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Half a Century Later: The Costs of European Development Policy on Grappling African Industries

Julian Osei-Bonsu

This paper examines the EU's external policies in Africa and, for the most part, analyses the areas, where these strategies fall short from ensuring growth and development on the African continent. Europe's relationship with Africa dates back centuries. An overview of Europe's colonial history in Africa is given, with emphasis on colonialism's lasting impact still evident on both continents today, and its relevance in the shaping of present policy.

Turning to the EU-African relationship of the twenty-first century, the study assesses the EU's current policies, designed to help Africa grow and develop. These take the shape of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), as well as funds for developmental assistance. Criticised for not being development-enhancing and taking on "neo-colonial" forms, African countries begin to increasingly turn to other emerging actors for cooperation and assistance. Even though, the new partners present a welcome alternative for Africa's development, especially in aiding in the continent's industrialisation, they too are assessed as being driven by their own interests of accessing African markets and resources, as well as establishing political spheres of influence.

In line with Pan-African objectives, Africa must focus on integration, both at the regional and continental level, to ensure long term growth and sustainable development. Emphasis should be put on political cooperation, peacekeeping missions, and boundaries must be lifted to facilitate intra-African trade, but this requires a diversification of African production. The EU's integration experience could be studied or serve as inspiration. However, the study concludes that Africa must devise its own methods best suited to the African context. What exactly these approaches should entail to bring out Africa's fullest potential requires further research.

KEYWORDS

European Development Policy, Colonial legacy, Integration, Economic Partnership Agreements, African Unity, Pan-Africanism, Regional Economic Communities

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List of Abbreviations

ACP - African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AEC – African Economic Community
AfCFTA – African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU - African Union
BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CAADP – Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CEN-SAD – Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CFA – Communauté Financière Africaine / African Financial Community
COMESA – Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COVID-19 – Coronavirus disease 2019
DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC – East African Community
ECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS – Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States
EEC - European Economic Community
EPA – Economic Partnership Agreement
EU - European Union
GDP – Gross domestic product
IGAD – Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MERCOSUR – Mercado Común del Sur / Southern Common Market
NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU - Organisation of African Unity
ODA – Official Development Assistance
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRC – People’s Republic of China
REC – Regional Economic Community

SADC – South African Development Community

UMA – Union du Maghreb Arabe / Arab Maghreb Union

USA – United States of America

WAEMU – West African Economic and Monetary Union

WAMZ – West African Monetary Zone

WTO - World Trade Organisation

1 Introduction

“Remember, aid cannot achieve the end of poverty. Only homegrown development based on the dynamism of individuals and firms in free markets can do that.”

- William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden*, 2006

In this study, I would like to draw attention to the EU’s external relations with its neighbouring continent of Africa. The connection between Africa and the various countries that form part of the European Union goes back centuries and has influenced the current “structure, nature and contour of the political economy of Africa” (Oloruntoba/Falola 2020, p. 3). Likewise, Africa has always been a focal point of the EU’s foreign policy. Even though the African elements to the European integration process have only recently drawn substantial attention among historians, Africa has, from the outset, played an important part in the dealings of the EU regarding its external policies (Leikam 2014, p. 293). A study of a relationship so contended, that receives such large amounts of coverage, both among experts and the media, therefore only seems apt.

To understand the prevailing innate, yet complicated bond between the European Union and Africa, it is important to consider the historical aspects of this connection first. “The triple heritage of the slave trade, colonialism, and post-colonialism” have left a lasting impact on Africa (Oloruntoba/Falola 2020, p. 3). Even though official European rule now lies back decades, the legacies left behind by European countries on Africa *cannot* be downplayed. Europe has impacted Africa with entirely novel systems, including unnatural borders, new cultures and religions, and economic systems that have come to regulate trading patterns (Herbst 2014, p. 58). Particularly these trading patterns have left African economies dependent on perpetuating their connections with Europe. The European Union too relies on Africa for trade and, from the outset of European integration in the 1950s, the European Economic Community (EEC) has put in place mechanisms to ensure its influence on the African continent (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 33).

Together with its member states, the European Union has enshrined development cooperation as a policy field within its treaties (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 208). In addition to this, the EU has made it its formal objective not to inhibit this provision when carrying out economic, financial, and technical cooperation with third parties (TFEU, Art. 12). The controversial turns that the EU has taken in the present century, regarding its trading policies in the form of the much-disputed Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), suggest that the EU might be impairing its own provisions.

This is because critics believe that instead of being development-enhancing, the EPAs inhibit Africa's potential for growth and development and contribute to the subjection of Africa's economies by Western powers (Moyo 2020a; Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016; Tetzlaff 2018; Van Dijk 2009b).

For decades, Africa has been the recipient of EU development aid. Yet, according to Adeoye O. Akinola (2020), Africa still “groans under the weight of globalisation” (p. 489). Even though the EU prides itself in being the world's leading provider of developmental assistance, some Africans perceive this aid as merely being an instrument brought about by developed nations to create markets for their output (Shikwati 2016, p. 182). Thus, in recent years, Africa has come to increasingly look to other international partners whose aid and support could contribute to the continent's long-term growth and development. One principal “new” actor is China, but other emerging regions are also beginning to take on roles of growing importance, offering often welcome alternatives to the continent's older partner. These relationships present a threat to the EU's sphere of influence. However, it is questionable whether the promises of Africa's new partners of presenting development-enhancing replacements to EU development aid are not hidden behind ulterior motives. In any case, the twenty-first century marks a crossroads for the EU's role in Africa, and this is marked by the reluctant attitudes of many African states when negotiating agreements with the European Union (Shaw 2016, p. 114).

Scholars and leaders of African countries advocate for integration techniques in the hope of fostering sustainable growth and development, to promote peace and to ensure international competitiveness (Oloruntoba/Falola 2020, p. 4). The methods proposed to achieve these aims vary, but the long-standing Pan-African vision of achieving political and economic strength through unity persists (Adebajo 2020; Aniche 2020; Nubong 2020; Odeyemi 2020). The African integration process has been underway for decades, reaching a landmark with the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Yet, integration has been slow and unstable, experiencing both periods of stalling and resurgence. To what extent the African integration experience can learn from Europe's own path towards the European Union of today is worth analysing. In a 2020 speech at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, the incumbent President of the European Council, Charles Michel stated that “a strong Europe is good for Africa, just as a strong Africa is good for Europe.” What then, are the appropriate steps that Africa and the EU should take to create a landscape, where both regions prosper and mutually benefit from one another?

2 The Evolution of European Development Policy: It's Outset from Europe's Colonial Past until now

“All peoples have the right of self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

- Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (United Nations 1960).

2.1 Europe's Colonial Legacy in Africa

When analysing Africa's relationship with other regions of the world, it becomes evident, that parts of Africa had already been in contact with other continents, including Europe, for several centuries mainly through trade (Oloruntoba/Fayola 2020). In his 1972 book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, historian, and activist Walter Rodney, however, establishes the transatlantic slave trade as a pivotal point in the relationship between the African continent and the Europeans, which led to the devastating subjugation of the peoples of Africa. Europe's activities in Africa did not end in the enslavement and deportation of Africans. On the contrary, over the years, Africa became a major setting of European imperialism and colonialism. In a period spanning from about 1500 to 1920, a majority of the earth's land mass and population came under the control of European powers (Osterhammel/Jansen 2012, p. 8). Almost the entirety of the African continent would be incorporated into a European-run colony within this period, with notable exceptions being Liberia¹ and Ethiopia².

In Africa, the act of colonisation reached its peak during the so-called “Scramble for Africa” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Arguably, an important event of this period was the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-1885, which resulted in the Berlin General Act, legitimising, and formalising the methods under which European nations could obtain territory within Africa (Craven 2015). This partition by the European powers was carried out with an atypical lack of deliberation, according to historian Christoph Marx (2004), the

¹ The state of Liberia was founded by freed slaves from the United States and gained independence in 1847 (Gegout 2017, p. 62).

² Ethiopia too, however, was not left untouched by Europe. Between 1935 and 1941, Ethiopia was invaded and occupied by Italy (Lausberg 2021).

reason for which remains a mystery for historical researchers (p. 115). As a result of Africa's partition, several ethnic tribes were forcefully separated and made subjects of different colonies against their will. This impetuous and insensitive modulation of European colonisation has left a lasting mark on post-independent African countries (Herbst 2014). Sadly, nothing has sparked greater conflicts and wars among African states and regions than the dispute of borders, one of the many colonial legacies which endure till this day (Oloruntoba 2020a, p. 3).

A great deal of historical literature still perpetuates the motives behind imperialism and colonialism as including the European desire to advance the spread of Western principles and values, such as education, modern medicine, and Christianity (Ezeanya-Esiobu 2019). According to political scholar Catherine Gegout (2017), however, "European powers were motivated by economic gain, geostrategic interests, prestige and the ideas of civilising missions and Eurocentrism" (p. 59). Despite their mission of "civilising" the African continent, it must be pointed out that comparatively little was done, in fields such as academics (Marx 2004, p. 317).

In fact, many post-colonial governments did more for the advancement of their nations' education and healthcare within the first few years following independence than had been done in the several decades of them having been colonised (Marx 2004; Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020). Notably, Christian missionary groups generally supported the concept of colonialism and did not hinder colonial authorities in their ignorant behaviour towards non-Western cultures (Osterhammel/Jansen 2012, p. 102). Ghana's first leader Kwame Nkrumah (1962) (who will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter), establishes economic exploitation, in the form of access to raw materials, the creation of markets for European products, and allowing the investment of excess European capital, as being the main rationale behind the European quest of colonising Africa. It could therefore be asserted that the economic gains obtained from colonisation *preceded* aspirations of aiding in the development of Europe's occupied lands in Africa.

Following the First World War, it became increasingly challenging for the European colonisers to maintain control within their empires. To gain a lead in fighting the Great War, the European powers had recruited subjects of their colonies to fight in their armies. For example, around half a million African soldiers were enlisted from France's colonies to serve in the war (Marx 2004, p. 158). African soldiers enlisted in the hope of increased recognition from their colonial masters and greater autonomy within the colonies, in return for partaking in the war. To their disappointment, African war veterans received little acknowledgement for their service, were confronted with racism and segregation among the European military, and only received sparse financial

compensation; this led to increased suspicion of the colonial system (Marx 2004, 159). The let-down felt at the end of World War I was certainly a contributing factor why the colonial forces began experiencing increasing pressure in the form of anti-colonial movements within Africa (Jansen/Osterhammel 2013, p. 29).

The dispiriting outcomes of World War I for African war veterans may have heightened the tensions and dissatisfaction with their colonial masters. In addition, the horrors and bloodshed witnessed as a result of the so-called civilised continent being at war, must have put the moral principles of European superiority into question (Marx 2004, p. 158). On the international front too, colonialism was beginning to lose its credibility. Two global factors that could have plausibly also invigorated Africans in their protest colonial regimes at this time include, firstly, the 1918 speech of US President Woodrow Wilson, and secondly, increasing solidarity witnessed from the African diaspora.

In his Fourteen Points speech of 8th January 1918, President Wilson communicated his post-war foreign policy aims for attaining a lasting peace in the world. Among the points was the proposal for an international, intergovernmental organisation to be put in place to guarantee peace and security – a League of Nations (Berg 2017). Also included in his speech were Wilson’s visions of collective democracy, free trade, and the importance of considering the interests of all people, including those of the colonies (Berg 2017). Even though President Wilson avoided the explicit term “self-determination” in his speech and had his reservations as to the limitations of who should be eligible to attain this³ (Berg 2017), it surely must have given anti-colonial thinkers incentive to fight for their goal for more freedoms within the colonies, as internationally highly publicised declarations such as President Wilson’s provided legitimacy for their demands. Nonetheless, the colonial powers came under increased pressure because of the growing international disapproval colonialism was receiving in the sphere of international politics (Jansen/Osterhammel 2013, p. 30).

A further, and more immediate, sense of purpose came from the growing support from people of African heritage living in other parts of the world. Black activists located in the diaspora formed connections with the educated elite from the African colonies, giving way to the rising popularity of the Pan-Africanist

³ It must be noted that President Wilson’s treatment of African Americans and other minority groups of the United States was far from progressive. He hindered African American access to higher education and, during his time in office, increased racial segregation in places such as federal offices (Berg 2017). For a better insight into Wilson’s domestic affairs, Manfred Berg’s 2017 Biography on President Woodrow Wilson is to be further recommended, in particular Chapter 3.

movement; in the 1920s, members of the movement organised several conferences with Black representatives from the USA, the Caribbean and Africa (Jansen/Osterhammel 2013, p. 34; Marx 2004, p. 229). This movement will further be discussed in the final chapter, in relation to the progression of African integration from independence until today. “The core of Pan-Africanism is that peoples share not merely a common history but a common destiny”, and it is founded on the idea that unity of the people of African descent is vital for the elevation of the political, cultural, and economic goals of Africans (Aniche 2020, p. 19). This form of international recognition also helped nourish early activists’ spirit to fight for more autonomy within the colonies.

It was not until the end of the Second World War in 1945, however, when European resources had been exhausted, that anticolonial protests really gained mass momentum (Herbst 2014). Again, African troops had served in the war. About half of the exiled French government’s troops consisted of Africans, yet they continued to be treated as second-class French citizens (Gegout 2017, p. 69). It was during this phase that nationalist and independence movements became a driving force in sub-Saharan Africa, and set in motion the actual phase of decolonisation, which would last about three decades (Herbst 2014; Jansen/Osterhammel 2013). Historian Dietmar Rothermund (2006), named the process of decolonisation as being “perhaps the most important historical process of the twentieth century”, and this raises several defining questions (p. 1). What impact did the end of colonisation have on the newly independent African states? How did it affect the citizens of these countries; and what did the loss of control over such vast territories mean for Europe? What was their new plan for action?

2.2 Decolonisation and the European Community’s Revised Pathways

1957 marks an important year, both for African colonies’ pathway towards self-determination, as well as for Western Europe’s integration process. In March 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to attain independence from British rule. Following Ghana in very short intervals, came the independence of many other countries situated in Western and Eastern Africa (Oloruntoba 2020a, p. 2). This changing landscape on the international front required the colonial powers, whose influence was quickly dwindling, to modernise their imperial strategies and come up with new ways of maintaining their interests within Africa (Kottos 2014, p. 311).

In Europe, early successes in the European integration process, in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic

Community (also formed in March 1957, under the Treaty of Rome) had been manifested. These changes in Europe occurred almost simultaneously with their loss of colonies abroad. Starting in 1957, the newly formed EEC made it their goal to work closely together with its members' colonies in Africa (Leikam 2014, 293). The effects of decolonisation on the foreign policies of a collective Europe are therefore worth analysing.

The downfall of colonialism also signifies the end of the European overseas empires, and with it, the loss of considerable authority (Jansen/Osterhammel 2013, p. 10). Of the EEC's six founding members, France and Belgium were the nations who were in control of considerable portions of Africa. Through the EEC, the imperial powers among the founding members would establish revised methods of maintaining dominance among newly independent countries, and this resulted in the European Policy for Aid and Development (Kottos 2014, pp. 311-312). This makes evident the ties that exist between the EU development policies of today, and the motivations behind the early foreign policy of the EEC.

In his book, *Neo-colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, published in 1965, Kwame Nkrumah states that colonialism still existed after countries became independent, but was now functioning under a new, neo-colonial disguise. Similarly, Rainer Tetzlaff (2018) writes that the EU's approach towards Africa still retains elements of colonialism and refers to this as "developmental colonialism" (p. 56).

The way in which colonisation is depicted in many European countries remains problematic - till this day. In France, for example, a 2005 law (which was later pulled back) obligated schoolteachers to shine a positive light on French colonialism; in addition, talking about the war in Algeria still remains a contentious topic (*République Française Loi n° 2005-158*; Castejon/Cole/Haag 2018, p. 81). Unlike other former colonial powers in the EU, Germany had lost its colonial possessions at an earlier stage in the twentieth century, following its defeat in World War I.⁴ In Germany, the country's colonial legacy has largely faded out from public discourse, and despite indelible incidents resulting under German colonialism, such as the crimes committed against the Herero and Nama people in the early 1900s, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has previously wrongly described German colonialism as having carried a lesser burden than that of other countries (Conrad 2019, pp. 120-121; Kößler 2020, p.121). Following a century of minimising these colonial atrocities, it was only in

⁴ Although at risk of broadening the definitions of colonisation, internal European forms of colonialism can also be studied, an example being the colonial nature of Nazi Germany's expansion into eastern Europe (Conrad 2019, p. 96).

May 2021 that the German government finally recognised the genocide in Namibia (Adami 2021).

Although, in recent years, some efforts have been made to acknowledge the negative impact of colonisation on the part of many European countries⁵, it is not nearly enough, especially in the realm of generating widespread public awareness – and these efforts have mainly been led by the African diaspora (Conrad 2019; Kößler 2020, p. 122).

To make matters worse, development aid to former colonies is often branded as humanitarian assistance by the Global North (McEwan 2019, p. 162). One may therefore assume, that this “postcolonial blindness to the colonial past” shapes the view many Europeans have of Africa (Castejon/Cole/Haag 2018, p. 81). Africans are aware of this image, and surely it does not resonate well among them. Arguably, the EU too is influenced by this view, and this inevitably has negative impacts on the relations between the two continents. Africa is put on an unequal footing if constantly viewed in this manner, and it is necessary for European countries to adopt an enlightened perspective when examining their colonial past. Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel (2013) therefore rightly proclaim that decolonisation is more than merely an annotation in the history of the EU - the process affected the power structure of Europe and is closely connected with the direction that early European integration was to take.

Within a timespan of about ten years, the map of Africa, displaying the number of sovereign states, started to look noticeably different. By 1968, countries including Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Benin, and the Ivory Coast had gained independence. A majority of Africa was officially no longer under the control of Europe. To maintain some form of political and economic influence among their ex-colonies, and to secure the much-needed access to raw materials, the EEC now actively begun pursuing special trade relations with the newly independent countries of Africa, as well as with their former Caribbean and Pacific territories (Tetzlaff 2018, p. 300). In 1963, these objectives led to the signing of the Yaoundé Convention between the EEC and the associated African states that shared a colonial past with EEC members, with the goal of creating a free trade area. In addition, the EEC-financed European Development Fund had been founded to aid the former colonies in their economic growth (Tetzlaff 2018, p. 300). This suggests that guaranteeing a relationship based on economic

⁵ Some success has been achieved by activists, for example, through the renaming of certain streets and public squares in Germany that previously carried the names of contestable colonial figures. Yet, campaigning is still underway to further highlight the link of the colonial past to the present – for instance, by way of public restitution of African art obtained during colonisation and located in prominent European museums (Conrad 2019, pp. 121-122).

cooperation with associated African countries was of immense importance to the EEC from the beginning, and that it played a significant role in the early foreign policy of the European Community.

The African signees of the Yaoundé Convention in the 1960s did not include Commonwealth nations – the countries previously under British rule, the reason for this being that the United Kingdom was not yet a member of the EEC. This posed a problem for intra-African trade relations, in that Commonwealth African countries like Ghana and Nigeria feared that the African states associated with the EEC would prefer to engage in trade with EEC countries rather than with them; in addition, the Commonwealth countries would face competitive drawbacks when trading with the EEC (Leikam 2014, p. 298-299). Moreover, despite certain trading benefits, critics alluded that the Yaoundé Convention was further based on an unequal partnership between the EEC and Africa, and that it was an obstacle in the way of economic integration between African countries (Leikam 2014, p. 298-299).

The EEC's relations with Africa also had effects on the dynamics within Europe. Britain's European policy was influenced by the effect that the EEC's relationship with its former colonies had on Commonwealth Africa (Leikam 2014, p. 295). Even though not included in the Yaoundé Convention, some of the African Commonwealth nations started to conclude their own trade deals with the EEC. However, fearing that they would not be permitted to impose duties on imports, many Commonwealth African nations were initially not interested in closer association with the EEC (Leikam 2014). Nevertheless, Britain was concerned about the growing political and economic power of the EEC, including its dominance in Africa, and it was concluded that EEC membership was essential to maintain Britain's own interests and to protect the relationship with its former colonies (Leikam 2014, p. 297-298). In 1973, following two failed attempts, the United Kingdom became a member of the European Economic Community. In 1975, the Lomé Convention was signed in Togo's capital between the EEC and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, including former British colonies. By Africans, this convention was received with the hope to overcome the neo-colonial characteristics of earlier agreements; it also offered the ACP countries more favourable conditions for trade (Tetzlaff 2018, pp. 300-301; Love/Disney 1976). The Lomé Agreements would be active until the year 2000, when they were replaced by the current Cotonou Agreement, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

An assessment of the aftermath of decolonisation should not be confined to the changes it brought about in international relations, politics, and trade. When considering the populations of the newly independent African states, it is interesting to question whether the end of the colonial period changed their lives in any way, and if their hopes and dreams of freedom and liberty were validated.

As mentioned earlier, progress was made in the education and healthcare sectors in several African countries (Marx 2004). For example, the number of primary schools in Ghana increased from 1083 in 1951 to more than 8000 by 1966; basic education also became compulsory and free (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020, p. 187). Some of the post-colonial states also desired to industrialise their economies, in order to become more self-reliant; unfortunately, this led to neglect of the rural workforce and also manifested that some African governments were susceptible to corruption (Baah-Boateng 2016; Ganahl 2013, p. 208; Oloruntoba/Falola 2020, p. 5). For Africa, decolonisation was a long and tedious process, and did not end on the day the countries secured their independence (Conrad 2019, p. 124). In many countries, the negative impacts of colonialism have left marks on African citizens that are still evident today. This is seen in the corrupt regimes of some post-colonial African governments, but also in the wars and ethnic conflicts that ensued because of the boundaries created by colonial powers (Thompson/Fernandes 2020, pp. 879-880).

The above examples are just a few that attempt to demonstrate the deep-rooted legacy of colonialism in Africa even years after the end of European rule.

3 European Development Policy in the Twenty-First Century

“The African Union is a partner I count on and I look forward working with in the spirit of a true partnership of equals.”

- from Ursula von der Leyen’s speech, Addis Ababa, 7 December 2019.

3.1 EU-African Relations of the Past Twenty Years

As discussed earlier, the European Union’s relationship with African states dates to the very beginnings of European integration, that accordingly, the legacy of the colonial past has left profound traces on the political and economic landscape in Africa, and that the continent’s dependency on the Global North was not eliminated with decolonisation (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, Osterhammel/Jansen 2012). In the following paragraphs, the last two decades of this correlation will be analysed, starting with the ratification of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000. A principal change here was the inclusion of the much-disputed Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), which take away certain trade preferences that the EU had granted its ACP partners in earlier accords, in favour of a free trade zone (Tetzlaff 2018, p. 301). In addition, the question as to why development aid coming from the EU has failed to ensure a reduction of dependency among ACP countries will be raised (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 44). Does the EU’s approach concerning its development policy not hinder the working partnership between Europe and Africa, on a basis of mutual respect and in the spirit of equality, as EU Commission President von der Leyen has put her faith in?

3.1.1 Cotonou and the EPAs: The Best Way Forward?

Following the Yaoundé Convention and the Lomé I-IV Agreements, the Cotonou Agreement was signed between the EU and seventy-nine ACP states in 2000, to build upon the existing framework of EU-ACP cooperation (Oloruntoba 2020b). The goals of the Cotonou Agreement include the eradication of poverty, which was to be in line with the goal of attaining sustainable development among ACP nations, as well as achieving the aim of integrating the ACP economies into the world economy (Cotonou Agreement 2000, Art. 1). In addition, it was concluded that trading arrangements were to be agreed upon which would be in conformity with the principles of the 1995-founded World Trade Organisation; and that

Economic Partnership Agreements were to be negotiated during a preparatory period of about seven years (Cotonou Agreement 2000, Arts. 36-37).

The EPAs, that were established as part of the Cotonou Agreement, formed the basis of the EU's plan of fashioning free trade areas with the individual ACP states or with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of Africa (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p 15). This would be presented through the gradual lifting of non-reciprocal trade preferences, that had been granted the ACP signees under the Lomé Agreements⁶, and their transformation into reciprocal EPAs (Fritz 2017, 4). The scheme was met with criticism from actors both in Europe and the ACP regions, one reason being that uncompetitive ACP markets would be forced to open up to cheap European products through free trade (Fritz 2017, p. 4; Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 16). It is quite unambiguous why the proposed implementation of the EPAs was both feared and denounced by many actors other than the EU. James Nyomakwah-Obimpeh (2016) sums this up in the following way:

“Here is a group of 79 countries whose population account for 15% of the world, yet in terms of share of global trade they take only an intangible 3%. That is the contrasting material trade situation of the Group negotiating EPA with the EU – a group of 28 countries, among the most industrialised economies in the world accounting for about 16.4% of global trade, according to 2013 WTO and European Commission figures” (p. 39).

The “material trade” advantage that the EU holds over ACP regions when engaged in free trade is made clear and helps explain why receiving ACP support for the EPAs has often proved a challenge. Negotiations concerning details of the EPAs have been difficult, since the ACP regions need to consider all the negative impacts the EPAs will have on their development, including some of the poorer ACP countries' significant reliance on the customs they receive from imports and which form a crucial part of their total tax revenue (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 15; Fritz 2017, p. 10). It seems, however, that with its coercion to get the EPAs enforced, the EU not only ignores its development aims for regions such as Africa, but downright counters them (Fritz 2017, p. 4).

The EU might be of the opinion that with the EPAs it is merely adhering to WTO regulations, which seek to do away with protectionist tools such as quotas and tariffs; and thereby also acknowledges developing regions like Africa as being equal players, as well as encouraging them to finally become competitive and

⁶ Under the non-reciprocal system, the beneficiary ACP states were given preferential treatment when trading with the EU: usually through duty reliefs on their exports to the EU, without having to exempt the EU from paying duties on exports to ACP markets in return (Fritz 2017, p. 4).

independent actors in the global economy (Moyo 2020b, pp. 766-767; Van Dijk 2009b, p. 109). I would like to propose an argument countering this idea. Even when the underlying repercussions of colonialism on many African economies are not taken into account, the EU is partly responsible for the still-persistent high levels of poverty in developing countries, through the self-serving trade policies it has been pursuing over the years (Kohnert 2008, p. 3).

Yes, former colonies have been given preferential treatment thanks to the Yaoundé and Lomé agreements, yet, over the years, this special treatment has not helped much in increasing trade and development in many of these countries (Van Dijk 2009b, p. 101). It is also true that many African countries have been lacking in the area of stable and development-promoting governance (Kohnert 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, it must also be noted that some EPAs grant ACP economies an interim period of about ten to twenty-five years during which the ACP regions are able to adjust to the changes brought about by them.⁷ However, it remains questionable whether with the EPAs, the EU is assisting in the achievement of the goal of eradicating poverty in the ACP nations, as it boldly outlined in Article 1 of the Cotonou Agreement. Rather, by forbidding ACP regions from accessing protectionist measures, which the now developed nations had previously also implemented to support their own industries, the EU's external trade policy further contributes to the economic hardships of ACP states through its insistence on the adoption of EPAs (Kohnert 2008, p. 16; Moyo 2020b, pp. 766-767).

Another downside that Africa and other developing regions encounter when engaging in free trade with the EU is their disadvantaged position in relation to heavily subsidised European agricultural products. For instance, African agricultural markets, that consist of many smallholders but are also a major job-source, are already unable to compete with the high import levels from the EU's strong agricultural sectors, partly because of the subsidies EU agricultural industries receive (Baah-Boateng 2016; Müller 2016; Tetzlaff 2018; Van Dijk 2009b). Additionally, agricultural subsidies offer protection to EU economies; they contradict the EU's principles of free trade and vulnerable African agricultural sectors bear the burden, especially with other powerful regional players also resorting to agricultural dumping on African markets (Kohnert 2008; McEwan 2019; Murphy/Hansen-Kuhn 2017). Without any import protections from EU products, the EPAs do more harm than good for struggling African economies, according to Rainer Tetzlaff (2018), and they also contribute to the number of African farmers illegally migrating to Europe because they are not

⁷ During this period, ACP regions are given access EU markets without having to adhere to tariffs and quotas, whereas they only gradually have to reduce their restrictions on EU imports (Fritz 2017, p. 9).

able to sustain themselves at home. It can therefore also be argued that, with the introduction of EPAs and the increase in economic hardships in Africa, the EU inadvertently impacts the illegal migration flows from Africa. In any case, the EU's subsidised agricultural sector additionally suggests that the benefits gained from the EPAs are not proportional to the negative impacts, casting doubt on whether the principal aims of the Cotonou Agreement have ever been met.

The Cotonou Agreement was to last for a period of twenty years, with five-year periods dedicated to different financial protocols, determining the amount of money granted to the ACP countries (Cotonou Agreement 2000, Art. 95). The provisions of the Cotonou Agreement have been prolonged until the end of November 2021, and it was also established that a new agreement between the EU and the ACP regions is in the works (European Council n.d.). Like with subsequent conventions, the "post-Cotonou" agreement will build upon the main themes of the Cotonou Agreement, including sustainable growth and development. In comparison to the EPAs which the EU has signed with economically powerful regions, such as its 2019 bilateral trade agreement with Japan and where both regions have very high GDPs⁸, the unbalanced nature of the EU-ACP economic partnership further presents itself. Unlike with the EU-Japan agreements, the very differently sized markets of the EU and ACP territories make it indisputable as to which party bears the brunt of the partnership. Taking into consideration the above arguments, the debate as to the benefits derived by ACP regions from the EPAs can certainly be challenged. Whereas the EU believes the EPAs are also in the interest of developing regions, that continents like Africa must stand on their own feet, trade in accordance with WTO law, and follow the modern models of reciprocity, the ACP regions do not seem convinced (Van Dijk 2009b, p. 109).

Some ACP countries, such as Nigeria, have not ratified the EPAs, as they have concluded that the agreements are unlikely to contribute to their development plans (Van Dijk 2009b, p. 109; Oloruntoba 2020b). Finally, Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba (2020b) and Marcel Nagar (2020) also point out that the EPAs impair Africa's regional integration endeavours. The progress and challenges of African integration will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter.

⁸ The EU and Japan combined, total almost a third of the world's GDP (Åsenius 2020).

3.1.2 Development Aid and its Varying Facets

It is important to consider that “economic and trade policies between the EU and the ACP countries have intricately been intertwined with development cooperation” (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 44). Beside its economic goals, the Cotonou Agreement also laid down goals for human and social development (Cotonou Agreement 2000, Section 2). To help in the achievement of this, the EU has put in place its international development aid strategies, that provide financial support and political engagement, to help in the reduction of poverty in developing countries (European Commission n.d.).

The EU is also a full member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which is an international forum of 30 donor countries (including the EU) that sets official development standards, conducts reviews, and monitors Official Development Assistance (ODA). ODA comprises the annual official and verified government aid statistics “that promotes and specifically targets the economic growth and welfare of developing countries” (OECD 2021). For aid to be regarded as ODA, it must originate from an official institution, have the intention of promoting development, be in the interest of a developing country and, if not a grant, must provide concessions to the recipient (Chaponnière 2009, p. 62). A current concern of the OECD is the fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in developing regions, providing them with recovery packages and securing a fair distribution of vaccines (OECD). Whether EU development aid consistently satisfies the requirements of the ODA, as well as African responses to aid, will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

A problem with EU development aid that is persistent today, is that many Europeans’ understandings of regions such as Africa are not always in line with twenty-first century realities. A starting point is the West’s perception of developing regions as being poor, disease- and disaster-stricken, and in dire need of European charity and humanitarian assistance (McEwan 2019, p. 162). However, not only one image should come to mind when thinking of Africa. For example, several African cities have become surging metropolises with ever-growing middle classes (Ellis 2016, p.170). And even though many African regions continue to be devastated by crises and poverty, McEwan (2019) warns that the Global North must abstain from broadly designating developing regions with the term “poor”, merely because they do not fulfil European development expectations, and that the way in which people label and view *themselves* should always be taken into consideration. In addition, it must not be forgotten that many of the challenges present in Africa today, such as income inequality and the high unemployment levels of young people are not only attributes of Africa but affects numerous parts of the world (Ellis 2016).

Nevertheless, it is only understandable that development policy is a topic of interest for many EU citizens – the EU is the world’s largest donor of international development aid, a large part of which goes to its natural neighbour, Africa.⁹ According to the European Commission, the EU provides more than 50 billion Euros a year to aid in the battle against global poverty and to help the advancement of worldwide development (European Commission n.d.). By contrast, the USA’s budget for development assistance was less than half of that of the EU in 2019 (European Commission, 2020). It is therefore only beneficial when the multi-faceted aspects of African societies are propagated in the EU, to portray realistic and contemporary images of Africa.

On top of that, Africa too must re-examine its own position as a principal beneficiary of EU development aid. Despite early African leaders expressing desires and hopes to attain not only political independence, but also render their nations economically and industrially independent over time, African nations have often remained dependent on developmental assistance from their former colonisers (Ganahl 2013, p. 207; Tetzlaff 2018, pp. 317-318). Even if EU development aid has experienced some direct success, such as in the area of food access, it often fails to reach those who need it the most – leakages in the transfer of aid are common, due to corruption and political instability in many African countries – and over time, the reliance on aid from Europe has established itself within the system of things (Seteolu 2020, p. 781; Tetzlaff 2018, p. 322). It is therefore up to the citizens of African countries to actively fight against corruption and for more transparent forms of governance. Africans should review their reliance on aid from Europe and come up with their own development schemes, in the hope of becoming less reliant on others (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 276).

The New Partnership for Economic Development (NEPAD)¹⁰ is one such African development initiative. Unfortunately, NEPAD has “largely failed in achieving its set development goals”, partly due to claims that it is still too closely associated with Western liberal ideas for its continued dependence on foreign assistance (Ishola 2020, p. 49; McEwan 2019).¹¹

⁹ Approximately 20 billion Euros of EU development aid goes to Africa each year, (African Union, n.d.).

¹⁰ NEPAD is an agency formed by African Heads of States in 2001 and ratified by the AU in 2002; it tackles development issues with the aim of reducing poverty and ensure sustainable development, among others, (United Nations, n.d.).

¹¹ Another example of an African development initiative is the African Union’s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). According to Ishola (2020) and Vanheukelom (2016), however, success has remained limited due to a lack of commitment by AU member states with regard to policy adoption and financial contribution.

The EU must, in turn, increase its efforts in not only ensuring that they deliver large sums of aid, but also become certain of its effectiveness, and show more concern as to whom benefits from it (Carbone 2014; Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 275). Additionally, the EU may also consider reviewing its aid strategy in relation to other donors, such as China. China often manifests its aid as being an alternative to the traditional European prototype, one which does not mirror the “European post-colonial and charity-based attitudes” (Hackenesch 2009, p. 7; Van Dijk 2009a, p. 9). China presents its aid as a form of “mutual assistance” between regions that is also carried out more quickly and effectively, and at a lower cost than European aid (Chaponnière 2009). It is likely that this approach to development aid is seen as more favourable by its recipients.

It should be noted that Africa is no longer to be perceived as a powerless and submissive global player, one that is solely dependent on help from others. Certain African countries have also embodied the part of conciliator and humanitarian (McEwan 2019, p. 286). In other words, they personify the role in which the Global North traditionally sees itself. Local methods can sometimes also be a more efficient alternative to Western proficiency, as held by Cheryl McEwan (2019). The following three examples attempt to demonstrate that Western aid and assistance is not always required for Africa to sustain itself.

Firstly, some African nations have welcomed a considerable number of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants coming from other parts of the continent (Vervaeke 2020, p. 172). Uganda has set an example by hosting over a million refugees and displaced persons from neighbouring countries, which is about the same as the number of asylum seekers present in Germany (UNHCR 2020).¹²

Another example is that of Somaliland. In her book, *When There Was No Aid: War and Peace in Somaliland*, Sarah G. Phillips (2020) depicts how the self-declared state has managed to become self-sufficient without Western aid.

Finally, when it comes to money from abroad, African states do not rely only on custom fees and development aid coming from the Global North. Remittances also play a sizeable factor in Africa’s total earnings. According to Senegalese development consultant, Sanou Mbaye (2016), remittances are Africa’s second largest source of overseas capital, with over 40 billion US dollars of remittances being sent back home each year by Africans living and working in other parts of the world.

¹² Filippo Grandi, the current United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, praises Uganda for having “the most progressive refugee policies in Africa, if not the world,” despite the country’s own development challenges (Clayton 2018).

Despite the large sums of aid and charity flowing into Africa, the above illustrations suggest that, although dependent on foreign capital, the African continent is not solely reliant on financial assistance from Western organisations and governments, as might sometimes be incorrectly discerned.

The political elements of Western development aid must also be noted as often being counterproductive to the growth and development it sets out to achieve. The EU and other governments are known for strategizing economic aid packages to maintain their own security and influence within developing countries (McEwan 2019, p. 217). In addition, non-governmental organisations coming from Europe and which, at first glance, engage in independent development strategies, are often not devoid of governmental influences when engaged in developing countries. In her book, *Between Samaritans and States*, Jennifer C. Rubenstein (2015) explains that NGOs are more frequently involved in the process of governance than their “good Samaritan” image would have one believe, and that they are highly political. This argument is supported by Cheryl McEwan (2019), who explains that many NGOs are often appointed by Northern governments and obtain funding from them. Accordingly, NGOs tend to advance the interest of the states they are coming from, and this often proves a challenge because it can hinder them from doing effective and impartial work in countries that require aid (McEwan 2019, pp. 235-236).

Understandably, it can prove challenging to separate development policy from politics, especially when involving human rights issues. The European Union has made it part of its mission to promote the respect for human rights across the globe, with coherence to international humanitarian law (Council of the European Union 2009). This follows the values upon which the EU is founded and is laid down in the Union’s treaties (Treaty on European Union, Art. 3(5)). The Council of the European Union adopted the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy in 2012, which is to ensure that human rights are realised through all of the EU’s policies (Council of the European Union 2012). In addition, the respect for human rights is also held on to by the EU and ACP states in Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement.

In the field of human rights, however, the EU has not always been quick to respond to abuses in other countries (Gegout 2017, p. 248). For example, the EU finally put in place penalties against Rwanda, which had given military support to rebel groups in the DRC in 2012, only after other prominent countries had taken action against Rwanda (Gegout 2017, p. 248). Similarly, the EU has not always withdrawn aid from African countries with oppressive anti-homosexuality laws (Gegout 2017, p. 248). It must be noted that some human rights violations presently carried out by African nations trace their roots back to colonialism. The laws criminalising homosexuality, for instance, are remnants of colonial law (Gloppen/Rakner 2020).

Indeed, the politicised nature of human rights and its relation to development policy creates problems, partly because threatening to hold back aid due to human rights infringements challenges the sovereignty of African states and retains elements of neo-colonialism (Døhlie Saltnes/Thiel 2021). Johanne Døhlie Saltnes and Markus Thiel (2021) point out that the EU also takes into account its geopolitical status and interests, when deciding on whether or not to take action in the event of human rights abuses occurring in partner countries.

To conclude this section, it must be reiterated that the way in which development aid is perceived by Europeans must be improved. There ought to be better education regarding how Europe has profited from the contributions of developing regions such as Africa and its peoples, and how it continues to do so today (Baptiste 2018). This includes an increased awareness of Europe's colonial history (as argued in the preceding chapter), as well as educated and realistic media coverage of African life and society of the twenty-first century, preferably coming from local African journalists who, according to Kenyan journalist Patrick Gathara (2019), "explain rather than simply report." This might help eradicate the Rubenstein coined "good Samaritan" image of the West that is still present in the minds of many when it comes to development aid. In doing so, the idea of an EU-African relationship based on equal opportunity might be underpinned. The EU must also seek to reform its development aid mechanisms, in the hope of achieving greater successes in the growth of developing nations (Nyomakwah-Obimpeh 2016, p. 44). Although already part of the EU's agenda, it could increase development by deepening its focus on the flows of aid towards private businesses and local firms^{13 14}, and consistently steer clear of concealing self-serving political and economic motivations behind its aid (Carbone 2014; Langan 2011). To ensure that foreign aid meant for development and enhancement of welfare is not embezzled by government officials, Africans must actively fight corruption and political instability (Ganahl 2013). Moreover, increased efforts could be made among African states to move toward regional integration which, if successful, will strengthen African economies, reduce poverty and make Africa less reliant on aid. (Oloruntoba 2020a, p. 1; Oloruntoba/Falola 2020, p. 8; Nubong 2020, p. 1070). This would help Africa stand

¹³ The EU already has adopted initiatives such as the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) and the EU External Investment Plan (2017-present) to help with private sector investment and sustainable development in developing countries, (European Commission n.d.).

¹⁴ In 2018, former EU Commission President Juncker announced the launch of the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, constituting a shift from the charity spectrum of development aid to one reflecting a partnership based on equality (Vervaeke 2020, p. 169).

its ground when associating with the EU and other powerful regions such as China.

3.2 Current and Future Players

The new millennium also brought with it additional external factors for the EU to consider in terms of its policies in Africa. China's emergence as an economic superpower and a major global player has presented Europe with challenges in many areas. The rapid rise of China is a much-discussed topic among EU policy makers and has appeared in several strategy appraisals, most recently in the EU's 2021 Trade Policy Review (European Commission 2021). China and other new players have also made their presence known in Africa and, like the EU, they have an interest in maintaining both a political and economic sphere of influence on the continent. This has resulted in heightened competition between the EU and others over dominance in Africa, and many see this as presenting African nations with welcome alternatives that they could exploit to best suit their own development goals (Kohnert 2008; Vervaeke 2020). Critics, on the other hand, discern these new rivalries as being an updated form of the colonial period's Scramble for Africa and an additional bleeding out of African resources, further hindering Africa's growth and development (Moyo 2020a, p. 557). Below, the blueprint of China and other actors' policies for African countries will be discussed in relation to their effects on the EU's long-standing association with Africa.

3.2.1 Is China Assuming Europe's Role in Africa?

Even though China's presence in Africa is often described as a relatively recent occurrence, the Sino-African relationship can be traced as far back as the Portuguese exploration of sub-Saharan Africa of the fifteenth century (Chaponnière 2009, p. 60). In the twentieth century too, China's presence in the African region dates to the 1950s, following the creation of the PRC, having given assistance and support to the likes of Guinea and Ghana during this period (Chaponnière 2009, p. 10; Van Dijk 2009a; p. 10, Jiang 2020, p. 6). China's economic reform of 1978, and the following decades' ensuing economic growth, not only increased Chinese interests in the building up of rapport with African countries, but also attracted Africa's fascination, primarily as a result of China's swift rise to economic greatness (Meidan 2020; p. 75, Chaponnière 2009, p. 60).

Not unlike Europe, China recognises the value of maintaining partnerships with Africa, since the continent is rich in raw materials that are essential to foster its own growth and presents an important market for Chinese manufactured goods

(De Beule/Van den Bulcke 2009, p. 44). Often, African policy makers favourably look upon the increasing opportunities with China, as they provide them the chance to break away from the more traditional “donor/creditor” relationship they retain with the EU and give them the possibility of learning from Chinese methods for their own development (Moyo 2020a, p. 569; Schmidt 2008, p. 6). It has thus become more difficult for the EU to receive support for their trading plans with African regions. This is demonstrated by the refusal of some African countries to sign EPA agreements with the EU, leaning towards interim agreements instead, because, as put by Senegal’s former president Abdoulaye Wade, their preference to invest in the more efficient and financially affordable projects with China outweigh their beliefs in the merits of the EPAs (Van Dijk 2009b, p. 106).

A distinct difference between Chinese and EU cooperation in Africa is that China labels its aid as an alliance based on “mutual assistance” under which both China and its African partners benefit, hence taking away the “donor” connotation that development aid often carries with it (Chaponnière 2009, p. 60; De Beule/Van den Bulcke 2009, p. 46). Naturally, this approach is likely to receive higher levels of appreciation among Africans because the partnership retains an element of equality. Lately, the EU has also attempted to openly put emphasis on the reciprocal element of the EU-African relationship, as voiced by multiple EU heads and representatives in recent speeches (Vervaeke 2020, p. 166). However, China can further rely on a shared history with its partners in Africa: both regions share a colonial past, have previously been classified as “the poor South” by developed nations, and each understand the struggles involved in building up their economies upon independence (Chaponnière 2009, p. 60; Jiang 2020).

China also presents an alternative to traditional Western models that the EU has been pursuing, thereby challenging the conventional development policy paths set out by the OECD members and offers other methods with which developing African countries can achieve economic growth (Hackenesch 2009, p. 7; Van Dijk 2009a, p. 12). China was able to modernise and build up its economy to one of the strongest in the world without Western aid (Kappel / Schneidenbach 2006), and this is a further factor why some African players have turned their focus and admiration away from the EU and towards China.

As a result of its swift growth to one of the strongest and dominant world economies, China also desires to build up its political influence within the international system that had previously been dominated by Western powers (Jian 2020, p. 6). However, regarding Africa, China garners local mainstream support in very different ways than, say, the EU. Unlike the EU, China does not intervene in African policies when it comes to human rights protection, believing that each state may follow its own definitions and methods of enforcing and protecting these rights (De Beule/Van den Bulcke 2009, p. 45;

Kappel/Schneidenbach 2006, p. 1). On the one hand, this non-interference highlights China's respect for the sovereignty of each African state it collaborates with. On the other hand, this poses a problem for the EU's efforts to ensure that human rights are safeguarded around the world. Some sub-Saharan African states are still lacking when it comes to democracy and human rights protection (Ishola 2020).

Important tools which the EU employs to improve human rights conditions within partner states include political dialogues and economic diplomacy (European Commission n.d.). These instruments, however, lose a lot of their potential when corrupt governments with a disregard for human rights are presented with an alternative partner who does not intrude in domestic affairs, does not urge for good governance and democracy, and is not peace-enhancing, going as far as offering military aid to fuel conflicts in African regions (Devermont 2020; Kappel/Schneidenbach 2006; Schüller/Asche 2007). To create a more harmonious environment in Africa, the EU must therefore attempt to bridge its gaps with China, have some acceptance for the Chinese viewpoint, engage in discussions and learn to cooperate and coexist with China when it comes to development policies in Africa (Jian 2020). This, in turn, could be a method of receiving more widespread support for the EU's own values.

With respect to economic interests in Africa, Chinese policies bear resemblance to those of the EU: both put a strong emphasis on the trade in raw materials from Africa (Kragelund/Van Dijk 2009). Yet, in the development sector, China has discovered an important field to which the EU has paid insufficient attention, one that is paramount for the economic development of a country. Even though it has been established that a stable industrial sector is vital for economic self-sufficiency and growth, the EU and other Western donors have failed to commit to aiding the industrial development of their African partners (Chaponnière 2009, p. 68; Moyo 2020a, p. 562). China has seen this failure of the EU's decades-old development policy as a chance to become involved in the industrial development of sub-Saharan African regions, by offering financial support and expertise in the industrial and technical sectors, including healthcare (Chaponnière 2009; Moyo 2020a).¹⁵

Africans welcome this type of assistance, in the hope that Chinese aid and loans will result in substantial changes and help in the modernisation objectives of African society and economy. To many, the Sino-African relationship seems to be more efficient and straightforward than traditional European forms of cooperation which are heavy-ridden with procedures and conditionalities; and

¹⁵ China has established institutions such as the China Exim Bank and the China-Africa Development Fund, to aid in the infrastructural investment in Africa (Moyo 2020a, p. 558).

in addition, trade with China seems more worthwhile thanks to the affordable imports of Chinese commercial goods that are complimentary to the creation of “an atmosphere of development” (De Beule/Van den Bulcke 2009, p. 50; Schmidt 2008, p. 6). Critics of China’s funding methods, however, argue that, instead of helping in the sustainable development of Africa, Chinese financial assistance is leading African states into huge debt crises that will be difficult to overcome (Moyo 2020a).

In his 2009 article on Chinese aid to Africa, Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière proposed that, even though China claims that its aid relations with Africa are unmistakably in contrast to the approaches taken by the West, with time China’s policies in Africa could begin to resemble very much that of those “donors” it has been distancing itself from. It is therefore interesting to analyse whether this prognosis has proven true in 2021. Indeed, critics have long been sceptic of China’s involvement in Africa. For instance, certain experts believe that instead of fostering a partnership based on friendship, equality and development, China has assumed a neo-colonial character with its increasing influence (Kohnert 2008). In addition, there is a growing belligerent sentiment among local traders and producers because they are unable to compete with the flooding of cheap Chinese products and services on African markets (Kohnert 2008). Furthermore, it does become evident that China is not development enhancing for Africa in every aspect. For instance, China’s presence is principally felt in resource-rich African regions, and Chinese assistance often takes the form of “tied aid”, making it dubious as to whether the aid is not first and foremost designed for China’s own benefit (Sun 2014). For example, it is part of China’s policy that loans for African infrastructural projects can only be granted if they involve a Chinese company (Moyo 2020a). Additionally, China’s colossal subsidy scheme for its own industries is inevitably manipulating local African markets (Åsenius 2020).

These examples underline certain self-serving similarities China shares with other international actors regarding development policies in Africa, which poses the question as to whether the EU’s approach might be more beneficial for Africa in the long run. Even though European aid too has underlying motives, it does appear to be based on values that are democracy-enhancing and that do not overlook moral principles such as the promotion of human rights.

To sum up the above points, it must be noted that either arguing solely in favour of the EU’s development policies or exclusively for China’s aid strategy does not help in promoting Africa’s economic and social well-being. The solution is not as clear-cut, and both the EU and China provide better aid in some areas and are lacking in others. Gordon Moyo (2020a) holds that China’s workings in Africa bears neither a redeemer quality that many African supporters had hoped for, nor is it exploitative and neo-colonial as argued by detractors but forms a middle ground between these two opposing views. China’s presence in Africa has

provided many African nations with opportunities, such as development in the infrastructural sector and access to economic and technical expertise, which provide an alternative to Western formulas (Chaponnière 2009; Knorringa 2009; Moyo 2020a). Africa must make use of these opportunities, and African governmental and non-governmental actors should unite, apply pressure, and argue in their nations' interests, to alleviate the damaging sides of foreign policy on their regions (Knorringa 2009; Moyo 2020a). In the end, Africa is essential to the development and growth of other regions (Vervaeke 2020), and it is therefore not only up to Africa to bend and adapt to the demands of others. Instead, African leaders must learn to hold their own in dialogues with China or the EU (Moyo 2020a). Having a stronger mechanism of regional integration in place, could therefore be the best way forward for improved negotiations between African regions and external actors.

3.2.2 Other Actors to be Considered

China is not the only emerging donor the EU has to take into consideration in the future layout of its development policies for Africa. The following are some additional players that threaten to erode Europe's strong standing on the African continent, and which represent additional arguments that "the traditional North-South axis is being superseded by an East-South 'turn'" (Shaw 2016, p. 113).

Over the past years, Turkey has made significant efforts to broaden its role in the international setting, focusing much of its foreign policy on the Middle East, but also with ever-growing emphasis on Africa (Langan 2018). These initiatives occurred partly as a consequence to the increasingly strained EU-Turkey relationship in the aftermath of Turkey's failed accession negotiations of the 2000s (Langan 2018). In the past decade, Turkey's ODA budget has grown by more than tenfold from 812 million US dollars in 2011 to 8.75 billion US dollars in 2019 (Tüyoğlu 2021, p. 12).

According to Turkey's Foreign Ministry, ODA to Africa has become an essential part of the country's foreign policy, and Turkey has provided much needed humanitarian relief to African regions plagued by catastrophes - during the Somalian famine in 2011 for instance, or more recently, by issuing medical relief to twenty-two African countries amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Langan 2018; Güngör 2021). Somali-Canadian political scholar Afyare Abdi Elmi (2017) praises the Turkish aid system in relation to the Somalian famine as one that other donors should set as an example for their own models. Undoubtedly, this has ensued in improved relations between Turkey and the African countries it has been involved with.

Following the Chinese model, Turkey portrays its assistance policies as being at variance with Western and European forms of aid, doing away with old and colonial techniques of which, as implied by Turkey, it too has been a “victim” (Langan 2018, p. 104).¹⁶ On top of that, Turkey has an added advantage over Europe in building up good rapports in those African countries that have predominantly Muslim populations; and others might eventually also turn to Turkey in light of unpopular European policies in Africa, such as the recent EPA negotiations (Langan 2018).

India, Saudi-Arabia, and Brazil are also among the countries that have progressively shifted their foreign policy attention towards Africa since the beginning of the current century.

The Indo-African relationship is founded on a very similar colonial past (Mullen 2016). India attained self-rule from the British in 1947, only a decade before the first wave of independence in sub-Saharan Africa. India and the majority of the African continent had adopted similar stances in the Cold War through the Non-Aligned Movement, and the friendship is also strengthened as a result of some of the Indian diaspora being located in Africa (Mullen 2016). Rani D. Mullen (2016) writes of a resurgence of this Indo-African correlation in recent years, with Indian foreign policy being directed towards increased development cooperation within Africa; and this has been met with widespread support on both sides (Mullen 2016).

Similarly, Saudi Arabia has sought to build up its influence in Africa, specifically in the Horn of Africa, engaging in soft power, capitalising on its oil and gas resources, and making use of its shared religious identity with Africa’s 650 million Muslims (Durovray 2018). In other countries, Saudi Arabia has also adopted measures to foster closer ties. In 2020, Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that Ghana was in the process of revitalising its bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Brazil’s world exports quadrupled, and trade with sub-Saharan African regions prospered (Schor 2021). Again, the relationship with Brazil is rooted in a deep historical connection, dating back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as well as a shared Portuguese-ruled colonial past with several African nations (Marques/Krause 2021).

This rekindling of partnerships between Africa and other emerging regions further highlights the shifts in balances that the EU has been experiencing over

¹⁶ It is worth noting that the Ottoman Empire took part in in the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 on Africa’s partition (Albrecht 2020, p.19).

the past two decades with regards to its standing in Africa and shows the likelihood that the dynamics of the distribution of influence will continue to evolve.

Lastly, the EU does not only need to pay heed to the changes occurring in Africa's affiliations regarding external emerging actors but must also focus on the budding impact of powerful African players such as Nigeria and South Africa.

Being the largest economic power on the continent and a leader when it comes to digitalisation and industrialisation (Ali/Odularu 2020), it cannot be denied that Nigeria enacts considerable political, cultural, and economic influence within Africa, particularly in West Africa. Nigeria was able to show determination in its rejection of the EPAs, which garnered widespread attention (Oloruntoba 2020b), and it is likely that other countries might follow in the footsteps of prominent nations such as Nigeria in future arrangements that might not be in their immediate interest.

The end of the apartheid regime in South Africa and the democratic election of Nelson Mandela in 1994 signalled the resurfacing of South Africa on the international stage (Thakur 2018). South African foreign policy began to focus on the advancement of human rights and democracy, and Nelson Mandela actively addressed such issues in dialogues with other African leaders (Thakur 2018). South Africa was initially seen as an intermediary between the Global North and Global South, however the country's next president, Thabo Mbeki, started moving his focus and preferences towards initiatives that represented the interests of the Global South, with foreign policy becoming submerged in African and NEPAD-led projects (Thakur 2018). Peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction functions, roles in which the EU sees itself, have also partly been taken over by South Africa in recent decades (Heinecken 2020; Kagwanja 2009; Thakur 2018). Even though South Africa has not always occupied a dominant role in Africa, it is an important player on the continent and, as a member of the BRICS group of emerging economies, has the potential of increasingly redirecting focus away from the West and towards internal players concerning policies involving growth and development (Shaw 2016; Thakur 2018).

4 African Perspectives and African Integration as a Means to End Dependency

“The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart.”

- Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 1963

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4.1 The Long Road from Political Self-Determination to True Independence

In this section, I turn my focus to Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president and one of the leading proponents of African unity. Even though Nkrumah’s ideas were not always met with widespread acclaim and lost in popular appeal in the years following his death in 1972, his teachings and literary works remain relevant to the understanding of the ideas and objectives behind the African integration process that is still ongoing today (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020, pp. 188-189; Langan 2018). The attainment of political self-rule from European colonists on the African continent did not mean complete independence to Nkrumah and served only as “the prelude to a new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct [Africa’s] own economic and social affairs.”¹⁷ Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanist visions, which are aimed at unifying and empowering people of African descent, are still very current and are reflected in the African Union’s priorities and goals set out in its Agenda 2063, which outlines the African Union’s current plan for modelling Africa into a “global powerhouse” (Aniche 2020). This blueprint aims to turn the African economy into a powerful and stable one with high living standards, bring peace and prosperity to the continent with adherence to democracy and human rights, and to ensure that Africa takes on full responsibility in accounting for its development (African Union, Agenda 2063 n.d.).

¹⁷ From Kwame Nkrumah’s speech delivered at the inaugural ceremony of the OAU Conference, Addis Ababa, 24 May 1963 (Nkrumah 1997).

4.1.1 Kwame Nkrumah: Pan Africanism and African Unity

Even before leading the Gold Coast into independence, Kwame Nkrumah had Pan-Africanist aspirations. During his studies in the United States and in the United Kingdom, he associated with other Pan-Africanist scholars, Marxists and Africans located in the diaspora. Drawing inspiration from socialist and Pan-Africanist ideas, and being impressed by the rapid political and economic rise of the United States of America, Nkrumah believed that the complete liberation of all African colonies, and their coming together to form a Union of socialist states would be the only way for Africa to be truly independent, have influence over its own development, attain economic greatness and improve its global standing (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020, p. 186; Marx 2004, pp. 276-277; Langan 2018; Nkrumah 1963; Nubong 2020). He was therefore not only committed toward the self-determination of his own country, but also to help all others free themselves from colonial rule (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020, p. 186). Nkrumah and other intellectuals with similar visions, including political philosopher Frantz Fanon and activist and future Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, were inspired by Marxist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Pan-African activists like Marcus Garvey, and developed a new theory known as “African socialism”, whereby African norms and values were to be focussed on to ensure the continent’s development (Langan 2018).

In 1957, the Gold Coast became the first sub-Saharan African colony to be declared independent. Its name was changed to Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah who had been the colony’s Prime Minister since 1952 was elected President of the Republic of Ghana in 1960. Nkrumah was not only immersed in the economic, infrastructural, and cultural development of Ghana, but also further dedicated himself to African unity. He was one of the main leaders behind the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The OAU’s aim was to foster economic growth and political integration, thereby doing away with the “balkanisation” caused by the European colonial powers (Boateng 2003). To the OAU’s founders, political independence alone would not relieve Africa off its economic dependency, and that without a strong and united continent, independent states would remain in the clutches of the West’s neo-colonialism (Marx 2004, pp. 276-277).

The OAU’s goals were based on Pan-Africanist models of cooperation and coordination of various sectors and policy areas of the member states, and despite political successes of the OAU in freeing the African continent from colonialism, disagreements soon emerged among its figureheads on how to best achieve the Union’s set out objectives (Nubong 2020, p. 1071; Oloruntoba 2020a, p. 2; Sonderegger 2016). These disputes among the leaders concerned diverging political and economic allegiances. Some preferred to focus on regional forms

of integration, others displayed a preference for neo-liberal economic alignments; other problems included the inability to efficiently intervene and resolve wars and conflicts, lack of commitment, and corruption allegations (Engel 2008; Oloruntoba 2020a). In attempts to cling to power at home many African leaders, including Nkrumah, soon manifested despotic and undemocratic streaks. The OAU was also plagued with organisational and economic shortcomings and was eventually disbanded in 2002 to be replaced with the new and updated African Union (AU) that same year, designed to give the integration process new impetus.

Kwame Nkrumah was sceptical of European and North American economic aid and their continued influence on Africa, stating that the West is the true winner of its development policy, by attaching conditionalities to their loans and donations, regaining the funds given, and indirectly manipulating political activities within Africa (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020, p. 184; Langan 2018, Sonderegger 2016). He also opposed the idea of African states forming economic partnerships with the EEC and believed that this would hamper the progress of African economic integration (Leikam 2014).¹⁸

In his book, *Neo-colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa*, Mark Langan (2018) states that many contemporary scholars are uncomfortable with talking of Africa as a whole and find it more accurate to refer to the individual states in Africa. Likewise, many believe that the term “neo-colonialism” is no longer relevant to the current procedures in the development policy landscape (Langan 2018). It can however be argued that it is essential for Africa to be classified as one collective international actor, without the infliction of European-designed internal borders, matters that Kwame Nkrumah and other Pan-Africanist leaders hoped to attain in the long run. Furthermore, when looking at the various forms that development policy to Africa takes, whether coming from the Global North or the emerging South, it becomes apparent that it always contains egocentric motives which some might classify as neo-colonialism. Critics therefore maintain that neo-colonial elements are often hidden behind a veil of proposed developmental strategies including Economic Partnership Agreements. With this argument, I simply highlight that Nkrumah’s claim of neo-colonialism is still a topic worth discussing, even while donors like the EU strive to adapt their development strategies to more suitable forms.

In time, Nkrumah and his Pan-Africanist views became less acclaimed. Despite early economic and industrial growth in Ghana, as well as better and improved

¹⁸ During the creation process of the EEC, France demanded for preferable economic treatment to be given to its colonies. This led to the Yaoundé, and later, Lomé and Cotonou agreements (Van Dijk 2009b).

access to education, his socialist and anti-tribalist¹⁹ approaches proved unpopular among many Ghanaians (Fuller 2014, p. 163). During his presidency, Nkrumah became notorious for developing the characteristics of an exuberant dictator. In 1964, he declared himself president for life, banned all forms of opposition, introduced press censorship and imprisoned political opponents, denying them the right to fair trials (Fuller 2014). In February 1966, Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup and replaced as president by Joseph Arthur Ankrah. Under Ghana's succeeding leaders, the country re-established its relationship with the West and began neglecting socialist and Pan-Africanist ideas (Fuller 2014, p. 152).

Following the end of the Cold War, socialist doctrines became even more outdated among Ghanaian and African elites, and Nkrumah's teachings were criticised for lacking practical concepts, as well as portraying Africans simply as casualties of external actors, taking away every sense of Africa's own initiative in the shaping of global affairs (Marx 2004; Langan 2018). Additionally, Nkrumah and his dogmas became affiliated with the many dictatorships that have and continue to exist in several African nations (Langan 2018). Ultimately, the Pan-Africanist aims envisioned by Nkrumah proved unsuccessful at establishing a stable African economy and in ensuring lasting peace on the African continent (Oloruntoba 2020a). The failure of the OAU in reaching its desired goals can therefore be traced back to flaws and unpopularity of Nkrumah's ideals.

Over the past few decades, however, Kwame Nkrumah's visions have been experiencing a kind of renaissance (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020). Drawing inspiration from Pan-Africanist perspectives, certain African governments continue to realise the value of maintaining close ties with Africans located in the diaspora: their expertise and investment capabilities may be incorporated to the benefit of the economies and societies of African countries (Oloruntoba 2020a).

An example is the approach taken by Ghana's current government. In a widely publicised campaign designed to attract skilled and innovative Black people from the diaspora to settle in or visit Ghana, President Nana Akufo-Addo named 2019 the "Year of Return" (Tetteh 2019). The initiative employed touching symbolism, alluding to the "homecoming" of the ancestors of slaves, four hundred years after the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade. According to Ghana's Minister of Tourism, the initiative brought in an additional 1.9-billion-dollar revenue into the Ghanaian economy in 2019 (BBC News 2020).

¹⁹ Strong tribal identity and notions of class supremacy were also remnants of colonial propaganda (Ekanade 2020, p. 1021).

Political Economist Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba (2020a) suggests that the Pan-Africanist ideas that originated from the African diaspora and that helped Africa bring an end to political colonisation in the twentieth century, could be incorporated again to aid in the attainment of African economic independence in the twenty-first century. Nkrumah's teachings on African unity are therefore still of significant relevance and continue to impact the AU's agenda on future integration and development. It is therefore not surprising that Kwame Nkrumah was voted "African of the Millennium" by African BBC listeners at the close of the twentieth century (Ayelazuno/Mawuko-Yevugah 2020, p. 171; Fuller 2014, p. 1).

4.1.2 The African Union's 100-Year Plan: "Agenda 2063"

In 2015, the African Union adopted "Agenda 2063" as its slogan, with the aim of attaining a high level of development and self-sufficiency by 2063 – the year that will mark the one hundredth anniversary of the continent's official starting point of political and economic integration (Ishola 2020, p. 45). When analysing the African Union's priorities and goals, it cannot be denied that the Pan-Africanist ideology continues to live on. To improve in the areas where the OAU had been lacking, the AU has established updated policy plans to guide the continent on a long-term mission of increased involvement within the international political economy, with a renewed focus on African democratic principles, in pursuit of well-defined sustainable development goals, and with better cooperation between the AU and the continent's various Regional Economic Communities (Diawara et al. 2020, p. 79; Ishola 2020, p. 44). Particular attention has been placed on the attainment of an African Economic Community (AEC), an economic goal which had already been called into force in 1991, by the OAU, under the Abuja Treaty (Aniche 2020, p. 23; Oloruntoba 2020a, p. 3).

With the AEC, the African Union aims to create regional customs unions, a single market, and a monetary union, channelling the model of the European Union (Fasan 2019). The AEC does its work by encouraging the establishment and growth of various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) throughout Africa, which are known as the "pillars" or "building blocks" of the AEC (Nubong 2020). With the establishment of RECs, it is the African Union's aim to encourage good regional governance and secure a deepening of regional economic integration which would eventually lead to better integration at the continental level (Aniche 2020). Again, this is founded on Pan-Africanist ideals encompassing the cooperation of peoples sharing common identities and pursuing a joint goal (Oloruntoba / Toyin 2020, p. 8). The aim of reaching economic union at the continental level through the consolidation of the RECs is laid out in Article 88 of

the Abuja Treaty. The RECs, and the paths taken towards the attainment of the AU's ultimate goal will be discussed in the following section.

In 2019, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) came into effect in the African Union, a further attempt of deepening economic integration by boosting intra-African trade (African Union n.d.). Even though it had been part of the Abuja Treaty's aim to have in place a Continental Customs Union by 2019 with the plan to institute a Continental Common Market in 2023, the AfCFTA, which as a free trade area is inferior to the stated goals, is an initiative in the path towards further, albeit a more prolonged, integration (Fasan 2019). In addition, it has been stated that the AfCFTA will not achieve a complete eradication of tariffs, but will help boost African production, trade, and regional value chains (Schmieg 2020). Bringing together all member states under the AfCFTA, the AU moves a step further in its integration objective, with established protocols on the rules and procedures of trade in goods and services (Diawara et al. 2020). This is part of the AU's plan of enlarging intra-African trade, deemed necessary for the reduction of poverty and the reaching of sustainable economic growth, goals that form part of Agenda 2063 (Diawara et al. 2020, p 79).

Unfortunately, not unlike the OAU, the AU too is plagued with several difficulties some of which, according to observers, are the outcome of a series of missed opportunities of African elites and politicians, while others are a consequence of other unfavourable deficiencies. One problem that hinders the progress of the AU is the difficulty of its member states to form punctual and undivided decisions (Fasan 2019). For instance, implementation of the AfCFTA is proving a challenge: negotiations have been long and drawn out and Africa's largest economy, Nigeria, has demonstrated hesitancy and would prefer to follow a national protectionist track (Diawara et al. 2020, p. 78; Fasan 2019; Schmieg 2020). Accounting for development levels varying across Africa, economically weaker countries may also hesitate in moving forward with negotiations as a means of protection against competition with countries such as South Africa and Kenya, which have stronger export sectors (Schmieg 2020).

To be fair, it can only be expected that it is nearly impossible to reach agreements in an organisation comprising fifty-four member states. Even in the EU, this has proven to be taxing, especially following its enlargement to a Union of twenty-seven. This struggle was not unknown to the AU's predecessor. The ideological conflict between the "Casablanca bloc", which centred on African socialism mirroring a United African State, and the "Monrovia bloc", which believed that the member states must bear the ultimate authority, resulted in disaccord from

the outset of the OAU's creation (Ishola 2020, p. 43).²⁰ Furthermore, corruption continues to hinder the AU in its endeavours. An example is that of the aforementioned failure of Africa's development agency (NEPAD) in achieving the desired success, which Nigerian scholar Ebenezer Babajide Ishola (2020) attributes to corruption and prebendalism among African ruling classes.

One other issue facing the AU, regarding intra-African trade, is that the export structure and output is not suited for trade among African countries since they mostly produce similar, unmanufactured goods (Aniche 2020, p. 32). To enable a noteworthy rise in intra-African trade in the long-run, African economies must focus on the diversification of their output and work towards the build-up and modernisation of their manufacturing industries. It is therefore logical that African states value foreign assistance and proficiency aimed towards infrastructural and industrial growth over the aid that only causes a short-term end to problems.

When it comes to European policy towards Africa, economic experts and detractors of the EPAs have warned about the harmful effects that the EPAs might have for African industries, suggesting that an elimination of trade barriers with the EU would lead to further deindustrialisation of the already weak but emerging African manufacturing sectors (Langan 2018). Instead, the EU should reinforce the AU in its establishment of the AfCFTA, which will increase trade within Africa and encourage Africa's industrialisation (Moyo 2020b, p. 757; Schmieg 2020). Industrialisation forms part of Agenda 2063, and the AU should make the most of the opportunities it is presented with and draw inspiration from other world economies (African Union n.d.). Economist Theresa Moyo (2020b), however, emphasises the need for Africa to reflect on approaches that will complement African society in the best possible way, approaches that will be most compatible with Africa's goal of achieving industrialisation across the continent.

Despite apparent flaws and many obstacles ahead, the African Union's potential should not be underestimated. African unity has proven successful in achieving several set-out goals relating to political integration in the past, and as the world's second largest continent and largest regional organisation that is extremely rich in resources, the AU could well achieve profound economic integration (Vanheukelom 2016). Ishola (2020) concludes that, so far, the AU has not shown the required amount of resourcefulness and clarity with its plan of action to achieve its stated aims. To deliver on the goals of the AU's Agenda 2063,

²⁰ Ultimately, the OAU came to resemble a confederate system, mirroring the model of the Monrovia bloc (Ishola 2020, p. 43).

African leaders and civil societies therefore need to stand up to the challenge, work hard and revitalise their dedication to ensure a positive outcome of their goals, and put emphasis on the good governance of all its members. African citizens should also become more engaged in the integration process. Here, African media can play an important part, as it has the potential to help “propagate African values and Pan-Africanist goals and objectives”, to garner widespread support and to encourage the involvement of Africans in the strive toward the AU’s objectives (Omotoso 2020, pp. 155-156). Active discussion and coverage of Pan-African aims is imperative for the realisation of African integration targets and for the achievement of sustainable development. Accordingly, an increased sense of awareness and urgency must be raised among the African mainstream.

4.2 The Long Road from Political Self-Determination to True Independence

As previously stated, Africa’s multiple Regional Economic Communities form the pillars on which the African Economic Community stands, and that it is the African Union’s overarching task to “drive and possibly facilitate” the integration process among the RECs (Nubong 2020; Schmiege 2020, p. 4). Africa’s eight recognised RECs vary greatly in their levels of integration, with some having already established customs unions and with mechanisms in place that enable further integration, while others have made very little breakthrough (Oloruntoba 2020a). In this paper, I will focus on one of the RECs that is among those to have made the most progress in terms of integration, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Disagreements continue to exist over the levels of success even the most impactful RECs have achieved with respect to the attainment of the extensive Pan-African aims (Odeyemi 2020, p. 98). Being the most highly integrated body in the world, it is also worth discussing the extent to which RECs in Africa can learn from the European Union’s narrative (Ludlow 2016). Should the EU be placed in the role of a paragon for the REC’s ambitions in the quest of achieving long-term sustainable development and continental integration, pursuant to the goals set out in the AU’s Agenda 2063? Or should Africa regard its situation as unique and unlike any existing models, and therefore follow a path it deems more appropriate in reaching its goals?

4.2.1 ECOWAS: One of Africa's "Greatest" Regional Economic Communities

Almost immediately after gaining independence, new African states began forming regional associations as a means of integration and a collective way of tackling developmental issues: as early as 1959, Ghana and Guinea announced the formation of the ephemeral Union of African States and, in the same year, French-speaking West African countries came together to form the *Conseil de l'Entente* (Aniche 2020, p.23). Since 1958, the United Nations Economic and Social Council also promotes intra-regional integration in Africa with its establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and this also encouraged the creation of several regional associations across Africa (Odeyemi 2020, p. 98). Today, the AU recognises eight Regional Economic Communities as its building blocks to foster economic integration within the regions and "through the wider African Economic Community" and to create harmony in areas such as "peace and security, development and governance" (African Union, n.d.). Article 28 of the Abuja Treaty states that RECs should be created and strengthened with the aim of ensuring the progressive establishment of the African Economic Community (Treaty Establishing the AEC, Art. 28(1)).

The official RECs are, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In addition, some RECs have a number of subgroups within them. For example, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) are customs and monetary unions that exist within the ECOWAS zone (Aniche 2020, pp. 29-30).

In the following paragraphs I have chosen to focus on ECOWAS because, along with the EAC and SADC, it is the Regional Economic Community to have made the most progress in realising some of its goals (Diawara et al. 2020). ECOWAS is also the oldest REC to form a pillar of the African Economic Community, suggesting that it has had more time to firmly establish itself in comparison to the newer RECs. Lastly, by engaging in a discussion of the achievements and challenges of ECOWAS, it becomes apparent that most of these issues are not unique to ECOWAS but are mirrored across the other RECs in Africa.

ECOWAS was established in 1975, under the Lagos Treaty and with the intention of coordinating the process of economic integration and development in West Africa. In 1993, the heads of state of the member states signed a revised ECOWAS Treaty with the hope to speed up the integration process in line with the

objectives of the AEC, increase public involvement, establish a monetary union, and make security and conflict resolution part of the Community's work (ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Arts. 2-5). Fifteen West African states that mostly share similar colonial pasts of French, British or Portuguese rule, form the members of ECOWAS; and in many cases, ethnic peoples of common origins live across the borders of multiple nations (ECOWAS n.d.). ECOWAS has a similar constitutional framework as many other international organisations. Their roles and functions are set by the Treaty of Lagos and include, the Authority of Heads of State of Government, a Council of Ministers, a Community Parliament, a Court of Justice and, like the AU, an Economic and Social Council (ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Arts. 6-24). In contrast other RECs, such as the Economic Community of Central African States, suffer from "organisational weaknesses", that add to their inferior performances (Lemarchand 2016, p. 232). Nevertheless, critics argue that ECOWAS must use its legal tools to further democratise its institutions, such as the Community Parliament, to allow for effective and relevant law-making and to stimulate integration (Alumona/Azom, 2019).

Pan-Africanist leaders of the mid-twentieth century are often regarded as the forebearers of African continental integration, whose impact is still felt within the African Union of today (Asante 2016). In a similar fashion, advocates of ECOWAS look up to Nigerian economist and former Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Adebayo Adedeji, as being a driving force of economic regional integration in West Africa. Adedeji is often considered the "father of ECOWAS" and was a strong proponent of integration in a period when African integration and state-driven industrialisation started to stagnate and a WTO-led global free-market capitalist approach was preferred by many (Adebajo 2020, p. 267). Through his collaboration with representatives of the OAU, Adedeji made known his belief that to escape the still present colonial trappings and attain economic autonomy, African regions need to diversify their production structures and move away from an overreliance on the raw material sectors (Adebajo 2020, p. 268). For West Africa, his vision was the attainment of the free movement of people, goods and services, and the building of infrastructure to allow for smooth trade and investment (Adedeji 1970). According to Adedeji, regional integration is a means of achieving peace, as well as social and economic development across Africa, and that it is a step in the direction of greater African integration, with the creation of an African Common Market being his long-term hope (Adedeji 1989; Adebajo 2020, p. 276; Asante 2016). Even though these aspirations were not all fulfilled during his lifetime, the impact Adebayo Adedeji had on ECOWAS and on the achievements of African integration should not be understated.

Reactions to the success and progress made by ECOWAS have been varied (Adedeji 2012; Akinola 2019). Isaac Temitayo Odeyemi (2020) argues that the

Community has achieved limited results in its plan of eliminating trade barriers. Diawara et al. (2020) however, claim that ECOWAS is making relatively good advancements when it comes to free trade, monetary union, and customs union²¹. Also on a positive note, Odeyemi (2020) points out the introduction of a common passport for citizens of ECOWAS countries, which enables them visa-free travel across the region, as being a great success in the integration process. Since the 1990s, ECOWAS has been an African pioneer in the field of adopting and implementing a security regime, beginning with its active intervention in the Liberian conflict (Odeyemi 2020, p. 107). Peace is essential to ensure economic and political integration and, according to Said Adejumobi (2016), this peace-building approach has created new resolve to cooperate among the ECOWAS members. The AU has followed in ECOWAS' footsteps by becoming more involved in security operations and by establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, with an official acknowledgment of the peacekeeping work done by the RECs stated within the Council's establishing protocol (African Union 2002). Based on this argument, it could be declared that in the field of collective security, the African Union's intentions of building up from the regional to the continental level over time, is going according to plan. Increased efforts and regional cooperation on the part of ECOWAS could moreover lead to further continental improvements.

Originally, ECOWAS was established solely for the participation of West African nations. The Treaty clearly mentions ECOWAS as being an economic Union in West Africa (ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Art. 3). In 2017, the North African state of Morocco applied for membership to ECOWAS, and the decision whether to permit Moroccan membership has caused much division within the Community (Odeyemi 2020). Allowing Morocco to join ECOWAS could lead to an increase in trade and investment and would mirror Pan-Africanist ideas of unity, paving the way for greater African integration. Detractors argue that Morocco's monarchical framework is not in line with the Community's democratic beliefs and are also aware that Morocco's growing ties with the EU through the European Neighbourhood Policy could expose ECOWAS to excessive external influence and pose a threat to the sustainability of West African industries (Odeyemi 2020; Oloruntoba 2020a).

In many aspects, ECOWAS and the other RECs encounter similar problems that inhibit economic growth and hamper the integration process. With most RECs, there is an overlap of membership since many African states affiliate themselves

²¹ Although the West African Economic and Currency Union have in place a monetary and customs Union, ECOWAS' other primarily anglophone subgroup, the West African Monetary Zone, has not attained its goal of introducing a common currency, the Eco, by 2015 (Harvey / Cushing, 2015).

with more than one regional organisation, the Democratic Republic of Congo belonging to as many as four RECs, all of which differ in their regulations regarding trading standards (Aniche 2020; Gathii 2009; Lemarchand 2016; Nubong 2020; Schmieg 2020; Tang/Tavares 2011). In addition, it becomes clear that the numerous subgroups that exist within many of the RECs present administrative difficulties and obstruct integration at a higher level (Aniche 2020; Tang/Tavares 2011).

Within ECOWAS, these subgroupings form part of an anglophone / francophone divide and can lead to a certain cherry-picking by members, thereby impeding real progress from being made (Momodu 2018; Odeyemi 2020). Often, a lack of motivation and political will of member state governments lead to drawn out negotiations or result in the failure to implement agreed upon regulations. Some politicians are hesitant about giving up their national sovereignty and fear that their nations might not directly benefit from regional integration, because they are reliant on the tax revenues coming in from trade with external non-African partners (Ganahl 2013; Nubong 2020; Oloruntoba/Toyin 2020).

External influence existing within ECOWAS must therefore also be taken into consideration. The presence of European Economic Partnership Agreements, for instance, which the EU has signed with every ECOWAS member except Nigeria, are likely to weaken the attainment of increased intra-African trade as, once again, priorities shift towards trade with Europe (Oloruntoba 2020b). Daniel C. Bach (2020) and Jeffrey Herbst (2014) describe the francophone countries' retention of the West African CFA franc currency as being a preservation of France's supremacy and an example of the continued usage of "policies imposed by colonial rulers" (Bach 2020, p. 969). France's colonial legacy and persistent influence over the French-speaking countries of West Africa is therefore also a reason for delayed progress made by the Community, since it is stated in Article 55 of the ECOWAS Treaty that among the Community's objectives is the creation of a monetary union with a single currency for the entire Community (ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Art. 55).

Unfortunately, West African economies are still heavily reliant on raw material trade with third parties and have missed the opportunity to diversify production in line with Adebayo Adedeji's hopes. As a result of this, intra-African trade continues to be low, only making up an average of ten percent of total African trade (Aniche 2020). To boot, negotiations between the various RECs on the road towards increased intra-African trade is made difficult because of the differing stages of integration reached by the eight RECs (Schmieg 2020). Cheap agricultural imports from more competitive trading partners, such as the EU, have also negatively impacted West African economies, with local producers losing large market shares, and diminishing the potential for African regions to become economically self-reliant (McEwan 2019). Innovation and expansion in

West African production are important factors that could counter these threats, and ECOWAS and the other RECs must increase investment and research to enable diversification (Akinola 2019).

Despite the many drawbacks that ECOWAS continues to face, as well as its failure to attain its stated objectives within the set timeframes, it is still a community that has made some significant achievements. As of now, these accomplishments may not have led to noteworthy economic growth or helped improve intra-African trade across the continent. However, thanks to the work of ECOWAS and other RECs in the field of collective security for instance, Africa is becoming less reliant on external intervention and aid concerning regional conflicts (Odeyemi 2020). ECOWAS, with its institutional framework and clear goals, should therefore certainly act as an inspiration for other RECs, in the quest of moving a step further on the path to collective African integration. If the RECs succeed in integrating further and barriers are removed to facilitate intra-African trade, then according to Aniche (2020), Africa's development possibilities will be wide open, and this will strengthen the African economy and eventually put an end to Africa's dependency on foreign development aid.

4.2.2 The European Union's Experience as Lessons for African Integration?

For proponents of African unity, integration is the ideal instrument to bring out Africa's full potential, and to build a peaceful, democratic, economically stable, and globally competitive continent with high living standards (African Union n.d.). The European Union is often regarded as a model of regional integration which other organisations should follow, and it has indeed reached many of the AU's defined goals (Gathii 2009; Jerome/Nabena 2016; Ludlow 2016). The EU also shares a history with the African continent, and as an immediate neighbour, continues to be a powerful and important partner for many African regions. There are, however, also clear differences in the integration set-ups and experiences of these two continents, raising the question of whether a study of the European Union's road towards integration is applicable to the African Union's context, and whether lessons could be learned from the EU (Nubong 2020). Should the EU serve as a model for the African integration process, should the AU begin to look elsewhere for inspiration, or is it up to African actors to be the trailblazers in their unique situation?

As previously stated, early champions of African unity, such as Kwame Nkrumah, looked to other regions for inspiration regarding African integration prospects, hoping to establish a political union of African nations which share their sovereignty with a central, high authority (Nubong 2020). In many ways, the

European Union has achieved just that in the decades following the end of the Second World War. Europe and Africa are driven by related motives behind their core integration agendas. Regions decide to come together and integrate because as a combined body, they stand better chances of furthering their interests considering increasing globalisation and worldwide competition (Nubong 2020). Additionally, having in place a strong political union between economically interdependent states is also a rationale for maintaining peace in a region. Since its establishment, the EU has been able to maintain a peaceful coexistence between its member states, many of which had, for centuries, been engaged in long periods of warfare. African integration too has led to the creation of a range of organs with the aim of keeping peace and security on the African continent.

Indeed, as pointed out by political economist Gabila Nubong (2020), European and African integration processes have resulted in the formation of a similar institutional framework, consisting of commissions, parliaments, councils, and law courts, and the pursuit of similar objectives through the creation of treaties. In 1957, the European Economic Community was founded in Europe under the Treaty of Rome with the aim of promoting economic integration, and with the Abuja Treaty, the AU established the African Economic Community in 1991, pursuant to the same objective (Nubong 2020). A key difference, however, is that African institutions are weaker than those of the EU, leaving more sovereignty in the hands of the member states (Gathii 2009). However, the similarities may point to Africa's following in the EU's footsteps and that it is the AU's aim to fashion its own organisation according to that of the European Union.

Even if the African Union does not intend to exactly mimic the work of the EU, it certainly can learn from its integration experience. This is especially important when looking at certain challenges that African integration is currently facing. Earlier, I mentioned the overlapping memberships and subgroupings of the RECs in Africa as being likely factors which impede further integration. Yet, historian N. Piers Ludlow (2016) argues that, with hindsight to the EU's experiences, such issues do not necessarily need to be seen as problems, and that instead, rivalry and competition between varying actors, and the emergence of new ones, could even strengthen and invigorate the integration process. Ludlow goes on to state that successful integration does not require the immediate participation of each region or state, but like with the EU, may start with a small core group or subgroup even and, if successful, could later expand into a greater union (Ludlow 2016). This is in line with the principle of "variable geometry", which lets members of Regional Economic Communities engage in integration according to the pace suited to their development and to avoid weaker countries from suffering under the restraints of strict trade rules (Gathii 2009). In 2008, the East African Community's Court of Justice delivered an Advisory Opinion on allowing variable geometry to guide the integration process

within the region (East African Court of Justice 2008). Like with the EU's history of enlargement, Africa is following a "linear model of stepwise integration", beginning with increasing cooperation within the AU's pillars, with the aim of establishing a common market for the entire continent down the line (Nubong 2020, p. 1082).

Emulating orthodox Western integration methods might, however, not always be useful for the African experience (Adebajo 2020). The European Union's system of integration was established for countries that had already realised certain levels of industrial advancement, and Africa's circumstances are very distinct from those of Europe (Asante 2016). The European model is designed for economies with manufacturing industries and advanced infrastructure, whereas African production is focused on raw materials and natural resources, and as of now, still has low manufacturing capacities that would make the creation of a common market within its current state ineffective (Asante 2016; Nubong 2020). Samuel K. B. Asante (2016) therefore suggests a distancing from the EU model, going on to state that Europe's colonial patterns are still evident in Africa's high focus on raw material production which render African regions dependent on trade with developed regions like the EU, and make them forego intra-African trade. In the twenty-first century, Africa's situation is further aggravated by the EU's balkanisation of the African continent through the EU's creation of "its own convenient groupings" when drafting and negotiating EPAs with differing African regions; and this is counterproductive to the Pan-African goal of relieving the African continent off its colonial ties through region-building and integration (Asante 2016, pp. 127-134). Therefore, Africa must come up with its own schemes for integration, diversification, and the attainment of sustainable development.

From a historical perspective, regional cooperation and trade within Africa have existed for centuries (Aniche 2020). Thus, politicians and social actors could focus on Africa's own past achievements and legacies as inspirations for the continent's future development and proceed in ways that work best for Africa. For example, the more flexible and informal adoption of treaty rules in contrast to their Western counterparts might be a more fitting and less damaging way for African regions to integrate over time (Gathii 2009).

The European Union has experienced its fair share of crises in recent years, suggesting problems within its framework and that the EU is not the "perfect" model to be copied. African integration has been negatively affected by migration and xenophobia, but this is also a problem the EU is facing, even now that it has attained very high levels of integration (Ravenhill 2016; Nubong 2020). The growth of right-wing parties and populist groups in many European countries destabilise the EU's international image depicting a successfully integrated body and makes its status as global leader and professor of Western

values less legitimate (Moyo 2020a). The recent challenges that Brexit and other exhibitions of Euroscepticism present have brought the term “disintegration” into the conversation in relation to the European Union (Bach 2020, p. 967). To some, integration has gone too far. The EU sees the need to reflect on its future and has brought forward various scenarios on how to best proceed with its integration process (European Commission 2017). With a population by far exceeding one billion and with fifty-four member states of cultural, social, and religious diversity, the African Union must also look to regions other than the EU for guidance on how to integrate or continue to come up with its own innovative methods of developing the continent.

The African Union must decide which aspects of the European integration experience it wants to incorporate, and which elements are adaptable to its situation, in a way that echoes the successes of the EU and abstain from past mistakes and shortcomings of the EU or other regional organisations (Nubong 2020). The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has managed to make noteworthy shifts from “region building” to focus on “community building”²², but not unlike other regional organisations ASEAN too is facing challenges including, territorial disagreements, political tensions in some member states, climate change, broadening development divides, as well as security challenges (Caballero-Anthony 2016, p. 284). In Latin America, MERCOSUR has also encountered problems dealing with the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as a lack of responsible leadership, overlapping agreements, and a failure of members to implement decisions (Gómez-Mera 2016). With their memberships currently comprising ten and five states respectively, the approaches taken by the ASEAN Community and MERCOSUR may also not be entirely applicable to the African Union and its fifty-four member states. The AU must bear in mind that such differences, as well as historical ones, need to be considered when it studies the processes of other regional bodies, and that the greatest potential for integration and development comes from within Africa (Ludlow 2016).

²² On 7 October 2003, the Bali Concord II was adopted, pledging the establishment of an integrated ASEAN Community consisting of three pillars: a Security Community, an Economic Community, and a Socio-Cultural Community (ASEAN 2003).

5 Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to analyse the European Union's long-standing policies towards the development of Africa, the reasons for their existence, and why they have failed to attain the desired results of fostering growth and sustainable development on the African continent. To begin this discussion, it was important to consider the historical elements of the EU's relationship with Africa, especially the lasting effects of colonialism. Colonialism did not end immediately upon the attainment of independence, but took on new, neo-colonial forms, elements of which continue to characterise societal attitudes and are still evident in the EU-African relations of today. The EU's current development policies in Africa are also a product of Europe's attempt to maintain its influence within Africa following the end of colonial rule.

Of late, the EU has made it its declared mission that, with its external policies, it aims to build a strong working relationship with the African continent determined by equality and mutual benefit. Yet, based on extensive research of scholars of the field, the tools the EU has in place fail to bring about solely positive change within Africa, and in some regards, even do more harm than good. In this study, the Economic Partnership Agreements that the EU communicates as being growth-enhancing and to the benefit to all parties involved, are established as having negative impacts on African industries, as it keeps them unable to compete with the large and competitive European markets. This is further highlighted by the negative reception of these agreements among Africans. The EPAs have made further appearances throughout this thesis, emphasising the damaging effects they have on the African integration agenda and on intra-African trade.

Even though large amounts of the European Union's development aid budget go towards Africa, it has, over the years, failed to help in the attainment of sustainable growth and development. This is, in part, associated to corruption and misallocation by African officials, but also because the EU has not demonstrated contemporary and innovative ways of allocating their funds. In addition, new and emerging actors, most prominently China, are gaining ever-growing impact in many African regions and threaten to erode the EU's well-established sphere of influence. These new partners also offer aid steered towards development, focusing on more sustainable infrastructural and industrial growth which, according to scholars, the EU has fallen short from sufficiently tackling. Furthermore, the emerging powers benefit from additional advantages over the EU, being that they do not share a colonial past with Africa and have gained approval for their rejection of traditional Western methods in their own attainment of growth and economic success. However, the study asserts that, not unlike the EU, the emerging players are first and foremost

motivated by the enhancement of their own interests and that ultimately, large proportions of African society and industries bear the negative consequences of these new development partnerships. For the EU, Africa's new partnerships also undermine its soft power capacity and its ability to effectively promote European Union beliefs and values, based on democracy and respect for human rights, among African societies.

African countries share a desire to develop, overcome neo-colonial relationships and to gain a foothold in the international community. For Pan-African leaders and scholars, this can be achieved through integration on the African continent. This study has given considerable attention to the outset of the Pan-Africanist movement, and how its principles and objectives led to the creation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 and its replacement with the African Union in 2002. By means of its building blocks in the form of the Regional Economic Communities, the AU seeks to attain stepwise integration, starting at a regional level and thereby facilitating deeper continental integration over time. Again, the shortcomings of the integration experience in bringing about development, and the difficulties of establishing an African free trade area can be traced back to both internal factors, including political disinclination and lack of diversified production sectors, and external factors, such as EPAs that divert focus away from African integration.

In the final section, the question as to whether the European Union's own experience could be used as inspiration to ensure successful African integration has been examined. The study concludes that, despite valuable lessons learned from the European Union, the African continent and its regions must go their own way and devise new, African techniques that are most suitable to their unique situations and that are most likely to foster sustainable growth and development in Africa. What exactly these new approaches should entail requires further research by historians, political scientists, economists, legal scholars, and others, preferably coming from teams of experts who have a deep understanding of Africa's complex structures and societies.

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About the Author

Julian Osei-Bonsu studied European and European Legal Studies at the Europa-Kolleg Hamburg, receiving his Master of Arts Degree in 2021. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in French and Law from the University of Stirling in the United Kingdom.

Contact: julian.bonsu@yahoo.com

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Editors

Europa-Kolleg Hamburg
Institute for European Integration
Prof. Dr. Jörg Philipp Terhechte, Managing Director
Dr. Andreas Grimmel, Research Director
Windmühlenweg 27
22607 Hamburg, Germany
<http://www.europa-kolleg-hamburg.de>

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