

THEORIZING THE EU CONDITIONALITY POLICY AND ITS APPLICATION IN WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THE CASE OF CAPE VERDE¹⁴²

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Abstract

The EU is a major international donor and a *de facto* normative power. As such, it uses leverages (including aid support) and its transnational networks to promote long-term structural changes in third countries. These leverages often take the form of conditionality policy. The Cape Verde-EU relations have been intensifying in the last decade resulting in the signing of a Special Partnership between them. Cape Verde keeps counting on the EU's financial support to face basic challenges such as the struggle against poverty and the consolidation of its young democracy. This paper provides an historical overview of the EU-Cape Verde relations and discusses the role of conditionality policy in the shaping of these relations in the last decade. It argues that, although one may contend that the EU agenda for Cape Verde does not escape the logic of EU's typical development agenda for West Africa, the official rhetoric is that the most adequate pattern for the EU-Cape Verde relations is that of political dialogue and policy convergence rather than that of conditionality policy. This is so, the EU explains, because they share common challenges and face common threats. Besides the country has achieved a considerable level of social and political stability and has a remarkable record when comes to the use of European funds. The contribution of Cape Verde in the security dossier is emphasized and pointed as one of the possible reasons for the absence of *explicit* conditionality practices in the framework of the Special Partnership.

Keywords: EU-Cape Verde relations; conditionality policy; Special Partnership; collective security.

EU-Cape Verde relations: an historical overview

The origins of the relations between what is today the EU and the so-called developing countries are intimately linked to the European colonialism (Broberg, 2012: 1-7). "It was the weight of colonial inheritance that forced the European nations engaged in the late 1950s in the creation of the European Community (EC), to deal in a common fashion with the diverse 'countries and territories' still under their national jurisdiction" (Grilli, 1994: 1). Following the independence of the African colonies in the 1960's and 1970s the relations between the EC and the newly independent African states called for a new approach. The first attempts to regulate those relations were materialized in the Yaoundé Conventions of 1963 and 1969 between the EC and the Associated African and Malagasy States (AAMS), and later, on February 1975, through the signature of the famous Lomé Convention, (renewed three times, Lomé IV being signed in 1989 and revised in 1995 between the EC and ACP group of states (Grilli, 1994: 1-49 and Brown, 2002). The Lomé approach was essentially the EC trying to "buy" political and institutional reforms through aid and cooperation programmes relying on political and economic conditionality. It failed. The failures of Lomé led to the signing of the

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Cotonou Agreements (first signed on 23 June 2000, revised in 2005 and 2010). The Cotonou rhetoric places emphasis on the concept of “ownership” and argues that the donor-beneficiary framework is no longer the basis for EU-Africa relations but rather that of promotion of common interests.

With regard to the case of Cape Verde, its relationship with the EC/EU institutions dates back to the year of 1975, only few months after the country ascended to independence on 5 July 1975. In October that year, the Cape Verdean authorities took the initiative and advanced with a proposal for the accession of the newly independent country to the Lomé Convention (see Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 1975). On 28 March 1977 the Republic of Cape Verde acceded to the Convention. In 1980, Cape Verde, as ACP member, was one of the signatories of the renegotiated version of the Convention, commonly known as the Second Lomé Convention.

To explain such urgency on the part of Cape Verdean authorities in seeking approximation to the EC is rather very simple. A newly independent state, struggling with its concerning lack of resources, Cape Verde saw in the approximation to some major international donors an important asset not only for its progress and preservation of its independence and sovereignty but also for its very survival. “The new leaders of Cape Verde faced the dual challenges of ‘viability’ and ‘vulnerability’, common to island countries. Structurally unable to achieve self-sufficiency in food production and with only limited export potential, *Cape Verde needed donor support to survive* [my emphasis]” (Meyns 2002: 157). At least in the first years following the country’s independence, the State’s budget depended essentially on foreign aid (Enders, 2013: 133). The approximation to the European supranational institutions, was (and, to some extent, it may still be) part of this survival strategy. There is no denial that the European financial support over the years has been a major contribution for the alleviation of poverty in the country as well as for the consolidation of democratic institutions itself.

Once acceded to the Lomé Convention, Cape Verde became just one member of ACP among many others whose relationship with the EU is regulated through the Lomé-Cotonou Conventions/Agreements. With the transition to multi-party democracy in the early 1990s and subsequent consolidation of civil and political rights, the country started to be held in high esteem by the international community. This fact, combined with the old claim of historical and cultural affinities with Europe, fostered what has been called the Cape Verde “European aspiration”. Thus, the first years of the 2000s brought about the talks of “special status” in or a “special partnership” with the EU. What makes it interesting is that of the seventy-nine ACP states, only Cape Verde has been given the status of “special partner of the EU¹⁴³”. The immediate question here is why Cape Verde and no other ACP state? According to the MEP Maria da Graça Carvalho, there are several reasons for that. The first reason has to do with the fact that Cape Verde is geographically and culturally closer to Europe and it has been a platform or a bridge between Europe, Africa and America. The second reason has to do with the good governance which is an indicator very dear to the EU in cooperation programmes and international relations. The EU has Cape Verde in high regard because the country is an example of stability and good governance and makes good use of the European funds. Regardless the government in power there has been a continuity in development and democracy hardly possible to be verified in any other ACP state (Interview).

¹⁴³. Another reason has to do with the fact that decisions taken lately by the Union authorities in the framework of the Special Partnership give some signs of consolidation of the bilateral cooperation that are worth pointing out. Among these decisions are the approval of the readmission agreement and the decision to allow visa free travelling for specific groups of Cape Verdean citizens in the EU. As it has been pointed out, this “is highly symptomatic since other countries claiming special relations with the EU, such as Ukraine and Moldova, have only obtained to date the agreements, which imply facilitation rather than lifting the visa requirements” (Vieira and Ferreira-Pereira, 2013: 568).

To understand the process that resulted in the establishment of the Special Partnership between the EU and the Republic of Cape Verde it is of utmost importance to look into the historical and political development of Cape Verdean state vis-à-vis that of the West African and sub-Saharan states. Unfortunately Africa remains at the epicentre of the literature on collapsed/failed/endangered/weak states (Zartman, 1995). There are doubts whether it is even possible for democracy to survive at all in the continent (Bratton and de Walle, 1997: 236). Cape Verde's historical and political development may be regarded as a fortunate example that Africans too are able to embrace democracy and live under the rule of law. Few African countries have experienced renewed change of government after successful founding elections, Benin and São Tomé e Príncipe are among them; few other have also recorded remarkable changes of government through elections in recent years (Ghana, Senegal and Mauritius) The obvious question here is: what does explain the Cape Verdean success where many other countries failed? Why was such a peaceful transition possible in Cape Verde and not in almost any other African country?

The answer for these questions requires to take into consideration several factors including the very process of colonization in Cape Verde. The archipelago was inhabited at the moment of its discovery. It was populated with African slaves and Europeans. There was no space for ethnic strifes, tension or violence (about 71% of the population is of mixed ethnic descent). Unlike in many other African countries, in the aftermath of its independence, Cape Verde faced no ethnic struggles (although ethnic diversity is not a problem per se, the way it is addressed and used in several African countries makes of it a major problem) simply because by the time of its independence it was a fairly homogeneous society, with a defined national identity, not a puzzle of ethnic groups (Lorentz, 2001 and Baker, 2006: 504-506).

Another reason for the Cape Verdean success is certainly the absence of armed conflicts which avoided the militarization of society, a common problem in Africa to this very day. Linked to this absence of militarization of society is what is perhaps the most important reason of all, namely the way political actors in Cape Verde, whether in power or in opposition have been dealing in conflicts. "Drawing on intellectual traditions of debate within their society and aware of the vulnerability of their country, they have developed a nonviolent political culture that has shaped the process of democratic transition" (Meyns, 2002: 164; for a detailed analysis of the transition process, see Almada, 2013 and Évora 2013).

The fact that Cape Verde decided to travel the road of social and political stability, definitely a less travelled road in African context, can hardly go unnoticed to the international community given that it has been producing concrete and remarkable results at various levels. Cape Verde is one of the very few African countries considered "free" by the Freedom House's Democracy Report (see Freedom House, 2012: 14; 2013: 14; 2014: 18). On 06 December 2007, after over seven years of negotiations, Cape Verde saw the gates of the World Trade Organization (WTO) opening to it. On 23 July 2008, only few months following the country's graduation from the list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), it became WTO's 153rd member (for a more detailed information on Cape Verde's graduation from LDCs, see Fialho, 2013). Very recent reports indicate that Cape Verde is also one of the few African countries in a good position to reach the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set for 2015 (United Nations, 2013: 26). For all these reasons, in the last years leading countries such as United States of America and supranational Organizations such as the EU have been looking at Cape Verde as an example to be followed in Africa.

Let us return to the EU-Cape Verde relations. The Cape Verdean success is of utmost importance to understand the establishment of the Special Partnership with the EU. This has essentially to do with two main factors: the first is that the country's "European aspiration" has been fostered by and is anchored on its own success. The second has to do with fact that this same success has been the element of consensus among Portuguese politicians, diplomats and scholars whose support was decisive in the negotiation process leading to the Special

Partnership (Vieira and Ferreira-Pereira, 2013). In March 2005, the former Portuguese President of Republic, Mario Soares and the renowned Portuguese scholar Adriano Moreira (former Minister of Overseas) publicly supported the European vocation of Cape Verde by launching a petition urging the EU to start membership talks with the country¹⁴⁴. Despite the fact that the initiative was supported by the Foreign Minister of Portugal, Diogo Freitas do Amaral, it was not followed up by Cape Verdean authorities who decided not to submit any official membership application. The initiative did not lead to the recognition of Cape Verde as an EU member, but to date the petition has not received any official denial either.

The push for membership, however, seems to have given space to a more realistic approach and it was in this context that the idea of membership or special “status” start to be replaced with the idea of a special “partnership”. There is no denial that the Special Partnership between the EU and Cape Verde was materialized much due to the efforts of Portugal that used its Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers in the second half of 2007 to “lobby” for Cape Verde at EU level. However, the Special Partnership only became possible on account of a wide convergence of interests and inter-institutional support. The Commission played a crucial role. Maria da Graça Carvalho, a Portuguese national who worked with President José Manuel Barroso in his first mandate and is currently MEP, argues that, although the Portuguese Presidency of the Council played an important role, the most decisive factor in the shaping of the Special Partnership had to do with the interest of the Commission in the person of its President, Barroso. It was President Barroso who, making use of his extensive knowledge of ACP countries, the bridge between Europe and Africa and African cooperation, pushed, designed, decided and proposed the Special Partnership to the College of Commissioners. Then the Commission used its right of initiative to formulate the proposal to the European Parliament (EP) and to the Council. To make the process as smooth as possible, Portuguese MEPs supported the Special Partnership and engaged in the promotion of Cape Verde in the European Parliament. It was all this that made it possible that the Special Partnership was signed on 19 November 2007 (Interview).

Conditionality policy in the EU-Cape Verde relations.

Conditionality policy: an analytical assessment.

The practice of conditionality policy is of key importance in international politics. By studying the practice of conditionality clear patterns and trends in international politics can be established. This certainly holds true for the EU conditionality policy, intimately linked to its development policy. What is important is to bear in mind that the EC/EU’s action in the international politics is a moving target which means that the EU conditionality policy is also a moving target, highly dependent on changes of environment. For instance, it was only by the end or in the aftermath of the Cold War, that the democratization process in Eastern Europe led the EC/EU to adopt a clearer and more precise language in the definition of requests laid down in international agreements in order to encourage third countries to establish democracies and protect human rights. In 1987, the Single European Act had gave to the EP the veto power in agreements with third countries and it was only by then that, for instance, the insistence on introduction of human rights clauses in EC’s international agreements start to gain wide support (Smith, 1998: 260; Bartels, 2008). Up to that moment the Community’s relations with the developing countries was known for its non-political character (Grilli, 1993: 101-102).

This “neutrality” changed in the aftermath of the dismemberment of the Soviet World. The 1990s seems to have brought great ambitions to the Community. The original ambitions

¹⁴⁴. Confronted with the fact that the Treaties are very clear that European Union membership is reserved to European countries only, the petitioners argue that this issue ultimately comes down to the matter of “cultural identity” (and claim that only following this line of reasoning can one understand why the EU accepted to enter into accession negotiations with Turkey) and that in this aspect “Cape Verde is Europe as well” (Adriano Moreira in Afrol News/A Semana, 2005).

of the Maastricht Treaty were very optimistic when comes to Europe's international role. It envisaged that the CFSP would lead the EU to a status of a significant international actor, and, as such, Europe would be in a good position to shape the international affairs. The Treaty established for Europe the role and responsibility to promote global democracy and development. Hence in the revised Lomé as well as the agreement with the Latin America and Asia in 1990's the EU saw the application of conditionality as *sine qua non* condition and, by 1995, unequivocal suspension clauses were being foreseen in these agreements, particularly in case of serious violations of human rights and democratic principles (Smith, 1998: 264). By the 1990's the EU was profoundly convinced that sustainable development can only result where there are secure and effective institutions to promote democracy and civil society. Experience had shown that, economic conditionality was, by itself, inadequate. Concepts/practices such as good governance had become a developmental prerequisite, not an optional extra (Holland, 2002: 121).

Let us now look into the concept of conditionality. Painted in broad strokes conditionality is a concept easy to define. It has essentially to do with a body of principles and conditions that regulate the relations between a normative power and third parties, namely with a set of conditions defined by the former in order to enter negotiations and build up a relationship with the latter. Applied to the EU's action in the international scene, conditionality has to do with "the practice of making the conclusion and implementation of agreements, cooperation and assistance by the EU dependent on certain conditions being met by third countries" (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014: 205). The impact of conditionality policy is often profound and some scholars go to the point of speaking of "governance by conditionality". In the context of EU-Africa relations it does make some sense given that the EU is in a position to use leverages and influence "good" governance policies in ACP states making use of its transnational networks. Consider, for example, the CFSP. It has been an instrument through which the EU "transfer rules of conduct that presupposes political, social, and economic, which in long-term determine the nature and shape the EU interests in third countries. These rules entail good governance, which is sound economic policies, competent public administration, and open accountable government together with policies aimed at combating corruption that characterise the interstate system of the EU" (Mugenyzi, 2012: 69).

Needless is to say that conditionality policy is often the channel through which policy transfer is materialized. Policy transfer is no more than the "transportation of policies and/or practices *already in operation* in one jurisdiction/country to another" (Page, 2000: 2). The Union is continuously engaged in selling its policies as "best practices" to the outside world. Conditionality policy, thus, should not be dissociated from the concept of external governance that has to do with the application or introduction of EU norms, rules and principles beyond its borders (Lavenex, 2004 and Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009). This point is of crucial importance to grasp not only how the EU impacts political and institutional changes in the candidate countries but also in non-candidate countries (especially those in weaker position) aiming at some sort of relationship with the Union. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the EU often aims to be the catalyst for changes in third countries even when accession to the Union is clearly excluded. A good example of this is the EU Neighbourhood policy towards its Eastern and Southern neighbours.

Although often vehemently criticized and accused of inefficiency (particularly in the context of developing countries where conditionality is often portrayed as an attempt to "buy" reforms through aid), it is hardly possible to deny that the EC/EU's conditionality policies (inextricably related to the *acquis communautaire* in the accession processes) has proved to have major impact in European politics of the last decades. Suffices to look into the radical political and social transformations (for which the EU has been largely responsible) in the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC's) (Grabbe, 1998 and 2002) and in the (Western) Balkan region. What is relevant for the present study is the fact that the rationale of

conditionality (and, to some extent, that of *acquis communautaire*) is applied by the Union, with more or less consistency, in its relations with third parties even when the accession to the Union is not being discussed. In other words, the conditionality policy of the EU is not confined to the relations with countries aspiring to the Union. Conditions such as good governance and market economy, human rights are also often at the core of EU relations with non-candidate countries, especially when it comes to trade, aid, assistance, and cooperation programmes.

In order to make the practice of conditionality clearer is of utmost importance to stress that conditionality assumes different contours. One may establish a dichotomy between political and economic conditionality; it can also be internal or external. Conditionality can be prescriptively explicit (when the mechanisms, forms and outcomes of a policy is described in detail) or general in its description (when only outcomes and goals are described and the methods and policies to achieve them are left to the good judgment of the third parties). Conditionality can be *ex ante* (typical to IMF that requires that prior action be taken before the loan is given) or *ex post*; it can take legal or informal forms or be peculiarly “European” or new in nature or derived from existing global standards and definitions (Holland 2002: 119-120).

It is also important to notice that the nature and rationale of the conditionality policy tend to vary from entity to entity and assume different contours in different circumstances. For example, the EU conditionality policy applied in the accession negotiation with the CEECs is considered to be too vague given that the Copenhagen Criteria do not define what constitutes a market economy or a stable democracy. Other international actors, namely international financial institutions and development banks tend to adopt a more straightforward and blunt approach when defining conditions that the third parties have to meet if they are to receive assistance. With international financial institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank, conditionality “links perceived benefits to the fulfilment of certain conditions [...] conditionality is primarily linked to the implementation of specific economic policies, such as those aimed at structural adjustment, and the main benefit is finance” (Grabbe 2002: 252). As Mosley *et al.* (1991: 65) put it, the World Bank conditionality “is simply a side condition designed to ensure the execution of a contract”. It is about “a promise by one party to do something now in exchange for a promise by the other party to do something else in the future”. This linkage between fulfilling particular tasks and receiving particular benefits tends to be much less clear in EU conditionality policy than in the international financial institutions and one reason for this is that in the EU conditionality policy (for instance as applied to the accession negotiation with the CEECs) “the tasks are complex, and many of them are not amenable to quantitative targets that show explicitly when they have been fulfilled” (Grabbe, 2002: 252).

The nature of conditionality policy varies. The focus at this stage of the discussion is to make an inquiry on the specific case of European-Cape Verde relations in the context of the Special Partnership. Are there conditions involved? If so, which sort of conditions? Economic? Political? Direct? Indirect? My findings indicate that in the establishment of the Special Partnership between Cape Verde and the EU no conditions were *explicitly* imposed on the African country. This is in line with the behaviour of other international donors, such as the IMF, which has been dealing with Cape Verde in adjustment programmes without imposing any *explicit* political conditionality. “In Cape, governance does not seem to be an issue at all: donors are satisfied with the relative efficiency of the government” (Dijkstra 2002: 329).

With regard to the EU the MEP Maria da Graça Carvalho argues that it would not make any sense to impose conditions on Cape Verde because not even the possibility of a Special Partnership would be open for discussion if Cape Verde had not already met the necessary conditions. Besides, according to the *Communication from the Commission to the*

Council and the European Parliament on the future of relations between the European Union and the Republic of Cape Verde” (hereinafter the 2007 *Communication*) of 24 October 2007, the aim of the Special Partnership is “to strengthen dialogue and policy convergence between the two parties, so enhancing the traditional donor-beneficiary relationship with a framework of mutual interests” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 2). The official rhetoric is, thus, that due to political and social stability in the country, the conditionality rationale is not appropriate but rather that of total ownership and political dialogue.

The 2007 *Communication* limited itself to set the rules for the implementation of the action plan. This is to be “monitored by means of meetings at political level, to be organised at an interval to be determined, and annual technical-level meetings in Cape Verde or in the European Union. [...] At local level the inter-ministerial group set up by the Government of Cape Verde, chaired by the foreign minister, will hold regular special partnership monitoring meetings with the EC Delegation and Member State diplomatic missions” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 7). This, however, does not mean the EU is entirely satisfied with the state of things in the country. For instance, under the topic of good governance, the Commission *Communication* foresees that “special attention will in particular be paid in this connection to strengthening and consolidating democracy, the rule of law and civil society participation in the political life of the country. Enhanced policy dialogue and cooperation will be pursued, especially in the areas of democracy and human rights. There will be an increased focus on the rights of children and women, the regularisation of immigrants and tackling domestic violence. The Government will undertake a reform of the justice sector and implement a national plan to tackle corruption” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 4). To sum up, positive and *implicit* conditionality may be present in these bilateral relations aiming at the consolidation of civil society in Cape Verde.

Conditionality and EU’s objectives in international scene. Does the EU have a defined policy for Cape Verde?

To evaluate the Union’s attempts to impact reform policies in third countries one should take into consideration that the EU regards itself as a normative power with capacity to produce major structural changes¹⁴⁵. The concept of normative power is important when addressing the EU’s action in the international scene not only because it is intimately linked to the Union’s practice of conditionality but also because, when exercising its normative power, the Union (or any other normative power for that matter) influences/shapes, changes or consolidate structures. In other words, the Union is a normative and a structural power. The practice of conditionality is never an *end* in itself; it is always a *mean* to an end and that end is to promote EU norms and values. The promotion of these norms and values, in its turn, aims at shaping/changing/supporting structures at various levels. The interconnection here is established by the fact that the norms and values will not prevail without the appropriate structures and the desired structural changes cannot be operated unless through the acceptance of the same norms and values.

The practice of conditionality by the EU only becomes understandable when its theoretical basis are considered. The Union’s actions in the international scene (and consequently the conditions it imposes on third parties in order to establish relationship with them) are inspired by many sources such as the international law or the UN Charter of Human Rights, but first and foremost by the Union’s own Treaties. The principles and objectives of the EU’s international action (CFSP and CSDP; humanitarian policy, trade and development policy) are delineated in the Title V TEU (which deals with general provisions on the Union’s

¹⁴⁵. In an interview with John Peterson (2008: 69) the President of the European Commission José Manuel Durão Barroso declared that “we [the EU] are one of the most important, if not the most important, normative power in the world” and argued that it is so because the EU has been “successful in establishing norms, and applying them to different realities”. Accordingly, Mr. Barroso contends, the EU is to be regarded as a “laboratory of globalisation, the most advanced ever”.

external action and specific provisions on the CFSP), particularly in Article 21 TEU. Article 21(1) TEU points to the main objectives and principles guiding the EU's international action and reads as follows:

The Union's action in the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world, democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. Article 21(1) is of utmost importance to understanding conditionality policy and policy transfer in the context of the Union's external action, not only because these are the values that the Union preaches to and endeavours to promote in the wider world but also because, at least in theory, the Union claims to deal only with third parties that promote the values it upholds or at least show some interest in embracing such values. Claims such as those found in Article 21 TEU confer consistency to Ian Manners' emphasis on EU as a "normative power", a concept he uses to underpin the EU's "ability to shape the conceptions of 'normal' in international relations" (Manners, 2002: 239). From this focus on values - indeed, an essential feature of the EU and its foreign policy (Manners, 2002; 2006 and 2012) stems the Union's belief that it is in a position to say to third parties what is to be regarded as "normal" and what is not.

These value-centred approach and the Union's self-awareness of its position as a normative power should not be neglected when analysing its conditionality policies. Normative power emanates from the capacity of a normative power to influence others by convincing them that its own ideas and identity are the basis for "best practices". Thus to define the EU as a normative power is to admit that the EU is able to somehow influence the rest of the world (or, at least, certain parts of it) in key issues such as peace, democracy, the rule of law, liberty, human rights, sustainable development, good governance, regional integration, market economy, among other values. If that is so, a great deal of power emanates from the Union's ability to influence others through the ability to set the standards of "normal". Manners (2002: 253) is probably right when he claims that "rather than being a contradiction in terms, the ability to define what passes for 'normal' in world politics is, ultimately, the greatest power of all".

The Union's actions in the international arena shows also that it is a structural power. Foreign policy, it has been noted, goes beyond shaping or managing relations with other actors. "On a more ambitious level, foreign policy is also about influencing the *structures* that determine how other actors behave". (Kuekeleire and Delreux, 2014: 27). This brings us to a concept of crucial importance to understand the nature and scope of EU impact on reform policies in third countries – the concept of structural foreign policy. In their definition of structural foreign policy Keukeleire and Delreux (2014: 28) place emphasis not only on structures but also on a *long durée* approach: "Structural foreign policy is a foreign policy which conducted over the long-term, aims at sustainably influencing or shaping political, legal, economic, social, security or other structures in a given space". When looking into the objectives of structural foreign policy one easily understands that they vary. Sometimes the objective of a structural foreign policy is "to promote and support structural changes and structural reforms, tackle structural problems and constraints", but sometimes a structural foreign policy is designed aiming only to support and sustain existing structures (*Ibidem*). These variations in the objective depend on various aspects (including the capabilities, aims and ambitions of the structural power, the feasibility of certain reform policies and the very way the structural power regards the current structures in the third country/region)

At this stage of analysis one has to ask to what extent the EU exercises its normative power to define conditionality practices in the framework of the Special Partnership with Cape Verde. How does the EU sees the current structures in the country? It has been said that

the current EU-Cape Verde relations are based more on political dialogue than in *explicit* conditionality practices. The Union claims it does not aim to change structures in Cape Verde but rather support their consolidation. This is due to the fact that the two parties share strong “socio-political values” and “common concerns and challenges”. The 2007 *Communication* is particularly clear in this respect. The country, the document stresses, embraces the values of democracy, human rights, good political and economic governance. [Furthermore,] the guarantees offered by the rule of law in force in Cape Verde [...] also seeks to promote peace, security and the fight against terrorism and crime. [...] Closer ties between Cape Verde and the European Union will in particular strengthen relations and bring about further integration between it and the outermost regions; Cape Verde also shares a number of strategic priorities with the European Union, especially as regards certain security issues, for instance action to tackle trafficking (drugs, illegal immigration, etc.). In this connection, Cape Verde is expected to become a partner in increased police and judicial cooperation with Europe. Because of its geographical location, the country can make an important contribution to tackling illegal trafficking, and its open approach on security is one of its key strengths in its efforts to build closer ties with the EU. The special partnership is therefore intended to strengthen dialogue and policy convergence between the two parties, so enhancing the traditional donor-beneficiary relationship with a framework of mutual interests (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 2).

The passage just quoted is crucial to understand the nature of the Special Partnership between the EU and Cape Verde and the absence of a conditionality-like approach (at least in the official discourse) by the EU. The passage, however, contains few remarks that are germane to the discussion on within which policy area or framework the EU-Cape Verde relations fits the best. CFSP? CSDP? External action with its development policies? In light of documents available it is extremely difficult if not impossible to answer to these questions. The answer may be in the combination of those policy domains. Another difficult task is to scrutinize whether the EU has a defined policy for Cape Verde. The official documents point the consolidation of state’s structures, eradication of poverty, regional integration and collective security among the priorities. The Union’s main aim, however, seems to be to capitalize the African country’s potential in the struggle against the threats that transnational crime networks in the West Africa represent for Europe. In fact, it must be stressed that this aspect may partially explain the absence of a conditionality-based approach in the framework of the Special Partnership. Cape Verde has indeed something to offer to the Union. Although, as it has been said, in practice the Special Partnership does not escape the logic of EU’s development agenda and the donor-beneficiary framework, this should not be overstated. Apart from allowing the Union the access to the country’s marine resources through the fisheries agreement, Cape Verde represents an important asset in the promotion of the Union’s interest in West Africa, especially when it comes to the problem of security and transnational crime networks. Cape Verde is one of the few stable countries in the region and this makes it a good partner in the security sector. Given the crucial importance of this topic, it deserves a discussion, even if it is only a summary one.

Cape Verde’s contribution in the security dossier of the Special Partnership. The EU’s alternative in a region of failed states?

It has been said that one of the EU’s main objectives in the framework of the Special Partnership with Cape Verde is to use its development agenda in the country to promote its own interests. Among these interests are the attempt to capitalize the country strategic position (surrounded by many weak and highly unstable states) to minimize some of the perceived security threats against Europe stemming from West Africa, namely drug trafficking, terrorist activities and illegal migration. Insecurity in West Africa and the states incapacity to dismantle and stop criminal networks in the region is regarded as a serious threat

to the Union's own security. The Union welcomes the Special Partnership because these threats concern both parties and the Cape Verdean contribution to the challenge of overcoming them should not be neglected but rather capitalized. At least this is the argument the Commission used to convince the EP and the Council in the 2007 *Communication* where is stated that

Closer ties between Cape Verde and the European Union will in particular strengthen relations and bring about further integration between it and the outermost regions; Cape Verde also shares a number of strategic priorities with the European Union, especially as regards certain security issues, for instance action to tackle trafficking (drugs, illegal immigration, etc.). [...] Because of its geographical location, the country can make an important contribution to tackling illegal trafficking, and its open approach on security is one of its key strengths in its efforts to build closer ties with the EU. (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 2).

The passage just quoted clearly demonstrates the importance of security sector in these bilateral relations and emphasises the geo-strategic driving force behind the Special Partnership. This geo-strategic approach to the Special Partnership aims at the neutralization of serious security threats against the Union by tackling security issues in the West Africa. The EU has, indeed, motives to be concerned with the deterioration of the situation in the region. Consider, for instance, drug trafficking. Recent reports published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) have been pointing West Africa as an important transit area for cocaine trafficking between Latin America and Europe (UNODC, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; 2013). An aspect underlined by those reports that helps one to understand the need for institutional reforms and structural changes in the region is the fact that the logic behind the increasing use of West Africa as transit space for drug trafficking “has less to do with where West Africa is placed geographically than with the ability of traffickers to operate in the area with impunity” (UNODC, 2008: 5). This impunity stems essentially from the fact that in some of Western African states drug barons are infiltrating states' structures and are protected by high rank politicians and army officers (UNODC 2008: 5)¹⁴⁶.

Although the West Africa's drug trafficking problem is still relatively small compared with that of West Asia, the Caribbean or Latin America, “it is growing exponentially and threatens to turn the region into a center of lawlessness. [...] The affected countries and the international community must act before the situation spirals out of control” (Costa, 2008). The United Nations is not the only major international actor calling for coordinated actions in order to face the deteriorating situation in the West Africa. A telling example is NATO which

¹⁴⁶. António Maria Costa, Executive Director of UNODC, could hardly put it more plainly when he observed that in most West African countries “Drug planes don't have to fly below the radar, because in most cases there is no radar (or electricity). Soldiers sometimes help smugglers by closing airports and unloading the cargo. Police cars run out of gas when giving chase or are left in the dust by smugglers' all-terrain vehicles. There are no local navies to intercept the ships coming from Latin America or to chase the 2,000-horsepower boats that speed drugs up the coast to Europe. Traffickers are seldom brought to trial; in some cases, there are no prisons to put them in. Even when they are charged, they are usually released because evidence is not collected or needed laws are not in place. [...] Drugs have become a security issue. Drug money is perverting the weak economies of the region. In some cases, the value of the drugs being trafficked is greater than a country's national income. The influence that this buys is rotting these fragile states; traffickers are buying favors and protection from candidates in elections” (Costa, 2008). What is important for the present study is that there was a moment that Cape Verde was under a serious threat of being in the same situation as some its West African neighbours currently are. Some ten years ago a quick intervention of the international community prevented that from happening. “Cooperation among customs officials, border guards, the police and counter-narcotics agents at ports and airports, for example has made Cape Verde a less attractive transit point for drug traffickers” (Costa, 2008). An interesting challenge would be to scrutinize the EU's role on this process, but it must be said that with the available materials, the task may be impossible given that, the reforms of security sector in Cape Verde in the last years were driven by a plethora of domestic and foreign influences.

has been looking at Cape Verde with an increasing geo-strategic interest to the point of choosing the country to host the exercise Steadfast Jaguar in 2006, with participation of Cape Verdean soldiers. In 2003 the EU High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana, stressing the dynamic nature of the new threats, pointed State failure as one of the major threats for the Union and alerted that “State failure and organized crime spread if they are neglected – as we have seen in West Africa” (Solana, 2003: 11). Mr. Solana’s concerns seems to be shared by the EU and this is visible in the increasing securitization of the Union’s development agenda in West Africa. The Cape Verde-EU Special Partnership should not be dissociated from the securitization agenda. A Council document, dated 16 November 2007, welcomed the willingness of the Cape Verdean authorities “to promote collective security through close cooperation with the European Union in sector such as the control of illegal trafficking (drugs, illegal immigration, arms, etc.), the fight against terrorism, etc.”; stressing that “these sectors are of paramount importance for both Cape Verde and the European Union” (Council of the European Union, 2007: 4).

What is crucial to understanding the key role played by the security dossier in the current relations between the EU and West-African states is to bear in mind that the EU is increasingly aware that African insecurity more and more affects Europe’s own security. To make this plain it may be useful to briefly map the evolutions and trends in the EU relations with the so-called Third World. These evolutions and trends make the focus on security dossier in the Special Partnership between Cape Verde and the EU easier to understand. Europe’s relations with the developing countries changed dramatically in the last three decades. Defining moments in the shaping of European integration such as the successive enlargements, the fall of communist ideology and structures in Central and Eastern Europe or the reorganization of international trade under the supervision of the WTO called for significant revisions in the Community/Union’s relations with the Third World (Grilli, 1994, Holland, 2002; Holland and Doidge, 2012). Amongst the best sources to grasp this policy revision processes are certainly the texts of Lomé Conventions (1975-2000) and those of Cotonou Agreements (signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, revised in 2005 and 2010).

Although the Cape Verde-EU relations labelled as “special” and said to go beyond the traditional donor-beneficiary framework (and it is, in fact true, that Cape Verde does offer a great deal in return to the EU), in practice it does not escape the logic of EU’s typical development agenda for (the West) Africa. It, thus, needs to be addressed and understood within the framework of EU-Africa relations, regulated by the Cotonou Agreements. Only within this analytical framework can it be understood. This holds true, especially when comes to the role played by the security dossier. It is important to recall that the political conditionality that started shaping the post-Cold War EC’s policies towards the ACP states resulted in total failure in most African countries. It did not manage to trigger the economic development that had been so long hoped for. Thus major political crisis and conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa (such as Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Liberia, to name some) fed a significant literary production on “collapsed”, “failed” and “weak states” (Zartman, 1995 and Migdal, 1998) and deepened the International Community’s intervention in the region. The concept of “good governance” emerged in the agenda of international actors’ political discourse regarding sub-Saharan Africa states. The EU was no exception. It got deeply involved in Africa through political monitoring, crisis management, conflict preventions and development programmes addressing the causes of instability in several African states.

All this needs to be contextualized. In line with the International Community, the EU’s development policies have been expanding towards a holistic understanding of development where security and governance are regarded as *sine qua non* conditions for economic prosperity and a broad set of reforms needs to be implemented to ensure these two prerequisites (Bagayoko and Gibbert, 2009). In other words, the EU’s recent policies towards Africa is based on the development-governance-security triangle; motivated by a strong

conviction that without development there will be no sustainable peace and security and that without peace and security there can be no sustainable development (see Partnership Agreement, 2010, Article 11)¹⁴⁷.

The obvious question here is: why such a change in approach? Why the sudden especial emphasis on the security sector? Insecurity was already in previous decades a major problem in most African states. One may even contend that in this particular topic things did not get worse over the years. Why was it, then, not so important in the EC/EU agenda for Africa as it tends to be now? The answer to this question lies in the evolvments or changes in the way African insecurity and underdevelopment are perceived in Europe. Marie V. Gibert (2009: 623) rightly argues that until the end of the 1990s, Africa's insecurity and underdevelopment were regarded to be a threat primarily to its own peoples and Western interventions were, at least at official and rhetoric levels, motivated by "morality and a disinterested humanitarianism". The 9/11 events, the same scholar goes on explaining, transformed perceptions, and "Africa's insecurity and underdevelopment are increasingly understood, defined and addressed according to the alleged threats they pose to the rest of the world stability and prosperity". The same line of reasoning is found in Fearon and Laitin (2004: 13) where it is argued that "given the dangers posed by collapsed states and rogue regimes in a world with WMD, open economies, and easy international travel, all would benefit from political order and responsible (if possible, democratic) governments in the periphery". Promoting development and good governance is in the interest of international community as a whole since it will help prevent local conflicts and insecurity from spilling over (Gibert, 2009: 623).

It is within this framework, one in which the donor's intervention in Africa is no longer motivated by the apparent post-colonial and paternalistic solidarity with African countries but rather guided by an "enlightened self-interest" that EU development policy for Africa and its emphasis on security sector reforms must be approached. The description just made allows one to conclude that the increasing drug trafficking in the West Africa as well as other security threats in the region such as terrorist activities and illegal migration and the inability of the regional states to handle the problem increases the urgency for coordinated actions. These threats are not only West Africa's problem, they are also Europe's. The Special Partnership between Cape Verde and Europe is regarded by the EU as an important instrument and a sort of viable alternative in the challenge of overcoming the same threats through coordination of policies. Obviously this does not mean that the Special Partnership with Cape Verde and its security dimension are regarded as a sort of panacea for the security problems that transnational crime networks in West Africa poses to the Union. The partnership with Cape Verde is seen as part of the solution, an important contribution in the task of overcoming the security problems in the region.

Conclusions

On 5 July 1975 Cape Verde gained its independence under a tremendous pressure which had to do with survival and viability as an independent state. Respected international institutions, renowned politicians and scholars publicly argued that the country was not viable due to its lack of resources. Much due to the efforts of international community, Cape Verde survived as an independent state. In early 1990s the country embraced democracy. Political and civil rights flourished and the country start to be able to punch above its weight in

¹⁴⁷. It was certainly not by chance that the EU newly established ESDP found in African soil its ideal experimentation field. EU operations such as Artemis RD Congo (2003), EU support to AMIS action (Darfur, 2005-2007) EUPOL RD Congo (2006-present), EUFOR RD Congo (2006), EUFOR Tchad (2008-2009) EUSSR Guinea-Bissau, EUNAVFOR Somalia-Operation Atlanta (2008-present), some other military peacekeeping missions as well as naval monitoring and deterrence missions in Africa managed to find consensus among the EU member states (for a detailed discussion on these missions, see Koutrakos 2013).

international scenario. These considerations are important to understand the development and the contours of EU-Cape Verde relations.

To a certain extent it is accurate to say that the partnership between the EU and the Republic of Cape Verde stands out as an atypical form of cooperation in the context of relations between the EU and African states. Looking into the historical and political development of Cape Verde and into its relationship with European institutions within the framework of ACP-EC/EU relations, it is easy to conclude that the Special Partnership came about as a corollary of the convergence of interests: Cape Verde needs the EU's financial support to overcome some basic challenges, namely poverty and budget constraints; the EU finds a country it can use to promote its own interests in the West Africa region. To handle security issues such as terrorist activities, drug trafficking and illegal migration is part of these interests.

Strategically located, a stable country and with a relatively well organized security forces (if compared to most West African states, of course), Cape Verde can, for instance, give substantial contribution in maritime surveillance, an essential element in the fight against drug transportation up to the European continent. More, the country is open to coordinate efforts with the EU to face security problems, regarded as common threats to be neutralized; common challenges to be overcome. The contribution of Cape Verde in security dossier, along with significant concessions on the African country's part (namely those involving fisheries agreement with the EU) can be said to be the factor that brings the EU-Cape Verde relations close to a "true partnership"; the factor that one can use to argue that the current EU-Cape Verde relations have, *de facto*, surpassed the donor-beneficiary framework and is guided by a dialectics of mutual interests. Seen from this angle, and considering the unusual historical and political development the country has experienced since its independence (again, if compared to most African countries), it becomes understandable that the establishment of the Special Partnership with the EU and its implementation did not follow a conditionality-based approach but was and has been guided by the principles of political dialogue and policy convergence. Obviously, Cape Verde's good record in the use of European funds throughout the years also contribute to the exclusion of conditionality policy in the establishment of the Special Partnership.

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