



**Faculty of Political Science and Sociology**

**Final Degree Project**

**The European Union's external action  
towards the developing world:**

**Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa  
as case studies**

**Author:** Maria Lan Pedra Martínez

**Supervisor:** Federico Guerrero Cabrera

**Date:** 20 May 2022

**Bachelor's Degree in** International Relations

# Index

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>2. Methodology</b> .....	2
<b>3. Theoretical framework</b> .....	3
<b>4. Comparative analysis: EU strategy towards SEA and SSA</b> .....	5
4.1. Trade .....	5
4.1.1. EU-SEA.....	5
4.1.2. EU- SSA.....	6
4.1.3. Comparison .....	7
4.2. Development .....	8
4.2.1. EU-SEA.....	8
4.2.2. EU-SSA.....	10
4.2.3. Comparison .....	11
4.3. Political dialogue.....	12
4.3.1. EU- SEA.....	12
4.3.2. EU-SSA.....	13
4.3.3. Comparison .....	14
<b>5. Conclusions</b> .....	15
<b>6. Bibliography</b> .....	16
<b>7. Annexes</b> .....	23
7.1. Additional information for the comparative analysis.....	23
7.1.1. Trade: EU-SSA .....	23
7.1.2. Trade: EU-SSA .....	25
7.1.3. Development: EU-SEA .....	26
7.1.4. Development: EU-SSA .....	26
7.1.5. Political dialogue: EU-SEA .....	27
7.1.6. Political dialogue: EU-SSA.....	27

## 1. Introduction

According to Article 21.2(a) of the Treaty of the European Union's (TEU), the European Union (EU) shall pursue common actions in all fields of international relations. This research tries to analyse the EU's external action towards two developing regions -southeast Asia (SEA) and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)-. Both regions have historically been part of European colonialism, hence, some EU member states (MS), such as France still retain historical ties with them (Farrell 2015). Moreover, both regions are of huge importance to EU's trade interests: EU is the biggest trade partner for SSA countries, making "*the relationship of dependence particularly evident*" (Sicurelli 2016, p.31), and, for its part, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and EU constitute each other's 3rd largest trading partner (European Commission 2022a).

The hybrid nature of the EU<sup>1</sup> -combining intergovernmental and communitarian dimensions- contribute to EU's identity (Sicurelli 2016). It has usually been portrayed as a normative power, hence promoting practices and values beyond its borders (see article 21(2) of the TEU), together with asserting its interests. This research aims at responding to the following research question (RQ): ***What prevails most in the European Union's external action regarding the developing countries, interests or values?*** To do so, the research has been delimited to three spheres as to facilitate the comparative analysis: trade, development and the political dimension. Those three are all very relevant to articulate EU interests and values in each region. Firstly, trade interests are important to contemporary EU to consolidate itself as a great power. In fact, they recall to its own *raison d'être* (creation of the single market), following Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) "*it is mainly the EU's economic power that foremost make an attractive partner for third countries*" (p.204). Secondly, the EU is also often presented as a normative power, and exporter of democratic values and the rule of law (Manners 2002). And thirdly, pursuant to Article 21.2(d), one of the Union's goals is to promote sustainable economic, social and environmental development in developing countries, with the main goal of eradicating poverty.

This research tries to prove the validity or invalidity of the following hypotheses: first, ***when the EU's economic interests are a priority, the political and other social values that the EU intends to export towards developing countries become more contingent in the relationship.*** Accordingly, Weinhardt (2011) argued that ACP countries still consider the EU as a player acting on the basis of its own economic interest, despite having included conditionality clauses in different agreements. Second, ***while EU development policy towards SSA is increasingly linked to security issues, development cooperation in SEA is very contingent to economic interests.*** In this regard, the 2003 European Security Strategy stated "security as a precondition of

---

<sup>1</sup> neither being a state nor constituting a traditional international organization, and its complex foreign policy system (see Barbé 2014)

development” and differently, in the case of the EU strategy towards SEA, Holland and Doidge (2012) argued that it essentially constitutes an economic dialogue to which development rhetoric has been attached.

The topic of research is relevant as the current power shift towards Asia (Khandekar 2014) may give growing influence to SEA countries. Similarly, the scarcity of certain commodities and competition from international actors, has made some SSA countries increasingly important to the EU (Del Biondo 2014). As the EU may need to engage both regions to current processes (i.e. fight against climate change), interests may change and evolve current policies and strategies.

## **2. Methodology**

SEA and SSA have been chosen as case studies for their condition of being “developing regions” and the existence of a strategy developed by the EU in each.

The comparative method used is Landman’s (2003) **Most Similar Systems Design** (MSSD) since it allows us to compare different outcomes, in this case, different strategies followed by the EU, across regions that share similarities. Moreover, three different sectors (trade, development and the political dimension), act as independent variables -and also articulate EU interests and values in each region-, and one dependent variable (the strategy), have been chosen to develop the analysis.

The methodology of this study will be qualitative: a theoretical framework will be based on previous literature regarding the variables exposed and how these articulate EU’s interests and values. Nevertheless, some quantitative data may be used to do a more empirical contrast of arguments, for instance when dealing with economic development and trade indicators of the two regions.

Additionally, as to analyse EU’s strategy in each region, both primary - official EU documents, speeches, press releases and other document and secondary sources -policy papers, academic articles and book chapters- will be used.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

This research is based on different approaches to the nature of the EU and its role in the international arena. In this regard, several authors have pointed as it being a ‘hybrid international entity’ enacting ‘civilian’, ‘military’ and ‘normative’ roles (Aydn-Dzgit 2015).

Questions around the nature of the EU have been broadly discussed, however, these will not be discussed in this paper. Instead, following Barbé (2014), we assume that, regardless of its nature, the EU constitutes an international actor since it elaborates its own foreign policy. Therefore, the EU has often portrayed itself as a **normative power** (Farrell 2015), stressing on its convergence with international liberal norms (Barbé 2014) and its use of normative justification of its foreign policy and external action. Following Beach (2015), some liberal theories argue that norms are merely resources used by actors to persuade or can also be seen as forming part of actor identities, fitting into a more constructivist approach.

Additionally, Sicurelli (2016) stresses on the need to consider interests, together with factors of identity, as a motor of EU norm diffusion and foreign policy.

In Andreatta & Zambernardi (2017) words:

*“the EU uses its attractiveness in terms of political and economic institutions and also diplomatic and normative tools to change international standards and foster behaviours compatible with its own view of the world” (p.86)*

Whereas, Aydn-Dzgit contends that EU does not always act in accordance with norms, Youngs (2004) similarly states that *“strong economic interests can trump a concern for international human rights in EU foreign policy”*.

Lastly, the EU can also be conceptualised as a model power (MoPE), which may coexist and overlap with other approaches. Following Ferreira-Pereira (2010), the EU not only needs to promote its norms and values in world politics but it has to be a “model power” that others imitate. Interestingly, it does not ignore that the EU intentionally tries to secure its interests.

EU’s external action can be conceptualised as a mix between interests and norms. However, despite the EU trying to be a promoter of norms, Beach (2015) argues that instead it makes a strategic use of them: this research then tries to answer whether ***interests or norms prevail in EU’s external action*** when approaching SEA and SSA.

The EU's economic power makes it an attractive partner for third countries, and it uses it to build leverage on political issues. Moreover, EU interests, articulated in its foreign policy basically through trade objectives, in many cases prevail, disregarding other objectives such as poverty reduction in developing countries (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014).

The Cotonou Agreement combines trade, development and political dimensions. Carbone (2010) argues that the changes in EU-Africa relations and the emphasis on the political dimension, respond to the pursuit of European interests to improve its development record and image.

Provisions on human rights, respect for democratic principles and rule of law, despite being included in almost all EU agreements since 1995, tend to be relegated to a secondary role. Usually included in the form of conditionality clauses<sup>2</sup>, are difficult to be applied; hence Fierro (2003) argues that “*ex post conditionality tends to be static rather than dynamic and symbolic rather than substantial*” (p.377-8). Adding to this, according to Keukeleire and Delreux (2014)

*“EU representatives often prioritize trade issues and do not want to disturb negotiations by tough talks on problematic foreign policy issues. The result is that political dialogue is not exercised to its full potential, and cases are limited where it is used as leverage to promote and obtain concrete EU foreign policy goals.”* (p.207)

Furthermore, negative conditionality provisions are present in EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement; though not in agreements with SEA countries.

Regarding EU-SEA relations, Murray (2010) highlights that the EU’s primary goal in the region is to seek better trade relations and to protect its interests and norms. However, such statement can appear more rhetoric than action. Evidence shows that, despite EU’s normative intent, where it is the most recognized is in trade (Murray, 2010). Because of previous lack of EU interest in the region, development cooperation with non-ACP developing countries, particularly in Asia was less tangible.

In brief, despite the EU portrays herself as a normative power, in many cases, when the EU has narrower strategic and trade interests, these usually prevail over other foreign policy goals). By doing this, it creates an expectations-capability gap: the expectations and role assumed by the EU do not match the implemented policy, hence decreasing its impact (Barbé 2014). Thus, interests and norms, both present in EU foreign policy and external action, can enter in contradiction and negatively affect each other: “*whereas within the EU the intensified use of conditionality is seen as a positive instrument of a strong foreign policy, invoking it can sour the EU's trade and foreign policy relations with third parties*” (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014, p.206).

---

<sup>2</sup> “*a leverage mechanism to orientate behaviour that usually works well when the donor is stronger (from an economic and/or political point of view) than the recipients*” (see Martines 2020, p.99)

## **4. Comparative analysis: EU strategy towards SEA and SSA**

### **4.1. TRADE**

#### **4.1.1. EU-SEA**

The EU-ASEAN relation has been most successful in trade (Sok 2019).

Between 2011-2021, both EU imports and exports to ASEAN countries grew considerably<sup>3</sup>; ASEAN as a whole nowadays represents the EU's 3rd largest trading (European Commission 2022a). EU interest in SEA, thus, is clear: in fact, imports grew more than exports. Consequently, the trade deficit grew to €56 billion in 2021 (Eurostat 2022).

In 2021, EU mainly exported manufactured goods to ASEAN partners, noting the large share of machinery and vehicles (41% of total exports). Moreover, Singapore was the largest ASEAN destination of exports; Singaporeans -with the highest purchasing power- may be buying cars produced in the EU. Other key exports are chemicals, which rose to 22%.

Machinery and vehicles also dominate imports of goods from SEA. According to Eurostat (2022) data, Vietnam was EU's largest partner for imports of goods among ASEAN countries: its surge of exports is largely due to country's transformation to a high-technology manufacturing hub: in fact, companies like Samsung, LG Electronics or Intel are producing there and now, exports of smartphones and computer parts account for more export earnings than the traditionally textile industry (Nguyen & Mah 2022). Malaysia and Indonesia are also among EU's largest trade ASEAN partners: while Malaysia's exports include machinery and appliances, plastics or rubber, Indonesia exports agricultural products, and processed resources such as palm oil, fuels and mining products, apart from textiles.

In EU's perspective, ASEAN sets high-tariff barriers on many EU exports and has huge market potential, thus making it an ideal free trade agreement (FTA) partner. For this reason, in 2006, the Council authorised region-to-region trade negotiations with ASEAN, however, in 2009 these were suspended: the agreement had differing effects on ASEAN members' economies. Besides, the EU was highly critical of the Myanmar situation. Since then, the EU decided to pursue a bilateral strategy; the current ongoing negotiations between the EU and ASEAN members, both for FTAS and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) are a key feature of EU-ASEAN relations (Khandekar 2014).

Only two bilateral FTAs are concluded: the EU-Singapore FTA (EUSFTA) and the EU-Vietnam FTA (EUVFTA), into force since 2019 and 2020 respectively. Interestingly, these are EU's

---

<sup>3</sup> except for the drop in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

largest trading partners within SEA. Other FTAs negotiations are now on hold. These may be because of the inclusion of sustainable development clauses<sup>4</sup> (Bungenberg & Hazarika 2019).

Other EU trade instruments used with SEA countries are Everything But Arms (EBA), the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) or the GSP+, which remove import duties from products coming into the EU market from developing countries. For this reason, some SEA countries benefitting from them, for instance Lao PDR or Cambodia had little interest in a FTA, as they already benefitted from the EBA<sup>5</sup> or GSP trade privileges (European Parliament 2014a). Regarding Myanmar, it was the EU who objected to start negotiations until democratic reforms were launched. However, whereas the EU used conditionality and imposed sanctions to Myanmar, in other instances, for instance, in Vietnam, EU's reaction to human rights violations was questionable, as it moved ahead to sign the FTA (Bungenberg & Hazarika 2019).

#### 4.1.2. EU- SSA

The EU and SSA countries have had historically strong trade links, making the EU the biggest export market for African products. In fact, agreements between them were mainly economic and commercial until the Cotonou Agreement (2000) (Bauer, 2021).

Despite there is no aggregate data on EU-SSA trade, EU main exports to the different SSA regions do not diverge very much: these are machinery, mechanical appliances, equipment, vehicles, foodstuffs and pharmaceutical products. However, EU imports from the different SSA regions do differ, ranging from fuels, food products, agricultural products or minerals: for instance, West Africa - EU's largest trading partner in SSA- exports to the EU consist mainly of fuels and food products. It is also worth noting oil is the main export from Central African countries to the EU (41%)<sup>6</sup>. In any case, primary goods seem to dominate EU imports from SSA: food products and raw materials' share is quite large. As there is no available data on EU-SSA trade, we cannot establish whether trade balance is positive or negative.

Following Lodge (2019), the 1975 Lomé Convention, which granted ACP countries nonreciprocal preferential access to the EU market, spurred ACP development. However, since the Cotonou Agreement, non-tariff trade benefits are retired, as manifested in Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

The idea behind the negotiations of EPAs, was *“to help to foster liberalisation of trade in goods and services and cooperation on regulatory issues”* (Murray-Evans 2019, p.163). However, EPAs

---

<sup>4</sup> See Annexes for additional information

<sup>5</sup> 5 The EBA scheme removes tariffs and quotas for all imports of goods (except arms and ammunition), coming into the EU from least developed countries (LDCs).

<sup>6</sup> See the annexes for a more detailed explanation on EU imports from SSA countries and regions.



could also entail pernicious effects for African economies (Guerrero 2014): the EU prioritization of its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), boosting European agricultural exports went in detriment to ACP exports, despite those were key to alleviate poverty (Lodge 2019).

Moreover, the EU was able to impose its preferred design for region-based trade on much economically weaker ACP countries. In fact, SSA countries have been, since the beginning, “*deeply suspicious of the EU’s agenda for deep liberalisation, viewing it as driven by European self-interest*” (Murray-Evans 2019, p.166), despite EPAs do provide for development cooperation on prioritised ACP trade needs.

Overall, EPAs cannot be considered a success (Blucher 2015): firstly, lengthy negotiations led to a diminution of confidence among both parties. Secondly, *the negotiation of separate agreements reduced ACP countries’ collective bargaining power*”: used for EU domination (Ölund 2012, p.20). And thirdly, only few EPAs are finalised though not fully implemented<sup>7</sup>; for instance, six Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) countries concluded an interim EPA with the EU in 2007 which only applies provisionally since 2012. In other cases, the ratification processes are not completed.

Regarding the preferential schemes -GSP, GSP+ and EBA-, most SSA countries benefit from an EBA regime, as they are considered LDCs. Also, as of January 2019, the Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Kenya benefited from a standard GSP (European Commission 2019). Besides that, some EBA beneficiaries are also parties to FTAs with the EU (SADC-EU Economic Partnership), as that is not incompatible (Zamfir 2022).

Besides, as SSA countries vary in development, the implementation of policies and EPAs face both socio-economic difficulties but also to political constraints<sup>8</sup>. The huge diversity of governments in SSA region also leads to different motivations when forging external relations and their degree of legitimacy (Ölund 2012).

#### **4.1.3. Comparison**

In both regions, trade is key: however, whereas ASEAN and the EU constitute each other’s third largest partner, forming an interdependent relationship, EU-SSA relationship is more one of dependency. Seeing that, many experts have highlighted that the EU is still acting as the “big brother” towards Africa, setting the rules in the relationship, though it might be changing (Ölund 2012).

---

<sup>7</sup> See Annexes for a complete picture of EPAs

<sup>8</sup> insufficient political dialogue, lack of commitment by national governments, limited engagement of civil society organisations, EU’s fragmented funding system, lack of transparency managing resources by African partners

A region-to-region FTA, as discussed, has not, to this day, been possible in SEA, hence the EU has pursued a bilateral strategy, negotiating bilateral FTA with ASEAN countries, though with not all of them – only with those with have a significant economic weight-. As for SSA, EPAs have been negotiated as trade and development agreements. However, these are not consolidated enough, hence an assessment cannot still be made. To this day, EPAs apply for 14 countries in SSA, while other 34 benefit from either a GSP or an EBA scheme. Despite EPAs may have contributed to a little diversification in SSA exports, they still cannot be considered a success (Blucher 2015), as it reflects a very neoliberal approach and the option preferred by the EU. In SEA, preferential trade agreements have also been put into place. Therefore, both regions benefit from EU schemes for developing countries.

The EU has included, in both cases, provisions of its core values in trade agreements, reflecting its objectives of external action. In brief, it seems that in both cases, economic and trade interests tend to prevail: the EU has opted -at least in a first instance- not to react to human rights violations in SEA countries, such as in Vietnam or Cambodia (Bungenberg & Hazarika 2019) or to stop the signature of a FTA. Similarly, the start of negotiations of EPAs, despite complaints by African counterparts, demonstrated the prevalence of EU economic interests over interests of SSA countries, such as keeping preferential trade agreements. In fact, “*EPAs in their current form would be detrimental to development*” (cited in Ölund 2012, p.19). Additionally, African counterparts have perceived the EU as insincere and coercive, as it has remained reluctant in stating its economic interests in the region; in SEA, that does not happen.

## **4.2. DEVELOPMENT**

Following Blucher (2015), development aid is seen “*as an important means of helping to improve the quality of people in developing countries*” (p.2) and the EU, together with its MS, is the world’s largest development aid donor (OECD 2020).

### **4.2.1. EU-SEA**

Despite allocations are subject to political considerations and biases, ACP countries receiving traditionally most part of EU development aid<sup>9</sup> SEA has also received development assistance.

Being a very diverse region, in SEA we find a huge development gap: while Singapore and Brunei are well-developed nations, other countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR or Timor Leste are LDCs. Moreover, large-population countries, such as Indonesia or Thailand tend to

---

<sup>9</sup> The largest instrument for development cooperation, the European Development Fund, is mainly focused mainly on ACP countries, and only between 2014-2020, allocated €30.5 billion (D’Alfonso 2014)

receive less aid, as considered more capable of generating their own development progress. Moreover, the EU constitutes the biggest donor to the ASEAN secretariat for regional funding.

Since the institutionalization of EU-ASEAN relations, development cooperation has been included in the subsequent agreements between the two<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, different PCAs signed with individual ASEAN members include a chapter on development cooperation.

It has traditionally been funded by the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), however, since the restructuration of the EU external action instruments, from now onwards, EU programmes in SEA will be funded by the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), together with other EU MS bilateral assistance to ASEAN MS (Lilyanova 2019).

In developing countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, but also LDCs which require aid for urbanization and infrastructure, the EU plays an important role by providing development assistance, contributing to countries' own efforts: for instance, in 2016, the EU and its MS contributed with €151.87 million to support of Cambodia's development, helping it “*rebuild infrastructure and communications, increasing agricultural production [...]*” (EEAS 2021).

Furthermore, each EU MS has its own agenda, priorities and policies, and has pushed for different programmes. Other EU funded programmes aim to enhance people-to-people connectivity; for instance, EU-SHARE programme aims at increasing the mobility of students and professionals or E-READI facilitates science and research dialogues (EU Mission to ASEAN 2021), or to identify and establish geographical indications<sup>11</sup> globally, also in ASEAN countries.

Lastly, security issues are also relevant in EU-ASEAN relations, however they are more related to the political dimension rather than to development cooperation, following the structure of the ASEAN communities and priorities set in the different PCAs and Plans of Action. The recent elevation of the parties' relation to a Strategic Partnership (2020) envisaged new security cooperation, covering maritime security, counterterrorism, and transnational crime (EU Mission to ASEAN 2021).

To conclude, as in SEA there are huge differences in terms of development, the EU's strategy is fragmented, varies depending on the country: in least or low developed countries, development cooperation tends to be the main dimension whereas in more developed countries, trade and investment are the overarching dimension in bilateral relations.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Annexes.

<sup>11</sup> A geographical indication is a distinctive sign used to identify a product whose quality, reputation or other such characteristics relate to its geographical origin (EU Mission to ASEAN, 2021)

#### 4.2.2. EU-SSA

The EU is a major development partner to sub-Saharan countries, though in reality MS themselves retain primary control of development aid budgets (Blucher 2015), leading to differing levels of commitment and proportions in the aid given.

A potential bias towards ACP countries can also be found: an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study in 2014 concluded that EU development aid remains primarily focused on Eastern Europe and SSA. Gumbo (2019) coincides, arguing that more than half of EU development budget is spent in Africa, in the pursuit of eradicating poverty. Despite that, some countries could potentially be considered as relatively overfunded -Cameroon, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia-, while others could be regarded as chronically underfunded: Angola, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania or Uganda (Blucher 2015).

EU's relation with Africa stems from a historical responsibility: In Gumbo's (2019) words:

*"When many of the African states gained independence, it became mandatory for European countries to help with development [...], open more trading markets for the EEC but ultimately to consolidate European influence over Africa".*

Already in 1957, the idea was to maintain influence over former colonies, taking a leadership role: for this, the Treaty of Rome facilitated the establishment of the European Development Fund (EDF). The Joint Africa-EU strategy (JAES, 2007), on top of the Cotonou Agreement (2000) is the current framework for EU-African Union relationship: however, it has been criticised for being unable to withstand bureaucratic pressure. Additionally, the EU's use of different instruments when dealing with development policy, and its approach increasingly based on aid for trade and political conditionality rather than the mandate for poverty eradication, have often been regarded as contributing to incoherence and shortcomings in policy output<sup>12</sup> (Gumbo 2019). According to Lodge (2019), these come from an inherent contradiction between a global economic actor and development partner.

Other authors have paid attention to the increasing focus on security issues when delivering development cooperation. Orbie and Versluys (2008) note that the EU disburses only a small amount of its development aid as a result of increasing focus on security issues. Bountagkidis et al., (2015) also highlight increasing links to security concerns after 9/11. In fact, the European Security Strategy (2003) stated that security is the first condition of development. Because of this, African counterparts have expressed concerns that development needs will be subordinated to

---

<sup>12</sup> See Annexes for additional information

security priorities. Delputte and Orbie (2018) have also raised concerns on new ‘Agenda for Change’, as it seems to put less emphasis on aid and more on security concerns.

#### 4.2.3. Comparison

As both regions are developing, the need for development aid is imperative, though EU allocation may be affected by factors other than need. Furthermore, both constitute very diverse regions, in terms of development, form of government and type of economy. However, the development gap in SEA, ranging from developed nations to LDCs; in SSA, LDCs status prevails.

EU’s strategy towards both developing regions envisages the inclusion of sustainable development and conditionality clauses, for instance, in the Cotonou Agreement; therefore linking trade and development to the political dimension, and in EPAs. In SEA, EU’s strategy seems to differentiate trade and development: on the one hand, FTAs and preferential schemes, on the other PCAs with provisions on development cooperation. Moreover, as the strategy in SEA is bilateral, development provisions in PCAs may be included only as general principles, not leading to sanctions.

Regarding the effectivity in yielding development, many experts have highlighted that political conditionality has, in many occasions, led to ineffective implementation of development in SSA (Men & Balducci 2010). In SEA, as conditionality has rarely been invoked, it cannot have led to an ineffective implementation. In SEA, major constraints can be found in the so-called ASEAN way”: the adherence to the non-interference principle leads to a fragmented strategy.

EU projects now bring together a wider sphere of stakeholders in both regions, however, the use of different instruments may lead to incoherence in EU’s external action and to shortcomings in policy output (Gumbo 2019).

Moreover, whereas EU’s development strategy in SSA can be characterised by a normative approach, “*using development policy as a way of asserting itself as a global power*” (Carbone 2011, p.17), in SEA, normative emphasis is not so strong.

Lastly, an increasing link between security and development can be traced in SSA, as the European Security Strategy (2003) stated: “security is the first condition of development”. However, despite “Agenda for Change” affects entirely EU development policy, security issues in SEA have been kept within the political sphere, not linking them directly to aid and development cooperation.

Besides, EU’s engagement with Africa has traditionally been greater, despite some SEA countries had also been former European colonies; maybe due to geographical and political distance (IDEA 2009).

### 4.3. POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Political dialogue comprises a wide range of issues, covering from democracy, human rights to addressing threats in a society, such as transnational crime. This research, then, only focuses on EU political conditionality<sup>13</sup> towards SSA and SEA, since it allows us to relate the political dimension to our analytical framework: namely, trade and development.

#### 4.3.1. EU- SEA

Political conditionality has been out of reach of EU-SEA trade agreements, as it generated a major source of friction: in fact, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Malaysia, in a first instance, refused completely. Hence, if included, these were included in bilateral PCAs and as preambular statements, that is to say, in the form of positive political conditionality, not in the form of negative conditionality (suspension).

Besides, SEA countries also present different hurdles for the EU to include political conditionality in agreements, ranging from the adhesion of ASEAN members to the principle of non-interference, also referred as “the ASEAN way” to the particular cultural context of SEA states – multi-religious, multi-ethnic populations. Moreover, within ASEAN, the EU is often perceived as an important actor in economic terms, though geographically, historically, militarily and politically distant (IDEA 2009). These have led to a change in EU’s perception of ASEAN, consequently reshaping its material interests and behaviours (Xuechen 2018). As a result, the EU has developed an increasingly pragmatic approach.

Despite that, Karen E. Smith (2014) argued that since the EU acts according to its own personal benefits, if any negative conditionality would harm commercial interests the EU would freeze this conditionality. Akinci has also identified double standards when applying conditionality; whereas the EU has targeted Myanmar as the preferred victim of its embargos - negative conditionality playing a major role and being one of the reasons why the EU–ASEAN FTA was suspended in 2009-, it has not applied any negative conditionality on Thailand, despite the country has repeatedly violated democratic values (Akinci 2015).

All in all, it seems that EU action vis-à-vis ASEAN can be characterised as a questionable normative intent: a weak localization of norms and a decreasing legitimacy of EU normative power (Akinci 2015). Then, it can be argued that EU normative objectives in SEA are intertwined with material interests, and the latter tend to overshadow normative claims. Furthermore, EU not applying negative conditionality with Thailand suggest that EU will be more flexible on some

---

<sup>13</sup> “It refers to the practice of making the conclusion and implementation of agreements, cooperation and assistance by EU dependent on certain conditions being met by third countries” (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014, p.205)

essential elements to overcome deadlocks, hence converting its norms are flexible and systematically context-dependent (Maier-Knapp 2014).

#### 4.3.2. EU-SSA

Political and economic conditionality were first introduced in the revised Lomé IV agreement between the ACP countries and the EU, including provisions on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law without, however, linking them to specific sanctions (Börzel & Risse 2004). The Cotonou Agreement strengthened it, affirming that the “respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law” are essential elements of the Agreement (article 9). Hence, on the basis of Article 96, and to a lesser extent, Article 97, their violation may lead to sanctions or temporary suspension of aid. However, EU’s selective use of Article 96 and the conditionality itself have been a focus of criticism (Moberg, 2015).

Firstly, development aid conditionality is perceived as a unilateral application and the EU making use of a superior bargaining position, provoking irritation in ACP countries.

Secondly, some argue that EU applies double standards when evaluating breaches of human rights, more specifically, when identifying the non-cases: *“while the EU punished some violators of democratic principles and human rights, ‘several other countries that appear equally problematic did not face sanctions’* (Del Biondo 2014, p.237).

For instance, sanctions are mostly imposed against norm violators in which the EU has few economic or security interests and less likely to be imposed to key commercial partners, energy suppliers or partners in the war on terrorism. For example, in uranium supplier Niger and oil and gas producer Nigeria, the EU rather took a pragmatic approach. Del Biondo (2015) also found a nexus between democracy and development in conditionality in SSA: thus, in good development performers, namely, Rwanda or Ethiopia, the EU seemed reluctant to impose sanctions, while the strongest were imposed on developmental laggards such as Zimbabwe, Guinea and Ivory Coast. Furthermore, EU MS have also refused to apply conditionality in former colonies; for instance, France in Cameroun or in Chad.

Moreover, Crawford (2007) argues that the EU is promoting democracy as means of sustaining economic liberalisation and of maintaining neoliberal hegemony.

Therefore, it seems that the EU not only does a selective use of Article 96, but it also has a rather high threshold when invoking it: the scarcity of certain commodities and increased interest from international actors has led to more ‘realpolitik’ in EU democracy promotion (Youngs 2009).

Despite that, in SSA, Moberg (2015) documents that between 1996 and 2014, there were 23 cases in which the Council has decided to invoke the conditionality clause, being the undemocratic regime change the main reason why it was invoked, for instance, in 2011 with Guinea Bissau.

Hence, despite many hurdles, it could be argued that NPE has an influence to EU foreign policy toward Africa, though it has increasingly been more geared toward its own interests. In fact, as Youngs (2004) poses, “*norms are woven into material interests*’ (p. 420).

Thus, if the EU intends to be regarded as a normative power, it must use the conditionality clauses in possible cases of violations of human rights; a non-use may erode its legitimacy and may also may constitute a breach of EU law.

#### **4.3.3. Comparison**

In both regions, democracy seems to drive EU foreign policy when there is no conflict between norms and interests. Big differences can be noticed regarding EU’s choice of instruments for democracy promotion, their degree of implementation and the inclusion of political conditionality clauses: whereas the Cotonou Agreement establishes a clear link between the trade and development dimensions and political dialogue, as sanctions can be applied and are established in article 96, hence making clear the conditionality of aid to the respect of the “essential elements” of the Agreement, the PCAs signed with SEA countries, besides being few, do not include a negative conditionality clause. In PCAs human rights and democracy are identified as basic principles but trade or development cooperation aid are not dependent on the respect of those. The only case in which it could be argued that EU may apply some sort of conditionality is regarding the preferential schemes: GSP, GSP+ and EBA, as these allow for the suspension of preferences. However, suspension of preferences under schemes has been applied in only a few cases, as the EU “*has privileged a strategy of incentivising gradual progress through dialogue and monitoring, rather than withdrawing preferences*” (Zamfir, 2018).

Moreover, despite the Cotonou Agreement establishes a conditionality clause and may suspend aid, double standards can be regarded in EU’s imposition of sanctions: it has been reluctant to impose them on commercial partners, energy suppliers or partners in the war on terrorism. This envisages similarities with EU’s action towards SEA: double standards which cannot be justified have also been regarded when imposing sanctions (see examples of Myanmar and Thailand).

It seems EU’s pursuit of political conditionality in both regions is dictated primarily by its interdependencies with the third country (Knodt & Jünemann 2007): the higher the economic potential of a country in relation to the EU, the more reluctant the EU will be to choose ‘negative’ instruments (Borzel & Risse 2004).



Overall, it can be argued that EU's external action in the political dimension is situated between norms and interests. However, despite the EU portrays its normative commitment, it tends to be conspicuously silent on its own geopolitical, security and economic interests in partner countries (European Parliament 2014b) and is still far from playing the role of an effective normative power.

## **5. Conclusions**

After the analysis that we've carried out of both case studies, we draw on the two hypotheses raised to see prove their validity or invalidity. First, *when the EU's economic interests are a priority, the political and other social values that the EU intends to export towards developing countries become more contingent in the relationship*. In SEA, this proves to be valid: the analysis has revealed that political conditionality was out of reach of trade agreements. Thus, political conditionality clauses could only be included in PCAs and as general principles. EU-SEA relations seem to still be dominated by trade and economic interests, and, when EU's economic interests are at stake, such as with the signing of EUVFTA – recalling that Vietnam is EU's second largest trade partner in SEA and key exporter of smartphones and electronic devices – , the EU has opted not to react to human rights violations. In other cases where commercial interests were not so imperative, namely in Cambodia, despite the EU seemed reluctant to act to human rights violations that began in 2017, three years later, the Commission decided to partially withdraw EBA preferential access to the EU market<sup>14</sup>.

In SSA, the EU seems to devote more efforts to promote its core values, as the political conditionality clause is included in the Cotonou Agreement and article 96 allows to impose sanctions. Despite that, the EU, in practice, has applied double standards, hence taking a rather pragmatic approach, for instance, in uranium supplier Niger. Moreover, when delivering development cooperation, following Lodge (2019) *“EU's development efforts are often compromised by the weight of its economic interests, resulting in policy incoherence”* (p.115). Lastly, the scarcity of certain commodities and increased interest from international actors has led to more 'realpolitik' in EU democracy promotion in SSA.

The second hypothesis, *while EU development policy towards SSA is increasingly linked to security issues, development cooperation in SEA is very contingent to economic interests*. This

---

<sup>14</sup> For more information, check Amnesty International's report on the situation of Cambodia. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/cambodia/report-cambodia/>. Also, the European Commission's full decision to withdraw EBA preferential access to Cambodia, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_1469](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1469)

seems to be partially true: in SSA; an increasing link between security and development can be drawn, as there is an increasing influence of security issues like terrorism and the securitization of migration in EU's performance as a donor. In SEA such a link could not be drawn: security issues in SEA have been kept within the political sphere, following the ASEAN 3-community-structure, thus not linking them directly to development cooperation. Moreover, as economic interest come primary, delivering development cooperation to SEA countries is relegated to a secondary role. Whereas there is a need for further research on the topic, as for now, the second hypothesis seems to be true.

Hence, the answer to our RQ, according to our analysis, is that interests (not values) prevail more in the EU's external action towards SEA and SSA.

## **6. Bibliography**

AKINCI, A. (2015). "Normative Power Europe in Southeast Asia: Deception or Reality?", Master's thesis, Leiden University.

Amnesty International. (2022). "Cambodia 2021". <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/cambodia/report-cambodia/> [Accessed 6 May 2022].

ANDREATTA, F. & ZAMBERNARDI, L. (2017). "The European Union as a Power" in HILL C., SMITH, M. and VANHOONACKER, S. *International Relations and the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 73-93.

ASEAN. (2017). *ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022)*, Manila: ASEAN. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ASEAN-EU-POA-2018-2022-Final.pdf> [Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021].

AYDN-DZGIT, S. (2015). "Social-Constructivist and Discursive Approaches to European Foreign Policy" in JORGENSEN, K.E., AARSTAD, A.K., DRIESKENS, E., LAATIKAINEN, K., and TONRA, B. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy: Two Volume Set*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 137-149 Available at <http://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781473915190.n9> [Accessed 6 Jan 2022].

BARBÉ, E. (2014), "La Unión Europea en las Relaciones Internacionales. Debates para el análisis.", en BARBÉ, E. (dir.) *La Unión Europea en las Relaciones Internacionales*, Madrid: Tecnos, pp. 219-238.

BAUER, N. (2021) “Post-Cotonou Agreement: Blackmail for Development Aid”. *European Centre for Law and Justice*. August, 2021. Retrieved from <https://eclj.org/geopolitics/eu/accord-post-cotonou--le-chantage-a-laide-au-developpement> [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022]

BEACH, D. (2015). “Liberal International Relations Theory and European Union Foreign Policy” in JORGENSEN, K.E., AARSTAD, A.K., DRIESKENS, E., LAATIKAINEN, K., and TONRA, B. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy: Two Volume Set*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 137-149 Available at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473915190.n6>> [Accessed 6 Jan 2022].

*Bandar Seri Begawan plan of action to strengthen the ASEAN-EU enhanced partnership (2013-2017)*. 2010. [Online]. [Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021]. Available from [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129884.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129884.pdf)

BLUCHER, M. (2015). “*European Union development aid allocations*”, Master’s thesis, University of Canterbury. Retrieved from <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/11929> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021]

BÖRZEL, T. A., & RISSE, T. (2004, October). “One size fits all! EU policies for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. In *Workshop on Democracy Promotion* (Vol. 4, No. 5). Stanford: Stanford University. Retrieved from [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/27153/13\\_B%C3%B6rzelt\\_Risse-04.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/27153/13_B%C3%B6rzelt_Risse-04.pdf) [Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022]

BOUNTAGKIDIS, G., FRAGKOS, K. and FRANGOS, C. (2015). “EU Development Aid towards Sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the Normative Principle”. *Social Sciences* (4), pp. 85–116; [doi:10.3390/socsci4010085](https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci4010085)

BUNGENBERG, M. and HAZARIKA, A. (2019). “EU trade and development policy in Asia: Promoting core EU values”, in BILAL, S. and HOEKMAN, B. (eds). *Perspectives on the Soft Power of EU Trade Policy*. London: CEPR Press, 203-217.

CARBONE, M. (2010). “The EU in Africa: Increasing Coherence, Decreasing Partnership”. in BINDI, F. (ed) *The Foreign Policy of the European Union, Assessing Europe’s Role in the World*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 239-252.

CARBONE, M. (2011). The EU and the developing world: partnership, poverty, politicization. in HILL, C. and SMITH, M. (eds). *International relations and the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 324-348.

Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) [2012] *Official Journal of the European Union* C 326/13.

Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [2012] *Official Journal of the European Union* C 326/141.

*Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Community and Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations* (No L 144/2) entered into force since 10 June 1980.

Council of the EU. *Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership*. C/07/54, 7588/07 (Presse 54), Nuremberg, 15 March 2007

Council of the EU. (2019). “*Thailand: EU to broaden its engagement following elections*”. [Online], October 14th. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/10/14/thailand-eu-to-broaden-its-engagement-following-elections/> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022]

CRAWFORD, G. (2007). “The EU and democracy promotion in Africa: high on rhetoric, low on delivery?”, in MOLD (ed) *EU development policy in a changing world: Challenges for the 21st century*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 169-197.

D'ALFONSO, A. (2014). “European Development Fund: Joint development cooperation and the EU budget: out or in?”. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. PE 542.140. <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-IDA-542140-European-Development-Fund-FINAL.pdf>>

DEL BIONDO, K. (2014). “Norms or Interests? Explaining Instrumental Variation in EU Democracy Promotion in Africa”. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(2): 237–254. doi:10.1111/jcms.12169

DEL BIONDO, K. (2015). “Donor interests or developmental performance? Explaining sanctions in EU democracy promotion in sub-Saharan Africa”. *World Development*, vol 75, 74-84.

Delegation of the European Union to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. (2021). “Green recovery: EU-Indonesia Partnership 2021”. Retrieved from [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu\\_indonesia\\_cooperation\\_2021.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_indonesia_cooperation_2021.pdf)

DELPUTTE, S., & ORBIE, J. (2018). “EU development policy”, in HEINELT, H. and MÜNCH, S. (eds). *Handbook of European Policies*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 208-305.

EEAS (European External Action Service). “The European Union and Cambodia”. Available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/cambodia/european-union-and-cambodia\\_en?s=165](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/cambodia/european-union-and-cambodia_en?s=165) [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022]

EU Mission to ASEAN. (2021). “EU ASEAN strategic partners: Blue Book 2021”. Retrieved from <https://euinasean.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Blue-Book-2021.pdf>

European Commission (2015) *Trade for All: Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy*. Brussels, 14.10.2015 COM (2015) 497 final.

European Commission. (2019). “List of GSP beneficiary countries”. <[https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2019/may/tradoc\\_157889.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2019/may/tradoc_157889.pdf)> [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022]

European Commission. (2020). “Cambodia loses duty-free access to the EU market over human rights concerns”. <[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_1469](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1469)> [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022]

European Commission. (2022a). “Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)”. *Trade Picture section*. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/asean/>

European Commission. (2022b). “Generalised Scheme of Preferences”. <[https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/generalised-scheme-preferences\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/generalised-scheme-preferences_en)> [Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022]

European Commission. (2022c). “Overview of FTA and other trade negotiations”. <[https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/december/tradoc\\_118238.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/december/tradoc_118238.pdf)> [Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022]

European Parliament (2014a). *In-depth analysis: EU – ASEAN: Challenges ahead*. PE.536.426, DG EXPO/B/PolDep/Note/2014\_214, December 2014. Available in [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2014/536426/EXPO\\_IDA\(2014\)536426\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2014/536426/EXPO_IDA(2014)536426_EN.pdf)

European Parliament (2014b). *Study: Political dialogue on human rights under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement*. PE 534.977. EXPO/B/DEVE/2013/31, July 2014. Available in <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/534977/EXPO-DEVE\\_ET\(2014\)534977\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/534977/EXPO-DEVE_ET(2014)534977_EN.pdf)>

Eurostat. (2022). “ASEAN-EU - international trade in goods statistics” <[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=ASEAN-EU\\_-\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics&oldid=526930#ASEAN\\_countries\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_with\\_main\\_partners](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=ASEAN-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics&oldid=526930#ASEAN_countries_trade_in_goods_with_main_partners)> [Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022]

FARRELL, M. (2015). “Europe–Africa Relations over Time: History, Geopolitics and New Political Challenges” in JORGENSEN, K.E., AARSTAD, A.K., DRIESKENS, E., LAATIKAINEN, K., and TONRA, B. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy: Two Volume Set*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 779-792 Available at <<http://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781473915190.n54>> [Accessed 6 Jan 2022].

FERREIRA-PEREIRA, L.C. (2010). “Human Rights, Peace, and Democracy: Is “Model Power Europe” a Contradiction in Terms?” in BINDI, F. (ed) *The Foreign Policy of the European Union, Assessing Europe’s Role in the World*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 290-302.

GUERRERO, F. (2014), “Relaciones de la Unión Europea con el mundo en desarrollo”, en BARBÉ, E (dir.) *La Unión Europea en las Relaciones Internacionales*, Madrid: Tecnos, pp. 219-238

GUMBO, C. (2019). “*Conceptualising EU development in the African Union: will Brexit matter?*”, Master’s Thesis, University of Canterbury. Retrieved from <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/100091> [Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021]

HOLLAND, M. and DOIGE, M. (2012). *Development policy of the European Union*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). (2009). *Democracy in Development: Global Consultations on the EU's Role in Democracy Building: a Report of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*. International IDEA. Retrieved from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/democracy-in-development-the-role-of-the-european-union-in-democracy-building.pdf> [Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022]

KHANDEKAR, G. (2014). “Mapping EU-ASEAN relations”, FRIDE, available at <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177603/Mapping%20EU-ASEAN%20relations.pdf>

KEUKELEIRE, S. and DELREUX, T. (2014). “Trade, Development and Other External Action”. *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*. London: Red Globe Press, pp. 197-221.

KNODT, M., & JÜNEMANN, A. (2008). “EU External Democracy Promotion Approaching Governments and Civil Societies”. In KOHLER-KOCH, B., DE BIÈVRE, D., MALONEY, W. (eds.) *Opening EU-Governance to Civil Society*, Mannheim: CONNEX, 259-293.

LANDMAN, T. (2003). *Issues and methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, pp. 23-48

LILYANOVA, V. (2019). “Financing EU external action in the new MFF, 2021-2027: Heading 6 'Neighbourhood and the World'”. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. PE 644.173. <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/644173/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)644173\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/644173/EPRS_BRI(2019)644173_EN.pdf)>

LODGE, J. (2019). “The EU as a trade and development partner to the ACP: Some initial reflections” in BILAL, S. and HOEKMAN, B. (eds). *Perspectives on the Soft Power of EU Trade Policy*. London: CEPR Press, 105-116.

MAIER-KNAPP, N. (2014). “The European Union as a Normative Actor and its External Relations with Southeast Asia”, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*. 10 (2): 221-235.

MANNERS, I. (2002). “Normative Power Europe: A contradiction in Terms?”. *Journal of Common Market Studies (JCMS)*, Vol 40(2), pp.235-58.



MARTINES, F. (2020). “EU Political Conditionality as a Tool for the Promotion and Protection of Non-trade Values in Non-EU Countries” in VELLUTI, S. *The Role of the EU in the Promotion of Human Rights and International Labour Standards in Its External Trade Relations*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, pp. 97-180

MEN, J., & BALDUCCI, G. (2010). *Prospects and challenges for EU-China relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the partnership and cooperation agreement*, Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang.

MOBERG, A. (2015). “The Condition of Conditionality—Closing in on 20 Years of Conditionality Clauses in ACP-EU Relations”. Stockholm Institute for Scandinavian Law, in *Law and Development*, vol 60, 275-306.

MURRAY, P. (2010). “Regionalism, Interregionalism, and Bilateralism: The EU and the Asia-Pacific”, in BINDI, F. (editor) *The Foreign Policy of the European Union, Assessing Europe’s Role in the World*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 253-262.

MURRAY-EVANS, P. (2019). “Limits to soft power in the Economic Partnership Agreements” in in BILAL, S. and HOEKMAN, B. (eds). *Perspectives on the Soft Power of EU Trade Policy*. London: CEPR Press, 163-169.

NGUYEN, T. & MAH, K. (2022). “An Introduction to Vietnam’s Import and Export Industries”. *Vietnam Briefing*. Retrieved from <https://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/introduction-vietnams-export-import-industries.html/> [Accessed 14 April 2022]

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2014). “Development Co-operation Report 2014: Mobilising Resources for Sustainable Development”. <[https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/development-co-operation-report-2014\\_dcr-2014-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/development-co-operation-report-2014_dcr-2014-en)>

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2020). “Development Co-operation Profiles: European Union institutions”. <<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c0ad1f0d-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5e331623-en&csp=b14d4f60505d057b456dd1730d8fcea3&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=chapter>> [Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021]

ÖLUND, M. (2012). “Critical Reflections on the Joint Africa-EU Strategy”. *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 2, 2012, pp. 15 – 23.

ORBIE, J. and H. VERSLUYS (2008). “The European Union's International Development Policy: Leading and Benevolent?”, in ORBIE, J. *Europe's Global Role: External Policies of the European Union*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, pp. 67-90.

Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000.

PINHÃO, D. B. (2009). “The ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement: Implications for Democracy Promotion in the ASEAN Region”. *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*. Available from <<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/the-role-of-the-european-union-in-democracy-building/eu-democracy-building-discussion-paper-28.pdf>> [Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021]

SCHEIPERS, S., & SICURELLI, D. (2008). “Empowering Africa: normative power in EU–Africa relations”. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(4): 607–623. Available from <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13501760801996774?scroll=top&needAccess=true>> [Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021]

SICURELLI, D. (2016). *The European Union's Africa policies: norms, interests and impact*. London: Routledge.

SMITH, K. E. (2014). *European union foreign policy in a changing world*. London: Polity Press.

SOK, T. (2019). “The ASEAN-European Union (EU) Dialogue Relations towards a Strategic Partnership: Rationales and Benefits”. *UC Occasional Paper Series*, 3(1): 58–91

VILLACORTA, W. V. (2009). “Inter-regional Cooperation in Democracy Building: Prospects for Enhanced ASEAN-EU Engagement”. *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*. Available from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/the-role-of-the-european-union-in-democracy-building/eu-democracy-building-discussion-paper-59.pdf> [Accessed 4th May 2022]

WEINHARDT, C. (2011). “The EU as a friend of the developing world? Self portrayal and outside perceptions in the negotiations of EPAs”, in LIEB, J. SCHWARZER, D and VAN ONDARZA, N. (eds) *The European Union in International Fora: Lessons for the Union's External representation after Lisbon*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 99–114

World Bank. (2021). “The World Bank In Vietnam”. <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview#1>> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022]

XUECHEN, I. C. (2018). “The Role of ASEAN's Identities in Reshaping the ASEAN–EU Relationship”. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol 40(2), 222–246. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26539179> [Accessed 4th May 2022]

YOUNGS, R. (2004) ‘Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 42 (2), 415–35.

YOUNGS, R. (2009) ‘What Role for Sub-Saharan Africa in Europe's Energy Policies?’ EDC. Working Paper 5. Available at <[http://www.edc2020.eu/fileadmin/Textdateien/EDC\\_2020\\_Work\\_paper\\_No\\_5.pdf](http://www.edc2020.eu/fileadmin/Textdateien/EDC_2020_Work_paper_No_5.pdf)>



ZAMFIR, I. (2018). “Human rights in EU trade policy: Unilateral measures applied by the EU”. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. PE 621.905. <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621905/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)621905\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621905/EPRS_BRI(2018)621905_EN.pdf)>

ZAMFIR, I. (2022). “New EU scheme of generalised preferences”. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. PE 698.857. <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/698857/EPRS\\_BRI\(2022\)698857\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/698857/EPRS_BRI(2022)698857_EN.pdf)>

## **7. Annexes**

### **7.1. Additional information for the comparative analysis**

#### **7.1.1. Trade: EU-SSA**

The EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement (1980) – European Communities at the time- constitutes, in many instances, the main framework to develop ties between both regions.

They have a multi-layered relationship (Khandekar 2014); however, it is in trade and commercial ties that has been most successful (Sok 2019). In fact, it was not until 2007 Nuremberg Declaration that both parties called for closer cooperation on political, security and socio-cultural issues.

As it is discussed in the final report, EU’s main exports to ASEAN countries were manufactured goods: these accounted for 86% of the total exports, with an increase in their share of 9 percentage points between 2011-2021. Within those, it is worth noting the large share of machinery and vehicles. Additionally, EU also exported raw materials to SEA countries, however, such exports experienced a drop, mainly by the fall in the share of raw materials (Eurostat 2022). It is also worth noting that Brunei, which is considered a smaller ASEAN partner- receiving 18.8% of total EU exports, and Cambodia (8.3%) had the highest growth rates from 2011-2021. Moreover, as discussed, the trade balance is negative. This is greatly due to Vietnam's high growth in imports – the EU saw its trade in goods deficit with Vietnam increase from €6.4 billion in 2011 to €27.8 billion in 2021- However, it is also relevant that the trade deficit with Malaysia also increased significantly, from €5.7 billion in 2011 to €17.4 billion in 2021. All in all, trade deficit has grown from €19 billion in 2011 to €56 billion in 2021 (Eurostat 2022). This may be indicative of EU’s increased interest in the region in the last decade.

The pursue of a bilateral strategy - EU towards each ASEAN member state individually- was not the preferred option by the EU. In fact, the EU considers these bilateral free trade agreements

(FTAs) “*as steps towards reaching a FTA with ASEAN as a unity*”, especially now that the ASEAN Economic Community is in place (EU Mission to ASEAN 2021). However, this optional approach has been criticised as detrimental to the process of economic integration in SEA but also to EU ambitions.

As stated, to this day, the only two FTAs that have been concluded and are into force are EUSFTA and EUVSTA, the two largest trade partners of the EU. Negotiations with Indonesia are still ongoing, though negotiations with Thailand, Malaysia and The Philippines are now on hold (European Commission 2022c). Thereby, EU access to ASEAN countries' markets remains unequally open. These may be because of the inclusion of sustainable development clauses (Bungenberg & Hazarika 2019). In fact, the “Trade for All” Communication envisaged a new approach: using trade agreements as levers to promote EU principles such as sustainable development, human rights or fair trade (European Commission 2015).

Other ASEAN members enjoy different EU schemes for developing countries: GSP, GSP+ and Everything But Arms (EBA): “*by removing such import duties, these schemes help developing countries to alleviate poverty and create jobs based on international values and principles, including labour and human rights*” (European Commission 2022b). The EBA regime has the highest benefits as it removes tariffs and quotas for all imports of goods (except arms and ammunition), coming into the EU from least developed countries (LDCs). GSP is aimed at low and lower-middle countries (with partial or full removal of customs on duties on two-thirds of tariff lines), while GSP+ has a special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance: if third countries implement 27 international conventions related to human rights, labour rights, the environment or good governance in return, the EU cutting import duties to zero on more than two-thirds of the tariff lines of their exports) (European Commission).

Within SEA, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR and also Timor Leste (LDCs) enjoy from the EBA scheme. It is worth noting though that Timor Leste, despite being considered a SEA country is the only one not part of ASEAN and relations are actually governed by the Cotonou Agreement, like Sub-Saharan countries.

Indonesia is currently benefitting from a GSP, despite negotiations for a FTA were launched in 2016. Malaysia is no longer eligible for a GSP, since it transitioned to an upper-middle income country. FTA negotiations are now on hold, waiting for the new government to take position on a possible resumption (European Commission 2022c). A FTA could definitely boost trade. EU trade with Brunei – a developed nation- is small, despite having risen considerably. An EU-Brunei PCA is in the process of being negotiated, expected to pave the way towards a FTA (Khandekar 2014).

The Philippines enjoy from a GSP+. FTA negotiations with the Philippines and Thailand negotiations are on hold: with Thailand, due to 2014 military take-over. In the view of the March 2019 elections, the Council took steps towards its resumption (Council of the EU, 2019).

Besides, these three schemes allow for the suspension of benefits in case of violations of the prescribed standards, generally related to EU values. Hence, “*despite countries have incentives to adhere to them [...] countries such as Cambodia or Thailand have repeatedly seen incidents of serious human rights violations*” (Bungenberg & Hazarika 2019, p.212). The EU, in such instances, was initially against removing privileges, though recently has been forced to do so.

### **7.1.2. Trade: EU-SSA**

EU imports from the different SSA regions diverge: for instance: West Africa - EU's largest trading partner in SSA- exports to the EU consist mainly of fuels and food products. East African Community exports are dominated by sugar, coffee, fish, tobacco, copper and crude oil, while oil is the main export from the Central African countries to the EU (41%). Other main regional exports from central African countries are copper, wood, cocoa, bananas, and diamonds. Similarly, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries are strong in the exports of diamonds and other products such as agricultural products, oil from Angola or aluminium from Mozambique.

To this day, West Africa-EU EPA (ECOWAS plus Mauritania<sup>15</sup>) has concluded its negotiations -almost ten years after their launching- however, the signature process is currently ongoing, just as with the East African Community. The agreement with countries in the SADC entered into provisional application on 2016. And with the Eastern and Southern Africa region, the EPA - signed in 2009- has been applied on a provisional basis since 2012. Despite this, EPAs cannot be considered a success (Blucher 2015) and they have often been regarded as undermining inter-regional integration.

Additionally, others have highlighted the EU's incapability of openly declaring its stark commercial interests in its trade policy pursuits with Africa (Lodge 2019). Moreover, recently, many African countries increased their strength, mainly due to the scarcity of raw materials in the rest of the world and the improvement of economic developments (Ölund 2012), but also to other actors' competition in the continent: China and India which, in contrast to the EU, have recognised SSA countries their economic value, are signing agreements which include aid without conditionalities. This entails that Africa is now in a stronger position, as Europe is facing competition and that, in Ölund words: “*EU is using strong pressure in order to enforce some*

---

<sup>15</sup> Economic Community of West African States

*agreements to take place, just as was the case in the EU-Africa trade (EPAs) negotiations, rather than creating a dialogue”* (Ölund 2012, p.19). Hence, this influences EU’s discourse in the region, as if there is too much work to be done in the form of conditionalities to receive support, African counterparts may look for other actors’ aid and support.

### **7.1.3. Development: EU-SEA**

Since the institutionalization of EU-ASEAN relations, development cooperation has been an essential part of their relations, as reflected in the subsequent agreements and declarations between the two: the 2007 Nuremberg Declaration, the following Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action, aimed to strengthen the Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017), and the ASEAN–EU Plan of Action 2018-2022. Additionally, different PCAs signed with individual ASEAN members have also a chapter on development cooperation.

Development assistance in SEA is mainly carried out through concrete projects and programmes. For instance, in Indonesia, both parties made a joint commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, under a series of thematic programmes, the EU support Indonesia's development policies, including the Medium-Term National Development Plan (RPJMN) or the SDG Action Plan (Delegation of the European Union to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam 2021).

Additionally, each of EU member states has set its own priorities in the region, the different editions of the Blue Book EU-ASEAN collect the different programmes each member state has pushed for.

The EU is also an importance source of humanitarian and emergency aid to ASEAN countries, as SEA is a region subject to many natural disasters, such as typhons or floodings. However, it is worth noting that this type of aid (short-term) is not considered development cooperation (medium-long-term). EU’s humanitarian aid covers a number of projects in the field of rehabilitation and disaster preparedness (Khandekar 2014).

### **7.1.4. Development: EU-SSA**

As stated, EU’s relation with Africa stems from a historical responsibility and has, since the independence of different African states, been “special” in a way. Despite the idea was to maintain European influence over former colonies, the financial aid provided to SSA countries had a key feature: the multiannual financial framework (MFF) allowed beneficiaries to plan their respective development intervention and a mutual ACP–EU accountability – a feat not extended to other EU aid instruments (Lodge 2019). However, since the restructuration of external action instruments that may change.

EU's development strategy has several facets, covering many different areas including trade, political, social, security, peace, justice, and human development. However, it has been carried out in the form of political conditionality, hence threatening African counterparts to terminate aid if certain norms and values aren't complied with (Carbone, 2011). These generated complaints from African leaders, as many were not ready to adopt EU norms in full, consequently, damaging the relationship. Men and Balducci (2010) also argued against it: EU's strong emphasis on political conditionality has made them become ineffective in implementation of development.

Additionally, there is also a conception-performance and capability-expectation gap due to a failure or resistance to adopt the EU norms. Consequently, now some see the EU as a partner increasingly using its economic muscle to build relations with third countries and with a hidden agenda driven by self-interest (Elgstrom 2008, cited in Gumbo 2019).

#### **7.1.5. Political dialogue: EU-SEA**

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) made mandatory the inclusion of positive political conditionality provisions in all formal agreements between the EU and third countries (Pinhão 2009). As a result, EU bilateral PCAs with ASEAN countries included them as preambular statements, as SEA governments have always been reluctant to such type of provision.

The adhesion of the ASEAN members to the principle of non-interference, also referred as “the ASEAN way, which only allows the EU to promote democracy and human rights within the national boundary of a state and according to its own stages of economic development (Villacorta 2009), has been, to a great extent, a big hurdle in EU democracy promotion in the region. Moreover, the particular cultural context of SEA states – being characterised by multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multicultural populations- and the Confucian traditions of respect for authority, deference and seniority, together with the disparity of regimes in SEA seem to conflict with the democratic models the EU tries to export. Despite that, the move towards democracy in Thailand in 1992, following the examples of the Philippines in 1986 and Indonesia in 1998, prove that SEA is not hostile to the idea of democracy.

#### **7.1.6. Political dialogue: EU-SSA**

EU's relationship with Africa and its former colonies has been broadly discussed. Despite the intention of both parties to promote a more equal-intercontinental exchange, it seems the EU is struggling to free itself of paternalistic discourse about Africa. Moreover, many have also argued that SSA may not be ready for an equal-intercontinental exchange, emphasizing, again the asymmetry between parties.

It is also worth noting that Crawford (2007) argues that the EU is promoting a form of democracy only compatible with neo-liberalism; that is to say, promoting democracy as means of sustaining economic liberalisation and of maintaining neo-liberal hegemony. This seems relevant, as it would be verifying, in a way, the first hypothesis raised: that EU's interests prevail over values, in this case, over democratic values.