The European Union as a Global Actor

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Abstract

There has been considerable debate surrounding the nature of the European Union’s international capacity. Early conceptions of the Union as a civilian – or non-military actor – dominated early thinking, characterising the Union as a new kind of international actor. Others, meanwhile argued that this simply sought to make a virtue of weakness and that if the Union were ever to be taken seriously, then it would have to develop a full-spectrum military capacity. That debate, in a somewhat different form, continues today. The ‘civilian power’ thesis has evolved to one in which the Union continues to be posited as a new kind of international actor, but now as one which is somehow uniquely capable or uniquely configured as effective exporter of norms and values in the international system. Others insist that only as the Union develops its nascent military capacity can it begin to shoulder real international responsibilities. Within this second debate exist more polemical positions on the adverse, or other, consequences of the ‘militarization’ of the Union’s international profile and transatlantic arguments surrounding a division of labour between the US and EU in delivering ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ security capacity. This paper will outline and critically engage these debates. It will conclude that while the Union remains a distinctive international actor, the trajectory of its development may suggest the pursuit of an ‘enlightened power’ model.

Introduction

The original treaties establishing first the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 and then in 1957 both the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community 1

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Community made no mention of foreign or security policy. Nonetheless, the Communities were international actors by virtue of their very existence: their international treaty base and their interaction with other global actors and institutions. Furthermore, there was an underlying political assumption that the process of European integration was one that was inherently political and which aspired to the creation of a truly political European community of states. Thus, it was to be expected that shared interests would gradually and increasingly be assigned to a supranational authority which, over time, would further extend its policy reach. Moreover, within this neo-functionalist perspective, it was presumed that such a process would not be limited to domestic welfare issues of trade and production, but that it would also spillover from this area of ‘low politics’ into the ‘high politics’ of international relations and foreign policy. For these theorists, the move from a Common Commercial Policy to a Common Defence Policy was both desirable and inevitable.

Throughout the early period of the EC’s development, there was an implicit acceptance that the Community was already engaged in international politics. Certainly, trade could not be divorced from politics. This was illustrated by the association of former French overseas territories to the emerging European market, to the negotiation of bilateral trade agreements and to the EC’s participation in multilateral trade talks. Gradually, the EC Member States were drawn – as a group – further into explicitly political issues with attention being given to EC relations with South Africa and the Middle East, with the EC’s reaction to the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas crisis and to the EC’s contribution to the Helsinki process. In each case the use of trade and other economic tools were linked – and sometimes explicitly – with political goals such as the end of Apartheid, a peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict, or support for Détente.

Indeed, for many analysts of the contemporary European Union, it is in the precise realm of trade, economics and aid that one continues to find the real substance of European power and

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9 Stavridis, Stelios and Hill, Christopher, (1996) Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: West European Reactions to the Falklands Conflict, Berg.

its potential for global projection. Michael Smith, for example, has written on the need to reassess ideas of power and international actorness. He argues, for example, that the EU’s Common Commercial Policy and its impact upon global trade agreements, has far greater foreign policy significance than analysts properly credit. Similarly, of course, the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy has far greater effect upon the developing world than the impact of all the coordinated political declarations issued by EU Member States on the developing world. Indeed, a persuasive case is made in favour of viewing of the Union’s own enlargement policy as being its most significant foreign policy contribution to peace in the 21st Century.

Others have assessed the EU’s approach to key strategic regions such as the Mediterranean and the countries of the former Soviet Union, most of which have been conducted through the mechanisms of the EU’s trade, economic and development cooperation policies.

While these approaches offer a necessary corrective to an unhealthy preoccupation with ‘high politics’, they still underscore the reality that the EU’s international coherence and effectiveness relies upon a balance between different policy tools and an effective decision-making structure. That structure, however, has not developed as originally foreseen – that is to say increasingly shared political interests being pursued through a set of common supranational institutions. Instead, Member States have created a parallel structure to deal with explicitly ‘foreign’ policy issues. As the pressures increased – most notably from third parties – to see the EC take a more visible international stand on the major issues of the day, the Member States responded by developing an intergovernmental policy structure that excluded the supranational institutions (Commission, Parliament and Court of Justice) and which was devised outside the parameters of the founding EC treaties. Even in those areas where orthodox Community rules continued to be applied, such as trade and economics, Member States proved themselves surprisingly adept at resisting efforts either to relate these to explicit foreign policy goals or even to extend Community competence to associated issues, such as intellectual property rights and trade in certain service sectors.

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14 Barysch, K., 2004 The EU and Russia: Strategic Partners or Squabbling Neighbors? Centre for European Reform.
In 1970 the Member States of the European Communities established a procedure for the coordination of specific, agreed foreign policy positions. European Political Cooperation (EPC), as this procedure was called, was created outside the ambit of the Community’s institutions and law and was based upon an explicitly intergovernmental base. It was not until the 1986 Single European Act that the basic infrastructure of EPC was set out in a formal treaty text. Even then, it was provided for within a very distinct Title of the SEA treaty, and was agreed among the “High Contracting Parties” rather than among the “Member States” of other treaty provisions. In form and content therefore, EPC appeared to be precisely the kind of interest-driven, Member State controlled procedure that intergovernmentalists would have expected to see ascribed to the realm of foreign policy cooperation.  

Witnessing the apparent stagnation of the European project in the late 1970s some analysts saw the stubborn strength of intergovernmental interests – exemplified in EPC - as the best possible illustration that state interests were the true driving force behind the European integrative project, which was itself the complex product of a simple ‘convergence of national interests’. The EU’s institutional superstructure could then be seen as the matrix within which an especially complex system of interstate bargaining would then take place and through which the cooperative benefits of such interstate bargaining would be distributed. Analysts could also point to empirical case studies where the dominance of state interests in the construction of a ‘common’ European position could be clearly seen where the interests of the larger states predominated and those of the smaller states bought off through side-payments in other policy areas. However, earlier neofunctionalist frustrations with European foreign policy cooperation were quickly matched by those of intergovernmentalists. In the early 1990s As EPC was replaced by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and came to be strengthened and developed further, it became increasingly evident that European foreign policy cooperation appeared to play by its own rules. Member State interests were not the immutable object of state ambition, nor did European foreign policymaking follow the prescribed intergovernmental script. Instead, the Commission assumed an increasingly significant role, the European Parliament became involved and even qualified majority voting

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16 Pijpers, A. (1990), The Vicissitudes of European Political Cooperation: Towards a realist interpretation of the EC’s collective diplomacy, CIP.
was introduced. However, if European integration theorists found themselves struggling to understand and explain the EU’s international persona, international relations’ theorists were positively dumbfounded.

**The European Union in International Relations**

For many years, the EU simply did not appear on the horizons of international relations’ theorists – and for very good reason. The Union, as an international actor, simply could not be accommodated within a large section of orthodox theorising about the interstate system. The European Community, and later the EU, challenged deeply instantiated and widely held assumptions. As a result, it could be argued that EU was ‘somehow beyond international relations’ ²¹ The EU was not an actor in the inter-state drama and, at best, could only be accommodated as a vehicle of the post-imperial interests of the larger powers. Even with the arrival of liberal approaches to international relations, the EU was sandwiched together with other ‘new’ actors such as multinational corporations and trans-national interest groups. Moreover, it could still only be conceived of as an institutional illustration of cooperative problem solving among an enlightened set of state agents and actors, alongside the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, for example.

For realists and liberals alike then, the EU posed a fundamental paradox – it was not a state, yet was ‘state-like’ in so much of its relations with states and the interstate system. Foreign policy could only be understood as a subset of state activity directed towards the outside world. If the theoretical drawbridge was lowered to accommodate the ‘foreign policy’ of the EU, would not the same also have to hold true for the United Nations, for the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation, for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – perhaps even for the Coca Cola company? And yet, if the theoretical rules were applied with rigour, how credible would it be to assess the impact and capacity of the foreign policies of up to 200 states in the international system and yet ignore the international impact of a political community that accounted for about one quarter of world trade and global wealth creation?

European integration has thus never fitted easily within a rationalist-dominated international theory. Indeed, neo-realists and neo-liberals share much more rationalist analytical territory than they dispute. One key example is the extent to which they both argue that power rests at

the core of politics and that such power derives from the pursuit of individual material interest. Another is that the range of questions open to analysts is precise, centring upon how interests are bargained and the processes of strategic decision-making that lies behind public policy choices. The comparative power of the rationalist approach and a partial explanation of its dominance is that it offers to the holders of power a precise and sparse account of their reality without opening uncomfortable doors into realms which draw their own positions into question. It also seems to relate more directly to ‘the facts’ of international politics and because of the way in which it defines the world and inter-relationships within it, the approach often looks just like common sense. 22

Certainly, when looking at the EU’s performance, particularly at times of crisis, the explanatory power of rationalist accounts is tremendously persuasive. The collapse of the former Yugoslavia 23 and the subsequent conflict in Kosovo 24 are convincingly explained in terms of conflicting Member State national interests, the EU’s failure to reconcile those differences and a resulting psychosis in EU policy which weaved dangerously between hubris and humiliation. Similarly, when looking at the Middle East dispute, rationalist accounts privileging the role of national interests and competition with the United States, offer an apparently parsimonious explanation of why the EU is an ineffectual regional actor. 25 They also offer a concise explanation of how EU policies have failed to leave any substantive mark on the conflict 26 and what is required if the EU is successfully to engage as a serious and effective actor. 27

In contrast, constructivist accounts of European integration have had more to say about governance, identity, norms and belief structures than either of the two rationalist approaches. They open the door to a wider and perhaps more significant set of questions when looking at the international persona of the EU, including questions about the creation of a transnational European identity, the impact of Europeanisation on national foreign policies and the export

of European values and norms through EU foreign policy. Such questions are of immediate relevance to an understanding of Europe’s global role, but are outside the pale of analysis within a narrower rationalist worldview. When looking at the Middle East, for example, constructivist analyses do not focus on the short term ‘realities’ of the immediate crisis but upon the longer evolution of policy and regional capacity on the part of the EU and its Member States. In the Yugoslav and subsequent Kosovo crises, constructivist analyses also focus upon the way the EU responded by trying to export and instantiate its own norms and values) and the way such values can prompt substantial policy action in the form of ‘humanitarian intervention’.

The EU’s emerging foreign policy has not – as we have seen – lent itself to easy categorisation and has successfully resisted being boxed into our existing understanding of European integration or international relations. It might even be argued that the EU is best viewed as a transitional entity, or one that generates international relations but which also remains itself a subsystem of those international relations. In recent years too, the development of the EU’s international capacity has made the effort to understand it even more challenging.

This is rooted in the EU foreign policy’s capacity to transform the construction, content and expression of the national foreign policies of the EU Member States. Regarding the construction of foreign policies, it is clear that institutionalised policy coordination – involving common EU-wide work practices and structures, a partially shared information base, a common substantive agenda and a unique policymaking structure – has established a truly collective context through which a significant proportion of ‘national’ foreign policy is now formulated and pursued. Whether characterised as ‘Brusselsization’ or ‘Brussels-based intergovernmentalism’, it amounts to a fundamental shift in the way that national foreign policies are being constructed. This does not eliminate the role of national perspectives or even

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29 Manners, Ian (2002) op cit.
of declared ‘national interests’. It does, however, underline the degree to which national foreign policies are translated and formulated through a European context even before they hit an intergovernmental negotiating table.\textsuperscript{34}

Regarding the content of national foreign policies, there is also evidence of fundamental processes of change. These are illustrated by ‘a consequent internalisation of norms and expectations arising from a complex, collective policymaking system’.\textsuperscript{35} Hill and Wallace\textsuperscript{36} define this process as one in which rationality is seen differently as a result of intensive exchange between officials. Earlier, Nuttall identified this as a ‘consultation reflex’ in which officials sought out the views of colleagues before constructing their own analyses of the situation and possible policy responses.\textsuperscript{37} The impact of this internalisation of beliefs and norms is that the content of national foreign policies have gradually shifted over time. While it is difficult to apply the \textit{ceteris paribus} principle, analysts have identified such shifts for a range of states and over a range of issues.\textsuperscript{38}

In the case of foreign policy expression, it is also evident that much has changed in recent years. The substantive reach of all but the largest Member State foreign ministry has also been broadened and many Member States are now involved in a much wider range of issues than heretofore. External actors expect the Union to have a response to international events and crises and EU Member States frequently justify their own policies by virtue of collective foreign policy endeavour. Member States have thus had to generate and defend positions that even 10 or 15 years ago they would not be expected to have held.\textsuperscript{39}

In response to all of these challenges, a number of analysts have sought to ‘rethink’ the EU’s foreign policy and to apply alternative approaches to the study of the EU’s global role. Some such approaches have sought to deconstruct state-centric views of world politics by shifting analysis away from how state-like the EU’s foreign policy is towards analysis of its

\textsuperscript{34} Tonra, Ben (2001) op cit.
\textsuperscript{35} ibid
\textsuperscript{39} Tonra, B. (2001) op cit.
international ‘presence’\textsuperscript{40} and ‘actorness’.\textsuperscript{41} These concepts are then used to link the internal workings of the EU across different functional policy areas with its overall impact on the external environment. The EU clearly acts internationally and even if it is not a fully-fledged actor. It is nonetheless necessary to consider its impact and how such action is politically derived within the EU.\textsuperscript{42} It is also important to try and avoid looking at the EU as if it were ‘an incompetent state’\textsuperscript{43} and instead to consider its real-world capacity to shape events outside its borders, both by its own volition and in response to third party expectations and demands.

When the focus of analysis moves from what sort of actor the EU is, to consideration of its attributes as an international actor, a range of analytical issues arise. One key issue identified is the ‘Capabilities-Expectations Gap’ first outlined by Chris Hill.\textsuperscript{44} In his article Hill compared and contrasted public expectations of what the EU was supposed to accomplish in the world with the means and capacities that Member States had actually bestowed upon it to achieve those ends. The comparison was unfavourable and the analysis identified a ‘gap’ which implied that the EU was not an effective international actor.\textsuperscript{45} Furthermore, this approach was especially well-equipped to deal with the EU’s evolution as an international actor, particularly as a collective foreign policy develops, because it was able to measure the ways in which ‘actorness’ evolves over time.\textsuperscript{46} The approach can be criticised, however, because it is still predicated upon a model of actorness similar to that of a state. Thus, if state foreign policy is the benchmark against which the EU’s international actorness is assessed, two logically consistent, but fundamentally opposed, conclusions could be drawn. The first is that the EU is on the road towards the construction of a state-like foreign policy – a ‘superpower’ or ‘superstate’ – which is then a matter of time, of political will and/or of institutional design.\textsuperscript{47} Alternatively, it could argued that since the EU cannot and will never be

\textsuperscript{40}Sjøsted, G. (1977) The External Role of the European Community, Saxon House.
\textsuperscript{43}Bretherton, C. and Vogler, J (1999) The European Union as a Global Actor, Routledge, p.3;
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46}Bretherton and Vogler, op cit. pp 1-45.
a traditional state, it is condemned to a Sisyphus-like existence, with its system of intensive diplomatic coordination measured against a set of criteria it is condemned never to fulfil.48

These alternatives remain, however, essentially rooted in a rationalist understanding of foreign policy and a largely positivist approach to social science. Two further alternatives move beyond these essentialist conceptions and posit an understanding of EU foreign policy that is perhaps more centrally rooted in identity and beliefs.

**Considering Identity and Ideas**

If the ideational foundations of foreign policy are to be taken seriously and the analyst is to move beyond seeing ideas either as ‘hooks’ in the hands of individual utility maximisers, or as another set of parsimonious variables, then our conceptual horizons might be significantly broadened. At least one group of writers argue that the foundations of EU foreign policy can best be excavated using the archaeology of identity, rather than that of interests.49 This constructivist approach offers a norm-based account of institutions that addresses many of the weaknesses of more instrumental, rationality-based models of a neo-liberal/neo-realist synthesis. The focus on beliefs, identity and norms, opens new pathways for analysing the EU’s international capacity. For example, it allows analysts to look at the growth and development of a ‘European’ identity in foreign policy50 and the role of public opinion and discourse in the creation of such an identity.51 The analyst may also examine the implications of such a development for the creation of the EU as a normative actor driven by identity and values rather than interests.52

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The point of departure for such constructivist approaches is consideration of actors as role players rather than as rational utility maximisers. James March and Johan Olsen offer a conceptual model in which actors work to a ‘logic of appropriateness’. Within such, state actors (or agents) consider the context and expectations of the decision-making situations in which they find themselves and base their resulting decisions accordingly. That relationship, however, cannot presume any ontological primacy between agent and structure. While the actor’s identity and options for choice are shaped by the institutional structures that she inhabits, these self-same institutional structures exist and evolve as a result of their constitutive actors’ identities and choices.

Thus, the conception of the EU’s foreign policy is not that of a forum within which state/actors’ interests are bargained, but an environment from which a common foreign policy evolves and within which the interest/identity of actors/policymakers can be and often are shaped or even transformed. This shift is crucial. What it suggests is that foreign policymakers are not neo-medieval emissaries of pre-defined national positions, there to do battle and emerge bloodied and victorious, but are instead colleagues within a shared policy space whose ambition is to fulfil their own and others’ expectations of them in agreeing upon an effective collective position.

The ambition to construct a coherent and credible European ‘voice’ in world affairs has been an important and recurrent theme in the development of the EU’s international capacity from as early as the 1974 ‘Declaration on European Identity’ which stated that: ‘Europe must unite and increasingly speak with one voice if it wants to make itself heard and play its proper rôle in the world’.

This identification of EU foreign policy with the expression of a single set of ideas or beliefs is reflected in the Union’s pursuit of a political figurehead who might embody and personify the Union’s singularity and give it a recognisable ‘voice’. This was partially realised in the Amsterdam Treaty’s creation of the office of High Representative of CFSP. The original purpose behind this CFSP post was to engender greater identification with a European political voice – to personalise the EU’s international identity. In the event, this has been only partially


55 Article J.8 SS. 3 “The Presidency shall be assisted by the Secretary-General of the Council who shall exercise the function of High Representative for the common foreign and security policy.” Treaty Of Amsterdam Amending The Treaty On European Union, The Treaties Establishing The European Communities And Related Acts, Official Journal C 340, 10 November 1997
successful, since the voice lacked the added credibility of also commanding the external relations of the EU (including its trade and aid capacity). The Lisbon Treaty’s proposal to merge the two posts (that of the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations) into one is explicitly presented as a means whereby the EU’s ‘voice’ would have greater clarity and credibility.\(^{56}\). This is also illustrated through the Lisbon Treaty’s proposed creation of a European External Action Service – which is again explicitly designed to offer a more coherent, effective and integrated interface between the Union and its Member States and the wider world.\(^{57}\)

Important point: It would seem to me important to analyse the added-value of the Lisbon Treaty. You can either add an extra section at the end of your article or deal with it at the end of each of your current section. What may be interesting is to apply your conceptual framework to the Lisbon Treaty and explain to the reader whether the new Treaty confirms your theoretical understanding of the EU.

Constructivism also offers a framework that improves our understanding of the centrality of ‘values’ in the development of EU foreign policy. The first formal delineation of European Political Cooperation in the 1970 Davignon Report spoke of the Member States’ ambition to make an international contribution that was “…commensurate with its traditions…’. These were later defined in the same text as including “…the common heritage of respect for the liberty and the rights of men…“\(^{58}\). This normative orientation of EU foreign policy has since become a significant vehicle for theorising about the EU’s global role. From its earliest inceptions, writers have been struck by the fact that the European Communities (and later the EU) were applying a new language to foreign policy and that this had the potential to make a

\(^{56}\) Article 10A “The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect.” Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007 Official Journal C 306, 17 December 2007.

\(^{57}\) Article 13a SS3.3 provides that “In fulfilling his mandate, the High Representative shall be assisted by a European External Action Service. This service shall work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States and shall comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the Member States. The organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service shall be established by a decision of the Council. The Council shall act on a proposal from the High Representative after consulting the European Parliament and after obtaining the consent of the Commission.” Amendments To The Treaty On European Union And To The Treaty Establishing The European Community Official Journal of the European Union, C 306/10, 17 December 2007.

very new contribution to understandings of international politics. Francois Duchêne argued that
this new European polity was indeed a new construct in the international firmament. It was a
political entity with a powerful trade and economic identity, but a comparatively weak
political/security structure. Thus, it might best be characterised as a new ‘civilian power’ in
international relations. His argument, however, was bigger than that, in as much as it also set
out the thesis that this new ‘civilian power’ might supplant traditional military power as the
preferred means by which influence might be exercised in the modern world. The thesis was
hotly contested and disputed in a by now famous reply from Hedley Bull. More recently, it
has been taken up by scholars interested not so much in fact that the EU has an impact on the
international system, but in the fact that the EU has a very unique impact and identity.

A number of writers have focussed on the very strong normative orientation of the EU’s
international actions towards issues of international justice and human rights. This, they
argue, arises from the nature of the EU and the ways in which it acts as a normative exporter
of values and beliefs. Manners and Whitman for example, move decisively away from
analysis of the EU as an actor to that of the EU having an international identity that now
allows the analyst to consider how the EU ‘is constituted, constructed and represented
internationally’. They insist that the EU’s international identity can only be successfully
understood by employing both social and political theories, and conclude that it is necessary
to move beyond essentialist, positivist and rationalist predispositions in order to look at the
EU’s international identity as an ongoing ‘contestation of complex, multiple (and) relational
identities’. They go on to characterise the EU as an open, pacific, principled, consensual,
network characterised by an unconventional nature which is wholly unlike that of a traditional
Westphalian state.

By focusing so intensively on the nature of the EU’s international identity, the pass is also
opened to considerations of how that identity may then impact upon the international system.
In other words, if the EU is so different – indeed, according to Manners and Whitman, it is a
‘difference engine’ - then what are the implications of this for the EU’s foreign policy?
Sjursen argues that there is a growing literature focussing on the nature of the EU’s

59 Duchene (1972) op cit.
60 Ibid and Duchene (1973) op cit.
61 Op cit.
Foreign and Security Policy: Analytical Building Blocks in Michele Knodt and Sebastian Princen (eds)
Understanding the European Union’s External Relations, Routledge.
63 Manners, I and Whitman, R (2003) ‘The Difference Engine: Constructing and Representing the
International Identity of the European Union,’ Journal of European Public Policy, 10, 3.
64 Ibid p. 397.
international impact.\textsuperscript{65} Citing Rosencrance, Aggestam, Menéndez and Manners, she argues that the EU does indeed represent something fundamentally different in the international arena and that this difference is rooted in normative considerations of justice and human rights.\textsuperscript{66} Despite entering several important caveats to this hypothesis, she argues that cooperation based upon increasingly intensive communicative processes may offer a better understanding of why the EU has been constituted by, and then acts as, such a significant exporter of certain norms and values.

Certainly, the Lisbon Treaty again underscores the Union’s self-expressed dedication to a specified and very particular set of normative values. The treaty insists that in its foreign policy the Union will be “…guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.” Moreover, the substantive changes mooted by that treaty in the realm of foreign and security policy appear all to be directed towards a further strengthening of the Union’s integrated capacity to act – across a spectrum of mutually-reinforcing policy areas. At the same time, this does not attempt to reflect the capacities or structures of Member States. It neither creates an institutional primus inter pares among the Member States nor does it instantiate anything even remotely comparable to a federalised foreign and security policy making system. It attempts – through institutional development, policy integration and Member State volition – to create a sense of ‘we-feeling’ that transcends a simple multinational association of shared interests and yet does not presuppose the creation of an overarching ‘European’ identity.

\textbf{The Military Dimension}

Whether or not one accepts that the Union is a truly ‘different’ international actor, it is certainly true to say that the Union’s development as an actor has been unique. Following consecutive crises in the Balkans and in Africa’s Great Lakes region, EU and Member State policy makers reassessed the Union’s foreign policy capacity and identified what they perceived to be serious weaknesses therein. While a ‘common defence policy’ has since been added to the substantive remit of CFSP and the former now includes the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), national motivations to develop this military dimension to the EU’s

\textsuperscript{65} Sjursen (2003) op cit.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, p.49.
foreign policy capacity have varied.\textsuperscript{67} For some, it is viewed as a means of amplifying or adding collective political-military muscle to existing national foreign policies – enabling national policy makers, as it were, to piggy-back their national interests upon the shoulders of a collective European policy. For others, this new realm of military cooperation is a crucial means by which the political identity and cohesiveness of the Union as a whole is strengthened and deepened and a substantive contribution then made to international security.

Despite these differences, the Member States agreed within the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty to cooperate specifically on conflict prevention and conflict resolution. They drew up a list of missions that the European Union might undertake - the Petersberg Tasks\textsuperscript{68} - and agreed to develop both civilian and military tools that would contribute to fulfilling those responsibilities. Based upon that agreement, in 1999, the Member State Governments, meeting in Helsinki, agreed to establish what they called their 'Headline Goal' for military cooperation. The aim for military cooperation was to create a pool of resources from which they could construct a 60,000-strong peacekeeping force within 60 days, assign it to a conflict situation and be able to support that force in the field for up to one year. This force was given the title of the European Rapid Reaction Force.

For a variety of reasons the Member States declared the European Rapid Reaction Force to be only partially operational in 2003 (i.e. they could undertake those Petersberg Tasks which would operate on a small to medium-sized scale). In 2004, the Member States agreed that the European Rapid Reaction Force would be composed of even more rapidly deployable but smaller units that could then be mixed and matched to the needs of a particular conflict situation. By 1 January 2007 fifteen battle groups – of approximately 1,500 troops each – had been created and were included in a deployment roster, with two battle groups deployable on a six-monthly basis. Of that number, just five were composed of single Member State military contingents, with the rest operating as multinational military units. The EU Member States now have a total force capacity of nearly 30,000 with an aim of getting up to 3,000 troops in place within 10-15 days of a crisis breaking out. Irish participation in this system has been secured through the Swedish-led, 2,800-strong Nordic Battlegroup to which the Irish Government has pledged up to 180 troops. Their participation, is however, contingent on UN authorisation of any mission to which the Battlegroup might be directed.

\textsuperscript{67} Tonra, Ben (2001) op cit.
\textsuperscript{68} The Petersberg tasks were originally adopted in June 1992 at a ministerial council of the Western European Union (WEU) held at the Petersberg Hotel, Germany. These tasks were subsequently adopted by the EU and are specified in Article 17 of the EU Treaty as defining the content of the EU’s security and defence policy. Within that policy, military units of the EU Member States may be employed for: Humanitarian and rescue tasks; Peacekeeping tasks; Tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking.
Over the last few years, the Member States of the European Union have established a number of EU-commanded operations to address specific conflict situations; Operation Artemis (Democratic Republic of Congo, 2003), Operation Althea-EUFOR (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004), and Operation Concordia (Macedonia, 2004) are perhaps largest and most widely known. In total, these operations have involved more than 10,000 troops from EU and other countries. Most of these missions have been approved by the United Nations Security Council. However, UN authorisation is not a precondition for an EU operation. In the case of the 2004 Operation Concordia, for example, the Government of Macedonia requested peacekeeping assistance but this request was vetoed by the Government of the People's Republic of China at the UN Security Council. All EU operations, however, must operate - according to treaty - within the UN Charter and international law.69

In the meantime, both internal and external expectations about what ‘Europe’ can and/or should be doing internationally have only grown. In poll after poll, Europeans declare that foreign, security and defence policy are key areas where a common European approach is both expected and supported. Moreover, in the light of consecutive international horrors – ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, genocide in Rwanda or mass starvation being used as a tool of civil war in Sudan – European publics have demanded that Europe do more to prevent or resolve such conflicts. For their part too, European policy makers have often found themselves frustrated and angry at their collective incapacity to act – or, as in the case of the war in Iraq – even to agree a common position. Does then the addition and development of a military capacity to the Union amount to its militarization?

For some, “developing and strengthening the military instrument is not sufficient to validate or invalidate the notion of civilian power Europe.”70 From this perspective, the normative civilian ambitions of the Union are so unique as to transcend the particular foreign policy tools employed to pursue them. For others, indeed, the addition of a military capacity might be seen as even a necessary adjunct so that the Union might at long last act – even forcibly – in support of the external promotion of democratic principles and associated norms and milieu

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69 Title V, Article 11 provides that “The Union shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy covering all areas of foreign and security policy, the objectives of which shall be: - to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter; - to strengthen the security of the Union in all ways; - to preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter, including those on external borders;

goals of collective security\textsuperscript{71}. In other words, the normative ends take precedence over the civilian means. From a contrary perspective, the Union has either never been, nor could hope to be, an effective international actor without a military capacity. Hedley Bull, for example, argued that “…the power or influence exerted by the European Community and other such civilian actors was conditional upon a strategic environment provided by the military power of states, which they did not control\textsuperscript{72}. In other words – and this prefigures the analysis of more contemporary critics such as Kagan – the Union could only be a civilian actor or ‘soft power’ so long as it was assured of the military support of the United States and operated within an international system contextualized by the exercise of US hegemony. Moreover, what is the logic in clinging to ever more abstruse definitions of a ‘civilian power’ when the one clear, obvious and specific indicator of civilian-ness (i.e. the absence of a military capacity) has been breached? The death of civilian power EU may be regretted but it may also be regarded as being “definitively dead”.\textsuperscript{73}

The question that then arises is what difference the ‘militarisation’ of the Union makes to the nature and substance of EU power and its exercise? For some, the Union can now be placed within traditional inter state power structures and it is simply then a matter of assessing the Union’s international capacity alongside any number of historical or contemporary precedents. The Union is thus no longer different in any meaningful sense. This can then open one of two avenues in a rationalist critique that centres on an explanation of the Union is a power-seeking and interest-pursuing entity. The first might be described as a traditional rationalist left-wing critique of the Union – that it is a neo-imperial, acquisitive, capitalist enterprise bent on the exploitation of the developing world and other less powerful interests in pursuit of its rent-seeking aspirations. The second might be described as a traditional rationalist right-wing critique of the Union – that is a soft, pacifist, self obsessed and overbearingly smug international actor which exploits a free-ride for its own defense provided by the United States but itself makes only a limited, grudging and inadequate contribution to international peace and security.

But what if the ‘militarisation’ of the Union does not entail any \textit{a priori} shift in the normative ambitions of EU foreign and security policy? What if that ‘militarisation’ is simply a further step in the socialization and Europeanisation of Member States – one in which the key policy


\textsuperscript{73} Smith, Karen E. (2005) ‘Beyond the Civilian Power Debate’ \textit{Politique Europee}, 1, 17, p.76
actors within the Union and its Member States have acknowledged that the shared project of creating a credible and coherent European ‘voice’ necessitates the existence and use of military resources. Moreover – and with the considerable experience of most of the Member States within NATO – how close are we already to the point of witnessing a Europeanisation of security and defence policy among the EU Member States?

This constructivist turn or may be illustrated by several factors. First, it should be borne in mind that European military and security cooperation is not such a latecomer to the European project. The proposal of the European Defence Community and its associated Political Community only collapsed in 1954 after the treaty had been signed by all six founding ECSC Member States when its ratification failed in the French National Assembly. Initiatives to re-engage with security and/or defence cooperation resurfaced in 1960-1962 in 1976 and again in 1980. Second, these efforts at the ‘militarisation’ of the Union foundered not upon the rocks of principled pacifism nor ambitions for an explicitly ‘civilian’ European foreign policy, but on the abiding rocks of the Atlanticist-Gaullist divide and Irish, Greek and Danish identity politics.

In sum, therefore, perhaps the Union’s militarization – the extension of the Union’s foreign and security policy capacity to encompass military and defence issues – is simply part and parcel of a broader, identity-driven process of Europeanisation? Certainly, this is illustrated by the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, which in the security and defence realm, provide the legal underpinnings for an already complex and sophisticated institutional system. The Union does not provide for a mutual security guarantee, nor does it establish itself as any kind of military alliance structure. At root, the ‘progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence’ is pitched precisely as a process directed towards identity-construction and ‘we-feeling’.74 It aspires to mutual solidarity and the development of a political reflex that is both self-referential to the Union as whole as well as the obligations of shared interests and purpose.

The European Union as an Enlightened Power?

It is the argument of this paper that the Union is neither a complex international institution, nor a state-in-the-making. It represents a new departure in international relations – one that is

74 Article 10C provides that “The Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence.”
uniquely conditioned by a very particular set of capacities and an ambition which exceeds the pursuit of collective self interest and which instead aspires to systemic transformation. This, based also on its very unique legal and institutional structures creates of the Union a potentially ‘enlightened power’.

Ian Manners has offered a conceptualization of the European Union as a ‘Normative Power’ in which the Union’s capacity and ambition to shape conceptions of the “normal” in international relations is headlined\(^{75}\). He argues that the Union’s normativity leads it to pursue milieu goals rather than possession goals i.e. the redesign of the international system as a whole rather than the pursuit of short-term immediate self-interests.\(^{76}\) Manner’s thesis is supported by an analysis of the Union’s normative scope, which – at least on the face of it – is much broader than other actors. It lays claim not just to the promotion and instantiation of democracy and human rights but also wider social rights, sustainable development, global solidarity and good governance. The Union’s capacity to diffuse such ambitious normative aspiration is also aided by the fact that the Union can pose no physical threat. As a result, according to Manners, the “EU can be conceptualized as a changer of norms in the international system - ‘not by what it does or what it says, but what it is”\(^{77}\).

However, can this claim for the Union’s focus on norms over interests be sustained? Certainly, as highlighted by Sjursen there is within the literature a broad recognition that EU foreign and security policy is seen to be animated by powerful ambitions not simply to act coherently but to act in the right way.\(^{78}\) This has recently been underlined in work on the enlargement of the Union, wherein it has been highlighted that the Union sold its own interests short in its ambition to fulfil what its key policy makers – at both EU and Member State level – saw to be their historic obligation to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.\(^{79}\)

This is not to say that the Union is in any way blind to self-interest, simply that in its pursuit of its own declared norms, values and beliefs, it creates in itself and among the relevant policy makers a sense of shared mission and identity which both tempers the substance of – and certainly downplays the profile of – declared ‘interests’. This phenomenon is accentuated

\(^{75}\) Manners (2002) op cit.

\(^{77}\) Ibid p.252.


by virtue of the Union’s relationship with its own Member States. Union institutions and actors are consistently seeking to ameliorate, adjudicate and coalesce the declared ‘interests’ of the constituent Member States into some common shared position. They are, as result, so acculturated against the concept of ‘interest’ that they tend to reinvent particular interests as general principle and to then pursue same as general norms, universally applicable. This offers some understanding as to why the focus on Union policy makers is so consistently bent towards the expression of norms, beliefs and values presented by the Union as generalisable and universal. Even so, however, how far can the Union really be distinguished from other international actors in that regard? Are we not aware of other major international actors that take the nationally particular and then glibly universalise its applicability?

Certainly, there is a long and powerful normative tradition in US foreign and security policy. Whether it is inter-war Wilsonianism, the Détente-inspired Human Rights policy of Jimmy Carter or the post Cold War’s new world order conceived of by George Bush père, US policy has long had a penchant for the export of domestic norms. How then can the Union be contrasted with such an example?

According to Sjursen, this can be accomplished on two grounds: first through an appreciation and recognition of and positive engagement with, situational context and second through a reliance on soft as opposed to hard power. The former is illustrated by something of a foreign policy cliché; the presumed European disposition towards compromise, bargained outcomes and ambiguity as against US foreign policy absolutism and determinism. Thus, the normative credentials of US policymakers are undermined by the external perception that the US is simply seeking to impose itself and replicate itself in the world, rather than engaging with the historic, political or cultural sensitivities involved. The second level of differentiation is that of policy pursuit. Again, at last partly by function of having the capacity successfully to employ hard power (i.e. the power of carrots and sticks) the United State’s pursuit of what it claims to be universal norms is further undermined by the alacrity with which it employs such hard power to secure acquiescence. By contrast, and again partly or largely due to its comparative lack of hard power capacity, the Union’s normative credentials are only strengthened by the fact that it relies more on the soft power of illustration, example and exhortation than on explicit conditionality and other hard power. As Kagan puts it “Europe brings a unique kind of power, not coercive military power but the power of attraction. The European Union has become a gigantic political and economic magnet whose greatest

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strength is the attractive pull it exerts on its neighbours. Europe's foreign policy today is enlargement.”

At the same time, it would wrong to characterise the Union as a uniquely normative actor. While the Union and its policy makers may repeatedly invoke the primacy of human rights in their bilateral dealings with states, that did not compromise their determination to drop arms sanctions against China well before the US administration in the years following the Tiananmen Massacre. Similarly, critical attention must be directed towards the ethical implications of EU policy in a host of policy areas – such as the impact on the developing world of the Common Agricultural Policy and the impact on efforts to address global warming by the creation of the European carbon bubble. Similarly, for all the Union’s anxious concern with developing a military capacity so as to address the 600,000 or so annual deaths resulting from armed conflicts globally, what similar proportionate efforts have been made to revise or address EU policy towards the 20,000,000 or so annual deaths occurring from want of basic foodstuffs and/or basic medications?

Despite the aforementioned weaknesses and lacunae, the European Union remains unique as an international actor in several other respects which, together with the (qualified) normative ambitions and capacity outlined above, does give substance to the potential idea of the Union as an ‘Enlightened’ power. In his book ‘The Conditions of Peace’ E.H. Carr insisted that peace in Europe could only be guaranteed when Europeans were finally prepared to “determine themselves into different units for different purposes’ and to establish among themselves a “wider form of international community”. If successful, this model might then be recognised by the rest of the world as a model. Carr’s idealised “New Europe” bears an uncanny resemblance to the contemporary European Union with its critically important and all-encompassing ‘moral (or normative) purpose’, the subordination of national interests to the collective good, and an institutional structure that defended common interests and which contributed to the creation of “new loyalties” and a new collective European identity. What is arguably missing is what Emanuel Adler then calls “enlightened power” – what Carr refers to as the willingness of Europe’s leaders to “take and enforce with vigour and impartiality the decisions which they think right”.

82 see Hurrell cited in Smith, Karen (2004)
84 Ibid p.117.
85 Ibid p.62
86 Ibid, p.273
It is here – in the provision of an ‘enlightened power’ – that the European Union arguably has the greatest potential. In an entirely different context, that of corporate and business leadership, Coughlin, Wingard and Holihan define a new style of leadership which rejects the traditional, hierarchical, patriarchal and competitive style of leadership for one which they characterise as being ‘enlightened’. This entails a more reflective and collaborative style of leadership, one that is values-driven, that has an explicit normative ambition and impact and one which is based upon “collaboration, cooperation, communication and open dialogue”. In a sense this is what defines successful leadership within the unique institutional matrix of the European Union. Thus, if the Union’s normative ambitions remain, if this is then truly grounded in a political project that delivers a transformation of policy and policy makers through ‘Europeanisation’ and if these can then be marshalled through a new kind of political leadership – reflective not of a traditional Westphalian State – then it is possible to envisage the Union, with or without a military capacity, as offering itself as a new kind of international actor – as an Enlightened Power.

**Conclusion**

The Union’s international capacity continues to be an issue of fascination for analysts both of European integration and of International Relations. As we have seen above, neither field has fully nor comfortably been able to place the development of the Union’s global power within the neat boxes of their respective typologies or theories. At the same time, in struggling to accommodate the Union, analysts have identified certain elements which mark the Union as being, if not unique, then certainly exceptional. There is little doubt but that on the face of it, the Union has acquired – or is in the process of acquiring – many of the traditional trappings of a state-like foreign, security and defence policy: from a politically accountable foreign minister-type appointee, to the organisation of troops on common, agreed military missions.

Within the transformation outlined above, the addition of a military capacity to the EU’s foreign and security policy and the effective end of the EU as an exclusively ‘civilian power’ is especially significant. However, the analysis of this article would argue that the Union remains sufficiently unique and/or exceptional as to rule out its decisive movement towards becoming a traditional Westphalian State. Whether that differentiation is rooted in its decision making procedures and structures, its institutional design, its alleged normative ambitions, its impact on Member States’ foreign and security policy and policy makers or

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simply a different approach to that of other major international actors, the EU does appear to
act apart – or at least aspires in its rhetoric to act apart. Whether that difference amounts to
an effort to transform the world through example is perhaps not yet clear. It might yet be
argued, however, that an ‘enlightened power’ model is a worthwhile target to which the
Union might aspire and a standard to which it might be usefully held.

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