EU-Africa Relations:

Dealing with the Challenges of the Future

Asteris Huliaras

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Executive Summary

Relations between the European Union and Sub-Saharan Africa are deep and complex. The EU is by far the African continent's main trade partner and its main source of development assistance, while several all-encompassing agreements have created a sense of a common space that some commentators have defined as 'Eurafrica'. In recent years there has been extensive diplomatic activity. A variety of new agreements and ambitious declarations have created a growing sense of an ever closer and more balanced relationship. In particular, trade relations between Europe and Africa are in the process of being reformulated. However, the fact that the new trade agreements are still being finalised after years of frustration illustrates the challenges that the EU–Africa relationship is faced with. Moreover, the current financial crisis may be used to justify significant aid cutbacks; many EU Member States may not honour their official commitments to increase development aid to Africa. In addition, the growing presence of other global powers in Africa seems to undermine long-term good governance and human rights objectives. All this comes in a period during which the democratisation trend in Sub-Saharan Africa has stagnated: the increasing numbers of *coups d' etat* and rigged elections have contributed to a new pessimism. Finally, despite the progress made in giving the relationship a more institutionalised and at the same time more equitable foundation, in several important aspects EU–African relations remain surprisingly non-'Europeanised'. EU Member States show completely different levels of interest in Africa and sometimes follow conflicting policies. Even bilateral aid packages taken together are far more significant than Brussels' multilateral efforts. However, there are

grounds for optimism. In fact, after a long period of mistrust, there are indications that the asymmetrical interregional relationship has a real chance of becoming a true partnership.

Abbreviations

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific
AMIS	African Mission in Darfur
APF	African Peace Facility
AU	African Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EBA	Everything But Arms Initiative
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EDF	European Development Fund
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SADC	Southern African Development Community
WTO	World Trade Organisation

There is always something new out of Africa.
(Ancient Greek saying quoted by Aristotle,
De Animalibus Historia)

1 Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to critically review the policies of the European Union towards Africa, to consider some important future challenges for the interregional relationship and to present some useful policy recommendations. It should be noted from the very beginning that the term 'Africa' used in this research paper does not include North Africa, which is usually discussed in both academic and policy circles as part of the Mediterranean. But even this smaller non-Mediterranean 'Africa' is extremely diverse and its treatment as a single entity is full of analytical traps that can lead to patronising generalisations, resounding clichés, imprecision and untruths. This paper tries to avoid these traps by choosing to emphasise—where this is possible in a limited space—the deep differences between African countries and regions. However, some generalisations are unavoidable. The reader should always keep in mind that the continent's human, political and economic geography is in several respects far more diverse than Europe's.

Africa is often portrayed in the Western media as a land of pestilence, disease, war and calamity. In March 2000, *The Economist* magazine published a map of Africa on its cover, with the headline 'The Hopeless Continent'. Although many (especially Africans) expressed their anger, most observers agreed at that time that the title was not far from reality.

Much has changed since then. In many respects, Africa is no longer the 'hopeless continent', the poverty-ridden and war-prone 'black hole' of the world. Since the beginning of the new millennium and in many different and important ways, Africa has been transformed. Much of this transformation is indigenously driven. But it also reflects developments in the continent's external milieu, especially in relation to perceptions held and policies followed in Europe and the United States.

The first part of this paper examines four internal changes that prove beyond any doubt that this transformation is both extensive and deep. The second part analyses three external developments that also acted as forces of change for Africa's position in the world. The third part focuses on important changes in the EU–Africa relationship. These changes are evident at three levels: aid, trade and foreign and security policy. Finally, the fourth part examines some future challenges for the interregional relationship and makes a number of policy suggestions. The main argument is that the EU–Africa relationship has entered into the post-colonial era and has a strong chance of becoming a real—and not just a rhetorical—partnership.

2 The Internal Milieu

Africa's circumstances have changed as a result of four important developments: first, the end of several bloody civil wars that claimed millions of victims; second, a wave of democratisation that has promoted transparency and accountability; third, the introduction of a number of important policy initiatives that have led to a reform of continental and regional institutions; and fourth, a new dynamism in Africa's economic performance that has considerably increased the size of the continent's middle class. The following paragraphs examine each of these changes in turn.

First, Africa is more peaceful than ever before. In particular, within the last five years both the number of wars and their death tolls have significantly decreased. The year 2003 marked the end of three extremely bloody wars: the West African wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Central African wars in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (which have been characterised as 'Africa's First World War') and the civil war in Angola. Admittedly, the region of Darfur in Sudan continues to be the 'open sore' of the continent. And for almost two decades, Somalia remains the paradigm of a collapsed state. Low-scale conflicts in the Niger Delta, northern Uganda and eastern Congo continue to claim thousands of lives every year. The vast majority of Africans, however, now live in peaceful countries.

Second, African regimes have become more democratic and accountable. There was a democratisation wave in Africa immediately after the end of the Cold War, a wave that

proved both strong and sustainable. In the 1980s only 36 elections were held throughout the entire continent; the number climbed to 65 in the 1990s, and 41 elections took place in the five-year period from 2000 to 2005 (Sieff 2008, 186). It is true that recent electoral fiascos in Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe and some recent coups in Mauritania and Guinea somewhat tarnished this democratisation trend. Moreover, the frequent intimidation of voters and the significant human rights abuses have led some observers to argue that the democratisation trend has been halted (Collier 2008). Other observers have claimed that African democracies tend often to be superficial, 'illiberal' or 'shallow' without much respect for civil liberties and the rule of law. However, the extensive improvement is undeniable. According to Freedom House (2007), in 1977 only three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa could be categorised as 'free'. The comparable figure in 2007 was 22. The number of 'partly free' countries has also increased from 11 in 1977 to 16 in 2007, while the number of 'non-free' countries has shrunk from 25 to 15. In sharp contrast to the past, most African leaders now voluntarily leave office after the end of a constitutionally defined term or electoral defeat. As a result, a new generation of leaders has gradually replaced the 'Big Men' of the past. Most of these new leaders are educated in European and US educational institutions and 'are not stuck in the anti-colonial, anti-Western ideologies of the past; they are agile, pragmatic, clear thinking, and have no patience for corruption, inefficiency and ineptitude' (Sieff 2008, 192). Finally, an increasingly vibrant African civil society (journalists, students and intellectuals) ensures that these leaders will remain on the right track.

Third, within the last 15 years, Africa has undergone a degree of soul-searching that has led to significant changes

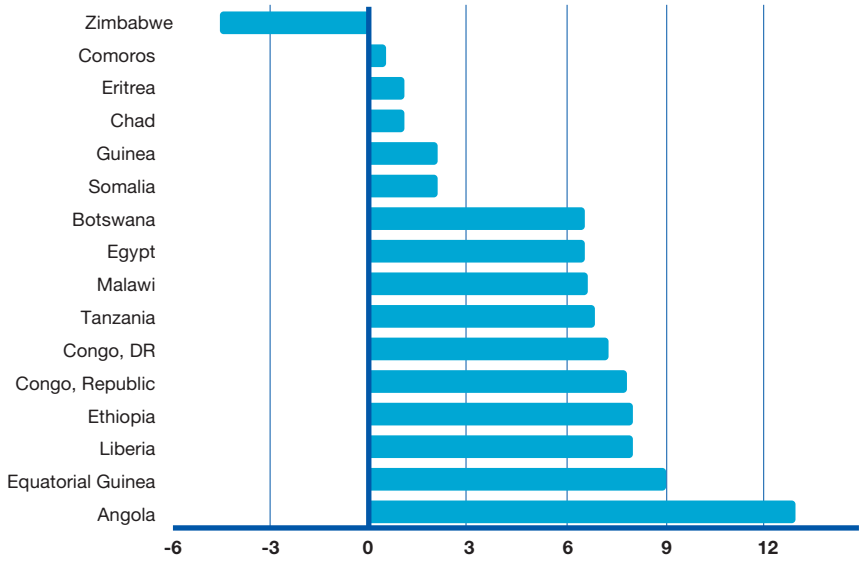
in the way it confronts the problems that have plagued it since decolonisation. The creation of the African Union (AU) in 2002 was a significant step forward in this process. The establishment of new structures like the AU Peace and Security Council, the Pan African Parliament, the African Court for Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court of Justice was widely perceived as evidence of a more proactive regionalism. Further, in contrast to the former Organisation of African Unity, the integration logic of the AU focused not only on governments, but also on members of parliaments, political parties, entrepreneurs and civil society actors, indicating a clear effort to promote democratic consultation and improve legitimacy. The creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the subsequent decision to integrate it into the AU cemented this change of mentality. NEPAD aims at setting standards of good governance and development. Its main instrument is the African Peer Review Mechanism in which laggard states are identified by a panel of fellow African leaders. Although less than half of the continent's countries have signed up to it, NEPAD could be considered a milestone in African politics because for the first time an initiative supported by African leaders questioned the decades-long norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. In the same vein, the African Union's Peace and Security Council undertook important initiatives to promote stability and democracy, resolve armed conflicts and calm electoral disputes. It decided to impose sanctions and even threatened military intervention. The first African large-scale peacekeeping mission was deployed in Darfur, Sudan, and AU forces were also sent to Somalia. At the same time, Africa's regional organisations have shown a greater willingness to play a leading role in peace and security operations: the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) intervened in Liberia and the Ivory Coast, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) deployed its forces in Lesotho.

Fourth, and most important, African economies are exhibiting an increasing dynamism. After more than two decades of stagnation, African countries' GDP increased within the 2004–08 period by an average of more than 5% per year (EC/OECD 2008; ECA 2009). Much of this growth was driven by higher prices for the continent's minerals, metals and energy resources. During the five years preceding the global economic downturn in 2008, fuelled by high international demand, the real prices for such commodities more than doubled (Taylor 2009 216). Since 2003, Angola alone had received over $50 billion annually from oil exports and Zambia, whose copper mines a decade earlier looked worthless, was exporting over $2 billion per year (Collier 2008). But, more impressively, economic development was not limited to oil, gas and mineral exporters. Many of Africa's non-mineral economies also grew, led by sectors such as tourism, telecommunications and banking. In part, this reflected better economic management. With the exception of Zimbabwe, macroeconomic policies have spectacularly improved throughout the continent. Almost all countries privatised inefficient state-owned enterprises, cut budget deficits and lifted restrictions on foreign investment. Inflation is now in single digits in most African countries, and tariffs have been significantly reduced. Better economic management has led to more investment, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows to the continent rose significantly: in 2007 more than $53 billion in FDI flowed into Africa, up from $9 billion in 2000. Estimates for 2008 show a new increase to $72 billion (UNCTAD 2008). Although much of this investment is

concentrated in 'extractive industries' like oil, natural gas or metals rather than in infrastructure, the change is impressive. According to several studies, investments in the continent have the highest rate of return among all developing regions. In part, these high returns reflect compensation for high risks, but they also demonstrate that Africa is back on the map of global business. Investment brings growth, jobs and wealth. The African middle class is increasing. About 300 million Africans are now middle-income consumers with an average monthly income of $200 (Sieff 2008, 186). In the enthusiastic words of one journalist, 'since the millennium, parts of Africa had begun to look more first world than third world. Images of a starving, suffering, war-torn continent were being edged aside by new pictures of shiny office blocks and rush-hour traffic jams' (Dowden 2009).

Table 1: Top and bottom performers in Africa in 2008 (%annual growth)



Source: UN-DESA, November (2008a)

3 The External Milieu

Separate from the above indigenous developments, but also partly linked to them, certain external factors have increased Africa's geopolitical importance. The end of the Cold War had a negative impact on the geostrategic importance of Africa. For almost a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Africa was a marginal region for international politics. Embassies and military bases were closed and aid declined. But within the last seven years, global interest in Africa has increased considerably. The following factors explain this development: oil, terrorism and China.

3.1 Oil

Africa's growing capacity to lower the United States' dependency on the Middle East for crude oil has given US policy makers a reason to regard the continent as a national security challenge. Oil constitutes over three-quarters of US purchases from Africa (LeMelle 2008). In particular West Africa (Nigeria, Angola, Congo Republic, Gabon, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea) has become a growing source of American oil imports. In May 2001, the Bush administration's national energy policy predicted that West Africa would become 'one of the fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market' (Siverstein 2001). This prediction was accurate. Africa now supplies the United States with roughly the same amount of oil as does the Middle East (Authers 2007) and it is expected that by 2015 the United States market will get about 25% of its oil from Africa (LeMelle 2008). Angola, which has now replaced Nigeria as the largest oil producer in Sub-Saharan Africa, became a priority for US Africa policy: America ignored Angola's democratic deficit (its government has delayed presidential

elections for 18 years) and has invested a lot of diplomatic effort to improve relations with a country that was never one of its traditional allies (Economist 2009). The decision to increase US oil imports from Africa was deliberate, and clearly connected to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—an event that led US national security planners to ask for the diversification of the supplies of oil away from the Middle East.

3.2 Terrorism

Terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya in 1998 and in Mombasa, Kenya in 2002 have highlighted the threat of terrorism in Africa. Of particular concern to US policy makers is the challenge of 'ungoverned spaces' where there is an absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control. Africa's failed states are considered potential 'safe havens' for terrorists. US planners note that radical Islamic groups are gaining strength in countries bordering the Sahara (the Sahel region) and in the Horn of Africa (especially Somalia). Terrorism and other African security problems are expected to expand at the transnational level and spread beyond the continent itself. South American drug cartels are reported increasingly to use West African countries to traffic cocaine to European markets. A quarter of all the cocaine consumed in Europe today is trafficked through the region (Sieff 2008, 187). Moreover, Africa's coastlines, in particular along the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean but also along the Gulf of Guinea, are seen as highly favourable to various illegal activities: the inability of African states to adequately police these waters has enabled criminal elements to smuggle people and weapons and dump hazardous waste, opening maritime commerce to the threat of piracy and

sabotage (Ploch 2009, 14–15). In eastern Africa, off the coast of Somalia, pirates regularly seize ships and demand ransoms of tens of millions of dollars. Not unexpectedly, and aiming to counter these threats, the Bush administration deployed hundreds of advisers to the continent and created a new Africa Command that became operational in December 2008 (Ploch 2009). It remains to be seen if the new Obama administration will change course.

3.3 China

There is a growing Chinese presence in Africa that has led some observers to conclude that the period when Europe and the US were the foreign powers that dominated Africa's external relations is rapidly drawing to a close. China has become the biggest importer of African raw materials—oil, uranium, cobalt and timber—and hundreds of Chinese companies have invested billions of dollars in the continent (Huliaras & Magliveras 2008). In 2000 China overtook Britain as Africa's third-largest trade partner (Bezlova 2009). By 2007 it overtook second-placed France, and in 2008 China overtook the United States as Africa's top trade partner. Chinese–African trade reached $107 billion in 2008, a tenfold increase over a decade earlier. The change was so spectacular that it led one observer to conclude that for the first time since the slave trade there was a reorientation of African commercial relations from the 'Global North' to the 'Global South' (Clapham 2005, 275). Moreover, Chinese companies became major players on the continent, investing in the construction sector, telecommunications, manufacturing and even space hardware (Huliaras & Magliveras 2008, 401). In March 2008, Nigeria was offered up to $50 billion by Sinosure, China's export credit guarantee agency, to assist in the funding of projects over the next

three years (Kohnert 2008, 19). This was the largest overseas commitment by China to date. It intended to encourage Chinese investment in Nigeria, especially in the railway and power sectors, in exchange for licenses in oil exploration blocks. By 2006, China had implemented some 800 projects throughout Africa with an estimated total cost of $5.75 billion (Kohnert 2008, 19). Finally, Beijing has become a major donor to Africa, providing large amounts for Africa's development. In 2002 China gave only $1.8 billion in development aid, but in the following years these funds increased spectacularly . Chinese President Hu has promised to provide an extra $5 billion in loans and double aid by 2009 (Kohnert 2008, 19). However, China's progress in Africa has not been without problems. Its growing presence in Zambia, for example, has met with internal resistance; and Beijing has been accused of supporting authoritarian and repressive regimes (like Omar Bashir's in Sudan and Robert Mugabe's in Zimbabwe) through direct military aid and favours. Moreover, several African governments have already used their new-found friendship with China to resist Western pressure for democratisation and economic reform.

4 EU–African Relations

All the factors mentioned in the previous sections have considerably influenced EU–African relations: new security challenges have affected the relevant European agenda; the

growing Chinese presence has attracted the attention of European decision makers; the particularly high growth rates of some African economies have mobilised the European business community; and the growing wave of democratisation has created new expectations for a deeper and more mature interregional relationship.

Indeed, the relationship between Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa has a long history that goes back to colonialism and far pre-dates the institutionalised framework for cooperation that the two regions have built over the past three decades. The Yaoundé Convention was the first agreement between the European Economic Community and 18 African ex-colonies. Signed in 1963 and revised in 1969 it regulated the interregional economic relations for a decade. It was replaced by the Lomé Conventions. The first Lomé Convention was signed in 1975 between the nine EC Member States and the 46 developing countries that became formally known as the ACP (Africa, Carribbean and Pacific) group. Revised every five years (from Lomé I to Lomé IVb) the Convention provided duty-free access for most agricultural and mineral exports of ACP countries (with some important exceptions) to the European market while the EC committed significant resources for aid and investment to the ACP group. Today EU–Africa relations are framed by Lome's successor, the Cotonou Agreement of 2000 (Babarinde & Faber 2005), which covers a 20-year period beginning in 2003. The term 'partnership' features strongly in the agreement: it appears 52 times within the text and a further nine times in the annexes. However, its principles and instruments—that is, political dialogue on trade, peace building, conflict prevention and resolution, and so on—have increasingly collided with most recent initiatives, especially the current

negotiations on the new Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (see below). In fact, the Cotonou Agreement 'faces the risk of being made increasingly redundant' (Kohnert 2008, 10).

In 2000 the first EU–Africa Summit was held in Cairo with the participation of all 53 African countries and the then 15 EU Member States. In December 2005, the EU adopted a new strategy entitled 'The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership'. Its purpose was to create a comprehensive, integrated and long-term framework for EU–African policy, a 'grand strategy' for Europe's relations with the continent. The overarching goal of the strategy was to support Africa's efforts to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and to make Europe's partnership with Africa more efficient. The strategy was built around four pillars: good governance, peace and security, trade and health, and education and a safe environment. Although the document was more a holistic political statement than a blueprint of clear guidance for day-to-day relations, it marked the beginning of a number of important EU initiatives. The second EU–Africa Summit, which took place in Lisbon in December 2007 after a long gestation period made tortuous by disagreement over Zimbabwe's participation, resulted in a renewed dynamism in interregional cooperation. The Summit adopted a 'Joint EU–Africa Strategy' which claimed that Africa and Europe should 'move away from a traditional relationship and forge a real partnership characterised by equality and the pursuit of common objectives'. The new strategy was agreed together with an Action Plan for the 2008–10 period. The plan defined concrete partnership objectives, outcomes, actors, priorities, activities and financial resources. It also established eight partnerships:

1. The EU–Africa Partnership on Peace and Security
2. The EU–Africa Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights
3. The EU–Africa Partnership on Trade and Regional Integration
4. The EU–Africa Partnership on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
5. The EU–Africa Partnership on Energy
6. The EU–Africa Partnership on Climate Change
7. The EU–Africa Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment
8. The EU-Africa Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space

The Cotonou Agreement, the EU–Africa summits, the strategy papers and the Action Plan mark a significant widening of the scope of the EU–Africa relationship. During the Cold War, trade and development assistance were the two aspects of the partnership. In fact, foreign aid was the European Union's only external policy instrument (Gilli 1994, Lister 1997). Today, the EU's Africa policy is composed of three different institutional bodies with different decision-making rules—development aid, trade and foreign policy (CFSP/ESDP)—and covers an extensive number of different agendas that range from development to climate change, from investment to migration and from fishing to peace and security. The next sections examine each of these institutional bodies in turn.

4.1 Aid

The proportion of Europe's gross bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Sub-Saharan Africa has been reduced in the post-Cold War era, a clear indication of

the shift of EU strategic interests to Central and Eastern Europe and to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. As Table 2 shows, the percentage of EC aid to Sub-Saharan Africa declined from 65.5% in 1984–85 to 43.4% in 2004–05. In 1970–74, 13 of the top 15 recipients of EU aid were Sub-Saharan African countries; by 1996–97 this figure had fallen to just two, the remainder being East European and Mediterranean countries (Smith 2004, 62). In addition, wider changes in North–South relations have influenced the EU–Africa development cooperation relationship. Lomé IV, which was signed in 1989, marked the growing impact of neoliberal thinking. One of the major changes introduced was the use of aid for structural adjustment. A direct consequence of this new policy was 'a reduction in the amount of EU aid targeted for long-term development funding' (Hurt 2004, 159–160).

Table 2: Percentage of EC aid allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa

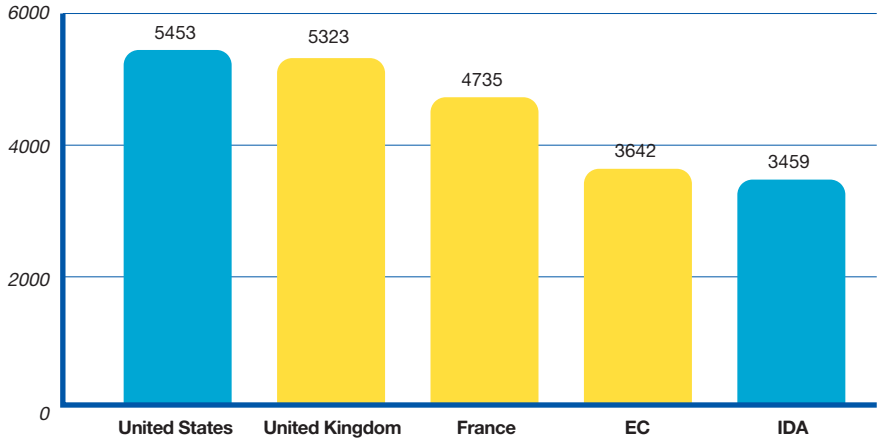
1984–85	1994–95	2004–05
65.5%	47.9%	43.4%

Source: Development Assistance Committee, OECD 2007

However, aid policies started to change by the turn of the century. The shift—a U-turn, in fact—was first felt in bilateral policies. The United Kingdom decided to unilaterally untie aid, reallocated its aid to low-income countries, and (re)made Africa the central priority of its development cooperation policy. More EU countries announced changes in a similar direction. This development was partly a result of a reappearance of a 'fighting poverty' debate. The 2000 UN Millennium Summit helped to bring foreign aid to the centre of the international politics agenda. NGO coalitions, like the 'Make Poverty History' campaign,

with the support of rock stars like Bono and Hollywood celebrities like Angelina Jolie, succeeded in persuading governments to promise more aid. On several occasions the EU expressed its full commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. EU Member States agreed to commit 0.51% of individual Gross National Income to their foreign aid budgets by 2010 and 0.7% by 2015. More importantly, they promised to allocate 50% of the increase to Sub-Saharan Africa (European Council 2005).

Table 3: Top Donors to Sub-Saharan Africa 2006 ($ bn)



Source: EC/OECD 2008.

The European Development Fund (EDF) was and still is the main instrument for providing Community aid to Africa (plus the Caribbean and Pacific states, as well as overseas countries and territories). The EDF is not included in the overall EU budget. It is funded by the Member States according to a specific contribution key, subject to its own financial rules and managed by a specific committee. The

Commission has repeatedly asked for an inclusion of the EDF in the EU budget. However, the European Council decided in December 2005 that the EDF should continue to work as before and finance the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries for the 2008–13 period. The EDF consists of grants managed by the Commission and risk capital and concessional loans managed by the European Investment Bank (EIB). Since the Cotonou Agreement, the Stabex and Sysmin instruments, designed to help the agricultural and mineral sectors, have been replaced by the FLEX mechanism, which aims to remedy the adverse effects of instability of export earnings. The Cotonou Agreement has also streamlined the EDF and introduced 'rolling programming' in order to give the system greater flexibility and the ACP countries greater responsibility. As a result, the EDF's budget has increased spectacularly. The 9th EDF (2000–07) had a pool of about €13.8 billion but the 10th EDF (2008–13) was allocated €22.682 billion. The EIB also contributed €2 billion from its own resources for the same period. Moreover, this aid is complemented by the bilateral aid of the EU's Member States. EU (i.e. the EC plus Member States) Official Development Assistance (ODA) accounts for 60% of total aid flows to Africa (Tull 2008, 8). From this amount, the EC contributes less than a quarter and the Member States more than three quarters (see below).

A significant change in the EC's aid policy towards Africa was the introduction of new and strengthened political conditions. The Cotonou Agreement focused specifically on democratisation, human rights and good governance. Although all these issues had crept into earlier agreements, they were now inserted with great vigour as 'essential elements'. Under a non-execution clause, violations of these principles could lead to the partial or full suspension of

cooperation or aid. The Cotonou Agreement (Article 96) stipulated that if there is no progress on human rights issues within 75 days of formal consultations, 'appropriate measures', including sanctions, could be implemented. However, even with these new instruments, the 'good governance' clauses were used rather selectively and often contradicted the strong rhetoric found in policy statements. In many ways, implementation has been weak and inconsistent. Since 2000, Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement has been used against the Ivory Coast (from 2000 until 2002), Liberia since 2001, Zimbabwe since 2002, Togo and Guinea since 2004, and Mauritania since 2005 (Gegout 2009, 404). However, alongside these negative measures, the EU has developed democratisation programmes and the EDF has supported human rights projects throughout Africa and assisted the AU in developing its own capacity to monitor and address governance issues (Magliveras & Naldi 2009, 136).

Many African leaders considered the EU's emphasis on democracy and human rights as an 'obsession', a kind of 'neocolonial conditionality' that ignored particular local conditions. In spite of the values enshrined in the AU's founding documents, many African leaders still feel uncomfortable dealing with states that are recalcitrant when it comes to human rights issues. With the exception of unconstitutional changes of power, African continental and regional organisations continue to avoid using sanctions as an instrument. Moreover, many African officials complain about 'European double standards', claiming that there is no similar discussion on human rights violations in Europe, especially against African migrants who often face extraordinary rendition (Kotsopoulos & Sidiropoulos 2007, 3).

The EU democratisation agenda in Africa is more reactive than proactive. The amount of aid channelled into the development and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and the adherence to human rights and fundamental freedoms is limited. Some commentators argue that the EU should adopt a more positive strategy that focuses on institution-building, especially as it relates to strengthening the deliberative, legislative and executive capacity of the continent's national and transnational institutions. However, such a strategy—if it is to be effective—requires vast amounts of aid that are currently unavailable.

4.2 Trade

For decades African countries enjoyed a number of non-reciprocal advantages when trading with the European Union. However, this privileged status did not prevent the relative decline of the EU's African trade: between 1985 and 2006, Sub-Saharan Africa's share in the EU's foreign trade declined from 3.2% to less than 1.4% (Tull 2008, 4). British trade with the region fell from 3.7% in 1985 to 2.3% in 2006, while the region's share of French trade fell even more sharply from 5.2% in 1985 to 2% in 2006 (Tull 2008, 4). Although this decline was a result of Africa's poor economic performance in relation to other regions, it was also a clear indication that trade preferences had failed to improve Africa's export performance. Several academics and policy makers called for a re-examination of the EU–Africa trade relationship. On top of the failure of trade preferences, there was a feeling within both the Commission and the EU's African partners that the Lomé Convention 'had become overly complex and that this was harming its effectiveness' (Hurt 2004, 163). The emergence and evolution of the Washington Consensus and the

neoliberal reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank further affected the EU–Africa trade relationship. Moreover, the new EU cooperation agreements with Latin American and Asian countries meant that trade with the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) group of countries was no longer 'special' (Smith 2004, 62). Finally, and more importantly, it became clear that the trade arrangements between the EU and Africa clearly contravened World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

The WTO allows for trade preferences only when they are either reciprocal (as they are within the EU) or when they are provided to developing countries on a non-discriminatory basis (as with the so-called Generalised System of Preferences). But the Lomé Agreements with the ACP group of countries did not fall under either definition. In 1994 a GATT panel ruled that the Lomé regime, with its non-reciprocal elements and discriminatory nature, was incompatible with the multilateral trading system (Flint 2009, 83) and required a waiver. The WTO waiver that allowed this state of affairs was set for 31 December 2007.

There was an exception to the rule, however: the ACP's Least Developed Countries (LDCs)—33 countries in Africa with a three-year average Gross National Income per capita of less than $750. According to the WTO, LDCs were entitled to continue non-reciprocal access to EU markets. Thus, the EU decided to differentiate between LDCs and non-LDCs. The LDCs became part of the 'Everything But Arms' (EBA) initiative which allows for tariff-free access to European markets of almost all LDC goods. By the end of 2009, the EU will have eliminated 919 tariff lines (Flint 2009, 87).

Responding to a changing international climate, in early 1998 the EU Member States adopted a proposal to replace the existing non-reciprocal trade preferences with Regional Economic Partnership Agreements and gave the Commission a mandate to negotiate. The Commission argued that the new arrangements would result in more trade (Gibb 2006, 472) and, in effect, reduce poverty. Several critics argued that the EU was simply trying to improve its own potential for exports to Africa, thus giving itself an advantage over other developed countries (Raffer 2001). The European Commission responded by arguing that the motivation was not commercial interests since the EU 'exports very little to the ACP and EU investors show too little interest in building up companies in these markets' (European Commission 2008).

Much emphasis was given to regional economic integration among African countries (Farrell 2005, 266). Indeed, this emphasis on regionalism was based on WTO rules which, although they do not allow for non-reciprocal agreements, do allow for agreements between economic blocs (Flint 2009, 85). The EU announced that it would negotiate with particular groups of ACP states: five in Sub-Saharan Africa and one in the Caribbean (see Map 1). The negotiations began formally in 2002 with an official deadline of the end of 2007—when the WTO waiver was to expire.

From the very beginning, there were many critics of the new EU policy, and their voices gradually became louder. Many academics and a great number of transnational development NGOs argued that the EPAs would have serious negative consequences for African countries at several levels. First, they claimed that African states would lose important revenues from import duties. Some predicted

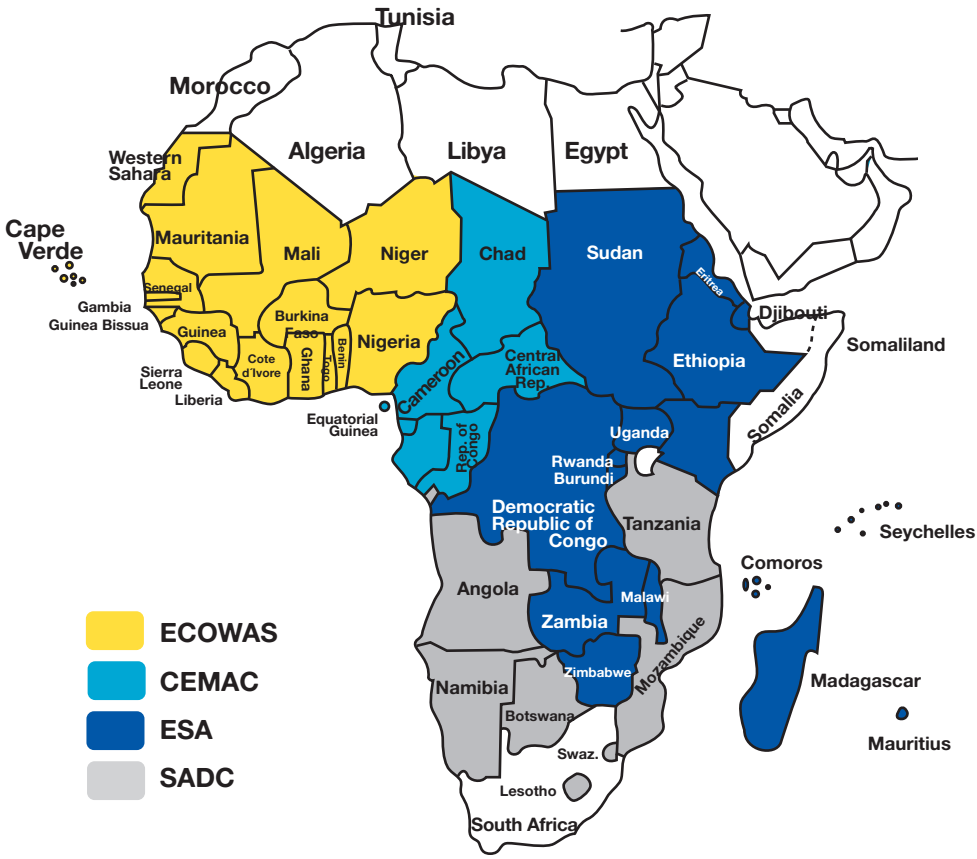
a decrease in government revenues of 10–30% (McQueen 1999, 228). Others even argued that these negative revenue effects could be underestimated 'when trade-diversion effects are taken into account' (Goodison 2007, 149). Second, and more importantly, many observers claimed that African producers would not be able to compete in the international markets. Some studies claimed that the de-industrialisation effects of EPAs would be most acute in West Africa (Goodison 2007, 149). The requirement for immediate liberalisation, concluded one pessimistic observer, would prevent African countries 'from extending protection to domestic infant industries against foreign competition, [would] mak[e] it more difficult to maintain public services under national ownership, and [would] restrict the opportunity to pursue industrial diversification strategies as part of a comprehensive program for economic development' (Farrell 2005, 279). Third, some critics argued that the new regionalisation imposed by EPAs would cancel out decades of regional integration efforts in Africa (See Map 1). Although these critics recognised that existing sub-regional organisations on the continent have overlapping memberships[1] and limited complementarity, 'the approach taken by the European Commission to the EPA negotiations is likely to exacerbate a situation that is already inchoate and fragmented' (Farrell 2005, 269). As each African region contains a mix of LDCs and non-LDCs, the implementation of the EPAs would necessitate strict control over intraregional trade movements that may not be easily enforceable (Hurt 2004, 166). Some have even accused the EU of using 'divide-and-conquer' tactics by redesigning the

[1] Of the 53 countries in Africa, only 6 are members of just one regional organisation; 26 are members of two groupings; 20 simultaneously belong to three; and one (the Democratic Republic of Congo) is a member of four (Flint 2009, 86).

map of regional integration in Africa. One author concluded that the EPAs were 'poorly-thought' and 'ill-defined' (Watts 1998, 52–53). Others claimed that the agreements were another example of the asymmetrical nature of EU–African relations, a relationship of two groups with 'very unequal political and economic strength' (Farrell 2005, 280). The new EPA framework, they noted, was more a diktat than a true partnership (Flint 2009, 79). However, we think that it is almost impossible at present to draw any firm conclusions from this about the economic effects of EPAs. It is even more premature to argue that the new trade policy of the European Union towards Africa is undermining the declared aims of its development aid policy (the reduction of poverty) as some have claimed (Olsen 2008). Much will depend not only on the outcome of the current negotiations but also on the future implementation of any kind of agreement (Meyn 2008).

Map 1: EPA Zones in Africa

Southern African Development Community (SADC)	Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania
Central Africa (CEMAC)	Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Republic of), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe
West Africa (ECOWAS)	Benin, Burkina faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Biisau, Côte d´Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
Eastern and Sothern African (ESA)	Burundi, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic of), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe



Source: Actionaid 2004.

It seems that the current economic crisis is adversely affecting the EPAs' negotiations. South Africa, the region's strongest economy, is facing a serious recession with obvious negative consequences for manufacturing and exports, and it is particularly critical of the EPAs' process. In October 2008, the country's Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies accused the European Union of being 'too focused on commercial interests […] partly in relation to the competition with China and India' (Roelf 2008). Davies

criticised the Union for 'undermining efforts to forge a […] fairer deal with South Africa' (Roelf 2009). South Africa, like Angola and Namibia, also feels that EPAs will adversely affect regional economic integration.

Although the deadline of 31 December 2007 elapsed, of the former ACP group only the Caribbean Region signed a full EPA with the EU. The Commission tried to accelerate negotiations by entering into bilateral talks with some African countries, thus moving away from the initial regional approach. In total, 20 ACP countries agreed to sign interim agreements that met WTO rules, while 43 countries decided, for different reasons, not to sign any agreement at all (Flint 2009, 89). Indeed, the majority of these are LDCs that are not under the threat of sanctions, since their access to EU markets is already secured through the Everything But Arms initiative. Nigeria, Gabon and the Republic of Congo have abandoned the process altogether, and South Africa decided not to sign an interim agreement (Flint 2009, 90). At the moment, non-LDCs remain subject to the basic Generalised System of Preferences regime that is applied to all third countries.

Thus, the whole process has created much tension. A declaration of the ACP Council of Ministers accused the European Commission of 'enormous pressure' that runs 'contrary to the spirit of the ACP–EU partnership' (Flint 2009, 90). There is much truth in this claim. Articles 37.5 and 37.6 of the Cotonou Agreement make it clear that EPAs will only be negotiated with countries which 'consider themselves in a position to do so' and that the EU will examine 'all alternative possibilities' (Flint 2009, 89). However, both the negative reactions of several African governments and the signing of interim agreements acted

as incentives for a rethink of the process. Some observers argued that Africa should not be forced to liberalise abruptly; instead it should be offered a gradual transition of 'perhaps two decades within which firms could adjust production and governments could adjust revenues' (Nicolaïdis and Collier 2008). This is already happening. Under the terms of the interim agreements African countries have excluded many products from any liberalisation at all and will liberalise other tariffs over a 10- to 15-year period (European Commission 2008, 1). For example, the EU and Ghana agreed to exclude all chicken products from liberalisation so there will be no change at all in the tariffs Ghana uses to protect its poultry sector (European Commission 2008, 1). Several other African countries that signed interim EPAs were free to exclude a wide range of sensitive goods and sectors from any kind of liberalisation.

This gradual transition will definitely help in reducing the yearly burden of the significant adjustment costs associated with the EPAs. These adjustment costs include, among others, the loss of tariff revenues; the restructuring of domestic sectors; the harmonisation of policies with neighbours, and so on. The Commonwealth Secretariat has estimated the adjustment costs at a minimum of $ 11.7 billion for all ACP countries (Bilal & Rampa 2006). The European Commission, though claiming that it 'is ready to assist with fiscal reform and adjustment to help cushion any net fiscal losses' (European Commission 2008), has refused to offer a new adjustment fund and argued that the costs will be covered by the 10th EDF. But since there is little new aid money in the EDF's budget, some analysts fear that the adjustment costs will have to be met at the expense of health and education projects (Flint 2009, 86).

Of course the main issue is that the European Union should offer improved market access to African countries. This access is not adequately provided by the current scheme, the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative. In fact, the EBA only includes the least developed countries while the region's most dynamic economies—like Ghana and Kenya—are being excluded. Moreover, several studies have shown that the EBA's impact on development has been very modest (Faber & Orbie 2007). Some observers have even argued that the EBA is a 'problematic arrangement' that has failed to achieve its declared aims: its Rules of Origin (RoO), introduced to prevent re-export of products from non-African states, 'are too complicated and restrictive to have a tangible impact on growth in Africa' (Kohnert 2008, 10).

From one point of view, the EU's commitment to free trade with Africa is at best partial. Focusing on tariffs, the EU refuses to recognise that its agricultural subsidies are highly distorting EU–African trade, despite the fact 'that its own reports on the cereals regime reveal that in the absence of direct aid payments, most EU cereal farmers would reduce their arable farming by at least 50%' (Goodison 2007, 143). According to some estimates, EU cotton subsidies alone account for up to 38% of annual income losses of cotton farmers in Western and Central Africa (Gillson et al. 2004). Recently the British economist, Nicholas Stern, has noted that while the average European cow is subsidised by about $2.50 per day, 75% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population live on less than $2.00 a day.

In sum, all developments described in this section show that the 'special relationship' in trade relations that characterised EU–African relations for over three decades is over. For the EU, Africa is no longer special, but one trading region among many.

4.3 Foreign and Security Policy

Until the early 1990s, attempts to develop a common EU foreign policy remained weak and uncoordinated. The Maastricht treaty introduced a new element of European foreign policy-making—the 'joint actions'. The first out-of-area joint action took place in Africa, with the deployment of an EU election observer mission in South Africa (1994). It was one of the first opportunities 'for the new Union to express its global role' (Holland 1997, 174). However, a few days later, the EU's response to the Rwandan genocide was rhetorical and weak (Hurt 2004, 168–169). It was only in 1996 that the Union dispatched a special envoy, Aldo Ajello, to the Great Lakes region.

Although France intervened more than 30 times in post-colonial Africa, the EU as a bloc has until recently been unable or unwilling to get involved in African conflict situations. However, policy debacles and extremely bloody conflicts like Rwanda (1994) and Zaire (1997) gradually forced several Member States to re-evaluate their previous positions on military interventions. The development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) gave a new impetus to a variety of joint actions.

In June 2003, the EU Council of Ministers decided to deploy EU military forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Faria 2004, 20–30; Olsen 2004; Olsen 2008, 163). This was the first time that the EU sent troops outside Europe. The mission was promoted by France, 'eager for a European show of strength and unity in the wake of the divisive clash over the Iraq war' (Chivvis 2007, 28). Operation Artemis, as it was called, had as its main objective the

stabilisation of the security conditions in the conflict-ridden Ituri province and its capital Bunia. Soldiers numbering 1,850 were rapidly deployed without using NATO facilities under the Berlin Plus Agreement. France acted as the 'framework nation' for the operation, providing most of the troops and the mission's commander. Operation Artemis was considered reasonably successful, effectively improving the security situation and allowing the return of refugees before handing over control to UN troops as planned (Olsen 2004, 432). Although Bunia did not become a 'weapons-free town' as was originally intended, weapons did become 'invisible' (Chivvis 2007, 28). It is also worth noting that the European success in bringing calm to Bunia did not only result from superior force but also from European pressure on local leaders to negotiate their differences (Chivvis 2007, 28).

A few months later, the General Affairs Council, responding to a request of the African Union, created a Peace Facility for Africa (APF) with a budget of €250 million (Faria 2004, 36; Olsen 2008, 163). The APF would be funded by resources from the European Development Fund (EDF) and would aim to cover some of the costs incurred by African peacekeeping forces such as the cost of transporting troops, soldiers' living expenses and the development of other capabilities. This money, however, could not be used to cover direct military and arms expenditure. In October 2006, the APF supported the African Union's mission in Darfur (AMIS) by providing equipment and logistics, planning and technical assistance, military observers, training for African troops, strategic transportation and civilian police officers.

In December 2004, the European Council decided to deploy a European police mission in the DRC. This was the first EU civilian crisis management operation on the

continent. Two years later, during the DRC election campaign and with a Security Council mandate to stay through the second round of elections three months later, the EU deployed 1,100 soldiers in and around Kinshasa. Now Germany was in command, providing roughly one-third of the troops (Chivvis 2007, 33). Another third was provided by France while 18 other EU Member States plus Turkey provided soldiers and other staff (Chivvis 2007, 33). A larger support contingent was available 'over the horizon' in neighbouring Gabon (Howorth 2007, 238–239; Olsen 2008, 164). This operation was also successful: although there were reports of intimidation and clashes among the various political parties, the elections went smoothly (Chivvis 2007, 33). Twenty-five million Congolese voters took part in the poll at an estimated cost of more than $400 million, much of it covered by the EU.

The third European Union mission to Africa and the EU's most ambitious military operation to date took place in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) in February 2008. The idea surfaced in June 2007 after a failed attempt by the French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, to establish a 'humanitarian corridor' through Chad to Darfur (IISS 2008a, 251). Authorised by a UN Security Council Resolution, the EU force deployed 3,700 soldiers. France contributed 2,000, Ireland 450, Poland 400, Austria 210, Sweden 200, Romania and Belgium 120 each, Spain 80, the Netherlands 60, Finland 40 and Slovenia 15; however, the United Kingdom and Germany were absent (IISS 2008). The mission was designed to complement the UN–AU force in Darfur, Sudan, and aimed to protect the almost 500,000 refugees in eastern Chad, facilitate aid delivery and provide security for UN staff (IISS 2008). In March 2009, following a well established pattern, the European peacekeepers handed over their

operations to a United Nations force (BBC 2009). This highly politically sensitive mission (due to previous French military interventions in Chad) has been characterised as very successful. Some commentators claimed that it could be considered 'as a model for bridging operations deployed quickly ahead of full-scale peacekeeping' (IISS 2009b, 285).

The three European military missions in Africa are particularly important because:

1. They provide excellent examples of successful EU–UN cooperation.
2. They show the significance of the ESDP.
3. They prove that the EU is able to plan its own military operations without resorting to NATO support (as was the case in all ESDP deployments in the Balkans) (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009, 796).

The alternative would be for individual Member States to undertake independent military operations, as the British did in Sierra Leone or the French in the Ivory Coast. Undoubtedly, an independent mission 'would not have the same legitimacy as the EU mission' (Chivvis 2007, 35). However, some commentators, focusing on the fact that all EU interventions 'were initiated by France', argued that Paris simply used the EU to maintain strong links with Francophone African states and avoid the charge of neo-colonialism. Further, they claimed that France wanted to demonstrate EU capabilities without NATO in order to show the United States that the EU was an independent actor capable of solving problems by deploying its own military force (Gegout 2009, 407–408). These commentators argued that most EU states remained reluctant to send troops to Africa, and that they only decided to do so under French

pressure and because all three missions were 'low risk, limited in space and time and uncontroversial', the EU having been 'invited by African countries under a UN mandate' (Gegout 2009, 411). However, this realist view of EU policies seems to ignore that all these missions were part of a larger EU involvement in conflict resolution to Africa that cannot be explained by French pressure alone.

It is indeed true that France had 'long been an obstacle to the EU's further involvement in African security issues' (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009, 800). It is also true that since France decided to 'Europeanise' its Africa policy, all these ESDP missions became possible. However, other big EU states also changed their policies on EU military missions—and not as a result of French pressure. The British followed a path similar to that of the French, opting for a 'Europeanisation' of military operations, and Germany's position has evolved significantly from initial reluctance to increasing readiness to contribute to short ESDP missions (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009, 800–801). Moreover, long before these policies, the EU had shown an active interest in African security, devoting considerable resources for African peacekeeping and exerting pressure on Africa's continental, regional and sub-regional organisations to undertake more responsibilities in conflict resolution. Recognising that there is a need for an integrated approach to conflict prevention, the EU has made a series of appointments in Africa, including special representatives for the Great Lakes region (since 1996), for Sudan (since 2005), for the Africa Union (since 2007) and for African peacekeeping capabilities (since 2008) (Gegout 2009, 405). Although all these appointments were made on an ad hoc basis and cannot be considered a systematic 'diplomaticisation' of the EU's presence in Africa (Bagoyoko and Gibert 2009, 795), they were a clear

indication of an increasing interest to mediate in conflict situations. Finally, the EU has consistently claimed that development and security issues are strongly interrelated (see below). In several instances the Brussels institutions closely cooperated with the United States, especially in fighting naval piracy off the coast of Somalia. In December 2008, the EU launched its first naval mission, Operation Atalanta. Its main objective was to combat Somali piracy, which had become a serious issue in 2008, and escort the UN's World Food Programme shipments (IISS 2009b, 277). The EU NAVFOR Somalia, in cooperation with the International Maritime Bureau, NATO and other naval forces (China, Russia, Japan, South Korea and Iran) patrolled a 'corridor' for merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden to protect them from pirate attacks. Run from a UK headquarters at Northwood, outside London, in early 2009 the EU force comprised four warships from France, Germany, Greece and the United Kingdom, supported by two maritime patrol aircraft from France and Spain (IISS 2009). Soon Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden sent units and the force grew, by April 2009, to 10 ships (IISS 2009). This was a significant initiative that showed that EU commitment to Africa was deeper than some sceptical observers assumed, and far from simply a 'cover' for French 'neo-colonial' interventions.

Indeed it is true that the EU approach towards conflict in Africa is still inconsistent. The EU has been virtually absent from conflicts in Somalia and northern Uganda (Gegout 2009, 411); however, it has intervened directly or indirectly in the most recent bloody conflicts in Africa—the wars in the DRC and in Sudan—and these interventions have shown a new commitment that goes beyond narrow national interests. Moreover, this activity has seemed to be sustained. The very latest ESDP mission in Africa, EU

Security Sector Reform-Guinea Bissau, provides advice and assistance on the security sector, largely drawing from the experience in the DRC (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009, 797).

5 The Dynamics of the EU–Africa Partnership

Since the turn of the century, Africa is back on the world geopolitical map. The growing awareness of the transnational character of relatively new security challenges (terrorism, failed states and internal and regional wars) has increased Africa's strategic importance. Moreover, China's dynamic inroads into Africa have attracted the interest of Western policy makers (Tull 2008, 8). The continent is becoming more and more significant for the EU's foreign policy agenda. The EU now claims that it is interested in building a 'real partnership' with the continent. We have very clear signs that the EU is moving from a policy *for* Africa to a policy *with* Africa.

Although much has been written on the Chinese 'invasion' in Africa, Europe is still Africa's most important trading partner and donor and it could be reasonably argued that it will remain so in the foreseeable future. The EU has sought to engage China in a dialogue on Africa; however, the success of this dialogue has been very limited and differences remain fundamental. The final communiqué of the 9th EU–China

Summit in Helsinki (September 2006) shows this clearly: the European Union 'reaffirmed its attachment to the principles of good governance and human rights' and China 'emphasised the upholding of the […] principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs'.

Probably the main question that should be answered is whether Europeans have a clear sense about their interests and objectives in Africa. As one observer argues, 'comprehending European Africa policies requires to take the identity and institutional developments of the European Union seriously' (Tull 2008, 12). The EU's Africa initiatives may tell us more about the international ambitions of the Union than its objectives in Africa per se. Although it sounds paradoxical, from one point of view, European Union policies towards Africa are more a function of internal institutional dynamics and international ambitions than of specific goals in Africa itself (Tull 2008, 12). 'Africa policy,' concluded the French Africanist Jean Francois Bayart, 'serves as a way of creating a united Europe on the cheap' (2004, 454). From a reading of all the strategy papers and the agreements it seems that a clear sense about European interests and objectives in Africa is still lacking, and a clear strategy for how relations between the two regions should look in the future is still missing.

It is still unclear how the signing of the EPAs will affect the EU–Africa relationship. Despite all the 'big talk', to a large extent the EU's African economic policies continue to be incoherent and contradictory. EU agricultural subsidies continue to distort bilateral trade and undermine efforts to combat poverty. The goal of opening access to African markets seems able to undermine the goal of eradicating poverty. The meagre sums ('cash for access') that the EU pays to western African governments to in fact pillage fish

stocks along the western African coast deprive tens of thousands of families of their livelihoods and in turn add to migration pressure (Ilnyckyj 2007). The particularly high financial burden for supporting the EU naval force off the Somali coast could be used far more efficiently in rebuilding this shattered country. Furthermore, while the EU considers African regional organisations to be key players in the African security architecture, through the negotiation of the EPAs it is redesigning the regional map of Africa (Bagayoko and Gilbert 2009, 794). And in the end the EPAs, by exacerbating livelihood insecurity, may create or increase social tensions and conflict (Bagayoko and Gilbert 2009, 795). Indeed, the lack of coherence in the EU's African policies is an extremely complex problem. It is not a unique problem, however; to a large extent it replicates similar problems evident in all contemporary nation states.

Despite the military interventions, the EU continues to consider itself a 'soft' or even 'moral' power and this does not only affect the way it sees its role in Africa but also influences the ways its actions on the continent contribute to its standing on the international stage. Aiming to establishing a more effective foreign policy, the European Union has tried to coordinate its different policies (especially CFSP/ESDP and development aid) and to make them consistent with each other. Much progress has been recorded. Compared to past European policies, the EU's African policy today is far less weak and inconsistent. This is, of course, partly a result of reforms within the European Union and especially of the European Commission's ability to set the agenda and influence policies.

Until recently, most studies of EU–African development cooperation saw the Member States, specifically France and

the United Kingdom, as the leading actors in shaping EU–African development cooperation, whereas the European Commission was generally considered a relatively marginal player (Grilli, 1993; Lister, 1997; Cosgrove-Sacks, 1999, 2001; Brown, 2002; Holland, 2002; Babarinde and Faber, 2005). However, some recent research has shown that the European Commission is playing an important leadership role in the EU's development agenda, but its leadership is contingent upon a number of factors: the presence of an institutional entrepreneur, internal cohesiveness and the astute use of a repertoire of tactics. These studies have shown that the European Commission can alter the institutional *status quo* (Carbone 2007, 2). In particular the lack of clear decision making procedures for cross-pillar issues helps the Commission to present policy problems as subject to pillar I procedures. This is being done by 'framing' the discussion, interpreting problems, and defining their causes and implications (Sicurelli 2008, 219). By framing development and security issues as closely interlinked, the Commission 'has the opportunity to extend its sphere of action, entering the competence area of the Council' (Sicurelli 2008, 219). The Commission has claimed that the establishment of the CFSP and the ESDP made it absolutely necessary to implement the Union's different policy instruments in a coordinated, coherent and consistent way. The Commission's 'EU Strategy for Africa' has tried to offer a basic framework for coordination by emphasising the close connection between conflict prevention and development. According to the document, 'Without peace, there can be no lasting development' (Africa Strategy 2005, 10), and 'peace and security are therefore the first essential prerequisites for sustainable development' (p. 26). The conclusion is extremely clear: the EU has to 'set up a more comprehensive […] approach complementing these

Community instruments through CFSP/ESDP approaches. A common EU policy is therefore needed' (p. 71).

Gradually the Commission has replaced the Council in managing funds for peacekeeping-related activities. As we have seen, by giving the African Peace Facility the 'label of development intervention, the Commission has increased its powers over peacekeeping' (Sicurelli 2008, 228; Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009, 802–803) and succeeded in transferring from the second to the first pillar part of the competences for African security. Thus, by framing the discussion and emphasising the links between development and security, the Commission has been able to exploit the gaps in the EU pillar structure and affirm its competence on security issues. This process, whereby the Commission is gaining influence in the EU's Africa policy, is likely to continue. The Treaty of Lisbon has tried to tackle the problems related to policy incoherence and has extended qualified majority voting to fields with external implications, such as external border control, asylum and migration (Sicurelli 2008, 231). These changes will further increase the supranational dimension of EU foreign policy—especially with regard to Africa.

However, despite the increasing ability of the Commission to exploit the gaps in the EU pillar structure, the Council remains a powerful actor in determining the EU's Africa policy. That policy has gradually become more coherent not only because of the increasing role of the Commission but also—and probably more importantly—because of the conflation of views and interests of the three big powers: France, Germany and the United Kingdom (Olsen 2004, 434). The agreement of these powers is probably the major precondition for a strong, coherent and consistent EU Africa policy. Very few of the other Member States rank

developments in Africa as highly as these three in their foreign policy agendas. For all of the new Member States and some of the older ones, Africa is almost non-existent in their list of external priorities. This situation has led to totally different priorities being given to Africa among the six-month rotating Presidencies (Huliaras & Magliveras 2008, 411). The changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and the creation of a European Council president—a beefed-up 'high representative' who will chair meetings of EU foreign ministers—and a new foreign service (External Action Service) may prevent further competition and friction losses between the Council and the Commission. It may also increase the coherence of the EU's Africa policy, especially since the programming units of both the Commission Directorate General for Development (DG DEV) and of the EuropeAid Cooperation Office (AIDCO) will be transferred to that service. Particularly in the case of the EU's Africa policy, this may turn out to help streamline the policy process. However, it is probably too early to make any predictions.

The global financial turmoil has belatedly affected Africa. Revising initial optimistic estimates, the World Bank claimed that African economies would grow by an average of only 3% in 2009. Others are even more pessimistic, arguing that growth may fall below the rate of population increase (IISS 2009b, 265). South Africa, the continent's biggest economy, is confronting a serious recession; Nigeria's vibrant stock market has collapsed; and Kenya's lucrative tourism industry is being hit hard. The slump in commodity prices is adversely affecting export performance and is draining foreign investment flows. Ambitious projects are being delayed or cancelled, and the International Monetary Fund estimates that FDI will drop about 18% from around $30 billion in 2008 (Nixon 2009). The Democratic Republic of Congo, which expected $2.4 billion in

foreign investment this year, now anticipates about $600 million (Nixon 2009). Other external sources of financing are drying up: for example, Africans in Europe and North America are cutting support for their families at home. In Kenya alone, such remittances declined by 27% in early 2009 (Dowden 2009). And foreign assistance may remain stagnant: there are indications that several donors may not meet their previous commitments for increased aid. These realities threaten to reverse a decade of economic growth and advancement on the continent. There is a real prospect that, in absolute terms, the number of African poor will increase and many countries may face unrest in poor urban areas. Nevertheless, there are also signs of hope.

First, statistics about Africa often tend to be misleading. The negative consequences of the global economic crisis may be overstated. Most African countries have massive undisclosed incomes from their black economies that are not reported in official statistics. Also a large range of jobs on the continent—from the street hawker to the roadside bicycle repairman or the bushmeat trader—are not recorded or measured. Informality, lack of regulation and high flexibility in the African labour markets mean much less unemployment than outsiders assume (Taylor 2009, 220). Even though governments are now under severe pressure to cut back health and education budgets, which will definitely adversely affect the well-being of state employees, the crisis in everyday life may not be so negatively felt. Family support systems, intangible social networks and small-scale business ingenuity are protective nets for the average African family. And even at the governmental level there is also a bright side: the tighter availability of credit and a reduction in aid flows may lead governments to react by collecting taxes more efficiently.

Second, despite the global economic crisis, China is not retreating from the continent. On the contrary: there are signs that it is increasing its presence and strengthening its economic ties. Although the global economic downturn has led some Chinese companies to close operations in Africa and has prompted a rethink of some multi-billion dollar deals, Chinese–African trade continues to increase by a spectacular 30% per year, and there are clear indications that the Chinese policy of strategic expansion to the continent remains alive: 'We will continue to have a vigorous aid program here, and Chinese companies will continue to invest as much as possible in Africa because it is a win-win solution,' the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said in mid-January 2009 (quoted in Thomson 2009). Chinese firms have expressed interest in taking over the top Zambian cobalt producer, signed a $2.6 billion contract to develop Liberia's iron ore deposit, and are pushing ahead with strategic energy sector investments and infrastructure. Beijing has offered Angola $5 billion in oil-backed loans (Thomson 2009). The global credit crisis is likely to push Africa closer to China and other Asian powers. This may further undermine the ability of Western countries, and particularly of the European Union, to influence economic policies and political developments on the continent. In the words of one journalist, 'with the near collapse of the Western model in its own heartland, any minister or diplomat who lectures African governments over exchange controls, import restrictions or bank regulation will be laughed out of town' (Dowden 2009).

6 Policy Proposals

The next paragraphs present some suggestions for changes in strategy, as well as a number of initiatives that may help to strengthen the current relationship.

1. The global economic crisis offers a chance for EU–African relations. The crisis is forcing the great powers to re-examine the global institutional architecture. The impetus to reform international institutions partly reflects the realisation on the part of governments, rich and poor, that several important challenges—like climate change, the forces of globalisation, the scramble for resources, state failure, mass terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and so on—often need global solutions, not national or regional ones (The Economist 2008). In parallel, new economic winners like China and India demand more say. Both of these factors present an opportunity for some leading African countries such as Nigeria and South Africa to increase their demands for a reform of key international institutions like the UN Security Council and the International Monetary Fund, and for the inclusion of more voices from the South. But this is also an opportunity for the EU's Africa policy. The European Union should help Africa—from some of the continent's powerful states to its more successful transnational institutions—to increase its presence in leading international bodies. If such a policy were introduced it would give real meaning to the EU–Africa 'strategic partnership' and would open a variety of new avenues for mutually beneficial cooperation. Above all, it would greatly help to cover the trust gap between the two sides, especially from the point of view of the relationship's weaker side—Africa.

2. After five decades of 'common policies' and 'joint actions', there is still a need for the 'Europeanisation' of the EU's Africa policy, and especially of the Union's development policy. In many respects the bilateral assistance policies of the Union's Member States towards Africa continue to be far more important than the policies of the Brussels institutions. In 2004, the European Commission and the EU's Member States provided $14,062 million, or about 55%, of all aid to Sub-Saharan Africa. This is an impressive percentage of all donor efforts. Both of these statistics are widely circulated.
However, a closer look shows that the EC provided only a fifth of this amount, or only 11% of all donor assistance (EC/OECD 2006, 21). The World Bank (through IDA, its soft loan instrument) provided about 15%, the United States 14% and France (an EU Member State), through its bilateral programme, 12% (EC/OECD 2006, 21). By 2006, the EC was the fourth most generous donor to Sub-Saharan Africa—behind the US, the United Kingdom and France (EC/OECD 2008). The EU's Africa aid policy is far less 'Europeanised' than most people realise. There is an urgent need to get all Member States and the Commission to work with common objectives, country strategies and a unified delivery mechanism.
Moreover, it would also be wise 'to advise the new EU members against establishing more bilateral development bureaucracies and to recommend instead a more European and multilateral cooperation' (Koeberle 2007, 138–139). Probably the problem is not different interests or diverse views among Member States but lack of political will. If this political will exists, then the 'Europeanisation' of the Union's development policy can be a great success story, a model for the EU's foreign relations.

3. There is a clear need for greater coherence among the EU's different pillars. Despite the growth of the Commission's power and its growing ability to influence decisions in the second pillar—or, from another point of view, exactly because of that—competition among the EU's different institutions is increasing rather than decreasing. The EU should try far more seriously to improve cross-pillar coordination and, especially, should improve the coordination between its CFSP/ESDP activities and its development aid policy. Again, reconciling institutional differences and normalising incoherent objectives and strategies is a matter of political will. The new institutional architecture introduced by the Lisbon Treaty seems to be an important step, but political will is absolutely essential for the efficient implementation of the legal changes.

4. The EU's peacekeeping missions in Africa form an important success story that should be continued. In particular there should be a more consistent effort to develop a 'security triangle' of close cooperation among the European Union, the United Nations and the African Union (Pabst 2008). Such a security triangle could become a global model of trans-multilateral cooperation between international and regional organisations. It could simultaneously solve three challenges: the AU's lack of resources, the UN's peacekeeping overstretch, and the EU's search for more influence and visibility in world affairs. Indeed this triangle is already apparent in all EU military missions on the continent. What is needed is a more cohesive and integrated approach that includes permanent consultation mechanisms; common strategies, principles and norms; and the assignment of roles according to specific challenges and existing capabilities (Pabst 2008, 41).

5. The European Union should not try to limit the growing Chinese influence in Africa. The Member States should lower their high expectations that they can, through a 'triangular dialogue', alter Beijing's stance towards authoritarian regimes (Wissenbach 2009). China's policy of non-interference in African affairs will most probably change by itself as the Chinese presence on the continent increases and the cost of its support for repressive regimes becomes more apparent (Huliaras & Magliveras 2008, 418–419). The real question is not whether China will move from a position of a rising power to one of an established and responsible power, but how long it will take to move from one stance to the other. If Chinese policy towards Sudan is an indication, then the answer to the question is: very soon (Huliaras & Magliveras 2008, 419). The EU should not see China as a competitor but as a partner. It would probably even be fruitful for the Europeans (both at the bilateral and at the multilateral level) to copy the Chinese methods, offering to African partners packages of infrastructure financed by aid and resource extraction. This strategy is extremely simple and effective since 'revenues are very speedily converted into domestic public investment without the need for great deal of honesty or competence in public administrations' (Collier 2008, 207).

6. The European Union should focus on its visibility and on a strengthening of its private and civil society ties with the continent. First, the European Union should increase its visibility in Africa. The Union dedicates significant resources to promoting economic growth and development, representative government, health and human rights in Africa, but this commitment goes largely unappreciated, in part because of its low profile. A 2003 public opinion survey found that only 42% of the Africans interviewed had ever

heard of the European Union, far less than the United Nations (52%) and the World Bank (50%). More importantly, informed Africans thought that the EU performed rather well, but less well than the United Nations and the World Bank (6.2 out of 10 for the EU compared to 6.79 and 6.78 for the UN and the WB) (Afrobarometer 2003, 2). This situation hurts the relationship, impedes the negotiations of the new EPAs and undermines African support for the EU. Lengthy trips by the new President of the Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as well as by the Commissioners of External Relations, Trade and Development and Humanitarian Aid to discuss shared interests would also help.

Second, the Union should make more systematic efforts to mobilise European capital to invest in Africa. At the moment there is very little detailed information on investment opportunities on the continent. As Collier (2008, 208) argues, this lack of data exists simply because the cost of collecting it is unusually high: 'each country is a distinct opportunity and needs to be understood as such, yet most African economies are so tiny that the cost of acquiring the information is high relative to the opportunity'. As a result, 'few African countries have internationally rated public debt, so portfolio investments automatically fall below "investment grade" quality'. Thus it is absolutely necessary that the European Commission should finance a number of studies on investment information in Africa, cooperate closely with Euro-African Chambers of Commerce and organise Euro-African forums and support meetings that bring businesspeople from both continents together.

7 Conclusions

The EU–African relationship continues to be characterised by a deplorable asymmetry of power and influence. Therefore, many observers claim that speaking of a 'partnership' is a misnomer. However, almost all interstate and interregional relationships are asymmetrical: some states or regions give more than they get in return. Asymmetrical relationships can become partnerships if the interests, benefits and costs are clear to both partners (Schieder 2008, 24). In that sense, the problem of the EU's relationship with Africa is far more philosophical and cultural than political or economic. For decades Europeans have had difficulties in seeing the African countries as 'normal' or 'ordinary'. They tend to relegate the continent to 'the classic categories of barbarism or to the Newspeak of "development", "the elimination of poverty" or "humanitarian aid"' (Bayart 2004, 458). This view has made 'politics impossible' (Bayart 2004, 458). From this point of view, the EU's Africa policy has succeeded in initiating a process of 'normalisation' of the interregional relationship. The end of non-reciprocity in trade relations and the new Economic Partnership Agreements, the growing cooperation between the Commission and Africa's continental, regional and sub-regional institutions, the support of Africa's peacekeeping missions, and the common views on the promotion of democracy and human rights clearly show that for the first time the European Union does not regard Africa as inferior, barbaric or different, and is now considering the relationship to be 'normal' and 'ordinary'. If this approach is sustained, then the current, vastly asymmetrical, relationship will resemble more and more a real partnership and not just a rhetorical one.

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Asteris Huliaras

Asteris Huliaras is Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Peloponnese, Greece. He has participated in many United Nations and European Union missions in several African countries (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe). He has advised the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs on development cooperation and African policy issues and has implemented research projects under the aegis of the European Council, the European Commission and the Government of Canada.

His articles have been published in *African Affairs, European Foreign Affairs Review, Geopolitics, International Journal, The Journal of Contemporary African Studies, The Journal of Modern African Studies, The Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans, Orbis, The South African Journal of International Affairs* and *Survival* as well as in several edited volumes published in the UK and the US. He has won (with Nikolaos Tzifakis) the Marcel Cadieux Distinguished Writing Award (2007). He is also the author or editor of eight books (including *International Development Assistance to the Balkans 1991–2007* [2008] and Geographical Myths of International Politics [2004]). He is currently working on an edited volume, entitled *Changing the World? Celebrity Activists in World Politics*, due to be published by Intellect in 2010. His research interests include African politics, development assistance and the international relations of developing countries.

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