

Book Review

Cynthia McKinney (ed.), *The illegal war on Libya*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 2012, 314 pp.

The book's chapters focus on what transpired prior, during and post the Libyan leg of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. It provides alternative accounts and views, other than those that endorsed the Western-style and the West-dominated narratives that centre the Euro-North American-centric perspective, in the quest of providing scholarly perspectives on what happened in Libya in 2011 and on epistemic issues affecting the world. The locus of enunciation of the book is Libya, in particular the political context of the Arab Spring uprisings in that North African country.

The discourse in the book evinces that mass media was used to spread anti-Muammar Qaddafi propaganda to unsuspecting and trusting populations of the world in order to monsterise Qaddafi and his regime, thereby demonising and discrediting him. The book refutes the claims that the Qaddafi-regime brutalised its own populace in response to the Arab Spring protests in its domain. The emerging narrative in the book negates and dismisses the damn lies that have been propagated by Qaddafi-regime's nemesis for the purpose of justifying the regime change agenda. For example, that the Qaddafi-regime gave its military Viagra tablets in order for the military to rape and violate women is contested. The outlandish claim that the Qaddafi-regime tortured its citizens who were protesting against it in the Arab Spring protests is also reduced to unfoundedness.

Furthermore, the book demonstrates how, legally speaking, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) flaunted rules of engagement when it was faced with the Libyan case in that the United States of America's (USA) constitution, as the chief member-state, did not, and does not, allow for a military intervention in a country that is not at war with another. Libya was not at war with any country, yet the NATO alliance militarily invaded it. The narratives in this book dismiss claims that NATO's intervention was based on humanitarian intervention. It also provides evidence that the Libyan situation of 2011 did not warrant, neither did it merit, humanitarian assistance as Libya had the best standard of living in Africa, that was comparable to Europe's and the oil-rich Middle-East countries'.

More importantly, the book reveals how the relatively new notion of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was abused and manipulated in the Libyan situation; the book unmaskes the faulty basis and the unfounded claims that Qaddafi had turned on his own people and that Libya's population was in imminent danger of death as a result. Personal agendas of individuals, and foreign states to Libya, are highlighted as having influenced the invasion of Libya by NATO forces. In the book, it emerges that oil was what capitalist USA and its allies were really targeting in Libya. In the absence of government, it becomes easier for opportunists to syphon a country's resources without accounting to the host state and the capitalists' states themselves. Such is the case in Libya today.

In pursuit of finding and providing epistemic and factual truth to the accounts proffered thus far about the Libyan crisis of 2011, bearing in mind that these have been largely told from the Western centric world-view, the book delves in untold truths about what transpired in Libya. It does so in going back in time in order to trace the antecedents of the Libyan crisis of 2011. Consequently, the book provides (raw) primary data in that first persons' accounts of what transpired in Libya in 2011 are narrated. In addition, the book focuses on the lived experiences of Libyans during a time when "global media" (CNN; BBC; Al Jazeera; France24 to mention a few) was blatantly lying and misleading the world by conjuring up issues that it presented as facts.

The book is geared towards, inter alia, academics in the social sciences in general, but Political Sciences and International Relations, and Law in particular. Scholars of international relations, especially post-graduate students, would certainly find this book to be an interesting and an intriguing read. Policy-makers and inter-governmental organisations' officials will also find this book appealing. The book may also appeal to historians, journalists and the general public whose interests would be topical issues of the day.

The greatest gap and limitation in the book is that the accounts are not written by Libyans for Libyans themselves and the world, but rather by African-sympathetic Americans, among others. Africans must and should get into the habit of writing their own stories and not wait for the (writing, and by implication literate) saviours from the West. While McKinney and her colleagues write in order to centre the Libyan, and by extension African experience in the Libyan crisis of 2011, it would have been more meaningful and beneficial had it been Libyan nationals who wrote their accounts of their history for themselves and

for the benefit of the outside (Libya) world. That notwithstanding the fact that truths remain as such, regardless of who pronounces on them. That said, it was a necessity for McKinney and her team to pen down their experiences of Libya at that crucial time in that country's history.

Chidochashe Nyere

The African Decolonial Research Network and Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Book Review

Kgothatso Shai & Siphamandla Zondi (eds.), *Dynamising Liberation Movements in Southern Africa: Quo Vadis?* Pretoria: Institute for Preservation and Development & Ziabe, 2020, 145 pp.

The title of the book, without delving into the contents, represents an omelette that is challenging to unscramble. Liberation discourse in Africa is a highly contested terrain, more so in South Africa, where there were various social formations fighting for the liberation of the African and black majority from the colonial and capitalist apartheid. It is this point that makes the book more interesting, given that its entry point to the analysis of the liberation movements is focused on the African National Congress (ANC), “a broad church”, “a liberation movement” and “a ruling political party”. These classifications describe the difficulty of determining the identity of the ANC, made worse by its lack of coherent ideological posture. Most importantly, is the fact that these classifications have an implication on the policy positions of the ANC as a ruling party over a society with deep rooted colonial, capitalist and racial legacies. It is thus, important to situate and characterise the ANC among these classifications in order to assume a supreme position to analyse its liberation credentials in exile and as a ruling party. This book suffers the anticipated and unintended consequences of incoherent analysis about an amorphous party with no ideological posture. Thus, the authors are scrambling to explain this amorphous party called “broad church” from various vantage points. This could be an advantage of an edited book, it provides a broad and multiplicity of analysis of the ANC yet in a focused manner. The last two chapters of the book are focused on the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). This challenge is not obtained from these two chapters, precisely because the ZANU PF has a clear ideological posture.

The major focus of the book is on the ANC, with two chapters on the ZANU PF, yet the title is aimed at the liberation movements in Southern Africa. This is not appropriately explained and justified in the book, given the variety of liberation movements in the region varying in ideologies, tactics and international alliances. Zimbabwe’s ZANU-PF and Mozambique’s FRELIMO were allies of the People’s Republic of China, while the ANC, Namibia’s SWAPO received international

support and solidarity from the Soviet Union. Perhaps, a focused understanding of the ANC as both an oldest liberation movement in the continent and a ruling party could provide a generalised understanding of how liberation movements behave when assuming state power; either betray the liberation aspirations or fulfil them. During its formative years, the ANC, then South African Native National Congress (SANNC), realised the importance of “pan-Africanism and inclusivity” in its struggle against apartheid. This realisation led to the change of the name in 1923. Secondly, the ANC is the oldest liberation movement and the last to assume state power in the entire continent. Given this characteristic, the ANC could provide an interesting generalised overview of the evolution of the liberation movements in Southern Africa.

“Quo vadis”, a Latin phrase loosely translated means, “where are you marching”; demonstrates the unexpressed yet a discovery in the chapters of a desire to interrogate the policy direction and impact of liberation movements once in state power. Sehlare Makgetlaneng and Siphamandla Zondi’s chapters respond to this urge. Besides fighting for the decolonisation and liberation of the country, how is the ANC behaving in power in terms of the achievement of the aspirations of the Africans and Blacks, who were marginalised and exploited under colonial and capitalist apartheid. Zondi argues that the debate of transition of liberation movement into political parties is informed by; 1. Assessment of liberation movements in power in light of governance and development. 2. Assumptions about consolidation of democracy. He posits that scholars use inherently contradictory and contested democracy theory to judge and assess liberation movements. Zondi seems to propose the developmental state with democratic credentials as evidenced by Rwanda and Asian Tigers, as a narrow developmental path. This is premised by a thorough analysis of the development alternatives for African countries. In this endeavour he tries to situate the role of political parties.

What makes Zondi’s chapter a key part of the book, is the fact that in the late 1990s, there was a fierce debate on whether power was transferred to the people in 1994 South Africa’s democratic breakthrough and the assessment of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). Key figures in this debate were Jeremy Cronin and Joel Netshitenzhe. Netshitenzhe continued with the debate, writing about this factor during the celebration of the ANC’s centenary in 2012. But the underlying revelation of this debate, which is also contained in the chapter of

Makgetlaneng, is the fact that the ANC was not ready to govern. Thus, relied on the apartheid architectures such as the civil servants, and the commanding heights of the economy. The negative implication of this reality, is that the ANC instead of pursuing the liberation aspirations was now burdened by the stubbornness of the legacies of the apartheid and the unprepared cadres for governance. The consequences of this reality were illuminated by the fact that the ANC led government abandoned the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) socio-economic policy framework for the 1996's macroeconomic strategy: Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). This policy tip-toeing by the liberation movement bring to the fore, the reality that the ANC was not prepared for governance, but mainly focused its energy on fighting apartheid.

On more empirical and less theoretically sophisticated chapters is the contribution of Kgothatso Shai and Olusola Ogunnubi on an emotive health scandal of Life Esidimeni of 2015. It is a tragedy that resulted in the death of 144 psychiatric patients. This remains to be a thorn in the glorious history of the liberation movement. It contributes to the discourse that the movement was not ready to govern. This chapter appropriately belongs to this archive. It is linked with the chapter of Makgetlaneng, who used the popular warning of Oliver Tambo, that fighting liberation is much easier than being in power. Shai and Ogunnubi interrogate the adherence and consistency of ANC led government on the advancement of human rights by focusing on the health sector. The Freedom Charter proclaimed that "All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights" and that "There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort". The ANC has scrambled to claim the Congress of the People, which resulted in the Freedom Charter as its liberation heritage, thus there is an expectation that the ANC led government would strive for the realisation of the ideals of the new South Africa wished for in the Charter. However, Shai and Ogunnubi's chapter provides a contrary picture.

Let us revert to the above assumption, that the ANC is the oldest liberation movement in the continent and the last to assume state power, thus its analysis could bring a generalised understanding of the governance and development challenges related to the liberation aspirations of the Africans and blacks in general. To this end, Adam Habib argued that South Africa should assume a hegemonic role in the continent in order to underwrite the implementation of democracy, security and development in the region, while antagonising the "elite interests". He invoked former president Thabo Mbeki's assertion that "the fate

of democratic South Africa is inextricably bound up with what happens in the rest of the continent?” In the book, it’s not clearly brought out how the ANC as a liberation movement plays this role with other liberation movements in the region. It is a gap that can be pursued further in the other books with a focus on this body of knowledge. Perhaps it could be a discourse to be pursued in the continent and the region of Southern Africa, on whether countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria and Egypt could play a pivotal state in their respective regions and what could be the role of the liberation movements in this endeavour.

This would not be an easy task given the emergence of progressive movements in the continent opposing and challenging the appalling behaviour of the liberation movements in state power. In the book, Zondi’s chapter argues that the debate on whether the liberation movements have lost track on the liberation aspirations, and ignores the reality that both liberation movements and political parties suffer the same challenges while in state power. To this end, Zondi posits the ignorance to the reality that both liberation movements and political parties suffer from “lost moral compasses, ideological content, policy substance and institutional capacity to build democracies geared at delivering on the popular aspirations”. Added to this challenge, is that there are new social movements which have emerged out of claims to represent the aspirations of the people picking from the failures of the liberation movement in state power. In this fold, is the South Africa’s Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

I am not one to compartmentalise knowledge into the common binary of academic and non-academic spheres. Thus this book contributes to a body of knowledge and an important archive of the liberation movement, written by participants actively and passively of the liberation discourse in Africa about Africans, concretely epistemology of the South. It is spread into ten chapters. Chapters are a combination of theoretical and empirical contributions. Indeed the book is a positive contribution to dynamising the liberation discourse in Southern Africa. It dynamises the discourse in a sense that it brings the liberation movements into public scrutiny. The ANC through its conferences has stifled the debate on its track record in power, by claiming that its reports from the office of the Secretary General helps in this regard. To this end, the debate is not only stifled but incubated and take place in confined and controlled space. Thus the ANC cannot be an “authentic interlocutor” in this debate, as a focus of scrutiny.

Hence the need for books of this kind.

Frank Lekaba

Department of Political Science and International Relations
North West University, South Africa

Endnotes

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² Ibid.

³ Cronin, J. 1996. Thinking about the concept 'National Democratic Revolution'. *Umrabolo*, 1 (4).

⁴ Netshitenzhe, J. 2011. A Continuing Search for an Identity: Carrying the Burden of History. South African History Online Conference, Debating Liberation Histories and Democracy Today: One Hundred Years of the ANC. https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/a_continuing_search_for_an_identity_carrying_the_burden_of_history_by_joel_netshitenzhe_21_september_2011.pdf (accessed on 08/04/2020).

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