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## Unity in divergence? Reconceptualising EU regionalism policies in Latin America

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**Abstract.** Official EU policy and researchers have, for a long time, emphasized the Union's role in promoting regionalism outside of its borders. However, recent choices in the EU's foreign relations with Latin America and the Caribbean cast some doubts on the continuing existence of this long-standing EU foreign policy goal. While official documents and past behaviour stress the EU's policy aim of supporting Latin American regional integration, the reality of the EU's regional policy is different. Rather than concentrating on fostering relations with regional organizations in LAC, the EU has developed specific ties with so called strategic partners, negotiated bilateral Free Trade Agreements devoid of larger ambitions of political dialogue and cooperation, as well as demonstrated diverging approaches to different LAC regional organizations. The EU's overall policy aims in Latin America have always faced difficulties due to the region's political complexity. In contrast to past behaviour, however, recent changes in the Union's policies towards the Andean Community of Nations and the group of Central American states represent an effective abandonment of the EU's prior Latin America policy goals. While a weakening of the concepts of new regionalism and interregionalism with regards to the EU has been noted in the literature already, the abovementioned developments require a reconceptualization of the EU's ties with the region altogether.

### **Introduction**

The European Union (EU)<sup>2</sup> has recently concluded Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with an important number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). These agreements cover countries in the Andes region of South America, as well as in the Central American region. In the case of Central America, the FTA is part of a broader Association Agreement (AA) with the Central American Integration System (SICA). Such an agreement, aside from its trade provisions, covers components on institutionalized political dialogue and cooperation. In the case of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), the agreements reached are not of such a comprehensive nature. Rather, they are limited to an FTA element and have been negotiated on a bilateral—rather than regional—basis with Colombia and Peru only. The conclusion of the latter bilateral agreements run counter to a long-standing EU foreign policy goal of promoting regional integration in Latin America through fostering interregional ties on a broader basis than the promotion of free trade.

The above-stated example is only one manifestation of a changing EU foreign policy towards the region in comparison to the 1990s. Directly relevant for its policies towards LAC is a move away from a long-standing and successful policy of advocating relations between the EU and LAC on an interregional basis. While interregional ties are still being intensified in some cases, as the above example of Central America shows, bilateral treaties with individual countries have gradually supplanted this. Another foreign policy shift that can be observed in the region is representative of a broader change in

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper the usage of the term EU is as broad as possible. It refers to today's European Union, as well as to its predecessor organizations.

EU foreign policy overall. In the past, the EU has sought to link different aspects of its external policies, namely connecting trade policy to development questions and elements of political dialogue. Subsequent treaties have furthermore aimed at an institutional integration of the different aspects of the EU's foreign policy that used to be separated by the EU's pillar structure established with the Treaty of Maastricht. The aim of ever-increasing institutional integration that has culminated in the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was to ensure coherence across different EU foreign policy fields. Despite these important changes, however, recent developments in the EU's global trade policy, and in particular towards LAC, show that it is more and more isolated from other aspects of the EU's foreign policy, thereby undermining the EU's former goal of establishing comprehensive interregional ties.

The promotion of the European Union's own model of development—based on regional integration—is arguably one of its longest standing global influences. The adoption of regional economic and political structures similar to those of the EU elsewhere was initially principally based on diffusion processes unrelated to active EU policy conduct (See Börzel and Risse 2009 for a debate of different diffusion processes)—with the EU serving as a global model for other aspiring regions. The EU's support of regionalism dates back to the late 1960s and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Yaoundé convention (De Lombaerde, Pietrangeli, and Schulz 2009). This was a limited policy and has only changed into a more active one since the end of the Cold War. This is due to a changing global context and new EU foreign policy competencies, especially since the Treaty of Maastricht. Rather than just aiming at promoting regional integration elsewhere, the EU has been keen to promote ties between itself and other regions in what can be called a policy of interregionalism. In economic terms, this desire to negotiate at the interregional level can be attributed, in part, to attempting to achieve economies of scale when negotiating with a group of countries, rather than bilaterally (Meunier and Nicolaïdis 2006). Overall, however, the motivations for the promotion of such a policy are varied, and were based as much on economic and development policy concerns, as on a desire to promote the EU's own model abroad and legitimize the European project in itself (Söderbaum, Stålgren, and Van Langenhove 2005).

The advent of the EU's engagement with other regional organizations has equally created academic interest in it. The body of literature revolves around the conceptual terms of *interregionalism* (Aggarwal and Fogarty 2004; Börzel and Risse 2009; Grisanti 2004; Hänggi, Roloff, and Ruland 2006; Söderbaum, Stålgren, and Van Langenhove 2005), *new regionalism* (Grugel 2004), or *biregionalism* (Grabendorff and Seidelmann 2005). It offers an extensive debate of the EU's motivations for promoting interregional ties and it evaluates its prospects. While much of this literature is enthusiastic about this EU-specific foreign policy tool, citing its successes from the 1990s, more recent literature has become critical toward the prospects of the policy's success (Santander 2010a, 2010b). This is mainly due to recent setbacks of regional integration projects based on the EU model worldwide, as well as problems that the EU is currently facing in extending its interregional ties. This is reflected in Alan Hardacre's and Michael E. Smith's (2009) attempt to reconcile the EU's interregionalism policies with its strategy of entering into bilateral ties with 'strategic partners'. Nonetheless the existing literature has yet to engage with the newest developments in the EU's promotion of interregionalism that risk to call into question the entirety of the policy's past successes.

The EU has aimed at developing interregional ties with every region of the world, as its agreements with the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN), or the Gulf Cooperation Council show. However, several factors set Latin America and the Caribbean apart as the core region for the EU's interregional policies. On one hand, both

continents share close cultural and economic ties, and the democratisation of LAC up until the 1990s has added another common factor to this list.

The fact that regionalism outside of Europe is most developed in LAC is the determining factor for the region's importance in the EU's promotion of interregionalism. This is an important difference in comparison to the EU's relations with the ACP group of states. The ACP group, as well as its different regional groupings came into existence mainly because of the EU fostering privileged ties with this group of countries. With the exception of the Caribbean states that are part of the ACP group, this is not the case in LAC. The region thus offers a very different environment for developing interregional ties as it can be regarded as a laboratory for regional integration. After all, it has seen many past attempts at creating regional organizations. While many of these projects have failed, some regional organizations in LAC such as the Andean Community of Nations have proven resilient to the ups and downs of other integration projects. This organization has been exemplary of the EU's interregional ties with the region: The EU's institutions and structure have served as blue prints for the institution's structure through indirect diffusion effects due to the EU's mere existence. In addition to this, the EU has attempted to create ties with the Andean Community of Nations as early as 1969, and the first agreement with this organization dates back to 1983 (Börzel and Risse 2009, 9). Ever since, the EU has aimed at strengthening LAC regional organizations such as CAN by a variety of means.

The official links that the EU has to LAC today are complex, governed by a number of different treaties and agreements with the region as a whole, with regional organizations (on a non-continental scale), as well as with individual countries. Furthermore, on the EU's side, these relations span across various policy fields that are in turn accompanied by national ties that EU Member States have with LAC. While trade with most of the region is not particularly important for the EU, the inverse is true from the Latin American perspective. The EU is LAC's second most important trade partner, after the United States (CEPAL 2011).

During the 1990s the EU has successfully aimed to unify its ties with LAC through promoting interregional ties that would strengthen regional integration on the continent itself. Some authors have even gone so far as to call this EU regionalism promotion policy a "one-size fits all approach" (Börzel and Risse 2009, 10), as the EU has aimed at applying this goal uniformly across the different subregions in LAC at the time. The conclusion of various agreements with the Central American Common Market (1993), the Andean Community (1996), as well as Mercosur (1995) underlines the successes of this policy at the time. Sébastien Santander notes that optimism about possibilities to further the relationship was equally present then (Santander 2010a). In the 2000s LAC's economic boom, a changing global environment, as well as the failure of the Doha Development Round have created incentives for establishing even closer integration between the EU and the continent along those lines outside of multilateral regimes. The opening of negotiations for comprehensive association agreements with a number of Latin American partners, as well as the rhetorical establishment of two 'strategic partnerships' in the region illustrate the renewed European interest in the region.

However, the initial example of the EU's conclusion of bilateral FTAs with a select few countries—and thereby ignoring its goals of promoting comprehensive and interregional relations—shows that while the rhetoric of promoting interregionalism with LAC is still present, political reality looks different today from what it had been in the 1990s. This paper aims at outlining these recent changes and explaining how this has created a disjointed EU foreign policy at several levels. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to explain the underlying mechanisms for the EU's move away from

regionalism, nor to give an extensive overview of the recent evolution of the EU's relations with the region as a whole. While offering some possible reasons for the EU's policy change, the main aim is to raise the issue of a changed European policy and to broadly outline the current state of the EU's interregional ties with LAC.

Existing literature uses terminology surrounding EU regionalism in a plethora of different ways. So as to avoid confusion arising due to different usages of the term, this paper uses the term interregionalism to describe the EU's relations with another regional organization. On the other hand, bilateralism refers to the EU's relations with individual Latin American countries. The terms comprehensive and sectorial refer to agreements that span across different policy dimensions in the former and only one dimension in the latter case.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: The next section outlines the EU's stated foreign policy goals towards LAC, as well as giving an overview over how these have been successfully translated into policy during the 1990s. The paper then outlines the outcomes of more recent negotiations between the EU and its regional and country partners in LAC, with a focus on how these are connected to the EU's foreign policy goals identified earlier. The next section then analyses why these outcomes represent the emergence of a disjointed EU foreign policy towards LAC at multiple levels. The conclusion then offers some possible explanations for the policy conduct observed.

### **EU foreign policy goals in Latin America and the Caribbean**

Latin America has never been at the top of the EU's foreign policy agenda. The region is geographically distant from mainland Europe; and the United States have been keen on maintaining exclusive and close ties with much of LAC throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Certain policy instruments, such as a EU membership perspective, often times considered the ultimate element of political conditionality in the EU's external relations, are absent in the Union's relations with Latin America. Nevertheless, the European Union and its member states have to be considered important actors in LAC since the 1980s and especially since after the end of the Cold War (Youngs 2002) when the EU conducted policies that were supportive of the democratic transition on the continent. The EU's foreign policy goals in Latin America and the Caribbean of today are not outlined in a single document. Rather, they have evolved over time in sync with developments in the Union's development and trade policies, as well as the regularly held EU-LAC summits.

The basis for the EU's promotion of regionalism—along the lines that still can be found in official documents today—was laid at the 1992 Lisbon summit. The summit's conclusions phrased this aim as “promoting regional political stability and contributing to the creation of political and/or economic frameworks that encourage regional cooperation or moves towards regional or subregional integration” (European Council 1992, 31). The promotion of regionalism was thus one of the goals for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to be established with the Treaty of Maastricht. Without being specific to LAC, two European Commission documents from 1995 and 2002 respectively establish regional integration policies as part of the EU's aims to support sustainable economic development in developing countries (De Lombaerde, Pietrangeli, and Schulz 2009).

LAC-specific documents first appeared in 1994 during the German Council presidency when a *Basic document concerning relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean* (Council of the European Union 1994) was prepared that mentioned specific partner organizations in LAC with which cooperation was to be increased. This goal was then reaffirmed at the Essen summit at the end of 1994

(European Council 1994). In 1995 the European Commission prepared a document that set up a five-year regional strategy towards LAC, taking up the key goals of the prior documents. A communication prepared in 1999 before the 1<sup>st</sup> EU-LAC summit then declared that the goal of regionalism was to be furthered by developing differentiated approaches to LAC's different regional organizations (at the sub-regional level), as well as developing a 'strategic partnership' with the region as a whole. The 2002 LAC regional strategy document then focused on the issue of coherence of the EU's relations with LAC at the regional, subregional and bilateral level (Freres and Sanahuja 2005).

Several more recent European Commission communications (European Commission 2005, 2009) aim at explaining the EU's overall goal of "partnership" with the region. Sectoral policy goals for the EU's development cooperation policy are furthermore set out in its regional development policy strategy paper for the 2007-2013 budget cycle (European Commission 2007), supplanted by its mid-term review from 2010 (European Commission 2010). These regional documents are accompanied by individual country and sub-regional strategies that aim at linking the broad goals to the various partners.

Overall, these official documents define the promotion of regional integration through the negotiation of comprehensive Association Agreements with regional organizations as the key policy goal of the EU in LAC. This policy preference is equally confirmed in interviews with European Commission officials working on LAC issues (Hardacre and Smith 2009; Haubrich Seco 2011). In terms of the EU's development policy goals, the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the promotion of social cohesion through the reduction of inequalities in the region are at their core. The sectorial planning documents equally identify the promotion of the overall goal of regional integration and the promotion of democracy through development policies as a priority. Several other policy aims that span across different EU policies are furthermore identified in the various documents: These are notably the support of democratic governance in the region, supporting the fight on drugs, and increased cooperation on multilateral matters, especially in the United Nations' (UN) context. In more recent documents the issues of tackling climate change and migration have furthermore been identified as priority areas. All of these are still inextricably linked to democratic conditions in the countries targeted by the EU.

The declarations prepared at the biannual EU-LAC summits have over time equally stressed the goal of regionalism and have served as occasions to begin negotiations on Association Agreements with Latin American partner regions. The 2010 *Madrid Declaration* stressed for instance that both continents "commit to further strengthening this partnership, with the goals of deepening political dialogue and regional integration" (Council of the European Union 2010, 6). The declaration (Council of the European Union 2013c) prepared at the most recent summit in Santiago de Chile (that was held in January 2013), however, shows a change of language, in that it underlines the need for further trade integration between the regions without mentioning either the political and cooperation elements or the interregional ties (at the subregional level) that would serve as its basis.

The EU's official documents have thus outlined comprehensive interregionalism as its main foreign policy goal in LAC since 1994. It is only at the beginning of 2013 that the *Santiago Declaration* has introduced a change in rhetoric that could already be observed in the EU's foreign policy behaviour.

Overall, the EU's relations with LAC are thus structured around the ultimate goal of comprehensive interregionalism. This describes the EU's aim of cooperating with the continent on an interregional level through the negotiations of comprehensive Association Agreements. These have different policy pillars that aim at cross-policy issue

linkage. The different dimensions are: 1. Trade/commerce 2. Cooperation (primarily development policy) 3. Political dialogue.

In addition to the regionalism dimension, the EU's policies in LAC have to be seen in the context of its trade agenda. The Commission had pursued the goal of negotiating FTAs with Latin America since the 1990s, but this was at the time blocked by some EU Member States (Bergsten 1996). A communication from the Commission on *Global Europe: competing in the world* (DG Trade 2006)—as part of its Growth and Job strategy—reveals a desire to pursue the conclusion of FTAs more aggressively worldwide at that point in time. It thereby ended a de facto moratorium on the conclusion of new FTAs (Woolcock 2007). This represented a significant move away from its prior goal of putting multilateral trade negotiations first (Heron and Siles-Brügge 2012). The Commission's Directorate General for Trade (DG Trade) prepared this document in the context of a failing Doha Development round.

Overall, it is possible to say that “support for regional cooperation and integration has become a cornerstone of the relations between the then-established EU and third countries” (De Lombaerde, Pietrangeli, and Schulz 2009, 248). While the EU is not responsible for the emergence of regionalism in LAC, its policies have been successful in promoting and supporting it on a number of occasions.

### **A taxonomy of EU-LAC relations**

As the previous section has shown, the EU until recently had clear and longstanding foreign policy goals with regards to Latin America and the Caribbean. A look at developments in EU-LAC relations since the early 2000s, however, reveals a growing disparity in the EU's LAC policy. More recent policy outcomes and choices neither reflect the EU's official policy goals, nor a continuity with the successful policy pursued at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Aside from the treaty-based dimension of the EU's relations with the region that forms the major part of this section, the EU's unchanged development policy towards LAC adds to the picture of a growing policy mismatch.

When looking at the EU's negotiations over Association Agreements with partners in LAC, it has to be noted that these negotiations came about in different phases. At the same time, the EU has often times linked negotiations with different LAC partners into parallel processes. These have, however, created radically different policy outcomes in certain cases.

**Mexico.** The EU has reached a comprehensive agreement with Mexico in 2000, called the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement* (PCA). While its name differs from that of an Association Agreement, its contents are similar, as the agreement spans across all three dimensions of interregional cooperation. It represented the first successful instance of a transatlantic free trade accord that was equally unprecedented in its depth and policy linkage at the time (Szymanski and Smith 2005). The EU's conclusion of the agreement stands out due to the bilateral nature of negotiations from the outset and it has to be considered as an outlier when comparing it to the EU's other attempts at negotiating agreements with partners in LAC. This is due to Mexico's geographical disconnection from LAC that is reinforced by its membership of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA)<sup>3</sup>, making it more of a North American, rather than Latin American partner that can serve a 'bridging' function between the North and the South of the continent (Grevi and Khandekar 2011; Hess 2009). The speed of reaching an agreement (negotiations began in 1996) despite important difficulties can equally be attributed to the

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<sup>3</sup> A Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico that dates back to 1994.

EU's strategic considerations due to the country's NAFTA membership (De Lombaerde, Pietrangeli, and Schulz 2009).

Despite the uniqueness of the case, the conclusion of the agreement with the country represented a first occasion for the EU to negotiate and establish a comprehensive Association Agreement in LAC in accordance with its policy goals. This is particularly relevant, as Mexico despite its support for Free Trade Agreements was initially reticent to accept the components of a treaty with the EU that has come to be known as the 'democracy clause' (See Szymanski and Smith 2005 for an overview of the negotiation process).

Despite the PCA already having established strong bilateral ties between the EU and Mexico, this relationship has been further upgraded in the political dimension in 2008. The EU then declared Mexico to be one of its 'strategic partners', a term used only for two countries in LAC and putting Mexico—at least rhetorically—at par with the BRICs countries in the EU's diplomatic language.

**The Caribbean.** The successful negotiations with the CARIFORUM countries of an *Economic and Partnership Agreement* (EPA) are the first instance of an Association Agreement type accord with a regional organization in LAC. However, this case is distinct from others in LAC, as the EU's overall relations with this subregion are shaped by its membership in the ACP group of states. As such, the existence of CARIFORUM is the direct product of the EU's ACP policies—unlike independently formed regional groupings such as the Andean Community or Mercosur.

The EU's relations with CARIFORUM are thus shaped by the most recent incarnation of the treaty with the ACP group of states, namely the Cotonou agreement. This global agreement contains provisions on trade, cooperation and political dialogue. In difference to the EU's Association Agreements, however, the preferential trade conditions granted to the ACP countries were scheduled to expire in 2008. These were then to be replaced with so called *Economic Partnership Agreements* (EPAs) with ACP's regional groupings, one of them being CARIFORUM. In difference to the prior trade relations with the ACP countries these would have to be based on reciprocal free trade.

And indeed, agreement on such renewed trade relations was found in late 2008. It represents the first successful conclusion of an extensive *Economic Partnership Agreement* with a regional grouping of the ACP group of states (Heron 2011). Due to ratification difficulties in a number of EU member states as well as by certain Caribbean countries, however, the agreement is only in provisional application up to today (Council of the European Union 2013b).

While this case differs from the negotiation of Association Agreements in many regards, the successful conclusion of an EPA with the region still represents a negotiation success in a setting where trade components are linked to the cooperation and political dialogue pillars.

**Mercosur and Chile.** From the year 2000 on negotiations began with Chile and Mercosur on establishing comprehensive Association Agreements. The EU's attempts at negotiating such agreement with the regional grouping, as well as an individual country were a parallel process. This was not a coincidence as the EU ultimately aimed at reaching a single agreement with Mercosur that by that time would have admitted Chile as well (Garcia 2011).

While the EU has interacted with Mercosur since its inception (Faust 2004), the negotiations framework for reaching an AA was based on cooperation agreements with both partners that were entered into in 1995 in Madrid at the end of the Spanish Council presidency. The major impetus for the beginning of negotiations, however, can be attributed to the first EU-LAC summit in 1999 which ended with high expectations in terms of renewed cooperation between the regions for all the participants (Kegel and

Amal 2012). Unlike the EU's initial plans, the rapid slow-down of negotiations with Mercosur and their eventual decline led to negotiation outcomes that can hardly be reconciled with the EU's stated goals in LAC. Rather than keeping to the goal of negotiating a comprehensive Association Agreement with an enlarged Mercosur, the EU eventually entered into such an agreement with Chile only, abandoning the parallel nature of negotiations and the original goal of enticing Chile to enter the regional organization. This outcome, as Maria Garcia (2011) has argued, is highly surprising from an outside perspective, as it ran counter to the EU's regionalism goals, as well as coming about at a point in time when bilateral treaties had largely come out of favour.

At the same time, the EU has gradually begun to abandon its interregional strategy vis-à-vis Mercosur itself. In 2007 in an agreement that covers the political dimension of relations only, the EU entered into a 'strategic partnership' with Brazil, leaving aside other important Mercosur countries, such as Argentina.

The case of these negotiations shows that the EU in a first instance has abandoned the goal of negotiating interregional agreements only. When entering into a strategic partnership with Brazil, the EU has not only abandoned this interregional element for a second time, but also given up on the aim of reaching comprehensive agreements that span across all three pillars of the policy.

**The Andean Community and Central America.** The EU's negotiations on Association Agreements with these two regional groupings are the most recent, and equally the most complex case of the EU's evolving policy towards Latin America. The paper therefore describes this case in more detail than the others.

Once again, the EU treated the negotiations on reaching Association Agreements with the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), as well as the Central American Common Market<sup>4</sup> as parallel processes. Negotiations began at the same point in time, and the outcomes—albeit radically different with regards to both regions—passed the EU's legislative processes on the same days until the very end.

This round of negotiations with both regions came about at the end of a de facto moratorium by the EU on negotiating new FTAs. This change of (trade) policy can be attributed to the new trade strategy advocated by the EU's new Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson since 2006 after the effective failure of the Doha development round. This new strategy was laid out in the Commission's strategy paper *Global Europe* (DG Trade 2006), as already outlined in the previous section of this paper. The debate on reaching Association Agreements with both regions dates back to the 2004 Guadalajara summit (Woolcock et al. 2012). However, the EU's changed trade strategy and the outcomes of the 2006 EU-LAC summit in Vienna opened the way for the beginning of official negotiations in 2007.

The overall goal to enter into a new comprehensive agreement dates back to 2003. The Association Agreements with both regions were meant to be an extension of the *Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreements* from 2003. These were signed, once again, in parallel in Rome in 2003. The aim for the Association Agreements was to build on and extend the cooperation and political dialogue elements of the prior agreements and to add an extensive free trade component to it. However, negotiations with both regions soon ran into difficulties, much as was the case in negotiations with Mercosur.

In the case of CAN this can be attributed to growing internal political differences amongst two groups of member states. It effectively split into two, with Peru and Colombia being supportive of an extensive FTA component in a treaty with the EU. Ecuador and Bolivia at the same time aligned against FTAs overall, getting politically closer to Hugo Chavez' Venezuela. The latter country had left CAN just prior to the

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<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the Dominican Republic which is part of the ACP group of states.

beginning of negotiations citing its opposition to the free trade orientation of CAN (Maihold 2008, 23). By the time negotiations were scheduled to enter their 4<sup>th</sup> round in 2008 these had become increasingly difficult (European Commission 2009), and EU officials started to become impatient (Haubrich Seco 2011, 13). While the May 2008 EU-LAC summit achieved little overall, one of the steps to defuse these problems was that CAN and the EU agreed on a more flexible format to conduct the negotiations for the Association Agreement. This was amidst concerns in Bolivia and Ecuador over opening up their economies to the European market (Phillips 2008b). In June of 2008 several Latin American countries voiced their concerns over the so-called EU returns directive, fearing a massive expulsion of their citizens from the EU. Of the CAN members, Bolivia and Ecuador used the issue to threaten to bloc the new round of CAN negotiations with the EU (Phillips 2008a, 2008c). In the end, the new negotiation round was cancelled by the EU's External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner on June 30 2008, citing internal conflicts within the Andean Community (Fritz 2010).

The EU's decision to suspend negotiations could be interpreted at the time as a move to force CAN's Member States to come to an internal agreement so as to support the region's political and economic integration in line with the EU's goals. When Benita Ferrero-Waldner announced that the negotiations would continue in November 2008, however, a major policy change on the European side began to become apparent. The EU announced that negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would go ahead with Ecuador, Peru and Colombia only, dropping the aim of reaching a region-to-region agreement, and eliminating the additional dialogue and cooperation components to be found in Association Agreements (Fritz 2010). While Bolivia did not participate in the process, the country was officially invited to the negotiations by the EU (Willis 2009). The Bolivian government stated later that it had never voluntarily withdrawn from the negotiations. It then tried to bloc the resumed negotiation process with a CAN-internal judicial measure (Fritz 2010). Ecuador withdrew from the process in July 2009 citing the banana dispute with the EU (Fritz 2010). Despite continuing European concerns over the human rights situation in Colombia (Willis 2010), the remaining bilateral negotiations led to the eventual conclusion of agreements with Colombia and Peru.

While there has been a significant change in the EU's codified relations with CAN, a similar change does not seem to have occurred in the EU's development policy towards the region. The abandonment of negotiations towards an association agreement with the Andean Community has not led to a modification of the development assistance that the region receives, despite a major change in the underlying trade dimension. The mid-term reviews of the EU's development cooperation with the region did not focus on altering the elements of direct regional support to the Andean Community. Much like indicated in the 2007 Regional Strategy paper, the respective mid-term reviews are still focused on strengthening regional integration. This is done primarily through measures such as directly supporting CAN's institutions.

In contrast to the outcome of the negotiations with CAN, the EU achieved to enter into a comprehensive Association Agreement with Central America at the same time that it entered into the FTAs with Colombia and Peru. While the negotiations to reach an agreement with this regional grouping were certainly not as difficult as in the case of CAN, they were still faced with difficulties on a number of occasions. Such was the case when negotiations were suspended due to the Honduran coup d'état in 2009, or when tensions rose between Nicaragua and the EU due to electoral fraud allegations. Other influencing factors were Nicaragua's increasing political alliance with Venezuela, or Costa Rica's interest to negotiate bilaterally with the EU on a more extensive trade deal. In contrast to the CAN case, however, the European side repeatedly insisted that the EU would not enter into bilateral agreements with individual Central American

countries. Negotiations were eventually successfully concluded by 2010, with the agreement now being provisionally applied.

**Overview of outcomes.** Table 1 gives an overview of the outcomes of the EU's attempts to negotiate comprehensive association agreements with partners in the region. While the outline that it offers is necessarily a simplification of these relations, it is nevertheless representative of overall trends that can be observed. With the exception of Mexico, all negotiations listed in the table began within an interregional setting, and were grouped as parallel processes in different waves of negotiations (as marked by the bold dividers). As of today, the regional component has only survived in the case of the EU's relations with CARIFORUM (though the treaty is only provisionally applied), as well as in the case of Central America. Where negotiations have not led to the conclusion of interregional comprehensive agreements, bilateral agreements have been entered into. The content of these agreements, however, vary in important ways and differ from the EU's initial aim to negotiate comprehensive agreements across all three policy dimensions. For instance, in the case of Brazil, this has led to a "strategic partnership" that is limited to the political dimension, while the EU's relations with Colombia and Peru now cover trade aspects only.

Rather than pursuing pure interregionalism, the EU's relations with LAC today represent a patchwork of different types of bilateral and interregional treaties that vary in what policy dimensions are covered by them.

Target region	Outcome				
			Trade	Cooperation	Political
<b>Mexico</b>	1996	2000	X	X	X
<b>Caribbean</b> (ACP: CARIFORUM)		2008	X	X	X
<b>Mercosur</b>	2000	-			
		<b>Brazil</b>	2007		X
<b>Chile</b>	2000	2002	X	X	X
<b>Andean Community</b>	2007	-			
		<b>Colombia</b>	2010	X	
		<b>Peru</b>	2010	X	
<b>Central America</b>	2007	2010	X	X	X

**Table 1:** Years mark the beginning of negotiations, as well as the conclusion of agreements.

### The emergence of a disjointed LAC policy

The outcomes of the EU's recent Association Agreement negotiations shows that the EU has moved away from a unified comprehensive interregionalism policy with regards to LAC and towards a policy conduct that can be described as being disjointed and no longer reflects attempts at strengthening comprehensive interregionalism.

Officially the negotiation outcomes described above are presented as being compatible with the EU's aim of regional integration. To return to the example of CAN, the FTAs with Colombia and Peru are presented as offering an "opportunity to conclude a trade agreement with a regional perspective" (European Commission 2009, 4) upon request of the partner countries in the official rhetoric.

However, a recent study commissioned by the European Parliament prior to the ratification of the two FTAs (Stevens et al. 2012) acknowledges the potential to weaken CAN integration, while underlining that the regional organization is already incapacitated

in important ways due to its internal political dynamics. Already at the time that the negotiations were concluded with Colombia and Peru, the president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, for instance, saw these negotiations as the main factor that severely weakened CAN (Willis 2010). If one agrees with Morales' assessment or not, the recent founding of a regional integration project called the *Pacific Alliance* is an important indicator of a further weakening of CAN in the aftermath of the EU's policy change. This new regional organization is based on a common commitment to free trade and globalisation. Its scope is much more limited than that of traditional regional organizations and leaves out most administrative and legal instruments that are at the core of projects such as CAN. It is composed of Chile and Mexico in addition to the CAN members Peru and Colombia. The EU has negotiated FTAs with all four and currently there are no formal ties in place with this new organization.

The emergence of what can be called an EU's disjointed policy towards LAC is due to several factors. On one hand, the conclusion of bilateral treaties runs counter to the EU's stated policy of supporting regional integration. On the other hand, modified relations with Peru and Colombia show that the EU is no longer operating along its goal of connecting trade issues with the other two dimensions of the relations. At the same time the case of Brazil shows an attempt to develop political ties without taking into account the regional dimension of the issue, or linking it to the other policy areas. In the case of failed negotiations at the regional level, as has been the case in negotiations with the Andean Community, the EU has not modified its development policy to reflect new realities. In addition, as the parallel negotiations with CAN and Central America show, the EU has undertaken different negotiation strategies, insisting on an interregional agreement despite difficulties in the latter case, while diverting to individual country negotiations in the former.

While the move away from interregional negotiations can be ascribed in part to LAC internal difficulties with regards to CAN, as well as Mercosur/Chile negotiations, the abandoning of the comprehensive element in bilateral treaties leaves further questions with regards to the EU's LAC policy. Given the willingness of Peru and Colombia to negotiate a comprehensive Association Agreement from the outset, there appeared to be no immediate necessity to drop the political dialogue and cooperation components from the bilateral treaties eventually concluded with these two countries. This is particularly relevant as the 2003 agreement with CAN that covers these policy fields has not come into force: While it has finally been ratified by CAN despite its internal divisions, it still awaits ratification by the EU to this date (Comunidad Andina 2012; Council of the European Union 2013a). This outcome thus represents a further move away from integrating the EU's trade policies with its other foreign policy elements, in line with a more aggressive free trade agenda. This then again contrasts with the EU's insistence on a comprehensive Association Agreement with Central America.

While interregional negotiations with LAC have always been difficult due to continuing political changes in the region, the EU, by agreeing to enter into bilateral sectorial agreements—and despite the continued official rhetoric with regards to the Colombia and Peru agreements—has effectively abandoned its policy of interregionalism.

Once again, its relations with CAN can serve as an example. Comparing the EU's policy shift away from interregionalism in CAN to its relations with Central America, it becomes clear that other policy options would have been at its disposal. After all, the EU could have frozen the negotiations with CAN to exert pressure on its Member States to come to an internal agreement on the divisive issues, rather than abandoning its long-lasting policy goal of supporting interregionalism. And even in accepting bilateral ties

with certain CAN member states, there was no need to abandon the political and cooperation elements of the agreement.

It is true that Peru and Colombia are more important economically than the other two CAN members, and that a precedent has been set by the United States' having established FTAs with these countries. The potential averse economic effects of not immediately signing an FTA would have been relatively limited, however (Stevens et al. 2012). The Andean Community is responsible for only 1% of the EU's total trade, and Central America for 0.5%. In comparison, Brazil alone is responsible for 2.1% of the EU's international trade (DG Trade 2013). And the price to be paid in terms of the EU's policy continuity seems disproportionate. After all, EU has promoted interregionalism for more than 20 years and the EU's ties to CAN precede those with all other regional organizations in the region.

Negotiating bilateral treaties with LAC countries that are members of existing regional organizations also consciously ignores those organizations' internal structure: CAN decision 667 stipulates that all CAN negotiations with the EU had to be joint in accordance with article 52b of the *Cartagena Accord*. While the *Tegucigalpa protocol* that is the basis for Central American Integration does not explicitly state that individual states cannot enter into bilateral agreements of economic nature, its article 6 stipulates that member states are prohibited from entering into unilateral measures that may undermine the goals of the Central American Integration System. The *Treaty of Asuncion*, at the basis of Mercosur has a similar provision that stipulates that member states have to coordinate their external commercial policies. By agreeing to enter into bilateral agreements with Peru, Colombia and Brazil, the EU thus violated these organizations' internal structures.

It has been argued in the past that the EU's interregional policies are "multifaceted" and "subject to adaptation" (Söderbaum, Stålgren, and Van Langenhove 2005, 367). Furthermore, Michael Smith and Alan Hardacre (2009) have attempted to reconcile the EU's attempts at entering into strategic partnerships with a continued focus on interregionalism by developing an approach called complex interregionalism. However, contrasting current policy outcomes to the EU's "one-size fits all approach" (Börzel and Risse 2009, 10) from the 1990s reveals that it is hardly possible to still speak of an active EU interregionalism policy in LAC. Sebastian Santander (2010a) already warned in 2010 that the EU's increased bilateralism in LAC could effectively set a precedent that will deprive it of interregionalism altogether, according to him one of its most important EU foreign policy tools to date.

While the EU's negotiation outcomes in LAC may represent the results of a more strategic trade strategy, an important collateral damage has been created. Overall, where the EU has promoted interregionalism in the past, it appears as though this policy is slowly dying despite official claims to the contrary. Interregionalism with LAC can only be successful when applied across the board, as any bilateral and sectorial agreement sets the bar lower for the EU. At the same time this creates incentives for its LAC partners to call for similar exceptions, as could be seen in the case of Peru and Colombia.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has explored recent changes in the EU's regionalism policies towards Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU has, for a long time, sought to promote comprehensive interregionalism with the region, and official documents still claim this to be the EU's prime foreign policy goal with regards to LAC. Recent treaties concluded with the region show, however, that the EU's LAC policy has moved away from such a unified goal and has become more and more disjointed.

It is true that some comprehensive Association Agreements have been negotiated with the region, and most recently with Central America. However, the outcome of a

parallel negotiation with the Andean Community of Nations has shown that the EU has moved away from its goal of interregionalism, as well as from the goal of reaching comprehensive agreements in the region. The abandonment of the policy in only one case, however, is enough to put into question the EU's entire commitment to regionalism, at the very least in its most important region that is LAC. The disassociation of EU trade policy from development and political dialogue components furthermore shows that the different elements of the EU's foreign policy towards the region are becoming more and more disjointed, despite ever-increasing institutional integration of the EU's foreign policy apparatus.

The conclusion of bilateral and sectorial agreements sets precedents for the developments of future relations with the region and runs counter to the goal of promoting LAC's overall regionalism through cooperation at a subregional level. The availability of special relationships for some countries creates expectations in others, and means the de facto death of the EU's interregionalism with LAC. The choice to establish a strategic partnership with Brazil, for instance, has already angered other regional powers, such as Argentina, who have been excluded from the special relationship.

All these developments can be observed despite regionalism promotion in one form or another being one of the oldest of the EU's foreign policy tools, and one that has shown significant successes during the 1990s. When comparing the current state of EU-LAC relations to existing literature on regionalism, some of the main claims will have to be revised as a result of these recent developments. The observed changes equally have effects on the EU's image abroad, as part of the reason to promote regionalism in the first place was to promote the EU's own model of development, and thereby to legitimize itself.

Unearthing the underlying reasons for the evolution of the EU's LAC policies towards the present disjointed state will necessitate further research. Incidental evidence, however, points to several factors that have contributed to the status quo in EU-LAC relations. On one hand the EU has developed a more strategic outlook in its trade policy, and some of the outcomes observed above reflect changes in global and LAC-regional economic and political conditions. On the other hand, the disassociation of trade policy from the other policy elements points to EU-internal processes. These have to do with EU-internal disputes over what kinds of concessions to give to LAC partners (Doctor 2007), as well as an absence of possibilities to coordinate the present change in trade policy with other policy elements. The latter is exemplified by the non-adaptation of development policies towards CAN.

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