The Checkmate Pendulum: from fiction to reality by Antonio Maria Costa (AEF Moringa, 2014, 479 pp),

Quick review 28 August, 2014

Antonio Maria Costa, a UC Berkeley economist who edits the Journal of Policy Modeling, has been a mandarin at the United Nations in New York and Vienna, the OECD in Paris, the EC in Brussels and the EBRD in London. We met over thirty years ago and have been fast friends ever since. He reinvents himself one more time with The Checkmate Pendulum…from fiction to reality. As he says: “The analytical reader will learn about the financial-political warfare in Europe. Those concerned with geo-political issues will appreciate the strategic insights”. Indeed: I plan to use the book in a postgraduate course on globalization and governance. But the title targets “the anxious reader” who “will rush through the plot rich of suspense and reversals”, expecting moves in different directions and frequencies but also swings between fantasies that have been or will become real. The cover brings out history with red stars, an imperial eagle and a map of Europe in the background - but the thirty chapters read like a worldwide travel logbook. The pendulum oscillates from Berlin to Paris then from Washington to Brussels, and always seems to come back to a pit in Ukraine. Yet it in fact leads to a prisoner on death row in Beijing musing on the adaptation of the Roman’s divide ut impera to the conquer and unite goal of China. As I was replacing the globetrotting anchor of financial programs at ENN TV with Tintin from Hergé’s 1936 The Blue Lotus I heard echoes of the Eagles’ 1976 Life in the fast lane. Instead of Snowy, Pierre G.’s companion and confident is Martha, a German academic who dies tragically as they are discussing the three dimensional chess play where the US wants German help against China. The opponents of Germany in the euro-game are rich in manpower, sun and museums - which makes them interesting for the Chinese to buy in a currency they can control. Thick reports on the single currency and on the Soviet Union brought to life in Hotel California - where you can check out any time you like but you can never leave.

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