

# BOOK REVIEW

**Adekeye Adebajo. *The Eagle and the Springbok: Essays on Nigeria and South Africa*.** Cape Town: Jacana Media, 2017. 312 pp. Acknowledgements. Notes. Index. \$23.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-1928232476.

Among the many legacies of colonial rule, the establishment of territorial borders and the ascendance of modern state loom large. Two major states within the African continent—Nigeria and South Africa—have over time engaged in diverse forms of interactions, beginning with conflictual rivalry during the era of apartheid. This was followed by a time of cooperation and collaboration within the peacekeeping framework of the African Union, and finally expanding trade and economic relations. Adekeye Adebajo's book *The Eagle and the Springbok* examines the processes and dynamics of competition and cooperation between these two regional powers within the context of political rivalries, hegemony and leadership styles, and the development visions of both countries.

The thirteen chapters are arranged under four main themes: Rivalries, Hegemony, Rulers, and Visionaries. The first chapter, which describes politics as a "Shakespearean drama," examines four major epochs in Nigerian–South African relations. The first was from 1960 to 1992, during which Nigeria supported liberation movements including the ANC, which advocated total decolonization of the continent. From 1994 to 1998, Nigeria was under the heavy-handed military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha. The period from 1999 to 2007, when Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki were presidents of Nigeria and South Africa respectively, witnessed collaboration between the two African powers, especially in continental institution-building. Finally, as the author contends, 2008 to 2017 is the "decade of troubles," characterized by strained diplomatic relations over xenophobic attacks against Nigerians and other African migrants in South Africa and the vandalism of South African businesses in Nigeria.

The second section of the book, "Hegemony," examines the concepts of *Pax Nigeriana* and *Pax South Africana* to explain the attempts of both countries within their respective regions to assert leadership and control, especially through active involvement in regional peacekeeping operations as well as in the economic sphere through ECOWAS and SADC. Adebajo incisively describes Nigeria's role in restoring peace and stability in Liberia and Sierra Leone as well as its collaboration with the UN peacekeeping

operation in Darfur-Sudan. In the case of South Africa, the author discusses its role in peacekeeping initiatives especially in DR-Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic. In Chapter Six, Adebajo deploys the notion of "Every African is his brother's keeper" to demonstrate how both Nigerian and South African leaders in the post-apartheid era have "championed the implementation of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principles through AU, ECOWAS and SADC ..." (96).

In the third section of the book, "Rulers," Adebajo elaborates on the role of political leadership in shaping the domestic and foreign policy orientations of both Nigeria and South Africa. In Nigeria, he focuses on the autocratic regime of general Sani Abacha (whom he labels "*King Babu*" after Soyinka's satirical critique) and Olusegun Obasanjo (whom he calls "The Naked Emperor"). In South Africa, he dwells on the contributions of Nelson Mandela (the "Prophetic Peacemaker") and Thabo Mbeki (the "Renaissance Man"). Although Adebajo effectively describes the contributions, challenges, and failures of these leaders in their efforts to shape the trajectories of the political, social, economic, and cultural landscapes of their respective countries, his articulate framing of the irony in the case of Nelson Mandela is particularly revealing. Nelson Mandela (also known as *Madiba*) contributed enormously to the liberation of South Africa, but the establishment of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation to which the Rhodes Trust in Oxford contributed the sum of 10 million British pounds for scholarships, sports facilities, and child healthcare in South Africa (120) perverts the very principles that made Mandela an authentic hero and a model of democratic leadership. Thus, through the Mandela Rhodes Foundation, the ghost of Cecil Rhodes, the nineteenth-century architect of British imperialism and apartheid, became entwined with *Madiba*, the twentieth-century revolutionary, peacemaker and liberator of South Africa.

The fourth and final section of Adebajo's book focuses on "Visionaries," professional technocrats from Nigeria and South Africa who, in their divergent public service careers, have tried to articulate and reform national and continental institutions while enhancing socio-economic development. These visionaries include Adebayo Adedeji, who is credited with strengthening the UN Economic Commission for Africa and establishing the African Peer Mechanism to ensure democratic accountability and good governance in Africa. In his 2007 Country Review Report on South Africa, Adedeji warned about growing economic inequalities and the threat of xenophobic attacks against migrants, which the Mbeki regime dismissed as "simply not true." In May 2008, 62 foreigners were killed in South Africa; and between 2008 and 2015 a total of 350 migrants were killed in different cities across the country (201). Xenophobic attacks against fellow Africans reveal the failure of South Africa's ruling elites to educate the local populace about the collective sacrifices of Africans, especially from the Frontline States such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria, and Namibia, in the liberation struggles against apartheid. Another South African visionary leader whom Adebajo discusses is Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, a one-time Chair of

the AU Commission whose controversial tenure has been criticized for inept decision-making, lack of clear policy direction, and nepotism. In Nigeria, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the MIT-trained Minister for Finance in Nigeria under Obasanjo from 1999 to 2007, is credited with renegotiating the terms of Nigeria's USD30 billion debt with the Paris Club; setting up the Excess Crude Account (ECA) for saving oil wealth; increasing budgetary transparency; and liberalizing Nigeria's telecommunications sector (233).

Adebajo's comprehensive analyses of the roles of Nigeria and South Africa as major powers within their respective regions of influence and the African continent at large certainly deepen our understanding of the complex rivalries and cooperation between these two important post-colonial states. His detailed and incisive descriptions of the social, economic, political, and cultural landscapes as well as leadership profiles are commendable. However, a book of this magnitude should have examined the challenges confronted by both Nigeria and South Africa at the domestic level, specifically in the area of social provisioning to the working class. For example, Adebajo is silent on the flagrant environmental and human rights violations by the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta region and the complicity of oil companies such as Shell, Exxon-Mobil, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company. In the case of South Africa, he does not mention the tragic Marikana massacre of 2012 at the Lonmin platinum mine, where Cyril Ramaphosa, the current president of South Africa, has significant financial investment. The tripartite alliance between the state, national elites, and corporations in the exploitation of resources and the resulting implications for security, poverty, and violence in both Nigeria and South Africa should have been incorporated into this work. Nevertheless, Adebajo has provided us with an important book that will remain a major point of scholarly reference for understanding Nigerian-South African relations, in particular, and African politics in general.

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### For more reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:

- Grilli, Matteo. 2017. "Nkrumah, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism: The Bureau of African Affairs Collection." *History in Africa* 44: 295–307. doi:10.1017/hia.2016.15.
- Tsomondo, Micah S. 1975. "From Pan-Africanism to Socialism: The Modernization of an African Liberation Ideology." *Issue: Quarterly Journal of Opinion* 5 (4): 39–45. doi:10.1017/S1548450500000494.