

UDC 327(4-672EU:292.63/.69)
Bibliid: 0025-8555, 75(2023)
Vol. LXXV, No. 2, pp. 237–261
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2298/MEDJP2302237B>

Original article
Received 17 November 2022
Accepted 1 February 2023
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EU-Sub-Saharan Africa relations: The history of (un)equal partnership

Danilo BABIĆ¹

Abstract: This paper explores some exploitative economic tendencies in Africa-EU relations, tracking them from the Treaty of Rome, continuously through Yaounde, Lome and Cotonou initiatives. As time passes, the exploitative aspect of this relationship is getting vaguer through vocabulary changes and more subtle economic mechanisms. Each new cooperation framework tried to emphasize the importance of equality in the EU-Africa partnership but the inequality between the two parties constantly grew. This is the case with the newest, Global gateway framework. This investment plan is an *ad-hoc* initiative designed to counter Chinese interests in the region. The EU tends to be a norm creator in the African continent. The paper reexamines the capability of the EU to fulfill that role.

Keywords: Africa, EU, Global gateway, equal partnership Yaounde, Lome, Cotonou.

Introduction

The paper presents an overview of the relationship between Africa and the European Union from the viewpoint of postcolonial theory. The entire history of Africa – EU relations is being reexamined using a “postcolonial theory lens”, from the Treaty of Rome to the newest cooperation-investment framework called Global

¹ Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, danilo.babic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs, orcid.org/0000-0003-3646-0896

The work is a result of the scientific research project “Serbia and Challenges in International Relations in 2023”, financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (no. 179029), and realized by the Institute of International Politics and Economics in 2023.

gateway. In this latest framework, the EU is emphasizing its role as a norm creator and role model to follow. Consequently, the ability of the EU to be a norm creator in Africa is being reexamined as well. The hypothesis of the paper is that the entire relationship between the EU and African countries is modeled in a neo-colonial fashion with the goal to preserve long-established exploitative and/or asymmetrical mechanisms. The latest Global gateway framework is at least partially exempted from neocolonial tendencies. However, its purpose is not to mend EU-Africa relations but rather to counter Chinese investments in the region.

Authors such as Haastруп, Raimundo, and Grilli are mostly critical of the EU's role in Africa, while Twitchett and Lister have more positive viewpoints. It is noteworthy that newer sources of literature are more critical of the role of the European Union than older ones. This can testify to the increasing importance of postcolonial criticism and the weakening of "imperialist restraints" in the scientific discourse.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of EU-Sub-Saharan relations can be perceived from the point of view of several different international relations (IR) theories: realism, liberalism, constructivism, and the postcolonial approach.

Many realist authors believe that the structural disparities between the EU and Africa are defined by the "nature of the state". Precisely, the coloniality² of the imperial structures in postcolonial Africa illustrates the absence of the state in the European notion (Bates, 1981; Englebert and Dunn, 2013). In essence, "if IR theory, as the realists say, is dependent on the Eurocentric statist framework, the existence of distinct 'Afrocentric states' invalidates its universal assumptions" (Faleye 2021, 17). Therefore, the African experience demonstrates the existence of different types of states in diverse histories of the world. This unveils "the futility of absolute values", in the development concepts and knowledge systems (Ibid).

As noted by Walter Rodney in his famous book *The development of underdevelopment* "colonialism in Africa left the continent without the tools, skills and political capital required to mobilize its resources for developmental purposes" (Rodney 1972, 163). Consequently, as Faleye puts it, "the continent has been

² Coloniality represents long-standing patterns of power that occurred after colonialism. These designs further define knowledge production, culture, labor, and inter-subjective relations (Shange 2021). Moreover, "coloniality refers to the organization and systemic distribution of power through the control of access to knowledge, moral and artistic resources by the dominant group" (Townsin 2016)

perpetuated into a state of underdevelopment” in a world controlled by the imperialistic structures of the collective West (Faleye 2021, 18).

Realists demonstrate the EU’s “divide and rule” strategy in the making of the Cotonou Agreement of 2000. The Cotonou Agreement led to the partitioning of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states into regional developmental areas (Holland, 2003; Babarinde and Faber, 2005).

Liberals perceive regional integration in Europe as a necessity to promote peace, security, and progress. In this respect, mirroring the European regional scheme to Africa symbolizes the EU’s commitment to promoting its interest in Africa through soft power diplomacy based on the principle of peaceful coexistence of nations through mutual cooperation. These supranational organizations such as the ECOWAS, COMESA, and the African Union (AU) are supposed to defuse aggressive tendencies in the international system (Faleye 2021, 18). However, the implantation of liberal democracy in Africa has not delivered the promised development in the region. In fact, the democratic transition that happened in Africa through electoral malpractices legitimizes the state in the interest of the political elites. Moreover, liberal democracy catalyzed unequal development, ruthless power struggle, and marginalization of the majority of Africans by a few privileged ones. Famous Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, gave African democracy an infamous nickname, calling it “demo-crazy” (Ibid,18). African political system operates via patronage and clientelism. Vainly copying the European political system, this neo-patrimonial rentier order is based on the privatization and appropriation of state resources despite proclaiming the ideas of liberal democracy (Ibid).

Constructivists believe that society is the product of the people, showcase how social interactions determine state behavior via interaction of people and societal norms. Faleye points out that “the operationalization of social norms constitutes societal practices, and that the engagement of individuals and groups with such practices defines their level of agency³ in societal transformation” (Ibid,19). Thus, as Kubalkova points out, “social norms represent the agents’ practices which emanate from their agenda, that creates the pathway for the emergence of institutions” (Kubálková et al., 1998). Faleye sums up by saying that the constructivists see anarchy as an international structure governed by dynamic social norms which are constructed historically in the global space (Faleye 2021,19). However, contrary to the realist and liberal schools of thought, constructivism

³ According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin “agency refers to the ability to act or perform an action. It answers the question if individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2007, 6).

provides some answers to the inherent challenges in IR theory regarding the African experience (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998, 266). Rosenberg tries to redefine IR, by arguing that the word “international” (in IR) refers to multiple forms of human experience. Considering the world’s pluralistic character, Rosenberg redefines the IR concept to summarize the socio-economic and political relations among structured human groups. Thus, in explaining EU- Africa relations, it is necessary to use a holistic framework that underlines the normative structures at local and international levels. According to the constructivist framework, social relations are based on “the historical experience and its attendant symbolic codes” thus creating the logical foundation for comprehending the dynamic transition of the state’s identity as a result of the convergence of internal and external factors. (Rosenberg 2016, 21; Faley 2021, 20).

The pattern of EU- Africa relations is based on mutual perception. Constructivism deconstructed the idea of monolithic Africa and the colonial blocs. Earlier, African identity was perceived as unitary. Moreover, in the era of European imperialism, there was a tendency to harmonize the distinctive precolonial African nations along francophone and anglophone identities. This phenomenon, was evident in the French policy of assimilation and the contrasting British system of indirect rule (Faley 2021, 21).

In order to rectify the asymmetries between African and European countries, it is necessary to apply a post-colonial approach(es). Postcolonial approaches seek to deconstruct Eurocentric perceptions through postcolonial theory and perspective. Consequently, in the context of Africa- EU relations, postcolonial approaches are used to “demystify and demythologize⁴ African agency” (Rutazibwa, 2014, 296; Sebhatu 2021, 38). Postcolonial approaches present a radical intellectual practice that challenges the dominant ways of producing knowledge about developing countries (Chandra 2013, 491).

Before explaining terms such as postcolonial and postcoloniality, the term coloniality must be explained. Coloniality refers to “the deep structures that not only justify colonialism in the eyes of the colonizer, but also produce the hierarchies that made modernity possible” (Maldonado- Torres, 2007, cited in Capan, 2016, 3). In other words, coloniality and modernity are interconnected. Coloniality is constitutive of modernity and the two should not be perceived separately. Both are legitimized through Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism can be defined as “the

⁴ To demythologize means to “reframe and add to existing mainstream arguments so as to rectify Eurocentric bias in mainstream knowledge production on Africa- EU relations”. By interrogating myths, “scholars are in a better position to develop “more grounded theories” – theories that cannot be easily debunked or provincialized as is the case with Eurocentric studies” (Sebhatu 2021, 38-39).

sensibility that Europe is historically, economically, culturally and politically distinctive in ways that significantly determine the overall character of world politics” (Sabaratnam, 2013, 261). Coloniality is made “through” the process of othering – Africa is Europe’s Other. Othering is sustained mainly through culturalist Eurocentrism. It creates discourses that position Africa as underdeveloped, weak, etc. while Europe is modern, developed, strong, etc. (Sebhatu 2021, 44-45).

The term “postcolonial” is used “to define the situation of formally colonized countries and peoples, including their place in the global political economy”. Postcoloniality refers to “transcending an imperialist past not just coming after” (De Alva, 1995, cited in Fisher Onar and Nicolaidis, 2013, 293–294). Young would say that “postcolonialism does not preserve the memory of colonialism, but it preserves the memory of the triumph over it” (Young 2001, 60). The “post” in “postcolonial” is used to describe the situation in African countries after their political decolonization from Western Europe colonization. However, there is a strong sense that colonial structures still exist in present-day Africa. Postcolonial theory is therefore a critical theory that acknowledges colonial legacies. It provides approaches and analytical tools for studying coloniality in contemporary times. Postcolonial approaches have an understanding of colonial legacies which enables them to provide the foundation for knowledge production that hinders the reproduction of coloniality through Eurocentrism. Postcolonial theories and approaches to the study of Africa- EU relations allow a deeper understanding of the dynamics of Africa-EU relations from a historical and global perspective. It represents an alternative to mainstream analysis of the impact of colonialism as historical, which omits its link with modernity (Sebhatu 2021, 39-40). Power asymmetry, mentioned above among African states and the EU is the dominant discourse in the studies on Africa- EU relations. Sebhatu points out that the postcolonial approach to asymmetry discourse should not be concerned with arguing against the fact that economic disparities between Africa and Europe truly exist. The postcolonial approach needs to focus on contextualizing why and how such disparities exist in the first place, and what is their cause. Moreover, a postcolonial approach needs to recognize the epistemic violence behind this discourse, including a historical perspective, and how such an epistemology silences African agency (Ibid, 45).

According to the postcolonialists, contemporary Africa-EU relations are covered with complexity and “primordial sin”. During colonization, the economies of African countries were structured to meet the needs of Europeans, not Africans. The best example to illustrate this is the shape of state borders in Africa. African borders are tailored to fulfill European needs. As a consequence of this process, fourteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are landlocked or enclaves. Enclave status

significantly complicates terms of trade, since the enclave-state is forced to use the infrastructure of neighboring states in order to access the sea. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, almost no Sub-Saharan country possesses a completely politically stable environment. Secondly, the infrastructure in Africa is underdeveloped and as a result, the distance from the sea or river port is a much bigger obstacle than it is in Europe. Apart from trade and overall economic development, such borders have also disrupted the ethnic balance in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, such a border can separate a single ethnic group, or it can forcefully unite two or more ethnic groups that have never lived together until European colonization. Furthermore, in the worst-case scenario, it can unite (in one state) several ethnic groups that have been in conflict throughout their (pre-colonial) history (Babić 2022, 46-47).

Sebhantu claims that the very constitution of the EU is a product of colonial legacy: “The central objective of Europe’s integration – the Treaty of Rome and the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC – today’s EU) in 1957 – was dictated through a collective agreement among European countries that they needed Africa (as commodity base) in order to restore Europe’s productive power in the aftermath of World War II” (Sebhantu 2021, 42). After former African colonies regained their independence the term Eurafrica appears repeatedly throughout EEC discourse on European integration until the mid-1960s, then it gets replaced with terms such as development, aid, and diplomatic counseling to the undeveloped regions (Hansen and Jonsson, 2018, 40, 44).

Fisher Onar and Nicolaidis note mentioning and then disappearing of Africa in the very construction of a European community, which they say is a symbol of the historical amnesia that depicts Africa’s underdevelopment from an ahistorical perspective. This historical amnesia is an example of how the EU imagines itself as a global actor and power – “by forgetting its colonial past and successfully entrenching the myth of its own ‘virgin birth’” (Fisher Onar; Nicolaidis 2013, 292). Rutazibawa and Sabaratnam claim that the myth of the EU’s “virgin birth” and its path toward modernity cannot and should not be understood as being separate from its colonial past. Moreover, they say that European countries generated wealth, industrialization, and development through the exploitation of the resources and people of their former colonies (Sabaratnam, 2011, 787– 788, Rutazibawa cited in Sebhantu 2021, 43). This is the reason why the postcolonial approach is necessary when discussing Europe’s power and self-imaginary present – to deconstruct this fundamental historical myth of European development and innocence. From the former statements of Sebhantu, Rutazibawa, and Sabaratnam it can be concluded that the discourse in which Europe was technologically advanced and economically developed through the building of institutions, and

that it originates from enlightened and universalist ethical and political thought was a smoke screen intended to cover up massive exploitation of natural resources and free human labor in its colonies. The fact that one of the motives for creating the European Community was the desire to collectively manage a colonial world that must be part of the deconstructive agenda that postcolonial approaches ultimately strive for (Fisher Onar and Nicolaidis, 2013, 293; Sebhatu 2021, 43).

An overview of an unequal partnership

The Treaty of Rome era (1957-1963)

The history of Africa-EU relations starts with the Treaty of Rome itself. The Rome Treaty enabled a link between the EEC and the colonies and overseas territories of Belgium, Italy, France, and the Netherlands, with the purpose of “promoting the economic and social development of these territories, and establishing close economic relations between them and the EEC as a whole”. Raimundo says that this integration system was based on three main elements: trade, financial aid,⁵ and formal relations. Reciprocal trade preferences guaranteed by this agreement enabled the continuation of privileged access which was existing between metropolises and colonies (Raimundo 2022, 60).

France requested that its colonies and territories have “special consideration” Paris wanted to prevent the creation of the EEC as a customs union which would affect its colonial trade arrangements.⁶ It also hoped to share the burden of its aid, in order to counter separatist and pro-communist impulses in Africa (Ibid). This has led to the Convention of the Association of Overseas Territories (OCTs). This consideration of the OCTs in the Treaty of Rome was based on an agreement among the European signatories, thus, non-European states had not been

⁵ Aid was allocated through the specifically established European Development Fund (EDF), with contributions from all Six member states and administered by the European Commission. Even if relatively small, EDF was disbursed in the form of grants and supplemented the bilateral aid from the EEC countries (Raimundo 2022, 60).

⁶ The other member states were reluctant to follow France’s plans. Strong opposition came from West Germany and the Netherlands, which had a more open and globalist outlook while at the same time being fearful of neocolonial accusations and unwilling to shoulder the costs of joint aid. Faced with France’s firm insistence, these objections were ultimately overridden by the priority given to European reconciliation and reconstruction, as well as through some concessions (Raimundo 2022, 60).

consulted. The EEC member states had agreed on mutual integration, and to assist the OCTs and decolonized nations with technical and financial support from the European Development Fund (EDF). This support had two goals: according to Haastrup, the first goal was to help the former colonies to develop social, political, and economic infrastructure. The second goal was to give “European countries continued, and consistent, access to their former colonies”. Assistance was focused on the francophone countries. In 1956 the French government wanted to preserve its links with its former colonies within the framework of the EEC. Thus, the framework in which the colonial donor-recipient paradigm continued to function in a post-colonial environment. It can be concluded, that “from the very beginning EU–Africa relations were at the very least, morally problematic, plagued with accusations of neo-colonialism – a label that still resonates today” (Haastrup 2013, 8-9). By including association with African countries in the Treaty of Rome, all the member states of the EEC had equal economic and exploitation access to the African francophone countries. This highlights the colonial origin of modern European cooperation and institutionalization (Ibid, 9).

Yaounde era (1963–1975)

The wave of decolonization swept across Africa in the early 1960s and created a need to rethink the nature of the association. The first agreement or convention, Yaoundé I, was signed in 1963. Yaoundé Convention of Association was signed between the EEC and a group of 18 countries, essentially former French colonies in Africa, known as the Associated African and Malagasy States (AAMS). This move coincided with a period marked by increased attempts at foreign policy cooperation among Western European countries, partly spurred by the ambiguous French Gaullist vision of Europe as a ‘third way’, independent of the superpowers (Raimundo 2022, 61). This agreement still focused on former francophone colonies. It preserved preferential trade relations between metropolises and their former colonies. The convention was particularly favorable to France.⁷ It guaranteed France access to raw materials from Africa (Haastrup 2013, 9). However, instead of forming a wide Eurafrikan trading area (which was the case with the Rome Treaty), Yaoundé enabled bilateral free trade areas between the EEC and each of the associated

⁷ Since neither Britain nor Portugal were initial members of the EEC, there was no advocate for the inclusion of the anglophone nor lusophone African countries. Former British colonies complained that Yaoundé I was intended for the former French colonies, giving them “premium access” to European markets. Thus, Yaoundé I appeared to preserve the French colonial system in Africa (Haastrup 2013, 10).

countries. Moreover, the involved parties were free to organize their commercial relations, both with each other and with third countries. These changes partly reflected the new independent status of African countries. On the other hand, it was an attempt as Grilli says: “to make Yaoundé conform more with GATT rules and an answer to the criticisms of neocolonialism and divisiveness leveled in particular by some African Commonwealth countries” (Grilli, 1993, 19–20 cited in Raimundo 2022, 61–62).

Modernization theory ideas inspired the Yaoundé system. Market-centered policies of development formed the crux of the convention (Holland and Doidge, 2012, 23–24). Unlike the Rome Treaty arrangements, Yaoundé was freely negotiated and ratified by all parties (not just European ones). This novelty did not prevent EEC member states from controlling the negotiations. Even so, during the discussions, the African countries tried to exert some pressure by appealing to the honor and moral integrity of the Europeans. To facilitate the processes of negotiation and implementation of the agreement, joint institutions were created in which the two sides were represented on an equal basis. Again, this had its important limits, because institutional structure mirrored that of the EEC, and decision-making power rested mainly with the European side. Yet, Twitchett believes it was “simultaneously, a symbol of parity between the two parties as well as a useful framework to promote dialogue and mutual awareness” (Twitchett, 1978: 109–113, 139–140). However, it could rather be defined as the attempt of equalizing the unequal.

The successor of Yaoundé I was Yaoundé II, which came into force in 1971. This agreement was not significantly different from the previous one. Yaoundé II incorporated the Arusha agreements⁸, thereby including some former British colonies. The incorporation of former British colonies happened because of earlier criticisms that ECC Africa relations “were a reflection of French-driven neo-colonialism” (Haastrup 2013, 10). Both agreements ended and constituted the basis for the broader Lomé Convention of 1975.

In conclusion, despite the signs of greater openness and less exclusiveness, Yaoundé remained narrowly focused on francophone Africa and tried to strengthen the link between Africa and Europe (the West), not among African countries or other countries of the developing world (Lister, 1988, 45). Simultaneously, such asymmetry rooted in colonial legacies was not immune to paternalism (mainly French). Despite the efforts to achieve greater parity, Yaoundé inaugurated a pattern of interactions based on a clientelist paradigm (Raimundo 2022, 62).

⁸ Arusha Declaration is known as most prominent political statement of African Socialism.

Lome era (1975-2000)

The first EEC enlargement in 1973 opened the door to a reformulation of the Europe-Africa relationship. Britain wanted to protect its Commonwealth ties, which went well beyond the African continent. EEC countries such as the Netherlands and West Germany used the prospect of British membership as an opportunity to press for a more open and broader system than Yaoundé (Raimundo 2022, 62). Despite the formalization of the ACP group⁹, there was no real change in the dynamics of North-South relations regarding Europe and the rest. On the contrary, the pattern of engagement that had always existed got reinforced even more. In fact, it worsened Africa-EU relations by institutionalizing the prevailing colonial paradigm. It also created a platform for mutual relations that is still active today (Haastrup 2013, 12). Lister defines the Lome framework as politically discreet rather than neutral, as it sought to distance itself from colonialism and superpower rivalries, supposedly claiming the “middle way” while being closer to the United States (Lister, 1988, 189–192).

Lomé I was the first agreement signed in EEC–ACP format. The agreement was signed in 1975 and came into force in 1976. It continued preferential trade between the EEC and ACP countries and guaranteed non-reciprocal trade concessions to ACP member countries, by allowing 90% of their exports into the Communities duty-free. The agreement retained “the contractual nature of aid”, although it was more detailed and precise, focusing also on the growth of agricultural infrastructure as well (Goutier, 2008, 8). The overall perception of Lomé I was the object of a lively debate. More positive perspectives are those of Gruhn who looked at it “as an important step away from colonialism towards increased interdependence” (Gruhn, 1976). More critical viewpoints, such as Galtung’s emphasized the continuities with past, colonial patterns of engagement, describing Lomé as a neocolonial device (Galtung, 1976). Ravenhill describes it as a form of “collective clientelism” (Ravenhill, 1985, 22).

Lomé II was introduced five years later. The cooperation between the ACP and EEC countries had two additions. Firstly, the ACP membership was expanded. Secondly, the System of Stabilization of Export Earnings from Mining Products was added to the agreement. This mechanism was designed to assist the ACP countries

⁹ ACP group of countries was created by the Georgetown Agreement in 1975. It consists of African, Caribbean and Pacific States. Currently known as the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

in upgrading their own mineral production capabilities (Babarinde and Faber, 2005, 4; Haastrup 2013, 12).

Lomé III came into force in 1985. It retained all the downsides of the previous agreements. The EC maintained its privileged position with the ACP countries, most of which were dependent on external aid. However, the situation was also exacerbated by the weak governance systems in post-colonial Africa (Haastrup 2013, 12-13). Goutier notes that Lomé III reflected “aid fatigue” on the part of the donor nations. European countries felt they were not getting the positive returns expected from the agreements with the ACP countries, such as social, economic, and political development. On the contrary, poverty was at its highest rate since independence, and many countries were governed by military regimes or other kinds of dictatorships (Goutier 2008 cited in Haastrup 2013, 13). Haastrup notes that what set Lomé III apart from previous agreements were the “policy dialogues”. In 1985 it was obvious that “high politics” goes parallel with social and economic development. African states viewed political issues in their relations with Europe as an imposition of conditions for aid. Haastrup provides an example:

“During negotiations, the ACP countries took issue with the phrase in the Lomé III agreement which introduced a commitment on their part to the preservation of ‘human dignity’. This reference to human dignity was to emphasize the importance of observing human rights in the function of trade, aid, and development, which clearly veers in the direction of a political concern rather than economic cooperation. Nevertheless, the ACP countries accepted the changes in writing” (Haastrup 2013, 13-14).

This shows the existing pattern of the Africa-Europe relationship rather than change. It shows the imposition of values wrapped in economic aid which actually makes African countries more dependent.

In 1990 Lomé IV was signed. In this agreement, the EC (later EU) stipulated stricter controls on the use of funds. Additionally, the European Commission increased the period of validity for each agreement from the usual five years to ten years. The idea was to provide “better continuity of development programs” (Goutier, 2008, 9 cited in Haastrup 2013, 14). But it also testifies to their (in)efficiency having in mind the timeframe lengthening.

Unlike its predecessors, Lomé IV was signed for ten years, with a mid-term review after five years. This extended duration should have provided extra stability, but it was also indicative of a certain “Lomé fatigue”. For the first time, explicit economic and political conditions were introduced in the document. A significant proportion of EDF aid was directed towards structural adjustment support, which led to a reduction of funds targeting long-term development. Moreover, Lomé IV

included a human rights clause stipulating that development “entails respect for and promotion of all human rights”. In a practical sense, several African countries were suspended from aid programs for political reasons, a move condemned by the ACP countries (Brown, 2002, 73–114; Lister, 1997: 108–131). The Lomé IV mid-term review expanded political conditionality and EU control over aid resources. Respect for human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law were made ‘essential elements, and a “suspension clause” was inserted, stating expressly that non-observance of these conditions could lead to sanctions. Apart from that, EU development objectives were explicitly included in the convention, hence increasing the European influence over Lomé’s policies. Furthermore, the mid-term revision introduced phased programming that allocated funds in two tranches, with the second one subject to a successful review of progress. This more flexible and performance-based system was criticized by the ACP countries for reinforcing the possibility of conditionalities and undermining Lomé’s founding principles (Raimundo 2022, 64). Lomé IV became the tool for imposing EU values and not the instrument of assistance to the ACP countries.

Raimundo believes that the “evolution of the Lomé framework represents a gradual shift from an emphasis on equality, solidarity, and neutrality to a greater accent on European objectives, efficiency, and conditionality” (Ibid, 64–65). The sentiment in Africa-EU relations shifted towards less generous, more conditional, and politicized terms. This meant that the initial rhetoric of an equal partnership and a new model for North-South cooperation lost further ground (Ibid). It can be concluded that openness and equality were referring to European countries. The intention was to give more access to Africa to the new EC/EU member states, foremost the UK.

Cotonou era (2000-2020)

The expiration of the Lomé Convention created an opportunity for reshaping of Africa-EU arrangements. Although the desire for reform was widely shared, the ACP side was less keen than the EU in general. Reflecting their own weaknesses, the ACP countries were mainly interested in preserving the benefits of Lomé and their identity as a group. The preservation of trade preferences for the ACP countries was perceived as a main benefit for the ACP countries. Among Europeans, the main divide was initially visible between those who wanted to retain special ties and those who instead wished to “normalize” relations with their developing counterparts (Carbone, 2013, 744).

The first Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000, was a continuation, a move away from the previous agreements, and an attempt at re-evaluation. Cotonou was signed

for a 20-year period, with a review every five years. Its main stated goals were “reducing and eventually eradicating poverty consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy” (Holland and Doidge, 2012, 26–27, 71). European Development Fund financed the Cotonou Agreement. The new terms of EU–ACP relations remained very explicit about the political nature of development assistance in the 21st century (Haastrup 2013, 15). Cotonou reinforced the political dimension of the EU-ACP relationship. Political dialogue became a more important feature and was turned into the third pillar of cooperation, alongside the traditional aid and trade dimensions. Although the idea of partnership was emphasized, political conditionality continued and was expanded to new levels. During the negotiations, the EU had tried to include good governance as another “essential element” for reviewing Africa, good governance was added implying that “serious cases of corruption” could lead to sanctions as a “measure of last resort”. Simultaneously, the revision procedure was strengthened, including the possibility of external arbitration (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006, 122). But, what Western policy-makers somehow always forget is the fact that “corruption has two ends” and that African officials are just on the receiving end of it. The big question is who is corrupting African officials, and with what money. Money used for corruption does not come to Africa *ex nihilo*, it comes from various multinational companies, aid agencies, development funds, etc. whose CEOs, chairmen, and boards of directors are sworn to honor transparency, good governance, and strict ethical norms.

This Cotonou agreement reflected the slow but steady erosion of the old arrangements. Carbone states that Cotonou Agreement represented a “fundamental break” with the past. While preserving the partnership model and the twin pillars of aid and trade, it promoted a new type of cooperation combining trade liberalization and “politicization”. This notion of linking different dimensions was a novelty at the time, making Cotonou a ‘unique agreement’ just like the Lomé Convention had been at its time (Carbone 2017: 300–301). The Cotonou Agreement created a new norm – security (Haastrup 2013, 18). The first review of Cotonou in 2005 introduced security amendments to the political pillar. Reflecting the post-9/11 context and the EU’s global ambitions, the revised agreement gave a new emphasis to security aspects. New clauses were included on terrorism, mercenary activities, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and weapons of mass destruction (Raimundo 2022, 66). Moreover, in contrast to the essentially G2G approach favored by the Lomé convention, Cotonou gave a new emphasis to the involvement of non-state actors (NGOs). This innovation was viewed by EU representatives as important in building democracy within ACP states but was resented by ACP governments which considered it as interference. Regarding development aid, the Cotonou agreement

expressed commitment to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by introducing more flexibility into the aid disbursement process (Ibid).

The second review of Cotonou in 2010 emphasized issues such as regional integration, climate change, state fragility, and aid effectiveness. In the context of regionalism, African Union was recognized as a key interlocutor in peace and security matters. Moreover, according to Raimundo the second review was “seeking to put political dialogue on a more equal footing, the review stipulated that ‘the principles underlying essential and fundamental elements’ should apply equally to both the ACP and the EU. However, the two sides disagreed on aspects related to sexual discrimination, illegal migration, and the ICC” (Ibid, 66).

(Un)predictably the emphasis on (sub)regional dynamics and the emergence of parallel policy frameworks (such as the separate strategies for Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific) led to a gradual dissolution of the EU- ACP framework. As the trade and political pillars of Cotonou were regionalized, EU- ACP cooperation was de facto reduced to a mostly development tool. Thus, slowly the Cotonou Agreement lost momentum and was not able to revitalize the EU-ACP relationship (Bossuyt et al., 2016).

Joint Africa- EU Strategy (JAES)

Even during the Cotonou agreement, the EU had a back-up plan. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was formally adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2007 by representatives of 53 African and 27 European states. The JAES was perceived as a long-term continent-to-continent strategy that seeks to define a partnership of equals through which consensus on priorities is jointly identified (Kell, Vines 2021, 105). The language used in the Lisbon Declaration and in the original JAES document highlighted a desire to overcome the traditional donor-recipient relationship that dominated previous decades and replace it with a “partnership of equals” built on jointly identified values and goals (Ibid, 107).

The priorities of the JAES at its inception were codified under four Strategic Framework features:

- “• Peace and security: Promoting a safer world;
- Governance and human rights: Upholding our values and principles;
- Trade and regional integration: Raising potential and using opportunities; and
- Key development issues: Accelerating progress towards the MDGs (Kell, Vines 2021, 107)”.

In early 2016, the EU acknowledged that Cotonou had not been able to address the importance of the AU as a continental organization (European Commission, 2016, 6). Such indications were recognized formally in June 2018 with the release of the EU's post-Cotonou negotiating mandate, which called to adapt the relationship with the ACP by establishing an “umbrella” agreement of three regional partnerships with Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean, respectively (Kell, Vines 2021, 114).

Since old promises were bankrupt and unfulfilled it was time for a new “carrot”. In March 2020, the Commission released a joint communication: “Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa” (European Commission, 2020). The document outlines five core partnerships for a new strategy: “green transition and energy access, digital transformation, sustainable growth and jobs, peace and governance, and migration and mobility” (Ibid.). The tone of the document was less paternalistic than usual EU rhetorics: avoiding the corny phrase of a “partnership of equals” and appealing to “respective interests”, not simply mutual ones. However, while pursuing a less overbearing approach in rhetoric, the document contains no discussion of the precise instruments and financing mechanisms by which the strategy could be implemented. Furthermore, just after the release of the documents, the road to implementing an agreement at the sixth AU–EU summit became “increasingly bumpy”: facing constant delays and revisions for a period of 2021–2027 EU due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Ukraine crisis (Kell, Vines 2021, 116).

The Gateway for the silk road

On 1st December 2021, the EU unveiled the Global Gateway, its plan to support infrastructure development around the world. Global Gateway aims to mobilize up to €300 billion in investments between 2021 and 2027. EU claims Global Gateway consists of the new financial tools in the EU multi-annual financial framework 2021–2027 (European Commission – Press release Brussels, 1 December 2021, 1). The fund has a new name – Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). However, when the lump sum is closely examined it can be seen that this sum is composed of: “€135 billion in investment foreseen under the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+), where the EU provides €40 billion in guarantee capacity, of which €26.7 billion via EIB and €13 billion via an EFSD+. The new financial line is dedicated to Global Gateway targeting national financing and development finance institutions – €18 billion in grants under other EU external assistance programs. The sum of €145 billion is planned investments

by EU countries' financial and development finance institutions. Existing programs such as the Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III, Interreg, InvestEU, and Horizon Europe will also be used to mobilize resources under Global Gateway. The EU is also exploring the option of creating a European Export Credit Facility to complement existing credit arrangements by EU countries and increase its overall firepower in this area." (Tagliapietra 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that it is not a new financial tool with "fresh" money inflow but rather a skillful combination of leftovers from already existing projects, despite the new name.

It is planned that Global Gateway projects would be implemented through Team Europe Initiatives. As stated in the EU Press release: "The EU institutions, Member States, and European financial institutions will work together with European businesses as well as governments, civil society, and the private sector in partner countries" (European Commission – Press release Brussels, 1 December 2021, 2). Global Gateway emphasizes an ethical approach in which infrastructure projects do not create unsustainable debt. The EU insists on high standards, good governance, and transparency, while implementing its projects The Global Gateway will offer its partners "a response to the urgent needs to develop sustainable and high-quality digital, climate and energy and transport infrastructures and strengthen health, education and research systems across the world, taking into account their needs and the EU's own interests" (ECQ&A 2021, 1).

European Commission identifies key pillars of the Global Gateway:

- Democratic values and standards

Global Gateway will offer a values-based option for partner countries to choose from when deciding how to meet their infrastructure development needs. This means adhering to the rule of law, upholding high standards of human, social, and workers' rights, and respecting norms from international rules to intellectual property and open public procurement. It means selecting investments that are sustainable – for local people, the local environment, and local economies. It means taking an ethical approach so that infrastructure projects do not create the unsustainable debt or unwanted dependencies (ECQ&A 2021, 2).

- Good Governance and Transparency

Delivering projects that work for people will require transparency, accountability, and financial sustainability. It will provide open access to public procurement, a level playing field for potential investors, and a clear set of agreed deliverables to ensure that Global Gateway projects will deliver what they promise. Those most affected by potential projects must have their full say through proper public consultations and civil society involvement. Projects should ensure affordable and equal access to the

services and benefits they will deliver, notably for women and girls and those at risk of disadvantage or exclusion (ECQ&A 2021, 2).

- Equal partnerships¹⁰

Global Gateway projects will be designed, developed, and implemented in close cooperation and consultation with partner countries. Infrastructure projects will be based on the needs of local economies and local communities, as well as the EU's own strategic interests. This means developing partnerships with countries at eye-level and ensuring that project planning takes into account the capacity of host countries to manage and maintain the infrastructure in a sustainable way after it has been completed (ECQ&A 2021, 2-3).

- Green and clean

The Global Gateway is a climate-neutral strategy to speed up sustainable development and recovery, create inclusive growth and jobs, and transition to a cleaner and more circular global economy. It will invest in developing infrastructures that are aligned with pathways toward net zero emissions. Projects will live up to the European Green Deal oath to ensure the use of environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments. EU will invest in infrastructure and support regulation to pave the way for the clean energy transition in partner countries. The EU will support regional energy integration, promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and just transition. The EU will also work with partner countries to invest in infrastructure for developing sustainable and resilient raw materials value chains (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

- Security-focused

Secure infrastructure underpins the resilience of the global economy and supply chains. Global Gateway projects will invest in infrastructure to heal vulnerabilities, provide trusted connectivity, and build capacity in the face of natural or man-made challenges, and physical, cyber, or hybrid threats. They will ensure that citizens are shielded from unwarranted surveillance by public authorities or private companies (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

- Catalysing private sector investment

The Global Gateway will combine and leverage resources from the EU, its Member States, financial institutions, and Multilateral Public Finance, and use these public resources to crowd-in private capital (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

- A digital transition in line with European values and standards

¹⁰ The term equal partnership existed as early as 2008 (Meyn 2008, 526) which shows that rhetoric used in the Global gateway project is not new.

The EU will work with partner countries to deploy digital networks and infrastructures such as submarine and terrestrial fiber-optic cables, space-based secure communication systems as well as cloud and data infrastructures, which together provide a basis for data exchange, cooperation in high-performance computing, artificial Intelligence, etc. The EU will prioritize underserved regions, countries, and populations, with the aim of tackling the global digital divide and strengthening secure digital connections within them and between Europe and the world. The EU will minimize the environmental footprint of digital infrastructure, by promoting green data centers and deploying underwater cables equipped with ocean monitoring sensors (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

- Sustainable, smart, resilient, inclusive, and safe transport networks

Global Gateway will promote worldwide infrastructure investments that create sustainable, smart, resilient, inclusive, and safe transport networks in all modes of transport, including rail, road, ports, airports, as well as logistics, and border-crossing points, in a multimodal system. The EU will implement transport infrastructure projects that foster the sustainable development of partner countries and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as enable the diversification of their supply chains (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

- Health

The EU will be working with partner countries to diversify their pharmaceutical supply chains. The Health and Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) will also contribute to addressing international supply chain bottlenecks and establish close collaboration with global partners to prevent future health emergencies and strengthen global surveillance (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

- Education and research

The EU will invest in quality education, including digital education, research, and innovation. Through education, training, youth, and sport exchange programs, the EU facilitates the mobility of students and staff and strengthens higher education institutions and peer learning. The Erasmus+ strengthens societal links and promotes the EU's soft power and the attractiveness of its model of society. Talent Partnerships are supposed to facilitate the mobility of partner countries' young professionals and trainees to Europe for employment or training. The EU also seeks to reinforce global cooperation in the field of research and innovation. The Horizon Europe Program includes opportunities for collaborative research and for the mobility of researchers at an international, inter-sectoral, and interdisciplinary level. Horizon Europe also offers the possibility to associate countries located anywhere in the world, which share fundamental values and with strong science, technology, and innovation profile. The EU will also continue

investing in cultural cooperation between Europeans and citizens in partner countries (ECQ&A 2021, 3).

Symbolically, in its name, and in its core the Global gateway project is designed to counter Chinese engagement in Africa. The rhetoric used in EU documents regarding Global gateway is such that they depict China as an unreliable partner and an actor who wants to harm African countries by capturing them in debt trap arrangements.

EU as a normative power in Sub-Saharan Africa

Former European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana commented: "The EU has the responsibility to work for the 'global common good'" (Aggestam 2008, 6).

In understanding EU's normative power, Ian Manners's works are the most cited ones which mean he is a leading authority on this topic. Manners argues that "the EU represents a new and distinct kind of actor within the international system, and transcends the anarchic and self-interested behavior of states" (Manners 2002, 240). The EU's constitution as an "elite-driven, treaty-based legal order," which implies that its identity and behavior are based upon a set of common values (Ibid, 241). The most significant of these values are peace, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, anti-discrimination, and good governance. These norms distinguish the EU from traditional state actors. Manners argued that the EU's ability to influence the behavior of others by exporting its values rendered it a distinct kind of actor in world politics (Manners 2002; Manners 2008). The EU's constitution on a normative basis "predisposes it to act normatively in world politics" (Manners 2002, 252). According to this view, the EU is a "force for good within world politics" and enacts a foreign policy aimed at promoting core ethical norms (Aggestam 2008, 1). Mechanisms through which the EU disperses its norms includes the use of positive and negative conditionality in its agreements with third parties (Smith 2001, 188).

The EU's normative stance has been reflected in its consistent support for international legal order (Hardwick 2011). A key example of this was the EU's policy of encouraging African states to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Schiepers and Sicurelli 2008, 611). Manners states that:

"the EU diffuses its norms by example, rather than in the coercive manner of traditional military power. One of the most important norms of EU normative power is that of human rights, closely linked to the policy of conflict prevention. When dealing with third countries, EU stipulates conditionality clauses that bind the recipients to practice ethical human rights, as stipulated in the

European Convention on Human Rights. In addition, the EU includes human rights clauses with trade partners” (Manners 2006, 187).

However, this statement by Manners had been proved wrong. The greatest limitation of the EU’s normative power is the discrepancy between the EU’s ethical norms and the material interests of member States hence member states have consistently prioritized their economic interests at the expense of the EU’s ethical norms. For instance, The EU did not propose resolutions critical of China in 1996. This change was orchestrated by Germany and France, whose trade relations with China started to grow at the time (Balducci 2010, 43). A regular human rights dialogue with China was initiated instead of condemning resolutions. However, these meetings have been labeled as “no more than a means for the Chinese government to channel criticism of its human rights record” (Baker 2002, 59). As Lucarelli points out, “the EU continued to sponsor resolutions critical of Zimbabwe until 2004, and of Sudan until at least 2007” (Lucarelli 2010, 40). This testifies to the double standards of the EU and shows that in practice, economic interests play a greater role in the EU’s external policy than its self-identification as a normative actor.

Two other examples of the EU’s moral hazard easily come to mind: Bosnia and Herzegovina and the case of the secessionist Serbian province of Kosovo. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU is supporting a highly controversial institution of “High representative” whose authorities are not much different from those that colonial administrators once had (Jahić 2021). In the case of Kosovo,¹¹ the EU is proclaiming to be an unbiased mediator but in reality, it is facilitating the recognition of the secessionist province. In a bizarre demonstration of double standards, EU is full-heartedly supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine, while simultaneously pressuring and conditioning Serbia to forfeit its own territorial integrity and sovereignty (EEAS 2021).

In the African context, the extent of the EU’s structural power makes it the dominant partner within EU–Africa relations. EU’s role as a dominant partner influences the structuring of security cooperation. The extent of its resources, the length of its integration experience, and its position in prior European–African relations make EU the dominant partner. However, the role of the EU as a dominant power does not preclude some African advantages in EU–Africa relations. In addressing the EU’s engagement with Africa on migration African countries exploit EU capability deficiencies to further their own agendas (Haastруп 2013, 43). For example, In 2002 and 2004 African nations have resisted the intervention of the EU, when they joined with Asian nations at the UNCHR to block EU-sponsored

¹¹ In accordance with UNSC resolution 1244.

resolutions condemning Zimbabwe (Smith 2006, 165). Hence, the EU's attempts to export its values have not always been well-received by third states.

On the other hand, the existing power asymmetry between the EU and Africa does not automatically rule out the ability of the EU to achieve the aims of new EU–Africa relations. In fact, the EU shows its strength in civilian crisis management and articulates its position as a civilian crisis actor. As Hastuup points out “the idea of normative power in relation to Europe potentially gives a holistic view of EU international actorness in many areas, including sustainable peace (and security) beyond militarised interventions” (Haastrup 2013, 37). However, this claim is refuted by the events in Ukraine, where the European Union supports one side.

Given the final judgment of the European Union as a normative power, it can be perceived that the EU is only self-portrayed as a normative power while others see it as a coercive power.

Conclusion

This paper aims to show that the entire relationship of the European Union with African countries is based on the preservation of the colonial order, more precisely on the creation of neo-colonial dependencies. The various documents that were signed in order to develop cooperation with Africa had hidden goals within them – to break the traditional colonial blocs and grant the equal right to exploit Africa to all countries of the European Community (later the European Union). The latest investment framework – the Global gateway recycles old narratives about an equal partnership, but at least recognizes the interest of the European Union and does not propagate pure altruism like earlier strategic documents. In its essence, it is more of an anti-Chinese action plan than an original idea that promotes cooperation between the European Union and Africa. The financial resources available for this project do not represent the fresh supply of cash but are a combination of remnants of other EU investment instruments.

In its attempts to represent a normative power, the European Union exhibits double standards and inconsistency. The mechanisms in which the European Union proliferates its norms represent the relapse of colonial behavior by apostrophizing the assumed superiority of European civilization, nowadays illustrated via democracy, transparency, and human rights standards. Constantly seeking self-affirmation through the process of othering the EU is forcing its own anti-Chinese sentiment on Africa. However, as shown in Africa and elsewhere, various countries are increasingly rejecting the European value package. By insisting on its norms

using punishment mechanisms European Union is becoming a coercive power rather than a normative one.

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DaniLO BABIĆ

**ODNOSI EU I SUBSAHARSKE AFRIKE:
ISTORIJA (NE)JEDNAKOG PARTNERSTVA**

Abstrakt: Ovaj rad istražuje neke eksploatatorske ekonomske tendencije u odnosima između Afrike i EU, polazeći od Rimskog ugovora, pa nadalje kroz inicijative Jaunde, Lome i Kotonua. Vremenom, eksploatatorski aspekti ovog odnosa postaju sve zamagljeniji kroz promene vokabulara i suptilnije ekonomske mehanizme. Svaki novi okvir saradnje nastojao je da naglasi važnost jednakog u partnerstva na liniji EU-Afrika, ali je nejednakost između dve strane stalno rasla. To je slučaj i sa najnovijim strateškim okvirom zvanim “globalna kapija”. Taj investicioni plan je *ad hoc* inicijativa osmišljena da se suprotstavi kineskim interesima u regionu. EU nastoji da bude kreator normi na afričkom kontinentu. U radu se preispituje sposobnost EU da ispuni tu ulogu.

Ključne reči: Afrika, EU, “globalna kapija”, ravnopravno partnerstvo Jaunde, Lome, Kotonu.