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Inter-regionalism : A Comparative Analysis of ASEM, FEALAC and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)

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Introduction

The decade following the end of the Cold War witnessed a remarkable increase in regional projects. New forms of often multi-layered inter-regional relations have appeared as a corollary of “new regionalism”. Inter-regionalism refers on the one hand to the political/economic relationship between two regional more or less institutionalised cooperation schemes and on the other hand to the process of building interactions and links between two separate regions.

Inter-regionalism also emerged and differentiated itself from regional integration theory when scholars started to understand that regions were becoming actors in their own right. Regions exercised this status by developing their own external relations. Emergence of inter-regionalism also could mark as a turning point in the study of regions and what it is that joins them together (Olivet, 2005: 9).

Literature on inter-regionalism, though still scarce, tries to provide some analytical insights on the patterns and features of relations among regions. Despite the fact this theory is still very much in a continual process of development, there are certain convergences between the scholars who have written about it, as for the reasons of the emergence, development and maintenance of inter-regional dialogues and relations. Jürgen Rüland was one of the first to propose a research agenda on inter-regionalism and has described seven functions its performs: balancing and bandwagoning, institution building, rationalizing, agenda-setting and controlling, identity-building, stabilising and development (Rüland, 2002b).

However, most of the existing studies as Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff and Jürgen Rüland observe, have so far failed to contribute to a better understanding of this new sub-field of international relations. “Theoretical explanations, albeit, rare, have been primarily deductive, at times even speculative, and mostly lacking sufficient empirical evidence” (Hänggi, Roloff, Rüland, 2006:7).

The first part of the paper after describing different forms of inter-regionalism will offer an analysis of the extent to which is it useful to compare different kinds of inter-regional cooperation schemes and of the theoretical questions arising from this analysis.

The second part of the paper will develop a typology of comparing inter-regionalism and the third part of the paper, by comparing the interregional
relationship a) of the EU member states with the East Asian Countries (ASEM), b) of the EU with the South Mediterranean countries (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership-EMP) and c) of the East Asian Countries - ASEAN plus China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand- with the Latin America countries (FEALAC), would attempt to answer to what extent are there similarities/common characteristics and differences in the process and development of three different forms of inter-regionalism: ASEM (transregionalism), EMP (asymmetrical hybrid constructed inter-regionalism) and FEALAC (peripheral trans-regionalism) from which some useful conclusions may derive on the patterns and features of relations among regions.

**Forms of inter-regionalism**

The expanding network of inter-regional relations appears in a wide array of manifestations. In order to categorise existing inter-regional arrangements, Heiner Hänggi, observes that three different forms of inter-regionalism can be distinguished:

(a) relations between regional groupings/organisations which we could call bilateral inter-regionalism (Hänggi, 2000:3). Clear examples are the relationship EU –ASEAN and EU- MERCOSUR and MERCOSUR – ASEAN (see Diagram 1)

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1 This part is based on my paper “Asymmetric Inter-regionalism: The EU, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and BSEC” presented to the workshop on Comparative Regionalism in World Politics: Benchmarking Best Intellectual Practice, Institute for International Economic Relations, Athens, 11-12 December 2006.

2 Hänggi, after six years subdivided inter-regional relations into five types: a) relations grouped around a regional organization/regional group and a third country, b) group-to-group relations, c) relations between a regional organization and a regional group, d) relations between two regional groups and e) relations between a group of states from more than a region. Of the types only b to d defines as interregional relations in the narrower sense. (Hänggi,2006: 31-62).
(b) Trans-regional arrangements. Membership in these rather heterogeneous arrangements is more diffuse than in traditional group-to-group dialogues; it does not necessarily coincide with regional groupings and may include member states from more than two regions. By the concept of transregionalism we refer to less institutionalised forms of relations between regions. The most important characteristics of trans-regional relations are two:

First, trans-regionalism encompasses a broader set of actor relationships than simply those among states. Thus any connection across regions, including transnational networks of corporate production or of nongovernmental organisations, that involves cooperation among any type of actors across two or more regions can in theory also be considered as a form of transregionalism (Aggarwal-Fogar, 2004: 5). Thus, the actors behind regionalist projects are no longer only states, but actually a large number of different types of institutions, organisations and movements. According to Christopher Dent trans-regionalism implies the establishment of common ‘spaces’ between and across regions in which constituent agents (e.g. individuals, communities, organisations) operate and have close associative ties with each other. Therefore, trans-regionalism is about the creation of more future challenges and of extensive and deeper integrative links that form the basis of a ‘trans-region’, such as Eurasia. There are various common trans-regional ‘spaces’, like political, economic, social-cultural, business ones (Dent, 2003:232). Although in many cases these bodies or ‘spaces’ operate rather independently without linking their efforts to develop a clear ‘bottom-up’
cross-border process of inter-regionalism, they nevertheless contribute to the development of democracy within, and stable relations between, the states concerned. (Bailes, 1999:179) Trans-regional strategies could also – according to the neofunctionalist hypothesis - be transformed and widened by spill-over effects (Hettne, 2003: 25).

Two, the membership of transregional process is comprised of individual countries that may or may not be part of other regional groups, but if they are, they participate in an individual capacity and do not act on behalf of the regional group they are a part of (Olivet: 2005: 10). Examples of transregionalism are ASEM and FEALAC. (see diagram 2)

Diagram 2

(c) Hybrid inter-regionalism.

Hybrid inter-regionalism could take three forms. First is referring to relations between regional groupings and single states (e.g. EU-Russia, ASEAN–Australia) (see diagram 3)
The second type of hybrid inter-regionalism refers to the relationship between a formal regional group/regional organisation and a ‘constructed’ regional group. The ‘constructed’ regional group is usually set up by countries which have been obliged to form a regional group in order to be able of cooperating with a formal regional group (Hänggi, 2006: 39).

A clear example is the relations of EU with the ACP countries under the framework of the Cotonu Agreement and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). (See diagram 4)
The third type of hybrid inter-regionalism refers to the creation of institutional arrangement between major representatives of two or more regions which claim regional leadership. A clear example is IBSA, the trilateral, developmental initiative between India, Brazil and South Africa to promote South-South cooperation.³ (See diagram 5)

³ The launching of the IBSA Dialogue Forum was formalized through the adoption of the "Brasilia Declaration" in June 2006. The main objectives of the IBSA Dialogue Forum could be summarized as follows: to promote South-South dialogue, cooperation and common positions on issues of international importance, to promote trade and investment opportunities between the three regions of which they are part, to promote international poverty alleviation and social development, to promote the trilateral exchange of information, international best practices, technologies and skills, as well as to compliment each others competitive strengths into collective synergies, to promote cooperation in a broad range of areas, namely agriculture, climate change, culture, defence, education, energy, health, information society, science and technology, social development, trade and investment, tourism and transport. The IBSA Dialogue Forum has regular consultations at Senior Official (Focal Point), Ministerial (Trilateral Joint Commission) and Heads of State and/or Government (Summit) levels, but also facilitates interaction amongst academics, business and other members of civil society.
A comparative analysis typology of inter-regionalism

This part of the paper based to a great extent on the systematic paradigm of Michael Schulz, Fredrik Söderbaum, Joakim Öjendal on how regionalism can be studied, conceptualised and understood (Schulz-Söderbaum-Öjendal, 2001: 234-276) and on the analytical tool of comparative analysis of inter-regionalism proposed by Hans Maull and Nuria Okfen (2006:218-233) will attempt to develop a comparative analysis typology of inter-regionalism by looking at three key issues:

The first one refers to the dynamics of inter-regionalism the second to structural change and the third to the preferred outcomes of inter-regionalism.

The Dynamics of inter-regionalism

Michael Schulz, Frederik Söderbaum, and Joakim Öjendal pay attention to what actors and whose interests are the ‘driving’ (or impeding) force dominating the process of regionalism. Is it the states and their constituencies which push the process of regionalism and establish an agenda or is it the often neglected private economic forces and/or civil society? What is the relative strength and relationship between state, market, and (civil) society actors and how does this affect the dynamics from ‘above’ and the dynamics from ‘below’? (Shulz and Söderbaum and Öjendal, 2001:250-256).
Jürgen Rüland gives more emphasis on institution-building which considers from two different perspectives. The first one is relating to the “creation of a new level of policy-making in a multi-layered international system and the creation of subsidiary institutions such as regular summits, ministerial and senior officials’ rounds, business dialogues etc” (Rüland, 2006: 302). The second one stems from the fact that inter-regional dialogues create a need for unified positions and, hence, intensified consultation and coordination in order to carry out negotiations with a single voice, and in this way inter-regional relation may facilitate regional groupings to enhance institutionalisation (Rüland, 2001:7). (See diagram 6). Juliet Gilson pays more attention to cognitive institutionalisation which goes beyond formal rules and structures to acknowledge institutions as social phenomena. Thus, “cognitive institutionalisation delineates the margins of the social script through which institutional participants communicate, and provides the basis upon which fixed and readily identifiable idiosyncrasies for an institution’s practices are founded” (Gilson, 2001: 114)

The task at hand in the first key issue is to determine the characteristics of inter-regionalism in other words what type of inter-regionalism EMP, ASEM and FEALAC are, who the main actors – driving factors are in the process of inter-regionalism and what kind of institution-building has been achieved.
For some observers, inter-regionalism as well as regionalism is seen as an integral part of globalisation, as one of its many manifestations. Inte-regionalism and globalisation, are then seen as a seamless process, being an outlet of the same underlying phenomenon. Other authors, emphasise the distinction between the two processes and view them almost as 'bouncing' toward one another. 'Globalisation' being the challenge of economic and cultural homogenisation of the world, and inter-regionalism being a social and political reaction. According to some analysts this regional response takes place where region-wide societies (clusters of states) seek to
protect themselves for the 'evil' consequences of globalisation, but at the same time to take advantage of the very same process. (Pelagidis- Papasotiriou, 2002:519-535).

A key theoretical and practical question is what does new regionalism signify? Is it compatible with globalisation being an outlet of the same underlying phenomenon does it foreshadow it? As Björn Hettne points out, “the two processes of globalisation and regionalisation are articulated within the same large process of global structural change.” (Hettne, 1999:2) Other authors emphasise the distinction between the two processes and view them almost as ‘bouncing’ towards one another with ‘globalisation’ as the challenge of economic and cultural homogenisation of the world, and new regionalism being a social and political reaction. and a return to closed, antagonistic regional ‘stumbling blocks’? (Gamble: 2001: 24).

Regionalism and particularly ‘open regionalism’ can be used also as a stepping-stone towards more global or multilateral relations.\(^4\) In deepening integration, and in proceeding with reform, new vested interests can be created through inter-regional liberalisation. In that case inter-regional cooperation schemes could contribute to the balance of the international system as well as of the global governance structure.

According to Rolf Roloff globalisation and regionalisation pose two challenges to the nation states. They react to globalisation either by strengthening regionalism or by launching inter-regional cooperation (Roloff, 2006: 24). The regions participating in an inter-regional process aim to balance certain negative effects of globalisation as well as to balance expressions of power deriving from the emergence of certain international actors, (other regions, countries or international institutions) that might affect their interests. In other words regional cooperation schemes are using inter-regional links in order to strengthen the bargaining power of regions vis-a-vis each other but also more general in the international system. Thus, inter-regionalism offers an additional layer to multilevel governance which could facilitate the finding of solutions on a global scale in pre-discussing or even pre-negotiating issues to be taken up in a multilateral or global setting (Reiterer, 2006:241).

Jürgen Rüland distinguishes two forms of balancing: ‘Power balancing’, if it has a military dimension and ‘institutional balancing’ if “perceived disequilibria between

\(^4\) Some analysts define ‘open regionalism’ in relation to official barriers against trade (protectionism). (Garnaut, 1994: 273) Open regionalism means that policy is directed towards the elimination of obstacles to trade within a region, while at the same time doing nothing to raise external tariff barriers to the rest of the world (Gamble- Payne, 1996: 251).
regions are countered by interregional institution-building or the activation of existing interregional forums” (Rüland, 2006: 300).

The structural change key issue refers to two questions:

- Political inter-regionalism versus economic globalisation? In other words to what extent inter-regional cooperation schemes in a new globalised world are able to strengthen the balancing power of their participating regions in the international system as well as to balance superior power (USA)?

- From 'stumbling blocks' and 'stepping stones' to 'building blocks'? In other words to what extent regional cooperation entities due to inter-regionalism are able to manage economic interdependence between themselves and to contribute to global governance? (See diagram 7).
The Preferred outcomes of new regionalism

This third key issue emphasises mainly the values of peace and development. The question is what does new regionalism mean for the promotion of peace and development? More specifically, with regard to the fundamental value of peace, in what way does new regionalism promote stability in the international system, resolve upcoming conflicts and deal with old animosities? One way to investigate this is to try to assess whether regions are being transformed from regional conflict formations and security complexes into better functioning security communities by providing security.
A related task is to determine the quality and record of regional conflict-resolution, intervention and peace-keeping.

With regard to development both policy-makers and theorists have emphasised for decades the potential of new regionalism in stabilising the international system and promoting trade and economic development. However, strong criticisms have also been made against regionalist projects, for instance that they may reinforce a narrow and particular type of regionalist economic regime which may largely serve elitist interests and sacrifice social development concerns. It is therefore relevant to assess if, and in what way, regional strategies and mechanisms actually contribute to genuine, new development.

Inter-regionalism may also contribute to spurring regional identity-building. As Julie Gilson observes “what its understood by ‘region’ …will depend to a large extent upon how they [the participants of the interregional process] view themselves and each other within, and as a result of, the process of interaction”. (Gilson, 2002: 11). In the dialogue with another region, a region, therefore may enhance its own identity by talking and acting as a region as a collective (Maull and Okfen, 2006: 219). This process of identity-building, may stipulate, especially in heterogeneous and newly formed regional groupings regional identity-building. It may sharpen differences between self and other and thus help galvanize regional solidarity on the basis of shared norms and identifiable, aggregate interests and formulate goals and policies (Rüland, 2002a:10)

Another important aspect of inter-regionalism which has been neglected so far is its transformation. During the process of inter-regionalism some of the initial aims and priorities of the participating regions may change and in that case they will try to lead the inter-regional scheme to another direction from the initial one (See diagram 8).
Comparative Analysis of EMP, ASEM and FEALAC

The aims of the European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM) and the Forum for East Asia and Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC)
EMP: The EMP or the Barcelona process was established as a partnership between the EU-countries and twelve Mediterranean states including the Arab states Morocco, Algeria, Tunisa, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the PNA. Also Turkey, Malta and Cyprus and Israel were part of the Agreement, launched in Barcelona in November 1995. The latest EU enlargement, on 1st May 2004, has brought two Mediterranean Partners (Cyprus and Malta) into the European Union, while adding a total of 10 to the number of Member States. In the Barcelona Declaration, the Euro-Mediterranean partners established the three main objectives of the Partnership: First, the definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue (Political and Security Chapter). Second, the construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area (Economic and Financial Chapter). Third, the rapprochement between peoples through a social, cultural and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies (Social, Cultural and Human Chapter). The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership comprises two complementary dimensions: a) Bilateral dimension. The European Union carries out a number of activities bilaterally with each country. The most important are the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements that the Union negotiates with the Mediterranean Partners individually. They reflect the general principles governing the new Euro-Mediterranean relationship, although they each contain characteristics specific to the relations between the EU and each Mediterranean Partner. b) Regional dimension. Regional dialogue represents one of the most innovative aspects of the Partnership, covering at the same time the political, economic and cultural fields (regional co-operation). Regional co-operation has a considerable strategic impact as it deals with problems that are common to many Mediterranean Partners while it emphasises the national complementarities. The existing MEDA programme is the main financial instrument for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.5

ASEM: ASEM (the Asia-Europe Meeting) is an informal dialogue process initiated in 1996. Now, the twenty five EU Member States, the European Commission and thirteen Asian countries (Brunei, Burma/Myanmar, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Indonesia,

5 The official web site of the European Commission for the EMP is http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/index.htm
Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) participate in the process. The ASEM Sixth Summit held in September 2006 decided to admit Bulgaria and Romania on the European side, and India, Mongolia, Pakistan and the ASEAN Secretariat on the Asian side to the ASEM process, upon their completion of the necessary procedures. The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is a forum with various levels of cooperation between Asian and European countries. The ASEM process is based on dialogue with the objective of strengthening mutual understanding between the two regions and promoting concrete cooperation that aims at sustainable economic and social development. The cooperation covers three sectors referred to as a political pillar, an economic pillar and a cultural pillar. The priorities, objectives and principles of the ASEM process have been laid down in the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000 (AECF 2000).

 FEALAC : The Prime Minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong, in October 1998, proposed the formation of a summit to bring together the leaders of Asian, including Japan, and Latin American countries. It was called the East Asia- Latin America Forum (EALAF, in Spanish, FALAE). The first Meeting of EALAF was held on September 1 to 3, 1999 in Singapore. The inaugural Ministerial Meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, Chile on 29 and 30 March 2001. In this meeting, it was agreed that the official name of the forum will be “Forum for East Asia – Latin America Cooperation.” (FEALAC; in Spanish:Foro de Cooperacion America Latina y Asia del Este, FOCALAE). The participant countries at the Singapore Meeting were China, South Korea, Japan, ASEAN ten countries of ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam), Australia, New Zealand and twelve countries from Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico). At the inaugural FEALAC meeting, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Cuba were accepted as member countries. Thus, one of the salient futures of this Forum lies in a fact that almost all the Latin American countries are joining it, while only three countries from Latin America are participating to APEC. Asia is linked to North America through APEC, and also has a dialogue channel with Europe through ASEM.

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6 The official web site of the European Commission for ASEM is http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/asem/intro/index.htm
(Asia-Europe Meeting). In this sense, it is expected that the FEALAC could be a forum that boosts Asia-Latin American ties and forges the missing link between two regions. During the Meeting, the Ministers approved the Framework Document of the Forum that establishes the principles, aims, objectives and modalities to guide its future work. The main aims of the Forum are: First, to increase mutual understanding, trust, political dialogue and friendly cooperation among member states with a view to enriching and sharing experiences and developing new partnerships. Second to tap the potential of multidisciplinary cooperation, among other things, in economics, trade investment, finance, science and technology, environmental protection, culture, sports, tourism and people-to-people exchanges and third to expand common ground on important international political and economic issues with a view to working together in different international bodies in order to safeguard our common interests. The member states also decided to establish three Working Groups, with the aim of strengthening dialogue and cooperation in political/cultural, economic/social, and education/science and technology fields.

The Dynamics Criteria: EMP, ASEM and FEALAC

All three inter-regional groupings have more or less the same organisational mechanisms and a three-pillar agenda, comprising economic dialogue, political dialogue and other (socio-cultural) and more or less the same objectives moving beyond economic issues, meanwhile countries participating on their own individual basis. Thus, they have loose membership and a multidimensional approach, covering the full spectrum of relations between the two regions, and devoting equal weight to political, economic and cultural issues. The choice of a multidimensional logic presents one major advantage and one major difficulty. It provides valuable flexibility by allowing participants to give more importance to trade, development or foreign policy depending on the circumstances. The difficulty lies with the obligation to have a proper overview of several logics of intervention unfolding simultaneously.

We can see also that all three are in line with the usual structure of inter-regional processes, although are organised on the base of different structures and levels of meetings. For example ASEM is holding biennial ASEM Summits, featuring Heads of State or Government, which give the overall political impetus to the ASEM process,
meanwhile EMP and FEALAC have not Summit meetings. The absence of Summits, particularly in FEALAC, suggests that lower priorities is attached by East Asian and Latin American governments to FEALAC than to other dialogues such as ASEM; APEC and FTAA. It is in fact only a second best device for strengthening mutual relations (Low, 2006:91). Senior Official’s meetings in ASEM and EMP is by far more regular and more frequent than in FEALAC, meanwhile in FEALAC there is lack of a body or institution to implement actual cooperation programmes. In ASEM, this is the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and in EMP actually there is the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures.

FEALEC, uses, to large extent, the ‘ASEM way’ of promoting dialogue and cooperation. “As far as FEALAC working principles, purpose and process are concerned, the work carried out within ASEM has largely served a blueprint” (Hwee, 2005: 480).

However, EMP, ASEM and FEALAC do not represent the same type of inter-regionalism.

EMP is an asymmetrical hybrid ‘constructed’ inter-regionalism, ASEM is regarded as transregionalism and FEALAC as ‘peripheral’ trans-regionalism.

EMP’s asymmetry stems from differences mainly in the economic field like the advancing gap in economic prosperity, trade imbalance –with the exception of energy– at least those which are not members of the EU – as well from the dependence of many South Mediterranean countries on the development aid from the EU. The reality of the asymmetric dependence in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has undermined the EU’s inclination to pursue a liberal inter-regional arrangement in terms of two “equal” regions (See diagram 9).
For the EU as a global actor with ‘soft power’, the cooperative hegemony strategy is an appropriate theoretical tool to explain EU inter-regionalism towards the MPCs (Mediterranean Partnership Countries). Given EU strength in areas such as economy, technology, culture and ideology, provider of security, promoter of democracy and good governance through positive and negative conditionality, supporter of intra-regionalism and subregionalism, the EU is therefore well-placed to pursue a cooperative hegemony approach. The cooperative hegemony approach involves the use of soft power through engagement in cooperative arrangements linked to a long-term strategy (Pedersen, 2003). Implicit in the strategy is the notion that states have freedom to devise strategies, to incorporate new ideas and to revise strategies. Under cooperative hegemony, institutions and ideas are combined to offer a framework through which a regional order is constructed. (Farell, 2004:7) (See diagram 10)
EMP could be characterised also as hybrid ‘constructed’ inter-regionalism, because in face of the well – established coordination machinery of the EU, the MPCs from the partner regions were almost forced to engage in some sort of regional coordination in order to deal with the EU and its member states under the framework of the Barcelona process.

ASEM could be regarded as tranregionalism because from one hand encompasses a large number of different types of institutions, organisations and movements than simply transactions those among states, which consists a ‘bottom-up’ cross-border process of inter-regionalism and from the other because ASEM is
FEALAC comprised of individual countries that are part of other regional groups and participate in ASEM in an individual capacity.

FEALAC could be considered as ‘peripheral’ trans-regionalism because it involves primarily lower-medium and small power of the South which could not alter the main structural pillars of the international system meanwhile the volume of economic transactions, both in trade or Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is insignificant. One of the regions involved, Latin America, does not belong to the Triad while the other, East Asia is the least powerful pole at least in political and security terms within it. (Dosch, 2005: 185)

All three regional groupings have also adopted a ‘bottom-up’ process of inter-regionalism by involving, parliamentarians, local authorities, the business community, organisations and professional groups from all participating states. All these are making proposals, mobilising public opinion, using indirect strategies and organise their own monitoring of inter-regional development.

However, many participating countries quite often are hindering the functioning of the civil society and NGO’s in their country as well as a democratic accountability. For example, as regards the economic dimension of EMP, the MPCs are bound to resist demands for transparency when it comes to an economic restructuring, since it would undermine the patronage system operated by the state elites. Therefore, the policies of economic liberalisation and democracy, the basic strategy of the EMP are mutually antagonistic because economic liberalisation frequently creates social tensions, and control of social upheavals may be more easily handled by a non-democratic government. Given the immediacy and directness of threats deriving from social tensions, like Muslim fundamentalism, the more short-term policy implications often appears needing to work with existing governments, rather than awaiting a longer-term internal transformation within these states (Calleya, 2005: 103). This has meant, in particular, the European tendency to accept the argument of many Arab regimes that the only alternative to their authoritarianism is anti-Western Islamist radicalism. (Dannreuther, 2006: 198).

The EU is also caught between the contradictions of trying to promote human rights and political and social change in the EMP and ASEM, while trying to stabilise

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7 FEALAC members as a whole contribute only about one-fifth of global trade, and absorb about a fifth of global FDI.
corrupted regimes. The ironic aspect of the imposition of Euro-thinking is that the introduction of democracy in the area of MPCs and some Asian counter-partners, could lead to Islamists gaining power through a popular election, which would be in direct opposition to EU interests. “The member states simultaneously pursue an idealistic policy for the sake of national and international public opinion and, at the same time, act according to realpolitik” (Feliu, 2001: 94). Essentially, the flow and exchange of information via the Internet, through NGO networks, the media and so on, is to a very large extent impossible to control. As to the third basket of the EMP is concerned, many programs were set up, some now being completed or extended. Results are often in line with objectives but the latter were rather modest. It seems fair to say that on the cultural, audiovisual or educational level, what has been achieved is rather patchy and elite-oriented. More attention needs to be given to the third pillar of the EMP, that dealing with social, cultural, and human affairs. Closer cross-cultural co-operation can only be achieved if a more concerted effort is made to seek a convergence on the basic values that are part and parcel of the civilizations surrounding the Mediterranean area.

**Structural change or Globalisation versus inter-regionalisation: EMP, ASEM and FEALAC**

None of the three EMP, ASEM and FEALAC can be regarded as having a substantial impact on the formulation of the international political and economic system. EMP could not be considered that has strengthen the bargaining power both of European Union and of the TMC. On the contrary the Middle East stalemate is not only detrimental to the region itself but is also having a negative impact upon EMP itself. It seems however that all three have been created to perform functions of institution balancing as: first, the regions can learn from each other’s experiences in managing economic crises, second, ASEAN members wanted to extent ASEAN plus Three format to its external relations, three Asia was seeing FEALAC as a device to protect and improve its access to the vital markets of South America, fourth, MPC’s as well as some member states of the EU, Latin American and Asian countries regarded EMP ASEM and FEALAC as an attempt to balance strong US influence. For the Arab Mediterranean group in particular, EMP was sought after as
an effective counterweight to the USA in the Middle Peace Process (Gomez, 2003: 177).

Regarding the contribution of EMP, ASEM and FEALAC to global governance in terms of institution-building as well as in terms of international monetary relations has so far been negligible despite the fact that all have so far managed to reduce barriers and obstacles to trade and FDI. Inter-regional cooperation schemes, however, like ASEM, are not institutions meant to enhance global governance capacity directly. They are instruments primarily used for diplomacy, networking, information-sharing, gathering and confidence building. To be able to contribute directly to global governance, the participating states must decide to use the process to define issues and problems, try to achieve consensus and come up with suggestions to resolve these problems (Fort, 2004:362).

As far as the management of economic interdependence is concerned ASEM and EMP trade and FDI relationships are much stronger than in FEALAC.

EMP has made a serious impact on the road towards liberalisation and privatisation. This could in the first instance be seen as an adaptation to globalization although the Arab states traditionally have held on the economic nationalism and import substitution thus increasing more the economic asymmetry between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. On the other hand the EU emphasis on economic liberalisation, the opening up to international trade of MPCs market and the creation of a Mediterranean Free Trade Area (MFTA) until 2010 have positive but also negative effects (Xenakis and Chryssochou, 2001:81): South Mediterranean industrial goods had long been allowed free access to the European market. European goods entering the South Mediterranean countries had been placed under national tariff arrangements. Now these tariff and non-tariff barriers were to be lifted, so that industries in southern economies were to be exposed to the full force of European competition. Most industries in the Mediterranean have been dominated by the public sector, and with their present level of competitiveness they will be unable to survive the international competition from the EU. The closure and/or restructuring of companies will inevitably lead to increased levels of unemployment which will contradict one of the central aims of the EMP, namely job creation in agriculture. The EU is an extremely important trade partner for the MPCs, but the MPCs region itself is of minor importance to
Europe. European interest towards it must, therefore, be motivated by other factors, such as European perceptions of security intermeshed with the economic relationship. However, free trade will never be fully realised until the EU is willing to remove long-standing protectionist measures in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). From a Mediterranean perspective, agricultural exports produce, for example, olive oil, tomatoes, and wine, have been barred from entering the European market and many rural areas have become increasingly unable to provide a livelihood for the local population, which has resulted in a steady migration to urban areas and abroad. In addition to this, unfavourable climatic conditions, bad regional planning and national politics have not helped. It is still remains to see the results of the new reform of the CAP. But the spin-off is most likely to increase the chances of further sustainable development of the Mediterranean agricultural sector, and this will result in a demand for labour in the Mediterranean rural areas- and not in Europe.\(^8\)

Foreign investment to the region remains also insufficient and has been identified as one of the major shortcomings of the economic partnership. Inflows into the Mediterranean region have more than doubled in 2003 compared to the 1992-97 average. The region has failed to attract sufficient net FDI compared with its economic size. Its share of total net FDI inflows to developing countries remains the lowest of all developing regions. Unless the Mediterranean is able to improve its economic diplomacy track record by introducing the necessary measures to attract the attention of international investors, the latter are much more likely to be attracted to other developing regions.

The importance of Europe and Asia in the world economy, and the ongoing process of globalisation, means that the prosperity of these two regions is inseparably linked. Asia’s long record of dynamic growth, and rapid recovery from the crisis of 1997-98 (not ignoring the ongoing challenges of reform), makes it an essential trade

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\(^8\) The European Commission has proposed in October 2005 and the Council of Ministers have given a mandate to the European Commission that a road map should be agreed with the MPCs for trade liberalisation in agricultural, processed agricultural products and fisheries with a regional mandate providing for a high degree of liberalisation with a very limited number of exceptions and a timetable for implementation consistent with the provisions and objectives of the Association Agreements. Negotiations should be concluded within a year with a view to aligning the liberalisation of trade in agriculture and fisheries with 2010 Free Trade Area objectives.
partner for Europe. In 1992 trade flows between the EU and East Asia have overhauled for the first time the volume of transatlantic trade, thus making East Asia the most important regional trading partner from this time onwards (Dent, 1999: 22). On the other hand Europe’s own weight in the international economy, as the largest single market, the largest source of FDI, and the largest global donor, in addition to its experiences in regional economic and monetary co-operation, makes it an essential partner for Asia.

The most constructive common agenda item for Asia and Europe in the ASEM process is to support multilateralism in general and the WTO in particular. ASEM is not a regional trade agreement, nor is there any need of turning it into one. With APEC becoming increasingly redundant on the one hand and the United States engaging in unilateralism on the other, ASEM can serve as a bulwark of the international trade order. The new challenges facing Asia-Europe relations in the context of globalisation suggest that a particular emphasis should be placed on ASEM's potential to offer a forum for informal dialogue, and to use this forum for enhancing awareness and understanding between the two regions. Thus, this is time of both considerable opportunity and risk for the inter-regional relationship. However, ASEM so far has failed to reach a consensus in the WTO New Round, not to mention that it does not yet act as a multilateral forum to develop embryonic WTO accords or as a force to counter American unilateralism. Therefore it is still an open question if issues like Doha Development Agenda could be considered in the ASEM framework as a paradigm of multilateral utility theory or even could be regarded as an element which could promote inter-regionalism between EU and East Asia.

There is no doubt that the existing levels of trade and investment did not adequately reflect the true economic potential of each region. ASEM would therefore represent an opportunity to give a political impulse to economic cooperation. Both Asia and Europe have benefited tremendously from the economic liberalisation of the past few decades. It is not certain however that the trend in favour of liberalisation will continue automatically. The Asian financial crisis has seen question marks raised once more about the free flow of goods and services. In some developed economies, there are signs of aggressive unilateralism, including frequent recourse to anti-dumping charges.
Given the lengthy local and regional agendas of both Europe and East Asia, the ASEM process will have to sharpen its focus if it is to demonstrate tangible results.

Intra-regional trade in East Asia and Latin America has increased in the last fifteen years. However, FEALAC members as a whole contribute about one-fifth of global trade, and absorb about a fifth of FDI. In terms of intra- FEALAC trade, East Asia accounts for 88 percent, while Latin America accounts of only 8 percent. The trans-Pacific regional trade between East Asia and Latin America economy remains as a relatively low level of 4% (Siddique, 2004: 17). Without doubt the present economic relations does not reflect the potential for trade and investment that exists in an increasingly globalised world. This is particularly true so when the tremendous progress made in reducing barriers to trade in both regions is taken into consideration (Hwee, 2005:46). Regarding FDI Asian investment is mainly concentrated in the major Latin America economies, Japan taking the lead and South Korea having caught up with huge investment projects especially in manufacturing industries. Even if Asian interests increased in absolute numbers, Asian firms did not participate as much as European and US firms in the Latin America FDI boom during the 1990’s (Faust and Mols, 2005:10). The reasons why interregional FDI flows have lagged far behind the dynamic trends of total FDI flows in the two regions include not only the macroeconomic environment but also other economic and social factors. Lack of knowledge of companies in one region in the other, due to cultural, geographical and historical reasons, is one important factor. The scarcity of information, especially about recent trends in trade and FDI, regional integration and existing business opportunities in each other is another important impediment to reciprocal trade and mutual investment. (Kuwayama, 2002:28).

FEALAC member states have clearly stated in the Manila Action Plan of 2004, that they expected to achieve a more equal distribution of the benefits resulting from globalisation. Furthermore, FEALAC could be considered as the result of a diversification strategy aimed at enhancing the position of the participant countries in the North-South dialogues. Thus, while the EU and US developed interregional relations with East Asia, thereby looking to balance an existing situation, East Asia and Latin America approached each other in order to start participating in the modern international system and thus avoiding of being marginalised. Strategic decisions on
how to diversify foreign policy are based on cost-benefit analysis considerations on the parts of the actors involved. At the same time, as Jörn Dosch has observed, peripheral inter-regionalism, like FEALAC, cannot be expected to necessarily generate international regimes or any other kind of measurable effectiveness (Dosch, 2005:186). However, FEALAC’s political and economic weight, despite the promising signs and its importance for the future of East Asia and Latin American countries, is marginal in comparison to other inter-regional process. Definitely, as Marina Cecilia Oliver points out, “cannot be regarded as a way to balance the structure of international system or as a way to contribute to the construction of the global governance structure (Olivet, 2005: 17).

**The Preferred Outcome Criteria: EMP, ASEM and FEALAC**

All three inter-regional groupings do not have importance in influencing global security developments and collective deterrence and were unable so far to become providers of security or to build up a collective regional identity.

The creation of EMP was due mainly to the need for a Mediterranean security policy. The EU with the EMP abandoned the exclusive economic focus of its Mediterranean policy and for the first time the politico-military field was included as an issue to be covered by the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation (Biscop, 2003:121). However, this approach was materialized because the political and security aspect of EMP was paralysed.

Asymmetry in military organisation on the two rims of the Mediterranean basin is an important obstacle for the development of an effective cooperation between the EU and the MPCs. On the Northern rim, national armies are linked to a single alliance, NATO. The development of the CFSP and EDSP of the EU further increases the coordination of the national defence systems of the European members of the Partnership. On the Southern rim, instead national military power, and, in few case, loose bilateral defence agreements are the only means available for a single state to overcome any security dilemma with potential or real enemies (Attina, 2001: 41).

The Middle East stalemate has been not only detrimental to the region itself but has also had a negative impact upon regional relations across the Mediterranean area.
and to the EMP itself. The ten years since 1995 have seen if anything a degeneration in relations both between and within the two peoples- Israelis and Palestinians- involved. Its milestones are familiar: Binyamin Netanyahu’s 1996 election victory, the collapse of Camp David and the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, the building of the “separation wall” and the war of Summer 2006 in Lebanon.

Furthermore the overall political framework is being governed by US hegemony. European Union initiative through the Barcelona process was meant to displace the hegemony of the United States but it has clearly failed. Washington remains the key player in Palestine and indeed launched its own democratisation initiative on the Arab world in 2004 without any apparent reference to the existing Barcelona process. EU is unable for the time being to play a leading role in the Middle East conflict, as the Europeans themselves are as divided as ever in matters of security and foreign policy – as evident by the dispute over Iraq since 2003.

The creation of a 60,000 strong European Rapid reaction force might be invoked to undertake missions in the Mediterranean region, but apart from relatively low-key exchanges of information behind the scenes, the Helsinki (OSCE) and Barcelona processes have so far been kept separate one from the other. One reason for this is historical: most co-operation over the military aspects of regional defence and security have been kept within the Mediterranean dialogues of NATO and the Western European Union over the past years, where the EU had no competence. Another reason has been the emphasis of Barcelona's three-pronged approach, namely, to build partnerships in the spheres of political and security, economic and financial, and human and cultural relations, has taken the 'soft' end of the security sphere as its starting premise.

The security aspect of the EMP also is referring more to the so called soft security issues rather to the traditional ones. Among them is immigration, terrorism, human trafficking, preservation of the environment and others.

FEALAC also has achieved very little compared to the ambitious visions, broad objectives and many good ideas. Although FEALAC, regarding political cooperation, could serve as an effective forum in exchanging views on security issue, all the gatherings of government officials have failed to advance beyond diplomatic rhetoric, and have not broken down the psychological and mental barriers that still divide the two
sides of the Pacific (Jae-Sunk, 2004:77). The main reasons, are: First the wide geographical scope of FEALAC and the fact that many of its members are developing economies meant constraint on resources that can be used for various initiatives to step up cooperation between the two regions. Second, there is still widespread information gap due in part to physical and cultural distance. Third, the internal dynamics and developments within the two regions also impact the attention and interest that both regions accord to each other. Forth, the FEALAC dialogue suffers from the incoherence and lack of actoriness of the two loose regional entities (Hwee, 2006:3), Fifth, there is not definition of priorities. The approach taken is extremely decentralized. The projects are presented on a totally voluntary basis and lack coordination, Sixth, FEALAC lacks financial support, which is probably the main obstacle for enhancing the interaction, but also concreteness and the incentive to design and carry out projects that are not planned and executed on a multilateral level (Wilhelmy and Mann, 2005:42-43).

ASEM political dimension remains symbolic and rhetorical. However, ASEM has been more successful discussing “high politics” than FEALAC. Even at that hand, there have never been common positions and compromise formula beyond a lowest common denominator, despite the fact that ASEM had explicitly included a political and security dimension from the beginning, thus enabling members in principle to bring up security issues. The only significant security issue which ASEM has been able to breach with some concrete results, therefore, has been the situation on the Korean peninsula but even that has been characterized as fortuitous and circumstantial, rather than politically induced (Maull and Okfen, 2006:227). However, Michael Reiterer is of the view that there has been “a substantial political dialogue in ASEM, at all levels, based on one golden rule: the less you write about the political dialogue and the more you actually dialogue, the better the result!(Reiterer, 2002:84).

The EMP is the only inter-regional cooperation scheme which since 2004 has started to change its direction: From asymmetrical inter-regionalism towards a dependent regionalism in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The principles of the ENP reveal a new dimension of how the EU considers itself and looks at the world. “Although there was undoubtedly a discrepancy between theory and practice, as Raffaella Del Sarto and Tobias Schumacher observe, the EMP stressed the importance of north–south and south–south cooperation, along with the notion of
partnership. ‘Wider Europe’ conversely, explicitly conveys a centre–periphery approach with the EU obviously standing at the centre.” (Del Sarto-Schumacher, 2005:27)

The ENP includes the countries of the Western Newly Independent States (NIS), the Caucasus and the Southern Mediterranean countries which have no explicitly recognised prospect of membership. It was developed in 2004, with the objective of avoiding the EU the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and our neighbours.

The ENP was first outlined in a Commission Communication on Wider Europe in March 2003 (Commission of the European Communities, 2003), followed by a more developed Strategy Paper on the ENP published in May 2004 (Commission of the European Communities, 2004). This document sets out in concrete terms how the EU proposes to work more closely with these countries. As part of its report on implementation, in December 2006, the Commission also made proposals as to how the policy could be further strengthened (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). The main emphasis is not on encouraging the countries to cooperate with each other, but on encouraging each to undertake economic and political reforms, in an attempt to influence their internal and external policies. Bilateralism is clearly predominant over regionalism (Smith, 2005a:360). The neighbours are being asked to adopt much of the acquis communautaire, to embrace the values and norms of the EU, and to commit to political reform towards the goal of creating a system that is a mirror image of the European Union in its normative design and value systems (Farell, 2004:25-26). Progress towards greater integration is seen to be more likely to come about by the use of EU leverage on its neighbours separately and it will depend Commission’s evaluation of the situation in each country in the direction desired by the EU (Smith, 2005b: 762-763). So while the ENP will not lead to the formal dissolution of the Euro-Med partnership, it clearly signals a change of direction. Although the EU continues to pay lip service to its multilateral engagement with the MPCs, in practice it has retreated from it (Gavin, 2005: 359). In concrete terms, the EU is presenting a carrot and- stick policy by offering the benefits of closer economic and political ties in exchange for progress by its Mediterranean and Eastern partners in political and economic reform (Farell, 2004:25-26). The ENP from the EU perspective, therefore, is

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm
considered as a process where the relations between itself and its neighbours are unequal and reinforce the power of asymmetries between the EU and the NC (Neighbouring Countries).

The reasons which push the EU to formulate the ENP are many, but the most important ones seems to be the following:

*The Strategic Importance of NC for EU.* Undoubtedly the South Mediterranean areas’ strategic importance to the EU is invaluabel. This strategic importance has been further reinforced by the last enlargement and is due to the following reasons:

First, the region is marked by ongoing, “traditional” crises- the Arab- Israeli conflict, the Palestinian question, the Cyprus problem and the Greek- Turkish dispute, the clash over Western Sahara. The crisis in the Gulf also has demonstrated how important cooperation between some of the frontline Mediterranean Partnership Countries (MPC) and the EU is for the strategic interests of all the member- states.

Second, the region continues to undergo an alarming accumulation of conventional weaponry and proliferation of non conventional weaponry. The amounts of weaponry and proliferation acquired in the area and the growing importance of the armies are particularly impressive, if compared with the figures for the countries to the north of the Mediterranean frontier. Since the 1980’s these elements of instability have been compounded other factors arising from the deterioration of politico- economic conditions in the Mediterranean, namely radical Islam and terrorism.

Third, MPC economies are deteriorating. Most of the MPC face serious development problems: inadequate export earnings and large foreign debts (with implications for employment and food self- sufficiency) as well as general deterioration of the environment (the effects of urbanization) marine pollution, desertification, etc).

Fourth, the total volume of oil which is shipped across the Mediterranean. This volume is influenced by three main variables: a) the level of production in the Mediterranean oil- exporting countries; b) the level of consumption in the Mediterranean oil- importing countries; c) the pattern of the transportation system connecting exporting countries and importing countries that lie outside the Mediterranean (Luciani: 1984:15)
Fifth, demographic pressures are growing. The effects of the ‘population bomb” are quite evident on the southern Mediterranean shores. If present birth rates continue, it is estimated that by the year 2025, 75% of the Mediterranean populations will be of Middle Eastern and Maghreb origin increasing the influx of immigrants in the member states of the EU. The migration issue has become an increasingly important element of so-called “low politics” and of “soft security”, both at the EU and national/bilateral issues (Tsardanidis - Guerra, 2000: 328-329).

The post-enlargement claims to define EU its relations with the new neighbourhoods. After enlargement, the EU was expected to face the unprecedented challenge of formulating its policy towards NC which will not, at least in the foreseeable future, become members of the EU membership, but which play a crucial role in the maintenance of security and stability in Europe (Lavanex, 2004: 681). ENP was conceived as a way of “exporting” some of the benefits offered by the EU without striving for membership. Thus, In order to compensate for potentially damaging effects of long-term or permanent ‘exclusion’, a replacement incentive for regional cooperation was seen by the EU as necessary in order to placate ‘non’ Europe The ENP was also a response to fears that, following the 2004 enlargement, the EU would neglect relations with its Mediterranean and eastern neighbours and set up new barriers (Dodoni-Fantini, 2006:508).

The management of soft security threats by creating a security community. The EU’s attempt to develop a security community is supported by the argument that security threats are common to the entire neighbourhood and must be dealt with in concerted fashion. Terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, smuggling, illegal immigration, cross-border organised crime and environmental hazards are among the concrete threats evoked (Scott, 2005:441).

Towards Dependencia Regionalism?
ENP has been considered by many analysts as a principal testing ground for validating what kind of relations EU would develop with its neighbours.

Ronal Dannreutther and James Wesley Scott claim that ENP would create a “post – Westphalian” security regime would not be centred on the interests of individual states and on balances of power. It would, rather, be based on a recognition of
interdependence between nations and the necessity of a much wider political agenda of development in order to stabilise the world geopolitical system (Scott, 2005:433). EU - a post-Westphalian power- is gaining influence through encouraging the internal transformation of societies rather than through physical or military coercion (Dannreutther, 2006: 184).

Mary Farell believes that cooperative hegemony approach could serve as a satisfactory explanation for the EU approach to inter-regionalism. She claims that ENP suggests many of the elements in the cooperative hegemony approach. Emphasising shared values, the European Commission highlights notions of partnership and cooperation, stressing the interdependence and need for collective decision-making by the EU and its neighbours on the new eastern frontier (Farell, 2004:24-26).

Others, like Björn Hettne, considers the ENP as a soft form of imperialism (asymmetric partnership) based on conditionality, the prize ranging from assistance to full membership. The success story is the transformation and integration of Central and Eastern Europe, which in fact implied a large number of resolved and prevented conflicts (Hettne, 2004:11). Ulla Helm as well as observes that the ENP can be perceived “as a new edition of the colonialism” by the NC on their way in the new cooperation framework (Holm, 2005).

Inter-regional dialogues may promote “regionalism through inter-regionalism”. One of the implications is that region-building, leading to such inter-regional relationships, is creating its own dynamic of more region-building. (Boäss-Machand-Shaw, 2005, p.168).

Inter-regionalism is not only fundamentally cooperative in nature, intended to bring benefits to both parties through voluntary negotiations but it could be perceived also a) as a product of asymmetrical relationship, and b) as an expression of the hegemon’s strategy or as a response to it by other actors. As Heiner Hänggi has observed “regionalism through inter-regionalism” may to a large extent, be explained by the sharp asymmetry of terms of regional actor quality in all those cases where the EU is a counterpart of a regional group of states” (Hänggi, 2006:39)

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10 Soft form of imperialism refers to an asymmetric relationship, and the imposition of norms in order to promote the EU’s self-interest rather than a genuine (interregional) dialogue as a foundation for sustainable global governance (Hettne- Söderbaum, 2005:15)
Therefore, ENP should not be considered as a type of inter-regionalism, but as a process of “regionalism through inter-regionalism” which could be named as dependencia regionalism. The ENP expresses through differentiated bilateralism (Action plans) the aim of exporting the EU’s values and expand its economic and political interests and less of promoting sub-regionalism in the Mediterranean or/and inter-regional contacts between EU and MPC. (See diagram 11).

**Diagram 11**

**Dependecia Regionalism**

1. Trade imbalance
2. Dependence on FDI
3. Development Aid
4. Economic gap

1. Provision of Security
2. Political conditionality
3. Promotion of regional identity of regionalism
4. Support of Intra-regionalism

European Neighbourhood policy

Wider Europe as a Megaregion

Michelle Pace states ENP intends to promote intra-regional, sub-regional and cross-border cooperation and underlines the acceptance from the EU’s side that the
Mediterranean is made up of a number of sub-units which challenge –even- refute- any unifying ides and therefore any holistic policy approach (Pace, 2006:87). Karen Smith also argues the EU is the world’s foremost example of regional integration, has prided itself on boosting regionalism elsewhere in the world, and now claims to be supporting effective multilateralism everywhere. Not doing so in its own backyard seems a rather curious paradox (Smith, 2005b: 772). By promoting ENP the EU has started a process of building up a new region – Wider Europe- which consists from homocentric circles. According to Fabrizio Tassinari five regional clusters can be identified in the post-2004 European neighbourhood:

1. Northern Europe
2. Mediterranean
3. Balkans
4. Black Sea Region and
5. Eastern Dimension (See diagram 8)

Diagram 12

Source: Tassinari (2005: 12)
ENP therefore should be perceived as a process leading towards a mega region of a the Wider Europe.

Conclusions

The paper by proposing a typology of comparing inter-regionalism tried to examine the similarities and differences of three different forms of inter-regionalism: ASEM (transregionalism), EMP (asymmetrical hybrid trans-regionalism) and FEALAC (peripheral inter-regionalism) EMP. The analysis points at the need for more empirical comparative studies as a way of assessing the real value and impact of inter-regionalism. A fundamental question which has been raised by Yeo Lay Hwee about ASEM but applies also to EMP and FEALAC is the following: How do the members states themselves look at inter-regionalism? Do they see inter-regionalism as an instrument that can be used effectively to address issues of regional concern, global governance, and influencing world politics? Or do they see it merely as an instrument to promote narrow self-interests? (Hwee, 2003:181).

Following the above typology we were able to find out some similarities and differences between the three inter-regional cooperations:

- All three have three-pillar agenda, comprising economic dialogue, political dialogue and other (socio-cultural), have loose membership where countries participating on their own individual basis. All three norms such as non-interference and decisions are made strictly by consensus.

- It is not only the states and their constituencies which push the process of inter-regionalism and establish an agenda but also institutional bridges have also flourished among Parliaments, economic actors and civil societies more in case of EMP and ASEM and less in FEALAC. All these ACTORS are making proposals, mobilising public opinion, using indirect strategies and organise their own monitoring of the development of the inter-regional cooperation.

- All have more or less the same organisational mechanisms. ASEM and EMP however are much more institutionalised than FAELAC.

- The contribution of all three to global governance in terms of institution-building do not have importance in influencing global security developments and collective deterrence.
All have not so far managed to reduce barriers and obstacles to trade and FDI despite the fact that a liberalization has been achieved at a certain extent. However, in ASEM and EMP trade ad FDI relationships are much stronger than in FEALAC. Collective identity building through inter-regionalism is minimal.

All are considered as vehicles for balancing the massive influence of the US in their region but are not able to function as a bridge between regionalism and multilateralism to be used on the parts of the partners for support on some WTO and UN issues and consequently cannot be regarded as a way to balance the structure of the international system.

In EMP and ASEM EU uses interregional relations to export its values and concepts of good governance.

The EMP is the only inter-regional cooperation scheme which since 2004 has started to change its direction: From asymmetrical inter-regionalism towards dependencia regionalism in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). ENP therefore, should be perceived not as a type of inter-regionalism, but as a process of “regionalism through inter-regionalism” which will lead to the creation of a mega-region extending from the “Atlantic to the Urals and the Caucasus” and from the “Barent Sea to Sahara desert” based on homocentric circles of integration.

Finally, whereas much of the three interregional relations are conducted under the pretext of mutual benefits and win–win solutions, the distribution of these benefits seems to be a function of the relative power positions of the stronger region vis–à–vis its counterparts. The stronger the counterpart, the more concessions are given by the other. With weaker ‘partners’, the EU for example dictates much more of the conditions for interregional cooperation. (Söderbaum – Stalgren- Van Langenhove, 2005:377). As Helge Hveem has noticed the dynamism in the contemporary inter-regional relations may probably be interpreted along two dimensions: The first is related to hegemony and sees inter-regional activism as an expression of the hegemon’s strategy and the second as a response to it by other actors (Hveem, 2003:97). This could explain how the EU negotiates with the relatively strong East Asian region and how to the weak MPCs.
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