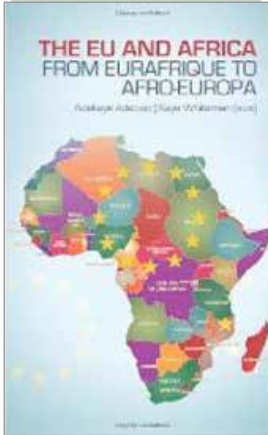


Kameel Premhid

is a former intern at
the Helen Suzman
Foundation



**THE EU AND AFRICA:
FROM EURAFRIQUE TO
AFRO-EUROPA**
Edited by Adekeya
Adebajo and Kaye
Whiteman
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BOOK REVIEW

The EU and Africa: From Eurafrique to Afro-Europa edited by Adekeya Adebajo and Kaye Whiteman

While the title of this work may have benefitted from a little more attention from the publishers, one should not make the mistake of discounting this work's value and relevance, based on the title alone, in the discourse of historical and modern (continental) relations between the 'new' and 'old' worlds. The editors, Adebajo and Whiteman, do a thorough job of marshalling some of the world's foremost experts' thoughts on areas as diverse as identity and security into an easily readable, though nuanced, book.

Whereas this subject has been canvassed by many other authors, writing alone or in concert, the distinguishing feature of this book, apart from the fact that it emanates from an African think-tank in an otherwise European-dominated area of scholarship, is that it seamlessly brings together people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs in a way that allows individual authors enough freedom to express their opinions while allowing the book to escape being schizophrenic, as is often the case with compilations of this nature. Rather, Adebajo and Whiteman, both experts in African affairs themselves, have done a superb editorial job of allowing individual authors the freedom to express themselves while maintaining a balance of opinion that results in the reader benefitting from a cogent exposition on EU-African affairs over time.

The book itself is the product of the Centre for Conflict Resolution's (CCR) specifically organised research and policy seminars to consider relations between the two continents. The CCR, based in Cape Town, and headed up by Adebajo, is an African flagship organisation which is able to undertake research and make policy proposals in a way that not many other African entities are able to do so. Institutional biases, whether intended or not, tend to dominate the narrative, rightfully or wrongfully, around particular subjects. Accordingly, subliminal prejudices and beliefs, no matter how learned or enlightened the author, can particularise the way in which certain subjects are considered. This book does an excellent job of providing balanced and critical comment: it is not simply an inward-looking African exercise in self-aggrandisement as a response to Europhilia, it is a serious piece of scholarship.

Divided into 6 parts, this book is an ambitious attempt to explain a historical relationship that spans several centuries. It covers, broadly; history, the political economy, trade and development, security and governance, bilateral relations, migration and identity. While the book itself runs to 500 odd pages, its length is justified, both by the complexity of the subject matter it attempts to deal with and the consequent need for incisive, if long, commentary that explains it. This book cannot be described as being “gripping,” or “riveting” nor by any of the other labels blithely applied to books in reviews, especially those reviews conducted in the popular press, but such is to be expected: it is a study done in assiduous detail.

In an age where communication is limited to 140 characters per tweet, and where long-form journalism is itself a rarity, lengthy essays of this kind do not lend themselves to being picked up and pursued by the everyday reader. The everyday reader that does, therefore, deserves to be elevated to being considered as more than “everyday.” Accordingly, this book is not meant for the everyday reader, but rather the reader who seeks to deepen, challenge and further his/her understanding of Africa and Europe and the ties that bind. It is the mastery of the detail that it provides which sets this book apart. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that this book could be prescribed as essential reading for those reading history, politics, economics, international relations, security studies at university. Some of the policymakers who have responsibilities in these areas should consider it essential reading too. Indeed any reader of this review, who has an interest in those disciplines, within an African/European context, would benefit from reading this book.

They argue that this relationship must be reformed so that there is greater equity in the future. What is interesting is that they readily concede that this is not only in Africa's benefit, as it will go some way to break Africa's dependence on the West, thus making it better able to empower itself, but, in time, has become a geopolitical necessity for Europeans themselves.

The transition in this relationship, postulated in the subtitle (“From Eurafrique to Afro-Europa”), is one that is not immediately clear based on the title alone. In the introduction, Whiteman goes some way to explain what this means.

The intelligent linguistic device used to symbolise that transition, “Eura” for “Europe” being predominant and primary to “Afrique,” the French word for Africa in “Eurafrique,” then changing to “Afro” for Africa and “Europa” for “Europe” with, seemingly, more equality between the two terms, rather than one dominating or colouring our understanding of the other, is a theme that is returned to by most, if not all authors. The authors and editors, rightfully, argue that the previous characterisation of Europe’s relationship with Africa was an exploitative and self-enriching relationship, to Africa’s detriment. They argue that this relationship must be reformed so that there is greater equity in the future. What is interesting is that they readily concede that this is not only in Africa’s benefit, as it will go some way to break Africa’s dependence on the West, thus making it better able to empower itself, but, in time, has become a geopolitical necessity for Europeans themselves. With the United States’s continued, even if diminished, economic dominance to the West, and India and China’s emergence as rival power bases to the East, European countries finds themselves individually too weak to rival either of these nations, but collectively more able to act in the continent’s individual nations’ best interests when they do so as a trade and political bloc. Thus, reform should not be viewed as caving to the demands of Africans, but rather as a strategic necessity to ensure that Europe’s benefits continue.

The book does discuss in great detail the EU model. The lessons that it thus allows AU policymakers to glean, without the pain of experience, is something that cannot be understated. The Eurozone crisis, the rise of nationalism in response to it, the arbitration of justice and questions of sovereignty, are issues that, as the AU moves for greater continental and regional integration, must be considered. Comparatively, the EU is a much stronger institution (it has had a few decades head start and did not have to deal with the nasty effects of colonialism). But if it manages to just limp on from crisis to crisis, can it serve as a model for the AU?

However, not all of the books prognostications are bad. In fact, it is the opposite. In allowing the AU to look to its northern neighbours and learn the lessons they have to offer, some of the more calamitous mistakes that the EU has made, can be avoided. Further, this historical and holistic approach offers key insights into the mutual benefits that both Africa and Europe stand to gain from a continued strategic relationship. While the book does not offer a sufficient explanation as to why this is the case, but rather seems to accept it *fait accompli*, it is clear that the historical ties and financial interests which exist is enough of an incentive for it to continue. Leveraging off Europe's need to remain relevant to and, in some respects, dominant of world affairs, is something that international relations and foreign policy is made of. Why, however, Europe is the best strategic partner for Africa, in the opinion of authors and the editors, is perhaps a chapter that would have been a good starting point, as the foundation for the exposition which would follow. This question, especially if answered from both perspectives, would have enhanced the books attempt to settle any ambiguities or ambivalence in each continent's policy towards the other.

What may have previously been an exploitative relationship, has by chance or design, morphed into one that is predicated on mutual interest. When policy makers realise this, as well as the people of both continents, Europeans will, hopefully, no longer feel that they are being exploited and, likewise, Africans will no longer feel entitled. Rather, this relationship must be fully cognisant of the past while not allowing it to determine current and future relations, for a preoccupation with settling old scores may render it impossible to govern for today and tomorrow. This is not to say, at all, that an ahistorical approach must be taken which allows Europeans to abdicate their responsibility for Africa's present problems. Rather, it is an approach which accepts European responsibility and African accountability as well: not all problems, or at least their manifestations, can be blamed on the past.

Academic books of this nature can often be banished to the annals of history without a further thought. This book, however, is one that the authors and editors should genuinely seek to keep alive by updating it periodically to reflect the dynamic and ever-changing relationship they seek to examine.