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THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AS AN INTERNATIONAL ACTOR IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

This research aims to discuss the role of the European Union (EU) in developing countries in establishing democracy, rule of law and development. The EU has been considered an international actor since its establishment. Various literatures argue that the EU plays a significant role in developing countries. In this context, this study highlights the various roles of the EU and their multi-dimensional engagement in developing countries. Furthermore, the article also traces the EU's actorness through its cooperation in several areas of engagement such as international cooperation in global peace and conflict settlement, military, sustainable development, economic cooperation, humanitarian background, cultural engagement and other activities. The qualitative study is applied here to generate an argument through the primary and secondary sources of data, where the research traces vis-à-vis the review of books and articles of the scholars in international relations. The empirical analysis aims to highlight the main problems of developing countries and evaluate the role of the EU as a problem-solving actor for better social development. As a result, the EU itself and its various associate institutions have been working in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceanian countries in many sectors for a stable government with democratic norms and ethos. The initial findings of this article are that the EU is the largest aid provider in many countries of Asia and Africa and supports institutional development in war zone regions in the world.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to describe the EU's role in the developing countries as an actor to promote sustainable development, socio-economic development, peace and security. The EU is a key international organization since its gradual establishment. It has focused on economic empowerment, sustainable development, social harmony, democracy promotion, and environmental security. The EU policies are based on achieving economic development in the European countries as well as in the developing countries of the world. Thus, the EU itself aims to better economic cooperation in the countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Caribbean countries. The EU adopted multidimensional goals to promote democratic norms, the peacekeeping process, education, health security and others. Specifically, the EU agenda beyond European countries acts as an international actor to help in the field of sustainable social development and economic partnership in developing countries. Article two of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) shapes the overarching objectives of the EU to spread economic development in the developing world. Since the last decade, the EU's maritime policy has also included oceanic countries as economic partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Regarding the EU as an actor to participate in the construction of sustainable economic growth. The EU has been participating in the peacekeeping mission in the Gulf countries and African countries for a long period. Inevitably, in light of the economic approach of the EU mutual cooperation and financial support, it is always moving forward. By and large, the paper explores the role of the EU as an international actor to promote economic development, peace and democracy, social harmony, and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the paper demonstrates empirically the theoretical capabilities of filling the gap among the developing countries through the sustainable development programme since 2000. The scholarly debate tries to find out the EU's effectiveness as an international actor to what extent it becomes a success story. In order to study, we can explore the EU's policies shape for the trade and business partnership in the prism of realist and liberal approaches. Moreover, the objective of this research is to investigate how the EU nurtures various policies in developing countries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Internationally, the concept of sustainable development and economic partnership is the key agenda of the EU as an international actor. It is the prime objective to settle down the economic engagement with the developing countries. The developing countries need economic support for the overall development of the country. Many economic power groups are investing in these underdeveloped countries from Asia and Africa (Burchell & Lightfoot, 2004; Vogler & Stephan, 2007). The Union's development is prevailed in the economic area to eradicate global poverty. It is an inclusive economic development agenda for third-world countries. The developing countries don't have proper mechanisms to expedite overall development. The EU's countries are establishing the basic infrastructure of industries, power

plants, irrigation systems, health, and education in many African countries. The EU wants to expand their role as a larger donor of socio-economic development of the developing countries. It is encouraging direct private investment and sharing clean technology to the formation of the automobile industry and with related institutions (Bretherton & Vogler, 2008). The EU has influenced the world's economic powers so that the Union can operate successful economic cooperation and other initiatives beyond the boundary. Explicitly or implicitly, the global communities understand that the role of the EU as an actor is gaining importance in the international arena. EU policies have pioneered the development agenda, which is the opportunity to make gains on the notion of opportunities, presence and capacity in the underdeveloped countries. The EU's Reform Treaty (Art. 3.5) highlighted the wider relation among the developing countries. The norms of the treaty support their values and interests in the countries. Specifically, the role of the EU as actorness to promote and contribute to peace and security in developing countries. It shall cooperate to the gradual development of the earth, creating respect among peoples. The rules of the treaty also advocate free and fair trade, the eradication of poverty. The solidarity and protection of human rights are very important agenda for the EU (Ginsberg, 1999).

In recent years, political pundits have accepted that the EU has become a global normative power. The normatively desirable values and the EU extend their support worldwide to expedite the norms of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and respect the minority community. The area often includes a normative mission that has been adopted by the EU law (Bengtsson, 2008, 2009). The EU's flagship policy for eastward enlargement in Europe initiated the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Another strategic partnership had started with Russia beyond the EU border. In the light of following strategic economic engagement, the EU extended their reach toward intercontinental connectivity (Bengtsson & Elgström, 2012). Further, the EU extended ENP policy with regional consideration as a form of Eastern Partnership in 2009. There are six countries engaged in the initiative, mainly Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The EU focuses on these countries regarding all aspects of socio-economic cooperation.

In order to maintain the peace and security, the EU always seems to heavily participate under the United Nations (UN) flag. European troops get involved in making peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The EU participates in the peacebuilding process in the South Caucasus, Africa, West Asia and elsewhere. The role of the EU in starting the peace process as an international actor is important in the world politics because it is a strong international organisation that has great relevance in the world. Inevitably, the role of the EU is of great importance in the fast-changing world and it is generating pros and cons. The rapidly changing world order creates several crises as well as many opportunities for the international actors. Thus, the EU is involved in assisting for better understanding between the two countries. It is a successful example of a peace process through integration and cooperation among the member states. It provides international security through agreements and treaties (Solana, 2005). To strengthen political and economic ties among developing countries, the EU has initiated a policy of interregional and regional cooperation. The EU used incisive behaviours to accelerate and promote the differentiated approach in the international arena. Thus, developing countries are associated with the EU (Grugel, 2002). Within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the EU expands the economic interconnection in Latin America, Asia and African countries. The CFSP dialogue is a success for the EU which has been benefited from these initiatives (Smith, 1997).

The EU has the central international agenda; therefore, it has agreements with developing countries on trade, aid and commercial activities. Since 1980, the EU has been initiating the possibility of growth of interdependence and interpenetration. Due to the EU's economic engagement outside the Union's borders, it attracted many countries and served as a bridge between the market and regulatory structures. According to the Treaty of Rome, the EU had set up the Single Market programme in various countries. Since the last decade, the role of the market economy has increased enormously due to globalization. As a result, the European Council (EC) and the EU have to pioneer the new structure and procedure to deal with mergers, acquisitions, and as public procurement, market access at the international level (Woolcock, 1992, 2012; Harrison, 1994; Woolcock & Michael Hodges, 1996; Smith, 1997, 1999; Young, 2002).

In the era of open regionalism, the European Union establishes bilateral, trilateral, and strategic partnerships with many regional organisations and other countries. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Latina American regionalism of South American Economic Organisation (MERCOSUR) established a new relationship and joined in this endeavour with the EU's economic cooperation. The EU's economic policy extends its relationship with middle eastern countries, North African countries and India. This kind of cooperation establishes interregionalism which is shaping the world like the broader architecture of global governance to benefit the maximum number of people from developing countries (Hånggi, 2006). The EC constituted a unique international regionalism through its external economic cooperation among various countries from the world. The emergence of globalisation expedited the strategic partnership towards Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Pursuing proactive economic policy has caused the EU to engage beyond European borders.

3. THE EUROPEAN UNION INITIATIVES BEYOND EUROPEAN BORDER

The EU has initiated economic cooperation from the Latin American countries as an involvement with the Southern Common Market. Furthermore, at the primary level, economic engagement incorporated group-to-group wider rapprochement. Therefore, the Union's approach reflects the same pattern as the ASEAN member states. While the EU is actively engaging in capacity building and fostering ties with MERCOSUR in Latin America, perceptions of US policies may currently enjoy greater trust among the population. Addressing these perceptions involves showcasing the tangible benefits of EU initiatives and aligning them more closely with the priorities and expectations of Latin American countries.

The people of Brazil gave the US a higher rate in comparison to the EU's commitment in Latin America (Fioramonti & Poletti, 2008). The EU's ties with India suffer from low visibility in the sense of economic cooperation, aid and other issues. The EU is not as much visible in India as other global players. France's engagement with India goes beyond just economic cooperation; it encompasses strategic, defence, cultural, and multilateral dimensions, reflecting a comprehensive and deepening bilateral relationship (Bharti, 2022). For security concerns, the EU shows the way for the settlement of peace. Security remains a complex and multifaceted issue in today's world, affecting national stability, economic prosperity, human rights, and international relations. Addressing security challenges requires comprehensive strategies, cooperation between nations, and adaptation to evolving threats and vulnerabilities. Today everywhere people are scared of crises, insurgencies, and terrorism. The security

issues of third-world countries are becoming international concerns. As an international actor, the EU policymaker seems to provide humanitarian assistance. The European countries agreed on a consensus for development in 2006, it is a principal strategic move in the field of development. The development policy is a key approach to focus on developing countries. This agenda, also called development, is the heart of the European policy for developing countries. The EU's security approach is linked to the fight against poverty in developing countries. To fight against global poverty is not only a moral obligation, but also building much stable, peaceful, equitable world prosperity among peoples. Furthermore, security and development implicitly highlighted the EU's commitment to the complete eradication of poverty from developing countries (Keukeleire & Raube, 2013).

The process of development is a key element of established peace and security in any country. The EU's sustained assistance and support play a vital role in promoting development, peace, and respect for the rule of law in African countries. These efforts are aimed at achieving sustainable progress and enhancing the well-being of populations across the continent. The relationship between development cooperation and security is also explicit in the EU's commitment under the agreement. The African, Pacific, and Caribbean countries (APC) are involved in the EU's initiatives of development cooperation. The EU's policy discourse is a prime approach to participate in developing countries as an international actor. It is the main official policy process to initiate security and development issues. Thus, the EU's recognition expedited the notion of security and development. To some extent, the EU incorporates the security issue with the developing countries. The discourse focuses on limited securitization and large levels of economic development in the region. The discourse emphasizes that there should be a coherent environment through the pair of security and development policies.

Since the last decade, the African countries have emerged in the large picture for international actors to cooperate there as multidimensional approaches. The EU has challenges from other larger economic powers in Africa, the US and China. Moreover, the Indian entrepreneurs are being settled in their industry, plants, and agricultural industry. Above mentioned economic powers with full potential are involving many sectors. They are doing everything possible in these countries, which are challenging issues for the Union to do better to compete with other countries that seem to invest on a larger scale (Howorth, 2007). The EU is also involved in a general interest in those areas where security and migration have caused an increase in security problems. Since the developing countries have gained international attention in their region, as geo-economics politics have changed the dynamics of international cooperation in these demanding areas. That is why global economic powers have started economic cooperation with third-world countries. The Chinese project Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) is spreading across the world. China has started many projects in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa. This is a global geo-economics commitment and it is also a challenge for other regional organisations and countries.

The EU policy has pioneered its external policy to better cooperate and construct a comprehensive interregional multidimensional partnership with countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is expanding geo-economics areas and creating interregionalism. It is a great characteristic of the EU to extend their cooperation with the developing countries. It is creating long-term relationships with these countries at an intercontinental level. This relationship is based on the normative and material dimensions of the international order. By and large, the EU is supporting the proper development of developing countries. The EU provides ad-

equate help to countries in difficult times. It is a key priority of the Union to promote geo-economic partnerships in developing countries.

A free-trade agreement (FTA) is pushing ahead further potential for non-traditional profit. This agreement accelerates the economic reforms in developing countries (Collier & Gunning, 1995). The element of liberalisation measures and sound economic and trade policies gain the charm of real economic growth. In a general sense, trade impacts bilateral agreements. It can affect implicitly the percentage of export values. The EU's imports from developing countries often benefit from preferential treatment under FTAs and other trade schemes, allowing for significant market access advantages. This plays a crucial role in supporting economic development and trade diversification in these countries. The duty rate is marginal because they are industrial goods, raw materials, and not relevant to the products of subjects. In contrast, developing countries have relatively changes at a small level either from the actual EU and third countries FTAs or extended to fully free trade. In the context of the Doha Development Agenda, it could exceed the recent annual flows of official development aid from industrialized countries. In this regard, many of the gains for developing countries in the Euro-Med agreements and the agreement with South Africa could just as well have been achieved through unilateral trade liberalization and reform, combined with increased help and technical assistance (Francois, McQueen & Wignaraja, 2005).

4. THE EU AS PEACEKEEPER

The cooperation between the EU and the UN leads the peacekeeping process in the developing world. The EU's policy on international conflict management is holistic and multifaceted, focusing on prevention, mediation, crisis response, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and promoting international norms and human rights. It reflects the EU's commitment to global peace and security through diplomatic, political, and practical engagement in conflict-affected regions worldwide. The EU always supports the UN to lead comprehensive peacekeeping missions in African countries. Therefore, EU policymakers want to seize an opportunity to become a major global player that can resolve the international conflict beyond the European border. The EU is a transnational organization and achieves peace settlement in the European sphere. At an international level, the UN is a prime actor to perform the initial step to make the decision and the EU supports the stance of the UN. And the EU is providing funds, military support, aid and others (Hussain, 2016). The UN has accelerated the peacekeeping mission in the countries but behind the curtain, the EU is playing a key role in supporting the peacekeeping mission in the developing countries (Bove & Elia, 2011). During the military operations, the European forces participate as a NATO army. Several EU-associated agencies are supplying the necessary stuff for the affected people in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Congo, Central African Republic (CAS), Niger, Mali, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Somalia, and Sudan.

The collaboration between the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) in African countries is significant and multifaceted. The collaboration between the UN and AU in African countries is essential for promoting peace, security, development, and respect for human rights. Their partnership highlights the importance of regional ownership, collective action, and solidarity in addressing complex challenges facing the continent. They are always supported by the EU in the process of conflict management in this area. However, the EU

and other allied countries, notably France, Britain, and the US have good internal and external cooperation to support the UN and AU peace settlement process in Africa (Williams, 2017). For instance, during the period 2004–2005, the EU provided €2 billion to support peace operations in African countries through its African Peace Facility. NATO has been involved in peacemaking in Darfur and Somalia. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and AU are getting financial support from the EU for peacekeeping operations in various countries. The EU is also supporting the non-UN peacekeeping mission in many countries (Gaibulloev et al., 2015).

The EU won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for establishing peace in the world. The Norwegian Nobel Committee conferred to the EU, which supports the construction of peacekeeping missions in the developing world. This is the liberal approach of the EU to support peacekeeping operations. Since the EU won the Nobel Peace Prize, European security problems have changed dramatically, as Russia captured Crimea and fueled tension on Ukraine's eastern border. It has now turned into a full-fledged war between Russia and Ukraine since the last week of February 2022 (Birchfield, Krige & Young, 2017).

The joint declaration has been made between the UN and the EU to cooperate in crisis management and the peace process agreement took effect on the 19th of October, 2003. Similarly, the Cooperation in Military Crisis Management Operation had developed between two partners on the 17th of June, 2004. The cooperation between the EU and the UN has strengthened the joint peacekeeping mission on many continents. Wherever in the world crises escalate into large violence, the role of NATO's peacekeeping operation has been realised under the UN banner. The EU's peacekeeping combined forces have been staying for a long time in many Asian and African countries for the establishment of peace and security. Many peace projects of the UN need support from the EU. UN policy has been based on the EU's support for peacekeeping activities in many countries. Specifically, in the context of African countries where the UN depends on the EU's support. There is also a policy that the EU can directly support the UN-led operations (Willa, 2016).

The EU was just known before 2000 as a regional peacekeeper which has been limited within the European border. Thus, many political scientists claim the EU is focusing on maintaining peace and security in Europe only, but later on, it expanded the mission beyond the European border (Missiroli, 2003). Since the 2010, the EU has been present in many regions of the world. Now the EU Peacekeeping missions are present on three continents. It is supporting the peacekeeping mission in Somalia in Africa. Similarly, the EU Border Assistance Mission is involved in Libya for a peace settlement. In the Asian region, it is supporting the Palestinians as a form of the EU Co-ordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support since the peacekeeping mission started in 2017. The European Union's military and civil missions and operations facilitate all support in the affected regions of the world. Over the last two decades, the EU itself developed strong capabilities to launch successful peacekeeping operations. Until now, the EU has been a reliable regional partner of the UN at the international level. Ultimately, the EU is continuously supporting the UN's peacekeeping mission to maintain peace and security in the developing world. Nevertheless, despite many uncertainties, the EU seems to provide the necessary support to save humanity and is dedicated to working with the UN. Thus, the EU itself shows an enthusiastic approach to support humanity at the global level. That is why the EU has emerged as a strong regional organisation to cooperate in multidimensional areas among the member states.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study has examined the role of the EU as an international actor to pioneer cooperation in development sectors. The EU as an international key promoter of social values and norms in developing countries justify the notion of normative great power in the world. The empirical research has resulted in the EU's policy successfully being incorporated in developing countries. But the developing countries need much investment in a larger context. The EU development programme boosted the concept of inter-regionalism. Economic cooperation has successfully linked the relationship between the EU institutions and member states. Whatever the EU wants to do in the developing countries has successfully been settled. The EU institutions also failed to establish clear contact with many countries in Asia and Africa. It is a difficult task to successfully launch the projects in central and eastern African countries.

The study finds out that the EU is successfully initiating the peacekeeping mission and supporting the UN. Many projects achieved the goal with the joint effort of the EU and UN. During the Balkan War in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the peacekeeping mission was successfully launched by the EU. The EU used normative power to resolve the Balkan war under the UN flag. The EU and its member states play a significant role in supporting peacekeeping missions in Asia and Africa through financial contributions, military and police deployments, training, humanitarian aid, development assistance, and diplomatic engagement. Their collaborative efforts contribute to international peace and security efforts, fostering stability and supporting conflict-affected regions in their path towards peace and development. Apart from the peacekeeping mission, the EU is a part of many international projects aiming at eradicating poverty from the world. The EU's health programme mission established a good network in these countries. This is the main concern of the EU to reduce poverty and improve health in developing countries. According to the EU's law, the developing countries are getting financial assistance and various kinds of economic support. In the education sector, the universities and institutions from the EU countries provide Erasmus Mundus and Marie-Curie scholarships for higher education. There are also several projects run by higher institutions from EU countries that are hiring researchers, scholars, professors, scientists, and skilled professionals from developing countries. The abovementioned EU initiatives serve as an example that the EU's action is relevant to the world order. The conclusion outlines the EU's multidimensional approaches to the well-being of global communities which is demonstrating that the EU plays as an international actor. The UN policymaker also appreciates the collaboration of the EU for the welfare of the world community.

The EU engages actively in multilateral forums and partnerships with international organizations, regional bodies, and civil society organizations to coordinate efforts and leverage resources for sustainable development in developing countries. The EU's role as an international actor in developing countries is multifaceted, encompassing development aid, trade, humanitarian assistance, democracy promotion, environmental sustainability, peacebuilding, research and innovation, education, and multilateral cooperation. Through these efforts, the EU contributes to improving livelihoods, promoting stability, and supporting sustainable development in partner countries across the globe. The EU engages in initiatives to address climate change, environmental degradation, and natural resource management in developing countries. This includes funding for renewable energy projects, climate adaptation measures, conservation efforts, and promoting sustainable practices. The EU provides significant humanitarian aid to respond to crises and emergencies in developing countries affected by

conflicts, natural disasters, and other humanitarian crises. These initiatives aim to integrate developing countries into the global economy, enhance their export capacities, and stimulate economic growth and job creation. This research also indicates that development aid from the EU focuses on areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, governance, and private sector development.

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