

The EU in the World: Future Research Agendas

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First of all, I would like to thank the three foundations who have presented me with the 2007 Anna Lindh award: the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Volkswagen Stiftung, and Compagnia di Sao Paolo. I am deeply honoured (and thrilled) to have my scholarly work recognised so generously. I am especially proud to have won a prize named after Anna Lindh, who is one of my heroes – not least because she was a strong supporter of human rights, even when voicing criticism of human rights violations attracted strong criticism itself. Certainly in that respect (as in so many others), Europe is all the poorer in the wake of her tragic death.

I will use this lecture to report on work that I am currently doing for an edited book on *Studying the European Union: Current and Future Agendas*.¹ I am writing a chapter on the study of the EU's role in the world, and my 'brief' has been to review the 'state of the art' in that field of study, to identify gaps in knowledge, and to propose future research agendas.

The first thing to note is that academic interest in studying various aspects of the EU in the world is growing healthily. In the 1970s and 1980s, a few academics (several of whom are sitting in this room) identified European Political Cooperation and European Community external relations as developments well worth investigating; with the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the early 1990s, interest grew in the 'phenomenon' of European foreign and security policy; and in the last few years we have seen even more attention paid to this field. There is an academic journal specifically dedicated to the study of European foreign affairs (*European Foreign Affairs Review*);

¹ Michelle Egan, Neill Nugent and William Paterson, eds, *Studying the European Union: Current and Future Agendas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008/09 forthcoming).

conferences such as those of UACES (University Association of Contemporary European Studies), EUSA (European Union Studies Association), ECPR (European Consortium for Political Research), and BISA (British International Studies Association) usually have several panels on EU foreign and security policy; courses on the Europe's foreign relations are now offered at numerous universities around Europe and the world; the activities of FORNET (a network of research on European foreign policy coordinated by Professor Christopher Hill) are continuing largely within the framework of the EU-CONSENT network of excellence (coordinated by Professor Wolfgang Wessels); and *CFSP Forum* now even receives submissions out of the blue (not following a request from me). EU-funded networks have helped to strengthen links among researchers, while this programme (the European Foreign and Security Policy Studies Programme) has generously supported research into European foreign and security policy and fostered an active network of younger researchers in particular.

There are, however, quite fundamental questions about EU foreign and security policy that we still need to address. Research may be increasing, but there is too little 'accumulation of knowledge' (that is, not enough attention is being paid to the large questions we face and to the answers that have already been suggested), and there is still a great need for more substantial empirical analysis, with historical depth.

Studying the EU's relations with the world, including how it comes to agree policies towards outsiders, is inherently complex:

- it involves multiple levels of enquiry (international, EU, national and below the level of national governments), and multiple actors at those levels; and
- it involves a moving 'target', in that the EU foreign policy system continues to develop over time (with new institutions, new policy instruments, and so on, as well as enlargement to more member states).

Three challenges for research arise:

- to understand and explain the evolution of the EU foreign policy system (the institutions, the formal rules, the informal norms, and so on);

- to understand and explain the policy-making process, including the output and implementation of policy; and
- to understand and explain the impact of common policies (or the failure to agree common policies) on the system itself, on EU member states, on the world.

These challenges can be broken down into six core questions that I think we should be asking about the 'EU in the world'. I do not stake out preferences for a particular methodology or theoretical approach to answering those questions. Different theories can give us different answers to them, thus sparking a healthy debate. Likewise, different methodologies may give us different – and richer – answers as well. But these are six questions I believe should guide our research.

1) Why do the member states agree to act collectively in international relations?

By this, I refer to both the general and specific: firstly, in general, why might the member states act collectively? This is, of course, a very large question – with several different answers suggested in the theoretical literature. From a constructivist standpoint, we would consider the role that a 'common European identity' plays in motivating the member states to act together; that is, through the intense process of foreign policy cooperation and institutionalisation (the process by which shared standards of behaviour are developed) member states might be developing a common identity and thus be more inclined to act collectively. From an intergovernmentalist perspective, we would focus on the roles that shared or overlapping interests and what Roy Ginsberg calls the 'politics of scale' play. Realists would instead focus on how external threats might prompt collective action. And so on. But there is also the specific: in specific cases, why do the member states act collectively? In addition to the answers just suggested, looking at specific cases would also prompt investigation into the roles that internal and external actors – such as a directorate of powerful member states, small groups of other states, the European Commission, the European 'public', outsiders such as the US – have played in prompting or encouraging such action. Comparative studies of specific cases of EU collective foreign policy action could illuminate any persistent patterns in terms of which factors, or

actors, tend to be most important in prompting collective action. Comparison of EU foreign policy cooperation with any similar efforts in other regions could also yield potential explanations for cooperation within the EU.

2) How are policies made?

This question brings us down into the details of policy-making: who are the major actors and how do they take decisions (lowest common denominator bargaining?), who (member states and various actors within them, EU institutions) ‘wins’ in policy-making debates, what is the substance of any policies on which the actors can agree? Investigations would undoubtedly need to focus on actors at the EU level (in Brussels-based institutions) and national level (in various ministries), but the role that interest groups or epistemic communities may be of interest too. How are policies then implemented, and with which policy instruments? This is classic foreign policy analysis, which may, or may not, require modification to be applied in the European context.

3) Why have the institutions and decision-making procedures for making EU foreign policies evolved in the way that they have, and what impact do these have on the substance of any common policies agreed?

This question leads us into explaining the dynamics of institutional development in this field, so, for example, whether we are seeing neo-functionalist spillover, or incremental intergovernmentalism, or intra-EU balancing or even balancing behaviour by the EU as a whole. It also prompts questions about which actors might be driving forward the evolution of the institutions and decision-making procedures: a *directoire*, the European Commission, and so on? And about whether, how and why what David Allen first called ‘Brusselisation’ may be leading to more common policies.

4) What are the limits to EU collective action?

Again, there are numerous ways to address this question. How important is the ‘logic of diversity’ (as termed by Stanley Hoffmann four decades ago)? Do the member states have diverging interests that the processes referred to above cannot reconcile? Limits might also be posed by bureaucratic politics, for example, ‘turf wars’ between institutions in Brussels. How is this limiting EU collective action? Do the ‘pillars’ obstruct and complicate common policy-making, and how, exactly?

Other possible answers might focus on the limits of the foreign policy instruments available to the EU, and/or the restricted room for manoeuvre in the international system for an actor such as the EU: realists, for example, would note that the EU does not and cannot really use military force coercively (because the member states will not agree to go that far), and that this constitutes a serious limit to EU foreign policy aspirations – especially because the international system is more Hobbesian than Kantian.

5) What impact do the EU foreign policy institutions, decision-making procedures and common policies have on the member states?

Here attention primarily focuses on the extent of ‘Europeanisation’ of member state foreign policy (changes in national institutions, policy-making processes, policy substance, perhaps even foreign policy identity), or to put it another way, the extent to which national governments are involved in a process of socialisation into EU foreign policy cooperation norms.

6) What impact does the EU have on outsiders/international relations?

This question forces us to consider the effectiveness of EU foreign policies, and the EU’s broader influence in the international system (as Christopher Hill and Michael Smith have recently enjoined us to do). Considerations of effectiveness include whether the EU’s policies had the effect *intended*, that is, whether and to what extent they achieved the results desired. This question also encompasses the *unintended* effects of EU policies

– and not just the foreign policies agreed, but also ‘internal’ policies, such as the Common Fisheries and/or Agricultural Policies.

Measuring ‘effectiveness’ is inherently a difficult task – how can we attribute ‘success’ to the EU, rather than, say, to domestic actors or other international actors or beneficial international developments or just plain luck? But policy-makers – and perhaps more importantly, outsiders – do make judgments about the success or not of the implementation of policies. Of course, we may argue they may not be the appropriate judgments, and subsequent policy-making may not take such ‘lessons’ into account, but such judgments are still made, so for scholars this should be an important part of the investigation of the policy-making process. Is the EU able to influence other actors (third countries, non-governmental actors, international organisations, and so on) to do what it wants them to do?

But this question also raises the more general issue of what impact the EU may or may not be having on international relations in general – and again, approaches to this question could go in many different directions. Does the EU serve as a model for other regions, such that processes of regionalisation may be prompted, encouraged by the EU? Is the EU actually strengthening multilateralism and the rule of international law, and how? Or does the development and enlargement of the EU prompt balancing behaviour (and therefore potentially raise tensions in international politics)?

State of the art

The current literature on the EU and the world addresses many of these questions, though some more than others, but for the most part in a compartmentalised manner. Topics that currently seem to be popular (some extremely popular, noted in *italics*) in the literature include:

Regarding institutions/policy-making:

- the origins and potential impact of the ‘external relations’ provisions in the constitutional treaty and now the reform treaty (there has been much written, for example, about the possible implications of the EU ‘Foreign Minister’ – or, rather, the new-fangled High Representative – and the European External Action Service);
- *the development and implementation of the European Security and Defence Policy (mostly on the development of the institutions)* (some studies have, for example, focused on the role that the Franco-British-German trio have played in that development; others have analysed problems of coherence across institutions and pillars in particular instances);
- the impact of enlargement on the EU’s foreign policy-making system (though it is still early days for such studies);
- the intersection between the CFSP and the ‘Justice and Home affairs’ pillar (or rather, since that pillar is fast disappearing, between those issues that were part of the original JHA pillar - immigration, terrorism, organized crime, and so on – and foreign policy), though research has tended to concentrate on immigration policy rather than – oddly – terrorism or other JHA issues such as organised crime;

Regarding policy-making:

- *EU policies regarding particular third countries/regions/organisations/regimes* (some areas seem to be quite popular, reflecting EU priorities: 1) the neighbourhood (European Neighbourhood Policy), the Mediterranean in general, though some parts of the Mediterranean (Libya, Algeria) are not as well covered; with a few exceptions (such as books by Sonia Lucarelli and Brendan Simms), the Western Balkans has been given less scholarly attention than it merits, given the fundamental significance of that region in the EU’s foreign relations; 2) the US;

- 3) inter-regionalism; 4) the EU and the UN, the EU and the International Criminal Court; 5) the EU and the Kyoto environmental regime);
- *values and norms in the EU's foreign relations* (such investigations are often combined with 'area studies' – for example, the promotion of human rights in particular areas; or the role that differing norms may play in transatlantic relations);

Regarding the impact on member states:

- the Europeanisation of national foreign policy (including new member states) (though scholars are noting how problematic the concept can be when trying to use it in the foreign policy realm);

Impact on international relations:

- finally, the EU and the broader international system – with a related *tendency to try to categorise the EU's 'identity' as an international actor* (is it a civilian power, military power, ethical power, normative power, superpower, and so on).

Agendas for future research

What could be added to this already copious literature? There are still large gaps in our knowledge. Furthermore, there is a great need still for detailed, empirical, and/or historical research; theoretically-informed but nonetheless careful empirical research; the kind of research that requires lots of digging around in archives, or interviewing, or wading through a wide variety of sources that are not necessarily available on the internet (remember that what's online can be very patchy: for example, following the reorganisation of the Enlargement Directorate-General's website, it is now quite difficult to find information about previous enlargements). Scholars of EU foreign policy could also engage more with the large questions and concepts that scholars grapple with in

other fields, such as history, development studies, foreign policy analysis and international relations, public policy, and law. In particular, the following questions and issues merit further research:

Policy-making process: cross-pillar issues, coordination

The challenges of coordination between first and second pillar institutions are becoming well-known to us (and the implementation of the reform treaty provisions will give us more material to analyse), particular in areas such as ‘civilian crisis management’. But there are other similar issues which need more investigation:

- research on the JHA-CFSP intersection is in its early days, and the implications of the disappearance of the JHA pillar needs further analysis in particular. What, for example, is happening to the role of interior/home affairs ministries and ministers in ‘cross-pillar’ policies such as the fight against terrorism?
- there is even, I think, an undeveloped area of research regarding first pillar – second pillar coordination, which is the links, or tensions, between foreign policy and development policy. This is a clear example of an area where European foreign policy analysts could reach out to foster more links with development policy analysts. For example, the links, or tensions, between security and development in EU policy in Africa deserve further examination.

Policy-making process: how/why are policies made?

There is still much room here for detailed, empirical research – especially comparisons across policies. For example, why have the member states taken decisions to launch particular ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) missions? A comparison across the cases (now almost twenty) would be quite useful, and could even give us clues about how the ESDP might develop, at least in the short term.

Taking an historical approach could also be highly illuminating. For example, many of the theories or explanations of why the EU enlarges, refer solely to the 2004/07 enlargements (and sometimes beyond). Rarely – if ever – do we use such contemporary explanations ‘backwards’, to see if they are helpful in explaining previous rounds of enlargement (and if not, why not). There is then quite considerable scope for an historical, comparative approach to explaining why the EU enlarges.

Comparison with other regions is also needed: it is striking that in the UN context there appear to be blocs that are even more united than the EU (Africa Group, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and, until the 1995 enlargement, the Nordic Group), and most of these blocs are often vigorous in their opposition to the EU. What is going on there, and how does it compare to what is going on within the EU?

Impact of institutions on policy-making process

To what extent has institutionalisation – and the related (or identical?) process of ‘Brusselisation’ – actually prompted foreign policy cooperation and the formulation and implementation of common foreign policies? Going further, can we say that ‘socialisation’ is occurring in Brussels? Of course, there are obvious difficulties facing researchers here: how can we identify and prove that socialisation occurs? However, if we cannot ‘operationalise’ this concept, then perhaps we should direct our research energies elsewhere. But if we think that the concept is promising, then uncovering socialisation will require – at a minimum – a lot of interviewing and in-depth, detailed research. And its effects would also need to be explored: is it really leading to a convergence of views on interests, values, policies? what effect does it have on the substance of policies? How does enlargement affect institutionalisation, socialisation, cooperation? Is socialisation in Brussels offset by countervailing pressures from national officials?

The impact on institutions on policy-making processes is also an area where European foreign policy analysts could reach out to legal analysts: what impact is the ‘legalisation’

of the CFSP having on the substance of policies agreed, and on the attitude of policy-makers towards the CFSP (do they see themselves as making ‘law’)?

Impact of system on member states

Further detailed research is also needed on the impact of the EU on national foreign policy-making. This can build on research on ‘Europeanisation’, or foreign policy analysis, or constructivist insights about socialisation. Large-scale comparative studies would be of great interest here – and should obviously include the new member states.

We need a much better idea of what is going on in national capitals, the ‘depth’ of involvement of national officials in EU foreign policy processes, the proportion of national officials that must deal with the EU, and their attitudes towards EU cooperation. It may in fact be that most national officials deal rarely with EU affairs: for example, national officials involved with the ‘greater Middle East’ may not necessarily be informed of or interested in what the EU is doing in that respect. Can national foreign policy officials actually build a successful career while avoiding ‘all things European’ (as anecdotal evidence from the UK suggests)? By interviewing only officials involved in EU processes, we may miss the larger picture: we may think the EU is more important in national processes than it is. Of course we also may discover that in fact, in some (or all) states the EU actually is quite a significant factor (and the reasons for variations across countries and over time would merit exploration). But we do not yet have enough information to be able to state this either way.

Such research should then link into studies on what is happening in Brussels: we should connect what is happening in national capitals to the questions posed at the start of this lecture: why do the member states act collectively, what are the limits to collective action, how are EU foreign policies made.

We should take a longer perspective as well. It would be interesting, for example, to know whether policy-makers are aware of the history of EU cooperation, and how or

whether it affects how they interact within the system. I have heard a Council secretariat official state that the CFSP began in 1999: her point was that we shouldn't judge the member states harshly if CFSP doesn't work perfectly, the system was still new, everyone was still learning to cooperate. Yet six member states have had 37 years (and another three almost as many) of cooperation within a formal framework for foreign policy cooperation. Surely this is long enough for there to have been some impact on member states, for 'socialisation' to occur, for 'identity change' to be evident (as constructivists might argue). If – as many argue – the UK is 'not really European' or not 'Europeanised' after 34 years inside the EU (and fairly constructive and active participation in EPC/CFSP/ESDP), then perhaps there are serious limits to socialisation: but why?

The UK is not the only 'difficult' case here – we should ask the same questions of other countries. And we could gain insights from comparing serious 'problem cases' (member states with 'adjustment problems' in the European foreign policy system): for example, Greece in the 1980s, perhaps Denmark in the 1990s and Cyprus now. Are there similarities in these cases? How and why do they eventually adjust (are there any broad lessons there)? How do other member states deal with them?

Impact on world

Much more research needs to be done on the EU's influence in the wider world, and particularly on the EU's impact on the international system (are we, as some realists have argued, even seeing 'soft balancing' now? Is the EU a model for other regions, for international relations? Is it a 'power'?), and its actual impact on outsiders, compared to that of local and other international actors (does the EU influence them and how?).

Too often, we lapse into assertions that the EU has either considerable or little influence, without the backing of clear, substantial evidence for such influence. 'Proving' the EU has influence (or not, and what sort and why) requires considerable empirical research (and particularly a lot of interviewing, and reading materials not necessarily in an EU

language) – outside the EU, and necessarily involving non-EU based scholars. The view from Delhi or Moscow or Beijing or Tokyo or Cape Town or Accra or Caracas or Washington, DC (and so on) is bound to be different from the view from Brussels and EU national capitals – and might lead to considerable revision of our views on EU power and influence. This sort of research could go from investigating the effectiveness of EU aid policies (in particular countries, sectors, regions), to analysing the EU's influence in international diplomatic processes, to gauging the extent to which major powers consider the EU to be an actor, or even a power, worth listening to (and so on). This means separating out EU influence from that of other domestic and international actors – an inherently difficult task – but unless we try to get to the bottom of this, we are left with unsubstantiated assertions about the EU's place/role/influence in the world.

Doing research on these themes should entail 'us' physically leaving the EU and venturing into other countries, and should entail the involvement of researchers from outside the EU in joint research projects with those based inside the EU.

This suggestion also means that I think that we should turn our attention to analysing what kind of power the EU wields and with what effect, rather than debating what kind of power the EU *is*. Debates about whether the EU is or is not a civilian power, a normative power, a superpower and so on, are not really leading us anywhere right now – certainly not to firm answers to the core questions listed at the start of this lecture. We should instead engage in a debate about what the EU does and why it does it and with what effect, rather than what it is.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the field of study on the EU's foreign and security policy system offers up numerous research challenges but also numerous interesting questions to pursue. Much research is ongoing, but there are still many gaps to fill. We need more in-depth empirical research. We could also do more to make our work relevant to other disciplines and areas of study. We should be able to speak to a wider audience of academics and analysts, and

draw in a wider circle of scholars from other disciplines. We must speak to scholars outside the EU and involve them in joint research endeavours. Finally, there is still work to do to 'accumulate knowledge': to summarise important findings, stimulate research to contribute further findings to build up our collective knowledge.