
THE ROLE OF AFRICA
IN THE STUDY
OF WORLD POLITICS

Editor
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Editors' Note

THE PRESENT volume focuses on Africa as a key area within the study of world politics. The articles grouped here are meant to illustrate, by concentrating on specific countries, the relevance of the African continent for academic disciplines such as political science, international relations and area studies. The main underlining consideration of this volume is that African identity, democratization or democratic regression, the specificities of Islam in Western Africa, social movements in African countries, economic and social policies in Africa, armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, and post-colonial state development in Africa are all keys issues which reveal the peculiar features of the continent, but they also bring Africa in the study of world politics.

The first article, *Perspectives anticoloniales dans le djihad ouest-africain*, written by Ciprian Gabriel Oros, analyses particular features of Islam in Western Africa by focusing on the Islamic jihad. The author shows that the first movements emerging in Western Africa by the end of the 17th century and the preaching of radical Islamic purification forms (such as jihad, “holy war” against foreign influence and domination) were characterized by political, rather than religious actions. The article then explains the form of social radicalism triggered by the intertwining of political claims and social claims. As such, Ciprian Gabriel Oros’s article offers a historical and analytical perspective on the roots of African Islamism stemming from the confrontation between Muslims and the European colonial powers.

Boris Bertolt’s article, *Qu’est-ce que l’afropolitanisme ? Notes préliminaires sur une nouvelle philosophie de l’africanité*, tackles the concept of “afropolitanism” introduced by Taiye Selasi and popularised by Achille Mbembe. The author emphasizes the limits of the term “Afropolitanism” by discussing the Marxist critique and the fact that the term obscures persistent power relations between North and South, but also shows that the concept marked a milestone in understanding identity transformations of the African continent, which is in search of a distinct personality, and the African diaspora, in search of benchmarks. Moreover, Boris Bertolt argues for a new understanding of African identity. Consequently, he addresses the necessity of reconciling Afropolitanism with the future of the continent, as well as locating it within a larger framework of affirmation which transcends the “Black” identity. This new identity, coalesced within a long process of creolization, mixture and syncretism, could be a new road to Afrofuturism.

Joseph-Désire Som-F’s article, entitled *L’équilibre régional au Cameroun. Politique d’équité sociale ou dérive ethnique*, analyses the policy of quotas of access to the civil service in Cameroon, also called ethnicity balance policy. The latter stirred a controversy and spurred ethnic and political tensions in Cameroon. The article presents a historical view on the origins and development of this policy, by underlining the social, political and economic context, but also by stressing its meanings and the interethnic antagonisms it triggered. The author argues that the policy of quotas for access to the civil service is embedded in a process of constructing national unity and tackles regional equilibrium as a mechanism for public action, from a socio-historical perspective. Methodologically, the article resorts to qualitative research, drawing on a survey and various archive sources.

Laura M. Herta's article, *United Nations' Operations in Congo. A Historical "Reading" of UN Security Council Resolutions*, aims at analysing the UN involvement in the Congo, by looking at various United Nations' resolutions and emphasizing the nature and goals of each intervention. The main purpose of this article is the assessment of UN operations in the Congo (discussed in terms of success, limited success, pitfalls, domestic and international complexities) and the methodology employed is based on historical description and interpretation. The selection of the case studies is meant to indicate the constraints of the international system in different periods of time (*i.e.*, the impact of geopolitical interests during the Cold War period, on the one hand, and the post-Cold War era marked by humanitarian concerns, on the other hand). The three UN operations in the Congo are correlated conceptually to different forms of military engagement of the United Nations (peacekeeping, peace enforcement and "robust" peacekeeping).

Sergiu Miscoiu's article, called *The New Wave of Presidential Authoritarianism in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa*, focuses on the development of political institutions in Francophone Africa. In the author's analysis, most francophone Central and Western African states have witnessed a process of democratic corrosion, despite the general wave of democratization of the 1990s. The author poses the following question: how can one explain this process of political regression to authoritarianism and even dictatorship in the last decade? Sergiu Miscoiu opts for weighing the existence and magnitude of this democratic regression by breaking it into several dimensions related to the political and institutional frameworks and to the practices of power control and power projection. As such, he discusses several relevant examples from different countries of this area, rather than doing an in-depth country-based case study.

The article written by Babacar Faye and entitled *Re-reading Frantz Fanon in the Wake of Y'en A Marre. Social Media and Post-Statist Politics in Postcolonial Senegal* introduces readers to the Senegalese social movements. The author's goal is to offer a re-reading of Frantz Fanon's political thought on African postcolonial contemporaneity with respect to the *télos* of African social movements and youth rebelliousness against state politics and globalization. The case study focuses on the *Y'en A Marre* social movement. The author's main claims revolve around Frantz Fanon's theory of a "new humanism" which cuts across *Y'en A Marre's* idea of a "*Nouveau Type de Sénégalais*," but also, as evidenced in the text, the relevance of Frantz Fanon's writings in African Humanities Studies.

Hugues Morell Meliki's article, *Socio-Political Use of Large Scale Agriculture. The Strategic Paradigm and the New Entrepreneur-Farmers in Cameroon*, resorts to an in-depth analysis of the elites' investment in agriculture, which is associated with the search for additional sources of income in a context of scarcity. The author's main claim is that large scale agriculture appears to be a strategic asset used to achieve both social and political aims. The research is based on empirical evidence drawn from the cocoa sector and analyses peasants' attitudes and reactions in order to identify homogeneous categories of new farmers and to discuss certain reasons which explain the emergence of these categories in cocoa farming. The article explains the concept of economic violence and its dual realities and aims at deciphering the reasons and meaning of the entry of the new urban dominant class into the agricultural sector.

This volume is the result of some academic endeavours of researchers within the Centre for African Studies (Babeş-Bolyai University), of their African collaborators, and of experts in African Studies.

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