

The European Union's external action towards the developing world: Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa as case studies

What prevails most in the European Union’s external action regarding the developing countries, interests or values? .

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, then, tries to analyse the EU’s external action towards **two developing regions - southeast Asia (SEA) and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)**. Since the EU has usually been portrayed as a normative power, hence promoting values beyond its borders, we analyse how these intermingle with asserting its interests.

HYPOTHESIS

- 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
- While EU development policy towards SSA is increasingly linked to security issues, development cooperation in SEA is very contingent to economic interests

METHODOLOGY

- Landman’s (2003) Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD)
- Qualitative
- Literature review
- Primary and secondary sources

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS



TRADE - DEVELOPMENT - POLITICAL DIALOGUE

- In SEA, the EU strategy is more **fragmented: trade and development are separated** dimensions.
- The 1980 EU-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement **did not include any references on human rights** nor any provision of political conditionality.
- EU trade relations with SEA are articulated with FTAs or different schemes for developing countries, whilst development cooperation provisions may be included in individual Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs).



TRADE - DEVELOPMENT - POLITICAL DIALOGUE

- In SSA, **trade, development and the political dimensions are linked** through the Cotonou Agreement and the subsequent Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).
- Additionally, in those agreements, the EU has been **successful to include provisions** on political conditionality, despite when invoking them, it has suffered from **double standards**.

CONCLUSIONS

- Despite EU’s normative intent, the **allocation of norms and values is weak** leading to a decrease in its legitimacy.
- Moreover, the EU is increasingly regarded as an actor driven by its self-interest; **TRADE AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS tend to prevail** over EU's commitment to export its norms.