



Season of Rains: Africa in the World

Stephen Ellis

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Africa is playing a more important role in world affairs than ever before. Yet the most common images of Africa in the American mind are ones of poverty, starvation, and violent conflict. But while these problems are real, that does not mean that Africa is a lost cause. Instead, as Stephen Ellis explains in *Season of Rains*, we need to rethink Africa's place in time if we are to understand it in all its complexity—it is a region where growth and prosperity coexist with failed states. This engaging, accessible book by one of the world's foremost researchers on Africa captures the broad spectrum of political, economic, and social foundations that make Africa what it is today.

Ellis is careful not to position himself in the futile debate between Afro-optimists and Afro-pessimists. The forty-nine diverse nations that make up sub-Saharan Africa are neither doomed to fail nor destined to succeed. As he assesses the challenges of African sovereignties, Ellis is not under the illusion that governments will suddenly become more benevolent and less corrupt. Yet, he sees great dynamism in recent technological and economic developments. The proliferation of mobile phones alone has helped to overcome previous gaps in infrastructure, African retail markets are becoming integrated, and banking is expanding. Businesses from China and emerging powers from the West are investing more than ever before in the still land-rich region, and globalization is offering possibilities of enormous economic change for the growing population of one billion Africans, actively engaged in charting the future of their continent.

This highly readable survey of the continent today offers an indispensable guide to how money, power, and development are shaping Africa's future.

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