

European Union Interregionalism and the Capability-Expectations Gap

MATHEW DOIDGE

*Department of Politics and International Studies
University of Warwick*

DRAFT ONLY – NOT FOR CITATION

This article addresses interregionalism in EU external relations. It considers the nature of interregionalism centred on two functional varieties – an internally focused, capacity building interregionalism and an externally focused, globally active form – and, in broad brush strokes, the evidence for each of these forms in EU interregional strategies. On this basis, it notes a capability-expectations gap in the EU’s approach to interregionalism, with a certain dissonance between the Union’s apparent acknowledgement of limited regional actorness in its partner groupings on the one hand and, on the other, its coincident high-level expectations as to what is achievable in the context of these relationships. The article concludes by suggesting priority areas for EU interregional strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception as the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, European integration has incorporated an external relations component, an element of the European project that has become increasingly significant in the more than half century of cooperation that has followed. Through successive treaty reforms and enlargements, the Union’s scope and competence in its external relations has been extended and enhanced, with it coming to play a more prominent role in the global arena, helping increasingly to shape the rules and norms of interaction. Notable in this respect has been the structuring of many of its relations with external partners through the framework of interregionalism, a reflection of the fact that “the EU’s international activity reflects a consistent search for settled frameworks within which to define and pursue international relationships” (Hill and Smith, 2005, p.12).

Interregionalism was an innovation introduced through the EU’s external relations framework, tracing its origins to the Yaoundé Convention of 1963. It was a direct result of the EU’s status as the progenitor and pre-eminent actor of its type. The

role of the Community and Union has therefore been central to the emergence of a framework of interregionalism on a global scale. From the 1970s and 1980s, as integration experiments became widespread and as internal EC developments, including particularly the inauguration of European Political Cooperation, produced a European Community interested in active engagement on the global stage, group-to-group dialogues proliferated. The EC concluded relationships with among others the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) grouping of states. Notably absent was the emergent of interregional group-to-group relationships not involving the European Community, a function largely of the low level of integration and absence of an external focus among other regionalisms. The consequence was an interregional architecture resembling a hub-and-spokes network gravitating around Brussels (Hänggi, 2003, p.198).

In the post-bipolar period this situation has changed. The systemic transformations that have occurred since the fall of the Berlin Wall 1989, and most notably the increased interdependence and interconnectedness associated with globalisation, have led to a fundamental transformation of the architecture of interregionalism. The emergence of the new open regionalism, characterised by an outward focus and full engagement with globalisation and world markets, has meant that the Union is no-longer unique in having an external focus. While the European Union has remained at the forefront of the process, regionalisms have proliferated and, as they have become increasingly internally coherent and institutionalised, so too have the sought to express themselves more clearly in the external policy space and play a greater role on the global stage. The obvious consequence of this has been an expansion in the array of interregional dialogues, and a move away from the hub-and-spokes system of the past to one incorporating multiple hubs. Interregionalism has become a seemingly indelible feature of the global system (Doidge, 2007, p.230).

Interregionalism, then, has come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in the external relations of the European Union. Since the launching of interregionalism with the Yaoundé Convention in 1963 and more particularly the EC-ASEAN relationship in 1978, the first real group-to-group dialogue (Regelsberger, 1990, p.5), the Union has spread its web of such relationships widely. In doing so, it has sought to pursue particular facets of its external relations. In general terms, it has sought, for

example, to extend its normative influence, aiming to structure the nature of international interactions in a manner reflective of the Union's own cooperative principles. In the interregional context, this has meant both the advocacy of engagement in multilateral efforts, and also the promotion of regionalism around the world. There has, however, been something of a dissonance between the goals of the European Union in its interregional relationships, and the reality of their delivery. The remainder of this article therefore explores EU interregionalism further, considering in broad brush-strokes both the functional varieties of interregionalism and their expression in European Union external relations, and highlighting the disconnect between Union expectations for its interregional partnerships, and what those partnerships are actually capable of achieving.

THE NATURE OF INTERREGIONALISM

Broadly speaking there are two functional varieties of interregionalism, each conditioned by the nature of regional actors engaged: (i) an internally focused, capacity building form and (ii) an externally focused, globally active form (Doidge, 2007, p.242). A brief consideration of regional actorness will therefore help to structure the discussion that is to follow.

Regional actorness, drawing on the work of Sjöstedt (1977) and Bretherton and Vogler (2006), can be understood as a tripartite formulation involving the interrelated components of *identity*, *presence* and *actorness*. A region's identity is that which delineates it from its external environment, and which informs and structures its external action. It is a product of socially constructed values and ideals, and of internal cohesion. Regional organisations are negotiated entities, and their values and ideals and internal cohesion are subject to transformation through social interaction, institutional evolution and membership change, with consequent impacts on presence and actorness. Presence, quite simply denotes that regions may prove consequential in the international system, even in the absence of the capacity to act in a purposive fashion (Allen and Smith, 1990, 1998). This is clearly linked to identity; the more firmly held a region's values and ideals, and the greater its cohesion, the greater its presence will be.

The move from presence to actorness involves the transition from passive to active player in the international arena. Actorness designates the ability to pursue goals, informed by the region's identity. Central to this, therefore, is the ability to formulate coherent policies, and the possession of the necessary instruments to operationalise them. While the baseline expectation for regional actors is only that they possess decision-taking structures that deliver more than that of a decentralised state system operating on the basis of power and self interest (Jupille and Caporaso, 1998, p.217), deeper institutionalisation is clearly advantageous. In general terms, the more clearly defined the structures of intraregional cooperation, the more clearly designated the decision-taking authority, and the deeper the level of institutionalisation, the more stable and responsive will be the policy formulation and goal-setting process and therefore the stronger the regional actor.¹ Such a framework is clearly reinforced by strong regional identity, which assists in overcoming intramural differences and minimises the potential for deadlock.

Forms of Interregionalism

The capacity building form of interregionalism is largely directed towards the strengthening over time of a weaker interregional partner. It is, in other words, the likely outcome of qualitative differences in actorness between regional partner organisations (Doidge, 2007, pp.238–242). Two elements are intrinsic to this. The first is the building of intra-regional institutions within the weaker regional grouping as a function of the need for greater intraregional cooperation in order to more fully engage with a more integrated partner. This may involve the emergence of new structures of cooperation, or the strengthening of existing structures. The second is the formation of regional identities, whereby the process of interaction with a more coherent regional 'other' at the interregional levels leads to a reinforcement of identities at the regional level. Both elements are therefore linked directly to the evolution of regional actorness.

In contrast to this internally focused variety, the globally active interregionalism is concerned with expression of the interregional partnership on the

¹ This is by no means, however, the only form that a strong regional actor might take. Strength of regional actorness might also conceivably appear in a regional architecture characterised by something resembling hegemonial domination.

global stage. It is focused on the pursuit of agreed goals and interests in the international system and in multilateral fora. Again, this involves a variety of processes. First, drawing on realist conceptions of actor competition and notions of ‘balance of power’, interregionalism is seen to contribute to the maintenance of equilibrium in the international system, particularly within the triad of regional economic powers of North America, Europe and Asia. Interregional partnerships are a means for balancing great powers in the global system, potentially challenging hegemonic structures and constraining unilateral action, or indeed enabling dialogue partners to avoid marginalisation. Second, the globally active interregionalism envisages such partnerships facilitating cooperation in global multilateral fora, allowing regional groupings to agree agendas for pursuit in global fora, or acting as clearing houses for such fora, allowing issues of global importance to be considered at a remove from the complexities of truly global multilateral negotiations. Each of these elements requires a significant level of actorness from regional organisations if they are to be successfully performed. They require partner groupings to be able to formulate policy on an intra-regional basis, and to then have the capacity to negotiate common interregional positions. They constitute, in other words, ‘high end’ functions premised on interregionalism between sufficiently strong regional actors (pp.235–238).

The obvious expectation is that these functional varieties will form the two poles of a continuum, charting a transformation in the nature of an interregional relationship from a capacity building to a globally active type as the actorness of the partners increases. It is, however, not as simple as to assert that interregionalisms engaging qualitatively different regional actors will focus solely on capacity building, while more advanced regionalisms engage in a globally active variety of interregionalism. We see in the European Union’s interregional partnerships a recognition of these twin interregional archetypes, with a clear emphasis on cooperation in multilateral fora, and the need to foster integrative solutions in other international regions. Importantly, however, these forms of interregionalism are not discrete – they co-exist in the EUs approach to its regional partners.

CAPACITY BUILDING INTERREGIONALISM

An internally focused, capacity building style of interregionalism, concerned with promoting integration in the weaker regional partner, is a key component of the EU's interregional relations. This is a product of two motive forces. First is the EU's desire to promote stability in the international system, regularising contacts within settled frameworks (Hill and Smith, 2005, p.12). Relationships with other regional groupings of states are one such framework. Second is the view that regionalism itself delivers benefits to its constituent states. The EU is itself an outcome of regional conflict resolution, delivering peace and prosperity in a way that would have been unthinkable in 1945, in the wake of the second European civil war of the twentieth century. This was emphasised in the 1973 Document on European Identity:

“The Nine European States might have been pushed towards disunity by their history and by selfishly defending misjudged interests. But they have overcome their past enmities and have decided that unity is a basic European necessity to ensure the survival of the civilization which they have in common” (para.1).

The promotion of regionalism, then, has been fundamental to the EU's view of its own place on the world stage, and the promotion of regionalism as a path to peace and prosperity quickly became entrenched in the Union's approach to its external relations, and specifically within its interregional partnerships. Subsequently, as the early architecture of interregionalism was established during the 1980s, the merits of regionalism found expression in the preambles to Cooperation Agreements with ASEAN in 1980, the Andean Pact in 1984, the CAEI in 1986, and the GCC in 1989, the latter of which, for example, emphasised “the fundamental importance attached by the parties to consolidating and strengthening regional integration, a key factor in the development of the GCC countries and the stability of the Gulf region” (EC-GCC, 1989).

In the post-bipolar period, the notion that the European construction is a legitimate model for emulation by the rest of the world has become more firmly entrenched. In 2000, Commission President Romano Prodi was explicit about this concept:

Our European model of integration is the most developed in the world. Imperfect though it still is, it nevertheless works on a continental scale... I believe we can make a convincing case that it would also work globally (Prodi, 2000, p.6).

And in the following year, the Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union spoke of a unified Europe “point[ing] the way ahead for many countries and peoples” (European Council, 2001, p.3). By 2005 the High Representative of the CFSP was also making such a role explicit, arguing in an article on the future role of the EU as an international actor, that:

In Europe we have learned the hard way that sustainable peace and security require regional co-operation and integration... That is why supporting regional co-operation is such a ‘growth area’ in our efforts. The African Union, Mercosur, Asean: these are all examples of strengthening regional regimes, explicitly taking their inspiration from the EU. We are deepening our relations with these other regional players and, where possible and relevant, we are giving our support for their further development. In the years ahead, these inter-regional dialogues will steadily reshape the nature of international politics and forge new mechanisms to manage global interdependence and tackle cross-border problems (Solana, 2005, p.3).

So entrenched has the notion of integration promotion become that Member State political elites, not usually the most supportive of EU external relations activities, have begun touting the possibilities, with UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband (2007) asserting that “the EU will never be a superpower, but could be a model power of regional cooperation” and, in so being, could “chart a course for regional cooperation between medium-sized and small countries”.

EU as Passive Influence

Before considering capacity building as a purposive element of EU external relations, it is worth first illustrating the passive role that the European Union also plays in fostering regional integration – the notion of the EU as a model, as a passive external influence on the construction of regional institutions – which helps underline and reinforce more explicit federative behaviour.

External influences as motive forces and influential factors underlying regionalist decisions have long been recognised. Zimmerling (1991) makes the case for both a *negative* and a *positive external cogency*, arguing that integrative endeavours may be spurred through external pressure or an external threat perception and thus are an attempt to mitigate a potential harm (negative external cogency), or through the expectation of a benefit to be gained from integration (positive external cogency). Additional to these potential causal factors is the role of *extra-regional*

echoing in structuring integrative responses. Defined as the “whole or partial copying of a regional group’s integrative behaviour by outside regional groups or states, especially behaviour which is innovative” (Avery, 1973, p.550), extra-regional echoing embodies the truest conception of the EU as model.

In terms of extra-regional echoing, the EU’s place is unique. The formation and evolution of the Union as a response to initial security concerns and the subsequent perceived economic benefits of integration – the first grouping of states to coalesce in such a way – has legitimised regionalism as a response to external pressures, be they the threat posed by an external other or, of greater moment in the post-bipolar period, what Rüländ (2001, p.61) refers to as the “border-crossing pathologies of globalisation”. Further, the EU’s ongoing success, and particularly economic success, as an integrative endeavour has indeed made it a model for other states seeking a similar integrative solution. When in 1961 Haas (1961, p.366) asked the question “Cannot the example of successful integration in Europe be imitated?”, he was speaking at the beginning of a wave of integration initiatives which, if not quite so successfully, attempted to mimic to some extent the European experience. Extra-regional echoing, then, is a significant “additional outcome of European integration” (Avery, 1973, p.556).

In the context of interregionalism can be seen an intensification of the passive stimulus to integrate. In dialogues between asymmetric regional actors – where one regional grouping is engaged with a more coherent regional other – the requirement of engagement in the interregional process is a significant spur to the integration of the weaker partner. Simply stated, the exigencies of interregional cooperation are such that regional groupings find it necessary to coordinate their positions prior to dialogue with their interregional partners, leading to the establishment of norms and institutions of intraregional cooperation, a process termed ‘regionalism through interregionalism’ (Hänggi, 2003). The clearest example of this is to be found in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). After the initial failure of the East Asia Economic Grouping/Caucus (EAEG/EAEC) proposed by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir in 1990 to generate the sort of integrative behaviour envisaged,² the launching of the

² Mahathir’s initial vision for the East Asia grouping was later stated thus: “Suppose Malaysia goes alone to Brussels to lodge a complaint against European protectionism. Our voice would simply be too small. Nobody would listen. But if the whole of East Asia tells Europe that it must open up its markets, Europeans will know that access to the huge Asian market obliges them not to be protectionist. That

ASEM process in 1996 explicitly posited an East Asian grouping (coincidentally mirroring the member of the EAEG/EAEC) against a European grouping embodied in the highly integrated EU. In stark contrast to the APEC experience, the EU confronted the Asian states with a coherent regional other, and furthermore one that was explicitly attempting to cooperate to a greater level than was generally the case in its external relations. In order to be effective in negotiations with such a partner, it became necessary for Asian participants to coordinate positions for expression in the various ASEM fora. The result was the emergence in 1997 of the ASEAN+3 as a framework for Asian coordination within ASEM, a process that has become increasingly institutionalised to the point where it is now viewed by the participants as “the main vehicle towards the long-term goal of building an East Asian community” (EAC, 2007, s.III(A)(1)).³

EU as External Federator

The EU’s approach to its regional partners, however, has in the post-bipolar period moved beyond a passive role, or indeed simply expressing support for regionalism, to far more overt forms of region-building, and it is this purposive element in which we are interested here, demonstrating as it does the role of interregionalism as a tool in the European Union’s external relations. What we increasingly see in the EU’s interregional dialogues is an attempt to influence the regional architecture of those with which it is engaged, establishing a more institutionalised framework for intraregional cooperation. This reflects the Union’s own Cartesian approach in which cooperation is established along legalistic lines with an emphasis on processes and norms that are binding in nature, and upon the establishment of concrete institutions of cooperation. Thus, where Mahathir criticised the “artificial... over-structured and over-institutionalised” European regionalism, advocating instead a “family or group of friends” model for East Asian cooperation (quoted in Kerr, 1994, pp.407–408), the Union’s interregional relationships have been characterised precisely by the fostering

was the reasoning behind the EAEC proposal” (Ishihara and Mahathir, 1995, p.44). However, opposition from key players (including the proposed leader of the grouping – Japan), as well as the emergence of APEC cooperation superceding any putative East Asianism, resulted in the EAEG/EAEC becoming little more than a hollow East Asianism given lip-service by its participants as a way to mollify Mahathir, but involving no real cooperation or institutionalisation as a forum.

³ For a more detailed consideration of the place of ASEM in fostering East Asian integration, see Hänggi (2003).

and strengthening of institutions of cooperation within its regional counterparts. This is a function of the nature of the EU as the most integrated actor of its type, and the corresponding perception of itself as the paradigmatic model for regionalism. It is a teleological assumption, in other words, that the EU's highly-institutionalised, sovereignty-pooling approach represents the *conditio sine qua non* for successful integration. Thus Prodi, in discussion of interregionalism, alludes to the European approach, emphasising the engagement of "strong and integrated" regional organisations premised on both economic and political integration enabling them "to speak and act singlemindedly on global issues" (Prodi, 2000, p.6).

Some element of federative behaviour has long been present in EU external relations. The 1992 Council Regulation on the provision of financial and technical assistance to the developing countries in Asia and Latin America (the ALA Regulation) provided the legal basis for such efforts on those continents, specifying that regional cooperation between developing countries, including the strengthening of regional institutions, should be considered "a priority area for financial and technical assistance" (Council of the European Union, 1992, Art.5). The 1995 Commission communication on support for regional economic integration took this further, outlining the arguments for, and approaches to take in using the Union's own experience to foster integration in the developing world, emphasising the need to engage in capacity building and institutional strengthening (European Commission, 1995, pp.14–15).

This new emphasis on capacity building quickly found its way into the Union's interregional dialogues. A matter of months after the March 1991 signing of the Treaty of Asunción the EU had established an accord under which it would provide administrative support for MERCOSUR (Sanchez Bajo, 1999, p.933), and a scant year later, in May 1992, an Inter-Institutional Cooperation Agreement was concluded between the European Commission and MERCOSUR's Common Market Council to provide training and technical assistance based on the Commission's own experiences. The underlying intent was to develop MERCOSUR sufficiently to become the main interlocutor in the Community's relations with the Southern Common Market countries (Santander, 2005, p.291). The goal of capacity building was subsequently reiterated in the 1996 Interregional Framework Cooperation Agreement with MERCOSUR (Titles IV–VI) – the largest component of an otherwise

'empty-shell' agreement – among the strategic partnership decisions at the first EU-LAC Summit in 1999, in the 2002 Strategy Paper (European Commission 2002b) and again in the 2007 Strategy Paper where it was stated that “The main aim of EC-Mercosur cooperation is to reinforce the process of institutional and market integration within the region” (European Commission, 2007, p.17).

One of the key concerns of the EU has been with progressing MERCOSUR institutions beyond being simply “advisory and decision making intergovernmental bodies”, an architecture seen to have “served the process of integration well during the initial period of consolidation” but the ongoing weakness of which was deemed by the Union to be “a barrier for the effective functioning of the regional integration scheme” (European Commission, 2002b, p.19). The goal has therefore been a strengthening of these institutions, and specifically the MERCOSUR Secretariat, to enable them to “impose discipline and direct the integration process” (pp.19–20), moving Mercosur a step further towards the supranationalism characteristic of much EU cooperation. In practice, this has been realised through EU funding for institution building and technical cooperation programmes, key elements in the EC-MERCOSUR strategies covering the years 2002–2013 (European Commission, 2002b, 2007).

This engagement of the EU in the MERCOSUR integration process since its inception has helped to structure the nature of the regional arrangements. Sanchez Bajo (1999) illustrates clearly the way in which consistent pressure, allied with the capacity and institution building measures outlined, helped to structure the choice of MERCOSUR member states to adopt a full customs union as a core component of their integration, rather than pursuing a more limited Free Trade Area

While MERCOSUR has remained the EU's headline Latin American partner since its launch, similar processes can also be found in its relationships with Central America and the Andean Community. The Union, for example, has explicitly linked the conclusion of an EU-Central America Cooperation Agreement with the deepening of regionalism, reinforced by the designation of integration support as the primary objective in its regional strategy. Again, this approach has centred on formal programmes, most notably the Programme of Support to Central American Integration (PAIRCA) launched in 2003 and revised in 2008, and the Programme of Support to the Design and Application of Central American Common Policies

(ADAPCCA) in 2008. The shallowness of integration has also been highlighted as a factor limiting the relationship with the Andean Community, though the focus in this relationship to date has been customs and technical cooperation among its member states. It is to be expected that the standard capacity building programmes will be rolled out for the Andean Community in the coming years.

Such measures have not been limited to new regionalisms, however, with capacity building also being retrofitted into the relationship with Europe's most established interregional partnership, that with ASEAN. From the tenth ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in 1992, offers of EU support for capacity building became an integral element in the Joint Declarations of interregional ministerial meetings, with the Union on that occasion offering "to share its experiences from the European economic integration process and to provide technical assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat" (AEMM, 1992, Art.6). This offer was operationalised following a request from the ASEAN Secretariat for assistance in increasing its own actor capacity and, as a consequence, the actorness of the Association more broadly. The first such programme, the Institutional Development Programme for the ASEAN Secretariat (IDPAS), was launched in 1995 with the express goals of enhancing the professionalism of Secretariat staff, and of developing the Secretariat into a central institution within ASEAN, to be achieved by familiarising Secretariat staff with relevant organs and operating procedures within the Commission. IDPAS was deemed a success, most notably by the Secretariat (ASEAN, 1999), and so capacity building was restated as a goal of EU-ASEAN cooperation, with the 2001 publication of the 'Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships' highlighting the need to "provide active support for reinforced regional integration" (European Commission, 2001, p.22).

The successor to IDPAS, the ASEAN Programme for Regional Integration Support (APRIS) was launched in 2004 with the intent of giving "the Secretariat some ammunition in order to go to the Member States and, using the Union experience as an example, argue for a supranational rather than intergovernmental approach to an issue" (Commission Official, quoted in Doidge, 2007, p.241). Again, the focus of the programme was to promote regional cooperation, and to enhance the role of the ASEAN Secretariat in this process (European Commission, 2002a, s.2.2). APRIS was

updated in the form of APRIS II in 2006, which will continue the process of capacity building and strengthening of the integrative process in ASEAN through to 2009.

The IDPAS/APRIS programmes are a particularly overt form of the federative behaviour to be expected from interregional relationships. By offering capacity building and technical assistance programmes modelled on its own experience, the Union, through the agency of the Commission, is helping to define the debate about what integration means, and what the endpoint should be. Specifically, it is helping to define the role of the ASEAN Secretariat in relation to the Association and its Member States. Indeed, an acknowledged “weak point... of the EU-ASEAN relationship is that the ASEAN Secretariat is really a secretariat” (Commission Official, quoted in Doidge, 2004a, p.202) – it lack the resources and the mandate to negotiate on behalf of the Association, limiting the possibilities for substantive engagement at the interregional level. Put another way, it is indicative on the relative lack of actorness of ASEAN in its external relations.

While progress in the EU’s capacity building efforts has been slow – evidenced by the still limited nature of cooperative institutions in target groupings – what is clear is steady movement towards the broader goal of entrenching regionalism and interregionalism in global governance, and as a consequence also the accepted liberal economic framework. Importantly, through engaging regional groupings (particularly newly formed and consequently less defined regionalisms) in interregional relationships, the EU is in many ways structuring the integrative choices available to them – choices relating to the nature of cooperation, the choice of free trade areas versus customs unions etc. The model espoused is one favouring a high degree of institutionalisation and internal coherence. The EU is both a roadmap and, through the capacity building measures in which it is engaged, a key interlocutor in structuring regional integration arrangements around the world.

GLOBALLY ACTIVE INTERREGIONALISM

While capacity building interregionalism constitutes a key element in the Union’s interregional relationships, it is in the globally active variety of interregionalism premised upon the expression of interregional cooperation on the global stage where the Union’s interests particularly lie. Engagement in multilateral fora and the

mechanisms of global governance is “the defining principle” of the Union’s external policy (European Commission, 2003, p.3), with building “an international order based on effective multilateralism” seen as a fundamental pillar of its broader strategy (European Council, 2003, p.9). In this respect, interregionalism is a means to an end – it contributes to the functioning of global governance institutions, and to the role of the EU in them. This is increasingly recognised within the Union, with the Commission noting of its role in the UN that a proactive and effective engagement in such global multilateral fora requires extensive dialogue and preparatory work with partner states and groupings (European Commission, 2003, p.4). Interregional dialogues are seen as a key institution for facilitating such preparatory work.

In the post-bipolar period, therefore, with the rise of multilateral governance institutions as a consequence of the ongoing process of globalisation and the recognition of issues requiring a global response, the need to cooperate to achieve global goals has become a core element in all EU interregional relationships, at least in a declaratory form. Indeed, Commission President Prodi (2000, p.5) premises successful multilateralism, and effective global governance institutions, on cooperation between regional groupings, arguing that “global governance can emerge only from such inter-regional cooperation”. Thus the 2002 EU-Latin America and Caribbean summit committed itself to reinforcing bi-regional political dialogue in international fora and the UN system, a commitment routinely found in chairman’s statements and declarations of the various interregional relationships in which the Union is engaged. While the EU-LAC commitment is firmly part of the outwardly focused era of globalisation, such intent is also traceable to the early days of interregionalism. The EU-ASEAN relationship, for example, has since the outset clearly expressed the intent to utilise interregional engagement as a foundation for greater cooperation on the global stage. The first ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting, convened in 1978, referenced the need to cooperate in key international fora such as the then forthcoming UNCTAD V. By the signing of the EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement in 1980, these global ambitions had become firmly entrenched, with cooperation to resolve issues in the UNCTAD, UNIDO and GATT becoming a key pillar of their engagement.

It is clear then, that a strong rhetorical commitment to a globally active interregionalism has become a key component in the European Union’s interregional

relations, justifying for some the existence of the interregional architecture. Indeed, it is in the performance of these functions that both Commission and ASEAN Secretariat officials have identified value in the maintenance of that particular relationship (Doidge, 2007, p.243). What has not been evidenced, however, is any ongoing performance of such functions.

As has been demonstrated in some detail elsewhere (Doidge, 2004a, 2004b, 2007), the few cases that are routinely highlighted as evidence for the performance of functions characteristic of globally active interregionalism were primarily declaratory in nature, and prone to collapse as the divergent interests of member states overwhelmed the capacity of regional institutions to cope. Among the most frequently cited examples of successful collaborative activity is cooperation on the issues of the invasions of Cambodia by Vietnam in 1978 and Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979. As a consequence of specific European concerns regarding Afghanistan and ASEAN concerns over Cambodia, the two organisations effectively traded cooperation in the UN on each issue as a *quid pro quo* for cooperation on the other. Such interregional cooperation was a function of the ability of intraregional structures to generate regional agreement – on actorness, in other words. Thus declaratory cooperation over Afghanistan was feasible due to the lack of divergent positions within either grouping. On Cambodia, however, this was not the case. The fracturing of the European group due to an inability to overcome entrenched state interests, thus undermining interregional efforts, was demonstrated clearly when member states disagreed over recognition of the new Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and on the provision of aid, with France most notably taking a different position to that of its European partners.

An inability to reach intraregional consensus also undermined putative interregional cooperation on the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Intramural differences within ASEAN and particularly the EU were too deeply entrenched for regional cooperative structures to overcome. The release of a letter by the so-called ‘Gang of Eight’ urging European cooperation with the US in overthrowing Saddam Hussein, for example, came only days after agreement in the General Affairs Council asserting that “[t]he responsibility of the UNSC in maintaining international peace and security must be respected” (General Affairs Council, 2003, p.14). In short, despite an intent to cooperate, making a reality of assertions as to the comprehensiveness of EU-ASEAN

dialogue, neither the Union nor ASEAN possessed sufficient actorness to be able to agree decisions intraregionally which could then form of the basis of interregional cooperation (Doidge, 2007, p.237).

Moving beyond security, the need for closer cooperation on issues of global economic governance has also been routinely highlighted in EU-ASEAN dialogue, but has again been limited in practice, a factor largely attributed by officials on both sides to the weakness of ASEAN as a regional actor (p.238). As a consequence, rather than the EU and ASEAN engaging at the interregional level in order to overcome what may be large differences in their respective initial positions – the clearing-house process – these groupings have tended to seek out partners at the WTO level with viewpoints already as similar to their own as possible, thus reducing the hurdle to be overcome. The result is that issue-based coalitions such as the Cairns Group have tended to be far more important. This, however, does not make achieving agreement at the global multilateral level any easier, leaving as it does the most difficult negotiations, those between divergent positions, still to be addressed.

The Asia-Europe Meeting has also routinely emphasised the need for cooperation in multilateral institutions, most notably the WTO – a function of the centrality of concerns over trade to the emergence of the ASEM process. And yet its dialogue has failed to deliver much in the way of cooperation in the WTO, producing instead general declarations designed to paper over differences between partners. Comprehensive discussions on WTO matters were held for the first time at the ASEM Senior Officials Meeting on Trade and Investment in 1996, and have since become a routine matter of dialogue in a range of ASEM fora. Consensus, however, is rarely achieved, with acknowledgement among participants that the most that has been possible is a common understanding on very broad interests (Doidge, 2004a, p.272). Robles (2008) points to a similar failure in relation to ASEM cooperation on the launching of WTO negotiations. As a consequence, consensus agreements reached as part of the ASEM dialogue routinely broke down at the WTO as one or another member state chose to go its own way. The weakness of the cooperative architecture within Europe and Asia, in other words, limited the possibility for substantive and effective cooperation, undermining the potential for ASEM to act as a clearing-house for WTO negotiations. Thus apparent consensus agreements prior to the launching of the Doha and Cancún WTO Ministerials regarding the priority to be given to

negotiations and agenda items to be pursued were undermined when key countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand) took contrary positions in the WTO itself (p.85–86).

EU relations with MERCOSUR have also been less than inspiring, failing even to progress beyond baseline interregional negotiations let alone to achieve an outwardly focused partnership. Central to interregional discussions since 2000 has been the negotiation of an Association Agreement and attendant FTA. And yet in spite of clear motivations on both sides, including classic balancing goals such as the EU's desire not to be sidelined by increased US engagement in the region (particularly in the context of the then proposed FTAA), and MERCOSUR's interest in both playing the EU and US against each other in order to gain a better deal for itself, and its concerns about Europe's turn towards its eastern half (Bulmer-Thomas, 2000), such an agreement has failed to eventuate. Negotiations were suspended in 2004 and had still not resumed by the end of 2009. A failure of the EU to cohere around agreed goals, particularly regarding agricultural concessions, limited its ability to negotiate. On the MERCOSUR side, integration remained highly state-centric. Regional policy choices, in other words, were the product of a purely intergovernmental bargaining process. This, as with the EU's more supranational approach, proved unable to cope with divergent member state positions.

THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATIONS GAP

What is evident, then, is the failure of interregionalism to live up to the EU's aspirations regarding its role in the broader architecture of global governance. It has not delivered the goal of cooperative partnerships in multilateral fora so routinely highlighted as central to the Union's concept of interregionalism. There is a considerable history of the EU's failings to achieve its international and global goals, and of theoretical explication of this situation. Hill's (1993) theorem of a capability-expectations gap in the Union's external relations is a useful concept and one that can be accurately applied to interregionalism. What we clearly see in the European drive to establish a framework of interregionalism through which to pursue particular foreign policy goals, especially in relation to establishing cooperative partnerships to be utilised in global multilateral fora – the high-end functions of an globally active

interregionalism – is a dissonance between European expectations of what can be achieved, and the actual capabilities of itself and its regional partner groupings.

The difficulty is that while the EU's investment in capacity-building interregionalism recognises that its partner groupings often lack capacity to act either intra- or extra-regionally, this recognition does not seem to have filtered through to its expectations regarding what its interregional partnerships can deliver on the global stage. What is evident, therefore, is a sort of cognitive dissonance regarding the current possibilities for interregionalism, with the Union expecting too much too soon from its interregional relationships.

In the context of a capability-expectations gap, commitments to the sort of elements the EU wants in its external relations (i.e. the high-end functions) run the risk of being purely rhetorical. These are routinely established in the formal frameworks of interregional dialogue – for example the headlining of multilateral cooperation in interregional agreements to which the Union is party – but the practical application is absent. One result, as can clearly be seen in the EU-ASEAN relationship, which despite more than three decades of cooperation has failed to deliver the cooperative global partnership expected of it, has been a frantic search for concrete deliverables to justify to practitioners and domestic publics the continuation of the dialogue. In this case, this has involved the routine elaboration and funding of projects and working groups without any overriding strategy to shape or constrain them. Rather, it has simply involved the EU acceding to a shopping-list of wishes of the ASEAN member states, and the consequent proliferation of institutions to the point where officials have difficulty keeping track of the multitude of meetings and working groups involved (Commission Official, cited in Doidge, 2004b, p.48).

The clear potential risk, in the context of the failure of interregional relationships to meet expectations, is that the perceived utility of such relationships, and therefore investment in their continuation, declines. This in turn would affect the performance of those primarily capacity building elements which are achievable. When difficulties entered the EU-ASEAN relationship over the issues of human rights and the place of Myanmar, for example, there was little ready motivation on the European side to remedy the problem, particularly given that the relationship was not delivering all that was hoped anyway. As a consequence, when ASEM emerged, the Union was quick to transfer its focus to this new Asian forum.

CONCLUSION

What can be seen from the, albeit brief, treatment of interregionalism given above is that it is a largely misapplied framework in European Union external relations. Notably lacking is an integrated understanding of what the Union's interregional partnerships are capable of delivering. The EU clearly acknowledges that regional actorness is a problem for many of its partners, a recognition that has fed through into the elaboration of capacity building programmes, but this has not followed through into recognition of the restrictions such limited actorness imposes on the high end aspirations the EU has for cooperation with interregional partners. A capability-expectations gap, in other words, is evident.

What is needed, then, is a greater awareness of what interregionalism is capable of, and an understanding that the strength of an interregional relationship is premised upon the strength of the partners engaged. Interregional partnerships must be treated as 'in process', and strategies defined in a way that reflects this reality, with emphasis on long term rather than short term goals. In this respect, three brief points can be made. First, the Union needs to more clearly recognise the benefits of capacity building interregionalism, and to engage with its possibilities in a more coherent fashion. Playing a role in assisting the integrative process in a region such as ASEAN, MERCOSUR or Central America, for example, even if the preference of the participants is a regional form other than that exemplified in the European Union, can only help but to cement in place relationships, constructing a sort of shared epistemic identity around the benefits of integration and, at a very basic level, consolidating ties between individuals and institutions. This is clearly of long term benefit of interregional relations and for the high end functions in which the EU is particularly interested.

Second, in focusing on the construction of regions, the Union can more clearly pursue its overarching goal of a regularised and rules-based international system. Regionalism, regardless of its precise institutional form, is today premised upon the concept of integration into the broader global community and coherence around a shared set of values and norms concerning the structure and functioning of the international economic and political system. Capacity-building interregionalism offers

the Union a better means for extending its own normative influence than does the globally active variety, helping (through the construction of regional identities) to more effectively socialise the member states of these regional organisations into the web of rules, norms and values that increasingly facilitates and constrains global cooperation.

Thirdly, such a capacity building approach sits comfortably alongside core EU policies, most notably development. The ‘normalising’ of European development policy underway since the 1980s has been brought to its logical conclusion in the Cotonou Agreement, with its central emphasis on poverty reduction through trade-based economic growth and the integration of developing countries more closely into the architecture of global governance (and particularly trade governance under the WTO). The Cotonou process is premised upon the disaggregation of the ACP grouping into smaller regional units, and an emphasis on integration as a means of competing in the global trading system (overcoming the constraints imposed by globalisation and market liberalisation on small and medium states) and fostering economic growth. Regionalism in this respect is effectively seen as the ‘killer application’ for economic growth-led development. Fundamental, therefore, is the success of the integrative enterprise. Capacity building interregionalism therefore offers clear synergies with this developmental regionalist approach.

REFERENCES

AEMM (1992) *Joint Declaration of the Tenth ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting*. Manila, 29th–30th October.

Allen, David and Smith, Michael (1990) 'Western Europe's presence in the contemporary international arena', *Review of International Studies*, 16(1), pp.19–37.

Allen, David and Smith, Michael (1998) 'The European Union's Security Presence: Barrier, Facilitator or Manager?', in Carolyn Rhodes, ed., *The European Union in the World Community*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

ASEAN (1999) *Annual Report 1998–1999*. Jakarta: Secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Avery, William P. (1973) 'The Extra-Regional Transfer of Integrative Behavior', *International Organization*, 27(4), pp.549–556.

Bretherton, Charlotte and Vogler, John (2006) *The European Union as a Global Actor*. Second Edition. London: Routledge.

Bulmer-Thomas, Victor (2000) 'The European Union and MERCOSUR: Prospects for a Free Trade Agreement', *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 42(1), pp.1–22.

Council of the European Union (1992) 'Council Regulation (EEC) No.443/92 of 25 February 1992 on financial and technical assistance to, and economic cooperation with, the developing countries in Asia and Latin America', *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L052, 27/02/1992, pp.1–6.

Doidge, Mathew (2004a) "*East is East...*": *Inter- and Transregionalism and the EU-ASEAN Relationship*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Canterbury.

Doidge, Mathew (2004b) 'Inter-regionalism and Regional Actors: The EU–ASEAN Example', in Wim Stokhof, Paul van der Velde and Yeo Lay Hwee, eds., *The Eurasian Space: Far More Than Two Continents*. Singapore: ISEAS.

Doidge, Mathew (2007) 'Joined at the Hip: Regionalism and Interregionalism', *Journal of European Integration*, 29(2), pp.229–248.

EAC (2007) *Second Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation Building on the Foundations of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation*. Singapore, 20th November 2007.

EC-GCC (1989) 'Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Communities and the Gulf Cooperation Council', *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L054, 25/02/1989, pp.3–15.

European Commission (1995) *European Community Support for Regional Economic Integration Efforts Among Developing Countries*. COM (1995) 219 final.

European Commission (2001) *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships*. COM (2001) 469 final.

European Commission (2002a) *Financing Proposal: ASEAN Programme for Regional Integration Support (APRIS)*. ASI/AIDCO/2002/0499.

European Commission (2002b) *Mercosur – European Community Regional Strategy Paper 2002–2006*. Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission (2003) *The European Union and the United Nations: The Choice of Multilateralism*. COM (2003) 526 final.

European Commission (2007) *Mercosur Regional Strategy Paper 2007–2013*. E/2007/1640.

European Council (2001) *Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union*. SN/300/01.

European Council (2003) *A Secure Europe in a Better World*. European Security Strategy. Brussels: European Council.

General Affairs Council (2003) *2482nd Meeting of the General Affairs Council, 27th January, 2003*. Brussels. 5396/03 (Presse 8).

Haas, Ernst B. (1961) 'International Integration: The European and Universal Process', in *International Organization*, 15(3), pp.366–392.

Hänggi, Heiner (2003) 'Regionalism through interregionalism: East Asia and ASEM', in Fu-Kuo Liu and Philippe Régnier, eds., *Regionalism in East Asia: Paradigm Shifting?* London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Hill, Christopher (1993) 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(3), pp.305–328.

Hill, Christopher and Smith, Michael (2005) 'International Relations and the European Union: Themes and Issues', in Christopher Hill and Michael Smith, eds., *International Relations and the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ishihara, Shintaro and Mohamad, Mahathir (1995) *The Voice of Asia: Two Leaders Discuss the Coming Century*. Tokyo: Kodansha.

Jupille, Joseph and Caporaso, James A. (1998) 'States, Agency, and Rules: The European Union in Global Environmental Politics', in Carolyn Rhodes, ed., *The European Union in the World Community*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Kerr, Pauline (1994) 'The Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific', *Pacific Review*, 7(4), pp.397–409.

Miliband, David (2007) *Model Power not Superpower*. Speech to the College of Europe, Bruges, 15th November 2007.

Prodi, Romano (2000) *Europe and Global Governance*. Speech to the Second COMECE Congress, Brussels, 31st March 2000. SPEECH/00/115.

Regelsberger, Elfriede (1990) 'The dialogue of the EC/Twelve with other regional groups: a new European identity in the international system?', in Geoffrey Edwards and Elfriede Regelsberger, eds, *Europe's Global Links: The European Community and Inter-Regional Cooperation*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Robles, Alfredo C. (2008) *The Asia-Europe Meeting: The theory and practice of interregionalism*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Rüland, Jürgen (2001) 'ASEM – Transregional Forum at the Crossroads', in Wim Stokhof and Paul van der Velde, eds., *Asian-European Perspectives: Developing the ASEM Process*. Richmond: Curzon.

Sanchez Bajo, Claudia (1999) 'The European Union and Mercosur: a case of inter-regionalism', *Third World Quarterly*, 20(5), pp.927–941

Santander, Sebastian (2005) 'The European Partnership with Mercosur: A Relationship Based on Strategic and Neo-liberal Principles', *Journal of European Integration*, 27(3), pp.285–306.

Sjöstedt, Gunnar (1977) *The external role of the European Community*. Farnborough: Saxon House.

Solana, Javier (2005) 'The Future of the European Union as an International Actor', *YES Communiqué*, 10(1), pp.4–5.

Zimmerling, Ruth (1991) 'Externe Einflüsse: Drei Annahmen aus der Integrationsliteratur', in Ruth Zimmerling, *Externe Einflüsse auf die Integration von Staaten: Zur politikwissenschaftlichen Theorie regionaler Zusammenschlüsse* [External Influences on the Integration of States: Towards a Political Science Theory of Regional Integration]. Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Karl Alber.