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## THE EUROPEAN UNION'S AND THE UNITED STATES' INTERESTS IN AFRICA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### Introduction

The international magazine *The Economist* published a special issue on the African continent with the title "Africa Rising". It acknowledged the continent's potential, including its rich natural resources which have begun to attract the rest of the world. The world is now keen to develop trade and political relations with Africa. The Europeans called it the 'dark continent' and except for forays into it for kidnapping people to sell them as slaves in the Americas, they generally ignored Africa, until the nineteenth century, when they began competing among themselves for colonizing it, to exploit its rich natural resources. In the sixties, many African countries gained independence from their colonial masters and a short period of euphoria followed, when the Africans believed that as independent countries they would soon become prosperous and developed.

However, despite its vast resources, Africa remains mired in poverty, ill-health and illiteracy. Then why has Africa become so significant for the rest of the world, in particular for Europe and the US in the twenty-first century? What are the actual ambitions and activities of the EU and the US in Africa? Does the intensification in economic and trade relations benefit merely the developed countries? Does the developed countries' deeper involvement in the continent unsettle the African people? These are the questions that will be explored in this paper.

### Historical background

In the late eighteenth century Europe and North America underwent some important changes. It was in this period that the American and French revolutions took place. Simultaneously, in Britain, the Industrial Revolution was also flourishing, gradually spreading to the whole of Europe and reaching the USA as well. The running of the large industries created an acute need for labour and as well as for a great deal of raw material. Running industries required oil and other raw material, and for that Africa proved to be a rich source. Industrialization boosted the European and

American economies which raised their power, influence and military might to unprecedented levels. It led to rivalries over colonies outside and territories in Europe, resulting in the world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Competition among the European countries for extracting the maximum raw material from Africa had decided the course of Africa's destiny.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the Second World War ended, the new era of Cold War began, in which the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union dominated the world order and vied for global influence and power. The great set-back to West Europe's economy caused by the Second World War could only be overcome with the help of the US, which massively funded the European Recovery Programme (ERP) for rebuilding Western Europe. West European countries had lost much of their wealth and political power and they now became second rate powers. Their empires began to unravel soon after the Second World War ended. It was during the 1960s that Europe began to free its African colonies and this process continued till the mid-1970s. As the Europeans withdrew from Africa, it too became the turf for US-Soviet global rivalry. Congo got independence in 1960 and the US tried to install a pro-West government there, while the Soviet Union continuously struggled to build socialist influence. The US succeeded in installing Mobutu as president, after the independent minded Patrice Lumumba was killed in an air crash, which many believe was not an accident. Mobutu had pro-West leanings and was involved in anti-communist activities, which is why he received immense US political and financial support.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, when Angola got independence in 1975 and the Portuguese withdrew without supervising elections for a new government, a civil war broke out. Eventually with strong support from the USSR, an Angolan political party MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) declared itself the sovereign government of Angola and Agostinho Neto became the first president. Later, the USSR's financial support proved insufficient for Angola and it was compelled to seek Western aid. The USSR finally withdrew from Angola in 1989 due to its own economic stagnation.<sup>3</sup> American interest in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/imperialism-grade-11-south-african-history-online>.

<sup>2</sup> [www.history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization](http://www.history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization).

<sup>3</sup> [www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp/history=ad33](http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp/history=ad33).

Africa appeared to be lessening in the 1970s and it actually retreated from Africa by the end of the cold war.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, a decade and a half after the Second World War ended the six-member European Economic Community (EEC) was formed and it realized the significance of Africa, a great part of which had been its member states' former colonies or were still to be given independence. The European Community began to develop its relations with the independent African countries under the banner of the Yaounde Convention I (1963-1969) and Yaounde Convention II (1969-1975). To consolidate relations with Africa, in February 1975, the successor of the Yaounde Convention, Lome I was signed between the European Community and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Gradually, according to the need of the time three more Lome Conventions followed. Lome IV was signed in 1989 and was revised in 1995. Under the arrangement, the ACP countries were given aid, preferential trade access to EU markets and assistance for stabilization of export earnings. European countries had begun to introduce conditionalities for giving aid. A broad condition was that the ACP countries should achieve economic and political stability. This was too much to demand from a still underdeveloped Africa. The last Lome Convention ended in the year 2000 to be replaced by the new Cotonou Agreements.<sup>5</sup>

### **A comparative study of EU-US policies in Africa since 2000**

#### ***The American and European political approaches***

The EU-US approaches differ greatly in terms of economic aid and the objectives of their development aid. Similarly their attitudes on the relationship between security and development and multilateralism is also different.<sup>6</sup>

#### ***Cotonou versus AGOA Agreement (2000)***

At the beginning of the new century, the EU reviewed its previous policies, highlighted their flaws and designed some innovative policies for Africa and

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<sup>4</sup> Macharia Munene, J. D. Olewe Nyunya, Korwa Gombe Adar (eds.), *The United States and Africa: From Independence to the End of the Cold War* (Kenya: East African Publishers, 1995), 178-180.

<sup>5</sup> William Brown, *The European Union and Africa: The Restructuring of North-South Relations* (New York: I.B Tauris Publisher, 2002), 190-198.

<sup>6</sup> Daniela Sicurelli, *The European Union's Africa Policies: Norms, Interests and Impacts* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 4.

what followed were the Cotonou Agreements signed on June 23, 2000 between the EU and the ACP countries. This agreement is more dynamic and sets targets to help the ACP countries to integrate into the world economy. Along with trade and commercial relations, it also focuses upon political dialogue, good governance, rule of law, promotion of human rights, eradication of poverty, cooperation in peace-building and conflict prevention.

In term of trade relations, the EU granted non-reciprocal trade preferences to the ACP countries, a temporary waiver allowed by the WTO which expired in December 2007. Therefore, to introduce reciprocal preferential trade, after long-drawn out negotiations, finally in 2008, the EU and ACP countries signed the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). According to the EPAs, the ACP countries in order to retain preferential access to the EU markets would have to open up their own domestic markets to the EU.<sup>7</sup>

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was signed in May 2000. It was a trade agreement between the US and sub-Saharan African countries. Under its banner, the preferential access granted to the sub-African countries enhanced the United States' trade relations with the region. The eligibility criteria for AGOA is establishment of a base for market economy, implementation of the rule of law, adoption of political pluralism, removal of all kinds of barriers to US trade and investment, eradication of poverty and corruption, safeguarding of intellectual property, progress in healthcare, education and human rights, particularly discouragement of child labour.<sup>8</sup> In 2012 exports from the AGOA-eligible countries to the US increased more than twice the level of exports in 2000, while US exports to these countries more than tripled.<sup>9</sup>

### **African responses to the AGOA and the Cotonou Agreements**

Since EU-ACP trade began to intensify from the year 2000 with the introduction of new trade policies by the EU, the US being the sole superpower, found it impossible to remain behind the EU. Thus by signing

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<sup>7</sup> [www.siteresources.worldbank.org/intwdr2009/resources/4231006-1204741572978/vollmer\\_2.pdf](http://www.siteresources.worldbank.org/intwdr2009/resources/4231006-1204741572978/vollmer_2.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See [www.trade.gov/agoa/eligibility](http://www.trade.gov/agoa/eligibility).

<sup>9</sup> <file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/Administrator/My%20Documents/Downloads/US-Africa%2013%20March/US-Africa%20Free%20Trade%20Agreement%20%20Upgrade%20the%20African%20Growth%20and%20Opportunity%20Act.htm>.

the AGOA, the US began to develop and strengthen its bilateral relations with the African countries right from the beginning of the new century, and one of the major reasons of its increased involvement was to counter the EU's trade and economic relations with Africa.

The general African response regarding the impacts of both the AGOA and the Cotonou Agreements on the African countries was that these carried a neo-liberal agenda,<sup>10</sup> which would potentially benefit the EU and the US and lessen rather than enhance African economic growth, compelling the continent to become more dependent on so-called EU-US developmental aid and assistance. It was also feared that the agreements would undermine regional integration in Africa. As pointed out by an observer, "In support of existing IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs, both the Cotonou Agreement and AGOA will pressure African countries to continue implementation of structural adjustment policies, while further dividing them and undermining Africa's efforts at regional integration."<sup>11</sup>

#### **The EU and US policies for Africa**

The US has grown more ambitious about sub-Saharan Africa in terms of its global political strategy as well as for access to the region's rich resources. One of the examples of its increasingly ambitious policy was the holding of the US-Africa summit on August 4-6, 2014. It was a historic event in US-Africa relations and had a very high profile, for it was hosted by President Barack Obama himself. Forty African heads of state flew to Washington DC to meet top US government officials and businessmen.<sup>12</sup>

As regards the European Union, the African continent has been a source of raw material for Europe since a long time and the new millennium's world order is all about acquiring maximum economic resources. For fulfilling its need for more resources, the EU designed fresh policies and strategies to get the most out of the African continent. The establishment of the African Union (AU) which replaced the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2002 further facilitated the interaction between the two continents in terms of

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<sup>10</sup> Visit [http://www.academia.edu/2986824/The\\_Cotonou\\_Agreement\\_Who\\_s\\_Agreeing](http://www.academia.edu/2986824/The_Cotonou_Agreement_Who_s_Agreeing).

<sup>11</sup> Rick Rowden, An Overview of the Increased Coordination of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Liberalization Policies, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders, "US-Africa Relationship, Key Elements Following Historic US-Africa Summit", *The World Post*, 11 July 2014.

democracy promotion, institution-building and the protection of human rights. The EU began to consolidate its influence over the African countries by using yet another tool, namely the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). In 2003, the EU introduced a series of peacekeeping missions for the cessation of conflicts and the protection of human rights in Africa. Likewise since the year 2000, the EU is also very much involved in the monitoring of elections in sub-Saharan Africa. It has monitored nine elections so far.

Presently, the EU is actively involved in bilateral trade relations with the African countries, and South Africa too has officially joined the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) as part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) group in February 2007.<sup>13</sup>

#### **The EU and the US assistance in combating HIV/AIDS in Africa (2001-2008)**

In October 2002, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) of the US issued an infectious disease report which revealed that the highest level of HIV/AIDS infected people are found in Africa. Women, children and older people are worst affected. US attention was then drawn towards the need to combat this disease which had assumed the proportions of a global threat to humanity. These efforts began during the administration of G.W Bush and later became a priority on American foreign policy agenda.<sup>14</sup>

#### **An evaluation of EU and US foreign policies**

After eleven years of heated debate and persuasion by the Europeans, the fifteen nations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signed the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU on July 10, 2014. According to this partnership, which is for a period of twenty years, the African countries would have 100 percent access to the European market, while the EU countries would have 75 percent access to the African markets.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/south-africa/>.

<sup>14</sup> Jennifer G. Cooke and J. Stephen Morrison (eds.), *U.S. Africa Policy Beyond the Bush Years: Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration* (Washington, D.C: CSIS, 2009), 39.

<sup>15</sup> Rick Rowden, "Africa's Free Trade Hangover", *Foreign Policy* 7 (August 2014). Available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/07/africas-free-trade-hangover/>.

The ECOWAS states have become sceptical about the impact of the EPAs, which have created certain hurdles in terms of overall African integration. The import of European products over decades, has not let African industries to develop and produce their own manufacturing goods. African countries have been compelled to mostly export their raw or semi-processed commodities, and have bought European manufactured goods at high costs.

To voice their reservations on so-called free trade agreements, the African countries have joined BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) in the World Trade Organization (WTO). WTO however has its own biases that favour the rich Western countries, which is another factor causing unsettling sentiments amongst the African governments against the EU.

#### **The global financial crisis of 2008 and its impact on Western trade with Africa**

In the year 2007, the bursting of America's housing bubble led to a crisis in its mortgage markets, which seriously affected its banking industry along with its securities and equity markets. When big firms like Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy, it had catastrophic effects worldwide.

Some African analysts held that since strong economies became prime victims of the financial crisis that began in 2008, the African countries with their weak economies and small banking sector, stock exchange and securities markets would not be affected. But the crisis did hit Africa as well, and there was a decline in the key African exports and prices in the years 2008 and 2009.<sup>16</sup>

The United States' trade with sub-Saharan Africa under AGOA continued working well until the year 2008. The repercussions of the financial crisis led to a gradual decline in the graph of US-Africa trade from 2010. The volume of trade was \$125 billion in 2011, \$99 billion in 2012 and \$85 billion in 2013. In the first half of 2014, US-Africa trade in goods totaled about \$31 billion only.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Peter M. Lewis, "African Economies' New Resilience", *Current History* 109, no. 727 (2010): 194.

<sup>17</sup> <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/214270-american-and-chinese-trade-with-africa-rhetoric-vs-reality>.

The global credit crunch of 2007/08 adversely affected Europe as well, and Africa being a close trading partner of the continent could not escape the repercussions of the economic crisis. A research study reveals that the volume of African exports to the EU declined from around 51% of Africa's total exports in 2005 to only 42% in 2010.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, this economic recession also affected remittances to African countries which decreased from \$41.5 billion in 2008 to \$39.3 billion in 2009; however these rose again to some extent in the year 2010 to around \$45.0 billion.<sup>19</sup>

### **The EU and US peace building and security measures for Africa**

Apart from trade and development policies, the US has also been actively involved in matters relating to peace and security. The African people too welcome American involvement, for they hope that the superpower will help resolve the ongoing conflicts; likewise it is in the interests of the US to trade in a peaceful environment.<sup>20</sup>

It was after September 2001 that the US actively began to build up its military presence in Africa. It acquired bases in Africa to counter terrorist activity. There is the military presence of the US in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Eritrea and Djibouti) where the American military is involved in training its African counterparts for combating terrorism. In 2002, the American Department of Defense began to promote military-to-military cooperation and training programmes with African states to contain al-Qaeda. These include the "Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorist Partnership" and the "East African Counter -Terrorism Initiative".<sup>21</sup>

Avowedly for peacekeeping measures in Africa and to deal with humanitarian crises and conflicts, but with the actual aim of strengthening its control over the continent, the US government established the US Command of Africa (AFRICOM) in the year 2008.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Data in African Economic Outlook 2012, available at [www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/African\\_Economic\\_Outlook\\_2012En.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/African_Economic_Outlook_2012En.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Lesly Anne Warner, "Advancing Peace and Security in Africa", Brookings Report, 3 April 2013, available from [www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/04/advancing-peace-security-africa-warner](http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/04/advancing-peace-security-africa-warner).

<sup>21</sup> Daniela Sicurelli, *The European Union's Africa Policies*, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Visit research report of Dr. Chilufya B. Lewis, US Foreign Policy towards Africa: A Case Study of the Obama Administration Vis-à-vis Sub- Sahara Africa, 2013, 21. Available at



### **US-BMENA agreement**

The US administration and the G8 Summit (Georgia, 2004) launched the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) plan in 2004, which was meant to work for the betterment of democracy and education, and the promotion of liberalization and societal changes in these regions.<sup>23</sup>

### **The AU-EU strategic partnership**

The EU has been actively involved in conflict management issues in Africa along with the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In this regard, in April 2000 the first Africa-Europe summit took place in Cairo, which addressed a broad spectrum of issues, including human rights, democratic principles, good governance, peace building, the rule of law and the prevention of any future threats/conflicts.

In December 2007 a summit took place in Lisbon, at the conclusion of which the "Africa-EU Strategic Partnership" was announced and both sides promised to work together for measures related to peace keeping.<sup>24</sup>

### **The respective interests of the EU and the US**

#### ***September 11, 2001***

Prior to the twenty-first century, Africa was generally not very high on the list of American foreign policy priorities but after the unfortunate events of September 11, 2001, the US aggressively waged the war against terrorism worldwide. There are several Muslim countries in Africa and like in the rest of the world, extremists are also to be found in this continent. For the US, fighting militancy had become a matter of prime concern and therefore it sought the cooperation of African governments in this regard. Thus one reason why the US deployed its military and developed stronger relations with the indigenous African military was to root out the extremists and militants. Furthermore, since the post Cold War new world order is all

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<http://www.bard.edu/civivengagement/usfp/resources/index.php?action=getfile&id=4769906>.

<sup>23</sup> Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, *The Foreign Policies of the European Union and the US in North Africa* (London: Routledge, 2013), 15.

<sup>24</sup> Daniela Sicurelli, *The European Union's Africa Policies: Norms, Interests and Impacts*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 46.

about access to the global economic resources, the world's leading and emerging powers are taking a keen interests in resource-rich Africa.

The US has begun to take sub-Saharan Africa quiet seriously since the beginning of the new millennium and is vigorously pursuing its trade and development policies, plus it is carefully designing its strategies according to the new international dynamics, keeping in view the policies and interests of other powers.

### **Strengthening of US-Africa relations — the EU's concern**

While the EU's interest in Africa has been more economic than political, ever since the independence of the African countries, the former European metropolitan powers never let go of their erstwhile colonies, and as agreed by many observers in the developing world pursued their policy of neo-colonialism, under the guise of different conventions and agreements. With the beginning of the twenty-first century there was a consolidation of the old relationships and one of the major factors behind the EU's deeper involvement in this region is the strengthening of the US-Africa relations which has evoked serious concerns among EU policy-makers. The US being a global superpower has immense potential to succeed in the African continent, which is a traditionally European sphere of influence.

### **The China factor**

Another noteworthy development is that Africa-China trade relations saw a significant increase and its value increased from 2000 to 2008 to around \$93 billion, which makes China the largest developing trading partner of Africa. This has motivated other developing countries to establish bilateral trade relations with Africa for drawing economic benefits.<sup>25</sup>

China is an emerging giant in the global economy and international politics and it is gradually spreading its influence worldwide. Relations between the African countries and China is not a new phenomenon, for they have been ideologically aligned under the banner of "solidarity among the Third World countries." In the Mao era, China looked for more political than economic gains in its relations with other countries, but in the post-Mao era, the Chinese have become very pragmatic and seek economic as well as strategic benefits in their foreign relations. Since the beginning of year

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<sup>25</sup> "South-South Cooperation: Africa and the New Forms of Development Partnership", *Economic Development in Africa Report 2010*, United Nations, 30.

2001, China has taken a keen interest in Africa and of course the continent's rich natural resources are an important factor in shaping Beijing's policies. Since the US and China are political rivals, the greater Chinese involvement in the African continent is being seen as an alarming development by the US in the economic, political and strategic realms; therefore, in order to keep an eye on its rival and to counter its objectives, the US had to enhance its presence there.<sup>26</sup>

### **Growing competition for African trade**

Since with the passage of time the significance of the African continent has grown, simultaneously its trade with various countries and regions has also grown. Apart from its trade relations with its traditional trading partners such as the West European countries and the US, Africa has also sought the enhancement of its trade with other countries. The continuous increase in the share of its trade with the developing world has somewhat lessened its proportion of trade with Europe and the US. In the period following the financial crisis of 2008, Africa has expanded its trade relations with India, the Republic of Korea, China, Venezuela, Brazil, Cuba, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE. Relations with these emerging economies have improved markedly the bargaining position of Africa in the global market and launched it on the road to prosperity.<sup>27</sup>

The EU continues to be the largest trading partner of Africa because it is still dependent on the Union for the export of its raw commodities, plus it is a relationship that can be traced far back into history.

### **Neo-Colonialism in Africa?**

Though the period of neo-colonialism began almost as soon as the African countries got independence from their European colonial masters, disguised as various conventions, policies or agreements, globalization, stepped up economic and political competition, and increased terrorism have compelled the EU and US to enhance their presence in Africa, which has enough natural resources to satisfy even the hunger of these two giants. Hence in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the interest of the EU and the US in Africa has greatly increased.

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<sup>26</sup> Yun Sun, "China in Africa: Implications for U.S. Competition and Diplomacy", Brookings Report, (April 2013). Available at [www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/04/china-africa-us-competition-diplomacy-sun](http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/04/china-africa-us-competition-diplomacy-sun).

<sup>27</sup> "South-South Cooperation: Africa and the New Forms of Development Partnership".

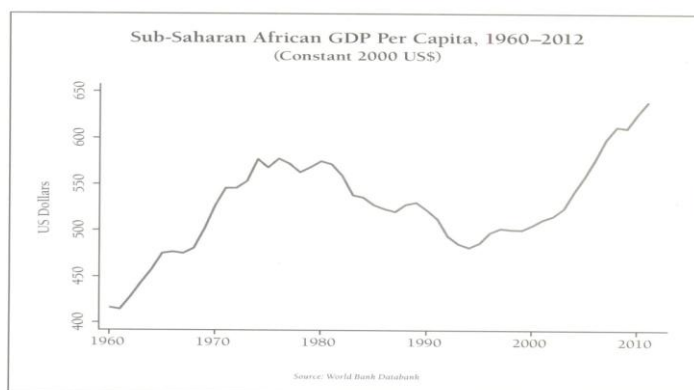
Officially the US strategy in sub-Saharan Africa is based on the following pillars.

- i) Strengthening democratic institutions.
- ii) Spurring economic growth, trade, and investment.
- iii) Advancing peace and security.
- iv) Promoting opportunity and development.<sup>28</sup>

The US appears to be involved in almost every field in Africa and is consolidating its influence all over the continent, but its political and economic rival China too has a big share of Africa's trade and is also establishing its political influence there. This makes the US uncomfortable.

On the other hand, the EU has a different strategy for Africa, where along with its development aid and trade relations, it dictates its norms to the African Union (AU) and presents to the latter its own model of regional integration as the best. The African leaders however are quite sceptical about the European model's applicability in the continent's milieu.<sup>29</sup> Thus the three great powers seem to be pulling Africa in different directions.

#### Graph of sub-Saharan African growth (1960s-2010):<sup>30</sup>



Source: World Bank Databank

<sup>28</sup> The White House, U.S. Strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa, June 2012, 2. Available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/africa\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/africa_strategy_2.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Sicurelli, *The European Union's Africa Policies*, 152.

<sup>30</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, "Can Africa Turn from Recovery to Development", *Current History* 113, no. 763 (2014): 172.

It is evident from the above graph that the rise in sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth actually began right from the post independence period. For a short while it declined in the early 1990s but then it rose again in the mid 1990s. Furthermore, since the beginning of the new millennium its trade relations with a number of countries has increased, which has accelerated its growth. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century sub-Saharan African economies have grown by almost 5% per annum which contributed considerably to the betterment of the region's population and that is why now 21 African countries are considered as belonging to the "middle income group".<sup>31</sup>

#### **Factors contributing to improvement in the economic realm**

- i) Close relationships with the former colonial masters in terms of bilateral trade.
- ii) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which is mainly attracted to African mines and the vast markets for information and communication technology. I.T attracted more than 50% of FDI investment in Africa from 1996-2006.<sup>32</sup>

#### **African progress in the new millennium**

According to World Bank estimates by the beginning of the new millennium (1999-2008) the percentage of population in Africa whose daily earning was less than \$1.25 declined from 58% to 48%, which was a marked economic improvement. Another major development occurred when a decline was observed in the death rate of African children by 4% a year from 2000 to 2010. The statistics give us a picture of overall development in Africa. However, African leaders do have certain reservations regarding the revival of hegemonism by the leading Western powers.<sup>33</sup>

#### **African perspectives on the EU and the US**

The perspectives of the African people regarding EU-US involvement in the region has its own significance. African people perceive the EU and the US

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<sup>31</sup> Luc Christiaensen and Shantayanan Devarajan, "Making the Most of Africa's Growth", *Current History* 112, no. 754 (2013): 181.

<sup>32</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, "Can Africa Turn from Recovery to Development", 171.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Kenny, "Millennium Goals Miss African Progress", *Current History* 112, no. 754 (2013): 195.

as being on the same plane. They believe that generally the impact on the region of the involvement of both powers is positive. However, Africans still prefer Europeans as compared to the US.<sup>34</sup> One of the major reasons of their preference is that historically the US has been less active in the region and its relations with Africa are new as compared to that of Africa with Europe. While colonialism ended, Europe continued its strong bilateral and multilateral relations with Africa in the shape of trade and developmental aid. The overall African perception regarding the EU is positive but they do not appreciate the EU's insistence on their adopting Western democratic principles, for the belief is, that various peoples and cultures have their own notions about society, governance and politics.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion one arrives at from this study is that in the new millennium, the contemporary world acknowledges the significance of the African continent. Many countries now understand the need to develop bilateral trade relations with African countries, considering their rich natural resources and geopolitical significance. Africa is seen as a "golden goose", having immense potential to benefit other economies, and for the leading powers it provides a suitable strategic base to achieve their global political and economic ambitions.

This comparative study of the European Union's and the United States' relations with Africa in the new millennium reveals the consistently predominant position of the US. Besides economic interests, the US is interested in Africa from the strategic point of view as is quite evident by its military presence and its close alignment with the African military establishment. One of the major factors behind its deeper involvement in Africa were the events of September 11, after which the US began its aggressive anti-terrorist campaign globally, and because extremist elements had become active in the continent the US felt justified in building up a military presence there. The US has also enhanced its presence in Africa because it is convinced that it must protect its interests against China, Brazil and India – which are fast capturing the African markets.

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<sup>34</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs, *African Opinion on US Policies, Values and People: Joint Congressional Hearing*, (Washington: Diane Publishing, 28 March, 2007), 22.

However, the aims and objectives of the European Union in Africa during the second half of the twentieth century and even at the beginning of the new millennium have been more economic and less political. The EU's foremost objective in Africa is to retain its influence over the region and also help in its economic and political stabilization. The European Union and its member states are generally keen that the conflicts in Africa should be peacefully resolved, for it is very close to Europe geographically. Conflicts, extremism and militancy in Africa would pose a serious threat to the security of Europe. Therefore, it is in the European Union's interest to help resolve these issues.

The successive Yaounde and Lome Conventions and the Cotonou Agreement reflect the long term economic interests of the European Union. EU-Africa trade relations have benefited the African continent despite some serious weaknesses in these arrangements. In the colonial era raw materials from Africa fed European industries and played a great part in European post-war economic recovery. In recent years, the EU with a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in place, has taken some military measures in Africa, which would help in the smooth pursuit of its economic aims.

The European Union's and the United States' economic activities in Africa have somewhat improved economic conditions in the region, however there are doubts about whether these positive developments are long term or short term and whether the Western involvement may have some adverse impacts on the continent in the long run.

African leaders generally welcome the presence of both the EU and the US but they are also quite wary of taking dictates from them, which may harm their countries and only benefit these big powers.

It is noteworthy that in the age of European imperialism, Africa was colonized owing to the growing competition amongst the European states for the acquisition of raw materials for their industries. In the contemporary context, the only difference between colonialism and neo-colonialism is that the growing competition for resources is global and it involves different continents and regions. The objective in Africa is to draw the maximum benefits from the continent.