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Neocolonization and the Otherising Policy: Agonistic Identity in A'la Al-Aswani's Chicago and The Republic of False Truths

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ABSTRACT

The issue of whether people have truly achieved the long-desired equality and freedom, following the colonial era, remains a pertinent question. Postcolonial critics have extensively examined Colonial Politics and the manner in which freedom and equality are addressed. The present study constitutes a literary analysis of the status of Arabs and Muslims in relation to Americans in the post-9/11 era. In order to achieve the research objectives, the study draws upon Chantal Mouffe's theories on the democratic paradox, which emphasize agonistic identity and pluralistic democracy as defining characteristics of contemporary democracy. According to Mouffe, genuine democracy is unattainable, and all democracies involve the dominance of the majority, while minorities are granted limited space to create an illusion of freedom and choice. In reality, minorities are marginalized, and decision-making power resides with the majority resulting in a neocolonial policy. To trace neocolonial policies based on Mouffe's theories, this research investigates the interactions between Arabs and Americans, as well as the influence of American ideology, in Ala Al Aswani's novels, namely Chicago and The Republic of False Truths. The objective is to explore whether equality and freedom are genuinely achieved for all individuals or if claims of freedom and democracy serve as a façade to conceal new forms of colonialism. Both selected novels portray a certain opposition between Americans and non-Americans, particularly Arabs, which is covertly expressed through agonistic means. Furthermore, this agonism prevents the unification of Arabs and Muslims, as American ideology has culturally colonized some Arabs, resulting in internal disagreements among them. Consequently, this article contends that following the September 11th attacks in America, neocolonial policies have been implemented, propagating the notion that non-Americans, especially Arabs and Muslims, pose threats and acts of terror to Americans. This belief fuels the construction of agonistic identities, wherein individuals harbor fear and apprehension towards Arabs and Muslims. Simultaneously, the animosity towards those from different cultures and religions is concealed to exert better control over perceived enemies. Thus, the research suggests that enmity towards others who are perceived as potential sources of threats and fear has resurfaced in the post-9/11 era. This social phenomenon can be traced and analyzed within the selected novels to unveil the concealed truth that Americans harbor neocolonial otherizing schemes targeting individuals of different races or religions. Nonetheless, this enmity remains veiled to assert claims of democracy, which, in essence, is neocolonial as it seeks to culturally, economically, and socially subjugate others.

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