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Regional Integration: Setting the Framework for Analysis

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

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1. Introduction

Discussing issues of peace and conflict is not possible without making reference to regional conflict dynamics, which pose a major challenge for global peace in our times. While during the Cold War we could observe one global conflict showing regional manifestations, the post-Cold War era has been characterized by a bottom up dynamic whereby regional conflicts have increasingly translated into global tensions (Buzan and Wæver 2003). By drawing in a wide range of actors across state boundaries, those conflicts bear the risk of spill-over effects, and hence represent global challenges to be dealt with.

Regional integration is often seen as one central way to approach these kinds of 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. Through regional integration European nations were able to overcome what seemed a never-ending story of deep-rooted conflict, and came to enjoy an unprecedented period of peace. Therefore, the promotion of regionalism has been

characterized as a ‘distinct European idea’ (Börzel and Risse 2009: 5; see also Bicchi 2006; Grugel 2004). Within the literature, the EU is thus 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 seem to belittle the concept of internal integration (Chiti et al. 2012) and amplify tendencies of disintegration (Webber 2012; Schmidt 2012).¹

Furthermore, because of its self-representation as an unparalleled integration process and a leading normative power (Manners, 2002), the EU plays a central role in the international promotion of regionalization and conflict transformation, by means of its wide array of policy tools.

Promoting regionalization has 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 Security Strategy (2003) defines regional conflicts as global security challenges that ‘impact on European interests directly and indirectly’ (p. 4). 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)

Regional integration has also formed part of the EU development policy since 2006 (European Parliament et al. 2006).

Against this backdrop, it is necessary to assess the extent to which the image of the EU as a ‘reference model’ is still resonant in other world regions, and to investigate whether there is a positive impact of the EU’s integration strategy on conflicts abroad. This assessment is all the more important because of a lack of a shared consensus on the relevance of the EU model of integration in other world regions. In the case of Asia, for example, scholars claim on the one hand that “[t]he EU's problems did not affect the plans of other regional groupings to move

forward with cooperation. ASEAN, for example, went ahead with proposals to establish an ambassadorial steering committee, similar to the one in Brussels, which is known as Coreper” (Cameron 2010). On the other hand, skepticism towards the EU model is raised in the Asian context. Bilal points out that the EU is even seen as an “anti-model” in Asia (Bilal 2005).

This paper argues that the promotion of regional integration has been a key pillar of the EU acting externally as a normative power. Nonetheless, we observe a lot of cases in which the EU or single Member States have instead increasingly adopted bilateral or interest-based strategies in dealing with different world regions (see: Tocci 2011; Pace 2007; Edwards 2008; Commission of the European Union 2011). These strategies may contrast with the claim of the EU to promote regional integration abroad. As Pace points out: “EU policy towards the Mediterranean shifted from what is here referred to as ‘normative regionalism’ to ‘normative bilateralism’.” (2007: 662) And “(...) the ENP is highly focused on bilateral (rather than multilateral, cooperative and intra-regional) relations” (Pace 2007: 662). Being aware of these existing inconsistencies, we argue that regional integration has been a core strategy of the EU in dealing with conflicts abroad and that it bears the potential of leading to long-term conflict resolution.

The regional integration approach of the EU has its origin in liberal approaches of long-term conflict management through binding institutions and through transforming societal bases, on which conflicts are based (See Mitchell 2011: 92; Wallenstein 2007: 251). From a theoretical standpoint, the promotion of regional integration may be driven by different motivations (normative- or interest-based) and may work through a variety of means, which are applied by the EU. Its strategy may have the effect of binding actors to institutions and codes of conduct shaping actors’ behavior, or of transforming identities underlying a conflict. In this regards, we share the argument that promoting regional integration is a form of conflict transformation and peace building, the long-term changing of structures to prevent or at least minimize violent conflict behavior (Lederach 1997).

In what follows, we provide the contours of a research project (*RegioConf*) that is aimed at unwrapping the conditions of success of the strategy of regional integration while focusing on the efforts of its major international promoter, the EU, and on the local responses to its strategy. Research on this strategy is needed, since the effects of regional integration are not uncontested: regional integration is often dismissed as representing a promising strategy for

conflict resolution, because of the persistence of conflicts and the lack of examples of regional integration that parallel the EU.²

We therefore seek to address the following research question: *To what extent, and under which conditions, does the promotion of regional integration contribute to the positive transformation of regional conflicts?*

This paper pins down the analytical and conceptual foundations of the project. The next section defines regional conflicts as a major global challenge. In this context, we discuss general peace and conflict literature dealing with the impact of integration on conflict transformation. In the third section we concentrate on the relevance of regional conflicts for the EU and take a further look at the existing literature dealing with the EU strategy to promote regional integration and cooperation abroad. Finally, the last section outlines the RegioConf research design, whose ultimate aim is to determine whether conflict transformation did occur as a result of regional integration, under what conditions and how patterns of success/failure of the EU strategy can be accounted for across different world regions.

2. Definition of regional conflicts

Within the existing literature, no common definition of regional conflicts is available. The only two characteristics shared by most researchers dealing with regional conflicts are: “geographical proximity” of the actors involved and their “interaction” which may either be “cooperative or confrontational” (Ansorg 2011: 174).

Our definition of regional conflict relies on three broad criteria:

- 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.

² For a critical note on integration and conflict transformation see Kapitonenko (2009).

- The behavior by conflict parties is unregulated and often violent; there exists no common definition of possible solutions.

Since the above criteria also apply to other types of conflict (local or global), a conflict defined as “regional” must display at least one of the two features below:

- 1) 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.

- 2) 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).

At the same time, 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).

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 describes a general change in terms of the characteristics of warfare already in the years following World War II. 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 has led to an increased concentration on regional dynamics by several authors³ who started adding a regional perspective in their works on conflicts and cooperation during the Cold War (Ansorg 2011).

The dangers of region-wide spill-over effects have become crucial in a number of conflicts on the African continent (Aning and Atta-Asamoah 2011). For instance, spill-over effects are seen responsible for conflicts in the African Great Lakes region, especially in the case of the civil war in Congo (Buhaug 2008: 217). Other examples are the sequence of conflicts shattering the Balkans in the past (Buhaug 2008: 217) and the possibility of spill-over effects stemming from the Syrian conflict today. In the latter case the conflict involves different international actors which either uphold the principle of human security or insist on the norm of non-interference.

However, peace and conflict studies have so far neglected to assess the challenge of regional conflicts and their transformation theoretically (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). However, 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).

³ 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 point to the advantage of regional organizations in providing greater local knowledge and support 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, 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.

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 integration is a strategy to respond to the global challenge of resolving regional conflicts (Haftel 2007). At a minimal level, regional integration may be viewed as a channel to manage conflict through the institutionalization of relations between conflict parties. The aim is not necessarily 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 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 approach towards regional integration and what exactly characterizes this EU 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 according to Börzel and Risse the support of ‘endogenous processes of regional integration’ (Börzel and Risse 2009: 11). One example of this is the support of regional institution building abroad (see the case of Asia and South and Central America).

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.

However, this 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 (Diez and Cooley 2011). Few studies exist on the genesis of the promotion of regional cooperation/integration (Smith 2008: 79-109, Bicchi 2006, Warleigh et al. 2011, Youngs 2002, Jetschke and Lenz 2011). Nevertheless, in a number of studies the EU is referred to as a successful ‘external federator’ (Gilson 2002: 102f., Hänggi et al. 2006: 10, Rüländ 2001: 8). However, its precise impact on tackling the persistence of regional conflicts remains underexplored.

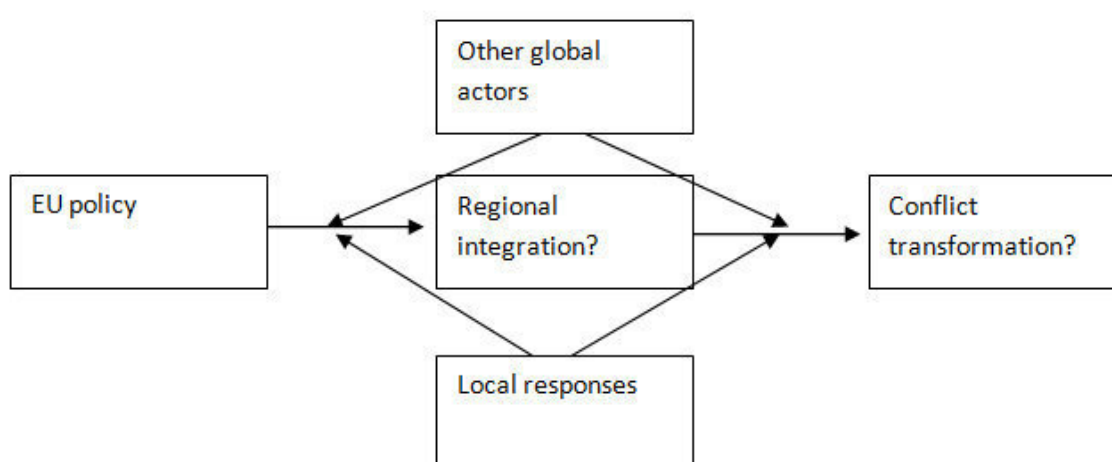
In this context, the promotion of regional integration has been characterized as one of the core pillars of the EU’s normative power (Adler and Crawford 2006, Santander 2005, Hänggi 2003). This normative power literature refers to the argument that the EU particularly tries to spread its own norms while 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), 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 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.

4. Filling the gaps

4.1. Argument

Figure 1 shows the two-step model which captures our research puzzle:

Figure 1: A two-step model of EU conflict transformation strategy



In the first step we analyze the EU strategy of regional integration, describing the main features of the EU's approach towards regional conflicts. In the second step, we focus on the implementation of the regionalization strategy and on the impact this strategy had on regional conflicts.

The first argument guiding our research refers to the possible impact of the EU on regional integration. Regarding this first step, we distinguish between three different possible forms of EU impact on a regionalization process in a given region:

- Direct impact on new regional institutions and rules, when the EU actively contributes to the creation of a new institutional setting.
- Direct intentional impact which differs from the original EU policy goals (and which may actually contradict those goals).

- Indirect unintentional impact, when an EU policy has an impact on regional integration although this was not planned by the EU.

We therefore need to assess these different forms of direct and indirect conflict transformation. We can trace direct influence by considering the change of institutional rules and settings within a region. More indirect forms of influence may be found in interviews which show the motivations of regional actors of changing their behavior. In this context we need to include possible indirect consequences of EU action into our analysis. By this, we mean effects on regional actors, networks and flows (people, goods, interaction, intensity of exchange). How we proceed with this is elaborated in the section on operationalization (4.2.).

We argue that one condition for positive EU impact on conflict transformation is that the EU actually pursues the regional integration policy which it claims to promote, and does not undermine this policy through, for example, member state engagement in bilateral partnerships etc.

The second analytical step refers to the link between regional integration and conflict transformation.

1. In accordance with the literature on the EU as a normative power, the EU will be especially successful in transforming regional conflicts by reaching a long-term change of identities of the conflict parties and conflict perceptions of the regional actors.

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 “securitisation”, 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. In terms of conflict parties, the EU’s impact might depend 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 might be prone to continuing conflicts in order to remain with a stable identity. This kind of dynamic can solely be undermined by public consultations between the conflict parties, by convincing the 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 the reflection on conflictual routines among the actors by recognizing the cooperative intentions of both conflict parties publicly or by engaging

actors in “routinized public meetings and commitments for solidifying recognition of security-seeking” (Mitzen 2006: 363). This kind of ontological security of regional actors may be a considerable reason at the local level, why actors may have difficulties to pick up on the EU’s strategy of regional integration. We therefore need to pay attention to the fact that regional conflicts may provide the identity basis for conflict parties and that this may have implications for the success of the EU’s strategy.

Thus, we argue that the EU may be successful in applying its integration strategy to regional conflicts if it is able to make conflict parties reflect on their possible conflictive routinized relationship and their conflict identity (their attachment to the conflict settings).

2. The perspectives for successful conflict transformation arise, if the EU has integrated other global actors into the process of fostering regional integration abroad and if it is perceived as a model or promising example for local conflict parties.

The first part of this argument points to the question whether the EU has acted in synergy or tension with other global actors engaged in the selected conflicts, including international organizations. This focus relates to the second pillar of the normative power of the EU, which is ‘effective multilateralism’. Within the project we therefore pay attention to the question whether or not the EU has acted on a multilateral (including regional) level in order to promote its strategy. On this so-called ‘supply’ side of regional integration, we argue that EU influence interacts with that of other global actors, such as the UN, and great powers such as the US or China. *We argue that the EU gains support by global actors for reaching conflict transformation if it has consulted and included other global actors into its integration strategy. On the other side, we argue that 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.*

Whereas research emphasizing the ‘supply’ side of conflict resolution, and thus focusing on the EU is abundant, the literature does not pay sufficient attention to the ‘demand’ side and thus overlooks local demands for EU involvement.⁴ On the demand side, the interests and receptiveness of local actors has been identified as crucial (Tocci 2007).

⁴ See Mattli (1999) for these two categories.

The European Union has pursued this strategy of regional integration via a variety of instruments in different world regions: in some cases, through the institutionalization of relations between conflict parties;⁵ in other cases, to resolve and indeed transform the core issues of the conflict itself. In order to assess the strategy of regional integration of the EU, we draw upon a model of four different pathways of promoting regionalization, which draws together the aspects of supply, demand and interaction with other global actors.

Influence of local and global actors.	Pathway of influence	Supply: EU	Demand: local actors	Intervening: other global actors
Logic of action				
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

Table 1: Pathways of EU influence on external conflicts

This table allows us to consider different motivations of the demand and supply side of regional integration, as well as of other international actors intervening in the conflict. The model also bears the advantage of considering various kinds of influence that can result from regional integration.

Methodologically, we account for the direct and indirect consequences of EU regional integration through semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders and 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

⁵ For an example of conflict management see Swanström (2002).

(compulsion, social learning, changing context, model setting) affecting the promotion of regionalization and hence linking the supply (EU) to the demand (local actors) side.

The promotion of regional integration, and its impact on conflicts, raises in fact 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).

Table 2 outlines the Regioconf’s methodological approach:

OBJECTIVES	PATHWAYS OF EU INFLUENCE				ACTORS
	<i>COMPULSION</i>	<i>LEARNING</i>	<i>CHANGING CONTEXT</i>	<i>MODEL SETTING</i>	
<i>REGIONAL INTEGRATION (RI)</i>					<i>Actors involved in RI process</i>
<i>CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CR)</i>					<i>Actors involved in CR activities</i>
<i>CR through RI (CR-RI)</i>					<i>Actors involved in CR-RI</i>

Table 2: Methodological matrix

4.2. Our cases

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 cooperation 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 Western Africa and the Great Lakes sub-region. In all of these three 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.

5. 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 center 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 undetermined and underexplored. In this paper we set out a two-step framework of analysis. We developed a typology of EU impact on regional integration (direct and intended, indirect and unintended, indirect and intended) and established a link between those different scenarios and conflict transformation. Intervening factors influencing a successful regional integration strategy on transforming conflicts include: the receptiveness of local actors (EU as a model), the degree to which the EU consults other global actors on its strategy (multilateral negotiations) and the degree to which the EU is able to change the conflict identity of the conflict parties.

Finally, we have come up with a model of four pathways tracing the different channels of EU influence on local actors.

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