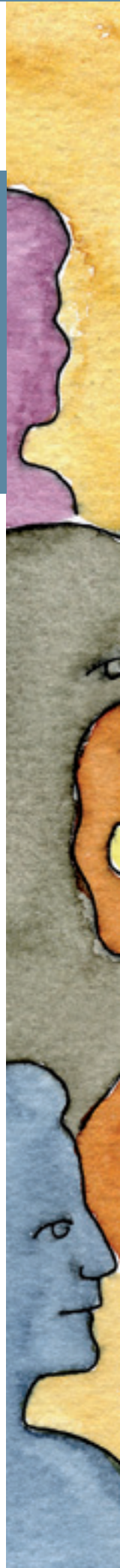




European Union Policy Integration and Democracy Building in Africa: Is there Hope for the Future?

Dr Henry Kippin, Honorary Fellow, Political Economy Research Centre,
University of Sheffield, United Kingdom



European Union Policy Integration and Democracy Building in Africa: Is there Hope for the Future?

© International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2009

International IDEA publications are independent of specific national or political interests. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of International IDEA, its Board or its Council members.

Applications for permission to reproduce or translate all or any part of this publication should be made to:

International IDEA
SE -103 34 Stockholm
Sweden

Layout by: Bulls Graphics

European Union Policy Integration and Democracy Building in Africa: Is there Hope for the Future?¹

Abstract

The EU has suffered from a lack of coherence and presence on the international stage, and its collective engagement with African partners has frequently been undermined or subsumed beneath bilateral relationships based on deeply personalized ties. This paper explores some of the linkages between European Union (EU) foreign policy and the processes of democracy building in Africa. It evaluates the current ‘direction of travel’ in EU foreign policymaking, and suggests some ways in contemporary debates can be influenced in a tangible and positive way. It asks whether a common EU policy would reflect a more measured and egalitarian approach to African affairs, and would precipitate a more effective approach to promoting and supporting democratic governance. The paper asks how plausible a common approach to foreign and security policy in Africa might be, and assesses whether such an approach would represent a truly multilateralized set of concerns and imperatives. It also asks whether the policy agendas of the former colonial powers will continue to dominate engagement on the continent, or whether a true Europe-wide approach would begin to blur the historical ties that have defined policy to date. Ultimately, it explores the extent to which causal links can be envisaged between a more streamlined, multilateral EU foreign and security policy, and positive trends in democratic consolidation in Africa.

Summary of Recommendations

The EU should apply principles of democracy and human rights not as straitjackets for policymakers, but as broad goals with multiple ways to achieve them. Democratic societies are the ideal, but it should be recognized that transition to them may not be linear. In established African democracies, the EU should focus on maintaining strong central accounting and transparency mechanisms such as electoral commissions; in post-conflict societies, it should focus on establishing the conditions for political dialogue; and in those countries under authoritarian rule, EU foreign and security policy (EUFSP) should help

The EU should apply principles of democracy and human rights not as straitjackets for policymakers, but as broad goals with multiple ways to achieve them. Democratic societies are the ideal, but it should be recognized that transition to them may not be linear.

¹ The author would like to thank Nyambura Wambugu, Danaa Nantogmah, Alimou Bah and Bill Anderson for their support, and Beth Foley for comments on the draft. All errors are entirely the responsibility of the author.

bring regional pressure to bear through African multilateral organizations. These are diverse strategies for a diverse set of political circumstances.

The EU should continue to support the more holistic aspects of democracy building, such as providing basic services and infrastructure, and developing the frameworks through which African citizens can connect with their political representatives. The EU should work towards region-to-region dialogue as a primary conduit for discourse with African states, as well as offering institutional support for the effective working of these institutions.

EU elites should continue to work for the implementation of the foreign and security policy elements in the Lisbon Treaty, alongside lobbying for decision-making processes that represent the increasing diversity of the EU member states. ‘Marginalized’ states should try to increase their influence within the EU by committing resources to EUFSP initiatives. For example, smaller members could strategically contribute troops and resources to a common intervention force, which would relieve pressure on the ‘bigger’ states and afford these marginalized states increased leverage in decision-making.

Democracy building is a multifaceted concept concerned with the direct instruments of democracy, ensuring free and fair elections and effective re-politicization of undemocratic regimes but which also has more holistic implications, such as ensuring good governance, transparent decision-making and public accountability. For democracy building strategies to have any real meaning, they must engage with these elements in toto.

1. Introduction

This paper explores some of the linkages between European Union (EU) foreign policy and the processes of democracy building in Africa. Democracy building is a multifaceted concept. On one level, it is concerned with the direct instruments of democracy, ensuring free and fair elections and effective re-politicization of undemocratic regimes. It also has more holistic implications, such as ensuring good governance, transparent decision-making and public accountability. For democracy building strategies to have any real meaning, they must engage with these elements in toto. Ensuring peaceful forums for civic debate is as important as counting ballot papers, and providing basic services as crucial as protecting a free press. Several countries in sub-Saharan Africa have shown what happens when some of these elements are missing. Undemocratic leaders can be propped up, popular debate stifled and electoral processes mishandled.

The machinations of EU foreign policy seem a long way from Zimbabwe or Côte d’Ivoire, but the two are intrinsically connected. Since the end of the colonial era, the policy priorities of key European powers (most obviously France, the United Kingdom and Portugal) have helped to shape the political landscape of their African ‘partners’ in a fundamental way. These deep and often personalized relationships have made it difficult to establish and maintain any kind of consistent, multilateral European approach to African issues. The long-term effect has been to create a disjuncture between clarity of ideological rhetoric on the value of democracy and human rights, and the lack of operational coherence in support of these goals.

Since the end of the colonial era, the policy priorities of key European powers have helped to shape the political landscape of their African ‘partners’ in a fundamental way. These deep and often personalized relationships have made it difficult to establish and maintain any kind of consistent, multilateral European approach.

Understanding this sense of disjuncture is important precisely because of the potential that an EU Foreign and Security

Policy (EUFSP) has to offer tangible support to democratic government in Africa. In short, a shift in emphasis from within the EU towards a coherent, multilateral foreign policy agenda could have fundamental effects, supporting inter-regional development, conflict resolution and accountable, bottom-up democratic processes. As an institution, the EU has long held ‘promotion of democratic values’ to be a fundamental pillar of its institutional thinking on foreign affairs, development and security. However, although the EU has professed a desire to position itself as a bastion of such values internationally, foreign policy interventions in the traditional sense have largely been left to its member states.

Such a state of affairs highlights the complex politics of intra-EU policy integration. In economic terms, there is a high level of integration between the powerful states, culminating in monetary union and the single European currency. Political union, however, has proved more problematic. Even a country such as Ireland, which has been an enthusiastic champion of economic integration, is cautious about efforts to integrate and streamline social and political decision-making. The apotheosis of this attitude was reached in June 2008, when ratification of the Lisbon Treaty was rejected in a national referendum.

Several proposed developments in foreign and security policy integration were immediate casualties of stalled political reform within the EU, but there is reason to believe that developing a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) will emerge as a key issue for future presidencies – whatever the outcome of the debates over the Lisbon Treaty. Such reform could have precipitous effects in Africa. Although the EU has, concurrently with the United Nations, framed its multilateral relations with Africa in terms of good governance and democratic development, individual member states have maintained distinctive relationships with African states based on historical ties and economic interdependence.

Efforts to multilateralize decision-making within the EU could have a fundamental effect on these relationships. Would a common EU policy reflect a more measured and egalitarian approach to African affairs? If so, could this precipitate a more effective approach to promoting and supporting democratic governance? This paper assesses the extent to which this could be the case. It asks how plausible a common approach to foreign and security policy in Africa might be, and assess whether such an approach would represent a truly multilateralized set of concerns and imperatives. It also asks whether the policy agendas of the former colonial powers will continue to dominate engagement on the continent, or whether a true Europe-wide approach would begin to blur the historical ties that have defined policy to date. Ultimately, it explores the extent to which causal links can be envisaged between a more streamlined, multilateral EU foreign and security policy, and positive trends in democratic consolidation in Africa.

Efforts to multilateralize decision-making within the EU could have a fundamental effect on these relationships. Would a common EU policy reflect a more measured and egalitarian approach to African affairs?

2. EU Foreign Policy in Perspective

The analysis of EUFSP has, to date, largely focused on two dichotomies: the relationship between the policy instruments of the EU and the demonstrable outcomes of its actions; and the tension between the limitations on collective policy decisions, and the

influence of the EU as an international institution. Woven into these debates is a classic theoretical tension between realism and collectivism – how can a union of states be an effective foreign policy instrument if all these states maintain a distinct and individual foreign policy?

While the EU cannot necessarily act in a homogenous fashion in the realist sense, it constitutes a visible and influential presence, if only by grouping together several of the world's foremost economic and historical powers.

Most contemporary critiques of this perspective highlight a disconnect between this institutional capability to act in a 'substantive' fashion and the track record of the EU – suggesting that 'established mechanisms' for shared policy have not delivered the results they are capable of delivering. Karen Smith suggests three main reasons for this: the divergence of national interests within the EU, the lack of a centralized military capability and the lack of a coherent international 'identity' (K Smith 2003). To this Hazel Smith (2002) adds a deficit in executive decision-making and an 'expectations gap' – a tendency to expound on international crises without following up with meaningful policy interventions. As is demonstrated below, the plans for EUFSP integration set out in 2008 address these issues specifically.

In practical terms, today's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has its legal basis in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993. This crystallized the transition from European Political Cooperation (EPC) to the CFSP – bringing new policy instruments to the table and 'institutionalizing' cooperation between member states (Holland 1997). In broad terms, the Treaty compelled member states to commit to a series of 'joint actions' and 'common positions', both of which required collective adoption of a coherent position, and thus greater dialogue and coordination between European foreign ministries. Joint actions in particular required the EU to behave as a homogenous foreign policy actor; and 15 such actions were undertaken within the first 16 months of the CFSP.

Inevitably, perceptions of the CFSP have depended on national approaches to European integration – France and Germany, for example, have been more enthusiastic than the UK (Soetendorp 1999). To this end Holland (1997: 1) observes that: 'For the minimalist member states who cling to the traditional notions of sovereignty in foreign affairs it remains unnecessarily intrusive; for integrationist member states it is too modest and contrived...'. Such discord between member states has been advanced as one reason why an EUFSP has been seen as something of an underwhelming force – especially as effective cooperation and common interest are so central to effective decision-making. EU member states may well share significant common values and interests, but domestic foreign policies are not always constructed with ideological concerns in the foreground. Largely because of this fact, joint actions under the CFSP have been seen as a mixed bag – expedient only when foreign policy issues become too big to ignore, for example, in South Africa during the early 1990s (Holland 1997).

One way the EU has circumvented this tendency is to develop a more 'holistic' set of foreign policy tools (H Smith 2002). The CFSP architecture allows the EU to exert intermittent influence as a discrete international actor, but far more influence is brought to bear through legislation on matters of trade, aid and development. As Karen Smith (2003: 2) reminds us, 'the CFSP pillar most obviously concerns foreign policy, but foreign policy is not just the product of the CFSP pillar'. This becomes

obvious when one considers EU relations with the African continent, where recent discussions have been dominated by Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) – nominally an issue of trade rather than foreign policy. Aid regimes, too, have brought foreign policy goals to bear. Several countries, including Nigeria, (then) Zaire and Sudan, have experienced suspensions of aid programmes as a response to political concerns of the EU.²

With this in mind, the ‘geo-issue-area’ approach developed by Hazel Smith (2002) is a useful way to look at EU foreign policy. Smith focuses not on the narrow architecture of the CFSP, but on how the EU has developed and maintained relationships in geographic and regional terms. Most relevant to this article is the development of relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, institutionalized through the Yaounde and Lomé conventions, and since 2000 the Cotonou Agreement.³ Policy towards these states has been cultivated through a series of trade and development agreements, ostensibly moving the EU away from the deep bilateral relationships of the colonial era towards multilateral bargaining and equality of access to the markets of Europe. It goes without saying that this transition is still very much a work in progress.

Smith’s geo-issue-area approach allows us to evaluate the changing priorities of EU foreign policy through convention agreements.⁴ In short, there was a distinct transition from simple ‘trade and aid’ agreements for ex-colonies to a more sophisticated regime of ideological and policy conditionality – a shift in thinking from Lomé I in 1975 to Lomé IV in 1995, the point at which human rights concerns were brought to the foreground. The Cotonou Agreement reflects a multilateral⁵ trend towards a ‘governance agenda’ promoting liberal political systems alongside liberal economies (Kelsall 2002, Harrison 2004).

These EU-ACP agreements represent the frameworks through which the more traditional aspects of foreign policy can be imagined. For example, if respect for human rights and for democratic politics are enshrined as fundamental elements of regional cooperation, then deviations from these ideals invariably warrant action from one partner or another. In this sense, regional agreements bind the EU to a common position on the reasons behind foreign policy interventions, and, even if we argue that *realpolitik* still rules the day behind the scenes, decisions on foreign policy intervention are always likely to be justified with recourse to the terms of regional cooperation.

If respect for human rights and for democracy is enshrined as fundamental elements of regional cooperation, then deviations from these ideals warrant action from one partner or another. In this sense, regional agreements bind the EU to a common position on the reasons behind foreign policy interventions, and these decisions are always likely to be justified with recourse to the terms of regional cooperation.

² Hazel Smith (2002) notes that in 1994, eight countries had aid suspended or restricted: Gambia, Eritrea, Liberia, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Togo and (then) Zaire.

³ In 2005 a revised agreement was produced with ‘the threefold objective of simplification, clarification and harmonization, while preserving the fundamental *acquis* of the Cotonou agreement.’ See European Commission (2005).

⁴ This arguably tells us far more than amalgamating joint actions and common positions. These agreements, although not officially foreign policy by definition, represent the frameworks within which relations between the EU and ACP countries have been envisaged.

⁵ Promoted especially by the World Bank.

3. EU Foreign Policy in Africa: The Politics of Democracy Building?

As International IDEA notes, ‘the European Union and its enlargement process provide one of the most successful democracy building processes in the world’.⁶ In this sense ‘success’ can be taken to mean well-functioning, stable and (broadly) liberal democracies, respecting fundamental human rights and the rule of law and enabling politically and socially plural societies.⁷ These fundamentals inform EU policy in toto and, with respect to foreign policy, can be seen as the gold standard at which interventions aim. Since the first Lomé agreement, a progressive strengthening can be observed of both language and legislation towards the above aims in Africa, and in May 1998 a common position was adopted establishing support for ‘human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance in Africa’.⁸

This position has since been underwritten by aid flows for democratization and electoral assistance, renewed vigour in political dialogue and attempts to engage with the development of African regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as the African Union (AU). Resources have also been targeted at broadening the stakeholder base of national development strategies, inviting private, non-governmental and community participation. This has gone hand in hand with efforts to support strong private-sector driven economic performance. Such a focus on good governance and the more holistic aspects of democracy building is in line with the policies of other multilateral bodies – most obviously the World Bank. The World Bank’s approach has been to enforce a framework for ‘good governance’ (Woods 2000) through a form of soft compulsion, that is, conditioning loans and budget support on particular types of behaviour, usually based on the ‘liberal’ practices of Europe and the USA. The accountability of political leaders, it is argued, is paramount in nurturing the trust and responsibility that a functioning representative democracy needs.

In general, good practice in this area has been rewarded by increased aid and more favourable terms of trade – but has this accelerated the cause of democracy on the continent? Certainly, good governance is a desirable end, and there is no real reason why democracy and development should not be jointly pursued and mutually reinforcing. On the other hand, the policy of rewarding good practices economically may help to institutionalize particular parties and cadres of officials within government. In Tanzania, for example, the perpetual ‘good performance’⁹ of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party has made it harder for opposition parties to offer a credible alternative, and easier for the party to conflate progress with political continuity (Kippin 2007).

In a 2005 paper, Gordon Crawford offers some more critical reflections on EU democracy building in Africa. He attacks what he perceives to be a ‘policy high on rhetoric but ... low on delivery’ (Crawford 2005: 572), arguing that EUFSP post-11

⁶ See International IDEA (2009)

⁷ For a recent analysis of how democracy building has taken shape in a new European country, see Laura Zanotti ‘Normalizing Democracy and Human Rights: discipline, resistance and carceralization in Croatia’s Euro-Atlantic integration’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11/3 (2008), pp. 222–250

⁸ Council 1998, cited in Crawford 2005: 576

⁹ See for example ‘Kikwete’s Growing International Prestige’ *Tanzanian Affairs* 90 (May 2008)

September 2001 has valued stability above democracy to the detriment of the latter. Using Ghana as a case study he explains that:

if the EU was seriously committed to assisting democratization in African countries, then, as a favourable candidate, Ghana should receive substantial support. Yet low levels of actual democracy assistance suggest that rhetoric cannot be taken at face value and that policy proclamations fulfil other purposes. [...]

Ghana does not attract significant support for ongoing democratization because it is regarded as politically stable and formally democratic. ... Rather, EU attention is focused elsewhere in Africa, notably on situations of conflict, where its own interests are more likely to be directly affected (2005: 592).

Crawford's observations fit into a wider trend within international relations that has melded ideas about development and security like never before (Duffield 1999). Clearly, the EU is not the only international actor to prioritize stability. In the Horn of Africa particularly (Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea), there has been marked international concern over the preponderance of politically unstable governments providing safe haven to 'terrorist' groups (Dempsey 2006). David Chandler (2007: 379) suggests that such strategies represent an 'anti-foreign policy ... driven by a self-referential political agenda rather than foreign policy concerns'. While such prioritizing is understandable, the long-term implications of pulling back on support for democratization could be just as significant and even more damaging.

It would be churlish to suggest a hidden agenda behind the EUFSP, but these criticisms are nevertheless worth taking into consideration. If we accept that both the type and the distribution of EU support reflect a degree of institutional self-interest (as all foreign policy necessarily does), then its shortcomings are easier to understand.

Crawford's second point is about the type of democracy being promoted within the EUFSP. This taps into a well of cynicism over the role of the West, particularly the Bretton Woods multilaterals, in Africa, suggesting that democracy building is simply a project designed to further enshrine the principles of neoliberalism on the continent. Reforms that 'strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the public bureaucracy' improve state accountability to donors, but not necessarily to populations. Efforts to decentralize are ostensibly designed to empower local people, but in fact serve the purpose of shrinking the state. Ultimately, Crawford suggests that 'democracy promotion policies fulfil more covert agendas' (2005: 593).

It would be churlish to suggest a hidden agenda behind the EUFSP, but these criticisms are nevertheless worth taking into consideration. If we accept that both the type and the distribution of EU support reflect a degree of institutional self-interest (as all foreign policy necessarily does), then its shortcomings are easier to understand. This self-interest can take an institutional form, but is also reflective of the relationships that EU member states have built in Africa – relationships that have arguably been far more damaging than any interventions the EU has made collectively.

The Effect of the Foreign Policies of EU Member States

It is suggested above that the individual foreign policy agendas of EU member states have, at times, constituted a barrier to effective and coherent EU action. While this is certainly a procedural issue, it is also a philosophical problem, as the EU's enshrined

It is clear that France and the UK have over the years maintained different attitudes to engagement with their former colonies in Africa. Such policies have myriad positive and negative effects, but what they share are policy outcomes that are personalized; that is, they are a product of bilateral historical and commercial ties, and of interventions that are not always objective or reflective of the ethical and moral tenets of the European Union.

Much of Western public engagement with Africa is through the prism of development – an industry that has tried so hard to depoliticize the process of governing polities and economies. In effect, what this produces is a kind of public myopia.

commitment to democracy and human rights is subsumed within national strategies that may not be so ideologically driven.

The development of dense ties between French and Francophone African elites, for example, can hardly be said to have advanced the cause of democracy in the countries concerned. In some cases, these relationships stunted new governments and repressed groundswells of popular opinion, looking to maintain networks of privilege through political patronage. France is certainly not alone in maintaining close ties with its former colonies. Looking to southern Africa, Zimbabwe's slide into crisis is a sorry tale of interwoven historical relationships, broken promises and political

posturing between the country and its ex-coloniser – the United Kingdom. Deep 'commercial and historical ties' (Porteus 2005: 291) can undermine democracy building indirectly, by allowing vested financial and personal interests to deeply politicize issues of governance and the rule of law. This is particularly significant because much of Western public engagement with Africa is through the prism of development – an industry that has tried so hard to depoliticize the process of governing polities and economies (Ferguson 2006, Abrahamsen 2000). In effect, what this produces is a kind of public myopia – so that a crisis such as that being experienced by the Zimbabwean people is given the kind of international attention that arguably outweighs its importance in a broader, comparative context. This in turn contributes to imbalances in foreign policy agendas, so that crises that may require concerted collaborative effort – for example in Sudan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – are subsumed within general concern over a country in which many economic and family ties have been formed.¹⁰

It is clear that France and the UK have over the years maintained different attitudes to engagement with their former colonies in Africa. Such policies have myriad positive and negative effects, but what they share are policy outcomes that are *personalized*; that is, they are a product of bilateral historical and commercial ties, and are the result of interventions that are not always objective or reflective of the ethical and moral tenets of the European Union. They have a fundamental impact on the ability of the EU to behave as a discrete foreign policy actor, and/or with a coherent underlying political agenda. Rather than remarking on the inevitability of this situation, however, there is some reason to hope that things can change in the future. Countries such as France are re-organizing and streamlining their foreign policy objectives and armed capabilities,¹¹ and will look to 'multilateralize' certain aspects of foreign policy in the future. Reform of EU foreign policy thus offers an opportunity to bring European interventions in

¹⁰ Here I am not suggesting that such close relationships will always produce bad outcomes. For example historical links between the UK and Sierra Leone facilitated effective intervention to help end the country's civil war.

¹¹ The Livre Blanc reforms published in June 2008 suggested a restructuring of the French armed forces, looking towards intelligence and anti-terrorism focused reforms over traditional structures. Senior generals were alleged to have responded to the paper by penning an anonymous article criticizing the government.

Africa under the collective umbrella, and hopefully closer to the democratic ideals of the EU. Section 4 explores the extent to which this might happen.

4. Reforming EU Foreign Policy in Africa

EU engagement with the African continent is probably best understood with reference to trade and aid agreements and in the context of EU regional frameworks with the ACP regional grouping. As is noted above, such themes are integral parts of a ‘geo-issue-area’ foreign policy – a concept that sees EU FSP in holistic terms, rather than simply as the product of CFSP machinations. That is not to say, however, that we should ignore the more traditional elements of foreign policymaking. In recent months, events have combined that suggest a shift in thinking on issues of foreign policy legislation and prosecution, at least at the level of the European elites.

The Lisbon Treaty

The failure to secure ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 came as a crushing blow for those pushing for deeper integration within the European Union. The treaty is on ice, and its legislative agenda may have to wait for implementation, but the approach to foreign policy reform contained within it tells us much about contemporary European thinking in this area.

The draft of the treaty reflects a long-held desire to pull together some of the more disparate and ‘loose’ elements of the EU. In a practical sense, it aims to prepare the ground for ongoing enlargement – to streamline decision-making and lay out clearer lines of demarcation in several policy areas. Perhaps the key policy shift represented in the document is the proposal for a High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – a single, unified policy office to be created by merging the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy.¹² The idea is to bring together the policymaking and financial instruments of EU foreign policy to create an office with the potential to wield greater influence on the world stage. Decisions on foreign affairs would still require unanimity within the EU, so this would not amount to any loss of national sovereignty over policymaking. However, the international presence of the new High Representative would loom large over the foreign ministers of (particularly the smaller) member states, and would therefore constitute an alternative and independent ‘pole’ of foreign policy within the EU.

This is in part a reaction to a sense of policy disconnect between the ‘intergovernmental’ and ‘community’ pillars of EU foreign policy, which ostensibly contribute to the same external representation of the EU but are characterized by different (and sometimes conflicting) modes of decision-making. As Brady and Barysch (2007: 2) note:

The Council’s High Representative has the political clout that comes from speaking on the EU’s behalf. ... The Commissioner for External Action has a EUR 10 billion annual budget and a big team of specialists ... [but] ... little diplomatic weight... Cooperation between the two foreign policy figureheads is difficult, and sometimes entirely absent.

¹² Positions currently held by Javier Solana and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, respectively.

By multilateralizing decisions on African policy interventions, member states subject these decisions to ratification from a collective, and thus potentially strip them of bias generated by personalized and historical ties. This could, in turn, lead to policy interventions more focused on the philosophical ideals of the EU, and thus to greater support for human rights and democracy building in Africa.

Clearly, the treaty represents a collective will to see a more efficient, streamlined and cost-effective EU, and elites in several countries – not least the UK – have been at pains to frame it squarely within these terms – fearing a public backlash at any suggestion of a compromise of national autonomy or sovereignty. There is, however, a sense that EUFSP reform also betrays a deeper commitment – an emerging sense that European elites are ready to work in greater concert to institutionalize shared aims and to start acting as a union.

One reading is that such a development would be good for Africa. By multilateralizing decisions on African policy interventions, member states subject these decisions to ratification from a collective, and thus potentially strip them of bias generated by personalized and historical ties. This could, in turn, lead to policy interventions more focused on the philosophical ideals of the EU, and thus to greater support for human rights and democracy building in Africa.

This is already happening in some ways. In the aftermath of violent elections in Kenya in December 2007, for example, the EU member states used future aid flows as leverage,¹³ and are now predicating KES 40 billion of budget and project support on the implementation of the Waki Commission report into the causes of post-election violence.¹⁴ There is little sense that the UK, as Kenya's former colonial occupier, has wanted to involve itself in the conflict independently of the EU – a decision that in this case could well contribute to positive developments in democratic accountability in the country.

As is outlined above, historical ties between African and European nations have fundamentally affected the trajectory of African democracy in the post-colonial era. This has not always been to the benefit of African populations, or of the development of representative liberal democracy across the continent. It would be foolish to suggest that Lisbon reforms can fundamentally alter the deep-seated relationships – but a change in direction *is* possible. A shift towards a more coherent and more visible international presence could see the EU become a more consistent player in international relations. If its interventions match its values, this could have positive implications for democracy building.

The 'Trio' EU Presidency

France's 2008 Presidency of the EU was significant for a number of reasons. Most obviously, it coincided with a concerted effort by the government of President Nicolas Sarkozy to distance itself from the ideals of *Francafrique* that characterized the Presidencies of Jacques Chirac and Francois Mitterand. The new president's language

¹³ 'Rival Teams Meet in Second Step Towards Peace' *The East African Standard* (Nairobi), 30 January 2008

¹⁴ 'EU: No Waki, No Donor Money' *The East African Standard* (Nairobi), 17 November 2008

was of 'equal partnership'¹⁵ and a new 'Eurafrica',¹⁶ while his minister for overseas aid even declared 'death to Francafrique'.¹⁷

France has pushed defence reform as a key pillar of its strategy for its EU Presidency. This was billed as one of four key themes and, as with the Lisbon proposals, French thinking provides an insight into how the EU might engage with Africa in the future. French proposals were for 'permanent structured cooperation' through the establishment of a semi-autonomous planning unit, which would have use of a 'common intervention force' (CIF) of 10,000 troops. G6 members¹⁸ would be compelled to contribute a fixed proportion of GDP as well as troops to this force, which would be available to address flashpoints and low-level conflict around the world.

Such a development may have significant implications in Africa, where 'low-level conflict' has been devastating in countries such as Angola, Sudan and the DRC. Meaningful burden-sharing among EU member states would mean that the EU could react far more quickly to incidents requiring international attention, which could have a catalytic effect on conflict resolution in certain areas of Africa.

On 1 January 2009, the EU Presidency was passed from France to the Czech Republic. The transition marked the beginning of stage two of the 'trio' presidency, to be completed when Sweden takes the reigns in the summer of 2009. The idea of a trio commits its three partners to a set of common, cross-cutting goals as well as individual themes and policy targets. In this 18-month period, implementation of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy and the roll-out of EPAs are the primary Africa-focused goals (European Commission 2008: 86), and broad policy continuity can be expected in this area.

The Lisbon and defence reforms are both examples of grand proposals that may never come to fruition and they do not point to a clear agenda for an EU foreign policy future. They are, however, compelling examples of the direction in which European elite thinking is moving – away from bilateral interventions based on historical ties, and towards a more streamlined, integrated future.

Future Challenges for EU Democracy Building

The Lisbon and defence reforms are both examples of grand proposals that may never come to fruition and they do not point to a clear agenda for an EU foreign policy future. They are, however, compelling examples of the direction in which European elite thinking is moving – away from bilateral interventions based on historical ties, and towards a more streamlined, integrated future. The African continent is likely to experience any first manifestations of such reform, because diplomatic and military intervention is so rare in other parts of the world, and perhaps also because inertia in the face of African conflict (e.g. in Rwanda) has undermined the legitimacy of EUFP in the recent past.

I have suggested that such a policy shift would present opportunities for supporting

¹⁵ 'Sarkozy's Africa Policy Shift' BBC Online, 26 September 2007, available at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7014776.stm>>

¹⁶ 'Sarkozy Promises 'Eurafrica' Partnership on Tour' *Reuters* 26 July 2007, available at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL26199215>>

¹⁷ 'Death to Francafrique?' *The Economist* blog, 21 January 2008, available at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/certainideasofeuropa/2008/01/death_to_francafrique.cfm>

¹⁸ The G6 members are the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland.

democratic development in Africa, allowing the EU to develop more coherent policies and country strategies that reflect institutional ideals rather than narrow interest. This is, however, not a linear process.

There will be as many challenges as opportunities in reforming EUFSP towards Africa in the future. On the positive side, there is an emerging line of thinking that prioritizes multilateralism, shared responsibility and a move away from the personalized politics of the recent past. These trends are, however, contingent on resolving fundamental issues of historical vested interests and economic burden-sharing – not to mention the complex internal politics of intra-European integration.

Rolling out an integrated, streamlined approach to EUFSP cuts to the heart of normative viewpoints on the EU and poses a massive challenge to people already sceptical about the breadth and depth of integration between member states. Furthermore, without progress on the Lisbon Treaty and associated issues around enlargement, it is hard to see how integrationist perspectives on CFSP reform will get past the discussion and debating stages. In this sense, progress on EUFSP is highly contingent on ongoing efforts in other areas of EU institutional development, which are themselves racked with disagreement over the form that ‘multi-level governance’ should take.

There are other, more structural, challenges to EUFSP reform that stem mostly from uncertainty over exactly how much things would change under the surface even if a more multilateral approach were to be institutionalized. Military capacity is an example. Delivering 10,000 CIF troops becomes more difficult if these troops must be ‘combat ready’, and in practice this means they would principally need to come from the UK and France.¹⁹ The UK will be engaged in the Middle East for some time to come and may be unwilling to commit combat troops under such circumstances, and an overdependence on British and French troops would leave multilateral intervention open to the accusation that it is biased towards the interests of the leading contributors. This opinion has already been voiced with reference to the EUFOR operation in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), which some European diplomats felt was simply propping up French interests in the region.²⁰

The CAR example represents a classic tension between individual (realist) and collective (structuralist) foreign policy agendas, but there are also domestic political factors to consider outside the traditional foreign policy sphere. Even in a single country, national foreign policy may be challenged by the actions of other political actors (for example, civil society, the judiciary or the media) – and the problem is inevitably multiplied in a multilateral collective. Recent comment from *The Economist* on the situation in eastern DRC brings this into focus. It suggests that a deterioration in the relationship between France and Rwanda is undermining a coherent and targeted EU response to the crisis there. Significantly, given the EU’s own ideological commitments, it is divergent perceptions on human rights abuses that lay at the centre of this dispute.²¹ The broader point is that foreign policy inertia is not always the result of conflict between integrationist and minimalist member states, nor a product of conflicting visions of what EUFSP should look like. Often, other, tangential, factors can be to blame – a

¹⁹ From a personal communication during a research project at African Development Information Services (AfDevInfo).

²⁰ Comments from a senior European diplomat, made anonymously in 2007.

²¹ Eg. the recent arrest of Rose Kabuye. See ‘Judicial Politics of a Genocide’ *The Economist*, 13 November 2008, p.67. For a Rwandan perspective on the affair see ‘The Arrest of Rose Kabuye: Is this an Unjust World or What?’ Focus Media (Kigali), 12 November 2008, available at <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200811210810.html>>

scenario that is unlikely to change whatever reforms of the CFSP take place in the future.

There will be as many challenges as opportunities in reforming EUFSP towards Africa in the future. On the positive side, there is an emerging line of thinking that prioritizes multilateralism, shared responsibility and a move away from the personalized politics of the recent past. These trends are, however, contingent on resolving fundamental issues of historical vested interests and economic burden-sharing – not to mention the complex internal politics of intra-European integration.

5. The Future: What can EU Foreign Policy Reform Achieve?

Given the observations made above, it is time to ask what the forthcoming Swedish EU presidency can hope to achieve. Sweden will inherit the EU Presidency at a time of great economic turmoil, and will almost certainly be spending much of its tenure at the head of efforts to stabilize and re-boot European markets after the spectacular crises of 2008. The development of EUFSP will no doubt take a back seat in the face of such an all-consuming agenda, but this does not mean that progress cannot be made. If we accept that EUFSP is more than the sum of its CFSP parts, there is reason to believe that in the future EUFSP can offer greater support to existing democracies in Africa – and more consistent support to those pushing to achieve democratic aims in conflict scenarios. This section makes three broad recommendations for the future.

Maintain the EUFSP Direction of Travel

This article has argued that a fairly distinct set of ideas has emerged in recent months on the direction of travel of EUFSP reform, located principally around streamlining both foreign policymaking and the means to ‘action’ foreign policy interventions more expeditiously. Although these ideas are linked to wider agreement on the future of EU legislative structures more generally, they need not live and die with the Lisbon Treaty. One hope here is that the enthusiasm in the USA for the policies of Barack Obama – espousing deeper internationalism and reform of multilateral bodies such as the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions – will provoke similar sentiment among European elites. Key to making this happen will be assurances that EUFSP reform is not just a blueprint for the ‘big’ member states to divest themselves of responsibility, but a set of reforms that reflect the ideological and pragmatic principles shared across the EU.

The African continent stands to gain from any such movement, as it represents a transition from personalized and historical/colonial ties to a multilateral relationship free from the politics of elite patronage. EU elites should therefore continue to work towards implementation of the foreign and security policy elements in the Lisbon Treaty, alongside lobbying for decision-making processes that represent the increasing diversity of the EU member states. ‘Marginalized’ states should try to increase their influence within the EU by actively committing resources to foreign and security policy reform initiatives. For example, smaller members could strategically contribute troops and resources to a CIF – this would relieve pressure on the ‘bigger’ states and, at the same time, afford these marginalized states increased leverage in decision-making processes. These are all processes that could contribute to a more multilateral foreign policy in the future.

Continue Dialogue on the 'Shape' of Regional Cooperation

This article highlights above Hazel Smith's observation that EUFSP in Africa is framed by its regional 'ACP' agreements. In this context, it is vital that the EU continues to provide financial and political support for African regional integration. A recent communication on 'regional integration for development in ACP countries' sets out recommendations on how to do this, prioritizing 'regional governance and cooperation for peace and stability', and 'stronger ownership of regional integration processes'. Crucially, the document recommends that 'the EU respects the choices made by its partners on the objectives, design, speed and focus of their integration processes ... support[ing] choices that regions make for themselves' (European Commission 2008: 5). The EU has often been accused of being heavy-handed, for example over EPA negotiations,²² and even underhand (see Crawford above) in constructing bilateral

economic and development agreements. Facilitating the development of autonomous and indigenous regionalisms in Africa – typified by a strong AU – would go a long way to mitigating these claims in the future. The EU should therefore work towards region-to-region dialogue as a primary conduit for discourse with African states, as well as offering institutional support for the effective working of these institutions.

The EU should work towards region-to-region dialogue as a primary conduit for discourse with African states, as well as offering institutional support for the effective working of these institutions.

Resolve Conflict to Facilitate Democratic Development

The 18-month programme of the Council of the European Union stated in June 2008 that 'the Union will continue to promote peace and security in Africa by supporting stabilization and reconciliation processes. It will strengthen its support to African peace and security efforts, strengthening its political dialogue with the African Union and contributing to capacity building' (Council of the European Union 2008: 86). The election crisis in Kenya has proved that the EU can act coherently in support of such aims. EU conduct in relation to Kenya's post-election commissions has been concurrent with its philosophical commitments to democracy and human rights – values that are shared by many Kenyans. This is a positive note, but also represents a limitation for EUFSP in Africa. For example, a recent International IDEA study on democracy building (2008: 59) suggested that 'The EU, it has been argued, tends to be relatively good in situations where things are already moving in more or less the right direction, but it is not very good at making the indirect approaches work where there is not already a political commitment or political will to change.'

At the time of writing, conflict in the DRC is ongoing, and political tensions in Somalia and the Horn are bubbling over. A true test of the EU's commitment to democracy building in Africa is to be found in the way it engages with these emerging crises.

Put bluntly, it is easier to intervene when the path is relatively clear and a critical mass of popular support is pushing for democratic development. The EU has a role to play in situations like this, for example, in deepening democratic reform in countries such as Tanzania or Ghana, but must also look towards intervention when the terrain is less certain. At the time of writing, conflict in the DRC is ongoing, and political tensions

²² Ghanaian NGOs have been mobilized by in opposition to EPAs – spearheaded by Third World Network (TWN) in Accra. For more information see <www.twnafrica.org>

in Somalia and the Horn are bubbling over. A true test of the EU's commitment to democracy building in Africa is to be found in the way it engages with these emerging crises.

There is no simple way in which this can be done. Conflict in Africa is multifaceted and unique to particular social and economic circumstances. Military intervention is rarely a simple solution, as Somalia and Iraq have demonstrated, and the presence of EU troops on African soil can represent a political and moral minefield. Two things are germane here: first, the EU can strengthen African regional capacity to deal with conflict scenarios through the military capability of the AU, but also through the development of the AU as a key player within international forums. The EU's own foreign and security policy reform agenda – emphasizing clarity of message and a strong central presence – could be replicated here.

Second, the EU should continue to support the more holistic aspects of democracy building, such as providing basic services and infrastructure, and developing the frameworks through which African citizens can connect with their political representatives. Civil wars are precipitated by cleavages between people – establishing durable structures of accountability is the best way to mitigate against this in the long-term.

Civil wars are precipitated by cleavages between people – establishing durable structures of accountability is the best way to mitigate against this in the long-term.

Remember that More than One Type of Democracy is Possible

Supporting democracy building in Africa means supporting the idea of ownership, empowerment and 'bottom-up' development. All are buzzwords widely employed within the development industry (Abrahamsen 2000), and are frequently lumped together under the umbrella of 'good governance'. These values certainly correspond with the philosophy of the EU and undoubtedly represent inherently 'good' aims – but all too often they translate into a form of liberal democracy that rewards accountability *upwards* over accountability to national populations. However, recent evidence suggests that narrow forms of (neo)liberal democracy may not be the answer in every situation,²³ particularly in countries that are rebuilding political trust after conflict or crisis. In Kenya and Zimbabwe, for example, democratic transitions are being supported by power-sharing agreements – far from ideal-type governments, but in many ways representative of and accountable to their populations.²⁴ In other post-conflict countries, a more Western style of democracy has paid dividends – as elections in Sierra Leone and Angola have proved. To truly support democracy building on the continent, EUFSP must recognize the redundancy of a 'one-size-fits-all' policy, and focus on supporting democracies that hold African governments accountable to African citizens.

The EU should thus apply principles of democracy and human rights not as straitjackets for policymakers, but as broad goals with multiple ways to achieve them. Democratic societies are the ideal, but it should be recognized that transition to them may not

²³ For a fascinating discussion of why this may be the case see Schatzberg (2001).

²⁴ These governments are, of course, both transitional. The Zimbabwean power-sharing government in particular is deeply flawed, but at least begins to better reflect Zimbabweans' political preferences than a ZANU-PF government has done following previous 'democratic' elections.

Democratic transitions are being supported by power-sharing agreements – far from ideal-type governments, but in many ways representative of and accountable to their populations. In other post-conflict countries, a more Western style of democracy has paid dividends. To truly support democracy building on the continent, EUFSP must recognize the redundancy of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ policy, and focus on supporting democracies that hold African governments accountable to African citizens.

be linear. In established democracies such as Angola or Nigeria, the EU should focus on maintaining strong central accounting and transparency mechanisms such as electoral commissions; in post-conflict societies, it should focus on establishing the conditions for political dialogue; and in those countries under authoritarian rule, EUFSP should help bring regional pressure to bear through African multilateral organizations. These are diverse strategies for a diverse set of political circumstances.

6. Conclusions

This paper presents a largely optimistic view of the future prospects for an EU role in democracy building on the

African continent. It contends that, provided the EU can overcome some fairly fundamental internal challenges, there is reason to believe that a more coherent and streamlined EU can be a key regional partner in democratic development. Reform of EU foreign policymaking structures will be a key element in making this happen. The EU has suffered from a lack of coherence and presence on the international stage, and its collective engagement with African partners has frequently been undermined or subsumed beneath bilateral relationships based on deeply personalized ties.

The Lisbon Treaty epitomizes the potential shift away from this state of affairs. It seeks to strengthen EUFSP representation, to pull together different strands of its policymaking and, most importantly, to establish a real multilateral regional presence. Although its official instruments may not represent the whole breadth of the EUFSP, they are an important marker as to the intent of member states to work together as a union, and of their willingness to be represented through European structures. Of course, EU reform as a whole is a work in progress – still a matter for intense debate between European politicians and their own electorates as well as diplomats and national elites. This must be kept in mind, but there can be little doubt that the overall direction of travel is beginning to change.

Conclusions at this stage are inevitably tentative, but what can be hoped is that European policymakers will continue down this road. This could have real, progressive implications for Euro-African relations. It would signal a move away from relationships maintained by narrow trade and aid interests, to a shared commitment to strong regional institutions, each with an obligation to foster democratic accountability upwards to African regional organizations, the African Union and the EU, as well as downwards. This paper does not claim that such a shift is inevitable. Serious hurdles must be negotiated before we can conceive of such a scenario – not least with regard to the perceptions of EU member states of what the EU represents at home and what it should represent internationally.

What is clear is that foreign policy can have fundamental impacts on the building and sustaining of democratic societies. Building democracies means facilitating the development of home grown solutions to civic problems, and helping to build infrastructures within which accountable structures can thrive. To achieve this, conflict resolution is as important as financial support for electoral commissions, and basic services are just as fundamental as election observers. A coherent foreign policy that

draws on EU principles can underwrite these processes within developing countries. A region-to-region approach gives African states the best and most equal chance of addressing these issues in an accountable and ostensibly equal way.

Too often in the past international foreign policy efforts have been focused on ensuring steady flows of aid and foreign exchange between the multilateral, multinational and African government levels, helping to precipitate African democracies that are more accountable upwards than they are to their own citizens. This paper shows how a shift in EUFSP could affect this balance – and if forthcoming Presidencies can continue to tilt the scales in this direction, there is hope for progress in the future.

What is clear is that foreign policy can have fundamental impacts on the building and sustaining of democratic societies. Building democracies means facilitating the development of home grown solutions to civic problems, and helping to build infrastructures within which accountable structures can thrive. To achieve this, conflict resolution is as important as financial support for electoral commissions, and basic services are just as fundamental as election observers.

References

- Abrahamsen, Rita, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2000)
- Bangura, A.K., *Sweden vs Apartheid: Putting Morality Ahead of Profit* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)
- Brady, H. & Barysch, K., 'The CER Guide to the Reform Treaty' *Centre for European Reform Briefing Note*, October 2007
- Chandler, D., 'The Security-Development Nexus and the Rise of "Anti-foreign policy"' *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10/4 ((2007), pp. 362–386
- Charbonneau, B., *France and the New Imperialism: Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)
- Charlton, R. and May, R 'Warlords and Militarism in Chad' *Review of African Political Economy* 16/45–46 (1989), pp. 12–25
- Council of the European Union, 'The future French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies' 10093/08, 9 June 2008, pp. 86
- Crawford, G., 'The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana' *The European Journal of Development Research* 17/4 (2005), pp. 571–600
- Dempsey, T.A., *Counterterrorism in African Failed States: Challenges and Potential Solutions*, Monograph for the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, available at <<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub649.pdf>>
- Duffield, M., *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001)
- See European Commission, 'Information Note on the Revision of the Cotonou Agreement', 2005, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/negotiation_20050407_en.pdf>

- European Commission, Communication on 'Regional Integration for Development in ACP Countries' COM/2008/0604 final/2 Brussels, 6 October 2008a
- Ferguson, J., *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neo-Liberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)
- Ginsberg, R.H., *Foreign Policy Actions of the European Community: The Politics of Scale* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989)
- Grant, C. and Leonard, M., 'How to Strengthen EU foreign policy' *Centre for European Reform Policy Brief*, July 2006
- Harrison, G., *The World Bank and Africa: The Construction of Governance States* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Holland, M., 'The Joint Action on South Africa: A Successful Experiment?', in M. Holland, (ed.) *Common Foreign and Security Policy: The Record and Reforms* (London and Washington, DC: Pinter, 1997), pp. 174–183
- International IDEA, *Challenges to Democracy Building: Recommendations for a New Swedish Policy on Democracy Building* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2008)
- International IDEA, Concept Note for 'Democracy in Development: An initiative towards and beyond Sweden's EU Presidency in 2009', available at <<http://www.idea.int/eu>>
- Kelsall, T., 'Shop Windows and Smoke Filled Rooms: Governance and the Re-politicisation of Tanzania' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40 (2002), pp. 597–619
- Kippin, H.P.W., 'History, Space and Place: Exploring Politics, Development and Identity in Contemporary West-central Tanzania' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield
- Kral, D., *What Can be Expected from the Czech EU Presidency?* European Policy Institutes Network Commentary 12 (January 2009), Centre for European Policy Studies
- Larsen, H., *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis: France, Britain and Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Le Vine, V.T., *Politics in Francophone Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004)
- Matambalya, F.A.S.T., *The New EU-ACP Partnership: Consequences for Eastern and Southern Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2001)
- Ndulo, M. (ed.), *Democratic Reform in Africa: Its Impact on Governance and Poverty Alleviation* (Oxford and Athens: James Currey and Ohio University Press, 2006)
- Policy Network 'A European Union "Fit for Purpose" in the Global Age', Report on the Workshop held 17–18 October 2008, Hydra, Greece
- Porteous, T., 'British Government Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa under New Labour' *International Affairs* 81/2, pp. 281–297
- Schatzberg, M.G., *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001)
- Smith, H., *European Union Foreign Policy: What it Is and What it Does* (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

- Smith, K.E., *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003)
- Soetendorp, B., *Foreign Policy in the European Union: Theory, History and Practice* (London and New York: Longman, 1999)
- Tonra, B., *The Europeanisation of National Foreign Policy: Dutch, Danish and Irish Foreign Policy in the European Union* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001)
- Woods, N., 'The Challenge of Good Governance for the IMF and the World Bank Themselves' *World Development* 28/5 (2000)

About the Author

Henry Kippin is currently Commission Manager at the 2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA, a major new inquiry into the future of UK public services. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Political Economy Research Centre (PERC) at the University of Sheffield. Between 2006 and 2008 he was director of research at African Development Information Services (AfDevInfo), where he led research projects into several aspects of African political and development, including extractive industries, political infrastructures and foreign policy.

His doctoral studies focused on the relationship between political identity and processes of political and economic liberalisation in Tanzania, based on a period of fieldwork in Tabora region between 2005 and 2006. He has published a number of articles and book chapters on African, international and UK politics and development, and maintains a strong working interest in the relationship between political identity, democratic accountability and political reform.