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## The rise and fall of associationism: The Yaoundé and Lomé conventions

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### Abstract

The immediate post-colonial period offered opportunities as well as formidable challenges for former colonies of European powers. While colonial mentalities still pervaded in many European capitals and paternalism remained pervasive throughout the political diplomacy of the period, other perspectives were emerging. Through innovative policy engagements that occurred in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, a new sense of transnational purpose could be seen which presented former colonies with partnership options that were seemingly and practically outside the context of the historic geo-economic imposition. Whereas some European powers continued to exert overly dismissive attitudes to African engagement and society, other approaches experimented with developmental policies that were lauded by both sides at the time. This article will look at the practice and policies of associationism – the outworking of the Yaoundé and Lomé agreements – and will look at the formative international cooperation policies of the European Community (EC), as it evolved through the period when former European colonies were attaining independence. Finally, it will survey the reasons for the demise of associationism and speculate on the onset of what some have described as “neo-colonialism” (Langan, 2018: 1–32; Nkrumah, 1965).<sup>2</sup>

**Keywords:** associationism, Yaoundé and Lomé conventions, colonialism, international cooperation policies

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<sup>2</sup> The sequence of Association agreements made by the European Community (EC) are: Treaty of Rome 1958–63; Yaoundé I 1964–69; Yaoundé II 1969–75; Lomé I 1975–80; Lomé II 1980–85; Lomé III 1985–90; Lomé IV 1990–2000; Cotonou 2000–2020.

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## Powstanie i upadek układów stowarzyszeniowych. Konwencje z Jaunde i Lomé

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### Streszczenie

Bezpośredni okres pokolonialny przyniósł szanse, a także ogromne wyzwania, dla byłych kolonii mocarstw europejskich. Podczas gdy mentalność kolonialna nadal przenikała wiele europejskich stolic, a paternalizm pozostawał wszechobecny w dyplomacji politycznej tamtego okresu, wyłaniały się także inne perspektywy. Dzięki nowatorskim działaniom politycznym pod koniec lat pięćdziesiątych i sześćdziesiątych XX wieku można było dostrzec nowe poczucie celu ponadnarodowego dające byłym koloniom opcje partnerstwa, które pozornie i praktycznie pozostawały poza kontekstem historycznego przypisania geoeconomicznego. Podczas gdy niektóre mocarstwa europejskie nadal wykazywały zbyt lekceważące podejście do zaangażowania i społeczeństw w Afryce, inne eksperymentowały z polityką rozwojową, która była w tamtym czasie zachwalana przez obie strony. Artykuł ukazuje praktyki i politykę układów stowarzyszeniowych – skutki porozumień z Jaunde i Lomé – oraz formatywną politykę współpracy międzynarodowej Wspólnoty Europejskiej (WE), która ewoluowała w okresie, gdy dawne kolonie europejskie osiągały niezależność. Ponadto przeanalizowano przyczyny upadku stowarzyszeniowości i spekulacje na temat początku tego, co niektórzy określają jako „neokolonializm” (Langan, 2018: 1–32; Nkrumah, 1965)<sup>3</sup>.

**Słowa kluczowe:** układy stowarzyszeniowe, konwencje z Jaunde i Lomé, kolonializm, polityka współpracy międzynarodowej

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## Introduction

The influence of the European Community (EC) on the development of former colonies has been immense. This has been particularly the case on the continent of Africa, where all but two of the countries, Liberia and Ethiopia, were formally colonized. Given that all but a few of these countries were economically dependent on Member States of the Community and continued to be tied to their fortunes, the links between the various regions of Africa and Europe were crucial for the socio-economic development of the continent as a whole (Langan, 2018: 119–148). Through

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<sup>3</sup> Kolejność układów stowarzyszeniowych zawartych przez Wspólnotę Europejską (WE) to: Traktat Rzymski 1958–1963; Konwencja z Jaunde I 1964–1969; Jaunde II 1969–1975; Konwencja z Lomé I 1975–1980; Lomé II 1980–1985; Lomé III 1985–1990; Lomé IV 1990–2000; Układ z Kotonu 2000–2020.

the legal architecture of the Treaty of Rome (25 March 1957), the structure and form of these relationships altered the manner in which European powers engaged with the colonies and affected, in a myriad of ways, their developmental potential. The context was also important in a Europe where racist human exhibitions of colonial peoples were still permitted, such as the Congolese village complete with trafficked African villagers at the 17 April–19 October 1958 Brussels Expo. The Treaty anticipated and facilitated the liberation of former colonies and carried a sense of atonement at this point for the way in which the founding Member States had historically treated erstwhile partners and their people. It also provided the legal groundwork for the achievement of independence for former colonies and acted as a catalyst for new economic and policy arrangements. Article 182 gives some insight into the intention of the Community to engage with newly independent countries:

“The purpose of association shall be to promote the economic and social development of the countries and territories and to establish close economic relations between them and the Community as a whole ... association shall serve primarily to further the interests and prosperity of the inhabitants of these countries and territories in order to lead them to the economic, social and cultural development to which they aspire” (Art. 182, TEC).

This “associationism” was understood to be reciprocal in its form and not only had an impact on the post-independence economies of the Global South, but also on the global positioning of Western Europe itself. This article will survey the complications of this relationship from the perspective of the EC’s historical engagement with the former colonies, in Africa in particular, arguing that while much international cooperation offered more of the same by way of institutional and ideological driven development policies – framed by Cold War politics – some policies carried far-reaching positive ramifications (Carbone, 2007; Holland, Dodge, 2012; Babarinde, 1994; Grilli, 1994). Conversely, while acknowledging the efforts and financial commitments that have been made by various EC member states (indeed, over half its development aid went to Africa), the relationship still harbored fault-lines that continued to wrangle between the two continents. With this in mind, this article will also survey the manner in which certain policy interventions have contributed to erratic patterns of development in many regions of Africa, particularly those that have had a systemic impact on the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (Gruhn, 1967: 240–269). In assessing the contribution or otherwise to development that the Treaty of Rome has had on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), policy-making, development agencies, and non-governmental organizations, the article will consider the legacy of Western European intervention in Africa and will examine policy-based reasons for continued underdevelopment.

The rollout of the Rome program was both disparate and innovative in equal measure as it attempted to establish a more effective international economic policy architecture that could be put in place to enable the EC to engage better with a rapidly changing Global South. The various articles related to connectivity with former colonies and the eventual concretization of the principles of Rome through the Yaoundé and Lomé conventions represented an adaptive hegemony and a repurposing of the European policy framework a propos former colonies. Crucially, its progress into law sat parallel to the turmoil that came with the positioning and polemics of the Cold War and a scramble for political satellites. Furthermore, the bulk of policy initiatives within the Treaty pre-date this East-West global divide, and whereas the reconfiguration of global relationships and the ordering of the *acquis communautaire* arguably represented a clarification of Western Europe's aspirations in light of post-colonial liberation, the effects on policy implementation proved more problematic. This was particularly relevant to those aspects of development and economic policy that were susceptible to external geo-political pressures and reflected divergent outcomes between the intentions of the Treaty and the actual impact of the EC development policy on Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

This paper aims to highlight the problems faced by former African colonies of EC Member States and examines the public and economic policy that was affected by the sequence of changes to the EC's complex development policy. It will evaluate the impact on the policy going into Yaoundé and Lomé, the specific innovative aspects of development relations, and the ramifications of contemporary ideological shifts (Holland, Doidge, 2012: 46–69). Finally, it will look at the consequences of the implementation of these policies on more vulnerable economies in Africa and will comment on how the African leaders viewed the situation.

## Towards Yaoundé

The origins of the EC's relationship with developing countries can be traced back to the earliest days of an integrating European market system, the 1951 Treaty of Paris and the Messina Conference of June 1955. The complications of colonial relations were something that many of the participants (particularly the Benelux countries) felt were outside the competence of the discussions. Indeed, the initial feeder report on trade co-operation, the Spaak Report of 21 April 1956, omitted references to third countries. It was the French government under Charles de Gaulle – not known for sensitivity towards colonies – which insisted during the negotiations (in May) on the report that any new arrangements must include “overseas territories” as implicit

to the French economic bloc. Indeed, this became a prerequisite to its participation. Entrenched in a protracted war in Vietnam until the Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu on 7 May 1954 and running immediately into another doomed campaign in Algeria that very month, France needed answers to colonial issues. Consequently, the French government approached the integration debate from the perspective that financial drainage and dependency from associated overseas countries and territories (OCTs) were becoming burdensome in terms of state responsibilities and set about seeking to share the liabilities of the pending breakup of the empire with other European countries. John Ravenhill noted of the French position: “France’s move was shrewdly timed: by making a satisfactory agreement on provisions for its dependencies a *sine qua non* for its signature of the Treaty, French bargaining power was maximized” (Ravenhill, 1985: 48) This became very obvious when France was presented to the EC in its earliest manifestation as a collection of regions – even Algeria appeared on the earliest maps of the European Community.

With the signing of the Treaty of Rome relations between the Community and the former colonies became subject to the Common Commercial Policy (CCP), which regulated trade with external countries. The central implementation mechanism of the CCP was the Common External Tariff (CET), which detailed the rules governing trade between the former colonial powers and developing countries. Article 110 of the Treaty of Rome stated that the CCP should aim to “contribute, in the common interest, to the harmonious development of world trade, the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade, and the lowering of customs barriers.” Attendant institutional arrangements were also a key aspect of this associationism. For emerging independent governments in the Global South, it meant having representation at discussions on trade policy and economic connectivity. The names of the first countries to be given this “favored” status reflected where they were located in the international scheme of things: French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, the French Trustee Territory in the Cameroons, Madagascar, Togoland, the Belgian Congo, Ruanda Urundi, the French Trustee Territory of Somalia and the Netherlands New Guinea.

From the very beginning the European Commission, the executive wing of the European institutional system, was delegated the remit of negotiating with third countries on issues of mutual interest. The Commission acted with instruction from the so-called “133 Committee,” named after the article in the Treaty of Rome regulating trade. From 1957 onwards, the concept of “special relations” with poorer nations, both in trade and aid, was built into plans for economic expansion. Article 183.3 set the tone where Member States had an obligation to “contribute to the investments required for the progressive development of these countries and territories.” For EC

states, this was considered as a means of keeping colonial interests alive or as a means of building economic capacity. The Treaty also established the European Development Fund (EDF), which had the objective of targeting those regions most in need of aid and support. The six signatories of the Treaty agreed to set aside \$ 581.25 million for this fund, of which \$ 511.25 million was allocated to French dependencies (Swann, 1995: 359). Interestingly, the dialogue and negotiations show that the drive for association at this stage was not entirely Eurocentric. As Denis Swann noted:

“The broad thrust of the association arrangements, which had a double character, was as follows. The Community undertook to reduce tariffs on goods coming from the dependencies in line with internal tariff disarmament ... The dependent territories were required to reciprocate but could, however, retain protection needed for their development, industrialization or revenue, provided they extended to the mother country” (Swann, 1995: 359).

In these early stages of development cooperation, anti-colonial and pan-African movements voiced concern about the emergence of this powerful new European entity and its potential effects on the development of the southern hemisphere. Kwame Nkrumah's 1965 *Neocolonialism* was the culmination of a pan-African discussion on the new world order and the one-sided gravitation of geo-political relations (Nkrumah, 1965: Langan, 2018: 1–32). The most targeted point – made very effectively by Walter Rodney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* – was that inter-African partnerships were being frustrated through a default form of colonialism (Rodney, 1989). The result of concerted pressure from various voices from the Global South was a change in semantics and, arguably, direction. EC negotiations with African states in 1958 resulted in a Convention of Association and mechanisms which could enable 18 African states and Madagascar to benefit from the new developments in Europe. Indeed, by 1960, these new arrangements meant that 80 per cent of trade from the developing countries involved was with the six states of the EC, while 98 per cent of all aid contributions was targeted at these states (Grilli, 1994: 15).

All the participants involved in the formation of this trading network were aware at an early stage of the necessity of support for developing countries and the imposition that a new EC driven market system could have on former colonies. Indeed, between 1958 and 1962 the associated states not only achieved their independence, but also were to appoint diplomatic corps to the newly established EC, bringing an assertive and informed lobby to discussions on international cooperation. A Memorandum on “Free Trade and its Conditions” (26 February 1959) – the first memorandum from the Commission of the EC to the Council of Ministers – reflected a change in tone in some quarters in Europe:

“... it would seem necessary that any large-scale elimination of customs barriers and quotas between highly developed countries on the one hand and developing countries on the other, should be accompanied by a concerted and active development policy. In point of fact, the experience shows that free trade of itself does not lead to the elimination of disparities in levels of development” (Quoted in Weigall, Stick, 1992: 118).

This missive formed the basis of the first major multilateral arrangement between developing states and the EC, and was named after the Cameroonian capital, Yaoundé, where the delegates met. The objective of this Association was to enhance existing trade relations between the EC and developing countries, to work towards a mutually beneficial (trade and assistance) system.

The outcome of these discussions, combined with the increasing efficiency in the production of key commodities such as copper and other primary products, strengthened the relationship between developing countries and the EC to a point where the former could progressively secure more favorable trade agreements from the latter. The expansion of EC development programs, combined with the Yaoundé Convention, encouraged other African states to enter into complementary trading negotiations. It also offered a backdrop to the emergence of the growing pan-African counter-balance, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), founded on 1 May 1963 and the forerunner of the African Union (AU). At its founding conference, Aliou Ebrima Cham-Joof, the acclaimed historian and pan-Africanist, reflected on the confidence of the times and warned of possible dangers:

“15 years have just passed since the continental struggle for political emancipation started in the colonial empire. The beginning of the second phase of this struggle in Africa was born 7 years ago when the self-same European Powers, frightened by this mass struggle for political emancipation and economic stability, went to Rome for spiritual shelter for their undertaking and signed the treaty of Rome with determination to resist more strongly and effectively the hurricane of Africa Nationalism through economic struggle and manipulated under the cloak of common market. This through former friendly and helpful Africa would ensure the flow of supply of raw materials from Africa and bring in its wake a new domination of Africa through neo-colonialism whereby Europe would give less by the left hand and take away more by the right hand” (Cham-Joof, 1 May 1963).

For the developing countries and leaders engaging in this trade circle at the time, the benefits were, however, quantifiable and activating growth within their economies. The Convention comprised of the significant bulk of the *acquis*, from Part IV of the original EC Treaty with its tenure running five years from 1 June 1964. The Preamble to the Convention also contains evidence of the awareness of the key sensitivity of economic capacity-building on the continent and “...the importance of

developing intra-African trade and cooperation as well as international economic relations” (EC, no date: 9; Smith, 2002: 55–56)

The framework provided a forum for the African delegations to discuss common problems and included political leaders from Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, Upper Volta and Zaire (Holland, Doidge, 2012: 49). Significantly, the Convention was the first joint agreement between a bloc of countries from Africa represented by their indigenous political leadership and former colonial powers in Europe. This agreement was later renegotiated and enhanced in 1969 under the Yaoundé II Convention, which served to engage the (by then) 24 developing states in a process of economic exchange and political consensus. Under the auspices of the Convention, the Associated African and Malagasy States (AASM) expanded its influence by making representations to the European Parliament and succeeded in generating debate and action on a raft of development policy issues. Systemic imbalance showed through, however, relatively early on in the process, as explained by Martin Holland and Mathew Doidge in reference to the allocation of funding:

“First, typically, from 1957 to 1975 only a third of EDF funds were successfully disbursed during the lifetime of the respective agreements. Second, the greatest proportion of EDF aid was given to infrastructural projects virtually excluding development of the industrial sector. As such, the EDF mirrored the bilateral practices of former colonial donor states” (Holland, Doidge, 2012: 52).

Compounding systemic and disbursement problems, three contextual factors came into play that changed the relationship between the EC and the developing world through to the early 1970s. These significantly altered the working partnership between the African countries, European politicians and EC bureaucrats. The first factor was the pressure from rich oil producing countries – under the direction of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) – on developed nations to accept serial increases in the cost of crude oil. This had an immediate and detrimental effect on energy security and transport. The EC needed to rapidly invest in “friendly” oil producing states in the developing world or produce its own oil, which it eventually did through its North Sea oil fields. It was one reason for the United Kingdom’s (UK) “awkward” accession to the EC on 1 January 1973. Secondly, the Cold War had galvanized political allegiances within the Global South and became a catalyst for conflict, proxy-war and anti-imperialist struggles across the world, including a sequence of conflicts across the African continent (Congo, South Africa, Somalia, Egypt, Angola, to note a few). Thus, the stability of many regions, now regarded as strategically crucial in East-West relations, were threatened.



Thirdly, the enlargement of the EC in the early 1970s vastly increased the number of the Member States that had colonies and former colonies. For example, with the UK joining in 1973, it brought with it a global network and commonwealth trading partners that represented a significant bloc in its own right. India alone contained a fifth of the world's population. Similarly, both Spain and Portugal brought colonial networks into the EC with their accession, notably Central and South America. These factors cumulatively left the Yaoundé system in need of review and adaptation. It also set the scene for the comprehensive negotiations that led to its replacement by the Lomé Convention of 28 February 1975.

EC sensitivity to the unevenness of global development manifested itself on a number of occasions in the expansion debates and statements of the late 1960s. For example, a 1968 declaration by the Commission on "The Achievement of the Customs Union" stated that:

"Europe bears major international responsibilities ... It is the leading importer of products from the countries of the third world. Today, in its present form, it already has major responsibilities to the developing countries – and these will be even more important tomorrow when Europe is a larger entity ... it is Europe's duty to organize cooperation and association with the other main groups in the world" (Weigall, Stick, 1992: 145; Fryer, 1980: 53–54).

The Yaoundé protocol outlined the procedures for interaction between the EC and developing countries across the spectrum of policy areas for development cooperation. This protocol established, in theory, a process that enabled developing countries to work with the EC as *joint* stakeholders in policy formulation. The renegotiation of the Yaoundé Convention moved to the challenges of a new global context by including more developing countries within already straining development programs. The new partnership sought to overcome fault-lines from the initial agreements and take into account the contingencies arising from geo-political shifts. From the position of the African representatives, they were increasingly adopting the view that independence could pay dividends by broadening the potential for exchange. Consequently, the first Lomé Convention proved, by most accounts, a positive forum for the forty-six associates involved in the negotiations from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region (ACP).

Signed in Lomé, the capital of Togo, this association was to operate in a manner which maximized trade opportunities for growth, while enhancing sustainable economic support. From the beginning, there was an acknowledgement of the need for a more equitable mechanism between the EC and developing countries. The Preamble of Lomé outlines the need for "... a new model for relations between developed and developing States, compatible with the aspirations of the international community

towards a more just and more balanced economic order” (quoted in Bretherton, Vogler, 1999: 114; also see Babarinde, 1994; Hewitt, 1993). The EC participation in Lomé was to a large extent premised on the historic relationships with particular former colonies and the belief that it had a responsibility for the development of these states – especially during a period which could see the reconfiguration of the EC market system and European politics. Furthermore, the accession of the UK meant that new demands were being made on the EC. In this regard, the British Commonwealth arguably worked from a different understanding of development than that espoused by the former French colonies which had negotiated at Yaoundé. The concept of partnership, associationism was being altered into more of a commonwealth philosophy. That noted, there was a broad acceptance of the approach. At the signing of the Convention in 1975, Claude Cheysson, representing the European Commission and responsible for the negotiations that produced the first Lomé Convention, stated: “All this work has produced an agreement which, I say with some pride, is unique in the world and in history. Never before has there been any attempt to do anything of this kind. It is the first time in history that an entire continent has undertaken a collective commitment ...” (cited in Faber, 2004: 1). O.A. Babarinde noted that the initial reception of Lomé in Africa was “jubilation” – although “premature” (Babarinde, 1994: 216).

For the African leaders involved, the potential of the Association Convention was regional unification and building cohesiveness similar to that attained by the European states through the innovation of a common market. This can be recognized through a clause of “considerable political significance” in which the partnership aspired to “... the creation of customs unions or free-trade areas, either between the associated states and non-member countries (e.g. other African states), subject only to the conditions that such unions and areas are not incompatible with the principles and rules of the Association Convention” (EC, no date: 9). The outworking of the agreement between the years 1958 and 1969 (and expanded later) targeted economic and social infrastructures, roads, hospitals, schools, etc. It contributed to rural development with irrigation and soil conservation projects, technical assistance; scholarships were provided together with the training of project workers and graduate exchanges. The projects had, with some exceptions, to be “of general and social benefit and subject to public control.” Aid, grants, loans and diversification support were disbursed to partners to facilitate the reform of economic systems. Even the private sector could avail of support if it could prove it could contribute to socio-economic development. The range of actions were extensive and financially generous and worked to complement other substantive contributions, such as the United Nations Expanded Program of Technical Assistance and (more questionable) World Bank

interventions (Amin, 1982: 23–30). The European states, with France very much in the driving seat of international development cooperation policy, found the contributions and association necessary to stabilize former colonies, and the regime that was put in place seemed advantageous to overseas partners (Twitchett, 1980: 85–89).

In the context of the Cold War, encouraging such linkages was deemed to be a useful means of shoring up the Western sphere of influence. The Suez Crisis and the Algerian War loomed heavy over all the discussions. Counter arguments were also stacking up with the likes of Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral and Walter Rodney voicing critique. Indeed, Rodney saw the emerging system as profoundly damaging to Africa:

“It is also worth noting that Africa was denied the opportunity of developing healthy trade links with parts of the world other than Europe and Northern America. Some trade persisted across the Indian Ocean, but on the whole it is fair to say that the roads in Africa led to the seaports and the sea lanes led to Western Europe and North America. That kind of lopsidedness is today part of the pattern of underdevelopment and dependence (Rodney, 1972, 2005 edition: 230).

Investment in overseas partners provided a method of stabilizing markets and locking in political and economic destinies against alternatives. The political imperative during this period of the “special relationship,” from the EC point of view, was intended to actively align former colonies. Under the terms of the Convention, development assistance would be given to specifically enhance the economic capacity and infrastructure of participating countries. Priority in trading relations would be given to ACP states with a range of named products being offered free access to the EC market. Moreover, ACP export prices were protected from fluctuating markets by the System for the Stabilisation of Export Earnings from Products (STABEX). ACP states received technical assistance in certain fields to enhance market competitiveness, while aid programs were established to act as baseline support for modernization. In return, ACP states had to prioritize and formalize their trading relations with EC Member States. Within this system, the idea of the common interest became an important component of trade, aid and the economic agreements reached between representatives from ACP countries and the Commission in Brussels. Thus, ACP countries could operate in such a manner that gave parity to the exchange of trade. It is worth noting, though, that many other developing countries were systematically excluded from this trade loop, including some of the most impoverished developing states such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

As Yaoundé transformed into the broader Lomé agreement, it meant that ACP countries were offered partnership arrangements which enabled them to deal with their own internal developmental, strategic, and political concerns without external

interference. Furthermore, this Convention established a structure within which the economic and strategic interests of the ACP itself could be forwarded. The operational title of this body was the Committee of Ambassadors, which worked with the Commission on implementing the detailed provisions of the Convention. This body included the ACP-EC Council – which comprised of members from the Council of Ministers, the Commission, and a government minister from each of the ACP states – and an ACP-European Parliament joint assembly. With this in place and from the transcripts of discussions on progress at this point in the late 1970s, the Lomé system was recognized (by the African representatives and the EC alike) as building on the platform of Yaoundé and a positive departure from the traditionally exploitative relationship between European nations and the developing world. Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler stated that “... the Lomé system, with its complex provisions and strengthened institutions, consolidated a distinctive, Community approach to development cooperation” (Bretherton, Vogler, 1999: 118). The first round of programs, Lomé I, was arguably to represent a highpoint in EC development cooperation. With hindsight, the German government later portrayed the Lomé I arrangement as “... one of the greatest achievements” of the EC (Erridge, 1981: 9). The first phase of the program, with certain qualifications (such as the bureaucracy that emerged and the Pan-Africanist claims of neo-colonialism) seemed to be genuinely developmental. At its core it revolved around a series of key actions: technical assistance when requested; partner based institutions – consensus based policies; targeted development initiatives; a system of preferences in trade including almost all produce from ACP countries being given free access to the EC market; the System for the Stabilization of Export Earnings from Products (STABEX) – which meant that ACP export prices were protected from market fluctuations; Emergency Aid when necessary; and the now established EDF.

## Lomé and the new world order

Lomé was to be renegotiated on a five-yearly basis, with Lomé I spanning the years 1975–1980, Lomé II covering 1980–1985, Lomé III 1985–1990, and Lomé IV operating over a ten-year timescale up to 2000. On the completion of Lomé IV, the number of ACP countries involved had increased to 71. The provisions of Lomé as a system did not dramatically change over this time, but fundamental shifts in the global economy strengthened the influence of European interests over developing countries. Furthermore, changes were not only evident in the composition of the association, but also in the enlarged membership and enhanced economic position

of the EC. The nature of global market expansion and the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s – with its acceptance of predatory economic practices by larger EC states – saw the relationship with ACP countries (and their need for a more stable system of trade) generating political tensions. ACP representatives were fully aware that trade liberalization would leave ACP economies open and vulnerable to the European Union (EU) imports and Transnational Corporate (TNC) activity. With the accession of the three new Mediterranean states to the EC – Greece, Spain and Portugal – the stabilization of that region became ever more important to the EC's understanding of its own position in global terms. This shifting balance of power in Europe and a resurgent nationalism resulted in events such as the impending breakup of the Soviet Union, which became central to the stability of the EC's own border regions. As a consequence, the EU began prioritizing development programs in states to the East and on the immediate rim of the Mediterranean, to the detriment of former colonies.

External factors were also impacting onto the EU-ACP “special relationship” agreed in 1975, including powerful economic pressures from international financial institutions such as the World Bank. These agencies were critical of obstacles to market liberalization and the single market system advocated by the EU and portrayed “third country” trade deals as an obstruction to the unification of market forces within the fifteen Member States. The flaw in the system – divergence – had been flagged up during the negotiations on Lomé II and was to persist as an issue into its subsequent third and fourth rounds. The 1980 *Focke Report* to the European Parliament revealed drifting relationships and signaled a profound ideological drift as much of Western Europe moved towards a more neo-liberal consensus. It stated that “The structure of ACP-EEC trade reveals an acute imbalance... The rule of free trade is meaningless for countries which, at the present stage, because of their production structures, have practically nothing to export to the Community” (European Parliament, 1980: 14; also see Hewitt, 1993; Amin, 1982: 23–30) In a system increasingly fixated by market competition, a situation where countries had “practically nothing to export” confused the relationship and the type of development envisaged in Europe. Associationism was under immense pressure at this point.

Developing countries were recurrently suffering from falling commodity prices due to fluctuating markets and an escalating debt crisis through the 1980s, which increasingly tied their economies to World Bank (and other) loans and the debt cycle that came with this. It meant that EC projects were becoming ineffective in more vulnerable developing countries and were failing to prevent a cycle of economic meltdown. By the end of the decade, these problems were compounded by the collapse of command state socialism. This resulted in the reunification of Germany

and the need for the EU to commit resources to struggling economies in Eastern Europe. It contributed to a layering of complications for ACP countries, which, by the time of the Lomé IV negotiations in 1988–89, had doubled their debt liabilities to developed countries and the World Bank, with finding it difficult to trade, and were becoming vulnerable to inter-regional conflicts. In quantifiable terms, the poverty gap between ACP and EU countries was widening. In 1981, ACP debt stood at \$ 65 billion, but by 1986 it had reached a staggering \$ 130 billion (Ravenhill, 1993: 42; Amin, 1982: 23–30).

Between the conclusion of Lomé I and the signing of Lomé IV on 15 December 1989, the Lomé II and Lomé III agreements had become largely ineffectual in encouraging a mutually beneficial process of development. The geo-political shifts of the Western World carried it to a point where association in its historic form was deemed redundant. The EC was moving towards US style competition and business-like bespoke contractual arrangements. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Uruguay Round brought further pressures on the culture of partnership, with its drive towards establishing globalizing free markets where governments would seek to “roll-back” state intervention in the economy. Significantly, this economic development strategy actively sought to infringe on the protections which Lomé had afforded ACP states. Neo-liberal economics quickly disadvantaged less developed markets and producers. The most vulnerable within this global realignment were African economies, which struggled to get any semblance of equitable engagement. According to Bretherton and Vogler: “... the principles underlying the entire edifice of Community development co-operation were increasingly challenged by the influence of neo-liberal economic orthodoxy, with its reliance upon non-interventionist, market strategies” (Bretherton, Vogler, 1999: 119).

Lomé was renegotiated on three occasions. Lomé II (running from January 1981 to February 1985) saw an increase in aid provision and financial investment. The Lomé III Convention came into force in March 1985, renewing and refining trade provisions and expired in 1990. At each round of negotiation, financial support was increased and targeted in ways matching European economic shifts. Lomé IV, signed in December 1989, was to cover the years 1990 to 1999. These negotiations went on throughout the late 1980s, with ECU 12 billion to be allocated in its first five-year program. At this point 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific former colonies were included (EC, 1995a; EC, 1995b). Despite the growth and transfer of investment, the later Lomé negotiations resulted in the imposition of political conditions on development aid to developing countries, tying the partners to EC defined constraints. Apart from revising the time scales within which programs were operating, from five to ten years, additional criteria were added to the existing Lomé provisions.

The new criteria included *provisos* such as respect for human rights, democratic principles and the Western application of the rule of law. Support was subject to the understanding that political criteria “underpins relations between the ACP states and the Community and all the provisions of the Convention” (EC, 1995b: also see EC, 1995a, and EC, 2000). Indeed, Article 5 of the Lomé IV Convention on human rights was imposed in such a way as to exclude a number of ACP countries from participating in trade with the EC. New EC criteria levied against ACP countries included controlling their increasing debt to the financial institutions of the developed world and ensuring that there was also commitment to environmental protection and “regional economic integration.” The EC also demanded evidence and monitoring of sustainable economic and political development policies in ACP countries (Dinan, 1999: 506). President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, in a statement to the ACP Committee of Ambassadors at ACP House in Brussels on 17 June 2016, summed up the demise of associationism and Lomé: “Developments such as the end of the Cold War and the establishment of the WTO resulted in a major policy shift away from the ACP, lessening the appetite for the ACP within the EU. After the end of the Cold War the geopolitical significance of the ACP as a Group diminished as eastward expansion gained momentum” (Kenyatta, 2016).

As the adaptation out of associationism continued, ACP countries were to find it increasingly difficult to comply with EC stipulations or to export commodities to Europe. With the introduction of Europe-wide standards and regulations on produce, African producers struggled, and the trade flow increasingly divested into European controlled commodities such as copper, coffee, cocoa beans, etc. Without significant investment, the ACP producers could not compete. The larger Member States of the EC were particularly preoccupied with the internal single market strategy during the Lomé IV negotiation. The debates reflected the economic priorities of the Council of Ministers at the time. For the vast majority of representatives from ACP states, the new trade and aid regulations signaled a return to paternalism and on the circuit of negotiations the term “Fortress Europe” was voiced for the first time. The African response became accusative, the “... Organisation for African Unity (OAU) put the blame on factors outside the control of African governments, such as the legacy of colonial exploitation, dependence on commodity exports and falling terms of trade” (Faber, 2004: 5). During the Lomé IV negotiations, the ACP countries’ cycle of dependency on Western financial aid, in the context of the spiraling debt crisis, was reflected in the former colonies’ declining influence. The ACP negotiating position was further weakened by political and economic instability on the domestic front, and marginal influence with the EC. This power imbalance facilitated the EU move away from the partnership. The EDF – the dedicated budget

for development policy – had increased marginally, but the EC commitment was not proportionate to address the problems being accrued by ACP countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Going towards the close of Lomé and away from the original intentions of development cooperation between former colonies and European colonial powers, the concept of “Fortress Europe” reflected the protectionist policies of EC states regarding the movement of people and products from developing countries to Europe. When the review of Lomé IV was finally signed off in mid-1995 in Mauritius, the role of the EU in relation to ACP countries could be seen as one of a benign competitor. The exclusion of countries from EU programs for not complying with their criteria would become routine, yet there was no agreed interpretation of what good governance would involve in practice. The most visible difficulties regarding trade and aid with ACP countries came not from developing nations themselves, but emerged between Germany, France, and the UK over the allocation of development investment. This was due to the fact that the signatories of the Lomé IV Convention represented individual EC Member States in their own right and not the Community *per se*. For example, during the talks in Mauritius, France was concerned with the low levels of EDF support and urged an increase. Alternatively, Germany and the UK were seeking to reduce their EDF contributions. At a particularly strained agreement at the Cannes Intergovernmental Summit of June 1995, original commitments were reduced globally, with the UK alone reducing its contribution by 23 per cent (Faber, Roelfsema, 1997: 367–386).

The revisions which occurred in what became known as Lomé IV B (1995–2000) introduced a series of new policy objectives for the (by then) EU Member States, including: a concept of sustainability where projects would have to become economically self-sustaining; a recommitment to the global market system; a consolidation of the democratic rule of law and human rights, particularly in relation to women’s rights; and a focus on poverty reduction. Beyond this series of qualifications, the institutional bureaucracy was to emerge as a central obstacle to the smooth implementation of the range of policies, with responsibility for the development policy within the EU being divided up among three separate commissioners, two directorate-generals (DG IB, covering the Southern Mediterranean, Middle East, Latin America, South and East Asia, and DG VIII on development) and a special office (European Community Humanitarian Office – ECHO). The ACP leaders did not have a single point of contact, frustrating negotiations and engagement. This heavily layered structure was complicated further when the European Parliament (EP) gained influence over the implementation of policies by attaining approval powers over budgets and expenditure. By the end of the 1990s, the EU



links with the developing countries were silting up with a heavily layered bureaucracy that did not understand associationism.

Arguably, the liberalization of trading mechanisms became the rationale behind policy changes, coinciding with international shifts in the manner in which governments dealt with assistance and preferential trading agreements. The development strategy of the EU at this stage had tenure going back to the Yaoundé Convention, an acknowledged series of practical engagements with ACP counties. It was also a reflection of changes to the Common Commercial Policy (CCP), which had shaped the trade and political association with third countries since the earliest years of the Community. It is worth noting that while the complexity of the Lomé Convention was causing problems for EU-ACP relations at a diplomatic level, complementarity became *functional*, and in these developing regions recognized its worth. Indeed, African leaders found the contribution to be supportive in the broadest of senses, irrespective of motives. Between the years 1986 and 1998, EU financial support alone to ACP states was the equivalent of 30 billion euros, the vast bulk of which (77 per cent) was disbursed through the Lomé structures (Jones, 2001: 416).

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With the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995 and the EU's attempts to position itself as an active driver of the global economy in competition to the USA, Lomé with its support mechanism and leaning toward protective markets was running counter to the prevailing economic orthodoxy of EU policy makers (Apecu, 2010: 29–67). World Bank mismanagement and the resulting debt crises, divergence in key development indicators (such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, etc.) between the EU and the ACP regions, commodity prices fluctuating, the power imbalances that emerged during the dialogue, pressures to liberalize markets, and increasing dependency on aid, meant that there was an EU driven demand for changes to the ACP's relationship. Even the backbone of the EU development policy, the European Development Fund – which was a lifeline for many communities – was questioned, only retrieved by the French during the review of the agreement in 1995. Lomé, with all its constraints, provided an agreed framework for intercontinental development policy and set out actions that could provide evidence of progress. It could be measured by interventions such as: the comprehensive nature of the involvement, its mutuality; the agreed institutional and logistic structures which facilitated action; the principle of negotiation on activities – that is, joint-decision making; regular and generous funding; a bureaucracy that was transparent although cumbersome; ACP beneficiaries were able to work as an

entourage and negotiated as such; and significantly, the ACP states themselves found Lomé developmental.

Conversely, the problems that the EU was to table against Lomé were to swing the pendulum against this open style of development intervention and towards a more globalizing market focus. In effect, Africa would have to compete on the global market like everyone else. What was notable as the global market contorted out of the eighties, was that the unregulated drive of the financial markets affected the leverage on power that the dozens of developing countries had had under Lomé. ACP power had become weaker, their influence had been undermined and dismissed, and neo-colonial attitudes reemerged in European capitals. The EU believed that it no longer had the structures in place to efficiently deal with developing countries and ACP trade with the EU went down year after year. Debt was economically crippling the ACP states and their development. Many regions continued to slip into underdevelopment, characterized by food insecurity, widespread poverty, conflict and migration (Jones, 2001: 420).

Any system following on from the Lomé system was merely a compromise, embedding the difficulties that had affected development policy since the 1980s. It had served its purpose; macro-economic circumstances had altered significantly in the post-Cold War era and there was a general acknowledgement that globalization demanded a new arrangement. In practice, many of the ACP states found it impossible to adapt to global market liberalization and consequently, the value of their goods, trade and influence declined. It was all compounded by the establishment of the WTO, which set itself the task of forcing open markets that had previously been based on preference and co-operative arrangements – such as Lomé I. Times had changed and the Member States of the EU were becoming more fixated with the fluctuations of their own economies, focusing more on protecting their own markets and networks. The Common Agricultural Policy of the EU became the most obvious example of this, with almost 9,000 tariffs set against imports to the EU, most against African farmers who, if given the opportunity, could produce more competitively than EU farmers. There was also the problem of ad hoc interventions by the EU that carried both bureaucratic delay and a partisanship symptomatic of the EU system in general. The case in point was the “patchwork” nature of the EU relationship with Africa, where there continued (and continues) to exist a multitude of competing and overlapping policy frameworks and funding instruments.

The seven decades of the European partnership with former colonies had been a journey of contrasting engagements, with periods of seemingly positive interconnectivity countered by defensiveness and competitiveness. The chronology is important in accessing this developmental process, where there were obvious

periods of practical exchange followed by a divergence of interests and exploitative disengagement. This can be recognized through from Yaoundé and Lomé I when obvious enhancement in the standard of living across Africa can be discerned, but stands in contrast to the later programs which were seemingly driven by European caution and distraction through the emerging neo-liberal agendas of the period. Lessons were learned in the early associationism and still stand as examples of the possibility of genuine partnership without recourse to the destructiveness of more recent traits.

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