



**Jonathan Farley.** *Southern Africa.* London: Routledge, 2008. 176 S. \$99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-31034-5; \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-31035-2; (cloth), ISBN 978-0-203-41618-1.



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### **J. Farley: Southern Africa**

In this book, which is part of Routledge's The Making of the Contemporary World series, Jonathan Farley provides a short overview on the making of Southern Africa as a region since the end of World War II. Farley has worked in the Department of History and International Affairs at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, where he mainly taught African and Middle East politics on naval officer courses. He retired from the Royal Naval College in 1999.

First of all, this is a courageous undertaking. The history of this region is complex, especially when one plans to give an overview on the economic and social, the political, the security and the foreign policy dimensions on just 140 plus pages! The difficulty to do justice to all the intricate details and inter-linkages which other authors have analysed on so many more pages is evident and a critique could just be based on a list of gaps and omissions (of which there are indeed quite a number). Farley's narrative centres on the regional implications of the late decolonization of the Portuguese empire in Africa (i.e. Angola, Mozambique) and the liberation struggles against the white settler regimes in occupied Namibia, South-

ern Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. However, the book is not the kind of comprehensive historical account which would make sense of the entangled history of the region. All in all Farley's account remains very conventional as it treats states as containers, separates the domestic from the foreign and focuses too much on few important statesmen actors.

The making of a region and the nature of regionness of Southern Africa is not discussed at any length. Given the economic and political dependencies as well as the interventionist nature of apartheid and the transnational character of anti-apartheid diplomacy this is at least surprising. Just to pick up on one particular critical juncture which shaped the region, the end of apartheid in South Africa: Here Farley almost discounts the whole issue of the cumbersome sanctions campaigns and how the imposition of sanctions, however weak, curtailed the room to manoeuvre for the South African regime especially during the second half of 1989 and in relation to the specific nature of the South African finance regime. The subsequent negotiations between the government and the ANC are squeezed into one paragraph which cannot

explain what was at stake and why a transition was possible at all. Here the danger of over-simplification which comes with the choice of the format becomes extremely evident.

Some more impressions from this book: the description of the socio-economic dynamics and actors of Southern Africa is under-complex and lacks historic depth; throughout the text the reader is confronted with essentialising and sometimes patronizing language â there are *Mugabe*âs *Shona people* and *Nkomo*âs *Ndebele* (p. 75, my emphasis) as well as African women âwho are not yet sufficiently knowledgeable about basic health mattersâ (p. 32). More attention could have been paid to detail

(e.g. South Africaâs RDP, refers to the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* and not the *Renewal and Development Plan*, p. 86). Some sections of the book have been updated to some degree up to 2007 (South Africa), whereas other sections somehow stop with 2004 (Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, but also NePAD). The selection of the literature consulted is highly arbitrary; too many important publications have not been consulted. In conclusion, the author fails to meet the high ambitions signalled with the format. For undergraduates and other persons interested in a short history of the making of Southern Africa (this seems to be the target audience of the series) this book cannot be more than just a very first encounter with the topic.

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