

The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations

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The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations is a timely and pioneering volume that offers a comprehensive analysis of the evolving interaction and collaboration between the European Union (EU) and Africa. The work brings together contributions from scholars with diverse viewpoints, critical analysis, and expertise on EU-Africa relations. By blending historical contexts, contemporary dynamics, and future-oriented insights, this seminal volume offers a holistic understanding of EU-Africa relations with five parts that each part delve into specific aspects of the relationship, including historical and theoretical perspectives (Part I), governance frameworks (Part II), key issues (Part III), the role of external actors (Part IV), and opportunities for cooperation in tackling global challenges (Part V).

One of the most remarkable aspects of this volume is its bold interrogation of the asymmetrical relationship between the EU and Africa, as well as the prevailing Eurocentric narratives in the study of EU-Africa relations. In fact, some chapters deliberately use the term “Africa-EU relations” to emphasize a shift in literature, challenging dominant narratives and promoting a more inclusive and diverse scholarship. By navigating the complexities of this relationship, the handbook sheds light on underlying dynamics and offers practical modalities for consolidating and strengthening the partnership between the two continents.

The introduction discusses the evolving nature of EU-Africa relations since 2000, which have been marked by institutional reordering, periodic summits, and changing dynamics on both sides, including the rise of the African Union (AU) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as well as the growing influence of emerging economies. It also addresses the tension between the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), which aimed to enhance Africa’s agency,¹ and the enduring asymmetry of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. It reframes the

1 African agency is posed as a question to which scholars are trying to answer. Yet, throughout this book, this concept is framed as the capabilities and experiences of African individuals and institutions, particularly their governments, to shape their own political, social, and economic destinies, rather than being solely defined or acted upon by external forces.

structure of the handbook on the discourse on EU-Africa relations to acknowledge African agency and promote a more balanced relationship.

Part I discusses the theoretical frameworks used to understand EU-Africa relations, which have mainly been situated within the field of International Relations (IR) with the dominance of the EU perspectives. In the first chapter, Olukayode A. Faleye offers a comparative analysis of EU-Africa relations through the lens of IR theory, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship. Despite recent shifts positioning Africa more centrally in global affairs, such as China's growing influence, the chapter argues that African agency remains marginalized in IR theory due to "intellectual imperialism"² (p. 14). The second chapter by Frank Mattheis examines the role of regionalism and interregionalism in shaping EU-Africa relations, highlighting the complexities of regional dynamics. Yet, it also acknowledges a shift towards International Studies allowing a broader consideration of Africa's agency. The emergence of regionalism and comparative regionalism as subfields has provided an opportunity to pay more attention to Africa's own integration processes. However, the dominant literature still tends to view Europe as the originator of regionalism, and African agency is often unintentional or limited in this framework (p. 27). The discussion of evolving the relationship between the EU and the African, Caribbean and the Pacific Group of States (ACP), with a focus on the complexities of interregional cooperation and the potential impacts of a proposed umbrella framework for ACP regions is well worth reading as an important contribution to the literature (pp. 30-35). Rahel Weldeab Sebhatu explores postcolonial approaches to studying Africa-EU relations in the third chapter, shedding light on power dynamics and legacies of colonialism in the relationship. Sebhatu aims to underline the existing blind spots in understanding relations and "to demystify and demythologize African agency" through post-colonial approaches (p. 38).

Part II focuses on the formal governance processes in EU-Africa cooperation, noting significant changes in structures and policies over the years. Following the introduction chapter by Mary Farrell, Chapters 4-9 in Part II focus on the evolving nature of governance in EU-Africa relations, shaped by a convergence of interests among states, non-state actors, and supranational institutions. While António Raimundo traces the governance of EU-Africa relations from the Treaty of Rome to the Cotonou Agreement, highlighting both continuity and change in the fourth chapter, Lesley Masters and Chris Landsberg analyzes the evolution of EU foreign policy towards Africa, focusing on key strategic documents in Chapter 5. Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters explores the role of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in shaping EU-Africa relations in Chapter 6. In the following chapter, Anthony Costello examines the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its implications for EU relations with North African countries.³ Fergus Kell and Alex Vines then provide a comprehensive overview in Chapter 9 of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and its implementation over the years in Chapter 8. John Akokpari and Primrose Z.J. Bimha assess the role of the AU in EU-Africa relations,

2 Intellectual imperialism, manifested in Western social science scholarship on developing countries, is seen as a form of imperialism due to its imposition of capitalist values, institutions, and development models, its focus on Westernization, and its promotion of ideas benefiting capitalism and imperialism, all of which hinder the understanding and development of these nations.

3 For the general overview on the ENP, see: Murat Necip Arman. 2011. The Problematic Fields in European Neighborhood Policy: Human Security and Neighborhood Relations. *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 8, 31: 45-68.

focusing on its effectiveness as an interlocutor. Overall, Part II comprehensively explores the evolution in relations, reflecting changes in global and regional dynamics and including shifting strategic interests, diverse actors, and new opportunities.

Following the introduction chapter by Nicoletta Pirozzi and Bernardo Venturi, Part III covers the historical evolution of and key issues in EU-Africa relations, emphasizing shifts in development cooperation (in Chapter 10 by Sarah Delputte and Jan Orbie), democracy and human rights promotion (in Chapter 11 by Edalina Rodrigues Sanches), peace and security cooperation (in Chapter 12 by Ueli Staeger and Tshepo T. Gwatiwa), regional integration (in Chapter 13 by Giulia Piccolino), interregionalism and bilateralism (in Chapter 14 by Andrzej Polus), trade and economic partnerships (in Chapter 15 by Victor Adetula and Chike Osegbue), and cooperation opportunities in science, technology, and innovation between Africa and Europe (in Chapter 16 by John Ouma-Mugabe and Petronella Chaminuka). Part III notes a move from aid effectiveness to external action impact in the EU development focus, while political conditionality on democracy and human rights has weakened. The EU's engagement in peace and security has grown, emphasizing the "security-development nexus" and African agency (pp. 177-78). Despite promoting regional integration, EU-Africa relations remain asymmetric, particularly in trade, where European Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are seen as reinforcing inequality (pp. 211-22).

In the introduction chapter to Part IV, Andrew Cottey provides an overview of the role of external actors in shaping Africa's international relations, with a focus on the Africa-EU relationship, highlighting the complexities and dynamics of these interactions. While Norman Sempijja examines the dynamics of cooperation between the EU, UN, and AU in considering the impact of resources and state interests on their collaboration in Chapter 16, Obert Hodzi analyzes the impact of China's engagement in Africa on the agency of African states and the renegotiation of EU-Africa relation in Chapter 17. Carolina Pavese and Guilherme Ziebell de Oliveira then explore triangular cooperation between the EU, Brazil, and Africa, highlighting areas of collaboration and challenges in Chapter 18, while Mark Langan and Sophia Price discuss the role of non-state actors in Africa-EU relations and their contributions to sustainable development in Chapter 19. Overall, Part IV highlights the shift in the global context from the United States and the Western hegemony to multipolarity, with the rise of China and other powers challenging the liberal international order with its implications on EU-Africa relations.

Asteris Huliaras and Sophia Kalantzakos introduce Part V, emphasizing the importance of cooperation between Africa and the EU in addressing global challenges. As the governance of maritime migration occupies an important place in EU-Africa relations, Ana Paula Moreira Rodriguez Leite, Thauan Santos, and Daniele Dionísio da Silva examine the challenges of migration across the Mediterranean Sea and its implications for EU-Africa cooperation with relevant available data on migration flows.⁴ In addition, specific issues including environment and climate change in Chapter 22 by Simon Lightfoot, the role of civil society in Chapter 23 by Uzoamaka Madu, the significance of agriculture and land in Chapter 24 by Edward

4 Another prominent study evaluating EU-Africa relations as cooperation on the migration axis is Belma Engin Güder and Ayşe Gülce Uygun. 2019. Afrika Birliği ve Akdeniz: Avrupa Birliği ile "Göç" Ekseninde İşbirliği. In *Akdeniz Jeopolitiği*, ed. Hasret Çomak and Burak Şakir Şeker. İstanbul, Nobel Yayınları: 903-911.

Lahiff, and gender in Chapter 25 by Laura Davis, are discussed as important headings in EU-Africa relations. Two important implications of this part should be mentioned. First, future cooperation should focus on sustainable development goals, natural resources management, and education. Second, the EU-Africa partnership should rationalize its relationship, enhance coordination, and include more national governments and civil society actors to avoid incoherence and improve effectiveness. Peace and security, along with investing in education and skills development, are likely to remain key priorities.

In conclusion, *The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations* is a groundbreaking work that offers a comprehensive and critical analysis of EU-Africa relations. It provides valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in understanding and enhancing this important relationship. By challenging hegemonic and Eurocentric narratives, this handbook contributes to building more inclusive and diverse scholarship on EU-Africa relations, paving the way for a more equitable and mutually beneficial partnership between the two regions. This handbook is clearly a key reference for scholars and professionals, offering a comprehensive and critical analysis of the theoretical perspectives, issues, and policies central to EU-Africa relations.