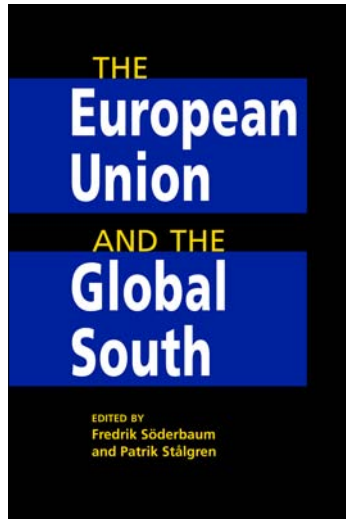


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1

The EU and the Global South

Fredrik Söderbaum and Patrik Stålgren

This book contributes to the burgeoning debate on the European Union (EU) as a global actor in world politics. The external activities of the European Community (EC), now the EU, have expanded dramatically since its inception in 1958.¹ The EU has become a force on the world scene and its presence is felt almost everywhere, albeit more in some policy areas and counterpart regions and countries than in others (Bretherton and Vogler 2006; Hill and Smith 2005a).

Differing views abound about what type of political animal the EU is and about the nature and impact of its external relations. Although the EU is, to an increasing extent, referred to as one of the two superpowers of the world, it is not a “state.” Skeptics argue that the EU has diffuse and ineffective foreign policies and that it is divided between the interests of its member states, implying that the EU is seen merely as a potential actor in world politics. More positive observers have varying views about the EU as a global and international actor and about the logic behind its external relations. In short, the EU is often perceived as an ambiguous polity and its foreign policy profile appears to be a moving target.

In order to obtain legitimacy as a global actor, from member states and in the international community, the EU must acquire some degree of “actorness,” which can be defined as conscious efforts to shape the external world in accordance with the values, interests, and identity of the actor. Actorness brings attention to the close relationship between the EU’s internal development and its external policies (Hill and Smith 2005b: 5). This link has become increasingly evident in the EU’s official policy documents and treaties, which repeatedly stress that without a

coordinated external policy the legitimacy of the EU as a global actor will be called into question.

The EU can act as a collective actor in international affairs and be seen as “one” by outsiders, for instance, when signing a trade agreement or when disbursing aid. Being a global actor is more demanding, however, than simply being a regional organization or being a “region.” The fact that the European Commission does “something” is not enough for a claim to actorness. The extent to which EU is a genuine actor is more complicated. Notwithstanding, much of the discussion about the EU’s role as an actor is implicitly or explicitly framed within rather conventional statecentric notions about world politics, which we seek to transcend. Two assumptions underlie this book: states are not the sole potential actors in world politics, and “coordination failure” within the EU does not automatically disqualify it as an actor. The second of these assumptions is supported by analogy with states: because a region is not unified does not mean that we dismiss it as an actor.²

The overarching question addressed in this collection is to what extent and under what circumstances the EU should be seen as an actor in its relations with different counterparts and in different policy areas in the Global South. Without neglecting the increasing complexity of the notion of the Global South,³ the book explores the EU’s engagements with Africa, Latin America, and Asia,⁴ focusing on three controversial policy areas: economic cooperation, development cooperation, and conflict management.

We make a methodological contribution to the research field by undertaking a series of in-depth empirical case studies. Hence, in contrast to much of the previous research in this field, our focus is not simply on the policy strategies of the EU and what its member states say they are going to do. Instead we try to make in-depth assessments of the power relations and decisionmaking processes “on the ground” in the various policy areas and in the counterpart regions.

Another unique feature of this book is its focus on the role of interregionalism in the shaping of the EU’s external relations and in its strategy of becoming a global actor. Although interregionalism is not explicitly mentioned as an objective in the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), it is deeply rooted in the European Commission’s and the EU’s foreign policies and external relations (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2004a; Hänggi, Roloff, and Rüländ 2006; Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2006). There is a long history of a rather loose form of interregionalism between the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) group of countries, and this interregional policy has been partly revised under the

new Cotonou Agreement and other frameworks. Since the 1990s, inter-regional cooperation has been further consolidated as a key feature of the EU's foreign policies with other counterpart regions, at least in official declarations. Indeed, we are witnessing a trend whereby the European Commission and other European policymakers seek to promote interregional relations and partnerships with the Global South, albeit not always with a consistent formulation. For instance, the former Belgian prime minister, Guy Verhofstadt, then president of the European Council, suggested in 2001 that the current G8 should be replaced by a G8 based on more adequate regional representation:

We need to create a forum where the leading continental partnerships can all speak on an equal footing: the European Union, the African Union, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), etc. (Verhofstadt 2001)

This collection explores the link between interregionalism and regions as actors on the world scene. From the EU's perspective, interregionalism not only justifies and promotes the EU's own existence and efficiency as a global actor; the strategy also promotes the legitimacy and efficiency of other regions, which in turn promotes further interregionalism in the world system: "Inter-regional cooperation offers support to processes of regional cooperation in other regions and enables the counterpart groupings to respond to globalization, thus improving their profiles as global actors" (Alec De Flers and Regelsberger 2005: 318).

The strength of interregionalism in the EU's relations with the Global South, and why it occurs, remain contested in the academic literature and policy analysis. As a result, this book addresses research questions such as: Is interregionalism prevailing in some policy areas but not in others? Is the EU pursuing interregionalism only toward particular regions and not toward others? Is interregionalism challenging or strengthening multilateralism, the EU's bilateral relations, and old-style state-to-state foreign policy relations? Does the EU act differently toward weaker and less powerful partner regions as opposed to relatively more powerful ones? Is the vision of interregional "partnership" simply a new instrument for enforcing asymmetric-style compliance?

These questions about interregionalism need to be linked to questions about the EU as a global actor. Whereas the EU often speaks with one voice, for instance in commercial policy, EU policies toward the outside world tend to be more ambiguous and pluralistic in other policy

areas, such as development cooperation and security policy, where decisionmaking is either “shared” between EU institutions and EU member states or is based on national and intergovernmental policies. Nevertheless, some momentum for coordinated policy has been generated by the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and more recently through an intensification of discussion regarding a common European Development Policy. It is not surprising that key policymakers, especially from the European Commission, emphasize that the making of the EU as an efficient and legitimate global actor across all areas of foreign policy, including development policy and security, calls for a strengthening of the EU’s central institutions, instruments, and policies, where the Commission must, so the argument goes, play a leading role (Bretherton and Vogler 2006). Such attempts at centralization and communitarization of decisionmaking and policy are contested, and there is a real need to analyze the tensions and paradoxes between the central EU institutions and those of the individual EU member states. Sometimes the EU’s external policies are supranational and common, whereas in other cases they are intergovernmental. In other cases still, there appears to be little in the way of articulated EU policy, and the member states pursue their own national policies outside of the EU framework. Thus, there are complex interrelationships between the EU’s external relations and those of the member states, and this book explores the fact that this “coordination game” varies across and between different policy areas and counterparts. Therefore questions need to be asked about the EU’s nature as an actor and where power lies within the EU. How much of an actor is the EU in its relations with different counterpart regions in the Global South and across policy areas? Do the large powers within the EU determine the Union’s foreign policies toward the South? Or are smaller member countries able to shape outcomes? Are central EU institutions able to decide the agenda and enforce compliance and enforce their “interests”? How are different EU actors’ foreign policy preferences and perceptions coordinated within the Union? How coherent is the EU in its policies toward the Global South?

Conceptualization

This book’s unique features include a systematic and in-depth assessment of interregionalism in a number of specific cases and what this tells us about the EU’s role as a global actor in the South. There is some ambiguity surrounding the concept of interregionalism. In the broadest

sense interregionalism refers to the process whereby two specified regions interact as regions, that is, region-to-region relations. The deepest form of interregionalism, so-called pure interregionalism, develops between two clearly identifiable regions (often two regional organizations) within an institutional framework. Pure interregionalism captures, however, only a certain part of contemporary region-to-region relations. This is because many “regions” are dispersed and porous, without clearly identifiable borders, and reveal only a low level of regional agency. The problem is that a significant part of the literature on interregionalism has a tendency to favor pure interregionalism, resulting in the same bias as in the literature on regionalism, which is heavily geared toward the study of regional organizations and “visible” formal interstate frameworks. This book’s premise is that a broader conceptual toolbox is required for understanding the emergence and logic of interregionalism, as well as how this phenomenon is linked to other forms of activity on the world scene, such as multilateralism and classical bilateralism. The concepts of *hybrid interregionalism* and *transregionalism* are useful for such broader analysis (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2004b: 5).

Hybrid interregionalism refers to a framework where one organized region negotiates with a group of countries from another (unorganized or dispersed) region. For instance, in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) the Mediterranean countries negotiate individually with the EU. Aggarwal and Fogarty (2004b: 5), referring specifically to commercial relations, take the Lomé Agreement as a similar example of hybrid interregionalism, where the EU has trade relations with a set of countries that are not grouped within their own customs union or free trade agreement. Hånggi goes beyond formal frameworks and refers to a hybrid interregionalism in which a region, such as the EU, interacts bilaterally with single powers. Formally, this can be thought of as a “region-to-state” relation, but it may also come close to or give way to interregional relations in those cases where the single power has a dominant position in its own region; examples are the United States in North America, India in South Asia, and China in Asia (Hånggi 2006: 41ff). Needless to say, such region-to-state relations are not unequivocal, and as Karen Smith (2006) correctly points out, under certain conditions such relations may also *prevent* interregionalism from taking place.

Transregionalism has been employed as a concept in order to go beyond the narrow region-to-region processes between two institutionalized regions within a formal and mainly intergovernmental framework (i.e., pure interregionalism). Transregionalism is even more open-ended than hybrid interregionalism and refers to region-to-region relations

where *both* regions are dispersed and have weak actorship. Hence, where an accord links countries from two regions even though neither of these two regions negotiates as a region, this can be referred to as transregionalism; an example is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Transregionalism has also been used in order to cover so-called *transnational* (nonstate) relations, again for the purpose of moving beyond conventional statecentrism: “Any connection across regions—including transnational networks of corporate production or of non-governmental organizations—that involves cooperation among any type of actors across two or more regions can in theory also be referred to as a type of transregionalism” (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2004b: 5).

The generic concept of bilateralism describes an interaction between actors. This concept is of course related to a broader discussion of what is (and is not) an “actor.” Conventionally, bilateralism is above all used to denote activities between two nation-states, but if the EU is perceived as a part in a bilateral relationship, it is per definition seen as an actor. Hence, *bilateralism* can be a means for regions to be seen as actors in world politics. Since a bilateral relationship between two regions (as actors) is synonymous with interregionalism, it is necessary to reflect on what constitutes a regional actor. In the next chapter, Hettne reflects on the question of how regions can become actors in world politics. Being an actor, or having “actorship,” is not necessarily the same for a region as for nation-states, although there are of course certain similarities. The fundamental issue is instead whether regions have the capacity to act and to pursue coordinated, coherent, and consistent policies toward the outside world while having a significant impact on the external environment and the behavior of other actors.

Coordination and coherence are of direct relevance for the analysis of such regional agency. A variety of modes of coordination is at work in the making of the EU’s foreign policies, such as the community method, the open method of coordination between the EU and the member states, the intergovernmental method, or a strictly national system of foreign policies, which takes place outside the EU’s structures (Bomberg and Stubbs 2003; Telò 2006). Coordination differs from policy divergence and differentiation, and in the literature it is sometimes used interchangeably with coherence (Forster and Stokke 1999). Whereas coordination here refers to cross-national adjustment of policies and strategies to other actors, coherence refers to a policy and action in one field being made to work for, rather than against, the policies and actions in other fields of activity—for instance, between trade and development cooperation. Normally the concept of coherence refers

to the internal policy coherence of a specific agent, such as an individual EU member state or the European Commission. As a result there is a certain conceptual overlap between coordination and (cross-national) coherence when analyzing a multicountry actor such as the EU.

Organization of This Book

This book is structured in five parts. The first part describes the emergence of the EU as a global actor, the emergence of the EU's interregional model, and the various instruments and mechanisms at its disposal. The three subsequent parts focus on economic cooperation, development cooperation, and conflict management, respectively. Within each of these parts there is a historically informed case study concerning the EU's relations with each of the counterpart regions: Africa, Latin America, and Asia. This research design opens up the possibility for comparison between policy areas and between counterpart regions, which we undertake in the final part of the book.

Chapter 2, by Björn Hettne, describes the historical development of a European actor and the construction of actorship, focusing on both European identity formation and the worldwide role of the EU. The more recent development of the European system in the context of the EU is described as a result of regionalization from below as well as harmonization and coordination from above. With this as a basis, Hettne describes the EU's Foreign Policy Complex (FPC), which is seen as the intricate institutional machinery through which actorship is being realized. Hettne then analyzes the EU's worldwide role toward new candidates, the "near abroad," the great powers, and the further afield regions of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, before reconnecting with the three policy areas that are the central pillars of this book: economic cooperation, development cooperation, and security cooperation.

Sven Grimm, in Chapter 3, focuses specifically on more recent changes and dynamics in the EU's relationship with the Global South in the three policy areas covered in this book. Grimm provides a detailed account of the instruments and mechanisms in each of the policy areas, such as trade agreements, aid instruments and mechanisms for financing development, the European security strategy, and the role of regional organizations in conflict management.

Mary Farrell sets out, in Chapter 4, an analysis of the EU-Africa relationship in the field of economic cooperation. The historical focus in the EU-Africa partnership has been on a special aid-trading relationship

with former colonies. Even if earlier interregional accords were officially designed to promote development, the results were not convincing. The new Cotonou Agreement places a stronger emphasis on reciprocal trade, which is compatible with the World Trade Organization (WTO) trading system, political conditionalities, regional economic cooperation and integration, human rights and democracy, and the “war on terror.”

In Chapter 5, Sebastian Santander deals with the European Union’s Latin American strategy and especially the interregional relationship with the Common Market of the South (Mercosur). Interregional cooperation between the EU and Mercosur was initiated on trade but has gradually expanded to emphasize other forms of economic cooperation and development cooperation as well as political dialogue and common “values.” Santander highlights the fact that this interregional partnership takes shape in the context of economic globalization and economic competition with the United States, not least because the EU’s aim is to become a global actor. It is intriguing that these factors both give rise to and undermine interregionalism at the same time.

In Chapter 6, Mary Farrell analyzes EU interregionalism in Asia. This region has seen interregional cooperation over many years, mainly within the framework of EU and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) dialogue. The mid-1980s saw a variety of new developments, particularly the launch of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which indicated a more active agenda for interregional cooperation. A wide range of issues is included within the ASEM framework, but the agenda tends to be ad hoc and flexible. Over the years, the scope of dialogue within ASEM and through EU-ASEAN meetings has expanded to include an array of issues such as concerns with human rights, international crime and terrorism, and environmental degradation. At the same time the EU has continued bilateral negotiations with individual Asian countries, particularly with China, Japan, and India.

The second policy area dealt with in this book, international development cooperation, is particularly interesting owing to the coexistence and so-called complementarity of Community aid and the development cooperation pursued by the individual EU member states. In Chapter 7, Fredrik Söderbaum and Patrik Stålgren deal with EU-Africa relations, highlighting the divergence between the EU’s official policy, as formulated in discourse and in Brussels, and development cooperation as it takes place on the ground in Africa. The pattern is twofold. First, even if the EU’s official goal is to promote EU-Africa interregional cooperation, the main pattern is a number of overlapping and sometimes competing region-building programs among a series of donors. The donors

are seldom coordinated, and the EU is not performing as a unified actor apart from the specific programs of the European Commission. This reveals the limits to the EU's interregional development cooperation in Africa. The second pattern is related to the fact that countries continue to be the most important counterparts in international development cooperation. But the EU is not really performing as a unified actor here either. Donor coordination is not taking place within the framework of the EU but through multilateral mechanisms, such as the Paris Agenda, the UN framework, or through more flexible budget support mechanisms and lead donor mechanisms.

Anne Haglund Morrissey, in Chapter 8, describes the fact that interregionalism has become a key ingredient of the EU's development cooperation with Latin America. At the same time, the EU has engaged in a variety of hybrid interregional and country-level relationships, as well as working through classical bilateralism. The European Commission has taken a leading role in the relationship with Latin America, among other things, owing to lack of interest in the region on the part of many EU member states. The emphasis on interregional development cooperation in combination with the leadership of the European Commission has strengthened the perception of the EU as a global actor in Latin America in this policy area since the early 1990s.

Sven Grimm, in Chapter 9, describes the changes in the EU's relations with Southeast Asia. The interregional relationship began in the late 1960s and was loosely structured around ASEAN. In the 1980s the relationship was largely driven by geopolitics, which among other things resulted in a dramatic increase of aid. In the early 1990s the relationship between the EU and Southeast Asia changed again, with a renewed role for interregionalism through the EU's Asia strategy and the establishment of the ASEM. Country-specific and bilateral aid programs are dominant, however, and development cooperation on the regional level is largely limited to a variety of ASEAN programs. This results in multiplicities of overlapping and sometimes competing aid programs at different levels in Southeast Asia, signaling that the EU does not present a collective view on how to approach the region in the field of aid.

Stefaan Smis and Sevidzem Stephen Kingah, in Chapter 10, analyze the EU's approach to conflict management in the Great Lakes region, with a particular focus on the conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The regional nature of this conflict has resulted in a series of conflict management strategies from outside as well as from within Africa itself. The authors show that the EU-led Operation Artemis can be seen as a limited, unassertive, and only partly successful interregional

conflict management response. Obstacles are both internal to the EU (for example, lack of coordination and poor policy formulation) and related to the nature of the conflict itself and the conflicting interests among African states and other vested corporate interests.

Philippe De Lombaerde, Geert Haghebaert, Socorro Ramírez, and An Vranckx, in Chapter 11, underline the national, regional, and international ramifications of the Colombian conflict as well as the contradictions in the EU's conflict management approach. Part of the answer why the EU fails to speak and act as "one" lies in competing national interests, the failure within the EU to understand the regional character of the conflict, and the failure to agree on plausible conflict management strategies. Another important factor is the failure of the Andean Community to deal with the Colombian conflict. Hence there is no functioning regional counterpart on the Latin American side, which illustrates the lack of both regional actorship (both within Europe and Latin America) and assertive interregionalism.

Chapter 12, by Björn Hettne, Fredrik Söderbaum, and Patrik Stålgren, draws comparative conclusions about the EU as an actor in the Global South across the three policy areas and across the three counterpart regions. Like many other publications in this research field, this book confirms the view that the EU is a strong and recognized economic actor. Indeed, many of the EU member states have subordinated themselves to the EU's common economic and trading agenda. But our study also underscores the fact that national interests do influence the process. This is most evident in cases where economic and commercial policies intersect with other policy areas. The book also draws attention to the EU's multifaceted and diverse policy mix based on multilateralism, bilateralism, and various kinds of interregionalism.

Although the EU seeks to be portrayed as an actor within the field of development cooperation, the case studies in this book highlight the ambiguous nature of the EU as an actor within this policy field. Donor coordination is rapidly improving at the country level, but these processes are usually centered upon a variety of largely multilateral or ad hoc country-based mechanisms, whereas the EU remains malfunctioning as a coordination mechanism, especially in Africa. There is a trend for regions to emerge as counterparts to countries in international development cooperation. Most donors pursue individual region-building programs in isolation from other donors, however, resulting in a multitude of overlapping and sometimes competing region-building programs. Hence, it becomes evident that the EU does not present a unified approach in this regard either; the clearest example of EU interregional-

ism in the field of development cooperation is in Latin America (which is the result of rather weak national interests and the relatively strong position of the European Commission).

The EU is, in general, a somewhat poorly coordinated actor in the field of conflict management, often failing to develop a coordinated response at both the country level and the interregional level. The EU's response to the conflict in the Great Lakes region is mixed. The EU managed to lead Operation Artemis, but this was a limited response, and there is a lack of coordinated action on the part of the EU. Whereas the case of the Great Lakes region draws attention to divergent interests among EU member states, the Colombian conflict underlines that there are no clearly defined interests among major powers within the EU at all, which explains the weak degree of EU actorness as well as interregionalism in this case.

Notes

1. The European Union was established through the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Technically it is still possible to speak about the European Community for first-pillar activities, but we use the term *EU* in order to enable comparison in time and between policy areas. The term *EU* can also be used to refer to the EU as an institution plus the member states, hence as a political system or a polity. This broader and more open-ended meaning of the EU is particularly important in the discussion about the EU as a global actor, explaining why it is the preferred label in this book.

2. Thanks to Karen Smith for emphasizing this point.

3. The book's scope encompasses the EU's relationships with a large part of the world. The two major exceptions are North America and Central and Eastern Europe, which to a considerable extent can be seen as "special cases" of the EU's foreign policies (Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2006). The transatlantic relationship is special for a number of reasons, characterized as it is by "big power" interaction and North-North relations as well as the particular relationship between the United States and Europe (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2006). The EU's relations with Central and Eastern Europe are also unique, perhaps most importantly because all countries in the latter region define their relations in terms of EU enlargement and whether and how soon to become EU members (Smith 2006).

4. Although some individual countries, such as Japan or South Korea, are neither part of the South in geographical terms nor part of the "developing world," they are typically integrated within their regional contexts and may be included in an eclectic understanding of the Global South.