

## Editorial

# Africa and the Challenges of the Second Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Constraints and Opportunities

The year 2011 is the year of the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of CODESRIA. The General Assembly is the highest governing organ of CODESRIA. It is the body that makes the most important policy decisions of the Council, elects the Executive Committee, and elects the President and the Vice President of CODESRIA. In the 38 years of its existence, CODESRIA has had 12 Presidents and the succession from Executive Committee to the other, and from one president to the next have been very smooth.

The General Assembly is coupled with a scientific conference which provides the African social science research community with a great opportunity to reflect on the challenges facing our continent and on the ways in which the social sciences are addressing those challenges, paying particular attention to CODESRIA's own role. CODESRIA General Assemblies are also extraordinary occasions for scholars coming from various parts of the world to meet and share discussion platforms, and as well as moments of conviviality.

The 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of CODESRIA is being organised at a time when the world as a whole is facing formidable challenges that include global environmental change; a highly unstable global financial system; extreme pressures on land, mineral, water and other natural resources; the formidable development of new technologies that are impacting on almost everything, from the way we communicate to the way we do research, trade, grow crops, and organise and engage in civic, humanitarian or political action; and the governance of the behaviour of increasingly complex private entrepreneurs whose everyday actions often pose threats to the public good. Africa is faced with additional challenges of being handicapped by centuries of externally induced oppression and pillage whose effects on the freedom and welfare of our people have been very negative, extremely fragmented regional political, economic and scientific spaces, and many flaws in the governance systems, and in the economic and social policies framed at various levels.

The 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will be held in a North African country, after having been held in West Africa for many years, and then in East, Southern and Central Africa. When the Executive Committee was making the decision during its 75<sup>th</sup> meeting in Harare, in December last year, to hold the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in North Africa, nobody could imagine that North Africa would be the site for some of new social and political revolutions, the birth place of an "Arab Spring", twenty years after the "Africa Spring" of national conferences and other forms of democratic transition. The CODESRIA community and its many friends from Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe could not have come to North Africa at a better time. In this issue of the Bulletin, we publish articles by Samir Amin, Hakim Ben Hammouda, and *Boaventura de Sousa Santos* on the "Arab Spring" that show the complexity of the process, and emphasise the need for some caution in the appreciation of what actually happened and the likely long term consequences. We will return to this issue later.

CODESRIA spent the last five years designing and implementing research, training and policy dialogue programmes aimed at 'rethinking development and reviving development thinking

in Africa' – the umbrella theme of the 2007-2011 CODESRIA Strategic Plan. The theme that the Executive Committee has chosen for the scientific conference of the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, which is "*Africa and the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*", paying particular attention to the constraints facing, and opportunities available to our continent, should enable us to harness and bring the precious insights and achievements of the last five years and, indeed, the formidable progress made by the social sciences over the years to address old and new challenges facing Africa and the world.

The holding of the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly coincides with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pan African conference held in Casablanca in 1961 that was attended by Kwame Nkrumah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Ferhat Abbas, Modibo Keita, Ahmed Sekou Toure and many other great leaders of Africa. The conference was an important milestone in the history of the Organisation of African Unity and the African Union. We therefore plan to take the opportunity of the convening of the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of CODESRIA to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Casablanca Conference.

The year 2011 will also go down in history as the year when an African country was split into two, following many decades of civil war, the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and the holding of self-determination referendum. In this issue of CODESRIA Bulletin, Mahmood Mamdani raises some questions regarding the independence of South Sudan. We consider the birth of this new state as one of the major events in Africa since the end of apartheid in South Africa because it marks the end of a protracted struggle that started with the Anyanya rebellion in 1955 and also because of South Sudan's geopolitical importance. Mamdani examines the process of self determination especially under the leadership of John Garang. He notes that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was a result of a power sharing deal between the political elite of the north and south, in the context of post-Cold War global politics largely dominated by the United States of America. He concludes his reflections by highlighting possible sources of new conflict between Sudan and its new southern neighbour, South Sudan.

In "Grappling with the Reality of a New State in southern Sudan" Peter Adwok Nyaba, then Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the National Government of Sudan, and now Higher Education Minister in the Government of South Sudan, tackles the thorny issue as to why the south found the idea secession very attractive. He attributes the success of the secession movement largely to the failure of the political elite to construct a viable, united Sudan over the years, leading to a marginalized south that had nothing to lose by leaving the union. He also reflects on new challenges and advises on how the new state of South Sudan should establish itself in the comity of nations.

We also publish a report by Tesfaye Tefesse and Christopher Zambakari on an international conference South Sudan that was co-organised by CODESRIA, the UNECA, and the Africa Research and Resource Centre on the "Consequences of the Birth of Africa's Newest State for East and Horn of Africa Regions." The conference was intended to encourage open dia-

logue on the intricate political situation in Sudan and in the region, and to underscore the value of learning from the experience of the acquired by the rest of Africa during the last fifty or so years of post-independence development, and in the management of the various diversities on the continent. The speakers are reported to have been of the view that, although not always palatable, dismemberment may be an unavoidable stage in the search for lasting peace, especially in situations of extreme diversities, and regional integration.

Samir Amin reflects on Africa's challenges in light of what has been happening in North Africa since the end of 2010. His article is characteristically entitled "An Arab Springtime?" He looks at various developments in the Arab world and wonders whether all these happenings are a sign of 're-awakening of the Arab world'. He examines Egypt's struggle to extricate itself from domination, oppression and imperialist control. He concludes on an optimistic position, to the effect that the 'Egyptian revolution' points to a possible end of neoliberalism.

In the same vein, Hakim Ben Hammouda, in his article "The Political Economy of the Jasmine Revolution" is hopeful that the Tunisian uprising is revolution in which the people have triumphed over their tormentors. It is a new beginning that has ushered in a new era of freedom which will lead to a democratic dispensation.

In "Will the West ever Learn?" Boaventura de Sousa Santos, writing at the time the Eleventh World Social Forum (WSF) was held in Dakar, Senegal, observes that the symbolic significance of meeting in Africa was to do with the organisers' interest to call attention to "Africa's problems and the impact those problems will have on the world." He observes that no one could have predicted that "social protests against the economic crisis and the Western backed dictatorships could be so vigorous, so contagious and so assertive of one of the basic principles of the WSF: the radicalisation of democracy as an instrument for social transformation." He submits that the struggle in North Africa has roots in issues that have been ignored by Western media or that have been reported in ways that reveal double difficulty in the West of learning from experiences of the world and giving justice to the principles and values that it claims to guard. Santos gives a string of examples from which the West should have learnt a thing or two but has chosen not to; so he concludes by asking: "Is the West going to learn only when it becomes post-Western?" If the West had learnt its lessons, Africa and the rest of the world would have been a little happier.

The article "The market colonization of Intellectuals" by Lewis R. Gordon confronts a growing trend over the past decade which started when some academics became public figures and public figures became academics. This fluidity led to a situation where some intellectuals started presenting their work as the basis for rewards in the academy and the entertainment industry suggestive of influences tantamount to the colonisation of intellectuals by the ever-expanding market. He uses two examples of Sartre and Fanon, he concludes: "For many, it's impossible to imagine intellectuals like Fanon and Sartre as anything short of holier than thou, even though neither of them argued that academics should not have academic pursuits and seek academic rewards. They simply asked for the rest of us not to pretend that the world is somehow better off by our being rewarded..."

Lansana Keita in "Reconfiguring Eurocentric Discourse and African Knowledge" examines the expansion of Western European cultural dominance over the world based on technological advancement and the psychology of human superiority. In Africa, there has been a trans-generational psychological response

against that dominance through intellectual movements using epistemological facts and arguments to discredit the forms used to equate European knowledge to universal objective fact. He draws from different works and experiences to demonstrate that there is a need to consider alternative analyses, to understand how different forms of knowledge have been ideologically configured to serve those who generated them. This form of knowledge can never serve the interests of Africa because they were never created for that.

Issa Shivji in his "The struggle to convert nationalism to pan-Africanism" opens by quoting Pannikar's description of the history of the West as the story of the "West and the Rest".

Western domination over Africa, has all been about taking away from the continent. Starting from accumulation by appropriation as it was in colonial times; it moved on to capitalism by accumulation, and later it became accumulation by capitalism, others call it accumulation by dispossession ... Plunder transformed its face and inspired the SAP programmes characterized by liberalization, marketisation, privatization, commodification and financialisation. These programmes destroyed any progress made in the areas of basic social services after Africa's independence. He thus concludes that the study of pan-Africanism cannot be made outside the confines of imperialism. Neoliberal primitive accumulation is the latest manifestation of Western imperialistic tendencies over Africa in this case. It is therefore from this prism that African intellectuals should revisit and reconstruct the pan-Africanist project to confront imperialism. Otherwise the story of the West and Africa: "... is a story of plunder, privation and destruction; it is a story of permanent war and passing peace."

In "Africa must make its own images", Abdon Sofonnou, presents a report on the CODESRIA Workshop of 2011 FESPACO which examined new the creative visions and directions in contemporary African film. The main goal of the workshop was to draw attention to the new creative visions and directions in contemporary African film. Africans must create their own logic to bring about real change. Africa's development will depend on the production of its own images; by taking the initiative to tell our own story. We need to harness our social and cultural environment for this purpose.

Oloka-Onyango has some kind of confrontation with Uganda's President Museveni. In "Speaking truth to power" we have a set of three articles that demonstrate some of the challenges that some scholars have to endure in the struggle to uphold academic freedom by confronting the authorities when things are not going right. In this case Oloka is concerned about governance and democracy in Uganda at a time when its president has been in power for twenty five years. He observes that Museveni is now suffering from a disease he characterises as "stayism" that seems to be leading him to want to stay in power for life. This temptation has led him to depend more on the coercive machinery of the state rather than on the will of the people. He ends by cautioning that going by what has happened in North Africa, there is no military might that can prevent the people from overthrowing a dictator when they are angry enough.

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