

# EUROPE AND AFRICA

## THE LONG SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

edited by **Giovanni Carbone**

introduction by **Paolo Magri**



ISPI



# **EUROPE AND AFRICA**

## **THE LONG SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND**

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edited by Giovanni Carbone

**ISPI**

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## Acronyms

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|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ACP     | Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (group of countries)             |
| AEDIB   | African-European Digital Innovation Bridge                |
| AfCFTA  | African Continental Free Trade Area                       |
| ALSOC   | Ambassadorial Level Senior Officials Committee            |
| AMU     | Arab Maghreb Union  |
| AMV     | African Mining Vision                                     |
| APF     | African Peace Facility                                    |
| APSA    | African Peace and Security Architecture                   |
| ASEAN   | Association of Southeast Asian Nations                    |
| ASF     | African Standby Force                                     |
| AU      | African Union   |
| AU GRAP | African Union's Green Resilience and Recovery Action Plan |
| AU MSC  | AU Military Staff Committee                               |
| AUC     | African Union Commission                                  |
| BASIC   | Brazil, South Africa, India and China (G4)                |
| CARICOM | Caribbean Community                                       |
| CCRT    | Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust                  |
| CENSAD  | Community of Sahel-Saharan States                         |
| CEWS    | Continental Early Warnings Systems                        |
| CFSP    | Common Foreign and Security Policy                        |
| COMESA  | Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa             |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CONOPS | Concept of Operations  |
| COPS   | Peace and Security Committee (EU)  |
| COVAX  | COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access  |
| COVID  | Corona Virus Disease   |
| CPA    | Cotonou Partnership Agreement  |
| CSDP   | Common Security and Defence Policy                                       |
| CSSDCA | Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa |
| CwA    | Compact with Africa  |
| D4D    | Digital for Development  |
| DCAF   | Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces                 |
| DCI    | Development Cooperation Instrument                                       |
| DDA    | Doha Development Agenda  |
| DG     | Directorate General  |
| DRC    | Democratic Republic of Congo   |
| DSSI   | Debt Service Suspension Initiative                                       |
| EAC    | East African Community   |
| EBA    | Everything but Arms  |
| EBRD   | European Bank for Reconstruction and Development                         |
| ECCAS  | Economic Community of Central African States                             |
| ECDPM  | European Centre for Development Policy Management                        |
| ECOMIB | Ecowas Mission in Guinea-Bissau  |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States                                |
| EDF    | European Development Fund  |
| EEAS   | European External Action Service   |
| EEC    | European Economic Community  |
| EFAD   | European Financial Architecture for Development                          |
| EIB    | European Investment Bank   |
| ENI    | European Neighbourhood Instrument  |



|         |  |
|---------|--|
| EPAs    | Economic Partnership Agreements                                |
| EPF     | European Peace Facility  |
| EPG     | Eminent Persons Group  |
| EU      | European Union   |
| EUCAP   | European Union Capacity Building                               |
| EUTM    | European Union Training Mission                                |
| FDI     | Foreign Direct Investment                                      |
| FMP     | Free movement protocol   |
| FTAs    | Free Trade Areas   |
| G20     | Group of Twenty  |
| G7      | Group of Seven   |
| GAR-SI  | Rapid Action Groups - Monitoring and Intervention in the Sahel |
| GCM     | Global Compact for Migration                                   |
| GDP     | Gross Domestic Product   |
| GSP     | Generalised System of Preference                               |
| IGAD    | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                     |
| IMF     | International Monetary Fund                                    |
| IOM     | International Organization for Migration (UN)                  |
| JAES    | Joint Africa-EU Strategy                                       |
| JFAs    | Joint Financial Arrangements                                   |
| JLMP    | Joint Labour Mobility Programme                                |
| JPA     | Joint Parliamentary Assembly                                   |
| LDCs    | Least Developed Countries                                      |
| MDGs    | Millennium Development Goals                                   |
| MFF     | Multiannual Financial Framework                                |
| MINUSMA | UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali   |
| MIPs    | Multiannual Indicative Programmes                              |
| MISIN   | Mission in Niger (EU)  |
| MME     | Migration, Mobility and Employment                             |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| MPFA    | Migration Policy Framework for Africa                                    |
| NAO     | National Authorising Officer   |
| NATO    | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                                       |
| NDICI   | Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument      |
| NEPAD   | New Partnership for Africa's Development                                 |
| NGOs    | Non-governative Organizations  |
| OACPS   | Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States                    |
| OAU     | Organisation of African Unity  |
| ODA     | Official Development Assistance  |
| PANWISE | Panel of Wise  |
| PI      | Partnership Instrument   |
| PSC     | Peace and Security Council (AU)  |
| PSOD    | Peace Support Operations Division  |
| RAO     | Regional Authorising Officer   |
| RECs    | Regional Economic Communities  |
| RMI     | Raw Materials Initiatives  |
| ROCK    | Regional Operations Centre in Khartoum (EU)                              |
| SACU    | Southern African Customs Union   |
| SADC    | Southern African Development Community                                   |
| SDG     | Sustainable Development Goal   |
| SDR     | Special Drawing Rights   |
| SIDS    | Small Island Developing States   |
| SSR     | Security Sector Reform   |
| TDCA    | Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement (EU-South Africa)            |
| TRIPS   | Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO) |
| UK      | United Kingdom   |
| UN      | United Nation  |
| UNECA   | UN Economic Commission for Africa  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| UN-NADAF | UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa |
| US       | United States                               |
| V4       | Visegrad Group                              |
| WHO      | World Health Organization (UN)              |
| WTO      | World Trade Organization                    |

## Introduction

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In the days before this report was going to press, the international agenda was rich in high-level events. In Kigali, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the African Union and the European Union met to take stock of progress made since the 2017 AU-EU Summit and set future priorities, in what Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, hoped would be an “unprecedented qualitative leap” in defining the partnership between the two continents. A few days later, the G20 leaders met in Rome and the work of COP26 opened in Glasgow. From Kigali to Rome and Glasgow, a high level of attention across the international arena is focused on what are perceived as common challenges, from the climate emergency to recovery from the “Covid recession”. Hopefully, this level of attention will remain high in the run-up to the 6th EU-AU Summit in February 2022.

Since the first EU-AU summit in 2000, there have been plenty of high-level meetings to discuss the engagement of the continents north and south of the Mediterranean. Five EU-AU summits have been held, and bilateral meetings between African and EU member states have proliferated – including three Italy-Africa ministerial conferences. While these initiatives show the will from both parties to define how to engage on a way forward, what emerges from these efforts, rather than a linear progress along a well-defined collaboration, is the attempt, as always and more than ever, to find *common ground*.

As a leading partner for trade, investment and aid, the EU promotes itself as Africa's "natural partner" in a multilateral world, and an alternative to old and new players on the African scene. But, when it comes to the priorities that should be the basis for their future engagement, are the two continents really on the same page? Meanwhile, both EU and AU countries must deal with their own internal differences. With more than 80 countries involved, finding a balance between the demands of their member states and the need to bring a common front to the negotiating table remains an open challenge.

At this pivotal time in Euro-African relations (as both the EU and AU counterparts keep presenting it), this Report takes stock of recent developments and provides interpretations for understanding the dialogue undertaken so far, highlighting where the two sides align or disagree, between leaps forward and steps back.

In late 2019, during the first hundred days of Ursula von der Leyen's "geopolitical Commission", one could perceive a sense of novelty in reformulating the relationship between Africa and the EU. Both sides appeared to be willing to redefine the relationship between the two continents along the lines of a "partnership of equals". The most tangible step in this process was the European Commission's communication entitled "Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa" of March 2020. In the same days, the Covid-19 pandemic made landfall in Europe and spread worldwide, forcing countries to revise their international priorities.

The effects of the pandemic are sorely visible in Africa. The spread of the virus highlighted the fragility of its healthcare systems, while the sharpest economic contraction since the mid-1990s resulted in a dramatic increase in poverty. These shocks are expected to be long-lasting, further aggravated by a high and rising debt burden. In turn, the economic recovery is affected by the vaccination rate, which is still far too slow in most countries of the region. The issues the international community will choose to prioritise will determine its credibility in the eyes

of its African partners. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown the gaps in the EU's strategy, first and foremost the marginal role played by health policies, which the EU should not fail to include in future negotiations. At the same time, the EU will have to be able to align these new priorities with its own internal agenda, in a constant effort to balance the conflicting demands of its member states, and to harmonise the various strategies for Africa implemented individually by European countries within a coherent framework.

Many items are crucial to both parties' agendas. The issues of climate change and the green transition gained even greater urgency with the momentum provided by the Rome G20 Summit and COP26 in Glasgow. Migration and mobility remain a potentially divisive issue, both between the two continents and within the EU, but it is certainly an issue that invites reflection as it is not going to disappear overnight. Finally, the issue of security remains a priority for all parties involved, as war in Ethiopia continues, while a wave of coups undermines the stability of entire areas, causing the balance between democratic and autocratic states to oscillate more and more.

Today's EU-Africa relationships are the outcome of a complex and continually evolving dialogue. The current phase is auspicious, as the EU has proposed a paradigm shift away from the asymmetrical logic of development aid and towards placing the two negotiating parties on an increasingly equal footing. The EU has reiterated its willingness to bring the two continents closer together through recognising common challenges and transforming them into opportunities. As Josep Borrell stated at the closure of the AU-EU Kigali meeting in late October, "We don't always agree on everything, but we agree on the essentials". The next few months will be the time to see if the essentials are enough.

*Paolo Magri*  
*ISPI Executive Vice President*

# 1. The Going Gets Tough: Will Europe and Africa Get Going Together?

Giovanni Carbone

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## Euro-African Evolving Connections

What if Europeans chose to disregard Africa and simply turn their gaze away? Against a history of structured ties that mainly draws back to colonial times and later became the basis for new forms of engagement, in principle Europe could conceivably opt for letting loose, snubbing rather than facilitating links that actors other than governments or EU institutions – including individual firms, NGOs, and others – might still want to invest in, establish and nurture.

There has been no lack of arguments for “cutting ties” with Africa, including lasting calls for ending once and for all undue “neo-colonial” political meddling and economic exploitation, for moving “beyond aid” to truly accomplish the continent’s independence, or even for “letting them fail” to re-emerge stronger, supposedly a solution to the fragility of states at times buttressed from the outside when threatened on the ground. In fact, there have been times when Europe on the whole diminished its engagement with the region – if still far from ignoring it *tout court* – as it did for the better part of the 1990s, when pessimism, aid fatigue and a pull towards other priority regions had Africa slip into the backseat.

Yet, not only would it be unnatural for Europe to discount such a geographically close region, one it essentially borders and already entertains a myriad connections with, but looking the other way would bear very substantial costs and would imply missing ample opportunities. Most notably, Europe would reduce its capacity to shape how a number of current processes and related challenges that are highly relevant to both Brussels and individual EU member states unfold. Promoting and strengthening multilateral cooperation and institutions; addressing climate change and the push for green transitions; dealing with migration and refugee flows; tackling insecurity in not-too-far-away areas, some with considerable potential for extremist spill-overs beyond the region; accessing Africa's expanding frontier markets, including natural, mineral and energy resources; and responding to the humanitarian crises ignited by violent conflicts, refugee-generating instability, food crises or, more recently, the Covid pandemic. Most of these are well-known, complex and delicate issues with wide-ranging implications, which evidently require some deeper form of joint Euro-African cooperation, and have long been high on the agenda. On top of it all, the mounting global competition between democratic countries and autocratic states, each led by powers trying hard to woo new potential partners and consolidate their strategic alliances across the African region – a dynamic related to a worrisome global autocratic drift<sup>1</sup> – is fast becoming a vital concern too. It is in this context and under this type of pressure that efforts for renewing EU-Africa relations have been pushed forward.

Following a much-publicised visit to the African Union on her first trip outside the EU, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stressed in her maiden State of the Union Address that the move “was a natural choice and it was a clear message, because we are not just neighbours,

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<sup>1</sup> S.F. Maerz, A. Lührmann, S. Hellmeier, S. Grahn, and S. Lindberg, “State of the world 2019: autocratization surges – resistance grows”, *Democratization*, vol. 27, no. 6, 2020, pp. 909-27.



we are natural partners ... in building the world we want to live in – whether on climate, digital or trade”.<sup>2</sup> Shortly afterwards, a draft Strategy with Africa,<sup>3</sup> issued by the Commission in early 2020 on von der Leyen’s request, confirmed a widespread perception that relations between the two sides were reaching a turning point. Backing former Nigerian minister of finance Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala for election to head the World Trade Organization (WTO), against initial opposition from the United States, was also meant to signal concretely that a political alliance with Europe would have payoffs for Africans, too. In February 2022, a long delayed EU-AU Summit is to take place under the French presidency of the EU, with high hopes it will bring about a new pact between the two continents.

Over the decades, despite much continuity, the ups and downs of EU-Africa relations have gone through a variety of changing scenarios, shifting rationales, and evolving frameworks. A brief look at the intertwining of these three levels offers an opportunity to pinpoint and understand the current state of affairs.

In terms of major world developments, momentous changes have occurred as the globe saw the proliferation of newly-independent nations between the late 1950s and the 1960s, the rise and demise of Cold War geopolitics, the spread of globalisation followed by the emergence of a multi-polar world, and most recently the intensifying competition between democratic countries and major autocracies. The progress of ties between Brussels and Africa reflected such phases, with the early relations formally established with the colonies of EU member states later evolving into full-fledged development cooperation with new African states, partly moulded by the overarching Cold War logic that was predominant at the time. Between the

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<sup>2</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, *State of the Union Address at the European Parliament*, Brussels, 16 September 2020.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa*, Brussels, 9.3.2020 JOIN(2020) 4 final, Brussels, March 2020.

late XX and early XXI century, mutual trade openings gained prominence in the economic and political agenda. Then, as non-EU foreign players with a foothold in Africa multiplied, growing competitive pressures led the EU to refocus on the need to close ranks with African partners with the stated aim of transforming them into full-fledged global political allies.

The same evolving scenarios acquired specific meanings when looked at from an African standpoint. The formal achievement of independence – including through the late liberation struggles of the 1970s and 1980s – left Africa's new nations striving for their full emancipation from post-colonial interference in domestic and continental affairs. Far from experiencing linear progress, however, widespread development failures hit most countries in the region, until a new and more positive season of economic growth set in around the turn of the century that would last for the better part of two decades. The concurrent return of international attention proved a mixed blessing for Africa, as it crucially fuelled much-needed economic progress while also creating new tensions and forms of dependence. Persisting challenges, notably the violent instability many areas across the continent continue to exhibit or the fast rising youth bulge in need of job opportunities, intertwined with promising advances. Most remarkably, the formation of the African Union (AU), in the early 2000s, revived the continental project of economic and political integration while also establishing a potentially unifying and powerful voice for the continent's external relations.

The EU itself, meanwhile, internally went through a more linear, long-term process of territorial enlargement and institutional consolidation, if not without its own bumps and setbacks. Crucially, however, Brussels' efforts to gradually establish the EU as a unified geopolitical actor have so far proved largely elusive, as the still embryonic Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) clashed with national resistances and growing political divides among member states. The departure of Britain bore witness to persisting dissonances within the

Union in a most dramatic if possibly unique manner, and in a way that, given London's connections to Africa, inevitably weakened EU relations with the continent.

These evolving international and regional developments carried a need to adjust the paramount rationales and goals of EU relations with Africa. If the original inclusion of Europeans' overseas territories in the Treaty of Rome of 1957 were essentially aimed at accommodating the concerns and aspirations of those early members states that were still colonial powers – primarily France and Belgium – these were later compounded, as the enlargement of the EU made progress, by a more broadly shared interest in African resources, the imperatives of international development solidarity, and the need to contain the influence of the communist bloc. Back in 1950, the Schuman Declaration itself had paved the way for linking European integration with Africa's development, suggesting that “with increased resources Europe will be able to pursue the achievement of one of its essential tasks, namely, the development of the African continent”.<sup>4</sup> The end of the Cold War, however, marked a period when relations cooled off somewhat, as mentioned, since European public opinion became more sceptical about Africa's development prospects and, simultaneously, the attention of their capitals turned towards the Mediterranean and the former communist countries of Eastern Europe. Gradually, meanwhile, new issues had been rising on the agenda, some of them proving quite divisive. A first set of subjects was primarily about sharing norms, ranging from the promotion of human and democratic rights to the opening up of international trade, to the regulation and joint management of African migration to Europe. A second, more recent array of issues embraced so-called “global challenges” – from Islamic fundamentalism to climate change and green transitions – but also Europe's belated efforts at countering the impressive, rapid and competitive rise of new international players in Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> R. Schuman, *The Schuman Declaration*, 9 May 1950.

Finally, the evolution of the institutional frameworks governing EU-Africa relations reflects the above-mentioned transformations both in the global political and economic landscape as well as in the key goals pursued by each of the two sides. Yet the fact that formal arrangements have been periodically renegotiated, rather than becoming more fully stabilised and long-term, also reveals an unresolved search for wider common ground. The successive deals that were struck over time – from the 1963 and 1969 Yaoundé conventions to the 1975 Lomé convention, and then the Cotonou agreement of 2000 (the latter two involving the broader African-Caribbean-Pacific or ACP group of countries) – were supplemented, at the turn of the millennium, by initiatives with a more specific whole-of-Africa focus, notably the first Africa-EU leaders' summit, held in Cairo in 2000, which fed into the Joint Africa-Europe Strategy (JAES) agreed to at the Lisbon meeting of 2007. The latter two were essentially aimed at starting a political dialogue on a more regular basis and an expanded partnership for cooperating on a broader set of issues. The stated purpose of the JAES, for example, was “to take the Africa-EU relationship to a new, strategic level with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation at all levels”,<sup>5</sup> thus moving more decisively beyond the themes of development. Key related initiatives included support for Africa's continental integration project and for the peace and security arrangements of the newly-established African Union. Meanwhile, growing European concerns for the management of migration flows – especially during the period of the so-called “European migrant crisis” – spurred a number of additional *ad hoc* schemes.

But two decades of African resistance to the full adoption of the Economic Partnership Agreements planned by the Cotonou agreement, the doubts and negotiations that renewing the latter in view of its expiration in 2020 generated, and, most

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<sup>5</sup> *Joint Africa-Europe Strategy (JAES)*, 2007, p. 2.

recently, Brussels' proposal for a new comprehensive strategy falling virtually on deaf ears in Africa, all give a sense of the increasingly complex and bumpy voyage towards bringing the two sides of the Mediterranean closer. Despite its internal divisions, the African Union itself is becoming more and more of an influential voice. While Europeans retain their stronger, asymmetric position *vis-à-vis* Africa – a continent that still needs Europe – it is also quite evident that African countries have gained room to leverage the broader spectrum of international partners that have been increasingly courting them. New Euro-African deals will again be struck. But what road really lays ahead remains uncertain.

## **The EU's Search for a Geopolitical Role**

Europe still looms large in Africa. On the aggregate, the EU is the continent's main trade partner (accounting for 36% of Africa's trade in goods, against 17% for China and 6% for the US), the main investor (with a FDI stock of €261 billion, with the US at €42 billion and China at €38 billion), the main donor (with some €22 billion per year), the main source of remittances (€21 billion in 2015, or 36% of global flows to Africa), and the major destination for African migrants.<sup>6</sup>

Yet it has long been evident that several other external players have been gaining ground. The proposed Africa strategy of 2020 opens with the acknowledgement of the extent to which the African landscape has changed from an international standpoint. Nowadays, "Africa's potential attracts increased interest from

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<sup>6</sup> All data (except remittances) are from Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, "EU-African relations are a strategic issue: Here's why", *ECDPM Great Insights magazine*, vol. 9, no. 3, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2020, pp. 4-5. Data on remittances are from European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU partnership*, Brussels, 4 May 2017.

many players on the world scene”. Despite frequent criticisms in the West of the way competitors such as China and Russia pursue their interests in Africa,<sup>7</sup> the EU’s official stand is that, in principle, the multiplication of international partners is “a welcome development” for Africa’s prospects. Yet it holds major implications – and requires adaptation – for the way the EU engages with the continent.<sup>8</sup>

Security, migration, green transition, trade – including the new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) – and development are the four areas in which EU-Africa cooperation remains essential. Closer cross-regional cooperation arguably implies strengthening the international action of the EU. This, in turn, would increase Brussels’ capacity to leverage its ties with African countries in the intensifying rivalry between democratic states and major autocracies.

The adoption of a post-Cotonou agreement in April 2021, following protracted negotiations, was itself an important development in setting a new time horizon and consolidating existing relations (see the chapter by Walter Kennes in this volume), although the ratification of the deal by member states – both in Europe as among those belonging to the ACP grouping – will require a few more years. By differentiating regional protocols – with a specific one devoted to Africa – the new agreement also makes progress “towards drawing together the various strands of Africa-Europe relations under the AU-EU umbrella”, in line with the EU’s goal of making an AU-EU strategic partnership the centrepiece of future Africa-Europe relations.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Remarks by National Security Advisor, Ambassador John R. Bolton on [The Trump Administration’s New Africa Strategy](#), 13 December 2018.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa...*, cit.

<sup>9</sup> D. Yotova, *After Cotonou: How Europe can forge new relations with Africa in 2021*, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 25 February 2021.

The EU leadership has made it abundantly clear, in recent years, that it aims at seeing the EU become a key geopolitical actor. In a remarkable intervention, the EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, pointed that "this is a world of geostrategic competition ... we must relearn the language of power and conceive of Europe as a top-tier geostrategic actor ... [and among its very] key priorities ... the EU must frame a new, integrated strategy for and with Africa".<sup>10</sup> The process that was undertaken in early 2020, when presenting African leaders with a planned new Africa-Europe strategy, was de facto suspended and upended by the Covid-19 pandemic. The latter pulled the carpet from under the EU's feet by monopolising political agendas on both sides. Moreover, the limited backing Europe demonstrated in supporting Africa's responses to the crisis – e.g. by not making vaccines more widely available to Africans or by not promoting vaccine manufacturing on the continent – was akin to an own goal. The upside, however, was that additional time was gained, which will allow to try and build a broader and more consensual basis to work out a stronger deal.<sup>11</sup>

Now, with Europe having apparently left the peak of the pandemic behind, the dialogue is set to restart, particularly, as said, with the EU-AU Summit planned for early 2022. The five topics that the draft strategy placed on the table, in view of establishing specific partnerships for deeper cooperation, are green transitions and energy access, digital transformation, sustainable growth and jobs, peace and governance, and migration and mobility (see the chapter by Chloe Teevan in this volume). Eighteen months of pandemic later, the marginal presence of health and the virtual absence of poverty from the text illuminate some glaring gaps that demand responses. Gaining support among African leaders and publics – who felt the draft EU plan was essentially a unilateral initiative

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<sup>10</sup> Josep Borrell, "Embracing Europe's power", *New Europe*, 8 February 2020.

<sup>11</sup> G. Laporte, *The AU-EU summit didn't prove immune to COVID-19 - but that may be a blessing in disguise*, ECDPM Commentaries, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 14 September 2020.

that did not properly account for the continent's voices and needs, reflecting a relation that remains unbalanced and poorly responsive to African agency – will require substantially revising the original proposal.

Over the years, Africa has become increasingly vocal in asserting its own distinctive priorities (economic transformation, infrastructures and debt, for example, more than migration and even security<sup>12</sup>). Yet the absence of a formal or at least a clearer African agenda for the continent's relations with Europe is itself a major limitation for prospects of progress in negotiating compromises between the two sides.<sup>13</sup> Like Europeans, the 55 member states of the AU have legitimate divisions among them. But the latter will have to be overcome, at least partly, if the continent thinks the EU opening may offer valuable opportunities. The African Union is a natural vehicle for articulating a continental platform that encompasses the positions and concerns of all or most members. As a matter of fact, the AU High Representative for AU-EU Relations Post 2020, Carlos Lopes, reportedly drafted such a platform, but the latter was never made official.

At the same time, the notion of an expanded geopolitical role for the EU and any underlying agenda will need stronger support on the part of EU member states, which in turn requires striking a balance where they hold different positions. An increasing number of European states have in recent years adopted a national Africa policy (see the chapter by Faleg and Pallechi in this volume).<sup>14</sup> Such Africa plans are largely consistent with each other and with the EU's own stances. Yet some points of disagreement do remain. Two examples of discrepancies among member states are migration and the role

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> T.T. Abebe and H. Maalim, *Relations between Africa and Europe. Mapping Africa's priorities*, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2020.

<sup>14</sup> G. Carbone, *Europe: team play in Africa? The Africa policies of EU member states*, Berlin, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), December 2020.



of the EU in relations with Africa.<sup>15</sup> As regards migration, a quite evident concern for reducing and controlling migration flows from Africa is shared across Europe as well as across national policy documents. The idea that ways to better manage the entire process must be found is a common theme, as is the notion that the very “root causes” or “structural reasons” behind the flows should be addressed – both development and security, in this sense, are also seen as strategies to reduce motives for the continent’s expanding youth to leave – alongside a number of more down-to-earth issues (including border controls and repatriations, for example). At the same time, however, while some countries formally espouse relatively progressive stances – largely in line with the EU’s official notion that “well-managed migration and mobility can have a positive impact on countries of origin, transit and destination”<sup>16</sup> – others are well-known to hold stronger views on this topic. Spain’s Africa policy on the one side and Hungary’s on the other are representative of the distance between the two poles.

Views about the role the EU should play *vis-à-vis* Africa also vary, as shown by the national policy documents of EU member states. On the face of it, Europeans largely acknowledge that the Union has a significant role to play in Africa. The very scale of the issues that the two continents should ideally address together – from fighting international terrorism to abating climate change – calls for Brussels to step in, as does the kind of competition that Europeans face in Africa from countries such as China or Russia. Beyond this, however, while smaller and less resourced European countries cannot but operate in such a huge and complex scenario as Africa indirectly – that is, via the EU – some larger EU member states jealously guard their autonomous room for manoeuvre. France, most notably, can conceivably and practically pursue its national interests in Africa while also backing the EU’s role. Yet for others – the likes

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa...*, cit.

of Austria, Greece or Denmark, for example – Brussels remains virtually the only or at least the main way of fostering national concerns in the African region. It is thus this second group that more consistently calls for and backs EU common action in Africa.

Over the years, past EU-Africa cooperation displayed a number of weaknesses. The fragmentation of the different frameworks through which relations were articulated has been mentioned already, alongside the relatively limited time-frames covered by the key arrangements. Some have questioned whether the chosen institutional set ups have been appropriate – including, for example, the grouping together of Africa and minor countries from other world regions under the umbrella of the Cotonou agreement. The perceived urgency, or the lack thereof, for a new pact also seems to distinguish the two sides, with Africans not showing a particular hurry, possibly also due to the need to first better articulate their own agenda.<sup>17</sup>

As Carl Michiels, director of the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), put it in a memo to the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, “discussing EU-Africa is not divisive like other files. The risks are lack of direction and imagination; and to fly on auto-pilot and see in a few years’ time that Africa has gone its own way”.<sup>18</sup> Besides a shared vision and road ahead, the key missing ingredients so far have been sustained political support on the part of EU leaders and full ownership of the adopted initiatives on the African side.

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<sup>17</sup> A. Green, “What’s going on between African nations and the EU?”, *Devex.com*, 30 August 2021.

<sup>18</sup> C. Michiels, “Memo to Michel: How to make most of EU-Africa at the summit”, *enobserver*, 15 October 2020.

## **Outline of the Report**

This volume offers a comprehensive analysis of recent and current developments in the relations between the EU – and in part, individual EU member states – and Africa, with the aim of better understanding their future prospects.

Following the introduction presented in this chapter, Chloe Teevan examines in chapter two the pros and cons of the proposed Comprehensive Strategy with Africa that the European Commission made public in early 2020. She shows how, adding to the need to better accommodate Africa's (often admittedly unclear) positions, the Covid-19 pandemic – with its strong negative impact on public health, poverty and international debt – significantly redefined the issues that will have to become an integral part of the final draft as the EU and Africa approach the summit planned for February 2022.

Meanwhile, a significant result was achieved on another negotiating front, if only after a long and tortuous road, with the deal for the renewal of the Cotonou agreement signed in early 2021. In chapter three, Walter Kennes examines the whole process with historical and technical depth. He starts by looking at the roots of the 2000 Cotonou agreement and its subsequent implementation – from the well-oiled mechanisms of development cooperation to the difficult progress made in the field of trade, to a political dialogue process that gradually shifted towards the AU – and goes on to examine the complex negotiations for a new deal and the equally complex institutional framework they produced. Despite some relevant changes and innovations, the new pact largely signals continuity. Pragmatism will thus be needed to accommodate the continuation of a dialogue with the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific group of countries – if now partly under distinct regional protocols – with the expanded role claimed by the African Union in the continent's relations with the EU.

The next two chapters shift the focus to more specific key themes, notably migration and security. Migration is addressed

in chapter four by Amanda Bisong, who goes through the EU's most recent initiatives with regard to this issue – that is, the draft Comprehensive Strategy with Africa, the proposed New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the recently agreed-upon post-Cotonou agreement – to point that Europe remains too focused on short term measures, notably the repatriation of irregular migrants and the externalisation of EU frontiers, that leave a gap or a mismatch with African priorities on migration, and thus risk prolonging and exacerbating tensions around migration cooperation.

In chapter five, Tshepo Gwatiwa looks at how security concerns continue to have profound influence on EU-Africa relations, but also shows how such concerns are shaped by broader developments, some of which are examined in strongly critical terms by the author. Besides conflict-based instability, he identifies economic security and the securitisation of migration as the key, non-traditional security cooperation priorities of the past decade. In the context of an Africa-Europe relation that remains strongly skewed in favour of the latter, the room for African agency in security issues has been somewhat expanded by the EU, more so than other partner organisations have been willing to do.

Giovanni Faleg and Carlo Palleschi illustrate and explain, in chapter six, the similarities and the divergences in the national approaches to Africa of individual EU member states. While Brussels continued the search for a way ahead in its relations with the continent, many European countries have in recent years issued their own “Africa strategies”. This is essentially a new development, as hardly any of them did it in the past. The contents of these Africa plans share significant overlaps and convergence, both with one another as well as with the key issues shaping the EU's own approach. Yet the strategic interests of individual member states are not the same, and the growing relevance of Africa may bring with it increased competition among them. This risks creating divides and exposing European states to manipulation by external powers

unless their approaches are coherently coordinated at the EU level.

In a final chapter, Giovanni Carbone, Rose Ngugi and Abebe Shimeles wrap up the contents of the report. They offer a snapshot of how the Covid pandemic currently under way is impacting Africa's economic scenario and the continent's development prospects. They then conclude by outlining policy recommendations that draw on the key points emerging from the different parts of the volume.

## **2. A New Strategy with Africa? The EU Plan Before and After Covid-19\***

Chloe Teevan

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The von der Leyen Commission hoped to mark a new era of relations with Africa, moving away from the donor-recipient relationship of the past and building multiple partnerships on issues of mutual concern. This was not a new ambition as the goal of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) of 2007 already stated that there was a need for: “a new phase in the Africa-EU relationship, a new strategic partnership”, and the JAES was laid out as a political vision and roadmap for future cooperation between Europe and Africa in both existing and new areas.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the importance that the new EU leadership sought to place in the partnership with Africa was evident when, in December 2019, Ursula von der Leyen chose Addis Ababa and not Washington or Beijing as her first extra-European trip within a week of taking office, and the following February almost the entire European Commission took the trip to Addis Ababa to meet with their counterparts at the African Union Commission.

However, even as the EU launched its new strategy with Africa on 9 March 2020, Covid-19 was beginning to spread from China across the European continent and would soon reach every corner of the world. The consequent health and

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\* The author would like to acknowledge the contributions and feedback of Pauline Veron on health and human development and to thank Andrew Sherriff for peer reviewing.

<sup>1</sup> [The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. A Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#), 2007.

economic crises spread far and wide, and at the time of writing were far from over, even as the EU managed to vaccinate large swathes of its population. While European officials insist that Covid-19 has not changed the will to renew the relationship with Africa, there is no doubt that the pandemic has caused further shifts in the geopolitical order and in Africa's expectations of its neighbours. Africa's development challenges were once more thrown into stark relief by the pandemic and, despite some strong coordination<sup>2</sup> and a great deal of innovation,<sup>3</sup> Covid-19 has nevertheless buffeted national health systems and ravaged national economies across the continent. The dramatic divide between the Global North and Global South was highlighted first by the very unequal ability of economies to respond to the economic and human challenge of the pandemic, and then by the huge gap in terms of vaccine procurement and roll-out. All of this has raised some big questions for EU-Africa relations, and shone light on gaps in the EU's 2020 Africa strategy.

The EU Comprehensive Strategy with Africa included five proposed partnership: green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility.<sup>4</sup> The green and digital agendas, together with the focus on growth and jobs, mirror the economic and social priorities of the EU domestically, and have indeed been strengthened within the EU by the "build back better" rhetoric adopted by the EU in response to the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on African economies has also added further urgency to the quest for growth and jobs in

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<sup>2</sup> A. Medinilla, B. Byiers, and P. Apiko, *African regional responses to COVID-19*, ECDPM, Discussion Paper 272, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 18 May 2020.

<sup>3</sup> WHO, *COVID-19 spurs health innovation in Africa*, 29 October 2020; S. Abdelkrim, *From M-Pesa to Ushahidi: How African tech is fighting the coronavirus*, Friends of Europe, 14 May 2020.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission and the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President (HR/VP), Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa*, Brussels, 9.3.2020 JOIN(2020) 4 final, 9 March 2020.

Africa, while lockdowns highlighted the importance of digital. Peace and governance similarly remain highly pertinent in spite of the pandemic, with old security challenges continuing and new conflicts and instability emerging. Similarly, although the pandemic caused some shifts in migration patterns and routes, this remains a topical question. Yet, as already mentioned, the pandemic also threw certain questions into relief, notably related to the global economic response to Covid-19 and global health. This chapter will thus argue that while the EU's Africa strategy continues to be relevant, moving EU-Africa relations to the next level will require a thorough reckoning with both the fiscal and health questions raised by Covid-19.

In the first section I will explore the background to the new EU strategy with Africa, followed by a look at what holds in the EU's Strategy, focusing in particular on the green, digital and economic partnerships as the migration and security partnerships will be covered in later chapters. In the third section, I will explore what is missing in the EU's strategy, and in the final section I will look at what needs to be done ahead of the EU-Africa Summit, now due to take place in early 2022.

## **Why a New Strategy?**

The EU's new strategy came against the backdrop of a renewed overture of partnership with Africa, brought on by the sense that the EU and its member states were losing influence on the continent as China, Russia, India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and others increasingly engaged with and invested in African economies and societies. While this sense of geopolitical competition was certainly present in the past, including at the time of the JAES in 2007, it has grown greatly in recent years.<sup>5</sup> The EU was keen to counter the claim that

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the background to the JAES, see: V. Tywuschik, and A. Sherriff, *Beyond Structures? Reflections on the Implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, ECDPM Discussion Paper 87, European Centre for Development Policy



China was now Africa's principle partnership, countering that combined EU trade and investment in Africa far outweighs China's trade and investment in the continent. Further, with the African Union increasingly focused on the construction of an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), similar to the EU Single Market, there was a keen sense that this sister market may mark an opportunity for renewed partnership on a new basis. At the same time, increased migration and security concerns were drawing attention to the challenges still facing the continent, and to the sense that more attention needed to be paid to addressing the root causes of these challenges. The strategy followed a renewed interest and advocacy from a number of EU member states over recent years. France, which has a long history with the continent, is increasingly realising that it will may have more influence as part of a united European bloc, and President Macron included a strong focus on Africa in his push for "European sovereignty", the idea of a stronger Europe in the world in response to the Trump administration. He has increasingly pushed for a strong Europe-Africa partnership as a core component of EU foreign policy, going so far as to argue: "Europe will not succeed if Africa does not succeed".<sup>6</sup> Germany's interest in Africa grew rapidly following the migration crisis in 2015 in particular, was a focus of their 2016 G20 Presidency, when they launched the G20 Compact with Africa, which sought to improve the investment environment in Africa and to increase private-sector engagement. This was shortly followed by the German Marshall Plan with Africa and more recently, Germany published its 2019 Africa Policy Guidelines laying out the basis for German engagement with Africa with five core objectives.<sup>7</sup> Multiple other member states have developed their

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Management, February 2009.

<sup>6</sup> "The Macron Doctrine. A Conversation with the French President", Groupe d'Études Géopolitiques, 16 November 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Federal Ministry of Finance, G20 Compact with Africa, The Federal Government. *An enhanced partnership with Africa. Continuation and further development of the Federal Government's Africa Policy Guidelines*, 27 March 2019.

own strategies for or with Africa in recent years or have greatly increased their engagement with the continent, indicating a wider uptick in interest across the EU.<sup>8</sup>

## A 5-Point Plan: What Holds and What Doesn't?

The first three partnerships in the EU's Africa strategy, which mirror three of the von der Leyen Commission's overarching priorities – “A European Green Deal”, “A Europe fit for the digital age”, and “Building an economy that works for people”<sup>9</sup> –, have grown in importance due to Covid-19. Within the EU, they have even been strengthened by the EU's €806.9 billion NextGenerationEU recovery plan with its stress on the green and digital transitions.<sup>10</sup> The EU's “build back better” rhetoric has increasingly been taken up globally as a slogan to signify a green and digitally advanced economic recovery post Covid-19.<sup>11</sup> We also see a strong focus on a green and digital economic recovery in Africa, including in the African Union Green Resilience and Recovery Action Plan (AU GRAP) and in the prioritisation of the e-commerce protocol of the AfCFTA, which was originally due to be negotiated at a later stage in the AfCFTA negotiations.<sup>12</sup>

The priority focused on peace, security and governance similarly remains very salient, as Africa's security and governance

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<sup>8</sup> For more on EU member states' strategies and engagement *vis-à-vis* Africa, see: G. Faleg and C. Palleschi, *African Strategies. European and global approaches towards sub-Saharan Africa*, ISS Europe Chaillot Papers, 30 June 2020.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, *The European Commission's priorities. 6 Commission priorities for 2019-24*.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, *Recovery plan for Europe*.

<sup>11</sup> G7 Cornwall, *Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué. Our Shared Agenda for Global Action to Build Back Better*, 13 June 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, 16 April 2021. K. Banga, J. Macleod, and M. Mendez-Parra, *Digital trade provisions in the AfCFTA: What can we learn from South-South trade agreements?*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)-UN Commission for Africa (UNECA), April 2021.

challenges have not gone away. Indeed, since the outbreak of Covid-19, new conflicts – such as that in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia – have broken out, while the situation in the Sahel is perhaps more unstable than ever, with the assassination of President Idriss Déby Itno in Chad and the two military coups d'état in Mali. An insurgency is also leading to growing instability and displacement in northern Mozambique. There is a sense that the migration partnership remains stuck and is not likely to reach a breakthrough in the coming months, but the importance of migration – as both a challenge and an opportunity for both continents – remains. As these priorities will be further unpacked in the next chapters, here we will focus on the first three partnerships, and explore what is missing.

In the Communication, under the “Green partnership”, the EU emphasises a variety of thematic areas for cooperation, such as investments in innovation, biodiversity, circular economy, urbanisation, energy security and sustainable agri-food systems. A few proposals are made in terms of what the partnership might mean in practice, but these are relatively vague. They include EU support to African countries in devising and implementing nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans. A “Green Energy” initiative is also proposed, alongside EU support for improving ocean governance and protection and promoting biodiversity via the “NaturAfrica” initiative.<sup>13</sup> While climate is clearly a global priority, and one that neither continent can ignore, it is still not entirely clear whether there is a shared agenda and if expectations on each side are aligned.

It is particularly relevant that since publishing its Africa Strategy, the EU has moved forward with the EU Green Deal, which is ultimately designed primarily as a domestic growth and transition strategy. While it does have a strong external dimension and potential benefits for neighbours in Africa, these are not necessarily well developed or communicated in the various components of the Green Deal to date. Certain

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission and HR/VP (2020).

aspects of the Green Deal, such as the carbon border adjustment mechanism – a mechanism designed to reduce the risk of carbon leakage by ensuring that the equivalent of the carbon price paid by EU producers is also paid on imports<sup>14</sup> – have caused considerable concern amongst partners concerned that this will affect their export to the EU, including some in Africa. The prospect of higher environmental standards and a global race for green technologies, that is already leaving Africa behind, are also causes for concern.<sup>15</sup>

In the EU-Africa partnership, there has been an effort to redirect the conversation and to focus more on energy, as well as jobs and growth opportunities that can be linked to the green transition, including through circular economy initiatives, new technologies and sustainable food systems.<sup>16</sup> There is strong technical cooperation between the EU and the AU, and the EU member states are supporting elements of the implementation of the African Union Green Resilience and Recovery Action Plan.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the EU has sought to build the Green Deal into its bilateral relations with many African countries, with a strong focus on green priorities in the programming of the €79.5 billion Global Europe-NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument) for 2021-27.<sup>18</sup> This has been equally true for the new Team Europe Initiatives in many partner countries, with the EU and member states coming together to develop flagship initiatives that they

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<sup>14</sup> European Commission, *Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism: Questions and Answers*, 14 July 2021.

<sup>15</sup> C. Teevan, A. Medinilla, and K. Sergejeff, *The Green Deal in EU foreign and development policy*, ECDPM Briefing note 131, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 21 May 2021.

<sup>16</sup> A. Medinilla, *AU-EU cooperation on climate and energy: In search of a common narrative*, ECDPM Briefing note 133, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 21 May 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Interview 12 April 2021.

<sup>18</sup> M. Di Ciommo and P.E. Ahairwe, *The EU budget and external climate financing: The state of play*, ECDPM Briefing note 132, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 21 May 2021.

hope will improve coordination between EU actors, build the EU's profile on key topics and better communicate EU cooperation with partner countries.<sup>19</sup> A large number of these Team Europe Initiatives have a focus on green priorities, but these are different in each country and adapted to local needs in an effort not to make the Green Deal and green priorities seem like a European imposition but rather a response to local needs.<sup>20</sup>

The Communication is similarly vague on digital, but it outlines a vision to work together on an improved regulatory environment to support the business environment in Africa, on digital infrastructure, on e-services and digitalisation of public administration, on cybersecurity, on digital skills and on space data and technology.<sup>21</sup> It mirrors many of the priorities outlined in the earlier EU-Africa Digital Economy Taskforce report, which outlined four priority areas for the partnership: accelerating universal access to affordable broadband; guaranteeing essential skills for all; improving the business environment and facilitating access to finance and business support; and accelerating the adoption of eServices.<sup>22</sup> Since the launch of the EU's strategy, the European Commission, together with five (and now eleven) EU member states, launched the Digital for Development (D4D) Hub, including a first regional hub, the EU-AU D4D Hub. This hub "will serve to provide demand-driven technical support to national stakeholders, disseminate best practices, and host digital policy dialogues between inter-African and African-EU multi-stakeholder partnerships".<sup>23</sup> Two further flagships with Africa have been

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<sup>19</sup> A. Jones and C. Teevan, *Team Europe: Up to the challenge?*, ECDPM Briefing Note 128, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 25 January 2021.

<sup>20</sup> K. Banga, J. Macleod, and M. Mendez-Parra (2021).

<sup>21</sup> European Commission & HR/VP (2020).

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, AU-EU Digital Economy Task Force (AU-EU DETF), New Africa-Europe Digital Economy Partnership - report of the EU-AU Digital Economy Task Force, *New Africa Europe Digital Economy Partnership. Accelerating the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Partnership*, 13 June 2019.

<sup>23</sup> D4D Hub, *About*.

launched, namely, the EU-AU Data Flagship and the African-European Digital Innovation Bridge (AEDIB).

Yet, it is apparent that all of this is still very much in the early stages, and it is not yet clear whether the EU will be able to live up to the role that it hopes to play with regard to digital. At the level of EU delegations in partner countries, there is a relatively low level of expertise regarding digital in most cases, and thus it is difficult for delegations to truly mainstream digital into their programmes, or indeed to develop stand-alone projects. Only two Team Europe Initiatives – in Kenya and Ethiopia – focus on digital. A lot will thus depend on the ability of the D4D Hub to push forward initiatives, and on member states also taking ownership of elements of the digital agenda and pushing them forward. Germany has been very active on this front, promoting a bottom-up and a top-down approach on data protection and spearheading the EU-AU Data Flagship. Belgium played an instrumental role in pushing forward the digital for development agenda and is coordinating the EU-AU D4D Hub, France engaged countries in French speaking West Africa, and Estonia is keen to share its expertise on e-government.<sup>24</sup> While EU and member state representatives are by and large optimistic about the D4D approach, there is a need for greater focus in the EU approach to digital with Africa. This should include scaling up the Team Europe approach beyond the development sphere, developing a stronger understanding of digital ecosystems in partner countries and ensuring that the EU's digital ambitions are reflected in the programming of the Global Europe-NDICI.<sup>25</sup> Further, as with the green agenda – and particularly energy – the EU hopes to scale up investments in Africa, which links very strongly with the third partnership on sustainable growth and jobs.

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<sup>24</sup> Interviews, 29 April 2021, 25 June 2021, and 30 June 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Interviews, July-August 2021. For a much more detailed discussion of the EU's approach to digital cooperation with Africa, see C. Teevan, *Building Strategic Digital Cooperation with Africa*, ECDPM Policy Brief no. 134, European Centre for Development Policy Management, September 2021.

The proposed partnership on sustainable growth and jobs is intimately linked to the first two proposed partnerships, as green and digital technologies are increasingly considered to be growth sectors that will play an important role in the post-Covid economic recovery. This partnership seeks to move away from a traditional development partnership with Africa, laying out a new economic agenda with Africa that focuses on the opportunities that exist on the continent. It includes four pillars: boosting trade and sustainable investments in Africa; improving the investment climate and business environment; increasing access to quality education, skills, research, innovation, health and social rights; and advancing regional and continental economic integration.<sup>26</sup>

This shift to a much stronger focus on supporting economic development through investment was already very clear under the Juncker Commission, particularly in the announcement of the EU-Africa Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and Growth, announced in response to the demand expressed by African Heads of state at the 2017 Abidjan EU-AU Summit. It led to the launch of four task forces, including that on the digital economy mentioned above, alongside others focused on rural Africa, transport and sustainable energy.<sup>27</sup> In its latest iteration, this new partnership aims to emphasise that the EU as a whole is in fact the biggest investor in Africa, and to facilitate further investments with a view to stimulating growth, whilst also highlighting the opportunities that Africa holds for European businesses. Thus, the rhetoric seeks to highlight that mutual interests exist, and that the economic partnership can facilitate wins on both sides. The new European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus, which falls under the NDICI instrument, will aim to leverage private sector investment in Africa through guarantees and blended finance.<sup>28</sup> A second major focus of

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<sup>26</sup> European Commission & HR/VP (2020).

<sup>27</sup> Africa Europe, *Alliance*.

<sup>28</sup> S. Bilal, *How European financial institutions can work better together for sustainable and green (co-)investment in times of COVID-19*, ECDPM Discussion paper 294,

this third partnership is on supporting African economic integration and the achievement of the AfCFTA, while the EU also proposes supporting African states “in adopting policies and regulatory reforms that improve the business environment and investment climate”.<sup>29</sup>

This third partnership also includes some elements of more traditional development cooperation, such as education, but it is notable that the focus on human development was relatively weak overall in the EU strategy, with health in particular only mentioned in a few lines.<sup>30</sup> Covid-19 was to expose this shortcoming, and put health back on the agenda in an important way. The same is true for the question of debt and access to finance. We will look in more detail at these two elements in the next section.

## **What's Missing?**

Thus, while the existing economic and social priorities of the EU's Africa Strategy largely hold, Covid-19 exposed some glaring holes in the strategy. Firstly, the pandemic proved the unpreparedness of many health systems to deal with a crisis on this scale, and moreover highlighted major imbalances in terms of access to vaccines that will continue to haunt EU-Africa relations. Yet health was barely touched on in the EU's Africa Strategy, while the vaccine question is currently overshadowing all others. Secondly, the pandemic once again shone light on the question of global debt, together with the wider issue of the very uneven fiscal space available to countries in the Global North and Global South. This is also not something that was covered by the EU's Africa Strategy, but the debt burden of some countries and the lack of fiscal space of many African countries ultimately undermines many of the goals of that

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European Centre for Development Policy Management, 1 March 2021.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission & HR/VP (2020).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



strategy. Yet, the question of debt has a long history in EU-Africa relations, with African states requiring the issue to be addressed as a condition for their participation at the first EU-Africa Summit in Cairo in 2000.

In hindsight, it is clear that health was the most important issue that the EU's strategy failed to cover. This is perhaps understandable as the strategy was published two days before Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and health is not a core competence of the EU within its borders nor an obvious area of added-value for EU development cooperation.<sup>31</sup> Yet, in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, it is clear that health cannot be left off the agenda of any future partnership and should even be considered as a sixth pillar when it comes to building out cooperation in the coming years.<sup>32</sup> As mentioned, the wider focus on human development was somewhat weak in the Strategy – beyond the focus on “investing in people”, in particular in youth – which ultimately sought to move away from traditional development cooperation and to refocus on economic development and investment in cooperation with Africa. Going forward, building a genuine partnership in the field of health, and in particular investing in the ability of African countries to manufacture and deliver vaccines, will be key for the continent's economic recovery.

There have been some positive advances on this front in recent months, including the announcement of a Team Europe initiative to support the production of vaccines by the Institut Pasteur in Senegal, and the announcement of future BioNTech vaccine manufacturing hubs in Rwanda and Senegal with EU support that would produce future TB and malaria vaccines at cost price. Yet, much remains to be done for these announcements to bear fruit.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> P. Veron and M. Di Giommo, *Fit for purpose: The EU's role in global health in the era of COVID-19*, ECDPM Discussion Paper 282, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 12 October 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews 12 March 2021 and 30 June 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Jeune Afrique, “[Are BioNTech laboratories really coming to Rwanda &](#)

Education and skills development are also among the leading priorities for Africa, “as well-trained human power is the backbone of sustainable and inclusive economic growth”.<sup>34</sup> Indeed this came out very strongly in the final declaration of the 2017 EU-Africa Summit, which focused on investing in youth and reinstated the importance of investing in jobs and skills.<sup>35</sup> Reinforcing the partnership around these issues would send a strong signal that the EU is serious about investing in the future of the African people. Covid-19, which risks setting back decades of progress on human development, has perhaps highlighted just how important it is for the EU to balance the two approaches and to ensure that human development continues to be prioritised alongside wider strategic economic priorities. Promoting health and education can serve mutual economic interests. According to experts, interlocking investments in the three key human development sectors, i.e. education, health and social protection, could end extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030.<sup>36</sup> The risk is that up to 150 million people might be pushed into extreme poverty by the end of 2021, while the pandemic also exposed underinvestment in social welfare, education and health across the world. More than 168 million children globally missed out on schooling due to the coronavirus crisis, and health systems across the world faced incredible strain. Similarly, gender-related gains of recent

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Senegal?”, *The Africa Report* (translation), 1 September 2021; E. Solomon and S. Fleming, “BioNTech prepares expansion into Africa alongside EU”, *Financial Times*, 10 June 2021; *Senegal: Republic of Senegal and Team Europe support agree to build a manufacturing plant to produce vaccines against COVID-19 and other endemic diseases*, European Investment Bank, 9 July 2021.

<sup>34</sup> T.T. Abebe and H. Maalim, *Relations between Africa and Europe: mapping Africa's priorities*, Institute for Security Studies Report, 14 September 2020.

<sup>35</sup> *Final Declaration: Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development*, 5th African Union - European Union Summit, 17 December 2017.

<sup>36</sup> M. Manuel (Overseas Development Institute, ODI) and S. Manea (Overseas Development Institute, ODI), *Financing human development and the ending of extreme poverty in Africa*, European Think Tank Group, July 2019.

decades risk being reversed, as women faced rising domestic violence, reduced access to sexual health and maternity services, disruptions to the labour market, increased care responsibilities and rising child marriage rates.<sup>37</sup>

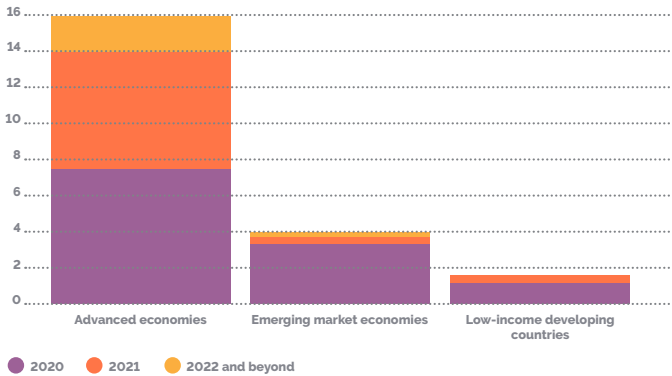
Covid-19 has also shifted the economic agenda considerably, raising questions about the fiscal space of countries to respond to the pandemic. Although the overarching priorities of the EU's Africa strategy with regard to investment and economic development still hold, Covid-19 resurfaced more structural questions about the global economy. These include the question of Africa's debt burden and fiscal space in order to respond to the economic challenges posed by the pandemic. The disparity in stimulus packages between the Global North and Global South have set off a very uneven recovery between countries, even after many months of multilateral diplomacy at the G20 and international financial institutions. The IMF estimates that Covid caused a 2.8% reduction in per capita incomes per year in advanced economies compared with pre-pandemic trends for 2020-22, whereas emerging market and developing economies (excluding China) may see a reduction of 6.3% a year. Both inequalities in vaccine rollout and the divergences in terms of policy support play a role in this two-track recovery. Advanced economies were not only able to provide considerable fiscal support to their economies in 2020, but continue to do so in 2021 and even into 2022, resulting in average spending of 17% of GDP compared with 4% for emerging markets and under 2% for low-income developing countries.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> P. Veron and K. Sergejeff, *Reinvigorating human development in EU external action*, Discussion Paper 296, 12 April 2021.

<sup>38</sup> G. Gopinath, "Drawing Further Apart: Widening Gaps in the Global Recovery", IMFBlog, 27 July 2021.

FIG. 2.1 – DIVERGENCES IN POLICY SUPPORT.  
WHILE FISCAL SUPPORT IN ADVANCED ECONOMIES CONTINUES, MOST MEASURES IN EMERGING MARKET AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES EXPIRED IN 2020 (TOTAL REVENUE AND SPENDING MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19; PERCENT OF 2020 GDP)



Source: IMF Fiscal Monitor database of Country Fiscal Responses to Covid-19; and IMF staff calculations.

Important steps have been taken to open up fiscal space for developing countries, but these questions will remain salient for many months to come and there is much still to be done. In May 2020, the European Commission proposed a “Global Recovery Initiative” that would link debt relief and investments to sustainable development,<sup>39</sup> and the EU and member states played an active role in actively promoting debt forgiveness at multilateral fora, including in the agreement of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) on bilateral debt (official debt between governments) at the G20 in 2020, and its extension through to December 2021.<sup>40</sup> Yet, the EU itself is not a bilateral creditor, and even its member states hold a relatively small share

<sup>39</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, [Speech by President von der Leyen at the UN High-Level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond](#), European Commission, Brussels, 28 May 2020.

<sup>40</sup> [Questions and Answers on Sovereign Debt Issues](#), IMF, 8 April 2021.

of global debt.<sup>41</sup> For this reason, it is vital that the EU and its member states show leadership at multilateral fora, notably on the issue of SDR reallocation, while also scaling up investments.

Together with African countries, the EU and its member states played a key role in pushing the IMF to create a new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDR), which are an interest-bearing international reserve assets that essentially allow IMF member countries to boost their foreign currency reserves. This was blocked by the Trump Administration, but the change of US administration allowed this to move forward in 2021 and US\$650 in new SDRs were allocated in August 2021. Yet, approximately two thirds of the new allocation went to developed countries, while only US\$21 billion was to be allocated to low-income developing countries. The reallocation of existing and new SDRs is essential to ensure that they are distributed to those countries that most need them, but there is little consensus on how exactly this should be pursued.<sup>42</sup> In early 2021, the EU already contributed SDR 141 million (equivalent to €170 million or US\$199 million) to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) for debt service relief.<sup>43</sup> Yet, despite these efforts, African countries are still struggling to respond to the continued economic challenge of the pandemic, and the combined debt-finance question is likely to continue to play an important role in EU-Africa relations through to the Summit and beyond.

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<sup>41</sup> V. Chadwick, "EU development boss makes debt relief push", *Devex*, 17 February 2021; S. Pleeck and M. Gavas, *The EU's Global Recovery Initiative: A Paper Tiger or the Markings of a Geopolitical Commission?*, Center for Global Development, 4 December 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Italian G20 Presidency, *Second G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting. G20 Communiqué*, 7 April 2021; M. Plant, *The Challenge of Reallocating SDRs: A Primer*, Center for Global Development, 18 August 2021.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission, *Global Recovery: The EU disburses SDR 141 Million to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust*, 5 April 2021.

## The Way to the Summit

Much remains to be done to ensure that the proposed partnerships laid out in the EU's Strategy actually become real partnerships and lead to actionable initiatives ahead of and beyond the Sixth EU-AU Summit. The Summit is currently due to take place in the first half of 2022, during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union and when Senegalese President Macky Sall will hold the Chairmanship of the African Union from February. While a great deal of cooperation is happening at the technical level across all of the proposed partnerships, it is often difficult to scale up these measures and to turn them into real shared political and strategic priorities. Ultimately, this can only be done by high-level political engagement and with the involvement of the member states on both sides. This is particularly true on the AU side, where the AU Commission does not have the same kinds of competences as the EU Commission.<sup>44</sup> This underlines the importance of joint EU and AU Ministerial meetings, bringing together Foreign Ministers from countries on both sides. Yet, these Ministerial meetings have been increasingly difficult to hold, with limited political interest on both sides to make them happen. As a result, the partnership lacks any joint political steering, and needs much greater investment in building continuity and discussion between the Summits at the highest level, rather than relying on ad hoc visits by the political level.

Despite close EU-AU alignment on green priorities, there remains a gulf between them at the level of political rhetoric. Despite considerable policy overlap and technical cooperation between the EU and AU, there continues to be something of a war of words at the political level. The African Union, the African Group of Negotiators, and South Africa as part of

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<sup>44</sup> For more on the differences between the functioning of the AUC and EC, see A. Medinilla and C. Teevan, *Beyond good intentions: The new EU-Africa partnership*, ECDPM Discussion Paper 267, European Centre for Development Policy Management, March 2020.

the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) countries, continue to demand greater support from historical emitters, while high-level African Union representatives, such as AU High Representative for Partnerships with Europe Carlos Lopes, have argued that the EU Green Deal is protectionist and risks making it even more difficult for African countries to export to Europe.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the EU is providing support to the AU in putting together its Circular Economy Action Plan, and there is much overlap between the AU GRAP and the EU's own green recovery focus. Yet, achieving a breakthrough ahead of the Summit would require reconciling policy and politics and call for the EU to show some leadership in bringing partners from across the Global North along with it to meet commitments. This includes living up to certain past political pledges, such as the global climate finance target of US\$100 billion, and setting a new more ambitious climate financing target for 2025. At the policy level, it will also require clarifications and adjustments to show that the EU's own domestic transition as part of the Green Deal will not hinder Africa's development.<sup>46</sup>

On digital, there is a lot of potential overlap of interests, but both parties will need to lay out more clearly the boundaries of how they work together, what they hope to achieve and what is actually feasible. Thus far, the EU/Team Europe approach to Africa has been somewhat scattered, with no clear joint vision guiding the way and huge ambitions that may pave the way for disappointment. While the EU member states have an important role to play in the EU's digital partnership with Africa, it will be important that the D4D Hub ensures coherence between various strands of work, and that they support an African-led

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<sup>45</sup> Mr. Tanguy Gahouma-Bekale, *Closing Statement of the Chair of African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change under the UNFCCC*, 4 December 2020; South African Government, *Joint Statement issued at the conclusion of the 30th BASIC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change hosted by India on 8th April 2021*, 8 April 2021; C. Lopes, *Europe and Africa need to see eye to eye on climate change*, Paris, OECD, 4 January 2021.

<sup>46</sup> For further analysis and recommendations, see Teevan, Medinilla and Sergejeff (2021); and Medinilla (2021).

agenda and facilitate rather than complicate the achievement of an African Digital Single Market.<sup>47</sup>

As with the digital partnership (and overlapping with it in many areas), there is still a great deal that needs to be clarified regarding the potential of the economic partnership. Many delegations are still struggling with how to programme the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus, and in certain fields, such as digital, work still needs to be done in order to create the necessary contacts with private sector actors and develop a coherent Team Europe approach to investment. There is strength in the diversity of European actors and instruments, but stronger cooperation should be encouraged amongst the various parts of the European financial architecture for development (EFAD), not only between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), but also amongst member state development banks.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the EU is working at the technical level to support the implementation of the AfCFTA, but it should also aim to understand the dynamics on the ground in partner countries and how regional integration is happening at the regional level – both within but also beyond the Regional Economic Communities. This will be essential to understanding how to support the implementation of the AfCFTA – both at the technical level and through investments in cross-border infrastructure – thereby truly encouraging growth and jobs in Africa.

At the same time, as already noted, the EU should not lose track of human development goals. Indeed, the most pressing question for EU-Africa relations at the moment clearly relates to equitable access to vaccines. The EU's reliability as a partner across all areas is likely to depend on its ability to deliver on its rhetoric in this regard. In the short-term, the EU will need to

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<sup>47</sup> Interview 23 June 2021.

<sup>48</sup> S. Bilal, *The beauty contest is over: High time to reform the European financial architecture for development*, ECDPM Commentary, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 21 June 2021.



develop and communicate a better strategy on how it hopes to help ensure that vaccines are accessible to all, and notably to its partners in Africa. Its strong initial support for COVAX was undermined by its participation in the global rush for bilateral vaccine contracts, while its commitments with regard to sharing vaccines are underwhelming. The G7 pledge to donate 1 billion vaccines was widely disparaged as being unambitious and too slow.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the EU has been unwilling to waive selected intellectual property rules under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) as proposed by India and South Africa, and has instead argued for alternative approaches to manufacturing and rolling out vaccines in the Global South. This stance has reflected badly on the EU on the global stage, particularly following US President Biden's support for the waiver. The announcement of potential vaccine manufacturing partnerships with Rwanda and Senegal is a step in the right direction, but the EU will need to show that this approach really works and can scale up to meet the needs of developing countries, and it will also need to communicate strategically on this. This could also mark an important step in moving beyond aid by highlighting research and innovation, technology transfer and investments in manufacturing.

Covid-19 should also lead to increased political will to take a "One Health approach" to address and prevent future pandemics by taking into account human, animal and environmental health, side by side with, and indeed learning from, African experiences of previous pandemics such as Ebola. As both the EU and AU strengthen their capacities in the field of health, mechanisms might be developed to share early warning signs and best practices.

The EU-Africa Summit should provide an opportunity for the EU to recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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<sup>49</sup> E. Piper and K. Holton, "We need more: UN joins criticism of G7 vaccine pledge", *Reuters*, 12 June 2021.

and to support the ambitions of the AU's Agenda 2063. Human development should be integrated into commitments across all of the five partnerships, taking into account that inequitable economic growth and gender-blind digital development may cause as many problems as they solve. Each of the partnerships can and should ultimately lead to enhancing the richness of human life.

Finally, the EU should continue to work with partners through the G20 to look for innovative ways to relieve the debt burden facing many African countries and to create fiscal space for them to respond to the pandemic and “build back better”. Amongst other measures, the EU should spearhead a new approach to the question of international debt and finance, championing debt-for-climate swaps, offering countries debt relief in exchange for environmental commitments and providing green finance as a means to truly help African countries in fiscal difficulty to “build back better”. This should be accompanied by a continued push to increase global climate financing and an ambitious target for post-2025.

### **3. Renewing the Cotonou Partnership Agreement: *Déjà Vu* or New Deal?**

Walter Kennes<sup>1</sup>

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When the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) was signed in June 2000 it was considered a historic event. A few years earlier it seemed uncertain whether the Lomé Convention, the preceding comprehensive agreement between the EU and the group of countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), could be continued. There was a broad feeling of fatigue about the whole system. With only a few exceptions, the economic situation of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa was disappointing. Political instability and conflicts were spreading across more countries than ever before. Moreover, despite their preferred trade partner status, the share of the ACP in EU trade was going down steadily. The late 1990s was also a period when anti-globalist sentiment was increasing. Only six months before the signing of the CPA, the WTO (World Trade Organization) ministerial conference held for the first time in the US ended in chaos and became known as the “battle of Seattle”. Against this background, it was a relief that a new and ambitious agreement involving 92 states (15 EU member states and 77 ACP states) could be signed. The CPA was welcomed as an exemplary and comprehensive way to deal with North-South relations.

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<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to Jean-Claude Boidin, Geert Laporte, Evita Schmieg, Remco Vahl and Rene Vandermosten for valuable suggestions on an earlier draft of the chapter.

The CPA had a time horizon of twenty years and when preparations for its follow-up started in 2015 it was again a period of great uncertainty and multiple challenges, such as the refugee crisis. Over the years the ACP as well as the EU had been affected by profound changes. There was renewed debate about the merits and weaknesses of the whole arrangement. Fortunately, in contrast to twenty years earlier, the economic outlook in Africa was much better. Several African countries had seen an unprecedented phase of economic growth and EU trade with Africa was rising. There was growing interest from other (geo)political players like China, India and Turkey. The negotiations for a successor to the CPA took longer than planned partly because of the coronavirus pandemic, but on 15 April 2021 they were concluded. On that day the chief negotiators, Robert Dussey, Togolese Minister for Foreign Affairs, representing the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), and Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships, representing the EU, initialled and released a new twenty-year partnership agreement.<sup>2</sup>

While the resilience and long tradition of the setup is remarkable, the question arises as to whether the new post-Cotonou agreement can be a solid framework for the next twenty years. This chapter combines an overview of the key events and documents with a personal assessment. After outlining the experience with the CPA, the stage is set for examining the preparations for the successor agreement. We will then look at the main characteristics of the new agreement, with its strengths and weaknesses, and assess its prospects. Although the agreement covers Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the focus will be on Africa, in line with the whole volume.

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<sup>2</sup> The agreement as initialled by the chief negotiators can be found together with related documents via the following link [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/news/post-cotonou-negotiations-new-euafrica-caribbean-pacific-partnership-agreement-concluded\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/news/post-cotonou-negotiations-new-euafrica-caribbean-pacific-partnership-agreement-concluded_en)

## Implementing the CPA, Twenty Years of Experience

Like the preceding arrangements, the CPA comprised the three interlinked pillars of trade, development cooperation, and political dialogue.

The difficult road towards new ACP-EU trade arrangements

Already during the negotiations for the CPA the trade aspects had been the most controversial part. In 1995 the WTO was set up and the EU was a strong defender of the multilateral trading system. It became clear that EU trade preferences towards the ACP countries were not compatible with WTO rules. A continuation of these preferences would require asking for an exception or waiver to the rules. For the EU such dependence on a waiver, which had to be regularly renewed, was not acceptable. A waiver would imply continuous uncertainty, but no waiver would lead to trade disputes, as was already happening for the banana trade. In order to resolve this issue, the CPA proposed the establishment of WTO compatible Free-Trade Areas (FTAs) referred to as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and subgroups of ACP states engaged in a regional integration process. The EPAs would be instruments to promote regional integration as a step towards integration into the world economy. Instead of EU preferences being granted in one direction to the ACP, EPAs imply *reciprocal* trade preferences. Even though there can be a good deal of flexibility, in the sense that ACP liberalisation would not have to cover all goods and there could be a very long transition period, the reciprocity requirement came as a shock to the ACP. There was a widespread view that reciprocity was simply unfair and unacceptable to the ACP, notwithstanding the legal requirements of the WTO.

The EPA process was affected by the restructuring of the European Commission in 1999, when a separate Directorate General for Trade was created. Until then, the Development

Directorate General (DG) had handled all aspects of EU trade relations with ACP countries. This included, for example, the follow-up of commodity protocols such as for sugar and beef, but also a whole range of tariff quotas for specific products covered by the Common Agricultural Policy. Within the Commission, the negotiation of the EPAs became the responsibility of the new DG Trade. That DG covered not only the whole multilateral trading system, but also all the bilateral and regional trade agreements. In other words the EU no longer considered the ACP Group as a special case for trade matters. The ACP negotiators felt that this posed a risk of overlooking the development dimension of the EPAs. However, DG Development remained involved in a different way because trade and regional integration policy is an integral part of overall development policy. This led to a range of programmes to support the EPA preparations and the transition process.

Eight years was envisaged as a reasonable period for negotiating the EPAs. In 2001, on the margins of the ministerial meeting of the WTO in Doha, a waiver for the ACP trade regime was duly obtained until the beginning of 2008. The Doha meeting was the start of a new round of multilateral trade liberalisation negotiations that would focus on developing countries, hence the name Doha Development Agenda (DDA). In order to facilitate the start of the DDA, the EU launched an important new trade initiative called Everything but Arms (EBA). Under EBA, the EU would fully liberalise all imports except arms from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). This was a significant gesture in the WTO context, but it seriously affected the willingness of ACP countries to agree on an EPA.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Of the 50 LDCs as recognised by the UN, 41 belonged to the ACP group; most of these are in Sub-Saharan Africa, a few in the Pacific region and one, Haiti, in the Caribbean region. EBA is one of the three modalities of the EU's *Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)* for which in principle all developing countries are eligible. The standard GSP has many restrictions and excludes various products, so it represents only a small improvement over the normal WTO trade regime. The EU also has the GSP+, an intermediate system between

The EPAs were designed to support the ACP regional integration process and to build on existing groupings. But these groupings generally contained a mix of LDC and non-LDC countries. For the LDCs, using EBA seemed an easy option that was not open to the non-LDCs. But if the LDCs did not participate, it could have a negative effect on regional integration. The EU pointed out that EPAs would also be attractive for the LDCs because they would go much beyond the trade in goods covered by EBA. EPAs would also deal with trade in services and trade-related areas such as investment, intellectual property and standards. Moreover, the EU promised sizeable support for the transition process and allowed flexibility and a long implementation period.

By the time the ACP waiver ended in 2008, only one full EPA – with the Caribbean region – had been negotiated.<sup>4</sup> For the Pacific ACP countries there was little motivation to negotiate an EPA, mainly because their trade with the EU is small, but also because of the large number of LDCs among them.<sup>5</sup>

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EBA and the standard GSP. GSP+ is granted on condition that the country respects core labour standards and implements a number of environmental and climate conventions. It is important to keep in mind that GSP is a unilateral arrangement of the EU while EPAs are negotiated agreements between the EU and ACP countries.

<sup>4</sup> This EPA covered the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as well as the Dominican Republic. It did not come as a surprise that this EPA was the first to be concluded. For the Caribbean region, trade arrangements with the EU, including the protocols for products like sugar, rum, bananas and rice, had always been more important than development cooperation, except for Haiti. This situation helped to create a pool of Caribbean trade expertise that could be mobilised for the EPA negotiations. A full EPA is complex. It is worth noting that the Caribbean trade expertise is used more widely with other trading partners and in the WTO.

<sup>5</sup> Only a few Pacific states such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea have significant trade with the EU. These two states initially signed and ratified an interim EPA covering trade in goods. Recently Samoa and Solomon Islands acceded to the EPA. Discussions continue on further accessions and to widen the areas covered by the EPA.

The most challenging EPA situation was in Sub-Saharan Africa. The EU requested the ACP to form negotiation groups based on their regional integration and without overlap i.e. one country could only be in one group. This seemed like an obvious requirement, but it was hard because of the structure of the African regional organisations, eight of which are officially recognised by the AU as Regional Economic Communities, or RECs, seen as the building blocks of the African Economic Community.<sup>6</sup> There is considerable overlap in the membership of the RECs, and some are much more active and advanced than others, illustrating the challenges for African economic integration. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in North West Africa and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) are barely active organisations. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) mostly deal with security issues and hardly touch on trade issues. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) can be considered the most active organisations pursuing an economic integration agenda. In addition to these eight official RECs, there are various other regional organisations in Africa, some of which are quite active and meaningful for the regional integration agenda.

The African countries formed five negotiation groups for the EPAs: West Africa (comprising all the ECOWAS member states plus Mauritania); Central Africa (with most of the ECCAS member states); EAC (comprising Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda); the SADC group (including Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, eSwatini, Mozambique and South Africa); and finally a group with the ten remaining countries in Eastern

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<sup>6</sup> For a thorough analysis of the RECs in relation to the EPAs, see D. Bach, *Regionalism in Africa: genealogies, institutions and trans-state networks*, London, Routledge, 2016.



and Southern Africa, referred to as the ESA group. All the countries in the ESA group are members of COMESA. It turns out that EAC is the only group that exactly corresponds to one of the RECs. However, the ECOWAS group almost corresponds to a REC, only Mauritania is added. The SADC group corresponds to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), which is an active grouping, but not a recognised REC, with only Mozambique added. It also became clear that all the African EPA groups comprise both LDC and non-LDC countries. Because of EBA, LDCs were often not in a rush to conclude an EPA.

The end of the WTO waiver in 2008 effectively implied the end of the EU's preferential regime for the ACP, which had been in use for almost half a century. In order to avoid a sudden change in ACP access to the EU, a series of interim EPAs were concluded. The interim EPAs covered at the minimum trade in goods in order to respect WTO rules for a Free Trade Area. Several ACP states, mostly non-LDCs, agreed to such an interim EPA.

EPA negotiations with the five African groups have moved slowly. Only in 2014 there was a breakthrough and negotiations were concluded with three groups: ECOWAS, EAC and the SADC group. But only the SADC group completed the actual signing and ratification process, and started EPA implementation. In West Africa, Nigeria is delaying the process, while Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana went ahead with the ratification of their individual interim EPAs. For the EAC group, only Kenya has signed and ratified the EPA. In Central Africa, only Cameroon has signed and ratified an interim EPA. Finally, in the ESA group, five of the ten countries – Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe – have signed and started implementing interim EPAs. Recently these five countries agreed to continue the negotiations towards a full EPA.

In summary, for Africa only 14 of the 48 ACP states are presently implementing an EPA.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of the others are LDCs that continue to have free access for goods to the EU market because of EBA. Nigeria and Congo are in the standard GSP and Cape Verde has obtained GSP+ status. Gabon is the only African ACP state that does not have a preferential trade regime. Kenya is a special case for the moment as it is covered by EBA even though it is not an LDC. Kenya ratified the regional EPA while it did not conclude an interim EPA. Kenya is a major exporter to the EU of horticultural products and flowers, and maintains its competitive position on the EU market. While the EPA negotiations are continuing, and given that the ratifications of the EPAs for ECOWAS and EAC are being held up by just a few states, the overall result after twenty years of negotiation looks rather modest. The clarity and simplicity of the past trade regime with the ACP states “at the top of the EU pyramid of preferences” has been replaced by a complex system of different trade regimes.

Development cooperation:  
the working horse of the CPA

Unlike the trade pillar, the development cooperation pillar of the CPA moved on the whole smoothly. Development cooperation was able to build on and improve the long experience with the Lomé Convention. The CPA took on board the best thinking about development policy. It strongly promoted the use of budget support as a way to increase aid effectiveness. The CPA implementation machinery is a truly vast system involving 79 country programmes plus a wide range of regional and thematic programmes. For each of these programmes there are several projects to be identified, appraised, decided, implemented and

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<sup>7</sup> See European Commission, European Trade Promotion Organisations' Association, “African continental integration, trade agreements, and the EU: synergies and challenges”, e-reader for European Commission webinar on 26 May 2021.

evaluated. Disbursements have on average been between €3-4 billion per year. A few points are highlighted below because of their wider significance and link to the post-Cotonou discussion.

The CPA contains strong provisions to ensure ownership by the developing country partners. Programming of cooperation must be based on the partners' strategies and plans. In each of the ACP states a Minister or high official is nominated as the National Authorising Officer (NAO). Typically, the NAO comes from a central ministry, like finance or budget. The NAO plays the role of co-manager in the appraisal and implementation of the cooperation programmes, including, for example, the launching of tenders and the signing of contracts. While the NAO system is interesting from the perspective of ownership by the partner country, the complex administrative requirements for EU projects and programmes have often been a challenge. In order to deal with this situation, a special support unit to the NAO was created in many ACP countries. But such a unit could lead to a parallel system for areas covered by EU cooperation. It was also noted that the powerful NAO setup did not always facilitate dialogue with line ministries and non-state actors. Because the EU is the only international partner with such a NAO system, coordination between a country and its development partners is made more difficult.

One of the special characteristics of ACP-EU cooperation has been that the financial resources were provided through a dedicated European Development Fund (EDF) outside the EU budget. The first EDF dates back to the Treaty of Rome of 1957. It was then strongly promoted by France as an instrument to share the cost of infrastructure projects in the African colonies of the founding members of the European Economic Community. A few years later, most colonies became independent states, but they still agreed to be associated with the EEC through the Yaoundé Convention, a predecessor of the CPA. The EDF arrangement was kept and the fund was replenished more or less every five years. For each replenishment, EU member

states agreed to provide a specific share that differs somewhat from their share in the overall budget. At the beginning of the CPA, the 9th EDF was set up, amounting to €13.5 billion<sup>8</sup> and covering the period 2000-07. At that time a considerable sum of nearly €10 billion remained unspent from the earlier EDFs. It was decided to add this amount to the 9th EDF with a new and strict requirement that the total amount had to be committed before the end of 2007. In 2006 the 10th EDF was decided, with a budget of almost €22 billion for the period 2008-13. Finally in 2013 the 11th EDF was agreed with €29 billion to cover the period 2014-20. This was the first time that the time horizon of the EDF was aligned with that of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), governing the EU budget.

For a long time, there have been calls for the integration of the EDF into the EU budget. The European Parliament was always strongly in favour because it considers it must have the same oversight role for the EDF as for the budget. The European Commission also preferred the EDF to be in the EU budget, mainly for reasons of rationalisation and delivery efficiency.<sup>9</sup> France and a few other member states usually resisted this. For a long time, the rules and procedures of the EDF have been somewhat different from those of the budget. Sometimes the EDF experience inspired the procedures applied for other EU programmes, like the substantial assistance packages for Central and East European countries during the 1990s. Over the CPA horizon there was a gradual convergence of the rules and procedures for the EDF and the budget. This convergence, together with the similarity of the end date of the 11th EDF and the 2014-20 MFF, paved the way for easy integration of the EDF into the budget.

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<sup>8</sup> The figures mentioned for the EDF do not include loans provided by the European Investment Bank from its own resources.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the EDF, ACP countries benefited from sizeable budget programmes such as food aid, humanitarian assistance and cooperation with NGOs. The use of budget and EDF programmes in the same countries complicated their management.

Regional cooperation has been a long-term feature of EU cooperation with ACP countries. The EU has promoted such cooperation more than any other development partner. Traditionally it involved supporting cross-border infrastructure and combatting livestock diseases that spread across countries. But during the 1990s, following a new wave of regional integration initiatives among developing countries, it became focussed on supporting regional economic integration as a step towards integration into the world economy. Attention shifted to the regional organisations engaged in working out and implementing the regional integration agenda. The CPA further reinforced this shift by strengthening the role of the Regional Authorising Officer (RAO) modelled on the NAO. But as mentioned above there were many overlapping regional organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa, so selecting the RAOs was tricky. The regional cooperation area also became closely linked to the EPA process. While the EU was confident that the EPAs would over time be beneficial for the participating countries, there were always going to be transitional costs for both the public and the private sector. The LDCs would face the biggest challenges. For example, trade liberalisation reduces government tariff revenue and leads to restructuring in the private sector. Regional cooperation was seen as the ideal tool to facilitate this process. For the 9th EDF the link was not yet very strong as the EPA process was just starting. But for the 10th and 11th EDFs the regional programmes were strongly focused on supporting the regional integration and EPA processes. However, it was not easy to manage these huge regional programmes.<sup>10</sup> The designated RAOs being the regional organisations with a mandate for economic integration rarely corresponded to the EPA configurations. Moreover, the transitional costs had to be covered at the national level, and it was tricky for the regional organisations to arrange this and for national governments to

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the regional programmes for Eastern and Southern Africa and for West Africa under the 11th EDF amounted to €1.3 billion and €1.15 billion respectively.

accept it. The result was slow disbursement and disappointment with the regional programmes under the CPA.

### Political dialogue

Political dialogue had long been part of ACP-EU cooperation, but it was only during the 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin wall and the political transitions, that it became prominent. The CPA deepened and streamlined the political dialogue process. The provisions on political dialogue are more elaborate in the CPA than in any other EU agreement, such as with the Mediterranean or ASEAN countries. Political dialogue is carried out at country and regional levels. The political dimension of the CPA is closely linked to the so-called “non-execution clause” permitting *appropriate action* in the event of violation of *essential elements*. The essential elements are human rights, democratic principles and rule of law. Good governance is treated in a slightly different way as a *fundamental element*. Appropriate action can mean a partial suspension of aid programmes. Usually, budget support programmes rather than specific projects are suspended. But before any measures are taken there is an extensive consultation procedure. Since the beginning of the CPA, consultations took place with around 20 countries, the vast majority in Africa. In most cases this led to a partial suspension of aid.

The EPAs also contain a reference to the non-execution clause of the CPA. This is another important link between the EPAs and the CPA. Appropriate measures in cases where essential elements are not respected can also mean trade sanctions or even (partial) suspension of the EPAs. So far, the EU has been reluctant to use this possibility for ACP countries.

Shortly after the CPA was signed, an event took place that profoundly affected the EU’s political dialogue process in Africa. In 2002, following the Durban Summit, the African Union (AU) was launched. The AU was the successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was created in 1963 mainly with the aim of supporting the independence

of all African states. Contacts between the EU and the OAU had been rather limited. But it was quite different with the AU. Right from the start, the EU wholeheartedly engaged in political dialogue as well as cooperation programmes with the AU. This involved, for example, regular Africa-EU Summits as well as Commission-to-Commission meetings, something that had not happened in the ACP context. The result was that the EU's political dialogue with Africa no longer took place in the ACP context but with the AU. The engagement with the AU went further to include development cooperation. The 2007 EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon approved the Joint Africa EU Strategy (JAES). The JAES covers a wide range of development topics that also feature in the CPA. The details were worked out in the form of an Action Plan and Road Map. The JAES was presented as following the new "whole of Africa approach", but there was no dedicated instrument to finance the JAES. Existing instruments would be used such as the EDF for the ACP states, the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) for the North African countries and the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) for South Africa. In terms of procedures this was a complex and difficult setup. Dialogue and cooperation between the AU and EU focused on peace and security, but also covered other key areas like economic integration, climate change, energy and migration. Maybe the most prominent initiative was the African Peace Facility (APF), set up to support the peace and security actions of the AU. Since its creation in 2004, more than €3.5 billion has been committed to the APF, with funding from the EDF. In 2014, in order to streamline EU support for the strategic partnership with Africa as a whole, the EU created a new Pan-African Programme (with a budget of €845 million for the 2014-20 period) as part of the DCI.

## Preparing the Post-Cotonou Agreement

The CPA stipulated that the negotiations on a follow-up arrangement should start in September 2018. But preparations began much earlier. In 2015 the Commission organised a broad stakeholder consultation and a detailed evaluation.<sup>11</sup>

The evaluation pointed to interesting results in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which had become the general framework for development progress, but it also underlined several weaknesses. As regards political dialogue, it demonstrated the limited role for the ACP level in comparison to the regional and African levels. There was also criticism of the complex procedures and the institutional setup. The public consultation confirmed a lack of visibility of the ACP structure, despite the big machinery and the financial volume. A related weakness has been the modest influence of the ACP-EU setup in the multilateral arena, notwithstanding the fact that the combined membership represents more than half of the UN membership. There are some exceptions to the latter observation. The ACP has been visible in the WTO, for example when the Doha Development Agenda was launched in 2001 and when the Trade Facilitation Agreement was concluded in 2014. The ACP also played a constructive role in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. A large majority of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are in the ACP group. The SIDS are among the most vulnerable to climate change and play an important role in the climate negotiations.

The evaluation pointed to weaknesses in the CPA provisions regarding migration. For the first time the CPA contained an obligation, on both sides, to readmit nationals who are illegally present on the territory of another party. During 2013 and 2014 the number of asylum seekers from Africa, and African nationals staying irregularly in the EU, went up quickly. This

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<sup>11</sup> See European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “[Evaluation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement](#)”, SWD(2016)250, 15 July 2016.



was the same period when many refugees fled the war situation in Syria. Several initiatives were undertaken outside the CPA, including the Rabat and Khartoum processes for jointly addressing these issues together with sub-groups of African countries touched by different migration routes. Many African countries as well as the AU took part in the Valetta Summit on migration held in 2015. At this Summit the EU launched a new Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to support migration management and to deal with the drivers of migration. This involved 26 countries in North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Of the €3.6 billion allocated to the fund, 88% came from the EDF and the balance from the Neighbourhood and Development Cooperation Instruments. The complex and sensitive migration issue illustrated some of the limitations of the ACP framework.

In parallel with the evaluation and stakeholder consultation organised by the European Commission, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) undertook a thorough political economy analysis on the future of ACP-EU relations. This led to a number of publications for discussion<sup>12</sup> that pointed to the gradual loss of status of the ACP-EU partnership and the limited track record of the CPA in delivering on its core objectives. The ECDPM analysis touched on many points that were also covered in the evaluation, but put more emphasis on the regionalisation dynamics, as exemplified by the rising role of the AU and the RECs as logical partners for the EU. It argued against business-as-usual, and in favour of a fundamental rethink of ACP-EU cooperation.

The ACP side prepared for the post-Cotonou period in several ways, including through an Eminent Persons Group

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<sup>12</sup> See J. Bossuyt, et al., *The Future of ACP - EU Relations: A Political Economy Analysis*, Policy and Management Report 21, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), 2016; J. Bossuyt, et al., *ACP-EU relations beyond 2020: engaging the future or perpetuating the past*, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), 2017.

(EPG) that published its report at the beginning of 2016.<sup>13</sup> The EPG underlined the uniqueness of the tri-continental outreach of the ACP Group and argued strongly for the Group to remain united. It was critical of the functioning of the ACP Group, stating that the failure by most member states to make timely contributions to the ACP budget was a serious weakness that should be rectified. The EPG recommended revising the 1975 Georgetown Agreement that established the ACP Group.

To fully appreciate the preparations for post-Cotonou, it is important to recall some significant changes that took place after the CPA entered into force. By 2013 there were 13 new member states in the EU, mostly from Central and Eastern Europe, bringing the total membership to 28. The British referendum in 2016, with a narrow majority voting against EU membership, led to the departure of the UK in 2020. The changes in EU membership including Brexit affect future relations with the ACP Group. Another change on the EU side was the Lisbon Treaty that came into force in 2010. This involved the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the diplomatic service of the EU in charge of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, but also more widely engaged in the EU's external action. The EEAS is headed by the High Representative of the EU, who is also a Vice-President of the Commission. In 2016 the EEAS published a Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy. The Global Strategy sets out principles and priorities for the EU's external action and covers extensively the EU's neighbours and surrounding regions. The strategy strongly advocates EU support for regional organisations, interestingly adding: "we will not strive to export our model, but rather seek reciprocal inspiration from different regional experiences". Several regional organisations are highlighted in the strategy, including the AU, the ECOWAS and the East African Community. But there is no reference to the ACP Group.

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<sup>13</sup> ACP Group, Report by the Eminent Persons Group, 2016.

Following the evaluation of the CPA and the stakeholder consultation, the European Commission and the High Representative outlined three options for a renewed partnership with the ACP countries:<sup>14</sup> (1) a substantially revised partnership, (2) a full regionalisation with three separate partnerships with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and (3) three distinct partnerships with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific under a common umbrella.

The third “umbrella” option was immediately considered the preferred one that could best preserve the Cotonou *acquis* and ensure coherence with the pan-African dimension and the JAES that was agreed with the AU. This could imply involvement of the North African countries.

The next stage in the preparation of post-Cotonou was the drafting and adoption of the negotiation mandate by the EU and ACP sides. The ACP Council of Ministers adopted the ACP negotiating mandate in May 2018. The mandate argued for a single Agreement that maintains and builds on the *acquis* of the Cotonou Agreement.<sup>15</sup> It also favoured keeping the EDF as the main financial instrument and the principle of co-management and joint decision making.

The European Commission in its recommendation to the Council suggested following the “umbrella scenario”, but expressed differently. It proposed a *foundation agreement* applicable to all members of the partnership, together with *three regional compacts or protocols* covering Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It stated that the *centre of gravity* would be the regional protocols. Based on this proposal, the EU’s negotiating directives or mandate was adopted by the Council in June 2018.<sup>16</sup> The mandate specified that “the agreement will be open

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<sup>14</sup> See European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific”, JOIN(2016)52, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> ACP Group, ACP negotiating mandate for a post-Cotonou partnership agreement with the EU, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Council of the EU, Negotiating directives for a Partnership Agreement

to and welcome the involvement or accession of third countries which subscribe to the same values, contribute to meeting the objectives and share the same interests”. Interestingly, it added that the agreement “will include an adapted, effective, lighter and flexible institutional architecture that simplifies and rationalizes relations between the parties”.

During 2018, while the EU and ACP sides were preparing their respective negotiation mandates, there were important developments in the AU. In March, the AU Executive Council criticised the geographic fragmentation of Africa in its relations with the EU. The AU advocated a continent-to-continent partnership with the EU and reaffirmed the need for AU-EU relations to treat Africa as one. The AU Commission (AUC) wanted to represent the African side in the negotiation on the follow-up to the CPA. However, by September 2018 it became clear that the AUC was not able to obtain the support of enough member states for its position. It is not quite clear how this evolved. Some AU members wanted the AUC to play an important role in the negotiations whereas others were against it. The AU is a very different body in comparison to the ACP Group. Maybe those against feared that they would lose some control of the process when the AUC was involved. With the traditional ACP setup they were confident that their interests would be taken into account. Later in the same month the negotiations between the EU and the ACP on a successor to the CPA officially started without AUC involvement.

It was remarkable that during the same month Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in his state of the union speech proposed a new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs. The proposal clearly followed the logic of treating Africa as one, as advocated by the AU. The details of the proposal<sup>17</sup> included support for the African Continental Free

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between the EU and its Member States of the one part, and with the countries of the ACP Group of States of the other part, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, “[Communication on a new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs](#)”, COM(2018)643, 2018.

Trade Area (AfCFTA) that had been announced by the AU as a new flagship initiative just a few months earlier. The Juncker proposals even included support for the long-term perspective of creating a continent-to-continent Free Trade Agreement. The EPAs and the new Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas on offer to the countries of North Africa would be building blocks for the AfCFTA and ultimately for the continent-to-continent agreement.<sup>18</sup>

The negotiations on the post-Cotonou agreement had a slow start because it took time for the ACP to drop the unitary approach of their mandate and to accept the proposed structure in the EU mandate with a foundation agreement and three regional protocols. The negotiations also took place during a challenging period for the EU, with the refugee crisis, Brexit, rising populism and strained relations with the US. It was not possible to conclude the negotiations before the end of 2019, when the new European Commission was installed. Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships, became the new chief negotiator for the EU, replacing Commissioner Neven Mimica. From the beginning of 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic put extra constraints on the negotiation. In order to allow time to finalise the new agreement, the validity of the CPA was extended until the end of 2021. One of the most controversial parts of the negotiation concerned migration, on which it was hard to find common ground between some of the EU member states and some of the African countries.

In April 2020, the ACP Group became the Organisation of ACP States. This resulted from a revision of the 1975 Georgetown Agreement, in line with the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group. The transformation should facilitate the future involvement of the ACP in international or regional bodies, but it did not directly affect the negotiation.

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<sup>18</sup> The European Commission under President Ursula von der Leyen continued the priority of engaging with the AU. In February 2020, early in its mandate, there was an unprecedented Commission-to-Commission meeting in Addis Ababa with 22 EU Commissioners.

In December 2020 the chief negotiators were able to reach a political agreement on the new post-Cotonou partnership agreement. The text still had to go through an internal approval process on both sides before it could be officially initialled and released in April 2021.

Outside the negotiation context, almost under the radar, another significant change for the ACP-EU cooperation setup took place. In 2018, when the Commission presented its proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-27, an EDF outside the EU budget was no longer foreseen. The funding for the follow-up to the CPA was included in a new comprehensive Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). NDICI completely changes the EU's external action architecture. It integrates a wide range of instruments, including the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the Development Cooperation Instrument, the Partnership Instrument (PI) that was used for cooperation with all third countries and finally the EDF. Adoption of the overall MFF was particularly challenging because of the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit. In order to support the economic recovery after the Covid-19 crisis, the Commission prepared an ambitious Recovery and Resilience Facility that was put forward for approval together with the MFF proposals. The unprecedented financial package amounting to more than €1,800 billion over the next seven years was endorsed by the Council in July 2020 and finally adopted in December 2020. It included future financial aid for ACP countries. After sixty years, this marked the end of the EDF. The NDICI Regulation was adopted in June 2021. The amount approved for Sub-Saharan Africa is €29.2 billion. For the Caribbean and the Pacific the funds are included in the wider allocations for Latin America-Caribbean and Asia-Pacific. The amount earmarked in the NDICI Regulation for the Caribbean is at least €0.8 billion and for the Pacific at least €0.5 billion. It is interesting to observe that the total for the ACP amounting at least to €30.5 billion compares favourably

with the 11th EDF of €29.1 billion, especially considering that 15% of that amount was provided by the UK. The fear that bringing the EDF into the EU budget would be at the expense of EU financial cooperation with Africa did not materialise.<sup>19</sup>

The discussions and controversy about the follow-up to Cotonou show a striking parallel with what happened 20 years earlier when the follow-up to the Lomé Convention was on the table. Back in 1996 the European Commission also organised wide consultations.<sup>20</sup> It produced a Green Paper on Relations between the EU and the ACP Countries on the Eve of the XXI century. The paper outlined several options and ideas for all aspects of the partnership. One of the ideas was to have the same arrangement for LDCs outside the ACP Group as for those inside it. The Green Paper contained some rather bold statements like: “the ACP Group is in reality neither a political group nor an economic entity. It grew up for essentially historic reasons and exists only in the framework of relations with the EU”. It clearly put the question of whether it would be preferable to split the Lomé Convention into separate regional agreements with Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. There was a lot of discussion about such a split of the ACP Group, but a few years later when the CPA was signed, unity was maintained. The difference two decades later is that unity is maintained for the foundation agreement, but this is complemented by three regional protocols that according to the EU mandate should become the centre of gravity of the arrangement.

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<sup>19</sup> The overall EU support for the ACP Group is expected to be still higher because the African Peace Facility (APF) is now integrated into the new off-budget European Peace Facility (EPF). A sizeable share of the maximum €5 billion allocated to the EPF for the period 2021-27 is expected to be used in Africa. However, the EPF is neither restricted to Africa nor to interventions endorsed by the AU.

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, *Green Paper on the Relations between the EU and the ACP Countries on the Eve of the 21st Century, Challenges and Options for a New Partnership*, 1996.

## The New Post-Cotonou Agreement: Contents and Prospects

At first sight the new agreement looks more concise than the CPA, but this is deceptive. There is no longer a detailed trade part because trade relations are handled through the EPAs or other trading arrangements. Moreover, there is no financial protocol and no description of the implementation and management procedures because the EDF is now integrated into the new budget instrument NDICI. The most important change in the new text is that it comprises four agreements instead of just one. There is the *foundation agreement* applicable to all the OACPS, and there are three *regional protocols* for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.<sup>21</sup>

The foundation agreement generally preserves the Cotonou *acquis* even though the formulations are sometimes quite different. Article 1, on the objectives, sets the stage for the new Agreement. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are now considered the overarching framework for the whole partnership. Unlike in the previous text, the eradication of poverty is not laid down as a central objective, but features in a wider list that includes promoting human rights, democratic principles, rule of law and good governance, and building peaceful and resilient states. This clearly reflects the principles of the EU's external action as expressed in the Lisbon Treaty (article 21). The objectives of the new agreement further include combatting climate change

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<sup>21</sup> For further analysis and views on the new agreement, see J.-C. Boidin, *ACP-EU relations: the end of preferences? A personal assessment of the Post-Cotonou Agreement*, ECDPM Discussion Paper no. 289, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2020; L. Ishmael, *Insights into the EU – OACPS negotiations 2018-21, what are the implications for the future partnership*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), 2021; A. Medinilla, *New beginnings or a last hurrah? The OACPS - partnership in 2021 - 2041*, ECDPM Briefing Note 130, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2021.



and implementing a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration. Article 1 further underlines the adoption of common positions on the world stage and the promotion of multilateralism and a rules-based international order. In contrast to the CPA, the objectives do not include regional integration or integration into the world economy.

Like the CPA, the new agreement recognises respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law as *essential elements*. Avoiding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is also added as an essential element. In the event of violation of essential elements, the parties may take appropriate measures such as partial or full suspension of the agreement. A difference with the CPA is that the latter provisions are somewhat hidden in the article on *dispute settlement* rather than being specified in a separate article. Interestingly, the new agreement provides for a mid-term revision clause specifically linked to the global 2030 Agenda deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to the mid-term review, revisions or amendments may be proposed at any time. Still, making amendments will not be easy since the same procedures apply as for the agreement's entry into force.

The institutional framework of the foundation agreement is comparable to that of the CPA. It comprises the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers, Ambassadorial Level Senior Officials Committee (ALSOC) and Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA). It also includes the possibility for all-ACP and/or regional summit meetings of heads of state and government. In the past there was no ACP-EU summit. There are also parallel institutions for the three regional protocols. Moreover, there are already the institutions created by the EPAs. All in all, this leads to a very heavy institutional setup that is not in line with the EU mandate for the new agreement, which called for a "light and flexible architecture that simplifies and rationalises the relations between the parties". Even though in some cases the possibility of back-to-back meetings can be envisaged, the whole setup will be a challenge for the EU as well as for the

ACP partners. The functioning of the institutions was already considered unsatisfactory with the CPA, but the new agreement further complicates the situation.

Because the EDF is now part of the EU budget, the implementation procedures will follow the Financial Regulation for the EU budget, as well as the provisions of the NDICI Regulation. Over the past period there was already a gradual convergence between the procedures of the EDF and the budget. The process to prepare Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIPs) will now be the same for ACP countries as for other developing countries. There will no longer be National Authorising Officers (NAOs) or Regional Authorising Officers (RAOs). But fortunately, in line with the principles of aid effectiveness, it will still be possible to use the procedures of the beneficiary countries or organisations through “indirect management”. This is one of the implementation modalities for cooperation with third countries or regional organisations under the EU budget. In order to use this possibility, the entity that will implement the budget must fulfil a number of criteria that are checked by a so-called “pillar assessment”.<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to observe that with the EDF in the budget it will become easier than in the past to combine the resources earmarked for countries in North Africa with those earmarked for Sub-Saharan Africa.

The foundation agreement describes six *strategic priorities*: human rights, democracy and governance; peace and security; human and social development; inclusive and sustainable economic growth; environmental sustainability and climate change; and migration and mobility. The most striking change is that migration is set down as a separate strategic priority. While in the CPA there was just one article devoted to migration, the foundation agreement now includes a distinct title with 14 articles on migration and mobility. There is also an annex describing the return and readmission processes.

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<sup>22</sup> This is to protect the financial interests of the EU. The criteria comprise *inter alia* an effective internal control mechanism, a reliable accounting system, clear external audit provisions and appropriate financial procedures.

Moreover, migration gets detailed treatment again in the Africa protocol and is briefly covered in the Caribbean and Pacific protocols. There are clear and ambitious provisions on “the obligation of each EU and OACPS member state to readmit their nationals illegally present in the territory of another member state without conditionality and further formalities”. This was an important issue for the EU. But the new agreement also strongly emphasises the positive development aspects of safe, orderly and legal migration. There is attention for the constructive role of diasporas, circular migration, as well as for measures against racism and xenophobia, in favour of effective integration policies and for cheaper remittances. The parties will also increase their efforts to prevent cross-border crime and migrant smuggling and to combat human trafficking.

Most of the changes in the new agreement reflect the evolution of the international and development agenda, in particular as regards the SDGs. Hence, the more classic development topics like human and social development, inclusive economic growth, role of the private sector, and involvement of non-state actors and civil society are extensively covered. One theme that is dealt with rather disappointingly concerns reproductive health and rights, as well as population policy. These were sensitive issues during the negotiations. Finally, there is an area where the EU was always in the lead and that now gets less focus: regional cooperation and integration. The big programmes in this area under the 10th and 11th EDFs were difficult to set up and to implement, resulting in a kind of fatigue in this respect. A likely explanation is that many ACP states were reluctant to allow regional organisations to be in charge of regional programmes. They preferred to focus on bilateral programmes. Nevertheless, the new agreement preserves the fundamental links with the EPAs outlined above. Looking at the overall content of the new agreement one might regret the absence of priorities within the development agenda. But this is understandable because the agreement is applicable to 79 ACP states. The specific priorities will always be the result of bilateral dialogue.

A remarkable change in the new agreement is the increased attention for contributing to global alliances and international cooperation. The new agreement devotes a full part (four extensive articles) to this subject in contrast to only one article in the CPA. As mentioned above, cooperation in the multilateral arena already took place on a modest scale in the WTO and during the negotiation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The new treaty encourages the EU and ACP states to adopt joint resolutions, declarations and statements on a wide range of international issues, including security issues. There is potential for the EU and ACP states to be more active on the provision of global public goods. This is in line with the recent Communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism.<sup>23</sup>

A possible source of confusion is linked to the considerable overlap between the foundation agreement and the regional protocols. One would have expected the regional protocols to focus on the specific and additional aspects for the regions, but this is not the case. There are some specific elements in the protocols, but the areas of cooperation as described in the foundation agreement are again worked out in the regional protocols, sometimes in a different order and with a different emphasis. Because the foundation agreement and the regional protocols are all legally binding there could be issues of interpretation. Possibly to avoid conflicting interpretations, it is stated that “nothing in the regional protocols can affect or deviate from the provisions in the general part of the agreement” (art. 6). This means that it will be difficult to adapt the regional protocols without also adapting the foundation agreement. It is not easy to see how the regional protocols can become “the centre of gravity” as indicated in the EU's negotiation mandate.

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<sup>23</sup> European Commission and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “Joint Communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism”, JOIN(2021)3, 2021.

## How to combine AU-EU and ACP-EU dialogue and cooperation?

During the whole CPA implementation period there was increasing cooperation between the AU and the EU. The 2007 EU-Africa Lisbon Summit endorsed an ambitious JAES. Since that time, cooperation between the EU and the AU has widened and deepened. Most of the financial resources for this cooperation were taken from the EDF that was linked to the CPA. Peace and security has been a focal area with substantial cooperation. The EU also welcomed and supported the African Continental Free Trade Area and indicated its willingness to reflect on a continent-to-continent Free Trade Area.

Even though the Africa protocol was negotiated without the involvement of the AU, it incorporates several AU initiatives. It states that “the parties shall take into account the objectives of Agenda 2063 of the AU” and that “they agree to ensure coherence and complementarity between this protocol and the continent-to-continent partnership as defined in successive AU-EU Summits and related outcome documents” (see art. 3). The protocol further refers to the AfCFTA, the Africa Peace and Security Architecture and the Africa Governance Architecture. Without the involvement of the AU it is not clear how these provisions will be followed up. But how should involvement of the AU be practically organised?

Because the North African countries are members of the AU, but not of the OACPS, the new agreement still does not involve the whole of Africa. The question arises as to how coherence and complementarity will be assured between the EU’s continental partnership with the AU and its partnership with the OACPS. The negotiation mandate called for “the most appropriate modalities to be sought for associating the countries of North Africa, without prejudice to the existing legal, financial and policy frameworks”. One possibility would be for the North African countries to become members of the OACPS and join the new agreement. However, this is highly unlikely because the North African countries give priority to the Association

Agreements concluded under the European Neighbourhood Policy. Also, these countries have already had their own trade agreements with the EU for a long time. Moreover, Morocco and Tunisia are negotiating more ambitious “Deep and Comprehensive” FTAs. But the EU side also seems not to favour this solution. Recently the European Commission and the High Representative<sup>24</sup> published a joint Communication on “a renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and a new agenda for the Mediterranean”. This will be linked to the Union for the Mediterranean, a loose arrangement between a number of EU member states and countries in the Mediterranean region. The North African countries are all in the Southern Neighbourhood and are members of the AU.<sup>25</sup> The proposed policy areas for the new agenda for the Mediterranean are very similar to what is in the new post-Cotonou agreement.

Over the coming years it will be challenging for the EU to combine the three partnerships involving African states: the new agreement with the OACPS, the African Union and the Southern Neighbourhood. The reconciliation of the different partnerships could be based on pragmatism and subsidiarity. For the OACPS and the Southern Neighbourhood the focus will be on the bilateral cooperation programmes. Cooperation with the AU could then concentrate on political dialogue and in particular on cross-border issues such as peace and security; migration; climate change and other environmental challenges; and physical connectivity, including transport infrastructure and energy networks. Fortunately there is only a single financial instrument, NDICI, that will serve the three partnerships.

It is interesting to recall how the situation in Southern Africa has evolved differently from that in North Africa. In 1999 South Africa signed a comprehensive Trade, Development and

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<sup>24</sup> European Commission and High Representative, “[Joint Communication on a renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and a new agenda for the Mediterranean](#)”, JOIN(2021)2, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> The EU’s Southern Neighbourhood also includes Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) with the EU. But South Africa also joined the ACP group and signed the CPA. Later-on South Africa decided to take part in the regional EPA together with its neighbours Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and eSwatini that are members of the SACU plus Mozambique.

### Prospects for the new agreement

Can the new agreement be a sound basis for the next twenty years? Some experts consider it to be a relic of the (colonial) past. But the alternative options did not get sufficient political backing, neither on the ACP nor on the EU side. The compromise was to have a foundation agreement combined with regional protocols for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. This should allow some regional specificities to be taken into account. But the main limitation remains that the parties to the Africa protocol do not represent the whole of Africa. We shall briefly assess the prospects of the new agreement under the three main headings of trade, development cooperation and political dialogue.

As regards *trade*, the situation is evolving. The negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements to replace the EU's preferential trade regime with the ACP were difficult and divisive. The present situation with several trading arrangements co-existing is somewhat confusing. Only 14 of the 48 eligible countries in Africa are implementing an EPA. However, to be fair, this underestimates what was achieved. An EPA was concluded for both ECOWAS and EAC, but it cannot be implemented as yet because a few member states have not signed or ratified it. It is striking that only 4 out of 32 African LDCs are implementing an EPA: Lesotho and Mozambique are in the EPA for SADC; and Comoros and Madagascar take part in the EPA for Eastern and Southern Africa. It is interesting to see that this has led to a significant increase in clothing exports from Madagascar to the EU.<sup>26</sup> On the whole, the EU's EPA

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<sup>26</sup> See E. Schmieg, *EU and Africa: investment, trade and development. What a*

offer has been considered risky by the LDCs because of the need to open their market to the EU. The EU has not always been able to reassure the countries concerned that the risks can be avoided by excluding sensitive products as well as by having long transition periods and assistance for economic restructuring. In the future the EU should demonstrate more clearly the advantages of the EPAs over EBA, including more flexible rules of origin. Where possible, the design could be simplified in a first phase.

An important question remains as to whether the EPAs have supported regional integration as was intended. The EPA work has generally stimulated those RECs that were already making progress with their own regional integration agenda like ECOWAS and EAC.<sup>27</sup> The EPAs and the RECs can be building blocks for wider African integration under the AfCFTA. But it is essential for the African side to finally tackle the many inconsistencies between the RECs. One interesting initiative in this respect is the tripartite FTA involving COMESA, EAC and SADC. The considerable EU assistance for the EPA process in the form of capacity building has been useful and relevant for African trade policy more widely, including for dealing with other trading partners (like the US or China) and for participating in the multilateral system.

Some have argued that the EPAs have hampered regional integration in Africa. While this has not been substantiated, the EPAs plus the bilateral trade agreements in North Africa constitute a hub-and-spoke system where the EU is the hub, which involves some advantages. The solution is better implementation of the African integration initiatives. The most

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*post-Cotonou Agreement with the ACP states can achieve*, SWP comment no. 1, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Bach (2016) provides a thorough analysis of the EPA negotiations, calling these a “stress test” for African regional integration. Schmiege gives some examples of a positive contribution of EPAs to African integration (see E. Schmiege, *Trade policy options for Sub-Saharan Africa: TTIP, EPAs, WTO and African Integration*, SWP comment no. 23, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, April 2015.



promising way to avoid the hub-and-spoke effect is to make progress towards the AfCFTA. One of the provisions of the AfCFTA is that there should not be more trade restrictions among African countries than between African countries and the EU. But because to date the AfCFTA has only been ratified by 37<sup>28</sup> of the 55 members of the AU, and because implementation is moving slowly even for those who have ratified it, it may not be easy to observe this provision. The EU, in its EPA implementation, should therefore ensure that this is respected. It would also be good trade diplomacy for the EU to indicate clearly that it is ready to wait until there is a request to negotiate an EPA. At the same time EU trade assistance should be focussed on supporting the AfCFTA. The new Africa protocol indicates that the AfCFTA, the EPAs and other trading arrangements are all mutually supportive, but does not specify any priority among them.

Bilateral *development cooperation* will remain the main pillar of the new agreement, in particular for the Africa protocol. Cooperation will now be based on the NDICI regulation instead of the EDF. But this should not be difficult because there has been a gradual convergence between the EDF and budget procedures, and because under NDICI the principles of aid effectiveness must be applied. It will be possible to use budget support and combine private and public resources through blending. There will be renewed attention for innovative financing mechanisms. The programming process leading to the MIPs will be the same for all countries, including North Africa. The main challenge will be to avoid the delays and inefficiencies resulting from the EU's complex administrative procedures. The evaluation of the CPA underlined this issue as one of the main weaknesses. There are no indications that this will change with NDICI.

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<sup>28</sup> As of 26 July 2021.

In comparison to the CPA it is likely that regional and thematic cooperation will receive less attention in the new agreement. This is mostly a reaction to the difficulties in making effective use of regional cooperation to support the EPA process under the 10th and 11th EDFs. But regional and thematic cooperation became also the main vehicle for the partnership with the AU. When the JAES was agreed in 2007 there was no dedicated funding, but a good deal of flexibility was possible for regional and thematic cooperation. For 2014–2020 a special Pan-African programme was created as part of the budget, but this was not continued under NDICI. In the future it could therefore be more difficult to finance cooperation with the AU.

What are the prospects for *political dialogue*? The new agreement pays a lot of attention to global alliances and international cooperation. The combined membership of the EU and the OACPS representing four continents should be able to make a difference, but there are only a few examples of this in the past. One recent illustration that it can help is the nomination of former Nigerian minister Ngozi Okonjo Iweala as the new Director General of the WTO, with the combined support of the EU and OACPS. She became the first woman and the first African in this post. Building on the experience during the negotiation of the Paris Agreement on climate change, there is potential for the OACPS together with the EU to influence future climate policy, considering that virtually all the SIDS are members of the OACPS.

Finally, there is an unresolved issue that could delay the entry into force of the new agreement. The text of the negotiated agreement initialled by the chief negotiators leaves the choice of whether the agreement will be signed by the EU or by the EU and its member states.<sup>29</sup> The first case would mean that the arrangement is fully covered by EU competence, while the second case implies that it is about shared competence between

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<sup>29</sup> It seems that the official signing will take place during the first half of 2022. Interestingly, the next AU-EU Summit, which was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, is expected to take place during the same period.

the EU and the member states. In the latter case, all the EU member states must ratify the agreement. In the past, all the EU member states ratified the Lomé Convention and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. But now at least one member state, Hungary, has indicated that it is not ready to support the agreement because of the text on migration.<sup>30</sup> An advantage of an EU only agreement would be that implementation can move smoothly and that provisional implementation will be possible so that there can be continuity in the cooperation programmes.

### **Déjà Vu or New Deal?**

When the preparatory work for the follow-up to the Cotonou Agreement started in 2015 there was a lot of similarity to what happened around 1995. At that time, the justification for continuing a special arrangement between the EU and a group of countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific was questioned. The countries in the three subgroups had little trade or other interaction among them, and their common (colonial) history was felt to be a weak justification. But the ACP group insisted on remaining united and so the agreement was concluded. In recent discussions the advantage of continuing with the ACP in a single arrangement was again questioned. This led to the idea of a common foundation agreement combined with three regional protocols. However, the new agreement and its Africa protocol only deal with Sub-Saharan Africa, and relations with North Africa still remain part of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Yet the new agreement refers to a range of policies and initiatives that apply across the whole of Africa.

The Lomé Convention of 1975 was welcomed as a genuine new deal. It was a remarkable response by the EU to appeals for a new international economic order. In 2000 the Cotonou

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<sup>30</sup> Chadwick explains what he describes as a power struggle between EU institutions over the ACP pact (see V. Chadwick, “[EU institutions in a power struggle over ACP pact](#)”, *Devex*, 15 June 2021).

Partnership Agreement was again seen as innovative. The new agreement certainly has its merits. It is comprehensive and incorporates recent development thinking, as on the SDGs. The volume of finance has been maintained despite Brexit and the EDF's inclusion in the EU budget. It covers important new elements, such as migration and climate change, which could make a difference in the future. The agreement is designed to accommodate increasing differentiation among ACP regions. But overall, it is continuing on the same track. The institutional complexity resulting from the combination of the foundation agreement and the three regional protocols, as well as cooperation with the African Union will be serious challenges. But these challenges are not new, they date back at least to 2007, when the Joint Africa EU Strategy was adopted. They can be overcome with pragmatism. An important test will be whether the OACPS and the EU can work together more effectively than in the past to foster global alliances and to preserve global public goods. The new agreement still has the potential to become a new deal.

## 4. Migration: EU vs African Perspectives and Approaches

Amanda Bisong

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### The Evolving Relationship Between the EU and Africa on Migration

Migration remains an important theme in cooperation between Europe and Africa, having featured in the recent European Union Strategy with Africa presented by the EU Commission in March 2020. Prior to this, migration cooperation between the EU and African countries has been ongoing in various formats and venues,<sup>1</sup> all targeted towards achieving similar objectives, with the EU in the driving seat of most of these negotiations and forums.<sup>2</sup> For African countries, migration remains an integral part of their development strategies, as can be seen in the African Union policies and programmes on

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<sup>1</sup> Such forums include the joint Valletta action plan, the Khartoum and Rabat processes, the EU partnership framework on migration for bilateral relations with partner countries, the joint AU-EU-UN Trilateral Task Force on Migration and the commitment to developing a joint framework on continent-to-continent migration and mobility dialogue. They also include cooperation with regional economic communities such as ECOWAS, IGAD, etc., and bilateral cooperation with African countries.

<sup>2</sup> V. d'Humières, *European Union/African Cooperation: the externalisation of Europe's migration policies*, Foundation Robert Schuman, European Issue no. 472, 30 April 2018.

migration – such as the Migration policy for Africa, the Joint Labour Mobility Programme (JLMP), the AU Free movement protocol (FMP) and Agenda 2063 –, which all highlight the development potential of migration for the majority of African countries. Hence, the dominant perspective in the African Union Commission (AUC) is to view migration and development together. However, within regions in Africa and among African countries, there are varying perspectives and approaches to migration and migration governance. This chapter provides an overview of the different views and positions of the EU and the AU/African countries on the issue of migration. Thus, it will shed some light on the underlying narratives, perspectives and approaches to migration of the EU and AU Commissions, with the aim of identifying areas for possible cooperation.

According to recent statistics, there were 272 million international migrants in 2020, representing 3.5% of the world's population.<sup>3</sup> Two thirds of all international migrants are labour migrants. The number of migrant workers globally is estimated at 164 million.<sup>4</sup> While opportunities for mobility have increased for migrant workers, the increase in international migration is driven by a global rise in conflict and violence. Consequently, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons is estimated at 29.5 million and 41.3 million respectively.<sup>5</sup> African migrants account for 14% of global migration, much lower than migration from other regions. A large proportion of African migration occurs within the continent, across land borders and through regular channels. IOM estimates that irregular migration accounts for about 15% of African migration.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> IOM UN Migration, *World Migration Report 2020*, International Organization for Migration, 2019, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> M. Achieng, A. El Fadil, and E. Righa, “What is wrong with the narrative on African migration?”, in A. Adepajo, C. Fumagalli, and N. Nyabola (eds.), *Africa Migration Report. Challenging the Narrative*, International Organization for

Large displacements within Africa as a result of conflicts especially in the Sahelian countries have resulted in movements of people within and across national borders. Conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan and DRC, and violence in Mali, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, amongst others, have resulted in massive internal displacements and an increase in refugees in neighbouring countries.<sup>7</sup> However, irregular migration from Africa through the Mediterranean in the direction of Europe has received more news coverage and has been a more important policy focus than the ongoing, daily, regular migration occurring within the continent, and also compared to the migration of highly skilled African migrants especially in the health and technology sectors to developed countries through regular channels. Other forms of regular migration occur within and outside the continent, for example student migration, labour migration and family reunification amongst others.

Mixed migration flows in Africa and varying reasons for migration and mobility have shaped the way African countries have responded to migration.<sup>8</sup> This is also largely due to the migration patterns within the various regions. Research has shown that African migration cannot simply be classified into an “easily identifiable, homogenous group with similar origins, motives and destinations and evidently, African migrations cannot be reduced to symptoms of misery and conflict”.<sup>9</sup> There are several factors at play when addressing mixed migration

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Migration (IOM), 2020, pp. 1-14.

<sup>7</sup> IOM (2020), p. 39; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *GRID 2020. Global Report on Internal Displacement*, April 2020, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Mixed migration refers to “cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities”. Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), *MMC’s Understanding and Use of the Term Mixed Migration and Human Smuggling*, MMC, July 2021.

<sup>9</sup> African Perspectives on Human Mobility Programme Funded by the MacArthur Foundation Comparative Report 2009, G. Jonsson, *Comparative Report: African Migration Trends*, International Migration Institute (IMI), 2009.

flows within the continent. Patterns observed include circular migration based on seasonal patterns and availability of work in neighbouring countries, the importance of remittances to social and economic development, transnational migration and social networks playing an increasing role in determining migrant destinations, trafficking and smuggling of migrants across borders, and new emerging destinations in the Middle East and Asian countries amongst others. Thus, many countries cannot simply be identified as countries of origin, destination or transit, especially because of multiple varieties of mixed flows across these countries and the complexity of migration flows. Consequently, responses and approaches to addressing these migration flows are varied and need to reflect the complexity of migration. Therefore, attempts at restricting migration or stemming migration within or across regions by restrictive border policies may equally affect livelihoods and other categories of migrants seeking protection.<sup>10</sup> Hence the need for a more holistic approach to migration governance in Africa.

But the reality reveals that African migration governance is shaped by Eurocentric perspectives on migration which are prevalent in national and regional migration policy making processes in Africa.<sup>11</sup> “The EU, meanwhile, employs lofty rhetoric to promote cross-border cooperation, but it undermines its efforts by isolating individual states to use as buffers against migration”.<sup>12</sup> The intense focus on irregular migration and the return and readmission policies springing up across African countries are a representation of this narrative. Also, the securitisation of borders and criminalisation of migration in some regions, especially in West Africa, reflects the EU’s focus on stemming migration flows and ensuring through regional security programmes that migration through irregular channels is curtailed.

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<sup>10</sup> A. Uzelac, *Incoherent Agendas: Do European Union migration policies threaten regional integration in West Africa?*, Policy Brief, Clingendael, June 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Achieng, Fadil, and Righa (2020), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> K. Long, “[African Perspectives on Migration](#)”, Blog Editor, LSE, 11 January 2016.



Several studies have sought to explain the differences in perspectives between the EU and African countries on migration.<sup>13</sup> This chapter, from the viewpoint of the new EU Migration and Asylum pact and the EU's Strategy with Africa, seeks to underline the recent changes in the narratives and discussions on migration cooperation between Europe and African countries. Based on interviews with European and African stakeholders and a review of policy documents and research publications, it teases out the African perspective on what cooperation with the EU should entail and how to move forward in the evolving contexts of migration such as the criminalisation and weaponisation of migrants. In order to examine migration policies at the continental and regional level, data from available official websites, regulatory and policy documents have been also analysed. The aim of this chapter is to review current developments and provide an analysis of the current approaches to and perspectives on migration cooperation between the EU and African countries. In line with these objectives, this research aims to answer the following questions: how will the New Migration and Asylum Pact proposed by the EU and the EU strategy on Africa change migration cooperation between African and European countries? How have these policy changes been received by African partners? What are some projected trends in migration cooperation between European and African countries? These questions will be discussed in the following sections.

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<sup>13</sup> R. Parkes and M. McQuay, *Ending the EU's Ambivalence to Free Movement in Africa*, Institute of International Affairs (IAI), 2020.

## New Policies, Same Focus: The EU Strategy with Africa and the EU Migration and Asylum Pact

### The EU strategy with Africa

In March 2020, the EU Commission presented its new Strategy with Africa – “Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa” –, which highlighted migration and mobility as one of the important areas for cooperation between the EU and Africa.<sup>14</sup> The strategy emphasised the need for “well-managed migration and mobility”, which would benefit countries of origin, transit and destination in Europe and African societies. The strategy also called for a “balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership, shared responsibility and based on the respect for human rights and international law”.<sup>15</sup> On the basis of the strategy, and building on previous cooperation between the EU and African countries, legal migration and cooperation on return and readmission were to play a more prominent role in future discussions on migration between the EU and African countries.

Legal migration is an important aspect of cooperation on migration, based on the demand for legal pathways from African countries during the Valletta Summit in 2015 and subsequent discussions between both parties.<sup>16</sup> Increased cooperation between the EU and African countries on legal migration can provide benefits for both partners by providing employment

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<sup>14</sup> European Commission, *Questions and Answers: Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa*, Brussels, 9 March 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; European Commission and the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President (HR/VP), Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *Towards A Comprehensive Strategy With Africa*, Brussels, 9.3.2020 JOIN(2020) 4 final, 9 March 2020.

<sup>16</sup> A. Knoll and N. Cascone, “The EU’s migration agenda - what about legal migration pathways?”, *GREAT Insights Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 1, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), Winter 2018.

opportunities that would meet the needs of the labour market on both continents. Also, cooperation on legal migration would serve as a basis for engaging more with African countries on return and readmission. The EU Commission, through its statements, has reinforced the view that enhanced cooperation on legal migration and the existence of a strengthened migration and asylum system in Europe is based on cooperation with third countries on return and reintegration. Also, projects on legal migration and labour mobility with African countries are equally aimed at improving the development benefits of migration and contribute to safe and regular migration and mobility.

However, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and other major events, there was no response from the AUC on the strategy for Africa and the focus on migration. The strategy was billed to be discussed at the Ministerial meeting scheduled for mid-2021, which was not held, and the Summit has currently been postponed until early 2022.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, there have been no official reactions from the African side on the Summit.<sup>18,19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen noted that the summit will be held in February 2022 when the EU council presidency is France (See European Union, “[2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen](#)”, Strasbourg, Speech, 15 September 2021).

<sup>18</sup> The EU and AU commissions have been engaging in discussions on the topics featured in the EU strategy for Africa through the Debating Africa - EU Series hosted by the Friends of Europe. See the discussion on migration See the Debating Africa-EU series (on migration. European Commission, “[Beyond Borders: Migration, Mobility and Good Governance in the Africa-EU partnership](#)”, News, 29 September 2020) and the strategy task forces of the Africa - Europe think tank engagement. See also the statement by Carlos Lopes chief negotiating officer of the AU, on the strategy which has informed the discussions within the AU on the strategy.

<sup>19</sup> A. Medinilla and C. Teevan, *Beyond good intentions: The new EU-Africa partnership*, ECDPM, Discussion paper, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2 March 2020; G. Laporte, *The AU-EU Summit didn't prove immune to COVID-19 – but that may be a blessing in disguise*, ECDPM Commentary, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 14 September 2020. See also the recent [Joint Communiqué of the second African Union-European](#)

While the strategy uses the regular “partnership lingo” for emphasising shared responsibility and partnership in migration cooperation between African and European countries, evidence from policy makers and research reveals that the cooperation is largely one sided and dominated by the European agenda and priorities.<sup>20</sup> In parallel, African priorities suffer from lack of sufficient funding and prioritisation. This has resulted in erratic cooperation especially on issues of return and readmission which are deemed particularly important to the EU and European countries. Legal migration, on the other hand, has seen improved cooperation through pilot projects supported by the EU Commission and implemented in cooperation with EU member states. These projects focus on promoting mobility in specific sectors and between specific countries.<sup>21</sup>

### The EU migration and asylum pact

In September 2020, the EU Commission presented a new asylum and migration pact which aims “to reinforce solidarity among the member states and to strengthen EU migration management and asylum procedures, while also making them more consistent”. The pact has drawn critical responses from civil society organisations, academia, practitioners and policy makers in the EU.<sup>22</sup> In addition, frontline EU member states

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[Union Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting](#), Kigali, Rwanda, 25-26 October 2021, which again highlights migration and mobility as one of the priority areas for cooperation.

<sup>20</sup> T.T. Abebe and H. Maalim, “[Relations between Africa and Europe: Mapping Africa’s Priorities](#)”, *Africa Portal*, 14 September 2020.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the pilot projects, their focus countries, sectors and their impact see D. Stefanescu, [Partnerships For Mobility At The Crossroads. Lessons Learnt from 18 Months of Implementation of EU Pilot Projects on Legal Migration](#), International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF), 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Caritas Europa, [Joint statement on the impact of the Pact on Migration and Asylum on children in migration](#), Terre des Hommes, December 2020; S. Carrera, [Whose pact? The cognitive dimensions of the new EU pact on Migration and Asylum](#), CEPS Policy Insights, no. 2020-22, Brussels, Center for European Policy Studies, September

have been very vocal against the “lack of solidarity” still promoted by the pact, especially as it concerns EU states which face the pressure of irregular migration and high influx of asylum seekers and migrants.<sup>23</sup> The pact is currently being discussed by the European Parliament and the European Council. Although the initial aim was to adopt all regulations as a complete package, recent events have caused the regulations to be adopted with a piecemeal approach. The Commission has moved forward with regulations where there is more traction for agreement with the member states, such as the revised Blue Card Directive<sup>24</sup> and the European Union Agency for Asylum,<sup>25</sup> than with other contentious regulations (changes to the Common European Asylum System and the screening regulations).

The internal dimension of the pact focuses on harmonising the procedures and facilitating the intra-EU mobility of third country nationals, promoting legal migration through tools such as the Talent Partnerships and the EU Talent Pool, streamlining the provisions for family reunification and access to the labour market of refugees within EU countries, amongst others. For these proposals to be successful, there will need to be changes to national laws after agreement at the EU level. The focus on this internal dimension is aimed at making the EU countries more attractive in the global race for talent and based on the need to meet the labour demand in several EU countries. The Pact also aims to streamline asylum application procedures, to reduce “asylum shopping” among asylum seekers, facilitate entry regulations and procedures and create new agencies for

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2020; E. Wallis, “Mixed reactions to new EU migration pact”, *InfoMigrants*, 24 September 2020; D. Boeselager, *One year after the EU migration pact, a better future for refugees?*, The Greens EFA in the European Parliament, 23 September 2021.

<sup>23</sup> K. Tagaris, “Europe’s south calls for more solidarity in new EU migration pact”, *Reuters*, 20 March 2021.; H. Smith, “EU’s southern states step up calls for ‘solidarity’ in managing mass migration”, *The Guardian*, 21 March 2021.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, “EU Blue Card: Commission welcomes political agreement on new rules for highly skilled migrant workers”, 17 May 2021.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, “New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Agreement reached on the new European Union Agency for Asylum”, 29 June 2021.

the processing of asylum claims and supporting national asylum structures.

The external dimension of the pact builds on the current EU migration partnership framework. It aims to promote international partnerships with third countries, particularly in promoting effective return of migrants who have not been granted permission to stay in the EU, combatting migrant smuggling and promoting legal migration. The external dimension of the pact also aims to support third countries in addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement.<sup>26</sup> This restated focus on the external dimension will employ various EU tools such as the visa code, funding and cooperation on legal migration to incentivise third countries into cooperating on return and readmission of their nationals. This reinforces the current externalisation policies of the EU. As has been evident in cooperation with African countries, the focus on security and migration management especially through border control and restrictive measures often outweighs cooperation on legal migration.<sup>27</sup>

### Migration in the Africa pillar of the Post-Cotonou Agreement

At the end of 2020, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the EU finalised the text of the post-Cotonou agreement. In the African pillar of the agreement, migration was one of the initially contentious issues.<sup>28</sup> African and European states however agreed to include text in the agreement that emphasises the need for legal migration pathways, to curb irregular migration, cooperate on

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<sup>26</sup> This focus on third countries was reiterated by EU interior ministers in their statement on the situation in Afghanistan (Council of the European Union, *Statement on the situation in Afghanistan*, CEU 2021).

<sup>27</sup> T. Raty and R. Shilhav, “The EU Trust Fund for Africa: Trapped between aid policy and migration politics”, OXFAM, 30 January 2020.

<sup>28</sup> C. Babière, “Negotiations on the post-Cotonou Agreement stumble on migration”, EURACTIV, 28 May 2018.

returns and readmissions, and work towards more manageable migration outcomes that are mutually agreeable. However, for some EU states, such as Hungary and Poland, this wording is not binding enough and does not compel African countries to take back irregular migrants in European countries – a point of contention between policy makers and government authorities of both sides.<sup>29</sup>

## Is Anything Changing? (R)Evolving Policies and EU-Africa Cooperation on Migration

According to some researchers, the EU's focus on short term measures such as migrant returns and strengthening its external borders is not aligned with African priorities on migration and may have the effect of straining migration cooperation between both parties.<sup>30</sup> They note that the EU's current focus on returns will affect other non-migration agreements such as the Post-Cotonou agreement and the EU's Strategy with Africa.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the lack of inclusion of local solutions and local administrations in migration governance between Europe and African countries may equally have a negative effect on their cooperation.<sup>32</sup> The current mismatch in priorities and agendas will continue to disrupt cooperation between both parties.

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<sup>29</sup> A. Medinilla, *New beginnings or a last burrah? The OACPS-EU partnership in 2021-2041*, ECDPM Briefing note 130, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, April 2021; E. Morgan, "OACPS/EU Post Cotonou Agreement – Obstacles in the path to signature", CARICOM Today, 8 June 2021.

<sup>30</sup> T. Abebe and A. Mbiyozo, "New Pact's focus on migrant returns threatens Africa-EU partnership", Forum on the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum in light of the UN Global Compact Refugees (CGR), ASILE project, 11 December 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> A. Geddes and M. Maru, "The New Pact on Migration and Asylum and African-European migration diplomacy", Forum on the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum in light of the UN Global Compact Refugees (CGR), ASILE project, 3 February 2021.

A review of the current policies developed in 2020 reveals that the following aspects of migration cooperation between the EU and African countries will be impacted: continuing with the existing policy measures and practices, institutionalising some of these practices, creating an unbalanced focus on some policy areas, and a sliding regard for international human rights commitments. Some of these changes are discussed below.

*Institutionalised externalisation.* The New Migration and Asylum Pact proposed by the EU reinforces the external dimension of the EU's migration policies in its cooperation with third countries. This is in line with the recent measures adopted by the EU and its MS aimed at externalising European migration policies in Africa, which are characterised by a widening geographic scope and increasing intensity.<sup>33</sup> This cooperation on the external dimension aims to reduce the arrival of irregular migrants in Europe through restrictive border control measures in countries of origin (and transit) and facilitating returns of irregular migrants to their countries of origin. The pact makes numerous references to the external dimension, thus institutionalising the externalisation of EU migration policies in third countries and reinforcing the ongoing practices.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the proposals are devoted to the management of external borders and return.<sup>35</sup> Although the strategy with Africa does not make explicit reference to externalisation, its reference to cooperation with African countries, especially as regards effective border management, encapsulates the practice of external border controls that is observed in third countries.

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<sup>33</sup> A. Bisong, *The impact of EU external migration policies on sustainable development: A review of the evidence from West, North and the Horn of Africa*, Caritas Europa and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2020.

<sup>34</sup> P. Andrade, *EU cooperation on migration with partner countries within the New Pact: new instruments for a new paradigm?*, EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy, Odysseus Network, 8 December 2020.

<sup>35</sup> European Economic and Social Committee, "EESC Opinion: A new pact on migration and asylum", 27 January 2021.



*Reinforced conditionalities.* Although the new EU pact does not contain many references to funding, the policy direction is aligned with other EU cooperation instruments aimed at reinforcing the use of conditionalities in migration cooperation.<sup>36</sup> As has been observed from previous cooperation, development assistance (ODA) is increasingly instrumentalised towards achieving the EU's migration objectives of containing migrants and enforcing mobility restrictions through the use of conditionalities and a “more for more” or “less for less” approach.<sup>37</sup> Towing this line, the EU through NDICI (Global Europe) “shall combine all appropriate tools and the necessary leverage through a flexible initiative approach with, as appropriate within this context, possible changes in allocation of funding related to migration” and “it shall take into account effective cooperation and implementation of EU agreements and dialogues on migration” (Article 8.10).<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, cooperation on return and readmission is now linked to the implementation of the new EU common visa policy and visa code,<sup>39</sup> where countries which do not cooperate with the EU on migration issues may face a reduction in the number of visas issued, especially for high profile government officials.<sup>40</sup> For example, discussions on this have already begun

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<sup>36</sup> C. Horwood, *Setting the highest standards for Global Europe implementation*, CONCORD, May 2021.

<sup>37</sup> D. Kipp, From Exception to Rule – the EU Trust Fund for Africa, SWP Research Paper 13, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 2018; L. Landau, “A Chronotope of Containment Development: Europe’s Migrant Crisis and Africa’s Reterritorialisation”, *Antipode*, vol. 51, 10 August 2018, pp. 169-86.

<sup>38</sup> European Union, *Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe*, 9 June 2020.

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, “[Visa Code: The Commission proposes temporary visa measures for Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia to improve cooperation on return and readmission](#)”, 15 July 2021.

<sup>40</sup> A. Bisong, “[The new EU visa code and what it means for African countries](#)”, ECDPM blog, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 6 April 2020.

in the case of the Gambia where the EU is considering using visa restrictions in order to coerce the government to accept the return of its nationals.<sup>41</sup> Also, cooperation on labour migration and legal pathways is being linked with cooperation on return and readmission of nationals. Thus, countries which cooperate on return issues are “rewarded” with legal opportunities for migration.

*Focus on return and readmission.* The central theme in the pact is to increase the returns of third country nationals irregularly staying in the EU (found in five of the legislative acts and two of the non-binding proposals). The Commission has revealed that the effective rate of return is less than 30% for those with an order to leave the EU.<sup>42</sup> Therefore the pact aims to: improve returns through expedited return border procedures (see the screening regulations); create an EU return coordinator to increase coordination among domestic return practices; increase the links between asylum and return policies (see the return directive); introduce return sponsorships as a way of promoting solidarity among member states; and leverage existing return cooperation (formal and informal) between EU member states and third countries for the benefit of other EU states. Also, this focus on linking returns and the asylum procedure may increase the possibility of refoulement, weaken the right to asylum and place asylum decisions solely within the mandate of border agencies, thus excluding the role of the judiciary.<sup>43</sup>

The strategy equally emphasises the importance of cooperation between EU and third countries on return and readmission,

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<sup>41</sup> M. Takambou, “EU escalates row with Gambia over expelled migrants”, *DW*, 5 September 2021.

<sup>42</sup> European Commission, “Return and Readmission”, *Migration and Home Affairs*, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> M. Moraru, “The new design of the EU’s return system under the Pact on Asylum and Migration”, EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy, Odysseus Network, 8 December 2020.; European Parliament Research Services (EPRS), “The European Commission’s New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Horizontal substitute impact assessment”, August 2021.

restating the need to conclude readmission agreements with African countries. Existing evidence suggests that an effective and sustainable return policy largely depends on the capacity to incentivise the cooperation of returnees and of third countries of return.<sup>44</sup> However, these policies focus on return, without the commensurate focus on building reintegration systems within the African countries, thus the social structure is weakened and increased vulnerability is observed in returning migrants.<sup>45</sup>

*Focus on selected origin and transit countries.* The new pact and the strategy both emphasise the need for the EU to promote cooperation with countries through partnerships to achieve the EU's migration policy objectives. This situation has resulted in the EU focusing on countries from which a larger number of migrants originate or transit through, thus resulting in a large number of countries within which there is a distinct focus on migration, to the detriment of other African countries. This renewed focus on bilateral cooperation risks undermining the gains achieved through regional economic communities (RECs) or regional free movement protocols in regions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Furthermore, it also risks undermining any moves towards the continental free movement protocol. While the EU at the same time supports these free movement programmes at the regional and continental level, its bilateral cooperation with states, which focuses on restrictive border procedures and practices, undermines mobility within the regions.

According to the pact, "assistance will be targeted as needed to those countries with a significant migration dimension".

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<sup>44</sup> P. Slominski and F. Trauner, "Reforming me softly – how soft law has changed EU return policy since the migration crisis", *West European Politics*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2021, pp. 93-113.

<sup>45</sup> E. Paasche, M.L. Skilbrei, and S. Plambech, "Vulnerable Here or There? Examining the vulnerability of victims of human trafficking before and after return", *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 10, 2018, pp. 34-51; A. Mbiyozo, "Returning migrants Europe's focus, but at what cost?", ISS Policy Brief 127, Institute for Security Studies, April 2019, A. Bisong, forthcoming.

These tailor-made dialogues and partnerships are aimed at prioritising development assistance to countries where migration challenges exist. Considering that the EU is using development funds to address these “root causes of migration”, this results in rechannelling development funds from its primary purpose of eradicating poverty, towards focusing on countries where migration cooperation is a priority whether or not their development needs are significant, to the detriment of other African countries where development needs exist.<sup>46</sup>

*Reduced respect for human rights and passing on human rights responsibilities to third countries.* The objective of the new pact is a “fair, efficient and sustainable migration and asylum management system that respects the fundamental rights under the EU and international law, including at the EU external borders”. However, some of the proposals under the pact potentially foster disregard for human rights and a breach of international law commitments especially with regards to the practices of EU states.<sup>47</sup> There are currently several EU countries that are already carrying out practices which are in contravention of EU asylum law and international commitments. Practices such as pushbacks, expedited expulsions, extensive use of detention and not rescuing and disembarking boats at sea have been reported and documented. Much to the chagrin of NGOs and other civil society organisations, the silence of the EU Commission on some of these measures has empowered MS to take more active steps towards promoting containment practices such as building fences and suspending the right to asylum. Some member states’ governments may view the pact as promoting some of their national policies that have been criticised for human rights violations and violating the right to seek asylum.<sup>48</sup> However, with regard to creating pathways for those seeking international protection to lodge asylum applications, the pact offers no legal regular pathways. This reinforces the view of fortress Europe

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<sup>46</sup> Andrade (2020); Bisong (2020), p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Moraru (2021).

<sup>48</sup> Carrera (2020).

where migrants and asylum seekers should be kept out,<sup>49</sup> given that the resettlement numbers among European countries are equally low.

This increasing disregard for the human rights of migrants and breach of international law commitments is also carried out by third countries with which the EU cooperates. For example, reports about flagrant human rights abuses in Libya have not prevented the EU or its member states from continuing their collaboration with the Libyan coast guard. Rather, the EU member states choose to abdicate responsibility for these abuses although they are funded and supported by cooperation with the EU. Furthermore, in countries such as Niger, the implementation of EU migration policies has in several cases promoted abuse and extortion by border guards targeted at migrants and cross border economic actors. Such actions contravene the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons.

*Moving away from migration and development.* The EU Commission describes the pact as presenting a fresh start and “a change of paradigm in cooperation with non-EU countries”.<sup>50</sup> This cooperation will be based on comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships that are mutually beneficial for all parties involved. The Strategy with Africa, in similar words, restates the focus on tailor made partnerships. However, in practice, it is evident that these partnerships are not mutually beneficial for all parties as they focus on the priorities of the EU partners much to the detriment of African countries. A case in point here is the shifting focus on migration and development towards more securitisation and border management. This shift has reframed the priorities of development cooperation with African countries around the single objective of migration

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<sup>49</sup> K. Kirişci, M. Erdoğan, and N. Eminoglu, “The EU’s “New Pact on Migration and Asylum” is missing a true foundation”, Order from Chaos, Brookings, 6 November 2020.

<sup>50</sup> European Commission, “A fresh start on migration: Building confidence and striking a new balance between responsibility and solidarity”, 23 September 2020.

management – which translates as managing irregular flows from these countries into Europe and increasing the number of returns. Development cooperation with African countries has been redefined towards “addressing the root causes of irregular migration”, thus linking other issues such as political, social and economic development to this aim, rather than addressing them in their own right.<sup>51</sup> However, this focus on linking other policy areas with addressing irregular migration falls short of addressing the broader issues which drive displacement and irregular migration. Issues such as global inequality due to unfair terms of trade and economic policies, conflicts and forced displacement fuelled by external interventions, unstable economic conditions in countries of origin and transit, poor terms of trade and a lack of opportunities and access in the global economy for African states are largely ignored.

While the pact and the strategy may reveal a shifting or changing focus of cooperation between African and European countries, the reality is that this is a continuation, albeit more focused, of the EU’s objectives in relation to migration.

### **Priorities of African Countries on Migration Cooperation with the EU**

Several African countries are unaware of the policy changes in the EU regarding migration cooperation. Being on the receiving end of these policies, they have no opportunities to and do not contribute to the debates on migration occurring in Europe. Thus, their roles, especially as regards the external dimension of the EU’s migration policies, are assigned to them by the EU through its development cooperation and support focused on reducing the root causes of irregular migration. However, some African countries which are at the forefront of the cooperation with European countries, although unable to contribute to the discussions, also are aware of the changes. But these countries

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<sup>51</sup> Uzelac (2019).

do not have the capacity to determine their roles in their migration cooperation. Thus, the rhetoric of a “partnership of equals” does not hold here.

For African countries, the more important aspects of migration cooperation include creating legal pathways for migration, boosting economic opportunities through creating jobs and facilitating access to these jobs in line with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), respecting the human rights of migrants and ensuring the development of sustainable reintegration systems to cater for returning migrants.<sup>52</sup> Also, the link between migration and development, especially as it concerns facilitating the flow of remittances, is another important aspect of cooperation. In the wake of the Covid pandemic, African countries are also focusing on restarting mobility especially in the tourism sector and in promoting the labour mobility of migrant workers who returned home during the pandemic. These points are further discussed below.

*Restarting mobility after Covid-19.* The mobility restrictions introduced by countries in order to curb the spread of the pandemic had a significant impact on all aspects of international migration, including mobility within regions.<sup>53</sup> The travel restrictions disrupted formal and informal migration channels within and outside Africa especially with respect to the mobility of migrant workers and students. Consequently, several families and economies were affected by reduced remittances from migrant workers who returned to their countries of origin during the pandemic.

In addition, the tourism sector in African countries lost an estimated US\$83 billion in GDP contribution (down by 49.2%) and lost up to 7.2 million industry jobs compared to 2019 levels.<sup>54</sup> As the effects of the pandemic are easing and

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<sup>52</sup> African Union, “The African Union 6th Pan African Forum on Migration kicks off in Dakar”, 11 September 2021.

<sup>53</sup> International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), *Migration Outlook 2021*, Vienna, 2021, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> T. Matiza, “Africa: How can tourism bounce back after Covid-19?”, *The Africa*

countries are working towards restarting mobility, African governments are undertaking measures such as tax incentives, efficient vaccination rollouts and phased restarting of the tourism sector.<sup>55</sup> However, they require support to efficiently implement these measures. They are also looking at improving the working conditions of migrant workers especially in terms of protecting the rights of migrants and their families.<sup>56</sup>

*Promoting labour migration and tackling unemployment in Africa.* African countries are also exploring opportunities for labour migration and mobility in order to address the high domestic unemployment rates they are facing.<sup>57</sup> While they are partnering with European countries towards creating jobs for young people, their focus is also on creating good jobs that meet the aspirations of African youth. However, African countries are faced with the paradox of promoting labour mobility on the continent while increasing restrictive border control measures to limit the movement of persons, especially low skilled workers. This paradox exists as a result of both measures being support by the EU through its cooperation on migration.

At the regional level, RECs are coordinating and harmonising the procedures of their member states on labour migration governance, with a view to promoting intra-regional trade and investment.<sup>58</sup> Thus, where regions are concerned, they are benefiting from the opportunities created by labour mobility and linking this with their regional economic development agendas.

*Facilitating the flow of remittances.* Remittances play a very important role in promoting development in most African

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*Report*, 19 July 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid; I. Adam, “Covid-19 and Tourism in Africa: An Unprecedented Shock”, ISS Blog, Institute for Strategic Studies, 2 October 2020.

<sup>56</sup> African Union, 11 September 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Mo Ibrahim Foundation, “Africa’s Youth: Jobs or Migration? Demography, economic prospects and mobility”, Ibrahim Forum Report, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Africa Union, “INTER-RECs Experience Sharing and Capacity Building on Labour Migration Policies”, Press Releases, 16 June 2021.



countries. Remittance flows to African countries are significantly higher than development assistance (ODA) flows, being up to three times greater in some countries. Therefore, African governments are interested in facilitating the flow of remittances and channelling the use of remittances towards development measures. The African Institute of Remittances also supports states developing their capacities and implementing strategies to promote the use of remittances for development. With remittances in some African countries suffering a decline as a result of the pandemic, countries are looking towards improving the conditions for facilitating the flow of remittances.<sup>59</sup>

*Protecting the human rights of migrants.* African countries have been very vocal about the protection of the rights of migrants. This position has been clearly stated in several policies and has also been reiterated by AU states in the wake of the corona pandemic.<sup>60</sup> However, practices by government agencies have not always respected the human rights of migrants. Indeed, following the pandemic, migrants have not been treated in the same way as citizens especially as regards vaccination rollouts in several African countries. Furthermore, African countries acting in line with their cooperation with the EU are recruited to engage in restrictive border practices that infringe the rights of migrants – including those relating to free movement as enshrined in the AU protocols and the right to seek asylum.

The AU and RECs are working towards building the capacity of national agencies to respect the rights of migrants and sensitising these agencies on the various AU commitments and the rights which they confer on migrants. Moreover, through

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<sup>59</sup> A. Bisong, P.E. Ahairwe, and E. Njoroge, *The impact of COVID-19 on remittances for development in Africa*, ECDPM Discussion Paper, European Centre for Development Policy Management, May 2020.

<sup>60</sup> African Union, *Draft Common African Position (Cap) on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, October 2017; African Union, “Statement of the African Union (AU) Labour Migration Advisory Committee (LMAC) on the novel Coronavirus Disease COVID-19 and the condition of African Migrant Workers”, Press Releases, 14 April 2020.

sensitisation programmes, migrants are being made aware of their rights and of the available mechanisms that can be used to complain when these rights are breached.

*Promoting economic and labour mobility through AU and REC agendas.* The African Union together with African countries are working towards promoting the interlinkages between the AfCFTA and promoting the free movement of people in line with the AU Protocol on the Free movement of Persons.<sup>61</sup> Policy makers have acknowledged linkages between AfCFTA, which provides for the free movement of people, goods and capital, and the AU Free Movement Protocol.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the AU is working towards promoting flexible pathways for regular migration and promoting labour migration in order to take advantage of the opportunities created by the AfCFTA.<sup>63</sup> However, the challenge is that some states view migration exclusively as a security issue and are unwilling to ratify the AU FMP, hence the low number of ratifications.

*Aligning with the GCM in promoting safe and regular migration.* African countries are aligning their regional and continental policies and actions towards implementing the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). In 2019, the AUC adopted a roadmap towards the implementation of the objectives of the GCM.<sup>64</sup> This roadmap, which is aligned with the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA), has guided member states in the measures they are implementing to help achieve the various objectives of the GCM. According to the recently concluded regional reviews on the GCM, African states have engaged in

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<sup>61</sup> African Union (11 September 2021).

<sup>62</sup> *Africanews* (2021).

<sup>63</sup> N. Mayer and A. Bisong, *Connecting people and markets in Africa in 2021*, ECDPM commentary, Maastricht, European Centre for Development Policy Management, 8 February 2021.

<sup>64</sup> African Union, “3 Year Implementation Plan of Action for The Global Compact On Safe, Orderly And Regular Migration (GCM) In Africa (2020-2022)”, Addis Ababa, 2019.

actions including addressing: the plight of missing migrants and saving lives; the high costs of transfer of remittances and the financial inclusion of migrants; predictability in migration procedures; and portability of social benefits.<sup>65</sup>

## **Crafting the Way Forward in Migration Cooperation**

In order to promote mutually beneficial cooperation on migration between African and European countries, policy makers of both continents should focus on the following aspects where the new EU pact and strategy align with the priorities of African countries.

*Promote legal pathways to migration.* African and European governments must work towards establishing legal pathways to migration that can be used to promote labour mobility and circular mobility between both continents. The pandemic along with recent studies have shown that the EU has labour needs which can be met by existing labour in African countries. However, there may be a need to skill, reskill or upskill this available labour for them to have access to the employment opportunities in European countries. Existing pilot projects already indicate the possibility of cooperation on labour migration between African and European countries. Therefore, these projects can be used to provide some leeway for establishing more structured migration pathways to promote labour mobility between African and EU countries. Moreover, instruments such as the Talent Partnerships and the EU Talent Pool can be used to promote labour mobility between African and EU countries.

*Promote intra-continental mobility.* African and EU governments can work together to promote intra-continental mobility, especially in the light of the AfCFTA, in order to increase the opportunities available for economic development of African economies. This should ensure that students,

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<sup>65</sup> *Africanews* (2021).

migrant workers, business persons and other categories of migrants have facilitated access to mobility as envisaged in the AU free movement protocol. These objectives should be aligned with creating jobs and promoting the labour mobility of young people on the continent, in line with the AU's youth employment strategy and Agenda 2063.

*Emphasise the linkages between migration and development.*

The shifting focus towards the securitisation of migration should be re-examined. Development related aspects of migration such as diaspora engagement and facilitating the transfer of remittances should continue to be the focus of migration cooperation. Furthermore, migration and development initiatives should not focus only on states deemed priority countries by the EU, based on the number of migrants that originate from or transit through these countries/regions, but should be guided by the development needs of the various countries.

*Protect the human rights of migrants.* Migration cooperation measures should be aimed at protecting the human rights of migrants including protecting the rights of migrant workers within and outside the African continent. The current measures which are being implemented by African and European state actors and the proposals in the pact which seek to undermine the protection of the rights of migrants should be stopped. Furthermore, African states should be supported in ratifying and implementing all important AU policy frameworks and protocols that protect the rights of migrants. In addition, migrants, regardless of their status, should have access to basic services and to information on their rights. Also, joint solutions to displacements should equally ensure that migrants' rights are protected.

*Empower local communities and migrants on the rights of migrants.* Migration cooperation measures should go beyond the current focus on state actors and include local communities in their response to migration needs across the continent. Consequently, they should empower communities

in Africa and Europe to respond to growing migrant needs in their communities. This also includes involving communities and local groups in the policy discussions on migration and promoting cooperation between these actors across both continents. Furthermore, migration cooperation should support and empower migrants and their families by informing them on their rights, and invest in migrant skills training, entrepreneurship, and sensitisation on financial literacy, amongst other things.

*Support the implementation of the Global Compact on safe, orderly, and regular Migration.* Migration cooperation measures should equally aim to support African countries in the implementation of the GCM objectives in line with the roadmap on the implementation of the GCM.

## Conclusion

This chapter began by providing an overview of the different views and positions of the EU and the AU/African countries on the issue of migration. Examining the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and the EU's strategy with Africa, the analysis highlighted the recent changes in the narratives and discussions on migration cooperation between Europe and African countries. The chapter restates the need to look beyond the current focus on the management of migration flows towards Europe, especially through the emphasis on externalisation of migration and asylum procedures with third countries and the short-term focus of increasing return rates, and move towards a more sustainable migration cooperation. Furthermore, externalisation of migration and asylum policies should not result in the abdication of responsibility and lowering the protection of migrants' rights. Migration and development should again play a central role in cooperation between African and European countries. This cooperation should be based on facilitating development opportunities, promoting intraregional mobility and economic activities especially through supporting

the implementation of the AfCFTA and other regional mobility policies and programmes. Also, in promoting migration cooperation with African countries, European countries should ensure the protection of the rights of migrants, including migrant workers and their families. Lastly, the EU should align its cooperation on migration with cooperation in other policy areas. The current contradictory policies, especially with regard to promoting development, puts at risk its efforts to support regional economic integration in Africa and in the long run may undermine the EU's migration policy objectives.

## **5. Security: EU Concerns and African Initiatives in Inter-Regional Cooperation**

Tshepo Gwatiwa

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Peace and security constitutes a critical component of the Africa-EU partnership for several reasons. First and foremost is the area of conflict-related instability, in which not only has the EU bankrolled Africa's crisis mitigation projects, but also the African Union has decidedly modelled itself after the European Union. Although a lot has been accomplished in this field, the partnership has become increasingly contentious around areas of African agency. Second is the area of the international political economy of natural resources and governance, which does not fall within traditional security but involves non-traditional security aspects of the partnership. Third, and perhaps more timely, there has been a securitisation of inter-continental irregular migration – both as a European concern and a joint response initiative. In this context, the conception of security in Africa-EU relations can no longer be restricted to the traditional view of conjoined interventions in armed conflicts but must be extended to non-traditional threats.

This chapter examines the search for common ground in such areas between Africa and Europe. It focuses on these three security issues – conflicts, economic security, and migration – which have been at the core of Africa-EU relations in the last decade or so. Moreover it restricts its examination to the purview of the two key multilateral institutions, namely the European Union and African Union. The general argument

is that although the two continents have made progress in accommodating the preferences of both organisations, the partnership is institutionally, materially and politically skewed in favour of Europe. Yet, the EU, unlike other partner organisations, has shown greater accommodation of African agency in security issues, even when the issues at stake, such as economics and migration, had become politically sensitive in Europe.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the background of Africa-EU security cooperation. It captures the changes as related to agency and interests in the partnership across different epochs. Thereafter it provides an analytical framework within which to assess African agency against the ever-abiding spectre of postcoloniality and the apparent subaltern position of Africa in international affairs. The third component constitutes a three-part thematic discussion of: European concerns and African responses in the areas of traditional peace and security operations and institution building; non-traditional security concerns around the international political economy; and the securitisation of migration problems and conceived solutions. Finally, the chapter offers a cautious conclusion on how Europe and Africa attempt to find common ground on peace and security issues.

## **A Brief Background of Africa-EU Cooperation**

The origins of this partnership can be placed at two critical junctures in the history of the Africa-Europe relationship. The earliest shadow of European influence over the design of African institutions was the fact that the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was drafted by a retired Irish general.<sup>1</sup> This can be explained by the fact that most African political leaders were educated in Europe and the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Organization of African Unity, *Technical Report No. 1 Prepared for African Negotiators by OAU Advisory Panel of Experts on ACP-EU Negotiations*, Addis Ababa, OAU, February 1999.



From another perspective, this partnership has roots in an inter-regional economic relationship. That aside, imperial powers' economic interests in Africa defined the processes of decolonisation. These economic factors influenced negotiations of early European treaties.<sup>2</sup> The peace and security element is just a part of a broader (economic) strategic partnership (i.e. the Cotonou Agreement of 2000) that succeeded the Lomé Agreement of 1974, which was predominantly economic. The inclusion of the peace and security component in the Cotonou Agreement derives from a perceived security-development nexus. Article 11 of the agreement states that "the Parties [sic] acknowledge that without development and poverty reduction there will be no sustainable peace and security, and that without peace and security there can be no sustainable development".<sup>3</sup> To Europe, this is important because of its needs for energy, mineral and other natural resources from Africa. To Africans, this means that they will not be alone in bearing the burden of stabilising the continent. The goal of stabilising the continent was already addressed in the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), the AU Constitutive Act of 2000, as well as the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol, all of which highlight the need for a multifaceted and perhaps coordinated approach to political and economic challenges in the continent. The most defining of these approaches is the security-development nexus doctrine, which purports that security and political stability should ideally precede economic development. As a corollary, the partnership is currently skewed towards peace and security with the hope of creating the necessary conditions for investments and development.

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<sup>2</sup> H. Adrian and K. Whiteman, "The Commission and development policy: bureaucratic politics in EU aid - from the Lomé leap forward to the difficulties of adapting to the twenty-first century", in K. Arts and A. Dickson (eds.), *EU Development Cooperation: From Model to Symbol*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 133-34.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission and Africa Caribbean Pacific States Secretariat, *The Cotonou Agreement*, Brussels, Europe Aid, 2000, p. 22.

## Inter-regionalism and African Agency

It is instructive to commence with the notion of inter-regionalism. This takes two forms: bilateral regionalism and trans-regionalism. Bilateral inter-regionalism refers to less institutionalised group-to-group meetings between two or more regional organisations which centre on information exchange and cooperation on specific projects.<sup>4</sup> It should be characterised by a formal promulgation of such a partnership between regional organisations. For example, the AU-EU partnership is emblematic of bilateral inter-regionalism. The meetings are held according to an agreed framework. For instance, the AU-EU heads of state and government summit is held every three years to review, renegotiate or improve the partnership.

Trans-regionalism refers to cooperation between institutions with more diffuse membership which may include not just regional organisations but states which are not members of any of the regional organisation, and/or includes states that are members of more than one of the cooperating organisations.<sup>5</sup> In its empirical sense, there should be at least one regional organisation and one powerful state. For example, the African Union's trans-regionalism involves a coordinated effort between the AU, the UN, NATO, the EU and the US. France is a key player in the UN, the EU and NATO, while the US is a global hegemonic player with its own imperium as well as crucial role in the UN and NATO. The role of major powers should be identifiable separately from regional or organisational membership. For example, the role of Germany, Portugal and Italy in Africa is inconspicuous.

To examine the relationship between the two worlds, it is instructive to consider African agency. This is not to dismiss European agency but to highlight that the history of this

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<sup>4</sup> J. Rüländ, H. Hanggi, and R. Roloff, "Interregionalism: A new phenomenon in International Relations", in J. Rüländ, H. Hanggi, and R. Roloff (eds.), *Interregionalism and International Relations*, Oxon and NY, Routledge, 2006, pp. 1-13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

inter-regional relationship is a story of uninhibited European agency in a helpless continent. Hence, Africa's agential story starts from its being a postcolony, which refers to "nation states ... once governed by, for, and from elsewhere"<sup>6</sup> and "interactions based on unequal power relations", which "designates situations of rule and subjectification that are based on us versus the inferior other".<sup>7</sup> The postcolony in Africa is also "made up of a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery that, once in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence".<sup>8</sup> This refers to a system of capital accumulation, wherein state bureaucracy works in concert with commercial entities and informational networks to engage in what has been also referred to as "accumulation by dispossession".<sup>9</sup> These networks and systems have been in place since the immediate post-independence period and defines Africa-EU [unequal] relations<sup>10</sup>. The doctrine under which African agency unfolds connotes that conflict and violence are temporal and superficial impediments that must be eliminated in order to achieve development.<sup>11</sup> This approach is oblivious to the root causes of most conflicts in Africa, which include flawed decolonisation processes, secessions, self-determination and

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<sup>6</sup> J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, "Law and disorder in the postcolony: An introduction", in J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff (eds.), *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> W. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Malden, Blackwell, 2005, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, pp. 101-02.

<sup>9</sup> See J. van der Merwe, "An historical geographical analysis of South Africa's system of accumulation: 1652-1994", *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 43, no. 147, 2015, pp. 58-72; also see J. van der Merwe, "Expanding US Africa Command: Reintegrating Africa within the US's system of accumulation", in T. Gwatiwa and J. van der Merwe (eds.), *Expanding US Military Command in Africa: Elites, Networks and Grand Strategy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2020, pp. 15-33.

<sup>10</sup> J. Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1971, pp. 81-117.

<sup>11</sup> M. Duffield, "The Liberal Way of Development and the Development-Security Impasse: Exploring the Global Life-Chance Divide", *Security Dialogue*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2010, pp. 53-76.

extremism bred by institutional decay.<sup>12</sup> Hence, African agency, which is the main focus of this chapter, is inextricably linked to this postcolonial condition. Agency here mainly relates to Africa's "freedom of subjectivity in action".<sup>13</sup> This refers to a referent actor's ability to undertake actions based on its preferences. Yet in its empirical sense, African agency is still limited in modern international affairs. Thus, African actors such as the AU may need to resort to action that is undesirable to its counterparts such as the EU in order to protect preferences without directly antagonising the more powerful partners – "agency slack". Agency slack takes two forms: *shirking* – i.e. minimising the effort; or *slippage* – shifting policy away from a preferred outcome.<sup>14</sup> An admixture of these concepts provides room to examine Europe and Africa's search for common ground in traditional and non-traditional security issues.

## Engagement in Peace and Security

In the renegotiation of the Lomé Agreement, in the late 1990s, OAU negotiators stressed the need for African agency in Africa-EU relations, emphasising the importance of principles of ownership and equality on the part of Africans. The African experience under the Lomé Agreement compelled Africans to adopt the following position:

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<sup>12</sup> A. Acharya, "The periphery as the core: the Third World and security studies", in K. Krause and M. Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 299-327; M. Ayooob, "Defining security: a subaltern realist perspective" in K. Krause and M. Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 121-46.

<sup>13</sup> W. Brown, "A Question of Agency: Africa in International Politics", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 10, 2012, pp. 1889-1908.

<sup>14</sup> D.G. Hawkins, D.A. Lake, D.L. Nielson, and M.J. Tierney, "Delegation under anarchy: States, international organizations, and principal-agent theory", in D.G. Hawkins, D.A. Lake, D.L. Nielson, and M.J. Tierney (eds.), *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 3-38.

[The] ACP should guard against an EU blue-print of these essential elements and should not accept conditionalities or directives regarding the pace or nature of reforms ... Such an approach should respect the overriding principles of ownership and sovereignty.<sup>15</sup>

The two regions agreed on a partnership that respected African ownership and leadership, which was consummated at the Africa-EU Summit held in Cairo in 2000.<sup>16</sup> However, the irony in this outcome was quite striking in its nature. The agreed framework relieved the Europeans from the burden of underwriting African problems.<sup>17</sup> While Africans attained the prerogative for “agenda and priority setting”, the Europeans attained what Bah calls a “blood and treasure” framework,<sup>18</sup> wherein the West remained in subtle control of the peace and security partnership, while the Africans attended to the most menial and risky aspects of the collaborative partnership. However, what is more important is the common ground that the two organisations have sought in the areas of institution building and peace operations.

The peace operations dimension of the partnership has remained largely unchanged except in areas of funding. The partnership is less strenuous compared to those with the United Nations, NATO and the United States Africa Command.<sup>19</sup> In principle, Article 11 of the Cotonou Agreement promised agential capacity in broad strokes: “[the] parties shall pursue an active, comprehensive and integrated policy of peace building and conflict prevention and resolution, and human security,

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<sup>15</sup> OAU (1999), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Europafira.net, n.d.

<sup>17</sup> Festus Aboadgye, personal communication, Nairobi, April 2016.

<sup>18</sup> See A.M.S. Bah, “West Africa: From a Security Complex to a Security Community”, *African Security Review*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2005, pp. 77-83.

<sup>19</sup> See T. Gwatiwa, *The African Union and African Agency in International Politics*, New York and London, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2021; also see T. Gwatiwa and J. van der Merwe, *Expanding US Military Command in Africa: Elites, Networks and Grand Strategy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2021.

and shall address situations of fragility... This policy shall be based on the principle of ownership...”.<sup>20</sup> A large part of that agreement was kept in place.

In March 2021, the EU replaced the Africa Peace Facility (APF) with the European Peace Facility (EPF). According to the official narrative of the Council of European Union, this is a broadening of the reach of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and enhances “the EU’s ability to prevent conflict, preserve peace and strengthen international stability and security”<sup>21</sup>, which ironically includes the supply of weapons. A coalition of civil society organisations had already registered its concerns with the then proposed notion of the EPF.<sup>22</sup> Earlier, in 2020, when presenting the idea to his African counterparts, the EU’s heavy-handed chief diplomat – Josep Borrell – justified the new hawkish approach as a *sine qua non* for peace and stability in Africa,<sup>23</sup> even though earlier agreements on African agency had dispelled that notion. However, the militarisation of EU security policy is not surprising given earlier attempts at a realist approach around 2014. The idea that the EPF will encourage weapons proliferation in the Horn of Africa is not new. In 2014, the then head of the AU’s Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) expressed concern that the EU purported to support the AU’s “silencing the guns by 2020” initiative, yet intelligence indicated that EU member states permitted the flow of small and light weapons to insurgent groups in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the EPF in its current format will only legitimise and embolden the foreign and security policy jingoism of certain EU states such as France.<sup>25</sup> Yet, the current

<sup>20</sup> European Union, Cotonou Agreement, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, “EU Sets Up the European Peace Facility”, Press Release, 22 March 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Joint Civil Society Statement, “European ‘Peace’ Facility: Causing Harm or Bringing Peace?”, November 2020.

<sup>23</sup> D.M. Herszenhorn, J. Barigazzi, and S. Marks, “To Be Top Gun on Foreign Affairs, Borrell Says EU Must Buy Weapons”, *Politico*, 28 February 2020.

<sup>24</sup> See, Gwatiwa (forthcoming 2021).

<sup>25</sup> French foreign and security policy towards Africa deserves a candid discussion.

form of the EPF does not spell a wholesale shift in the EU's role in Africa.

The EU is one of the main contributors to the AU's peace support operations. A key component of AU peace operations is meant to be the African Standby Force (ASF). When negotiations began around African agency, there was consensus that Africans should develop their autonomous capacity to undertake peace operations. Over the last 15 years ASF doctrines and concepts of operations (CONOPS), such as the logistics and strategic airlift concepts, have been based on the EU model.<sup>26</sup> In the words of a senior peace and security official "the European Union is a pillar in the Africa Peace and Security Architecture".<sup>27</sup> The EU has also provided training for AU troops in key missions. A key demonstration in accommodation of African agency is a formula whereby the EU engages in short deployments which often morph into AU or UN missions. Since 2007 the European Union has leaned towards capacity building and programme planning which is jointly managed by both the EU Military Staff and their AU Peace Support Operations Division colleagues. This has endeared the EU to the AU, with the corollary that most of the African diplomats and AU bureaucrats are relatively keen on the Africa-EU partnership and accommodate its intricacies and idiosyncrasies.<sup>28</sup> This does not mean that the partnership is perfect.

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It is an odious legacy of colonialism and imperialism. It began with Charles De Gaulle orchestrating the strategic neutering of 14 African states in a set of political and economic terms of independence. This includes depositing 50% of their GDP revenues into the French treasury, retaining different types of French military presence, and controlling former French colonies through a shadow state of sorts. See G. Ayittey, *Africa Unchained: The Blueprint for Africa's Future*, New York and London, Palgrave, 2006; R. Moncrieff, "French Africa policy: Sarkozy's Legacy, and Prospects for a Hollande Presidency", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2012, pp. 359-80.

<sup>26</sup> M. Nuyens, personal communication, EU Military Staff, EEAS, October 2015.

<sup>27</sup> J. Okeke, personal communication, AU Peace Support Operations Division, Addis Ababa, June 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Gwatiwa (forthcoming 2021).

The EU takes a calculated approach to capacity building, stabilisation and civilian missions. As part of its CSDP, the EU operates “civilian” and “military” missions. Starting with Operation Artemis in 2003, the EU has operated 21 such missions, of which about 11 are still active.<sup>29</sup> CSDP civilian missions such as European Union Capacity Building (EUCAP) Sahel Mali, EUCAP Nestor (in Somalia) and EUCAP Sahel Niger are largely aimed at capacity building. However, unlike the capacity building provided to the AU Commission in the 2000s, EUCAP efforts are essentially within the security domain: training internal security forces, combating terrorism and organised crime, controlling illegal migration and improving maritime capacity.<sup>30</sup> Without joint-assessments it is difficult to measure the actual impact of these capacity building measures beyond the self-soothing individually published EU reports and press releases associated with these missions. Notably, over the years the EU has undertaken security sector reform (SSR) projects throughout the continent. The EU spent around €1 billion on SSR from 2001 to 2009, and it has steeply increased its spending since then.<sup>31</sup> The EU has also supported the efforts of regional economic communities. For instance, between July 2015 and December 2018, the EU provided more than €20.2 million to support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB) – of which defence and security sector reform is an integral part.<sup>32</sup> SSR has also been a key area for several European states, including Switzerland and the United Kingdom,

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<sup>29</sup> European External Action Service EEAS10 2011-2021, “[Military and Civilian missions and Operations](#)”, 5 March 2019.

<sup>30</sup> See European Union External Action, “[EUCAP Somalia: Mission Background](#)”; European Union External Action Service “[About EUCAP Sahel Niger](#)”, 20 June 2016; European Union External Action Service, “[EUCAP Sahel Mali](#)”.

<sup>31</sup> U. Staeger and T. Gwatiwa, “Peace and security in the context of EU-Africa relations”, in T. Hastrup, L. Mah, and N. Duggan (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations*, London and New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 175-87.

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, 2019, *African Peace Facility: Annual Report 2018*.



which are not members of the EU. For instance, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) has undertaken the SSR projects in Libya, South Sudan and Burundi.<sup>33</sup> However, the general outcome has been limited success.

The EU's role in the partnership has been mainly salient in the area of financing, although it mildly strained the relationship. The EU has spent some €2.2 billion through the APF since 2004. The funding includes paying the salaries of troops serving in key peace support operations, notably in Darfur, Sudan and Somalia. It was a useful stop gap since major troop contributing countries such as Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia and Burundi could not sustain their troops in those missions. Initially, each officer was salaried at €1,200, but as of December 2015, the EU reduced the funding to €700. The AU registered its concerns about these developments, but was careful not to overplay the funding issue because it was both charitable and still reasonable by African standards. There were also concerns about accountability over the funds. The AU perceives the EU's requirement of accountability as coercion. EU demands for accountability coincided with increased diversification of funds from top African nations and a few Scandinavian donors. For instance, the Joint Financial Arrangements (JFAs), which also include Norwegian and Danish funding, are used to complement African contributions.<sup>34</sup> So far, there have been no major differences such as to upset the partnership between the two regions.

The second aspect of this partnership is institution building. The African Peace and Security Architecture may be an African initiative, but the constituent institutions are strikingly European in nature. As a matter of fact, all APSA institutions have European counterparts. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) is similar to the EU's Peace and Security

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<sup>33</sup> "The International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT)", Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

<sup>34</sup> See Gwatiwa (forthcoming, 2021).

Committee (COPS). The EU provides capacity building to the PSC secretariat in the form of visiting fellowships and in-house training at the EU Commission.<sup>35</sup> This does not mean that it is a direct replica of the EU COPS, given that the PSC is actually a transfiguration of the Central Organ which was formed in the early 1990s under the OAU.<sup>36</sup> The initial design of the partnership was such that the EU Military Staff would interact with what was to be an AU Military Staff Committee (AU MSC) in order to develop the Africa Standby Force, but the latter is yet to materialise. However, as mentioned earlier, the EU was an important contributor to the early conceptual design of the ASF. There have been fewer disagreements in this area. Moreover, the EU was a major supporter of the operationalisation of the ASF under the AMANI AFRICA II exercise.<sup>37</sup> The Africa Peace Fund is modelled after the APF. The expectation is that once the Africa Peace Fund is operational, the APF will be rolled back. However, the AU is far from reaching this level of self-sufficiency despite the recent reforms.

There are only two APSA institutions where the EU has been less influential. The EU has not made significant contributions to the Continental Early Warnings Systems (CEWS) and the Panel of the Wise (PANWISE). The CEWS mainly coordinates with the EU Joint Research Centre, based in Italy, wherein the latter focuses on the design of the software that is used for continental surveillance. While the EU generally provides funding, the AU has larger control on the design and function of the institution. This is largely because the AU was apprehensive about an intelligence based early warning system similar to the

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<sup>35</sup> J.-F. Costa-Pereira, personal communication, European External Action Service, European Commission, June 2013.

<sup>36</sup> A.S. Bah., E. Chogo-Nyangoro, S. Dersso, B. Mofya, and T. Murithi, *The Africa Peace and Security Architecture: A Handbook*, Addis Ababa, African Union (AU) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Colonel Antony Gash, personal communication, EU Military Planner, AMANI AFRICA II Team, Brussels, European Commission, June 2013.

EU Situation Room.<sup>38</sup> The EU then acceded to this exercise of African agency because of the previously agreed memorandum. Yet, the bigger question remains as to why the EU has been eager to grant the AU and its actors such wide latitude, given the persistence of Western interests.

The answer to the abovementioned question was best captured by former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo at the OAU/AU golden anniversary celebrations at the United Nations Office in Geneva, in 2013. When explaining the role of Nigerian, Algerian and South African heads of state in transforming Africa's agential status in international affairs, Obasanjo explained they had formed solid networks since the 1970s with their European counterparts who urged them to bear more responsibility for their own affairs. Perhaps what is more striking was the omission of the role of the Conference on CSSDCA.<sup>39</sup> Yet, these networks ensured both sides' commitment to a common cause. However, the seemingly rosy collaboration between the EU and the AU must not obscure the bigger picture in other dimensions of (non-traditional) security cooperation.

## **Engagements in the Economic Area: A Non-traditional Security Issue**

The question of the link between national security and the economy has already been discussed in academic and policy relevant circles. Several governments and regions usually see a threat to economic interests as a threat to national security. While most of the policy rhetoric often casts security in strategic terms, the original notion of security is also concerned

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<sup>38</sup> C. Mwaura, personal communication, AU Continental Early Warning Systems Coordinator, Addis Ababa, July 2014.

<sup>39</sup> E. Ansah- Akuffo, "Human security and Interregional Cooperation between NATO and the African Union", *Global Change, Peace & Security*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2011, pp. 223-37.

with economic, environmental and health issues.<sup>40</sup> As a matter of fact and historical record, distortions around issues which are proximate to capitalism and economic interest have often been used as an excuse for military interventions in Africa.<sup>41</sup> The issue of economic security ties into the claims, mentioned in the preceding section, that European concerns in Africa have little to do with the wellbeing of Africans. Europe's response to African agency in the extractive industries domain is quite self-explanatory.

Europe views Africa as an integral part of its existence and economic security. This has been demonstrated since the nominal and partial fall of colonialism. Africa is indispensable to the core thread of European economic integration: the European community is somewhat unimaginable without Africa.<sup>42</sup> For instance the consolidation of the Treaty of Rome shows:

France, Belgium, the Netherlands and even Italy all still had some colonial ties, described euphemistically in the Treaty as "special relations" ... Thus a relationship with a few parts of what was to be described as the developing world was wished on the Community almost as an afterthought, but a very French afterthought ... Still it was important enough for the French government of Guy Mollet to make it, in February 1957, a condition of signing up to the Rome Treaty. The key elements were trade access to the EEC with reciprocity –for these were still colonies and protectorates...<sup>43</sup>

Despite a revised broader partnership under the Cotonou Agreement of 2000, which promised African agency, the European Union and its member states have been somewhat

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<sup>40</sup> See E. Rothschild, "What is Security?", *Daedalus*, vol. 124, 1995, pp. 53-98.

<sup>41</sup> C. Obi, "Globalized Images of Environmental Security in Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 83, 2000, pp. 47-62.

<sup>42</sup> S. Beckert, "American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafrika, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870-1950", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 122, no. 4, 2017, pp. 1137-170.

<sup>43</sup> A. Hewitt and K. Whiteman (2004), pp. 133-34.

unsettled by increased African agency.

In the 1990s, the demand for natural resources in emerging markets such as China and South Korea began to threaten European access to African raw materials.<sup>44</sup> This improved Africa's bargaining position in commodity exports and other aspects of international cooperation.<sup>45</sup> By 2008, this seemed to have unsettled the European Union. The then EU Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson, lamented the rise of resource nationalism. He bemoaned the tendency of governments in resource-rich countries to introduce export restrictions on their raw materials, which would impede Europe's economy and its overall economic preponderance in Africa.<sup>46</sup> In response, the EU came up with the Raw Materials Initiatives (RMI). The original version of the RMI was openly hostile to the idea of increased African agency in the extractive industry, which the European Commission perceived to be a threat to its economic security. It was only after the intervention of the European Parliament and civil society organisations in 2011 that the wording of the RMI was modified.<sup>47</sup> This was indicative of the true non-traditional security concerns of the Europeans. The African response was equally telling.

Africans developed an initiative, called the African Mining Vision (AMV), which did not necessarily seek to disengage from the West but to set better standards for African agency. The AMV is an AU continent-wide framework, promulgated in

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<sup>44</sup> R.I. Rotberg (ed.), *China into Africa: Trade, Aid and Influence*, Washington DC, Brookings Institute Press, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> See D. Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, Oxon, Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> P. Mandelson, "The challenge of raw materials", speech delivered at Trade and Material Conference, Brussels, 29 September 2009, as cited in, R. Custers and K. Matthysen, *Africa's Natural Resources in a Global Context*, Antwerp, IPIS, 2009, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> H.-O. Fröland, D. Money, and T. Gwatiwa, "Africa–EU Relations and Natural Resource Governance: Understanding African Agency in Historical and Contemporary Perspective", *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 47, no. 166, 2020, pp. 585–603.

February 2009, with the objective of improving the bargaining position of resource-rich African states so that they can negotiate better contracts with Western countries that dominate the extractives industry, in order to promote broad-based sustainable growth and development.<sup>48</sup> It builds on previous initiatives, particularly the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) of 1990, a product of OAU and UN efforts to increase resource beneficiation.<sup>49</sup> The nature of the AMV is quite telling in relation to the European Union. The AU Special Technical Committee of mining ministers created the African Mineral Development Centre, but housed it under the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Interestingly, this process insulated this institution from European influence, relying on Australian and Canadian non-conditional funding.<sup>50</sup> The process has since been extended to the African Development Bank as well. This is an attempt to balance African and European interests, which are clearly divergent. In early 2013, a leading African negotiator indicated that key points of departure between Europe and Africa were that the former preferred sustaining the existing order while Africa wished its counterpart to abandon its aid-based approach for economic projects (emulating the Chinese approach).<sup>51</sup> This is an area which became most pronounced when Africa and Europe's diverging positions on the migration crisis became public knowledge.

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<sup>48</sup> African Union, "[African Mining Vision](#)", Addis Ababa, African Union Commission, 2009, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> This list includes: Africa's Priority Programmes for Economic Recovery which transformed into the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development in 1986; the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment for Socio-Economic Transformation of 1989; and the African Charter for Popular Participation for Development of 1990.

<sup>50</sup> Fröland, Money, and Gwatiwa (2020).

<sup>51</sup> Former South African ambassador, personal communication, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Pretoria: February 2013

## Migration as a Security Issue

The recent migration crisis exposed the core differences over European multidimensional security concerns and those of their African counterparts. Prior to the current scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic, migration between Europe and Africa was a topical issue. However, it is important to highlight that the sort of migration that received attention is irregular migration, which also involves undocumented migrants. People choose to migrate for various reasons. These include economic motivations as well as forced migration which is a result of conflict and natural catastrophes.<sup>52</sup> Although the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean was a hot topic in the press, this has always been a key issue in Africa-EU relations.

There is a close link between security and migration between the two continents. In most developed states, security is conceived as a tripartite phenomenon that entails geopolitical security, production and accumulation of material wealth, and social stability and cohesion.<sup>53</sup> It is in the latter that we find the notion of societal security. Within this discourse, there are key arguments relating to the opening and closure of borders. The most prominent, and relevant to this chapter, is that states have a propensity to close borders if migrants are: from countries associated with a security threat; from ethno-culturally distant countries; low-skilled; and less willing to assimilate into the dominant host culture.<sup>54</sup> More potently, it is the securitisation of African and Muslim migrants that has engendered often ferocious discussions in multilateral and policy circles. Aply, most African migrant-generating countries are associated with security threats such as terrorism (Nigeria, Somalia), autocracy (Eritrea, Ethiopia, etc.) and underdevelopment (much of

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<sup>52</sup> J. Connell, *Migration and the Globalization of Health Care: The Health Worker Exodus?* Cheltenham and Northampton, Edward Edgar, 2010, pp. 94-121

<sup>53</sup> C. Rudolph, "Security and the Political Economy of International Migration" *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, 2003, pp. 603-20.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 607-08.

central and West Africa). These resurged due to the migrant crisis of 2014-15, when many Arabs and Africans drowned in the Mediterranean Sea.

When the crisis began, there were concerns about the security implications of large refugee inflows into Europe. Although developments at the time primarily centred on Arab migration from conflict-torn states such as Syria and Yemen, African migration had been a problem for a while before that. There were thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing conflict situations such as terrorism in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.<sup>55</sup> There were two primary reasons for broader concerns about migrant inflows as of the summer of 2015. The first relates to the role of the media in responding to the migrant crisis. The media framing of the crisis moved from sympathy to suspicion and hostility towards migrants and refugees.<sup>56</sup> The second, and related to the first, was the suspicion that these waves could possibly include terrorist operatives from Islamic State, Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab. Moreover, African migrants were also suspected of possibly bringing to Europe the Ebola virus, a health epidemic which spread in West Africa around the same period. However, the EU's institutional response to these concerns was equally tetchy.

The EU and member states' initial response to the migrant crisis of the mid-2010s was securitisation, in an impulse to defend "fortress Europe". Leite and colleagues argue that Europe criminalised the image of the migrant in order to justify migration controls and close borders to an "external enemy".<sup>57</sup> The narrative about African and Arab migrants grew increasingly

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<sup>55</sup> J. Zaragoza-Cristiani, *Analysing the Causes of the Refugee Crisis and the Key Role of Turkey: Why Now and Why So Many?*, EUI Working Papers, RSCAS 2015/95, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> M. Georgiou and R. Zaborowski, *Media Coverage of the 'Migrant Crisis': A Cross-European Perspective*, Council of Europe Report, DG1, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> A.M.R. Leite, T. Santos, and D.D. da Silva, "Migration and the Mediterranean Sea: A Maritime Bridge Between the EU and Africa", in T. Hastrup, L. Mah, and N. Duggan (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations*, London and New York, 2021, pp. 301-13, [p. 302].



macabre, with official narratives shifting towards the need to patrol the seas in order to quell human trafficking networks, drug smuggling, piracy and armed robbery and terrorist infiltration.<sup>58</sup> Since the surge in migration was occurring via Italy, Rome was the first to launch a controversial EU-funded operation called *Mare Nostrum* (i.e. “our sea”). The operation, although aimed at saving lives, breached international maritime law by patrolling as far as the coast of Libya.<sup>59</sup> The subsequent smaller operation by Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency), Operation Triton, has been characterised by sharper securitisation. From a European perspective, this might have been an apt response to the migrant crisis given concerns about terrorism.<sup>60</sup> The unspoken narrative was that attackers in Belgium, Germany, the UK, Spain and France were mostly migrants from Middle Eastern or Muslim countries and often affiliated to Al-Qaeda or Islamic State. Although the EU took these issues seriously and engaged their African counterparts, the response from Africa was very different.

The African perspectives on the migrant crisis differ from those of the EU. When conducting fieldwork at the AU Commission between 2015 and 2016, the most common ice-breaking jest was that “Europeans were the first undocumented migrants in Africa and we accommodated them for over a century”. The general position from most African states and organisations is that the European migrant crisis is exaggerated, especially when it comes to Africa. The official position held and supported by evidence from the AU Commission (AUC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is that more than 90% of African migration occurs within the continent and not across the ocean; that 94% of African migrants crossing oceans are in a regular (documented) migration form; and that

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<sup>58</sup> European Commission, “EU Action Against Migrant Smuggling [2015-2020]”, Brussels, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> See J. Borger, “EU Under Pressure Over Migrant Rescue Operations in the Mediterranean”, *The Guardian*, 15 April 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Council of the European Union, “Timeline: EU’s Fight Against Terrorism”.

the African share of global migration pales in comparison to Asian and European migration.<sup>61</sup>

In the grand scheme of things, Africans have been largely concerned that the EU seems to have reneged on joint initiatives aimed at addressing inter-continental (regular and irregular) migration. AU security experts criticised what they deemed the EU's double standards and institutional schizophrenia. They blamed EU states for launching a military intervention in Libya despite existing inter-regional agreements around migration issues. For instance, when a few European states intervened in Libya under the auspices of NATO, they ignored AU warnings of an imminent migrant crisis.<sup>62</sup> European states went ahead in spite of the existing Africa-EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME). This shows a divergence of preferences wherein European states often renege on agreements while AU diplomats seek to stick to the more affordable path of institutional commitments. The MME included several agreements and declarations which sought to adequately manage migration. For instance, the Tripoli Declaration on Migration and Development (2006) highlighted the need to manage migration through foreign direct investments, investing in youths and in poverty reducing strategies in line with the then existing UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) objectives.<sup>63</sup> The AU was also infuriated by what it deemed the highest order of hypocrisy in that the EU quickly moved to securitise the mission when there was an existing protocol to combat human trafficking and drug smuggling, the

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<sup>61</sup> M. Achieng, M. El Fadil, and E. Righa, "What is Wrong with the Narrative on African Migration", in A. Adepoju, C. Fumagalli, and N. Nyabola (eds.), *Africa Migration Report: Challenging the Narrative*, Addis Ababa, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020, pp. 1-13.

<sup>62</sup> AU Official, personal communication, Addis Ababa, AU Commission, December 2015.

<sup>63</sup> African Union Commission and the European Commission, "[Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Migration and Development](#)", Tripoli, 22-23 November 2006.

Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the collapse of the Libyan government resulted in a porous littoral coastline, which exacerbated human trafficking and drug smuggling. It would seem that European actors bombed Libya and every migration policy protocol ascribed to it. When the author undertook fieldwork on the AU's partnership between 2014 and 2016, AU officials highlighted the imperative to reinstate the inter-regional protocols of the 2000s.

The return to joint declarations seemed to improve multilateral efforts after the height of the migrant crisis. In November 2015, African and European heads of state and government convened a summit in Valletta, Malta, and promulgated a political declaration and action, basically reiterating the contents of the Rabat Process, the Khartoum Process and the Tripoli Process.<sup>65</sup> If read against those three processes, there was nothing substantively new in the agreement, except the insertion of the AU's talking heads on African agency. It would seem that the European Union was sobering up from a securitisation excess and recommitting to the contents of previous inter-regional agreements. However, it is important to highlight the increased commitment by both parties since the Valletta Summit. In 2017, as a result of AU-EU Dialogue on Migration, the two regions set up the Regional Operations Centre in Khartoum in Support of the African Union Horn of Africa Initiative (ROCK). The initiative, which brings together the AU, Interpol and the law enforcement agencies of partner states, seeks to dismantle criminal networks involved in human trafficking and smuggling.<sup>66</sup> What is certain from these developments is that

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<sup>64</sup> African Union Commission and the European Commission, "Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children", Tripoli, 22-23 November 2006.

<sup>65</sup> European Commission, "Valletta Summit on Migration, Action Plan", 11-12 November 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Civipol, *Regional Operations Centre in Khartoum in Support of the African Union Horn of Africa Initiative (ROCK)*.

they demonstrate the extent to which inter-regional migration remains a security issue. Yet, what is more important is the trajectory of a convergence, divergence and re-convergence of preferences between the two regions.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a nuanced argument that depicts a thriving peace and security relationship between Africa and Europe. This argument was applied within the perimeters of inter-regionalism under the auspices of the European Union, the African Union and key member states. The argument suggests that the peace and security dimension has gradually moved from primary concerns with traditional security threats associated with states' borders and conflicts to those that relate to material and wealth accumulation and those associated with migration. In all these dimensions, the partnership shows a capacity to balance EU concerns – about conflicts, mineral resource nationalism and irregular migration – and African agency. The AU is cognisant of its material weakness in relation to the EU. Without external support, it cannot do much in terms of quelling conflicts, improving natural resource beneficiation within Africa and controlling irregular migration and its associated risks. Thus, it mainly seeks to project its agency by largely shaping European activities in so far as they seem neo-colonial, Eurocentric or one-dimensional.

The EU and its member states still play a large role in the peace and security domain, but they cede certain bolder aspects of security cooperation. The EU finances most peace support operations but allows African states to play a larger role in peace operations. The EU has supported institutional design and institution building within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework. The balancing of European concerns and African agency are a result of years of diplomatic engagement between the two regions. In the area of natural resource extractions, the tying of the economic and national

security largely exhibits itself on the side of the EU. The EU interprets the increase in African agency in resource beneficiation as “resource nationalism” and a threat to its economic and national security. Africa’s promulgation of the AMV and its insulation from the EU demonstrates the perception that Europe presents an existential threat to its agency. However, the securitisation of the economic dimension of the partnership by either region will not upset the partnership. Luckily the issue has not been as controversial as other issues and will still be saved by inter-regional dialogue and the inter-regional partnership as was the case with migration. Migration, which was deemed a crisis in the mid-2010s and a major concern in Europe, has been the largest preoccupation of this partnership. Migration was securitised most visibly since the early 2000s, even though there were joint Africa-EU migration protocols dating back to the inception of the partnership. African policymakers and diplomats limited their agential efforts to inter-regional declarations and action plans from the 2000s. The two regions found common ground in the resuscitation of the earlier joint-accords. The post-2015 accords are currently being implemented to deal with security threats associated with migration.

In light of the overall evidence, it is safe to conclude that the search for common ground on various traditional and non-traditional security issues is secured by the institutionalisation of the partnership. Even though there are occasional hyperbolic reactions, especially from Europe, the dialogue between the AU and the EU often results in amicable solutions. The institutionalisation of the partnership protects it from occasional knee-jerk reactions and foreign policy jingoism of member states.

## 6. Europe's Pivot to Africa: National Strategies and the Challenge of Coherence

Giovanni Faleg, Carlo Palleschi

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In a world where two plus two makes four, a political bloc of 27 sovereign nations would never manage to formulate a *common* foreign policy while at the same time keeping intact the *individual* strategic priorities of its constituents. In the European Union, this can happen by virtue of a bureaucratic wizardry that goes under the name of the “EU external action” machinery. Sub-Saharan Africa is, in this regard, an area where the differences and complexities of EU member states’ engagements are so prominent and rooted in history, that even the most powerful wizard would be afraid of failure. And yet, in recent years, the magic has seemed to work out: while many global powers have started scrambling for political and economic influence in Africa, the EU’s external action has initiated a strategic pivot towards the continent, showing on paper a broad consensus between member states on key priorities for Europe-Africa relations, which have been included in the Joint Communication “Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa”.<sup>1</sup> Traveling across EU capitals, from Lisbon to Berlin, one is likely to hear very similar, if not identical discourse in

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission and the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President (HR/VP), Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa*, Brussels, 9.3.2020 JOIN(2020) 4 final, 9 March 2020.

diplomatic circles on the importance of trade and investment, connectivity, digital innovation, green growth, peace and stability, but also convergence on geographical areas of interest. Many EU member states have almost simultaneously opened new embassies in Africa – particularly in West Africa – or engaged in Summit Diplomacy by hosting periodic gatherings with African leaders. Born in the Covid-19 crisis, the “Team Europe” approach has trademarked a new way of working in which the EU – understood as the European Commission and the European External Action Service – and its member states can work better together, delivering faster and more effective support to partner countries in need of assistance to face the pandemic, with a strong emphasis on the African continent. Even in the Sahel, an area where the strategic interests and presence of some member states are often a source of tensions, initiatives like the France-led Takuba Task Force have attempted to improve coordination and coherence among EU member states in delivering security assistance to the region.

This chapter argues that EU member states have enhanced convergence in their strategic priorities towards the continent<sup>2</sup> primarily as a result of four factors: (1) a response to greater multipolar competition<sup>3</sup> (e.g. the need to contain China, or the threat posed by Russia on the continent); (2) the temporary absence of the United States from Africa under the Trump Administration; (3) a paradigm shift describing Africa as a land of opportunities, with many African countries moving from being recipients of development aid to becoming attractive markets open for business; (4) to a lesser, but not negligible extent, the greater strategic ambition of the new EU leadership since 2019, and particularly the von der Leyen “geopolitical” Commission, who have prioritised a stronger partnership with

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<sup>2</sup> On this topic, see also: G. Carbone, *The EU's New Africa Strategy and Individual Member States' Policies*, ISPI Commentary, ISPI, 21 December 2020.

<sup>3</sup> G. Faleg, *Global power competition in Africa: implications for the EU*, ISPI Commentary, ISPI, 21 December 2020.

Africa on top of EU foreign policy objectives,<sup>4</sup> pulling some member states to match this ambitious approach.

On that account, and to test this argument, this chapter analyses the strategies of EU member states towards Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting common denominators and fault lines. The choice not to focus on the whole continent is justified by the fact that several actors still de-link North and Sub-Saharan Africa in their doctrines and it is indeed on the sub-continent that most variation in strategic orientations can be observed. The first section classifies member states' strategic priorities, showing where and how EU capitals want to engage with Sub-Saharan Africa, and what are the elements of continuity and change. The second section discusses what the EU presence in Sub-Saharan Africa comprises, illustrating member states' hard and soft power. The third section focuses on the main points of convergence and divergence among member states' strategies, outlining political implications for a truly common EU approach.

## **EU Member States in Sub-Saharan Africa: Who, Where and Why**

A growing number of EU member states have finally realised the importance of Africa in their strategic thinking. Indeed, in addition to those EU countries that traditionally prioritised Sub-Saharan Africa, others have expanded or enhanced their strategic footprint. Against this backdrop, Africa has gained a new centrality in national policy planners' agendas, producing implications for EU strategy-making in terms of resetting common priorities.

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<sup>4</sup> D. Yotova, *After Cotonou: how Europe can forge new relations with Africa in 2021*, Commentary, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 25 February 2021.



EU member states can be divided into four groups, depending on their level of strategic engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>5</sup> The first group includes countries that consider the continent a top priority in the pursuit of their national interest, and have developed a fully-fledged strategic approach. This group includes Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain. What these countries have in common is a long-standing relationship with African countries, due to their history or geographic position among other factors, which results in prioritisation in foreign policy agenda across multiple sectors. Some may focus on one or more sub-regions, such as Belgium in the Great Lakes or Portugal in Southern Africa's Lusophone countries. Others, like Spain and Italy, have only recently re-engaged in the continent after a period of political and diplomatic (but not necessarily economic) disengagement. France is by far the biggest EU player in Sub-Saharan Africa and outweighs any other member state with regards to hard power and military deployments.

The second group includes countries that have high stakes and large presences in Africa, which cannot, however, be considered as top strategic priorities. Austria, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden are part of this group. The Nordic countries have systematically been engaged in Sub-Saharan Africa as part of their contribution towards international development. Austria and Ireland have not always maintained such a level of engagement, but have upgraded their strategic approaches in recent years, and scaled up their activities and diplomatic presence. For instance, in 2019 Ireland launched "Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025".

The third group is quite close to the second and is made up of countries that traditionally did not have a strong strategic

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<sup>5</sup> This taxonomy is the updated version of the categorisation based on quality indicators and quantitative research previously published in: G. Faleg and C. Pallechi, *African Strategies: European and global approaches towards sub-Saharan Africa*, EUISS Chaillot Paper no. 158, European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2020, pp. 11-12.

focus on Africa, but revamped it in the last 2-3 years, as a result of greater interest in the area: this is the case of Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia (the so-called Visegrad Group, or V4), Estonia and Malta. The Maltese government has released an ambitious Africa Strategy 2020-25 based on trade, development and diplomacy, the first one in its history towards Africa. Estonia presented its first African strategy in February 2021 and stepped up its security presence in the continent, for instance by contributing special forces to the Takuba Task Force. The fact that the V4 have strengthened their strategic role is particularly interesting, as they have revived old ties from the Soviet past,<sup>6</sup> embracing greater commitment to economic cooperation, but also provision of security and defence, as shown by Czech Republic and Poland in the Sahel.

Finally, the fourth group is composed of member states that do not consider the continent a strategic priority and only have limited, sectoral engagement, meaning that the quantity and quality of their interactions with African countries is not strategically as important as other areas for their national interests. This group is very heterogeneous and includes 9 states: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia. It is worth outlining that, based on current levels of engagement, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania would begin from a good starting point if they decided to upgrade their strategies towards Africa.

There are two main visible indicators to measure the strategic relevance of Africa in national foreign policy agendas. One is the publication of official strategic documents and frameworks on Africa, or the space allocated to Africa in general foreign policy doctrines. The other is the number and type of high-level summits and ministerial conferences with African governments organised by EU member states. A close look at both shows the growing interest of capitals towards Africa and significant

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<sup>6</sup> S. Cibian, *Central and Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa: prospects for sustained re-engagement*, Research Paper, Chatham House, May 2017, pp. 6-7.

convergence in terms of language and priorities: while many of the published strategies have broad cross-sectoral focus, a growing number of documents are tailored to economic cooperation and to defence and security (particularly in West Africa/Sahel).

FIG. 6.1 - SUMMIT DIPLOMACY: SUMMITS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES HELD BY EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES AND OTHER GLOBAL PARTNERS



Source: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).  
 Note: The EU Summit 2020 has been postponed because of Covid-19.

The number of flagship, high-level summits set up by member states is also increasing. Due to historical ties with the African continent, France is the only EU country with a longstanding tradition of African summits. The “France-Africa Summit” was first organised in 1973 as a coordination meeting between France and francophone Africa. Over the last few years, high-level Africa summits organised by other member states have become much more common. For instance, Italy organised the Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference in 2016, 2018 and 2021. As for Hungary, the “Budapest Africa Forum” (2013, 2015 and 2018) has become a milestone event as part of its “Global Opening”, a strategic foreign policy that is aimed at rebuilding and enhancing relations with African countries. Many member states have launched initiatives with the specific objective of building or strengthening their economic partnerships with the African continent and supporting the internationalisation of their enterprises. Germany, for instance, made Africa the focus of its Presidency of the G20, with the launch of the Marshall Plan for Africa and the Compact with Africa (CwA), whose primary objective is to increase the attractiveness of private investment in Africa.<sup>7</sup> In its Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-21, Poland committed itself to continuing to implement the “Go Africa” programme,<sup>8</sup> which aims to increase “the number of Polish investments in Africa, strengthen bilateral trade and promote Poland on African markets”.<sup>9</sup> Ireland has set up various initiatives that confirm its dynamism in the region, such as the Africa Ireland Economic Forum and the Africa Agri-Food Development Programme. This plethora of

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<sup>7</sup> So far, twelve African countries have joined the initiative: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, and Tunisia.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, *Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021*.

<sup>9</sup> Polish Investment & Trade Agency of the Republic of Poland, Speech of the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Economy Iлона Antoniszyn - Klik at the conference summarising the programme *Go Africa 2013*, 21 January 2014.

initiatives demonstrates the increasing interest of member states towards Africa, while at the same time highlighting a certain fragmentation which could be detrimental to developing a common EU approach, as we will see in the conclusion.

Having discussed what EU member states' strategies are, let us now analyse how strategic priorities are changing. EU capitals have in fact shifted attention, in response to new trends and dynamics in the African sub-continent, such as rising threats posed by violent extremism, new economic opportunities and multipolar competition. Shifts have been twofold: thematic and geographic.

Analysing member states' African strategies, the first remarkable thematic shift that stands out, concerns migration. If we go back to 2017, when debate was dominated by the European refugee crisis, the top priority for member states in Africa was "migration".<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, on the contrary, migration is just one element of a broader picture, as new priorities have emerged in national policymaking. The overarching framework of this innovative approach is the consolidation of the vision of Africa as "a land of opportunities", which attaches great emphasis on long-term positive economic and digital transformations. This is linked to the opportunities which arise from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the need to enhance strategic partnership to support connectivity, bilateral trade and investment. Migration remains a key tenet for member states, but is now addressed with a longer-term horizon, stronger attention for migrants' rights and deeper focus not only on migratory flows between Africa and the EU but also on intra-African human mobility. Addressing the root causes of migration continues to partially drive stabilisation efforts in the Sahel, but the expansion of violent extremism and the collapse of the social contract in the region has broadened the strategic rationale for action, de-linking it from purely

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<sup>10</sup> K. Hughes, "EU-Africa Relations Strategies for a Renewed Partnership", *Friends of Europe*, May 2017.

migration concerns. Against this backdrop, many strategies highlight the centrality of engaging in conflict prevention, with a stronger emphasis on human security and the need for an integrated approach to conflicts and crises in line with the EU Global Strategy. It is also worth noting a return of soft power, with member states – old and new – increasingly committed to strengthening their engagement and intensifying dialogue with African partners in fields such as education, research, cultural and language activities.

As for member states' geographic priorities, West Africa (namely the Sahel) and East Africa (the Horn) remain the regions drawing the highest strategic attention, but at the same time new areas have been gaining strategic relevance, such as Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean. Central Africa is less prominent in member states' strategic thinking, with the exception of Belgium, France and Ireland. West Africa is identified as a priority region not only by traditional players, such as Belgium,<sup>11</sup> France, Germany, Italy,<sup>12</sup> Ireland,<sup>13</sup> Spain and Portugal, but also by "re-engaging countries" such as Czech Republic,<sup>14</sup> Hungary<sup>15</sup> or Poland, and newcomers like Malta.<sup>16</sup> The focus is mainly on the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, with a greater recent interest in the Gulf of Guinea, resulting from a combination of different factors, including management of migration flows, security threats, illicit trafficking, piracy and trade opportunities.

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<sup>11</sup> Since 2017, Belgium opened four new embassies in Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Mauritania.

<sup>12</sup> Since 2017, Italy has opened new embassies in Niger and Burkina Faso and has reopened its embassy in Guinea (2018). It also plans to open new embassies in Mali and Chad.

<sup>13</sup> In 2018, Ireland opened a new embassy in Liberia.

<sup>14</sup> Czech Republic launched in 2018 the "Strategy of the Czech Republic for the Support of Stabilisation and Development of the Sahel Countries for the Period 2018-2021" and in 2019 opened new embassies in Mali and Senegal.

<sup>15</sup> Since 2016, Hungary has opened new embassies in Ghana and Nigeria.

<sup>16</sup> Malta opened in 2019 a High Commission in Ghana, the first Maltese mission in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Although strategic engagement in the Horn of Africa has been affected by Brexit and by the growing attention given by many member states to the Sahel, the area continues to be considered by several member states as a strategic region, particularly by France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The attention towards the Horn of Africa is mainly driven by three factors: maritime security, mainland security and multipolar competition. Regarding the first element, member states' concerns revolve around the need to curb the implications of the Yemeni war in the Red Sea as well as to fight piracy activities affecting sea lines of communications, maritime trade and energy provision. Secondly, mainland security is mainly jeopardised by the spread of the terrorist threat posed by al-Shabaab and the contested legitimacy of Somalia's central government. Furthermore, serious concerns are arising among EU capitals regarding the implementation of the peace deal between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the recent conflict in the Tigray region. These issues are of paramount importance especially in the light of the fact that Ethiopia is identified by many member states as a strategic partner and a political "hub" in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lastly, the Horn has been increasingly interlinked with Middle Eastern dynamics. This geostrategic shift has required – and still requires – member states to broadly rethink their strategic approach in order to tackle the increasing militarisation and the growing economic presence of global powers, as well as to cope with new patterns of realignment by countries in the Horn with players in the Gulf, which creates *de facto* a "Horn of Arabia" space.

The Indian Ocean is not (yet) a priority for many member states, but trends indicate its growing relevance for African geopolitics in the near future. The geopolitical concept of the Indo-Pacific region responds to the strategic confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans,<sup>17</sup> which links Africa to Asia creating,

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<sup>17</sup> This concept was presented by Prime Minister Abe in a speech delivered in 2007 entitled "Confluence of the Two Seas". See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "[Confluence of the Two Seas](#)", speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India, 22 August 2007.

in Japanese Prime Minister Abe's words, the so-called "arc of freedom and prosperity".<sup>18</sup> To date, France is the EU country most engaged in the area, with a comprehensive strategy which foresees a deeper integration between the Indian and Pacific Ocean as part of a larger opening towards Asia. In this area, due to the growing engagement of global powers such as China, Japan and India, geopolitical competition is likely to increase, while at the same time new opportunities for trilateral cooperation can emerge. Indeed, there is room for EU countries to develop strategic partnerships with India and Japan to promote a "free and open" Indo-Pacific, uphold maritime security, improve connectivity and ensure territorial integrity and freedom of navigation. In line with the aforementioned priority focus on the region, France is the EU country which is the most active in strengthening cooperation mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region, especially with India, with whom it has been linked by a "Strategic partnership" since 1998. This framework was confirmed by the "Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region" which was presented in 2018 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership.<sup>19</sup> As confirmation of this strategic cooperation, France and India have a defence logistics agreement, which facilitates port visits, joint exercises and training, and which could allow Indian warships access to the French base in Djibouti. In addition to geopolitical competition, the Indian Ocean has emerged as a key area in terms of maritime security, especially with regard to piracy off Somali shores and growing security concerns in the Mozambique Channel, a key transit route for maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean. It is within this context that it is foreseeable that the "African" Indian Ocean

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "[On the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity': An Address by H.E. Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Founding of the Japan Forum on International Relations](#)", International House of Japan, 12 March 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of External Affairs of India, "[India-France Joint Statement during State visit of President of France to India](#)", New Delhi, 10 March 2018.



will gain strategic relevance in the near future for other member states in addition to France, with the possibility of exploring new synergies with other global powers.

Southern Africa maintains its strategic relevance due to the presence of African powerhouses. South Africa, in particular, is the strongest economy in the region and a main economic and political partner of EU member states at the continental level. It is worth noting that even those member states that are less engaged in the continent have established a diplomatic presence in South Africa. Angola is also growing its political leverage in the region. The strategic attention of many EU capitals is also drawn by security concerns, in particular with regard to the increasing threat posed by violent extremism in the northern Mozambique province of Cabo Delgado, as demonstrated by the proposal to send an EU training mission to Mozambique.<sup>20</sup>

## **The Geometry of EU Member States' Approaches**

Against this new strategic backdrop, member states have upheld and expanded their presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the aim of advancing their national interests on the sub-continent while promoting economic prosperity. Their approach is multidimensional and multilevel. Multidimensional in the sense that EU countries have adopted a mix of hard and soft power instruments, combining engagement in security and conflict prevention and mitigation with a huge focus on business ties and stronger cooperation in the fields of development, education, innovation and connectivity; multilevel, in the sense that while institutional relations continue to be at the core of member states' projection, the private sector, civic society and people-to-people connections, especially in the light of the

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<sup>20</sup> B. Immenkam, "European Peace Facility Investing in international stability and security", European Parliament Briefing, 2 June 2021; and G. Faleg, "Conflict Prevention in Mozambique: can there be peace after the storm?", EUISS Brief no. 5, European Union Institute for Security Studies, 10 April 2019.

African diaspora in EU countries, have gained a new strategic centrality.

With regard to the security domain, we are witnessing two growing trends both in multilateral and bilateral engagements, which are complementary and perfectly in line with the strategic “pivot to Africa” described above. On the one hand, member states’ multilateral engagement towards Sub-Saharan Africa has increased, as demonstrated by the fact that the share of Sub-Saharan missions in demand for personnel for EU civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions rose from 2% to 28% between 2009 and 2019.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the number of member states deploying troops in Sub-Saharan Africa outside UN or EU operations has recently grown too, while only a few years ago this kind of intervention was a prerogative only of traditional African players. This latter consideration is of great interest as bilateral engagements are a better indicator of a country’s will or capacity to project hard power, as they usually require heavier investment, efforts and commitments than contributions to multilateral operations.

Consistently with the geographic shift illustrated above, member states concentrate their security concerns mainly in two areas: the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Due to the deterioration of maritime security, the Gulf of Guinea is also gaining greater attention, especially from France which is committed to ensuring maritime security with Operation *Corymbe*, and by Portugal and Spain through maritime defence cooperation. Although multipolar competition may trigger stronger military commitment by other states in the Indian Ocean, for now this region is not seeing an increase in engagements, with the exception of France, which is present in the area through its military defence bases in French overseas territories La Réunion and Mayotte. In confirmation of this, “France’s Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific” clearly states that France’s security

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<sup>21</sup> T. Smit, “Towards a More Capable European Union Civilian CSDP”, Policy Brief, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), November 2019.

interests are “to protect sovereign territories, secure strategic supplies, ensure freedom of action in the commons, and foster stable regional environments”.<sup>22</sup>

The growing bilateral engagement is evident in the Sahel, where even though France remains the main security stakeholder, other member states today play a bigger role in the field of defence and security. As confirmation of this greater strategic cross-cutting engagement, the Takuba Task Force is supported by several EU countries:<sup>23</sup> Belgium, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany (political support only), Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, as well as two non-EU countries, namely Norway and the United Kingdom (essentially political support). Romania will join the Takuba Task Force operationally starting in late 2021.<sup>24</sup> Against this backdrop, President Macron’s decision to reconfigure – or to be more precise – end French-led Operation Barkhane,<sup>25</sup> is consistent with France’s effort to reduce its direct engagement in the Sahel by capitalising on strategic convergence towards the region and encouraging other member states to translate strategic documents into actions and clear commitments. In this respect, Macron’s decision could even accelerate member states’ strategic convergence towards the Sahel, widening further the room for intra-EU cooperation. The Europeanisation of security interventions in the Sahel would be politically centred on the Takuba Task Force and based on an expansion of CSDP missions (e.g. through EUTM Mali).

The Horn of Africa is another key region in terms of hard power projection. Unlike West Africa, where member states’

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<sup>22</sup> French Ministry for the Armed Forces, “France’s Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific”, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> DECISION no. 35 of 16 June 2021, <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/243303>

<sup>24</sup> In addition to these countries, Greece also expressed its interest in joining the Takuba Task Force but no commitment has been officially announced so far.

<sup>25</sup> See: “L’opération Barkhane reconfigurée sur trois piliers. La menace est au Sud, cap sur le Niger dit Emmanuel Macron”, *Bruxelles2*, 11 July 2021.

approaches are strictly security-driven, hard power in the Horn of Africa responds to the wide range of interconnected issues described above, among them the economic relevance of the area and the growing military presence of global powers. Another difference with the Sahel is that, leaving aside member states' engagement in multilateral missions, bilateral military engagement remains the prerogative of traditional security providers, mainly France<sup>26</sup> and Italy,<sup>27</sup> which both have a permanent military base in Djibouti. Italy's interest in the area is also confirmed by the Bilateral Training Mission for Police Forces in Djibouti and Somalia (MIADIT) and the recent visit of the Minister of Defence, Lorenzo Guerini, to Djibouti in March 2021.<sup>28</sup> Germany and Spain maintain military personnel in the French facilities in Djibouti within the framework of EU-led Operation Atalanta.<sup>29</sup>

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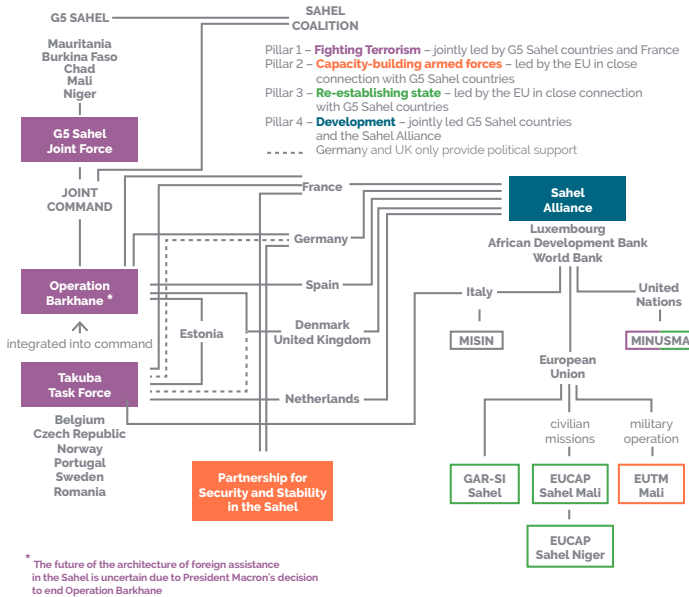
<sup>26</sup> France's forces are deployed at several sites in Djibouti city, including Djibouti-Ambouli International Airport, a naval base, and Chabelley Airport outside the capital. Since independence the number of French troops in Djibouti has declined from 4,300 in 1978, to 2,400 in the 2000s, to the current level of 1,450 – the minimum stipulated in the 2011 treaty.

<sup>27</sup> Italy's National Support Military Base opened in 2013. The base is intended primarily to support Italian naval activity in the region, most notably Operation Atalanta, and the operation of UAVs. The base is reportedly capable of hosting up to 300 troops but operates with on average of 80 personnel.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Defense, "[Terminata la due giorni del Ministro Guerini nel Corno d'Africa. Incontro con autorità della Somalia e di Gibuti](#)".

<sup>29</sup> N. Melvin, "[The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region](#)", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Background Paper, April 2019.

FIG. 6.2 - ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS: FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN THE G5 SAHEL AND THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN STATES



Source: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).

In addition to military deployments, another good indicator of member states' security engagement is defence cooperation. In this sector too, according to the data gathered,<sup>30</sup> it is possible to identify a growing engagement by a broad spectrum of EU countries. Portugal is actively engaged in defence cooperation in the field of maritime security in West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire, Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe) and has defence cooperation agreements with its former colonies Angola and Mozambique. Italy can boast a well expanded network of defence cooperation agreements, including the Horn of Africa (with Ethiopia and Djibouti), West Africa (Senegal, Mali,

<sup>30</sup> Data referring to defence cooperation were gathered by the authors in a research previously published in Faleg and Palleschi (2020).

Niger, Ghana, Gabon, Chad and Burkina Faso) and Southern Africa (Angola, Mozambique and South Africa). Finally, it is interesting to note the defence cooperation agreements between Poland and Mali (expired in 2019) and between Austria and Ghana and Austria and Senegal. While defence cooperation has been further developed over the last few years, this kind of engagement is not yet an element of security projection for many member states belonging to group 3 and 4 – such as Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Slovenia – confirming how demanding bilateral engagement still is for some EU countries.

As specified above, member states who use little or no soft power, and only act through hard power, no longer exist. In addition to security projection, the economic dimension stands out above all, as demonstrated by the importance of trade and investment in member states' strategic documents. This is reflected in concrete terms by high-level initiatives and business fora organised by EU capitals as well as by the extensive network of member states' trade offices and business councils, all good indications of how intense commercial ties are. Looking at this network, we can note that South Africa and Nigeria are the most important commercial hubs while Ghana is gaining greater attention, and that in East Africa, Kenya hosts several business and trade councils. Member states' engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates fresh economic impetus, with the aim of promoting a suitable and secure business environment, increasing investment opportunities and boosting trade on the basis of mutually beneficial commercial partnership and inclusive economic growth. Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, who do not have any trade offices on the sub-continent at the moment, could start building their presence at least in some Sub-Saharan African commercial hubs in order to capitalise on the strategic attention attached to business opportunities and thus strengthen trade relations.

Development cooperation also occupies an important role in the soft-power toolbox. Even though EU member states share the

strategic intent to move from donor-recipient relations towards a more comprehensive partnership, development assistance remains a key factor in assessing EU member states' engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2018, the top five EU member states engaged in Official Development Assistance (ODA) were Germany, France, Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium. However, it is interesting to note that, with the exception of Germany and Luxembourg, all the top donors and the majority of other member states scaled down their aid disbursements to Sub-Saharan African countries between 2009 and 2019. The top-three Sub-Saharan African recipients of net ODA from EU member states in 2018 are: Ethiopia (US\$510 million), Cameroon (US\$468 million) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (US\$436 million).<sup>31</sup> Ethiopia is also explicitly indicated as a partner country for development cooperation by Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden.

In addition to economic instruments, member states' capability to project their soft power on the sub-continent is also influenced by the extension of their cultural footprint through cultural and research centres, university campuses and schools. In this regard, we can note that the presence of cultural centres is mainly correlated to deep-rooted historical and linguistic ties: Portugal is well represented in Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau; Belgium in Central Africa; Italy in Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. Greece has schools in Ethiopia and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another interesting example is Spain, which has been committed to increasing its cultural footprint on the sub-continent. In April 2021, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez inaugurated in Dakar the first Cervantes Institute in Sub-Saharan Africa, which represents "a clear bet by Spain on Africa".<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, many member

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<sup>31</sup> Net ODA disbursements are expressed in current US\$ million. Source: OECD, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Instituto Cervantes, "[Pedro Sánchez afirma que el nuevo Instituto Cervantes](#)

states – including for instance Austria, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovenia – still do not have any cultural presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, showing how much cooperation in these sectors can be further developed to fully operationalise the importance attached to cultural soft power in their strategic documents.

As argued above, member states' presence in Sub-Saharan Africa is not only multidimensional, but also multilevel. Institutional relations are highly cultivated by EU countries, as demonstrated by the frequency of high-level visits from member states to Sub-Saharan African countries, which have increased in number over the last few years. Furthermore, the geographic distribution of these visits is also a good indicator to understand which countries attract most attention and where member states are most interested in strengthening diplomatic and economic relations or finding new contacts. Analysing the data gathered covering the timeframe 2010-19,<sup>33</sup> it can be seen that Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa are some of the most visited by EU countries and that Angola also attracts member states that we classified in group 4, as it was chosen as a destination country by the ministry of foreign affairs of Bulgaria and the deputy prime minister of Romania for their official trips in 2019. Visits in part correlate to consolidated historical ties, such as in the case of Portugal (with ministers mostly visiting São Tomé and Príncipe, Cabo Verde, Angola and Mozambique) and Belgium. West Africa has recently gained greater attention, especially Niger and Mali, mainly within the framework of enhancing security cooperation. Mali for instance was visited, among others, by Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Portugal.

In addition to inter-institutional relations, member states have been engaged in strengthening strategic interactions with

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de Dakar 'es una apuesta clara y decidida de España por Senegal y por toda África"', 9 April 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Data were gathered by the authors in a research previously published in Faleg and Palleschi (2020).



other actors, such as civil society, women and youth groups and the private sector. In this sense, people-to-people connections can be intensified by the aforementioned cooperation in the culture and education sectors as well as by the African diaspora in EU member states. In this context, France, Italy, Portugal and Germany are the four member states with the largest number – in absolute terms – of migrants from Sub-Saharan countries, as of 2019.<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that in the timeframe 1990-2019, almost all member states experienced an increase in the number of Africans living in their countries, especially from Nigeria, South Africa, Somalia and Eritrea. In particular, Portugal continued to be seen as a destination country especially by migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries and Hungary experienced an increase in the number of migrants from Nigeria, confirming a consolidated trend of migration flows from African countries to Hungary, which dates back to the Cold War. The private sector plays a key role in member states' strategies not only with reference to business opportunities and trade relations, but also when it comes to development. Indeed, as argued above, the model of development cooperation has changed over the last few years and EU countries have been ready to capture this paradigm shift and integrate private sector cooperation in their Africa development strategies. It is within this framework, consistently with the EU concept of “partnerships of equals”, that member states aim to improve public-private coordination in those sectors where their companies can provide added value to unlock African endogenous potential, promote digital transformation, and generate employment and opportunities for African youth.

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<sup>34</sup> Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *International migrant stock 2019*, UNDESA, 2019.

## The Importance of Being Earnest (and Coherent)

Compared to the past, there is certainly broader consensus among EU member states on the need for a stronger partnership with Africa, as well as on its strategic importance in their foreign policy agendas. National strategies towards Africa converge in five main areas.

First of all is acknowledgment of the objective of inclusive economic growth as a key element of the partnership, in light of the stronger continental economic integration underpinned by the AfCFTA. Private sector investments and job creation feature as core elements in nearly all strategic documents produced by EU member states, marking a shift away from a donor-recipient approach overly focused on development aid that will become even more prominent in the coming years due to post-Covid-19 recovery needs.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, the promotion of peace and security on the continent remains a common priority, especially in areas that are considered as more directly linked to European security, such as the Sahel. Here, there is a strong emphasis in many strategic documents on the implementation of an integrated approach and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. At the same time, security discourse<sup>36</sup> has adapted to new realities and paradigms, as shown by a growing attention to conflict prevention, hybrid threats, violent extremism. The geographic attention to the Sahel is also gradually expanding to the broader West Africa region, as insecurity spreads from the G5 countries down to the coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Along the lines of support to African economic recovery to Covid-19 being provided by the EU under the Team Europe approach. See [European Commission, "Team Europe mobilises to support African economies"](#), Press Release, Brussels, 18 May 2021.

<sup>36</sup> See N. Duggan and T. Haastrup, *The security dimension of EU-Africa relations*, ISPI Commentary, ISPI, 21 December 2020.

<sup>37</sup> This is characterized in particular by an expansion of violent extremist groups. See G. Faleg and K. Mustasilta, *Salafi-jihadism in Africa: a winning strategy*, EUISS Policy Brief no. 12, European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2021.

Events unfolding recently have also shifted policy attention towards East and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean, the latter becoming a space where geo-strategic competition among global powers is becoming more prominent.<sup>38</sup>

Third, EU member states share, in Africa as elsewhere, a value-based strategic narrative emphasising governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and the whole set of conditions that underpin the EU's foreign policy since its creation. Related to this, commitment to a rule-based multilateral order is firmly established in strategic documents. Slightly in contrast with the latter, member states are, however, also aware of the need for realism and pragmatism in order to face multipolar competition in the continent.

Fourth, new thematic areas have emerged and are now at the core of European strategic engagement with African countries. A growing attention to sustainability results in capitals prioritising – more forcefully than in the past – the need to address climate change and facilitate transition to a green and blue economy,<sup>39</sup> focusing on gender equality. Connectivity and digitalisation are examples of themes that will define the prospects of growth in Africa in the next decade and have therefore captured member states' strategic attention, particularly in terms of repercussions for FDIs and public-private partnerships.<sup>40</sup>

Fifth, the geography of European strategies towards Sub-Saharan Africa is also changing and becoming more convergent, as shown by increased presence and activities in West Africa. Looking ahead, a growing focus on the East and the Indian Ocean can be expected. South Africa and Ethiopia are currently

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<sup>38</sup> D.M. Baruah, *What is happening in the Indian Ocean?*, Q&A, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 3 March 2021.

<sup>39</sup> See G. Carbone and C. Casola (eds.), *Hopes and Realities: A Green Recovery for Africa?*, ISPI Dossier, ISPI, 26 June 2021.

<sup>40</sup> On priorities for the next decade and scenarios for African prosperity (and the EU's role), see: G. Faleg (ed.), *African Futures 2030: free trade, peace and prosperity*, Chaillot Paper 164, European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2021.

the main economic and political hubs on the continent but new realities such as Ghana or Nigeria are becoming more competitive for EU member states.

Although there are important common denominators among EU member states and their strategic language converges, strategic interests are obviously not the same and not always easy to reconcile. A first important factor to consider is that the renewed strategic importance of Africa for more EU member states can amplify intra-EU competition, if not managed or coordinated. A case in point is West Africa, which is being overcrowded with diplomatic, economic and security presences and where traditional actors, such as France, will be confronted by a growing number of engaged partners. This can create more entry points for collaboration and burden sharing, as shown by the Takuba Task Force, but also lead to a more complex and potentially problematic harmonisation of individual nations' interests and priorities. Higher transactional and negotiation costs to foster convergence among national foreign policies can therefore be expected. While the "usual suspect" here is security and military cooperation, the fragmentation of national trade and investment plans is likely to gain relevance, given the strong focus of economic partnership in EU member states' bilateral relations with African countries. Uncoordinated initiatives launched by European capitals could undermine collective action if high-level summits gathering African leaders multiply, leading to a mini-scramble for Africa within Europe that would be detrimental *vis-à-vis* competition with other global powers.

An important aspect of strategic divergence among EU member states is the dissimilarity of historical trajectories, which results in multiple conflicting narratives. While countries with a colonial past are sometimes struggling to shed negative associations with the colonial period, other countries, namely those of the post-Soviet space, can share with Africa their experience in the implementation of economic and political reform during the transitional period, and can benefit from a

clean track record to set up a dialogue free from paternalism.<sup>41</sup>

While it is unlikely that EU member states will push competition to the extreme, even small indicators of fragmentation could undermine the EU's credibility and effectiveness on the continent, especially if leveraged by external actors with an aim to discredit the EU. Because of growing multipolar competition, African countries are in fact exposed to multiple influences and can choose the most profitable deals or partners. If EU member states do not establish a coherent and coordinated approach, they may expose their flanks to manipulation by external powers. A common EU approach is therefore essential in a multipolar world.

The final and fundamental question to be raised in this chapter is therefore how likely is that approach to materialise, given the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic? On the surface, the EU's strategic posture outlined in the March 2020 Joint Communication "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" seems perfectly in line with those of its member states. The thematic priorities largely overlap, with the five key areas (green transition, digital transformation, sustainable jobs and growth, peace and governance, migration and mobility) featuring prominently also in national strategic documents, although both the EU and member states' strategies could require a fresh perspective in the aftermath of the pandemic to overcome the emergency approach and integrate the long-term consequences of Covid-19 in a more structured manner, especially in the fields of health, socio-economic inequalities and digitalisation. The EU-27 aims to leverage a wide range of instruments and implement an integrated approach in its relationship with Africa. The geographic distribution of CSDP missions and operations essentially overlaps with EU member states' deployments. As the High Representative Josep Borrell

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<sup>41</sup> On the Soviet's bloc relations with Africa, see G. Faleg and S. Secieru, *Russia's forays into sub-Saharan Africa: do you want to be my friend, again?*, EUISS Policy Brief no. 6, European Union Institute for Security Studies, March 2020.

put it,<sup>42</sup> Europe's problem is not a lack of power or instruments per se, but the ability to use political will to aggregate such power, ensuring coherence and maximising the capacity to be strategically flexible to adapt to post-Covid-19 or long-Covid-19 scenarios. The Union and its constituent members must also be prepared to face stronger global power competition in Sub-Saharan Africa: being an earnest and coherent partner in the eyes of African countries is therefore the main pre-requisite to advance Europe's collective strategic interests.

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<sup>42</sup> Josep Borrell, "Embracing Europe's Power", *Project-Syndicate*, 8 February 2020.

# Conclusions and Policy Implications

Giovanni Carbone, Rose W. Ngugi, Abebe Shimeles

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The European Union and Africa have compelling reasons to strengthen their cooperative ties. Economic links and prospects, demographic and human mobility trends, developmental and environmental challenges, regional and international security concerns, these as well as other forces, all push towards closer collaboration. A potentially fertile ground for deepening the relations between the two sides undeniably exists, provided by their long-established links – whether institutionalised or not – and a shared view that proximity at least makes it sensible and desirable, maybe even inevitable, to invest in dialogue and connection.

Wide differences remain, however, between two continents that lie not only on the opposite shores of the Mediterranean but also, for the most part, at the far ends of the economic development scale. Moreover, meeting halfway hinges on each side having first achieved internal coherence and compromises around a continental agenda as the starting ground for inter-continental bargaining. This is itself a complex task, as each of the two parties – most notably Europe – includes actors that openly resist the prospect of closer contacts, or at least certain specific forms such ties may take. Thus, when we talk about Euro-Africa relations, although on the face of it this concerns two sides, in practice some eighty countries are more or less directly involved.

Recent efforts have shown that the EU is willing to build on continuity (by renewing the Cotonou Agreement, for

example, albeit in a significantly revised version thereof), while also articulating the need to work for improved, expanded and ultimately deeper relations – a vision it set out in early 2020 with the proposal for a new Comprehensive Strategy with Africa. Yet, although Brussels’ draft project was meant to be “new”, the health and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic soon highlighted the fact that the plan was incomplete and rapidly became in need of a substantial overhaul.

## **Africa and the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic**

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Africa had been struggling to recover from the impact of the slump in the prices of major export commodities, slowdown in foreign direct investment flows, weather shocks in parts of the continent, and debt distress in some countries. Africa’s real GDP growth started to decline from a peak of 7.0% in 2012 reaching the bottom at 2.1% in 2016, and only recovered to a modest average growth of 3.5% for 2017-2019 (3.3% in 2019)<sup>1</sup>. As a result, other macroeconomic indicators, such as inflation, current account balance and budget deficit, also worsened during this period. The debt burden deteriorated, with external debt service crossing conventional limits of 20% of export earnings in most countries. The reversal of fortunes in an otherwise hopeful economic performance of two decades exposed the structural fragility of growth in Africa and its vulnerabilities to transient shocks.

The initial conditions by the time Covid-19 struck were not particularly favourable. Several indicators from a range of studies suggest that African economies are likely to suffer significant long-term economic effects due to the pandemic<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from OECD, Africa’s Development Dynamics, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AEO> (accessed 18 October 2021).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, African Development Bank, [African Economic Outlook](#)



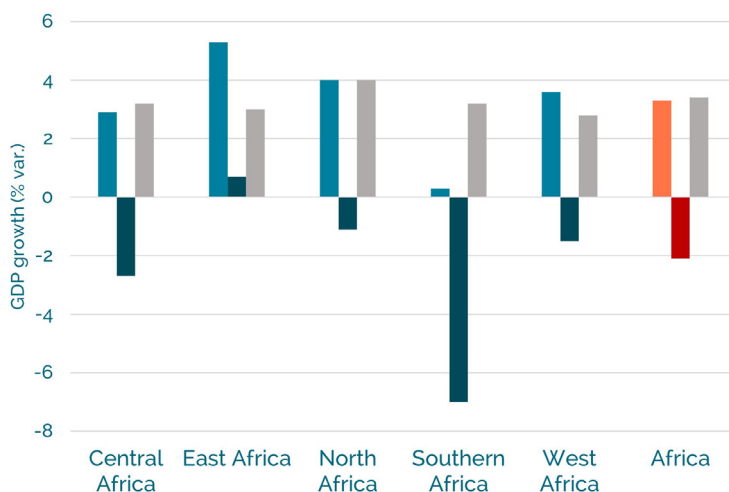
The advent of the latter sent shockwaves across the emerging sectors, such as tourism, manufacturing and financial intermediation, compromising the recovery. However, the full impact on livelihoods is yet to be ascertained as the uncertainty surrounding the behaviour and the intensity of the pandemic is still unfolding. So far, the pandemic has forced many businesses to temporarily shut down, supply chains have been disrupted, unemployment has soared, and the cost of living has risen tremendously. In particular, prices of basic necessities have increased against the backdrop of low economic activity, lockdown and loss of employment. Most of these economic disruptions were caused by policy and administrative responses required to slow down the spread of the virus that causes the Covid-19 disease. These included restrictions on people's mobility, closing border-crossing points and air travel, both within and between countries, and many other lockdown measures that limited travel. Stringent measures taken by governments led to a significant decline in Covid-19 infection rates. The most effective prevention method was to use strong communication campaigns to enhance community understanding of the pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to economic contraction in Africa on a scale unseen since the mid-1990s. Estimates suggest that real GDP growth for some African countries might have declined by about 8% (for the likes of Botswana, Zimbabwe or the Republic of Congo, for example) and up to 15% (Mauritius) between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 1), leading to a loss of GDP equivalent to US\$200 billion in PPP terms for the region as a whole – an amount that could have lifted around 280 million people out of extreme poverty. The impact of Covid-19 shows considerable spatial variation, where Southern Africa is estimated to have experienced the most significant economic contraction followed by Central and West Africa. East Africa is the only

sub-region with a decline but with positive real GDP growth for 2020 in the wake of the pandemic. The variation across Africa also suggests that the impact was mediated by heterogeneity in structural vulnerabilities, different stages of development, and policy orientations. It is important to understand these underlying factors to chart out the path to recovery.

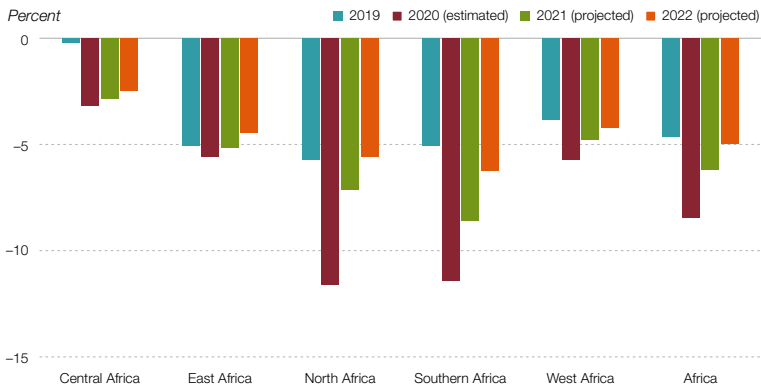
Poverty and inequality have also been substantially affected. Extreme poverty in 2020 increased in almost in every country in Africa. The AERC studies (2020) on Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and Uganda, for example, show massive increases in absolute poverty during the pandemic, ranging from 33 percentage points in Senegal to 4 percentage points in Ethiopia. Drastic increases in poverty wiped out the gains these countries had made in the previous decade in fighting poverty. Restoring livelihoods to pre-Covid-19 levels will likely be extremely challenging. The income loss estimated in the wake of the pandemic reached more than 10% of GDP for most of these countries, implying a long road ahead to recovery.

FIG. 1 - ESTIMATED IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REAL GDP GROWTH (%)



Source: AfDB, African Economic Outlook, 2021

FIG. 2 – FISCAL BALANCE TO GDP, BY REGION



Source: AfDB, African Economic Outlook, 2021

In addition to the impact on real economic activity, the pandemic caused a deterioration in governments’ fiscal balance: revenues declined and spending increased as authorities struggled to provide cushions to affected citizens and rushed to provide preventive and curative health services (Figure 2). The impact on governments’ fiscal balance is more pronounced in regions with relatively elaborate social protection programmes, such as North Africa and Southern Africa, where subsidies for basic necessities, unemployment benefits, health care and education services tend to be more widespread. Average deficits in these regions surpassed a staggering 10% of GDP, which is unprecedented.

External trade also suffered a significant shock in 2020 due to Covid-19. Africa experienced a current account deficit of around 5.5% of GDP, with the largest deteriorations involving oil exporters and tourism-dependent economies<sup>3</sup>. The twin deficits (fiscal and current account balances) are the major drivers of external debt accumulation in Africa. A 1

<sup>3</sup> African Development Bank, [African Economic Outlook 2021](#), 2021, p. 22.

percentage point increase in current account deficit can lead to a 2.3 percentage point increase in external debt as a share of GDP (Ndungu et al., 2021). In addition, some economies protected the nominal exchange rate from depreciation in line with current account deficit build up as well as the automatic stabiliser, thus creating major distortions. With such significant structural sensitivities of debt accumulation to external shocks and market distortions, most African countries have little or no policy lever to manage external debt in a meaningful way. Here is where Africa's effort to diversify its export base, to penetrate the global value chain to improve productivity and promote industrial transformation can be facilitated through a meaningful partnership with Europe.

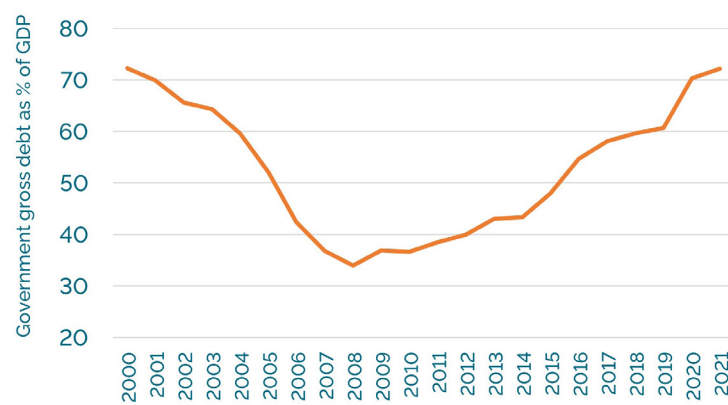
The contraction in real GDP due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the deterioration of government budget balance, and worsening current account balance created the perfect conditions for debt to accumulate and morph into a situation of debt distress or debt crisis. A recent report by the IMF indicates that, following the marked increases due to the economic shocks caused by the pandemic, 18 of 35 low-income African countries are in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress<sup>4</sup>. Figure 3 shows that the weighted average public debt to GDP ratio in 2021 is expected to reach 72%, the level recorded at the early stages of the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative back in the mid-1990s. Inflation has also inched up in many countries, threatening any further borrowing options from domestic sources to meet their financing needs. For many countries in Africa the most serious problem was their shrinking liquidity position as the debt-service to exports and debt-service to revenue ratios increased substantially, and in some cases beyond the minimum threshold to carry debt. Recognising this dilemma, the IMF and the World Bank urged G20 countries to adopt a Debt-Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) to temporarily halt debt

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<sup>4</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Regional Economic Outlook. Sub-Saharan Africa. One planet, two worlds, three stories*, October 2021, p. 11.

servicing through debt re-profiling and restructuring. Recently, the IMF announced the debt re-profiling, restructuring and other measures of relief for 45 African countries to the tune of some US\$33 billion, with the aim of assisting the economic recovery process<sup>5</sup>.

FIG. 3 - TOTAL GOVERNMENT DEBT AS A SHARE OF GDP IN AFRICA



Source: calculated based on data from the World Economic Outlook database, 2021

While the resources mentioned above are a welcome gesture from the world’s leading financial institutions, they are merely a drop in the bucket compared with what the pandemic has done to the economies of Africa and the slow recovery from its ripple effects. Africa’s financing needs are enormous, and other sources, such as Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), remittances, equity and portfolio flows and Official Development Assistance (ODA), are inadequate to close the gaps. Noting the enormous global savings glut and low interest rates in other regions of the world, this may be the time to look at Africa as a continent of

<sup>5</sup> See International Monetary Fund, “Serving Member Countries. IMF Financing and Debt Service Relief”.

enormous opportunities with lower investment risk than is all-too-often assumed.

For most African countries, closing the resource gap is partly contingent on rating agencies' perception of their creditworthiness. A study by Michigan University estimates that sub-Saharan African countries pay a premium of 2.9% above the rest of the world in borrowing costs. This has been further adversely affected by the Covid-19 crisis, which has increased debt distress and prospects of poor rating. The premiums placed on sub-Saharan countries do not fully consider Africa's huge potential, including the dividends of demographic growth and vast resource endowments. Some sovereign downgrades have also increased financial market volatility and the difficulty of African countries in gaining access to new sources of financing.

A call by the G20 to provide temporary debt relief to the world's poorest countries while at the same time warning lenders that they should preserve their ratings highlights another aspect of the problem. This is a repeat of previous approaches to debt crisis. It is not surprising that the efforts to reform credit ratings that began in 2008 have made little progress, despite proposals and calls for reforms to credit rating agencies by a multiplicity of international forums. There is a need to shift towards ratings that account for the probability of recovery rather than focusing on debt indicators alone. Further, the G20 should assist African countries to curb the moral hazard resulting from recurrent debt forgiveness while ensuring that African countries remain transparent in all debt dealings. Clear guidelines and governance on projects financed by such debt should be devised too.

## **Halting the Covid-19 Pandemic**

A key prerequisite for Africa's economic recovery is success in reining in the Covid-19 pandemic. This, in turn, requires speeding up the vaccination process. Advanced countries have accelerated the vaccination drive such that, by early October 2021, fully vaccinated populations surpassed 64% in the

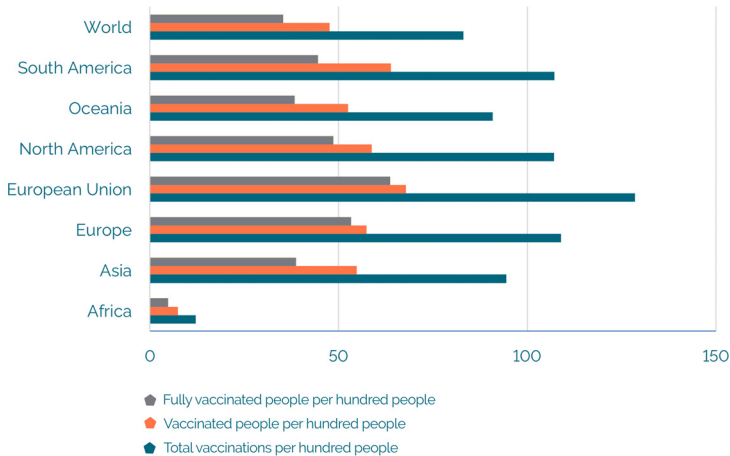
European Union and 49% in North America. There is still much to do to secure strong immunity, but these regions are on track to achieve it soon. Africa, on the contrary, is the laggard in this respect and potentially the most exposed region in the world, with less than 5% of the population fully vaccinated (Figure 4). Strategic measures and development cooperation will be needed urgently to support the Covid-19 reset across Africa.

Most worryingly, while some small countries such as Mauritius and Cape Verde surpassed many advanced economies in their vaccine coverage, African demographic powerhouses such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have hardly reached a 1-to-2% share of fully vaccinated populations, with Egypt doing only partly better with 8% of its population covered. It is very difficult to predict the implications and ramifications for lagging so far behind in vaccination coverage, but it is possible to anticipate that most African countries could face travel restrictions, including movement of goods and services, complicating the potential for a speedy recovery and resumption of normal daily life for millions of people across the continent.

It is no mystery that the world will not be safe if Covid-19 in Africa is not brought under control. With extremely low rates of Africa's population currently being vaccinated, a major drive and strong external support are required to speed up the process. The Team Europe initiative was launched on 8 April 2020, aimed at supporting partner countries – most notably in Africa – with substantial financial resources to develop their own pharmaceutical, biotech and MedTech industries and facilitate equitable access to quality and safe products and technologies. On the supply side, the initiative targets the development of regional manufacturing hubs across the continent, including in South Africa, Senegal, Egypt, Morocco and Rwanda, in line with the AU and Africa CDC Partnerships for African Vaccine Manufacturing. On the demand side, it supports African leaders and communities in tackling the fragmentation of local

markets and helping consolidate demand and facilitate market integration and use of locally produced goods, all aiming to strengthen pharmaceutical and health systems.

FIG. 4 – SARS-CoV-2 VACCINATION RATES BY REGION  
(OCTOBER 2021)



## Policy Recommendations

The Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effects in Africa have brought valuable lessons for re-examining and reshaping the scope and depth of Africa-Europe relations. Not only has the continent's growth contracted for the first time in over two decades, but the recovery may be complicated by the debt burden, diminished fiscal space, reversal of gains made on the Sustainable Development Goals, and the slow progress of Covid-19 vaccination across the continent. While the effects of the pandemic are still unfolding, what has been experienced so far needs to be carefully considered and integrated in finalising the new partnership proposed by the EU with its draft for a "Comprehensive Strategy with Africa". Accordingly, the EU should:



- **Revise the focus of the EU's proposed new Strategy with Africa so as to accommodate the priorities highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic.** The Covid-19 pandemic demands that issues which were essentially left out of the EU's proposed new Strategy with Africa should not just be integrated but become priorities in a revised version of the plan in view of the AU-EU summit of February 2022. This is most notably the case for health and poverty – or, more broadly, human development – as well as for debt relief. Cooperation on health must crucially address the question of anti-Covid-19 vaccine sentiment in Africa. The fact that the eradication of poverty has also lost centrality among the goals of the post-Cotonou deal, when compared to the previous agreement, adds to the urgency.
- **Lead international efforts to address the worsening debt situation in Africa.** As mentioned above, with the pandemic, the debt burden has increased significantly for a vast majority of countries in Africa. More than in other world regions, this raises issues of debt sustainability. Ten out of the 23 Paris Club members and four members of the G20 (including the EU itself) are from the EU. This means that Brussels carries significant weight for a successful global restructuring of Africa's debt. The EU should continue to lead efforts towards this goal, following measures adopted by the G20, such as the Debt-Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and the Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the DSSI. Africa was only given a small fraction of the US\$650 billion equivalent in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) that were allocated in August 2021 (around 3.6% for sub-Saharan Africa, or about US\$23.4 billion, with almost one third of it going to just two countries, i.e. South Africa and Nigeria), well below the continent's external financing needs (estimated by the IMF in 2020 at US\$1.2 trillion through 2023). The EU must work

closely with the AU in supporting the restructuring of debt for African countries.

- **Push forward a dialogue to address the existing mismatch between African and European long-term priorities.** A better, gradual alignment of long-term priorities in key areas where significant disagreement persists requires a political will on the part of the EU to meet halfway and sustain the related political and economic costs. Migration and green transition are cases in point, as is the perceived incompatibility of the sub-regional EPAs with the continent-wide African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that came into force at the beginning of 2021 and is now in the early stages of implementation. Debt-to-climate swaps (i.e. offering African countries debt relief in exchange for environmental commitments and providing green finance to deal with fiscal difficulties and “build back better”) exemplify how some divergences might be addressed. If gaps and divergences are not bridged, but fuelled rather, they risk escalating and may spill over into other areas of continent-to-continent cooperation.
- **Support the role of the African Union as a privileged vehicle for the continent’s agency and agenda.** Full acknowledgement of the key and growing role of the African Union is in the interest of both Africa – for its potential to strengthen the continent’s voice when dealing with external actors – as well as the EU, for which the AU represents a single and unified counterpart and interlocutor. The post-Cotonou deal already accommodated a number of AU initiatives despite the AU not taking part in the talks directly. As in Europe with the EU, African states will not always be cohesive in supporting the AU, but the latter should increasingly become the context where continental divides are resolved, including with regard to the region’s relations with Europe.

- **Reaffirm the centrality of development goals – most notably the eradication of poverty – as the key drivers of European aid and the basic criteria for its allocation.** Development aid must retain its focus, that is, progress in developing countries, without diverting from it. In particular, European aid must not be over-concentrated on and channelled towards migrants' countries of origin or transit with the stated aim of addressing the so-called root causes of migration.
- **Expand cooperation on issues such as legal migration and remittance costs as the basis for better engaging African countries on returns and readmissions.** Migration has increasingly become a contested topic in EU-Africa relations. As such, it holds significant potential for hindering progress and gradually damaging ties. However, the fact that the two sides have partly different concerns – with the EU prioritising the management of irregular migration and readmissions, and African countries demanding legal pathways for safe migration and more favourable conditions for remittances and portability of old-age pensions – can be one basis for working out compromises.
- **Work long-term towards a comprehensive continent-to-continent trade agreement.** The EU's proposed New Strategy points to the long-term prospect of creating comprehensive continent-to-continent free trade, albeit in very general terms. The EU should consider negotiating a comprehensive continent-to-continent trade agreement that also includes North African countries, which are not part of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) with which a post-Cotonou deal was struck. Such an agreement would both acknowledge and strengthen the emerging reality of trade relationships on the continent following the coming into effect of the AfCFTA.

- **Bridge internal divisions within the EU with regard to Africa and deepen the Africa-specific dialogue to maximise alignment between EU-level initiatives and those of its member states.** In the context of the renewed strategic importance of Africa in EU member states' thinking, EU policies with or for Africa should offer a focus for them to align with. It is fundamentally important to build on common denominators to identify entry points for collaboration and burden sharing, harmonise individual nations' interests and priorities, and defuse intra-EU competition. The Africa policies of EU member states should thus become as consistent as possible with Brussels' approach – including through a possible division of labour among EU member states focusing on specific sub-regions, countries or sectors – so as to ensure that Europe actually operates in a cohesive manner with and across Africa.

## About the Authors

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**Giovanni Faleg** is a Senior Analyst at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), where he is responsible for analysis and research on sub-Saharan Africa. He focuses on the drivers of state fragility in Africa, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and the EU's integrated approach to conflicts and crises. Before joining the EUISS, he worked at the World Bank (2014-2018) in the fragility, conflict and violence unit; at the Centre for European Policy Studies (2011-2018) and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (2013), focusing on the EU's foreign and security policy. He holds a PhD in European Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science (2014). He is the author of *The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: Learning Communities in International Organizations* (2016).

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