

# **Effective Foreign Policy without Sovereignty: The European Union's Policy towards Africa**

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## ***Abstract***

*It seems as if foreign policy initiatives become more and more important for promotion of the European integration. A stronger focus on the international interventions of the EU automatically raises the question of sovereignty. The EU lacks sovereignty, at least in formal terms. Christopher Hill argues that without formal possession of sovereignty, it is very difficult to have a foreign policy. Nevertheless, the European Union has an ambition to establish an effective and coherent foreign policy towards Africa as it is formulated in the 2005 'European Union Strategy for Africa'. The paper argues that the Union is capable of pursuing an effective foreign policy towards Africa in spite of the lack of formal sovereignty. The argument is 'tested' against the CFSP/ESDP initiatives, the development aid policy, the humanitarian aid policy and the trade policy aimed at Africa. The conclusion to the empirical analysis is that it is difficult for the EU to establish an effective policy towards Africa. However, it is impossible to establish if that has to do with the EU's lack of formal sovereignty.*

## **Introduction**

In recent years, a strong trend in the international debate on the future of the European Union has argued that foreign policy increasingly is becoming the instrument which can and most probably will push the European integration process further (...). It means that foreign policy initiatives and an increasingly prominent role for the European Union on the global scene are considered crucial for further development of European cooperation. If the assessment is correct, it naturally turns the focus towards the foreign policy initiatives of the Union and towards the preconditions for the EU to play a significant international role.

The preconditions have been presented on several occasions by Mr. Javier Solana, the High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. For example, he has stated: "A more effective foreign and security policy begins with the political will to use all the available instruments in a co-ordinated and coherent way....Collectively these are substantial: as the world's

largest aid donor we already make an important financial contribution to aid programmes and to humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. We have a global diplomatic network .... We can use our diplomatic, economic and financial muscle to influence the behaviour of recalcitrant parties and aggressors” (Financial Times 29 September 2000).

The focus on the external relations raises the issue of competences in European foreign policy between the common European institutions and the member states. Such a focus also touches upon the discussion concerning which institutions and which actors are involved in decision-making on external affairs. Thus, discussing foreign policy almost automatically leads to the complicated question of sovereignty which is traditionally closely linked to the nation state. As far as sovereignty is concerned, Christopher Hill argues that “formal possession of sovereignty makes it highly likely that a state will have a foreign policy....whereas in situations where sovereignty is denied or the capacity to exercise it severely impeded, foreign policy becomes particularly difficult – but not impossible” (Hill 2003: 31). Following the argument, it can be expected that the European Union will face significant problems when it pursues a foreign policy.

It is the argument of the paper that in spite of the lack of ‘formal possession of sovereignty’, the European Union is capable of pursuing an effective and coherent foreign policy at least towards one region, Sub-Saharan Africa. The ambition to formulate a coherent policy toward the whole of Africa manifested itself for the first time in 2000 with the Euro-Africa summit held in Cairo (Olsen 2005). The until now, final step in this process came in December 2005 with the adoption of the ‘EU Strategy for Africa’ which set out the first European framework to address the political aim of improving the coordination, coherence and consistency of the Union’s policies and instruments aimed at one particular region (EU Strategy 2005).

The paper scrutinizes the European Union’s efforts to integrate its different external policy instruments in order to establish a ‘more effective foreign and security policy’. The focus is on the Union’s policies towards Africa with special emphasis on the initiatives launched in the current millennium. Before embarking on the analysis, the next section briefly discusses the question of the EU’s lack of sovereignty and its prospects for establishing an effective foreign policy. It is followed by the presentation of the criteria for evaluation of what is an effective foreign policy. The empirical analysis falls into four sections. First, special attention is given to the initiatives towards Africa launched within the framework of the CFSP/the ESDP. It is followed by a separate analysis of the

development assistance policy and a separate analysis of the humanitarian aid policy. Fourthly, the paper looks into the trade policy aimed at Africa and in particular into the initiative to establish the so-called Regional Economic Partnership Agreements (REPAs). The conclusion returns to the question of the prospects for the EU to establish an effective foreign policy towards Africa without the possession of sovereignty.

## **Foreign policy without Sovereignty**

The analysis is based on the assumption that an international actor can have an effective external policy, even though it is not a sovereign state. "No discussion of international affairs can avoid discussing sovereignty and everyone has something to say about it", it is stated in a recent edited volume on contemporary international relations (Bickerton, Cunliffe, Gourevitch 2007: 1). The authors are extremely critical towards the new theories of International relations mainly constructivism and post-structuralism (Bickerton, Cunliffe, Gourevitch 2007 a: 20-37). The new theories fail to understand the importance of agency and in particular, they fail to understand why it does not make sense to apply a crucial concept such as sovereignty in studies of international relations without linking it to the state. It is mainly due to the fact that the state is the only agency which can claim responsibility in international affairs and which, at least potentially can be held accountable (Cunliffe 2007: 39ff).

The foreign policy of the European Union is defined as "the ensemble of the international activities including output from all three of the EU's pillars and not just that relating to the CFSP" (Hill 2003: 144-145). According to Christopher Hill, most citizens probably rank efficiency in foreign policy higher than democratic influence and participation indicating that 'most citizens' are mainly concerned with their government's ability to defend their interest effectively abroad (Hill 2003: 43). However, there is considerable disagreement concerning what interests should be defended abroad. Also, there are different expectations of what a 'successful' or 'efficient' foreign policy might entail.

Analysing the European Union as a foreign policy actor can be expected to face two analytical challenges. One is the argument of Christopher Hill that there seems to be a close link between sovereignty and the capacity to exercise an (effective) foreign policy. It is exactly what is being analysed in this paper. It questions the argument that it is difficult to establish an effective foreign policy in situations where sovereignty is lacking. The other analytical challenge is related to the

question of what type of foreign policy actor is the European Union referring to the above argument of Philip Cunliffe which indicates that sovereignty is tied to the nation state and not to other entities. This particular problem will be addressed below.

Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler take into account that the EU is not a sovereign state. On the other hand, they are in no doubt that the EU is an actor in global politics even though they are open to the extent to which it is the case. The two authors suggest to use the concept 'actorness' in order to stress that the Union is a unique actor in global politics (Bretherton & Vogler 2006). There are three crucial elements for understanding the actorness of the EU. The first is 'opportunity' for the Union to adopt new roles and new responsibilities. The second is 'presence' which contains elements such as identity. Finally, actorness is characterised by 'capability' which includes availability of policy instruments (Bretherton & Vogler 2006: 25ff).

Georg Sørensen agrees that the European Union is not a state in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, it is a 'postmodern state' and in such a state, the 'sovereignty game' differs from what is the case in the modern and postcolonial states. In the postmodern state, i.e. the European Union there is a tension between on the one hand, constitutional independence remaining the basis for EU-cooperation and on the other hand, integration that has progressed so far that constitutional independence is increasingly under pressure. When it comes to the aspect called 'substantial statehood', it is argued that the high level of integration within the EU means that there is no clear distinction between what is domestic and what is international (Sørensen 2001: 158ff). It can be assumed that this position leads to an argument which is fairly open towards attributing considerable sovereignty to the European Union not least as the question of responsibility is almost solved in this particular case and therefore, it can be expected that Sørensen is positive towards the prospects for establishing an effective foreign policy.

Robert Keohane refers to the Union as an entity with a limited and 'pooled sovereignty' indicating that the EU has moved away from the classical conception of external sovereignty. There is no doubt that the EU is pursuing relatively autonomous policies and exercising influence in world politics (Keohane 2001: 744). Robert Keohane argues that under the current conditions with increasing interdependence, we are experiencing a 'new' type of sovereignty which is less tied to the territory and much more to the "ability to act" within the new framework of international politics and that is considered positive for world order (Keohane 2002: 748, 762). It can be maintained that the European

Union is a special foreign policy actor even though formal ‘sovereignty is denied’ or the capacity to exercise foreign policy is severely impeded.

Summing up, there seems to be general agreement that even though the European Union is not a state, it is definitely an actor on the international arena. There is general agreement that the EU lacks formal sovereignty. On the other hand, the Union is an actor with so much potential international influence that it questions the viability of the argument that sovereignty is closely linked to the nation state. It seems safe to conclude that there is agreement among the authors presented here and the argument of James Heartfield that the European Union and its institutions are increasingly accruing authority in international affairs too (Heartfield 2007: 138ff). However, it is an open question if the agreement can be stretched to cover the argument that the EU member states currently experience a decline in the efficacy of the nation-state institutions which is then substituted by the Union as it is stated by James Heartfield.

## **Policy effectiveness**

The paper aims at discussing or testing the argument that in spite of lack of formal sovereignty, the European Union is able to establish an effective foreign policy at least towards Africa. Therefore, it is necessary to establish criteria for evaluating what is an effective foreign policy. Policy effectiveness has two dimensions. On the one hand, it involves both the question of coherence between the various external policy instruments and on the other hand, it is closely related to the question of the political will to use the different policy instruments in a strategic fashion. Policy coherence or policy consistency has two dimensions. The first is labelled ‘horizontal coherence’ referring to the point that the policies pursued by different parts of the EU machine should be consistent with each other, or at least they should not involuntarily be incoherent. Horizontal coherence therefore requires knowledge of the goals and the objectives of specific policy initiatives and also, it needs an evaluation of whether the different initiatives buttress the same goals or, if the initiatives basically pursue different goals and objectives (Nuttall, 2005: 93ff).

The other dimension of policy coherence, ‘institutional consistency’ refers to the fact that several actors each with a different set of procedures are involved in handling the external relations of

the Union. Institutional inconsistencies may both be the result of different approaches to the same problem and it may have to do with the fact that different actors pursue different objectives (Nuttall, 2005: 93ff). The distinction between horizontal and institutional consistency is related to the fact that EU policies are worked out in different parts of the EU machine each with their own specific procedures and also, it is linked to the fact that these policies may be adopted in pursuit of different objectives (Nuttall 2005: 104). However, due to the aim of the paper, it is obvious that horizontal consistency is the most important criterion to be used in the analysis.

Policy effectiveness is closely tied to the political will to act and to use all the available instruments in a strategic fashion. Political will to act is therefore linked to the type of interests and to the foreign policy goals, the European Union seeks to safeguard by means of its foreign policy initiatives. However, foreign policy interests and foreign policy goals cannot be seen in isolation (Hyde-Price 2004: 102). They have to be understood as the outcome of discrete political processes involving a number of different actors such as the Brussels-based EU institutions and the member states. As it is pointed out by constructivist theories, interests and decisions to a large extent are the result of interaction and socialization between actors operating both at the national level as well as at the EU-level (Smith 2003: 197-198; Smith 2004: 746; Knill 2001). Because, interests, preferences and goals develop over time, policy behaviour also changes (Hill 2003: 95-155; 296-7).

In spite of interests, preferences and goals may change over time, there is general agreement that a number of basic values and ideas fairly constantly guide the foreign policy initiatives of the European Union. These values and ideas are associated with the question of the Union's identity stressing that identity matters as identities contribute to shape the definition of European interests. The so-called 'European identity' is associated with values such as liberal-democracy, social market economies and peaceful resolution of disputes (Hyde-Price 2004: 108). The part of the identity debate which deals with the external policy argues that ethical and moral concerns to a large extent influence the Union's initiatives in this field (Hill & Wallace 1996: 1-16; Ginsberg 1999; Whitman 1998; Manners 2002). Concretely, the values and the principles guiding the external policies have been defined as the emphasis on "diplomatic rather than coercive instruments, the centrality of mediation in conflict resolution, the importance of long-term economic solutions to political problems, and the need for indigenous peoples to determine their own fate – all of these in contradistinction to the norms of superpower politics" (Hill & Wallace, 1996: 9).

Institutions are also assumed to play a role in the processes forming interests and identities. It is important here that not only decision-makers and states that have interests and preferences. Two European Union institutions are supposed to be of particular interest when it comes to establishing a more effective foreign and security policy namely the European Commission and the Council of Ministers (Hix 2005: 402; Bretherton & Vogler 2006). Involvement in conflict management and conflict prevention requires the use of all the Union's external policy instruments as it has repeatedly been stressed by Javier Solana (Solana 2000a; Solana 2000b) and thus the involvement of both the Commission and the Council securing them greater political clout.

Before embarking on the empirical analysis, a few remarks have to be made on the method of the study. There has to be a baseline for evaluating if the Union is able to develop an effective foreign policy. The CFSP/ESDP initiatives towards Africa are considered as the baseline in two respects. On the one hand, is there coherence and consistency between the individual CFSP/ESDP initiatives? On the other hand, are the different initiatives falling within the framework of the development aid policy, the humanitarian assistance policy and the trade policy coherent with the CFSP/ESDP initiatives? The reason for using exactly the CFSP/ESDP initiatives as baseline is that the common defence policy exactly touches upon the "last bastion of 'sovereignty'" (Howorth 2007: 31). Thus, the analysis of policy coherence is based on two core questions namely: Does a specific policy initiative strengthen horizontal as well as institutional coherence? And do the initiatives contribute to establish an effective policy towards Africa as far as the policies buttress this overall aim?

## **CFSP/ESDP initiatives towards Africa**

It is the aim of this section to show how the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and in particular how the European Defence Policy (ESDP) towards Africa has developed in recent years (Howorth 2007; Salmon 2005; Smith 2004; Wong 2005). As far as Africa is concerned, the EU Council of Ministers on June 12, 2003 adopted a resolution which, for the first time deployed EU military forces on the continent concretely in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The resolution was adopted within the framework of the European Common Defence Policy (ESDP) and it was groundbreaking as far as it was the EU's first crisis management operation outside Europe which was implemented without using NATO facilities under the Berlin Plus Agreement (Gégout 2005; Ulriksen

et al. 2004). The aim of Operation ‘Artemis’ was to stabilize the security situation in the crisis-ridden Ituri province in the DRC and improve the humanitarian situation in and around the main town of Bunia (Faria 2004, 20-40; Ulriksen et al. 2004).

There are several interpretations to why the operation in the DRC was launched. One is that the intervention had its background in the deep divisions among the European member states caused by the war on Iraq in the spring of 2003. The Congo operation was an attempt by the European powers to prove that they could still cooperate and that the CFSP/ESPD was still alive (Salmon, 2005: 375-9; Menon 2005: 631-48; confidential interviews, Brussels December 2005). In summary, the launch of Artemis was basically motivated by the interests of two of the great EU powers which shared an interest in continuing the development of the ESDP as a means to secure a role for the EU on the international scene by intervening militarily in a geographical area which is not as politically sensitive as for example the Middle East (Gégout 2005: 443).

On 17 November 2003, the General Affairs Council approved a draft decision to use the European Development Fund (EDF) to create a so-called ‘Peace Facility of Africa’ in line with the request made by the African Union (Faria 2004: 36). On March 25 2004, it was officially announced that the African Peace Facility which was a 250 million Euro instrument, financed by ‘development money’ i.e. the EDF was established with the aim to support African peacekeeping operations. By October 2006, the Peace Facility had supported the African Union’s AMIS mission in Darfur by providing more than 242 million Euros to its mission. In a recent evaluation report of the EU supported operation in Darfur, it is stated that “it is evident that AMIS has been able to contain the violence where it operates, but the signs of a return to stability are not as consistent or as strong” (ECDPM 2006: 4).

The APF is the outcome of almost 10 years of reflections and discussions among European and African decision-makers on the importance of conflict prevention for development and of the need to have appropriate measures to tackle conflicts in Africa. “The biggest innovation of the APF was in reality its legal basis.....In the European treaties work on peace-keeping or conflict resolution has really always been seen as falling under the inter-governmental pillar and not in the ‘community domain’ of the EC where development traditionally has been located. Other elements of the conflict cycle such as conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction work have long fallen in the EC’s domain and have been regularly recognised as such by the Member States (ECDPM 2006: 8).

Discussing the interests behind the launch of the African Peace Facility, there is no doubt that the Facility is instrumental in buttressing the ambition of the Union to have a foreign policy at least towards Africa. At the same time, it can not be dismissed that the EU involvement in the crisis in Darfur was promoted by a strong European desire to have the African Union to take responsibility for the security in Africa (Howorth 2007: 216). Allegedly, it was the aim to avoid direct EU military involvement in Darfur (Confidential interviews, Brussels, December 2005; Biscop 2005: 133). Jolyon Howorth has a rather critical view on the overall outcome of the EU's involvement in the crisis in Darfur. He argues that "the EU has ultimately proven unable to contribute in a manner consistent with its future ambitions and historical responsibilities for Africa...one is struck by the shortfall between the rhetoric and the reality" (Howorth 2007: 217).

In December 2004, the Council adopted a Joint Action deploying a number of European police officers in the DRC. This so-called EUPOL-Kinshasa mission was the EU's first civilian crisis management operation in Africa which, quite remarkably, fell within the framework of the ESDP. The next element in the European Union's engagement towards promoting stability and security in the DRC was the launch in June 2005 of an advisory mission for security reform in the country. The mission was intended to provide assistance to the local security authorities ensuring that the promotion of policies was compatible with human rights, democratic principles and good governance (Howorth 2007: 229).

During the election campaign in the spring of 2006, maintenance of order in Kinshasa was recognised by the UN as a key element for the success of the electoral process (EUPOL 2006). The Foreign Affairs Council decided temporarily to strengthen the EUPOL mission in Kinshasa by adopting a Joint Action on a military operation in support of the UN mission (MONUC) in the DRC. The EUFOR DRC was conducted within the framework of the ESDP and was assigned to support MONUC to stabilise the situation during the election process, protect civilians and protect the airport in Kinshasa. The military deployment with the operational headquarter provided by Germany included an advance element of almost 1.000 soldiers in and around Kinshasa. Also, the EU's military contribution included the availability of almost 1200 troops on-call 'over the horizon' in neighbouring Gabon from where they were quickly deployable if necessary (Background, DRC elections 2006, June 2006, Howorth 2007: 238-239).

Turning to the interests motivating EU decision makers to launch the different mission in Congo, they seem to have been mixed. Jolyon Howorth refers to "accusations that it was primarily

intended to get some good coverage for the EU is hard to avoid. However, it was consciously framed as part of the EU's comprehensive approach to the DRC." At the same time, it is summarised to "when taken together, the four EU missions in Congo do amount to a sizeable measure of assistance ....." (Howorth 2007: 239f). Also in a recent discussion paper, it is concluded that "the Congolese crisis has functioned as a political testing ground for the EU to design forms of intervention" (SDA 2007: 34; 9; 13).

Summing up, this section has produced the baseline for the analysis of the attempt to establish an effective European policy towards Africa. The different initiatives towards Africa all fall within the framework of the CFSP and the ESDP and thus within the realm of the Council of Ministers which clearly showed a will to act by launching these different initiatives. Moreover, it appears that the Commission has supported the initiatives. It appears that despite "different policy debates and the number of institutions involved, the policy consensus on how to promote conflict prevention between member states and the Commission and internally between Development Ministers and Foreign Ministers or between DG Dev and DG Relex is remarkably solid" (ECDPM 2006: 26). The assessment is confirmed by the SDA report stating the existence of "a large degree of common interest between the EU institutions and the bilateral policies pursued by the member states" (SDA 2007, 34; 35). At the same time, it also has to be recognised that bureaucratic conflicts and conflicts of interests have disturbed decision-making and implementation (SDA 2007: 11).

The remaining question is which goals and aims, the European Union pursued with the initiatives launched towards Africa within the framework of the CFSP/ESDP. No doubt, there were several motives involved. Nevertheless, it is argued here that the overall aim was to establish the European Union as an international actor. The most important observation to make is that, at the face of it, there seems to be a remarkable horizontal as well as institutional coherence between the different initiatives launched if they are evaluated against the goal of turning the EU into an international actor in its own right. It means looking at the CFSP/ESDP policies detached from the other policy instruments makes it safe to conclude that these initiatives lay a solid foundation for the establishment of an effective foreign policy.

## **Development assistance policy**

This section scrutinizes if and to what extent the Union's development assistance policy has buttressed the declared aim of improving coordination, coherence and consistency with the view to establish an effective policy towards Africa. At the UN millennium summit in September 2000, the EU countries promised to increase their development aid in order to secure resources for reaching the ambitious Millennium Development Goals (MDG) one of which is by 2015 to halve the number of people living in absolute poverty. Afterwards, the EU expressed its full commitment and dedication to the MDG on several occasions (Commission 12 April 2005). It was clearly underlined at the EU summit in Barcelona in March 2002 where the 15 member states promised to make an effort to set aside at least 33% of their individual GNI for ODI by 2006 (Morrissey 2003: 6). The goal was later revised upwards as the EU countries agreed to reach 0,51% of individual GNI in development aid by 2010 and 0,7% by 2015. Within the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that it was decided that 50% of the agreed increase should be allocated to the African continent (Council 16 & 17 June 2005: 8-9).

The increase in the volume of aid to sub-Saharan Africa meant that the region received a slightly increasing share of the total net disbursements of ODA from the EU as it almost reached 37% in 2005 compared with 30,4 % in 2001 (OECD 2006: table 29). Most probably, the share will increase further in the future as a result of the decision to give priority to Africa. This change in aid allocations seems to point towards a preliminary observation that the aid policy buttresses the Union's aim to make a difference in Africa.

Parallel to the increasing aid volumes, remarkable changes took place in the geographical distribution of development aid from the EU to individual African countries. From 2001 to 2005, a number of countries experienced increases in their aid volume, whereas others had their aid reduced. The aid to Ivory Coast from the EU was cut by more than 70%. From 2001 and the following years, Kenya experienced significant reductions in aid allocations but from 2004 till 2005, there was almost a doubling of the aid volume to the country. In this context it is most interesting that a number of countries experienced significant increases in their aid allocations. Measured in current prices, the DRC

experienced an increase in EU aid of around 500%, Mozambique some 200 % whereas the EC aid to the Sudan jumped by no less than 1000 % from 2001 to 2005 (OECD, 2007: 68).

The two trends in European development assistance policy require an interpretation. The increasing political priority given to conflict management and conflict prevention can, at the face of it explain the remarkable increase in aid to the DRC and the Sudan. Both countries are in an extremely vulnerable post-conflict viz. conflict situation where development aid can be one of the instruments to stabilise the situation. And as described, both countries are among the absolute priorities of the ESDP towards Africa.

On the other hand, there are numerous statements and official documents which explain the increase in the aid volume with reference to the strong EU consent to the UN millennium goals (Commission 2005). The development Commissioner Louis Michel has explicitly stated that “the European Union has geared its development policy firmly towards poverty reduction. We share the vision of the UN’s Millennium Declaration: a world free from want” (Michel 2005). There is no doubt that the DRC and the Sudan are among the poorest countries in Africa. Due to the official poverty focus of European development assistance, the two countries had to be among the main recipients of EU foreign aid to Africa. It points towards a conclusion that the European decision-makers disburse aid to the African countries based mainly on criteria tied to the traditional aim of poverty reduction. This type of argument can not only explain the significant increases in aid disbursements to the two countries mentioned. It can also explain the growth in aid to Zambia and Mozambique. This type of ‘traditional’ reasoning may finally explain the reduction in aid to the Ivory Coast with its ongoing civil war and the fluctuations in aid to Kenya, for example.

It is necessary to stress that it has not been possible to find indicators suggesting the increase in the aid volume to sub-Saharan Africa in particular can be explained with reference to the fight against international terrorism i.e. to a new type of security concerns. Also, it is difficult to explain the changes in geographical distribution of EU aid to Africa as an element in the fight against terrorism (Olsen 2006).

Summing up, it is possible to argue that the increasing aid to Africa combined with the simultaneous priority given to the DRC and the Sudan buttressed the aim of pursuing a coherent and possibly effective Africa policy. It has to be recognized that there were two aims and motives guiding the initiatives launched within this particular policy field. On the one hand, there is no doubt that

poverty eradication was a crucial aim. On the other hand, it is possible to argue the Union's aid policy towards Africa seems to point towards a conclusion that a number of important decision-makers have been in agreement in trying to pursue an aid policy which was not in contradistinction to the CFSP initiative launched in the same period. This gives a basis for concluding that the combination of the CFSP/ESDP initiatives and the aid initiatives showed a considerable, but not unambiguous horizontal as well as institutional consistency. With the political will to act, it seems reasonable to conclude that the European Union with its development aid policy has laid the foundation for a pursuing an effective foreign policy towards Africa.

## **Humanitarian assistance**

The section scrutinizes if and to what extent, the Union's humanitarian assistance policy has buttressed the declared aim of improving coordination, coherence and consistency in the Union's policies towards Africa. It appears that humanitarian assistance is a highly relevant instrument in support of the ambition to establish an effective foreign policy. The decision in 1992 to establish a separate EU office with responsibility for emergency assistance (ECHO) had its background in the frustration over the lack of a European capability to deliver efficient humanitarian assistance during the crisis following the war liberating Kuwait in 1991. However, there was also a political wish to have a specialized organization within this particular policy field. Both purposes aimed at fulfilling a third motive which was to give the European Community much more international visibility in a policy field that is very often in the focus of the international media (Personal interview, Brussels 16 November 1999; Holland 2002: 100).

The combined resources from ECHO, from so-called 'other Commission' and from bilateral contributions made 'Europe' the biggest provider of humanitarian assistance during the 1990s accounting for 53-54 % of global humanitarian assistance on the average (ECHO 1999: 29). ECHO as a separate donor accounted for around one-third of the amount placing it among the top global donors of humanitarian aid (ECHO 1999: 29). Between 2001 and 2006, on the average 37% of all humanitarian assistance from the EU went to Africa (ECHO 2002: 15, 20; ECHO 2006). It means Africa continued to receive a considerable amount of EU humanitarian assistance both before and after September 11. This pattern of allocation can be interpreted as an indication that ECHO followed its

‘forgotten-crises strategy’ launched in 2001 (Tanguy 2002) assuming Africa contains the biggest number of forgotten crises. The strategy stated as a general aim of the EU’s humanitarian assistance policy that aid should be given to crises where other donors were reluctant to become involved, among other things because of lack of media attention as it has been the case with the West Saharan refugee crisis. On the other hand, the pattern of allocation can also be seen as an indication of the attempt to pursue a coherent and consistent foreign policy where Africa is an obvious target region because of its many emergency and post-emergency situations.

However based on the actual financial decisions, it appears that after 2001 ECHO ended up in disbursing significant amounts of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq which can hardly be described as ‘forgotten crises’. Thus in 2003, Iraq and Afghanistan were the two biggest recipients of disbursements of humanitarian assistance from the EU. And Afghanistan continued to be so in 2004. The amounts are remarkable compared with the disbursements to Congo and Southern Africa (ECHO 2003, 2004) which were also very big crisis regions. This pattern of allocation not only questions the adherence to the forgotten crises strategy. It also questions the commitment to pursue a coherent and effective foreign policy towards Africa.

In conclusion, the significant disbursements of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq stress at least two important observations. One is that a bureaucratic organization like ECHO cannot set its own goals independently from what core decision-makers find politically important. Secondly, humanitarian assistance is increasingly considered as an integrated part of the foreign policy of the European Union. It means that depending on the specific case and the specific situation, humanitarian aid will be channelled to crises that are considered politically important, to a large extent because of intensive media coverage but partly irrespective of the objective needs elsewhere (Macrae 2004; Macrae & Harmer 2004). The situations in Afghanistan and in Iraq were so important to some decision-makers within the EU and to the interests of many member states that huge amount of assistance was directed to these countries. On the other hand, it is difficult to argue that this pattern of disbursement undermines the attempts to establish a coherent and effective foreign policy as exactly the priority given to Afghanistan and Iraq could very well be part of a coherent and consistent foreign policy of the EU aiming world wide. At the same time, it is only possible to argue that the political emphasis given to Iraq and Afghanistan and thus the priority in the allocation of humanitarian assistance exactly to these two countries may weaken the possibilities for pursuing a coherent and

consistent policy towards Africa. This is the conclusion if the policy initiatives are measured against the assumed goal of the Union's Africa policy which is to establish the EU as actor on the international scene in spite of the lack of sovereignty.

## **Trade policy: Regional Economic Partnership Agreements**

A crucial element in the preparation for the revision of the Lomé Convention expiring in 2000, the European Commission in 1996 issued a 'Green Book' on the future of the EU-African relationship (Green 1996). It contained reflections both on development aid issues and on trade. The trade proposals involved the abandonment of the existing system of trade preferences granted to the African countries and replace it with regional free trade agreements. Also, the European Commission wanted to change the trade arrangement from a single agreement covering all ACP countries to several agreements presupposing a regionalization of Africa into four sub-regions. From the start, the African countries opposed both the idea of regionalization and the suggestion to give up the principle of non-reciprocity in the trade relations (Forwood, 2001: 427ff). Gradually, however, the position of the African countries shifted towards accepting the idea of 'Regional Economic Partnership Agreements' (REPAs) (Forwood 2001: 435).

Officially, the EU has two general aims with its proposal to establish REPAs. First, it is to facilitate the integration of the African countries into the world economy. Secondly but definitely just as important, much of the rhetoric in the Cotonou Agreement emphasises that the overall aim of the new convention is poverty reduction. The aim of reducing poverty and the aim of gradually integrating of the developing countries into the global economy are both emphasized in the Maastricht Treaty which in 1992 laid down the overall goals and aims of the EU's development cooperation (Hurt 2003: 165ff; Forwood: 435f).

The EU Commission and European policy makers referred to the WTO and to the generally agreed principles of international free trade as the basic argument for why the African countries had to give up the non-reciprocal trade arrangement. The other reason is that more than 30 years of trade preferences and non-reciprocity in the trade relations between the EU and Africa have not been successful if measured against a goal of trade diversification and economic growth (Green Book 1996). The reference to the WTO and the need to be in line with the provisions on free trade receives critical

comments from several authors who find the argument of WTO compatibility is a bad excuse for abandoning the existing system of trade preferences. For example, Richard Gibb finds that “WTO compliance is at the very centre of the present post-Lomé negotiations because the EU puts them there..”(Gibb 2000: 466). And Stephen Hurt argues that the “use of the WTO as the major justification is ..a strategic attempt by the EU to externalise responsibility for its own policy” (Hurt 2003: 174).

Irrespective of the strong opposition from the ACP countries and from parts of the research community as well, the EU member countries in early 1998 agreed upon a negotiating mandate for the Commission which contained a proposal to replace the existing non-reciprocal trade preferences with REPAs which were to be signed with different regions in Africa (Council 1998). According to the proposals in the EU mandate, the African partners would retain their current preferential access to the European markets, but they would have to reciprocate by progressively opening up their markets to imports from Europe on a preferential basis. The negotiations began formally in 2002 and the official deadline is by the end of 2007 a date which is closely related to the WTO which has granted a ‘waiver’ that expires at the end of the year (Stevens 2006: 443ff).

In spite of the fact that the negotiations are currently taking place, a number of authors are predicting that the establishment of the REPAs will have very serious consequences for the African countries (Stevens 2006; Gibb 2000: 457; Stevens & Kennan 2005; McQueen 1999). On the other hand, there are authors who look much more positively at the potential impact of the REPAS and who argue that they may accelerate trade in Africa (Hinkle & Schiff, 2004; Hinkle, Hoppe & Newfarmer 2005/6). Lacking empirical evidence of the consequences of the REPAs, we have to rely on official statements on the goals and aims of the new turn in the Union’s trade policy towards Africa

Summing up, the proposal to establish the REPAs is obviously a rupture with the traditional European trade policy with Africa which tied to African countries to the EU by means of preferential trade agreements. Based on the officially declared aims, it is not possible to conclude that the new trade policy may not buttress the goal of establishing an effective European policy towards Africa. There is not yet empirical basis for claiming that the REPAs may not promote economic development and thus that the new trade policy may not be in agreement with the aims of the development aid policy as they are found in the Maastricht treaty. On the other hand, it has to be recognised that abandoning the special trade agreement between the two parties necessarily weakens the relationship and thus the possibility to pursue an effective policy aimed at establishing the EU as a significant international

actor, at least towards Africa. Thus, the overall conclusion has to be that it is impossible to establish if it will result in buttressing the aims of the Union. As far as the crucial criterion, it has to be concluded that there is a lack of horizontal coherence between the trade policy and the other policies analysed in this paper.

## **Conclusion**

It is the basic argument of the paper that it is possible for the European Union to establish an effective foreign policy in spite of the fact that the EU is not a state and in spite of the fact that the EU does not hold formal sovereignty. Focussing narrowly on the initiatives launched within the framework of the CFSP and the ESDP with minor reservation, it is possible to conclude that the European Union is capable of establishing an effective foreign policy towards Africa. It is important to stress that this particular type of policy initiatives seems to buttress the overall aim to establish the EU as a significant international actor. If the policy initiatives launched within the field of development assistance is included in the analysis, it is still possible to argue that the EU is capable of pursuing an effective foreign policy towards Africa. However, a close look may blur the picture because, it is not clear if the development aid initiatives unambiguously buttress the goal of turning the EU into an international actor. It appears that poverty eradication is a rather strong motive for disbursing aid to Africa and not necessarily to establish the EU as a world player in general. It leads to a rather cautious conclusion. Based on the CFSP initiatives and the development aid initiatives, without reservations it is not possible to maintain that the EU is under way to establish an effective and coherent foreign policy.

Taking the humanitarian aid policy into account adds to the mixed picture of the prospects for establishing an effective foreign policy. The humanitarian aid policy is to a very large extent subject to political considerations in a very narrow sense of the word. The strong political influence on the decisions taken within this realm means it is difficult to conclude that the policy towards Africa buttress the goal of turning the EU into a global actor. It may be the case, but it is not obvious. Finally turning towards the rapidly changing trade policy, it is clear that there is a lack of horizontal as well as institutional coherence between this particular policy field and the others analysed.

The overall conclusion has to be that it is difficult for the European Union to establish an effective foreign policy towards Africa. It means that we have to reject the argument of the paper. However, the rejection does not mean that it is possible to establish that the lack of a coherent foreign policy has to do with the lack of formal sovereignty or that the somewhat incoherent foreign policy of the EU has to be explained with reference to internal circumstances within the Union itself.

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