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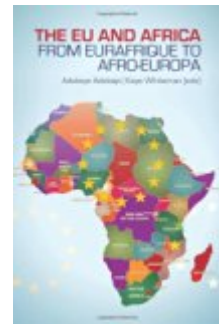
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Adekeye Adebajo, Kaye Whiteman, eds. *The EU and Africa: From Eurafrique to Afro-Europa*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. xiv + 531 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-70396-3.

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Understanding the relationship between the European Union (EU) and Africa can be a complex task due to the burden of history punctuated by a legacy of slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism, and exploitation, thereby eliciting doubts as to whether they will ever have a mutually beneficial association devoid of intrigue. Such a legacy produces skepticism from most Africans concerning the true intentions of Europeans when it comes to initiating or maintaining relations. Yet the EU, with the exceptions of a few of its member states, has shown a desire to move beyond the colonial legacy and engage with the African continent in more constructive ways in a bid to open up trade and ensure security beyond its borders. Additionally, because not all twenty-seven EU countries have a colonial past with Africa, building an equal relationship is not an illusion.

It is with this background in mind that some of the best experts on Africa contributed chapters to the book *The EU and Africa*. This book provides a firm, non-compromising, educative, and non-biased assessment of the EU's relationship with African countries. Apart from students, practitioners, academics, and policymakers interested in Africa and the EU, the volume can be beneficial to everyone in Europe, Africa, and beyond who wants a keen understanding of the history of the continents and their postcolonial and post-Cold War relationship. The book has an added aim of encouraging constructive dialogue between the aforementioned groups.

The book is divided into six parts, which start off with an examination of Europe's post-World War II reshaping of relations with the newly independent African states and its endeavors to achieve unity. The book then delves

into the relationship between Europe and Africa in today's world with special attention on Africa's place in the EU's quest for global partnerships. The study then analyzes trade, investment, aid, the emerging importance of security, and good governance, plus the historical role of states like France, Britain, Portugal, and the Nordics from an EU perspective. The book concludes with a thorough examination of identities, post-racial world perspective, and immigration policies of Europe in light of its intricate relations with the Maghreb and the Mediterranean.

With this expertly assembled array of authors tackling different chapters, the volume is indeed well written with balanced arguments and a precise narrative. Due to the diversity of the chapters and authors, different themes are explored in the different parts. But overall it becomes apparent that there is a difference in perceptions and interests among the twenty-seven EU countries toward Africa and among the African countries toward Europe. The situation is not helped by the emergency of rival actors like China that draw the attention of both parties leading to a need to reevaluate values (for the case of the EU).

The study as shown in the title is centered on charting a new course for the relationship between Europe and Africa. The study therefore explores concepts, like the discredited "Eurafrique," which, as defined by Guy Martins, was an ideology "originating in the colonial period, according to which the fate of Africa and Europe is seen as being naturally and inextricably linked at political, economic, social and cultural levels."^[1] This organic linkage between Europe and Africa was a construct that led to exploitation of African resources. The authors

argue then that the purpose of the book “is to examine how far attitudes have changed in this relationship, and whether a new, more balanced concept ... ‘Afro-Europa’—that is, an equal partnership of mutual interests without suggestion of a special relationship of more significance than others—can now become predominant” (p. 3).

Crucial to the EU-Africa relationship are the interests of states. The book makes it clear that states still retain autonomy when pursuing foreign policy objectives. For example, Germany played a crucial role in the scramble and partition of Africa and was vital to the development of the concept of “Eurafrika.” Portugal played a vital role in organizing the EU-Africa summits in 2007 and 2010. Great Britain, which has played a hands-off role in Africa, was at the forefront of the G8 summit in Gleneagles in 2005. However, it is France that has remained a major player in the EU-African relations. France, as examined in the book, views Africa as its domain and does not hesitate to co-opt the EU into its foreign policy objectives, as the feeling is what is good for France is good for Europe.

Africa as a continent poses a difficult challenge for book editors in that it is composed of over fifty states that are normally lumped together and dealt with as one entity. Yet individual states have interests and allegiances that may differ from others. Therefore they will react differently to trade partnerships with other states or organizations. It should however be noted that the lumping together of African states is not without merit as most of the countries share a common heritage. Nonetheless, the danger with this grouping is that the perceived uniformity is a fallacy as epitomized by the differences between Francophone countries and Commonwealth states brought about by their allegiances to former colonial masters. The stranglehold that France has over its former colonies and spheres of influence can contribute to the success or failure of the economic partnerships between the EU and Africa.

Nevertheless it is the ultimate desire of Europe to harmonize the bilateral and multilateral relations by these states including the Nordic countries. However this has proved to be cumbersome. For instance, although there had been EU agreement on commissioning of operations Artemis and EUFOR RD Congo, the EU was divided when approached by the United Nations (UN) in 2008 to help out in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The EU ended up not sending a force. This failure to find harmony when dealing with Africa brings questions in mind as to whether the twenty-seven EU countries with sometimes competing interests can jointly formulate policies

in relations to a heterogeneous group like the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) states.

The book argues that “Africa and Europe still appear not to have fully escaped the burdens of history,” which according to the authors necessitates a need to scrutinize the possibility of expounding and applying the concept of Afro-Europa in the future (p. 19). It is further argued that “at the heart of the book is the desire to make the Afro-European relationship equal. By highlighting the negative impact of some European policies, and drawing attention to the lack of commitment in some quarters in Africa truly to stand up to these policies, the book challenges our current understanding of benign policies in Europe towards Africa” (pp. 19-20). Although the intention to make the Afro-European relationship equal is a noble cause, it is hard to deduce if this will ever happen because a power asymmetry exists between the ACP and the EU mainly due to the abundant resources of the latter and the context in which these relations take place. According to Van Crielinge Tine, the ACP has been continually marginalized from the EU foreign policy agenda due to interests elsewhere plus more pressing domestic and foreign policy concerns.[2] Yet even with EU interests dominating the negotiations, the power relations are not as they seem as some ACP states have been able to successfully negotiate with the EU. The ACP-EU negotiations have been punctuated by use of brinkmanship, exercising of leverage over the other. This is a far cry from the aim of making Afro-Euro relations equal.

The division of the ACP into six groups by the EU during the Cotonou negotiations weakened its status as special and privileged partner leading to conflict and mixed loyalties, and at the end no region, except the ACP, had signed a full Economic Partnership Agreement.[3] This shows that as in its relationship with the UN, the EU uses its economic power to influence decision making. Indeed it is held that the decision to break the ACP into six regions was in the interests of EU’s economic and geopolitical concerns. However if it is pursuing a new relationship with the African states then an introspective look has to be taken to address these tendencies.

Apart from the above, it is also evident from the study that Europe is attempting to coordinate policies to deal with the rising immigration from Africa. This is put into perspective further by an examination of the rise of post-racial societies in the wake of Barack Obama’s election and an analysis of the conundrum of Europe’s contemporary identity and role plus the task of sanitizing the latter of past delusions. Indeed, as most European coun-

tries, like Britain and Germany, try to build multicultural societies, they are faced with open rancor about the rapid spread of religions like Islam, even while there seems to be an open acceptance of people of other races.[4] The adoption of multiculturalism, although good for harmony, has created divisions within countries whereby immigrants and their descendants do not hold in high regard the identities of their adoptive nations. So the question becomes: is multiculturalism meant to separate identities and loosen attachments of immigrants to the adoptive states or is it a sensitive policy of accommodating other people and letting them freely practice their cultures? Opposition to multiculturalism has led to the rise of Far Right groups, like the British Nationalist Party which abhors Islam, calling the religion both wicked and vicious and intolerable when put in the context of the fundamental values of free speech and democracy, which are some of the cornerstones of British society.[5] Such developments indeed validate the chapter especially the identity crisis in Europe and the contemporary post-racial world.

Overall the book gives an excellent analysis of the EU–Africa relationship, highlighting the weaknesses in the different institutions, like the African Union and EU; the influence of former colonial masters; and the key policies interests of the EU in trying to secure its borders as it grapples with issues of identity. The emergency of tiger economies in Asia is a major threat to fostering EU-African relations from a vantage point of the EU. However, the African states that have been experiencing an economic boom are in a curious position of having an a la carte menu of different possible countries with which to partner. But for the EU to engage fully with Africa the rhetoric has to be turned into action. Although “Eurafrique” is a discredited concept, the relationship be-

tween the EU and Africa is still marred by a power asymmetry in favor of the former and as long as factors remain constant Afro-Europa will remain an illusion.

For an area of study that has had little written about it, the book takes a great leap in showing the opportunities and challenges of developing an equal relationship between the EU and Africa. This groundbreaking study acts as a harbinger for future study of the relationship between the EU and Africa in the post-Cold war context without undermining the colonial legacy.

Notes

[1]. Guy Martin, “Africa and Ideology of Eurafrica: Neo-colonialism or Pan-Africanism?” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 20, no. 2 (1982): 222.

[2]. Van Crielinge Tine, “Implications of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) on the EU-ACP Partnership and the possibility of ACP Leverage” (paper presented at the Garnet Conference Brussels, Belgium, April 26-28, 2008), 2.

[3]. *Ibid.*, 3.

[4]. Bob Taylor, “Growing Concerns over Increased Islamic Influence in Europe,” *Washington Times*, December 28, 2012, <http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/what-world/2012/dec/28/growing-concerns-over-islamization-europe-especial/> (accessed April 17, 2013).

[5]. British Broadcasting Corporation, “Griffin Attacks Islam on BBC Show,” October 23, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8321683.stm> (accessed April 17, 2013).

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