

Book Review

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THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY: WHAT KIND OF POWER AND DIPLOMATIC ACTION?

Editors: Mario Telò and Frederik Ponjaert

This edited volume constitutes an important addition to the existing work on EU foreign policy with its thorough analysis of the combined impacts on the EU of the Lisbon Treaty, the global financial crisis, and subsequent Eurozone crisis, as well as the systemic constraints brought about by the emerging multipolar world order. In this context, Telò, Ponjaert and their international team of foreign policy experts make a timely contribution to the literature by providing a new framework for the analysis of EU foreign policy in times of difficulty and change. The authors share dissatisfaction with 'the past dual conceptualisation –the EU as an idealistic "normative power" and a "global security actor in the making" vs. "the EU as an irrelevant entity"' (p. 7), and have attempted to draw a realistic picture of the EU as an international actor in the making, theoretically and empirically.

The edited volume consists of three main parts. Part I (Chapters 1-3) explains the rapidly changing post-Cold War world order with special reference to the emerging multipolarity, evolving transatlantic relations and the ongoing financial crisis, while critically examining the institutional changes and effectiveness of post-Lisbon EU foreign policy. Part II (Chapters 4-6) analyses the European External Action Service (EEAS) established at Lisbon from three distinctive theoretical perspectives, namely the functional analysis of bureaucracy, the policy cycle model, and diplomatic coherence and consistency. Part III on EU external relations in the near and far abroad (Chapters 7-12) has a broad scope and critically examines not only the EU's neighbourhood policy (Chapter 7) and its interregional relations (Chapter 8), but also the strategic partnerships. Chapter 9 provides an overview of 10 existing strategic partnerships between the EU and third states, whereas the three final chapters (10-12) focus on the EU's three strategic partnerships with China, Japan, and India respectively. The authors of Chapters 10 to 12 come from these Asian countries, reflecting the editors' intention of avoiding the potential pitfalls of delivering excessively Eurocentric or inward-looking approaches to the study of EU foreign policy (p. 2).

The volume is far-reaching but rests on four recurrent contentions. First, that the performance of post-Lisbon EU foreign policy has been much poorer than many expected. One major cause of this is that the Lisbon Treaty increased rather than decreased the institutional complexity of the EU in external relations. As Telò (p. 27) succinctly puts it, in the long process of treaty revisions until the Lisbon Treaty, 'each progress towards enhanced coherence was paradoxically increasing internal complexity' (see also Chapter 5). One consequence of this is a structural problem in the form of ineffectiveness in the newly created position, High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission (HR-VP). Since the responsibilities of HR-VP are vaguely defined and too broad to be undertaken by one person, it is no surprise, according to the authors, that performance has been deficient, especially in the areas of security and defence (pp. 68-70; p. 92). The second contention is that the EEAS has so far played a limited role in shaping a consistent and cohesive EU foreign policy, although it is becoming a key institutional actor in bureaucratic, routinised aspects of diplomacy (p. 86). In other words, member states, especially the larger ones, remain key actors in the policy process. Third, the financial crash of 2008 and the Eurozone crisis since 2010 have brought serious

budgetary constraints on EU foreign policy. In fact, 20 member states cut their defence budget between 2009 and 2010, severely challenging the idealistic idea of the EU as a global military power (p. 69). Last but not least, the EU has not clearly identified and articulated its own place in an emerging heterogeneous multipolar world in which the USA and rising powers such as Brazil, China and India play key roles, and not necessarily on a multilateral basis (Chapter 1, Gamble). Overall, the volume sends an important message: it is of vital importance to ascertain the consequences that the current fundamental shifts, both internal and external, have brought to the EU as an unprecedented kind of international actor.

The key strengths of this collective work concern three aspects: theoretical innovation; the use of original materials; and comprehensiveness. Concerning the first point, the collection goes beyond empirics and provides numerous conceptual and theoretical tools tailored to the analysis of the EU. Part II is the best example of this point. Lequesne (Chapter 4) analytically distinguishes the three roles of the EEAS, namely that of a vertical and horizontal coordination builder, an information provider, and producer of global strategic ideas; while evaluating its mixed performance in each aspect. In turn, Carta (Chapter 5) discusses the formal and informal role of the EEAS and its relationship with other national and EU institutions from the policy cycle perspective. Finally, Mayer (Chapter 6) identifies five specific dimensions of diplomatic consistency and coherence (vertical, horizontal, strategic, narrative and external engagement), whilst criticising the EU's obsession with this issue as 'a European debate for Europeans' (p. 115) detached from the issue of external effectiveness. Altogether, the chapters help to analyse the new institution from various angles.

In respect of the second key strength, the most original material is to be found in the last three chapters on the EU's strategic partnerships with major Asian partners (by Zhimin, Nakamura and Bava). Specifically, the chapters play two essential roles. On the one hand, they empirically reaffirm the limited efficiency and external visibility of the EU explained in Parts I and II, and this complementary role illustrates the overall cohesiveness of the three-pronged book. On the other hand, they bring in specific issues not addressed in the other parts, indeed, issues seldom discussed in textbooks on EU foreign policy: the EU's increasing economic and financial reliance on China and declining leverage in negotiation after the financial crisis (pp. 182-185); ideational divergence on certain issues, (e.g. the death penalty and conservation of bluefin tuna) even between two like-minded civilian powers, Japan and the EU (p. 207); double standards employed in EU foreign policy which seriously undermine its self-image of a norm entrepreneur (pp. 214-215) (e.g. the tendency to lecture India on human rights, while strengthening ties with China, which is not a democracy). It is worth noting that Grevi's chapter (Chapter 9) plays a pivotal role in Part III in that it contextualises and adds coherence to the subsequent chapters on strategic partnerships which could otherwise have seemed rather detached from each other.

Finally, the thematic and geographical scope of this work is vast. It analyses the EU's power in the transatlantic and global context as well as institutional reforms especially the establishment of the EEAS and the new function of HR-VP. Bilateral relations with Mediterranean countries (Chapter 7, Gillespie) and the strategic partners are examined in depth, whereas Ponjaert provides a comprehensive survey of interregional cooperation as a distinctive instrument in the EU foreign policy toolbox (Chapter 8).

While the book as a whole is consistent in terms of policy analysis, whether the same can be said about policy recommendations is a moot point. Chapters 2 and 3, for example, deliver quite different, possibly irreconcilable policy proposals. According to Telò, the EU is a civilian power by default (p. 39), with Germany leading the demilitarisation process, especially after the current financial crisis. He concludes that the EU should develop a structural foreign policy: a long-term, holistic approach, taking stock of the EU's main asset, namely its internal socioeconomic policies, as well as its foreign and security policy instruments (p. 53). Then, Howorth (Chapter 3) not only

underlines the unsustainability of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU, which was largely ineffective even in the 'archetypical' case of Libya in 2011, but also suggests enhancing the effectiveness of the CSDP 'through and within' the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (p. 75). The book could have delivered a more direct message to policy makers if it elaborated on whether and to what extent these two policy recommendations - one suggesting a distinct EU approach with relative autonomy, and the other recommending further cooperation and the pooling of resources between the EU and NATO - are compatible with each other, even if the two authors fully agree that the EU as such cannot become a global military power.

Summing up, the text provides an excellent account of the EU's external relations in a critical and dispassionate way. The value added of the book more than compensates for those shortcomings identified. Thus, the book is recommended for all those looking for a clear and exhaustive account of the moving target that is EU foreign policy.



BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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