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Book review: Dylematy polityki rozwojowej Unii Europejskiej wobec Afryki Subsaharyjskiej w latach 2000-2015 [Dilemmas in the development policy of the European Union towards Sub-Saharan Africa 2000-2015], by Filip Kaczmarek

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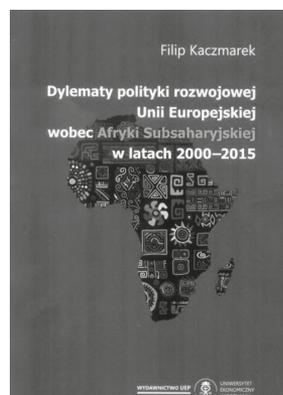
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Book review:

Dylematy polityki rozwojowej Unii Europejskiej wobec Afryki Subsaharyjskiej w latach 2000-2015 [Dilemmas in the development policy of the European Union towards Sub-Saharan Africa 2000-2015]

Reviewed by Ewa Latoszek



Dylematy polityki rozwojowej Unii Europejskiej wobec Afryki Subsaharyjskiej w latach 2000-2015 [Dilemmas in the development policy of the European Union towards Sub-Saharan Africa 2000-2015], by Filip Kaczmarek, Poznań: UEP, 2018, 324 pp., ISBN 9788374179591 (pbk)

Sustainable socio-economic growth and development is one of the most important political, social and economic challenges of contemporary world. Hence, development policy and cooperation constitute an important research area in the field of social sciences. In this context, the monograph by Filip Kaczmarek constitutes an interesting study updating our knowledge of the European Union's (EU) development policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. The monograph presents a politically and economically competent analysis of the main issues in EU development policy, implemented against a wide spectrum of social issues affecting developing countries, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa. Its value-added lies in the topicality of the issues raised and the inter-

disciplinary approach focusing on political and economic sciences. In Polish literature on the problems of developing countries, one would not find such complex scientific studies of aid and development policy which would meet the requirements of being up to date and substantively useful for the purpose of solving complex socio-economic problems of developing countries within the scope of their relations with developed countries. This is a particularly important aspect of the reviewed monograph, as each EU Member State, including Poland, is trying to conduct its own development policy while at the same time participating in shaping and implementing the development policy of the EU.

The author of the book reviewed here has accurately chosen the subject and focused his research on an important, yet difficult and exceptionally relevant issue. The complexity of conducted research, the combination of methodological approaches and perspectives used for the analysis, suggest that the monograph will fill a gap in the Polish literature on the researched subject. The importance of the research on this issue will inevitably increase. Apart from its scientific merits, the book shows important didactic potential.

Totalling 324 pages, the book consists of an Introduction, five chapters, conclusions and three comprehensive annexes. The latter present an overview of literature and the state of the research on development policy, a presentation of European Commission communications regarding issues important to Sub-Saharan Africa, and a presentation of European Commission communications containing strategies and programmes regarding developing countries, including Sub-Saharan Africa. Particular parts of the paper have been devoted, respectively, to: presenting the subject of the research, presenting hypotheses and research methods, literature and the state of research, as well as the structure of the paper in an expanded Introduction, discussing historical relations between the EU and Sub-Saharan Africa, the motivations behind providing development aid and global conditions affecting the European development policy, the EU development policy in the context of legal, political, economic and institutional basis, a presentation of the barriers in the development of Sub-Saharan Africa, the programming, implementation and results of the EU development policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa and a presentation of the perspectives of the EU development policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa, including an

analysis of challenges for the EU development policy and the position of the EU towards the new development agenda.

In the Introduction, the Author formulates the main objective of the monograph, which is “a comprehensive presentation and assessment of the EU development policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa in the years 2000-2015, including conclusions and recommendations”. The objectives of the book are: to present the origin of the EU’s involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa, to define the legal, institutional and political basis for the EU development policy conducted in the region, to establish the scope of the global conditions around the EU development policy and to identify the barriers and dilemmas in the development of Sub-Saharan Africa. Against this backdrop, the rest of the discussion follows.

In the first chapter, the Author presents a very concise genesis of the historical relationship between Africa and Europe, followed by an unfortunately superficial analysis of the origins of the EU’s involvement in Africa and the motivations for providing it with development aid. Chapter two presents the legal, political and institutional basis for the EU development policy. In my opinion, the chapter would greatly benefit from shortening the amount of space devoted to EU institutions which handle the EU development policy. This is already thoroughly described in literature. In chapter three, the author examines the political and economic barriers to the development of Sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, however, the author omitting such important issues as social, national and cultural diversity. Chapter four, devoted to programming, implementation and results of the EU development policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa, should be regarded as important from the perspective of research on development. The Author presents three stages of programming, demonstrating their individual specifics and architecture of financial instruments, as well as the conditionality of the aid itself and providing budgetary support. Furthermore, the author evaluates the results of the implementation of the EU’s development aid for Sub-Saharan Africa. Chapter five presents the perspectives for the EU development aid and the dilemmas it is expected to face.

The contents of the book have been supplied with a conclusion diagnosing the dilemmas of the EU development policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, the Author has formulated two groups of conclusions

and recommendations. The first one directly refers to the cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa and delineates certain general rules which it should be based upon in the nearest future, while the second group of conclusions and recommendations refers to the legal, institutional and financial foundations of the entire future EU development policy and its member states.

There is a certain sense of insufficiency in the theoretical aspect of the monograph. That is, it does not contain a fully developed theoretical part regarding issues it examines. The confusion results from the fact that the analysis of the theory of development has been placed in two separate places, i.e. in the expanded Introduction, in the point devoted to the overview of the literature and the state of the research, and in Annex 1, titled “The overview of literature and the state of the research”. It is therefore difficult to fathom how these two parts relate to each other and why the Author made the decision to divide his deliberations on theory into two parts.

One of the unquestionable flaws of the reviewed monograph is, among others, the omission of the issue of “absorbing” a considerable amount of the development aid resources by EU countries, or conducting a policy of conditionality, not always in accordance with the actual interest of the African countries – or even working in favour of opening the markets to goods from the EU instead of working in favour of actual benefits for African countries. It is regrettable that these aspects have not been included in the analysis, as this would have undoubtedly enriched the study and would have added great value to the monograph in question – both for the sake of science and practice. The Author’s relatively uncritical attitude towards researched issues causes the analysis in places insufficiently deepened and numerous issues are presented in a rather unilateral manner.

It should be stressed that the empirical research conducted by Filip Kaczmarek is of important ancillary character and inspire further research. The monograph is well structured. It addresses an important topic, largely underdiscussed in the Polish literature. Developing a common development policy is extremely difficult and regards its scope, the amount of funding and its distribution, specific projects and assessment of their effectiveness, as well as its beneficiaries, which includes all the countries belonging to the EU, including the new members of the EU. Thus, undertaking such topics is of importance for

this specific group of countries, as their financial contribution to the budget of the EU development policy may as well be allocated to helping the less developed countries in this part of Europe. The reviewed monograph brings forward this subject matter, and the experiences of Africa as a long-term beneficiary of aid constitute an excellent source of knowledge for EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe, providing a lot of material for reflection, especially in the context of current global challenges, including the migration crisis and the events of the recent years in this part of our continent.