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The EU as a Global Actor

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Introduction

In order to achieve a coherent European foreign and security policy and strengthen the EU's voice in global affairs, the Lisbon Treaty established the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR). The HR, until summer 2014 Catherine Ashton, and currently Federica Mogherini, is assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and is charged with ensuring consistency and coordination of the Union's external actions. The new service was meant to cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, and to enhance the consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and other Union policies. Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and comply with the Union's actions in this area.

In several ways, however, the EU has always been an international actor. Actually, it has been possible to characterize the EU as an international actor ever since the Treaty of Rome and the establishment of the European Community. The reason for this is simple: a customs union has an internal and an external dimension. As regards the latter, relations with the external environment must be defined and subsequently cultivated.

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Moreover, an increasing number of "internal" policies have attained "external" dimensions over time and, on top of that, the Union increasingly aspired to international engagement. Today, EU involvement in global affairs can be related to many different policy fields, and objectives are being pursued through bilateral and multilateral relations. Policy areas are typically intertwined and cannot be handled in isolation, as they are more or less related to other policy fields. International health policy, for example, is related to other areas such as humanitarian aid, development, trade and agricultural policy. Directly or indirectly, each policy area has contributed to constituting the EU's role as a global actor. Strengthening this role requires the thorough coordination of often complementary but potentially also contradictory policy areas. Finally, the EU is a union of sovereign states, but each policy area is characterized by its distinct balance between "Union" and "Member States," depending on how much sovereignty was transferred to the EU level in a specific area.

This chapter examines the role of the EU as a global actor and discusses the contribution of the newly established EEAS in this context. The first part of the chapter examines the potential of the HR and the EEAS to promote a coherent European external policy and strengthen the EU's role in the world. Subsequently, we examine the EU's portfolio of international policies and those EU policies with an international dimension. The third section reviews the EU's web of bilateral and multilateral relations through which the policies are implemented while also encountering the policies of third states. We emphasize the interaction between bilateral and multilateral relations. Finally, we conclude and outline a number of broader perspectives.

Foreign Policy with the EU's Actor Characteristics

In 2010, the European Commission urged a stronger common European voice in international health policy.[1] The initiative was followed by Council Conclusions on global health, calling on EU Member States and the Commission to act together in all internal and external health policies and actions and to increase the EU's leadership in meeting global health challenges.[2] This kind of interplay between Member States and EU institutions is typical of the EU. However, the example represents only one policy area, highlighting how the task of formulating coherent international

policies involves major challenges. In order to meet these and other challenges and strengthen the EU's voice in global affairs, the Lisbon Treaty established the HR, who subsequently set up the EEAS in 2011.

The development of a common foreign policy does not imply that national foreign policies are withering away.[3] The EU is a union of Member States, but each policy area is characterized by its distinct balance between "Union" and "Member States," and individual member states may obstruct common policies and decisions in different policy areas. The HR exercises, in foreign affairs, the function which so far were exercised by the six-monthly rotating Presidency, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Commissioner for External Relations (EEAS website). In terms of a common voice, who speaks for Europe is not always obvious. In policy areas within the domain of the CFSP, the HR represents the Union, although the Member States remain the dominant *decision*-makers. In other areas, such as trade, the European Commission has exclusive competence to represent the EU in the world, such as in the WTO.

The configuration of involved institutions, their roles and their policy- and decision-making processes vary across policy areas, and it matters whether a policy is primarily internal or external. To complicate matters, this configuration changes over time and change is sometimes triggered by formal Treaty reform processes, and at other times by social or institutional learning. For outsiders, identifying a relevant negotiation partner and how large the scope for negotiation is can take some time.

The decision to create the EEAS is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty and was driven by aspirations to strengthen the EU as a global actor and to enhance the possibility of achieving a coherent European foreign and security policy. The HR is "double-hatted": as Commission Vice President, the HR is in principle able to coordinate policy areas placed in different parts of the Commission; toward Member States, the HR chairs the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), thus replacing the former EU Presidency in this task. The creation of the EEAS placed the EU delegations within this single hierarchical entity, a move which may strengthen the coordination between the EU and Member State delegations in third country capitals.

These aspirations clearly informed the decade-long process leading to the Constitutional Treaty, and the aspirations maintained their momentum and came to fruition in the Lisbon Treaty despite the failure of the

Constitutional Treaty. Five years after the Lisbon Treaty came into force, aspirations have been replaced by sometimes serious frustrations, especially because the EEAS seems not to have significantly strengthened the EU as a global actor or contributed to the EU's global impact. Five factors explain why this is the case.

First, the process of creating the EEAS was highly politicized and the implementation of the blueprint demonstrated that key players had significantly different ideas about what the EEAS should be like or capable of. Along the vertical axis, the balance between Member States and the new EU service had to be defined, which proved to be no plain sailing. The EEAS should support the HR in ensuring compliance with common decisions by the Member States [TEU Article 24(3)]. Member States shall support the Union's foreign policy, comply with its decisions and develop their national foreign policies in the spirit of mutual solidarity. (Ref. 4, p. 19) The EEAS must rely on informal instruments such as persuasion, leadership and the "goodwill" of Member States. Along the horizontal axis, the EEAS has an element of supranationality and an element of intergovernmentalism, as it is situated somewhere between the European Commission and the Council Secretariat — but where exactly? As Commission Vice President, the HR is tasked with coordinating the activities of fellow Commissioners on "other aspects of external action" [TEU Article 18(4)]. But the Commission is still eager to maintain the responsibility for the external dimensions of internal policies as well as for development and enlargement policies, a feature that can render the task of horizontal coordination almost impossible.[5]

Second, the EEAS is a merger of institutions employing former staff from the Commission and the Council Secretariat together with Member State diplomats. Any textbook on organizational mergers will emphasize how such merger processes tend to be difficult exercises for the management, merged units and staff alike. The processes are influenced by great uncertainty among staff, institutional inertia and different organizational cultures. Ways of doing things tend to be disrupted (sometimes intentionally), and nostalgia might trump future scenarios.[6] Creating a unified and professional organization also requires staff training. Member State diplomats must learn more about the EU, while personnel from the Commission, many with a more technical

background, will require better understanding of diplomacy; however, the EEAS has no training facility that can contribute to achieving those objectives.[6]

Third, the EEAS was created on the basis of a Council Decision (2010/427/EU of 26 July 2010 establishing the organization and functioning of the European External Action Service, Article 6 para 11, OJL 201, 3 August 2010). The Commission, the Council and the European Parliament have therefore significant influence in defining the financial and human resources of the new diplomatic service. The enhancement of a strong and coherent European foreign policy requires that the EEAS gain some level of autonomy.[5] However, the emerging literature on the EEAS suggests that the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament might continue to utilize their budget control as an instrument for limiting the autonomy of the HR and the EEAS.[6]

Fourth, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty has been marked by systematic obstruction from the UK government, not least the Conservative Party. The Conservatives failed to acknowledge the implications of the Lisbon Treaty; and when they did, they attempted to undermine them. While previous Conservative British governments frequently attacked the *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the edifice of the EU's legal order, the current UK government has targeted the EEAS and other novel bodies. The Conservative Party seems to be drifting into a position of isolationism *vis-à-vis* Europe.

Fifth, the EEAS is headed by the High Representative, previously Catherine Ashton and now Federica Mogherini. Ashton was not the first choice (but would Tony Blair have done a better job?); she was relatively inexperienced and the job description had "mission impossible" written all over it. Member States express dissatisfaction when she acts too independently — but also when she waits to see if consensus can be established among the Member States. She is supposed to fly to global hot spots and distribute ECHO food packages, but also to set out strategic directions for the EU in the EEAS headquarters at *Place Schuman* (in a triangular building first made available to the EEAS three years *after* it was supposed to function). In short, the HR/EEAS story is so dense with pros and cons that unambiguous analytical accounts are bound to suffer from a lack of credibility.

Despite the critique of the EEAS outlined above, however, it is still too early to properly assess the new body. The EEAS is still a relatively new service, and with Federica Mogherini we are only at the HR version 2.0. There is still room for learning, consolidation and new people that might drive the organization forward. With the interim Iran deal — which would not have been possible without Ashton having stayed in dialogue with Iran over several years — Ashton and the EEAS have gained in authority. Second, the extensive criticism of the EEAS is possibly the result of a lack of empirical research on the new body and how it operates. The relatively narrow literature on the EEAS has been focusing on *a priori* evaluations of organizational constraints. There has been limited empirical work on whether, when and how the EEAS and its delegations promote the implementation of coherent EU foreign policy. Thus, we still know relatively little about how the EEAS works and whether the new institution has brought changes toward more coherent EU foreign policy.

In summary, the EU can be characterized as a composite or patchwork actor — even an accidental superpower.[7] The Lisbon Treaty changed the configuration of the composite actor; specifically, entities from the European Commission (such as the former DG Relex) and the Council Secretariat have been merged and contribute significantly to the volume of the EEAS. In this fashion, the EU might appear less patchwork-like than previously, but the distribution of competence continues to vary significantly across policy areas, and the direct involvement of EU Member States staff in the EEAS has added a novel component to the composite actor.

The EU's International Policies

The EU's portfolio of international policies, i.e. policies aimed at changing the state of affairs outside the EU, has expanded considerably over time. Health policy has been one of the more recent additions to these policies. This section provides an overview of the international policies and, moreover, discusses key issues such as the EU's performance — the extent to which the EU achieves its policy objectives — and changes related to the Lisbon Treaty.

Variation is generally the name of the game. In several policy areas, e.g. trade and development, the EU is a relatively experienced player, not least because these policy areas have been handled by the EU ever since the Rome Treaty. In other policy areas, such as territorial defense, the EU is hardly a player at all. In between these two options, there is a mixed zone of arrangements. The general impact of the Lisbon Treaty is that the EU remains a composite, patchwork-like actor, now just characterized by new configurations. The EU therefore remains challenged within several policy fields. Acknowledging this diversity is very important in order to understand the EU as an international actor.

When examining the EU's international policies, it is useful to consider the origin of international policies. The rationale for some of the international policies is that they represent the international dimension of domestic EU policies. In the late 1960s, Philippe Schmitter pointed out the expectation that domestic would spill over into international and formulated the "externalization hypothesis." This externalization feature is hardly unique to the EU, as it characterizes the foreign affairs of many states around the world, demonstrated for instance by line ministries handling a range of international questions. Obviously, this is far from the classical image of the ministry of foreign affairs managing foreign interests in a manner detached from any domestic factors, but it more accurately characterizes the state of affairs at the beginning of the 21st century.

Moreover, foreign affairs also include policies aimed at shaping the environment in which the EU is operating. Enlargement policy is one example of the EU having an interest in and being able to shape its environment — indeed, successfully redefining the European order along legal, administrative and political lines. As enlargement policy has its natural limits — only European states are eligible for membership — the EU invented its neighborhood policy (ENP), aimed at reorienting states in the EU's neighborhood in a direction more compatible with the EU's own political, economic and legal arrangements.

The EU's trade policy can be seen as even more ambitious, especially because some aspects of EU trade policy aim at establishing global rules and norms for free trade. Whereas the EU previously employed mainly multilateral strategies to achieve these objectives, it now uses both multilateral (such as in the WTO context) and bilateral strategies (such as

negotiating bilateral free trade agreements). The EU trade policy is one of the most important areas of EU foreign policy. Given that the EU is the world's largest trader, its policies in this area are of great significance.[8,9,10] The European Commission (DG Trade) represents the Union in trade negotiations, and the creation of the EEAS has not changed this arrangement. Since the outset, the Union's trade policy has been characterized by tensions between support for global trade regimes and the liberalization of global markets as opposed to the protection of a varying number of European producers.[10] For a long time, the EU's regime concerning trade with ACP countries was not in line with global norms and rules, a factor in explaining the EU's interest in redefining EU–ACP relations.

Finally, there is also the EU's development policy which aims at contributing to lifting poor countries out of poverty. Development policy is a key dimension of European foreign policy, demonstrated by the fact that the EU-28 is the world's largest public donor of development and humanitarian assistance, representing 51% of the world total.[9] The EU's engagement in development cooperation already began with the Treaty of Rome.[8,3] With the entrance of new members of the European adventure, including Great Britain, Spain and Portugal, development engagements also came to include Asian and Latin American countries. In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), a framework agreement for supporting developing countries (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml). Subsequently, the EU acknowledged its obligation to support the MDG and issued the European Consensus on Development (2006/C 46/01). The consensus identifies shared values, goals and commitments to be implemented by the Union through its development policies and defines the framework for development activities across different policy areas. Health has been identified as a policy area that could accelerate progress toward achieving the MDG (*ibid*.).

As mentioned above, health is a relatively new issue in the EU foreign policy. The EU has enjoyed institutionalized relations with the World Health Organization since 1982, but priority areas for EU–WHO cooperation were first identified in 2000, including health information, communicable diseases, research, environment and health, and sustainable health development.[11] In 2007, the external dimensions became part of the EU

Health Programme 2008–2013, which called for coherence and synergies between the program and the Community's external action (EC 1350/2007). In 2010, the Commission called on the Member States to take common global action to improve health, reduce inequalities and increase protection against global health threats.[12] The foreign ministers welcomed the call from the Commission the same year, urging the Member States to act together in all relevant internal and external policies and actions and to prioritize their support to strengthen comprehensive health systems in partner countries.[2] Despite the increasing focus on global health issues, establishing a common European policy in health still poses significant challenges. EU Member States primarily consider health policy a national affair in which Brussels should not interfere.[13,11] The EU has shared competence in common safety concerns in public health matters, but only complementary competence in other public health issues (Article 6, TFEU), and health policy has largely remained in the hands of the Member States. (EU health-related legislation such as food safety or pharma legislation is based on the internal market or the agricultural policy, but not on the health article.)

Consequently, there is no clear policy guidance for EU external health policy other than some general statements in the documents referred to above. The EU position on global health issues shifts according to topic and the ability to reach common decisions. Despite the limited mandate and vague policy, external health issues have been directly embodied in various policy areas, and this has shaped the role of the EU as a global health actor. For example, health has been a constant dimension in EU development policy.[12]

The EU in International Diplomacy: Bilateral and Multilateral Relations

The previous section examined the EU's international policies and highlighted a range of policies that the EU has adopted. However, it is when the EU cultivates its relations with third countries or international institutions that the policies might begin to acquire a certain degree of consequence. This section focuses on the bilateral and multilateral relations characterizing the EU's role as a global actor.

Bilateral Relations

The EU's network of 130-plus diplomatic delegations indicates the scope of EU engagement in international diplomacy. The Union has bilateral relations of varying range and substance with most countries and regions in the world. Five major groups of countries are in focus to provide an overview:

- Eligibility for EU enlargement
- Countries in the EU's neighborhood
- Strategic partners
- ACP countries
- Special relations

Enlargement. The EU's enlargement policy has traditionally been one of the most important dimensions of European foreign policy. In the first place, it is one of the policies that have been pursued almost since the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The UK was among the first to apply for membership, and that was soon followed by other countries. Moreover, due to the EU's soft power — the pull of attraction — enlargement policy is one of the policies that work, i.e. the EU is capable of influencing the development in the applicant countries. In terms of economic, legal and political order, most of the European continent has been transformed over the last five decades. Finally, given that less than a dozen more countries are eligible for membership, the enlargement policy is approaching an end. While it is impossible to predict when Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Turkey, Belarus, Ukraine, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo will join the EU, it is easy to conclude that, with the exception of Turkey, they are not countries characterized by massive volume in terms of population or economy. While enlargement policy is fundamental to European foreign policy, it is not the EEAS but DG Enlargement that is in charge of policy-making.

Countries in the EU's neighborhood. At the beginning of the 21st century, when the EU entered a phase of acute enlargement fatigue, it became important for decision-makers to emphasize that enlargement is a finite

process; that the number of countries eligible for membership is limited. However, a map of EU Member States and the countries eligible for membership will reveal that in the EU's neighborhood — in Russian terms, "the near abroad" — there are many countries that cannot join the EU and to them the EU's enlargement policy does not apply. This group of countries includes the states along the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and Turkey's neighbors. As the EU nonetheless has a direct interest in a neighborhood characterized by peace, stability and European values in general, there is a strong rationale for creating what is now known as the EU's neighborhood policy (ENP). In contrast to the enlargement policy, the ENP's general direction is handled by the EEAS. While far from consolidated as a new service, the EEAS was catapulted into addressing the so-called Arab Spring, a basket full of difficult dilemmas and potentially contradictory objectives.

During the heyday of the Arab Spring, the EU — in concrete terms the EEAS — adopted a cautious wait-and-see policy, conducted a thorough policy review and subsequently adopted a revised policy, addressing what appeared to be a new situation. However, in contrast to the previous, largely multilateral EU policies for the Mediterranean area, including the Barcelona process, the ENP is conducted on a predominantly bilateral platform.

Strategic partners. During the last decade, the EU has established so-called strategic partnerships with an increasing number of (major) countries around the world. The EU is currently cultivating such partnerships with Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa, India, South Korea, Russia, Canada, Japan and the United States; some of these partnerships are formal, and others are informal.

The EU has always cultivated a strategic partnership with the United States. Historically, it was the US that encouraged the integration of Western Europe and provided some of the templates for integration. Transatlantic relations have been prioritized, thereby constituting one of the backbones of the "West." This is a relationship that spans every possible issue area worth mentioning. In the sphere of political economy, the EU has traditionally been heavily involved in US-initiated trade talks,

such as the Tokyo and Uruguay rounds.[14] Likewise, FDIs flow across the Atlantic in a two-way highway fashion, generating a volume that remains unmatched in any other corner of the world. In the sphere of defense, most EU members are also members of NATO, a military alliance within which the US enjoys *primus inter pares* status. EU Member States have therefore been reluctant to grant the EU a significant role concerning territorial defense, especially during the Cold War. In the 25 years since the end of the Cold War, however, the security environment has changed dramatically and both defense and security have been redefined. EU Member States have found the EU increasingly relevant to contemporary security governance, and launched the first-ever military mission under EU command in 2003.

In addition to the United States, the EU cultivates bilateral relations of strategic significance with a handful of other major countries around the world. Concerning trade, relations with both China and Japan are of key importance for the EU's foreign economic relations. Russia is the only great power with which the EU has a common border and though energy relations increase interdependence the troubled relationship seems to be a constant. Competition in the mixed zone of influence (e.g. Ukraine and Georgia) indicates the problematic nature of the difficult encounter. The general trend of emerging economies implies that two handfuls of countries have become much more relevant as EU trade partners (e.g. Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia and South Korea), and one of the consequences of the stalled multilateral Doha trade negotiations is that bilateral relations are upgraded.

ACP Countries. The EU's relations with the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) began with the Rome Treaty, simply because some of the six founding members had colonies at the time. A post-colonial relationship between Europe and the former colonies had to be defined after a few years.[15,3] For years, the ACP countries constituted a privileged group within the Third World, especially concerning trade and development aid.[3,8] The Union has used trade incentives to encourage export from ACP countries, thereby improving their economic situation. Bilateral agreements include different forms of trade provisions and subsidies for export products aimed at the development of Third World

countries.[20,8] From 1971, the Community's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) granted all developing countries non-reciprocal, prudential access to EU markets. This system was reformed in 2012 and an amended GSP system will apply as of 2014. For the least developed countries (LDCs), the GSP was supplemented in 2001 with the Everything But Arms initiative, which gives all LDCs duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market for all their exports except for arms and ammunitions. In 2005, the Commission established a general strategy — Aid for Trade — to help developing countries improve their capacities for trade.

Concerning development, the EU has supported development projects in ACP countries through regional and thematic funds.[21] The EU uses these funds to directly support health system improvements in many of those countries. Indirectly, the Union supports projects for gaining access to safe food and drinking water.[16] Since 2004, more than 32 million people have gained access to improved water supplies thanks to support from the Commission.[13] Some health programs, for instance the South African HIV Programme, are entirely funded by the EU.[17,18] In other cases, EU funds empower civil societies to make effective demands on health issues, including holding leaders and governments responsible and accountable for decisions that affect the citizens' lives. One example is a project in Tanzania that recruits health workers to rural areas where health workers were once non-existent.[19] Although such examples can be viewed as unsustainable "islands" of success in a sea of failure,[17] they still represent focused projects that are important for specific areas and for inspiring further long-term development.[18]

The fifth and final way of categorizing the EU's bilateral relations is to focus on the geographical areas with which some EU countries cultivate special relations. The accession of Spain and Portugal to the EU strengthened relations with Latin American countries. The EU has ongoing negotiations with several Latin American countries, as well as Mercosur. However, relations with Latin American countries do not enjoy the institutionalized character of EU–ACP relations, and the focus is therefore broader, incorporating different political and economic issues.[9] Sweden and Finland have sponsored the so-called Northern Dimension, a bundle of transborder initiatives and policies toward Russia. With the accession of countries in Central and Eastern Europe came an

increased emphasis on relations with countries to the east of Central and Eastern Europe.

Finally, it is significant that the EU's bilateral relations are characterized by what has euphemistically been referred to as "coordination problems." While the EU has exclusive competence to negotiate trade agreements with third countries or regions, Member States might want to promote their own interests in other issue areas. For example, while the EU is considered the dominant aid donor and trade partner in ACP countries (interview 1), Member States such as Sweden, Denmark and the UK prefer to pursue many of their development policies regarding Africa in parallel to the EU efforts.[22] Likewise, some Member States prefer to negotiate with the US bilaterally or in multilateral organizations such as NATO, where the EU has a weak hand.[23] The EU is therefore considered a weaker actor in transatlantic relations, at least in the areas of defense and security. Finally, some Member States have been tempted to cultivate exclusive bilateral relations with Russia. In turn, Russia has utilized its role as an energy exporter to weaken the EU's ability to speak with one voice toward Russia.[24]

Multilateral Relations

For a decade, the EU has declared its support for a largely underspecified "effective multilateralism," and the state of affairs appears somewhat unclear. For quite some time, the EU has been cultivating relations with a broad range of international institutions, and some of the policies reviewed above are pursued by means of multilateral strategies.[25] Relations are in principle two-way streets of influence. However, the degree to which such two-way streets carry asymmetrical flows of traffic remains an empirical question. The 2003 European Security Strategy is renowned for making support for international organizations one of the EU's key foreign policy objectives and EU–UN relations have been singled out as particularly important. The EU and (especially) its Member States have a considerable share of votes in UN fora and constitute the biggest financial contributor to the general UN budget, as well as many of the specialized agencies. However, the EU's ability to translate or interest in translating these assets into political ends seems rather limited.

Concerning international financial institutions — the IMF and the World Bank — the EU has stated for years an interest in strengthening its influence. The EU-28 contributes collectively about twice the amount of the single largest state. However, the EU's influence in the financial institutions has never matched the financial contribution or the share of votes. The reluctance or structural inability of the EU-28 to make use of its power is intriguing and requires further research. However, the topic has attracted little attention from scholars.[7,26,27] These two cases — the UN and the international financial institutions — are representative of a general pattern, not least because the EU-28 often has a significant presence in international institutions in terms of membership and financial contributions. Thus, the EU/EU-28 has 28 members of the OSCE's total of 55 member states.

Given the EU's considerable formal power in many international institutions, one might expect an instrumental linkage between the EU and specific organizations. What are the EU's objectives? What does the EU consider to be the key functions of specific institutions? How does the EU influence policy-making within institutions? All such question focus on the EU as an actor within international institutions. The opposite flow of influence runs from international institutions to the EU and concerns situations in which "multilateralism hits Brussels."[28]

Given the predominance of Euro-centric perspectives and the focus on European decision- or policy-making processes, the outside-in perspective is often overlooked. However, EU policies and policy-making processes may have been influenced by international organizations. Such influence should come as no surprise. Instead, it would be expected and connect to the literature on how international organizations "teach" states what states (really) want, thereby influencing the definition of national interests.[29]

Several studies demonstrate how the EU has been a newcomer in several policy fields and how policy learning has become a standard operating procedure in the processes by which European interests are defined. Examples abound and include relations between the EU and the WHO,[30] NATO (de Witte) and the World Bank.[31]

Finally, it should be added that the distinction between the two flows of influence — inside-out and outside-in — is not unproblematic. Even if the

world hangs together in very complex ways, drawing distinctions is analytically convenient if not downright necessary. It is simply impossible to analyze everything in one go, and methods of bracketing exist and are ready to be used. On the other hand, we should keep in mind that these processes are possibly dynamic. Even if the EU has been an inexperienced newcomer in one period, this is not necessarily the case in the subsequent period and thus might reverse the direction of flows of influence. Relations between the EU and the WHO represent an example of such role change over time.[28] Moreover, some of the seemingly external influences might have been initiated domestically, either by one or more EU Member States or by parts of the European Commission seeing an advantage in taking an issue to the international level.

In conclusion, we should take note of the serious problems and challenges that flow from attempts at assessing multilateralism from a constituent actor perspective. In their efforts to evaluate the effectiveness or influence of a particular actor, most scholars tend to dichotomize the international organization and the actor whose influence they want to explore. Yet international organizations are constituted by these very Member States. When analytically splitting off constituent parts from the organizations, we are in some sense erasing a fundamental part of any international organization. These problems are further complicated when we begin analyzing the EU. While the EU is not formally a constituent part of most international organizations, in practice it can be regarded as a *de facto* constituent member of several IOs that have been recognized as such by both EU Member States and other IO members.

Conclusions and Broader Perspectives

The EU has been called a composite unit and a patchwork actor, and both labels have some merit. While the EEAS is the outcome of merged institutions, the EU remains patchwork-like, especially because the distribution of legal competences reveals a picture of rich diversity. In many ways, the EU is a unique global actor, characterized by distinct institutions and policy-making processes. The conferral of sovereignty and competences to the supranational level is at the heart of its distinctiveness and clearly differentiates the EU from any other intergovernmental policy-making or institutional setting.

This conferral of sovereignty, linked with a distinct separation of institutions and the ever-important balance between Member States and the Union, provides unique features. Although this assumes that other major global actors are not uniquely distinct — analysts of American, Chinese or Russian foreign policy would have an easy time emphasizing how unique and distinct their global actor is, pointing out for example American exceptionalism, Chinese relations between party and government and foreign policy with distinctly Russian characteristics — none of these players have transferred sovereignty to a new level where they decide commonly and often with a qualified majority as EU Member States have.

Patchwork or not, the EU has developed an impressive portfolio of international policies. Some of these policies have existed throughout the history of the EU, whereas other policies have been added along the integrative path, especially during the last 25 years. Some of the international policies can be seen as the extension of domestic policies — environmental policies are just one example. Other policies address the state of affairs in third countries that the EU aims at changing, such as promoting the abolishment of capital punishment throughout the world. The EEAS has thus inherited a policy catalogue, and part of the EEAS mission is to make sure that every single policy adequately represents the EU's preferences or is suitable for an ever-changing international order.

We have also demonstrated how the EU cultivates bilateral relations with most states around the world. While EU delegations obviously play a significant role in these relations, we highlight the substantive dimension of the EU's international relations. We conclude that variation is pronounced: some relations focus predominantly on development, others on economy and still others on politics. In addition to bilateral relations, the EU engages (increasingly) in relations with multilateral institutions. While strong conclusions would be premature, our preliminary conclusion is that much seems to have changed with the introduction of the EEAS and the High Representative. There is more continuity in how the EU is represented, and the potential accumulation of experience has been strengthened. Diplomats from third countries are less uncertain about who does what, when and why in the EU. Finally, we have shown that the EU is both a strong and a weak global actor. As a composite or patchwork actor, the EU has not fully understood its potential as a global actor. The prime reason is not that the EU has different priorities, but rather that

the EU is in a structural state of affairs that hinders the achievement of stated objectives.

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