



“CAROL I” NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY  
SECURITY AND DEFENCE FACULTY



PROCEEDINGS

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THE 16<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE  
“STRATEGIES XXI”

**STRATEGIC CHANGES IN SECURITY  
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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# REGIONS AND AGREEMENTS. EVIDENCES ON INCREASING FORMAL LINKS BETWEEN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**Abstract:** *Few waves of regionalism have been described in the academic literature linked to phases of regional integration across the globe. The main aim of the paper is to assess the development of the formal linkages established between regional organizations. Based on an empirical analysis of the agreements concluded at interregional level (memoranda of understanding, cooperation agreements), the paper investigates the interregional dynamics by exploring the main documents guiding their external relations. It follows the agreements concluded between 2010 and 2019 across four regional organizations in Europe and Asia: the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Eurasian Economic Union. The author argues that, despite protectionist tendencies and a spectrum of crisis challenging the global status quo, the regional arrangements consolidated in the past decade their external relations.*

**Keywords:** *regional organizations, external relations, interregional cooperation, international organizations, international agreement.*

Our aim in this paper is to analyze the development of interregional formal linkages between regional organizations in the past decade (2010-2019), exploring the primary sources of these regional organizations – therein the European Union (EU), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). We focus on region-to-regional cooperation and investigate the external actions by looking at the agreements and memoranda concluded by these organizations in the defined timeframe.

## **Regions and regional organizations. Four cases under examination**

Globally, regional organizations have a history of more than a century, if we exclude the colonial dimensions of regionalization. Early forms of regionalism included pan-regionalist movements across continents – in America, Asia, Africa and Europe. The European ideas of unity are well-known, given the evolution of European studies. Thinkers such as Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Giuseppe Mazzini, Victor Hugo shared the ideals of European integration and Europeanism in different forms. The pan-Americanist ideals can be identified in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the independence movements across the continent. Simón Bolívar and Thomas Jefferson are known as promoters of Latin American and pan-Americanist ideals, inspired by independence and political projects under development in that era. In Asia, different visions of Asian unity were identified in the different regions. In the Far East, for example, the Japanese Tarui Tōkichi, Oi Kentaro and Ueki Emori are some of the promoters of (Oriental) Asian solidarity in reaction to the European powers and the United States of America<sup>1</sup>. In Africa, it is more difficult to assess the extent of political thought on Pan-African regionalism given the extent of colonialism, the modern and influential Pan-Africanist movements being remarked starting with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, we have important figures in the history of Africanist thought educated and active in England –

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Lévy, *Tarui Tōkichi selon Takeuchi Yoshimi: une vision romantique de l'asiatisme?*, in *Ebisu - Études Japonaises*, 2011, pp. 27-53.

Ottobah Cugoano, Olaudah Equiano and the members of the corresponding society Sons of Africa – were at the forefront of Black anti-slavery advocacy<sup>2</sup>.

While the political thought of early regionalism has a range of well-known proponents, the organizational architecture is less developed. Despite having antecedents traced back to the inter-American system established by the Congress of Panama in 1826, the First International Conference of American States was organized between 1889 and 1990 in Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup>. It became the Pan American Union in 1910 and later, in 1948, in the new United Nations system, backed by a collective security treaty (the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance), the Organization of American States (OAS) was born. This continental organization is one of the oldest continuous regional intergovernmental organizations in world, even if its development under the present name was developed after Second World War, together with other regional organizations. Indeed, at sub-regional level, on sectoral aspects, different cooperation initiatives that took part of a membership organization were founded. The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine is recognized as the oldest institutionalized international organization in modern history<sup>4</sup>. But its membership is limited by geography since the Congress of Vienna and there are other earlier sectoral cooperation initiatives.

A regional international organization can be defined as an international organization, mostly treaty-based and with an institutional architecture, with a set of functional capacities conferred by participating states within a region. This definition allows us to include varieties of regional organizations, from regional integration initiatives, having the supranational dimension, to regional cooperation and other regional governance frameworks, based on intergovernmental state-led cooperation. We include in this definition the regional groupings of states to ensure the „regionness” of the international organization, because there are other entities grouped differently – consider as an example the development level.

An international organization, understood as intergovernmental organization, refers to a treaty-based entity between at least two sovereign states or other intergovernmental organizations, with a specific aim. An international organization has the capacity to conclude treaties according to the rules of that organization. A treaty is defined by the Vienna Convention on the Law of the Treaties as “an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law, whether embodied in a single instrument or in two or more related instruments and whatever its particular designation”<sup>5</sup>. Even if we have the treaty as the main instrument explicitly stating the provision of the legal personality for international organizations, the 1969 Convention applies only to the treaties between states. The international agreements signed between states and other subjects of international law, including international organizations, or the ones between other subjects of international laws are out of its scope, without affecting the legal force of such agreements. In 1986, the International Law Commission opened for signature the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations or Between International Organizations, a proposal complementary to the 1969 Convention, that covered the treaties between one or more states and one or more international organizations, as well as the treaties between international organizations<sup>6</sup>. Given the low number of ratifications until present day, this instrument has not entered yet into force.

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<sup>2</sup> Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and West African Nationalism in Britain*, in *African Studies Review*, 2000, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> OAS, *Our history*, 2020, accessed January 4, 2020, [http://www.oas.org/en/about/our\\_history.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/about/our_history.asp).

<sup>4</sup> CCNR, *Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine*, 2016, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Vienna Convention on the Law of the Treaties, 1969, United Nations Treaty Collection, p. 2, article 2 (a), [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1980/01/19800127%2000-52%20AM/Ch\\_XXIII\\_01.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1980/01/19800127%2000-52%20AM/Ch_XXIII_01.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations or Between International Organizations*, United Nations Treaty Collection 1986, p. 63, article 1, [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1986/03/19860321%2008-45%20AM/Ch\\_XXIII\\_3.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1986/03/19860321%2008-45%20AM/Ch_XXIII_3.pdf).

As we see nowadays, despite the unsuccess of this legal instrument, there are important dynamics developed among other subjects of international laws. The international agreements between regions in the past decade are further analyzed. The European Union (EU), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are the European and Asian international organizations with a complex institutional framework. And they established international agreements with other regional international organizations. The period selected for this overview on evidences of increasing formal linkages between organizations is justified by the development and evolution of the legal personality, influenced by the moment when they had their legal personality explicitly stated in the founding documents and including their capacity to act on the international scene: ASEAN since its Charter (2007), SAARC since its Charter (1985), EU since its Treaty of Lisbon (2007), EAEU since the economic union treaty (2014). However, some of these concluded agreements before with an implicitly recognized position as subjects of international law. Others had in other institutional and legal arrangements this capacity – the previous treaties of economic communities – or through coordination of multilateral sessions involving all member states.

They are regional in scope and membership, are treaty-based and competences allocated by and shared with their member states. They offer different models of regional governance. For instance, ASEAN has been functioning as a concert of Southeast Asian states with clear aims and object, but without a focus on the concept of regional integration. It is considered one of the most developed regional organizations, despite being a regional arrangement based on intergovernmentalism.

- We present in the next table some of the main descriptors of these four entities, based on their treaties and the information published by their institutions<sup>7</sup>:

#	ASEAN	EAEU	EU	SAARC
Founded (current)	1967 ASEAN Declaration	2011 Treaty on Eurasian Economic Commission	1992 Treaty on European Union	1985 SAARC Charter
Headquarters	Jakarta, Indonesia	Moscow, Russia	Brussels, Belgium	Kathmandu, Nepal
Members	10	5	27	8
Legal personality	2007 ASEAN Charter	2014 Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union	2007 Treaty on European Union ( <i>explicitly</i> )	1985 SAARC Charter
Main organs	<p>ASEAN Summit</p> <p>ASEAN Coordinating Council</p> <p>ASEAN Community Councils (each responsible for different sectoral formats of cooperation)</p> <p>Political-Security Community Council</p> <p>Economic Community Council</p> <p>Socio-Cultural Community Councils</p> <p>ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies</p> <p>Secretary General and the ASEAN Secretariat</p> <p>Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN</p> <p>ASEAN National Secretariats</p> <p>ASEAN Human Rights Body</p> <p>Entities associated with ASEAN (associated</p>	<p>Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEAEU)</p> <p>Eurasian Intergovernmental Council</p> <p>Eurasian Economic Commission</p> <p>EEC Board</p> <p>EEC Council</p> <p>Departments</p> <p>Court of the Eurasian Economic Union</p>	<p>European Council</p> <p>European Commission</p> <p>Council of the European Union</p> <p>European Parliament</p> <p>European External Action Service</p> <p>Court of Justice of the EU</p> <p>European Central Bank</p> <p>European Court of Auditors</p> <p>European Economic and Social Committee</p> <p>European Ombudsman</p> <p>Interinstitutional bodies</p> <p>Specialized agencies,</p>	<p>Meeting of the heads of state or government</p> <p>Council of Ministers</p> <p>Standing Committee</p> <p>Programming Committee</p> <p>Technical committees</p> <p>Working groups</p> <p>Action committees</p> <p>SAARC Secretariat</p> <p>SAARC Specialized bodies</p> <p>Arbitration Council</p>

<sup>7</sup> Check the references section the treaties and websites mentioned.



	stakeholders from parliaments, judiciary, business organizations, think-thanks, academic institutions, civil society organizations			decentralized bodies and other organizations	South Asian University Development Fund Regional Standards Organization Regional centers SAARC Apex bodies SAARC recognized bodies
Budget (2018)	~20 \$mln	128.9 \$mln	160.1 €bln 9,943 €mln - administration	?	?
Employees	2016: ~300 Secretariat	~1,200 Commission	~32,000 Commission Overall: ~60,000	61 Secretariat	
GDP (2018, US \$mln, nominal)	2,986,391	1,928,288	~16,000,000	3,467,225	
GDP/capita (2018)	4,601	10,487	35,851	1,923	
Population (million, 2018)	649	184	446	1,803 (2020)	
Land area (km2)	4,493,516	20,229,248	4,233,262	5,099,611	
Sources and additional information:	asean.org	caeunion.org; eec.eaunion.org	europa.eu; ec.europa.eu; europarl.europa.eu	saarc-sec.org	

### **An empirical approach on region-to-region agreements between 2010 and 2019**

Nowadays, these four organizations are in different phases of regional cooperation and integration. The liberal institutionalist pattern of understanding the level of regional integration in the framework of multilevel global governance follows a linear evolution from preferential trade agreements to economic and even political unions. The schema starts with the preferential trade areas, including free trade areas and economic partnerships, continues with customs unions in which the participating states remove their tariffs within and set common trade policies towards other states. Afterwards, the step of a common market in which the barriers to labour and capital are removed, the single market in which internal borders and regulatory obstacles to goods and services are removed. Among the last steps of regional economic integration is the economic union, described through the harmonization of economic policies, the monetary union with a common monetary policy and a common currency area, and a political union in which other dimensions of integration are developed, with a focus on fiscal union.

The four proposed intergovernmental organizations are in different phases of regional integration with different aims. Additionally, the implementation of these phases, despite being stated in a programmatic document, is not necessarily step by step and could have some simultaneous advances and wide-ranging designs.

	ASEAN	EAEU	EU	SAARC
<i>Economic Community</i>	<i>AEC 2003/2007</i>	<i>EurAsEC 1998</i>	<i>EEC 1957</i>	<i>SAPTA 1991-1993</i>
FTA	AFTA 1992	CISFTA 2011	EEC 1957	SAFTA 2004
Custom union	Ongoing since 2003	EACU 2010	EEC 1957 EUCU 1968	N/A
Common market	AEC 2015-2025	CES 2012	ECSC 1951 Euratom 1957 EEC 1957	N/A
Single market			Single Market 1986-1993; EEA 1994	N/A
Economic union	N/A	EAEU 2014	Maastricht 1992	N/A
Monetary union	N/A	N/A	Maastricht 1992 ECB 1998 Euro 2002	N/A
Political union	N/A	N/A	Maastricht 1992	N/A

*Status of regional integration in ASEAN, EAEU, EU and SAARC<sup>8</sup>*

#### *ASEAN: an assortment of partners and formal agreements*

As a regional organization with integration perspectives, ASEAN is influenced by its design, in which its customs and common market dimensions are in early stages of development. Yet, it developed in important level of economic and political coordination, a free trade area and envisages not only an economic community, but also politico-security community and a cultural-social community. Its relations with other regional organizations

<sup>8</sup> AEC – ASEAN Economic Community; AFTA – ASEAN Free Trade Agreement; EurAsEC – Eurasian Economic Community; CES – Common Economic Space; EEC – European Economic Community; CISFTA – Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Agreement; ECSC – European Coal and Steel Community; Euratom – European Atomic Energy Community; EEA – European Economic Area; Maastricht – Treaty of Maastricht; ECB – European Central Bank; SAPTA – SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement; SAFTA – South Asian Free Trade Area



are well-developed, some of them going back to 1970s, the European counterpart being a dialogue partner for ASEAN since 1977. Moreover, as the European External Action Service highlights, the informal ties go back to 1972<sup>9</sup>. In 1980, the members of ASEAN and European Community, reunited in Kuala Lumpur, signed a cooperation agreement based on most-favored nation treatment, commercial, economic and development cooperation<sup>10</sup>. This is the oldest region-to-region agreement between two regional entities discussed in this paper.

ASEAN's mature external relations include a clear demarcation of actors. The 2018-2019 annual report released by the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) summarizes the external partners of the organization. These partners are divided into three categories: dialogue partners, sectoral dialogue partners and development partners. The European Union and Canada, among the dialogue partners, are those not considered strategic partners, the other members of this group of actors being Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russian Federation and United States of America. Among the sectoral dialogue partners are Norway, Pakistan, Switzerland and Turkey, while Germany and Chile filled the category of development partners<sup>11</sup>. In 2019, the joint statement following the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting recognized that the two regions are bind "in a longstanding partnership as partners in integration" and underlined the agreement towards an upgrade of EU-ASEAN relations to strategic partnership level<sup>12</sup>. Depending on the timeliness of the implementation of this agreement, this could be the first non-state strategic partnership of ASEAN in the present configuration.

The ASEAN-EU cooperation gained momentum after 2007, when the member states of both organizations signed revision treaties. Bi-regional negotiations for a trade and investment agreement started in 2007 and were suspended in 2009, in order to negotiate bilateral agreements between the EU and ASEAN states one by one<sup>13</sup>. While an EU-ASEAN free trade agreement remains an objective, since 2010 bilateral agreements were signed by single states and the EU trade bloc; there is a joint working group meeting regularly to discuss the perspective of an ASEAN-EU free trade agreement<sup>14</sup>.

The external relations of ASEAN toward the EU are well-developed: the joint cooperation meetings reached the 26<sup>th</sup> edition in 2019, the ministerial meetings reached the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition, together with senior officials and high-level meetings. The relation has been guided after 2007 by plans of action. The cooperation framework was enhanced in 2007 with the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership, adopted under the German Presidency of the EU Council<sup>15</sup>. It set up cooperation in field such as political and security, economic cooperation, energy security, climate change, environment, socio-cultural and development cooperation. First plan of action implementing the Nuremberg Declaration cover 2007-2012, the second one 2013-2017, and the third one 2018-2022. All of them commit to an enhanced partnership and support for regional integration.

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<sup>9</sup> EEAS, ASEAN and the EU, 11 May, 2016, accessed January 10, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/906/asean-and-eu\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/906/asean-and-eu_en).

<sup>10</sup> Cooperation Agreement between Member Countries of ASEAN and European Community Kuala Lumpur, 1980, accessed January 8, 2020, [https://asean.org/?static\\_post=external-relations-european-union-nuremberg-declaration-on-an-eu-asean-enhanced-partnership-nuremberg-germany-15-march-2007](https://asean.org/?static_post=external-relations-european-union-nuremberg-declaration-on-an-eu-asean-enhanced-partnership-nuremberg-germany-15-march-2007).

<sup>11</sup> ASEAN, *Annual Report 2018-2019. Advancing Partnership for Sustainability*, 2019, Jakarta, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> *Joint statement of the 22nd EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting*, Council of the European Union, 21 November 2019, pp. 1-4, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/01/21/joint-statement-of-the-22nd-eu-asean-ministerial-meeting>.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, *Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)*, 17 June, 2019, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/asean/>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> *Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership*, 2007, accessed January 8, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2007\\_16\\_nuremberg\\_declar.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2007_16_nuremberg_declar.pdf).

With the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the bi-regional policy is guided by a memorandum of understanding signed between their secretariats in 2016. Agreements on contacts followed after 1993<sup>16</sup>, yet the relations remain weakly formalized up to date. Despite having joint work plans in the previous decade, the cooperation between ASEAN and SAARC remains weak and moribund. The last recorded meeting was in 2013<sup>17</sup>. With the Gulf Cooperation Council, with formal contacts established in 1990, a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2009 on trade and investments, food security, tourism and energy<sup>18</sup>. A two-year action plan followed in 2010 covering the beginning of the decade. With MERCOSUR, two ministerial meetings were recorded in the institutionalized: 2008 and 2017, the latter being concluded with the desire to strengthen bi-regional cooperation through an action plan and secretariat cooperation<sup>19</sup>.

Another memorandum of understanding was signed with Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2005, having as priority area transnational crime, but focused on cooperation in other areas too – economy and finance, tourism, environment and natural resources, energy, social development<sup>20</sup>.

ASEAN revitalized its relations with regional partners across the Pacific. With the Pacific Alliance, a trade bloc established in 2011 by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, with regional integration purposes, a framework document adopted in 2016 sets the prioritized areas of cooperation (economic cooperation, people-to-people contacts, science, technology and innovation, sustainable development), among other areas of cooperation<sup>21</sup>. A work plan was developed for 2017-2019, extended to 2020, and there is an expressed commitment to enhance relations<sup>22</sup>. We add as to the development of formal agreements with other regions the free trade agreement between ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand (AANZFTA)<sup>23</sup>, as both Australia and New Zealand are important actors in the Pacific regional organizations. Signed in 2009, it entered into force in 2010 and represents the first case of joint negotiations of Australia and New Zealand of an FTA with third parties.

<i>Interregional agreements concluded by ASEAN</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Year</i>
Memorandum of understanding ASEAN-SCO	SCO	2005
Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership 1st Plan of Action 2007-2012 2nd Plan of Action 2013-2017 3rd Plan of Action 2018-2022	EU	2007
Memorandum of understanding ASEAN-GCC Secretariats Plan of Action 2010-2012	GCC	2009
Agreement establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area	ANZ	2009

<sup>16</sup> ASEAN, *Overview of ASEAN-ECO relations*, 2017, accessed January 11, 2020, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/DONEOverview-of-ASEAN-ECO-Relations-as-of-Oct-2017-fn.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> ASEAN, *ASEAN and SAARC Secretariats Enhance Relation*, February 28, 2013, accessed January 11, 2020, [https://asean.org/asean-and-saarc-secretariats-enhance-relation/?category\\_id=27](https://asean.org/asean-and-saarc-secretariats-enhance-relation/?category_id=27).

<sup>18</sup> *Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariat of ASEAN and the Secretariat of GCC*, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> ASEAN, *Overview of ASEAN-Mercosur relations*, 2019, accessed January 10, 2020, [https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/Overview-of-ASEAN-MERCOSUR-Relations\\_as-of-4-Sept-2019.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/Overview-of-ASEAN-MERCOSUR-Relations_as-of-4-Sept-2019.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> *Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN Secretariat and SCO Secretariat*, 2005, p. 2, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/ASEAN-SCO-MOU.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> *The ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for cooperation*, 2016, pp. 1-6, accessed January 9, 2020, [https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ASEAN-PA-Framework-for-Cooperation\\_FINAL.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ASEAN-PA-Framework-for-Cooperation_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> ASEAN, *Pacific Alliance reaffirm commitment to enhance relations*, August 15, 2019, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://asean.org/asean-pacific-alliance-reaffirm-commitment-enhance-relations/?highlight=pacific%20alliance>.

<sup>23</sup> *Agreement establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area*, 2009, accessed January 9, 2020, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/22260.pdf>

<i>Interregional agreements concluded by ASEAN</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Year</i>
Memorandum of understanding ASEAN-ECO Secretariats	ECO	2016
ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for Cooperation Work Plan 2017-2020	PA	2016

*EAEU: fast-forward recovery and focus on trade agreements*

At the end of 2019, the trade agreements of the Eurasian Economic Union were signed with state actors – Vietnam, China, Singapore, Serbia, the interim agreement with Iran<sup>24</sup>. However, it the newest organization established among those examined. Moreover, the list of memoranda of understanding presented by the Eurasian Economic Commission contains mainly states and few trade organizations: International Trade Center, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)<sup>25</sup>. A joint statement following a meeting in 2014 in Buenos Aires with MERCOSUR is also available. It states that there were exchange of views on future trade and economic cooperation between EAEU and Mercosur and the agreement to continue working on a draft cooperation instrument<sup>26</sup>.

In 2018, a memorandum of understanding on economic cooperation was signed between ASEAN and EAEU on the sidelines of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-Russia Summit<sup>27</sup>. It sets as cooperation areas customs and trade facilitation, sanitary and phytosanitary, technical regulations, e-commerce, trade in services and investment, business development and other areas to be defined. Some members of ASEAN signed already trade agreements with EAEU (i.e. Vietnam), others are engaged in talks on this possible development.

In North Africa, the Eurasian Economic Union started the negotiations for a free trade agreement with Egypt, with negotiations ongoing<sup>28</sup>. With Morocco, a memorandum on economic cooperation was signed in 2017<sup>29</sup>. Additionally, the engagement with the African Union is developing. The Russia-Africa Summit held in Sochi in 2019 provided the context for the signing of two memoranda of understanding: first of them between the African Union Commission and the Russian Federation, on cooperation in thirteen areas, the second one between the African Union Commission and the Eurasian Economic Commission on cooperation in areas as infrastructure, agriculture, trade, investment, private sector development, regional economic integration<sup>30</sup>. With the implementation of the African

<sup>24</sup> Eurasian Economic Commission, *Trade agreements of the Eurasian Economic Union*, 2020, accessed February 7, 2020, <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/trade/dotp/Pages/Торговые-соглашения-ЕАЭС.aspx>.

<sup>25</sup> Eurasian Economic Commission, *Меморандумы с третьими странами и международными организациями*, 2020, accessed February 7, 2020, <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/trade/dotp/memorandymi/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>26</sup> *Meeting between the Eurasian Economic Commission and MERCOSUR - Joint Statement*, 2014, p. 1, accessed February 5, 2020, <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/trade/dotp/memorandymi/Documents/Joint%20conclusion%20-%20UEE-MERCOSUR.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> *Memorandum of understanding between the Association of Southeast Asian Nation and the Eurasian Economic Commission on economic cooperation*, 2018, pp. 2-3, accessed February 5, 2020, [https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/MOU-between-ASEAN-and-the-EEC\\_Signed-English.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/MOU-between-ASEAN-and-the-EEC_Signed-English.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Egypt Today, *Egypt, EAEU can sign free trade zone agreement in 2020: Russian minister*, June 22, 2019, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/71919/Egypt-EAEU-can-sign-free-trade-zone-agreement-in-2020>.

<sup>29</sup> Kingdom of Morocco, *Morocco, Eurasian Economic Commission Sign Cooperation Memorandum*, September 28, 2017, accessed February 8, 2020, <http://www.maroc.ma/en/news/morocco-eurasian-economic-commission-sign-cooperation-memorandum>.

<sup>30</sup> African Union, *Statement on the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit and Economic Forum*, October 28, 2019, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20191028/statement-2019-russia-africa-summit-and-economic-forum-0>.

Continental Free Trade Area, the potential for cooperation development is expanding for regional organizations and for their member states.

<i>Interregional agreements concluded by EAEU</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Year</i>
<i>Draft cooperation instrument</i>	Mercosur	2014
Memorandum of understanding between ASEAN and Eurasian Economic Commission on economic cooperation	ASEAN	2018
Memorandum of understanding between African Union Commission and Eurasian Economic Commission	AU	2019

*SAARC: old agreements, limited external action towards regions, project-based*

The Southeast Asian Association for Regional Cooperation has an external relations framework focused on observers to the SAARC and agreements, mainly memoranda of understanding with other organizations and entities. There are currently nine observers to SAARC: Australia, China, the European Union (since 2006), Iran, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, Myanmar, and the United States of America. The European Union is the single regional organizations with observer status to SAARC<sup>31</sup>.

A compilation of memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements dated 2016 contains, among other agreements (mainly development partners), a memorandum of understanding on administrative cooperation between SAARC and the European Commission, signed in 1996<sup>32</sup>. The SAARC Secretariat mentions also that these agreements are signed with international and regional organization on project basis<sup>33</sup>. As mentioned above, there were attempts to strengthen the relations with ASEAN in the past decade.

There has been interest in the Kathmandu-based organization from other state and non-state actors in the early part of the decade. Its orientation towards regional integration has been declared by leaders numerous times, including towards the development of a customs union, a common market and an economic union. Yet, internal conflicts, a limited mandate and the scarcity of resources challenged the functioning and growth of the organization in the past half-decade.

The momentum in the interregional cooperation between SAARC and other stakeholders was marked in 2016, when the European Union gained the observer status. After that moment, a moratorium was instituted, and no new observers were admitted<sup>34</sup>. As the following summarizing table shows, there were no important developments in the external action, other agreements being limited to project-based cooperation:

<i>Interregional agreement concluded by SAARC</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Year</i>
Observer status for the European Union	EU	2006

*EU: regional cooperative orders and support for regions*

The European Union is the most developed regional international organization in the world nowadays by most of indicators. Some of its formal and informal ties to regional arrangements go back to the pre-Maastricht times. The orientation towards the developments

<sup>31</sup> SAARC, *Relations with observers*, 2019, accessed February 14, 2020, [http://saarc-sec.org/external\\_relations/details/relations-with-observers](http://saarc-sec.org/external_relations/details/relations-with-observers).

<sup>32</sup> SAARC, *Compilation of Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation Agreements*, 2016, pp. 4-5, [http://saarc-sec.org/download/publications/Comp\\_of\\_MoU.pdf](http://saarc-sec.org/download/publications/Comp_of_MoU.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> SAARC, *Relations with partners with MoUs*, 2018, accessed February 14, 2020, [http://saarc-sec.org/external\\_relations/details/relations-with-partners-with-mous](http://saarc-sec.org/external_relations/details/relations-with-partners-with-mous).

<sup>34</sup> SAARC, *Relations with observers*, 2019, accessed February 14, 2020, [http://saarc-sec.org/external\\_relations/details/relations-with-observers](http://saarc-sec.org/external_relations/details/relations-with-observers).

between 2010-2019 allows us to focus on the agreements concluded with regional organizations easier. Furthermore, as regional organization, it envisages a world based on regional cooperative orders. Moreover, it finances regional initiatives in the entire world. How were the previous agreements developed between 2010 and 2019?

In the Gulf, the 1988 cooperation agreement focused on stability, political and economic relations, economic and technical cooperation, and sectoral cooperation in different areas, the interregional cooperation benefitted from the 2010 joint action plan for the implementation of the cooperation agreement. However, it remains non-renewed. Efforts are being made to put on the agenda again the negotiations for a free trade agreement, as revealed by the meetings of the EU with the states part of the Gulf Cooperation Council<sup>35</sup>.

In regard to ASEAN, apart from the development mentioned, the European Union succeeded in 2012 to join the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), a regional peace and stability treaty signed in 1976 by the founding members of ASEAN and a key component of the ASEAN Political and Security Community<sup>36</sup>. The EU announced in 2009 its accession to join the treaty, but it had to be revised to allow the participation of regional organizations, not only states. Even with this development, the EU was among the latest parts joining TAC. EU's partnership with ASEAN covers different initiatives and programs. The European External Action Services (EEAS) maintains an updated list of initiative and developments in bilateral relations region-to-region<sup>37</sup>.

A memorandum of understanding on peace, security and governance was signed between the European Union and African Union in 2018. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted in 2007 and upgraded the cooperation between the two parts to a strategic level and guides the Africa-EU Partnership.

JAES provides the strategic orientation and it is implemented through multiannual roadmaps and action plans. In 2014, the roadmap for 2014-2017 was adopted, focused on peace and security, democracy, good governance and human rights, human development, sustainable development, growth, regional integration, global and emerging issues. It was succeeded by Abidjan Declaration from 2018 onwards which added investment in people, in resilience, peace, security and governance, mobilizing investments, migration and mobility<sup>38</sup>.

Economic partnership agreements were negotiated and signed at regional sub-continental level with the East African Community (2014, negotiations concluded, unclear status), West Africa (2014, not signed by all parties), South African Development Community (2014, provisionally into force since 2016), Eastern and Southern Africa (provisionally applied since 2012), and other groups of states<sup>39</sup>. Apart from these trade developments, the EU remains the main development and trade partner for the African states.

In 2015, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the League of Arab States for an advanced relationship, launching also a strategic dialogue to develop the operational cooperation on security aspects. The first high-level summit took place in 2019 and the

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<sup>35</sup> Omar Al-Ubaydli, *Why the GCC and EU should restart negotiations on a free trade agreement*, July 3, 2019, accessed February 20, 2020, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2019/07/03/Why-the-GCC-and-EU-should-restart-negotiations-on-a-free-trade-agreement.html>

<sup>36</sup> *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia Indonesia*, 1976, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://asean.org/treaty-amity-cooperation-southeast-asia-indonesia-24-february-1976>.

<sup>37</sup> *Mission of the European Union to ASEAN*, accessed February 20, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean_en).

<sup>38</sup> African Union, European Union, *The Partnership and Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, 2019, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/partnership-and-joint-africa-eu-strategy>.

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, *Overview of economic partnership agreements*, January, 2020, accessed February 20, 2020, [https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/september/tradoc\\_144912.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/september/tradoc_144912.pdf).

leaders of the two regional blocs agreed to enhance the economic, political and security partnership<sup>40</sup>.

The framework of bi-regional cooperation in Latin America follows different tracks: the cooperation with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) – group established in 2011 and having a strategic partnership dimension (with origins in a 1999 strategic partnership), engagement with regional and sub-regional entities (Mercosur, CARICOM, Pacific Alliance, SICA), and the relations with individual countries<sup>41</sup>. Among the highpoints, there are the adoption of the EU-CELAC Action Plan<sup>42</sup> and the institutionalization of regular dialogue formats between EU and CELAC, the signing of the constitutive agreement of the EU-LAC Foundation in 2016<sup>43</sup>, the trade agreement in principle with Mercosur in 2019<sup>44</sup> after the recommencement of negotiations in 2010.

No important updates on the agreements in relation to SAARC have been identified, except for development projects.

<i>Interregional agreements concluded by the EU</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Year</i>
Cooperation agreement between EC and GCC	GCC	1988
Joint action plan for the implementation of the cooperation agreement		2010
EU-LAC/EU-CELAC strategic partnership	CELAC	1999
EU-CELAC Action Plan		2013
EU-CELAC Action Plan		2015
Constitutive agreement of the EU-LAC Foundation		2016
The Joint Africa-EU Strategy	AU	2007
Roadmap Africa-EU Partnership 2014-2017		2014
Abidjan Declaration 2018-onwards		2017
Accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia	ASEAN/TAC	2012
Economic Partnership Agreement - Eastern and Southern Africa	ESA/ACP	2012
Economic Partnership Agreement - East African Community	EAC/ACP	2014
Economic Partnership Agreement - West Africa	WA/ACP	2014
Economic Partnership Agreement - South African Development Community	SADC/ACP	2014
Memorandum of understanding EU-LAS	LAS	2015
Memorandum of understanding - peace, security and governance	AU	2018
<i>Trade agreement (in principle) EU-Mercosur</i>	Mercosur	2019

<sup>40</sup> European Council, *EU-League of Arab States summit in Sharm El-Sheikh*, Egypt, 24-25 February 2019, October 31, 2019, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2019/02/24-25/>.

<sup>41</sup> EEAS, *EU-CELAC relations*, July 17, 2018, accessed February 21, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/13042/EU-CELAC%20relations](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/13042/EU-CELAC%20relations).

<sup>42</sup> *EU-CELAC Action Plan*, 2015, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23757/eu-celac-action-plan.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Council of the EU, *EU-LAC Foundation: constitutive agreement signed*, October 26, 2016, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/10/26/eu-lac-foundation-constitutive-agreement-signed/>

<sup>44</sup> European Commission, *EU-Mercosur trade agreement: The Agreement in Principle and its texts*, July 12, 2019, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2048>

This chapter of the interregional dynamics in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century around the world does not include analysis on regional financial institutions and their relations, the relations of specialized bodies and other entities, or diplomatic dynamics such as missions established to one or another regional entity.

### **Conclusions**

The expressed research questions asked for the documentation of the development of interregional formal linkages between regional organizations in the past decade. The presumed hypothesis was that region-to-region cooperation deepened between 2010 and 2019. Exploring mainly primary sources from four Asian and European regional intergovernmental organizations, new agreements among regions were discovered. New memoranda of understanding and different types of cooperation agreements were negotiated and concluded, some of them built on decades of history of formal and informal ties, others newly generated.

The analyzed entities – regional organizations with legal personality – are in different phases of their economic and political regional integration. Yet, the dynamics set among them and among other regions show that they consolidated their external actions. Making use of political and legal instruments, they overcame barriers to cooperation, not only economic cooperation, but also political, security, social and cultural cooperation. Despite protectionist tendencies, new instruments are now available or could be available in the near future in the commercial realm. Additionally, the region-to-region cooperation is seen as a way to mitigate systemic risks. With the exception of SAARC, a South Asian organization whose development has been questioned by internal tensions, the EU, the EAEU and ASEAN reached out of their region to other regional initiatives. In the defined period, a new impetus for interregional cooperation is noticeable.

There are limits to this exploratory endeavor. I will put emphasis on three of them. Different methodological actions can be used to check the development of a phenomenon in a defined time. I checked the milestones of the previous decade, having the historical development of these organizations assumed. Quantitatively, comparative analysis in time could be useful in supporting why the development in a defined period is special.

Secondly, the case selection could be improved. I was focused on the Asian and European dynamics, yet fantastic initiatives were promoted in the past decades in the Global South. Interregional cooperation is a global phenomenon and we do not have indicators of the extent of this process. There is no database on the agreements between regions outside the treaty collections of the United Nations and separate regional entities and outside of trade agreements monitored by the World Trade Organization and regional trade monitoring initiatives. Moreover, there are few criteria considered for case selection – legal personality, geographical and regional dimensions and a level of regional economic integration. There are other overlapping initiatives that could be explored. And thirdly, the constitution of the regional orders is a subject that requires in-depth consideration. There are important differences between the regional cooperation models and their development level, budgetary capacities and historical evolution do not explain how and why they „behave” in the international arena.

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