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RESENHA: "THE EUROPEAN UNION IN AFRICA"

CARBONE, Maurizio (ed.). *The European Union in Africa: Incoherent policies, asymmetrical partnership, declining relevance?* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013. Reprinted 2016 in paperback, 330 p., ISBN 978-1-78499-387-0

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African and European affairs are intimately and historically entwined. The twentieth first century, however, has been characterized by the ascension of a relatively new player: the European Union (EU). It was not until the 1990s, with the advent of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which were added together with more traditional external policies, such as trade and development, that the EU acquired a "proper" foreign policy dimension.

With these characteristics in mind, "The European Union in Africa", originally released in 2013 and re-released in paperback in 2016, is a collection of papers written by different experts on the field of European studies. It is edited by Maurizio Carbone[1] and endeavours to evaluate the EU's foreign policy in Africa in the twenty-first century. The volume aims to challenge traditional views enclosed in the subtitle: "incoherent policies, asymmetrical partnership, declining relevance?".

In the introductory chapter, Carbone sets out the background for the subsequent analyses, singling out two main "tracks" in which the EU-African relations are set against: the Cotonou Agreement[2] with its complementary Economic Partnership

[1] Professor of International Relations and Development and Jean Monnet Chair of EU External Policies at the University of Glasgow, UK.
[2] The Cotonou Agreement, was signed in 2000 between the EU and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) developing countries. It emerged as a substitute to the Lomé Convention, by limiting non-reciprocal trade preferences, and adding conditionalities for aid reception.

Agreements (EPAs), and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES)[3]. The volume is divided in two parts. The first, consisting of six chapters, is called “Actors and Contexts”.

The first three chapters focus on the dynamics of EU’s foreign policy. Fredrik Söderbaum (Chapter 2) questions the EU’s capacity to act as a unitary and coherent actor, highlighting “turf wars” amongst EU institutions and between the EU and its member states. It is also emphasized that Africa serves as ground for EU’s projection as a global actor, but this is limited by European states fears that the EU may outshine them globally. Next, Gorm Rye Olsen (chapter 3) compares the EU activity in Africa with those of the United States and China. While the US explicitly seeks material self-interests, the EU and China find in Africa a way of gaining significance in the international arena, albeit with different approaches: the EU seeks inter-regional cooperation, whereas, China favours engagement with strategic countries. Richard Whitman and Toni Haastrup (chapter 4) discuss the emergence of a distinctive EU security strategic culture. By observing CSDP missions, they find evidence that the EU’s security behaviour is based on: the development-security nexus, human security and preference for local enforcement.

The last two chapters of this section shift the focus to the African side. Ian Taylor (chapter 5) argues that Africa should not be dismissed as irrelevant. With increased assertiveness, it was able to engage with new players such as Brazil, Russia, and Iran. However, clientelism and patronage funnels benefits towards African elites. Mary Farrell (chapter 6) analyses the dynamics of regional integration. Although the EU has prominently promoted integration in the continent, it is argued that regionalism in Africa should be seen through the lens of African’s own agency and self-concern.

The second part looks into individual policy areas. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss development. First, Carbone (chapter 7) argues that during the 2000s, new global trends made the EU adopt a stance towards better donor coordination and recipient ownership. Member states pressurized the EU to disburse and spend quickly, without providing adequate resources. At the same time, the EU failed to transfer ownership to African parliamentary and civil society stakeholders. In chapter 8, Gordon Crawford analyses the promotion of human rights and democracy, finding a “chasm” between

[3] The JAES, signed in 2007 between the EU and the African Union (AU), covers the whole African continent. It can be considered as an ambitious political agreement with a focus on “equal partnership”.

rhetoric and implementation. The EU represents itself as a normative actor, while evidence shows that it "realistically" prioritizes security and economic concerns.

The next two chapters emphasize economic relations. Christopher Stevens (chapter 9) highlights the fact that the EU Commission failed to exercise "hard power" over the EPA negotiations. The EU's lack of a consistent strategy is to be blamed. In the tenth chapter, Alan Matthews examines the improved market access for African farmers and coastal communities brought by improvements in agriculture and fisheries policies. However, some benefits were offset by persisting protectionism through the maintenance of export subsidies to European producers.

Chapters 11 and 12 deal with "hot" issues in the global agenda. Amelia Hadfield (Chapter 11) explores EU's energy policy. It is argued that the EU has improved coherence and developed an energy-development-sustainability nexus. However, the same cannot be said of North Africa, where the Neighbourhood policy does not offer the same degree of policy coordination. Next, Simon Lightfoot (Chapter 12) investigates EU's climate change policy. Although Africa is extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, the EU's "green" rhetoric is not empirically matched, due to the lack of financial commitments towards climate-change mitigating strategies.

The next two chapters explore the social aspects of the relation. Tine Van Criekinge (Chapter 13) examines EU's external migration policy. It is argued that the EU selfishly ignored Africa's concerns about "brain-drain" and remittances, and due to lack of internal coherence, the Union redirected efforts towards readmission and migration control. In chapter 14, Jan Orbie tackles the promotion of a "decent work" agenda, taking a historical-institutionalist perspective. He describes how the Commission failed to engage its "labour" directorate general. On the African side, development policies are usually in the hands of financial ministries, while labour ministries and trade unions are excluded.

Finally, Michael Smith (chapter 15), wraps up the collection by reviewing the contributions to the book. But overall, what is the impression that the volume leaves to the reader? Does it really challenge traditionally held views?

First, there is a pervading sense that the EU fails to act coherently in every realm of its foreign policy. The picture is of a bureaucratic mess, that cannot be untangled. The reason for this may lie in the nature of the EU's foreign policy, that can

be described as “multifaceted”, entailing different policy areas, “multi-method”, combining supranational and intergovernmental procedures, and “multilevel”, comprising national, European and international levels (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014:14). This should not come as a surprise, since this dynamic is also present in the internal dimension of EU’s policies. It is important to notice, however, that despite these intricacies, the EU in Africa was able to evolve into a “productive policy making machine”. It seems that the EU has well developed the art of “muddling through” in its foreign policy (Richardson, 2015).

Second, it is undeniable that the European countries possess both economic wealth and military resources that surpasses those of the African continent. Nevertheless, the EU has not been able to translate this theoretical advantage into empirical benefit. Obviously, it is due to the issue of lack of coherence. But also, it is important to notice, that contrary to expectations, Africa, and especially its sub-Saharan part should not be considered as simply as a passive actor in this relation. Africa is an important player in the international arena, capable of exercising its own agency, even if it is marred by persistent clientelism and patronage.

Finally, the EU has not lost relevance in Africa. The relationship with Europe still offers African stakeholders a rich roster of policies unmatched by any other actors. African countries can take advantage of the lack of coherence from the part of the EU: As Stevens (chapter 9) shows with the EPA negotiations, the completion of these partnerships was delayed because African ACP members took advantage of other trade alternatives, countering the EU Commission’s initial “hard position”. Nonetheless, relevance is a two-way street. Africa is increasingly becoming indispensable for the EU, either in its aspirations to become a global power (Chapter 3), or materially, as indicated by the pervasiveness of the security nexus in the areas of development, food, energy, climate change, and migration. Although, there are emerging players gaining ground in Africa, European-African “inter”-dependency seems to be imperishable.

Ultimately, the book is a great contribution for those who are interested in this “somewhat new” relation between the EU and Africa. Students of the European Union will benefit from a collection that portrays the EU’s foreign policy in a deep analytical manner, based on relevant empirical evidence. Although it concentrates on the EU, students of African international relations, will gain from a comprehensive evaluation

of the activity of one of its most important partners, within a work that considers the relevancy of African agency and brings many insights to the role of Africa in the international context. Students of international relations in general, will gain from a detailed depiction of a well institutionalised multilateral foreign policy, in action. Definitely, "The European Union in Africa" is a must, for those interested in knowing more about the most recent chapter in this historical relationship.

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