

The European Union and Africa: Trade Liberalisation, Constructive Disengagement, and the Securitisation of Europe's External Frontiers

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During the past decade, a dramatic shift has brought to the fore Africa's interactions with the global economy and the international system. Emerging countries and a number of corporate players have come to see the continent as a pioneering frontier. Along with the expansion of oil and gas production,¹ global demand for agricultural commodities and minerals has triggered an unprecedented improvement in the terms of trade and resources for African producers. The growth of opportunities for trade and investment is simultaneously being enhanced by the successful completion of debt-relief negotiations, resulting in a decline in the political and macro-economic conditionalities previously imposed by donors and international financial institutions.

In many parts of the African continent, the rise of competition among or between old and new players is calling for comparisons with the 'scramble for Africa' that followed the Berlin conference of 1884-85. This article points to the flaws in such parallels through an analysis of recent trends in Africa-EU interactions. It is argued that European policies, while claiming to prioritise the continent, keep treating sub-Saharan Africa as an increasingly 'distant abroad'. A good example of this trend is offered by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) and the resulting Action Plan, both formally adopted at the Second Europe-Africa summit in Lisbon in December 2007.

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Africa Review 3, 1, 2011: 33-47

African Studies Association of India, New Delhi

What follows is a review of progress made towards ushering in a 'new era' for Europe-Africa relations and the establishment of a strategic partnership. After a survey of the EU's past and present policy orientations, the implementation of the JAES will be discussed in more detail. The article argues that, despite pledges to rejuvenate relations with the African continent through the establishment of a 'strategic relationship', trade liberalisation, 'constructive disengagement' in the field of peace-keeping, and the securitisation of Europe's external frontiers actually remain the priorities. The outcome is sub-Saharan Africa's de facto treatment as a 'distant abroad' and not as a 'new frontier'.

The Dilution of the EU's Initial Africa Focus

The Africa focus of the EU goes back to the adoption of the Treaty of Rome and the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958. Special association status was then granted to the (yet to become independent) French and Belgian colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. The outcome was the incorporation of specific propositions in Title IV of the Treaty establishing the EEC (Schreurs, 1993). The United Kingdom's accession to the EEC in 1973 was followed by negotiations towards the enlargement of the group of associated states. In February 1975, the adoption of the Lomé Convention signalled the formation of the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, a grouping that subsequently expanded so as to eventually include all 48 sub-Saharan African countries.

The Lomé Convention had the rather ambitious objective to promote an integrated approach to development. A non-reciprocal trade regime conferred totally free access to the EU market on all ACP exports of manufactured products and on 95 percent of agricultural products. This placed the developing economies of sub-Saharan Africa at the apex of the pyramid of EU trade preferences to developing economies (Kennes, 2000). Lomé also inaugurated policy instruments designed to temper the fluctuations in the export prices of agricultural and mining products. Development aid was committed on five-year terms and went along with the introduction of 'co-management' procedures. In order to promote the values of partnership and encourage North-South dialogue, group-to-group institutions were established. They included the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the EU-ACP Committee of Ambassadors, and the Joint Consultative Assembly composed of an equal number of ACP parliamentarians and representatives from the European Parliament. Current references to the Africa-EU strategic partnership are rooted in the history of these group-to-group institutions.

Lomé negotiations were conducted in the wake of the oil boom (and embargo) of September 1973 at a time when Europeans were particularly concerned at ensuring

stable access to oil and other strategic minerals. This particular conjuncture would also leave its mark on the outcome of the negotiations. Indeed, the set of instruments and procedures that were then adopted was meant to offer a model for the re-ordering of North-South relations. With the failure of the Paris and Cancun conferences on a new North-South international order, Lomé progressively became the symbol of unfulfilled promises and differing expectations. Excepting Mauritius, the ACP's trade regime had failed to stimulate a diversification of economies away from the export of unprocessed commodities. Despite the preferential access given to ACP exports, these were losing ground on the EU market due to competition from South-East Asian and Latin American exporters (Dickson, 2004). In addition to this, the Convention's parity-based institutional architecture and the context of the cold war stimulated collective clientelism (Ravenhill, 1985). Reforming relations with sub-Saharan Africa nonetheless remained a taboo subject until the early 1990s. By then, the fall of communism in Europe, the EU's changing priorities due to the prospects for enlargement by another 10 new member states, and the conclusion of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations suddenly transformed the review of Lomé into a priority. On 23 June 2000, after half a decade of semi-official debates and a two-year renegotiation process, the EU and 77 ACP countries signed the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) that superseded the Lomé Convention. Cotonou purported to provide the roadmap towards a new and original inter-hemispheric partnership based on subscription to common political norms, trade reciprocity, and the conclusion of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). These were meant to promote free trade between the EU and six regional groupings, four of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Cotonou Agreement departs from Lomé insofar as it inserts into a broader and generic approach the specific treatment previously granted to ACP countries. Human rights, democratisation and the rule of law are defined (Article 9) as an 'essential element' that may result, in the case of 'particularly serious and flagrant violation', in aid and trade sanctions.² The streamlining process that underscores Cotonou also stems from the end of the GATT/World Trade Organisation (WTO) waiver that allowed trade concessions to ACP countries until December 2007. WTO compliance now requires the progressive liberalisation of trade between Europe and Africa over a 12-year period so as to achieve completion by 2020.³ Two sets of related international developments have further eroded the value of past EU trade concessions to sub-Saharan Africa. First, the benefits that ACP countries used to draw from their exemption from the restraints imposed on Asian textile and clothing exports have lost their value with the termination of the quantitative restrictions imposed by Multi-Fibre Arrangements (MFAs) in December 2004. In addition to this, adverse rulings by WTO arbitration panels have dented the preferential

treatment that special EU protocols used to offer to ACP exports for sugar, bananas, and beef. By the mid-2000s, South Africa already constituted the only exception to a pattern of dereliction that permeated trade and investment flows between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa — in 2004, South Africa alone accounted for 42 percent of EU trade with sub-Saharan Africa.



Constructive Disengagement: Africa-Led Peace-Keeping Operations and AU Capacity-Building

The build-up of a special relationship between the EU Commission and the African Union (AU) Commission dates back to the adoption of the AU's Constitutive Act in 2000. The EU Commission was not indifferent to a reform of the pan-African Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Charter that, at least formally, borrowed extensively from the EU (Bach-1, 2008).⁴ The African Union's new acronym (AU) was an explicit reference to the model of the EU. The Secretariat of the former OAU was to be known as the Commission, while the former Secretary-General of the OAU became President of the new Commission. There was also a Permanent Representatives' Committee that echoed the EU's Committee of Permanent Representatives or *Comité des Représentants Permanents* (Coreper). Regional disparities among AU members were also to be addressed through the creation of a Community, Solidarity, Development and Compensation Fund, an instrument evocative of the EU's structural funds. In the areas of peace-keeping and security, although the United Nations (UN) Security Council provided the template for the institutional structure of the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), its functions and objectives were meant to be integrated within a Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP) that intimated a parallel with the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

More important than this somewhat formal emulation of the European model was the spectacular departure of the AU Constitutive Act from the OAU Charter's past emphasis on strict non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states (Magliveras & Naldi, 2009). The Constitutive Act of the AU prescribed the establishment of an African peace and security architecture that would uphold 'the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity' — Article 4 (h) (AU, 2000). The signatories also condemned and rejected 'impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism, and subversive activities' — Article 4 (o) — along with 'unconstitutional changes of government' — Article 4 (p). Article 30 also prescribed that the AU had the right to suspend the membership of any government that violated these principles (AU, 2000).

The assertion of these principles went along with a readiness of the AU to undertake new responsibilities, a move that dovetailed with the reluctance of the United States (US) and the EU to commit troops to UN peace-keeping operations since the Somalia and Rwanda disasters. This convergence boosted the adoption of a European policy of constructive disengagement aimed at promoting Africa-led operations and capacity-building in the areas of good governance, conflict prevention, and peace-keeping. At least initially, European engagement into short-term peace-keeping missions in Africa was viewed as an opportunity to test the objectives assigned to the CSDP, after the crisis in the Balkans had dramatically highlighted Europe's weaknesses in the field of conflict prevention.⁵ For the European Commission, providing financial, staff and logistical support to the AU and its peace-keeping missions also created opportunities to expand the reach of first-pillar (Community) activities through peace and security missions that had a clear link with development objectives. In an area that used to be the exclusive preserve of EU member states (through the CSDP), the European Commission was now also able to craft and develop autonomous policies. Accordingly, substantial financial support for peace-support operations had been channelled to the AU by the EU Commission through the establishment of a specific financial instrument, the African Peace Facility (APF). Endowed with 250mn drawn from the European Development Fund, the APF has contributed to transform the EU into the largest funding partner of the AU (Vines & Middleton, 2008).

The rationale for constructive disengagement has also meant that whenever the direct intervention of European troops in Africa was agreed upon — for example, in 2003, when Operation Artemis was launched in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); in 2006, when the European Union Force (Eufor) was sent to the DRC; and in 2007, with the deployment of Eufor in Chad and the Central African Republic — this has been on a short-term basis and with the explicit objective to prepare a handover to UN troops. Such processes have also been associated with increased co-ordination or 'Europeanisation' of the policies of EU member states.⁶

Sub-Saharan Africa's Treatment as a 'Distant Abroad'

Enlargement was frequently described as the foreign policy of Europe during the 1990s and early 2000s. Since the mid-2000s, it is the securitisation of Europe's external frontiers and 'near abroad' that permeates converging and increasingly high-profile foreign policy initiatives. For the countries of the Maghreb, prospects for an improvement in their access to Europe and its market have become explicitly linked to their readiness to control their shores and land-borders. The extension of controls along the Sahel-Saharan borderlines and the intra-regional boundaries of the Maghreb states also stems from the post-9/11 security overlay, stimulated by the

terrorist attacks in Casablanca and Madrid and weariness that such radical Islamist groups as *Al-Qaida au Maghreb Islamique* (AQMI) may transform the southern fringes of the Maghreb and the Sahel into a sanctuary (Davis, 2007; Mandraud, 2010, 6).

The implications of this trend for sub-Saharan migration flows have been broad-ranging. By the turn of the new millennium, sub-Saharan Africans accounted for the bulk of **trans-national** migrants seeking opportunities for illicit crossovers from Morocco, Tunisia, or Libya (Boubakri, 2004, 2-3). Impoverished and often stranded, these migrants have borne the full brunt of the increasingly active involvement of the Maghreb countries in the management of European asylum and migration policies. In Tunisia, as in Morocco, Algeria and Libya, this meant by the mid-2000s a tightening of 'controls on the southern borders of the Maghreb states [and] ... rules on the entry, residence and employment of foreigners' in an overall context characterised by problems 'related to the rights (and lack of rights)' of migrants and stricter 'border controls at points of departure to Europe' (Boubakri, 2004, 4). Such readiness to regulate migration flows has also contributed to entrench sub-Saharan Africa as a European 'distant abroad'.

During this period, the EU's announcement of a new initiative, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), also created an institutional basis for dissociating interactions with North Africa from those with sub-Saharan Africa. Launched in 2004, the ENP is meant to promote a relationship between the EU and its immediate neighbours that will 'ultimately resemble the close political and economic links currently enjoyed with the European Economic Area' (EU, 2003, 15). This process — popularised through the formula 'everything but institutions' — involves the conclusion, as a preliminary step, of specific action plans. These may, in turn, open the way to 'mobility packages' designed to provide better access to the EU for those countries willing to co-operate on re-admission,⁷ irregular migration, and border management (Trauner & Kruse, 2008, 16). The process also involves participation in joint monitoring patrols and common policing operations across the Mediterranean, as well as access to material and financial assistance through police training, presence of liaison officers, and so on (Gabrielli, 2009, 5). The expectation is that responsibility for the management of these issues can be delegated to a network of non-EU countries, mostly from its immediate neighbourhood. By contrast, sub-Saharan African countries do not benefit from any linkage between EU visa facilitation and re-admission agreements. Indeed, the EU considers that the link that Cotonou's Article 13 establishes between migration issues and development provides an adequate basis for the conclusion of supplementary bilateral re-admission agreements between selected ACP countries and EU member states (Trauner & Kruse, 2008, 17;

 see EU, 2006, 5-9).

As the Lisbon Summit was about to be convened in December 2007, EU member states acknowledged that, despite restrictive immigration policies, large numbers of illegal migrants still reached Europe. But it was also noted that Europe would require an additional 20mn, often highly-skilled workers by 2025. Debates accordingly shifted towards the adoption of common policies and EU legislation designed to enhance the mobility of highly-skilled or seasonal labour across the Mediterranean, while countering an avalanche of unskilled migrations through increased operational co-operation between member states.⁸ Since then, the adoption of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum in December 2008 has confirmed an approach that looks at immigration policies through the prism of 'control first', but for highly-skilled migrants now eligible for an EU blue card scheme.

The priority assigned to border security and trade liberalisation has also prompted the EU and its member states to disregard violations of democratic and human rights by authoritarian regimes in the Maghreb. Accordingly, in May 2010, the EU Commission for Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy had no hesitation in depicting Tunisia as 'an important and reliable partner' and 'an economic pioneer among the European Union neighbours' (ENPI Info Centre, 2010). The responsible EU Commissioner also announced that the 8th EU-Tunisia Association Council was about to 'set up an ad hoc group to work on a roadmap which would lead us to ... [an] advanced status. That advanced status will be focussing ... [on] more intense political dialogue, legislative approximation, [and] a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement' (ENPI Info Centre, 2010). By July 2010, the Ben Ali regime apparently felt confident enough to amend Tunisia's criminal code so as to forbid contacts between Tunisian human rights organisations and European institutions (Dempsey, 2011).

The Rhetoric of 'Partnership': From Gleneagles to Lisbon

The year 2005 was dubbed the 'Year of Africa' due to the continent's designation as a special issue on the agenda of the G8 Gleneagles Summit. The multiplication of initiatives in Europe and North America that focused on the African continent meant that, by the middle of that year, a cathartic atmosphere surrounded the 'Live 8' concerts and the flurry of other activities sponsored by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These events and the summit itself also marked the highpoint of a vision of Africa that stressed humanitarianism and moralistic imperatives. The situation on the continent, described earlier by British Prime Minister Tony Blair as 'a scar on the conscience of the world' (*BBC News*, 2001), was perceived as an emblematic expression of the legacy of colonialism and the pitfalls of globalisation.



Consumption(1995-US\$)

Under strong pressure from public opinion across Europe and the US, the G8 summit subsequently announced plans towards a comprehensive ‘Africa Action Plan’ that would combine debt relief, increased official development assistance (ODA), infrastructure rehabilitation, and a sustained commitment to poverty alleviation on the continent.

In the US, as in Europe, emphasis on humanitarianism often went along with downgraded assessments of the geo-strategic and economic stakes associated with the African continent. The Africa Report that was released in December 2005 by the US Council on Foreign Relations was, therefore, groundbreaking in several respects (Council on Foreign Relations, 2005). While celebrating the ‘noble commitments’ and ‘humanitarian impulses’ that went along with the Gleneagles Summit, its authors made a case for redefining policy orientations that would, as they put it, go ‘beyond humanitarianism’ and ‘charity-inspired blueprints’. Two years later, EU Commissioner for Development Louis Michel (2007) similarly denounced ‘Afro-pessimism and the “caritative” or even paternalistic overtones’ of past relations, while committing the EU to a new and strategic relationship with Africa.

It is against this background that the Second Africa-Europe Summit was held in Lisbon in December 2007. The summit was designed to promote and endorse a radical shift in EU-Africa relations. It also epitomised feelings that, as had been the case in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis, a transformation of the *rappports de force* (power relations) between Europe and ACP countries was on the way. The decision to convene the Lisbon Summit followed Europe’s acceptance that Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe be invited, despite persistent opposition from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The EU’s decision to back-track on this issue barely concealed the view that the success of the Second Forum for China-Africa Co-operation (Focac) held in Beijing a year earlier should not be left unmatched. The attendance of 80 states was, in this sense, a huge success. The Lisbon summit also reflected on the ability of Europeans and Africans to discuss publicly the substance of their relationship, in sharp contrast to the smooth flow of speeches, echoed by uncritical press comments, during the Focac summit. At the urging of two particularly active personalities, European Commissioner Louis Michel and AU President Alpha Oumar Konaré, the Lisbon Summit also announced a partnership and a ‘new era’ for Europe-Africa relations through the adoption of a Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES).

The objective of the JAES and its first Action Plan (2008-2010) is the establishment of a much more overtly political relationship than had been the case through Lomé, Cotonou, or the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EU, 2005). To this effect, the thematic areas earmarked in the JAES range from aid and development — trade, regional integration, infrastructure, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

— to peace and security, democratic governance, and migration. The holistic ambition of the agendas is also signalled by the inclusion of energy and climate change, along with science, information and communications technology, and space exploration. To promote these partnerships, the JAES stress the importance of a dialogue based on the principle of a ‘partnership of equals’, an approach designed to be a radical departure from past representations and interactions. A closely related ambition of the JAES is to ‘treat Africa as one’, namely to contribute to overcoming the incoherencies resulting from the patchwork of European instruments and agreements focused on specific areas of the continent. While a specific Trade and Development Co-operation Agreement (TDCA) ties the EU to South Africa, the rest of sub-Saharan Africa along with the Pacific and Caribbean countries (ACP) are signatories to the Cotonou Agreement. In North Africa, two sets of agreement co-exist: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. The JAES seeks to overcome this fragmentation through the promotion of a global framework for the treatment of EU-Africa relations.

The regular contacts between the Commission of the AU and the European Commission — a model turned into a mentor in many respects — have come to symbolise the ambition to ‘treat Africa as one’ and to transcend purely development-oriented agendas (EU, 2005). Initiated in 2005, the Commission-to-Commission meetings have sustained the momentum for the construction of EU-Africa political agendas. Already at the 4th Ministerial Meeting of the African and European Troikas,⁹ held in Luxembourg on 11 April 2005, the President of the European Council stressed that ‘the EU considers the AU as its main counterpart within the EU-Africa dialogue, being understood that Morocco remains associated in a pragmatic way’ (EU, 2005). Six months later, on 12 October 2005, the first AU-EU Commission-to-Commission Meeting was convened in Brussels on the same day the European Commission’s proposals for an ‘EU Strategy for Africa’ (CEC, 2005) were adopted. The event brought together the chairmen of the two institutions, as well as 8 AU and 19 EU commissioners. A joint working plan was adopted, along with the strengthening of institutional ties, the pursuit of ‘regular political and institutional dialogue’, and ‘twinning programmes’ between commissioners entrusted with similar portfolios (CEC, 2005). Since 2008, commission-to-commission meetings, known today as ‘college-to-college’ meetings (C2Cs), were convened once a year. Besides monitoring the implementation of the JAES, C2C meetings also offer an avenue for specific activities on bilateral co-operation between the two commissions. It is on such grounds that the joint appointment by the European Council and the EU Commission of a Special Representative of the EU to the AU was announced in December 2007 — a nomination that anticipated the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (Bach-1, 2008).

Emphasis on ‘partnership’ and the holistic vision embedded in the JAES — meant to go ‘beyond development’, ‘beyond Africa’, and ‘beyond institutions’ (EU, 2008, 4) — have resulted in the establishment of an impressive array of structures. Political dialogue and (since September 2008) monitoring the implementation of the JAES also feature on the agenda of the biannual meetings of the EU-Africa ministerial troikas. Other significant structures established to promote the objectives of the JAES include EU and AU Implementation Teams (ITs), as well as the eight Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) that are to co-ordinate, prepare for, and implement the priorities of the ‘Action Plan’. The outcome is a mix of institutions and processes designed to promote partnerships on an inter-continental and multi-tier basis — namely between member states, EU and AU commissions, regional parliaments, civil society organisations (CSOs), and so on. Legal and financial constraints, as well as poor commitment on the part of EU and AU member states, have considerably dampened the bold objectives initially stated. The JAES and its action plan is not a legally-agreed framework, unlike the TDCA, the CPA, or the ENP action plans. The structures established under the JAES and its action plan is yet to overcome the effects of the coexistence of overlapping agreements and institutions. The AU, entrusted with particularly high expectations by the European Council, is still handicapped by problems of governance and funding. Interaction with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and their ability to operate as ‘building-blocs’ continue to be hampered by problems of overlapping memberships and uneven enforcement of commonly agreed decisions.

However, the ability of the JEGs to bring in CSOs and generate new ideas has been severely constrained — they are not entitled to take new policy initiatives or decisions, unlike what was initially expected (EU, 2008). This means, for instance, that they still have no capacity to impact on the ongoing negotiations towards the conclusion of EPAs. In addition, and unlike what African countries initially anticipated, no specific funding has been earmarked to support the ambitious agendas of these partnerships. The action plans, the European Commission has been arguing, are designed to stimulate political dialogue, but the resulting initiatives should not undercut the functioning of existing instruments for EU-Africa development co-operation (Tywuschik & Sherriff, 2009, 9). Work within the JEGs is heavily dependent on the dynamism and expertise of their self-appointed members, chairs and co-chairs. Moreover, the AU Commission does not have adequate human resources to monitor work within each of the eight partnerships. As a result, the achievements associated with the JAES often have a bearing more on institution-building than on capacity-building.



The 13th Meeting of the Africa-EU Ministerial Troika, held in Addis Ababa on 14

October 2009, characteristically called for a 'fundamental review' accompanied by 'significant changes', but the draft joint options paper adopted six months later opted instead for excluding changes from the text of the joint strategy. The current priority areas of the action plan, it was decided, ought to remain unchanged. Attention should rather be given to enhanced implementation, further dialogue, and more involvement by JAES actors. Other suggestions included fuller participation and interaction with African regional and sub-regional organisations, the 'need to review the JEG mandate and guidelines', and the mobilisation of 'adequate funds and human/technical resources' (EU, 2010). Beyond the usual precautionary formulations, what was and remains at stake is the elusive capacity of the JAES to go beyond what such existing instruments as the CPA, the ENP, or the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership already offer.

Conclusion

The 3rd Africa-EU Summit, held in Tripoli in November 2010, was poorly attended and did not ignite the interest of the European and African press. This is not altogether surprising since implementation of the objectives assigned to the first Action Plan of the JAES has been hampered by poor levels of involvement and weak mobilisation on the part of both AU and EU member states. As a result, the JAES — almost exclusively funded by the European Commission — have become heavily dependent on the dynamics of interactions between the EU and AU commissions; and this has, in turn, generated specific problems due to the wide disparity between their resources and powers. Poor mobilisation of member states has been compounded by an all-encompassing agenda, the absence of clearly stated priorities, and the problems of co-ordination with the ENP or the RECs. Within the EU Commission, the value and implications of claiming to 'treat Africa as one' have not been properly assessed either. Much of the problem also seems to relate to the incapacity of the EU to speak as one, an area where little progress has been achieved despite the reorganisation of the EU's external policy instruments. The outcome is a 'construction' of Africa that is bound to appeal to the two commissions, but remains oblivious to the diversity of interests and weak enforcement capacity — as signified by the politics of overlapping membership within regional groupings and their poor performance as 'building blocs' since the adoption of the Abuja Plan of Action in 1991.

The EU's stated ambition to treat the African continent as a strategic partner coexist with policy orientations that negate this objective as these contribute to the treatment of sub-Saharan Africa as a 'distant abroad' of Europe. This repeatedly points to the need for the EU and its member states to clarify and co-ordinate what Europe's interests in sub-Saharan Africa are, or should be. Today, the question arises even more dramatically in North Africa where, since early 2011, the demise of

authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt has ushered in demands for freedom, democracy, and social justice across the Middle East. The recent prognosis that the so-called 'Beijing Consensus', based on the rise of virtuous interactions between capitalism and authoritarian rule, would 'dominate the ... [twenty-first] century' (Halper, 2010), has suddenly come in for some serious empirical reassessment.

North Africa's unanticipated and domestically rooted demands for democracy are also brutally exposing the coexistence of the ideals of partnership, brought forward by the EU's JAES and ENP initiatives, with a 'Brussels Consensus' that is largely driven by the specific priorities of EU member states. In a nutshell, the consensus is a trade-off that minimises violations of democracy and human rights, while valuing trade liberalisation, the securitisation of Europe's external frontiers, and political stability. The ambitions assigned to the 'strategic partnership' with Africa are yet to be reconciled with the substantive interests subsumed under the equation of the 'Brussels Consensus'. Until an effective co-ordination and Europeanisation of policy orientations is undertaken, such bold inter-continental policy templates as the JAES will remain prone to rhetorical drift.



notes

¹ Sub-Saharan Africa's oil and gas resources represent a fraction of those of the Gulf and the Middle East. Attractive fiscal conditions and, more generally, a lesser inclination of African states towards 'resource nationalism', originally stimulated the spectacular expansion of deep and ultra-deep offshore drilling.

² Human rights and democracy clauses are systematically inserted into the EU's international association agreements since 1992.

³ The least developed countries (LDCs) are entitled to claim the benefits of non-reciprocal trade preferences under the EU's 'Everything but Arms' (EBA) offer. The EBA is World Trade Organisation (WTO) compatible, since it is offered to all LDC economies.

⁴ Unlike the AU Commission, the European Commission is independent from member states and endowed with competencies that, depending on the nature of particular issues, involve supra-national or inter-governmental decision-making. The European Council represents the member states of the EU. It defines the broad orientations of European foreign policy and external relations and is composed of the European heads of state and government, or their representatives. Until the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force (1 December 2009), the Presidency of the Council rotated among member states every six months. Since then, the Council is chaired for two-and-a-half years by a President, elected by the members of the Council and subsequently approved by the European Parliament (EP). Elected for

a five-year term by some 500mn European voters in 2009, the 736 members of the EP are actively involved in drafting legislation with European-wide implications.

⁵ It is in Africa that the first autonomous EU military operation was launched between 12 June and 1 September 2003. EU troops were deployed without recourse to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) assets and capabilities in the town of Bunia, in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Operation Artemis was characteristically conceived as a short-term operation that would perform a bridging role and focus on a territorially limited area (UN, 2004).

⁶ A major step towards Europeanisation was the St Malo Defence Agreement (December 1998) whereby France and the United Kingdom agreed to increase armed forces co-operation.

⁷ Re-admission agreements provide for the return of citizens of contracting countries, as well as for that of third-country nationals.

⁸ It was estimated in 2007 that 85 percent of unskilled immigrants from Africa and Asia went to the EU, as against only 5 percent to the US — 55 percent of the migrants into the US were highly skilled, as against a mere 5 percent into Europe.

⁹ The troika format was originally introduced within the EU in order to ensure continuity. It included the representative of the country holding the Presidency of the EU (for six months) along with the past and future incumbents.

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