

The Evolution of the EU's Development Policy: Turning Full Circle

Julian BERGMANN^{*}, Sarah DELPUTTE^{*}, Niels KEIJZER^{*} & Joren VERSCHAEVE^{*}

Recent European Union (EU) policy discussions emphasize the need to reinforce linkages between the EU's external policies. This has spurred criticism of the EU's development policy losing its status as a self-standing policy area, instead being increasingly instrumentalized for broader external action purposes. This article seeks to contextualize and contribute to this debate by means of a long-term analysis of the status of development policy within the EU's broader external action. More specifically, it analyses how EU development policy has been (re-)framed in key policy documents over time, analysing three distinct periods i.e. (1) the period before the Maastricht Treaty, (2) the period between the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaty and (3) the period from Lisbon onwards. In so doing, we looked at the discursive evolution of three main dimensions that determine its status, namely the underlying motivation of development, the assumed 'road to development' and the perspective on policy coherence. The article concludes that recent policy trends represent a 'return to form' of EU development policy rather than a new phenomenon.

1 INTRODUCTION

In its 2016 Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, the European Union (EU) aims to strengthen coherence within its external policies and increase their alignment to other EU policies. In line with this general aim, the strategy states that EU development policy 'will become more flexible and aligned with our strategic priorities'.¹ This call reinforces concerns about a growing instrumentalization of EU development policy, and itself is indicative of a gradual trend of alignment of the development and foreign policy as triggered by the entering into force of the Treaty on European Union in December 2009.²

^{*} Julian Bergmann, German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik; Sarah Delputte, Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University; Niels Keijzer, German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik; and Joren Verschaeve, Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University. The authors would like to thank Sebastian Steingass, Sieglinde Gstöhl, Madeleine Hosli and Simon Schunz and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on earlier version drafts. Email: julian.bergmann@die-gdi.de, Sarah.Delputte@ugent.be & Joren.Verschaeve@ugent.be.

¹ European Union (EU), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* 48 (Brussels 2016).

² M. Broberg, *What Is the Direction for the EU's Development Cooperation After Lisbon? A Legal Examination*, 16(4) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 539–557 (2011).

The development policy community considers this instrumentalization problematic as it challenges the normative foundations of EU development policy.³ Development policy is funded through dedicated public finances reported as Official Development Assistance (ODA), which as per international norms pursues the interests of stakeholders in developing countries (DCs). The special status of EU development policy is acknowledged in the EU Treaties, with Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) clarifying that EU development policy promotes poverty reduction in DCs, and requires decision-making processes in other EU policy areas to take this objective into account.

These normative considerations stand in sharp contrast with today's 'realist' concerns of the EU. Recent external policy proposals portray the world as unstable and insecure, referring to trends such as the spread of terrorism, irregular migration, or state fragility. Accordingly, the EU's ODA budget increasingly encounters political pressure to provide short-term answers to these trends. Recent years included decisions to allocate more funds to military capacity building and security sector reform in partner countries.⁴ In addition, concerns have been raised over the EU's external migration policy diverting development funds for the purpose of border management and migration control⁵. This trend is not unique to the EU, bilateral development actors' policies increasingly posit that development policy has to work in concert with other areas of policy, yet in practice is increasingly co-opted by these policy domains.⁶

Although the public debate appears to have come to terms with the current status of EU development policy, empirical studies scrutinizing the present situation remain scarce. The current debate often reflects an ideal-typical representation of a former EU development policy as an independent and self-standing area of its external policy, referring to the so-called new season⁷ of the EU's development policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Yet, to contextualize and reflect on this debate, we argue that it is necessary to analyse recent developments in relation to how European development cooperation evolved since its inception in the 1950s,

³ A. Hadfield, *Janus Advances? An Analysis of EC Development Policy and the 2005 Amended Cotonou Partnership Agreement*, 12(1) Eur. For. Affairs Rev. 39–66 (2007); P. Debaere, S. Delputte & J. Orbie, *How Close Is the European Consensus from the Seoul Consensus. Evolving EU Development Policy Discourse*, in *The G20 Development Agenda* (D. Lesage & J. Wouters eds, forthcoming).

⁴ S. Keukeleire & K. Raube, *The Security–Development Nexus and Securitization in the EU's Policies Towards Developing Countries*, 26(3) Cambridge Rev. Int'l Aff. 556–572 (2013); K. Del Biondo, S. Olsch & J. Orbie, *Security and Development in EU External Relations: Converging, But in Which Direction?*, in *The Routledge Handbook of European Security* 126–141 (S. Biscop & R. Whitman eds, Routledge 2012); M. Carbone, *An Uneasy Nexus: Development, Security and the EU's African Peace Facility*, 18(4) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 103–124 (2013).

⁵ M. Langan, *Security, Development, and Neo-Colonialism*, in *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa* 149–175 (M. Langan eds, Palgrave Macmillan 2018).

⁶ E. Mawdsley, W. E. Murray, J. Overton, R. Scheyvens & G. Banks, *Exporting Stimulus and 'Shared Prosperity': Reinventing Foreign Aid for a Retroliberal Era*, 36 Dev. Pol'y Rev. 25–43 (2018).

⁷ M. Carbone, *Development Policy. The EU as a Multilateral and Bilateral Donor*, in *The European Union and Global Governance. A Handbook*, 157–165 (J. U. Wunderlich & D. Bailey eds, Routledge 2011).

when it started off as an instrument to extend the internal market to overseas countries and territories.⁸ Against this background, this article analyses how the status of development policy within the EU's broader external action has been discursively framed since the onset of development cooperation.

The article's contribution to existing scholarship is twofold. First, it contributes to the literature on EU development policy. Drawing on frame analysis, it introduces a framework that guides our long-term analysis of the status of development policy within the broader EU external action. There is a growing body of literature in EU development studies that engages with the interlinkages between development policy and other external policies. Drawing on the concept of 'nexus' to capture these linkages and tensions, scholars have studied interfaces such as the security-development,⁹ migration-development,¹⁰ trade-development¹¹ or climate-development nexus.¹² While these provide detailed analyses of policy-making processes at the cross-sectoral level, they tend to focus on one particular nexus rather than considering them as being part of a larger evolution of the status of development policy. By taking an integrative perspective on the status of development policy in relation to other external policy areas, this article provides more general insights on the role of EU development and nexus-building in this area.

Second, the article contributes to the literature on EU external policy coherence.¹³ While the scholarly literature has developed various conceptualizations of coherence, less attention has been paid to how coherence is understood and discursively framed in different EU policy contexts. EU policy debates frequently present coherence (and nexus-building) as an uncontested aim in itself. By analysing how coherence between development policy and other EU external policies is interpreted differently in several EU development policy documents, the article

⁸ D. Frisch, *The European Union's Development Policy. A Personal View of 50 Years of International Cooperation*, ECDPM Policy Management Report 15 (2008).

⁹ Del Biondo, Oltch & Orbie, *supra* n. 4; Keukeleire & Raube, *supra* n. 4; M. Overhaus, *Security-Development Nexus: Perspectives for the EU's Next Financial Framework*, 18(4) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 511–528 (2013).

¹⁰ R. Kunz, *Governing International Migration Through Partnership*, 34(7) Third World Q. 1227–1246 (2013); Langan, *supra* n. 5.

¹¹ M. Carbone & J. Orbie, *Beyond Economic Partnership Agreements: The European Union and the Trade-Development Nexus*, 20(1) Contemp. Pol. 1–9 (2014); G. Siles-Brügge, *EU Trade and Development Policy Beyond the ACP. Subordinating Developmental to Commercial Imperatives in the Reform of GSP*, 20(1) Contemp. Pol. 49–62 (2014); A. R. Young & J. Peterson, 'We Care About You, but ...'. *The Politics of EU Trade Policy and Development*, 26(3) Cambridge Rev. Int'l Aff. 497–518 (2013).

¹² F. De Roeck, J. Orbie & S. Delputte, *Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation into the European Union's Development Assistance*, 81 Envtl. Sci. & Pol'y 36–45 (2018); J. Gupta & N. van der Grijp, *Mainstreaming Climate Change in Development Cooperation. Theory, Practice and Implications for the European Union* (Cambridge University Press 2010).

¹³ E. Da Conceição-Heldt & S. Meunier, *Speaking with a Single Voice: Internal Cohesiveness and External Effectiveness of the EU in Global Governance*, 21(7) J. Eur. Pub. Pol'y 961–979 (2014); A. Niemann & C. Bretherton, *EU External Policy at the Crossroads. The Challenge of Actorness and Effectiveness*, 27(3) Int'l Rel. 261–275 (2013).

illustrates how understandings of policy coherence change over time and are influenced by the external policy context.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we discuss the research design of our study, elaborating first on frame analysis followed by our analytical framework and methodological approach. Section 3 presents the results of our frame analysis. Finally, the closing section discusses our main findings and puts forward an agenda for future research in EU development and external policy studies.

2 RESEARCH APPROACH

As outlined in the introduction, the main objective of this study is to analyse how EU development policy has been understood and justified over time, with special attention to its relation with EU external action more broadly. To do so, this article is inspired by frame analysis, yet deploys it in a pragmatic manner for reasons of feasibility (see *infra*). The next paragraphs will explain our research approach in greater detail.

The frame analysis approach was originally developed in the field of social movement studies, but has gained widespread attention in EU studies.¹⁴ While the majority of studies focuses on framing processes in EU internal policies,¹⁵ there is an emerging literature on policy framing in the context of the EU's external policies, including development policy.¹⁶ Frame analysis departs from the social constructivist premise that meaning is a product of social construction rather than a given.¹⁷ Policy fields may differ in the extent to which they are subject to framing, with climate policy being an example of an erstwhile technocratic area that over time has become the arena for competing frames. These frames influence which problem definition is dominant at a given point in time, and thus affect policy formulation.¹⁸

Our point of departure is that EU development policy can be conceptualized as a distinct discursive space, subject to continuous processes of (re)framing.¹⁹ Through discursive processes, actors (e.g. EU institutions, Member States, NGOs, academics) (re)produce frames which provide meaning to EU development policy in terms of

¹⁴ F. Daviter, *Policy Framing in the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan 2011); S. Princen, *Agenda-Setting Strategies in EU Policy Processes*, 18(7) *J. Eur. Pub. Pol'y* 927–943 (2011).

¹⁵ B. Kohler-Koch, *Framing. The Bottleneck of Constructing Legitimate Institutions*, 7(4) *J. Eur. Pub. Pol'y* 513–531 (2000); T. Warren, *Framing the Eurozone crisis: a Case of Limited Ambition*, 40(1) *J. Eur. Integration* 67–82 (2017).

¹⁶ F. Bicchi, *European Foreign Policy Making Toward the Mediterranean* (Palgrave Macmillan 2007); B. Voltolini & R. Roccu, *Security and Stability Reframed, Selective Engagement Maintained. The EU in the Mediterranean After the Arab Uprisings*, 23(1) *Mediterranean Pol.* 182–195 (2018); F. De Roeck, S. Delputte & J. Orbie, *Framing the Climate-Development Nexus in the European Union*, 1(4) *Third World Thematics* 437–453 (2016).

¹⁷ De Roeck, Delputte & Orbie, *supra* n. 16.

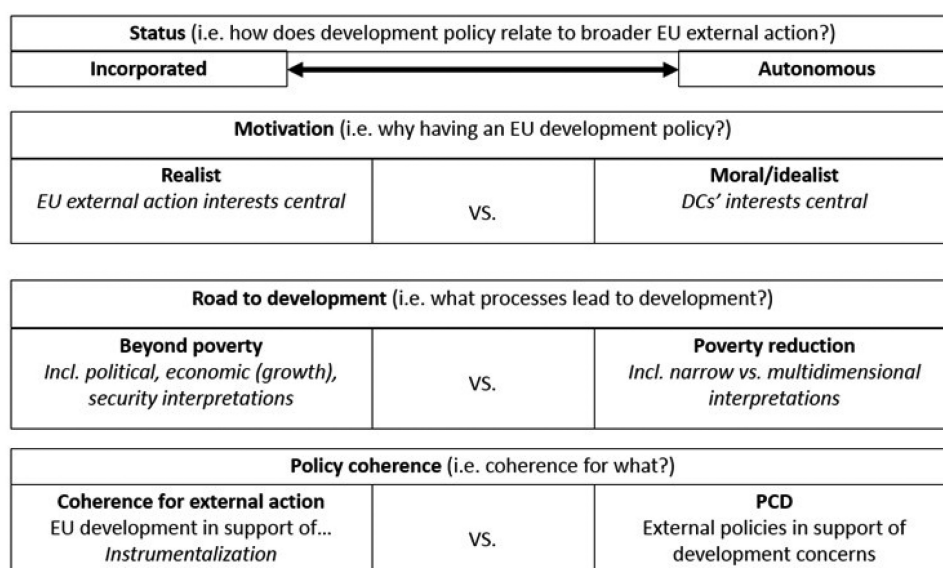
¹⁸ C. Dupont & L. Groen, *Framing in het EU-klimaatbeleid, de rol van expertise*, 2 *Vlaams Tijdschrift voor Overheidsmanagement* 51–62 (2018).

¹⁹ Cf. M. Smith, *The Framing of European Foreign and Security Policy. Towards a Post-Modern Policy Framework*, 10(4) *J. Eur. Pub. Pol'y* 556–575 (2003).

objectives, priorities, and its embeddedness in the EU's external policies more broadly.²⁰ Hence, by systematically assessing a set of pre-defined frames (see *infra*), this article is able to assess how the EU development has been understood and justified over time. This study focuses first and foremost on the outcome of the discursive processes and their stability over time, while largely overlooking the framing process itself, including the role of the different actors within such processes. This choice was partly motivated by feasibility concerns, given that it is very difficult to reconstruct discursive processes for the period up until the Maastricht Treaty (and even beyond) in sufficient depth, making a comparative analysis with today's period hard – or perhaps even impossible; partly by our motivation to provide a comprehensive analysis of dominant frames on EU development policy over a longer period of time, establishing patterns of stability and change in framing processes, the underlying dynamics of which can then be analysed by future research

To analyse the framing of the status of development policy within the EU's broader external action over time, the following analytical framework (cf. Figure 1) has been developed.

Figure 1 Analytical Framework



Source: Authors.

²⁰ Cf. S. Jaynes, *Making Strategic Change: A Critical Discourse Analysis*, 28(1) J. Organizational Change Mgmt. 97–116 (2015).

The first level of our framework relates to the status of development. We posit that this status may be positioned between the following extremes: EU development policy as an *autonomous*, self-standing policy status, and a situation in which development policy is *incorporated* in other specific EU external policy areas or the EU's external action in general. The former situation usually involves an institutional set-up in which development actors play a central and rather independent role. In contrast, the latter situation entails the institutional intertwining of development policy into other policy fields, at the expense of its independent status. Differences between these two frames relate to three dimensions: i.e. (1) motivation, (2) road to development and (3) policy coherence, which constitute the second level of our framework.

The **motivation** dimension refers to the question of why having a development policy. Our typology distinguishes between a moral or idealistic frame and a realistic or instrumental frame. Although we recognize that development policy's motivations have always been a complicated mix of normative and interest-based elements,²¹ donors have come up with different (dominant) frames that justify their development policy. We posit that moral concerns will flourish more in an autonomous development policy while a development policy incorporated within the broader external action offers more leeway to self-centred concerns.

The **road to development** dimension refers to the perspective or thinking on development. Here our typology ranges from a development policy which puts poverty reduction/eradication central and a development policy in which poverty reduction is either absent or incorporated in other (dominant) frames, including political, economic (growth), or security cooperation.²² In line with the previous frame, we argue that an autonomous development policy will have more space to put the focus primarily on poverty reduction, while an incorporated development policy status will rather include poverty reduction in broader conceptualizations of development.

Finally, the **coherence** dimension concerns the purpose and direction of coherence. We distinguish between Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and a framing through which increasing the EU's external action

²¹ A. Fuchs, P. Nunnenkamp & A. Dreher, *Determinants of Donor Generosity. A Survey of the Aid Budget Literature*, 56 *World Dev.* 172–199 (2014); Y. Kim & C. Jensen, *Preferences and Institutions. Constraints on European Union Foreign Aid Distribution*, 40(2) *J. Eur. Integration* 177–192 (2017).

²² Debaere, Delputte & Orbie, *supra* n. 3.

impact becomes the leading rationale.²³ We posit that an autonomous development policy will put the emphasis on the potentially detrimental effects of *other policy areas* such as trade and agricultural policies in line with the definition of PCD, while in an incorporated situation, development policy will increasingly be aligned to broader external action objectives, which may eventually result in its instrumentalization.²⁴

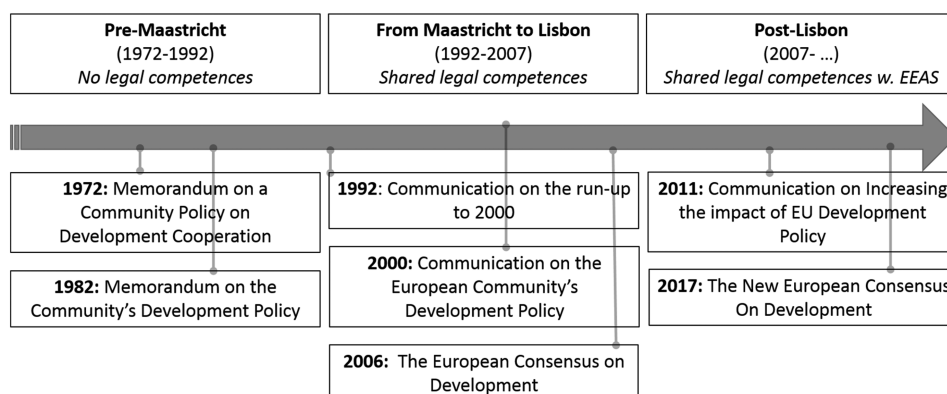
In terms of empirical data, EU development policy is framed by many modes of communication, ranging from speeches and position papers, up to legal texts. The variety and sheer volume of such documents is too large a size for a single research inquiry to cover. Therefore, we focused on one specific document type, namely official communications of the EU. Communications serve as key signposts in terms of both capturing and suggesting key changes in the direction of EU development policy. These documents play a key role in the field of development cooperation, a branch of EU policy that produces comparatively few 'hard legislation', with the sole exceptions of international agreements and the legislation covering the EU's development cooperation budget. The latter include documents relating specifically to the EU's relations with the ACP countries – including the Yaoundé and Lomé conventions as well as the Cotonou agreement. While we are aware that development cooperation in the framework of ACP-EU relations dates back to the very origins of the EU, these relations have been governed very differently, making it difficult to compare them in a systematic way with frames on overall EU development policy, especially since a comparison of the EU's engagement with specific regions goes beyond the scope of this article.

Empirically, we focused on the history of EU development cooperation from 1970 onwards. This is motivated by the fact that only from the 1970s onwards questions on the 'how' and 'why' of a development policy at the EU level came to the surface. More specifically, we made a distinction between three time periods (cf. Figure 2). Subsequently, within each period we selected 'milestone' communications that engaged with the policy field as a whole rather than specific geographic or thematic initiatives.

²³ J. Verschaeve, S. Delpitte & J. Orbie, *The Rise of Policy Coherence for Development. A Multi-Causal Approach*, 28(1) Eur. J. Dev. Res. 44–61 (2016).

²⁴ N. Keijzer, *Expectation Management? Contrasting the EU's 2030 Agenda Discourse with Its Performance in Evaluating Policy Coherence for Development*, 22(2) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 177–196 (2017).

Figure 2 Data Selection



Source: Authors.

Methodologically, we approached each document with standardized questions linked to the aforementioned framework, ensuring a systematic comparison of the different communications. For example, on the dimension of 'motivation', we used questions such as 'What is/are the specific rationale(s) of EU development policy?' or 'In case several rationales are present, is there a certain hierarchy?' Each document was analysed individually by two of the authors independently, who then compared their findings. This served to cross-validate the findings, as well as to relate the changes in discourse to the broader European and international dynamics.

3 RESULTS

3.1 FROM ROME TO MAASTRICHT

The European Commission de jure only obtained development policy competences in the 1990s, yet its role in international cooperation goes back to the Treaty of Rome (1957). The Treaty foresaw a preferential trade relationship with the founding European Economic Community (EEC) members' Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), with their subsequent full integration into the emerging market funded by the inter-governmental European Development Fund (EDF) and the creation of the European Investment Bank (EIB; Frisch, 2008). In the following years, European development cooperation gradually unfolded following the swift process by which the OCTs in Africa gained their independence, resulting in the signing of the first Yaoundé Convention (1963). Two years after the accession of the United Kingdom (1973), the first Lomé Convention was agreed to govern trade and development cooperation between the

EEC and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states.²⁵ By that time the European Commission increasingly assumed itself a more assertive role on development cooperation, for which it had first set out key ambitions and orientations in the **Memorandum on a Community Policy on Development Cooperation (1972)**.

Motivation. The memorandum demonstrates a moral frame on development policy and states that *'the Commission recalls that one of the basic objectives of the work of European integration is to seek a fair distribution of the world's wealth and well-being'*.²⁶ In a similar vein, the memorandum states that the EEC should strive towards a more equitable distribution of global prosperity with a specific attention to underprivileged groups.²⁷ The Commission thus considers itself responsible for contributing to the creation of a more just international order,²⁸ one that results in *'better conditions of life and of fulfilment for mankind'*.²⁹ Simultaneously the Commission adopts a 'European integration' frame of development policy, engaging in European development cooperation is argued to be the logical next step of the integration process. The memorandum argues that the transfer of development competences to the European level would make the Union an effective partner for DCs.

Road to development. Inspired by modernization thinking on development, the memorandum upholds a rather one-sided economic view on development, putting forward a linear thinking according to which economic take-off is presented as the silver bullet to achieve development progress. Thus, an emphasis is being placed on diversifying economies, modernization and industrialization programs, and increasing exports.³⁰ Nonetheless, the Commission's memorandum also acknowledges the importance of social development, be it just in support of the 'economic trajectory'. Indeed, it is stipulated that economic measures should be backed up with progress in terms of human development: *'no lasting economic development is possible unless it goes hand in hand with improvements in the standard of education and health of the people at whom it is aimed'*.³¹

Coherence. The memorandum places strong emphasis on promoting coherence for two reasons. First, it is argued that development progress requires coherent policies and acknowledges that policies at different levels (i.e. Community and national level) could do better in terms of taking into account their potential (negative) impact on development. As such, coherence is clearly framed from a development perspective, meaning that other policies should take into consideration development objectives.

²⁵ M. Holland & M. Doidge, *Development Policy of the European Union* (Palgrave MacMillan 2012).

²⁶ Commission of the European Communities, *Memorandum on a Community Policy on Development Cooperation*, 11 (Brussels, 2 Feb. 1972), <http://aei.pitt.edu/4364/1/4364.pdf>. (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, at 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, at 19.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, at 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

The text states, for example, that ‘Community decisions in the fields such as social affairs, transport, research and taxation show little sign of any consideration being given to the problems of developing countries’.³² Second, the memorandum frames coherence from a European integration perspective. In parallel to its European integration frame on development policy, it argues for a need to reduce vertical incoherence between the Community and Member States level for the sake of development effectiveness. This could be achieved by lifting development competences to the European level.

By the late 1970s, a combination of internal and external events forced the Commission to update its view on development. First, it became clear that the so-called first decade of development efforts had brought little progress. While various countries – most notably in Asia – witnessed strong economic growth, many others fell behind, including many African states. Second, Cold War tensions aggravated, including through the 1979 Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. Hence, thinking of development cooperation for geostrategic purpose resurfaced. Third, the EU was confronted with further enlargement waves which in turn had a number of implications for its external development role.³³ Responding to this different context which was no longer in tune with the 1972 Memorandum, the Commission adopted ‘**The Community’s Development Policy (1982)**’.

Motivation. The communication marks an important shift from its predecessor. The framing of development policy is twofold. On the one hand, the Commission now portrays development policy in terms of ‘mutual interests’ between Europe and the global South – as an ‘exchange of advantages’ in sectors such as fisheries, minerals, energy and industry.³⁴ According to the Commission economic progress will serve as a precondition for economic revival of Europe, illustrating the self-centred reasoning underlying the Commission’s development discourse. Nonetheless, the Commission maintained the moral frame, albeit less explicit than the 1972 memorandum. Development policy ‘is an earnest of solidarity with poorer countries, of awareness that international dependence has a political and humanitarian dimension as well as an economic one’.³⁵ As such, ‘whether we like it or not, we have a responsibility’³⁶ in helping to tackle structural imbalances between North and South.

Road to development. The communication identifies two interlinked roads towards development. First, economic progress is still seen as the main driver of development. The Commission emphasizes the need to achieve sustainable economic development, by means of dedicated actions aimed at integrating DCs

³² *Ibid.*, at 24.

³³ Holland & Doidge, *supra* n. 25.

³⁴ Commission of the European Communities, *Memorandum: The Community’s Development Policy*, COM (82) 640 final, at 17f (Brussels, 4 Oct. 1982), <http://aei.pitt.edu/4379/1/4379.pdf> (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, at 8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

into the world economy, adopting strategies to fully capture the potential of natural resources as drivers of growth.³⁷ Additionally, the Memorandum stresses the importance of turning DCs into more self-reliant partners. Various references are being made to 'self-reliance', and 'food-self-sufficiency'. Also in terms of social development, the emphasis of the suggested actions is on developing local capacities (e.g. human resources, independent capacities for scientific research) in order to support self-reliance of DCs.

Coherence. Coherence as a concept is not as prominent as in the 1972 memorandum. The text does include a separate section on coherence and coordination, pointing out that cohesion is often lacking between Community and national policies and the interests of the developing world.³⁸ It is recognized that EU policies '*indirectly affect in one way or another the Community's relations with the development countries*' and that therefore the Commission will have to ensure '*that the Community's internal and external policies dovetail with its development policy*'.³⁹ Nonetheless, the document remains vague on how to actually achieve such coherence. In sum, the 1982 memorandum largely frames the concept of coherence from a development perspective (i.e. ensuring that other policies are in line with – or do not undermine – development objectives), while it does not prominently feature it in the text.

3.2 FROM MAASTRICHT TO LISBON

The end of the Cold War, German reunification, and other intra-European developments called for a redefinition of Europe in the world. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) formalized a shared legal competence in the area of development cooperation, which spurred a debate about the EU's added value. In contrast to the development aid of the Member States, the Commission considered EU aid to be comparatively neutral, independent, and less driven by political interests, amongst others because the EU neither had a colonial past nor direct national interest. Furthermore, the Treaty anchored poverty reduction as the central objective of this new European policy domain, as such shielding the policy area from the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). A key Communication adopted just before the Treaty was adopted concerned **the 1992 Communication on the run-up to 2000**.

Motivation. In this Communication the EC returns to a moral rationale. With the end of the Cold War, '*developing countries are no longer of geostrategic interest to*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, at 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, at 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

opposing factions’,⁴⁰ while ‘humanistic values’ such as solidarity should be at the heart of the EU’s development policy. Hence, the world view underlying the Communication is one whereby the EC (and its Member States) see themselves as being part of the ‘developed world’, morally obliged to help achieving progress in the ‘developing world’: ‘*the North has to pay the cost of the South’s under-development*’ as the ‘*economic models obtaining in the North weigh heavily on the South and diminish their prospects of sustainable development*’.⁴¹ This rationale also reflects from the specific policy options it puts forward, such as improving DCs’ access to the European market, and improving human development through education, health or food security. Even so, development cooperation should contribute to the EU’s international profile by ‘*enhancing the Community’s presence on the world stage, thereby furthering the recognition of the Community’s identity*’.⁴² The Communication only makes one explicit reference to strategic interests of the EU or its Member States, namely that ‘*when promoting these humanistic values [...] this policy contributes to the protection of the Community’s interests by taking into account the mutual interest of the parties concerned*’.⁴³

Road to development. The Communication puts forward three interlinked priorities for the EC’s development policies in the years ahead, reinforcing the ones listed in Article 130 of the Maastricht Treaty. These are, (1) sustainable economic and social development, (2) the smooth integration of DCs in the world economy, and (3) campaigning against poverty. In addition, the Communication lists a fourth priority, namely, the consolidation of democracy. A further analysis indicates that the political (i.e. democratic progress) and economic dimension (i.e. growth) seem dominant in the EU’s development thinking. For the first time, specific attention is paid to the consolidation of democracy,⁴⁴ albeit ‘*within the framework of political stability*’.⁴⁵ Still, economic growth remains essential to the so-called ‘campaign against poverty’. Importantly, both are seen as interwoven. ‘*While democratization remains the key word, no real process can be initiated on a lasting basis without an economic fabric*’.⁴⁶

Coherence. Although development cooperation ‘*is also a vital component of foreign policy*’ (Introduction) and should ‘*further the objectives of other Community policies*’,⁴⁷ the document recognizes that development policy should have ‘*its own*

⁴⁰ Commission of the European Communities, *Development Cooperation Policy in the Run-up to 2000. The Community’s Relations with the Developing Countries Viewed in the Context of Political Union. The Consequences of the Maastricht Treaty. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament*. SEC (92) 915 final (Brussels, 15 May 1992) and SEC (92) 915 final/2, at section II/1.1 (Brussels, 18 Sept. 1992), <http://aei.pitt.edu/6855/1/6855.pdf> (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, s. II/2.3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, s. IV/1.4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, s. IV/1.3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, s. IV/1.1, 2.1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, s. IV/2.1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, s. IV/2.2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, s. V/2.1.

particular traits and driving force' (Introduction) and should '*achieve its own primary goals*'.⁴⁸ References made to the Maastricht treaty underline that development cooperation has become a full-blown EU policy. In addition, while the document prioritizes moral goals within EU development policies,⁴⁹ positive synergies should also be pursued with other EU policies. In this regard, a specific section on coherence states that '*the Community needs to improve the linkage between development policy and the common policies (e.g. the common agricultural policy, the common fisheries policy and the common commercial policy), taking full account of their beneficial and/or negative implications for the developing countries*'.⁵⁰ Similar calls are also made with regard to the Union's trade policies, again pointing at the fact that other policy areas can help advancing the priorities of EC development cooperation.

However, these initiatives produced mixed results. Lack of political will and capacity in the recipient countries, lack of coordination with initiatives of other donors, tensions within the Commission as well as reluctance in the Member States hindered real progress.⁵¹ Global aid reached its lowest level in the late 1990s and EU aid followed this trend, while the extension of the EU's cooperation programmes contributed to increasingly negative perceptions among Member States about the effectiveness of the Commission in this area.⁵² Confronted with this situation, the Council and the Commission agreed at the end of 2000 for the first time ever on setting aims of a European development policy. Poverty eradication was enshrined as the primary objective and coordination with the Member States and international donors had to ensure aid effectiveness. This **Development Policy Statement (DPS) (2000)** symbolized the 'European doctrine' for development and outlined an overall narrative with the aim of strengthening the visibility and effectiveness of European aid.

Motivation. The DPS reflects a moral frame, proposing a value-driven development cooperation. A main objective of the Communication is '*to become a partner in solidarity with the developing countries and refocus its activities to combat poverty*',⁵³ because this is what European citizens expect of the Union, but also because of dominant thinking within international development forums. '*(T)he global projection of our fundamental values and the pursuit of our objective of sustainable development must be manifested in strong solidarity, supported by a commercial policy that*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ M. Van Reisen, *EU 'Global Player'* (International Books 1999).

⁵² Holland & Doidge, *supra* n. 25.

⁵³ Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: The European Community's Development Policy*, COM (2000) 212 final, 4 (Brussels, 26 Apr. 2000), https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication-european-development-policy-com2000212-20000426_en.pdf (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

shows concern for shared interests'.⁵⁴ In light of a global increase in poverty, the objective of development cooperation is to reverse this trend, both by doing 'better' (i.e. improving aid effectiveness) and by doing 'more' (i.e. increasing budgets).

Road to development. The statement emphasizes the importance of economic growth and more generally the opportunities to achieve development offered by globalization processes. However, it also stresses the risks of globalization processes (e.g. Asian crisis) and recognizes explicitly that economic growth not necessarily reduces poverty. Here we can clearly identify the entrance of an additional dominant frame in the EU's development thinking, with the overarching objective being to '*refocus the Community's development policy on poverty reduction*'.⁵⁵

Coherence. The Communication distinguishes between building positive coherence across the EU's external policies and avoiding 'unintended incoherence'. In both cases, the promotion of development – more specifically the interest of the developing world – is put forward as the primary objective. With regard to building positive coherence, the EC aims to maximize its impact at the international stage in order to advance the interests of DCs. With regard to policy incoherence, the Communication argues to reduce the negative impact of several EU policies on DCs. In sum, coherence is always framed as coherence in function of advancing development objectives.

In the first decade of the 2000s, when EU ODA budgets were on the rise, international discussions on aid effectiveness emerged and the EU made its 'big bang enlargement'. Conditions were considered favourable for a next step in European integration. Following the DPS and institutional reforms in the Commission, a process was initiated towards the adoption of a joint statement that would concern both the Commission and the Member States: **the European Consensus on Development (2005)**.

Motivation. The very first sentence of the Consensus states that the primary objective of development policy is the eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development. '*Combating global poverty is not only a moral obligation; it will also help to build a more stable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable world, reflecting the interdependency of its richer and poorer countries*'.⁵⁶ Hence, the Commission adopts a moral frame on development.

The Road to Development. The Consensus positions the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the centre of EU development policy.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, at 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, at 8.

It presents for the first time a definition of poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. This is highly relevant because previous EU Communications refer to poverty reduction as an objective of EU development policy, without explaining what it means. To achieve progress with regard to poverty reduction, it suggests 'more and better aid'. Indeed, a lot of emphasis is being placed on scaling up collective aid levels – in line with previous ODA commitments at EU level. At the same time the document also states the importance of improving aid effectiveness, putting forward such concepts as 'ownership' and 'partnership'. Unlike previous Communications, economic growth itself features much less prominently in the document.

Coherence. The EU Consensus increases the level of ambition and provides a political interpretation of the EU Treaty's commitment to coherence. It introduces the term 'Policy Coherence for Development' as '*ensuring that the EU shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in all policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries, and that these policies support development objectives*'.⁵⁷ The definition expresses the expectation that the entire range of EU policies contribute positively to the achievement of the MDGs. The Consensus further commits the EU to promote synergies between migration and development and to support DCs in migration management and combatting human trafficking. This presents a departure from the traditional role of development policy and the commitment to promoting ownership of cooperation, by instead considering a 'symbiosis' (or nexus) between migration and development policy. Moreover, the text presents operational objectives for how migration should be promoted in development policy, without suggesting those objectives for promoting development in the context of the EU's migration policy.

3.3 POST-LISBON

External and internal events forced the Commission to fundamentally revise its development policies, particularly following the start of the global financial crisis in 2008, followed by the European debt crisis in 2009. Hence, development objectives (i.e. MDGs) needed to be pursued in a different economic climate characterized by austerity and increased global economic competition, including the BRICs countries. The entering into force of the Treaty on European Union in December 2009 prompted the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The EEAS was mandated to promote consistency within the EU's external action policy sphere and obtained a key role in co-deciding on the programming of aid.⁵⁸ The changing international and European context called for a redefinition of EU development

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Broberg, *supra* n. 2.

cooperation. This resulted in the adoption of the **Agenda for Change** (AfC) in 2011, aiming to modernize the EU's development policy.

Motivation. The AfC shows a remarkable shift towards a more self-centred vision on development policy. While the document still places great emphasis on the moral objectives underlying development cooperation, the AfC 'also' addresses other global challenges and furthers the EU's own long-term economic growth strategy (Europe 2020). The AfC argues throughout that there are no trade-offs between these objectives. Thematic instruments '*will both project EU policies into development cooperation and help eradicate poverty*'.⁵⁹ The Agenda thus promotes a shift in EU development policy from a primary focus on poverty reduction and the MDGs towards a broader agenda that is directly connected to EU foreign policy (e. g. security, migration, neighbourhood). The AfC demonstrates both a moral as well as realist frame on development policy.

Road to Development. In terms of 'road to development', the AfC marks an important shift away from previous communications, moving towards a cooperation that combines governance and economic cooperation. The commitment to social sectors is maintained, but it is clear that this is no longer at the centre of attention. A clear choice is made for a stronger focus on economic cooperation and the role of the private sector as an 'engine' of development. The road to development is summarized as '*inclusive and sustainable growth for human development*'.⁶⁰ In this sense, it resonates with earlier statements that DCs can grow themselves out of poverty.

Coherence. The AfC acknowledges upfront that '*the EU must choose the right mix of policies, tools and resources to be effective and efficient in the fight against poverty in the context of sustainable development*'.⁶¹ Linked to this, there is a clear departure from the idea of development as a self-standing area of public policy: '*At the EU level, the Lisbon Treaty has firmly anchored development policy within EU external action*'.⁶² The document presents a straightforward yet ambitious recipe for promoting coherence: '*The EU is an economic and trading partner, and its political dialogue, security policy and many other policies – from trade, agriculture and fisheries to environment, climate, energy and migration – have a strong impact on developing countries. It must translate this multi-faceted role into different policy mixes adapted to each partner country*'.⁶³ Both the security-development and migration-

⁵⁹ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change*, COM(2011) 637 final (Brussels, 13 Oct. 2011), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A52011DC0637&qid=1412922281378&from=EN> (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, at 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

development nexus are mentioned. No subordination is directly suggested, but the former is described in a manner of consistency (all policy areas should contribute to security by working together) while the latter suggests some imposition (development should pursue these migration-related aims).

A second juncture took place more recently, i.e. the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The EU took up an active role in the negotiation process leading to the 2030 Agenda, and one year after its adoption initiated a process to renew the 2005 EU Consensus on Development. This resulted in the **2017 New European Consensus on Development**.

Motivation. The new Consensus indicates that the document essentially serves as a response to the 2030 Agenda. The document presents two distinct frames on development. First, the Commission adopts a moral frame on development policy, stating that *'the primary objective of EU development policy, as laid down in Article 208 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, is the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty'*.⁶⁴ However, in contrast to the 2005 Consensus it refrains from including a definition of poverty. Additionally, a key assertion throughout the document is that *'Development policy is an essential part of the range of EU policies to tackle global challenges, manage interdependence and build a better world'*.⁶⁵ Subsequently, it refers to a range of EU policy areas, including trade, fisheries and agriculture. By implying an ex-ante positive contribution from these policy fields, the ability of development policy as a 'change maker' in promoting reforms of these policies for the benefit of DCs is strongly diminished while a self-centred frame becomes more obvious.

Road to Development. A key difference between the 2005 EU Consensus and the Communication is that the latter provides more detailed information on how to achieve development. While the old consensus puts forward the MDGs as 'road to development', the new one structures the current 17 SDGs into five 'Ps', namely people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The five 'Ps' are translated into specific actions, when the Communication frequently refers to objectives such as eradication of poverty, increasing resilience of DCs or promoting gender equality. The document also identifies a myriad of objectives, to the extent that it is fair to say that it lacks clear prioritization and policy choice. It could even be argued that the Commission's proposal for a new EU Consensus on Development seeks to deliberately create maximum 'policy space' for the use of the EU's development finance.

⁶⁴ European Union, *The New European Consensus on Development, 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future'*, 9 (Brussels, 19 May 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, at 8.

Coherence. A prominent difference with the 2005 Consensus is that the 2016 Communication does not address coherence issues upfront, but towards the end of the document. At this point, the Treaty provision for coherence in EU external action is mentioned first as requiring that all policies contribute to sustainable development. While the PCD-commitment is de-emphasized, countless references accentuate the interlinked nature of the global development agenda. At a prominent place under the heading *‘working better together’*, the Communication argues that *‘greater coherence is required between Member States and EU institutions; and between the internal and external dimensions of EU policies.’*⁶⁶ This prominence suggests that these will take precedence over the commitment to PCD. The New Consensus moreover radically reframes development policy by breaking its ‘monopoly’ of development cooperation as the sole policy field directly catering to DCs.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article analysed how the status of development policy in relation the EU’s broader external action in general has been (re-)framed over time. A number of overall findings emerge, from which we draw some implications as inputs to an agenda for future research in EU development and external policy studies (Table 1).

First of all, our analysis shows that the status of development policy in relation to other EU external policies has undergone various changes. Development policy seem to have gone ‘full circle’. In its early days, it was primarily framed as a supplementary policy to support other EU policies’ objectives, mainly through financial means. In the course of the European integration process, development policy gradually evolved into a self-standing EU external policy area that was largely perceived as pursuing objectives independent of other EU policies. Under recent policy shifts since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, development policy has again been framed as a policy that facilitates the EU’s broader external action. This strong alignment with other EU external policy areas seems to be the more natural role development policy has in the European integration project. Hence, this finding suggests that the status of development policy during the 2000–2009 period was a temporary phenomenon, while more recent policy changes representing a ‘return to form’ (cf. Figure 3). This conclusion is based on our main findings on the framing of EU development policy in the analysed documents, differentiating between the dimensions of motivation, road to development and coherence.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, at 1.

Table 1 Summary of the Analysis

	1972 Memorandum	1982 Memorandum	1992 Communication	2000 Development Policy Statement	2005 European Consensus	2011 Agenda for Change	2017 New European Consensus
Motivation	Moral > Europe- an inte- gration	Realist & Moral	Moral > Europe- an inter- national role	Moral	Moral	Moral & realist	Realist & moral
Road to development	Econo- mic growth > Social develop- ment	Econo- mic growth & Self- reliance	Econo- mic growth & Democ- racy > Poverty reduc- tion	Poverty reduc- tion > Econo- mic growth	Poverty reduc- tion through MDGs	Econo- mic growth > Poverty reduc- tion	No focus: SDGs ⇔ five Ps
Policy coherence	Avoidi- ng inco- herence for develop- ment objec- tives	General claim on coher- ence	Avoidi- ng inco- herence + (emer- gence of PCD)	Strong PCD frame	Stronger PCD frame	Develop- ment policy part and parcel of external action > PCD	Develop- ment policy contributes to external action objectives (Instrumen- talization)

Source: Authors

Figure 3 EU Development Policy's Return to Form



Source: Authors

In terms of **motivation**, our analysis demonstrates that the 2000s marked a unique period in the sense that during this time period the Commission upheld an almost exclusive moral frame on development. In contrast, for most of its existence, it always upheld different motivations, i.e. a moral frame combined with a more self-centred frame, be it in terms of European integration (cf. 1972),⁶⁷ the EU's international image (cf. 1992) or EU strategic interests (cf. 1982, 2011 and 2017). Hence, unlike what many believe today, our analysis shows that the current period of EU development cooperation is perhaps not breaking with the past, at least not with that before the 2000s.

As regards the **road to development**, our analysis shows a strong consistency, with the exception of some minor deviations over time. The omnipresence of economic growth in the Communications is not surprising as it can be considered an 'empty signifier' being interpreted in many different ways, in that it covers a plethora of aims from macro-economic stability to individual economic agency.⁶⁸ Furthermore, certain interpretations of growth were inspired by moral considerations,⁶⁹ whereas in other Communications economic growth of DCs also had a clear link with the EU's own economic interests.⁷⁰

Finally, in terms of **policy coherence**, our analysis shows that up until 2011, coherence was predominantly framed from a development point of view. Initially the Commission demonstrated a kind of PCD notion *avant la lettre*, emphasizing the general importance of ensuring coherence so that non-development policy areas do not undermine development objectives and priorities.⁷¹ This thinking was refined and strengthened in the 2000s, with the Commission emphasizing the importance of PCD as well as putting forward concrete plans of actions on how to

⁶⁷ Cf. European Commission, *supra* n. 26.

⁶⁸ Cf. European Commission, *supra* n. 40.

⁶⁹ Cf. European Commission, *supra* n. 26.

⁷⁰ Cf. European Commission, *supra* n. 34.

⁷¹ Cf. European Commission, *supra* n. 40, n. 26 & n. 34.

achieve it. The AfC (2011) and the New Consensus (2017), however, mark an important shift in terms of coherence thinking. Whereas up until 2011, the Commission – to a varying degree – always indicated a hierarchy with regard to coherence (i.e. other development areas in support of or at least not undermining development policy), this is no longer the case. The most recent Communications demonstrate what one could call a ‘beyond development’ of ‘policy coherence for external action’ perspective.

The implications of our findings are threefold. First, this study shows that the ‘good old days’ in which development policy enjoyed an autonomous status are not as old as the development community assumes in its criticism of current trends. The ‘new season’ in development policy instead constituted a temporary phenomenon, with recent policy changes rather representing a ‘return to form’. Indeed, the EU External Investment Plan (2017) and its European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), as well as the Africa-Europe Alliance (2018), seem to point to the continuation of a self-centred framing of EU development policy and the consistent omnipresence of economic growth as the road to development. Under the assumption that African migration to Europe has mainly been motivated by a lack of economic opportunities and employment, these and other initiatives emphasize job creation and external investment as a means to address presupposed ‘root-causes’ of irregular migration to Europe. In today’s discourse, development cooperation is again seen as one of the external policy areas of the EU that could contribute to global sustainable development. Hence, the space for instrumentalization has (re-)opened, meaning that depending on the specific actions pursued by the Commission, development cooperation could be used in support of other policy areas.

Second, and following from the previous, if development is indeed a question of geopolitics, migration policy, investment or trade relations, a more fundamental debate on the relevance of having a self-standing development commissioner and development policy seems to become imperative. The instalment of European Parliament’s new Development Committee and the new Commissioner for Development constitute an ideal opportunity for scholars and policymakers to engage in this debate.⁷²

Third, this study calls for more future research in EU development and external policy studies, to deal with the various new questions that our study may raise. In particular, further research could delve deeper into the explanations of these findings, building on some of the factors that our study already touched upon, including the role of different actors and institutions in the framing processes

⁷² See also J. Orbie & S. Delputte, *Let’s abolish EU Commissioner for Development*, EU Observer (9 May 2019), <https://euobserver.com/opinion/144841> (accessed 23 Oct. 2019).

or the international ideational context. Indeed, although our analysis points to various points of continuity in the dominant framing of EU development policy, what has changed radically since the Juncker Commission is that these frames are predominantly set by EU heads of state and the Commission's leadership. This has relegated the EU's development policy and the Commissioner in charge to an implementing role, and has eroded the purpose of the regular convening of EU development ministers in the Foreign Affairs Council. We thus see considerable scope for further research into the process through which EU development is framed.