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The EU and Africa:
Regionalism and interregionalism beyond institutions

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims at mapping relevant trends of regionalism and interregionalism in and between Europe and Africa, by looking at the historical evolution and in light of recent developments. The analysis focuses on institutionalized regionalism and interregionalism between the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), as well as regional organizations in Southern, West and East Africa in the three sectors of trade; security; and environment. It also goes beyond by addressing and comparing formal and informal, state and non-state, patterns of integration at regional and transnational levels.

The paper concludes that the EU and AU present many commonalties in terms of institutional architecture. Nevertheless, if we look at the reality of their achievements, it emerges that the two organizations evolved at different pace, with the AU lagging behind, also due to the fact that the integration process in the two regions is confronted with different challenges. In terms of interregional relations, it appears that the EU has heavily influenced the development of regionalism in Africa mainly through teaching and support. The relationship between the EU and African regions is fundamentally characterized by the former influencing regional policy of, and providing funds and capacity building to, the latter.

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1. Introduction

Europe and Africa are both experiencing deep transformations that affect their integration paths and interregional relationship.

In the last two decades, the European Union (EU) has been characterized by phases of progressive deepening and widening of the integration process and prolonged stalemates. The reforming fatigue that resulted from the adoption and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, accompanied by the economic and financial crisis erupted in 2008, have questioned the validity and sustainability of the EU model and opened new avenues for alternative – selected and/or differentiated – forms of integration.

Today's Africa is still marked by enduring instability in Libya and Somalia, governance and electoral crises in Central African countries, disease outbreak and epidemics in West Africa and terrorist threats from the Sahel region to the Horn. At the same time, it is characterized by positive developments such as efforts at fostering continental and regional integration through the African Union (AU) and African Regional Intergovernmental Organizations (RIGOs). At the economic level Africa has also experienced some marginal improvements. From the end of the 1990s till the current global financial and economic crisis, economic growth began to recover, rising and staying above population growth. However, the sustainability of this economic development is challenged by factors such as external instability, domestic conflicts, inflexible production systems, and unequal distribution of wealth.

Contemporary regionalism in Africa and Europe cannot be understood by looking only at governmental integration in the framework of continental organizations such as the EU and the AU. Regional and interregional dynamics need to be analyzed through additional levels and forms of interaction. State actors apart, various types of non-state actors, including social and professional groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based and cultural organizations, play an increasingly important role in these processes, both within and outside existing regional and interregional arrangements.

Based on the assumptions outlined above, the paper aims at mapping relevant trends of regionalism and interregionalism in and between Europe and Africa, by looking at the historical evolution and in light of recent developments. The analysis will go beyond formal regionalism and interregionalism by addressing and comparing informal patterns of integration at regional and transnational levels. Except for the (formal and informal) continental regional integration processes linked to the EU and the AU, focus is put on other regional actors developed in connection with specific regional areas in Africa. It will be articulated in the three sectors of trade; security; and environment with a view to identify relevant conclusions on the current status of African-European interregionalism.

2. Conceptualizing Regionalism in Europe and Africa

Equating regionalism and "European integration theory" (Wiener and Diez 2004) is misleading, as the basic conditions of European integration, namely industrial economy and liberal politics, are not "readily transferable to other regional contexts" (Haas 1961: 378). In this paper, the authors reject the paradigmatic approach that tends to judge the achievements of other integration projects on the basis of the European example. At the same time, the analysis contests the assumption that "Euroexceptionalism" (Acharya 2012: 11), and in particular the uniqueness or *sui generis* character of the European integration represented by the EU, should be considered as an impeding

factor for a comparative study that takes into consideration the EU and other forms of regionalism. Following the approach suggested by Luk Van Langenhove, we adopt “a perspective that, on the one hand, allows us to consider regions of all kinds (wherever they are located) without being 'Eurocentric', but with the possibility of understanding the EU as a special case” (Van Langenhove 2012: 24).

In particular, we refer to Glyn Morgan's categorization of the project, the process and the product of integration (Morgan 2005: 4) and evaluate regionalism in Europe and Africa through a distinction between: (1) the main determinants in the origin (the project) and evolution (the process) of regionalism in Europe and Africa with a view to compare their characteristics; and (2) the current outcome (the product) of the integration processes in both regions on the basis of their products, namely political institutions, policies and practices.

In order to assess the product of integration processes in Europe and Africa, the analysis takes into consideration different sectors of integration, in particular: (1) trade; (2) security; and (3) environment. The same sectors will be used to evaluate the development and status of interregionalism between Europe and Africa.

This analysis does not neglect the traditional approaches to regionalism, “which stressed formal structures and intergovernmental interactions” (Acharya 2012: 8), but their scope is enlarged so as to include the basic features of a new regionalism, in which the role of non-state actors and informal processes of interactions represent constitutive elements.

As for formal structures and intergovernmental interactions, our study focuses on the EU as the most prominent and comprehensive regional organization on the European side. On the African side, we identify the AU, the continental organization that replaced the Organization for the African Unity (OAU) in 2002, as the most inclusive and articulated regional initiative. However, African regionalism is founded on a number of African RIGOs that overlap and interact with the AU and the EU in different ways. For purpose of delimitation, this paper concentrates on Sub-Saharan Africa, with particular reference to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). These are the most innovative and eminent African RIGOs in terms of dealing with trade, environment and security, respectively.

3. Origins and evolution of regionalism in Europe and Africa

In Europe, regional integration has been originally promoted through the creation of a common market in the key area of the coal, iron and steel industry, marked by the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. It later evolved in the creation of a common market within the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, meaning the removal of trade barriers between member states, the setting up of joint external barriers and the establishment of a common trade policy. The political and strategic purpose behind this project was to create ever stronger ties among European nations as a means to secure peace. The strive for further, deeper and broader, integration led to the creation of the EU in 1992 through the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which has progressively undertaken new tasks and covered additional issue areas. Today, after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the EU has exclusive competences (only the EU can legislate and adopt binding acts) in the fields of customs union, competition rules, monetary policy, conservation of marine biological resources, common commercial policy, the conclusion of international

agreements and a common foreign and security policy (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: Art. 3).

The origins of the African integration process at continental level can be traced back to the decolonization movement in the 1960s and the idea of Pan-Africanism. The original African continental organization, the OAU was established in 1963. However, it suffered from poor performance and limited results which led in 2002 to the launch of a brand new organization, the AU. The constitution of the AU marked a shift from the logic of non-interference in the internal affairs of its member states to a stance of non-indifference, marked by the right to intervene in a member state "in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity" (Constitutive Act of the African Union 2000: Art. 4) and the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanisms in 2003 in the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The AU remained an intergovernmental organization, even if supranational aspirations can be traced in various aspects of its framework, such as the AU Commission and the right of intervention mentioned above. Moreover, its objectives include, among others, to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; to promote and defend African common positions; and to achieve peace and security in Africa (Constitutive Act of the African Union 2000: Art. 3).

Regarding the involvement of non-state actors in European and African regionalism, beyond a shared commitment to embed civil society organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of policies, EU and AU have chosen different approaches. On the EU side, civil society's participation has been structured around self-selected groups that usually gather a broad array of non-state actors and networks (Silvestre 2009). Such an informal system has the advantage to avoid bureaucratic and lengthy procedures, but at the same time it has serious difficulties in providing continuity due to high turnover of members and a lack of resources (Miranda 2012:68). On the African side, the AU Constitutive Act contains a formal commitment to base the AU on a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society (Constitutive Act of the African Union 2000: Art. 4). Social groups, professional groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based and cultural organizations, as well as African diaspora organizations are included in the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), an AU advisory body created in 2008. The ECOSOCC, represents the main channel for the involvement of the African civil society and such a degree of formalization has impeded the transparent and effective participation of CSOs in AU policy processes (Miranda 2012:69-71).

African regionalism also presents a specific feature that characterized it in comparison with other regionalization projects, namely the establishment of RIGOs. In terms of Southern Africa, the level of integration has historically been high in a number of areas, such as transport, migrant labor, mining and trade (Odén 2001). The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was born in 1980, partly to reduce member states dependence on Apartheid South Africa through functional cooperation in various sectors (Oosthuizen 2006). Later, the leaders of the region decided to formalize SADCC and eventually signed the SADC Treaty in 1992. With the establishment of SADC, the focus shifted from the co-ordination of national affairs to regional integration. An amended SADC Treaty was signed on the 14 August 2001, resulting in some new institutions (ibid). The new Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) became the main socioeconomic development program, which broadened the regional agenda to include security, environment and social issues such as HIV/AIDS (Le Pere and Tjönneland 2005).

Regional integration in Southern Africa has historically been the preserve of states and governing elites, and popular participation in regional integration frameworks has been

very weak (Tsie 2001; Matlosa and Lotshwao 2010). SADC has indeed made frequent proclamations of the need to involve civil society in regional integration, such as §23 in the SADC Treaty (Blaauw 2007: 207), and encouraged the creation of the SADC Council of NGOs. Also, various departments at the Secretariat, most notably the HIV/AIDS Unit, have made efforts to co-operate with CSOs. However, in practice civil society has been rather marginalized in SADC-led regionalism, apart from some business- and social sector oriented organizations involved in project implementation and policy development (Godsäter 2013a). Regionalism in East Africa dates back to the colonial time, when colonial merchant capitalism created various trading networks throughout the region (Ochwada 2013). Upon independence in the 1960s, the new East African states had inherited already existing interstate integration arrangements that mainly focused on commerce and trade. The first Treaty for East African Co-operation led to the establishment of the EAC in 1967 (Adar 2014: 230). However, due to the domination of Kenya in political and economic integration, as well as personal and ideological differences between the leaders, the EAC disintegrated in 1977 (Adar 2014, Ochwada 2013). In 1999 the EAC was revived through the signing of a new treaty and Burundi and Rwanda became full members in 2006 (Adar 2014). The core elements of the resurrected EAC are the adoption of a trade regime and cooperation in trade liberalization (Nixdorf 2013), but it also entails a comprehensive regional framework for governing regional affairs, such as peace, security and development, and also environmental concerns (Adar 2014: 232).

The new Treaty also opened up for participation of non-state actors in the regional integration process. Furthermore, the EAC Secretariat has granted observer status to members of civil society and the business community in the region by allowing them to have representatives in selected meetings and committees (Alusa 2013: 75). However, in practice, state actors dominate the regional processes and have shown little consideration of civil society and individual citizens (Ochwada 2013: 60).

The colonial roots of regionalism in West Africa can be found in the geographical break-up between French and British colonies (Gandois 2014). It was the Francophone states that took a lead in the (formal) integration of the region after independence in the 1960s, forming West African Economic Community in 1974. At the same time, Nigeria, a former British colony, contested Francophone integration promoting a more inclusive RIGO; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was eventually created in 1975. ECOWAS soon became the dominant RIGO in the region. Principles related to trade enhancement through elimination of obstacles to free trade dominated the treaty. The treaty was revised in 1993, which changed the organization institutionally and gave it a more explicit security and democracy mandate. ECOWAS has often been used as a political forum for state leaders to advance their national agendas (Hartmann 2013: 10). Nevertheless, ECOWAS has made some provisions for the collaboration with civil society on a regional level. The revised treaty of 1993 calls for ECOWAS to cooperate with NGOs in order to encourage popular involvement in regional co-operation (Gandois 2013: 200). In 1994 ECOWAS became the first RIGO to grant observer status to CSOs at its meetings and in 1996 the Forum of Associations Recognized by ECOWAS was created by ECOWAS to coordinate CSO activities and act as a link between the CSOs and the Secretariat. In 2003, a civil society unit in the Secretariat was created. In principle, most CSOs have adopted a partnership strategy, concerned with implementing various ECOWAS instruments (Iheduru 2014). However, there is still potential friction as ECOWAS officials and West African civil society sometimes disagree on approaches towards regional issues (Olonisakin 2009: 111).

4. Outcome of regionalism in Europe and Africa: trade, security and environment

4.1 Trade

4.1.1. Regional trade integration in Europe

As outlined above, the process of market integration laid the ground for European regionalism: a cornerstone of this process was the adoption and implementation of a major legislative programme, the Single Market Programme, resulting in the elimination of non-trade barriers by 1 January 1993. The next major steps were the creation of an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in 1999 and the introduction of the Euro in 2002 (European Commission 2007).

The integration of the goods and services market is still progressing 20 years after the launch of the Single Market. Approximately three-quarters of the trade in goods within the EU are covered by harmonized regulations. However, member states have shown an enduring resistance to complete the Single Market, especially in certain areas such as energy, the service sector, the digital industries and telecommunication markets, and defence. Some recent initiatives, such as the 2013 European Commission Roadmap to strengthen the internal market, have been undertaken to boost integration in these sectors.

Intra-EU market represented around 17% of EU GDP in 1999 and close to 22% in 2011 (European Commission 2012). This positive general trend in terms of integration hides contrasting situations among member states. While the evolution of intra-EU imports and exports to GDP ratios in the period 1999-2011 has been positive in some member states, negative trends or stagnation can be seen in others (European Commission 2012). Moreover, intra-EU trade saw a sharp downward trajectory in the last four years, which implies that global trading partners are becoming more important (Bruegel, 2014).

4.1.2. Regional trade integration in Africa

Support for economic integration on in Africa is strong among the continent's external partners and African elites (Draper 2012: 67). Many initiatives have been undertaken by the AU in this direction, with a view to implement a continental free trade agreement by 2017 and a continental common market by 2028 (Tumuhimbise 2013: 13). Some progress has already been realized, but these objectives are far from being reached.

The level of intra-African trade has increased in real terms from $32 billion in 2000 to $54 billion in 2011 (UNCTAD 2013: 22). At the same time, this has been accompanied by a decrease in its share of total African trade from 19.3% in 1995 to 11.3% in 2011, due to the fact that African trade with the rest of the world grew much faster than intra-African trade (ibid: 24). A number of factors inhibit an expansion in intra-African trade For example, firms in most African countries find it difficult to produce competitively, as they face high production costs due to poor access to electricity, credit, skilled labour and other inputs (ibid: 61). Intra-African trade is also faced with relatively high non-tariff barriers such as price controls, product standards and discriminatory foreign exchange allocation (UNCTAD 2013: 61).Consequently, the AU has launched a number of

initiatives, including the adoption in January 2012 of an Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and a Framework for Fast Tracking the Establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (African Union 2012: 5-17).

It must be underlined that substantial economic activity in poor countries in Africa and elsewhere is not captured by official statistics and suffers from poorly designed policy on the basis of the assumption that informal economy is unproductive (Bauer 2000). Although there are no systematic statistics on informal cross-border trade in Africa, it is estimated that it represents 43% of official GDP, thus being almost equivalent to the formal sector (OECD 2009). The high share of informal trade, coupled with the insufficient or incorrect data, compounds the difficulty for governments, regional organizations and external partners in addressing trade barriers in Africa.

4.1.3. Regional trade integration in Southern-, East- and West Africa

Regional integration arrangements in Africa are deeply influenced by the European model of linear market integration through sequential phases of integrating goods, labour and capital markets, and finally monetary and fiscal integration. This is manifested by a free trade area, followed by a customs union, common market and economic union (McCarthy 2010). Starting with Southern Africa, the pivotal role of SADC is to facilitate regional trade through various liberalization schemes (Matlosa 2006: 7-8). The SADC Trade Protocol was signed in 1996, calling for a removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers. Later, RISDP set time-bound targets for the trade-driven regional integration but so far, only the free trade area has been achieved. Significant challenges have emerged in the trade integration process, for example related to the reduction of trade barriers, which contributed to the failure to launch the SADC customs union in 2010 (TRALAC 2012). Therefore, intra-SADC's export share of the total exports declined from 11% in 2000 to 9, 5% in 2006. Also, it is important to underline that about 70% of total intra-SADC trade involves South Africa (Chigwada and Pamacheche 2012: 98-102) due to the historical patterns discussed above. Furthermore, SADC tends to ignore the informal dimension of trade, despite its 40% share of total trade in the region, due to its perceived illegal character and the consequent perspective that it should not be facilitated (SARDC 2008). SADC mainly works with formal business organizations such as the Association of SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry, dealing with the movement of goods, productivity and investment, at the expense of engagement with CSOs advocating for social rights and trade justice such as the Economic Justice Network However, it has lately shown a growing interest in the Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT)-sector and started to open up for interaction with relevant CSOs, for example the newly-established Southern Africa Cross Border Traders Association, which seeks to lobby SADC for recognition of the needs of informal cross-border traders (Godsäter 2013a).

In East Africa, the EAC states have been implementing a customs union since 2005 but the planned common market is not yet in full bloom and the proposed monetary union and political federation are very far away. The problem is that the member states are not moving forward with policy harmonization, reluctant to phase out barriers to trade. In fact, intra-regional exports are higher compared with SADC but still only 19%. Also, due to the different levels of development among the EAC states, deeper integration might increase the intra-regional inequalities instead of promoting equitable growth (Matambalya 2012). Trade integration facilities at borders, such as easing customs procedures and tax reduction for products produced within the community, are not very accessible for small-scale traders. In practice, little is done by the EAC to facilitate ICBT, despite being a considerable trade potential in the region (Nixdorf 2013).

As is the case of the previous regions, regional trade integration in West Africa also follows the linear model of integration. The challenges for doing this are also similar. Being hesitant to transfer sovereignty to the regional level, member states have never seriously considered harmonizing their economic policies (Hartmann 2013). Ambitious objectives linked to free movements of persons and goods, the progressive harmonization of customs barriers and a single monetary zone have not materialized. Consequently, the amount of intra-regional trade is still insignificant and makes up only 11% of total exports. Economic relations to third states are more important and the main trade partner for ECOWAS is the EU (Igue 2011). In terms of ICBT, the volume is significant, but most countries continue to disregard the informal aspects of trade. By consequence, there is no incentive to inform informal traders about regional trade schemes, which results in a situation where traders lacks knowledge about policies guiding cross-border trading (Olabisi Yusuff 2014).

4.2 Security

4.2.1 Regional security integration in Europe

The EU has defined a specific framework for action in the fields of security and defense through the development of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) as a part of its Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. Furthermore, the adoption of the European Security Strategy in December 2003 represented a key step towards identification of the main challenges and threats the EU must be able to face to be a credible actor in a changed international environment. Simultaneously, since the launch of its operative phase in 2003, more than thirty ESDP deployments have been initiated, among which many have already been successfully completed. However, the unanimity rule, together with the lack of an integrated headquarters in Brussels to plan and conduct missions abroad and uneven financial mechanisms for military operations, continues to impact negatively on the ability of the EU to guarantee effective and timely action in crisis scenarios. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 has opened new perspectives for the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Among the most innovative provisions, we can name: the nomination of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice President of the Commission in charge with External Action; the creation of an European External Action Service; the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation in the area of defense, through which willing and able EU member states would work together to improve their military capabilities; and the improvement of the European Parliament's role in the field of security and defense.

Looking at the role played by non-governmental actors in this field, it is worth noting that the EU Political and Security Committee, a key body responsible for peace and security matters in the EU Council, invites to its meetings experts from CSOs in order to have opinions from the ground on specific countries and regions on an ad hoc basis. CSOs contributes to EU activities in peace and security mainly in the sectors of early warning and training and mediation Nevertheless, despite positive examples and formal commitments on the engagement of civil society actors, security and defense matters in the EU are still monopolized by governmental and institutional stakeholders.

4.2.2. Regional security integration in Africa

The concept of providing "African solutions to African problems" underlines the identity dimension of security issues in Africa (Makinda and Okumu, 2008). Hence, the AU has

securitized the pan-African project, both through the deployment of a number of AU peacekeeping missions and by the ongoing establishment of a new African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The APSA envisages cooperation on prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa between the AU and regional entities such as ECOWAS, SADC and EAC. It includes an institutional structure the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and a Panel of the Wise (PoW); an operational arm (a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the African Stand-by Force (ASF); and a Peace Fund.

The PSC is the standing decision-making body of the AU responsible for peace and security matters at continental level. It has fifteen members elected on regional basis for two years (ten members) or three years (five members), while its chairmanship rotates on a monthly basis.

The PoW is composed of highly respected African personalities, its mandate is focused on conflict prevention, and it is designed to both provide advice and undertake action. For the time being, the Panel has not succeeded in translating its intentions into effective mediation actions, despite positive developments such as the recently established mediation guidelines with the AU and regional organizations

The CEWS consists of a Situation Room located at the AU Commission in Addis Ababa and responsible for data collection and analysis on the basis of early warning indicators. However, it is challenged by the lack of reliable network infrastructure and its coordination with regional units, which shall collect and process data, is still insufficient.

The ASF should be composed by stand-by multidisciplinary contingents (civilian, military and police) to be rapidly deployed at appropriate notice. Through the ASF, the AU should be able to conduct observation and monitoring missions and classical peace support operations, but also interventions in member states in case of grave circumstances, preventive deployment and peacebuilding. However, operational capacity remains limited vis-à-vis rising demand and expectations. The Peace Fund has been created with the view to provide the necessary financial resources for peace support operations and other operational activities. However, only a small percentage of the already limited AU budget is allocated to the Peace Fund. Moreover, a number of AU member states have difficulties in honouring their financial obligations (Pirozzi 2009:16).

In terms of interaction between AU institutions and non-governmental actors, the PSC adopted in December 2008 the so-called Livingston Formula, according to which it may call upon CSOs to organize and undertake activities in the areas of peace and security (African Union 2008). Unfortunately, such activities have not been implemented on a regular basis. As regards the operationalization of APSA, CSOs such as the African Peace Support Trainers' Association provide training on specific security issues (and mediation techniques ((Miranda, Pirozzi and Schaefer 2012:11). However, as on the EU side, civil society still plays a marginal role in decision-making on peace and security issues.

4.2.3. Regional security integration in West Africa

Among the African RIGOs, ECOWAS is probably the most advanced in terms of integration in the field of security and defense. Civil wars in states such as Liberia and Sierra Leone have prompted ECOWAS to develop security architecture. The ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group was created in 1990 in order to intervene in military conflicts before they spread to the rest of the region. In 1999, the ECOWAS Protocol

relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security formed the core of a more comprehensive peace and security architecture, including human security (Gandois 2013: 197). Furthermore, in 2008 ECOWAS introduced the Conflict Prevention Framework (CPF), addressing the structural causes of conflict and in 2010 ECOWAS was the first RIGO to set up a functioning regional brigade (Gandois 2013). Another success of ECOWAS is its engagement in the resolution of political crises in the region (Igue 2011; Piccolino and Minou 2014).

Civil society interaction with ECOWAS is notable in the field of peace and security (Gandois 2013) and CSOs have made a great impact on the broadening of the security paradigm. Important regional actors are the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP). These and other CSOs play a key role in ECOWAS, for example in the implementation of the Early-Warning System and the Small-Arms Control Program as well as in developing the CPF (Olonisakin 2009). It should be mentioned that CSOs such as CDD and WANEP originally contested the traditional state-centric view of security, but were later drawn into the ECOWAS agenda (Iheduru 2014).

4.3. Environment

4.3.1. Regional environment integration in Europe

Environmental policy is a central area of the European integration process since the 1970s. Since then, an impressive body of environmental legislation has been developed in the EU framework. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, climate change policy remains a shared competence between the Union, primarily the European Commission with its Directorate-Generals (DGs) on Environment and Climate Action, and EU member states (European Commission 2013).

The environmental policy of the EU has been formulated in a series of EU Environmental Action Programs, the last of which was in force until 2012. On March 2010, the European Commission inaugurated the Europe 2020 Strategy, which integrates environmental protection issues in the overarching EU development strategy. Among the priorities of Europe 2020 Strategy, there is a strong commitment to resource efficiency and biodiversity protection.

The main challenge remains implementation. In particular over the last two decades, the EU has put a lot of effort into developing effective domestic policies in climate change and global environmental governance in general. In line with this approach, the Europe 2020 Strategy proposes stricter reviews and controls of the national reform programs (Papadaki 2012).

Both the decision-making and the implementation process of EU legislation in the field of environment is influenced by non-state actors, in particular environmental NGOs, industries and citizens exercising their participatory rights. DG Environment at the European Commission can be described as one of the most open DGs for external interests (Cruce 2011:9). Other points of entrance are the Members of the European Parliament, in particular those in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, which have regular contacts with interest groups and, also due to the lack of resources, rely on the expertise of NGOs in this field (Cruce 2011:10). Environmental NGOs have worked in the past both through public campaign, for example the big joint campaign on the EU Climate Package between Climate Action

Network Europe (CAN Europe), Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and World Wildlife Foundation as well as traditional lobbying (Cruce 2011:11).

4.3.2. Regional environment integration in Africa

On the African side, some efforts have been undertaken to boost regional cooperation at the continental level in the field of environment but there are still many challenges to overcome for a unified framework. To this end, an Action Plan for the Environment Initiative has been established in 2003 in the framework of NEPAD as the guiding document for AUs activities in the fields of environment and climate change. The overall objective of the Action Plan is to improve environmental conditions in Africa as a pre-condition for economic growth and poverty eradication, to build Africa's capacity to implement regional and international environmental agreements and to effectively address African environmental challenges (Action Plan for the Environment Initiative 2003). A crucial role in its implementation is played by the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), which aims to strengthen cooperation between African governments in order to halt the degradation of Africa's environment and satisfy the food and energy needs of the continent's people. It is expected that AMCEN would ultimately become a Specialized Technical Committee of the AU Commission. Its tasks include promoting awareness on global and regional environmental issues; developing common positions to guide African representatives in international environmental negotiations; reviewing and monitoring environmental programs at the regional, sub-regional and national levels; and building African capacity in the field of environmental management.

CSOs have successfully negotiated a place in the AU and NEPAD and played an important role in the development of AU protocols on critical issues such as biosafety and genetic resources Of particular importance has been the development of networks, including different types of CSOs, sometimes in partnership with business, governments and multilateral organizations, like the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and the African Stockpile Program (UNDEP, nd.).

4.3.3. Regional environment integration in East Africa

There are signs of growing interstate cooperation at the regional level on issues such as biodiversity and climate change (Compagnon, Florémont and Lamaud 2011). The EAC is the most important example of this. During the past ten years or so, a number of initiatives have been taken by East African states to regionally manage common environmental challenges, in particular on the Lake Victoria Basin (LVB). For example, in 2003 the EAC Summit signed the Protocol for Sustainable Development of the Lake Victoria Basin, enacting regional legislation on environment and natural resource management. Consequently, the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) became operational in 2004, providing policy guidance in relation to promoting sustainable use of the lake resources and coordinating development activities in the area. The most important regional project under the LVBC is the so-called Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project (LVEMP). Another major player in regional environmental governance in East Africa is the Lake Victoria Fishery Organization (LVFO), a technical regional organisation under the EAC responsible for coordinating and managing fisheries resources of Lake Victoria (Godsäter 2013b). LVEMP and LVFO are considered to have contributed enormously to the EAC's knowledge of the LVB environment as well as to poverty reduction around the lake (Okurut and Othero 2012). Lastly, the EAC recently adopted a Climate Change Policy, which addresses the adverse impacts of climate change in the region (EAC 2011).

Both LVBC and LVFO work closely with the regional private sector and civil society, which have great interest in the development of the LVB. However, it should be noted that the various regional institutions within the EAC have shown collaborative interest only for those sections within civil society that provide service and policy advice. Two important examples are Osienala Friends of Lake Victoria and East African Communities' Organization for Management of Lake Victoria Resources. The fact that other, more critically inclined CSOs such as the East African Sustainability Watch Network are relatively excluded seriously compromises the legitimacy of EAC (Godsäter 2013b).

5. Comparing regionalism in Europe and Africa

As outlined above, the EU and the AU present many commonalties in terms of institutional architecture and also share some principles and strategic objectives. Nevertheless, if we look at the reality of their achievements in terms of development and implementation of policies in the three fields analyzed above – trade, environment and security – striking differences emerge. It must be recognized that the two organizations evolved at different pace, being the AU a much younger organization than the EU and confronted with different challenges. While the EU acts in a relatively stable and peaceful context, the AU has to address problems ranging from extreme poverty, endemic war, serious health issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and ebola, poor state governance and severe radicalization phenomena.

In the field of trade, the EU stands as the largest market and most integrated region in the world thanks to the realization of the single market and the EMU. Both these projects have been recently challenged and put into question: while some member states oppose the completion of the single market in sectors such as financial services, defense and energy, the economic and financial crisis erupted in 2008 has shown the fragility of the EMU and the stability of the Euro. Africa has established the ambitious goals of adopting a continental free trade agreement by 2017 and a continental common market by 2028, but these objectives are far from being reached. The low level of intra-African trade accounts for a failure of past attempts to realize market integration in the continent. Also, the estimations about informal trade being almost equivalent to the formal sector row against the aspirations of policy-makers to demolish trade barriers. While many experts question the validity of the market integration model for the African continent, it continues to be regarded by most African leaders as the solution for a progressive integration of Africa in the world economy.

The EU is quite advanced in the regulation of environmental issues and has developed an impressive amount of legislation to address climate change, both at domestic level in its member states and through the setting of international standards. The AU has shown some activism in this field lately, especially through the establishment of the AU Action Plan for the Environment Initiative, even if implementation of the initiative lags behind.

In the field of security, the EU remains anchored to the intergovernmental logic and the unanimity rule in the decision-making process, which resulted in a non-linear process of integration and the partial realization of the aspirations of the treaties to develop a truly common security and defense policy. The AU has set ambitious goals for the resolution of crises and conflicts on the continent through dedicated structures, a continental force to conduct peace support operations, as well as adequate and predictable financial resources. Nevertheless, its ability to cope with security challenges in the region is still hampered by human resource deficiencies, scarce

absorption capacity of external funding and persisting imbalances between continental and regional structures.

The role of alternative processes of integration – such as in the case of trans-boundary informal trade – and civil society participation – which are more substantial in fields such as environment and less developed in sectors like security and defense – allow to identify significant margins of improvement for African regionalism. The main challenge lies on the capacity of continental institutions to address governance issues at national level and build a conducive environment for commitment and participation in the integration project.

In terms of regional integration in Africa, there are many common denominators between the three regions analyzed in this study. Regional integration is essentially based on economic and trade related premises with the aim of increasing intra-regional trade among the members of the respective organizations. Hence, trade liberalization schemes and monetary convergence have been on the center stage in the creation of various regional governance mechanisms. It should be mentioned that this enthusiasm only concerns formal trade. ICBT, regardless of its scope, is generally looked at with suspicion and the link between poverty reduction and informal trade is not acknowledged. However, with its increasing focus on regional security, West Africa deviates slightly from this picture. ECOWAS and its member states have worked hard to put in place advanced regional security architecture and have been reasonably successful in hindering internal conflicts from spilling over to other countries. The political leaders have slowly developed a regional understanding of peace and security agreeing that stability in the region can only occur if resources and peacebuilding efforts are pooled. The environment is generally of low relevance in regional governance, but the EAC stands out in this regards. The political leaders have gradually come to the conclusion that managing the Victoria Lake resources must be done in a collaborative fashion and have developed a rather sophisticated regional framework in the environmental field.

Furthermore, regional integration is a slow process in all three regions, of which one manifestation is the low level of intra-region trade, ranging from 9, 5% in Southern Africa to 19% in East Africa. The member states are, to a large extent, hesitant to give up part of their sovereignty to the regional level, making it very hard to harmonize trade-related policies but also concerning security. Such state-centrism is linked to a general suspicion towards the role of civil society in regional integration, despite grand declarations stating the opposite. In the trade field CSOs are particularly excluded, most notably in SADC. On the whole, regionalism is highly top-down giving little space for popular involvement. However, there are important instances of increasing civil society participation in regional governance, especially in the environmental area. Also, in the security field, even if CSOs generally have a hard time participating in policy-making, ECOWAS deviates from this pattern. Here, NGOs have made a significant contribution to the regional peace and security architecture.

6. Interregionalism between Europe and Africa

The relations between Europe and Africa seem to cover almost the full spectrum of possible definitions of interregionalism systematized by Francis Baert et al. (Baert, Scaramagli and Söderbaum 2014: 4-6). In this paper, we use the following categories to exemplify interregionalism between Europe and Africa: (1) pure interregionalism, which develops between two clearly identifiable regional organizations within an institutional framework; (2) transregionalism, which refers to transnational (non-state)

relations, including transnational networks of corporate production or of NGOs; (3) quasi-interregionalism, which is used to describe relations between a regional organization/regional group and a third country in another region.

6.1 Pure interregionalism

The concept of a Euro-African partnership has evolved over time: the initial approach of a mainly institutional type, based on the donor-recipient logic of the Yaoundé (1963, 1969) and Lomé (1975, 1979, 1984, 1990) Conventions, has gradually evolved into a more balanced partnership to be pursued in the field of development cooperation (Cotonou Convention, 2000).

In the last fifteen years, the creation of the AU produced an increasing interaction with the EU, which has been modelled on a comprehensive continent-to-continent dialogue. In 2000, the Cairo EU-Africa Summit set in motion a structured political dialogue, which was reinforced by the 2005 EU Strategy for Africa, the first attempt to establish a single framework for continental engagement. These first steps were mainly characterized by unilateral European efforts to design a credible approach to African development and security challenges, without the effective involvement of African actors. To overcome these problems, the new Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted at the Lisbon Summit in December 2007, guided by the principles of ownership and joint responsibility and aimed at taking the Africa-EU relationship to a more ambitious strategic level, with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation in all fields. The two Action Plans, adopted for 2008-2010 and 2011-2013 in order to operationalize the JAES, as well as a Roadmap adopted for 2014-2017, took stock of this evolution and identified priorities for cooperation, the first of which is peace and security. AU-EU relations on peace and security matters take place in different frameworks and at various levels, including Africa-EU Summits held every three years; joint meetings between the EU PSC and the AU PSC and Africa-EU Defense Ministers meetings; annual Commission-to-Commission meetings between the European Commission and the AU Commission; contacts and meetings between ad hoc delegations from the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament. Moreover, a Joint Expert Group on Peace and Security involving AU and EU representatives has been created but it had little impact on the implementation of the partnership due to lack of expertise and resources. An Implementation Team on Peace and Security has also been established by the EU, with a view to gather together all the relevant actors involved in the Africa-EU Partnership, both in the European Commission and in the EEAS. The role of the EU Delegation in Addis Ababa has also been reinforced in the new system by appointing a double-hatted Head of Delegation/Special Representative for the AU, by enhancing its autonomy in managing and disbursing funds, and by creating a specific section in the Delegation dealing with peace and security issues. At the operational level, the EU has committed relevant financial and technical resources to help the AU in the process of developing a CEWS and sustains the development of AU mediation capacities, especially through its support to the PoW. Moreover, the EU channeled its support to AU civilian and military missions mainly through the African Peace Facility, a financial instrument that allocated €300 million to African Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and capacity-building for the period 2008-2013. In terms of capacity-building, the EU's support is directed mainly towards the operationalization of the ASF.

Interregional cooperation on climate change and the environment became a priority of the two organizations at the end of 1990s, in connection with the international debate triggered by the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. Environmental issues became part of the EU’s development cooperation approach towards Africa in the Strategy for Africa

adopted by the European Commission in 2005. Later, environmental sustainability and climate change were introduced in the JAES among the priorities for Africa-EU partnership, while specific priorities and tools for action were specified by the following Actions Plans. The first Action Plan (2008-2010) aimed at improving coherence between climate change and development policies (Sicurelli 2013: 154) by defining global warming as a key threat to sustainable development and to the effective achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The main actions envisaged were (1) building of a common agenda on climate change policies and cooperation, in particular through the integration of regional and national strategies with new instruments, and (2) addressing land degradation and increasing aridity. The second Action Plan (2011-2013) was mainly directed at specifying the objectives of the previous one and providing additional financial resources. The Africa-EU partnership in this field led to the definition of key principles such as sustainable development, cooperation, equity and responsibility in the joint documents and declarations, as well as the establishment of a common monitoring framework (ibid: 158-160). However, it has to face a number of political challenges, including the lack of commitment by African governments towards environmental objectives; the still contested division of responsibilities between European and African countries concerning the reduction of CO2 emissions; and the mutual perceptions of African and the EU as non credible actors (ibid: 153). Civil society is involved in the partnership mainly through a monitoring and consultation role, but its inclusion in strategic decision-making and the implementation of financial instruments is still insufficient (ibid: 155-156).

Other forms of pure interregionalism can be found in the EU's relations with ECOWAS, SADC and EAC. The cooperation between EU and ECOWAS dates back to the 1970s, the former supporting development and integration in West Africa. Traditionally, the EU has focused on economic integration and support to trade, which attracts the bulk of the European Development Fund (EDF), the main instrument for development cooperation with Africa and elsewhere. However, the EDF has increasingly targeted ECOWAS conflict management activities. Even though 70% of the money deployed in the last EDF goes to deepening regional integration, improving competitiveness and European Partnership Agreements (EPAs), with the objective of supporting the establishment of a common market and the creation of the custom union in order to facilitate trade with and within West Africa, regional security, stability and peace building has become a strong sector (EU 2008a). As for EPAs, these are a scheme to create a free trade area between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states. With regards to the EPA between the EU and West African states, an agreement was signed in 2014. However, West African states fall under three different trade regimes vis-à-vis the EU, resulting in fragmentation. This can negatively affect regional ECOWAS-led integration in West Africa (Piccolino and Minou 2014). Similarly, European aid has historically spurred the development of a multitude of overlapping and sometimes competing RIGOs, such as the ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (not discussed here) (ibid).

In terms of the security aspect, the EU has since 1995 acknowledged ECOWAS as an important regional security organization dealing with conflicts and development in the region. Joint declarations and statements have created an image of partnership between EU and ECOWAS in the security field. Ministerial EU-ECOWAS meetings have been held annually or biannually since 2000 (Nivet 2006). Funding through the EDF has increasingly been channeled to ECOWAS conflict management. Interestingly here, the EU policy and discursive influence on ECOWAS has mainly taken place in the economic integration area, whose agenda remains deeply shaped by the EU, understanding economic integration as a linear process modeled along the EU experience. However, in the security area, it is more uncertain to what extent the EU has been influential of the evolving security agenda of ECOWAS. Some scholars, for

example Lucia (2012) believes that the EU is more or less exporting its political values and security norms in its relationship with ECOWAS. Other scholars, such as Piccolino and Minou, want to nuance the EU direct influence arguing that "to the extent that regional integration has contributed to conflict transformation in West Africa, this process has been driven mainly by West Africans themselves" (2014: 24).

As for interregional relations between the EU and SADC, according to one scholar, "[…] the EU's economic hegemony over the region, entrenched through massive financial assistance, has effectively locked SADC into Brussels' sphere of influence" (Qobo 2012:251). In fact, the EU contributed with 25% of total funding to SADC in 2008 (Buzdugan 2013). In the 10th EDF, through the EU-SADC Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Program 2008-2013, 80% was earmarked for assistance to regional economic integration (EU 2008b). The EU seeks to influence the path of regionalism in SADC towards a customs and monetary union, in line with a conventional neo-liberal discourse of trade liberalization and macroeconomic convergence, seeing itself as the model for regional integrating (Buzdugan 2013). Asymmetrical aid relations between SADC, the EU and other donors have been institutionalized over the years. One manifestation of this is the Joint SADC-International Cooperation Partner Task Force (JTF), which intends to coordinate donors and their counterparts within the Secretariat (ibid), in which the EU is responsible for trade and institutional development (Tjönneland 2008). Through the JTF, donors participate in budget programming and joint project planning with SADC and have direct input on policy and strategy (Buzdugan 2013). Furthermore, the EU is SADC's largest trading partner. The value of SADC exports to the EU account for 30% of total exports and the equivalent value for imported goods from the EU is 29%. Up until now, in trading with EU under the Lomé Conventions, the SADC States enjoyed preferential non-reciprocal access to the EU-market. Through the EPA negotiations with SADC members, the EU seems to further "lock in neoliberalism" regionalism in Southern Africa through promoting trade liberalization and open regionalism (Hurt 2012: 507). Furthermore, the EPA negotiations have reinforced already existing trade divisions between Southern African states, in terms of dividing the SADC-member states into four separate negotiating blocks, creating their own separate trade paths with Europe (Qobo 2012: 260).

Looking at EU-EAC negotiations, from the 1980s the EU has evolved as a major funder of regional integration and development in East Africa under the EDF (EU 2008b). Up until today, facilitating commercial integration, besides EPAs, has dominated EU's promotion of regionalism (Theron and Ntasano 2014). In fact, according to two scholars, EAC's market-oriented type of regionalism seems to have adopted EU's linear integration approach without questioning the applicability of the European model in a post-colonial East African context (Bachmann and Sidaway 2010). The Regional Indicative Program for East and Southern African and the Indian Ocean, in which the EU's support for East African regionalism is situated, highlights two focal areas: economic integration and political cooperation. Focusing on formal trade, the former received the lion's share of the funding in the last EDF, 85%, compared with 10% for regional political activities and 5% for non-focal areas (EU 2008b).

Of all external trading partners, the EU is the most important one for the EAC (de Zamaróczy 2012). Since 2003, the EAC has been engaged in EPA-negotiations with the EU to replace the previous non-reciprocal trade preferences between the two regions with new trading arrangements that should not only foster interregional free trade but also regional integration and development (Marinov 2013). From 2007, the EAC EPA group has been comprised of the five members of EAC and is the only EPA-grouping in Africa which corresponds with a regional organization. A full EPA has not yet been concluded partly due to the fact that the EAC has demanded binding

commitment from the EU on development assistance in order to put in place development safety nets to support the required economic adjustments (Lorenz-Carl 2013). In fact, the EAC "[…] has managed to develop a position towards the EU that lies beyond a simple stereotype of a weak negotiation party from the South" (ibid: 70).

Even though the main priority for EUs support to East African regionalism is regional economic co-operation, another dimension of this is natural resources and environment. The Indicative Program aims to "support the region to improve land and water resources management" (EU 2008b: 45). Consequently, the EAC may receive resources for environment-related activities allocated to regional economic integration. However, the total amount of 10th EDF resources allocated to environmental activities is very modest in comparison with the overall financial envelope (Durán and Morgera 2012). From 2000 the EU has supported a series of regional projects that deal with environmental degradation and enhanced food production in the LVB (Delputte and Söderbaum 2012). One specific intervention was the funding of bridging phase activities between LVEMP I and II (Okurut and Othero 2012). However, by comparison to other donors the EU is not a prominent funder in the environment field in East Africa (ibid). There are signs that the EU wants to play a more significant role in the environmental field in the future. In the 11th EDF 2014-2020 regional natural resource management no longer falls under the support to regional economic integration but constitutes a separate focal area.

6.2. Transregionalism

Notable examples of transnational (non-state) relations are: the Europe Africa Policy Research Network, a network of African and European research institutes aiming to pool and foster policy research capacities, dialogue, information and partnership on issues relating to EU-Africa relations; the EU-Africa Economic and Social Stakeholders' Network, which brought together representatives of employers, workers, farmers and consumers in the social economy and cooperatives from the two continents at the eve of the latest Africa-EU Summit in 2014 with a view to lay the foundations for regular and structured cooperation; the Africa-EU Intercontinental Civil Society Forum, which met in 2010 and 2013 in order to provide input from civil society for reform of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy. The participating organizations have acknowledged that "the Joint Strategy should be co-owned by European and African non-institutional actors" and they are willing to make it a "permanent platform for information, participation and mobilization of a broad spectrum of civil society actors" (European Union and African Union 2007:22). The above-mentioned fora are valuable settings for information-sharing and policy coordination among non-governmental actors alongside and beyond EU-Africa institutional cooperation. However, they suffer for the *ad-hocism* of meetings, high turnover of participants and lack of predictable resources, which hampered their effective impact in the creation of a sustainable interregional framework.

6.4. Quasi interregionalism

There are a number of examples of this specific interregional pattern in EU-sub-Saharan African relations, including among others the EU-South Africa relations in the field of trade. Since 1999, these relations have been regulated by a Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA), which included a free trade area. In 2007, the EU and South Africa entered into a Strategic Partnership, which symbolizes the recognition by the EU of the important role played by South Africa on a regional and international level. Since then, South African and EU's representatives have held regular summits and ministerial meetings. Another example of quasi-interregionalism is

the security co-operation between France and ECOWAS. Since the end of the 1990s, France has actively supported and collaborated with ECOWAS in terms of conflict prevention and peace-building in West Africa. Some examples are provision of capacity-building support; training peacekeepers; undertaking joint training exercises; seconding military liaison officers; and jointly undertaking peacekeeping operations, such as the civil war in the Ivory Coast from 2002 and onwards (Chafer and Stoddard 2014).

7. Assessing EU-Africa interregionalism: a partnership among equals?

Andrew Hurrell (Hurrell 2007: 132) identifies three ways in which regionalist models come to be diffused around the world: through regional competition, through teaching and support and through conditionality. Regional competition did not emerge as a defining feature in EU-Africa relations. Instead, the EU has heavily influenced the development of regionalism in Africa through teaching and support. For example, the EU has committed relevant financial and technical resources to help the AU in the process of developing its capacity in the field of peace and security, in particular through the African Peace Facility. Conditionality is also at the heart of the EU-Africa relations, particularly in the fields of trade and development cooperation. The EU has included political conditionality clauses in most of its international agreements since 1995, when the Lomé Convention has defined human rights, democracy and the rule of law as 'essential elements' of cooperation (Del Biondo, 2011:380). This means that, when partner countries do not respect such essential elements, the EU can suspend the agreement. The typical example of conditionality clause in agreements with African countries is now Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement (European Parliament, 2009:3). Such article has been invoked by the EU especially in cases of *coups d'état* or flawed elections (Del Biondo, 2011:381). Moreover, the Cotonou Agreement has extended conditionality, through Article 97, to good governance and corruption. Finally, EPAs contain clauses which allow for measures to be adopted according to Articles 96 and 97 of the Cotonou Agreement (European Parliament, 2009:3). Criticism raised towards conditionality clauses has to do both with their effectiveness (Faust, 2013:1) and the EU's consistency in implementing them (Del Biondo, 2011:390). The 2007 JAES has the declared objective to take the Africa-EU relationship to a more ambitious strategic level by moving away from the traditional donor-recipient relationship based on the conditionality principle and establishing a "partnership among equals" and enhancing cooperation on jointly identified priorities. However, it seems that this principle is still struggling between rhetoric and facts, as the AU remains heavily dependent on the EU in terms of financial support and this inevitably hamper the possibility of African actors to shape the common agenda.

In terms of EU-RIGOs relations, the EU is very dominant in all three regions and fits the teaching and support category above well. The relationship between the EU and SADC, EAC and ECOWAS respectively is fundamentally characterized by the former influencing regional policy of, and providing funds and capacity building to, the latter. Being the most important donor for the above RIGOs and having a strong impact on policy-making, the EU exports the European model of linear economic integration. In terms of regional integration in Southern Arica, it is evident that donors, of which the EU is the most prominent, coordinate and lay the policy foundation for many facets of economic integration. Regional security in West Africa, being more internally grown, is an exception. It seems as if the many similarities between the EU and ECOWAS

regarding the understanding of conflict prevention stems from shared norms among peacebuilding practitioners and not an export of European ideas to West Africa. Furthermore, in terms of the EU's support to regional integration in all three regions, the commercial, market-oriented approach towards regional integration is explicit in the indicative plans for Eastern and Southern Africa and Western Africa. The bulk of the EDF funds go to this area in comparison with, for example, social issues. Of course, this has a strong discursive impact on the (neo-liberal) view of regional integration on behalf of regional policy-makers. This is further strengthened through the EPA-negotiations which are used to 'lock in' market-oriented and macroeconomic policies within states, particularly in Southern Africa. Nevertheless, in practice, trade liberalization is a slow process in all three regions due to protection of national interests. It should also be noted that some funds within the field of regional economic integration are deployed to activities related to environmental and climate change in East Africa and it seems that the EU will put more emphasis on regional natural resource management in the new EDF. In terms of ECOWAS, lastly, a decent share of the EDF funds is allocated to regional peace and security even if regional economic integration still dominates the funding portfolio.

Forms of quasi interregionalism, in which regional organizations in Europe or Africa establish institutionalized partnerships with one state in the other continent, represent a distinguish feature of interregional dynamics between EU and Africa. The cases of EU-South Africa and ECOWAS-France account for differentiated patterns of interregionalism that intersect and overlap with EU-AU-RIGOs relations, making it difficult to rationalize dialogue and initiatives on issues of common concern, bilaterally and in international fora. This is amplified by the divergences and competition among governmental and institutional actors both in Europe and Africa. Finally, an emerging transregionalism is gradually involving civil society actors from the business and NGO sectors in both Europe and Africa, which is gaining increasing capacity to influence institutional constituencies. Beyond pure interregionalism, both quasi interregionalism and transregionalism are to be considered as crucial aspects of the EU's relations with Africa and deserve attention for future research.

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