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EUROPEAN NEO-COLONIALISM IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Europe has a peculiar relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa where the Europeans could historically extol and justify their colonial project most loudly and skilfully. This colonial history of the individual European states has had profound implications on Europe's contemporary relations with Africa. Since the emergence of the European Union as a supra-national entity, the relations with those states have regularly been negotiated referring to its claims of being a major development actor in Africa. Development policy is a hybrid policy of the EU conducted both bilaterally through the European Commission and multilaterally through the individual efforts of the member states. This article focuses on the bilateral conduct of the development policy by the EU as a collectivity and argues that in the long run the EU has transformed from a development actor into a neo-colonial power in Africa.

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Introduction

The nature and implementation of the European Union's (EU) development policy has evolved as a response to the changes in the conceptualisation of development itself as a result of regional and international debates on the issue. However, the use of the development policy as the EU's instrument for its colonial and neo-colonial project has never been changed. Starting from the beginning, all development agreements with the African states have created a centre-periphery relationship as the mechanisms of the EU's neo-colonial aspirations. With the rise of neo-liberalism, the EU could find the opportunity to deepen the hierarchy between itself and the African states by using its development policy which eventually led to a "less developed" developing world with more exploitation, deteriorating economic conditions and increasing political pressure on this part of the world. This fact has reduced partnership to a rhetorical status and justified the criticisms towards the EU in terms of the gap between its objectives on paper i.e. increasing trade, improving development and its intentions in practice which seems neo-colonial control of the African states.

This article has a main argument that the EU's development policy has become a tool of European neo-colonial project in Africa.* Within the framework of the development cooperation, the EU can protect its interests, markets and investments in Africa under a democratic coverage and construct a dependant Africa on Europe. With this purpose, article starts with the history of the development cooperation between the EU and African states starting from the initial years of the European integration. Then, it discusses the transformation of the development cooperation into the EU's neo-colonial practices. In this part, after explaining neo-colonialism briefly, the attention will be paid to the specific provisions of the legal documents, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and development aid as the tools of European neo-colonialism. Based on them, the article tries to show that in the long run the EU has transformed from a development actor into a neo-colonial power in Africa. In doing so, a number of caveats are in order. Firstly, in the EU geography, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is linked with certain Caribbean and Pacific states to form the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP)

* Conceptual clarification among colonialism, post-colonialism and neo-colonialism may be helpful to follow the rest of the paper. Colonialism implies "the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years." Post-colonialism is used to refer to the post-independence period and processes of the former colonies. Neo-colonialism refers to any and all forms of control of the ex-colonies after political independence. The definitions suggest that "colonialism only modified and developed into the neo-colonialism of the post-independence period." For details pls. see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2013.

group on the basis of colonial heritage and a common peripheral status in the international system (Kahler, 1982). While accepting the ACP states a group as the object of the EU's development policy, as a limitation, the reference to the ACP states will prioritise SSA throughout this paper where it is henceforth referred to as Africa for simplicities concerns. Secondly, throughout the paper, the term EU is used to represent the institutional level of the European integration, although the predecessor of the organisation is European Economic Community (EEC) between 1957 and 1993.

1. European Union as a Development Actor in Africa

EU history with post-colonial Africa has been progressively formalised and politicised (Lister, 1997; Brown, 2002; Holland, 2002) under its development policy institutionalised as a historically constructed discourse after World War II. Development strategy including its discourses and practices became a powerful instrument for the socio-cultural and economic production of the Third World (Escobar, 1995: 4, 6).

The first years of the EU's development policy were shaped within the framework of colonial relations by referring to the association status given to the African colonies of the original member states of the EU (Whiteman, 1998: 30). Thus, development was incorporated into the Treaty of Rome in the form of Association[†] which was then defined in terms of "economic, social and cultural development" (Treaty of Rome, 1957: Art.131), with the intention of economic growth through industrialisation (Doidge and Holland, 2014: 61). As the tools of economic growth, two mechanisms were introduced by the Treaty. First a free trade area was set up and both parties enjoyed reciprocal market opening. Second, European Development Fund (EDF) was newly instituted as the instrument for the implementation of the financial development assistance of the successive development agreements between the two sides in the future.

The association of the Treaty of Rome was an "association between unequals" (Malafia, 2005: 38). It excluded associated countries in the overall structure and decision making mechanisms of the association relationship. It overlooked the priority of African development in the distribution of the development aids. Rather the provisions of the Treaty proved the eagerness of Europe in gaining political and economic control over the ACP states. Therefore, the association status of the Treaty of Rome which also formed the basis of the EU's development

[†] Of all the founding member states of the EU, it was the French colonial interests that were most persistent. France made this association of its former African colonies a pre-condition of becoming a member of the Community. Thus, those African colonies were given the status of association basing on which the development cooperation immediately started.

policy towards the developing countries was severely criticised due to its neo-colonial overtones to deepen and strengthen the African dependence on Europe (Segal, 1964: 81).

The global context where the EU operates have always constrained the policy options of Europe (Holland, 2002: 11). Accordingly, the shape and content of the relations with the association countries have altered many times since the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The successive enlargements of the EU, differential rates of global development, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the re-organisation of trade under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) among many others have forced the EU to redefine its relations with the developing countries including African ones. However, despite the changes in terms of the bilateral relations, the nature of the relations has never changed as discussed below.

1.1. New Context for Development Cooperation in 1960s

Decolonisation process of the 1960s which resulted in the independence of the African states inevitably necessitated a revision in association relationship between the EU and African states. As a result of the revision process, the Yaoundé Convention was signed on 20 July 1963 and renewed on 29 July 1969 as a “negotiated contractual outcome rather than the unilateral imposition that had previously been the case” (Doidge and Holland, 2014: 63). The aim of the Yaoundé regime which was in force between 1963–1969 (Yaoundé I) and 1969–1975 (Yaoundé II) was to help the newly independent states in achieving their “economic development and thereby economic autonomy” (Flint, 2008:13). Politically, Yaoundé Conventions recognised the newly independent states, even if it was a limited recognition, by setting up joint institutions, i.e. an association council and a parliamentary assembly. Economically, reciprocal trade relations were supposed to remain as the practical basis of the relationship. A second EDF was introduced to provide the African states with development assistance. Moreover, Yaoundé actively promoted regional partnerships for the formation of a Europe-Africa free trade zone. However, the Yaoundé goals of an EU-ACP free trade zone could not be accomplished due to a number of reasons including little enthusiasm among ACP states for the reciprocal trade links with the EU, emergence of other developing regions as the new priorities of the EU and introduction of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in 1971 by the EU to provide all developing countries with preferential market access at the expense of the African interests. The weakening of the advantages provided for the African states triggered another revision process for a new agreement.

When negotiations began for the transformation of the Yaoundé system, the changing national and international contexts became highly important and influential in the final outcome.

Regionally, Britain was accepted as a new member to the EU in 1973 which inevitably led to the inclusion of its former colonies, which were at a similar level of development as the other association states, to the scope of the negotiations. Thus, they united with the already existing associate states during the negotiations and formed a unified bloc under the name of the ACP group. Internationally, the agenda was dominated in the 1970s by the call of the developing countries for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). At the centre of the NIEO was re-orientation of international trade to ensure better and more stable commodity prices, preferential and non-reciprocal access to the developed world markets and greater volumes of economic and technical assistance with no strings attached (Doidge and Holland, 2014: 64). These demands reflected “responses to real problems experienced by states in the South, particularly as a result of the Bretton Woods system’s creation and operation” (Laszlo et al., 1979) and also provided the background for negotiations on a new formal agreement between Europe and ACP states. Thus, as the successor of Yaoundé, the first Lomé Convention emerged from a specific time conjuncture and was signed on 28 February 1975 to promote the economic, cultural and societal development of the African states by basing on the principles of “equality of the partners, sovereignty in decision-making and security of relations” (Taylor, 2015: 5-6). The Lomé I was successively renegotiated at five-yearly intervals, in 1980 (Lomé II), 1985 (Lomé III), 1990 (Lomé IV) and finally in 1995 (Lomé IV-bis).

Lomé, in nature, was very different from Yaoundé and emerged as a breakthrough in the development history between the EU and African states. First, at a basic level, principles of partnership and a contractual approach were clearly emphasised in the treaty. With the recognition of the sovereignty of the ACP states, they were given the right to determine their own development strategy. It was an implicit recognition of the specific needs of the developing countries. More importantly, the Convention replaced reciprocity principle with the nonreciprocal trade access for ACP states. Third, aid allocations were guaranteed for full five years and accepted to be managed jointly. Finally, the Lomé Convention I also introduced the System for the Stabilisation of Export Earnings (STABEX) for primary commodity exports as a compensatory mechanism to price fluctuations. It was later accompanied by the Stabilisation Scheme for Mineral Products (SYSMIN) as another market correcting instrument for the ACP states. Over time, however, both have become the tools of the dependency relationship between the EU and Africa with the hegemonic role of the former.

With this background, Lomé I was the closest one among the others to an agreement among partners. There was hardly any conditionality and African states were left free to arrange their own economic strategies and policies without any foreign intervention. However, successive

renegotiations of Lomé, weakened their power with the additions in each new text. Non-reciprocal trade concessions of Lomé I was complemented by globalisation of EU-ACP cooperation in Lomé II; introduction of the cultural, social and economic rights in Lomé III and conditionality principle in Lomé IV. Those changes in the form and content of the agreements prove that since its beginning, the history of European development cooperation has been continuing as the process of erosion of the limited concessions provided for the ACP states mostly as the result of the increasing adoption of neoliberal thinking (Hurt, 158). The concessions “secured by the bloc in the build-up to Lomé I were progressively “rolled-back” by each renegotiation of the convention” (Flint, 2008: 15). Thus, “any economic bargaining power the African states had previously enjoyed began to dissipate and agreements on conditionality provided a glimpse of a new agenda that was to dominate the 1990s” (Holland, 2002: 42).

1.2. Development Cooperation after 1990s

Newly emerging international system in the late 1980s led to a considerable transformation in the EU’s development policy and undermined the equilibrium of partnership between the EU and ACP states against the latter. The globally settled Washington Consensus of the 1990s forced the EU to align with the neo-liberal understanding of the IMF and WB. Accordingly, the imposition of economic conditionality along with structural adjustment programmes towards the African states put the relations with them under pressure due to its incompatibility with the partnership spirit that was supposedly at the heart of the Lomé. However, the structural adjustment programmes did have little impact on boosting economic progress in developing countries, mainly those in Africa. Thus, the development strategy towards the region had to be revised. According to the revision, political as well as economic conditionality was introduced for more effective implementation of the adjustment programmes. The EU followed the global trends and accepted good governance as crucial dimension of all development strategies. Afterwards, poverty reduction, sustainable development and gender equality have become “hallmarks of Lomé’s later incarnations” (Dearden, 2002: 4–6).

Within this framework, 1990 started with Lomé IV signed for ten-year duration with a mid-term evaluation in 1995. Lomé IV politicised the nature of development cooperation and marked the growing trend of neoliberal thinking in EU-ACP relations with an emphasis on the conditionality principle. Causally, economic and political conditionalities were imposed on the ACP states for the continuation of the development relationship. In the economic realm, despite

the European rhetoric and attempts to diverge from the severely criticised forced adjustment policies of the World Bank and IMF at the global level, the EU implemented its structural adjustment policies in complete alignment with the neo-liberal policies of those institutions (Hurt, 2004:160; Brown, 2000: 374-375). Thus, a significant proportion of the financial transfers were directed from the EU towards the ACP states to be used for their structural adjustment programs which led to an inevitable reduction in EU aid destined for their development objectives in the long-term.

In the political realm, conditionalities were formally and explicitly attached to aid provision. However, the use of aid by the EU (as a donor) to promote certain principles i.e. legitimacy, rule of law, human rights, transparency and good governance among many others, in other countries has led to the serious questions about the forms and functions of the aid in question (see Abrahamsen, 2000). Amid emerging doubts, political conditionalities were used as the stick to suspend economic and development aid. Moreover, 1995 mid-term evaluation of Lomé IV introduced the principle of phased programming for the dispersal of the EU aid as opposed to the previous dispersions for the entire duration of each Lomé Convention. This change implied that funds would be allocated in two tranches with the second one which would be subject to a successful review of progress.

These notable changes in EU–ACP development cooperation during the 1990s moved the EU policy further away from the original ideal of Lomé Convention based on partnership. Throughout the 1990s, the Lomé Convention was criticised due to a number of reasons. First, there appeared a decline in the common interests between the EU and ACP states as a result of the newly emerging priorities of the EU elsewhere. Second, the relationship was highly politicised which posed a threat to the partnership claims. Third, EU’s economic and political conditions severely constrained their policy options. Fourth, the establishment of WTO increased pressures all around the world to implement a multilateral trade liberalisation globally. Last but not least, both the EU and ACP states accepted that Lomé Convention became excessively complex and complicated which was eventually damaging its effectiveness.

On the other side, the historical record of Lomé was not successful. The aid part of the EU-ACP relationship could only achieve patchy results, the rhetoric of partnership had been consistently damaged, and the impact of trade preferences granted to the ACP states had failed to halt the decline in their export performances (European Commission 1996: 11–18). Indeed, during the Lomé period, “the ACP states’ shares in the EU’s market fell from 6.7% in 1976 to 3% in 1998, whilst 60% of the total ACP export concentrated on only 10 products. There was also an appreciable rise in poverty in many ACP countries” (Schade 2001). These figures show

that despite the introduction of economic and political conditionalities, majority of developing countries were performing unsatisfactorily by the mid-1990s which resulted in a new negotiating strategy and process between the EU and ACP states.

Reviewing and revising processes of Lomé IV started in September 1998 and could be finalised as a result of protracted and controversial discussions (Martenczuk, 2000; Forwood, 2001). As the successor of Lomé, the Cotonou Agreement was signed on 23 June 2000 for a 20-year period and marked a deep change in the nature and spirit of the EU-ACP development relations due to the much stronger dominance and superiority of the neo-liberal thinking in 2000s. The new agreement scheduled the relationship between the EU and Africa for a minimum of twenty years. This means that neo-liberal thinking would have a long-lasting impact on the relations between the EU and ACP states. By 2000, the approach adopted by the EU to its ACP partners was a long way detached from that negotiated in 1975. Therefore, after Cotonou, it became apparent that privileged relations that had been the case between the two groups of countries no longer exists.

The Cotonou Agreement is based on three facets, i.e. political dimension, development cooperation and trade-aid cooperation which are interconnected to each other. First, entrenched in all national development approaches and within the context of EU development collaboration with individual states in the ACP region, key political activities are linked to promoting institutional, political and legal reform processes and capacity building programs. Second, development cooperation is supposed to range from the promotion of the private sector, to regional cooperation and mainstream environment, gender, and HIV/AIDS into EU-ACP aid partnerships. Third, trade is envisioned as the strongest pillar of the Cotonou Agreement which, however, shows how privatisation and liberalisation have become as dominant as they are within the WTO system, even though many ACP states do not have a competitive private sector (Raffer, 2001: 4). Thus, ACP states seriously suspected that the agreements proposed by the EU are more strongly focused on the EU's ambitions to justify the global trade tendencies than "any real commitment to sustainable development or poverty alleviation demands of the ACP" (Flint, 2008: 145).

Instead of being a "partnership based purely on the specific needs of the participants, the relationship became increasingly 'normalised' within a growing international development consensus" (Flint, 2008: 16). First, there were, and remain, certain difficulties related to the regional strategy initiated by the EU in the Cotonou Agreement due to the limited regional integration in Africa. Second, many ACP states felt, and continue to feel, that the schedule for

completing non-reciprocal trade links was quick and could lead to damages in their economies. Third, in December 2005, the EU members accepted *European Consensus on Development* as an attempt to fix a commonly agreed vision for the EU's development policy. This document could only confirm the principles of the Post-Washington Consensus along with its potential damages on the economies of the ACP states. Fourth, there are problems concerning funding. Regarding the aid provisions of the EDF, Cotonou adopted a new approach which is doubling of the proportion of loans, as opposed to grants, and a shift from support for raw material exports (both STABEX and SYSMIN have been removed) to the financial backing of regional integration (Hurt, 2004: 164).

Based on the above mentioned principles, the Cotonou Agreement represents a divergence from the original intention of the EU's development assistance vis-à-vis their former colonies in Africa. Overall, with the impacts of neo-liberalism, the EU has been inclined towards the global trends of neo-liberalism which led to the use of development as a "mechanism of the 20th and 21st centuries for the colonial and neo-colonial domination of the South by the North" (Escobar, 1995: 26-39). In that sense, Africa is the most suitable case where the European divergence can be most clearly seen. The following part will try to discuss how the EU's inclination towards the global development understanding has revealed its neo-colonial ambitions in Africa.

2. European Union as a Neo-Colonial Power in Africa

2.1. Theoretical Explanations

According to Hurt (2004) "a number of different approaches can explain the relationship between the EU and Africa". The first approach representing also the official EU view originates from liberalism and explains the relationship by basing on jointly favourable cooperation, improved equality and interdependence (Gruhn, 1976; Zartman, 1976). This approach accepts that relations are not exploitative in nature. Rather, they are mutually beneficial and the benefits would result from integrating of African states into the global economy to which the EU would significantly contribute. Fieldhouse calls this group as "optimists" including Adam Smith, David Ricardo and modern neo-classical economists who believe that establishment of a single world economic system has been beneficial both for the "core" and the "periphery". Thus, the spread of capitalism through the single world market is a key to economic improvement and growth for all. On the other side, "pessimists" ranging from humanitarian and liberal critics of imperialism to the neo-Marxists and dependency theorists, argue that global economic integration has only brought disadvantages to the lesser developed countries which has either weakened or experienced little benefits in unregulated or even moderately regulated relations with the West. Accordingly, the process of integration means

“only exploitation of the periphery by the developed core” (Fieldhouse, 1999: 9-67). This paper accepts the second view and argues that Europe-Africa relations structured within the broader context of centre/core-periphery relations is assumed to originate from the colonial past between the two which left the “legacy of underdevelopment on the African continent” (Rodney, 1972) because of the orientation of the African economies more towards the European needs than the regional requirements. This was the quintessential definition of dependency which tends to explain the underdevelopment of ACP states by referring to their exploitation and domination by the developed Western capitalist states including Europe. This kind of dependency gives the EU the opportunity to perform its neo-colonial aspirations in Africa even after the independence of the continental countries.

Current European neo-colonial inclinations are nowhere more visible than in Africa. This can be possible through the implementation of its development policy which has become a way of professionalization and institutionalisation of “legitimacy of the Western intervention into the Third World” (Rist, 2002: 103) by imposing the values of market economy, democracy and well-being by using different instruments and practices including foreign aid, loans and investment among many others. Consequently, development has become only a discourse implying a “particular mode of thinking and a source of practice designed to instil in underdeveloped countries the desire to strive towards industrial and economic growth” (Escobar: 1988, 1995). This mode of relationship symbolises a move to the “post-colonial phase” (Khadiagala, 2000: 83) where Europe still does not treat Africans equally and does not contribute to African development sincerely and significantly. Considering “development cooperation as encapsulating particular political and economic relationships rather than constituting some kind of ‘apolitical’ or ‘technical’” (Brown 2000: 368), the EU has used it to construct Europeanised political and economic regimes throughout Africa. Thus, in line with the Escobar’s assumptions (1988, 1995), development has become an ideological tool for the neo-colonial construction of the region through different practices and mechanisms of Europe as discussed in the following part.

2.2. Tools of European Neo-Colonialism

The history of the development cooperation between the EU and Africa has been institutionalised through a number of European tools of power including planning, foreign aid, loans, grants, investment, machinery and technology as the neo-colonial devices of perpetuating African dependency and subservience (Uche, 1994: 51). Although the EU is supposed to establish relationship of cooperation or partnership with the sovereign states of Africa, as

Walter Rodney (1973) and Samir Amin (1972) argue it many times Europeans weighed down the sovereignty of Africans by dominating them through various economic and political dynamics of neo-colonialism including development cooperation.

Development cooperation which establishes a particular political and economic relationship between the partners (as opposed to expectations) has given Europe the historical chance of persisting its colonial ambitions and incursions into the African continent. Therefore, as Bachmann (2013: 20) shows it EU's development policy has long been identified as unidirectional and paternalising within the framework of a neo-imperial Europe leading to the emergence of a development policy as a form of neo-colonialism (Goldsmith, 1997).

Referring to its development policy, European colonial attitude towards Africa was formalised in the initial years of the European integration which was institutionalised by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. As it is explained in the previous parts, the Treaty provided the overseas countries and territories with formalised and structured association relationship which would eventually result in their exploitation. Therefore, as Nkrumah said it the Treaty of Rome and the EEC denoted "the advent of neo-colonialism in Africa" (quoted in Martin 1982: 229), whereby association represented a new-fangled engagement for "collective colonialism which will be stronger and more dangerous than the old evils we are striving to liquidate" (quoted in Asante, 1993: 740).

This understanding of Europe continued with the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions both of which were criticised due to implicit neo-colonial inclinations of Europe referring to the failure to support development, absence of substantive partnership and unequal economic exchange that left the ACP states with a falling share of the European market (Lister, 1989). Moreover, similar to its predecessors, also the latest Cotonou Agreement has been being criticised due to the doubts behind the real intentions of trade liberalisation (either development or market access) and the reflections of European neo-colonialism embedded in the principle of conditionality (Hurt, 2003).

Cotonou is an agreement basing on both consent and coercion. Consent is achieved through partnership, dialogue and owning of the development priorities and strategies by the ACP states themselves. Coercion is existing in the EU's introduction of the EPAs to which the aid is conditioned (Hurt, 2003: 163). EPAs are, rhetorically, agreed in the Cotonou Agreement as comprehensive development partnership. However, they are designed to get the most for Europe without the necessary considerations of its "negative effects on weaker developing country partners" (The Guardian (London) May 19, 2005). While accepting neo-liberal economic order as the starting point and aspirations of the ACP states, EPAs have quickly

become the tools of the EU to strengthen its structural power vis-à-vis the ACP states (Holden, 2009: 13).

2.2.1. Economic Partnership Agreements

The EPAs with the ACP states are signed to replace the preferential trade agreements with reciprocal trade agreements between them. In conformity with the rules of the WTO including equal treatment, non-preferential treatment; and reciprocal market access, the EPAs put an end to the favoured status of former colonies by placing them in competition with the rest of the countries in the world. Therefore, they have become untenable for the ACP states especially in terms of trade relations and bring the EU's trade and development policy back full circle to its free trade ambitions in Part IV of the EEC Treaty (Bartels, 2007: 751).

Considering the EU as the ACP's top trading partner with 25% share in its total trade relations in 2016 (European Commission DG for Trade 2017: 8), it is possible to argue that trade is one of the dominating dynamics of the ACP relations with the EU. However, the ACP states cannot benefit from this high percentage of trade with the EU which is dominated by the import of mainly primary products (fuel and mining, agricultural products) by the latter from the former in exchange for manufactured goods (machinery and transport equipment) (Table 1) - in line with the trade patterns in the hierarchical centre-periphery relations[‡]. In this system ACP states are not allowed to diversify their export commodities. Rather, they are relying on the export of a single commodity for foreign exchange earnings and import of a variety of goods from western developed nations. Under those conditions, the whole export/import relationship between Europe and ACP represents one of unequal exchange and exploitation.

Table 1. European Union Trade with ACP Total

	Import Value Mio €				Export Value Mio €			
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total	92,051	91,088	81,194	69,938	86,387	85,495	86,734	76,802
Primary Products	73,427	71,502	59,382	45,696	24,454	24,984	23,113	19,616
Manufactured Products	14,596	14,069	15,735	15,765	60,112	59,000	61,863	55,435

Source: European Commission, 2017, 5.

[‡] There is an unequal exchange of products, whereby the centre predominantly provides the periphery with manufactured goods (i.e. iron, steel and textiles) including medium and high-tech products (i.e. electronic machinery, chemicals and communications equipment) in exchange for primary goods (i.e. oil, coal, fuels, gas and agricultural products). For more detail please see A. Emmanuel, 1972. Unequal exchange: a study of the imperialism of trade. London: New Left Books.

This kind of trade relationship, inevitably, forces the African states to operate under the conditions of dependence which results in an asymmetric and exploitative power structure between the EU and Africa (Sepos, 2013: 270). This can be evidenced by use of tariffs and subsidies by the EU in its agricultural sector in order to eradicate the only remaining competitive advantage of the ACP states vis-à-vis the EU producers. Although the EU has been pushing for a rapid removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers in manufacture sector since 2001 when *Everything but Arms* initiative started its operation, any removal of tariffs and other barriers from agriculture sector has been proceeding very slowly and gradually and in some cases not at all (Flint, 2008: 71). Moreover, the EU consistently applies enormous subsidies to protect its agricultural products and producers from the ACP competition which is a serious breach of neo-liberal principles. As a result, ACP states have become more and more dependent on the European markets for certain group of commodities.

As the basis for this inequality, EPAs are in the centre of serious criticisms due to a number of political and economic challenges for the ACP states which eventually lead to the exploitative power relations between the two sides. First, the EPAs basing on the principle of reciprocity in trade is not beneficial among the countries with asymmetrical development and wealth levels. The system is working in favour of the more developed side while exploiting the less developed one. The ACP states suffer from the lack of their competitive power in goods and services against the EU. Second, the EPAs are concluded with six regions within the ACP group rather than with the whole group itself. The insistency of the EU to negotiate at the regional level weakens the possibility of a more concerted or collective action by the ACP vis-à-vis the EU. The smaller scale of the regions and their less power than the ACP as a whole have made the regions less capable to negotiate for an agreement favouring developing countries. Consequently, it is the EU which sets the agenda and controls the pace and content of negotiations and allows little room for discussing clauses that are disadvantageous to the ACP states including tariff liberalisation, rule of origin and export tax among many others. Third, the EU is also accused of forcing the ACP states not to resist the EPAs by threatening to suppress aid from the EDF. The EU's policy of conditioning the future development aid to the signing of EPAs proves the dominant position of the EU vis-à-vis the ACP states which makes the latter dependent on the former. From a more general perspective, the coherence between the EPAs and dependency can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Coherence between EPA and Dependency Theory

DEPENDENCY THEORY

International Influences of Relationship

WTO conformity and reciprocity:	and	It is not compatibility which needed to be regarded first; but the human welfare. The reciprocity may be damaging EUACP countries Agreements. ‘the fact that there would be cheap EU maize, fruits and vegetables coming to Namibia is detrimental to local farmers’
Suspension of development	of Doha	The Doha agenda failed because of the EU and the United States of America (USA) did not agree to reduce agriculture subsidies. It was a self-interest question. ‘the big boys (USA and EU) are behaving like gluttons who want to consume and pocket everything without appreciating that the situation of SACU members demands flexible treatment’
Failed experience of financial assistance support	of EU	Aid for trade has often not been translated into a set of clear and concrete actions. It failed because donor countries don’t have enough money to pay the adjustment costs
Discretionary powers of the EU	negotiation	The EU has strong negotiation power because ACP countries are dependent on the aid sector. ‘the EC’s refusal to amend the interim EPA text or add an annex to the existing one in order to safeguard Namibia’s interests has caused a deadlock in the negotiations’

Disappointing Results of the Previous Agreements

Failure of Lomé	The share of imports from ACP to the EU has declined during Lomé Convention. The ACP countries are not much better off after 25 years of Lomé cooperation
Short lifetime of Cotonou	The Cotonou Agreement is not quite an agreement, but a neoliberal agenda of the EU imposed on the African continent. It is an unfair treaty

The New Agreement

EPA	EPA will bring high adjustment costs and unemployment will rise in Namibia. Further destruction of infant industries through competition of EU products
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Source: Hassane, 2010, 80.

The criticisms explained above prove that the EU have used the EPAs on behalf of its own material and ideational interests by giving precedence to its mercantilist interests over the ACP’s developmental and regional integration interests (Sepos, 2013: 271-272). Thus, the EU has narrowed down the Cotonou objectives of sustainable development and poverty eradication to a self-serving trade and investment liberalisation agenda. As it is also argued by the European

Parliament, contrary to the development expectations of the ACP states, ‘too rapid reciprocal trade liberalization between the EU and the ACP could have a negative impact on vulnerable ACP economies’ and ‘liberalizing trade between unequal partners as a tool for development has historically proven to be ineffective and even counterproductive’ (European Parliament, 2006: 1). This will only increase the domination and concentration of European firms, goods and services’ in African states (www.stopepa.org). Therefore, developing countries have developed significant opposition to forcing EPAs on them.

Thus, referring to the historical evolution, it is possible to argue that the plan for reciprocal trade relations under EPAs represents a return to the relationship that was first structured in the Treaty of Rome and then the Yaoundé Conventions. In this historical framework, EPAs can therefore be seen as an attempt to achieve what is effectively a normalisation of the trade relationship (Hurt, 2012: 498) under the global liberalisation and privatisation waves. From this perspective, EPAs represent neo-colonial intentions of the EU forcing the ACP states to accept the unfavourable trade agreements which put their long-term development objectives of the latter at serious risk (Olivier, 2011: 60).

2.2.2. Development Aid

Besides trade, development aid is another development instrument of the EU which is used as a political tool rather than an action of the European goodwill. These aids recently provided in the form of loans with high interest rates as opposed to grants mostly result in the increasing amount of foreign debt for the African states. Moreover, it seems that heavy indebtedness of the African economies and the refusal of the Europeans to write-off the debt would make African economic dependency on Europe a permanent feature of their relations (Uche, 1994: 53-54) in the long run.

As Crawford notes it ‘development aid has always been political...with implicit conditionality’ (2001: 2). As the EU policies towards Africa have been developing, the relations have become politicised with much more explicit conditionality and put ACP states under the political pressure of the EU since the middle of the 1980s (Carbone, 2007: 7, 32). Although the first Lomé Convention respect of state sovereignty and the self-determination of partners, as the EU’s policies towards Africa have developed, they have become steadily more politicised (Carbone, 2007). Moreover, since around the mid-1980s, the EU has started including explicit references to political norms in pacts. Liberal democracy, human rights and rule of law were successfully inserted into the text of Lomé IV Convention. The revised Lomé IV Convention

of 1995 elevated these norms to the status of ‘essential’ and reinforced that aid has become conditional on political dialogue, respect of democratic principles, human rights, and rule of law. It also introduced the idea of performance-based funding which makes funding through the EDF more of a political instrument (Holden, 2009: 130).

Cotonou confirmed the politicisation of aid by confirming conditionality. It changed the context for aid in several respects and developed a new system basing on needs and performance (Holden, 2009: 132). The agreement also introduced punishment mechanisms for misdemeanours, in the form of aid suspension for gross abuses of human rights (Taylor, 2015: 12). This means that Cotonou made aid and resource redistribution possible to reward compliant countries, and limit or deny unspent funds to poor performers. This sent the message that ‘it is possible to re-allocate the second tranche to other countries that do perform well and take more account of EU priorities’ (Crawford, 1996: 509). Thus, the funding amounts of Cotonou, as shown in the Table 3 below, accentuated ‘existing trends towards heightened conditionality and a focus on reform’ (Holden, 133). This policy of the EU followed a broader pattern whereby ‘the introduction of explicit political conditions to aid has become additional to the prevailing economic conditionality that had dominated aid policy in the 1980s, with multilateral lending and much bilateral aid dependent on the adoption of International Monetary Fund/World Bank-led structural adjustment programs’ (Crawford, 2001: 2). In this sense, political as well as economic conditionalities have become part of the EU’s development policy against the ACP states.

Table 3. Aid Allocations under the Cotonou Agreement for ACP (in million euros)

	9 th EDF (2000-2007)*	10 th EDF (2008-2013)	11 th EDF (2014-2020)
EDF	13500	21966	29089
Additional EIB Funds	1700	2000	2500
Total	15200	23966	31589
Annual Average	1900	3994	4513

*In addition, these resources were supplemented by unused balances transferred from previous EDFs,

Source: EP, 2015, 9.

Conclusion

Europe's relations with ACP states have been shaped by various historical and contemporary forces reflecting the economic, political and geo-strategic contexts that have influenced both regions. In that sense, colonialism was noticeable in constructing an exploitative and asymmetric relationship between Europe and African states. Even, colonialism was later transformed into neo-colonialism with the de-colonisation movements of the 1960s. Thus, independence of the ACP states did not end their underdevelopment because of the emergence of a new type of unequal power relations under 'neo-colonialism' whereby colonial masters [Europeans] continue controlling their former colonies [in Africa] indirectly in the guise of development cooperation by using social, political and economic tools (Oguejiofor, 2015: 1). Historically, the EU is a major source of development assistance for Africa. However, modern time development cooperation of the EU under neo-liberalism has reinforced dependency relationship between itself and Africa due to the continuous erosion of limited concessions granted to the ACP states mostly as a result of the increasing adoption of neoliberal thinking (Hurt, 2004: 158). Regional adjustments to the global neo-liberal trends have eventually transformed development cooperation into a European neo-colonial project with its detrimental consequences on the object of dependency relationship which is represented as the ACP states in this article.

When the classical colonial ties between some of the EU member states and the former colonies in Africa have been replaced by neo-colonial relationship, the ACP states have become much more dependent on their former colonisers. As a result, because of the adoption of a pragmatic approach to development and trade policy under the increasing pressures of globalisations, the EU has failed in meeting development needs of the ACP states. Rather, Europe has increased its wealth through the exploitation of the African poverty which could only be possible by the European neo-colonial domination and imperial intervention in the region. Therefore, referring to the theoretical explanations and practical implementation, it is possible to argue that development cooperation of the EU with Africa is one of the fittest examples revealing its neo-colonial ambitions in the region which, however, results in uneven power relationships with distinct categories of losers and winners in the capitalist world economy through the cycle of perpetual inequality.

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