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The EU, Regional Conflicts and the Promotion of Regional Integration: Setting The Framework of Analysis

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The EU, Regional Conflicts and the Promotion of Regional Integration: Setting The Framework of Analysis[1]

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This paper sets out the theoretical framework of the Regioconf project. Regioconf is *supported within the 'Europe and Global Challenges' program jointly developed by the* Compagnia di San Paolo, the VolkswagenStiftung and the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. More information on the project is available at www.regioconf.eu

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, regional conflicts have increasingly shaped the security discourse. While during the Cold War one global conflict prevailed, and interfered with regional disputes as an overlay, the post-Cold War era has been characterized by a bottom-up dynamic, whereby regional conflicts have started translating into global tensions (Buzan and Wæver 2003). By drawing in a wide range of actors across state boundaries, regional conflicts bear the risk of spill-over effects, and hence represent global challenges that require our attention. Indeed, the European Security Strategy (2003) defines regional conflicts as global security challenges that 'impact on European interests directly and indirectly' (p. 4).

Regional integration is often seen as one way to address regional conflict dynamics (Stefanova 2006; Swanström 2002; Khan 2009). The European Union (EU) is, in this respect, the most advanced and institutionalized example of regional institution building as a strategy to foster peace and stability. Regional integration has helped European states to overcome an historical record of deep-rooted conflict, and thus to enjoy an unprecedented period of peace. Therefore, the promotion of regionalism has been depicted as a 'distinct European idea' (Börzel and Risse 2009: 5; see also Bicchi 2006; Grugel 2004).

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[1] A draft version of this paper was presented at the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention in San Francisco, California, April 3-6, 2013.

The promotion of regional integration originates in liberal approaches to long-term conflict resolution through binding institutions in which conflicting subject positions are negotiated through peaceful means, and which thus transform the societal fabric in which conflicts are embedded (Mitchell 2011: 92; Wallensteen 2007: 251). The practice of integration then binds actors to institutions and codes of conduct shaping their behaviour, ultimately transforming the identities underlying a conflict (see Senghaas-Knobloch 1969). Amongst its ultimate goals is the long-term prevention of violent conflict behavior (Lederach 1997).

Within the literature, the EU is referred to as a model and 'the gold standard' of regional integration (Börzel and Risse 2009: 5), despite the implications of the Eurozone crisis that risks imperiling the European political project (Chiti et al. 2012), amplifying tendencies of disintegration (Webber 2012; Schmidt 2012). Furthermore, because of its self-representation as an unparalleled integration process and a normative power (Manners, 2002), the EU discourse grants a central role to the international promotion of regionalization and conflict transformation, by means of its wide array of policy tools.

Already in the 1970ies regional integration has been an EU goal in several interregional agreements of the EU with Asian, Latin American or African countries.[2] It has furthermore been a key strategy of the EU in order to foster conflict transformation in its near abroad (Bicchi, 2011; Tsardanidis 2011; Niemann, de Wekker 2011; Ciambra 2008). The European Commission's "vision" of regional integration is outlined in a Communication of 1995:

> "It should be recognized that the European model, shaped by the continent's history, is not easily transferable nor necessarily appropriate for other regions. On the other hand, to the extent that the European model of integration has become an unavoidable 'reference model' for virtually all regional initiatives, the EU should share with other interested parties its experience on: improving the functioning of regional institutions, absorbing the adjustment costs originated by lowering barriers, and sharing the benefits from integration." (Commission of the European Union 1995: 8)

Against this backdrop, this work investigates to what extent this self-image of the EU is met by the actual record of the EU as a promoter of regional integration and whether the promotion of the EU model influences the transformation of conflicts in third countries. Are local responses consistent with the idea of integration the EU tries to promote, and how close are the policy outcomes (e.g. new institutionalized forms of cooperation) to the desired ones?

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[2] Examples are the EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement (1980), the EC-Mercosur Interregional Framework Cooperation Agreement (1995) and the Cotonou Agreement (2000).

These questions are important insofar as the relevance of the EU experience and transmission of the integration process is often contested on the recipient side. Regional integration is often dismissed as a promising strategy for conflict resolution, because of the persistence of conflicts and the lack of examples of regional integration that parallel the EU.[3] Asia is a case in point. While on the one hand ASEAN has established an ambassadorial steering committee similar to Coreper (Cameron 2010), scepticism towards the EU model is substantial. Bilal points out that the EU is even seen as an "anti-model" in Asia (Bilal 2005). In other cases, the obstacles to the promotion of integration are within the EU itself. The EU and/or individual member states are prone to adopt bilateral or interest-based strategies in dealing with different world regions (see: Tocci 2011; Pace 2007; Edwards 2008; Commission of the European Union 2011), which, in many cases, go to the detriment of the normative/transformative goal of promoting regional integration. A telling example is the EU policy towards the Mediterranean. According to Pace, the focus has shifted from 'normative regionalism' to 'normative bilateralism', as reflected in the ENP's focus on bilateral rather than multilateral, cooperative and intra-regional relations (Pace 2007: 662).

On a theoretical level, therefore, assessing regional actors' engagement with integration processes is a way to gauge the EU's impact as a normative (Manners 2002) and transformative (Diez et al. 2006; Börzel and Risse 2009; Grabbe 2006) power.[4] The question then arises is to what extent the "transformative" and "normative" aspects of the EU external action toolbox are likely to produce observable policy change in conflict-affected regions, both in terms of deeper co-operation among actors and a (consequential) reduction of conflict trends. We argue that the key drivers of policy change leading to regional integration can be framed in terms of the demand for and "responsiveness" (degree of compliance) of local recipients to regionalization inputs and the supply and "comprehensiveness" (degree of coherence/consistency) of regionalization outputs coming from the EU's external action. If institutionalization of regional cooperation is accepted by local actors and promoted in a consistent and comprehensive manner by the EU, we can expect its medium to long-term outcome to be a substantial reduction of conflict trends through the capacity of new institutional arrangements to shape actors' preferences and interests and, as a result, their conflict identities and ensuing behaviour (Sandholtz 1996).

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[3] For a critical note on integration and conflict transformation see Kapitonenko (2009).
[4] For the purpose of this paper, normative power is understood in a narrow and functional sense as the promotion of regional integration as a means to achieve regional peace.

This paper pins down the analytical and conceptual foundations for such an endeavour, with the final goal of analyzing the conditions under which the promotion of regional integration by the EU has contributed to the transformation of regional conflicts. The next section defines regional conflicts. The third section engages with the broader peace and conflict literature dealing with the impact of regional integration on regional conflict transformation. The fourth section sets out the analytical framework in order to determine whether conflict transformation has occured as a result of regional integration, under what conditions this has taken place and how patterns of success/failure of the EU strategy can be accounted for across different world regions.

2. Regional conflicts

The term "conflict" describes, in broad terms, a set of incompatible subject positions resulting in hostile, including violent, action. In political science, conflict mostly refers to the armed clash resulting from contested incompatibilities concerning government, resources or territory, in which at least one of the two parties involved is a government or a state (Stefanova, 2006: 83). In this regard, a conflict differs from political struggles or peaceful competition in that it involves the potential of destructive violence.[5]

The focus on the regional character of conflicts can be traced back to the concepts of "regional security complex" (RSC) and "regional conflict formation" (RCF). RSCs are defined as groups of states whose security interests are linked together "sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from another" (Buzan, 1991: 190), and are "regional" to the extent that "interests are tied together by regional, short-distance, cross-border linkages" (Furstenberg, 2010: 9). Wallensteen and Sollenberg have narrowed down this definition so as to include "situations where neighboring countries experience internal or interstate conflicts, with significant links between the countries" (Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 1998: 623-624). RCFs occur when one or a set of transnational conflicts, no matter what the issue at stake is, form mutually reinforcing linkages with each other across state borders (Rubin, Armstron and Ntegeye, 2001: 3).

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[5] Cf. the Johns Hopkins SAIS' Crisis Management Toolkit. Available from: http://legacy2.sais-jhu.edu/cmtoolkit/approaches/introduction/defining-conflict.htm (Accessed 15 April 2013).

According to the RSC/RCF frameworks and on the basis of several empirical studies (Rubin and Armstrong, 2003; Leenders, 2007; Giroux, Lanz and Sguaitamatti, 2009; Lambach, 2007), the concept of regional conflicts relies on four characteristics: (1) the degree of geographical proximity; (2) the type of interaction between involved parties, which may either be "cooperative or confrontational" (Ansorg 2011: 174); (3) the structure of the relationships between conflict actors, which features a dynamic plurality of national and transnational networks; and (4) the degree to which conflict interactions have become interlocked to make a conflict intractable (Furstenberg, 2010: 9).

Drawing from these studies, we posit that regional conflicts analyzed in this project share the following features:

I. The presence of an RSC affected by transnational conflict or associated to an emerging or existing RCF;

II. The presence of a plurality of actors and transnational networks interacting across state boundaries in an unregulated/violent way, with no or limited shared understanding of possible solutions to the conflict (positional differences);

III. The involvement in the conflict of more than two state actors or, in the case of intra-state conflicts, the engagement of external actors having diplomatic, political or economic leverage in the region.

For clarity purposes, it is equally important to define what regional conflicts are not. Regional conflicts differ from global conflicts. The Second World War or the Cold War are global insofar as their 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 2003).

How can regional organizations help to transform such regional conflicts? To what extent have there been successful examples of such a transformation? In the following section, we will review the state of the art on these questions.

3. Little Ado About Much? Regionalisation and conflict in the literature

3.1 The promise of regional integration

In her study on regional conflict systems, Ansorg (2011) describes a general change in terms of the characteristics of warfare that took place already in the aftermath of World War II before the global overlay of the Cold War set in. This change consists in the emergence of complex relations between different actors which 'compete for political control and the monopoly of violence in a region' (Ansorg 2011: 174). In the conflict literature, this shift led to several authors[6] focusing on regional dynamics underneath the systemic conflict structures of the Cold War authors (Ansorg 2011). Following the end of the Cold War, authors building on this literature pointed to the dangers of region-wide spill-over effects in a number of conflicts (Aning and Atta-Asamoah 2011). For instance, spill-over effects are considered responsible for conflicts in the African Great Lakes region, especially in the case of the civil war in Congo (Buhaug 2008: 217), or the sequence of conflicts shattering the Balkans (Buhaug 2008: 217).

However, peace and conflict studies have so far largely neglected the challenge of regional conflicts and their transformation in their theories (Ansorg 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. Furthermore, the existing peace and conflict literature has for a long time been concentrated on the research of short-term third party intervention in various forms of mediation, and, to some extent, peacekeeping and peace enforcement (Fisher 2011 and Hampson 2001, Lund 1996, Keashly and Fisher 1996). Thus, there are only few works dealing with regional integration as a strategy to long-term conflict resolution (Stefanova 2006; Francis 2009; Peck 2001; Wallensteen 2007; Swanström 2002; Khan 2009).

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[6] Ansorg refers to Russett 1967, Cantori and Spiegel 1970, Buzan 1983, Väyrynen 1984 and Hettne 1989.

These references to regional organizations and their impact on conflicts emphasise the advantage of regional organizations in providing greater local knowledge and support than the UN as a global organization is able to do, and the development of a greater regional consensus (Diehl 2007: 540-2; Peck 1998, 2001). Peck, for instance, points to two ways of conflict transformation through regional cooperation, via compulsion and the ability to change the conflict context (Peck 1998). Yet, the different ways and conditions in which regional integration may help to resolve conflicts remain under-explored.

As far as theoretical engagement exists, the literature broadly refers to regional integration as a channel to manage conflict through the institutionalization of relations between conflict parties. The aim of integration is not necessarily that of eliminating the conflict as such but managing conflict so as to ensure that their most acute manifestations such as violence are kept at bay (Kleiboer 1996: 382). By situating 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 address the root causes 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 and conflict prevention are achieved.

The question arises if this thinking has also affected and motivated the EU's approach towards regional integration and what exactly characterizes this approach.

3.2. Assessing the EU approach towards regional integration and conflict transformation

The link between regional integration and conflict transformation is indeed a central raison d´être to the EU´s strategy of regional integration: "The European Commission strongly believes that regional integration is an effective means of achieving prosperity, peace and security" (Commission of the European Union 2012). The basis of successful regional integration, in turn, lies in economic integration. Thus for the EU: "Essentially, regional integration is a process by which groups of countries liberalize trade by developing free trade areas or customs unions" (Commission of the European Union 2012).

The reason for engaging in this strategy of regional integration can thus be found in the EU´s idea to foster 'security, stability and prosperity at the EU's borders and beyond' (Börzel and Risse 2009: 5). The use of political dialogue as well as conditionality is seen as central in the EU´s attempt to engage other actors in region-building (Börzel and Risse 2009). In terms of instruments, the EU strategy of regional integration abroad is made by interregional cooperation agreements as well as interregional dialogues. The aim of the EU in applying these instruments is the support of 'endogenous processes of regional integration' (Börzel and Risse 2009: 11). One example of this is the assistance given to regional institution building abroad. First insights into the impact of this strategy may be found in the general literature dealing with the role of the EU for conflict transformation abroad.

Such a regional integration strategy is expected to: mitigate anarchy through the creation of international norms; facilitate the construction of deeply institutionalized security communities; provide a forum and venue for multilateral diplomacy; act as a communications link; reduce uncertainty; mobilize resources for peace processes; have a range of institutional machinery for conflict resolution (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009: 129).

However, most of the literature 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 in areas further afield (Diez and Cooley 2011). Few studies exist on the genesis of the promotion of regional cooperation/integration as a means to achieve regional conflict resolution. Most studies instead are primarily concerned with the promotion of regional integration as such (Smith 2008: 79-109, Bicchi 2006, Warleigh et al. 2011, Youngs 2002, Jetschke and Lenz 2011). Thus, in a number of studies the EU is referred to as a successful 'external federator' (Gilson 2002: 102f., Hänggi et al. 2006: 10, Rüland 2001: 8). However, its precise impact on tackling the persistence of regional conflicts remains underexplored.

In this context, the promotion of regional integration has been characterized as one of the core pillars of the EU´s normative power (Adler and Crawford 2006, Santander 2005, Hänggi 2003). The normative power literature refers to the argument that the EU tries to spread its own norms while interacting with third states. 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; Diez 2011; Diez 2012), rather than achieving its goals by brokering or forcing peace upon warring parties (Keukeleire and MacNaughton 2008). While this aspect of EU foreign policy has been analyzed with respect to the EU's policies towards specific geographical areas such as the Balkans and the Mediterranean, a systematic treatment of it is still wanting.

The following section (4.) introduces a theoretical framework which aims at narrowing this gap in the literature.

## 4. Filling the gaps: the Regioconf theoretical framework

Conflict transformation entails fundamental changes in the societal bases upon which conflicts emerge, and hence a transformation of structural and institutional environments in which conflict parties interact (Mitchell, 2011: 92; Wallensteen, 2007: 251). By triggering processes of institutionalization, regional integration processes may lead to conflict transformation. They can produce long-term institutional and policy change, whose ultimate objective is to prevent or minimize violent conflict behaviour (Lederach, 1997). The expected effects of regional integration in a conflict-prone environment are: to enhance interdependencies between states; to create dependable expectations that conflicts can be resolved peacefully; and to establish institutional mechanisms to build confidence and settle disputes through rule-based action (e.g. Haftel, 2007). Nowhere has this been said to be clearer than in Europe, where integration brought about conflict transformation (in the most ambitious form) in the original core of founding member states and then on the rest of the continent through waves of enlargement.[7] Because of this experience of building a security community in Europe (Börzel and Risse, 2009; Wæver 1998), the EU developed a long-standing tradition of supporting regional cooperation and integration abroad, through financial and technical assistance, political dialogue and multilateral trade agreements. As outlined in the preceding section, the underlying rationale was to contribute to the mitigation or broader transformation of conflict structures elsewhere. The question then arises as to whether the observable outcomes of EU policies both lead to an increase in regional integration and a consequent transformation of regional conflict dynamics, that is an observable transformation of subject positions reducing (or eliminating) the scope of their incompatibility mitigating or transforming conflict.

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[7] For a more critical assessment, see Diez et al. 2008 and Tocci 2007.

The answer to this question lies in a two-step model (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1: A two-step model of EU conflict transformation strategy
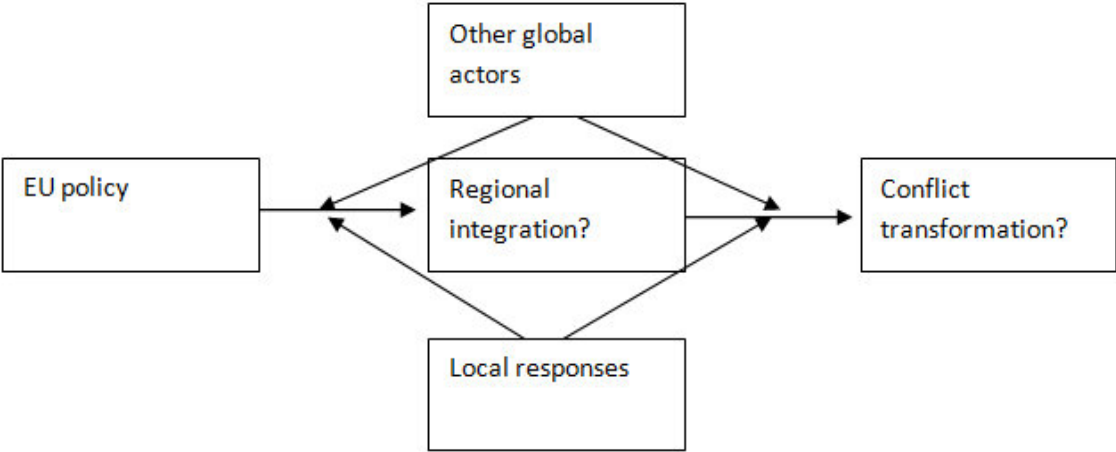
In this model, the first analytical step studies the EU strategy and relevant policies to achieve regional integration. Specifically, this step also points out those cases in which such strategy is linked to the purpose of conflict transformation. The second step focuses on the implementation of the regionalization strategy and its impact on regional conflicts, assessing if the desired outcome (conflict transformation) is achieved or not.

Drawing from the first step of this model, the typology below defines the characteristics of EU impact vis-à-vis the objectives of regional integration and conflict transformation. We define "impact" on conflict transformation as the reduction of the degree to which the conflict parties construct the other parties as existential threats through "securitization" (see Buzan et al. 1998; for the application in conflicts, see Diez et al. 2006) and an increased willingness to deal with conflicts through institutionalized and regulated patterns of behavior.

Concerning conflict parties, the EU´s impact should impinge on the degree to which the local actors of the region are entrapped in what Jennifer Mitzen calls the "ontological security dilemma" (Mitzen 2006). This notion implies that actors might stick to conflictual relationships, since certain routines of conflictual interaction form the basis of their identity. If states rigidly stick to those routines, they are prone to reproducing conflicts in order to retain their identity. This kind of dynamic may be undermined by public engagement between the conflict parties, by convincing other regional actors that the rule-violating party is a security-

seeking actor and by bringing actors to reflect on their conflictual routines. The EU may foster actors' engagement in "routinized public meetings and commitments for solidifying recognition of security-seeking" (Mitzen 2006: 363). Regional integration will thus have to provide a framework in which these processes can develop.

Change takes the form of transformation in the positions between actors, which can be assessed by looking at two variables. First, the existence and growth of trans-party networks and institutions. Second, the degree and growth of flows (e.g. flows of goods or people) across the conflict divide. Both would ultimately lead to a change in subject positions.

Against this backdrop, the effects of EU policies on the final goal of conflict transformation are expected to be of two types. First, those that result from targeted conflict transformation measures within the context of broader regional integration policies. In this case, the EU engages in conflict management or mediation in a specific regional conflict, e.g. by sending an EU Special Representative who directly contributes to the resolution of a specific regional conflict issue. Second, those that come about as a general effect of the regional integration processes, where the EU promotes integration as such and does not aim at setting specific conflict resolution mechanisms.

Within our research, we are particularly concerned with the second type of effect, since we are interested in the link between the general promotion of regional integration and conflict transformation. However, targeted conflict management may as well be linked to the promotion of regional integration and may be embedded within the general regional integration approach of the EU. We therefore need to consider that both effects can enhance or undermine each other. On the one hand, the mediation efforts of an EU Special Representative may be undertaken within the setting of a regional institution, which is hence given special attention and value by the EU. On the other hand, there may be cases, in which the EU´s targeted conflict transformation measures go against the proposals of a regional forum – see for example the employment of negative conditionalities of the EU towards Burma/Myanmar in the past, which went against the perceptions of conflict management of the ASEAN states (see: Garelli 2011).The promotion of regional integration as such can take three forms:

1. Direct intentional, whereby the EU is present as a direct promoter of regional integration.

2. Direct unintentional, whereby the EU is present as a direct promoter of regional integration, but the outcomes are different from the desired or declared ones. As we will elaborate in our hypothesis on the conditions for successful EU impact below, unintentional consequences can be explained either by horizontal inconsistencies between EU and/or member states policies (e.g. bilateral trade agreements that contrast multilateral regional efforts), or because of local responses leading to undesired or different outcomes, or because of the contrasting policies of other external state, intergovernmental or non-state actors.

3. Indirect, whereby the EU is not present as a promoter of regional integration, as there is no formal or declared goal, nor policy framework to foster integration in a given region. However, there may be loose or informal forms of institutionalized cooperation in the region anyway, for instance because of the EU's model setting effect.

Based on this typology, the following table (Table 1) maps out the possible interactions related to the different pathways of influence of the EU in promoting regional integration as a means to resolving regional conflicts. The table identifies four main pathways and, for each one of these, the role of the supply (EU), demand (local actors) and intervening factors (global actors). We combine this dimension with different logics of action, which vary from interest-based, consequentalist to norm-based behaviour (see Diez et al. 2006; Tocci 2007).

Table 1: Pathways of EU impact on regional integration and external conflicts

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 behavioral 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 behavior, enduring interaction. This includes also the functioning and reputation of the EU model itself (in times of deep crisis)	Socialisation ontological insecurity Receptiveness to 'model EU'	Setting example with supporting or alternative norms, creating (in)consistencies

Our expectation is that empirical findings in each one of the regions analyzed (cf. next section) will fall within one, or more, of these pathways of influence. These can be defined as follows. Compulsion refers to a process through which the EU induces actors to change their behaviour through conditional incentives and sanctions. Social learning entails the enablement of and learning processes through dialogue and interaction with EU counterparts, leading to a voluntary change in the behaviour of conflict actors that in turn leads to regional integration and, consequently, regional conflict transformation. By changing context, we mean the EU's ability to bring about – and local actors willingness to accept – change in the conflict context brought about by the provision of new formal and informal rules. Finally, model setting entails the reconstruction of conflict parties' identities by "lesson drawing" (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005) or by "deliberately emulating" (Lavenex and Ucarer, 2004) the European integration experience.

On this basis, we propose four hypotheses on the conditions under which the EU has an impact on conflict transformation in the regions considered. The first two of these hypotheses concern the supply side, pointing to the EU´s disposition in fostering regional integration and

conflict transformation. The second two (H3, H4) refer to the demand side and concern the interaction of EU policies with local and global actors.

H1. Comprehensiveness: the EU successfully achieves conflict transformation through policies aimed at facilitating regional integration if the latter are not undermined or hampered by other EU policies or member states bilateral interests. Comprehensiveness can be vertical (that is, coherence and consistency in policy implementation from the supply to the demand side) and horizontal (presence or absence of contrasting objectives between EU policies).

H2. Capabilities: the EU is able to transform conflict if it is also capable. The latter is a function of the internal resources devoted to the RI-CR strategy as well as of the external reputation. Reputation can be defined as the degree to which the use of such resources is credible in the eyes of international partners and recipient countries. The Eurozone crisis has negatively affected the link between resources and reputation, and hence undermines the success of the EU regional integration strategy.

H3. Responsiveness: the EU may be successful in applying its integration strategy to regional conflicts if the idea promoted by the EU is compatible with local identities and/or if it is perceived as a model or promising example for local conflict parties. Conflict parties, in other words, must be receptive to and share the idea that supranational regional institutions facilitate accommodation and compromise between their positions. Pre-existing ideals, such as pan-regionalism (cf. pan-Africanism) contribute positively to the creation of such awareness.

H4. Effective multilateralism: the perspective for successful conflict transformation increases if the EU has integrated other global actors (multilateral ones, such as the UN, or great powers such as China or Brazil) into the process of fostering regional integration abroad. Conversely, prospects for conflict transformation decrease if the EU acts in competition with other global actors involved in the conflict or if the EU acts unilaterally.

5. Methodology and Case Studies

Methodologically, we account for the direct and indirect consequences of EU regional integration through semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, the analysis of official documents and media analysis. The purpose of fieldwork interviews is twofold. First, to map the population of actors directly or indirectly involved in conflict resolution (CR) and regional integration (RI); second, to facilitate the identification of the four influence paths (compulsion, social learning, changing context, model setting), as well as their impact in affecting the promotion of regionalization and regional conflict resolution and hence linking the supply (EU) to the demand (local actors) side.

The promotion of regional integration, and its impact on conflicts, raises three fundamental questions. First, who are the local actors that constitute the regional social environment, and what are the communities acting as "carriers" of normative diffusion within this context? Is actorness limited to policy-makers, or is there a more complex constellation of stakeholders (local, transnational) that create the "social environment" of regional conflict? Second, what indicators or benchmarks can reveal the presence of different pathways of EU influence on regional integration and conflict resolution? Finally, how can a linkage be established between the EU's promotion of regional integration and the resolution of conflict?

Drawing on Mérand et al. (2011) and Kriesi and Jegen (2001), we will collate a list of actors and parties involved in conflict resolution (CR) and regional integration (RI) or both (CR-RI) according to three criteria:

1) positional criterion: scanning and identification of all actors in a given area of analysis;

2) participative criterion: in-depth study of actors' participation in relevant regional initiatives (summits, diplomatic activities, regional institutions, regional civil society initiatives), conflict negotiation or mediation between conflict parties in order to select those actors who take a stand on the conflict and regional integration, independently or on behalf of their organization;

3) reputational criterion: submission of the list drafted on the basis of the previous two criteria to a small group of experts who would add the names of other experts that were relevant or would subtract those who they would consider as playing a marginal role (for instance in negotiations, or as opinion makers).

We look at different regions in which some elements of regional integration are already present. Our main focus is to account for the role of the EU in strengthening or weakening these regional developments, and thus on the role of the EU in fostering conflict transformation by applying its strategy of regional integration.

The four selected regions are:

- The Mediterranean region, which displays rather negative outcomes in terms of conflict transformation. The project focuses, in particular, on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Western Sahara conflict. While the literature, in both cases, is concurring on the ineffectiveness of regional integration initiatives, none of these studies have connected the dots of the EU's impact on the two regional conflicts and its regional integration initiatives.

- The African region, namely the Sahel (Western Africa) and the Great Lakes sub-region. In both cases, 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 already taking place in these regions. However, 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 ongoing processes of regional integration

- Central and South America, with a focus on the EU sponsoring of regional integration and the effects of conflict transformation in the disputes between Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia, and the coup d'état in Honduras in 2009. The literature on the EU's involvement in these conflict areas is both sparse and heavily tilted towards the economic aspects of this involvement, be it in its multilateral or bilateral form (Martins and 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 (Porto and Flores, 2006). Yet, there is virtual silence on the impact of regional integration on the resolution of regional conflict in general and on the EU's role in sponsoring and supporting such processes in particular.

- The East Asian region, especially concentrating on the tensions on the Korean peninsula as well as in the South China Sea. A focus lies here on the EU´s successful experience of 'region-to-region dialogue' with the ASEAN (Börzel and Risse 2009; Camroux 2008). While the literature so far has had a tendency to focus more on the comparison of regionalism between Europe and Asia (Loder et al. 2011) as well as on the possibility of further institutionalization 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 institutionalization 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.

6. Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have argued that regional conflicts represent a major global challenge today because of their inherent spill-over effects to the global arena. The prevention of such conflict is therefore essential for world peace. For the EU, promoting regional integration is a key foreign policy objective. Interregional cooperation and dialogues have been at the centre of its strategy to deal with other world regions.

At the same time, the extent to which the EU has effectively contributed to transform conflicts in third countries by relying on its strategy of regional integration is unclear and underexplored. In this paper we set out a two-step framework of analysis. We have developed a typology of EU impact on regional integration and established a link between these types of impact and conflict transformation. The factors influencing a successful regional integration strategy on transforming conflicts include four broad categories: comprehensiveness, or vertical/horizontal coherence and consistency among EU or member state policies; responsiveness, meaning the compatibility of the idea of integration with local actors' identities, and their perception of the EU as a "model"; capabilities, which are depend on the link between internal resources and external reputation; and effective multilateralism, through which other international actors are involved – in the form of multilateral negotiations - or support the strategy of regional integration process as a way to transform conflict. Finally, we

have come up with a model of four pathways tracing the different channels of EU influence on local actors. These channels include conditions and incentives, dialogue and interaction, the provision of formal and informal rules and model setting, which are employed by the EU, and which lead to either targeted conflict transformation measures or more general CR effects resulting from the regional integration process as such.

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