The EU, Regional Conflicts and the Promotion of Regional Cooperation:
A Successful Strategy for a Global Challenge?

(RegioConf)

Work Programme

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Summary:

Regional conflicts are a core global challenge in that they threaten international peace and affect global actors either because of economic and strategic interests or because of challenges to normative claims. The European Union (EU) has been seen as a normative power able to help transform such conflicts. A prominent strategy in this has been the promotion of regional integration through various forms of support for regional integration projects and strategies, from the Andean Community to the African Union. REGIOCONF aims at assessing this strategy by comparing EU involvement in different cases in the Mediterranean, Africa, Central and South America and East Asia. It will explain the persistence of this strategy and the choice of particular instruments, assess its implementation, analyse local responses and the interaction with the global community, and determine the conditions under which a regionalisation strategy, as an instrument of conflict transformation, may be successful. In doing so, it will enhance our understanding of a crucial part of EU external policy, make a contribution to the debate about sustainable peace strategies, and put forward policy recommendations about how to assist the transformation of regional conflicts more successfully.

Aim of the project

A core global challenge that Europe faces in its neighbourhood as well as on a global scale is the persistence of regional conflicts. Such conflicts typically have regional (if not global) spill-over effects, which threaten both the general goal of promoting international peace and the specific norms and interests of local, regional and external actors. A strategy to tackle this challenge, which is particularly prominent with the European Union (EU), is the promotion of regional integration. Yet there has been little, if any, systematic analysis of the success or failure of the promotion of regional integration as a means to transform regional conflicts. In view of this:

- the *scientific aim* of REGIOCONF is to conceptually define regional conflicts; examine these conflicts empirically within specific geographic areas (the Mediterranean, Africa, Central and South America and East Asia); assess whether, to what extent and how the EU, in cooperation (or competition) with other global actors has attempted to resolve them through regional cooperation and integration schemes; and evaluate the promotion of regional cooperation and integration as a strategy to transform conflicts in order to prevent the resort to violence and/or to contribute to long-term peacebuilding.

- The ensuing *policy aim* of REGIOCONF is to identify how the EU (together with other global actors) might enhance its strategies aimed at resolving regional conflicts through regional cooperation and integration, and to assess the extent to which EU member states with their historical links to some conflict regions can facilitate or hinder EU impact.

Research question

Our main research question is thus: To what extent, and under which conditions, does the promotion of regional integration contribute to the positive transformation of regional conflicts?

Significance for the research field of "global challenges"

The questions of conflict and peace are "classic" global challenges. They take a prime spot in the United Nations Charter, where the prevention and limitation of war and the promotion of peace is a focus of both the Preamble and one of the core purposes of the UN set out in Article 1. 'Peace and conflict' are also among the fifteen 'global challenges facing humanity' identified by the Millennium Project (2011). Likewise, the European Security Strategy (ESS 2003) recognises that regional conflicts 'impact on European interests directly and indirectly' (p. 4). While they lead to the suffering of human beings who live in conflict regions, they also, by their very nature, draw in a variety of actors from different states, which significantly enlarges their spill-over potential.

In particular, therefore, regional conflicts represent global challenges to be tackled because of their inbuilt potential to spill over into the global arena. This challenge has risen to the forefront of the international agenda particularly in the post-Cold War period. In fact, whereas during the Cold War *the* global conflict often had regional manifestations – i.e., proxy wars –, in the post-Cold War era, a bottom up dynamic is at play, whereby regional conflicts have the potential of translating into global tensions and conflicts (see Buzan and Wæver 2005). The case of Syria today, and the international tensions it has generated between actors

upholding the principle of human security versus those insisting on the norm of non-interference, highlights precisely this escalating potential. As such, regional conflicts are often dealt with at the global level through the involvement of the UN Security Council and/or of specific extra regional third parties. The challenge is thus "global" if and to the extent that extra-regional actors, including the EU, have a stake and thus intervene in such conflicts. These stakes may be normative and/or interest-based. They may be particularistic – i.e. pertain to the specific region and conflict in question – or general – i.e. related to the perceived link between the conflict and the goal of maintaining international peace. The intervention of extra-regional (global) actors may be diplomatic, economic, military, social or technical.

Regional integration, not least following the European post-World War II experience, has been one long-term strategy of the EU to address the root causes of conflict. It has tried to pursue this strategy through the enmeshing of states in a set of institutions and rules, which at a minimum is thought to lead to constraints for conflict parties in choosing their strategies and to create opportunities for win-win solutions, and at best to transform their identity so that the underpinning incompatibility of subject positions that defines the conflict (see Efinger et al. 1988 for this definition of conflicts) disappears (see Senghaas-Knobloch 1969).

This long-term transformation strategy for conflicts owes a lot to liberal thinking in International Relations and Peace Studies, as exemplified in John Burton's cobweb model of world society (Burton 1972: 35-45), David Mitrany's functionalist strategy to undermine state nationalism (Mitrany 1966), or Karl Deutsch's idea of security communities emerging out of greater degrees of transnational transactions (Deutsch 1968; see Adler and Barnett 1998). Common to all of these approaches is that they do not aim at short-term conflict management, but that they try to fundamentally transform the societal bases on which conflicts are built. They do so primarily by changing the structural and institutional environments of conflict parties (Mitchell 2011: 92) by creating regional international communities (Wallensteen 2007: 251) which transform the conflict parties themselves. Promoting regional integration can thus be seen as a form of conflict transformation and peacebuilding, the long-term changing of structures to prevent or at least minimise violent conflict behaviour (Lederach 1997).

Yet the effectiveness of such a conflict transformation strategy has hardly ever been properly analysed, at least not outside Europe itself and its immediate neighbourhood. In fact, most studies in the Conflict Management and Resolution literature focus on rather short-term third party intervention in various forms of mediation, and, to some extent, peacekeeping and peace enforcement (see the overview in Fisher 2011). It is instructive that two of the core reference books for conflict resolution (Bercovitch et al. 2009; Webel and Johansen 2012) have no entry on regional integration as a conflict transformation strategy. An exception is the work of Peck (1998, 2001), who notes that regional organisations can help in conflict resolution through providing a forum for dialogue; the establishment, promotion and surveillance of norms and democratic institutions; diplomatic assistance to prevent violent conflict behaviour; and assistance in peacebuilding and peacemaking. Like Diehl (2007: 540-2), she identifies a number of reasons why regional organisations may be better placed to assist the prevention and resolution of conflicts compared to the global United Nations, above all through greater local knowledge and support and the development of a greater regional consensus. Yet Peck only covers some of the paths through which regional integration can transform conflicts, especially those that we will below call "Compulsion" and

"Changing Context", and she does not provide a detailed empirical comparison of how and under which conditions the influence of regional integration may work.

More recently, there has been a substantial growth in the literature on the EU and conflicts. Yet this has so far focused either on the impact of European integration and the prospects for conflict resolution in the EU neighbourhood (Diez et al 2008; Coppieters et al 2004; Tocci 2007; Tocci 2004) or on intervention strategies in ongoing violent conflicts (Diez and Cooley 2011). It is generally assumed that the EU's comparative advantages in foreign policy are to be found in its capacity to bring about the long-term transformation of international relations through its 'normative power' (Manners 2008), rather than achieving its goals by brokering or forcing peace upon warring parties (Keukeleire and MacNaughton 2008). In this context, the promotion of regional integration has been characterised as one of the core pillars of EU normative power (Adler and Crawford 2006, Santander 2005, Hänggi 2003). While this aspect of EU foreign policy has been analysed in respect of the EU's policies towards specific geographical areas such as the Balkans and the Mediterranean, a systematic treatment of it is still wanting. Studies exist on the genesis of the promotion of regional cooperation/integration (Smith 2008: 79-109, Farrell 2007, Bicchi 2006), but its impact on tackling a core global challenge – the persistence of regional conflicts – remains underexplored.

Another core pillar of the EU's normative power is its declared commitment to support "effective multilateralism" (Bouchard, Peterson and Tocci 2012). Effective multilateralism has both an internal and external dimension (Klein, Kunstein and Reiners 2010). Internally, a key question concerns the extent to which the EU has prioritised external action at EU or member state level. Externally, the question is whether the EU has engaged in external action at bilateral – including through strategic partnerships with key states – or multilateral, including regional, level. Given the global challenge of resolving regional conflicts, a specific focus of REGIOCONF is to analyse whether the EU, in its regional policies, has acted in synergy or tension with other global actors engaged in the selected conflicts, including international organisations.

Quite often, the effects of regionalisation efforts are simply dismissed in the light of the persistence of regional conflicts or the lack of regional integration efforts on a par with the EU. But have there really been no successes? And to the extent that there are failures, how can we explain them? To what extent has the EU failed (or succeeded) in its promotion of regional cooperation/integration (or other competing policies such as strategic partnerships)? To what extent have successes/failures been due to local and/or other global actors working with or against the EU, or have they been due to EU-internal characteristics? Answers to these questions will help us better understand the EU's behaviour in global politics and seek ways to enhance its effectiveness.

Relevance for EU policy and collective action on the global level

Multilateral cooperation in conflict resolution sits high on the European foreign policy agenda and also constitutes a founding principle of the European Union's integration process. Since 2003, when the entry into force of the European – now Common - Security and Defence Policy (ESDP/CSDP) provided the EU with a long-awaited military structure and rapid reaction force, "the question of the EU's possible contribution to UN-mandated peacekeeping

and peace-making operations" has become "more urgent than ever" (Fioramonti, Schoeman and Olivier 2012). According to the EU:

> Conflict prevention and crisis management lie at the intersection of the international community's development and security agendas. The European Union and the UN should coordinate systematically with regional organisations in conflict prevention and in crisis and post-crisis situations, and complement each other's resources where possible. They are also areas in which the goals and activities of the European Union and UN are united by the premise that the case for multilateralism and international cooperation is unequivocal (Commission of the European Union 2003).

Consequently, the EU has spent considerable amounts on the promotion of regional integration across the globe. While the relevant sums may seem small in comparison to other budget items, they are nonetheless significant if compared to the efforts of other great powers to support regional integration projects. Between 2004 and 2009, EU institutions have committed to regional cooperation projects on average 2.5 times the amount of aid committed to such projects by the US.[1] Yet such an investment needs to be critically scrutinised in order to assess its effects, and to make recommendations for how to improve policy.

While we do not expect to find a general fix for regional conflicts, it is important to know whether regional cooperation and integration make a difference in conflicts, and if so why it has been successful in some cases but not in others. Likewise, the EU, intent on promoting "effective multilateralism" externally, engages other global actors involved in regional conflicts. Attention will therefore be paid in particular to the role of China and the United States in Africa, the Mediterranean, Central and South America and East Asia, and international organizations such as the United Nations, as well as to the interplay between the EU's regional cooperation/integration strategies and the policies of the above mentioned global actors in the same regional conflicts.

Theoretical base and methodological approach

Research questions (RQ):
1. *Defining regional conflicts and the global challenge of resolving them*. What constitutes a regional conflict? What are the features that render them a global challenge calling for their resolution? What is the relevance of this challenge for the EU?
2. *Describing EU policy and its formulation*: What are the main features of the EU's approach to regional conflicts? Does this approach differ from the EU response to other (non-regional) conflicts? How has the EU developed its policies on the promotion of regional cooperation and integration as a response to regional conflicts? What are the principal EU policy instruments used to this effect? Who are the driving forces behind these policies, and what are their main interests and expectations? To what extent is there a variation in EU policies towards regional conflicts, and what is the basis of this variation?

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[1] Calculated using data of the OECD Creditor Reporting System database for development assistance by comparing the commitments to projects with a regional focus.

3. *Assessing implementation by the EU:* How has the EU promoted regional cooperation and integration in Africa, Central and South America, Asia and the Mediterranean? What are the commonalities and differences between cases? To what extent has the rising number of bilateral EU policies – i.e., the development of strategic partnerships with specific parties – conflicted with the EU's drive for regional cooperation and integration? Are the policies in line with EU aims and strategy?
4. *Analysing local responses*: How have the promotion of regional cooperation and integration and the EU been received by conflict actors? What have been responses to the EU's efforts to promote regional integration? What are the obstacles the EU faces?
5. *Analysing the interaction with other third parties*: How has the promotion of regional integration been received by other outside parties (the US, Russia, China, as well as other regional actors)? To what extent have their policies conflicted with or reinforced regional integration?
6. *Assessing the outcome:* To what extent has there been regional cooperation/integration? Has it had an impact on the conflict in either regulative management or transformation terms? Has this impact been a general consequence of regional integration, or has it been a direct and attributable effect of specific EU policies?
7. *Explaining the outcome:* How can the success or failure of promoting regional cooperation/integration as a means to solve regional conflicts be explained?
8. *Enhancing conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies:* How can the promotion of regional cooperation/integration be made more effective as a way to address regional conflicts and contribute to "deep conflict prevention" (Miall 2000)? What can the EU do to enhance the effectiveness of its regional integration strategies as a means for conflict resolution? Specifically, how could the EU revise its regional integration strategies in Africa, the Mediterranean, East Asia and Central and South America both independently and in collaboration with other global actors?

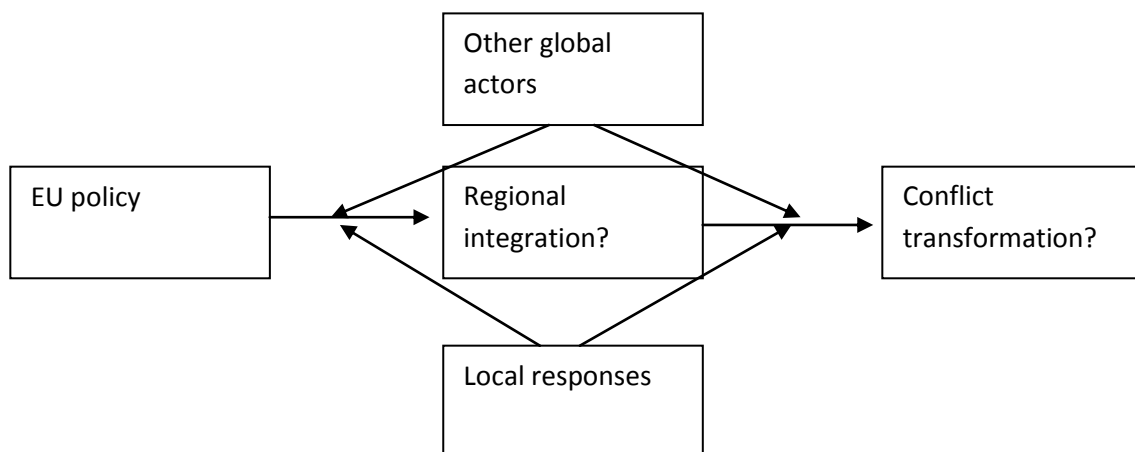The basic model underpinning these RQs is a three-step model:

Figure 1: A basic model of EU impact on conflict through the promotion of regional integration

Defining the scope of the project

Regional conflicts are a widely used concept that, surprisingly, is not clearly defined in the literature.

We argue that, as in the case of other (local or global) conflicts, they share a number of characteristics:

- Conflict parties are not only states, but also other groups of actors, including religious and ethnic groups, as well as criminal networks, some of which may aim at acquiring the status of a state.
- The positional differences at the heart of the conflict are tied to (ethno-)political identities and/or security and economic interests.
- The behaviour by conflict parties is unregulated and often violent; there exists no common definition of possible solutions.

Yet unlike other types of conflicts, regional conflicts display two necessary features:

- The conflict is regional in terms of the prime actors (or conflict parties) involved:
    - The conflict is regional when it is inter-state, and involves more than two states in a given region. The Arab-Israeli conflict is a clear case of a regional conflict.
    - The conflict is regional when it is intra-state but regional external actors are involved in the conflict. The Syrian conflict in 2011-2012 is regional despite its intra-state nature, because of the role of regional external actors such as Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Likewise, the Cyprus conflict is a regional conflict in view of the roles of Turkey and Greece in the intra-island dynamics.
- The conflict is regional in terms of the issues involved. The conflict issues, in terms of their causes, symptoms and impact, affect more than one state in a given region. The link between the conflict and the region may be related to the main conflict cause (e.g., natural resources in Central and South America), or the conflict symptoms and impact (e.g., closed borders disrupted trade in the Maghreb, refugee flows from Bosnia or Libya).

It is equally important to define what regional conflicts are not: Regional conflicts differ from global conflicts. The latter, such as the Second World War, the Cold War or even the Iranian nuclear question are global insofar as its conflict parties and issues are not confined to a single region, impacting upon global norms, interests and balances. This is not to say that regional conflicts do not have global ramifications. External (extra-regional) third parties, with specific norms and interests in the affected region, are often involved in regional conflicts (as clearly evident in the Arab-Israeli conflict but also in other conflicts). Yet they remain regional in their constitutional features and are not part of a global 'overlay' structure (Buzan and Wæver 2005). On the other end of the spectrum, there are also state conflicts that remain confined to domestic politics or two states and do not have effects on or involve other actors. The Northern Irish conflict, for instance, while no doubt an important and bloody conflict, never unfolded a regional dynamic beyond the conflict territory itself, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, the support of Diaspora groups and the attempts of other actors to solve the conflict as mediators notwithstanding.

Bearing in mind these characteristics, and seeking to cover the different regions in which the EU is active globally, the regional conflicts we propose to focus on specifically in REGIOCONF are:

- *the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Western Sahara conflict (Mediterranean):* In the Mediterranean, two conflicts can be defined as regional: In the Maghreb, the Western Sahara conflict pits Morocco against Algeria; in the Mashreq, the Arab-Israeli conflict includes Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese as conflict parties, but also entails the non-recognition of Israel by the Arab world (with the exceptions of Egypt, Jordan and Mauritania). The EU has been involved in these two regional conflicts through bilateral and multilateral initiatives (Tocci 2007; Joffe 2008; Darbouche 2008). Bilaterally, the EU has signed association agreements with southern Mediterranean countries and has negotiated Action Plans under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). It has also deployed two CSDP missions in Palestine (EU-BAM Rafah and EUPOL-COPPS). At multilateral level, the EU has engaged the region through successive policy initiatives, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and most recently the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). It has also supported sub-regional integration initiatives such as the 5+5 Dialogue, the Agadir Process and the Arab Maghreb Union. Yet the Mediterranean region has witnessed amongst the lowest levels of regional cooperation worldwide, as evidenced by the dismally low levels of intra-regional trade (Zoubir 2000), closed borders (e.g., between Morocco and Algeria; Israel and Syria-Lebanon; Israel and Gaza) and the lack of diplomatic recognition of Israel. The absence of regional cooperation alongside the EU's efforts to this goal begs the question: have the EU's multilateral initiatives been intrinsically ineffective at promoting regional cooperation, have they been offset by those of other regional or global actors, or have EU policies been internally contradictory pursuing contrasting goals? The literature so far has pointed in different directions. The EU's multilateral efforts at region-building have been criticized for reflecting more the EU's prerogatives than the underlying conditions of the Mediterranean (Bicchi 2007; Bicchi 2011). The EU has been criticized for following unquestioningly a Euro-Mediterranean vision while neglecting the roles of other regional and global actors (Tocci 2011). It has also been criticized for letting the United States playing the key role. Finally, the EU has been critiqued for trumping multilateral objectives with the pursuit of bilateralism (Abdelkhaliq and Colombo 2011). While concurring on the ineffectiveness of regional cooperation initiatives, none of these studies have joined the dots connecting the EU's impact on the two regional conflicts and its regional cooperation initiatives.

- *the Horn of Africa, Darfur-Sudan and the Great Lakes Region (Africa):* The EU has long been involved in Africa as a security actor and a promoter of regional integration. In 2004, it deployed the first out-of-area ESDP mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo in close cooperation with a number of regional organizations (including the African Union and the Southern African Development Community) as well as the UN. The success of operation Artemis prompted significant enthusiasm among EU policy makers and opened up new opportunities for both the direct involvement of EU peacekeeping forces or the leverage of financial resources to train and equip local actors (Scheuermann 2010). As part of this process, the African Peace Facility (APF), an instrument funded by the EU and managed by the African Union to train and finance local peacekeeping forces and post-conflict stabilisation, has marked a major advancement in the field ever since 2004. The Sudanese province of Darfur, ravaged by an armed conflict with the central government and a civil war since 2003, has been an important test bed for the implementation of the APF, given that the EU has provided resources to a number of peacekeeping operations manned by the African Union (AMIS I and AMIS II) (Schoeman 2012). Finally, in the Horn of Africa, the EU has been closely cooperating with regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and has supported a number of joint operations both in the context of the Somali conflict as well as against piracy in the Gulf of Aden. In all these regions, the EU has declared a clear interest in intervening directly or indirectly to support conflict resolution, maintain fledgling peace agreements, fight terrorism and, above all, promote regional cooperation and

integration as the most successful strategy to ensure stability. Although the EU's declared goals and principles are clear, there is a lack of focused analysis on the actual impact that these policies have exerted on the processes of regional cooperation and integration already taking place in these regions. Are there competing interests and agendas when it comes to regional-level conflict resolution and management? Has the EU managed to strike a delicate balance between fostering its foreign policy agenda and supporting indigenous regional integration goals? Given the complex institutional overlap of regional organizations in Africa, what institutions has the EU privileged in its interaction?

- *disputes between Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia, and the coup d'état in Honduras in 2009 and its regional implications (Central and South America):* The South American region has been full of tensions about a number of issues, of which the disputes between Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia are amongst the most serious. The three countries have had tense diplomatic relations, especially since 2008 when Colombian forces invaded Ecuadorian territory to kill several high-ranking-members of the Revolutionary Forces of Columbia (FARC) with whom the Colombian government has been engaged in a long-running civil conflict. Colombia has accused both the Ecuadorian and Venezuelan government of not only maintaining relations with the FARC but also of providing active assistance to this group. Taking into account the questions related to international drug-trafficking linked to this problem one can clearly see the complex nature of this regional conflict. The 2009 coup d´état in Honduras provided further illustration of the tensions between regional leaders. Whilst, for instance, the Organisation of American States (OAS) 'vehemently condemned' the coup, there was no agreement on either what to do in response or, after the installation of Porfírio Lobo Sosa as the first permanent post-coup president, whether to recognize his government or not. Being a significant economic partner of Latin America, to counter these tensions, the EU has made important economic and political investments in Latin America as a whole and in its various projects of regional integration in particular. For instance, for the period between 2007 and 2013, the EU allocated 50m Euros for the strengthening of regional integration in the Andes, with the priorities being the fight against drug trafficking and the facilitation of regional economic integration. Yet, this investment confronts formidable challenges bearing in mind the highly fragmented nature of Latin-American integration projects, with many different organizations and often overlapping objectives and membership**.** One only has to look at the difficulties Venezuela is having in joining MERCOSUR, or the difficulties of defining common political objectives amongst the member states of UNASUR (See, for instance, Gudynas, 2005). It may be a reflection of these difficulties that the literature on the EU's involvement in regional integration processes is both sparse and heavily tilted towards the economic aspects of this involvement, be it in its multilateral or bilateral form (see, for instance, Martins & Saraiva, 2009). Within this broad context, several studies have tried to use the EU as a template for assessing the various processes of regional integration in South America, especially the creation of a common market within the framework of MERCOSUR (See, for instance, Porto & Flores, 2006). Yet, there is virtual silence on the impact of regional integration in general on the resolution of regional conflict and on the EU's role in sponsoring and supporting such processes in particular. As such, there is a definite gap in the literature with regards to the role of the EU in solving regional conflicts through regional integration which the proposed project intends to fill.

- *tensions on the Korean peninsula as well as in the South China Sea (East Asia):* In East Asia, on one hand, the lingering unpredictability of North Korea's communist regime has been a source of serious concern. On the other hand, complex territorial disputes in the South China Sea have now come to the core of security concerns in the region. For instance, in the case of the Spratly Islands, seven countries (China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippine, Brunei) are claiming their territorial rights,

while the Paracel Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam. While the EU's involvement in these disputes has been limited for a long time, the Union is now trying to strengthen its commitment to Asia, mainly by utilising its successful experience of 'region-to-region dialogue' with the ASEAN (Borzel and Risse 2009; Camroux 2008). The EU is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is the only regional security forum in Asia-Pacific (Berkofsky 2003) as well as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (Gilson 2002). In particular, the ARF has become one of the most important frameworks to deal with the South China Sea questions and other regional disputes. In recent years, the EU has intensified its encouragement to regional integration in Asia. Among others, the launch of the ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) programme and of the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) in late April 2012 is seen as the EU's renewed commitment to contribute to regional integration within Asia. The EU is also demanding its seat at further important political and security institutions, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) in order to be involved in broader regional political and security dialogues in Asia. While the literature so far has had a tendency to focus more on the comparison of regionalism between Europe and Asia (Loder, Montsion and Stubbs 2011) as well as on the possibility of further institutionalisation of regional cooperation in Asia (e.g. Börzel and Risse 2009; Callahan 2011), there has not been a serious academic attempt to grasp the actual influence of the EU on such institutionalisation in East Asia. Furthermore, the reason why the EU has turned so active in encouraging Asian integration has not been wholly explored. Lastly, there is a need to take the policies and attitudes of the US and China into account in order for the EU to contribute to the peaceful solution of territorial disputes and to promote regional integration in Asia (see p.8 of this proposal).

We define a positive impact on conflict transformation as a reduction of the degree to which the conflict parties construct the other parties as existential threats ("securitisation", see Buzan et al. 2008; for the application in conflicts, see Diez et al. 2006) and an increased willingness to deal with conflicts through institutionalised and regulated patterns of behaviour.

Developing Pathways of EU Influence

In view of the regional nature of the actors and issues involved in regional conflicts, their solutions are often – and perhaps can only be – regional. As such, this project explores the scope for regional cooperation and integration to represent a solution to regional conflicts. By enhancing interdependencies between states, by creating dependable expectations that conflicts are resolved peacefully, and by establishing institutional mechanisms to build confidence and settle disputes through rule-based action, regional cooperation and integration is a strategy to respond to the global challenge of resolving regional conflicts (e.g. Haftel 2007).

This response can be interpreted in various ways, relating back to the principal schools of thought in the conflict and peace literatures. At a minimal level, regional integration may be viewed as a channel to manage conflict through the institutionalisation of relations between conflict parties. Here the aim is not that of resolving the conflict as such – a task viewed as next to impossible by realist readings of conflict – but managing them so as to ensure that their most acute manifestations such as violence are kept at bay (Kleiboer 1996: 382). By casting a regional conflict within a regional institutional structure the conflict is expected to unfold within the confines and constraints of rule-bound action. At a more ambitious level,

regional integration is viewed as a recipe to resolve and indeed transform the core issues of the conflict itself. Embedding a conflict within a regional structure can generate 'alternative satisfiers' necessary to address the basic needs of all conflict parties (Burton 1990, Gurr 1994: 365) leading to the gradual rearticulation of subject positions to the point when conflict parties no longer view themselves as such. In turn long-term peace building as well as conflict prevention is achieved.

Nowhere has this been experienced better than in the case of Europe through the process of European integration, bringing about conflict transformation first in Western Europe and then on the European continent as a whole (through the eastern enlargement), although the exact contribution of integration in this experience has only lately come under scrutiny (e.g. Axt et al. 2008; Diez et al. 2006; Tocci 2007). Precisely because of this experience, the European Union has a long-standing tradition of supporting regional cooperation and integration based on the inclination to replicate the post-World War II experience of building a security community in Europe (Börzel and Risse 2009). The underlying rationale is that, just as in Europe, regional cooperation and integration elsewhere will mitigate or even fundamentally transform regional conflict structures so that violent, unregulated conflict behaviour becomes virtually unthinkable. Such strategy, typically comprising financial and technical assistance, political dialogue and multilateral trade agreements, complements the increased efforts of the EU to contribute to mediation, peacekeeping and peace enforcement in cases of virulent military conflict.

The EU, with high stakes in regional conflicts in Africa, Central and South America, the Mediterranean and East Asia, has thus supported regional cooperation/integration efforts such as:

- The African Union (relevant to the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes) and sub-regional organisations such as IGAD (relevant to the Horn of Africa) and ECCAS (relevant to the Great Lakes)
- The Andean Community (relevant to Ecuador and Colombia), Mercosur (relevant to Argentina and Uruguay, Venezuela as membership candidate, and Ecuador and Colombia as observers) and the Central American Integration System SICA (relevant to Honduras)
- Integration in the Mediterranean and the Middle East (through EMP-UfM, the '5+5' Dialogue, and the Agadir Process as well as the Arab Maghreb Union, relevant to the Western Sahara)
- Support for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and inter-regional exchange (Asia-Europe Meeting, ASEM) to support the development of a regional security community in East Asia.

The expectation that the promotion of regional institutions contributes to the transformation of conflict behaviour builds on four different expectations, which are linked to both a consequentialist logic of action as well as the logic of appropriateness. Regional institutions are (1) supposed to change the "rules of the game" in order to incentivise actors to change their conflict behaviour (e.g. through prospective trade gains, security assurances in the institutional "shadow of the future"); they are (2) to provide different patterns of behaviour to be followed and emulated; they are (3) to alter the normative settings so that actors change their reference points for action; and they are (4) ultimately meant to socialise actors into this

new setting so that they transform their identities in a manner that makes them no longer incompatible.

This is a more extensive list of the possible effects of regional integration than is often discussed in the conflict resolution literature. The different logics of action also allow us to think more systematically about the various paths through which regional organisations can have an impact on conflicts. In this respect, the literature has taken the lead from general, neoliberal works on international institutions, and has identified as advantages of regional organisations in relation to conflict transformaiton that they:

- mitigate anarchy through the creation of international norms,
- facilitate the construction of security communities,
- provide a forum and venue for multilateral diplomacy,
- act as a communications link,
- reduce uncertainty,
- mobilize resources for peace processes,
- and have a range of institutional machinery for conflict resolution (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009: 129).

Our more systematic treatment of the pathways of conflict transformation through regional integration ties into existing work on the EU and conflict transformation, where we find four pathways through which the EU can have an impact on conflicts, further differentiating the impact of the changing institutional context (see Coppieters et al. 2004; Diez et al. 2006, 2008; Tocci 2007).

These pathways include (1) compulsion, through which the EU "pushes" actors to change their behaviour through (conditional) incentives and sanctions; (2) enablement and social learning, through which actors can legitimise their changing behaviour through their interaction; (3) change of social context brought about by European integration, through which actors are brought to interact in novel ways; (4) model setting, whereby conflict parties reconstruct their identities by 'drawing lessons' (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005) and 'deliberately emulating' (Lavenex and Ucarer 2004) the European integration experience. While such work has focused on conflicts within the EU or in its near-abroad, there is no reason why the basic pathways of impact should not also be applicable to the attempt to transform conflicts through regional cooperation/integration further afield. We will then have to also distinguish between two kinds of effects of EU policy: (1) those that result from targeted conflict transformation through specific policies (e.g. the setting up of targeted regional conflict resolution measures) and (2) those that come about as a general effect of regional integration processes, where the EU promotes regional integration as such and does not aim at setting specific conflict resolution mechanisms. These are reflected in our phrasing of RQ 6 (see above).

While valuable, such work has nonetheless tended to play down the "demand" side of conflict resolution, largely emphasising instead the "supply" side and focusing on the EU (see Mattli 1999 for these two categories). As a consequence, the conditions of EU impact external to EU behaviour have often found their way into these studies only in the identification of problems in the conclusion. Two such conditions stand out. On the demand side, the interests and receptiveness of local actors has been identified as crucial (Tocci 2007). On the supply side, EU influence interacts with that of other global actors, such as the UN, and great

powers such as the US or China. These factors need to be integrated more consistently in a project on the promotion of regional cooperation and integration in conflict contexts.

Based on these considerations, REGIOCONF takes its starting point from the following table, which maps out the possible interactions related to the different paths of influence of the EU in promoting regional integration as a means to resolving regional conflict, as well as the influence of local and global actors.

Logic of action	Pathway of influence	Supply: EU	Demand: local actors	Intervening: other global actors
Consequentialism	**Compulsion**	Conditions, incentives, sanctions	Cost/benefit calculations	Complementary or competitive through counter-incentives and sanctions
Mixed	**Social learning**	Provision of behavioural patterns, persuasion, interaction (e.g. Taiex, twinning)	Lesson-drawing, mimicry *vs.* conflicting routines	Provision of supporting or alternative patterns and frameworks
Mixed	**Changing Context through Integration**	Provision of new institutional rules	Legitimising interaction *vs.* experience with conflict context	Provision of supporting or alternative rules
Appropriateness	**Model setting**	Consistency of behaviour, enduring interaction	Socialisation ontological security	Setting example with supporting or alternative norms, creating (in)consistencies

Table 1: Pathways of EU influence in promoting regional integration

Method

In reconstructing the promotion of regional integration and its impact on conflicts, we will focus on the cases identified on p. 2. Our research will largely be based on qualitative methods. In particular, we intend to pursue the following **methodological steps (M):**

- M1. Review the literature on (a) regional conflicts to identify their main characteristics (b) the promotion of regional cooperation/integration to substantiate the present state of the art, (c) the link between regional conflict resolution and regional integration and (d) the evolution of the selected empirical regional conflicts cases (RQ1, 2).

- M2. Collate and review the relevant EU documents (including Commission and EEAS documents, Presidency, Commission and High Representative speeches, European parliament reports and resolutions) on the promotion of regional cooperation/integration and on conflict resolution in the relevant cases. The documents would be scrutinised with a view to collecting both relevant quantitative data (levels of EU assistance channelled to regional integration, EU trade ties and volumes towards regional conflict parties) and well as analysing the EU's discursive approach towards regional conflicts, unpacking in particular whether and how the EU views the connection between regional conflict resolution and integration (RQ 2, 3)

- M3. Conduct interviews with EU policy-makers (including Commission, EEAS officials, European Parliament officials and parliamentarians, as well as member state representatives in Brussels) in order to reconstruct the policy-making process (RQ2)

- M4. Conduct interviews with EU delegations, member state embassies and European non-governmental actors (including civil society organizations and journalists) present in the regional conflict countries (RQ3, 5)

- M5. Conduct interviews with local politicians, officials, journalists, academics and civil society representatives in regional conflict areas to gauge their views on the prospects for conflict resolution through regional integration, and on the EU's role (RQ4, 6)

- M6. Conduct interviews with officials of the regional organisations present in the regional conflicts under scrutiny (e.g,. African Union, Andean Community, Unasur/Unasul, Arab Maghreb Union, ASEAN) to gauge their views on the prospects for conflict resolution through regional integration, and on the EU's role (RQ3, RQ4, RQ6)

- M7. Analyse the coverage of regional cooperation and integration initiatives and the representation of the EU and its involvement in conflicts in local media and its development over time (RQ4, 6)

- M8. Conduct interviews with representatives of other global actors in regional conflicts, including officials from the US and Chinese embassies, as well as UN representatives (RQ5)

- M9. Compare findings of the different cases with a view to extrapolating the conditioning factors under which regional cooperation and integration represent a) feasible and b) effective avenues to resolve regional conflicts (RQ7, 8)

- M10. Conduct a second round of interviews with EU policy makers and local actors to fine-tune and rally consensus around the policy recommendations emerging from the project.

Interviews (M3-6, M8) will be semi-structured and take the pathways summarised in Table 1 as a starting point. Together with the analysed documents (M2), they will help us reconstruct the development of EU policy towards the region as well as to assess local responses. The findings will be triangulated with the evidence we gather from news media (M7). In that sense, the core method proposed is rather traditional. This, in our view, is justified given the nature of the topic at hand, which explores a field that has not yet been extensively researched empirically, and which takes place in the realm of traditional "high politics". It should be stressed that M7 does not simply serve us for triangulation purposes but also allows us to analyse the discursive representation of the EU in the media, which can be seen as a proxy for the general public debates about EU involvement, which may be one factor influencing the success or failure of regionalisation as a conflict transformation strategy, in particular in relation to the "model setting" pathway.

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