**EU-Africa relations after Cotonou:**

**A partnership for sustainable development?**

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**Abstract**

The ambition of the paper is to describe and analyze the relations between the EU and the developing countries referred to as the ACP-countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific; with a focus on Africa). There have been a number of agreements between the EU and these countries, most recently the Cotonou-partnership of 2000, which will expire in 2020.  There is an ongoing process to develop a new agreement to succeed the Cotonou-partnership. Several consultations have taken place.

The bilateral agreement is only one of several policies of the EU in relation to the ACP-countries, which makes it interesting to study how the EU deals with this multitude of ambitions.

Some of the most obvious ambitions are in trade policy, aid policy, climate change, democracy promotion and (less visibly) in the migration policy area. The policies are formed under a multitude of demands and ambitions, including global agreements such as the Paris Agreement within UNFCCC and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The paper is intended to be a conceptual paper, informed by interviews, comparing the different institutional frameworks (policies) which are handled within the process of getting to a new partnership.

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# EU-Africa relations

The ambition of the paper is to describe and analyze the relations between the European Union and Africa, especially how they can develop after the so-called Cotonou-agreement with the ACP-countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) expires in 2020. The agreement was signed in the year 2000, based on previous agreements in the 1960s and 1970s, which in turn were instruments for European countries to have a closer relationship with its former colonies in three parts of the world.

The situation in 2020 is much different from before. The World Trade Organization (WTO) limited the Cotonou-agreement by arguing that trade relations must be open for all WTO-members. China is now competing with the EU for investments and good relations with African states. The migration from Africa to Europe is a threat to political stability in Europe while the situation is more of a “brain drain” for African countries. There is also a global commitment since 2015 to solve major challenges such as poverty and climate change through the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The developments mean that Africa is relevant to the EU from several perspectives which go beyond the traditional donor-recipient relationship. Development policy is still a major issue, in addition to trade, security and general economic interests. The competition with China is over access to resources such as minerals, oil and fish, as well as over investment opportunities in the development of Africa’s infrastructure and industries. For Africa, there is more foreign support and the possible benefit of having more international donors to make arrangements with. At the same time, the international involvement has a history of creating negative side-effects in Africa, due to a lack of coordination and a lack of efficient governments to take control of the situation.

I want to look beyond the traditional focus on European policies for Africa, to highlight the puzzle of global cooperation between the EU and Africa in spite of what is still an unequal relationship. There is a debate on the EU (and China) treating Africa as an inferior party, while seeking its support for global agreements. The new situation is that global governance arrangements are becoming contested through the actions of the US and the BRIC-countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China). The EU and African states may have a common interest in supporting the traditional liberal world order, for example through multilateral trade agreements. The African countries may be the EU’s best friends at the global political level. The ambition to collaborate globally was stated already in the Cotonou-agreement and the puzzle, to put it bluntly, is if “paternalism” and partnership can be combined.

A further dilemma is that African governments are difficult partners at the global level. On the one hand, they are critical of the EU trying to rig regulation in its favor, the classical example being the conflict over agricultural exports to Europe. On the other hand, many governments are corrupt and authoritarian, stalling the development policies pursued by the west, where “good governance” is a key value. It is also a value which is central to the European Union. In other words, African states are not the ideal partners for the EU, while the EU is not the ideal partner for the African states.

## Method and material

I want to analyze policies to deal with fundamental challenges for African development, looking at problems in Africa and the possible strengthening of global regulation. I will use the framework provided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a set of five major challenges to be dealt with in Africa as well as through global regulation. I see this as a way to place the ongoing talks between the EU and the ACP-countries in context, i.e. to identify needed policies. The five challenges have been agreed on by all governments of the world as a common agenda to be achieved by 2030.

The first question is what challenges the EU and African states ought to collaborate on, in Africa and globally. What are the needs of Africa and Europe, and what are the possible areas for global cooperation? The second question is if collaboration is compatible with ongoing asymmetries, in Africa and globally, i.e. the puzzle identified above. I want to relate to the ongoing talks, but mainly discuss a possible common agenda.

# Aims of the EU

The Commission and the High Representative of the European Union set out their ambitions in a Joint communication in November 2016, *A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.* The document describes six specific priorities, where five relate to challenges in Africa and Europe and the sixth is to “join forces in the global arena on areas of common interest” (p 7). For each of the six priorities there is a general text and priorities for the specific regions (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific).

The priorities are related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The first priority is about good governance, which is a prerequisite to deal with other issues and dealt with in goal number 16. Priorities 2, 4 and 5 are roughly equivalent to the main dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. economic development, social development and environmental protection. These are dealt with in blocks of goals, covering number 1-15. Priority 3 focuses specifically on migration, which is the sensitive issue for the EU; “turn mobility and migration into opportunities and address challenges together” (ibid). This is given less attention in the SDGs.

A general comment on the text is that it states what should be dealt with, not how it should be done. This makes sense in a document to provide a framework, but the result is that the text gives little guidance and avoids most controversial aspects of these general issues.

The text on priorities for Africa is more specific and mentions several previous documents which are relevant, including the Joint Africa-EU Strategy from 2007. This leads to a suggestion to not only regionalize the ACP-framework, but also to open up for other African countries (i.e. North Africa) to join the regional arrangement for Africa. Commentators have suggested that the EU should seek to make an agreement with the African Union rather than with the ACP-group of countries (Medinilla & Bossuyt 2019). The argument is that the ACP-countries see themselves as recipients of aid, while the AU could develop into a more general partner for the EU.

A problem with the EU is that there is a variety of perspectives on Africa. Among the member states, some have an interest in maintaining a special relationship with countries which were once their colonies. Other countries are more focused on supporting the development and independence of the African countries. Most are concerned with the increasing Chinese influence in Africa.

There is also a variety of political goals and separate policies for Africa. The fight against terrorism and the need for security was a dominant theme, to which was added the need for “stability” to avoid an inflow of migrants to Europe. These self-centered motives for the EU coexist with more altruistic motives, like the desire to promote democracy and human rights, as well as economic development in Africa. Economic growth and the fundamental values are important to the EU and something the EU wants to promote in other countries.

The diversity of goals is reflected in the multitude of organizational units involved in dealing with the issues. DG DEVCO is responsible for relations with Africa south of the Sahara, while DG NEAR is responsible for relations with North Africa (and the Eastern partnership). The European External Action Service (EEAS) deals with the general strategic issues. The economic and security dimensions of the relationship are pursued by other DGs as well as by the member states.

Under these circumstances, one can expect the various subgroupings to act like epistemic communities, highlighting their specific perspectives and values to be most important in the new relationship with Africa (Haas 1992). One would also expect the subgroups to produce academic and other studies to underline how important their respective perspectives are. They will look for external partners to support their interpretation of the situation and their policy solutions. I will touch on some of these complexities in the following.

# A possible agenda

I will use the challenges discussed in the SDGs as a framework for analyzing the possible areas of collaboration between the EU and African states and organizations. I will look at the three dimensions of the concept of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) plus “good governance”, divided into two challenges (maintaining peace and building state capacity). The latter two are prerequisites for the other three. Economic development is a prerequisite for social development, both of which need to be balanced against the environmental aspects (Niklasson 2019).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Peace** | **State capacity** | **Economy** | **Environment** | **Social** |
| **Problems** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Actions** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **IGOs** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Reform** |  |  |  |  |  |

*Figure 1: Challenges and questions to be discussed*

For each of the five challenges, I want to describe briefly what the problem is and what can be done about it, by the European Union and others. I will also describe the main international (governmental) organizations involved in delivering services or regulating what others can do. Lastly I will point to ways of strengthening the international organizations, i.e. an agenda of political change which could be pursued by the EU and its African partners on the global stage.

## Peace

Armed conflict is a fundamental problem in large parts of the world, within countries as well as between countries. The conflicts are often based on ethnical or religious values, as well as military and economic motives. Environmental problems as well as lack of development are expected to lead to conflicts over scarce resources. Authoritarian rulers and/or civil uprisings against authoritarian regimes are also a source of violence.

The temptation to use violence may be strong in desperate situations. Robert Bates has described how military leaders are tempted to use their skills for personal gain if the long-term gains from peaceful development is uncertain (Bates 2008). Jaroslav Tir and Johannes Karreth (2018) argue that escalation of conflict can be avoided, especially if governments make credible commitments to opposition movements. Both arguments refer to situations where long-term collaboration is difficult to sustain (i.e. situations of Prisoners’ Dilemma). Unstable situations are often described as fragile states. The next section will discuss ways to develop state capacity.

Some reasons for conflict can be dealt with in the long term through economic development and greater tolerance etc. In the short term, a threat of violent response may be the only workable option, besides a credible commitment for a peaceful transition. After violence has broken out, the best options may be armed intervention or economic sanctions. International conventions and international courts to uphold those conventions are additional instruments on the global level.

Peacekeeping is a major international activity, pursued by the UN, sometimes together with the EU and AU. Emergency relief and the care of refugees are other international operations.

The United Nations is the key international organization dealing with these issues, through operations and through the conventions it has produced. A problem with the UN is that it is based on the principle of national sovereignty and the veto of the five permanent members of the security councils. However, the last decade has seen limitations on the national sovereignty, established through the UN, most clearly in the adoption of the principle of the responsibility of a government to protect its citizens, the “responsibility to protect” (Acharya 2018).

What could then the EU and AU pursue jointly on a global level? A stronger role for the UN could in theory be reached by limiting and/or exchanging the five permanent members. France and the UK could be exchanged for a joint European seat, while an African state could be added. A radical option would be to introduce qualified majority voting (QMV). For Cosmopolitan philosophers, the UN should be turned into an international parliament with supranational powers.

The problem with all these suggestions is of course that UN reform must be supported by all member states. There must be a sense of urgency to achieve such support. For example, the “R2P” was possible after the horrible civil war of Rwanda. Another option is to give a stronger role to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC) to punish acts of aggression or even authoritarian rule. This may be a little easier to achieve than reform of the UN.

A further option is to “incentivize peace” by giving a larger role to the organizations which fund development projects. Tir and Karreth (2018) argue that the IMF and the World Bank should play such a role. One could extend the argument to include the EU, as one of the largest donors in the world. This is something which could be done by the EU unilaterally or in cooperation with the AU.

## State capacity

The establishment of peace and resolution of conflicts lead to a need to develop governance arrangements to deal with further challenges. Most fragile states are based on governance arrangements which become barriers for development. One example is loyalty to the clan, rather than the nation. The clan-based order is an old form of social organization where protection is provided in exchange for loyalty. Patriarchal structures and norms are likewise rational under certain conditions but incompatible with modern understandings of individual rights and political democracy.

Another situation is where leaders have strong personal power, so-called neopatrimonial systems, which is common in Africa. The leader offers protection and favors in exchange for loyalty and bribes. This is also a workable and stable model under certain circumstances but with severe shortcomings. One is that corruption makes the state bureaucracy de-professionalized and unpredictable.

Authoritarian rule can be combined with some forms of democracy, which is perverted to support the authoritarian leader. One example is where votes are sold by local leaders to national leaders in exchange for favors to the local area. Combined with clans or ethnical groups, democracy will be based on loyalty to the group rather than an open discussion of strategies and policies. Accountability becomes low, which supports a culture of giving benefits to members of the dominant group (Hydén 2006).

The European “solution” to similar problems was the advent of powerful kings who raised taxes to fight wars with each other (Tilly 1990). The kings took control but were then limited by parliaments. This developed into the rule of law, a professional bureaucracy and, eventually, political democracy. The SDGs aim to achieve this in all countries by 2030, but it is difficult to imagine a successful strategy of small steps to break with traditional forms of governance.

“Good governance” refers to a situation where the government is predictable and held to account by the voters. “State capacity” refers to the powers held by the state. Some authoritarian states, like China, have strong state capacity without good governance. Many Asian states were “developmental states”, with rational bureaucracies to promote business development, without being democracies (Woo-Cumings 1999). This has led to a debate on what comes first, good governance or economic development (Kelsall & Booth 2010, Niklasson 2019), as well as to a plea for step-wise introduction of “good enough governance” (Grindle 2004).

Good governance and state capacity are important to make governments legitimate in the eyes of its citizens and foreign investors. Without legitimacy it will be very difficult for governments to be attractive for international firms, to raise taxes to pay for social services or to make tough decisions to protect the environment.

The main instruments to develop the state are aid and trade, where trade seems to be the stronger instrument by creating an incentive for developing countries to be attractive to foreign investors. Aid policy often supports civil society and the media, which is complementary but more indirect. International organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide grants and loans to support the development of good governance etc. The European Union is a big provider of developmental aid (Johnson 2016, Beetz 2017). It is also a big market for goods produced in other countries (below).

The SDGs give support to the African position that poor countries should have greater influence in international organizations. One dilemma is that donors have several and conflicting demands on the recipients which leads to waste of resources. Other reforms are debated, such as consolidating the European voting block and/or opening for the BRIC-countries to invest and get a larger share of votes. Europe underperforms in relation to its economic contribution. There may be openings for a European-African coalition to reform organizations like the World Bank and IMF.

Another route of reform is to enhance the powers of courts like the ICJ and ICC, mentioned above. One problem is that some African leaders may feel threatened by such legal action, which in turn will force the EU to avoid collaboration with such governments. Other options are to develop the legal case for a right to democracy (Varayudej 2006) and/or to (further) criminalize corruption (Wouters, Ryngaert & Cloots 2012).

## Economy

Poverty is a major global challenge. One billion out of seven billion people live on less than $1.90 a day. Another five billion live on a standard of living which we wouldn’t find acceptable in the global north. Many of the extremely poor have no income at all, since they live on family farms and other unpaid “jobs” to make a living. Extreme poverty often means a lack of food, water, sanitation, education and health care. Several of the sustainable development goals relate to these social problems.

The UN strategy is that poor people need some investments to get out of poverty traps, to be able to support themselves and to get economic development going (UN Millennium Project 2005). Small farms need things like better crops, electricity and transport to local markets. That would make more people able to go to school and to take jobs with salaries. The SDGs demand a minimum growth rate of seven per cent for the least developed countries.

Poor countries often have an informal sector of small-scale production and trade. This needs to be developed and taxed to create resources for investments. The SDGs elaborate a number of factors to speed up industrialization and infrastructure. Key items are trade, technology transfer and investments, i.e. more liberal rather than mercantilist economic policies. The SDGs also mention discrimination of the poor as a barrier for economic development.

However, globalization seems to solve some of these problems, while producing other problems like an increased burden on the environment. Countries like India and China have developed strongly, which has resulted in a decrease of extreme poverty from about two billion in 1990 to half that number today. Many hope that Africa will be able to take advantage of the opportunities created by globalization, to become manufacturers for global corporations and sell on international markets, including Europe.

There are several regional free trade arrangements within Africa. However, they have not led to as much trade as expected. Common explanations are a lack of diversification in African economies or a political motive to set-up organizations to support weak governments.

The EU has opened up for trade with Africa in several ways. A unilateral decision was to allow the export of “everything but arms” (EBA). There are also bilateral trade agreements with African states. The Cotonou-agreement has been replaced by Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA). On a multilateral scale, the WTO provides a framework for trade. All of these have been criticized for being used by the stronger parties (the EU and the US) to place burden on the poor countries. At the same time, trade seems to be a necessity for economic development in Africa.

The WTO is stuck in conflict between developed and developing countries. One interpretation is that the emerging countries demand that the EU and others open up for agricultural imports (Hopewell 2016). Another interpretation is that the EU was willing to abolish protection in exchange for the abolishment of subsidies for infant industries in developing countries (Mortensen 2009). The latter issue touches upon the difficult question of fair competition between developed and developing countries, an issue where the EU and AU may have different opinions.

If there is mutual benefit from trade, the EU and African states may be able to find a common agenda for trade. Possible items for reform in the WTO are to expel countries which break the rules and to introduce QMV to speed up negotiations. Another option is to give the WTO a broader mandate, for example by merging it with the International Labor Organization (ILO). Such a stronger WTO may be in the interest of the EU and an agenda of fair competition, while African states may be more interested in operating below ILO standards for salaries and working conditions, to be more competitive.

## Environment

The Stern Review was an ambitious report to summarize the challenge of climate change, its causes and consequences as well as reasonable remedies (Stern 2006). The review came up with the so-called two degree-target as a reasonable future state of affairs (the outcome of a cost-benefit analysis). This was based on predictions of outcomes at each degree of warming on issues such as water, land, agriculture, roads, and diseases. The costs inflicted were then compared to a set of actions to avoid these consequences. At two degrees warming the benefits would outweigh the costs of inaction. Rationality, rather than normative principles, gives support to this trade-off.

Other environmental problems are about pollution and/or over-consumption of resources at land and sea. Toxic pollutants have an impact on life forms, while resources are used at a quicker pace than new resources are created. These problems are mainly side-effects of population growth and technological (economic) development. Higher standards for more people will lead to greater use of fossil fuels and other impacts on the environment, if nothing else changes.

An underlying question is why this is so difficult to deal with. Some argue that human greed is the ultimate cause, while others argue that it is rather a problem with our institutions, that the air and some other resources are collectively owned and very difficult to control. Instead of extending property rights, innovative solutions like emissions trading systems are intended to provide incentives for limiting the use of collective resources.

Individual governments have made pledges within the framework set up through the Paris Agreement within the UNFCCC. They also make commitments within the framework of the SDGs. Several European countries have managed to lower their impact on the environment while maintaining economic growth. This will be different in Africa, where the needs are large and the level of technology is less advanced. Hence, the EU and Africa may find it difficult to agree on actions.

Rich countries will provide funding for environmental actions in poor countries through the Global Environmental Facility, GEF. There is also an obligation in the SDGs to transfer technologies to less advanced countries. A controversial issue in the SDGs is subsidies for fossil fuels, where the states only agreed on reviewing these subsidies, rather than abolishing them. This is possibly an area for cooperation between EU and Africa.

A common concern may be the weak structures of governance in the global environmental area, including energy policy. The Paris Agreement and the SDGs have no legal force. Compliance is primarily based on group pressure. Traditionally, the EU has tried to play a leadership role and may be interested in getting support from African states to launch a “World Environment Organization” and to consolidate the governance of energy issues, for example in the International Energy Agency (IEA).

## Social

The SDGs give large room for poverty-related social issues, with ambitious goals to provide food, water, sanitation, education and health care for all. In the short run there is a great need for international support, but the SDGs rather point to a national responsibility to fund welfare programs through national taxes (and economic growth). This is why state capacity, legitimacy and lack of corruption is such important ambitions. While there are welfare systems in most countries (Rudra 2008), the challenge is to upscale these as industrialization and modernization increase.

Other social issues are more of global public goods. One area is to control diseases, which is done through WHO and other organizations. This is an area with a multitude of organizations, competing with each other.

Another issue is to manage migration flows across the globe. Refugees from wars are primarily given care in neighboring countries with support from organizations like UNHCR. Some refugees leave their countries because of persecution on religious or political grounds. A large number of people travel to find better living conditions, which is primarily what causes turbulence in Europe. Human trafficking and prostitution are examples of criminal activities in this area.

Migration is mainly treated as a domestic concern and a security threat in Europe. The economic aspects are much debated, whether migrants provide a needed workforce or a strain on public welfare. The human aspects seem to be less relevant in European politics. The loop side is that it is also a brain drain for African countries.

Migration is of particular interest as an area which is only little regulated at the global level. There is an International Organization for Migration and the UN has introduced a global compact for migration. There have been further proposals to set up an organization with a stronger mandate, a World Migration Organization.

In the long run, migration raises issues like the transferability of welfare systems or even the need for general welfare systems around the globe. This might be possible within a global political system, though it is reasonable to allow great variety through a federal model and something similar to the principle of subsidiarity in the EU.

# Conclusions

The overview of issues where the EU could collaborate with African states and the AU is summarized and implications are highlighted.

## Summary

The analysis can be summarized in the table introduced above.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Peace** | **State capacity** | **Economy** | **Environment** | **Social** |
| **Problems** | Clash of values, interests | Clans etc  Corruption | Discrimination  Mercantilism | Fossil fuels  “Commons” | Lack of resources  Migration |
| **Actions** | Peacekeeping  Emergency relief | Peacebuilding  Democracy promotion | Investments  R&D  Trade | New technology, abolish bad subsidies | Taxation  Design |
| **IGOs** | UN  (IMF) | World Bank  IMF | WTO  ILO? | UNFCCC  IEA  GEF | WHO  Global compact |
| **Reform** | QMV? | ICC+ | QMV? | WEO | WMO |

*Figure 2: Findings of the study*

The most fundamental challenge is to sustain peace and to deal with clashes of values and interests within and between countries. Peacekeeping missions and emergency relief are two of the most important instruments in the short run. The EU and Africa may have a common interest in reforming the UN to make it a more powerful organization. The EU itself has a great interest in getting value for its development aid, which suggests that the EU could take greater responsibility.

Another fundamental challenge is to turn fragile states into working societies with high state capacity. This entails dealing with traditional forms of social order like clan-based structures and neopatrimonial rulers with corrupt bureaucracies. Democracy promotion is difficult, while increased trade may provide incentives for governments to make themselves attractive. There may be a joint interest in reforming organizations like the IMF and the World Bank. Courts like the ICJ could be given a role in dealing with corruption.

Economic development is necessary for social development and a challenge for the environment. Investments are needed to break the poverty traps. Good regulation is needed to promote economic activity and industrialization. Investments, R&D and increased trade are important instruments. EU and Africa would benefit from multilateral regulation of trade (WTO), but have some conflicting views on these regulations.

Environmental protection is needed to deal with climate change and overconsumption. Investments and technological development/transfer are important. Global regulation is needed to assure compliance. The Paris Agreement and the SDGs are important but weak. The EU and Africa may agree on stronger regulation, for example through a “World Environment Organization”.

Social development is mainly a national issue in the SDGs, which is why state capacity needs to be developed. Governments need efficiency and legitimacy to introduce taxes and new regulation. Issues of global concern are for example to deal with diseases and with migration. The first is a contested area with competing organizations, while the latter is still in the process of forming global arrangements. A “World Migration Organization” may be of benefit to the EU as well as to Africa.

## Implications

The overview has shown that there are many issues where the governments in Europe and Africa have agreed to common goals through the UN SDGs. In reality, there are differences in perspective which make it difficult to agree on all issues.

* Promoting peace is a common interest but difficult to deal with. Reform of the UN is difficult. A greater role for the EU as investor may be more relevant.
* Building state capacity is equally of common interest, to make other actions more efficient and to make African countries more attractive as global partners. Here, democracy promotion seems to be a slow instrument while trade promotion seems to create stronger incentives for change in Africa.
* Economic development is needed, but disagreements over fair arrangements for trade is an obstacle. There is potential in Africa helping to open up the multilateral negotiations.
* Environmental protection is difficult under weak global arrangements like the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. There is a need for stronger regulation to make sure that sacrifices are made in a fair and efficient way.
* Social development at the global stage is mainly about controlling diseases and migration. Both areas need stronger regulation to deal with issues in a fair and efficient way.

There are strong links across these challenges. Peace and state capacity are necessary to deal with the other challenges. Economic development is necessary for social development. Its relationship with environmental protection is more conflictual, where technological development and more resources are important for environmental protection.

Trade and economic development seem to be a good starting point for achieving the SDGs and to create resources for other ambitions. Rising living standards is a consequence and, hence, a motive to take other actions. It seems possible to do this in a controlled fashion to protect the environment at the same time. The use of fossil fuels is the biggest problem. The WTO is of key importance.

Another major issue is to build state capacity and get rid of corruption, which would make all other policies more efficient. Trade creates incentives for governments to make themselves more attractive. The popular support for environmental policies may lead to demands for better governments. Hence, the concept of sustainable development may in fact work as a multidimensional tool to drive modernization in Africa, including the promotion of good governance.

The social issues of controlling diseases and migration may open up for a bargain in the interest of Africa and Europe, respectively.

All of this point to the benefits of dealing with the issues on a high strategic level in the ongoing talks with the ACP-countries and the African Union on a new agreement after the Cotonou-agreement. The six priorities set up by the EU could be used as a framework to discuss the development of global governance as well as issues of immediate interest for the EU and Africa.

This in turn suggests an answer to my second question, if collaboration is compatible with asymmetrical relations. There is a risk that the present dependency/asymmetry creates a kind of poverty trap for the weaker party, i.e. that development policy becomes a barrier for development. It is rational – and in line with the SDGs – to go from a “paternalistic” relationship to one of equals investing in a common future. One reading of the SDGs is that development should be more of a national than an international responsibility, which is a way to deal with some of the negative side-effects of foreign aid (Hagmann & Reyntjens 2016).

Hence, African countries need to take care of their governance arrangements while European countries opt for a more business-like relationship. For both, it is important that international governance arrangements play a larger role in dealing with global problems as well as with African problems. This would be of value to build a stronger partnership for sustainable development.

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