1. Introduction

The promotion of regional integration (RI) is in the view of EU officials an almost ‘genetically’ motivated goal of the EU by which the EU has in the past tried to share and transfer its unique integration experiences with its neighbourhood and regions far abroad (Interview, 2013a).

In its contact with regional entities abroad, the EU has in the past occupied for many regional partners the preeminent position of the reference point for RI processes, since it has been the most advanced proof of RI bearing the possibilities for long-lasting peace and prosperity. The RI approach of the EU thus aims at transforming regional conflicts via the promotion of RI. But how is this aim put into practice in the EU’s relations with other world regions and in which ways has the EU been linking RI and Conflict Transformation (CTR) over the past years? Which similarities and differences can be observed in the EU’s approach towards regional CTR with regard to different world regions? How has the self-perception of the EU’s role for other world regions impacted on the implementation of the EU’s approach towards regional CTR?

Focusing on the EU’s perspective, and therefore the supply side of RI promotion, this paper is assessing the evolution of the EU’s approach towards RI and its impact on CTR in Latin America (LA) and Asia over time.

In a first step, I analyze how the EU has promoted RI processes in both regions and whether it has thereby successfully advanced regional CTR. I argue that there are different ways in which

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2 When speaking of the EU’s approach towards Asia in this article, I refer to East Asia including Southeast Asia.
the EU promotes regional CTR. These ways include incentive- and model-setting as well as socialization efforts and changing the context of interaction of their regional partners. Assessing the approach of the EU versus regional organizations and regional security challenges in Asia and LA over time, I argue that the EU has adapted its approach and self-perception to the evolution of regional conditions over time. While there has been a certain EU enthusiasm of acting as a reference point for RI and of addressing regional conflicts via regional fora for both regions throughout the 1980/90ies, in the current context, the EU has adapted its former aspirations to a rather cautious and less self-confident attitude towards both regions. This, I argue, has become apparent in the EU’s employment of the ways of influence, in which active model-setting and changing context efforts have become less relevant than in the past.

In a final evaluation of both cases, I compare the evolution of the EU’s ways of influencing regional CTR with regard to both regions in the light of the EU’s perception of regional context conditions. I will assess differences and similarities of the EU’s approach towards both regions and explore the change in the EU’s self-perception as a promoter for regional CTR. In a very final outlook of the paper, I discuss whether the findings on the changing EU approach can be used for further research on the adaptation of the EU’s approach towards a changed interregional relationship with both Asia and LA.

2. The EU’s approach towards regional conflict transformation, conceptual framework and different forms of influence

Within this article, I argue that there is a link between the EU’s self-perception and its promotion of RI. EU officials see RI promotion in other world regions as a ‘genetic’ characteristic and a natural aim of the EU (Interview, 2013a), by which the EU tries to export its fundamental norm of RI leading to peace and prosperity. It specifically sees RI promotion as a tool in order to reduce regional conflicts. The EU’s preferences for dealing with regional entities and its approach of binding its partners into interregional agreements has hence been the characteristic approach with regard to the EU’s policy towards other world regions, at least since the 1990ies (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005). Throughout the 1990ies, this has taken the form of an EU approach called ‘new interregionalism’, by which the EU has tried to achieve not only economic, but also political-institutional reforms with equal ‘partners’ abroad (Grugel, 2004: 608) and has wished ‘to transfer examples of its own best practice’ (Grugel, 2004: 612). Following Teló, the EU’s contact with other regional organizations in terms of inter-regional

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3 I am referring here to the time span starting with the beginning of the EU’s financial crisis in 2009 until today.
cooperation and negotiations also strengthens its internal legitimacy and its ‘collective identity’ (Teló, 2009: 173). Vice versa, he thus sees a danger for the EU’s internal unity, as soon as the EU engages in bilateral relations rather than interregional cooperation. While analyzing the EU’s approach towards regional CTR, I will therefore draw special attention to the evolution of the EU’s self-perception with regard to both regions.

With both Asia and LA, the EU has established routinized interregional relations in the past, in which the EU has for a long time acted as the knowledgeable promoter of RI and regional CTR. Examples are the EU’s interaction with the respective sub-regional entities, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Asia and the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) or the Andean Community (CAN) in LA. The EU’s identity has thus been formed against other world regions outside the EU which had not reached a comparable integration and subsequent peace process⁴. These sub-regions wished for their part to emulate or refer themselves to the EU example in their respective sub-regional organizations, at least throughout some phases of their construction. The point to make here is that the analysis of the EU’s interregional activities has to take into account the EU’s identity and self-perception. As outlined above, I argue that this is an important factor when analyzing the EU’s approach towards other world regions. I am not saying thereby that identity-based explanations are the only factor accounting for the strategy of the EU’s approach towards regional CTR in the far abroad. In fact, to a certain extent this article also refers to EU capacities and utility calculations in the light of regional conditions as well as to partners’ responses as further relevant conditions for the EU’s approach.

The following analysis of the EU’s approach towards regional CTR in Asia and LA is based on 21 interviews with high-ranking EU officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and with Brussels based EU experts, as well as on EU documents. This is triangulated with the evaluation of the EU’s approach in the academic literature. In this way, the subjective perceptions of EU officials are enriched and sometimes contrasted with the actual EU policy documents and the evaluations of the EU’s approach in the academic literature.

Tracing the ways in which the EU promotes regional CTR by promoting its central norm of RI in the far abroad is theory-wise located within the debate on the EU’s normative (Manners, 2002) or transformative power approach (Diez et al., 2006; Börzel and Risse, 2009; Grabbe, 2006). The normative power approach suggests that the EU impacts on other world actors by

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⁴ For identity formation see the notion of ‘othering’: Diez, 2005.
spreading its norms and thereby shaping the conceptions of what is seen as “normal” and desirable for these other actors (Manners, 2002).

However, within this debate the empirical assessment of how the EU precisely promotes its norms is under-researched. Especially the assessment of the link between RI promotion and its effects on CTR in the far abroad display a gap in the literature (Diez et al., 2013: 8).

One of my fundamental assumptions is that the EU’s promotion of regional CTR is based on different forms of influence. I conceive influence as the effect of exerting power. Thus, by drawing on a model of different forms of power originating in Barnett and Duvall (Barnett and Duvall, 2005) and on variations of this model (Scherwitz, 2014; Diez et al., 2013), I differentiate between four different forms of EU influence in terms of promoting regional CTR abroad.

I conceive two direct forms of EU influence: (1) The EU practices active model-setting and tries to convince partners of the advantages of the EU model of RI or (2) it applies direct funding or direct rhetorical support in terms of incentives in order to induce partners to commit themselves to deepening RI and approaching conflicts regionally.

There are furthermore two indirect forms of influence: (3) The EU works through dialogue and experience-sharing in order to socialize regional partners into a regional approach with regard to CTR. (4) The EU engages in the provision of new institutional rules for the (sub-) regional organizations which may then give actors the legitimacy to cooperate in a new regional setting and by which the EU actively fosters new forms of interaction.

Table 1: Ways of EU influence on other world regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU works through</th>
<th>direct</th>
<th>indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational, norm-setting measures</td>
<td>Model-setting</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible practical measures</td>
<td>(Financial) incentives</td>
<td>Promoting / introducing new institutional rules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EU’s promotion of regional CTR, source: own table based on Table 1, p.13: Diez et al., 2013.

The following paragraphs will outline how the EU has applied these influence paths in the past and in the current context and which differences can be tackled with regard to the use of these influence paths towards both regions over time. This is analyzed against the backdrop of the EU’s (self-) perception towards the regions.
In the context of this paper, I understand *regional conflicts* as an ‘incompatibility of subject positions’ (Efinger et al., 1988) between different regional actors. A conflict transformation would in my view already be present if micro-changes occur, e.g. if regional partners reach a different understanding of each other while interacting in an (EU-promoted) regional security organization. I conceive a conflict as *regional* if more than two regional partners of a region are involved and affected *and/or* if the issue of the conflict is regional in nature.\(^5\)

*Regional integration (RI)* is understood in a broad sense within this paper. I conceive efforts of regional cooperation as first steps possibly leading towards different forms of RI in the context of this analysis.

The paper compares the EU’s regional CTR efforts in two different periods of time. The focus lies on the one hand on a period starting with the 1980ies and 1990ies, ending with the early 2000s - a time span in which both Asia and Latin America encountered political and economic crises and in which the EU was referred to as a reference point for regional integration projects in the regions. This is compared to the current context starting with the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008/2009.

In the following case studies I will examine both the EU’s efforts on *RI promotion* and, specifically, whether the EU uses its *RI promotion as a means for CTR*.

3. Linking regional integration and conflict transformation in Asia - the EU still in the game?

3.1. Active EU engagement in East Asia in the past

Both Asia and Latin America (LA) have experienced decisive challenges for their regional stability and security throughout the 1990ies.

In Asia, the natural regional partner of the EU is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with ASEAN institutions being inspired by the EU example. The EU has remained a reference point throughout the 1970ies and 1980ies which has led to the signature of the EU-ASEAN cooperation agreement in March 1980. However, the EU’s expertise and support in the process of ASEAN’s RI was especially needed in the mid-1990ies when the ASEAN financial and political crisis endangered the subsistence and reputation of the Association (Jetschke and Murray, 2012: 181; 187). The EU, considered at the time ‘the world’s best

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\(^5\) These definitions correspond to the approach applied in the framework of the RegioConf project, see: Diez et al., 2013
example of regional integration’ (Garelli, 2011: 5), was increasingly called upon (Jetschke and Murray, 2012).

The EU model has in the course of these developments become a blueprint for different ASEAN institutions, such as the Permanent Representatives of ASEAN and the ASEAN Charter (in force since 2008). However, the question to what extent the EU has actually acted in a direct model-setting sense with regard to ASEAN institutionalization (Jetschke and Murray, 2012; Zielonka) or rather as ‘a passive reference point’ (Reuben Wong, 2013) is disputed. The EU has been very engaged in fostering these processes by specific incentives, e.g. by providing direct technical assistance (e.g. to the ASEAN Secretariat) and by deepening RI among ASEAN countries through development programs (Garelli, 2011: 2).

The assistance of the EU to the institutionalization of ASEAN may also be seen as an example of the promotion of new rules of interaction: the EU’s promotion of the set-up of the ASEAN secretariat and its support to the formulation of the ASEAN Charter, may be interpreted as efforts of the EU to assist ASEAN in implementing new ways of interaction.

As example of the socialization pathway, the EU’s establishment of interregional dialogues, such as the creation of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996, has led to a number of exchanges among officials, e.g. via a wide range of ministerial meetings (c.f.: Doidge, 2011: 59; ASEM, 2014). In the EU’s view these meetings represent a way of exchanging opinions and at the same time of shaping the perceptions of its regional partners (socialization pathway).

In terms of regional CTR, the EU has been directly engaged in regional challenges in the past via incentive-setting: One instance of this is the EU’s participation in the construction of light water reactors for North Korea together with other relevant actors of the region:6 ‘The European Union provided for over $100 million in support for the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) Project, despite not being part of the negotiations to resolve the 1994 crisis’ (Joel S. Wit et al., 2005: 40). The EU has thus been active in terms of direct financial incentive-setting for an approach bringing together different regional conflict actors.

In another case, which falls under the incentives pathway, the EU has been engaged via negative incentives in terms of regional CTR:

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6 Initially, the other partners were Japan, South Korea, and the US. The reactors were part of the US-North Korea Agreement of 1994 (Joel S. Wit et al. 2005: 2) and resulted in the creation of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which the EU joined in 1997.
It has opposed and sanctioned Myanmar/Burma for its human rights situation since the mid-1990ies (Stahl, 2010: 19) throughout the discussions on Myanmar’s accession to ASEAN. This has on the one hand been seen as an instance of the EU breaking ASEAN’s principle of non-interference (Morada, 2012; Stahl, 2010: 20). On the other hand, the formation of a common resistance of ASEAN members towards the EU’s interference has worked as an activator for a regional ASEAN identity\(^\text{7}\) and the formation of ASEAN’s common regional approach on this issue (Morada, 2012: 91; Haacke, 2009).

While the latter case has had effects on the regional cooperation among ASEAN members not foreseen by the EU, in yet another case the EU has been engaged upon demand: It has played a crucial role through its close and fruitful cooperation with ASEAN members in the Indonesian ACEH conflict (Tamminen, 2002: 51). By funding and monitoring of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among the ACEH conflict parties, the EU has **indirectly fostered and legitimized new rules of interaction** among the conflict parties. The implementation of the MoU in the ACEH conflict in 2005 shows that the EU has taken over a ‘vital’ (Tamminen, 2002: 50) CTR role for the region with regard to this specific conflict, a role which the EU self-confidently perceived as success: ‘this new ESDP mission has so far provided an effective contribution in ending years of fighting and paving the way to sustainable peace’ (Braud and Grevi, 2005: 3). The fruitful cooperation of the EU with its regional counterpart, ASEAN, is indicative of the EU’s preference for regional CTR.

These are just a few examples which illustrate how the EU via a set of different pathways has intentionally been engaged in the promotion of RI and CTR in the past, especially via direct incentives in terms of technical assistance and funding. The EU has thereby acted as a self-confident integration model for ASEAN with an active interest in a deepened integration of the sub-region. The two CTR examples have shown that the EU has directly assisted and influenced regional CTR in the region (KEDO, ACEH).

**3.2. Voluntary inaction? The EU’s role for regional CTR in the current context**

Drawing the attention towards more recent developments in terms of the EU’s **regional CTR approach**, I argue that the former active engagement has been replaced by a somewhat cautious and reluctant EU approach in terms of regional CTR.

EU skepticism concerning the prospects for a deepening of ASEAN RI has increasingly been raised following the stagnation of the negotiations for a comprehensive EU-ASEAN trade

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\(^{7}\) See also Hänggi’s notion of “Regionalism through inter-regionalism” in this context. (Hänggi et al. 2006: 10).
agreement in 2009 (European Commission; Interview, 2013c). Among EU officials this ‘failure’ to reach a comprehensive ASEAN trade integration (in the way the EU had hoped for) has equally raised doubts on the side of the EU officials concerning the prospects of further political integration among ASEAN members (Interview, 2013c).

In addition, the fact that the EU remains excluded from the most relevant forums in terms of security issues, namely the East Asian Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM+), has recently become a very crucial issue for the EU, since it feels under a certain pressure to not ‘fall behind’ the Asian pivot of the United States (Islam, 2012; Commission of the European Communities, 1994; Yo Lay Hwee, 2014: 54). The increased attention of the EU towards the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are indicative of this renewed EU determination (Capie, 2013). This has especially become visible in terms of the recent growth of the visits of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, to the region.

However, as I will highlight with regard to two recent examples in the context of regional CTR, the EU is nonetheless refraining from adopting an overarching regional security approach for the region.

As a first example I examine the territorial disputes over the South China Sea which involve several ASEAN states and important players such as China and the US. In this case, the EU has used a soft form of incentive-setting: It has pointed out its preference for a regional solution and an ASEAN approach towards the conflicts, thereby clearly undercutting the Chinese aspirations for a ‘bilateral solution’ (International Crisis Group, 2012: 4; Interview, 2013p). However, the EU’s approach of favoring a Code of Conduct between ASEAN and China has appeared in terms of quite general formulations into a common statement with the US (European Union, 2012: 2): ‘In the South China Sea, we urge ASEAN and China to accelerate progress on a meaningful Code of Conduct’ (The White House, 2014). It has further been articulated in a way clearly evading any direct EU positioning on the case:

‘The EU (…) while not in any sense taking position on these various claims [i.e. South China Sea], should nevertheless (…) continue to encourage the parties concerned to resolve disputes through peaceful and cooperative solutions and in accordance with international law,’ (Council of the European Union, 2012: 19, own brackets/emphasis).

This is indicative of the very soft and cautious form of rhetorical incentive by which the EU has tried to influence regional CTR with regard to the South China Sea conflicts.

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8 Here, I especially refer to ‘overlapping territorial claims’ islands of ASEAN members The Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei over the Spratley (Hunt, 2007).
Besides this, concerning the South China Sea dispute, the EU has mainly relied on the socialization pathway: An EU offer of experience-sharing has been realized in terms of ARF seminars (ASEAN Secretariat, 2007) and EU sponsored seminars dealing with maritime security (Antara News, 2009), as well as in terms of specific EU-ASEAN high level dialogues. However, these measures are only applied ‘if welcomed by the relevant parties’ (Council of the European Union, 2012). As one EU expert put it: ‘The EU does not want to get involved in an inappropriate way. It does not want to impose any conflict resolution in the region’ (Interview, 2013p). This contrasts with the evaluation of the EU’s potential role in the conflict, presented in the academic literature. Jetschke and Portela argue that the EU should move beyond sharing its RI approach and should develop precise suggestions on how to use the disputed resources of the sea area. According to them, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation\(^9\), which the EU acceded to in 2012, could serve as an instrument for the transformation of the Sea conflict (Jetschke and Portela, 2012: 6). Reiterer is just one of the academic writers who call for a ‘distinctive and principled voice’ of the EU in Asia, which at times may require sacrificing ‘neutrality’ and ‘equidistance’ in order to reach ‘credibility’ (Reiterer, 2014: 15). In the view of the author, this would include a clear-cut security policy for the region coupled with the promotion of a comprehensive understanding of security matters (non-traditional issues such as environmental, societal etc. included) and further efforts in terms of concrete security cooperation (Reiterer, 2014: 15). To gain credibility, the EU would thus have to become more visible and proactive in terms of its distinct regional security approach, especially in times of an obvious increased interest of the EU towards the Asia-Pacific (Reiterer, 2014: 15).

The criticized passivity of the EU is also visible with regard to the North Korean conflict, where the EU has not been able to access the (currently retained) six-party talks.\(^{10}\) In this context, the EU is well aware of its own inability to play a vital role in a possible resumption of the talks and their ‘regime building’ (Interview, 2013f). Some EU officials suggest that the role of the US as the dominant player evaluating the North Korean situation and the EU’s need to respect the US’s approach towards North Korea play a significant role for the inability of the EU to engage more actively in a regional solution to the conflict (Interview, 2013q, 2013o). Even the EU’s rhetorical support for South Korean President Park Geun-Hye, who is aiming at a regional solution to the North Korean dispute (Interview, 2013i), is seen as problematic from this

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\(^9\) The Treaty is a non-aggression and cooperation pact between ASEAN members and their partners (ASEAN, 1979; EEAS, 2012).

\(^{10}\) Members of the talks are: North Korea, South Korea, the US, China, Russia.
perspective. Officials of the European External Action Service (EEAS) expressed their need to avoid any possible interference with the US approach on this subject (Interview, 2013i). The examples referred to have shown that in comparison to past periods, the EU’s incentive-setting both in terms of the South China Sea disputes and with regard to a regional solution for the Korean conflict is rather cautious in nature than being made of substantive (financial) support. It does not surprise therefore, that the EU relies with regard to the South China Sea disputes predominantly on the socialization pathway and thereby on the soft forms of experience-sharing and the exchange of opinions in order to socialize its ASEAN partners into a common regional conflict approach. Instances of active model-setting and the promotion of new rules are not to be seen in the current context. It seems as if the EU has given up its self-confident role as a regional security promoter for East Asia compared with its past involvement in regional CTR. This is underlined by several analysts who see the EU in a potentially much more active role as an enabler for regional CTR for the region. The following section will assess in how far these developments in the EU’s behavior are underpinned by a decreased self-perception of the EU’s security role for the region in the current context.

3.3. Assessing the EU’s self-perception towards East Asian security issues in the current context

In contrast to the evaluation in the academic literature, a perceived weakness and hopelessness prevails among EEAS officials in what regards the EU’s potential impact in promoting regional CTR for the region. Against the backdrop of the recently increased foreign policy focus on Asia of the EEAS, the skeptical perception of several high-ranking EU officials is noteworthy: EU officials are concerned that a more active EU engagement with regional security issues in East Asia might risk to go against the interest of relevant regional powers (such as the US and China) (Interview, 2013d). On the other hand, interviews with EEAS officials revealed that the EU does not see itself in the position of acting as a relevant security player and promoter for regional CTR: With regard to the North Korean conflict, EU experts expressed that the EU did not have the power to promote a regional approach on this issue (Interview, 2013r), that the EU encountered limits in terms of resources (Interview, 2013g) in order to contribute to a regional solution to the conflict, and finally, that the EU was willing to contribute to a peace initiative ‘but not in a leading role!’ (Interview, 2013i). In the EEAS, the EU’s role is thus rather considered as one of mere trust-building (Interview, 2013n), without any substantial ‘hard’ leverage for the region.
With regard to the receptiveness of the Asian partners, several EU officials share the perception that the financial crisis is seen as a ‘failure’ of the whole EU integration project among Asians and that the EU’s reputation in Asia has suffered ever since (Interview, 2013k, 2013n, 2013o).

3.4. Concluding remarks

Summing up, while there was some continuity in the pathways applied by the EU in order to impact regional CTR in Asia, with the EU concentrating on incentives and socialization efforts, active model-setting efforts, however, have been abandoned. Furthermore, incentives have increasingly taken the form of cautious and reluctant rhetorical support for specific regional conflict approaches. Although regional trade integration of ASEAN is seen as stagnating and further political integration in Southeast Asia as improbable, the EU nevertheless concentrates its efforts on ASEAN, and especially the ARF, when it comes to regional CTR. In terms of the EU’s self-perception, a more proactive approach, fostering regional CTR, is deemed impossible for the EU in times of its reduced reputation in Asia and the prevalence of other actors in the region whose interests the EU feels it needs to respect.

Table 2: Ways of Influence on Asia - development over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU works through</th>
<th>1980/90 ies</th>
<th>current context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational / norm-setting measures</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Establishment of contacts, dialogues etc., lately focus on experience-sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model-setting</td>
<td>- active reference point for ASEAN institutionalization (ASEAN Secretariat, and ASEAN Charter)</td>
<td>- Reluctance to actively promote its model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible, practical measures</td>
<td>Incentives</td>
<td>- Financial incentives, technical assistance for ASEAN and direct support to regional CTR (KEDO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting / introducing new institutional rules</td>
<td>- support to ASEAN institutionalization - ACEH MoU</td>
<td>- unwillingness to get involved appropriately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s table
4. Latin America

4.1. Regional integration and security in Latin America - the EU as active model

Throughout the 1990ies the EU has actively assisted Latin American state leaders aiming for ‘regional institutionalization and regional market building’ as practiced by the EU (Lenz, 2008: 14), as for example with the case of Mercosur. The beginning of the Mercosur project was marked by Argentina and Brazil being heavily affected by the common debt crisis of the late 1980ies (Lenz, 2012: 160). Mercosur was then clearly designed after the EU model, which at the time was perceived by LA partners as ‘stronger and more radiant than ever, and much less dependent on the outside world’ (Lenz, 2012: 161).

In the following years, the EU did not only provide large scale ‘technical assistance’ for the institutionalization of Mercosur and acted in favor of negotiations with Mercosur ‘as a bloc’, but also actively promoted epistemic communities and state leaders favoring the EU model (Lenz, 2012: 162). It can be argued that the EU has thereby actively supported the ambition of Mercosur to emulate the EU model (Lenz, 2012: 162; 170). An example of the extent of the EU’s model-setting ambitions with regard to Mercosur is illustrated by Grugel who argues that the EU perceived EU-Mercosur negotiations as a ‘set of supportive structures for Mercosur’. Grugel cites Chris Patten, former EU Commissioner for External Relations, who has stated that: ‘(…) Mercosur can model its own development patterns on those of the EU’ (Grugel, 2004: 616f). Grugel further refers to a statement of the European Economic and Social Council who saw the need for the EU-Mercosur relationship to be ‘based on sharing the core values of the European Union’ (Grugel, 2004: 617).

Apart from its partnership with Mercosur, since in the 1970ies, the EU has fostered RI in the Andean Community (Commission of the European Union) and has thus supported the establishment of an EU-Andean Community dialogue in 1996. The EU has also promoted the integration process of the Central American Countries into the System of Central American Integration (SICA) in 1991. These examples underline the EU’s close assistance to the formation of (sub-) regional integration processes in LA.

These examples suggest that the EU has worked through model-setting, financial incentive-setting (technical assistance) for further institutionalization, as well as through socialization (establishment of dialogues and contacts) in order to promote regional integration in LA in the past.
With regard to regional CTR, the EU’s engagement towards the Central American regional conflicts of the 1980ies stands out. At the beginning of the 1980ies, the region was shattered by several civil wars threatening the stability of the whole region. The EU took sides with the so called Contadora group, initiated by several LA countries (Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico and Panama) which tried to negotiate a regional peace agreement and ‘unanimously opposed unilateral US military action’ (Bagley, 1986). With its support of the negotiations and the subsequent launch of the San José Dialogue, the EU thus acted in opposition to the US position towards the region (for US position, see, Bagley, 1986). Within the San José Dialogue, the EU supported the Contadora Group’s efforts in negotiating a peaceful regional solution for the years after 1984, including six Central American Countries involved in the dispute (Commission of the European Union, 2007). It has in this context linked regional CTR with the necessity of further RI. The EU clearly sees its engagement and the Dialogue’s positive results as one of the success stories of the EU’s engagement with regard to Central America as highlighted in Commission documents: ‘It must be emphasized that active European involvement made a significant contribution to resolving the conflicts by peaceful means rather than by military force. In the 1990s there was a general consensus in favor of negotiated solutions.’ (Commission of the European Union, 2007: 3). In 2003, the EU was subsequently able to extend and formalize the San José Dialogue process, to focus on new areas of cooperation such as human rights and counter-terrorism, and to further strengthen the Dialogue on the support of RI processes in LA (EEAS, 2003). Summing up, in the context of the San José Dialogue, the EU has been engaged in providing new rules of interaction by establishing this new dialogue forum, it has thereby equally tried to foster socialization processes among the dialogue members, and - by funding this Dialogue -, the EU has equally set financial incentives in order to keep the process going and contribute to long-lasting conflict transformation in the region. We can therefore conclude that with regard to LA, the EU has in the past actively promoted its integration model and has backed this model-setting by direct institutional funding of LA sub-regions. It has furthermore linked integration aims with CTR support, even if it thereby opposed US interests with regard to the region. With the launch of the San José Dialogue, the EU has thus provided an independent new form of dialogue with the Central American region which in the long-run has resulted in a formalized and expanded political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (EEAS, 2003).
4.2. A stagnating EU engagement in the current context?

Two developments stand out with regard to the recent RI and CTR promotion in LA. On the one hand, among EU officials, there is a perceived stagnation of the sub-regional organizations (especially Mercosur and CAN) which the EU had supported throughout the 1990ies (Interview, 2013h, 2013a). The initial drive of model-setting for Latin American sub-regions has been replaced by a preference of the EEAS for shifting the responsibility for shaping sub-regional institutions to their LA partners. RI assistance is currently only provided, if regional partners ask for it (Interview, 2013h, 2013m, 2013j). In the light of the current financial crisis, the EU does not see itself anymore in the position of teaching others how to proceed with their RI (Interview, 2013a).

This has implications for regional CTR efforts as well. In the first place, the EU does not see traditional regional conflicts as the pressing challenge for LA anymore, but sees social problems and other destabilizing factors such as drug trafficking and crime as the most pressing regional problems (Interview, 2013m). While the EU supports regional efforts to approach these problems, it nevertheless does not see great chances for sub-regional organizations such as the Andean Community or Mercosur to effectively approach these problems (Interview, 2013e). The EU is thus increasingly fostering single regional projects or initiatives and areas of non-traditional security cooperation in order to foster stability in the region (see respectively: Commission of the European Union, 2011) by financial and rhetorical support. In addition to this, EU officials feel somewhat frustrated since the perception prevails to have lost attraction as an integration model for LA, a phenomenon which has been triggered by the financial crisis (Interview, 2013h, 2013e, 2013b). One instance for this loss of interest among LA partners is fact that the EU´s technical assistance to the Mercosur secretariat and institutions has not been welcomed by Mercosur members in the way the EU expected it (Interview, 2013e; EEAS, 2011).

In terms of the single influence paths directed towards regional CTR in the current context, the following observations stand out:

The EU has implemented some direct, but quite soft incentives in terms of several remarks on RI as security building measure in its interregional agreements with LA sub-regions. The EU-Central America Association Agreement signed in 2012 speaks for example in quite general terms of the ‘efforts to strengthen confidence and security building on the regional level’ (Commission of the European Union, 2012: 46).
It has furthermore (financially) assisted upon demand the Central American Security strategy (Council of the European Union, 2013). Regional security promotion has been implemented via the EU funding of a regional programme aimed at addressing cross-border cooperation in different areas in the once conflict-driven zone of the Gulf of Fonseca (disputes between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua).

Besides those direct incentives, socialization has been the central (indirect) way, by which the EU has tried to influence cooperation in order to address the common regional challenges: especially in the field of the fight against drugs, the EU has fostered dialogue and exchange (Copolad project, PRAICAN programme for the Andean Community).

On the other hand, the approach of fostering new institutional rules for (sub-) regional organizations in LA has been decisively reduced, because of the perceived stagnation and frustration of the EU with sub-regional organizations such as CAN and Mercosur.

Finally, direct active model-setting has declined visibly. Especially in the context of development aid, RI and the spread of the EU’s model of such, is not within the central focus of EU efforts anymore (Interview, 2013e). Tailor-made solutions and efficient bilateral solutions have instead been outlined in the ‘Agenda for Change’ as outstanding answers to countries in need. The EU does not feel comfortable anymore in the role of an active ‘teacher’ for a RI process in LA following the EU example (Interview, 2013a, 2013l).

4.3. The EU’s ambiguous self-perception towards the region: soft alternative to the US or irrelevant player for the region?

The EU’s recent reluctance to act also seems to be the result of its ambiguous evaluation of the role it actually feels it can play within the region. EU officials highlight the EU’s positive, neutral role as opposed to the military and sometimes intimidating approach of the US towards conflicts in the region (Interview, 2013a). Following EU officials, the EU’s soft approach in terms of regional CTR, concentrating on social aspects, development policy and conflict prevention is seen in the EU’s view by its partners as a welcomed alternative to the US approach; EU officials thus underline popularity of the EU in LA (as compared to the US). At the same time, the EU is reluctant to interfere with US interests and to become more active with regard to LA security issues. It does not see itself as a ‘primary political actor’ in LA anymore and thus does not want to get ‘involved’ or ‘particularly active’ in terms of regional CTR, but rather adopts the role of an ‘observer’ with ‘limited resources’ (Interview, 2013b). While the EU deems its approach more suitable than the US’s approach, it is nevertheless reluctant to actively advertise it. The EU has rather adapted its RI promotion to its perception of the role it
can possibly play in the region and declares itself in terms of RI promotion unwilling “to impose anything anymore” (Interview, 2013a).

A “humble” approach respecting the LA way of integration is what EU officials nowadays deem appropriate for the region (Interview, 2013s).

4.4. Concluding remarks on the employment of the influence paths towards Latin America

The assessment of these interpretations of the EU’s role for the region’s integration suggests that its self-perception has decisively changed from the EU’s RI approach of the 1990ies. This has to do with the EU’s evaluation of RI processes in LA. The EU perceives existing regional organizations in LA as stagnating and feels that it should shift responsibilities to its regional partners in order to let the latter shape RI in their own way. This reluctance to engage shows also in terms of the promotion of regional CTR, where the EU does not really see regional conflicts at place, which it could possibly help to approach regionally. These circumstances explain to some extent the adaptation in terms of the use of the influence paths, by which the EU has tried to engage in regional CTR in LA: Changing context and model-setting are largely abandoned; the EU instead tries to work through specific project-wise financial incentives, rhetorical support and socialization efforts in order to promote specific regional approaches towards potentially growing regional tensions and challenges.

Table 3: Ways of influence on Latin America - development over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU works through</th>
<th>1980/90ies</th>
<th>current context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ideational / norm-setting measures       | Establishment of contacts, dialogues etc. ; lately focus on sector-specific security dialogues/exchanges (drug policies) | - no active spread of EU model  
- no wish of ‘teaching’  
- shift of responsibilities for model of RI to regional partners in LA |
| socialization                            |                                                                          |                                                                                 |
| Model-setting                            | - EU as direct model-setter for Mercosur  
- active promotion of institutionalization à la EU |                                                                                 |
| Incentives                               | - financial incentives, - technical assistance for institutionalization of Mercosur, CAN, SICA | - soft regional security incentives in Partnership and Cooperation Agreements  
- financial support to specific tailor-made (regional) solutions/projects  
- decreased funding of sub-regional institutions |
| Tangible practical measures              |                                                                          |                                                                                 |
| Promoting / introducing new institutional rules | - assistance in institutionalization (new rules) e.g. for CAN | - no engagement in introduction of new rules, frustration with development of sub-regional institutions |
5. Assessment, interpretation and comparative conclusion of the EU’s regional conflict transformation approach towards Asia and Latin America

5.1. Findings and interpretation of the use of the influence paths: similar developments in both cases

The overview of the EU’s approach towards both regions throughout the 1980/90ies I have presented has shown that the EU has in the past effectively promoted RI as a CTR strategy for regional conflicts both in Asia and LA. The EU has in the first place actively promoted its integration model as a reference point for RI processes with regard to sub-regional organizations in both regions. In both Asia and LA it has furthermore directly supported the institutional set-up of sub-regional organizations (e.g., ASEAN, Mercosur, CAN) in terms of funding and expertise. The EU has also been proactive in terms of a substantive contribution to new forms of regional interaction in regional conflicts. Examples have been regional confidence building measures to ensure the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding in the ACEH case as well as the creation of the San José Dialogue process in LA. By establishing direct contacts and dialogues with regional officials from both regions, the EU has furthermore tried to spread its approach on regional CTR through experience-sharing. The EU has thus applied the “socialization” pathway in both regions already throughout the 1980/90ies.

In the current context, while socialization and incentive-setting (in terms of financial, technical and rhetorical assistance) remain important ways of promoting regional CTR, the direct promotion of new institutional rules and (new) forms of interaction as well as the active promotion of the EU model have lost relevance in both cases. In the current context, the EU’s approach of promoting RI processes as a means to approach regional conflict issues has become somewhat mellow and vague: The South China Sea case has shown that the EU uses incentive-setting in terms of strikingly cautious rhetorical suggestions and the interregional agreements with LA sub-regions remain quite superficial in their passages on the requirements for security-wise regional cooperation.
In both regions the use of the four different influence paths has thus changed over time, making model-setting and the introduction of new rules and forms of interaction less relevant in terms of the EU’s approach towards regional CTR. While a number of regional developments have certainly triggered this adaptation of the EU’s approach, I have concentrated my analysis on the reasons put forward by EU officials for their specific approach towards regional CTR in the current regional set-up.

This section has thus highlighted certain similarities in terms of the development and the adaptation of the EU’s approach towards both regions and their regional circumstances over time. The following section will explore whether similar reasons for the change of the EU approach are put forward in both cases.

5.2. Adaptation of the EU’s regional CTR approach - an assessment from the EU’s perspective

The reasoning of EU officials in order to account for this change of its approach shows some commonalities for both regions. Both in Asia and LA the perceived stagnation of further integration of sub-regional organizations has been put forward as a reason for the EU’s new approach in terms of RI promotion: In the Asian case, EU officials refer to their acknowledgement of the limits of the EU’s RI efforts due to Asian norms and principles. These have become ever more present in the 2009 failure of an EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and – in the eyes of EU officials – they are rendering any further political integration rather unlikely. In the LA case, EU officials have referred sluggishness of those sub-regional organizations which the EU had projected its RI efforts and hopes on (Mercosur, CAN). This is in the LA case seen as the expression of the lack of interest of regional partners towards a deeper political integration, including a common security approach among the members of these organizations. But also in the Asian case, the perceived lack of demand of its regional partners in the current context is a factor explaining EU’s adapted approach: While throughout the ACEH conflict the EU was asked to get engaged in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, and while the EU’s (financial) assistance within the KEDO was called for, a demand for EU engagement is not made with regard to current regional conflicts: The six-party-talks on the North Korean conflict have proceeded without EU participation and are currently interrupted. It is unclear whether in the case of their resumption the EU will be included. Furthermore, although ASEAN members appreciate the EU’s experience-sharing in terms of seminars on maritime disputes etc., no specific request for EU engagement in the South China
Sea dispute is visible. Moreover, the EU is not even accepted as member of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting+. 

Another motivation for the current EU approach is related to the **EU’s wish of maintain favorable relations with important third players** in both regions:

In the South China Sea conflict, the role of Chinese interests is referred to as hindering the EU from taking a more clear-cut position. Given the growing assertiveness of China (International Crisis Group, 2012) with regard to the South China Sea issue a more explicit advocacy for a common ASEAN approach might be interpreted as a provocation by the Chinese, who prefer a bilateral treatment of the conflict. The risk of deteriorating relations with China at times of the EU’s financial crisis can be seen as an impediment towards the EU CTR approach in the South China Sea dispute. On the other hand, in the North Korean conflict, EU officials and experts point to the role of US interests as a factor which the EU feels it needs to respect.

With regard to LA, the EU perceives itself as the more apt integration model and cherishes its moderated compared to the US, it nevertheless does not wish become inappropriately involved in the region by directly challenging the US approach.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, EU officials speak with regard to both regions of a **certain loss of reputation due to the EU’s precarious financial situation**; this goes along with lack of EU resources to get involved in a more active way. Last but not least, EU officials have in both cases referred to their **lack of wish** of becoming an active regional CTR promoter for both regions.

**A look at the regional partners’ expectations** from the EU confirm some of the perceptions, which EU officials have expressed:

First insights into Asian perceptions of the EU’s role as a promoter for regionalism show that the EU’s view does not necessarily depart from the expectations of its Asian partners. The latter claim that the EU’s model has lost its good reputation in Asia due to the financial crisis (Lee, 2014: 23). Therefore, they highlight a preference for a distinctive ASEAN way of integration which departs from the EU model. The EU is not seen as an influential promoter of regional CTR anymore (Lee, 2014).

The same can be said in terms of regional expectations towards the EU’s recent approach with regards to LA. Regional actors in LA feel that EU model-setting, be it in terms of the promotion of RI or regional CTR, is currently not necessary, since LA partners see their regional
developments as quite positive (Lehmann et al., 2014: 26). Regional partners in LA claim that the EU’s economic model is respected and cooperation in this area is welcomed, whereas a regional conflict approach of the EU is not deemed as necessary (Lehmann et al., 2014: 17). In concordance with the perception of EU officials, the overall impact of the EU on regional security matters is seen as very limited among LA partners.

**In conclusion,** there are interesting similarities in terms of the recent adaptation of the EU’s approach towards a more reluctant, sometimes passive attitude in terms of regional CTR in Asia and LA. The underlying reasoning of the EU for this change of approach shows some common features for both regions. Similar factors are referred to as hindering a more self-confident and focused EU approach. It does not come as a surprise that this is reflected in a similar way in the responses of regional partners in Asia and LA who for their part do not expect much of the EU in terms of regional CTR promotion.

5.3. Differences in the EU’s approach towards both regions

Apart from the parallels in the EU’s approach towards both regions, several differences have to be taken into account in order to understand the EU’s change of approach towards both regions.

While in the case of East Asia, the existence of smoldering **regional conflicts** and challenges is not questioned by the EU, in LA the absence of manifest **regional** conflicts is shaping the EU’s approach towards the latter region: From an EU point of view, the type of regional challenges has decisively changed in comparison to the context of the San José Dialogue. Regional challenges in LA do not take the form of interstate military disputes anymore, but rather have their origin in social inequalities, drugs and crime in the EU’s view. In the light of a certain disappointment with the development of some LA sub-regional organizations, the EU’s approach is thus concentrating on tailor-made solutions and dialogue programmes for specific problems such as drug trafficking. The EU is exploring alternative ways of promoting regional cooperation towards challenges in LA and does not necessarily stick to the traditional support of sub-regional organizations whose institutionalization it had eagerly tried to promote throughout the 1990ies. Hence in the LA case, the obvious change of the regional challenges have had a clear impact on the EU’s focus in terms of regional CTR. This has not been the case in the Asian context.

Perhaps directly related to this fact, the EU’s approach on regional CTR is assessed differently in the **academic literature**. While with regard to Asia, a **more clear-cut regional security approach is seen as possible and desirable**, the **passiveness of the EU in terms of regional CTR in LA is not seized in academic writing**. Criticism of the EU’s approach towards LA is rather
centered on its heavy focus on trade and its supposed ‘feigned’ interest in RI promotion towards LA (Arroyo Picard et al., 2009; Hardacre and Smith, 2009).

A final difference in the context of the regional CTR approach of the EU concerns the EU-US relationship: In Asia, the Asia pivot of the Obama administration has been referred to as one factor contributing recently to more EU presence in the region, including at regional security fora. In LA, however, where the presence of the US has always been significant and where the EU perceives itself as the “better” model, there is nevertheless no sign of an increased presence of the EU in terms of regional security issues.

The overview on the differences has highlighted that although in both cases the EU acts more reluctant than in the past, this is in the LA case clearly motivated by the changed nature of regional challenges, while the aforementioned factors of the last section (see 5.2., especially third players’ interests) might have played a more decisive role for the EU’s change of approach in the Asian case.

While competition with the US as a security actor for the region has in the one case raised more presence (Asia), in the other not (LA); interestingly the presence of the EU has in both cases not been translated into a clear-cut EU approach acting independently from US interests.

The results on similarities and differences of the EU’s approach are combined in the table below.

Table 4: EU approach towards Asia and Latin America: similarities and differences

| EU approach towards and Asia Latin America: Comparing similarities and differences | Asia | Latin America |
|---|---|
| **Similarities in the EU’s approach** | - adaptation of EU approach over the two time periods: From active engagement to increased passiveness, reluctance to act, caution - model-setting and introduction of new rules abandoned - focus on socialization and rhetorical incentive-setting - actual lack of expectations of regional partners towards EU security role for both regions -no fully-fledged regional security approach towards both regions | |
| **Motivation for EU adaptation in the current context following interviewees (EU-officials)** | - stagnation of further integration of sub-regional organizations - lack of interest of regional partners in deeper (security-wise) integration - consideration of third actors’ interests - lack of wish to get engaged - perceived loss of reputation of EU as a model for Asia and LA due to financial crisis | |

21
Differences in the EU’s approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional conflict setting</th>
<th>Regional challenges</th>
<th>expectations of EU (in the literature)</th>
<th>Impact of EU-US relationship for EU approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- existence of smoldering regional conflicts not questioned: obvious need to tackle them</td>
<td>- regional challenges social in nature, no traditional (military) regional conflicts anymore</td>
<td>- fully-fledged regional CTR approach of EU possible and desirable</td>
<td>- US pivot towards Asia followed by more EU presence ( \rightarrow ) but does not lead to implementation of EU regional security approach for the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- need for tailor-made, specific solutions to the root causes of social inequalities, drug trade etc.</td>
<td>- EU’s role for regional security promotion not seized in the literature</td>
<td>- EU’s perception as more suitable integration model, not followed by more presence/action in the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- RI promotion not necessarily in terms of regional organizations</td>
<td>- criticism focuses on EU trade focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s table

5.4. Comparative summary on the EU’s approach

In conclusion, the change in the EU’s use of influence paths in the field of RI and CTR promotion seems to stem from an adaptation to the perceived current type of regional challenges as well as from the EU’s interpretation of the regional partners’ lack of demand for EU involvement. First insights into the actual perceptions of regional partners seem to suggest that this corresponds to the actual expectations of the regional partners.

While this paper has not been able to explore in detail the actual change of the regional conditions and the responses of regional actors in Asia and LA, it has given insights into the EU’s perception of these conditions as affecting the EU’s strategy of trying to promote regional CTR promotion.

The analysis of the cases has further suggested that there is a link between the actual change in strategy and the EU’s self-perception. In both cases, interviews with EU officials have revealed that the EU perceives its role for the promotion of regional CTR as irrelevant. Interestingly, in the justification of this role assessment, similar arguments are brought to the fore by EU officials with respect to both regions. First of all, the EU’s lack of leverage or capacity
(resources, hard power) as a relevant security actor is claimed for both regions. Furthermore, the specific context of the financial crisis is used as an argument for not being in the position of giving advice to others on their RI processes anymore. With regard to Asia, the US and China are seen as limiting the leeway for a more active EU regional CTR engagement.

However, in theory, the EU sees its potential role for both regions in a rather positive way, especially when compared to the US’s approach. Despite a range of limitations for applying its approach of RI promotion, the EU approach as such is thus not put into question. This may be one reason explaining why the EU is still engaging in regional CTR in terms of socialization and soft incentive-setting. The general perception of a possible transformation of conflicts via RI as a “genetic” EU norm has thus not been affected by some disappointing RI developments in both regions.

6. Prospects for further research - the EU’s identity adaptation to a changed relationship?

In this paper I have shown that there is a shift in the EU’s self-perception with regards to CTR in LA and Asia and how this is interrelated with context variables such as the financial crisis as well as changing regional conditions and a decreased responsiveness of regional partners.

It has shown that the norm of promoting RI as a means to CTR has not been undermined by the EU’s (quite negative) interpretation of the regional conditions and its own role for the regions. The ways in which the EU engages in regional CTR however has changed over time (lately in terms of a focus on socialization and soft incentive-setting). The EU has thus adapted its approach and its use of the influence ways- nevertheless RI as a means of transforming regional conflicts is still the central idea behind it.

The findings invite further research in order to explore whether the observed change of approach has to be understood as a temporary adaptation to the changed EU perceptions in times of the financial crisis and as transitory adaptation to changed regional challenges, or whether the adaptation is indicative of a fundamental change of the EU’s approach towards regions in the far abroad which might gradually lead to the abandonment of the EU’s norm of RI promotion as a tool for CTR.

The paper opens up a whole new research agenda on the interplay of regional identities, role perception and advancing RI and CTR in interregional relations. Until now, these issues have not been tackled systematically as field studies on interregional relations in general and the nexus of RI and CTR in interregional relations in specific is still rare to find. The findings of
this paper can therefore be used as a starting point to further explore the relationship of these factors against the background of existing theoretical approaches on identity construction in security politics. Drawing on the work of Jennifer Mitzen (Mitzen, 2006: 271), for example, this paper might give some evidence for the adaptation capacity of the EU’s identity when it comes to a change in its routinized relations with other world regions.

This article can thus serve as a guide for further, more theory-driven analyses of the complex interplay of identity, interaction and self-perception in interregional relations.
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