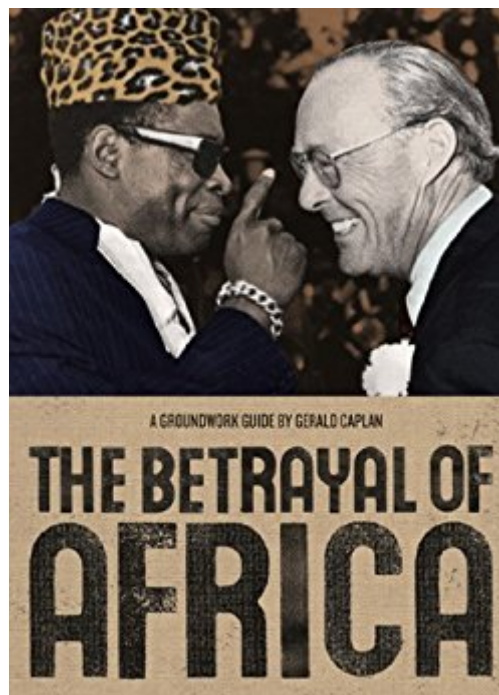




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The Betrayal Of Africa: A Groundwork Guide (Groundwork Guides)



Synopsis

"[The Groundwork Guides] are excellent books, mandatory for school libraries and the increasing body of young people prepared to take ownership of the situations and problems previous generations have left them." -- Globe and Mail Think Africa, and many people think of brutal war, endless famine, pervasive corruption, unworthy rulers, universal poverty, an AIDS epidemic out of control. As this book in the Groundwork Guides series shows, these characteristics are both true and a caricature at the same time. With the bold new presence of China in Africa, with an active and angry civil society demanding more from their governments, and with a new generation of leaders apparently committed to doing better in the future, a real possibility for positive change now exists. But for Africa to move forward, the citizens of rich countries must be aware of the false premises on which their own leaders deal with the continent. While Africa faces a daunting list of challenges, the vast majority of the continent's citizens live ordinary lives with the hopes and dreams that all of us share.

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Customer Reviews

Great copy, quick delivery. Thank you.

This book is short and the bulk of it is the author's opinions and there are not many facts (outside of some statistics) and maybe not even one detailed historical account. Reading the back cover, it states, "There is a widespread assumption that Africa is the problem and that we in the rich world are the solution." Unfortunately, this seems to be the view of the author as little is mentioned of the African's ability to self-govern as has been done for countless millenia before colonial interference. Instead, the book imposes the status quo view of the modern world that foreign aid for modernization and development would benefit the continent if it weren't for the corruption of the African leaders who are really henchmen of European and US governments. This view ignores 2 major facts. 1. The aid would not be possible if not for the plundering of African resources over the last 500 years at least. 2. The only purpose of European, American and Chinese investment and aid is to continue this legacy of plundering. I could have gotten past the narrowmindedness of the author if he had had at least presented more objective historical information.

Another book about "Africa" you may ask, and one of only 128 small pages? What can anybody say on such confined space about the continent of 53 states and at least 2000 languages and a multitude of cultures? Caplan, with more than 40 years of active involvement with Africa and a "passionate commitment" to the continent's development, will surprise you in all regards. His analysis, presented in clear and succinct language in well structured chapters, is informative, erudite without getting caught in details. In all regards this is a very worthwhile read and a useful book to have on the shelf for further reference. The "Betrayal of Africa" is published as a Groundwork Guide, a series intended to "provide an overview of key contemporary political and social issues... these books tackle pressing and sometimes controversial topics, offering both a lively introduction to the subject and a strong point of view." Caplan expertly lives up to the series' intentions. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of the continent's concerns, he presents a well reasoned analysis of the continuing challenges for the peoples of Africa. Discussing the "common predicament[s]" of this most diverse of continents, the author briefly outlines the historical context, characterized by colonialism and its lingering aftermath, its vulnerability to severe climatic variabilities, wide-spread poverty, and, last but not least, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Hand in hand with the exploitation of European masters went corruption and exploitation by local political and economic strongmen. The newly independent states were left without adequate infrastructures, professional sectors or functioning education

systems. These developments continued combined, later on, with often misguided or misappropriated international aid and investment funds. Caplan contends that these represent major obstacles to development and economic growth for the vast majority of Africans. Caplan reminds the reader that "far more of Africa's riches flow out to the West than are ploughed back in?". He provides examples and some statistics that are revealing in this regard. In the brief chapter on the recent engagement of China in Africa the author highlights some of the concerns of the Chinese approach and wonders if the Chinese investments will really contribute to economic advancements of Africans. Caplan concludes with a brief reflection on the future for Africa as he sees it. He places hope in the people themselves. Local communities and civil society organizations have been sidelined for too long both by governments and the international institutions, such as the World Bank. Yet, their active participation in shaping the democratic and economic future of African countries is one of the preconditions for giving Africa a serious chance in the global economic market. On the other hand, he warns against a simple application of the slogan "African solutions for African Problems". Africa will continue to be closely intertwined with the West and the rest of the world. Still, a new generation of African leaders is emerging, already influencing the way these partnership relationships result in positive change. Yet, his recommendations for the future remain somewhat diffuse. The Africa Timelines, the notes, the index and additional references are useful additions to round off this book as a good resource. [Friederike Knabe]

This is a book that does an excellent job at explaining why countries in Africa face the challenges that they do. The cover is really reflective of the book's overall argument, i.e. that both the West and Africans (particularly the "big men" - often dictators) are responsible. The book nicely examines the historical exploitation of Africa and highlights some of the present-day exploitation that is still ongoing. This is an excellent book to use as an introduction to African studies/history/politics as it gives a very good background, while also challenging some misconceptions about the continent. I'm an African history professor and this is a book I assign to my students at the beginning of my African history class. It's easy reading, clear, concise and enjoyable too. Highly recommend it to anyone who wants to know anything about Africa.

I've just finished reading this book and I am really disappointed. The author seems to appreciate only one side of the story and is so negative in his assessment that it physically hurts!!! Caplan also contradicts himself every second page. West is guilty of giving credits. West is guilty of not giving enough credits. West is guilty of intervening. West is guilty of not intervening. Chinese presence

is great. Chinese presence is terrible. NGO's are great for Africa. NGO's are terrible. And so on...Also as an academic he should stick to facts instead of feeding readers with his: "no data but surely", "hard to say but certainly" and so on. After reading this book you can seriously lose all hope for Africa. If you believe that solution is not FDI, international help, and liberalism then what is???

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