



Faculty of Political Science and Sociology

Final Degree Project

Executive summary

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

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

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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); more specifically, it aims at analysing the strategy followed by the EU in each. Both regions have historically been part of European colonialism, hence, some EU member states, such as France still retain historical ties with them.

The EU has usually been portrayed as a normative power, hence promoting values beyond its borders, together with asserting its interests. This research aims at responding to the following research question: *What prevails most in EU'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). 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 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.*
- Second, *while EU development policy towards SSA is increasingly linked to security issues, development cooperation in SEA is very contingent to economic interests.*

Parting from the premise that the EU constitutes an international actor since it elaborates its own foreign policy (Barbé 2014), the literature review has focused on EU's normative justification of its external action, stressing on the idea that it may not always act in accordance with norms; hence, the need to consider interests, together with factors of identity, as a motor of EU norm diffusion and foreign policy (Sicurelli 2016). To this end, we conceptualise EU's external action as a mix between interests and norms to grasp what motivated its external action towards the two regions of analysis.

Landman's (2003) Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) has been used to conduct the comparative analysis: to compare the different strategies followed by the EU across regions that share similarities. The methodology of this study is qualitative: the theoretical framework has been based on previous literature regarding the spheres of analysis. Nevertheless, some

quantitative data is also used to do a more empirical contrast of arguments, for instance when dealing with trade indicators.

The analysis of EU's strategies was made through both primary - official EU documents, speeches, press releases and other documents and secondary sources -policy papers, academic articles and book chapters.

The results show that 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: to provide aid on certain conditions being met by third countries. In SEA, the EU strategy is more fragmented: the 1980 EU-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement did not include any references on human rights or democracy nor any provision of political conditionality. Moreover, trade and development are separated dimensions: 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).

To conclude, the hypothesis have been proven to be true. The comparative analysis has showed, in several instances, that despite EU's normative intent, the allocation of norms and values is weak which decreases its legitimacy. Moreover, the EU is increasingly regarded as an actor driven by its self-interest; trade and economic interests tend to prevail over the commitment to export its norms. Despite political conditionality provisions have been included in agreements and in few other occasions the EU decided to suspend aid on a unilateral basis, it has often been reluctant to invoke conditionality clauses. In SEA, sanctions have been mainly targeted to Myanmar despite in other instances human rights violations were also present. Furthermore, in SSA; an increasing link between security and development can be drawn, as there is an increasing influence of security issues 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.

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