

Fiona McLaughlin presents a fascinating glimpse of the ‘linguistic ecology’ of the Sahel, where multi-linguicism is the norm, specialised oral skills are typically entrusted to a caste, and both French colonial rule and Islam have left a powerful imprint. Leonardo Villalón and Mamadou Bodian reflect upon the relationships between education (increasingly in private schools with an Arab language and religious training component), citizenship and national identity. Alexander Thurston’s study ‘negotiating secularism’ offers a welcome counter-balance to the emphasis on Islam, recognising the interplay between national politics, Christian minorities, and multiple and conflicting Islamic discourses regarding the relationship between state and religion.

Given the centrality of migration and mobility to the contemporary ‘securitisation’ of the Sahel, the final section provides a crucial endpoint to the volume. The contributions dove-tail nicely, emphasising the long history of regional migration within Africa (Sylvie Bredeloup), the nature of trans-Saharan migration through and from the Sahel (Harouna Mounkaila), and the ways that rapid urbanisation contributes to complex patterns of impoverishment, settlement and population dynamics (Florence Boyer and David Lessault). The final contribution, by Abdoulaye Kane, raises questions about the durability of economies built upon remittances sent through transnational networks, given the contraction of opportunities to migrate outside Africa and the possibility that the next generation born overseas will have less interest in investing on the continent.

If you, dear reader, choose to harass your library to acquire only one book this year, let it be this one. It will be useful to anyone teaching about Africa, doing research on the Sahel, or assessing policy options in a region increasingly in the spotlight. Should Oxford issue it in paperback it would make an excellent textbook for an interdisciplinary course on contemporary issues in Africa, on the cultural geography in Africa, or on politics at multiple scales.

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**Revisiting EU–Africa Relations in a Changing World** edited by VALERIA FARGION & MAMOUDOU GAZIBO

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This collection of essays on the Africa–EU relationship edited by Valeria Fargion and Mamoudou Gazibo offers comprehensive insight on key policy dimensions of the bicontinental ‘partnership’ – namely in terms of security, migration, trade, development cooperation and democratisation. The editors provide an engaging and accessible introduction to the book, explaining the efficacy of a historical neo-institutionalist analysis for making sense of path dependencies and policy legacies within Africa–EU ties. In addition, the editors point to important themes emerging throughout the collection, notably in terms of the securitisation of the EU’s policy approach to Africa, the legacies of colonialism, the rise of China, continued aid dependence (with impact for African agency) and the rise of European populist sentiment regarding migration. This sets the scene for the policy analysis across the five domains of security, migration, trade, development and democratisation.

Throughout each of the chapters, the consequences of Europe's interest-driven policy agendas become increasingly clear in terms of the agency of African officials and their attempts to achieve pro-poor forms of 'development'. The inequalities within the relationship perhaps come to the fore most readily within Rahmane Idrissa's excellent chapter *Europe–Africa unequal pacts: the case of West African migration*. The author convincingly points to the ways in which historical and more contemporary European interventions have precipitated enhanced migration flows from Africa to Europe (much to the chagrin of populist actors in the EU member states). Notably, he points to the implications of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) during the Washington Consensus in terms of decreased social spending and unemployment amid state divestment from key industries. He also rightly points to the more recent intervention in Libya by the UK and France and the consequences of the demise of the Gaddafi state for increased migration patterns. Given the EU's interest-driven approach in its pursuit of migration mitigation in the African continent, the author notes that African elites are questioning Europe's genuine commitment to norms relating to democracy and human rights.

Another key contribution within the collection comes from John Akokpari in his chapter *The African Continental Free Trade Agreement and its Implications for Africa-EU Trade Relations*. The author convincingly argues that the AfCFTA may well fall short of diversifying African trade away from dependence upon European markets. He points here not only to the impact of COVID-19 upon African economies and their potential for diversification, but also to broader problems associated with the historical non-implementation of pan-African initiatives. Worryingly, the author also raises the prospect of potential job losses in certain African national contexts under the weight of agricultural competition from African countries such as South Africa and Morocco.

Furthermore, the contribution by Niels Keijzer *From Complementing to Copying its Member States: Assessing the EU's Development Cooperation with Africa* provides detailed and insightful analysis of the EU's pursuit of an interest-driven 'crisis mode' agenda informed by member state interests.

These chapters collectively reinforce the sense throughout the book that Europe's partnership with African countries is increasingly guided by geopolitical concerns rather than more idealistic notions of solidarity. Taken together, the collection indeed often paints a picture of African agency being regularly thwarted or diminished by economically stronger European 'partners' that use trade and aid mechanisms as a device for ensuring African officials' compliance. This is a picture that would not surprise African political luminaries who warned about the dangers of a lopsided Eurafrican relationship from the late 1950s onwards. Scholars and students interested in learning more about whether Europe's 'partnership' with African countries materially benefits African citizenries would do well to read this excellent book.

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