

Africa's Moment, by Jean-Michel Severino and Olivier Ray



Review by: Joy Stoddard

Severino is a former vice president of the World Bank and Ray works at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department for Policy Analysis.

Regarding Africa, Severino says, it is time to change our rear-view mirrors for telescopes. He describes an Africa of 2,000 languages and deep ethnic diversity, a land mass 2.5 times the size of the continental United States, and a population projection of 1 billion extra inhabitants between now and 2050, with a growing middle class and just as many obstacles as opportunities for a bright future. Although the book details Africa's challenges of geographism, structuralism, and culturalism, Severino urges us to toss past notions of Africa as tragedy – mired in poverty, violence and corruption, weighed down by the structural adjustment programs of the Bretton Woods institutions - and highlights rising country stars, vast natural resources, new markets attracting China and India, and cosmopolitan youth with a mind on shaping their own destiny.

Severino's position is that Africa is at its turning point, that the 21st century "will be the century of Africa". Having visited Morocco, Senegal and Ghana in June 2012, and Kenya in April 2010, I can see his points. Africa's Moment provides a unique perspective on Africa's past and its potential future.