

***TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS IN AFRICA:
US AND EU CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN
SOMALIA AND SUDAN (1991-2008)***

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Introduction

In the period 1991-2008 the United States (US) and the European Union (EU)¹ pursued different strategies and used different methods for managing conflicts in Africa. Since the 1990s and especially in the 2000s, the US intervened in Africa with the main purpose of combating terrorism (and guaranteeing oil supply). This strategy was pursued through an approach of selective multilateralism in the 1990s, of unilateralism between 2001-2006 and thus of selective unilateralism in 2007-2008. Indeed, in this latter period, the US started to re-define its strategy towards Africa, recognizing that development aid was crucial for achieving anti-terrorism's goals. Since the beginning of the 1990s the EU intervened in Africa with the purpose of promoting peace and development in the continent, according to a strategy defined as 'structural stability' in a Commission's communication of 1996. Although the EU pursued this strategy on the basis of an approach of 'generalized multilateralism', some EU member states (most notably France), operating outside the EU framework, did not refrain from adopting unilateral initiatives in areas where they had historical links. Although these member states decided finally to coordinate their Africa policy within the EU, however they tended to do that in the framework of the second pillar (of CSFP and thus ESDP)². Inevitably this brought the structural stability strategy to be pursued (in certain countries but not in other) through not only economic and civilian measures, but also political and military ones. The questions we want to discuss are the following: (1) why did the US and the EU *strategies* and *approaches* to conflict management in Africa differ?; (2) why were those strategies and approaches re-defined in specific periods or in relation to specific countries? In order to answer these questions we consider the US and the EU intervention for conflict-management in two African countries, Somalia and Sudan, in the period in question. Somali and Sudanese conflicts can be compared under several relevant aspects. They were internal wars with macro-regional implications and had both territorial and ethnic-religious connotations. Both conflicts had potentially global spill-over effects since the two countries are considered fertile areas for international terrorism linked to Al Qaeda. Finally, Sudan and Somalia, being located in an arid part of Sub-Saharan Africa, were (and are) subject to natural disasters such as famine and desertification, which further exacerbated the conflict for basic natural resources.

International relations and domestic politics

¹ Of course the EU came into being formally with the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. Before, the last denomination was the European Community (EC). This denomination remained after Maastricht for indicating the first pillar. However, it is common in the literature to use the denomination of the EU for the entire polity aggregating the three pillars. Here we necessarily follow this usage.

² CFSP stays for Common Foreign and Security Policy, whereas ESDP stays for European Security and Defence Policy. These two policies are organized with the inter-governmental framework of the second pillar.

Certainly, it is plausible to argue that the different foreign policy strategies were the outcome of the different role the US and the EU had in the international system. The US is a military super-power with a global reach. Its military presence in many theatres made it the main security's provider at the global level. Consequently, it has been also the main target of terrorist groups. It was inevitable that the fight against terrorism became its main preoccupation already in the 1990s and of course after 11 September 2001. At the same time, the EU is mainly an economic super-power, with very limited global security's responsibilities, inevitably constrained to privilege the use of non-military foreign policy tools. However, the US and EU strategies were not only redefined along those years, but also they were pursued through different and fickle approaches. It is our argument that these different US and EU approaches to crisis management in Africa can be interpreted also as an effect of the influence of specific domestic factors. In the US, the anti-terrorism strategy and the growing reliance on a unilateral approach were mainly the outcome of the ideological paradigm of a political coalition (the neo-conservative coalition) that finally got the control of the separated institutions of government in the period 2001-2006 (the so called *unified government*). On the contrary, the institutional contest of *divided government* of the 1990s (1995-2000) fed a permanent contrast on strategies and approaches between a Democratic president and a Congress dominated by the Republicans³. After 2001, the predominance of the foreign policy paradigm based on anti-terrorism and unilateralism paved the way for a growing role of the Defence Department in foreign policy (in general) and in conflict management (in specific) thus marginalizing the rival State Department.

Also the EU strategy and approach to conflict management in Africa (in the period 1991-2008) was conditioned by internal factors. Certainly, because of the resources at its disposal, the EU strategy tended to privilege economic and civilian goals. At the same time, the approach to conflict management through the support of multilateral organization operating in the field was a sort of projection of "its own particular regional integration model" (Soderbaum 2007: 197). After all, "the EU's self image and identity as the 'natural' point of reference for regional initiatives is crucial for understanding the EU's role in the promotion of regionalism and interregional partnerships" (*Ibidem*), as the EU did with sub-regions such as West Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. However, if the EU tended to pursue multilateral approach to conflict management in Africa, that approach was interpreted in a relatively different way according to the institutional actor leading the

³ *Divided government* is the condition in which two different party majorities control the presidency and the Congress. On the contrary, *unified government* is the condition in which the president and the majority of Congress belong to the same political party. One should notice that the 2001-2002 period, the Senate had a Democratic majority by one seat, although that did not prevent the institution to support all the decisions taken by the Republican president after 11 September 2001. Technically, thus, the unified government includes the 2003-2006 period. In fact, in the mid term elections of 2006, both chambers of Congress went back to Democratic majorities.

dance. Conflict management initiatives organized within the framework of the first pillar favour a leading role of community institutions such as the Commission and, in the field of human rights, the Parliament too. On the contrary, conflict management initiatives organized within the framework of the second pillar favour a leading role of the EU member states governments (and of some of them in particular).

Certainly, the relevant role of the Commission in setting the EU Africa policy agenda and the relevance of development instruments for conflict management account for the focus of the EU on structural stability. However, single EU member states, and especially those (like France) with historical ties with African countries, continued to take unilateral initiatives for dealing with some of those conflicts, at least till mid 2000s (Charbonneau 2008). The growing financial and political costs of those unilateral initiatives introduced strong incentives for coordinating them within the EU. This is why France contributed to activate second pillar measures, leading ESDP operations such as the Chad and CAR missions in support of Darfur refugees. The EU approach continued to be multilateral, although France did not renounce to play its traditional hegemonic role in the area, through the CFSP and the ESDP measures. Moreover, among domestic factors, one has also to consider the role played in different historical moments by the public opinion in pressuring the US and the EU to be involved in crisis management operations (in Darfur in particular).

In sum, a different combination of international and domestic factors pressured the US to act in Africa as a “Westphalian” state primarily concerned with its own national security and the EU as a “post-Westphalian” power engaged in supporting regional integration projects which could promote the stability of the various crisis areas. Indeed, even though the strategies pursued by the US and the EU tended somehow to converge around mid-2000s (the US became more sensitive to the civilian side of anti-terrorism and the EU took important military responsibilities in the area⁴), their approaches continued to remain different. The paper is structured as follows: first, we elaborate on the reasons why Somalia and Sudan are relevant cases for analyzing the US and EU conflict management strategy and approach; second, we reconstruct US and EU conflict management interventions in the two countries; third, we discuss the implications on transatlantic relations of the peculiar features of the foreign policy making process in the US and the EU, deriving some indications for the “post-Bush” era.

The context: the crisis of Somalia and Sudan

⁴ After September 11, the EU launched three significant military operations in Africa: (1) in June 2003, Operation Artemis, within the ESDP framework, in the North Eastern Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); (2) in the Spring 2006, the EUFOR Operation, within the ESDP framework, in the Kinshasa area of DRC, in support of the UN mission MONUC; (3) in January 2008, a military operation, within the ESDP framework, in Eastern Chad and North Eastern part of Central African Republic, for protecting refugees from Darfur.

The roots of the conflict in Somalia can be traced back to the colonial times. British and Italian colonization of two parts of Somalia (respectively the North West and the South) ended in 1960 and left Somalia as a socially fragmented and politically instable country. The twenty years long dictatorship of Siad Barre, which started in 1969, brought temporary stability to the country, but it also activated a strong rivalry with neighbouring Ethiopia. Since the 1970s, the tension between Somalia and Ethiopia had global implications in the Cold War context, with the Soviet Union supporting Ethiopia and the US protecting Somalia. The end of Siad Barre's dictatorship brought Somalia back to instability: in 1991 the Northern part of the country, Somaliland, proclaimed itself independent. The international community intervened with the UN peacekeeping mission *Restore Hope*, which soon appeared unable to tame internal strife. In 2004 a transition government, backed by Ethiopia, was instituted in Somalia, but two years later the emerging Islamic Courts, with the support of Libya and Iran, imposed a strict religious regime on the country. In 2007, the Ethiopian government intervened to re-establish the transition government. It did succeed, but that success ended up in triggering another internal struggle and a new humanitarian crisis.

Also conflicts in Sudan were the effects of the colonial construction of a weak state. This weakness allowed the emergence of religious extremist factions with international connections. Since its independence from the English-Egyptian colonial administration (1956), the country has gone through a civil war between the North (African Arabic) and the South (Christian). The colonial legacy of economic discrimination of the periphery areas of the state set the basis for internal conflicts. The situation worsened when Libya intervened in the conflict in support of the project of a political union of Islamic states. Finally, in 2003 a new warring front emerged in the region of Darfur. The Khartoum government reacted by denying access to humanitarian operators and journalists in the region. In April 2004 a ceasefire agreement was signed, which allowed the entrance of the African Union (AU) troops (AMIS), with the task of monitoring and preserving the ceasefire. Nevertheless the parties involved repeatedly violated the ceasefire agreement. On 9 January 2005 an agreement between the North and the South of Sudan was finally reached, but it did not tackle the Darfur issue, where *Janjaweed* militia continued to exert violence on the civilian population.

During the period 1991-2008, both the US and the EU were involved in civilian and military conflict management operations in the two countries. Both were concerned with the instability of the area, given the possible implications of the conflicts in Somalia and Sudan for international terrorism. Indeed, the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001, in Madrid on 11 March 2004 and in London on 7 July 2005 made of terrorism a common concern (to

both shores of the Atlantic). However the US and the EU elaborated two different paradigms for explaining it and dealing with it. Regarding Africa, even though both of them recognized the need of conflict management operations in crisis situation, the US finalized its intervention to the priority-goal of neutralizing terrorist groups (operating in those crises or potentially emerging from them), while the EU pursued the more comprehensive goal of promoting structural stability in the region.

Moreover, the EU and the US pursued those different strategies with different methods or approaches. While the US alternated multilateral, bilateral and unilateral approaches, the EU preferred to support the action of regional organizations (and particularly the AU) engaged in bringing stability in the region, according to the philosophy of helping Africa to help itself. However, it needs to be said that France, operating outside of the EU frameworks, adopted regularly a unilateral approach for dealing with conflicts in African countries considered as its historical partners, approach which inevitably contrasted with EU aims (Meheler 2008). That notwithstanding, EU conflict management operations took place in the framework of multilateral organizations such as the UN. The EU was the major provider of funding for intergovernmental bodies such as the AU and other sub-regional African organizations. Certainly, also the US supported UN peacekeeping operations, but it felt free of carrying out unilateral actions or engaging in bilateral relations with single African states when considered to be more effective for countering terrorist groups. In sum, although both the EU and US conflict management interventions in Africa in the 1990s and 2000s lacked coherence and consistency, one might argue that while the EU followed an inter-regional approach for managing African conflicts (de Flers and Regelsberger 2005), the US preferred to build *ad hoc* relations with specific African countries in order to achieve the same goal (Patman, 2008).

US foreign policy towards Somalia

Africa has never had a key position in the US foreign policy. As Patman wrote (2008, 316), “despite historic ties with the continent, US policy toward Africa has in general been marked by indifference and neglect. Throughout the Cold War, Africa was treated as a pawn in the battle between the USA and the Soviet Union, as both sides attempted to limit the influence of the other”. This attitude changed with the end of the Cold War, also because “Africa has been increasingly racked by internal conflict, state failure, famine, poverty, and disease” (Patman, *ibidem*). This situation represented a fertile ground for the mobilization of terrorist groups and anti-American sentiments. Of course, after 11 September 2001, Africa became a crucial theatre for fighting terrorism (especially those parts of the continent closer to the middle-east or more permeable to

Islamic fundamentalism). In the case of Somalia, US policy may be divided in three phases in the post Cold War period.

The first phase includes the period 1991-1995. In 1991, the US placed Somalia in the list of countries hosting possible terrorist cells (Collins, 2007). At the same time, both George H. W. Bush (1989-1992) and Bill Clinton (1993-2000) were concerned with the humanitarian crisis hitting the country. Indeed, the Republican Presidency of George H. W. Bush promoted a UN humanitarian operation (UNITAF, replacing the former operation UNOSOM). The operation, known as *Restore Hope* (December 1992-May 1993), was an answer to a bipartisan resolution issued by Congress asking for an intervention in Somalia in order to stop the killings. According to Baum (2004), the reason why President George H. W. Bush decided to wait until the very end of his presidential mandate for engaging the US in such a large scale operation was the fear of a domestic backlash, in case of failure of the operation, during his campaign for the 1992 presidential election.

The incumbent president, though, lost the elections and the new Democratic President Bill Clinton inherited the leadership of the operation. Given the unsatisfactory outcome of that operation, and the still broad public and congressional support for a humanitarian mission in the country, President Clinton pressured the UN forces to tackle directly Aideed, the leader of a Somali faction involved in the conflict, and future president of the country. The UN action, though, did not succeed as expected, thus pushing the US to organize (in October 1993) a unilateral military raid in Mogadishu for capturing important members of Aideed's militia. This initiative was emblematic of the American selective approach to multilateralism and showed that, even under a Democratic presidency and a Democratic party controlled Congress (as it was in that period), the US did not refrain from unilateral intervention when considered necessary for reaching its goals. Such selective multilateralism, however, was not presented by President Clinton as a foreign policy paradigm, but rather as a pragmatic choice a super-power might take for meeting particularly insidious threats (McCormick, 2000).

However, this operation ended with a dramatic failure and a high number of American casualties. The failure, and specifically the CNN coverage of Aideed's men dragging a US death soldier in the streets of Mogadishu, raised strong public concern on the safety of US troops in Somalia (Von Hippel and Yannis, 1997). The backlash to the US humanitarian engagement in Somalia became known as a 'CNN effect' (Robinson, 1999). A sort of 'Mogadishu line' came to be defined in the public debate: beyond a threshold of risk, the US cannot intervene even for solving dramatic humanitarian crises. Indeed, parallel to the failure of the American involvement in the Somali crisis, with the Republican conquer of the majority of seats in both chambers of Congress in the mid-term elections of 1994, the Congress started promoting an isolationist view of the US

international role. For the new neo-conservative majority of Congress, the US should intervene abroad only when the national interest is at stake (and unilaterally if necessary). American soldiers, it was said, were not trained 'for protecting kids going to school', in Africa or in the Balkans or elsewhere (Widmaer, 2007). The result was that the US (and the UN) abandoned Somalia in 1995, leaving it in the same (if not worst) conditions which triggered their intervention in the first place. Consequently, the US focus on Somalia decreased significantly in the second phase (1996-2001).

The third phase concerns the 2001-2008 period. The attack to New York and Washington D.C. in 11 September 2001 changed radically the US foreign policy agenda. The US intervened again forcefully in Somalia in the framework of the War on Terror. In 2001, the executive power was in the hands of Republicans, thanks to the contrasted success of George W. Bush in the presidential elections of 2000, and the Congress remained largely in the hands of a Republican majority. The terrorist attacks resulted in the political and ideological strengthening of the Republican control of the US presidency and Congress. Indeed, in the mid-term elections of 2002, Republicans got a plain majority also in the Senate, thus achieving a full control of the governmental agenda. With those elections, the institutional and political conditions for implementing the National Security Strategy (NSS) made public by the president two months before (in September 2002) were finally in place. The NSS resolved the foreign policy ambiguities of the 1990s, ambiguities due to the contrast between a moderately multilateral president and an aggressively unilateral Congress. By then, the War on Terror became the strategy of US foreign policy, a strategy that might be pursued not only unilaterally (as the Republican Congress claimed since 1995) but also through pre-emptive (and not only preventive) interventions against countries considered to be (effective or potential) supporters of terrorist groups (Ikenberry 2002).

In this context, anti-terrorism became the top concern in driving US decisions also towards Somalia. In October 2001 the US led the shut down of Somalia's leading money-transfer company (*al Barakat*), due to its alleged role in laundering money for Al Qaeda. As Collins (2007, 402) comments, this decision "provided an early indication that the United States saw intervention in Somalia...within the purview of the War on Terror". At the same time changes in the power relations within Somalia occurred. The power of the Islamic Courts increased significantly during the 2000s. In 2006 US intelligence sources denounced the existence of a link between the Courts and Al Qaeda, which led President Bush to declare his concern with the strengthening of this Islamic fundamentalist movement in the country. Rather than establishing dialogue with the Courts, the Bush presidency opted for an aggressive policy towards the latter. In July of the same year the CIA agreed with factions of the various warlords to attack the Courts for capturing Islamic terrorists associated with them. This strategy, though, turned out to be a new failure and the US government

lost the control of the situation. The militias of the Islamic Courts defeated the warlords' militias and got the control of the entire Mogadishu's area. By the end of 2006, the Courts controlled almost all the Southern half of Somalia and started to advance towards Ethiopia. The Ethiopian army reacted with a counteroffensive against them, marching into Mogadishu and thus establishing a Transitional Federal Government, which received the US support. Indeed, the US based its conflict management strategy in the area on the bilateral cooperation with Ethiopia (Cohen, 2008), that finally left Somalia in January 2009. In sum, with the predominance of the neo-conservatives in the presidency and Congress (2001-2006), the US efforts to restore peace in Somalia became subordinated to its anti-terrorist strategy.

US foreign policy towards Sudan

Also in the case of Sudan, in 1991-2008, the key American concern was of neutralizing terrorist organizations. Even here, the conflict management approach was coherent with the anti-terrorism priority of US foreign policy. And even in this case, domestic factors, such as the partisan composition of Congress and the presidency, and the mobilization of public opinion, influenced the modalities of US intervention.

George H. W. Bush foreign policy towards Sudan mainly consisted in imposing financial sanctions on the Sudanese government following the coup d'état of 1989. President Clinton put Sudan in his conflict management and anti-terrorism agenda. As in the case of Somalia, however, Clinton foreign policy towards Sudan after 1995 appeared particularly contradictory, because of the contrasting pressures resulting from divided government. The outcome of those contrasting pressures between 1995-2000 was a policy of conflict management in Sudan which combined an blend of development assistance, hard conditionality and unilateral anti-terrorist measures (not always in a coherent way).

During Clinton's first term (1993-1996), USAID increased aid to Sudan by launching the *Greater Horn of Africa Initiative* (1994), aimed at intervening against crisis, instability and famine. In the second term of the Clinton administration (1997-2000), however, the Congress was able to impose stricter financial sanctions to Sudan. In 1997 President Clinton confirmed and strengthened the embargo established by George H. W. Bush after the coup d'état of 1989. In order to justify the sanctions, Clinton mentioned both anti-terrorist and conflict management reasons, stating that "the policies and actions of the government of Sudan, including continued support for international terrorism, ongoing efforts to destabilize neighbouring governments; the prevalence of human rights violations, including slavery and the denial of religious freedom, constitute extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the US" (Dagne, 2002, 18). The policy of sanctions on

the Sudanese government could thus appease different constituencies. It met the will of the Clinton presidency to make the US a promoter of human rights in the region and, at the same moment, it met the request of the Republican-dominated Congress of guaranteeing American national security *first*, making Sudan a spot where to combat terrorist groups “outside home”.

The centrality of anti-terrorism goals in the US approach to Sudan further increased in 1998, when two terrorist bombings took place against American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Reacting to these attacks, President Clinton initiated the unilateral *Operation Infinite Reach* (1998), which consisted in cruise missile strikes on a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan allegedly involved in the production of precursors to the nerve agent VX used for chemical weapons (Pillar, 2004). The cruise missile strike exemplified the formidable influence acquired by the the Republican Congress on foreign policy in a moment of personal weakness of the president⁵. Indeed, the political climate in Washington D.C. at the end of the 1990s was so favourable to the neo-conservative unilateral positions that Clinton had to downsize seriously his multilateral (although selective) views. The Republican Congress was able to set the public agenda and nationalism, unilateralism and hostility to the UN became the new parameters of US foreign policy (Dumbrell, 2002). The neo-conservative movement became so predominant, that President Clinton decided to sign the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court only at the end of his second and last mandate, aware that Congress would not have ratified it. In fact, not only the Congress did not ratify the Statute, but the new president George W. Bush withdrew presidential signature from the Statute one entered into the presidential office.

Thus, Clinton’s successor, President George W. Bush (2001-2008), further strengthened the predominance of the neo-conservative paradigm. In particular after September 11, he stressed the anti-terrorist perspective with which to look also to Sudan’s conflicts. Economic aid had to become coherent with the anti-terrorism strategy. An analysis of aid allocation during the George W. Bush presidencies (2001-2008) shows, in fact, how US development assistance was directed especially towards sensitive regions for terrorist cells in sub-Saharan Africa (Olsen, 2008). Both the State Department and USAID stated that after September 11 development assistance “must be fully aligned with US foreign policy” (State department and USAID, 2003: 4). This is why in Sudan the US, from 2001 to 2003, increased its aid allocation to the country by 148%. The US anti-terrorist strategy implied also an active involvement in diplomatic operations in Sudan. At the beginning of his second mandate (2005-2008), George W. Bush’s State Department intervened effectively as mediator in the 2005 *Naivasha Agreement* between the Islamist Arab Sudanese government, on the one hand, and the Christian/animist southern rebels of the Sudanese People’s Liberation

⁵ Indeed, especially after his re-election in 1996, Bill Clinton was object of a systematic attack from neo-conservatives’ quarters. Finally he was submitted to the *impeachment* procedure, which failed only for few votes in the Senate in 1999.

Movement/Army (SPLM/A), on the other hand. However, the Sudanese government perceived the US as a non-neutral actor in the conflict, and more precisely as a supporter of the anti-Islamic SPLM/A (Stevenson, 2007).

That said, the US supported also multilateral initiatives, such as, in the same year, the NATO/AU mission to Sudan. Two years later, the US imposed sanctions at government-run companies involved in the Sudanese oil industry and at individuals suspected of being involved in the Darfur violence. At the same time, public opinion's pressure for halting the civil war and genocide in Darfur became so vociferous that something needed to be done (The Associated Press, 2007). Indeed, given the high media exposure of the genocide taking place in Darfur, American public opinion called for a military intervention in the region. A survey by the Pew Research Center (2007) found that in 2006 a majority of the respondents (53%) was in favor of US military intervention in Darfur to end the ethnic genocide, although the preference was for a US intervention as part of a multinational force. However, the failure of the invasion of Iraq contributed to feed a popular reaction against the pre-eminently military interpretation of the War on Terror. Indeed, the mid-term elections of 2006 brought a new Democratic majority in both chambers of Congress.

As a result, the George W. Bush presidency had to re-calibrate the US foreign policy strategy, downsizing the military side and strengthening the civilian side of the War on Terror. Not by chance, after those elections, the champion of the military interpretation of the War on Terror, the secretary of the Defence Department Donald Rumsfeld, was fired, substituted with the member of a group of critics of the Pentagon's policy, Robert Gates. Thus, these external and domestic factors pressured the president and his advisers to pursue a more comprehensive strategy for combating terrorism. On 6 February 2007, Bush announced the creation of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) charged of giving substance to this policy in the African continent. According to the Commander of AFRICOM, General Ward, the decision of the US government to establish that military organization was aimed to prevent a spill-over of African conflicts to the sensitive middle-east area, thus creating the *humus* for the training of terrorist groups. However, this time, peace-keeping operations had to be supported also by measures for encouraging African military operations, for providing technical training to African soldiers and officials involved in anti-terrorism fight and for implementing civilian means such as the economic support of deprived communities and areas and the civic education of local leaders. As General Ward stated, "peace and stability on the continent impacts not only Africans, but the interests of the U.S. and international community as well" (Warda, 2007). Thus according to Olsen (2009: 9), "AFRICOM was born out of a number of security lessons one of which is that military force may not be the best instrument in security policy whereas 'soft power capacities' aimed at preventing conflict may in many any

instances be better”. In sum, as General Ward again argued, “a key underpinning for a more secure Africa is to encourage all segments of the population to reject terrorism as a political instrument” (AFRICOM, 2007). In particular, the Darfur crisis was one of the targets of AFRICOM’s conflict management operations. In sum, this more comprehensive approach to Sudan emerged from the negative US experience in Iraq, but also from a change in the power relations between domestic political forces. The new approach was thus confirmed by the new president, the Democrat Barack H. Obama (2009-), when he appointed a new Special Envoy of AFRICOM on 19 March 2009.

EU foreign policy towards Somalia

Contrary to the US, the Europeans have had important connections with Africa, for historical, geographical, economic and political reasons. Historically (Soderbaum 2007: 196-197), “the EC/EU-ACP⁶ partnership has emphasized humanitarian issues and a particular trade-aid relationship with former colonies”, although this relationship has been gradually redefined in terms of “a partnership among equals...with a stronger focus on human rights, governance, democracy and the rule of law”. Certainly, the EU/Africa relationship needs to be seen in a more critical way. As several studies argued (Farrell 2006: 22-3), through its interregional approach, “the EU has established its channels to convey values, priorities and even special interests”. Thus, rhetoric not always meets reality. Nevertheless, from 1991 to 2008, the EU (a pat from its member states) pursued a quite persistent strategy towards Africa, a strategy finalized to stabilize the more critical areas of the continent through the promotion of multilateral agreements. Thus, the EU intervened in the areas through the support of regional multilateral organizations rather than through its unilateral action. Structural stability was and continues to be an inevitable aim of the EU Africa policy, because African instability would have dramatic consequences on Europe (in the form, for instance, of inordinate flux of immigrants to European cities). Thus, even after the terrorist attacks that hit London and Madrid, EU policy towards Africa continued to look at the larger picture of the economic and social problems of the continent (rather than focus only on the issue of terrorism).

This is why the EU policy towards Somalia differed significantly from the American one. Not only it did not focus on anti-terrorism policy, but it was also carried out in coordination with the UN and the AU (and not in isolation). The EU implemented conflict management activities in Somalia even before the CFSP was established. In 1992, when the Maastricht Treaty was signed but not yet enforced, the EC already used development funds for organizing security operations in Somalia (Lister, 1997). Certainly, before and after the Maastricht Treaty, conflict management

⁶ ACP indicates a configuration of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries with historical links with European countries (generally of a colonial and neo-colonial nature). With these countries the EC and then the EU has set up a special partnership.

operations in Somalia were pursued also by individual member states (operating outside the EU frameworks). For example, in 1992, the military and financial support to UN peacekeeping operations (UNOSOM) came primarily from ex-colonial European countries: Italy was the most active EU member state in the UNOSOM and UNITAF both in terms of financial and troops support (Von Hippel and Yannis, 1997) and the UK provided troops for the US led operations in Somalia (Eliassen, 1998). Following these community initiatives and the involvement of single member states in the country, in 1993 the Commission appointed a Special Envoy for Somalia and started to elaborate a strategy of crisis management based on two tracks: 1) rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance; 2) promotion of a decentralized government (Von Hippel and Yannis, 1997). However, it was in 1996 that the EU tried to give coherence to its action in the country (and in the African continent). That year, the Commission made public a Communication on the “EU and the Issue of Conflicts in Africa”, which introduced the concept of structural stability as the strategic horizon for all EU operations. As Krause (2003) argued, this Communication, followed by the Communication on “Conflict Prevention” (European Commission 2001), contributed also to make African conflicts a priority of the CFSP agenda.

European involvement in Somalia has increased during the 2000s, when the EU became the key supporter of multilateral efforts of peace-keeping in the country. The EU (following the initiative of Italy, Sweden and the UK, and backed by Norway) actively supported the works of the Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD) of East African governments which was involved in conflict management in the country. The EU helped IGAD to organize the Nairobi Conference in 2002 aimed to promoting an agreement between the three frontline states (Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti) (Raffaelli, 2007). In 2003 the EU provided also support to UN efforts for human rights protection by enforcing UN sponsored financial sanctions to Somalia (EC Regulation 147/2003 of 27 January). In the same year the European Security Strategy (ESS), made public by the High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana in 2003, provided the ideological framework for supporting the EU development-based and inter-regional approach in the area.

In 2004 the EU endorsed the request of financial support for peacekeeping operations led by the AU and other regional organizations, making however the support for the AU conditional on progress in the diplomatic construction of long term solutions to the crisis. It was, again, a peace-keeping initiative based on the use of the European Development Fund for supporting multilateral organizations. The instrument built by the EU to support AU operations was the so-called *African Peace Facility*. The Commission played a key role in the establishment and implementation of the *Facility*, by persuading the Council to finance it with the European Development Fund rather than with CFSP funds. In so doing, the Commission was able to sponsor a development-based approach

to the peace process in the country (Sicurelli, 2008). In 2006, the EU confirmed its support for a macro-regional solution of the Somali case, by drafting a regional strategy for the Horn of Africa, finalized to promote stability through economic development and democratic assistance.

In sum, till 2008, EU foreign policy to Somalia was primarily based on first pillar instruments and aimed to support multilateral organizations involved in peacekeeping on the ground. The EU did not activate any ESDP operation for managing the Somali crisis. The only ESDP operation carried out in the area, in response to a UN request, was a naval operation on the Somali coasts (2009) led by French forces (NAVFOR), in cooperation with the AU, aimed at deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery against cargos of the World Food Program. This military operation confirmed the EU preference for a conflict management approach to Somalia based on inter-regional cooperation, even when it activated military instruments.

EU foreign policy towards Sudan

Also in Sudan, like in Somalia, the EU pursued a strategy of structural stability based on a multilateral approach to crisis management. In this case, however, the EU used a larger variety of means for managing the conflict, including ESDP operations in Darfur and in neighbouring countries. Why did the EU use in Sudan also second pillar instruments (and not only first pillar ones as in Somalia)? For answering, it is necessary to investigate the interaction between the EU and some of its member states. At this regard, of particular importance was the role of France. France, in fact, due to its historical relations with the area, pursued its own initiatives, even if they were not congruent with those of the EU. France wanted to preserve its special relationship with Africa (in this case, with the Central Africa Republic and Chad), with its inevitable economic and cultural advantages. However, unilateralism had its costs, in terms of budget and legitimacy. Thus, France had an interest in coordinating its Africa policy with the EU. However, for doing that, it preferred to promote this coordination in the framework of the second pillar, where the single member states governments have more influence than community institutions on the definition and implementation of the policy.

Certainly, the EC had imposed sanctions on Sudan even before the CFSP was established. As Lister (1997) argued, already in 1990 the EC refused to recognize the government of Sudan because of its low human rights records, although it continued to provide aid to the country. However, in 1994, the EU started to activate also second pillar instruments. On the basis of a CFSP common position, the EU joined the UN arms embargo to Sudan and suspended aid to the country. Moreover in 1996 the Parliament, which had only advisory powers on ESDP but considerable

powers on human rights matters, pushed for a very active human rights policy towards Sudan (King, 1999). In 2002 the Commission deployed the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (an immediate action-fund established in 2001) for landmine clearing in the Nuba mountains of Sudan.

In 2004, the Council of the EU, operating within the second pillar framework, sent military observers to Darfur and in 2005 it established a civilian and military ESDP operation in support of AU peacekeeping operations in the area. This operation was led by UK, Austria, Finland, Germany and Portugal. Because of the divisions emerged between the EU member states on the Iraq war of two years before (2003), the Darfur operation was a relevant test for showing the persistence of an internal solidarity on security matters between the main EU member states. Certainly, a group of member states initially contrasted the ESDP operation in Darfur, favouring on the contrary a NATO initiative (Casellez, 2007). Nevertheless, under the leadership of the UK and Germany, it was possible to draft a common position on the ESDP operation. Moreover, in 2008, in response to a request of the French government (and the new president of the republic, Nicolas Sarkozy), the EU took over the French military operations in Chad and Central Africa Republic, not only for stabilizing the area but also for providing more coherence to the ESDP mission in Darfur. Sarkozy's request showed the will of the new president to bring French foreign policy within the EU framework, since the unilateral intervention in those countries in 2006 resulted quite "expensive for France and highly controversial" (Mehler 2008: 32).

Besides the proactive role of a number of member states, the broad support expressed by public opinion for an intervention constituted a relevant pressure for mobilizing community institutions. According to the 2007 Transatlantic Trends Survey, Europeans supported the use of military intervention in Darfur more than in any other humanitarian crises considered by the survey (Balkans, Afghanistan, Lebanon). More precisely, 79% of the respondents were in favour of utilizing military troops for humanitarian assistance in Darfur. Such a broad public concern on the Darfur conflict, coupled with the interest of a number of member states in the area, explains why the EU member states agreed on implementing ESDP operations in Darfur and in the neighbouring countries.

Finally, like the US, also the EU raised the amount of development assistance to Sudan after 2001. However, as opposed to the US, this increment was not justified in terms of anti-terrorism policy but in terms of development's promotion (Olsen, 2008). Indeed, the economic support of Sudan was coherent with the European Security Strategy of helping to rebuild failing states (which were considered the main dangers to international stability). Moreover, as in the case of Somalia, also in Sudan the EU intervened through a privileged relation with the AU. The *African Peace Facility* in Darfur was the expression of this inter-regional approach to peace-keeping.

Transatlantic relations and foreign policy

Domestic factors, besides international factors, inevitably affect the foreign policy of democratic polities. As opposed to authoritarian regimes, the foreign policy making process in democratic regimes is necessarily open, although not always transparent (Hill, 2003). Party leaders, opinion makers, representatives of interest groups, members of religious organizations and civic protesters discuss the policy options in the public arena. However, within democracies, the way the foreign policy making process is structured varies according to the institutional nature of the governmental system. In parliamentary government, as the one which characterizes the large majority of European nation states (now EU member states), the foreign policy making process is significantly centralized within the Cabinet and, in the latter, it is generally controlled by the prime minister and few other ministers (as the foreign affairs, defence, finance or trade ministers). In particular in competitive/majoritarian parliamentary government (as Spain or the United Kingdom)⁷, the parliament plays a very limited role in the foreign policy making process (it enjoys information on the issues but not participation in the decision-making process for dealing with those issues). This is even truer in competitive semi-presidential government, as France of the Fifth Republic, where foreign policy is considered a *domain réservée* of the president of the republic, certainly shared with the prime minister and the foreign minister⁸. The legislature does not play any significant role in defining the priorities of national foreign policy or in selecting the tools for achieving them. In these competitive systems, the legislature is important because it constitutes the arena for the action of the opposition, for making public the latter's criticism of (or cooperation with) the government.

⁷ From a comparative perspective, a "competitive/majoritarian" parliamentary government is characterized by the possibility of alternation in government between two opposing political poles or parties. Indeed, a majoritarian parliamentary government is generally based on a two-party system and a first-past-the-post electoral formula (plurality-uninominal), such as the UK. At the same time, a competitive parliamentary government is generally based on a bi-polar party system and a constrained proportional-representation formula, such as Spain. The net result is the same: both types of parliamentary government function through the reasonable expectation of alternation in government of different political options. On the contrary, consensual parliamentary governments, as in Belgium, do incentive the logic of aggregation in the Cabinet of all the main parties (large coalition government), in contrast to the logic of alternation between alternative poles or parties. However, consensual parliamentary governments are proper of the medium-small countries of Europe, which have a limited international exposure (as single states) (Fabbrini 2007).

⁸ This is true when the president of the republic is also the leader of the political majority of the legislature. In this case, the prime minister is a sort of chief of staff of the president (as shown by the relation between Francois Fillon and Nicolas Sarkozy). However, the relationship between the two might be more controversial when they are the expression of different political majorities (as it happens in the condition of *cohabitation*). In this case, the prime minister is a rival and not a subordinated partner of the president of the republic, as shown by the thorn relation between the conservative President Jacques Chirac and the socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin in the period 1997-2002.

The institutional nature of the foreign policy making process in a government based on separation of powers such as the US is completely different⁹ (Cox and Stokes, 2008). Here, as opposed to parliamentary governments, the legislature (Congress) and the executive (president) are separated and not fused. Each governmental institution (House of Representatives, Senate and the president) has a distinct source of legitimacy, can operate without the support of the other institutions, and their members stay in office according to different time schedules. Certainly, with the dramatic rise of the international power of the country after the Second World War, the president gained a pre-eminent role, *vis-à-vis* the Congress, in the management of foreign policy. Presidential pre-eminence has thus required a transformation of the presidency, from a personal to an institutional office. Indeed, as far as foreign policy is concerned, a permanent competition has become institutionalized within the executive branch, *i. e.* between the personal advisers of the president and the departmental offices or between the state and defence departments. Since the 1930s, the US, without formally amending the constitution, has instituted a sort of two pillars structure, one for regulating the decision-making process in domestic policy and one for regulating the decision-making process in foreign policy. In the “first” pillar, Congress and the president have an equivalent status, whereas in the “second” pillar it is the president who has the pre-eminence. However different are these decision-making regimes, even in foreign policy the US Congress is not the British House of Commons. Although pre-eminent, the president has to deal with the foreign relations committees of the two chambers as he deals with external foreign powers. In particular the Senate has a crucial power, for the prerogatives that the constitution provides to it because of its being the chamber representing the states’ interests of the union. And moreover, divisions may emerge within the same presidency.

This decentralized decision-making process is open to the influence of a plurality of actors. In the US, contrary to parliamentary governments, those actors have many venues for affecting decision-making process. They affect it through the various committees engaged with foreign issues in the House of Representatives and the Senate, or through the various agencies and departments of the presidency dealing with international questions, or through the various security groups and advisers that operate around the president. Of course, such decentralization is going to make the foreign policy making process even more cumbersome when different political majorities control the various governmental institutions and pursue different ideological agenda. In the US Africa policy here discussed, the party composition of the governmental institutions has emerged as a

⁹ We prefer to talk of “separation of power government” or better “separated government” in order to avoid identifying US government system with “presidentialism”. Indeed, it is arguable that the US has a presidential government, but it is not a presidential democracy (Fabbrini 2008). Indeed, its democracy belongs to the genus of the ‘compound model’ (to which also the EU, and Switzerland, belong, Fabbrini 2007).

significant “intervening variable” for understanding policy outcomes. Although anti-terrorism became the top concern of US decision-makers, that strategy was pursued with different approaches in the period of divided government (1995-2000) and in the period of unified government (2001-2006): it was a selective multilateral approach in the former period and a unilateral approach in the latter period. Moreover, the War on Terror increased the militarization of US foreign policy, especially in the period 2001-2006, with the inevitable strengthening of the Pentagon vis-à-vis the State Department within the presidential office. Thus, in order to understand US foreign policy, one has to locate the US decision-making process in the context of a government structured on multiple separations of powers, where the president plays a pre-eminent but not at all a predominant role.

The institutional features of the foreign policy making structure are influential also in the case of the EU. Certainly, the capabilities of the EU affect its international role. The EU is not a state, it has limited military resources, it has an economic, more than political, power. Moreover, its nature of union of states has created powerful incentives for the EU to project its multilateral experience internationally. However, changing combinations of internal factors may pressure the EU to pursue in different ways its multilateral approach. Indeed, in our research, the pillar structure emerged as an important intervening variable for understanding the features of the EU Africa policy. Certainly, the pillar structure introduced by the Maastricht Treaty has not been as rigid as expected (Stetter 2007). Many foreign policy issues cut across the three pillars, calling for coordination of trade and development tools (included the first pillar) with second pillar civilian and military tools and, more and more, with the judicial instruments of the third pillar.

That said, however, the difference between the decision-making regimes of the first and second pillars affected the role of the EU in conflict management operations in Africa. As long as those operations were carried out within the first pillar framework, the Commission was the relevant actor in dealing with African conflicts, using the development funds for promoting structural stability in the area concerned through agreements with local regional organizations (the AU in particular). Nevertheless, since 1993, the EU has also intervened in the area through second pillar instruments, such as CFSP economic sanctions and ESDP operations, in order to tackle African conflicts. Certainly, structural stability continued to be the overarching goal for both first and second pillar operations, also because it matched the interests of all the EU actors in preventing massive immigration flows of African citizens to Europe. The EU implemented an ESDP operation in Darfur and another one in the neighbouring countries (Central Africa Republic and Chad), whereas it did not deploy any CFSP/ESDP operations in Somalia. The difference (between the instruments utilized by the EU in the two countries) might be explained with the role of single member states, in particular of France. France had traditional relations with the Central Africa

Republic and Chad. Those relations brought France to take unilateral initiatives in the region when the crisis exploded, especially in the Darfur area. The same European public opinion was very active in asking for a humanitarian intervention in Darfur. However, when France decided to locate its foreign policy within the EU, inevitably it did so *via* the intergovernmental procedure of the second pillar. This might explain the decision of the EU to opt for ESDP operations for supporting its crisis management initiatives in Darfur and Sudan, thus adding political and military components to the otherwise economic/civilian core of the strategy of structural stability

Thus, the foreign policy making process of the EU is very different from that of its member states. Like the US, also the EU is a union of asymmetrical states which has necessarily institutionalized a (even more complex) compound model of democracy (Fabbrini 2007). Decision-making power in foreign issues is diffused among a plurality of institutions, as the Council, the Commission, the Parliament and the member states institutions, according to formalized pillar logic. Each institution, in turn, has to aggregate the interests and preferences of different actors. Even the most inter-governmental institution of the second pillar, as the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), has to aggregate the policy preferences of 27 member states governments. With a limited military power and with significant budget constraints, the EU has thus tended to influence international relations mainly through civilian resources. In post Cold War Africa, the EU pursued a strategy of promoting stability through a multilateral approach. Inter-regionalism was the all-mark of the European strategy in the African continent from 1991 to 2008. As opposed to the neo-conservative US engaged in bilateral relations with African partners or unilateral interventions, for the period in question the EU was the major supporter of the initiatives of multilateral international institutions such as the UN and the AU.

Conclusion

For a more comprehensive understanding of the difference in US and EU conflict management strategies and approach in Somalia and Sudan in the period 1991-2008, one needs also to consider the policy-making structures of those two polities (Fabbrini and Sicurelli 2008) as well as their positions in the international system. Thus, it is plausible to expect a significant change in US foreign policy with the arrival of Barack H. Obama at the presidency and the conquest of the majority of Congress by the Democrats (Fabbrini and Sicurelli 2009). Or at least it is plausible to assume that the US will no longer behave as a solitary “Westphalian” power, as it did during the neo-conservative regime. Nevertheless, the magnitude of such a change will be constrained, not only by the legacy of the previous foreign policy strategy and approach, but also by the power the neo-conservatives still hold within the separated institutions of the US governmental system. In

particular in the Senate, the neo-conservatives have the possibility to stop any radical foreign policy change through the use of, or the threat thereof, the *filibustering*.

The 'al-Bashir affair' is an example of the difficulty to introduce a significant discontinuity in the US approach to international organizations. In March 2009 the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan on the basis of a mandate received by the UN Security Council. The new US ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, argued forcefully that the US "supports the ICC's actions to hold accountable those responsible for the heinous crimes in Darfur" (Reynolds, 2009), breaking with the anti-UN and anti-ICC rhetoric of the former ambassador of the US at the UN, John Bolton. However, it will be unlikely that the US will finally ratify the ICC Treaty, thus joining the organization, both for procedural and juridical reasons. From a procedural point of view, because the Democrats do not have the necessary 60 seats majority in the Senate for neutralizing the inevitable *filibustering* the Republican minority would threaten to activate against the ratification of the ICC Treaty (indeed, the Democrats are 58, the Republicans 41, with one senatorial seat, in Minnesota, still in dispute, without considering that among Democrats there are few senators with moderate views on the ICC). From a juridical point of view, because of the opinion expressed in several Supreme Court sentences that international treaties cannot infringe upon the status of the constitution as the supreme law of the land (Wedgwood, 1999). Indeed, on these basis, in 2004 Senator Obama argued that "the United States should cooperate with ICC investigations in a way that reflects American sovereignty and promotes our national security interests" (Citizens for Global Solution, 2004), thus confirming this position in a 2007 declaration (Citizens for Global Solution, 2007). Nevertheless, the new Democratic president and Democratic Congress seem engaged in both defining a new foreign policy strategy (scaling thus down the War on Terror) and elaborating a new multilateral approach (based on the idea of a renewed US leadership in multilateral organization).

At the same time, the EU will continue to behave as a "Post-Westphalian" power because of its institutional nature and constitutive ideology. Certainly, the probable approval by the Irish voters of the Lisbon Treaty in the fall 2009 will create the conditions for a more pro-active role of the EU in the international relations. With the formal supersession of the pillar structure, with a stable president of the Council and a (*de facto*) minister of foreign affairs, who will become also vice-president of the Commission, the EU will have the possibility of playing more coherently the international game. However, the rationalization of the decision-making process, as promoted by the Lisbon Treaty, will not alter the compound nature of the EU. Indeed, even without the previous pillar structure, a differentiated decision-making regime will continue to regulate common market policies and foreign and securities policies. In the EU, the decision-making process will continue to

involve a plurality of separated institutions and to generate regular incentives for those institutions to compete with each other. This is why, in order to understand both US and EU foreign policies, it is important to consider not only the extent and the nature of their international role, but also the institutional complexity of, and the changing political equilibrium in, their decision-making regimes. From this theoretical perspective, then transatlantic relations will always be open to changes, due to the fluidity of political relations which structure the US and EU foreign policy making process (Fabbrini 2004). Certainly, the system of international relations will foster continuity in the behaviour of the US and EU, given the former will continue to be a global/military power and the latter a regional/economic one. However, this pressure for continuity will have to face regular pressures for change and discontinuity coming from the internal structure of the two polities. The US and EU relations will continue to combine elements of both continuity and discontinuity. In the Africa policy case, discontinuity might mean a convergence of US and EU strategies and approach in the near future.

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