

DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Review by Gerard McCann

The study and analysis of the European Union's international development policy is a relatively recent addition to academic interest on the evolution of the European integration process. Despite the scale of the EU's contribution to international aid and the increasingly prominent role of member states in security interventions, debate has been slow to pick up. With the globalisation activities of the Union becoming more prominent throughout the 2000s and with the roll out of the Cotonou Agreement, Nice and Lisbon Treaties, interest in the EU's global reach has become more widespread. Martin Holland and Mathew Doidge's book on development policy, a follow-up to the former's earlier textbook, *The European Union and the Third World*, is part of this growing awareness around a plethora of concerns regarding the vexed issue of how former colonial powers are contributing to the development of former colonies.

The decision of the core member states of the Union to engage more functionally with the international community and markets, and to take a more involved role in international diplomacy, in many ways has reshaped the competencies of the Union. It has given the EU an unprecedented global responsibility and has rebalanced the partnership system that prevailed under the Lomé system from the 1970s until 2000. With the introduction of the Cotonou Agreement many of the EU's economic and development policies have been adapted to comply more readily with shifts in the international market system and geo-political circumstances. Together with aid and humanitarian commitments, which have been ongoing since the mid 1950s, recent policy changes have positioned the European Union – as a generic group – as the most involved bloc in the world in their dedication to international development. With this has come unprecedented innovation as well as challenges in contributing to the development of many of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Financial commitments provide a quantitative measure of the EU's collective aspirations towards more effective policies and represent almost fifty

percent of global aid contributions. The 2007-2013 financial contribution to the EU's development cooperation programmes totals roughly €50 billion per year. This includes the financial resources available under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) (€16.9 billion); the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) (€11.2 billion); and the European Development Fund (EDF) (€22.7 billion). Much has been achieved in terms of the qualitative impact of development policy, but much more needs to be done. Arguably as a result of the rebalancing, the scale and sophistication of the myriad of interconnected bilateral and multilateral agreements have at times frustrated and debilitated development efforts.

Two key interconnected issues continue to haunt attempts to create an encompassing progressive partnership between the European donors and recipients. The first is the legacy of colonialism and the effects that still continue to blight many countries around the world. The second is the seemingly intractable problem of enduring poverty for many Least Developed Countries, almost all of which are former colonies of EU states. From the United Nations Human Development Index, of the twenty-five poorest countries on earth, twenty-four are former colonies of EU states. Doidge and Holland's research is important in that it gives a comprehensive overview of reasons for the limitation of the policy over the past twelve years and more. Building on earlier work they break down the framework of the Union's external relations and update the policy changes that have come into effect for developing country relations in recent years. While taking an analytic view of the Cotonou process, the book takes on the vexed questions of the implications of the global recession, the so-called 'Everything but Arms' initiative, the EuropeAid network, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the implications of institutional changes within the European Union itself through the Lisbon Treaty. All of these facets have had a significant impact on the development operations of the Union and have impacted on working relationships across the spectrum of developing countries.

Underlining all the policy shifts recently have been the changes within the EU itself, its expansion eastward and the deepening recession in the eurozone. Development cooperation is reaffirmed in this new system through

the crucial commitments made in the Lisbon Treaty, and notably Article 3.5 which introduces key development issues with the clause that the EU:

“...shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter”.

This is a backdrop to the analysis presented in the book, which begins with a theoretical discourse and surveys recent academic debates on development issues before moving on to address the legacy issues and core policy areas. There are also a number of chapters looking at area specific interests, particularly Latin America and Asia. While Africa is dealt with in the last chapter within the context of the MDGs and recent prioritisation agenda, the continent could have done with its own dedicated section. Otherwise this is a comprehensive engagement with regions that are most affected by the EU's global agency.

The way in which EU integration has been processed over the past twelve years, since the introduction of the Lisbon Agenda (Europe 2020), has brought policies pertinent to partnership with former colonies into a sharper focus, coloured by the desire of the European political leaders to enter more forcefully into the financial mechanisms of globalisation. This strategy demanded policy shifts as manifest in the Cotonou regime and the introduction of the controversial Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). As Holland and Doidge rightly point out, the priorities of the member states have shaped the way in which the EU has come to deal with developing countries. Walking away from the principals of partnership and the ‘associationalism’ that informed relations prior to 2000, development policy in the new world order tends towards the needs, security or otherwise, of the member states first.

Holland and Doidge leave the scenario at this awkward conclusion, but possibly could have recommended returning to some of the good practice and principals of development policy in the past. Building a ‘common-purpose’

for development policy, even within the confines of a flawed process of globalisation, could mean a new mutuality between member states and former colonies. Straightforward and transparent structures and policy adaptation, informed by experience, could make all the difference. For example, it would seem logical to establish a primary budget line for development initiatives instead of the complex budget systems that criss-cross the continent. This would bring the finances beyond the multilateral system of preferences which invariably tends towards member state interests. At the very least (and as recommended by the Court of Auditors) a Development Fund could directly address global poverty. It could also mean further Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform to permit the access of goods and the diversification of production from former colonies as well as integration of the MDGs at operational level across EU policy. Ultimately, what is needed is an EU policy framework which references pro-development initiatives across the breadth of the *acquis communautaire*.

Unfortunately, as confirmed by Holland and Doidge, the disparate nature of the EU policy framework, working under member state priorities, and driven by fears of economic recession, globalisation and external competition, has brought the former colonisers and colonised to a new type of 'disconnected' (even exploitative) relationship – and this does not bode well for policy adaptation. Recent development policy changes appear to have ensured 'more of the same'. The book would be useful for NGO representatives who are interested in getting a comprehensive overview of the EU's development policy and an excellent textbook for undergraduate students taking modules on the EU as a global actor.

Matthew Doidge and Martin Holland (2012) *Development Policy of the European Union*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

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