Kristi Rød Gulliksen

The (In)Dependence of the African Union

Exploring how the European Union and the European Parliament has influenced the Pan-African Parliament

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Abstract

The African Union is often reported to borrow considerably from the European Union in terms of policies and institutional design. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the two organizations in fact differ quite a lot, as the African Union remains primarily intergovernmental, something which is reflected in its practices and how powers are distributed. The European Union on the other hand, is renowned for its intricate mix of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. The question is then, what has caused these similarities and differences? Using diffusion theory, I investigate how EU norms and practices have affected the African Union by taking a closer look at the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament, and the relationship between them. I find that certain diffusion mechanisms, such as emulation, socialization and 'manipulation of utility calculations', seem to have been at play. However, these processes have occurred simultaneously with increased agency on the part of African Union actors, which, to a certain degree, has limited the extent of the effects of diffusion.

Sammendrag

Det sies ofte at Den afrikanske union har basert mye av sitt institusjonelle oppsett og sin politikk på Den europeiske union. Tar man derimot et nærmere blikk på de to organisasjonene, framstår disse likhetene mindre tydelige. Den afrikanske union bærer fortsatt preg av å være sterkt tuftet på mellomstatlighet (*intergovernmentalism*), noe som reflekteres i organisasjonens maktfordeling og prosedyrer. Den europeiske union, derimot, er kjent for sin komplekse kombinasjon av mellomstatlighet og overnasjonalisme (*supranationalism*). En kan derfor stille seg spørsmålet: hva har forårsaket disse likhetene og forskjellene mellom Den afrikanske union og Den europeiske union? Ved hjelp av diffusjonsteori, undersøker jeg hvordan normer og praksiser tradisjonelt forbundet med Den europeiske union har påvirket Den afrikanske union ved å ta et nærmere blikk på Europaparlamentet og det panafrikanske parlamentet, og forholdet mellom dem. Oppgaven viser at diffusjonsmekanismer, som emulering, sosialisering og '*manipulation of utility calculations*,' har vært i sving. Dette har likevel skjedd samtidig som aktører innad i Den afrikanske union har demonstrert økende handlekraft, noe som til en viss grad har innskrenket omfanget av diffusjonseffekter.

Acknowledgements

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I am also grateful to Dr. Sören Stapel, who, unknowingly, inspired me to pursue this topic for my bachelor's thesis and whose lectures reinvigorated my interest and provided inspiration for where to go next.

Last but not least, I would like to extend thanks to my friends and family for their invaluable support which has kept my spirits and motivation high throughout this process.

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List of abbreviations

AEC – African Economic Community

AU – the African Union

DEG – Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group of the European Parliament

DPAP – Delegation for relations with the Pan-African Parliament

EESC – European Economic and Social Committee

ECOSOCC – Economic, Social and Cultural Council

EP – the European Parliament

EU – the European Union

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

OAU – the Organization of African Unity

ODA – official development assistance

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAP – the Pan-African Parliament

1. Introduction

In January 2024, Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, invited African leaders and representatives for the European Union (EU) to a summit in Rome to present the Italian government's new Mattei Plan. The plan is a €6 billion deal aimed at "boosting economic ties, creating an energy hub for Europe and curbing immigration" (Amante & Balmer, 2024). Although it received a warm welcome from many European and African actors, Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, lamented that Italy had not reached out to African countries for their opinion prior to the plan's launch (Nadeau, 2024). The irony therefore seems great when Meloni announces that the plan represents a new approach in Italian (European) relations with Africa that is not predatory or paternalistic. No matter how much room for maneuver is left for African actors in the plan, by not consulting with its proposed African partners, the plan entirely misses the mark (of non-paternalistic relations).

The plan prompts comparisons to the notion of 'Eurafrica', whose history Hansen and Jonsson (2014) detail in their book "Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism". Eurafrica, a merger of the names of the two continents, was, as demonstrated by the authors, both an idea and a political project launched in the 1950s in which the continued European exploitation of the African continent was regarded as critical not only to the survival of Europe (as they knew it), but also to the African continent. The authors argue that European leaders regarded Africa as 'uncapable of standing on its own two feet' and thus it was the prerogative of (former) colonial powers to ensure that African societies let European powers 'properly exploit' the continent in order for them to learn how (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014, p. 6-7). Furthermore, was Africa regarded as a solution to the purported problems Europe was experiencing at the time, such as overpopulation and dwindling natural resources. Hansen and Jonsson thus argue that the alleged need to maintain the strong (asymmetric) links to the African continent served as a common goal which accelerated European integration.

It is important, however, to bear in mind that Hansen and Jonsson's argument far from covers all the incentives and reasons for the emergence of institutionalized integration in Europe. It is neither the purpose of this paper to present all of these nor to argue which reasons played the greatest role in this history. Instead, I believe the mention of 'Eurafrica' goes to show how widely different, and at times surprising, the motivations that lay behind regionalist projects like the EU can be. Since then, has the world witnessed a proliferation of regional integration projects, while the theories seeking to explain this phenomenon in large part remain based on the European experience (Börzel & Risse, 2019, p. 1231).

The African Union (AU) is among the many regional organizations (ROs) that have emerged in later decades. Its precursor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), was spearheaded by prominent Pan-Africanists such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. As the AU (African Union, n.d.) writes on its website, was Pan-Africanism the ideology that guided both the establishment of the two successive organizations and their work. As such, the main aims were to increase cooperation and development, and in turn also do away with remaining colonial ties.

Considering the emancipatory dimension if African regionalism, the historical importance of Africa to European regionalism, and the stated aim of the EU to promote regionalism worldwide (European Commission, 2017, p. 27; Farrell, 2015, p. 102-103), is the aim of this paper, then, to explore how European integration has influenced regionalism in Africa. In approaching this, I will be focusing on the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), seeking to answer the question: to what extent has the EU and the European Parliament (EP), influenced the PAP?

The EU is regarded as one of the most successful regional projects of all time, and one that has gone further than any other in terms of how deeply it is integrated. It is therefore not surprising that many scholars argue it has served as inspiration for subsequent regional organizations (ROs) with regards to institutional design, policy areas dealt with, and operational norms (e.g., Bachmann & Sidaway, 2010; Byiers et al., 2020; Farrell, 2015; Haastrup, 2013; Piccolino, 2020; Sicurelli, 2013). Considering many of the AU's current aims, included in its Agenda 2063 (African Union Commission, 2015), focus on the promotion of good governance, democracy and closer integration, is it not only likely that the PAP itself might turn to the EP for inspiration and support in a search for more powers, but the AU as a whole might consider the EU's mix of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism a source of inspiration when developing its approach to realizing said aspirations.

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next sections I will be giving a brief overview of current literature on the topic, as well as introducing the thesis' theoretical framework and method. The second chapter goes into greater detail on the relations between the PAP and the EU/EP, as well as explaining where the EP and PAP differ from one another. The third chapter then analyzes the dynamics in said relationship and draws on secondary literature to argue how the EU/EP might influence the PAP's structure and functioning through different diffusion mechanisms. Lastly, I go through the main limitations of the thesis and provide my conclusions.

1.1 Literature review

It is easy to get the impression that much of African regional organizations' institutional set-ups are carbon copies of the institutions that are also found in the EU (e.g., Piccolino, 2020; Byiers et al., 2019; Bach, 2008). A quick look at many of the AU's institutions gives a similar impression. Starting with the name 'the African Union', will likely give associations to the EU. As Haastrup (2013) documents, do many of its institutions also bear resemblance EU institutions, such as the Pan-African Parliament, the AU Commission and the Permanent Representatives' Committee. Additionally, are institutions such as the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), and the Executive Council and the Specialized Technical Committees perhaps not similar in name, but their composition prompt comparisons to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Council of the EU, respectively.

As Börzel and Risse (2019) argue, is the proliferation of ROs the result of multiple factors. They disagree that most of the common integration theories, which are mostly founded on the European experience, on their own can explain the emergence of African

regional organizations (Börzel & Risse, 2019, p. 1245). Most of these traditional theories presuppose (intra-regional) economic interdependence for the emergence of regional integration, but as the authors find, is this not the case in many world regions. As an alternative explanation to the increase in the number of ROs across the globe, they argue that three other factors appear to play important roles, among which we find diffusion of institutional and policy designs from other organizations.

As Duina and Lenz (2016) emphasize in their article, can diffusion occur at any stage of the decision-making process in an organization, and as such it means that we do not always see convergence between organizations in final design. Instead, can diffusion work at different stages of the decision-making process, by affecting problematization, the framing of said "problem" and which final designs are considered.

For example, can diffusion result from influence exerted through capacity building and external funding. As Stapel and Söderbaum (2023) write, do donors to the AU differ in their approach in terms of involvement in where and how these funds are used. Some are more intrusive, while others are more 'hands-off'. The authors argue, however, that regardless of the approach, do donors still exert some influence as their decisions on who the recipients are often reflect their own priorities. Additionally, are most donors, even when claiming an accommodating approach, also inclined to demand to have a seat at the table during the recipients' negotiations on where and how to administer the funds. Considering that the AU is heavily reliant on external funding, this means that it is also subject to a host of potential pressures and influences from donors. Staeger (2023, p. 514) exemplifies this through the EU's Pillar Assessment used to decide how funding to external actors are administered. When the EU considers the recipients eligible to indirectly manage these funds themselves, they, in effect, become promoters of the EU's own external action programs, which includes the promotion of regional integration (Farrell, 2015, p. 102-103), and "values on which the European Union is founded" and "fostering […] the parliamentary dimension of international relations" (Conference of Presidents of the EP decision, 2015, §3(1-3)).

Despite its dependence on the support of donors, who often provide not only money but also technical assistance and capacity-building activities, is there clear evidence that AU actors also have demonstrated considerable agency vis-à-vis its donors. Farrell (2015, p. 112-113) documents how African actors have challenged the EU and in no way been a passive recipient of the EU's agenda. Haastrup (2013) argues in a similar vein and contends that instead of passively adopting EU norms and practices, has the AU systematically 'cherry-picked' the designs they find best suit the African context while simultaneously drawing inspiration elsewhere or developing uniquely 'African' solutions where that is preferable.

Although there seems to be a mix of both influence from the EU and AU agency which has resulted in current structure and functioning of the AU, do the different institutions in the AU structure diverge in their relations with the EU. As both Leininger (2015) and Luciano (2020) find, is there a tendency for the more supranational organs to seek out closer ties with the EU and its institutions, while the purely intergovernmental bodies of the AU generally seem more hostile and want greater independence from external partners. This hostility, has, as Luciano (2020, p. 1193) argues, hampered the effect of ideational diffusion from the EU.

1.2 Theoretical foundations

Diffusion theory will be utilized as a loose theoretic framework for this thesis as I believe it can explain some of the institutional convergence between the EU and the AU. Diffusion theory is a school of thought that is now present in a range of social sciences (Duina & Lenz, 2016, p. 773). In general, it postulates that "rules, organisational norms, and models developed in one political setting shape organisational decision-making in other settings." As such it draws on Galton's problem, which problematizes the commonly held assumption that cases involved in comparative analyses are atomistic, in other words, are independent of one another (Scott & Marshall, 2015). It is the study of this interdependence that constitutes the foundation of diffusion theory in the social sciences.

Several authors (Lenz, 2013; Piccolino, 2020) detail what diffusion is and through which mechanisms it can operate. A host of different names for these mechanisms exist (e.g. Piccolino, 2020; Lenz, 2013; Haastrup, 2013) but despite the different names, scholars tend to categorize the mechanisms quite similarly. They focus on: whether the source of diffusion takes an active or passive role in 'exporting' its norms, designs and so on; and whether it results from material or normative/ideational 'pressures'. Mechanisms which involve an active role on the part of the 'sender' include coercion and "manipulation of utility calculations" (Haastrup, 2013, p. 792-793), in which the latter includes conditionalities and incentives given by the sender together with the provision of e.g., financial and technical support, or proposals for political or economic cooperation (trade agreements, joint strategies, etc.). Mechanisms in which the sender is largely passive, and diffusion happens as a result of the actions of the 'recipient' include competition, emulation and socialization. Competition addresses processes where potential candidates for cooperation, and material and technical support from external partners, adopt designs and policies they believe will offer them a better chance at acquiring said benefits (Piccolino, 2020, p. 192). Emulation, on the other hand, is where actors, in situations of uncertainty, adopt the solutions of other organizations that are perceived as having a long pedigree of success (Lenz, 2013, p. 215). Lastly, socialization refers to cases of diffusion that stem from interactions with the source of diffusion through capacity-building activities, and prolonged cooperation with the source (especially when the 'sender' is perceived as having normative and ideational authority on the field in question). The 'recipient' is thus socialized in such a way that it comes to regard the solutions of the 'sender' to be the better choice (Lenz, 2013, p. 213).

As mentioned, are diffusion processes often categorized according to whether they are more material or normative in nature. As Lenz (2013, p. 212) argues, might normative processes of diffusion from the EU often not end in convergence in final design between 'sender' and 'recipient', but instead "the EU experience travels to other regions" where local conditions are different, prompting the adaptation of 'EU' norms, policies and institutional designs to the local context. Duina and Lenz (2016) further explicate this, demonstrating how diffusion can affect the problematization, framing and scripting (final design) stages of decision-making processes, and as such diffusion might not be clearly evident in the final design.

1.3 Case and method

A special focus will be given to the PAP as there is an impression that sovereignty remains incredibly important to African states (Haastrup, 2013, p. 797), in turn making national governments less likely to confer more powers to the AU's supranational organs. With PAP filling the role of being the organization's direct link to its citizenry it will likely come to play a greater role in the future development of the AU and its potential success as a continental actor.

To assess how and to what extent European integration has influenced the PAP and the AU, I will be conducting a comparative analysis of the most important treaties and protocols of the AU and the PAP. I had originally intended to apply Duina and Lenz' (2016) approach of disaggregating the decision-making processes in regional organizations into three stages: problematization, framing and scripting. Breaking down decision-making processes allows one to uncover evidence of potential diffusion between ROs at the different stages, instead of solely focusing on evidence from final design of a policy or institution. As such, it opens for a much greater effect of diffusion between ROs.

However, gathering data for such an approach was easier said than done since transcripts of debates, meeting minutes, etc., from African regional organizations are not readily available to the average student. What is available, on the other hand, are the founding treaties, protocols, charters and the like.

A comparative analysis limited to such documents regrettably constrict my chances of uncovering 'clear cut' evidence of diffusion from the EU to the AU, and the PAP. However, by comparing differences and similarities, I single out elements of convergence or divergence that can be investigated further in terms of diffusion. To do this, have I turned to secondary literature on the nature of AU-EU relations with regard to funding and capacity building, and in the development of joint projects, and, where available, to AU and EU sources that indicate potential diffusion mechanisms might be at play.

2. The PAP and its relations to the EU

In this chapter I will be turning my focus to the Pan-African Parliament, delving deeper into its structure and functions, as well as taking a closer look at its relations with the EU and the EP. The PAP started operating in 2004 following a protocol to the founding treaty of the African Economic Community (AEC) (Organization of African Unity, 2001), which was established as a part of the OAU architecture and later incorporated into the AU. Although this protocol calls for the later realization of direct election of its parliamentarians through universal suffrage, it was decided that until detailed provisions for such a procedure had been laid out by the Assembly, parliamentarians were to be appointed by the national parliaments (ibid, §2-5). In contrast to the EP, is each AU Member State awarded an equal number of parliamentarians (5) to appoint from their citizenry. Considering both the PAP and the EP are considered to be, among other things,

efforts by their respective Unions to increase the legitimacy of the two integration projects (EUR-Lex, 2022; Mbete, 2008, p. 307), it is somewhat striking to see that the different national populations of Africa, ranging from 108,000 (Seychelles) to 223 million (Nigeria), are represented by an equal number of parliamentarians. Notwithstanding the current six suspensions from the AU, this means that the total number of members the PAP can have is 275, a drastically smaller number than the 720 Members of the EP (MEPs) scheduled to be elected in the upcoming 2024 EP elections.

Similarly, is the PAP divided into fewer committees than the EP, with a total of eleven compared to the EP's total of 24 committees and sub-committees. Interestingly, however, the committees tend to overlap in terms of policy areas covered (Table 1). Some policy areas are covered by the EP and not the PAP, and vice versa. But in large part are many of the policy areas the same. However, the parliaments differ regarding which policy areas are included in what committees. Determining whether this convergence in policy area coverage is due to diffusion is difficult, however. As mentioned, has there been an increase in the number of regional integration projects worldwide, and so one could argue that the expansion of portfolios is a general trend among all these organizations (Byiers et al., 2019, p. 8), and that no one institution could be identified as the source of diffusion.

As Hooghe et al. (2019, p. 48, 61, 81) remark, however, are both the EU and the AU 'general purpose international organizations', which incentivizes them to pursue 'incomplete contracting' as it offers flexibility in the future, allowing them to adopt new competences when faced with changing contexts. With the objective of the AU being to achieve greater continental unity, cooperation and integration, this may have induced the AU emulate the EU as it is commonly recognized as the most heavily integrated regional community in the world (Hooghe et al., 2019, p. 64; Haastrup, 2013, p. 788). Although many of the same policy areas are covered by both, I believe the differing issue linkages found in the Parliaments' committees, on the other hand, reflect both the different continental contexts, and the disparity between the limited resources of the PAP and its desire to cover all these areas.

Table 1: Committees of the EP and the PAP

Committees of the EP	Committees of the PAP
Foreign affairs, subcommittees: - human rights - security and defence	Cooperation, international relations and conflict resolution
Civil liberties, justice and home affairs	Justice and human rights
International trade	Trade, customs and immigration matters
Internal market and consumer protection	
Industry, research and energy	Transport, industry, communications, energy, science and technology
Transport and tourism	
Culture and education (includes youth policy)	Education, culture, tourism and human resources
Women's rights and gender equality	Gender, family, youth and people with disabilities

Agriculture and rural development	Rural economy, agriculture, natural resources and environment
Environment, public health and food safety	
Employment and social affairs	Health, labor and social affairs
Economic and monetary affairs, subcommittee: - tax matters	Monetary and financial affairs
Budgets	
Budgetary control	Audit and public accounts
Constitutional affairs	Rules, privileges and discipline
Legal affairs	
Regional development	
Fisheries	
Development	
Petitions	

2.1 Powers of the Parliaments and parliamentary activism

2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the PAP's inaugural session, but also the tenth anniversary of the adoption by the AU Assembly of the Protocol to the Constitutive Act (African Union, 2014) which revises the AEC protocol and substantively expands the PAP's mandate. However, it has currently only been ratified by 14 Member States, while a minimum of 28 is needed for it to come into force. As opposed to the original AEC protocol, which only endowed the PAP with advisory and consultative powers, the new protocol states that the parliament "shall be the legislative organ of the African Union". However, as opposed to the EU where the Commission is the primary body entrusted with drafting legislation, the 2014 protocol extends this competence to the PAP too. The legislative process differs further from the EU, in that model laws are to be submitted to the Assembly for adoption, as compared to EU Commission proposals being presented to the Council and the EP for adoption.

Apart from some extensions in mandate, are there few substantial changes from the original AEC protocol (Luciano, 2020, p. 1194). Its members are to be chosen from outside the membership of national parliaments, which corresponds with the 2004 change in the EP, in which national office were considered incompatible with MEP office (EUR-Lex, n.d.). However, the PAP parliamentarians are yet to be elected by universal suffrage, which is the case of MEPs, although the new protocol still contains provision for a future shift to election by universal suffrage.

Yet, the 2014 protocol is far from coming into force, and thus the PAPs current advisory and consultative powers differ vastly from the EP, which is endowed with legislative, budgetary and supervisory powers. Nevertheless, can the not-yet-in-force 2014 protocol still be seen as a big step for the PAP in improving its relative position within the AU institutional structure. The EP has also recognized and repeatedly voiced its support for this. In 2017, the EP's permanent delegation to the PAP, the DPAP (2017, p. 2), stated that much work still remains but "advocacy work on targeted countries is

continuing." The PAP president, additionally, gave thanks to the EP for its financial and technical support. Three years later, then EP president, David Sassoli stated that close relations between the EP and the PAP is part of a strengthened AU-EU partnership. And referencing the EP's history of gradually expanding its mandate through parliamentary activism, Sassoli stated that he saw many similarities between the two parliaments, and that the PAP had potential to become a similarly powerful supranational parliament (European Parliament, 2020). And as recent as 2022, the EP and PAP jointly declared the commitment of the EP to support its African counterpart in its quest to gain a stronger role within the AU structure.

In general, these statements correspond with the observation already made by Bach (p. 359) in 2008, stating that there is a general trend for great optimism within the EU Commission and the EP for projects and activities that can "contribute to AU capacity building and empowerment." Luciano (2020, p. 1189), similarly, reports that the PAP matches this enthusiasm as Members of the PAP have long prioritized "mirroring the institutional path of the EP in the EU" as an important strategy to increase its relative standing both within the AU structure and internationally, indicating PAP parliamentarians have sought to emulate the EP. An example of this might be seen in the Rules of Procedure of the PAP, whose formulation the Parliament itself is responsible for. In the rules governing the committees of the PAP, it is clear they have been granted great leeway in terms of which issues to discuss as the wording is incredibly vague. Regardless of the incentives behind this specific example, it is hard not to make comparisons to the EP's history of empowerment which utilized "discretion in rule interpretation" and developing procedural habits based on uncertainties in the treaties, which in turn paved the way for later institutionalization of said practices (Navarro, 2008, p. 8; Roos, 2017).

2.2 Capacity building and funding

Capacity building is a recurring theme in EU-AU and EP-PAP relations. As it was decided in November 2015, was the PAP admitted onto the list of priority 'countries' of the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) of the EP (European Parliament, n.d.), who is responsible for parliamentary capacity development activity. This is interesting as the list is otherwise comprised mostly of candidates for EU membership (Moldova, Western Balkans, Georgia and Ukraine), with Tunisia being to only other non-candidate on the list (European Parliament, n.d.). It is widely documented that to be considered a candidate for accession to the EU, involves a process of adopting a range of EU norms and standards, a process which is commonly referred to as 'Europeanization' (Börzel & Risse, 2017, p. 302-303). Access to detailed descriptions and reports of capacity building activities conducted between the EP and the PAP is limited, but the EP explains that such projects generally take certain different forms, such as seminars, workshops, study visits and fellowship programs (European Parliament, 2019, p. 6). For the partnership with the PAP, the EP states that their capacity development efforts focus on "sharing EP's best practices and working methods on a selected topic in a targeted, in-depth and structured way, aiming to build in-house capacity more effectively." (European Parliament, n.d.). Such topics have included inter-institutional dialogue, parliamentary oversight and parliamentary research. Furthermore,

are civil servants from the PAP eligible to be seconded to the EP for up to three months to gain experience with how the EP works (European Parliament, n.d.).

Another area where the EU is heavily involved in activities of the AU and the PAP, is through financial support (Luciano, 2020, p. 1190). In the PAP's Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2023, it is stated that the EU Commission is "a major traditional partner" of the PAP, and that the funding it provides through its 'Strengthening the African Human Rights System' program will greatly assist in the implementation of the plan, as funding from the EU Commission is central to closing its funding gap (Pan-African Parliament, 2022, p. 55). In the same plan, the PAP (ibid, p. 14) recognizes that not only is external funding necessary for the realization of the Strategic Plan's objective, but that all of the PAP's activities currently rely on funding from donors. This acknowledgement is echoed in the Kagame Report (2017) which addresses the functioning of the entire AU. According to this report, does the AU not only struggle with an overdependence on financial support from external actors, but many of its organs also suffer from persistent underfunding (Kagame, 2017, p. 6-7).

A clear overview of the total amount of EU financial support to the African Union is difficult to obtain. The AU Commission (2021, p. 39) reports that the EU is the most important financial contributor among development donors, who together contribute, on average, 62% of the AU budget. As another indicator of the relative size of the EU and European countries as donors, Stapel and Söderbaum (2023, p. 1704) report that the EU, along with Germany, Sweden and the UK alone stand for 80% of the total amount of official development assistance (ODA) to the AU. According to the EU Commission's Financial Transparency System (European Commission, n.d.), has the EU, through the European Development Fund and the EU budget administered by the Commission, provided roughly €500 million to the AU from 2014 to 2022. Of this, 55 million were part of the African Union Support Programme, which is specifically geared towards capacity building within AU organs (African Union, n.d., p. 1). As Navarro (2008, p. 22) reports, has the EP exclusively asked the Commission to see to it that part of the 55 million is earmarked towards strengthening the PAP. However, as the Delegation of the EU to the AU (2023) reports, are there also a number of agreements between the two Unions in which the EU pledges to provide much higher amounts to different AU projects, such as €700 million to the AU's Great Green Wall, or €600 million to various peace operations led by the AU. Trade and investments from the EU are also areas where the EU promises to assist the AU, for example through the mobilization of investments worth €150 billion towards strengthening infrastructure through the 'Global Gateway Investment' strategy. Thus, the €500 million reported in the Financial Transparency System only represents a part of the EU's total financial support to the AU and its projects.

3. Discussion

3.1 Main arguments for EU influence

Duina and Lenz' approach of breaking down the decision-making process into problematization, framing and scripting inspired the focus on the PAP in this thesis, as there was a hope to discover evidence of diffusion in sources documenting these processes leading up to the 2014 Protocol. As mentioned, however, was this easier said than done, and the decision was made to compare the founding documents of the different institutions and instead use evidence from secondary literature to make plausible assumptions about the EU's influence based on this. As such, the findings are (regrettably) more general than what was first anticipated.

In this section, I will go through, first, arguments that support the notion that the EU has, and continues to, significantly influence the AU and the PAP. Thereafter, I will be turning the attention towards arguments that corroborate the opposite, namely that the influence from the EU is overstated and will go on to matter even less in the future.

There were considerable difficulties in finding documentation from both organizations of the EU exerting its (concrete) influence through for example agenda setting, policy formation and implementation, and institutional reform processes in the AU. However, considering the heavy involvement of the EU and its institutions in terms of provision of funding and capacity building, it is very difficult to argue that it has not played a role in the development of the AU and in its current activities, and that as such, EU principles and designs might have diffused from the EU to the AU.

The concept of conditionalities is a popular topic in several social scientific traditions. Stapel and Söderbaum (2023) have through interviews with both EU and AU actors studied how the approaches of the EU and three European countries (Germany, UK & Sweden) differ in their approaches to providing ODA to the AU. In their study, the authors reveal how the EU is by far the most 'intrusive' as it often has explicit demands and expectations for the recipient in terms of alignment of policies and strategies (Stapel & Söderbaum, 2023, p. 1706). Although the EU appears to be the most domineering among the donors considered, Stapel and Söderbaum (2023, p. 1702) emphasize how the others, despite a more 'relaxed' approach still exert an influence as the mere provision of assistance entails a process of prioritizing 'who, what, why, where and when'. Considering the other three major donors all are either current or past members of the EU, I argue that this experience likely also has influenced their priorities and approaches, and thus they might contribute to the diffusion of EU norms and practices.

The previous chapter made mention of the AU's dependence on external funding, something the AU itself has identified as problematic and is a priority in its institutional reform process (African Union, n.d.). Navarro (2008, p. 25), Byiers et al. (2019, p. i) and Fagbayibo (2022, p. 279) all explain that such dependence is controversial since it not only disincentivizes commitment from internal actors as the cost of (symbolically) committing becomes very low, but also because it has strong implications for the feeling of local ownership over activities and over the organization as a whole. One way in which the provision of funding from the EU carries with it implications for the operation and

practices of the recipient, is through the EU's Pillar Assessment, which establishes whether the recipient meets the EU's standards and principles for financial management, in which case the EU decides it can utilize the system of the recipient as 'indirect management'. As Staeger (2023, p. 514) argues, this mechanism "effectively makes the funding recipient an agent implementing EU external action programmes." A more detailed look at the funds provided to the AU between 2014 and 2022 reveals that the majority of these funds are administered through 'indirect management' (European Commission, n.d.)
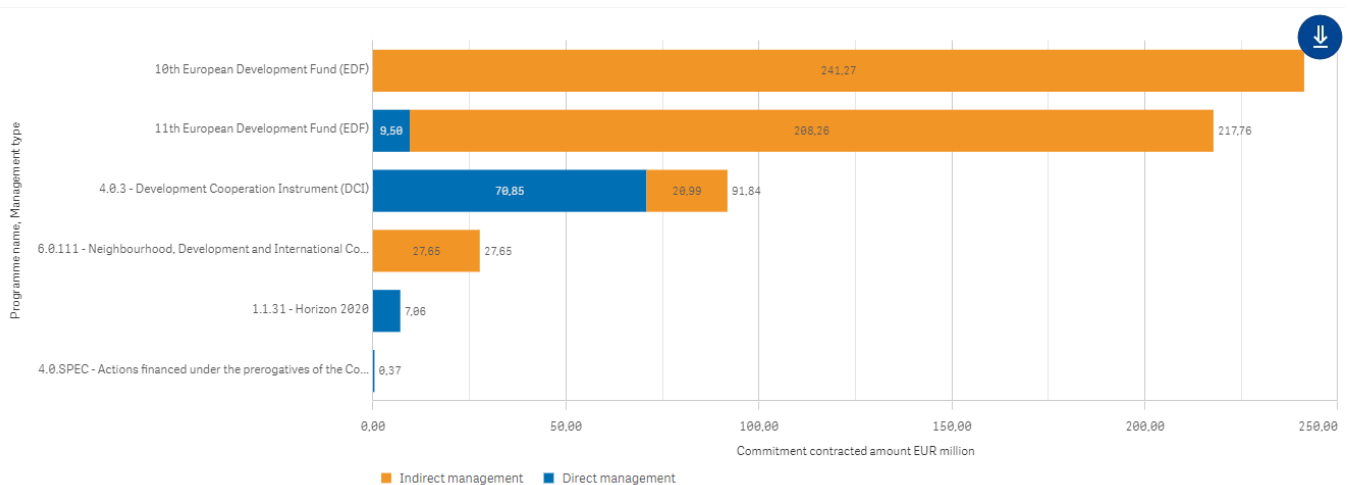

Figure 1: Management of EU funds to the AU (Source: European Commission)

Additionally, even if no conditionalities are explicitly stated, it is still likely that recipients, including the AU and its organs, might be following a logic of consequence or appropriateness. The former denotes the process in which recipients of financial assistance take account of the donor's potential for continued provision or withdrawal of said assistance, and adjust its decisions (and behavior) thereafter (Piccolino, 2020, p. 191). As such it relates closely to the diffusion mechanisms of competition and manipulation of utility calculations. The EP (Zamfir, 2017, p. 7) states, for example, that for a country or region to stay on its priority list for parliamentary capacity development, it presupposes that progress has been made. I argue then that this can incentivize the AU to opt for solutions that are promoted by and/or familiar to the EU/EP as they can easily recognize that concrete steps are being made, and as a result of their familiarity with the solutions might also expect them to bring progress on the matter. The logic of appropriateness, on the other hand, follows from the long-term socialization of actors and their consequent perception of what is the 'right thing to do' (Farrell, 2015, p. 102; Börzel & Risse, 2017, p. 293) in order to remain 'respected' within a certain community. As Haastrup (2013, p. 793) and Farrell (2015, p. 113) document, is there evidence that diffusion through socialization of AU actors has happened in the AU as a result of frequent interactions and the recurrent capacity building programs in which the two organizations partake.

Although the EU's provision of financial and technical assistance undoubtedly has some impact on the AU's practices and decisions, is it important to bear in mind, as Navarro (2008, p. 24) and Stapel and Söderbaum (2023, p. 1704) point out, that the EU is just one of many external partners to the AU, and as such are there multiple actors

which likely exert an influence on the AU. Sicurelli (2013) researched how the current security culture of the AU came to be, and found that the presence of other possible partners, in this case China, widened the AU's room for maneuver. Although China's incentives for developing partnerships with African regional organizations can be debated, its approach based on impartiality and non-interference in its partners' affairs, meaning its conditionalities are more 'financial' in nature, ultimately suited the AU better than the value-based approach of the EU. As Sicurelli (2013, p. 28) also points out, did the possibility of cooperating with the Chinese also give the AU "perception of a new sense of independence from Europe."

3.2 The importance of Pan-Africanism and African agency

Seeking independence from Europe is not something new to African regionalism, but is in fact something that inspired much of the regionalist movements in Africa in the 1950s-60s when many of the current African states acquired independence from their European colonizers. As Hansen and Jonsson (2014, p. 270) write, were many of the most prominent proponents of regionalism at the time very critical of the proposed 'Eurafrica' partnership since they believed it was in part an effort to thwart the development "of any types of independently organized African integration and regionalization schemes […]".

The notion of decolonization is still central to African regionalism and is highly visible through the importance of Pan-Africanism to the African Union. Pan-Africanism and its principles and values are mentioned frequently throughout the Union's founding documents, and still plays a critical role in the AU's operation and development. The Agenda 2063, which the AU refers to as its "master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future" (African Union Commission, 2015, p. 4) lists as it second aspiration the achievement of an integrated continent that is founded on the ideals of Pan-Africanism. Moreover (and relevant to this thesis), is not only the name of the PAP indicative of the importance of Pan-Africanism to this integration project, but the role of the Parliament is heavily geared towards promoting and realizing Pan-African principles and aims, as the objectives of the PAP indicate (Organization of African Unity, 2001).

The relative importance of Pan-Africanism and especially its emancipatory dimension sets the AU apart from the EU (as a regionalist project). As Haastrup (2013, p. 791) writes, is the idea of an actual union much more potent on the African continent. The colonial history between the two continents and the emancipatory aspect of the Pan-African ideology has implications for the relations between the two Unions (Staeger, 2023, p. 505) and has at times guided the approach of the AU in its relations with the EU (Luciano, 2020, p. 1193). An example of this can be seen in the EU and the AU's differing definition of capacity building. While the EU's definition follows the quite traditional definition of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the AU's definition makes explicit reference to Pan-Africanism, stating that 'recipients' of capacity building shall learn "in the context of a pan-African paradigm." (Zamfir, 2017, p. 3-4).

While Pan-Africanism definitely guides the approach of the AU in its interactions with the EU, has the EU also shifted its approach (or at least its rhetoric) in later decades, to one that emphasizes equality and partnership more, as opposed to the traditional donor-recipient dynamic (Söderbaum, 2015, p. 25; Del Biondo, 2020, p. 310, 313, Fagbayibo, 2022, p. 280). Again, is the definition of capacity building/development symptomatic. The OECD/EU definition, in which the notion of 'capacity development' is preferred, emphasizes that the word 'building' implies the process begins with a plain surface, indicating that the final result is a product based on a preconceived design and does not use the context and abilities the recipients already possess as a starting point (Zamfir, 2017, p. 3). As Del Biondo (2020, p. 320) reports, has the EU in capacity building activities on some areas let AU set the agenda alone and allowed for more ownership of the partnership's projects. This corresponds with what Staeger (2023, p. 506-508) terms 'cooperative capacity building', which opens for greater African agency and ownership of activities and projects developed under the EU-AU relationship. Another example of this cooperative mode can also be found in the previously mentioned EP endorsement of the PAP's pursuit of more powers within the AU structure. Opening for more African agency and ownership does not automatically mean that no diffusion will occur, but it at least lowers the chance of diffusion as a consequence of the EU's active promotion of its own experience and solutions.

3.3 Tying it all together

Despite the EU's move towards more 'equal partnership', and the AU's emphasis on Pan-Africanism and becoming more self-financed in its strategies and institutional reforms, are the asymmetries in terms of size and power between the two likely to continue to have an impact on their relationship for some time. There are still staggering differences in resources, with the EU's 2024 budget of €189 billion (Council of the European Union, 2024) dwarfing the 2024 budget of the AU at $605 million (Executive Council, 2024, p. 1). Additionally, are there large contrasts in terms of staff. According to Del Biondo (2020, p. 314) had the AU Commission in 2014 a staff of only 1,450, compared to the EU Commission's roughly 33,000. As mentioned previously is also the number of members of parliament in the EP nearly three times that of the PAP.

Because of the troublesome history of colonialism between the two, are the direct interactions between the EU and the AU "[forced] into an attempted post-postcolonial cooperative interaction mode." (Staeger, 2023, p. 505), and as such are we not likely to be able to observe the same evidence of direct power of the EU over the AU. However, as Staeger argues (ibid, p. 506), is the EU still able to exert a strong influence indirectly through for example designs for regional integration, and ideational and normative leadership which is available to AU organs to draw inspiration from.

Leininger (2015, p. 63) observes that the supranational organs of the AU have sought out closer relations with external partners in an effort to balance the more powerful intergovernmental institutions. In this context, the EU likely stands out as an external 'giant'. The intergovernmental organs, on the other, differed in attitude and emphasized the importance of sovereignty and Pan-Africanism in their efforts to gain

greater independence from OECD donors. This interesting dynamic can perhaps be elucidated by Staeger's (2023) explanation of African agency:

> The essence of decolonial African agency is, after all, Africans shaping their future 'under their own steam', which does not preclude selective or proactive continuity with 'artefacts inspired by colonialism', as long as there are 'good reasons for embracing them'. (p. 506)

Arguably this shows that there is, and has over time been, an intricate interplay between the influence of direct and indirect EU power, and African agency in EU-AU relations. And it is this interplay which can hopefully explain the interesting mix of institutional convergence and divergence between the two organizations. However, if one were to look further ahead, it is likely that these interactions, including very relevant capacity building and socialization, along with the AU's current focus on becoming self-financed, means that the AU in the future will become more equal in terms of resources and capacity. Consequently, is it likely that it will be able to stand more freely to develop its organization on its own terms, regardless of whether this involves drawing inspiration from others, or developing more uniquely 'African' solutions.

4. Concluding remarks

4.1 Limitations

As Leininger (2015, p. 66) writes, can the entire decision-making process in the AU, including how decisions are prepared, brokered and concluded, still be considered a black box. Staeger (2023, p. 506) adds to this by arguing that "the move towards attempted post-postcolonial partnership has led to power being exerted in more indirect ways" and in turn has the diffuse nature of these power dynamics made it harder for outsiders (and insiders perhaps) to detect and criticize. Personally, I believe this has been the biggest and most overarching limitation to my work. It has generally been difficult to access primary resources, especially from AU sources. This is likely a result of two main aspects. Firstly, is the AU generally short on resources so prioritizing public access to documents and other material might not be the highest point on the agenda. Furthermore, is the contrast to the EU's vast array of available material not very surprising considering the EU has had decades to develop and establish comprehensive transparency procedures and norms.

This is obviously inconvenient as I have not been able to conduct the research I originally planned to do and has made me very reliant on secondary literature instead of being able to point to first-hand evidence of or against diffusion. But the disparity in the availability if EU and AU sources is also problematic as it might have skewed my arguments and final conclusions. However, I hope that my recourse to secondary literature which is itself based on interviews and other primary sources from both EU and AU actors (e.g., Del Biondo, 2020; Duina & Lenz, 2016; Bachmann & Sidaway, 2010; Stapel & Söderbaum, 2023) might have alleviated this somewhat, as it has allowed for

both making use of the triangulation of data already conducted by the original authors, and for a quasi-triangulation on my part.

However, relying on such secondary literature also means my research hinges on their interpretation of said data. Had I been able to access the same material myself, there is the possibility that I might have interpreted the same material differently, in turn opening for a different conclusion.

The last major limitation to the work is the decisions that have been made in consideration of the scope of the thesis. A full analysis of how diffusion from the EU might have affected the AU would necessitate years' worth of work, and similarly is a comprehensive investigation of all the ways the EU and the EP might have affected the PAP far beyond the thesis' scope. I have had to limit myself to sources that were readily available online, as opposed to for example conducting interviews with relevant actors or analyzing minutes from committee meetings and plenary sessions. Additionally, has the need to focus on only certain aspects of the EU/EP-PAP relations meant that I cannot claim my findings are sufficiently representative to be generalizable beyond the specific contexts I have considered. However, I hope they give, if only a small, insight into the nature of some of these relations, and perhaps provide an indication as to what areas need more research.

4.2 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how the EU and the EP has influenced the PAP. To do this, a brief comparison of the two parliaments was conducted, in which it appeared that they currently differ vastly, both in terms of powers and resources. However, as the PAP, through the 2014 protocol, is set to be reformed quite drastically, this opened for investigation into avenues for influence and diffusion from the EU/EP, since the EU is known to promote regional integration abroad and does so both through material support and transfer of knowledge and experience. An overview of how the EU provides support through funding and capacity building was then given, which was followed by arguments and evidence from secondary literature on the topic, which demonstrated how this opens for dynamics that might foster either diffusion from the EU or increased African agency that could hinder diffusion.

In general, is it clear that diffusion via emulation, conditionalities, and socialization, has been at play to some extent. Several authors have observed the many striking institutional similarities between the two organizations, but they also argue that when it comes to functioning, the convergence is no longer as evident. From the names and structure of the AU and its institutions it seems obvious that the EU has served as inspiration during the early years of the AU. However, to what extent the EU and its institutions have influenced the AU, and the PAP specifically, in more recent years is not as clear as influence seems to be exerted in more indirect ways. As demonstrated previously, is the promotion of regionalism and regional integration a part of the EU's official foreign policy. Some report that the models promoted by the EU, and the incentives behind cooperating with the EU (such as funding and greater market access) still affects regional integration projects in Africa. Others, on the other hand, proclaim

that the ubiquity of Pan-Africanism strongly conditions AU actors' approach in their relations with the EU, and as such evidence of diffusion from the EU is rather the result of 'cherry-picking' by AU actors, and their adaptation of solutions and designs to the African context. As such, the EU definitely has influenced the AU and the PAP, but the mechanisms through which this occurs are somewhat debated, as the AU undoubtedly is no passive 'recipient of diffusion'. The importance of the relative power asymmetries between the two organizations and their institutions cannot remain unconsidered either, however.

As mentioned, are the findings of the thesis mostly applicable to the specific contexts considered here, such as funding and capacity building programs between the EP and the PAP. However, they are, regrettably, quite general as little is still known about actual extent and specific nature of the influence these dynamics stimulate. I believe, therefore, that great opportunities remain for more research on the same field using more appropriate investigative measures, such as interviews on and observations of inter- and intra-institutional dynamics, or analyzing how and where external financial support is spent.

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