

***Africa in World Politics: Constructing Political and Economic Order. Harbeson, John W and Rothchild, Donald, eds. Westview Press, Sixth Edition, 2017, 346.***

Ahmad Saffee\*

*Africa in World Politics: Constructing Political and Economic Order* is a collection of seminal essays which discusses the vibrant and resurgent challenges being faced by the African region. This book explores the changing status of Africa in the international order and its implications on the nature of polity and socio-economic landscape at a regional and sub-regional level. The book has been successful in drawing attention to the new emerging realities and has followed on an over-arching theme that highlighting the transformation of the African continent from a “Dark Continent” to that of a “Rising Africa.” Hence, the central question addressed in the book is, will the growing prominence of Africa in the world translate into the well-being and sustainable socio-economic, political and cultural landscape?

One of the authors of this book, John W Harbeson, has contributed two essays which reflect upon the state and democracy in a changing political and economic order. The book is segmented into four parts, which are sequentially interconnected through 15 essays written on a broad spectrum of issues and challenges faced today by Africa. However, the main impetus of the book remains on constructing varied contours of political and socio-economic framework that revolves around the African engagement with the outside world and their domestic implication.

This edition of the book is updated to include two new chapters, one on Nigeria and the threat from Boko Haram and second on the influence of party politics on economic development. Other revised chapters consider both the extent and the limits of continued healthy growth rates in many countries; the impact of investments by China and other BRICS (acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Asia) countries; progress and hurdles to human rights and democratisation; dimensions of chronic state

---

\* *The book reviewer is Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.*

weakness deepened by insurgencies, including those connected to transnational network of terrorism. Most of these issues are found to be persistent in the African history, therefore, this edition provides with an updated narrative on each but also connect these with a larger continental framework that surely is undergoing micro-macro level transformation.

Hence, the book not only provides updated facts but it also deepens understanding of the African countries. It unpacks the processes leading to changes and identify certain trends and trajectories with respect to the African issues. Most scholars hold a resilient optimism about Africa's future, yet, some remain elusive about the socio-political stratification found rampant across continent and the underlying tension among international and regional multilateral forums. These analyses are apt in identifying continental fault lines, however, very few provide a way forward, besides hope and optimism.

Moreover, certain topics that are deemed significant factors in terms of their impact such as climate change, immigration and refugee crisis, popular social movements remain unaddressed. Also most of the scholars have painted a gloomy picture of Africa, highlighting divergence in every aspect, which arguably is partial representation of Africa. Some of the new trends with respect to growing entrepreneurial innovation and incubators spreading across emerging economies are also ignored. The editors of the book have also been partial in selecting the scholars who mostly belong to the Western countries. There is also a need to bring the African scholars and their perspectives in the next editions. Another suggestion for the coming editions would be to focus on the African Diaspora and their perspective on the African problems, also to include their contribution in the international order and what possible benefits can be driven from this human resource.