

# **Guilt and Predation: Europe's Relations with the Former Colonial World**

Written by Christian Walker

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## **Guilt and Predation: Europe's Relations with the Former Colonial World**

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Whilst the European Union has always looked to the future with regards to its outlook and policy directions, there can be no escaping the colonial legacy that Europe forged for itself in the period leading up to the creation of the ECSC in 1947. Colonies who once owed their allegiance to European powers are now nominally independent, but special relations exist between each colonial power and its former territories – as a result, this necessitates special relations existing between the European Union and the former territories of Member States. The aim of this essay is to demonstrate that whilst relations are of great importance to EU policy makers, different endeavours and agreements are often confused or contradictory, in some cases predating on ACP weakness, and have generally achieved little other than reinforcing ACP dependence on Europe.

This shall be demonstrated by first briefly looking at the history of European colonialism, to provide context for Europe's foreign relations in this area, and to better understand why Europe might feel indebted to its former colonies. Then, the nature of relations between Europe and former colonies shall be examined; the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions shall then be explored, to see whether these helped further relations between Europe and African, Pacific and Caribbean (APC) states formerly owned by EU Member States, or were in fact just veiled forms of increasing economic control over those states. The Cotonou Agreement, which placed greater demands on APC powers wishing for economic assistance shall be looked at, along with recent instances of European aid which has been more military than economic in nature. Also the EU Development Fund shall be discussed, to see how this fund has altered perceptions of Europe in former colonies. Finally, the topic of enlargement shall be addressed, to see how the recent enlargement of the EU has transformed EU-APC relations, and not necessarily for the better.

Europe's colonial past stretches back to the fourteenth century, when Spanish explorers discovered native kingdoms throughout South America, and sought to replace those kingdoms with their own administration, in order to acquire the resources and territory of the native authorities. This caused much bloodshed and, when considered over the course of several hundred years, precipitated considerable social dislocation and in some instances, the creation and enforcement of native social classes previously non-existent, for the purposes of enabling the colonial power to more effectively oversee the territory (Harris, 2004, p.165).

This desire to dominate the rest of the world would be replicated by other European powers, particularly the United Kingdom, Portugal, France and the Netherlands; initially fuelled by a desire to maintain their power relative to that of other European states, Colonialism would come to develop a momentum all of its own, with ideas of nationalism and racial superiority being used to justify it in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Emerson, 1969, p.13). The slave trade would lead to the development of commerce dependent entirely on the conquest of overseas territories, creating an economic dimension to Colonialism that further encouraged ever greater expansion of colonial empires, and made discontinuing imperial endeavours economically and politically difficult (Emerson, 1969, p.8).

Different European states built up their possessions in different parts of the world; but most territory outside of Europe came under the governance of European powers at some point in their history, particularly in Africa, the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia (Joll, 1990, p.78). Whilst several non-European powers may be understood to possess 'imperial possessions' at various points in their history (the United States governance of the Philippines, the

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Japanese occupation of Korea and Taiwan, Chinese rule over Tibet and other non-Han territories), only the Europeans developed an entire political infrastructure and ideology to make colonialism easier to accomplish, and easier to justify (Domosh, 2004, p.456, Emerson, 1969, p.4). It is the legacy of this six hundred year imperialist endeavour that now causes much consternation and consideration for European policy-makers. Whilst there is undoubtedly a case for claiming that Europe's past contains immoral acts and policies which must be corrected and require unique and special arrangements between former colonial powers and their former possessions, it is difficult to do so without seemingly seeking to once again economically dominate those possessions. This is a particularly sensitive issue in ACP states, as many former territories have regained their independence from direct rule only relatively recently, and are in various instances still ruled by liberation leaders who are naturally distrustful of European motives (Mayall, 2005, p.293). Additionally, the economically fragile state of such nations is principally blamed on European colonialism – there is a largely accurate perception that imperial powers sought to economically configure territories to suit their own global interests, rather than allow natural and sustainable economic development to occur (Ravenhill, 1984, p550). Policy-makers must also find a way to create a policy-space for the European Union which is unique and independent from that of the individual Member States, who naturally desire to formulate their own relations with their own former territories.

As the Union has developed its economic apparatus to a far greater extent than it has its military or political apparatus, European foreign policy towards the former colonial world tends to be defined by economic issues such as reducing barriers to trade and distributing aid packages (Nugent, 2006, pp.514-515). The principal instrument used for distributing EU assistance funding to ACP states is the European Development Fund; the EDF dates back to the founding of the European Community, being established by the Treaties of Rome in 1957, and is perhaps the most visible instrument of EU policy regarding foreign relations with ACP states (Smith, p.230). The EDF is managed centrally by the DG Development, who has responsibility for liaising with the ACP states, and funding is allocated for each five year period – this is a recent development, as previously, individual Member-States contributed an amount to the EDF in accordance with a specific key. EDF funding is complemented with finance from various budgetary instruments: the Development Cooperation Instrument, the Instrument for Stability, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the European Humanitarian Aid Instrument (European Commission, 2009b). Problems have plagued the EDF; disbursement delays have however been addressed recently by reforms of the Cotonou Agreement, which created the EuropeAid Cooperation Office to exclusively oversee disbursement packages and streamlined the institutional framework of the EDF (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.124). But the ability of the EDF to act has often been constrained by nation-states, who make it difficult to develop a consistent and coherent policy from one five year review to the next, with each interested party having different focuses for 'their' aid – the French pursue a traditionally neo-colonialist policy, whereas the Italians focus on commerce; the British emphasise good governance whilst the Nordic powers seek to principally alleviate poverty first and foremost (Nugent, 2006, p.515). This has hopefully been remedied by taking budgetary powers out of the hands of Member-States, and placing it with the EU itself.

It can be seen how the EDF is the most important instrument in dealing with the ACP States, as it defines the amount and nature of the support being provided by the EU to the ACP, making it highly visible in the recipient nations. As such, the failures of the EDF over a period of forty years are difficult to rationalise or excuse; not only has it failed to meet its ambitions of providing assistance to ACP States, it has failed to increase its profile within the EU itself and consequently, remain on the periphery of Member-States own ambitions with regards to the ACP, even though it forms the single largest source of official development assistance in the world (European Commission, 2009). Procedures for the EDF have been confusing and convoluted, not helped by Member States pursuing their own projects and programmes for the development of ACP states, leading to the prominence of the EDF being undermined (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.125-126). This makes maintaining coherence in its dealings with the ACP virtually impossible. Whilst these problems are being corrected, it is unfortunate that it has taken forty years for reform to occur, with many of these failings being institutionalised at the EDF's creation during the first Yaoundé Convention.

Signed just over a decade after the formation of the ECSC, the first Yaoundé Convention was a reciprocal trade agreement between the ECSC and the eighteen new African states recently released from European (principally French) domination, and was created with a five year life-span. Several political institutions were also formed (a joint

## **Guilt and Predation: Europe's Relations with the Former Colonial World**

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Council of Ministers, a joint Parliamentary Assembly, and a joint Committee of Ambassadors), as was the European Development Fund. At this point, aid from the EDF emphasised infrastructural improvement in recipient states, with some 82% of the \$730 million development assistance of Yaoundé I and \$918 million in assistance set aside by Yaoundé II going to energy, health, housing, transport and education; this reflected particular development biases within the Development Fund's (mainly French) administrators (Rajana, 1982, p.200). As the United Kingdom was not a member of the ECSC, its former territories were not included, although the Arusha Agreement, signed by the ECSC and Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (former British territories) was signed in 1971, to run in tandem with the second Yaoundé Convention (de Flers, Regelsberger, 2005, p.321). Yaoundé II sought to continue the encouragement of trade between the two blocs, with the addition of Mauritius and Madagascar; the former still being a colonial possession, and the latter, independent but highly unstable when Yaoundé I was signed (Mayall, 2005, p.297).

The Yaoundé Agreement demonstrates that from its earliest beginnings, ECSC policy-makers placed importance on managing relations between Europe and the ASMM countries, and whilst the EDF at this point was relatively small, it constituted 30% of the external aid for the poorest ASMM States. But the material value of this aid was offset somewhat by the need for the ECSC to administer it personally, in a time-consuming and bureaucratic fashion which required European technocrats to steadily become increasingly involved in the macroeconomic management of recipient states (Gruhn, 1976, p.247). Also, the relatively short life of the Convention, allowing the ECSC to alter or even abandon entirely its relationship with the ASMM states, shows a degree of uncertainty on the part of the ECSC regarding how best to pursue relations, and whether those relations should even be pursued in the first place or merely left to individual member-states. However, the expansion of the membership during the second Convention illustrates the impetus on the part of the ECSC to bring as many African states as possible under the umbrella of the Yaoundé Convention, so as to more effectively manage its relations with the developing world as a whole (Mayall, 2005, p.298). This push for regionalism was seen as enabling those states to better resist the predations of the developed world; but it also had the ancillary effect of making it far easier for the developed world, including the ECSC, to control and direct the affairs of the ASMM, something that would become starker with the advent of Yaoundé's successor, the Lomé Convention of 1975.

Unlike the Yaoundé Convention, Lomé included British former territories (due to British accession into the EC in 1973), and spanned not only Africa, but also Asia and the Caribbean, making the agreement the most ambitious of its kind (Gruhn, 1976, p.249). The organisation who's founding had been encouraged through the drafting of Yaoundé, the ACP, was established and was given a permanent secretariat in Brussels, at the heart of Europe's supra-national political apparatus (Gruhn, 1976, p.251). Focus was shifted away from infrastructural improvements, to improvements in economic strength; particular ACP goods such as minerals could enter the EC free of any tariff, with quota systems setup for other products such as basic foodstuffs (Mayall, 2005, p.306). Aid and investment was also set aside for the ACP states, and was increased with each renewal of the Lomé Convention in 1981, 1985 and 1989, and in line with the shift away from infrastructure, focus turned to improving industry, agriculture and tourism (Rajana, 1982, p.202).. STABEX and MINEX were established under Lomé, which sought to stabilise the economies of APC states dangerously reliant on a single commodity (such as cocoa or coffee in the case of STABEX or precious stones/minerals in the case of MINEX), whereby states affected by downward price fluctuations would be compensated, and profits made by Europe from such fluctuations would be reinvested into the compensation fund (Ravenhill, 1984, p.550).

This demonstrates Europe's attempts at this time to respond to specific ACP-state difficulties but, as a result, becoming ever more deeply immersed in the affairs of independent states. The new trade policy, built around quotas and improving developing industries whilst simultaneously protecting European industry, caused resentment by ACP States who saw a European policy which demanded free-trade when it suited them, and shunned it when it didn't; the establishment and massive support lent to the CAP worsened this considerably, with many ACP States having foodstuffs as their principal exports, and no longer being competitive in their principal foreign market, the EEC (Smith, 2007, p.230). The creation of the ACP Secretariat enabled Europe to pursue relations with the former colonial world as one cohesive bloc rather than having to engage each individual state; a methodology preferred by the developed world as a means for better organising their relations and engendering co-operation and multilateralism among the developing world, but which can also be analysed as another example of conglomerating states in order to

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more effectively dictate terms to them (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.120-121).

It was at this time that the 'Pyramid of Privilege' is first defined; a method of prioritising who gets most from Europe, it placed the ACP countries at the top, Mediterranean states below that, and the rest of the developing world at the bottom (Mayall, 2005.p.299). Placement in the pyramid was not entirely defined by need, however; serious efforts were being made by the USSR and the USA to garner influence in the developing world, which constituted a so-called 'non-aligned' sphere in the war between Communism and Capitalism. But ex-colonies, embittered toward the west, were seen as easily malleable when given the right Soviet rhetoric and particular resources. This led to a re-evaluation of the importance of the developing world in the west, with President Kennedy seeking to blunt Soviet relations there and utilise the EC's by now well established relations with the ACP states as a means for promoting Western values within those states (Mayall, 2005, p.300-301). For its part, the EC remained aloof with regards to African politics throughout this period, and the admission of three communist governments to the ACP following Portugal's revolution implies that this attitude prevailed among the African states themselves as well as the EC (Mayall, 2005, p.299). Whilst disinterest in African politics prevailed, the same could not be said for African economics, where EC involvement now sought to reconfigure whole national economies, weaning Africa off its reliance on single commodities and seeking to fix prices (Ravenhill, 1984, p.550). This was all done for the good of the ACP states, Europe claimed; but others claimed that this constituted a new form of neo-colonialism, where the highly asymmetrical nature of negotiations gave the EC massive leverage in all negotiations and allowed Europe to effectively set the terms of their relations, leading to an even greater dependency on European gratuity and aid than before Lomé was signed (Rajana, 1982, p.201).

Perhaps the biggest indictment of the ambitious and overtly controlling Lomé Agreement is that it largely failed to meet expectations. The trade diversification and per-capita increase in wealth which was essential for Africa to establish a foothold in the global economy did not occur (Rajana, 1982, p.187), and aid, managed through the EDF, was often misappropriated or simply unspent (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.124).

The successor to Lomé, Cotonou was expected to lessen these deficits. Coming into force in 2003, the Cotonou Agreement increased the EDF to €13.8 billion (European Commission, 2009), restated the ambition of integrating the ACP into the world economy and introduced the aim of created WTO free-trade areas between the EU and various ACP regions. EDF procedures were streamlined and simplified in order to make those processes more efficient and reduce the backlog of disbursement (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.122). But the neo-colonialist aspects of Cotonou fundamentally remain and are extended to the political sphere; Cotonou rhetorically sought inclusivity with the ACP countries, in claiming to seek consensus and partnership between the EU and the ACP. But the EU defines how aid should be spent and, crucially, under what circumstances it would be given (Hill and Smith, 2005, p.394). Article 2 of the Agreement which reinforces that the conditionality introduced under Lomé and requires recipient states to meet 'good governance' criteria, drives European norms and practices onto ACP states. Much of this conditionality concerns the maintenance of good human rights practices and efforts to limit corruption on the part of ACP states, which is admirable and understandable – EU officials are quite right in not wishing their money to be used to fund the repression of innocent citizens or support the lifestyle of government kleptocrats (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.122). But other conditions are not so easy to rationalise. In an effort to export the corporatist nature of the EU, requirements now exist for non-state, civil society actors to be introduced into decision making processes; whilst this is considered by EU officials to be a rational first step in building democracy in ACP states, it is resented in the recipient states, which see it as an alien method for engendering participation in politics – and, for the ruling classes of ACP states, it is the most obvious affront to their own authority (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.123). Further influence can be exerted on ACP states by the EU, due to demands for 'regionalisation'; after several decades of encouraging the ACP to form a cohesive group, the EU now requires trade issues to be discussed not by the ACP, but by each of six smaller regional groups within the ACP, dealing a crippling blow to the unity of the ACP and that organisations ability to pool its resources and authority in order to get the best deal (Stevens, 2006, p.442). Additional concerns are raised by the differentiated scope of assistance, which allows the EU to award funds on the basis of individual ACP states 'performance' – in short, those who do what the EU asks of them get more, whilst those who do not get less (Bretherton and Vogler, 2008, p.126). Much like the Lomé Agreement, which meekly agreed with the prevailing US-centric international consensus that a large trading bloc would be good for all concerned, so Cotonou joins the dominant belief of the early 2000's, that conditionality promotes stability and the rule

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of law – recipient states, however, see it more as promoting western values over their own. With Cotonou, one can see not only a confusing policy which seeks to undo the successful unity-building measures of the ACP, but yet another European initiative which lacks any real imagination or unique methodology for achieving its ambition of eradicating poverty in Africa; an ambition under threat even more since the 2004 Enlargement of the EU.

During December 2004, the EU was enlarged to include Malta, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary (Barnes and Barnes, 2007, p.423). This constituted the largest enlargement of the EU in its history, bringing the borders of the Union to the Russian border and encompassing most of the former Soviet Bloc; the process of marketisation and democratisation begun in those states with the collapse of Communism in 1991 was now complete (Barnes and Barnes, 2007, p.422). This enlargement forced the EU to re-evaluate its priorities, however. Now, a large number of economically poor, technologically backward states are part of the Union, and requiring massive funding in order to bring their standard of living up to the European average; this compelled Europe to reformulate its Pyramid of Privilege, placing the new members at the top – the place formerly held by the ACP states – with everyone else below that (Mayall, 2005, p.302). This caused much resentment within the ACP, who believed that they were being cast aside after forty years of failed policy and insufficient funding on the part of the EU. The confusing state of affairs is compounded by the fact that particular colonial dependencies beyond Europe are treated as part of the EU, and as such are eligible for far larger sums of funding than their ACP neighbours; this is seen as the EU rewarding overt colonialism, whilst continuing with a policy of covert neo-colonialism, under the umbrella of the Cotonou Agreement.

In conclusion, it can be seen how European foreign policy towards its former colonies is considered important and formed part of the ECSC's first dealings with the outside world, and yet, these policies are often confusing and contradictory, if not plainly malicious. The European Development Fund was established with a clear mandate, but has proven to be largely incapable of fulfilling that mandate. The issue of who should be responsible for interacting with former colonies – the EU itself, or the Member States to which those colonies once owed their allegiance – has never been resolved, and as such, funding is split between the EDF, and Member States own projects and initiatives, as well as other International Agencies and charities. This leads to a confusing policy which can be seen by the ambitions and contents of the Yaoundé, Lomé and Cotonou Agreements – whilst the first two sought to encourage the establishment of the ACP, Cotonou wanted to break up the ACP into several smaller regional power blocs. Yaoundé allowed for largely unrestricted economic practices, allowing each state to do as they wish; whilst Lomé began attempts to micro-manage various ACP economies in order to 'right previous wrongs' of the colonial era – but neither Yaoundé or Lomé (both established during the charged period of the Cold War) had any specific policies regarding the politics of ACP States. This changed with Cotonou however, which pushed for a strongly neo-liberal framework for any state wishing to receive development assistance. Looking to the future, policy toward the ACP States looks set to radically change once again. The privileged position held by the ACP within the Pyramid of Privilege had been downgraded, in order for the EU to focus internally on improving the standard of living for its own new members, rather than the ACP States. Whilst this would seem disastrous for the ACP, it need not be: the EU has meddled in the economies of the ACP for forty years, and has generally achieved little. For the ACP States to stand on their own, take responsibility and act in accordance with their own interest rather than effectively being bribed to act in accordance of the developed world's interest, might prove to be the catalyst that affects real change for the ACP states.

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