

Niemann, A. and Bretherthon, C. (2013)  
'Introduction: EU external policy at the crossroads'  
In: *International Relations*, Vol. 27. No. 3, pp. 261-275.

This is a preprint of an article whose final and definitive form will be published in *International Relations* © Copyright SAGE Publications; *International Relations* is available online at <http://ire.sagepub.com>

# **EU external policy at the crossroads: the challenge of actorness and effectiveness\***

**Arne Niemann**

University of Mainz

**Charlotte Bretherton**

Portsmouth University

## **Keywords:**

Actorness, coherence, effectiveness, European Union (EU), EU external policy.

## **Introduction**

For more than two decades the role of the European Union in international relations (IR) has been the subject of controversy. For traditional IR scholars adopting a state-centric approach to analysis, the EU has been conceived as, fundamentally, an inter-governmental organisation through which individual Member States pursue their interests when appropriate. During the 1970s, however, a number of scholars noted the emergence of a ‘mixed actor’ international system,<sup>1</sup> characterised by interdependence and transnationalism.<sup>2</sup> None of these approaches succeeded in adequately conceptualising the EU’s external relations, or in locating the EU amongst the growing cast of international actors. During the same period, other scholars directed attention specifically to the increasingly important external role of the (then) European Community.<sup>3</sup> These works led to a tendency among European Studies scholars to develop analyses focusing primarily upon the internal characteristics and processes determining EU external policy; and to conceptualise the EU as a global actor *sui generis*.<sup>4</sup>

It is our intention to move away from this *sui generis* approach and thus to consider EU actorness and effectiveness in relation to other international actors. Previous attempts to do this have included Brian White’s adaptation of foreign policy analysis<sup>5</sup> and Hazel Smith’s location of the EU among a range of more or less powerful international actors.<sup>6</sup> In this Special Issue our goal is to improve our conceptualisation and empirical understanding of EU actorness and effectiveness in international relations. While the European Union aspires to play a greater global role, its actorness and effectiveness cannot be taken for granted given the nature of the EU as a multi-level and semi-supranational polity encompassing 27 Member States with diverse foreign policy preferences and positions. In fact, the EU is presently at an

important crossroad. On the one hand, its external policy stature and capacity have been boosted by institutional innovations and by the Union's increased involvement in the full spectrum of international issues. On the other hand, a number of factors cast doubt on the EU's real external policy actorness and effectiveness: slow and often only modest internal reforms, an increasing politicisation of formally 'low politics' issues, and a less favourable external environment, with the US shifting its focus to the Asia-Pacific region and emerging powers creating a more polycentric world order. A further, complicating factor has been the impact of the prolonged sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone, which both consumed the energies of policy makers internally and generated perceptions of disunity and incompetence externally. This unprecedented mix of hopes and challenges for EU external policy makes an improved understanding of EU external policy actorness and effectiveness all the more pressing.

While several publications offer valuable conceptualisations of EU actorness,<sup>7</sup> the literature contains relatively few systematic empirical explorations of the actual extent of EU actorness and especially effectiveness in international politics. And while the EU's actorness was found as only partially existing in the (few) studies of the 1990s, the EU's external policy procedures and instruments, as well as the EU's own claims to constitute an actor on the world scene, have subsequently developed significantly. Moreover, approaches such as those on civilian and normative power Europe are built on the assumption that the EU possesses sufficient actorness.<sup>8</sup> The mostly disappointing empirical findings concerning the EU as a normative power<sup>9</sup> suggest that it would be wiser to achieve greater clarity about the extent and consequences of EU actorness before engaging in the 'what sort of power' debate. Hence the central aim of this Special Issue is to re-evaluate the concepts of actorness developed by Jupille and Caporaso<sup>10</sup> and Bretherton and Vogler<sup>11</sup> – in the light of subsequent developments in the scholarly literature; of changes in the internal structure of the EU, most particularly those introduced by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty; of the Union's extending external policy scope; and of the evolving (and increasingly challenging) international structure within which the EU operates. Central to this re-evaluation will be a shift in focus from notions of actor capability to actor effectiveness.

While scholars have begun to connect issues of 'actorness' with those of 'effectiveness',<sup>12</sup> the relationship between the two concepts is often under-specified and systematic empirical analyses of EU effectiveness are still relatively rare.<sup>13</sup> The remainder of this introduction will unpack and further elaborate the issues raised so far.

## Conceptualising EU external policy

Mainstream IR theory struggles to adequately conceptualise the EU and its external relations as it tends to focus on statehood and rationality. Since the EU is not a state, nor does it have clearly defined interests enabling what traditional IR scholars consider to be rational behaviour, the Union has often not been regarded as a fully-fledged player in international relations.<sup>14</sup> The EU has been termed a ‘heterodox unit of analysis’, referring to its unique but ambiguous dynamic.<sup>15</sup> Losing this state-centric focus, which tends to exclude much of what is distinctive and significant about the EU, can help in developing an appreciation of the Union’s influence in international politics.<sup>16</sup> The view of the EU as *sui generis* may offer an alternative approach to the evaluation of the international role of the Union. It considers the EU as a separate category, and contains different perspectives on the unique international potential of the EU. As Marsh and Mackenstein note, for example,

‘the *sui generis* nature of the EU means that international organisations and fora vary in their willingness to recognise it as an actor in its own right as opposed to its constituent Member States. This leads, in turn, to substantial variations in the rights of the EC in different international organizations’.<sup>17</sup>

While it is quite clear that the EU currently does not fit the standard idea of statehood, some (few) scholars are convinced that the *sui generis* character of the Union refers only to its present stage, which is to develop further towards a European federation.<sup>18</sup> More generally, however, there has been a tendency in EU Studies to exaggerate the uniqueness of the EU. As a result, a considerable fraction of the EU external policy literature has been rather EU-introverted (or even Eurocentric) because the EU has been (analytically) insulated from wider International Relations themes and the foreign policies of other ‘powers’. This Special Issue moves away from viewing the EU as an actor *sui generis*, and will instead take a more comparative perspective.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to studies that consider the extent of EU actorness, increasing attention has been devoted to the question of which type of ‘power’ the EU constitutes in its international relations. Since the early 1970s much discussion focused on the idea of ‘civilian power Europe’ (CPE), thus conceptualising the Community as a ‘civilian’ actor with significant economic but limited military power that is mainly interested in using ‘civilian’ means of exercising influence, in pacifying international tensions and in the juridification of international politics.<sup>20</sup> The EU continues to focus on civilian power mechanisms in its international relations, and the concept has remained influential in academic discourse,<sup>21</sup> not

least as a point of reference in the debate concerning the ‘militarisation’ of the EU.<sup>22</sup> It has been widely criticised, however, and the majority of scholars now holds that the ‘civilian power Europe’ concept is (severely) contested by the advent of EU security/defence policy integration because of undue concept-stretching,<sup>23</sup> a weakening of the EU’s distinctive, civilian international identity<sup>24</sup> and the adverse consequences for democratic control of security and defence policy, an essential element of the CPE idea.<sup>25</sup>

In the past few years attention has increasingly shifted to the (potential) ‘normative power’ of the EU, that is its ability to project externally the norms and values which it holds internally (democracy, respect for human rights and so on) and hence to define what passes as normal in world affairs.<sup>26</sup> The normative power Europe (NPE) idea has spurred much scholarly debate and has also been subject to widespread criticism. It has been asserted, for example, that the concept is essentially Eurocentric and that perceptions of the EU as a normative power are not shared by external actors, particularly in the South.<sup>27</sup> Most importantly, in the current context, it has been noted that the concept lacks precision, particularly in terms of criteria and standards that can be applied for analysing the concept empirically,<sup>28</sup> an aspect that has been partially addressed since then.<sup>29</sup> While the normative power research agenda is in the process of attaining a more systematic empirical focus,<sup>30</sup> and some (few) works have indeed arrived at positive findings on NPE,<sup>31</sup> most of the empirical studies to date have been rather sceptical of the degree to which the EU constitutes a normative power. While EU membership has undoubtedly supported the consolidation of democracy in acceding countries both in southern and eastern Europe, projection of EU norms more widely is contested. Studies have exposed the lack of (genuinely) normative intentions/commitment,<sup>32</sup> the contested legitimacy of the Union,<sup>33</sup> the problematic nature of normative processes in terms of reflexivity and inclusiveness,<sup>34</sup> or the lack of (normative) impact.<sup>35</sup>

The doubts hanging over the concept of civilian power Europe, and the empirical (and methodological) challenges facing the notion of normative power Europe, raise the question of whether it does not make sense to take one step back. Recent studies have, indeed, attempted reconceptualisations of EU actorness that avoid these civilian/normative power distinctions in favour of notions of the EU as an (essentially) ‘integrative power’<sup>36</sup> or simply as a ‘small power’.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, these studies, too, are primarily concerned with the character of the EU and hence tend to take EU actorness for granted. Yet, the above-mentioned studies contesting the legitimacy and impact of EU foreign policy suggest that perhaps the second step was taken before the first, i.e. that talking about ‘what sort of

power/actor' initially requires more (systematic) analysis of actorness itself. The need to revisit the concept is further strengthened by the fact that it remains empirically underexplored; and that early studies of actorness, such as those by Cosgrove and Twitchett, Sjöstedt and Jupille and Caporaso,<sup>38</sup> were rather doubtful regarding the potential for or extent of EU actorness. At the same time the EU's foreign policy procedures and instruments, as well as the EU's own claims for constituting an (effective) actor on the world scene, have further progressed since. Against this background, it seems important to probe EU actorness more thoroughly for a more recent period.

### **The concept of 'actorness'**

While early studies, such as those by Cosgrove and Twitchett and Galtung,<sup>39</sup> were important in generating debate about the potential international roles of the European Community (EC), the first extensive and systematic study of the EC's 'actor capability' was produced by Gunnar Sjöstedt in 1977. Sjöstedt defined actorness as the ability to function 'actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system'.<sup>40</sup> His understanding of actorness recognised the patchy and uneven nature of the international capabilities of the EC, while also considering that the Community possessed some of the characteristics of typical actors in the international system, but lacked others. Sjöstedt's central criteria for actorness are delimitation from other actors and the capacity for autonomous action. While the first of these can be considered to inadequately conceptualise 'the pervasive intermingling of levels of political authority'<sup>41</sup> that characterise the EU, the concept of autonomy has been central to analyses of actorness in the international relations literature and hence has utility for comparative analysis.<sup>42</sup>

Sjöstedt also considers, as requisites for actorness, possession of several state-like characteristics, such as having a community of interests, systems for controlling Community resources and for crisis-management, as well as a network of external agents. Thus, as identified by Sjöstedt, actorness still presumes possession of a substantial degree of state-like properties. It has been suggested that if the EU wants to 'join the game', it will have to play, to some extent, according to the rules of this (state-dominated) game.<sup>43</sup> In consequence, increased EU actorness has often been associated with increasing supranationalism in the policy process and, conversely, diminished actorness with intergovernmentalism,<sup>44</sup> in this context, 'explicitly or implicitly using the state as comparator'<sup>45</sup>.

Sjöstedt's work is conceptually inspiring. It has influenced most subsequent treatments of EU actorness, and continues to do so.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, his properties focus excessively on internal characteristics and are mainly appropriate for application to EU external action generally. Hence they are difficult to operationalise and apply to specific cases. Subsequently a considerable number of somewhat differing approaches to actorness have been developed, each using their own criteria. Not all these frameworks are equally suitable here. For example Ginsberg focuses on decision-making structures in his framework,<sup>47</sup> an approach that is too narrow for the cases at hand.

Another conceptualisation of actorness that gained some prominence is that of Jupille and Caporaso.<sup>48</sup> Their critique of previous contributions to the actorness debate is that these lack clear criteria for determining the status of the EU as an actor. Jupille and Caporaso, therefore, employ four criteria for ascertaining actorness: recognition, authority, cohesion and autonomy. *Recognition* entails acceptance and interaction by and with an organisation, other members and third parties. *Authority* concerns above all the legal competence to act on a given subject matter. The EU's authority can be viewed as the authority delegated by the Member States to EU institutions. Apart from formal authority in terms of legal competence, the Community may also have informal authority, for example through substantial expertise on the part of the Commission. *Autonomy* concerns the distinctiveness of the EU's institutional apparatus during international negotiations, and the degree of discretionary goal formation, decision-making and implementation, in a way such that the EU makes a difference, compared to the baseline expectation of a decentralised state system working on the basis of power and interest'.<sup>49</sup> *Cohesion* is divided into several dimensions: 'value cohesion' (the degree of common basic goals), 'tactical cohesion' (availability of methods to make diverging goals fit one another, for example through issue linkage or side payments), 'procedural cohesion' (degree of consensus concerning how to process issues of conflict), and 'output cohesion' (the extent of success in formulating common policies, regardless of substantive and procedural agreement).<sup>50</sup>

These criteria are not absolute, suggesting that actorness is a matter of degree. Although the four criteria are partly interconnected, the approach to actorness has utility, not least because it is clearly structured and the specified criteria are 'operationalisable' for empirical research. It could be argued, however, that Jupille and Caporaso's approach is relatively complex and lacks parsimony, given the fact that each of the four criteria contains several sub-criteria. While Jupille and Caporaso's framework has been criticised as excessively complex, it is capable of adaptation and application, as (some) contributors to this

Special Issue will demonstrate. Other critiques, conversely, suggest that their framework is too narrowly focused, in that it is excessively concerned with internal factors and thus omits (*inter alia*) important questions of EU influence, in particular those associated with the subtle, inter-subjective processes that construct (or constrain) the exercise of power and authority in international politics.<sup>51</sup> Such processes, of course, are less amenable to empirical analysis than the more legalistic approach to authority adopted by Jupille and Caporaso. Nevertheless, for those scholars attempting to develop a constructivist analysis, they are essential to an understanding of EU actorness.

Such a conceptualisation is attempted by Bretherton and Vogler,<sup>52</sup> whose analysis focuses on the inter-related concepts of opportunity, presence and capability. Opportunity ‘denotes the external environment of ideas and events – the context which frames and shapes EU action or inaction’<sup>53</sup>. Here, context is seen as a dynamic process that encompasses external perceptions and expectations of EU actorness and related, evolving and frequently contested understandings of EU identity. In terms of research agendas, opportunity thus directs attention to various levels of analysis - including rules and structures of power at the global level and elite and popular opinion at the level of the third party state. This latter area has been the subject of a great deal of empirical research in recent years.<sup>54</sup>

Presence is a concept that builds upon the path-breaking work of Allen and Smith.<sup>55</sup> According to Bretherton and Vogler presence ‘conceptualizes the ability of the EU, by virtue of its existence, to exert influence beyond its borders’.<sup>56</sup> It is thus a passive concept that is manifested both directly, through the unintended external consequences of internal policies, and indirectly, through the subtle processes of structural power associated with perceptions of the EU’s reputation. The studies of external opinion referred to above have relevance here.

The third element of the Bretherton and Vogler model, capability, deals with the internal determinants of actor capacity. It utilises several of the categories introduced by Sjöstedt, as outlined above, but is also concerned with external perceptions of the EU’s ability and willingness to act externally, hence linking capability with both presence and opportunity. While capability, understood as the ability to formulate and implement policy, was originally conceived in terms of three categories – consistency, coherence and the availability of policy instruments – Bretherton and Vogler have more recently focused particularly upon the concept of coherence.<sup>57</sup> This revised approach is very much concerned with the relationship between EU actorness and effectiveness.

## **Effectiveness**



Policy effectiveness has been defined in several different ways. The two most frequently used categories are effectiveness in terms of ‘goal attainment’ and in terms of ‘problem-solving’.<sup>58</sup> Effectiveness is notoriously difficult to analyse and assess – a problem that is by no means confined to the study of EU external policy. Debates about EU effectiveness have been particularly intense, however, reflecting a belief held by (many) IR scholars that the EU is particularly *ineffective*.<sup>59</sup> Hence adoption of a comparative perspective can be instructive since, it is argued, ‘[m]any states – large and small – cannot put into practice foreign policy ambitions and when they do, sometimes fail to achieve their goals’.<sup>60</sup> This is evidently the case in relation, even, to the external policy of the USA, as demonstrated by high-profile failures in Vietnam, Somalia and elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, to make more far-reaching claims concerning the EU’s role and performance<sup>62</sup> in international relations, we have to go beyond the studies of actorness (or ability to act) discussed above and consider the effectiveness of EU action, an issue that has been addressed from a variety of perspectives. An early contribution was Christopher Hill’s seminal discussion of the ‘capability-expectations gap’ apparently affecting the EU.<sup>63</sup> An antidote to Hill’s rather pessimistic assessment was provided by Ginsberg’s innovative study.<sup>64</sup> Ginsberg’s aim was to take analysis of EU external policy ‘to its next logical stage of development – to analyse the effects (or outcomes) of actions’ thus ‘making more concrete the extent of the EU’s international influence’.<sup>65</sup> This aim, and the systematic application of his analytical framework, accords with the concerns of this Special Issue. However, his positive conclusions on EU ‘impact’ in a difficult case (conflict in former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995) are time-specific, in that they reflect a period of strong commitment on the part of (many) Member State governments to enhance the role of the EU in the post-Cold War world, and the reluctance of other international actors to become involved in that conflict. This neglect of contextual factors is a reminder of the potential trade-off between parsimony and richness when studying policy effectiveness.

Recent analyses have tended to focus on the concept of coherence, which has been referred to as ‘one of the most fervently discussed’<sup>66</sup> factors associated with the effectiveness of EU external policy. Reflecting the common-sense notion, frequently reiterated by EU officials, that effectiveness is enhanced when the EU ‘speaks with one voice’, the desire to strengthen the coherence of external policy has been a key factor driving Treaty and institutional reform for more than a decade.<sup>67</sup> Given the complexity of the EU policy system, however, coherence is inevitably multi-faceted and uncertain.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, the concept has

relevance to other international actors - for example policy coherence is enshrined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. It thus has potential for comparative analysis.

In the present context, a 'minimal level of coherence'<sup>69</sup> must be present to enable the EU to act. Hence, actorness logically precedes effectiveness. In evaluating effectiveness, however, we cannot posit a linear relationship between increased coherence and greater effectiveness in terms of goal attainment. First, as Missiroli has demonstrated,<sup>70</sup> efforts to achieve coherence can result in lowest common denominator, ineffective policies that are reflected (*inter alia*) in the EU's preference for inducements rather than threats when seeking to exert influence. Moreover, as Carbone argues<sup>71</sup> increased coherence can be associated with third party resistance and hence reduced effectiveness. In addition, a simple coherence/effectiveness relationship fails to consider the constraining and enabling factors that constitute the external opportunity structure.

In recent years several studies have considered the (complex and uncertain) relationship between coherence and effectiveness.<sup>72</sup> Bretherton and Vogler (2008) have considered the implications of attempts to achieve vertical coherence (between internal actors) and horizontal coherence (across policy domains) for sustainable development,<sup>73</sup> while van Schaik argues that the Union's unity is influenced by three factors: EU competence, preference homogeneity and EU socialisation.<sup>74</sup> The EU's unity, in turn, is supposed to positively impact on EU effectiveness. 'If the EU unites, it can be more than the sum of its parts'.<sup>75</sup> However, processes have to be analysed within the given negotiating context. Greater EU unity can also invoke negative reactions from negotiating partners and thus impede EU effectiveness.

Thomas particularly analyses the relationship between coherence and effectiveness.<sup>76</sup> He proposes a parsimonious approach for conceptualising coherence by drawing on policy determinacy (reflecting how clearly and narrowly an EU policy defines the boundaries of acceptable behaviour) and policy implementation (reflecting how rigorously EU actors comply with and support the agreed policy). Highly determinate policies are likely to enhance the EU's effectiveness because they are viewed by others as reflecting a greater common commitment which is likely to be perceived as a solid basis for good relations. In addition, when determinate policies are also regularly implemented 'collective material resources and persuasive powers are deployed on behalf of common objectives'.<sup>77</sup> Thomas emphasises that these hypotheses are probabilistic rather than deterministic. On any given issue, the Union may be opposed by more powerful or more determined actors with disparate preference -

demonstrating, once again, the importance of the external opportunity structure for analyses of EU effectiveness.

## **Particular focus of the Special Issue**

Inevitably effectiveness will vary across policy sectors, and the contributions to this Special Issue have been selected to illustrate this. In addition, effectiveness, in its various dimensions, is a relative concept. Therefore, the study of the EU's external effectiveness demands a move away from the traditional 'European Studies' approach, that treats the EU as an actor '*sui generis*', to an approach that is essentially comparative. The contributors to this Special Issue will thus contrast EU effectiveness with that of other, more traditional actors in International Relations.

The papers are tied together through their concern with these issues, which are at the cutting-edge of research on EU actorness/effectiveness. As we believe it will be more fruitful to allow contributing authors to make their own explorations of these complex issues, we do not recommend a specific conceptual framework but rather leave it to the authors to use their *own* adaptations of well-known frameworks. The contributions to this Special Issue seek to address four sets of questions:

- a) Can existing conceptualisations of actorness be revised to facilitate empirical analysis? How can current models of actorness be conceptually developed?
- b) Is the EU effective as an external policy actor? How can effectiveness be evaluated?
- c) How does EU actorness/effectiveness compare with that of other important powers in the international system? How and to what extent does the external environment condition EU actorness and effectiveness?
- d) What is the likely future direction of EU actorness/effectiveness? How will foreseeable developments at the national, European and international levels affect EU actorness and effectiveness? (In terms of the EU level, the Special Issue is particularly interested in the implications of the Treaty of Lisbon provisions for EU actorness and effectiveness.)

The challenge of conceptualising EU actorness in an empirically-tractable manner is addressed principally by Bretherton and Vogler, Groen and Niemann, Rhinard and Brattberg,

and van Schaik. The question of the effectiveness of EU external policy is tackled by Carbone, Elsig, Groen and Niemann, Edwards, Rhinard and Brattberg, and van Schaik. The comparative dimension between EU actorness and that of other powers and the question of how the external environment may condition EU actorness is addressed by Rhinard and Brattberg, Bretherton and Vogler, van Schaik, Elsig, Carbone, as well as Groen and Niemann. The question of future developments (especially in view of the Lisbon amendments) is addressed principally by Edwards, van Schaik, Carbone, Groen and Niemann, and also (to a lesser extent) by Bretherton and Vogler. As a whole, the project includes empirically rich studies on various areas of EU external policy, including security, trade, development, environment and public health. By focusing on actorness and effectiveness and on the guiding sub-questions specified above, the special issue offers a systematic attempt to link fields of EU external policy that require more substantial analytical cross-fertilisation.

In addition to its treatment of important fields of EU external policy, the Special Issue features both bilateral relations (Rhinard and Brattberg; Carbone; partly Bretherton and Vogler), and the EU's role in international institutions (van Schaik; Groen and Niemann; Elsig; partly Bretherton and Vogler). Furthermore, the level of analysis<sup>78</sup> varies between more macro-level studies that look at broader developments (Bretherton and Vogler; Edwards), micro-level analyses that focus more upon policy implementation and decisions taken on the ground (Carbone; Elsig), and intermediate or meso-level studies that investigate policy-making developments in particular cases and relationships (van Schaik; Groen and Niemann; Rhinard and Brattberg).

## **Overview of contributions to this collection**

Geoffrey Edwards discusses EU foreign policy - a controversial area due to its significance for Member State sovereignty - and hence a difficult case for EU actorness and effectiveness. Central to his argument is the disjuncture between the frequently reiterated commitment, by many Member State governments, to a more effective common foreign policy; and their reluctance, in practice, to relinquish autonomy in this area. Edwards charts the gradual development of EU foreign policy through a series of Treaty changes and concomitant institution building. Particular attention is given to the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, in terms of its potential to promote greater coherence in policy-making, both between Member States and between institutions at the EU level. The discussion considers four areas of importance to EU

actorness in CFSP – capacity building; availability of policy instruments; political will and legitimacy. While there has been some progress in all areas, and habits of cooperation between foreign policy officials have developed, continuing Member State resistance impedes effectiveness, and possibly even actorness, in this policy area.

Louise van Schaik analyses the EU's effectiveness in negotiations on international food standards taking place in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). She expects EU competence, preference homogeneity and EU socialisation to substantially affect the Union's actorness and effectiveness in the negotiations, but also pays attention to the negotiating context. In the 2009 negotiations on growth promoters, whose use the EU opposes, the Commission took the lead. It was trusted and supported by the EU member states, but with a small EU delegation and relatively passive Member States, EU capacity has not been used to the full potential, as a result of which the EU still seems to punch below its weight in the CAC.

Lisanne Groen and Arne Niemann examine the degree of EU actorness and effectiveness at the UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009. They take Jupille and Caporaso as a conceptual starting point and then specify a more parsimonious actorness framework that consists of coherence and autonomy. Effectiveness is conceptualised as the result of actorness conditioned by the 'opportunity structure' that enables or constrains EU actions. They suggest that the EU's actorness has been no more than moderate, particularly in view of only limited (preference) coherence. In terms of the opportunity structure they argue that the strong involvement of other important actors with rather different positions, namely the United States and the BASIC countries, inhibited EU effectiveness, as did the substantial degree of politicisation in restricting the EU's freedom to negotiate effectively.

Manfred Elsig's article examines how the EU selects judges for appointment to the World Trade Organizations' key judicial institution, the Appellate Body. Conceptually, the paper differentiates between effectiveness in representation and effectiveness in impact. Elsig indicates how delegation to the European Commission has raised the strategic agenda-setting power for championing its preferred candidates. He goes on to compare EU and US practice in nominating candidates. All in all, the article finds that effectiveness in representation has increased. In terms of effectiveness in impact, Elsig shows how the international environment conditions EU influence. The article also explores the difficulties in studying the effectiveness of EU external relations due to the unusual decision-making processes prevalent in judicial bodies.

In his discussion of EU aid to Sub-Saharan Africa, Maurizio Carbone points to the increasing significance of the Union as a development actor during the 2000s, but questions the frequently assumed relationship between actorness and effectiveness. Identifying coherence as a key criterion of actorness, he examines the ‘federator’ role of the European Commission in relation to the 28 aid programmes currently operated by the Member States and the Commission itself. In the context of common commitment to poverty eradication as the principal aim of development assistance, a number of important initiatives have sought, with mixed results, to increase the overall coherence of EU policy. In terms of aid effectiveness, however, Carbone’s field research reveals a poor implementation record. This failure, he argues, is attributable to the aid architecture, in particular the perception among practitioners that the considerable effort required to coordinate EU programmes is not justified by the results. From this perspective, increased actorness was associated with reduced effectiveness.

Mark Rhinard and Erik Brattberg examine and compare the respective roles and degrees of actorness/effectiveness exhibited by the European Union and United States in international disaster relief. They first theorise the relationship and linkage between actorness and effectiveness. The resulting hypotheses are assessed using the EU and US responses to the 2010 Haiti earthquake as a case study. Rhinard and Brattberg find some degree of support in their analysis concerning the expected links between actorness and effectiveness, although no straightforward relationship between actorness and their indicators of effectiveness is uncovered in all areas of their case study.

A broader focus on EU external action is provided by Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, who consider four policy areas – trade, development, climate diplomacy and CFSP/CSDP. They utilise an updated version of their model, based on the interlinked concepts of presence, opportunity and capability, to interrogate the notion that EU actorness and effectiveness is declining. In this approach, policy coherence is central to capability – and hence the capacity for action – but actorness is contingent upon the opportunity structure provided by the external environment (events and dominant ideas); and the external demands (or lack thereof) associated with the Union’s reputation, or presence. It is contended that, even should the increased capacity envisaged by the Lisbon Treaty be achieved, and the deleterious effect of the eurozone crisis on the Union’s presence addressed, this would not fully compensate for the loss of opportunity associated with the changing international structure. Hence the Union continues to be an international actor but its influence in global affairs, and hence its effectiveness, has declined.

## Notes

---

We would like to thank the anonymous referees for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of the contributions to this special issue.

<sup>1</sup> Oran R. Young, 'The actors in world politics', in James N. Rosenau, Vincent Davis and Maurice A. East (eds), *The Analysis of International Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1972), pp. 125-44.

<sup>2</sup> Robert O. Keohane and J.S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A Superpower in the Making* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973); Gunnar Sjöstedt, *The External Role of the European Community* (Saxon House, Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (1st ed., London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Brian White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Hazel Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy: What is it and what it does* (London: Pluto, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> For example: Sjöstedt, *External Role*; Joseph Jupille and James A. Caporaso, 'States, Agency and Rules: the European Union in Global Environmental Politics', in Carolyn Rhodes (ed.) *The European Union in the World Community* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), pp. 213-29; Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor* (1999).

<sup>8</sup> Francois Duchêne, 'Europe in World Peace', in R. Mayane (ed.) *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead* (London: Fontana, 1972), pp. 32-47; Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), 2002, pp. 235-58.

<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, 'The European Union as a Sustainable Development Actor: the Case of External Fisheries Policy', *European Integration*, 30(3), 2008, pp. 401-17; Nathalie Tocci, (ed.), *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2008); Arne Niemann and Tessa de Wekker, 'Normative power Europe? EU relations with Moldova?', *European Integration online Papers*, 14(14), 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Jupille and Caporaso, 'States, Agency and Rules'.

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> For earlier works: Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor* (1999); R.H. Ginsberg, 'Conceptualizing the European Union as an International Actor', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37(3), 1999, pp. 429-54; Smith, *EU Foreign Policy*.

<sup>13</sup> Katie Verlin Laatikainen and Karen E. Smith (eds.), *The European Union at the United Nations – Intersecting Multilateralisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Ben Rosamond, 'Conceptualizing the EU Model of Governance in World Politics', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 10(4), 2005, pp. 463-78, p. 465.

<sup>15</sup> Filippo Andreatta, 'Theory and the European Union's International Relations', in Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 2006*, p. 12; David Allen and Michael Smith, 'Western Europe's presence in the contemporary arena', *Review of International Studies*, 16, 1990, pp. 19-37, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Marsh and Hans Mackensteen, *The International Relations of the European Union* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Teija Tiilikainen, 'To Be or Not to Be: An Analysis of the Legal and Political Elements of Statehood in the EU's External Identity', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 6, 2001, pp. 223-41, p. 234.

- 
- <sup>19</sup> It is of interest to note that a comparative perspective was adopted by one of the earliest analyses of the potential actor capability of the (then) EEC – see: Carol A. Cosgrove and Kenneth J. Twitchett (eds.), *The New International Actors: The UN and the EEC* (London: Macmillan, 1970).
- <sup>20</sup> Duchêne, *World Peace*.
- <sup>21</sup> Jan Orbie, ‘Civilian Power Europe: Review of the Original and Current Debates’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 41(1), 2006, pp. 123-28.
- <sup>22</sup> Stelios Stavridis, ‘Why the “Militarising” of the European Union is strengthening the concept of a “Civilian power Europe”’, *EUI Working Papers*, RSC No. 2001/17.
- <sup>23</sup> For example: Karen Smith, ‘Still “civilian power EU?”’, CIDEL Workshop (Oslo: 22-23 October 2004).
- <sup>24</sup> Jan Zielonka, *Explaining Euro-Paralysis. Why Europe is Unable to Act in International Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Karen Smith, ‘The end of civilian power EU’, *The International Spectator*, 35(2), 2000, pp. 11-28; Andrew Moravcsik, A., ‘How Europe Can Win Without an Army’, *Financial Times*, 3 April 2003.
- <sup>25</sup> Wolfgang Wagner, ‘The Democratic Control of Military Power Europe’. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 32-48, 2006; Smith, ‘Civilian power?’; It should be noted that those defending the CPE concept are usually those who adhere to a narrow understanding of CPE (mainly based on civilian ends), whereas those critical of the concept, in the light of the ESPD’s evolution, usually take CPE to go beyond (civilian) ends but also to include (civilian) means and (democratic) control.
- <sup>26</sup> Manners, *NPE*.
- <sup>27</sup> Sonia Lucarelli, Lorenzo Fioramonti, ‘Have you heard of the EU? An analysis of global images of the European Union’, *Garnet Policy Brief*, No. 7, September 2008; L. Fioramonti and A. Poletti, ‘Facing the Giant: Southern Perspectives on the European Union’, *Third World Quarterly*, 29(1), 2008, pp. 167-80.
- <sup>28</sup> Helene Sjusren, ‘The EU as a “normative” power: how can this be?’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 2006, pp. 235-51, p. 236.
- <sup>29</sup> Ian Manners, ‘The Normative Ethics of the European Union’, *International Affairs*, 84(1), 2008, pp. 45-60; Niemann and de Wekker, *Relations with Moldova*.
- <sup>30</sup> Tocci, *Normative Actor?*; R. Whitman, R. (ed.), *Normative Power Europe: empirical and theoretical perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
- <sup>31</sup> Manners, *NPE*; M. Szymanski and M.E. Smith, ‘Coherence and Conditionality in European Foreign Policy: Negotiating the EU-Mexico Global Agreement’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 43(1), 2005, pp. 171-92; S. Scheipers, D. Sicurelli, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Credible Utopia?’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 45(2), 2007, pp. 435-57.
- <sup>32</sup> Alexander Warkotsch, ‘The European Union and democracy promotion in bad neighbourhoods: The case of Central Asia’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11(4), 2006, pp. 509-25; Robert Falkner, ‘The Political Economy of “Normative Power” Europe: EU Environmental Leadership in International Biotechnology Regulation’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(4), 2007, pp. 507-26.
- <sup>33</sup> Guy Harpaz, ‘Normative power Europe and the problem of a legitimacy deficit: an Israeli perspective’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 12, 2007, pp. 89-109; Hiski Haukkala, ‘The Role of Norms and Values in the European Union’s Russia Policy’, in J. Gower and G. Timmins (eds.) *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership* (London: Anthem Press, 2007), pp. 133–48.
- <sup>34</sup> Federica Bicchì, ‘“One size fits all”: normative power Europe and the Mediterranean’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 2006, pp. 286-303; Niemann and de Wekker, *Relations with Moldova*.
- <sup>35</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Sustainable Development Actor*; S. Fernandes, ‘EU Policies towards Russia’, in Tocci, N. (ed.), *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners*, (Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2008); N. Tocci, ‘Policies towards Israel-Palestine 2000-07’, in N. Tocci (ed.) *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners* (Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2008).
- <sup>36</sup> Joachim Koops, *The European Union as an Integrative Power?* (Brussels: VUB Press, 2011).
- <sup>37</sup> Asle Toje, ‘The European Union as a Small Power’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49(1), 2011, pp. 43-60.



- 
- <sup>38</sup> Cosgrove and Twitchett, *New International Actors*; Sjöstedt, *External Role*; Jupille and Caporaso, 'States, Agency and Rules'.
- <sup>39</sup> Cosgrove and Twitchett, *New International Actors*; Galtung, *Superpower in the Making*.
- <sup>40</sup> Sjöstedt, *External Role*, p. 16.
- <sup>41</sup> Jupille and Caporaso, 'States, Agency and Rules', p. 217.
- <sup>42</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 2006*, p. 17.
- <sup>43</sup> Rosamond, 'EU Model', p. 466; Tiilikainen, 'To Be or Not to Be', p. 223.
- <sup>44</sup> Martijn L.P. Groenleer and Louise G. van Schaik, 'United We Stand? The European Union's International Actorness in the Cases of the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 45(5), 2007, pp. 969-98, p. 969.
- <sup>45</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 2006*, p. 1.
- <sup>46</sup> Koops, *Integrative Power*, p. 107.
- <sup>47</sup> Ginsberg, 'EU as International Actor'.
- <sup>48</sup> Jupille and Caporaso, 'States, Agency and Rules'.
- <sup>49</sup> Jupille and Caporaso, 'States, Agency and Rules', p. 217.
- <sup>50</sup> What Jupille and Caporaso mean by 'cohesion', the majority of authors have referred to as 'coherence' (for example: D. Thomas, 'Still Punching below its Weight: Coherence and Effectiveness in EU Foreign Policy', Paper prepared for the European Union Studies Association conference (Boston: 3-5 March 2011; L. Van Schaik, 'Is the Sum More than its Parts? A Comparative Case Study on the Relationship between EU Unity and its Effectiveness in Multilateral Negotiations', Ph.D Thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2010; see also the discussion below), while Nutall has used the term (vertical) 'consistency' (Simon Nutall, 'Coherence and Consistency', in C. Hill, C. and M. Smith (eds) *The International Relations of the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 91-112, p. 97). To avoid confusion, the contributions to this special issue will use the term 'coherence' throughout when referring to the above phenomenon.
- <sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the social construction of authority in international politics see: M. Barnett and M. Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
- <sup>52</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 1999*; Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 2006*.
- <sup>53</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 2006*, p. 24.
- <sup>54</sup> Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 'Global Images'; Fioramonti and Poletti, 'Facing the Giant'. Fioramonti, L. and A. Poletti (2008) 'Facing the Giant: Southern Perspectives on the European Union', *Third World Quarterly*, 29:1, 167-80.
- <sup>55</sup> Allen and Smith, 'Presence'.
- <sup>56</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, *Global Actor 2006*, p. 24.
- <sup>57</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, 'Sustainable Development Actor'; C. Bretherton and J. Vogler, 'Towards an EU Policy for Sustainable Global Development?', in S. Gänzle et al (eds.) *EU Policy for Global Development: Superpower in the Making?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 153-71.
- <sup>58</sup> Oran Young, *International Governance: Protecting the Environment in a Stateless Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1994). The latter has also been referred to as the impact dimension of effectiveness (Young, *International Governance*, p. 12). The authors of this Special Issue will mainly analyse effectiveness in terms of goal attainment. If not specified otherwise, effectiveness throughout this Special Issue will denote the degree to which the EU managed to achieve its objectives. The debate on the EU's external effectiveness is related to that on the Union's 'transformative power' (for example: Mark Leonard, *Why Europe will run the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005; Heather Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
- <sup>59</sup> Smith, *EU Foreign Policy*, p. 6.
- <sup>60</sup> Smith, *EU Foreign Policy*, p. 6.

---

<sup>61</sup> It is instructive to note, also, that a systematic, empirical analysis of a more mundane policy area – US economic assistance – was unable to demonstrate effectiveness in relation to any of the variables or time periods considered (Patrick M. Regan, ‘Economic Aid and Political Repression: An Empirical Evaluation of US Foreign Policy’, *Political Research Quarterly*, 48(3), 1995, pp. 613-28).

<sup>62</sup> In the quest of going beyond ‘actorness’ this special issue confines itself to the notion of ‘effectiveness’ and does not seek to discuss the ‘performance’ dimension of EU external policy. On the EU’s performance (defined as consisting of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and resource viability) see: Knut Erik Jørgensen, Sebastian Oberthür, and Jamal Sahin, ‘Introduction: Assessing the EU’s Performance in International Institutions – Conceptual Framework and Core Findings’, *European Integration*, 33( 6), 2011, pp. 599-629.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher Hill, ‘The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(3), 1993, 305-25.

<sup>64</sup> Roy H. Ginsberg, *The European Union in International Relations: Baptism by Fire* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>65</sup> Ginsberg, *Baptism by Fire*, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Carmen Gebhard, ‘Coherence’, in C. Hill and M. Smith (eds.) (2nd ed, *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 101-27, p. 101.

<sup>67</sup> The contributors to this Special Issue will consider the implications for policy coherence/effectiveness of the most recent reforms, introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

<sup>68</sup> For example, Gebhard identifies four ‘types of coherence’ (Gebhard, ‘Coherence’, p. 106).

<sup>69</sup> Gebhard, ‘Coherence’.

<sup>70</sup> A. Missiroli, ‘European Security Policy: The Challenge of Coherence’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 6(2), 2001, pp. 177-96, p. 182.

<sup>71</sup> Maurizio Carbone, ‘Between EU Actorness and Aid Effectiveness: The Logics of EU Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa’, *International Relations*, 27 (3), 2013.

<sup>72</sup> For example: Missiroli, ‘Challenge of Coherence’; Szymanski and Smith, ‘Coherence and Conditionality’.

<sup>73</sup> Bretherton and Vogler, ‘Sustainable Development Actor’.

<sup>74</sup> Van Schaik, ‘Is the Sum More than its Parts?’.

<sup>75</sup> Van Schaik, ‘Is the Sum More than its Parts?’ , p. 16.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, ‘Coherence and Effectiveness’.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas, ‘Coherence and Effectiveness’, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> John Peterson, ‘Decision-making in the European Union: towards a framework for analysis’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 2: 69-96, 1995.

**Arne Niemann** is Professor of International Politics and Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration Studies at the University of Mainz. Previously, he held positions at the universities of Amsterdam, Dresden and Cambridge. He obtained a PhD and an M.Phil from the University of Cambridge and a BSc (Econ) from the London School of Economics & Political Science. He is author of *Explaining Decisions in the European Union* (Cambridge University Press 2006) and has published extensively on the European Union and its external policy in several journals, including the *Journal of European Public Policy* (1998, 2004, 2010, 2011) and the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (2008, 2011).

**Charlotte Bretherton** is a Visiting Research Fellow at Portsmouth University UK and was formerly senior lecturer in International Relations in the School of Humanities and Social Science at Liverpool John Moores University, UK. She holds a Masters degree in Latin American Studies from Liverpool University. Her book contributions include jointly edited volumes with Geoffrey Ponton, *Global Politics: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 1996) and, with

---

John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (Routledge, 1999 and 2006). She has also published journal articles and book chapters on various aspects of EU actorness and in the fields of women's networking, gender and global change and gender dimensions of EU enlargement.