



CHATHAM HOUSE

Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE

T: +44 (0)20 7957 5700 E: [contact@chathamhouse.org](mailto:contact@chathamhouse.org)

F: +44 (0)20 7957 5710 [www.chathamhouse.org](http://www.chathamhouse.org)

Charity Registration Number: 208223

## Meeting Summary

# The EU and Africa: From Eurafrique to Afro-Europa

*Book Launch*

**Dr Adekeye Adebajo**

Executive Director, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town

**Kaye Whiteman**

Journalist; Research Associate, Centre of African Studies, SOAS

**Discussant: Professor Gordon Cumming**

Cardiff School of European Languages, Translation and Politics (EUROP), Cardiff University

3 September 2012

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

### **Dr Adekeye Adebajo**

Even if the European Union (EU) has been Africa biggest trade partner over five decades, new global trends emerged in this relationship. The book aims at correcting anomalies in some of the writing on the relationship between Africa and the EU. This book is the result of two research and policy seminars and the hard work of different scholars. Each chapter looks at a different theme of the relationship (historical relations, regional integration, trade, migration, etc.). It provides contributions from various practitioners.

As the African Union (AU) is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the European Union its 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary, similarities and differences can be observed. Both institutions have been suffering a lack of democratic structures. The EU's power is shared by its institutions whereas the AU structure is very leaders-oriented. Ndlamini-Zuma is the first women to lead the AU, but the Commission still struggles to establish its role. The EU Commission in contrast initiates most legislation, is the guardian of the Treaties and has judicial power over member states if they refuse to comply. The EU members always pay their parts of the budget, the AU members never pay. The EU is often compared to a bicycle so that you have to keep peddling to reach the goal. The AU is more described as an African mini bus on which you can read: 'no condition is permanent'.

### **Kaye Whiteman**

A main characteristic of this book is its attempt to cover the wide variety of different themes comprehensively in the context of changes taking place in the world and in Europe – nine in 1973, now 27. This is why it goes beyond ACP relations or the Africa Strategy, and looks at the importance of Asia, and North Africa/Middle East implying Europe's position in Africa is diminishing. The idea of a special Euro-African relationship (see Dominique de Villepin's article in *Le Monde* at the end of July– in which he actually says 'our future is Eurafrikan') of the kind posited from Yaoundé through to Cotonou is perhaps no more. Even Lome, which was a beacon in its day, cannot be gone back to, though it represented the best and most progressive ideas of the time.

For Africa, relations with Europe are (although still important because of the scale of trade – most important trading partner) only one of several strategic partnerships. One needs to redefine Afro-Europa in this context. That is why immigration, agriculture are part of this study, because if Europe wants to maintain special relations it has to pay more attention in these sectors. Security partnerships will also figure more and more. The lesson drawn is that

Africa has to be sure that it is defending its own interests and not prosecuting Europe's own.

The historical chapter looks at the way Europe moved from the 1884-5 gathering in Berlin through a period of competing empires to Eurafrique. At the time this was a retrograde idea invented by the French and picked up by the Italians and by Hitler's Germany which aimed at unity between Europe and Africa based on the latter's raw materials furnishing the former's industrial growth, positing a restitution of colonies to Germany lost at Versailles. The historical parallel can be drawn in 1973 as most of SSA gathered in the Egmont Palace in Brussels – the first great conference in Europe on Africa since Berlin, only this time the African countries (with their fellows from Caribbean and Pacific) were present. Was it a kind of historical atonement for colonialism, a recompense for 'the Curse of Berlin'? It was not just former territories of Britain and France, Belgium and Italy, but also of Portugal and Spain ten years before it entered the European Economic Community (EEC), as well as Liberia and Ethiopia, a gesture towards Pan-Africanism – endorsed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1973 that led to the eighteen months of negotiations that produced the Lome Convention.

Eurafrique had been tried in the Yaounde convention born from the Rome Treaty, but it had been perceived as too one-sided, denounced by Pan-Africans as neo-colonial: Lome was to represent a new deal. The speaker had been in the 70s a spokesman for the EEC-ACP Lome Convention. But imperfect and incomplete though it was, the Lome Convention probably represented the high point of the notion that there could be a genuine mutually beneficial partnership between united Europe and at least an important part of the developing world.

It generated a spirit that has never really been recaptured, in part because of the new unity forged by the ACP. This spirit used pan Africanism to set up something that would contribute to Africa. The whole thing was a bit too good to be true, began to go downhill, even in the seventies, hypocrisy of 'unequal partnership'. Trade provision was under fire from the beginning, especially from GATT, against good free trade principles, and the whole notion of equal partnership submerged in Africa's 'lost decade', as the convention grew in size, it became less effective, damaged by European bureaucracy. So by '90s the relationship was back to reciprocity in Cotonou, especially as WTO played an influential role in the trade relation. This led to the birth of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) drama, which has done so much damage to the political atmosphere of the negotiations – not just ending non-reciprocity,

as fouling up regional cooperation even with the best of intentions. This will ended with the expiration of Cotonou in 2020.

Serious dysfunctionalities set in with the development of the idea of a Europe Africa Strategic Partnership, born of summits (Cairo 2000, delayed by Zimbabwe but eventually Lisbon 2007). Encouraged by the arrival of the AU and as pan African security needs developed in the 90s, this was later fuelled in 2001 by Europe's anti-terrorist concerns. Important chunks of European Development Fund from 2005 onwards began to go to AU forces, first in Sudan, then more successfully in Somalia, at the same time as Europe developed its own EUFORs, mainly in Congo, then Chad-CAR (both treated in detail). All of which by-passed the ACP completely, even though the funding came from EDF. There is a strategy that coexists with Cotonou, but there is a lack of relations between both. EDF has been a useful tool, but how long will it last given the current recession?

### **Professor Gordon Cumming**

As an independent reviewer, Professor Cumming commented on the book. The book's real strength is the extensive coverage and fact that there is a real space given to African voice. In addition, the book distinguishes itself from much of the existing literature which tends to be more specialised, narrower in focus (EU development assistance, security sector reform) and it has depth as well as breadth. The scope is wide and has an historical as well as a contemporary focus. This is useful in bringing out long term perspectives and new insights. Reference is made to France's break up of West and Central African federations at a time when France was helping to build Europe. Would these federations have been more viable given EU's current efforts at regional integration? The content came from senior practitioners as well as interview-led chapters by academics and think tanks. They brought fascinating insights such as: Portugal is relying on ex-African colonies to help it get out of recession; an allegation that France used Operation Artemis to supply arms to Hutu FDLR rebels; and that eight other countries now have more embassies than Britain in Africa. It also brings fascinating recommendations: on the need for donors to increase aid for agriculture and Africans to invest more in agriculture particularly at a time of food insecurity security and rising prices and on need for EU to be more modest about its capabilities as an actor in Africa.

Given the task of an independent critic, the speaker looked for any areas where the editors might have proceeded differently. Clearly from an academic

point of view, there is often an expectation that a theoretical perspective is used throughout and that an extensive literature review is included early on in the text. None of these features are true of this book but as a practitioner focused text, it gains rather than loses from not including such features. It does not get lost in arguments over whether the EU is essentially a value driven normative actor or self-centred hegemonic realist.

The book might nonetheless have benefited from a final concluding chapter that brought together the excellent recommendations raised throughout the text. This would have been an opportunity for the authors to pick out those recommendations that they see as key and to decide between recommendations by contributors that contradict each other. e.g., Adedeji calls for EU Marshall plan while de Vos wants to do away with aid and focus on trade. There would in fact be a case for preparing a very short note including the key recommendations of the study and sending this on to policy makers as a way of further enhancing impact.

To conclude, a few thoughts/ questions were put together. Is the EU disengaging from Africa? Is it transferring responsibility to other actors such as the G8 and G20 as well as to the UN, World Bank, WTO? Are these other actors such as the UN partners or competitors and how could cooperation with them be enhanced? The EU is said to be imposing its own institutions on the AU and regional trade model (via EPAs) on ACP. Are these the right models? In pushing its model, what space has the EU left for African voice, agency? What space is there for African ambitions such as the creation of an African economic community by 2028? How can the efforts of the African diaspora be better harnessed to ensure the development of Africa? Will the EPAs ever be concluded? Should they? Given that European member states are increasingly emphasising national interests, what will this mean for EU policy coherence?

The book concludes that EurAfrique, the era of exploitation of Africa's resources by the European powers has passed and should be replaced by mutual, equal partnership, Afro-Europa. But has it in fact been replaced by exploitation by different players: Chinafrique, BRICafrique?

## Q&A

### Question

What methodology have you followed for this research?

### Adekeye Adebajo

Originally there were twenty chapters commissioned from experts who have been working in the field. These papers were presented and discussed at a conference. The rest was a normal process.

### Question

Do you see signs of improvements in terms of Brussels cooperation with Africa?

### Adekeye Adebajo

We visited Brussels two times to discuss the book with different people. The overall impression from Brussels' officials is that there are a significant amount of very capable people, but there is a lack of understanding at the higher level. The higher political level takes the major decisions but does not always know what is happening on the ground.

### Question

You compared Africa to a 'car', where do you see that 'car' going?

### Adekeye Adebajo

First, the car needs a good maintenance. There are still a large amount of AU documents to be ratified and implemented for the institutions to be efficient. Regional integration is very positive for Africa and needs to be pursued behind regional leadership. Projects such as the Maputo trade corridors, large regional investments and infrastructure network are beneficial to the development of the continent. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has 5 regional pillars and also focusses on national good governance.

### **Question**

How can the EU promote regionalism amongst IGAD countries?

### **Adekeye Adebajo**

It is not an EU responsibility. The EU is already struggling enough to promote regionalism at home so it is not their responsibility to do it in Africa. IGAD countries need to do it themselves. The problem is that there are some very contradictory countries in IGAD, so help might be needed from the AU to define working RECs. Outsiders can invest to support these initiatives – with financial support and with enabling trade policies such as lower tariffs – but the implementation needs to come from inside Africa.

### **Question**

What is the future of the EU-Africa partnership?

### **Kaye Whiteman**

There are important dysfunctionalities between the Cotonou agreement and the EU-Africa Strategy. The EU is discussing the end of Cotonou approaching in 2020. They see it as a return to normality. The EU-Africa Strategy was somehow imposed by Brussels on African countries, even if it was revised by both sides.

There are also a number of dysfunctionalities within the EU. They are struggling to speak with one voice when it comes to African relations.

### **Question**

How do you judge the dynamics/impact of foreign private companies on Africa?

Will there be a book launch in Africa too?

What would you like to see on the agenda of the next EU-Africa summit of 2014?

### **Kaye Whiteman**

The topic of investments is always discussed by the EU. They wonder if there should be provisions on EU investments.

In terms of the summit agenda, I hesitate to recommend more coordination. There is a need for a more realistic partnership strategy with the accent put on what will follow 2020.

### **Adekeye Adebajo**

Private investments are very positive for Africa. What needs to be looked at is the way investments are done. Are they ethical? Do they create jobs? African governments are not often negotiated in a good way.

There are several areas to put on the agenda of the summit. The first one is peacekeeping. The EU should continue providing support to strengthen the African Standby Force while putting the accent on multilateralism through its partnership with the UN. Second, there is a need for more regional efforts. EPAs have not been working as it does not reflect the African view. Finally, the EU could cancel the African debts because they will never be repaid.