



RegioConf

THE EU, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

EXPERT WORKSHOP: 30-31 January 2014, Rome, Italy

The mid-term workshop in Rome hosted by the Institute Affari Internazionali (IAI) was aimed at providing the project team with a primary feedback on the results and the outputs of their fieldwork. On the one hand, five regional panels were set up for researchers to present and discuss their first findings on the EU's approach towards regional integration and the transformation of regional conflicts from their local viewpoint (European, African, Mediterranean, Latin American and Asian). On the other, practitioners and academic experts of the regions were invited to act as discussants and deliver specific comments to the presentations. The last session allowed project partners to point out any research related challenges, discuss possible solutions and examine the future development of the project such as publications strategies and other organisational matters.

The first meeting day started with a warm welcome and introduction on the project's conceptual framework by project leaders Thomas Diez and Natalie Tocci.

From a European perspective (Scherwitz and Faleg's working paper), regional integration processes in each of the four regions have not come close to EU expectations and thus undoubtedly favoured a diversification of regional approaches and EU initiatives towards regional integration (RI) and conflict transformation (CT) with regard to each of the regions.

While in Latin America and Asia the EU seems to (willingly) stay behind its actual possibilities of exerting an impact on RI and CT, in the African and Mediterranean regions, the EU has more openly and decisively used trade and aid instruments in the promotion of RI and CT, however with limited long-term effects. Generally, the EU sees the rather retained local responses together with its rather limited role as model setter, as a restraint for a successful RI and CTR.

The following workshop sessions, which were dedicated to the regional perspectives, underpinned in some aspects this sceptical EU perspective, however, different reasons for this were put forward:

Working papers presented during the African and Mediterranean panels underlined how financial and economic means were used by the EU to encourage RI and CT in the regions. However, this promotion has been hampered by a lack of specificity in terms of promoting RI initiatives (as pointed out by Azhar in her case study on Israel-Palestine and by Theron in her presentation on the Great Lakes region), and a lack of coherence reinforced by Brussels' decision to increase bilateral relations, instead of strengthening multilateral channels (as pointed out by Louis in the Western Sahara case study). Nevertheless, the EU has contributed to the evolution of ECOWAS' security visions, encouraging the organisation to embrace democratic values and human rights (See Piccolino/Minou working paper).

In both the Asian and the Latin American case studies (presented by Lee/Kim and Lehmann) the EU appeared as a reference point and a strategic partner in addressing certain political and economic aspects, but its role in the promotion of security cooperation is not (yet) relevant. This is again underlined by the EU's growing focus on bilateral ties. According to discussant Casarini, the EU might well exert an 'under the surface' impact on Asian security issues. With respect to both regions, discussants emphasized the role of power rivalries in terms of security issues (especially in Asia).

Generally, discussants thus encouraged further research on the interaction between the EU and other global powers in relation to RI and CT in the four regions, especially in Asia.

In a nutshell, from an EU perspective, a successful promotion of RI and CT in the four regions must include the local commitment to regional cooperation. In absence of an effective RI, the EU most often retreats from further active engagement or replaces regional CT objectives with other aims. From the regional partners' points of view, the EU is undoubtedly a model of regional cooperation, but the withdrawal of further RI efforts together with the adoption of bilateral diplomacy are perceived as rather ineffective in terms of CT and – from a regional perspective – might well indicate a superficial understanding of the regions' needs (This point was especially raised in Lehmann's presentation with regard to Latin America).

LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT PARTNERS

- ✓ Thomas Diez, University of Tübingen

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- ✓ Eleonora Poli, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
- ✓ Lorenzo Fioramonti, University of Pretoria
- ✓ Giulia Piccolino, University of Pretoria
- ✓ Sonja Theron, University of Pretoria
- ✓ Marco Pinfari, The American University in Cairo (AUC)
- ✓ Hirah Azhar, The American University in Cairo (AUC)
- ✓ Justine Louis, The American University in Cairo (AUC)
- ✓ Kai Lehmann, University of São Paulo
- ✓ Moosung Lee, Myongji University
- ✓ Yeikyounng Kim, Myongji University

DISCUSSANTS

- ✓ Karl-Hermann Buck, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union
- ✓ Nicola Casarini, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)
- ✓ Silvia Colombo, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
- ✓ Erwan Fouéré, The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)
- ✓ Lorenzo Kamel, University of Bologna
- ✓ Nicoletta Pirozzi, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
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