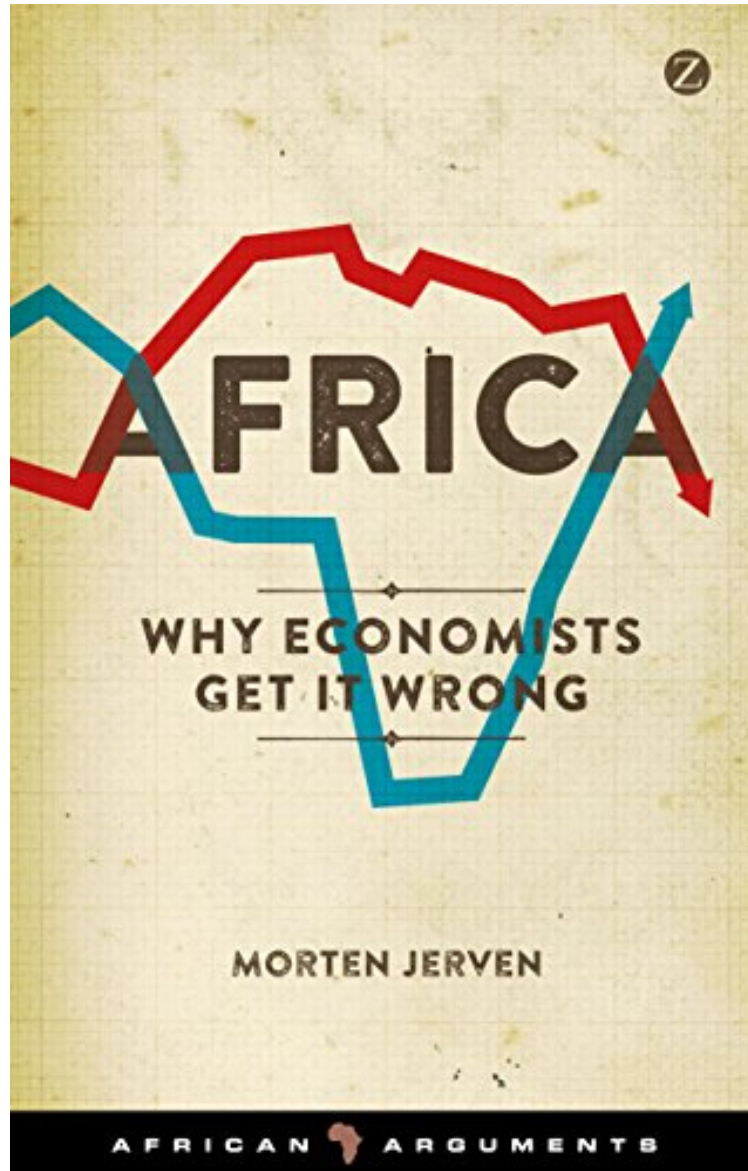


[Free pdf] Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong (African Arguments)

Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong (African Arguments)

Assistant Professor Morten Jerven
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Assistant Professor Morten Jerven : Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong (African Arguments) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong (African Arguments):

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. An insightful book on how African economic statistics have problems and how narratives built on them are dubious By sienAfrica : Why Economists Get it Wrong (2015) by Morten Jerven is a very interesting book on how economists have misused dubious statistics on Africa and erroneously

constructed a narrative on how African development has failed. Books on Africa such as Paul Collier's *The Bottom Billion* and William Easterly's *The Elusive Quest for Growth* are built on very shaky foundations according to Jerven. Jerven is an economic historian with a PhD from the LSE and wrote the highly acclaimed book *Wrong Numbers* that seems to cover much of the ground that this book does. Jerven describes how economic growth is misunderstood because good African statistics often start in 1960 and are not very strong and because low commodity prices and other factors, possibly HIV and some very poor governments led Africa to have low growth in the 1980s and the 1990s which was then declared as normal despite it effectively being two poor decades. The book also makes the point that if growth from 1960 to 1990 is divided into two 15 year sections Africa does fairly well in each, only huge growth in the 1975 to 1990 era by South and East Asia making Africa not look particularly good. It's curious here that for a book written in 2015 that the statistics stop in 1990. Jerven then looks at how poor statistics are compressed and combined to present a picture of poor growth in Africa in the pre-colonial era. This also includes some asides into how *The Economist* and other news magazines have declared Africa lost and then doing well in the space of two or three years. He also points out how a number of the explanations for growth successes may be post fact rationalizations. The idea that growth and wealth might bring in good institutions rather than the other way around is very interesting. The book also describes the big problems with modern African statistics in more detail. Due to low populations, low wealth and statistical tools designed to measure wealthy countries economies the accuracy of African statistics is very questionable. A number of African states have errors that are huge, in the order of 1/3 or more of the GDP per capita when comparing across different statistical agencies. This indicates huge inconsistencies and problems. Also rebasing is not done frequently enough and when it is done tends to have such a big effect that it overshadows actual economic changes. The book concludes that poor numbers and dubious explanations have combined to create poor economic studies of Africa. The differences within Africa and the relative lack of wealth may have caused economists to make considerable errors. Jerven asserts that there is no Bottom Billion and that development stories have been driven by narrative fallacies based on quicksand. It's a really interesting idea and even if wrong the book is definitely worth reading.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Jason Constantine
A great book
0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Extremely technical!
By A Customer
Extremely technical economic concepts and methods. Well Done!

A valuable corrective to the fraying narrative of [African] failure. Foreign Affairs
Not so long ago, Africa was being described as the hopeless continent. Recently, though, talk has turned to Africa rising, with enthusiastic voices exclaiming the potential for economic growth across many of its countries. What, then, is the truth behind Africa's growth, or lack of it? In this provocative book, Morten Jerven fundamentally reframes the debate, challenging mainstream accounts of African economic history. Whilst for the past two decades experts have focused on explaining why there has been a chronic failure of growth in Africa, Jerven shows that most African economies have been growing at a rapid pace since the mid nineties. In addition, African economies grew rapidly in the fifties, the sixties, and even into the seventies. Thus, African states were dismissed as incapable of development based largely on observations made during the 1980s and early 1990s. The result has been misguided analysis, and few practical lessons learned. This is an essential account of the real impact economic growth has had on Africa, and what it means for the continent's future.

"Excellent. . . . [Jerven's] points are elegantly argued and although he delves into extremely technical economic concepts and methods, *Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong* is readable and easy for a nonspecialist to understand. But specialists in particular must read Jerven, and take seriously his claims."