


**NORMATIVE POWER POLICY IN EUROPEAN UNION-AFRICA RELATIONS IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE COTONOU AGREEMENT AND THE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP
AGREEMENTS AND ITS IMPACTS ON EMPOWERING AFRICA**Asst. Prof. (Ph.D.) Omca ALTIN * **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the normative power policy of the European Union (EU) in its relationships with Africa through the Cotonou Agreement, which includes normative provisions and conditionality, and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). The study also tries to evaluate how effective the EU's normative power policy towards the continent and these agreements developed within the framework of the normative values are in the strengthening of the region. In the study, which was conducted by using the literature review method, current articles, books, and reports on the subject have been examined. The results of the study revealed that the normative power policy of the EU in its relations with Africa has been based on a realistic strategy rather than an idealist approach, and this policy has been used to realize the EU's political and economic interests, which have been the basis of its relations with the countries in the continent where the EU has a colonial past. In other words, the study argues that the normative power used by the EU in its relations with Africa is based on the economic interests of the EU. Therefore, it has been argued that the normative power policy of the EU towards the continent, the Cotonou Agreement developed within the framework of normative values, and the EPA has not been effective in improving and developing Africa. In particular, the EU practices cannot be implemented in compliance with the normative values it has set forth as part of the economic and commercial cooperation. The promotion of the values, the strengthening, and development of the continent might be kept relatively in the second place by the Union by prioritizing its own interests in economy and commercial cooperation. In this context, considering the structure and basic needs of the continent rather than the interests of the member states in the EU's normative approach to the continent will both ensure consistency in the normative approach of the EU by preventing the interests of the Union and its member states from getting ahead of EU norms and will be extremely important in the development and strengthening of the continent.

Keywords: European Union, Africa, Normative Power, Cotonou Agreement, Economic Partnership Agreements.

JEL Codes: : D63, O18, O52, O55, Z00.

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Makale Geçmiři/Article History

Bařvuru Tarihi / Date of Application : 23 Şubat/ February 2022

Düzeltilme Tarihi / Revision Date : 26 Haziran / June 2022

Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date : 23 Ağustos / August 2022

COTONOU ANLAŞMASI VE EKONOMİK ORTAKLIK ANLAŞMALARI BAĞLAMINDA AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ-AFRİKA İLİŞKİLERİNDE NORMATİF GÜÇ POLİTİKASI VE AFRİKA'YI GÜÇLENDİRMEDEKİ ETKİSİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada; Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) Afrika ile ilişkilerindeki normatif güç politikası, normatif hükümler ve koşulluluk içeren Cotonou Anlaşması ve Ekonomik Ortaklık Anlaşmaları (EOA) üzerinden analiz edilerek, AB'nin kıtaya yönelik normatif güç politikasının, normatif değerler çerçevesinde geliştirilen bu anlaşmaların bölgenin güçlendirilmesinde ne derece etkin olduğu değerlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırmada literatür tarama yöntemi kullanılmış olup, konuya yönelik güncel makale, kitap ve raporlar incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda; AB'nin Afrika ile ilişkilerindeki normatif güç politikasının, idealist bir yaklaşımdan çok özellikle sömürgecilik geçmişinin bulunduğu kıta ülkeleriyle ilişkilerine temel olan, siyasi ve ekonomik çıkarlarını gerçekleştirmek amacıyla kullandığı realist bir stratejiye dayandığı görülmüştür. Diğer bir ifade ile çalışmada AB'nin Afrika ile ilişkilerinde kullandığı normatif gücün, AB'nin ekonomik çıkarları üzerinden temellendiği, dolayısıyla AB'nin kıtaya yönelik normatif güç politikasının, normatif değerler çerçevesinde geliştirilen Cotonou Anlaşması'nın ve EOA'nın Afrika'yı güçlendirmede, kalkındırmada etkin olamadığı tezleri ileri sürülmüştür. Özellikle AB, ekonomik ve ticari işbirlikleri kapsamında ortaya koymuş olduğu normatif değerlerle uyumlu pratikler uygulayamamakta, Birlik ekonomi ve ticari işbirliklerinde kendi çıkarlarını ön planda tutarak, değerlerin teşviğini, kıtanın güçlenmesini ve kalkınmasını göreceli olarak ikinci planda tutabilmektedir. Bu kapsamda AB'nin kıtaya yönelik normatif yaklaşımında üye ülkelerinin çıkarlarından ziyade kıtanın yapısını ve temel ihtiyaçlarını dikkate alması, hem Birliğin ve üye ülkelerinin çıkarlarının AB normlarının önüne geçmesini engelleyerek AB'nin normatif yaklaşımında tutarlılık sağlayacak hem de kıtanın kalkınması ve güçlenmesinde son derece önemli olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Avrupa Birliği, Afrika, Normatif Güç, Cotonou Anlaşması, Ekonomik Ortaklık Anlaşmaları.*

JEL Kodları: *D63, O18, O52, O55, Z00.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The EU, which aims to establish democracy, fundamental freedoms, peace, rule of law and human rights, asserts these norms as the main components and conditions of cooperation in its cooperation with third countries in the international arena. This feature of the European Union (EU) has been legitimized by agreements and it is based on a realistic strategy used by the Union members to achieve their political and economic interests, rather than an idealist approach. It is seen that the Union uses this strategy, especially in its relations with the countries in the African continent where it has a colonial history.

The fact that Africa is an extremely important market with a constantly increasing market value, its location on international trade routes and its rich raw materials and natural resources have become the main factors that boosted the EU's interest in the continent. Moreover, the member states of the Union have special economic relations with Africa due to their colonial history. In other words, the current interests of the member states of the Union towards the continent have played a key role in making the continent one of the priority areas of the EU's foreign policy since its establishment. Therefore, the member states of the Union have been trying to benefit from the legacy of colonialism even today. With the end of the colonial period, the EU has developed a strong bond with African countries. Especially with the Lomé Convention signed with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the EU has established a formal relationship with the continent. This convention also facilitated the EU-Africa relations by a system based on unilateral trade relations for many years. However, in the 1990s, the Union's interest has shifted from Africa to Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean regions, which have been extremely significant for them in terms of new markets and commercial cooperation. With the Cotonou Agreement, which abolished the trade preferences system and included normative provisions and conditionality, the EU's Africa policy gained a new dimension. However, the EU has been observed to use these norms mostly to legitimize its economic, commercial, and geopolitical interests in the continent. Although the principle of the "equality of arms" is emphasized in the Cotonou Agreement, it cannot be implemented due to the asymmetrical relationship where the continent has been made dependent on the Union in terms of trade, economic relations and aid, economic relations and aid to be sent to the continent have been subjected to conditions, and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) is shaped in line with interests of the EU. Therefore, the Cotonou Agreement and the EPA, which were developed within the framework of normative values, have not been effective in strengthening the continent, solving the problems related to development and efforts for regional integration.

This study analyzes the normative power policy of the EU in its relationships with Africa through the Cotonou Agreement, which includes normative provisions and conditionality and EPA. The study also tries to evaluate how effective the EU's normative power policy towards the continent and these agreements developed within the framework of the normative values are in the strengthening of the region. In line with this purpose, the study first describes the concept of normative power and the normative power of the EU, and it presents the criticisms of the Normative Power Europe in the context of the EU-Africa relations. Then, the study discusses the EU-Africa relations before the Cotonou Agreement and it analyzes the use of normative power by the EU within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and the EPA and the effect of these agreements, which have been established within the framework of the use of normative power and normative values, on the strengthening of Africa.

2. THE CONCEPT OF NORMATIVE POWER AND THE NORMATIVE POWER OF THE EU

Although the EU is one of the most significant actors of international relations, it is defined differently from other actors. This unique feature of the Union in the field of foreign policy is explained by the concept of "normative", which has been widely used recently (Okcu, 2015: 239). In other words, the unique normative character of the EU distinguishes it from other great powers (Liszkowska, 2017: 366). The term norm refers to "the rule to be followed, the predetermined pattern" (Turkish Language Association, n.d.). Norms have features such as ordering, prohibiting, thus regulating the behaviors, creating and shaping the obligations in the social field (Ellickson, 2001: 35).

The word normative, on the other hand, is defined as "determining and defining the patterns and standards of behavior and revealing what should be". In the international political system, the norm does not refer to a piece of advice, a request, or a wish but has an imperative aspect. Therefore, in case of any violation, it may be possible to impose sanctions. Also, the norm indicates the "ideal way" by referring to its reasons, goals and bases (Işıktaş, 2015: 142-145).

In this context, the norms are regarded as a scale that can resolve many existing or emerging problems. Especially in international relations, they have become answers to many questions that emerged as a result of the relationship between the structure, actor and action by allowing different behaviors to look like each other. Norms are associated with the behaviors of the actors and they envisage that actions should be formalized within the framework of certain rules (Tabak, 2017: 149-150). They are patterns of behavior defined based on the rights and duties; they also have constructive and guiding features (Björkdahl, 2002: 14-16). Norm makers, on the other hand, persuade actors to redefine their interests and identities in this process and they aim to legitimize their norms and ensure their acceptance by involving the actors in the social learning process (Börzel and Risse, 2000: 2-3). Therefore, the norms that establish the rules of the path reveal the identity of the actor (Björkdahl, 2002: 14-16). The progress of the countries on the same path through the same norm plays a key role in coordinating the foreign policy decisions of the countries and creating a holistic will (Björkdahl, 2002: 14-16).

Four basic factors ensure the integrity of the norms. The first of these factors is that norms can direct the behavior of the actor by ensuring consistency in the behavior of the actor. The second factor is that the norms offer an opportunity for the actor to act in accordance with rational decisions and to behave in a norm-oriented manner. In this regard, the norm is also a motivation factor. Another factor is the norm's ability to impose sanctions. A norm with a sanctioning power has the power of forming the behaviors of the subordinate actors as well. Finally, the fourth factor is the normativity of the norm. The norm is an idea, and it arises from the moral concerns and desire to act justly; the historical change

that the international system has undergone constitutes the basis of these concerns (Goertz and Diehl, 1992: 636-638).

In this regard, normative power is an intellectual power formed by norms rather than a physical or material power (Manners, 2002: 238). In the relationship between the concepts of normative and power, it is observed that the focus has been on the legitimization of power or the means of using power through norms. In other words, normative power as a form of intellectual power is based on normative legitimization rather than the ability to use material or physical power (Manners, 2011: 230). Thus, normative power is the power that has the authority to decide what to do, what can be done or what should be done according to the responsibilities, powers, sanctions of the units (Oren, Luck and Miles, 2010: 815). The most important point to be considered in the normative state of power is that it requires normative sustainability in policies and relations with other units. In other words, this state of being normative should be explained and justified in other units, and it should be sustained by future generations (Manners, 2011: 230). In order to achieve sufficiently convincing normative justification, the issue of legitimacy must be resolved after the acceptance of the normative principles, and normative principles should be promoted to other units consistently and coherently (Portela and Raube, 2009: 17).

The concept of normative power coined by Ian Manners is based on the idea of forming, diffusing and normalizing the rules and norms in international relations. According to Manners, who is one of the first authors to define the normative vision of the EU's foreign policy, internalizing the history of the EU is extremely important in understanding its normative approach. The normative power of the Union derives from its characteristics such as the history of Europe, the hybrid structure of the EU and its legal structure. The Union first set out with the economic goals to eliminate the effects of the great destruction on the continent caused by World War II, to prevent the emergence of new wars on the continent and to bring lasting peace, prosperity and freedom to the continent. Then, it has evolved into a political structure that outweighs the social, political and cultural aspects during the process. After World War II, some norms left their mark on the period and new norms that separated democratic Western Europe from communist Eastern Europe during the cold war period were added to these norms. The significance of these norms has increased even more in Europe's identity formation process. Because the EU was observed to be inadequate particularly in military matters after the Cold War, instruments that would facilitate strengthening the EU's role as an actor in the global arena and ensure being taken into account by other actors were needed even more; in this context, the basic principles and values that the EU has had since the early days of the union have come to the fore in the field of foreign policy (Aksoy and Uğur, 2016: 222). At the same time, the Union's norms, which aim to be effective on the former communist countries after the end of the Cold War, have been the basic criteria for the EU membership for Eastern European countries. Then, the norms have been shaped in accordance with the priorities of foreign policy. In the historical process, the EU has become a mixed structure that includes both supranational and intergovernmental forms of governance. This mixed structure of the Union is due to

its legal structure based on agreements. Constitutional norms form the building blocks of the EU's international identity. According to the classification made by Manners, five core norms come to the fore in the agreements and policies of the EU. These core norms are democracy, peace, respect for human rights the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. Besides these core norms, the norms of social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance are defined as minor norms (Manners, 2002: 242-243; Reichenbach, 2008: 1). EU member states have agreed on these principles to the point where they have legally binding commitments (Dunne, 2008: 22). The fact that EU member states agree on these norms, as well as agreeing on the EU's use of these norms international arena, plays a key role in making normative elements both more consistent and more effective as a foreign policy instrument (Krohn, 2009: 12-14).

By adopting these norms and values, the EU has aimed to create a global sphere of influence beyond its system at the European level (Manners, 2006a: 184). According to Manners, the normative power of the EU aims to progress as an actor that sets rules with its values, determines the behavior patterns and standards in the global arena, and defines these standards; moreover, this normative power stems from not only the EU's normative basis but also the effort to diffuse its normative values internationally (Manners, 2002: 244; Vatandaş, 2018: 151). Therefore, Manners here highlights the EU's ability to diffuse the European legal and political standards, ideas, discourses, and integration standards, thereby shaping the international environment (Manners, 2002: 239). The adoption of these normative values by the EU has led to the capacity to diffuse these normative values to third countries in the next stage; thus, a normative character was attributed to the EU. As it can be understood, only adopting the normative approach in domestic and foreign policy is not sufficient for an actor to be defined as a normative power. Therefore, in order for an actor to be regarded as a normative power in the international arena, the approach adopted by this actor in the foreign policy should diffuse and penetrate into other countries and regions (Storey, 2006: 334). It is extremely important that the actor acts based on civilian instruments rather than military ones and ensures sustainability in the diffusion of norms rather than geographic expansion or military dominance (Diez, 2005: 613). Therefore, the legitimate diffusion of principles such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, social solidarity and sustainable development and convincing third countries to act based on these principles play a key role in proving the existence of the normative power (Manners, 2009: 11-13). In particular, the EU not only promotes these principles but also shows how to apply them (Liszkowska, 2017: 366).

On the other hand, it uses different methods in the diffusion of norms. Particularly in international relations, political actors can adopt similar policies or behavior patterns based on the previous experiences of the EU without any expectations. Many options such as EU declarations, policy initiatives, the institutionalization of relations through agreements, the physical presence of the EU in third countries, its membership in international organizations, the enlargement of the Union and

interregional cooperation agreements facilitates the universalization of norms. Also, financial rewards, such as commercial cooperation or financial aid offered in return for certain political conditions, or various sanctions are among the norm diffusion methods frequently used by the EU. The EU applied this method mostly in its relations, particularly with its former colonies (Manners, 2002: 244-245). Therefore, the EU can impose its own norms on third countries by placing conditionality provisions on these countries in trade and financial aid (Hyde-Price, 2008: 31). Although third countries are forced to accept conditionality provisions by the Union to be able to cooperate with the EU and obtain economic aid, these countries usually try to fulfill the conditions, as exclusion from the union will be more damaging for them (Hyde-Price, 2006: 230).

3. CRITICISM AGAINST THE NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EU-AFRICA RELATIONS

Manners emphasizes that the EU is not an actor that acts according to its interests and follows materialist strategies in international relations, on the contrary, an actor that aims to diffuse peaceful norms for a just world order (Manners, 2006b: 177). However, despite Manners's opinion, the extent to which the EU is a normative actor has become a disputable issue (Vatandaş, 2018: 151). In particular, the criticisms against the "Normative Power Europe" are mostly based on a realist point of view, which asserts that the EU has developed policies that are in line with its own interests in international relations. According to Hettne and Söderbaum, the EU tends to use its normative power in cases where the power relationship between the EU and third countries is partially symmetrical; on the contrary, it establishes imperial relations with actors that are weaker than itself in cases where the relationship is asymmetrical. In particular, the EU's relations with its former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) are the best examples of this situation. In theory, although the relationship established by the Union with the ACP countries is explained as a "partnership" relationship, in practice, it is an asymmetrical relationship in which norms such as democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, peace and fundamental freedoms, are presented by the EU as political conditions in return for commercial cooperation and various financial aids. In case the former colonies of the EU do not comply with these norms imposed on them, some sanctions, which are defined as restrictive precautions/measures, may be imposed by the EU, such as the suspension of commercial relations or financial aid (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005: 550; Eckes 2012: 114). These restrictive measures or sanctioning power of the Union obliges third countries, particularly their political leaders, to make modifications in their activities and policies (Aksoy and Uğur, 2016: 218). Hettne and Söderbaum describe the Union's approach to this region, which is extremely rich in raw materials and natural resources, as "soft imperialism" (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005: 550). According to Farrell, this situation is expressed as "a triumph of realism over idealism" (Farrell, 2005: 263).

Defining the EU as a normative actor puts it in a superior position against other international actors, and this allows it to determine what would be the “normal”, “correct”, and “best”. In other words, the EU is regarded as a "model worth copying" in terms of values such as human rights, democracy, rule of law, peace, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which constitute the main elements of the phrase "Normative Power Europe", and the further improvement of these values. However, this approach, which paves the way for the Union to try to develop and progress these values in other countries, is an important problem; defining the union as a normative actor with a colonial connotation as a "model worth copying" generally makes the EU a practice that maintains the interests of the member states and legitimizes their policies (Waeber, 2000: 261; Cebeci, 2015: 43,47). In particular, the EU uses the norms to implement its commercial and geopolitical interests in its policies towards Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific region, to legitimize its actions in its foreign policy and to ensure them to be acceptable. The discourses such as solidarity with the poor geographies in the world, human rights, responsibility towards their former colonies, democracy, egalitarian international economic system, which come to the fore in Europe's African policy, create an important advantage for the EU both economically and politically in practice, in other words, they strengthen it and legitimize its policies. However, on the contrary, these discourses do not create social, economic, or political progress for Africa (Langan, 2012: 265; Cebeci, 2015: 46). On the other hand, Storey also argues that the norms of the Union, especially those in its foreign trade and economic policies, and its relations with developing countries, are formed by the interests of the EU (Storey, 2006: 334). Also, the realists emphasize that the Union tries to achieve harmony with the countries in which it diffuses its own norms in its region, thus aiming to create buffer zones with geographies that pose a threat to its own security (Del Sarto, 2016: 222).

Considering the EU-Africa relationship from a historical perspective, it is seen that the EU's interest in the African continent is based on the relationship that the member states of the Union established with the continent during the colonial period. As a result of the competition in colonization that emerged immediately after the geographical discoveries, European countries have sought to colonize the peoples of Africa to meet their needs for raw materials and other resources and this situation continued until the countries in the continent gained their independence in the 1960s. In the 21st century, the relations of African countries with the countries that colonized them have also continued within the framework of the dynamics of the colonial period. In this context, their relations with the EU have been progressing within the same framework (Bekar, 2021: 313,315). Therefore, the relations of the EU member states with the continent actually play a key role in shaping the EU-Africa relations. Since the very beginning of its history, the EU-Africa relationship has progressed within the framework of the realist approaches of European countries, especially France and the UK, which have a colonial past with the continent. Confirming this, the provisions regulating the relations with non-European states were included in the Treaty of Rome in line with the request of France, which aims to develop special

economic relations with its colonies. Thus, France planned to ensure its sovereignty in the colonial markets and to share the costs of the aid planned for these regions with the other members of the European Economic Community (Banthia, 2007: 4). As can be seen, France and the UK aimed to develop their relations with their former colonies through the EU (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 110). Therefore, the desire of the member states to access the rich raw materials and natural resources of the continent and also to secure their economic investments have brought about their efforts to maintain their relations with their former colonies, and they wanted to continue their desires through the EU (Farrell, 2005: 266; Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 110). On the other hand, the EU has tried to keep its relations with Africa in the main area of interest of the Union by following the "Union for the Mediterranean" and the "European Neighborhood Policy" that it has developed over the period (Bekar, 2021: 315).

Since the 1990s, normative elements such as democracy, rule of law, peace, human right and fundamental freedoms constitute the basic conditions of the EU's relations with third countries (Farrell, 2005: 275-276). In particular, the Lisbon Treaty states that the Union will defend its own values in its relations with third countries, and contribute to behaving in accordance with international law and to the development of international law including peace, security, sustainable development of the world, solidarity and mutual respect between peoples, preventing poverty, the protection of human rights, primarily children's rights, and respect for the principles in the United Nations Charter (Kaçar and Öztürk, 2017: 365). The Union's development policy has also set mitigating poverty as its main target; however, it was emphasized that all these should be implemented by functioning democracies and accountable democracies to achieve this goal and ensure its sustainability. In this context, the norms such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, peace, fundamental freedoms, which are regarded as a natural reflection of the normative power of the EU, are presented as a prerequisite for financial aid and bilateral cooperation in the EU's policy towards Africa (Farrell, 2005: 275-276). Therefore, this conditionality policy of the Union, in other words, trying to impose its own values and norms on other societies is the most significant practice of its "silent power to discipline", in other words, its "dominating side". This is one of the criticized aspects of the "Normative Power Europe" approach. While this situation places the Union in a higher position, in other words, the position of authority, the identity of the target country is defined as an underdeveloped, imperfect, and incomplete country, which is expected to accept the values of the Union. In this context, it is seen that the representation of "Normative Europe" legitimizes the dominating policy of the Union and causes the target countries to define it negatively (Diez, 2005: 628; Merlingen, 2007: 438; Cebeci, 2015: 47-48,51).

Moreover, the fact that the EU presents these norms such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, peace and fundamental freedoms as a prerequisite to the target countries in return for various financial aids and collaborations without considering their economic, social, cultural, and political structures, in other words, the Union tries to impose its own values on other states, is often criticized

(Bicchi, 2006:296). It is not a unilateral action for the Union to have the said principles accepted by the target countries, thus diffusion of these values into the target countries. Furthermore, the capacity of target countries to carry out these reforms also plays a key role here. In particular, the traditional management styles, political structures, national systems, socio-cultural structures of the target countries are the determining factors for the success of this conditionality mechanism (Bozkaya and Kınal, 2020: 279). Considering the issue through the African example, there seems a significant difference between the political reforms requested by the EU from Africa to implement and the capacity of the countries in the continent to implement these political reforms. In terms of Africa, it is not possible to state the existence of governmental systems that have adopted the concepts of legitimacy and stability and have built up capacity in this regard, as is the case in the West. There are various political regimes in Africa, from dictatorships to elected governments that work hard for the development of democracy. Therefore, in the short term, it is not possible for the continent to implement or internalize the norms such as democracy, human rights and rule of law that the EU offers to Africa as a prerequisite, especially for financial aid and bilateral cooperation. As a matter of fact, it has taken centuries for democracy to take its present form, even in the West. Still, some problems may be encountered in its implementation in the EU. Therefore, it is very difficult to objectively evaluate the eligibility of countries for financial aid and cooperation through these norms in this region, which continues its democratization efforts at different levels and dimensions (Farrell, 2005: 275-276).

Another criticism of the “Normative Power Europe” is that the interests of the Union and its member states generally come before EU norms in EU foreign policy (Cebeci, 2015: 48), thus, stating that the Union is not consistent in its normative approach. Polack states that the EU mostly uses its resources in a hypocritical way and basically protects its own interests under the name of so-called universal norms and emphasizes that the Union is no different from other actors in this respect (Pollack, 2012: 199-204). On the other hand, according to Zimelis' view, the EU applies double standards in its mission of diffusing norms in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific region. The EU, on the one hand, imposes sanctions on any African, Caribbean, and Pacific country in case it violates the normative principles, on the other hand, it continues to cooperate with the country in question in different fields. Zimelis cites Guinea as an example of his claim. The EU imposed sanctions on Guinea due to human rights violations, and shortly afterward signed an agreement with this country in the fishing industry (Zimelis, 2011: 390,396-401). Therefore, the Union and its member states may prioritize their foreign policy preferences and interests and ignore issues such as democracy, rule of law, peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Wong addressed this case based on the example of France. According to Wong, although French political and diplomatic interests seem to be compatible with the Union's core values, in practice, the support provided by the French foreign policy to the oppressive governments, especially in Africa, actually proves that issues such as human rights and democracy are pushed in the background (Wong, 2007: 399). All of this criticism has led to questioning the effectiveness of the

Union's conditionality policy. Another inconsistency in the EU's approach towards the African continent is observed in the Union's Common Agricultural Policy. While the Union, on the one hand, limits protective measures by promoting free trade in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific region, on the other hand, it takes measures to protect its own farmers within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy and imposes high customs duties on high-profit products of African. African leaders state that the Union is not consistent in its policy of diffusing norms across the African continent and they point to the current interests of the Union member states towards their former colonies as the main source of this inconsistent behavior (Sicurelli, 2010: 152).

The inconsistency in the EU's normative approach is generally explained by the fact that the Union is not a single actor. In particular, the field of foreign policy is within the scope of the common jurisdiction, in other words, this field is not independent of the policies of the EU member states. The foreign policy of the EU, which consists of different countries, has an intergovernmental nature; therefore, the Union sometimes implement interest-based policies by acting in line with the interests of its member states instead of norm-based policies (Hoffmann, 2010: 87,101; Cebeci, 2015: 50; Kaçar and Öztürk, 2017: 363-364). According to Jorgensen and Laatikainen, the EU does not have a separate interest in foreign relations, the Union only serves the interests of its member states (Jorgensen and Laatikainen, 2004: 154). In short, they try to emphasize that polyphony makes it difficult for the Union to represent itself as a whole.

4. EU-AFRICA RELATIONS BEFORE THE COTONOU AGREEMENT

The foundations of the EU's policy towards Africa were laid in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC). With this agreement's special provisions for African countries, some of which are ex-colonies while some are new colonies, the interests and privileges of the member states on the continent from the past were tried to be protected (Bekar, 2021: 315). In Article 131 of the Agreement, it is decided that the countries and territories outside the borders of Europe that have special bonds with France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy (and the UK later) should establish partnership relations also with the Community. Also, Article 132 states that the member states shall apply the trade regime they offer to each other also to their trade with other countries and territories and they shall contribute to the investments necessary for the development of these countries and lands. Moreover, Article 133 emphasizes that the customs duties collected from the imports to the non-European countries or territories from the member countries or vice versa, imports to the member countries from the non-European countries and territories will be gradually removed (European Parliament). During the negotiation process of the Treaty of Rome, France requested a special procedure for its former colonies. Most of the colonies gained their independence in the 1960s, and especially in 1963, in the face of the EEC's desire to extend the partnership to all of continental Africa, many French colonies wanted to improve their relations with the EEC, which they found more neutral rather than the

French Community. In this context, these countries continued their relations with the Yaoundé I Convention between 1963-1969 and the Yaoundé II Convention between 1969-1975 to eliminate the uncertainties brought by full independence and to gain the strength to survive in the international arena without the need for European political and economic support. Also, the European Development Fund was established to support the former colonies (Montana, 2003: 70-71; Okcu, 2015: 246). The Yaoundé Conventions, which were regarded as a stabilizing factor for the postcolonial period by Lister, have created the opportunity for Community to continue its partnership with these countries (Lister, 1988: 30-45).

Yaoundé Convention I, which was signed in 1963, stipulated the economic, social, and cultural development of the parties, establishing industrial infrastructure, and ensuring economic diversity in the countries in the continent; however, the main target of the Convention was aid and trade (Williams, 2004: 23). With the Yaoundé Convention II, it was tried to integrate the African countries with the world economy while trying to facilitate the recognition of these countries, which gained their independence, by the EEC (Montana, 2003: 75). Upon the termination of the Yaoundé Convention in 1969, the Yaoundé II Convention was signed, and the Yaoundé II Convention aimed to strengthen economic development and to develop economic cooperation between the partners (Grilli, 1993: 28,29). On the other hand, Montana stated that the main purpose of the Yaoundé II Convention was to maintain the Euro-African relations (Montana, 2003: 80).

The Yaoundé Conventions, which were signed between the EEC and the countries in the African continent, emphasized the equality of arms principle and the mutual abolition of tariffs by the parties in the trade between the two parties was highlighted. The conventions focused on the idea of creating a free trade zone between Africa and the EU and it was stated that regional partnerships should be established in Africa to achieve this goal. However, the goal of establishing a free trade zone between Africa and the EU could not be achieved due to three major reasons. The first of these reasons was that many African countries that gained their independence at that time preferred to follow an import-substitution method based on protectionism. Another reason was that businesses in France, which had a privileged position to enter African markets, were worried that companies in other European countries would also benefit from this privilege. In the event of such a case, France thought that its interests would be harmed. The last reason was the concerns of the US that Europe would further increase its influence in Africa (Flint, 2009: 80).

Although the equality of arms principle was emphasized in the Yaoundé Conventions, Lister stated that several sections on the trade and aid in the conventions were prepared by the EEC; on the other hand, Montana emphasized that these conventions seemed to be a reflection of the neo-colonial order (Lister, 1988: 36-37; Montana, 2003: 80). In particular, the objectives stated in the Yaoundé Conventions were not fully achieved, and the relations were mostly guided by the EEC. Therefore, this

situation provided a clear view of the inequality between the parties (Gruhn, 1976: 247). Cosgrove stated that it was tried to protect the interests of Western Europe in any case (Cosgrove, 1969: 83-84).

Due to the failure of the Yaoundé Conventions in the 1960s to achieve the stated goals, as well as asserting that the agreements were the continuation of the neo-colonial order, the Lomé Convention was signed between the members of the European Economic Community and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in 1975 (Vogel, 2011: 1). With this convention, the EU gained the opportunity to establish official relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in a wider framework (Scheipers and Sicurelli, 2008: 607-608). Based on the principle of non-reciprocity, the Lomé Convention enabled both the European Community (EC) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to obtain some preferential trade privileges. In this context, while the EC will pay tariffs for their exports to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, these countries will not reduce tariffs for their exports to the EC. However, the Lomé Convention could not get the desired effect on the trade and development of the African, Caribbean and Pacific region. Thereupon, the Lomé II Convention was signed in 1979, and the Lomé III Convention was signed in 1984 by including new countries (Okcu, 2015: 247). Moreover, STABEX and SYSMIN, which were the instruments of the system of fixing the incomes from exports, were created to prevent the goods exported by the countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific region from being adversely affected by market fluctuations and these instruments were financed by the European Development Fund in the 1970s. While STABEX ensured that the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries did not suffer any damage from the imbalance in the export revenues of agricultural products, SYSMIN ensured funding the mining production for the development of mining in these countries (Güven, 2008: 44).

During the period of Lomé Conventions, the interests of the EU have undergone some changes as a result of developments in its internal dynamics and in the international arena. Accordingly, the differentiation in the priorities of the EU has also created a difference in its approach towards African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries. In the 1990s, a restructuring process has been started in the European Commission, and the African, Caribbean, Pacific region and EU relations, which were previously carried out by the Development Directorate, were decided to be carried out by the Trade Directorate. This showed that the EU's regional policy towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific region would be administered by the EU's foreign trade policy (Farrell, 2005: 268). In these years, the EU gave priority to the Central and Eastern European regions, which were extremely advantageous in terms of commercial partnerships and new markets. Germany, which had interests in these regions, was the factor in the EU's focus on these regions. Thus, Germany's interests in these regions also played a significant role in balancing the French-centered perspective on shaping the EU's behavior in the international arena (Sacks, 1998: 5).

On the other hand, in this period, the Mediterranean region became more important for the EU than the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries since it was geographically close and commercially

advantageous, also it posed threats such as illegal immigration and terrorism. Between 1970 and 1974, there were 13 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries among the 15 countries that benefited most from the EU aid; in 1996 and 1997, this number gradually declined to 2. In these years, Eastern European and Mediterranean countries benefited more from EU aid (Okcu, 2015: 247).

The fact that the new member states of the EU after the 1980s do not have any historical ties with the African, Caribbean and Pacific region was another reason why the Union's interest in African, Caribbean and Pacific policy decreased. Spain and Portugal, which joined the Union in 1986, had historical ties with Latin America instead of the African, Caribbean and Pacific region. On the other hand, the Nordic countries that joined the Union in 1995 focused on development policies. These countries were in favor of shaping policies according to requirements, not relations with former colonies. In addition, the countries that joined the Union did not have any economic interests in the African, the Caribbean and the Pacific region (Ravenhill, 2002: 10).

In 1990, it was agreed to sign the Lomé IV Convention, which would strengthen the previous Lomé Conventions and with this convention, it was decided to impose economic and political conditions on aid to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. On the one hand, this case has been regarded as a result of the approach of accepting the normative elements such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law that the Union developed in its relations with third countries in the 1990s as the major conditions of cooperation; on the other hand, this case was characterized as an escape for aid transfer. In other words, it was stated that the Community could keep the aids at a low level in this way (Güven, 2008: 98,114-117,124). The political criteria in the Union's policy towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries have formed the basis of the EU-African, Caribbean and Pacific relations since the Lomé III Convention. Article 4 of the Lomé III Convention emphasized economic, social and cultural rights; however, the Convention was observed to have no provision regarding political and civil rights. Provisions regarding civil and political rights, as well as human rights, were addressed in the Lomé IV Convention; and thus, new rights were added to the existing rights in the Lomé III Convention (Ravenhill, 2002: 4; Güven, 2008: 94). According to the Lomé VI Convention, the eligibility of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to receive aids from the Union became conditional on implementing structural adjustment programs, as well as complying with human rights standards. The term "human rights" was included in many articles in the Lomé VI Convention. In particular, human rights and development were linked for the first time in this convention; also, a provision stating that the Lomé Cooperation contributed to the promotion of these rights was included in this convention. Therefore, this convention states the importance of a development that requires respect for human rights (Arts and Byron, 1997: 83; Williams, 2004: 31). Lomé IV Convention was revised in 1995, and conditions were further expanded to include democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance (Banthia, 2007: 4). In the following process, African administrators stated that good governance is indirectly included in other conditions and therefore it should not be specified as a separate condition;

thus, the conditions were listed in two groups. Accordingly, the first group that constituted democracy, human rights and the rule of law was classified as the "required elements" while good governance was classified as the "core element" (Farrell, 2005: 272).

Although the Lomé IV Convention had no provision regarding the democracy, good governance and suspension of cooperation, the Union was observed to resort to the method of suspending aid, claiming that a country in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific region violated human rights and democratic principles (Arts and Byron, 1997: 83).

Considering all Lomé Conventions in general, Lomé I Convention seems to be a more advantageous Convention for the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries than others in terms of granting some privileges to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries without any conditions. The negotiation process of the Lomé I Convention coincided with a period when the United Nations called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and also, developed countries were asked to behave more fairly in trade between the North and the South. However, in the following process, each of the Lomé negotiations played a major role in reducing the power of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Especially in the 1980s, the economic problems that weaken the negotiation power of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the end of the Cold War have paved the way for the EU to impose some conditions on new agreements (Flint, 2009: 81-82). In the first three Lomé Conventions, the amount of aid to be provided to each country was clearly stated at the very beginning of the conventions and the performance for the use of funds was not considered as a criterion in the distribution of funds. However, with the Lomé IV Convention, the aids were distributed in two stages. While 70% of the aid was given in the first stage, the remaining 30% was given in the second stage based on the three-year evaluation of the National Indicator Program, which was a guide on the use of funds (Arts, 2000: 131). However, the expected results regarding the effectiveness of the aid in Africa could not be achieved (Olsen, 1997: 304-305).

Especially with the Lomé IV Convention, the EU tried to create a positive image for itself in the international arena by presenting the universally accepted norms as a prerequisite for aid to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In other words, the Union, which is on its way to becoming an international actor, both gained respect in the global arena and required conditions for aids by using other normative elements such as democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance, which were universally accepted but at the bottom of the hierarchy of foreign policy goals, as an instrument. Thus, it has provided legitimacy to its actions by reducing its aid to countries in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific region. Therefore, this reveals that the EU does not have an idealistic goal of placing the mentioned normative elements in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries but the most basic goal of the Union is to maintain its relations with the continent, to protect the interests and privileges of its member states in the continent from the past and to contribute to itself as a global actor (Güven, 2008: 125-126).

5. USE OF NORMATIVE POWER BY THE EU IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COTONOU AGREEMENT AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS AND ITS EFFECT ON STRENGTHENING AFRICA

The EU changed its policy towards the continent as a result of the developments in the international arena, the changing political and economic priorities of the EU in line with these developments, the fact that some preferential trade privileges obtained by the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries within the framework of the principle of non-reciprocity could not incite development in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, and failure to integrate the countries in the continent into the world economy (European Commission, 2005). Accordingly, the Cotonou Agreement, which was based on the principle of "equality of arms", was signed between the EU and the countries in the continent in 2000. One of the most significant changes brought with the Cotonou Agreement was the elimination of the trade preferences system in trade and the effort to adapt to the structure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Lenaghan, 2006: 133). In other words, the Cotonou Agreement has been required because the system of unilateral preferences that the EU has long granted to the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries did not comply with the "non-discrimination" principle of the WTO (Stender et al., 2020: 3). Accordingly, an intense effort was made to abolish the unilateral trade preferences system within the framework of the agreement. With the amendments, the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries continued to take place in the system of non-reciprocal preferences under the umbrella of the WTO until 2008, then, as of 2008, the preferences have been replaced by the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) created by separating the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries according to their regional groups; thus, the preferences have been adapted to the nature of reciprocity (Sönmez, 2015: 162). In other words, according to the WTO rules, the Cotonou Agreement stated that an EPA should be signed both between the EU and regional groups in the African, Caribbean and Pacific bloc and between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries among themselves. Accordingly, the African, Caribbean and Pacific bloc is divided into two categories as the least developed countries and developing countries. Accordingly, the least developed countries continued to benefit from the privilege of free trade in almost all products except for weapons and not dependent on the reciprocity principle in line with the "Everything But Arms" initiative created for the least developed countries within the framework of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in accordance with the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement. On the other hand, it was decided to liberalize the trade between the developing countries after 2008 by signing an EPA based on reciprocity, the negotiations for which would be continued based on groups. EPA aims to eradicate poverty, to establish legal frameworks that encourage trade and investment in accordance with WTO rules, to create trade policy and capacity, to provide economic balancing and diversification, to protect and promote the entry of the African, Caribbean and Pacific products into the Union market, to ensure solidarity between African, Caribbean, Pacific countries/regions and the Union, and to emphasize common interests (United Nations Economic

Commission for Africa, 2008; Sönmez, 2015: 162). Also, Article 35 of the Cotonou Agreement aimed to support regional integration in the region by stating that cooperation in economic and commercial fields should be based on regional integration initiatives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. That regional integration played a significant role in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries' being among the world economies, and their integration with the world economy was indicated as the reason for this case (Flint, 2008: 146).

It was decided to continue the commercial relations between the EU and the developing countries not signing the EPA within the framework of the GSP. The GSP included non-reciprocal privileges for developing countries and included the industrial products, textiles, and agricultural products not covered by the common agricultural policy. However, this system was observed to cover fewer products and have stricter rules compared to the non-reciprocal Lomé Conventions (Hurt, 2003: 168). The GSP was observed not to cover many agricultural products, which are extremely important for the economy of the African, Caribbean and Pacific region (Traidcraft, 2012). Therefore, that the GSP system covers processed and unprocessed products has been a subject of criticism; in particular, it has been stated that the Union, with this system, created an obstacle to the development of the industry of the developing countries on the one hand, and protects its own producers on the other hand (Dağdemir, 2006: 134).

Upon the regulation to abolish the preferences system by the Cotonou Agreement, the state of acting in accordance with WTO rules has created a division between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Among these countries, the group of the less developed countries maintained its tendency to continue its non-reciprocal trade preferences. On the other hand, developing countries have obtained the right to regulate their trade with the EU alone or with mutual EPAs to be implemented on a regional or national basis (Hurt, 2003: 166,167,173). Due to this EOA or GSP dilemma faced by the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, a deadlock was experienced in the efforts towards regional economic integration (Okcu, 2015: 252).

Within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, regional economic agreements have been negotiated with countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific region through separate country groups. Accordingly, negotiations with Africa in the African, Caribbean and Pacific bloc were carried out with regional country groups such as Western Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community (Okcu, 2015: 252). However, the Union has offered different agreements to regional organizations in the continent and even to countries in the same regional organization. Therefore, this has been an indicator of a serious problem related to the regional country groups. In other words, the regional country groups created within the framework of the EPA and the organizational groups in the continent do not match with each other. Due to the diversity of country groups on the continent and that most of the countries' memberships overlap in different organizations, this method, which was determined by the Union in the EPA negotiations, was observed to further clarify the fragmented structure in the continent (Farrell, 2005: 269).

Another problem regarding the groupings carried out by the EU within the framework of the EPA is that countries with different economic levels were gathered in these groups. This has created serious negativity in the development policy of the Union for the African countries. The EU development and cooperation policy emphasized that developing countries, especially those having disadvantages among them, would be assisted to develop economically and socially and it was aimed to gradually integrate developing countries into the world economy. Although the majority of the countries in Africa are among the least developed countries, the groups in the region are based on geographical and historical relations, not on the level of development. Therefore, the case highlighted in the development and cooperation policy of the Union creates a serious disadvantage for the continent in the current structure (Ravenhill, 2002: 10). The countries with different economic levels were brought together in the groups determined within the framework of the EPA. It has been frequently stated that this would increase the difference between the Union and the countries that have signed and not signed the EPA within the same group due to the lack of resources and infrastructure. It was emphasized that the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries that have not signed the EPA would follow a more defensive approach towards each other to prevent the Union's products from entering their own countries through their neighboring countries that signed the EPA with the Union. They stated that they would either leave the regional union to prevent the Union's products from entering their own markets, or they would increase the factors that prevent regional integration by applying different methods (Stevens, 2005: 11).

Furthermore, it was also emphasized that the EPA negatively affected the trade between the countries in the continent. It was observed that EPA caused a decrease in intra-regional trade in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific region. Since the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries would abolish the customs duties to a large extent in their trade with the Union, it caused the African, Caribbean, Pacific region to lose its own regional trade, on the other hand, it caused the Union to gain an advantage by increasing its exports to the continent (Karingi et al., 2006: 24). In other words, due to the abolition of customs duties, the Union products that are more suitable replaced the less efficient and less effective products, while the trade between the countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific region reduced (Pişkin, 2016: 216).

Therefore, the Union's motivation of regional integration towards the continent could not meet the expectations in intra-regional trade (Perez, 2006: 14). Moreover, the countries of the region that were not ready for EPA both economically and structurally had difficulty in competing with the countries of the Union; thus, the countries of the region actually became much more dependent on the Union. This situation prevented the countries in the continent from developing production and trade policies based on their own needs.

Another issue affecting intra-regional trade in the continent shaped by EPA was related to the deregulated products. Products included in or excluded from the scope of free trade by the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries differed in line with country-specific economic interests such as

protecting their own products or ensuring the continuity of their income from customs duties (Karing and Deotti, 2008: 31). In particular, the deregulation in different product groups for countries in the same economic region has hindered intra-regional trade.

The biggest concern about the impact of EPA on the countries in the continent has been about the loss of income to be experienced as a result of the losses in customs duties (Hinkle, Hoppe and Newfarmer, 2006: 271). In other words, it was stated that the income flow of many countries heavily burdened by customs would be adversely affected by the losses in customs duties, as a result, the countries would reduce their expenditures and there would be loss in welfare (Flint, 2008: 150).

In particular, all this economic cooperation and aid have been associated with the Union's normative values such as fundamental freedoms, ensuring peace, the rule of law, respect for democratic and human rights, good governance in the Cotonou Agreement. In other words, these normative values have guided partnership and cooperation relations. Accordingly, it has been stated that these economic cooperations and aids may be suspended by the Union in case the African, Pacific and Caribbean countries do not comply with these normative values, which the Union offers as a prerequisite for economic cooperation and aid (European Council; Markos, 2020: 3). Article 9 of the Cotonou Agreement emphasized the obligation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to comply with normative principles, while Article 2 of the Agreement emphasized the principle of "equality of arms" (Markos, 2020: 3). However, the principle of equality of arms could not be applied in an asymmetrical relationship in which the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries became dependent on the Union in terms of economic, commercial relations and aids, and also, economic relations and aids were associated with the conditions (Okcu, 2015: 252). Therefore, the principle of equality of arms emphasized in the agreement remained only as a discourse, and it was observed that inequality prevailed in the relationship between the two parties. In particular, the dominance of the Union over the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and its guiding role in the relations between them were seen as the proof of this inequality.

The EU tried to create a regional integration model both politically and economically in Africa similar to the EU integration, and it has often emphasized that it has been trying to ensure peace and therefore economic development in the continent (Sicurelli, 2010: 149). Also, it was emphasized that peace, security, stability, respect for human rights, democratic principles, rule of law, and good governance are the elements of long-term development in the preamble of the Cotonou Agreement (Güven, 2008: 166). With the goal of regional integration for the continent similar to the EU integration, the Union has followed a comprehensive strategy to harmonize the partnerships and collaborations with normative values. Therefore, the Union has stated that it has been trying to diffuse normative values such as freedom, peace, human rights, democracy, freedom of law, and good governance that it has had from the very beginning, thus making efforts for the development and strengthening of the continent. Therefore, one of the most important fields used by the EU for the diffusion of its normative power is

the field of economy and trade. The economic and trade strategy of the Union, which has undergone a transformation in the historical process, has gained integrity with the EU rules, norms, and principles in line with the normative approach (Bozkaya and Kıncal, 2020: 255). However, despite the EU's targets for the continent, it has been observed that the approaches of the Union and Africa towards regional integration differ from each other. Contrary to the EU's Customs Union-oriented approach, Africa considers regional integration from a broader perspective with its economic, political, and social aspects. On the one hand, Africa supported economic deregulation, on the other hand, it emphasized that economic deregulation alone would not be sufficient to solve the development problems of the continent. Africa asserted that priority should be given to issues such as infrastructure and qualified human resources in the continent. Therefore, they stated that the EPA should provide financial and technical support for these issues and give flexibility to the countries regarding the implementation of development programs. On the other hand, the EU regards the deregulation of trade as the priority in regional integration and underlines that the problems experienced in the economic, political, and social fields are not an obstacle to the deregulation of trade. With the EPA, the Union also aimed to deregulate investments and regulate the competition rules. Africa, on the other hand, stated that it has been concerned that these goals of the Union would narrow the development activities of the countries in the field of investment (Okcu, 2015: 253-254).

Furthermore, Africa has often emphasized the need for the deregulation of trade between its neighbors on the continent, before the deregulation of trade with the developed EU. This would play a significant role in creating a certain level of regional capacity and market. On the contrary, the Union argued that the deregulation of trade between the neighboring countries in the continent, as well as the deregulation of trade with the EU, would be possible and openly expressed its opposition to protectionism (Okcu, 2015: 254).

The EU argues that the smooth and reciprocal, yet asymmetrical deregulation process involved in the EPAs is an ideal way to promote development through trade integration. Therefore, the basic rationale behind EPAs is that deregulation of mutual trade promotes economic development (Stender et al., 2020: 4). The EU emphasized that the product market in the countries of the continent should be deregulated to a large extent. The Union argued that this was a development-oriented policy for the countries of the continent. On the contrary, Africa argued that EPA imposes a limitation on the development alternatives (Traidcraft, 2012). In other words, the countries of the continent do not agree with the perspective that regards EPAs as promising instruments to promote development (Hurt, 2016; Berthelot, 2017). According to Africa, EPAs could not solve the continent's problems such as unemployment, infrastructure, agricultural production and limited diversity. African countries stated that the deregulation was not carried out taking into account their own needs, on the contrary, it was carried out in line with the direction of the Union. The deregulated industries were those that could not compete with the Union. In this case, it has been stated that the underdeveloped industry of the

underdeveloped countries cannot compete with the strong companies of the Union, thus, the goods of the Union could replace regional production, which would further increase unemployment in the continent. Therefore, it has been emphasized that the development of countries depends on protecting their economies and industries until they reach a level where they can compete in the international arena (Traidcraft, 2012).

As it can be understood from all these, the Union has followed a comprehensive strategy to harmonize the partnerships and collaborations with normative values with the goal of regional integration for the continent similar to the EU integration. However, the continent has not got any advantage in terms of development and strengthening of the continent. This has been an indicator that the normative power used by the Union in its African policy is based on the economic interests of the Union. In particular, the EU cannot implement practices that integrate with the normative values it has put forward within the scope of economic and commercial cooperation. The Union, which stands out with its normative values, prioritizes its own interests in economic and commercial cooperation and may place the promotion of values, the development and strengthening of the continent in the second place relatively.

6. CONCLUSION

In its policy towards Africa, the EU has focused on the goal of preserving the historical interests and privileges of the member states of the Union towards the continent. While the main objective remained the same, the interests of the EU, in other words, its priorities changed due to developments in the international arena and in the internal dynamics of the EU. As a result, the EU's approaches towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries have also changed. In the 1990s, the Union focused on Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean regions, which have been extremely significant for them in terms of new markets and commercial cooperation; therefore, the Union's interest in the continent declined in this period. The EU's African policy gained a new dimension with the Cotonou Agreement, which abolished the trade privileges granted by the Lomé regime to the continent. The new approach was based on the elements of "reciprocity in trade" and "conditionality" as well as the basic principle that the norms such as democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, peace and fundamental freedoms should be used to legitimize the EU's economic, commercial and geopolitical interests in the continent. In other words, the EU aimed to get easy access to the market in the region and also to establish an economic superiority in the markets of the continent. Although the "equality of arms" principle was emphasized in the Cotonou Agreement, it was observed that the continent has been made dependent on the Union in terms of trade, economic relations and aid, that the economic relations, as well as aid, were associated with conditions, the EPA could not be implemented in an asymmetrical relationship shaped by the EU. Also, it was observed that the Cotonou Agreement and the Economic Partnership Agreements, which were developed within the framework of normative values, were not

effective in strengthening and developing Africa. Therefore, it has been observed that the normative power policy of the EU in its relations with Africa is based on a realistic strategy used to achieve its political and economic interests towards the continent rather than an idealist approach.

One of the most fundamental problems between the EU and the continent within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and the Economic Partnership Agreements has been that the perspectives of both sides on regional integration differ from each other. While the EU emphasized the need for mutual deregulation of trade with the continent, on the contrary, Africa stated that it would be more correct to deregulate trade between the neighbors on the continent first, until the continent reaches a level that can compete with the EU.

Another problem within the scope of the Cotonou Agreement is that the regional groupings made by the EU in line with the EPA and the country groupings in the continent are not similar to each other. Bringing together the countries with different levels of economic development by taking into account historical and geographical factors has affected the intra-regional trade negatively and caused the Union's regional integration goal to fail. Furthermore, the failure to reach an agreement on the scope of the products to be included in the free trade within the framework of the EPA and the attempts of the countries that did not want to be included in the EPA to protect their own markets from EU products were other factors that negatively affected the trade between the countries in the continent. Therefore, it will be extremely important to develop an approach that will encourage regional integration among these groups, especially based on the existing regional groups in the continent. Moreover, the losses to be experienced in customs duties due to EPA will cause a decrease in the revenues of the governments and the resulting loss of welfare has been one of the biggest concerns regarding EPA. Therefore, the Cotonou Agreement and EPA, which were developed in line with the interests of the EU within the framework of the norms and normative values that the EU has been trying to diffuse to the continent, provide various advantages for the EU; however, they do not provide any advantage for the continent, especially in terms of strengthening and development of the continent. In this context, the EU should adopt an approach based on the structure and needs of the continent rather than the interests of its member states towards the continent. The progress of the EU with such an approach prevents the interests of its member states from moving ahead of the EU norms and makes the EU much more consistent in its normative approach. Moreover, it will also play an extremely important role in the development and strengthening of the continent.

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Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.

Çıkar Çatışması: Yazar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

Finansal Destek: Yazar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

Teşekkür: -

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

Acknowledgement: -
