Building of a Regional Parliamentary Assembly in an International Context: The Creation and Launching of the Pan-African Parliament[1]

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ABSTRACT

Despite its very brief existence, the Pan-African Parliament has become one of the key institutions of African integration. Although it possesses only very limited formal attributions, it has the potential for influencing and scrutinizing other AU institutions, such as the African Commission, and it can contribute to legitimizing the whole process of political integration across the continent. In this article, I question the place of the Pan-African Parliament in the EU-Africa Partnership. More specifically, I argue that, if external relations are usually a policy area in which parliamentary institutions are marginalised, the establishment of regular interactions between Europe and Africa is propitious to the strengthening of the Pan-African Parliament's position.

Keywords: African Union; European Parliament; European Union; integration; international cooperation; interregional relations; parliament; regionalisation.

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[1] This paper was prepared for presentation at the 3rd GARNET Annual Conference "Mapping Integration and Regionalism in a Global World", Bordeaux, 17-19 September 2008. The author would like to thank Jean-Christophe Hoste, Helena Lindholm Schulz, Milissao Nuvunga and Fredrik Söderbaum for their helpful comments on earlier versions.

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1. Introduction

The media coverage of the last EU-Africa Summit, which took place in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007, was dominated by the controversies surrounding the participation of the President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe and the subsequent boycott of the Summit by the British and Czech Prime Ministers, Gordon Brown and Mirek Topolanek respectively. The meeting of delegations from the European Parliament and Pan-African Parliament on the margins of this second interregional summit of the Heads of State and Government went almost unnoticed [3]. Each institution was nevertheless represented by a delegation of 25 members headed by its respective President, Gertrude Mongella for the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and Hans-Gert Pöttering for the European Parliament (EP). For the first time, the two Presidents were granted an observatory status which allowed them to sit at the Summit table. The delegations also released a "Joint EP-PAP statement on the Joint EU-Africa Strategy to be adopted by the EU and African Heads of State and Government"; this document provided the Parliamentarians with an opportunity to plead for a greater parliamentary involvement in the cooperation between the EU and Africa[4]. Although the overall influence of the Parliaments on the EU-Africa Partnership remained meagre, the presence in the Portuguese capital of African Parliamentarians manifested the emergence of the PAP as a significant actor of regional integration in Africa and as a credible interlocutor for the Europeans.

Considering its initial weakness, the recognition of the PAP as a (minor) international actor may appear as a paradox. The PAP is a young institution, whose creation is linked to the recent regeneration of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now renamed the African Union (AU). Its members are not (yet) directly elected but selected by the national parliaments and it has no

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[3] Neither the BBC Webpage nor *Le Monde* gave reports of this aspect of the Summit.

[4] The Lisbon Summit is the latest major act of the European Union-Africa Dialogue. The first EU-Africa summit organised in Cairo in 2000 gathered the then 15 EU member states together with all African states representatives. It was the first step in the establishment a regular EU-Africa Dialogue. However, the process was hampered by the internal political situation in Zimbabwe and the following summit foreseen in Lisbon in 2003 was postponed *sine die*. It was replaced by ministerial troikas, in association with the two Commissions which contributed to the preparation of the agenda and the concrete work programme as from 2004. In December 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the EU adopted a new Strategy for Africa, with the title "The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership". This process ultimately resulted in the adoption at the 2007 Lisbon Summit of a document entitled "The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. A Joint Africa-EU Strategy", which identifies priorities in the areas of peace and security, democratic governance and human rights, trade and regional integration and other key development issues.

genuine legislative power. Actually, many commentators received the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity into an African Union with great scepticism. Despite its long history, African regionalism is perceived as having a rather disappointing record: this prompted Percy S. Mistry to assert previously that "seen from an objective, impartial perspective, Africa's commitment to integration appears to have been visceral rather than rational, more rhetorical than real"[5]; he further wrote: "If there is a major lesson to be learnt from Africa's experience with economic integration, it is that treaties and regional institutions do not necessarily result in integration"[6]. More recently, Daniel Bach stressed the "risk that AU institution-building processes will result in the establishment of organs devoid of much power and substance" [7]. Following this line of reasoning, the establishment of the AU and PAP simply appears as an attempt to "re-brand an old product".

The fact that international relations are not the "natural" background against which parliaments can grow is another reason to analyse the emergence of the PAP as a paradox. With foreign policy as the realm of the executive in charge of formulating and defending the national interest on the world stage, parliaments are usually considered as the "losers" of international relations [8]. Besides, the dynamic of international bargaining often involves the passing of intergovernmental agreements that the parliaments find difficult to break afterwards. This process is particularly marked in the case of regional integrations when competencies are pooled and the parliaments lose the possibility to control the decision-making process. This is the mechanism behind the well-known but much disputed "democratic deficit" of the EU [9]. In what follows, I will argue that, whereas the progressive empowerment of the EP – the response to the democratic deficit of the EU – resulted from the evolution of internal balance of power, the PAP seems to benefit from external influences both through the existence of the EP as a template and through the institutionalisation of interregional relations between the EU and the AU. The first years of existence of the PAP must therefore be analysed in the light of the specific pattern of African

[5] Percy S. Mistry, "Africa's record of regional co-operation and integration", *African Affairs* 99, 2000, p. 554.

[6] Mistry, "Africa's record of regional co-operation and integration", p. 561.

[7] Daniel Bach, "The EU's 'strategic partnership' with the AU: Match or Misnomer?", in John Akokpari, Tim Murithi and Angela Ndinga-Muvumba (eds.), *Building an African Union for the 21st Century* (Boulder, Colorado : Lynne Rienner, 2006).

[8] Samy Cohen, "Décision, pouvoir et rationalité dans l'analyse de la politique étrangère", in Marie-Claude Smouts (ed.), *Les nouvelles relations internationales. Pratiques et théories* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1998).

[9] Olivier Rozenberg and Yves Surel (eds.), "Parlementarismes et construction européenne", *Politique européenne* 9, 2003.

regionalism and the rise of interregional cooperation as illustrated by the Europe-Africa Summit of December 2007.

The rest of the paper is organised around six sections. In the next section, I will highlight the interest of the PAP for the study of regional institution building. In the third section, I will give some background information on the transformation of the OAU into an AU, focusing specifically on the introduction of a parliamentary body. In the fourth section, I will analyse the first steps of the PAP. The fifth section will discuss the implications of the international presence of the PAP. In the final section, I will discuss the practical and theoretical implications of the emergence of the PAP for our understanding of regionalisation in Africa.

2. Why study the PAP?

The PAP, one of the sole prominent new institutions created by the AU founding treaties, has received nearly no attention from the academic community. One can say without exaggeration that there is even a general ignorance of the very existence of African regional parliaments[10]. For example, the absence of publicity and literature on these institutions led Andrés Malamud and Luís de Sousa to state straightforwardly that regional parliaments "developed exclusively in two world areas, namely Europe and Latin America" [11]. In one of the few legal articles on the AU, the PAP is hardly mentioned [12]; the same is true with *Uniting Africa. Building Regional Peace and Security Systems* by David D. Francis [13]. As for the volumes on the AU by Timothy Murithi [14] and by Samuel M. Markinda and F. Wafula Okumu [15], they make only short and general comments about this body.

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[10] I think here in particular of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) of the East African Community, the ECOWAS Parliament, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the Comité interparlementaire of the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA), and the Commission interparlementaire of the Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC).

[11] Andrés Malamud and Luís de Sousa, "Regional parliaments in Europe and Latin America: between emporwerment and irrelevance", 5th Pan-European International Relations Conference, The Hague, September 2004, p. 2.

[12] Corinne A. Packer and Donald Rukare, "The New African Union and its Constitutive Act", *The American Journal of International Law* 96: 2, 2002, pp. 365-379.

[13] David J. Francis, *Uniting Africa. Building Regional Peace and Security Systems* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[14] Timothy Murithi, *The African Union: Pan-Africanism, Peace-building and Development* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

[15] Samuel M. Makinda and F. Wafula Okumu, *The African Union: Challenges of Globalization, Security and Governance* (London: Routledge, 2008).

However, the lack of research is not a sufficient reason in itself to focus on the PAP. In fact, although (as we shall see later) the PAP remains a very weak institution, its existence has important implications for regional cooperation in Africa, because it is the most evident manifestation of the changing nature of the Pan-African project. From the very beginning, the OAU's transformation into the African Union was closely linked to the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament, which seems to have reflected the determination to make the new AU a more relevant organisation. As one of the few genuinely new organs of the AU, the PAP could indeed provide the institutional overhaul that has taken place in continental politics with more concrete meaning. More specifically, there are at least four reasons why the creation of the PAP is an important development for the continent.

The establishment of a parliamentary institution, such as the PAP, may first reflect a shift from a purely inter-governmental logic to a supranational one. Historically, the primary *raison d'être* of the OAU was precisely to defend political sovereignty and territorial integrity. As noted by Murithi: "The OUA succeeded in its primary mission in liberating the continent from the yoke of colonialism when on 27 April 1994, the system of internal colonialism was dismantled in South Africa"[16]. In addition, the OUA provided the political platform for African leaders to dialogue and to conduct inter-African diplomacy. The lack of any kind of parliamentary involvement within the working structure of the old OAU was certainly no accident: it simply reflected the strictly intergovernmental nature of this organisation. On the contrary, the creation of the PAP involves the possibility (but not the necessity) of supranationalism.

The establishment of the PAP also suggests that the leaders of the continent decided to add a political dimension to the dominant economic dimension of regional co-operation in Africa since the 1970s [17]. The Constitutive Act of the AU conveys "the assertion of new political ambitions"[18], in particular "to accelerate rapid political and socio-economic integration of the Continent", "to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent" and "to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance" (art. 3 of the

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[16] Murithi, *The African Union*, p. 3.
[17] Informal interview with Dr Eddy Maloka, senior advisor "Governance, Public Administration, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development", African Union and NEPAD, Oslo, 29 January 2008.
[18] Daniel Bach, "Africa", in Marry Farrell, Luk Van Langenhove and Bjorn Hettne (ed.), *The Global Politics of Regionalism* (Pluto Press, 2005).

Constitutive Act). The shift from the policy of non-interference to a policy of non-indifference that the latter objective exemplifies is here particularly significant. The Constitutive Act also disposes that the establishment of "the conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations" is an objective of the AU; it paves the way for a greater international role of the AU and its organs.

The creation of the PAP can, thirdly, be interpreted as a means to democratize the AU [19]. As pointed out by Andrés Malamud and Luis de Sousa: "Virtually no process of regional integration has been safe of criticism for allegedly suffering from either democratic deficit or institutional deficit or both. These deficits, the argument goes, are the consequence of scarce accountability and the lack of transparency of regional decision-making. Different regional blocs have attempted a variety of ways to face one or both deficits, the most visible of which is the creation and empowerment of a regional parliament" [20]. In the case of Africa, in particular, the absence of a parliamentary body meant that contesting voices from domestic opponents were completely silenced and could not contribute to the process of integration. By creating the PAP, the governments may be trying to increase the legitimacy of the integration process.

Fourth, the PAP is likely to further stimulate integration. The very existence of such an assembly will give its members an interest in enhancing their power and influence on the decision-making process. According to its founding Protocol, the PAP is actually invited to "make recommendations aimed at contributing to the attainment of the objectives of the OAU/AEC and draw attention to the challenges facing the integration process in Africa as well as the strategies for dealing with them" (art. 11). In a 2005 report, the Pan-African Parliamentarians expressed their objective "to convince National Assemblies and their governments to surrender a portion of their sovereignty to the Pan-African Parliament and be prepared to implement its

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[19] Zlatko Šabič, "Building Democratic and Responsible Global Governance: The Role of International Parliamentary Institutions", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 31:2, February 2008.
[20] Malamud and de Sousa, "Regional parliaments in Europe and Latin America", p. 1.

recommendations" [21]. From a neo-functionalist perspective, the existence of PAP could mean that political actors will gradually shift their loyalty towards supranational institutions [22].

These are four fundamental reasons which justify our interest for the PAP. From a theoretical perspective, the PAP can also be seen as an opportune case to test the validity of the growing body of litterature dedicated to the creation and empowerment of regional assemblies, particularly the EP [23]. There are three main potential accounts of the creation of the EP that I will now review very briefly.

- First, according to *rational choice institutionalism*, member states create supranational institutions, such as the EP, in order to improve the effiency of the decision-making process or to obtain policy gains. Based on this logic, M. Pollack has proposed a "functional" theory of institution-building in the EU according to which member states support supranational institutions when they face collective action problems that may impede cooperation [24]. In Moravcsik's words, the creation of supranational institutions is thus explained by the will of the governments "to enhance the credibility of commitments" [25]. However, in the case of European integration, if it is helpful to understand the delegation of powers to the Commission and Court of Justice, according to M. Pollack himself, this "functionalist model fails almost completely at predicting the powers delegated ot the European Parliament, including its legislative and budgetary powers" [26].

- A second approach, initially formulated by A. Moravcsik, can be labelled *normative intergovernmentalism*. Indeed, departing from his usual interest-based reading of

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[21] Pan-African Parliament, *Report of the committee on rules, privileges and discipline on the oversight function of the Pan-African Parliament*, 28 November 2005.

[22] Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Standford : Standford University Press, 1958).

[23] For a recent example, Stelios Stavridis, Panagiota Manoli, "Comparing Experiences in Regional Parliamentarization in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Regions", *Agora Without Frontiers*, 13:4, 2008.

[24] Mark Pollack, "Delegation, Agency and Agenda Setting in the Treaty of Amsterdam", *European Integration online Papers*, 3:6, 1999.

[25] Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe* (London : University College London, 1998), p. 9 (quoted in Olivier Costa and Paul Magnette, "Idéologies et changement institutionnel dans l'Union européenne. Pourquoi les gouvernements ont-ils constamment renforcé le Parlement européen?", *Politique européenne*, 9, Winter 2003, p. 53).

[26] Pollack, "Delegation, Agency and Agenda Setting in the Treaty of Amsterdam", 1999, p. 2.

international relations, A. Moravcsik and K. Nicolaïdis [27] have argued that the main reasons behind the transfer of competencies to the European Parliament are not to be found in the consequential rationality of statist actors but rather reflect their normative concern about the legitimacy of the EU. In other words, when they discuss about the organisation of EU institutions, governments do not simply take into account their material interests: they defend specific "views" or norms about the role of a parliament in the governance of an international organization. In an effort to further develop this normative intergovernmentalist model, O. Costa and P. Magnette have specified the nature of the ideology at stake, that of democracy: they have notably demonstrated that different actors defend different institutional arrangements for the EU according to their vision of democracy [28].

- Thirdly, as opposed to the two previous approaches which regard the states as the main actors behind the creation of supranational institutions, S. Hix emphasises the role of the parliamentarians themselves in a way that is reminiscent of the *historical institutionalism* approach [29]. Analysing the Amsterdam Treaty negotiation, S. Hix has argued that the main gains for the EP were actually only the recognition and formalisation of already existing informal practices, which the EP had acquired thanks to its capacity to exploit the uncertainties of the previous treaties (what he calls "discretion in rule interpretation"). During an intergovernmental conference, it is less "costly" for the governments to back these already established practices (even if they were initially opposed to them) than to repeal them.

These theories provide a first basis for the study of the PAP, although it should be kept in mind that the process of European integration is deeply entrenched in the specific history of the continent and that Pan-Africanism has its own logic.

Considering the incapacity of the rational choice institutionalism model to account for the creation of the EP, a first lesson to be learnt is that the development of the PAP is very unlikely

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[27] Andrew Moravcsik, Kalypso Nicolaïdis, "Explaining the Treaty of Amsterdam: Interests, Influence and Institutions", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37:1, 1999.
[28] Costa and Magnette, "Idéologies et changement institutionnel dans l'Union européenne".
[29] Simon Hix, "Constitutional agenda-setting through discretion in rule interpretation: why the European Parliament won at Amsterdam", *British Journal of Political Science*, 32:2, April 2002

to derive from the will of the African leaders to improve the efficiency of the AU decision-making.

The normative intergovernmental hypothesis, which invites us to take into consideration the ideological foundations of African integration, seems much more promising. Clearly, liberal democracy is not as deeply rooted on the African continents as it is in Europe [30] and the mutation of the OAU into AU has its own idiosyncratic pattern; the "parliamentary model" can however have a far-reaching impact in so far as Africa has a long tradition in the import (more or less voluntary) of Western political practices [31]. Apart from being socialized into Western political models through education and training schemes, African leaders are well aware of European integration and institutions. We can therefore hypothesise that, when deciding about how to organise regional cooperation in Africa, politicians rely on available models of integration, the EU (including the EP) being certainly one such model. That said, we will also assume that the "institutional isomorphism" between the AU and the EU and between the PAP and EP is limited to the general arrangement of the new organisation and may not involve an exactly similar functioning, not to speak of the later evolution pattern.

Here, the historical institutionalist perspective may contribute to increase our understanding of the PAP's subsequent evolution [32]. As demonstrated by S. Hix, what may appear as minor institutional arrangements in favour of an assembly at one point in time can become decisive when the time to negotiate a new treaty has arrived, and the endeavours of the parliamentarians to use extensively the prerogatives granted to them and to grasp new powers can turn out decisive. If the moment to discuss a new treaty has not come yet for the AU [33], the uncertainties surrounding the interpretation of the founding treaties (the "discretion in rule interpretation", in S. Hix' words) offer PAP's members the opportunity to become more and more influential. More specifically, I will argue here that the initial institutional arrangement (which confer an outward-

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[30] Lia Nijzink, Shaheen Mozaffar and Elisabete Azevedo, "Parliaments and the Enhancement of Democracy on the African Continent: An Analysis of Institutional Capacity and Public Perceptions", *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 12:2-3, September-December 2006.

[31] Bertrand Badie, *L'Etat importé. L'occidentalisation de l'ordre politique* (Paris: Fayard, 1992).

[32] It should be noted here that the three models that were introduced earlier do not have the same validity according to the stage that they pretend to explain. If S. Hix's account of the Amsterdam Treaty negotiation is quite convincing, it is completely ill-suited to analyse the initial decision to grant the EP any power.

[33] The 2007 Grand Debate on the Union Government of Africa, which culminated with the Accra Summit, did not permit to redirect decisively the functioning of the AU.

looking profile to the PAP) and the dynamic of interregional relations between the EU and the AU are important levers for giving the PAP some credibility and maybe more weight in the continent's politics.

3. From OAU to AU: the meaning of the creation of the PAP

The creation of the PAP is fundamentally linked to the transformation of the old OAU into AU: it is indeed one of the only prominent institutions which resulted from this transformation and it is key to understanding its signification. Actually, this process must also be related to profound international and domestic changes, as well as to the role of the EU and the EP as models for the initiators of the AU and the PAP.

African regionalism between economic and political integration

The establishment of the PAP is the last episode of the history of Pan-Africanism and regional integration in Africa, which started with decolonization and even before [34]. The most important organisation, the OAU, was established in 1963 with the objective of promoting the unity and solidarity of the new African States, of defending their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence, and of eradicating all forms of colonialism from Africa. Due to the limited success of the initial attempts to political unification of Africa, the African leaders later decided to favour the establishment of functional organisations at the sub-regional level. The African states could thus follow the examples of regional economic cooperation in other parts of the world, such as the European Economic Community (EEC) or the Asociación Latinoamericana de Libre Comercio (Latin American Free Trade Association). Most regional structures established during the 1970s until the 1980s in Africa had an economic or technical nature with the aim of fostering development [35]. In reaction to the economic crisis, the Lagos Plan of Action, which was adopted in 1980, was meant to represent the first step towards the creation of an economic community by the year 2000.

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[34] René N'Guettia Kouassi, "The itinerary of the African integration process: an overview of the historical landmarks", *African Integration Review* 1:2, 2007.

[35] This is the case of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) created in 1975, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1980, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in 1983, or the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) in 1986.

The adoption of the African Economic Community (AEC) Treaty in 1991 provided the first opportunity to involve parliamentary actors inside African integration institutions. Despite the rapid entry into force of this treaty, the realisation of the parliamentary body was slow in coming. However, the most important was that the AEC Treaty, which echoed the precedent of the European Economic Community (EEC), stipulated that a Pan-African Parliament be created. At this first stage, the role of this parliamentary body was limited to the economic development and integration of the continent and it was to start its work only after the adoption of a specific Protocol (art. 14).

In 1999, the objective of the Sirte initiative was to accelerate the integration process provided for in the AEC Treaty. A subsequent meeting was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17th to 21st April, 2000 convened by the Secretary-General of the OAU, Salim Ahmed Salim and composed of Legal Experts and Parliamentarians who considered a Draft Treaty on the establishment of the African Union and a Draft Protocol of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament. This was followed by the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which convened in Lome, Togo from 10th to 12th July, 2000. The meeting approved and adopted the Draft Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament.

The Constitutive Act of the AU closely mirrors chapter III of the AEC Treaty, which was devoted to expressly identifying the organs of this emerging Community and defining their functions, composition, and terms of procedure. The only noticeable differences concern the name of some organs: the "General Secretariat" becomes the "Commission" but preserves the same functions and the Secretary-General is now called "Chairman". Besides, another new institution is created, namely the Permanent Representatives Committee (on the model of the EU COREPER).

From a legal point of view, the Constitutive Act does not invalidate the Abuja Treaty but, on the other hand, it abrogates the OAU charter (art. 33). Several legal instruments remain in force in spite of the adoption and entry into force of the Constitutive Act; they are: the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), the Cairo Declaration on the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (1993), and the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and the Regional Economic Communities (1998). The Heads of State

and Government also agreed to provide the AU with a programme called New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The Constitutive Act of the AU was quickly ratified and entered into force on 26 May 2001. The AU was officially inaugurated in Durham on 9 July 2002. The ratification of the Protocol on the Pan-African Parliament by the required number of member states occurred rapidly. In November 2003, the AU Commission received the ratification instruments from Senegal, meaning that the Protocol could enter into force the following month.

Strengthening Africa through integration

The Constitutive Act of the AU commits member states to political integration in the form of federation or confederation. As already pointed out, the creation of the African Union can be interpreted as a shifting focus of African integration from the economic dimension to the political dimension of peace and security [36].

The transformation of the OUA should also be seen in the larger international context of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, Africa was transformed into a battlefield for the influence of the great powers. The continent was divided by the support of countries to different camps, which prevented any form of integration. The 1990s marked the (almost) uncontested success of liberal democracy, which justifies the creation of a continental parliament. Western donors also pushed for reforming the institutional framework of the OAU and for the creation of a parliamentary body [37].

Many observers agree that the international context played an important role in the revival of regional integration in the 1990s. In some instances, external actors were directly active, such as France towards economic integration of the *zone franc*. The UN Economic Committee for Africa was behind the revitalisation of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which was almost completely ineffective between 1992 and 1997.

> "The outside influence also appears as a source of inspiration for what relates to the institutions and structures to be established as well as for the policies, the intervention

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[36] Francis, *Uniting Africa*, p. 6.
[37] Klaas Van Walraven, "From 'Union of Tyrants' to 'Power to the People'? The Significance of the Pan-African Parliament for the African Union", *Afrika Spectrum* 39:2, 2004, p. 202.

domains of the community or the chose method to define the nature and modalities of realisation of integration. The European experience plays here a determining role" [38].

The outside influence is also evident from the importance of outside resources for financing the process of integration. The traditional financial backers play a decisive role in shaping the new communities, be they bilateral backers (France, United States, United Kingdom, etc.) or multilateral ones (EU, World Bank, IMF, PNUD, etc.).

Last but not least, the transformation of OAU and the establishment of the PAP reflects some kind of internal dynamism of African regional integration. The PAP received the support of other parliamentary bodies in Africa. In 2002, the African Parliamentary Union endorsed a motion presented by the Sudanese parliament for the speedy launch of the Pan-African Parliament [39]. And according to Klaas van Walraven, "it was especially the OAU's Secretary General who tried to encourage change in the role that the organisation played in Africa's political order" [40]. As hypothesised, the process was indeed connected to the governance problem which was identified in respect to the late OAU: the gap between the official values of African cooperation and its achievement was an incentive for change. This was recalled by the Chairperson of the African Union, the President of Ghana J.A. Kufuor at the opening ceremony of the Ninth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in Accra : "We must also acknowledge the necessity for shared values in terms of respect for human rights, principles of good governance and the rule of law. These values should constitute the fabric of the Union's budding institutions like the Pan-African Parliament and the Union Court of Justice and Human Rights".

Despite all the initial declarations of support, the real influence of the PAP was still only hypothetical. It was (and still is) dependent upon the capacity of the parliamentarians to mobilize their limited resources.

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[38] "L'influence extérieure apparaît aussi comme une source d'inspiration, tant en ce qui concerne les institutions et les structures à mettre en place, que les politiques, les domaines d'intervention de la communauté ou la méthode adoptée pour définir la nature et les modalités de réalisation de l'intégration. L'expérience européenne joue ici un rôle déterminant" (Bruno Békolo-Ebé, "L'intégration régionale en Afrique : caractéristiques, contraintes et perspectives", *Mondes en développement*, no. 115-116, 2001, p. 85)
[39] According to the webpage of the African Unification Front (a Pan-Africanist organisation) http://www.africanfront.com/apu10.php (accessed 05/02/2008)
[40] Van Walraven, "From 'Union of Tyrants' to 'Power to the People'?", p. 201.

4. The first steps of the PAP

During the 2002 summit in Durban, the Assembly set a steering committee (comprising the presidents of parliaments of ten countries presided by South Africa) with the mission to accelerate the implementation of the Protocol. After a first meeting of the African Parliaments in Cape Town, the steering committee gathered in December to discuss the specific modalities for the launching of the PAP initially planned for January 2004. The national parliaments were requested to name their delegates to the PAP by that date, but the process was postponed until March. Finally, the PAP was formally inaugurated in Addis Ababa on 18 March 2004 when 190 MPs from 38 countries were sworn in [41].

Institutional features of the PAP

The Protocol on the PAP widens the scope of the competences of the Parliament further than what the AEC Treaty and the Constitutive Act of the AU had foreseen. Whereas the Constitutive Act simply intended to insure the participation of African people to the *economic* development and integration of the continent (art. 17), the Protocol mentions the promotion of good governance, the harmonisation of national laws or the exam of the Union's budget as part of the attributions of the Parliament (art. 11). It remains that the Parliament's prerogatives are exclusively consultative (art. 2). The PAP does not have the possibility to affect in a constraining manner the internal decision-making process or the budget of the AU: its competences are exclusively deliberative and advisory. The PAP has no power whatsoever in nominating or censuring the Commission. The role of the PAP is dominantly external, meaning that it can exercise its influence towards the member states and at the international level. In particular, the PAP was created with the explicit aim of concurring to the harmonisation of national legislations, although there is no clear indication of how it can do so [42].

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[41] BBC News, 18 March 2004.

[42] As noted by Klaas van Walrave, the influence of the PAP could be increased if it was associated to the implementation of the CSSDCA initiative (Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa) or the action plan of NEPAD. In 2002, an extraordinary conference of Heads of States adopted a memorandum in which the member states agreed to organise a CSSDCA biennial review meetings at the level of government leaders, senior officials and diplomats assisted by panels of qualified personalities, but no role was granted to the PAP contrary to a decision by the OAU Assembly taken in July 2000, which planned that the biennial review should make provision for the members of the PAP (Van Walraven, "From 'Union of Tyrants' to 'Power to the People'?", p. 215)

The PAP is only a semi-permanent body that convenes twice a year. The inability to convene speedily impedes any potential monitoring of the Peace and Security Council, which plays a key role in the mediation of Africa's violent conflicts and is able to meet at short notice. Additionally, the decision-making process within the PAP – by consensus or at a two-thirds majority – considerably weakens its capacity of action.

The PAP has ten permanent committees: The Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment ; The Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs ; The Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters ; The Committee on Co-operation, International Relations and Conflict Resolutions ; The Committee on Transport, Industry, Communications, Energy, Science and Technology ; The Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs ; The Committee on Education, Culture, Tourism and Human Resources ; The Committee on Gender, Family, Youth and People with Disability ; The Committee on Justice and Human Rights ; The Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline.

The Permanent Committees meet for several days a couple of months before every Ordinary Session of the PAP [43]. But as we shall see later, the effectiveness of the work of the committees varies considerably from one committee to the other. Interestingly, there is no committee in charge of political or institutional matters, which could give impetus to further integration or simply suggest some internal changes in the organisation of the AU. In order to overpass this difficulty, the PAP has to set ad hoc committees or to call on its Committee on rules, privileges and discipline. This was especially the case when this latter committee was requested to advice the Parliament on the oversight function of the Pan-African Parliament [44]. Recently, the same committee has set a Technical Sub-Committee to discuss and make proposals on "the transformation of the PAP" [45].

The PAP has no constraining power. However, it has a large consultative and advisory role, which allows it to discuss all the policies of the AU including international relations. This is both relevant for the internal development of the assembly and for the wider policy of the AU, as

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[43] The last round of committee sittings took place between August 25 and August 29, 2008 in view of the forthcoming Tenth Ordinary Session of the PAP, which is expected to be convened during October 27 – November 07, 2008.

[44] Pan-African Parliament, *Report of the committee on rules, privileges and discipline on the oversight function of the Pan-African Parliament*, 28 November 2005.

[45] Pan-African Parliament, "Sitting of the Committee on rules, privileges and discipline March 12-14, 2008", PAP/PC/RPD/2008, 12 February 2008.

suggested by the President of Mozambique Joachim Chissano, the then Chairperson of the African Union stated the Inauguration of the Pan African Parliament:

"The Pan-African Parliament we are inaugurating will, for some time, be the forum of the representatives of African Parliaments. Thus, members of this Organ have the critical task of working towards the gradual laying down of the pillars that will sustain the true Pan-African Parliament. It is necessary *to contemplate the rich diversity of the parliamentary practices of our countries, in order to identify the elements or traits that may show us the way we should follow, so as to reach the desired harmonization.* Bearing in mind the challenges that Africa is facing with respect to the development agenda with its partners, particularly at multilateral level, *we hope that the Parliament, within the framework of its activities, will mobilize its counterparts in other countries so that they are able to positively promote the debate on African issues within the governments of their respective countries.* I am here referring to issues of external trade and negotiations with the European Union, among others, about Africa's external debt." (emphasis added)

Following this advice, a 2005 parliamentary report suggested that the PAP ensure and monitor the ratification of treaties and international conventions by member states in particular advising the African Union Commission on developing mechanism to follow up on these instruments [46]. Although the demonstration has yet to be made that the Pan-African Parliamentarians can really be influential in this field, this highlights the "external" orientation of the PAP.

The membership

The membership of the Parliament and the mandate of the parliamentarians are other crucial features to understand its evolution. Each national parliament chooses five representatives from its members (one must be a woman). The PAP has 225 members from 45 countries [47]. The members of the PAP have a weak and ambiguous mandate. They are selected by their national parliaments and may be recalled by them. In other words, although there is formally no

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[46] Pan-African Parliament, *Report of the committee on rules, privileges and discipline on the oversight function of the Pan-African Parliament*, 28 November 2005.
[47] Not all AU member countries have signed and ratified the Protocol to the Treaty establishing the AEC relating to the Pan-African Parliament; the missing countries are: Côte d'Ivoire, RDC, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Somalia and Sao Tome & Principe. The Zambian members of PAP have yet to be selected.

imperative mandate, the relationship between the national parliament and the members of the PAP give to the former a firm hand on the latter. They face contradictory expectations: on the one hand, they are supposed to "represent all the peoples of Africa" and to act "in their personal and independent capacity" (art. 6), but they are selected by the national parliaments, which have the possibility to end their mandate at any time.

The fact that the members of the PAP are selected by the national parliaments and can be recalled by them is an obstacle to a genuine deliberative process, where the actors involved exchange ideas, try to convince each other and eventually decide. This situation may remain transitory as the PAP is supposed to be directly elected late on. However, it is not certain that this will happen in the short run. It should also be noted that direct elections do not represent only advantages, as it has been noted in the case of the European Parliament. On the one hand, the parliamentarians will have more time to dedicate to their mandate and they will be more committed to the integration project. But on the other hand, they will be less clearly connected to the national leaders and they may lose their leverage on the national governments who will remain the real deciders in the AU in the foreseeable future. The fact that the mandate of the Members of the PAP depends from their national mandate means that there is no common term for the assembly. This makes it difficult for the parliamentarians to learn to know each other and to build trust.

The profile of the representatives is as important as their formal mandate. If all national parliaments respect the rule that one delegate should be a woman, only a minority select two (or more) women. However, this probably mirrors the general composition of national parliaments and does not necessarily reflect a gender-biased selection of representatives at this level. When there are two distinct assemblies making the parliament, delegates come from both. As far as can be seen, many parliaments also follow the rule that some members of opposition parties be selected. This, of course, can contribute to insuring that the PAP is really representative of the populations and therefore increase its legitimacy [48]. This could also reduce the natural inclination to vote according to one's nationality and foster the politicisation of the assembly.

Very interestingly, the national parliaments have selected high rank members to represent them in the PAP. Several speakers of national chambers sit in the PAP: Ibrahim Boubacar Keita

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[48] If the presence of opposition's MPs is likely to increase the legitimacy and therefore the influence of the PAP, it should be noted that another interpretation can also be defended: the very fact that majority parties allow opponents to seat in the PAP may mean that this assembly is perceived as non-influential and non-strategic.

from the *Assemblée nationale* of Mali, Rajemison Rakotomaharo from Madagascar's *Sénat*, Jean-Pierre Thystere Tchicaya from the *Assemblée national* of Congo, Mninwa Johannes Mahlangu Chairperson of the SA National Council of Provinces. If this can help to raise the profile and visibility of the PAP, it can also imply that the members of the PAP do not have a lot of time to dedicate to their Pan-African responsibilities. Maybe even more meaningful is the selection of experts in matters discussed within the PAP. This is the case with the selection of Faeka AlRefai, the chairman of the Committee on NEPAD by the Egyptian People's Assembly, William F. Shija the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Tanzanian Parliament, Fatima Hajaig chairwoman of SA sub-committee on international affairs. This also means that the Members of the PAP have some experience of international negotiations and may have interacted in the past with their European counterparts.

Activities and main achievements

Since its inaugural session in March 2004, the PAP has been able to meet on a regular basis. Its ordinary sessions take place twice a year. The most often debated items cover the NEPAD, the APRM country reports and Peace in Africa. The PAP has also been very busy discussing its own organisation and its relationship to other AU organs. During its second ordinary session in 2004, it adopted its Rules of Procedure as prepared by the Ad Hoc Rules Committee. The Rules of Procedure detail the functions and powers of the Parliament, its constitutive organs (bureau, committee), conduct of debates, voting rules, etc.

Since the Parliament meets only twice a year in plenary, the bureau and the committees play an important role. To this respect, there seems to be some great differences in the performance of the standing committees. In 2007, the committee on Justice and Human Rights was able to meet and to adopt a report urging the member states to sign international humanitarian laws and conventions and to revise existing laws to implement their commitments. On the contrary, the Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters did not implement its planned activities for 2007 and had to dissolve its leadership. The committee on Cooperation, International Relations and Conflict Resolution has been charged of participating in negotiations with the European Parliament [49].

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[49] Pan-African Parliament, "Pan African Parliament adopts committee reports", Press release, 25 October 2007.

There are no clear indications of how members of the PAP have voted thus far. However, if we take the behaviour within the Assembly as a point of reference, it is very likely that geographical groupings play a more important role than party proximity. For the election of the president of the Commission, candidates openly played one region against the other: the Swaziland's minister of foreign affairs Moses Mathendele Dlamini declared that its country had taken back the application of former Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini as the sign of solidarity towards SADC [50]. Members of the PAP regularly hold meetings by geographic "regional caucuses" (Central, East, North, Southern and West Africa), which are officially foreseen in Part XVIII of the Rules of Procedure. These caucuses also play a role in attributing positions (bureau of the Parliament and of the committees within the assembly). For instance, each of the president and vice-presidents of the Parliament comes from a different region.

Although there seems to be no party groups, the Rules of Procedure disposes that "Members may form caucuses around issues of common interest as and when they deem it necessary" (rule 85). This leaves the possibility to form party groups or inter-groups on the model of those existing in most parliaments.

The PAP has demonstrated some maturity in mobilising its legal resources to increase its power. For instance, the question of the oversight function that it could exercise has been debated within the committee on rules, privileges and discipline. After consulting experts and debating amongst members, the committee came out with credible proposals such as undertaking public hearings, commissioning specialized studies or engaging with national parliaments [51]. It remains to be seen how the Parliament will effectively put these recommendations into force.

The PAP has displayed independence from the governments and its commitment to fight for more democracy. This is especially evident from the observatory mission of the last presidential election in Kenya, which resulted in the adoption of a very critical report: "It is evident that in the final stages of the electoral process, the independence of the ECK [Elections Commission of Kenya] was compromised and its operations hijacked. It is the Missions considered view that the disputed election fell short of matching the democratic election process

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[50] Radio France Internationale, 29 January 2008. http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/097/article_62112.asp (accessed on 4 February 2008). The dimension also played an important part in selecting the country presiding the Assembly: Radio France Internationale, 31 January 2008, http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/097/article_62153.asp accessed on 4 February 2008).

[51] Pan-African Parliament, *Report of the committee on rules, privileges and discipline on the oversight function of the Pan-African Parliament*, 28 November 2005.

and the expression and the will of the people of Kenya. […] The committee's view is that given the prevailing political situation in Kenya, an election re-run between the two Presidential candidates i.e. Kibaki and Odinga, would the most pragmatic and ideal solution to be considered. Furthermore, the mission humbly requests the AU heads of States and Government to look into a protocol that will deal with future revelations of the vote rigging by member states using state power, in the same light that it dealt with the condemnation of military coups in Africa"[52]. Similarly, the PAP has been extremely critical of the recent presidential and parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe considering that the "atmosphere prevailing in the country did not give rise to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections" and calling on the SADC leaders and the AU "to engage the broader political leadership in Zimbabwe into a negotiated transitional settlement"[53].

The visit of a delegation from the PAP to the headquarters of the AU in Addis Ababa on 19-22 February 2008 is an illustration of the will of the parliamentarians to exercise some form of oversight power over the African Commission. The delegation headed by Abdelmadjid Azzedine further requested the Commission to send a delegation to the seat of the PAP in South Africa. The press release mentioned that "amongst the preoccupations that were presented by the PAP delegation was the issue of inter-African cooperation as well as the international cooperation"[54]. This is another clear indication of the importance for the PAP of its insertion in world affairs.

5. The implications of the "international presence" of the PAP

As noted before, the attributions of the PAP are more outward-looking than internal. This means that the African Parliamentarians have the duty to influence national policy-makers, but also that they are increasingly active in international relations. In turn, the intensification and institutionalisation of interregional relations between the AU and the EU is clearly beneficial to the PAP. They allow the PAP to stand on an equal foot as the EP, to learn from other regional parliaments, and to gather support from outside actors.

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[52] Statement of the Pan-African Parliament election observer mission to Kenya's general election held on the 27th December, 2007.
[53] The Pan-African Parliament Election Observer Mission to the Presidential Run-Off and Parliamentary By-Elections in Zimbabwe, "Interim Statement", 29 June 2008.
[54] African Union Commission (Division of Communication and Information), "A delegation from the Pan-African Parliament visits the African Union", Press release no. 39, 2008.

International negotiations: raising the profile of the PAP

As noted in the introduction, the PAP is active in interregional negotiations between the EU and Africa. This is illustrated by the fact that, during the last EU-Africa summit, the president of the PAP Gertrud Mongella was granted the statute of observer along the EP's President Hans-Gert Pottering. The PAP is increasingly being recognized as a legitimate interlocutor by the European Parliament. During the last EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon on 8-9 December 2007, both institutions met and adopted a Joint Statement on the Joint EU-Africa Strategy. This means not only that the PAP is active on the world stage but also that it may indirectly be able to affect the policy of the AU which is very dependant on the EU. Twenty-five members of PAP participated along twenty-five Euro-MPs.

This summit was a good opportunity for the PAP to raise its profile. Delegates from both parliaments adopted a statement where they criticised the little role for the parliaments foreseen in the strategy - EP and PAP ask for fully involvement into process. "So far, the debate on the Joint Strategy and its implementation has been conducted largely outside our parliaments; there has been little systematic information on the progress of the negotiations and no formal consultation on agreements reached. Together with the regional and national parliaments of our continents, the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament need, and are firmly determined to be fully involved not only in the progress leading up to the Joint Strategy, but also in its implementation and monitoring. The Joint Strategy and the Action Plan must therefore include adequate provisions for the structured and systematic involvement of our parliaments in the debate on its implementation and future continuation"[55]. It remains to be seen whether the two institutions have the ability to effectively implement this objectives. However, they are encouraged by the European Commission and Council's reflection that "the institutional architecture [of the Joint Strategy] should also strengthen the formal structure of dialogue between the institutions and bodies of the EU and AU, and notably between the institutions that represent the people of the two continents, the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament"[56]. The two Parliaments have resolved to set up a joint parliamentary committee to

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[55] Joint EP-PAP Statement on the Joint EU-Africa Strategy to be adopted by the EU and African Heads of State and Government, assembled in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007 for the 2nd EU-Africa Summit.
[56] Commission/Council secretariat joint paper of 27 June 2007: "Beyond Lisbon: making the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership work" (SEC(2007) 856), quoted in Joint EP-PAP Statement on the Joint EU-Africa Strategy to be

oversight the implementation of the Joint Strategy and further discuss matters relative to the EU-African relations [57].

As far as the interplay between Africa and the EU is concerned, the PAP indirectly benefits from the attempts of the European Parliament at increasing its own power. In a 2007 report on the relations between the two continents, the European Parliament requested "the European Commission and the AUC to take active steps to involve the European Parliament and the PAP in the process of preparing the joint strategy and in the adoption and implementation stages thereof" (§ 4). By virtue of the increasingly intense institutional interactions between the EU and Africa, the PAP is able to benefit from the information rights granted to the European Parliament.

The European Parliament is an objective ally to the PAP. It "stresses the importance of sustainable democracy, including good governance and democratic elections, which must include support for parliamentary capacity-building, encouraging in particular cooperation between the European Parliament, the PAP and the African regional parliaments, and support for the organisation of civil society, and the involvement of local authorities in the political dialogue, especially fostering cooperation and exchanges between organisations of African and European civil society" (§ 25). The European Parliament most specifically pleads for a financial contribution of the EU to the functioning of the PAP; it "Urges the Commissions to use its support programme to the AU to widen the access of African parliaments, local authorities and non-state actors to the political dialogue taking place in the AU, and to earmark part of the EUR 55 million specifically for strengthening the PAP" (§ 50).

This support also takes the form of the establishment of a joint strategy and the establishment of a joint parliamentary committee. The European Parliament is "determined to closely monitor, together with the PAP, the implementation of the joint strategy and the action programmes; therefore calls for the establishment of a joint European Parliament - PAP parliamentary delegation as a forum to debate in a democratic way the issues affecting the relations between our peoples" (§ 102). This parallel approach to interregional relations jointly

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adopted by the EU and African Heads of State and Government, assembled in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007 for the 2nd EU-Africa Summit.

[57] It should be noted however that, contrary to the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States and the East African Legislative Assembly, the PAP is not an associate member of the International Parliamentary Union.

developed by the EP and the PAP means that the latter is able to take stock of the experience of the former.

Learning from other regional parliaments

The involvement of Members of the PAP in international forums gives them the opportunity to share experiences with Members from established regional parliaments. The report co-written by Bornito de Sousa (Angola) and Filip Kaczmarek (Poland) on "the experiences from the European regional integration process relevant to ACP countries" is an example of such joint work which can be a source of inspiration from African Parliamentarians.

The PAP has explicitly and openly asserted its disposition to learn from previous experiences. A 2005 report by the committee on rules, privileges and discipline proposes for instance that the PAP "enter into bilateral agreements with other regional Parliaments and organizations and international organizations and the institutions for the purpose of exchanging experiences and best practices and helping in the capacity building efforts of PAP"[58].

This point of view is also expressed by Gertrude Mongella the President of the PAP:
"It is important to look at your neighbour and learn something from them. But we would make a big mistake to just take what you have in the EU and put it into the African Union. It would equally be a mistake not to appreciate the systems that are serving the EU. For example the European Parliament has developed over 50 years. So it has a rich experience on how to establish a continental parliament. We have to look at that and then see what best we can pick for our Pan-African Parliament. We are working together to share the experience. But at the same time we need to interpret it to fit the African situation."[59]

Generally speaking, the PAP benefits from the will of the EP to promote regional parliaments beyond the European sphere. As pointed out by D. Bach, "there is currently, both within the European Commission and the European Parliament, an overwhelming positive

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[58] Pan-African Parliament, *Report of the committee on rules, privileges and discipline on the oversight function of the Pan-African Parliament*, 28 November 2005.
[59] Gertrude Mongella (President of the Pan-African Parliament), "Look positively at Africa", interview published on the Webpage of the European Parliament, 19 March 2008
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/028-23394-168-06-25-903-20080307STO23351-2008-16-06-2008/default_en.htm (last accessed 24 March 2008)

attitude towards initiatives that may contribute to AU capacity building and empowerment"[60]. This also takes the form of technical assistance and financial support to the PAP's organs.

Receiving the support from international actors

Part of the international strategy of the PAP consists in diversifying the origin of its resources. According to a report published by the "African Unification Front", PAP President Gertrude Mongella called for the PAP to end its dependence on the financial support of its subordinate AU organs and states: "If we want to make the parliament independent, we have to look at alternative sources of funding" [61].

Since the 2005, the PAP receives the financial support of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). Based in Harare, this Foundation is sponsored by the African Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 2007, it granted two million US dollars over a period of fours years to support the institutional capacity building of PAP (strengthening the capacities of the committees, MPs and parliamentary staff; enhancing the communication and outreach abilities of PAP; building the research capacity of PAP; and institutional strengthening) [62].

This prompted the Parliamentarians to establish the Pan-African Parliament Trust Fund. International donors include the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (German Society for Technical Cooperation - GTZ). The PAP also receives technical assistance from the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) [63]. For instance, AWEPA staff assisted in the formation of the PAP's Strategic Plan in 2005. In October 2006, AWEPA and the Dutch Embassy in Pretoria signed a three year programme (2006-2009) to provide institutional capacity building support to the PAP. The new Pan-African Parliament Institutional Capacity Building Programme aims to "enhance the institutional capacity of the Pan-African Parliament so that it

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[60] Bach, "The EU's 'strategic partnership' with the AU".
[61] http://www.africanfront.com/AF028.php (accessed 05/02/2008).
[62] Joint Press Release of the Pan-African Parliament and the African Capacity Building Foundation, "PAP and ACBF sign two million dollar grant agreement", 6th August 2007.
[63] *Le Parlementaire africain. Bulletin du Parlement Panafricain*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007.

can function effectively and communicate successfully with its members, other African institutions and the people of Africa" [64].

The fact that the budget of the Parliament is dependent upon foreign donors raises the question of the level of commitment of the African actors and long term viability of the whole enterprise [65]. It also raises the question of the independence of the institution and its ability to develop its own views.

5. Concluding remarks

Although sometimes welcomed with doubts, the PAP was quickly established after the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the AU. It manages to meet on a regular basis and has expressed some independent positions on critical issues such as election monitoring. In comparison to other organs foreseen in the Constitutive Act which have not yet been implemented (e.g. the Court of Justice), the record of the PAP is quite "decent".

All in all, it remains that the PAP is a weak institution with limited formal prerogatives. It is moreover hampered in its development by its lack of financial and technical resources, mismanagement scandals [66] and internal organisational problems. Against this background, the establishment and institutionalisation of interregional relations between the EU and Africa is clearly an asset for the PAP. It allows it to take stock of the experience of other regional institutions, to benefit indirectly from the information and status of the EP and to further mobilize international supporters. Contrary to the usual dynamic of international relations, the PAP is the winner and not the loser of the increasing international role of the AU.

If every process of regional integration has its own peculiarities, we have seen that theories of European integration – and more particularly theories about the EP – can increase our understanding of the development of the parliamentary dimension of the AU. This first attempt is an invitation to further question the cognitive and normative underpinnings of regional

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[64] Activities include the following: training workshops for staff on skills development (e.g. organisational and administrative support; strategic planning and management; committee support; parliamentary protocol and procedure; and monitoring and evaluation); training workshops for staff on knowledge development (e.g. about the PAP; about relevant African institutions such as the African Union and NEPAD; about relevant development issues); exchange visits between PAP staff and staff of European institutions such as the European Parliament; support for PAP communications e.g. maintenance and development of the PAP website; development of PAP/NEPAD publicity materials.

[65] Békolo-Ebé, "L'intégration régionale en Afrique", p. 85.

[66] Radio France Internationale, 30 June 2007. http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/090/article_53482.asp accessed on 4 February 2008.

cooperation in Africa (and elsewhere). We have also seen that the "international presence" of an institution such as the PAP, by allowing its members to take part in the larger debate about regionalisation and to influence the international community in its support to this ongoing process, can be as strategic as its immediate "domestic" activities. By a way of conclusion, I would suggest that this finding can probably apply to regional parliamentary assemblies in other parts of the world.

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