

The EU as strategic actor, pragmatic ‘re-actor’ or passive pole?

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This paper approaches the issue of EU’s actorness in international affairs by way of a theoretically informed discussion pertaining to three potential role-sets for the EU in the international arena, and to how major counterparts in the international arena would assess these roles. Classical IR-theory serves as the point of departure, but insights stemming from EU studies are also drawn upon. The analysis looks into whether the EU should be comprehended as a *passive pole*, as a *pragmatic re-actor* or as a *strategic actor*, and targets the issues of what its nature as an actor intends for its citizens, and for its relations with traditional great powers.

The chapter begins with a scrutiny of the European Union from a systemic and structural realist point of view. It is however not sufficient to examine the EU’s actorness by ways of a neorealist framework for analysis, which is constructed in order to capture processes at the system level.¹ In order to capture important aspects of the EU’s actorness it is necessary also to ‘open the black box’ and scrutinise internal processes. Moreover, realism disregards of the importance of identity, ideas and social context to international relations dynamics. To broaden and deepen the analysis, a constructivist analysis is added, which primarily deals with internal EU dynamics.²

Realist and constructivist theories have often been formulated in opposition to one another. Such an approach is not fruitful, since both provide important insights into the mechanisms of international relations and security. In this chapter, both frameworks generate vital contributions to the overall analysis of

¹ Waltz 1979.

² For an introduction to constructivism, see e.g. Katzenstein 1996, Finnemore 1996(a), Finnemore 1996 (b), Adler 1997.

the EU's character and weight as an actor in the international system of security, and its potential to shoulder the three roles outlined above.

The EU as a passive pole

As far ahead as the eye can see, Western Europe will remain an international-political cipher.³

This sombre conclusion stems from Kenneth Waltz's analysis of the EU in 1998. Waltz concludes that the EU lacks organizational ability and collective will to use its capabilities and resources.⁴ In contrast, this section argues that even though divided, the EU is certainly no cipher. Borrowing a concept from Waltz's own master theory, it can be characterised as a powerful 'pole' in world affairs.

Within the EU literature, scholars have attempted to grasp the relatively passive, but yet powerful, nature of the EU. Allen and Smith have described the EU as a 'strategic presence' in international affairs. This presence stems from internal processes and policies, and does not necessarily denote intentional international action. It does not even have to involve an actor, but can be generated by abstract forces such as ideas and expectations.⁵ Bretherton and Vogler suggest that 'presence' is a sort of 'latent actorness'. Such a rather passive stance can still serve to initiate action. For example, the EU can generate responses from external actors only by virtue of its presence in the international arena, and these responses may in turn result in EU action.⁶ In this interpretation, the EU is relatively passive, but can easily be activated. In such a perspective, the EU constitutes, as a minimum, an accumulation of power and resources – in neorealist terms 'capabilities' – in the international arena.

³ Waltz 1998: p. 22.

⁴ Waltz 1998: p. 22.

⁵ Allen and Smith 1990: pp. 20-22.

⁶ Bretherton and Vogler 2006: p.27.

The EU has also an impact on what it actively does, producing tangible effects, what I here term ‘actorness’. The difference between passive presence and actorness is efficiently caught by Ginsberg, who argues that the EU has external political impact in two ways; first for simply being present in the calculations of many nonmembers for what the EU broadly represents and what the EU can do for their interests. Second, the EU has impact for what it does actively, producing tangible effects.⁷

Temporarily leaving the question of what kind of actorness the EU possesses aside, we will elaborate a bit further on how it can function as a relatively passive pole. Using the vocabulary of structural realism, the EU can indeed be described as a ‘pole’. This framing of the union serves to clarify its significance in international relations. A pole is in this chapter defined as one of the leading players in international affairs, which together with one or a few more such players defines the contemporary structure of international relations. Such a power has the capacity (however latent) to project itself into the stage of world politics, and it matters to others, also when it does not use its voice and capabilities actively. In other words, even those who argue that the EU lacks actorness – a capacity to perform actively in the international arena – could ascribe to this sort of definition of the EU as a pole.

The US, the EU, China, Japan, and perhaps Russia, are the powers most commonly listed in discussions of the outlook of a potential multipolar world of the 21st century.⁸ It is indeed debatable whether the world is multipolar. Many would argue that the ‘unipolar moment’ is not over yet.⁹ Writing during the Cold War in 1979, Kenneth Waltz argues that for the short run, a united Europe, developing political competence and military, is the actor most likely to emerge as a third super power, probably ranking ‘between the United States and the Soviet Union’.¹⁰ As demonstrated above, Waltz was less optimistic some 20 years later. In 2000, he opens up just a little bit for the possibility of change,

⁷ Ginsberg 2001: p.274.

⁸ Brooks and Wohlforth 2002, Krauthammer 1990: p. 23, Waltz 2000:p.30, Kupchan 2003:p.213.

⁹ E.g. Brook and Wohlforth 2002, Krauthammer 1990, Krauthammer 2003, Ikenberry 2003.

¹⁰ Waltz 1979:p. 180.

arguing ‘in the absence of radical change, Europe will count for little in international politics for as far ahead as the eye can see, unless Germany, becoming impatient, decides to lead a coalition.’¹¹

An analysis of polarity depends upon how capabilities are calculated. Waltz argues that actors located in a self-help system have to use their combined capabilities in order to serve their interests. Economic, military and other capabilities should therefore not be separately weighted. He concludes ‘counting the great powers of an era is about as difficult, or as easy, as saying how many major firms populate an oligopolistic sector of an economy. The question is an empirical one, and common sense can answer it’.¹² In his later writings, his own common sense answer is that the EU has all the tools – population, resources, technology, and military capabilities – to emerge as one of the next great powers that could restore the balance in international affairs, providing a way out of unipolarity, but it lacks the organizational ability and the collective will to use them.¹³ Waltz argues pessimistically that European states are only able to follow a policy when the United States issues one: due to internal divisions, the EU cannot use its capabilities (population, resources, technology, and military capabilities).¹⁴

The EU cannot compete with the US militarily in quantitative terms, the military expenditures of the EU member-states adding up to less than half of those of the US.¹⁵ However, in many other areas the union retains great strengths and has demonstrated that it can also use these strengths actively. In the environmental sector it has even divested the US of the role of a global leader.¹⁶ Above all, being the world’s largest economy, the EU is clearly on equal footing with the USA in the economic realm. Bretherton and Vogler conclude that the EU’s growing economic strength has resulted in that it can be

¹¹ Waltz 2000: p. 32.

¹² Waltz 1979:p.131.

¹³ Waltz 1998: p. 21, Waltz 2000: p. 31.

¹⁴ Waltz 1998:p. 21.

¹⁵ Möttölä 2006:p. 5.

¹⁶ Bretherton and Vogler 2006: ch. 4.

regarded as a great power in many ways, 'even exercising a form of trade duopoly with the United States.'¹⁷ Marsh and Mackenstein call attention to that in addition to the EU's economic strengths, it has also an impressive collective presence in the international arena by virtue of its large global network of diplomatic representations.¹⁸

One of Waltz's realist colleagues, Richard Rosecrance, observes that the EU's strength is that it reverses the balance of power in the international system. Rather than causing actors to counter-balance, the EU attracts both neighbouring and remote states, because they wish to draw economic benefits of association to the Union.¹⁹ Rosecrance concludes that because of its economic strength that generates partnerships, political unity may not even be needed for the EU to have a major effect in global politics.²⁰ Similarly, Charles Kupchan argues that the EU does not need to become a super power with interests and commitments with a global range in order to change the effective polarity of the international system.²¹

Moreover, regardless of the EU's ability to act independently in every instance, and regardless of the exact distribution of capabilities in various issue-areas – which can be calculated and debated at great length – it is clear, that even though the international structure is not exactly multipolar, it is not unipolar in the sense that exclusively the doings of the hegemon define how the system functions in practise. This argument is in line with Buzan's and Waever's analysis, according to which both super powers and great powers define the global level of polarity.²² These scholars argue that the present system structure may best be understood as one superpower plus four great powers (Japan, China, Russia, and the EU/Europe).²³ In their analysis, what separates great powers from regional powers are that other major powers think of them as if

¹⁷ Bretherton and Vogler 2006: p. 88.

¹⁸ Marsh and Mackenstein 2005: pp. 52-53.

¹⁹ Rosecrance 1998: p.16

²⁰ Rosecrance 1998: p.19.

²¹ Kupchan 2003:pp.211-212.

²² Buzan and Waever 2003: p.34.

²³ Buzan and Waever 2003:p.30.

they have the potential to bid for superpower status in the short or medium term.²⁴ A great power with potential for a super power role matters in the international system to the extent that it can be named a pole.

In conclusion, the EU cannot compete with the US in all respects, but in some important ways it is a significant centre of power in international affairs that affects the workings of the system. It is certainly divided, but united enough so as to have an organizational ability and a collective will strong enough to warrant the characterisation as a sort of passive pole. Albeit passive, it is certainly not a powerless one. As a politically relatively passive economic giant, the EU may function as an unusually non-threatening actor that may nonetheless exerts influence in a range of ways. For example, in such a role, the EU can be apprehended not primarily as a distinct voice in international affairs – although it will sometimes use its ability to speak up - but as a remote discourse that inevitably enables and restrains other actors. The normative aspects of such a discourse gain added strength by being coupled to a ‘hegemonic’ world democratic movement, which is sustained by other major international actors like for example the UN and Canada.

As a minimum, the EU is thus a passive pole, and it is powerful if only by virtue of being such. It clearly makes a difference in the current international system. The ensuing discussions look into whether the union may be described as something more than a passive pole, and discuss potential implications for its interactions with traditional great powers.

²⁴ Buzan and Waever 2003:p.35.

A strategic actor – not for the time being

If the EU is a pole, can it even be defined a 'strategic actor'? For the time being, no. Problems that can be traced to realist thinking may contribute to the EU's difficulties of finding a common voice in the sphere of security, but factors which are linked to the actors' identities and interactions are even more problematic for the union in its quest for a common strategy.

The primary reason for the EU's weakness is that the three leading member states of the EU – France, Great Britain and Germany – represent different basic outlooks on the role of the nation state and of the EU. In Germany, the EU project has been interpreted as an alternative to German nationalism, which was dishonoured during World War II. The prevailing French view of the EU has centred on the union as a suitable vehicle for realising French ambitions. Among the three, Great Britain has been most sceptic to the EU.²⁵ These differences colour the states' varying logics of security, variances that generate clashes focused not only on interests, but also on norms and principles. They have so far resulted in grave problems for the EU to function efficiently in the event of serious international crises.

A central problem for the EU is that its pursuit of increased cohesion in the sphere of security – which is a precondition for a common strategy – risks generating negative effects for the general sense of community within the EU. In other words, it seems that to some extent EU states hesitate to bring their differences into the open, since this could serve to 'open Pandora's box'. So far, when confronted with seemingly overwhelming security problems, the EU has displayed a tendency to resort to highlighting its successes in other areas within the realm of security.²⁶

²⁵ For a brief overview of the development of the three states' identities and their views on the EU, see Marcussen et al (2001).

²⁶ Strömviik 2005: p. 180.

By focusing on the implementation of institutional reform, and on new tasks and challenges – such as launching new, path-breaking military missions – differences are partly concealed. Hence, in an ‘obsessive preoccupation with process’, as Osvaldo Croci puts it, the actors become occupied with new processes, new tasks, and refrain from engaging in an open discussion of their basic divergences in the sphere of security.²⁷ In a rare statement during the Iraqi crisis, one European leader, Joschka Fischer, acknowledged that the Europeans were not united on what world order to promote, but had to engage in a discussion of whether it out to be co-operative and multilateral, or unilateral.²⁸

The security dilemma is a central theme in the literature of IR. Anders Wivel points at another central dilemma for the European states; the integration dilemma, which stems from the paradox that if a state welcomes further integration in order to avoid isolation, it will also lose independence, freedom of action and the possibility to pursue its own interests.²⁹ The discussion above draws attention to a third dilemma highly salient to the EU, a predicament that does not belong within realist theory but within a constructivist logic; what I call the ‘cohesion/community dilemma’. In fear of encountering overriding differences by engaging in a frank discussion pertaining to basic differences, the leading EU member states prefer to avoid the subject. Put differently, the leaders avoid sorting out the basic problems, because such a debate could do damage both to the CFSP/ESDP and to the integration project as a whole.

In addition to severe differences among member states, there are also differences within the EU machinery, serious tensions pertaining to various aims embraced by different branches of the union’s bureaucracy. For example, the Commission depends upon functional relations to the Russian leadership to be able to advance reforms in the economic sector. This dependency may restrain EU criticism of human rights violation in Russia. Policy aims in one field may thus serve to hold back aims in another sphere. Such effect of

²⁷ Croci, Osvaldo (2003) p. 489.

²⁸ Joschka Fischer 20/03/2003.

²⁹ Wivel 1998: p. 182.

divisions within the EU may produce negative effect in a variety of ways. Russia has for example consciously used differences within the union – among member states and EU institutions – to its own advantage.³⁰

A more detailed analysis on the union's advances towards strategic actorness in various sub-areas is carried out by Lars Wedin in chapter X. Suffice here to say that for several reasons, of which some are further discussed below, there are substantial hindrances in the way for the EU's evolution into a strategic actor.

The EU as a re-actor

The discussion above signifies that the EU is beyond doubt a pole, which does matter to other key actors in the international arena; a significant but somewhat inert centre of power in the international structure. It is not a full-fledged strategic actor, but it still functions as an actor with a directed resolve, particularly within some issue-areas. These observations lead to the conclusion that even though lacking the qualities of a strategic actor, the EU is *some* kind of active player. This section proposes that it can be termed a 'pragmatic re-actor'.

Bretherton and Vogler propose five requirements for actorness in the international sphere, including shared commitment to a set of overarching values, domestic legitimation of decision processes and priorities for external policies, the ability to identify priorities and formulate policies, and availability of and capacity to use policy instruments.³¹ For a long time, the EU definitely did not meet these requirements. As a non-state actor manoeuvred by traditional member states that were far from co-ordinated among each other in the sphere of security, it primarily kept a regional perspective on foreign- and security policy. Until 1993 the EU's external dimension was not even officially defined as 'foreign policy'; the European Political Cooperation (EPC) was merely intended to co-ordinate policies of the member states.

³⁰ Dempsey 2004.

³¹ Bretherton and Vogler 2006: p. 30.

However, in recent years, the EU has developed a capacity to act both within and beyond its borders. Aid programmes to the former countries of the Soviet Empire were launched in the early 1990s, followed after 1993 by more developed relations with non-European countries in Asia, South America, the Mediterranean and the United States.³² The Maastricht Treaty created the CFSP in 1993. In 1999, the CFSP was given increased weight by revisions in the Treaty of Amsterdam that had been made possible by an agreement between the British and the French in St. Malo in December 1998. At the Cologne European Council in June 1999, a decision was taken to develop a military dimension, the ESDP, aimed at developing a more autonomous defence capability. The Helsinki Headline Goal Process subsequently resulted in the creation of a substantially increased actorness in the sphere of security. When the Union on July 4th 2003 took the decision to send a joint peacekeeping force to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to contain ethnic violence, it took a new step towards effective actorness in the international arena.

This brief look into the evolvement of the EU is enough so as to give an indication of that, in addition to being a passive pole, the EU functions as a more active player in the sphere of security. The union could be termed a *pragmatic re-actor* in international affairs. As a minimum, 're-actor' means an entity that provides forceful and quite predictable re-actions – verbal and physical - to a certain kind of pre-defined events that occur in the sphere of security in the surrounding world. In order to perform as a pragmatic re-actor it is not enough to respond in a completely ad-hoc manner to the flow of events. The EU has to be able to formulate goals for its external dimension that result in reasonably *similar* reactions to a certain category of events in the sphere of security.

A re-actor in this sense is thus an actor that is programmed to reply in a certain way to a certain type of stimuli. This description fits with the EU's focus on a

³² White 2001: pp. 2-3.

relatively limited range of issue-areas, such as conflict prevention and human rights promotion, particularly in its 'near abroad'. Antonio Missiroli observes that the EU's range of interests and partnerships is selective, focused on its geographical periphery and its historical/economic periphery characterized by post-colonial links and the member states preferred partnerships.³³

While a strategic actor is upheld by a mechanism that supports and carries out a coherent, comprehensive policy, a re-actor can function even when it is divided with regards to basic strategic issues. For example, the member states of the EU can disagree on the relative importance of sovereignty versus intervention for the cause of human rights, and they can differ so as to exactly what kind of relationship the EU should develop to the US. Even though divided, a pragmatic re-actor will still function as an effective player in the international arena with regards a few pre-defined core issue-areas, upon which the member states can agree.

This would for example mean a united, long-term policy towards the closest neighbourhood, on issues related to environmental security in the regional and global setting, and on the threat of terrorism. Even if the member states cannot agree on every detail within these issue areas, the steering documents envisage general guiding lines upon which the EU can act pragmatically. A good example is the area of conflict prevention, where the EU has developed a mainstreamed approach that will guide behaviour, ensure similar re-actions to similar events, and also provide the union with a distinct role in the international arena.³⁴

The main weakness of such a re-actor is that when new situations arise, where member states clash with regard basic interests and/or identities, the union will find it difficult to act. Some advantages may however also be identified. A pragmatic re-actor is more easily re-programmable than a strategic actor that has

³³ Missiroli 2004: p. 23.

³⁴ Möttölä 2006: p. 7.

adopted more detailed policies in a wider range of areas. Also, a re-actor is an entity with less ‘flesh and blood’ than a full-fledged strategic actor; it shares similarities with a computer in the sense that its programmers, the member-states, retain more of their separate identities, while the union acquires less of a distinct identity. This might appeal to those member states that are reluctant to accept further development of the EU as an actor in the sphere of security. It might also appeal to external actors, which we will return to below.

In order to uphold a role as a pragmatic re-actor with a capacity to act forcefully and in a reasonable coherent manner, the EU has to achieve a feasible level of democratic legitimacy for its actions in the sphere of security. If we re-call Bretherton’s and Vogler’s requirements for actorness in the sphere of security outlined above, one condition is that ‘domestic legitimation of decision processes, and priorities, relating to external policy.’³⁵ This prerequisite is highly accurate. It is not enough that the member states unite on a common strategy. The EU ought also to obtain a popular mandate that enables it to carry out its strategy.

The defeat of the constitution in the Dutch and French referendas in 2005 witnesses to that the union generally needs enhanced popular legitimacy. As regards the ESDP, it is hard to detect much conscious effort on the part of the EU to boost popular support. Yet, the ESDP has to be granted popular consent in order to develop new stronger institutions, such as a Foreign Minister representing both the Council and the Commission with its own Joint External Service, and a solidarity clause. These kinds of reforms are in turn crucial if the EU is to function as an effective actor in the sphere of security, since it cannot rely on accord among the members in view of concrete issues in the sphere of security.

Indeed, an EU strategy does not have to evolve top-down, from Treaty-based referenda’s and formal reforms, but can emerge bottom-up, as envisaged in

³⁵ Bretherton and Vogler 2006: p. 30.

chapter X.³⁶ In such a scenario, the EU would evolve on the basis of its concrete actions, e.g. gradually engaging in more peace-keeping missions thereby establishing a praxis and an identity of being a strategic actor which is particularly predisposed for such kind of action. Yet, even in this perspective, popular legitimacy is mandatory. If EU citizens are to accept large-scale external missions, resulting in losses and considerable budgets, they have to be convinced that they are worth it.

But what do the EU citizens want – what kind of security do they wish to prioritise? Scholars rarely refer to the popular will in connection with the EU's security dimension.³⁷ There seems to exist a cognitive gap so as to what kind of security the EU citizens wish to realize, and how they wish the ESDP to be used. The EU authorities do not have to abide by their citizenry. However, if there is a low awareness among the leaders of popular feelings on the topic, it is hardly possible to know when, where and how to go about 'speaking security' in order to obtain a passable support for out-of-area missions and the overall direction of the ESDP. The Commissioner for external relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, acknowledged in 2006 that the EU needs to wage a 'more sustained, open dialogue with the public' on external policy.³⁸

To extrapolate, do EU citizens endorse the EU's pursuit of the role of a 'moral' actor in global affairs, or are they mainly concerned with the threat of terrorism? What actions would they consent to?

According to a special Euro barometer survey of November December 2000, one question referred to the possible role of a future European army.³⁹ The three alternatives receiving most positive answers directly concerned the physical

³⁶ Eriksson and Britz, Wedin (Matlary?).

³⁷ For an exception, see Wagner 2005.

³⁸ Ferrero-Waldner 2006.

³⁹ Eight closed multi-items questions relating to the ESDP were inserted in wave 54.1 of the Eurobarometer, which was conducted between 14 November and 19 December 2000. The results were reported in a research report (Manigart (2001)). Notably, the poll was conducted before the terror attacks of September 11, and thus lacks the important dimension of the terrorist threat, but it is still valuable if only by virtue of being the only Eurobarometer available on the subject.

security of EU citizens. The by far most common answer to what a European should be used for was *defending the EU's territory* (71 %). In second place came *'guaranteeing peace in Europe'* and in third *'intervening in case of a disaster in Europe'*. Only half of the respondents gave their consent to what can be termed the EU's 'normative dimension'; 51 % approved of an army defending human rights.⁴⁰ A feeble minority thought that the army should intervene for the good of non-EU citizens, intervening in conflicts in other parts of the world.

Table 1. 'Roles of a European Army' ⁴¹	%
Defending the territory of the EU	71
Guaranteeing peace in the EU	63
Intervening in case of a disaster in Europe	58
Defending human rights	51
Carrying out humanitarian missions	48
Intervening in conflicts on the European borders	44
Repatriating Europeans who are in conflict areas	41
Intervening in other parts of the world in case of a disaster	37
Taking part in UN peacekeeping missions	34
Defending the economic interests of the EU	23
Symbolizing a European identity	19
Intervening in conflicts in other parts of the world	18

⁴⁰ The author of the major report emerging from the Eurobarometer Poll notes that legitimacy is clearly greater in the six founder countries with regard to the three so-called Petersberg missions most often cited as having to be one of a European army's roles (carrying out humanitarian missions, intervening during conflicts on the EU's borders, and repatriating Europeans who find themselves in areas of conflict). Manigart 2001: p. 20.

⁴¹ The precise wording of the question is: 'The European Union has decided to institute a common Security and defence policy. Among the following possible functions of a European army, for what, in your opinion, should it be used?'

Janne Haaland Matlary argues that the EU could gain legitimacy on the basis of its zeal for human rights in international affairs; 'human rights provides an increasingly legitimate basis for the power-projection of a post-national foreign policy'.⁴² The findings above question this assumption. EU's citizens would *not* necessarily support the EU's further development towards a 'moral' or 'normative' power in world affairs. When it comes to concrete tasks, the general public might place their priority on less norm-fulfilment abroad and more security for the EU citizens at home. The population does not seem self-evidently ready for sacrifice for the sake of morality. Departing from the one poll available – which is certainly a meagre piece of evidence, but at least something with empirical basis and as such much better than sheer speculation or even worse, lack of concern - a majority would prefer the EU to strengthen its role as an 'ordinary' power. It is less clear whether a majority would endorse the EU going out of area to establish or defend its preferred moral principles.

In conclusion, a pragmatic, programmed re-actor translate into an EU upholding an effective actorness, which requires a declared policy that ensures similar reactions in a pre-defined range of areas of particular interests. It also demands that the EU retains the power and skills to get its message through to the majority of EU citizens, in order that they are willing to endorse missions within the boundaries of this pre-defined policy, missions that might require both economic resources and costly losses.

Potential for fulfilment of the roles

This section discusses the EU in its potential roles by ways of an analysis of its ability to forge a consistent policy towards external actors. The fight against terrorism and the attempts to stabilise the periphery of the union are two areas

⁴² Matlary 2003:12.

where the EU has emerged as a distinct, active player during the past years. These two cases serves as a brief probe into its ability to forge a coherent policy, thus emerging as a programmed re-actor, and perhaps even continuing down the path towards becoming a strategic actor. The section also scrutinises the EU's ability to provide united answers to more dramatic, sudden events within the sphere of security, by discussing its policies on the crisis in Kosovo of 1999 and the Iraqi war. The discussion of the EU's capacity for strategic planning, and of its cohesiveness primarily draws upon the main findings stemming from an extensive empirical analysis of EU documents and of official interpretations made by high representatives of the EU, France, Germany and Great Britain on central issues of international security from 1999 to 2003.⁴³

Indeed, the EU can, and has, produced detailed policy-documents drawing up goals and methods to ensure similar reactions to events in various areas. For example, after the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, Romano Prodi outlined five guiding principles for the EU's responses to the threat of terrorism:

- to avoid falling into the trap of seeing this as a clash of civilisations;
- to realise how much our similarities outweigh our differences;
- to demonstrate total solidarity with the US;
- to opt for European integration;
- to promote our view of politics, one of multilateralism and solidarity.⁴⁴

During the years that followed, and in particular after the terror attacks in Madrid on March 11 2004, the EU demonstrated that it could articulate, and to some extent carry out determined responses to the threat of terror in accordance with these guidelines. The EU spokesmen steadfastly returned to and anchored their statements in the principles above. They re-iterated the need to avoid a clash of civilizations. They stated support for the US's military operations in

⁴³ C.f. Wagnsson 2007 forthcoming.

⁴⁴ Prodi 11/10/2001.

Afghanistan.⁴⁵ The officials referred to the EU's capacity to meet the threat of terrorism.⁴⁶ They repeated that the EU's efforts ought to be based on the method of multilateralism.⁴⁷ They focused on the roots of terrorism, i.e. regional conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment.⁴⁸

A range of practical measures were also undertaken in order to realize the principles, for example the adoption of a European arrest warrant allowing wanted persons to be handed over directly from one judicial authority to another, and identification of presumed terrorists in Europe and of organisations supporting them in order to draw up a common list of terrorist organisations.⁴⁹ The EU strengthened dialogue and cooperation with India, Iran, Pakistan, Central Asia and the Gulf Cooperation States.⁵⁰ It enhanced joint efforts with regard to non-proliferation and export controls of arms and other substances capable of being used for terrorist purposes, and increased cooperation to ensure the security of passports and visas.⁵¹ In 2005, the union issued a detailed 'Counter Terrorism Strategy', based on the four-fold method of 'preventing, protecting, pursuing and responding'.⁵² Counter-terrorism became based on a holistic approach that aimed to incorporate the fight against terror in all aspects of external policy.⁵³

The EU's adoption of strategies directed at its 'near abroad' is another example of its capacity to issue policy documents that are to ensure the implementation of predictable, long-term re-actions to events in its surroundings. The EU

⁴⁵ Declaration by the heads of state or government of the EU and the President of the Commission 19/10/2001.

⁴⁶ Chris Patten 04/12/2001, Javier Solana 21/10/2001

⁴⁷ Chris Patten 04/12/2001, Louis Michel 03/10/2001, Romano Prodi 24/09/2001, Conclusion and Plan of Action of the Extraordinary European Council Meeting on 21 September 2001.

⁴⁸ E.g. Presidency Conclusions European Council Meeting in Laeken 14-15/12/2001, De Ruyt 01/10/2001, Romano Prodi 11/10/2001, Declaration by the heads of state or government of the EU and the President of the Commission 19/10/2001, Conclusion and Plan of Action of the Extraordinary European Council Meeting 21/09/2001.

⁴⁹ Conclusion and Plan of Action of the Extraordinary European Council Meeting on 21 September 2001.

⁵⁰ Bretherton and Vogler 2006:p. 182.

⁵¹ Declaration by the heads of state or government of the EU and the President of the Commission 19/10/2001.

⁵² The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy 30/11/2005.

⁵³ Bretherton and Vogler 2006:p.182.

Commission issued a far-reaching communication called ‘a Wider Europe’ in March 2003. The communication traces the root causes of political instability in its Southern and Eastern neighbourhood to ‘economic vulnerability, institutional deficiencies, conflict and poverty and social exclusion’. The major message is that the EU wishes to promote an area of shared prosperity and values in its close neighbourhood.⁵⁴

On the basis of this communication, the union has developed more detailed strategies directed at the various regions. For example, in ‘The European Neighbourhood Policy’ (ENP) of May 2004, the EU re-iterates that the countries in the so-called shared neighbourhood – i.e. countries bordering both the EU and Russia – ought to commit to shared (EU) values, i.e. ‘respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.’ This policy targets six states in the Former Soviet Union – Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia Armenia and Azerbaijan. The policy signals that the EU back a long-term strategy based on a kind of functionalist logic according to which long-term co-operation will produce more common values that will enhance security and stimulate cooperation in the security realm.⁵⁵

Roland Dannreuther’s volume summarizes a range of similar EU neighborhood strategies directed to the south and southeast.⁵⁶ The strategies do suffer from weaknesses and they partly lack coherence, particularly with regard to the more remote abroad, such as Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.⁵⁷ However, in total, the strategies towards the closest neighborhood sum up to a demonstration of that the EU is determined to wage a predictable policy towards its closest surrounding. These kinds of long-term policies provide the EU with the role as a predictable, powerful re-actor in some issue-areas. Such elaborated principles function as a continual basis for long-term structural projects in the

⁵⁴ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament 2003. ‘Wider Europe— Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours’.

⁵⁵ Communication from the Commission. European Neighbourhood policy. 2004.

⁵⁶ Dannreuther 2004.

⁵⁷ Dannreuther 2004 p. 166, Tanner 2004: p.138, MacFarlane 2004: p. 132.

international arena, providing the EU with the air of a predictable, united re-actor.

Yet, it is far more difficult for the union to perform as a strategic, well-reflected and united re-actor in view of crises with repercussions for the rules of the game of international politics.⁵⁸ The most obvious, but far from solitary, example is the Iraqi crisis. When the EU was faced with an acute crisis in the global arena, with direct links to the threat of terrorism - against which it *had* develop an elaborated strategy - it became paralysed.

Despite the EU's clear guidelines for how to counter the terrorist threat, the member states could not agree on whether Iraq did constitute a threat with direct links to international terrorism, and consequently, could not endorse a unified answer to the dilemma. The British defined Iraq's possession of WMD's a threat because Saddam Hussein could use the weapons for his own winning, and proliferate them to terrorist groups. The leaders framed the threats of terrorism and rouge states' possession of WMDs as densely linked 'twin threats'.⁵⁹ Iraq in turn, was identified as one of many rouge states with connections to terrorism. Prime Minister Tony Blair referred to evidence of links between al-Qaida and Iraq.⁶⁰ The two other leading member states, French and German, seriously undermined Britain's definition of Iraq as the paramount threat to international security. Above all, they questioned the connection between international terrorism/September 11/al-Qaida and Iraq.⁶¹ As a result of these internal differences, the EU was efficiently blocked; it could not react in any meaningful way on the Iraqi problem. In practice, it was inadequate as a re-actor in international affairs during the spring of 2003.

⁵⁸ C.f. Wagnsson 2007, forthcoming.

⁵⁹ E.g. Tony Blair 31/01/2003, 28/02/2003, Jack Straw 02/12/2002, 09/01/2003, 20/01/2003, 21/01/2003, 11/02/2003.

⁶⁰ Tony Blair 05/02/2003.

⁶¹ E.g. Joschka Fischer 30/12/2002, 13/03/2003, Dominique de Villepin 07/03/2003, Vladimir Putin 11/02/2003, 20/03/2003, Igor Ivanov 30/01/2003, 26/03/2003.

An optimistic interpretation is to define the Iraqi case as a ‘worst-case scenario’ for the EU, a kind of situation that will occur very seldom. If such a state of affairs unfolds very rarely, it might not undermine the confidence in the EU’s capacity to re-act coherently to international events. However, during the short existence of the EU’s actorness in the security sphere, paralyzing situations have already occurred twice. During the Kosovo crisis in 1999, rather than trying to form a united, elaborated EU policy, the Union stayed passive and very silent, largely because of the fragile unity among member-states. Tensions among the EU states were to a degree disguised by the fact that all of them applied a seemingly uniform justification linked to humanitarian ethics. A closer scrutiny reveals that during the crisis, France and Germany used much energy to promote the EU and the UN as the main guarantors of peace and security, while Great Britain stood up for the US, NATO and an emerging new global security order, in which intervention in sovereign states would be legitimised with reference to human rights. France and Germany applied a European – and partly a national - level of analysis. Britain clearly prioritised the global dimension of the crisis, taking global norms and interests as rationales for transforming the global order.⁶²

Even if the occurrence of two serious clashes among member states during a short period of time turn out to be an unfortunate coincidence, I would argue that the divergences between key member states are too basic and serious to be easily overlook.⁶³ Both in view of Kosovo and Iraq, Great Britain focused more on the promotion and protection of certain basic liberal values, while the others placed more emphasis on the promotion and protection of common institutions, the EU and the UN. Great Britain also embraced the vision of a unipolar world with a benevolent super power, while the other two states rejected this vision, emphasizing multipolarity as the ideal global structure and multilateralism as the only viable method of reaching a stable international security.⁶⁴

⁶² Wagnsson forthcoming 2007.

⁶³ Moreover, these are of course not the only instances in EU foreign policy where member states failed to come to an agreement, for an account of additional ‘missed opportunities’ see Ginsberg 2001:pp. 41-42.

⁶⁴ Wagnsson forthcoming 2007.

The fact that the same kind of basic divergences between Great Britain on the one hand, and Germany and France on the other surfaced both in Kosovo and replicated in Iraq, bodes ill for EU cohesion in the long term. The EU inevitably becomes trapped when member states differ on major principles in the sphere of security.

Then again, if handled wisely, the complex divergences referred to above need not produce as dramatic effects as in the Iraqi case. In Kosovo, Germany and France chose to tone down their doubts and objections for the sake of intra-EU cohesion, and in order to reach a quick solution to the acute crisis. In the future, we might see more of such ‘easy (or wise)-way-outs’ of clashes of norms and interests. Moreover, the EU could enhance its chances of becoming an effective re-actor by increasingly admitting member states that are ready to act in a specific case go ahead. The idea of a more flexible foreign policy structure that can find solutions to situations where member states lack political will to actively stand together has been discussed for quite some time.⁶⁵

Practical solutions in this vein have also materialized, for example with regard to Iran, where France, Germany and Great Britain acted, and in operation Artemis, where France acted as the ‘Framework Nation’ for the operation, contributing with the major part of resources. If the EU will not always – or even not as a rule - be represented by the entire union, but may increasingly realizes its goals by ‘diplomacy/action of the willing’, this could boost the union’s chances of living up to the image of being a capable re-actor. Quiet consent on the part of reluctant or merely indecisive member states may turn out to be fruitful solution to diverging views on how to best realize the union’s security aspirations. This model has functioned in the UN Security Council when a member has abstained from voting in order not to paralyze the council.

⁶⁵ E.g. Ginsberg 200: p.42.

In sum, even though the EU can evidently produce coherent long-term policies that are also implemented, divergences among member states and the lack of strong foreign policy institutions disenable the EU of the role as a strategic actor. However, the EU could very well, in addition to being a passive pole, be termed a 're-actor' in the sphere of security. In this interpretation, 're-action' would mean that the union carries out predictable re-action to events within a certain number of pre-defined issue-areas. In other areas, where the member states find it hard to reach consensus, the entire union will not always be activated. Sometimes a part, or even a minority, of the member states will go ahead, acting swiftly and efficiently to security challenges in the international arena, with the explicit or quiet consent on the part of the remaining member states.

Potential external re-actions

If we turn from inward to outward looking, to address the external dimension, how would the EU's counterparts in the international arena approve of the EU in each of the three roles elaborated on in this chapter, a 'pole', a 're-actor' and a 'strategic actor'? The section mainly draws upon a thorough empirical study of Russian official statements on European and international security from 1999 to 2003.⁶⁶ A few reflections on reactions from other major global actors are added.

The main argument here is that the EU would seem more threatening to Russia in the role of a full-fledged strategic actor than as a mighty, but relatively passive and vague pole and re-actor. This problematique mainly stems from the fact that the two actors follow quite different paths so as to the overriding issue of 'export of norms' in the international arena. While export of norms for the sake of security is a central part of the EU's overall external ambition, the Russian leadership is suspicious of attempts to export democracy and other values in the global arena.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ C.f. Wagnsson forthcoming 2007.

⁶⁷ E.g. Vladimir Putin 11/04/2003, Igor Ivanov 05/03/2003.

As long as the EU suffers from inner divisions that prevent it from achieving strategic actorness, it lacks capacity to wage a more rigid policy that could include more effective demands on other states, including Moscow, to abide by its moral principles. A more forceful EU stance towards Russia would not necessarily succeed in pushing it closer to EU standards, but a stricter Union policy would definitely be disturbing to Moscow. As for the present situation, Russia can draw advantage on the EU's inner divisions, and it can rely on its loyal supporters within the union when some member states demand a harsher policy towards Moscow, for example with regards to Chechnya.

In this interpretation, Russia prefers that the EU remains a pole and an ad-hoc re-actor, without the qualities of a fox. This does not intend that Moscow would necessarily disapprove of the growth of a more 'lion-like' union. Russian leaders have indeed expressed appreciation of the evolvement of the EU into a stronger power, even a pole in international affairs, which can function as a counterweight to the USA.⁶⁸ According to this logic, peculiar as it sounds, Russia is more enthusiastic of the idea of the EU as a center of power, than of its concrete policies. The leadership has been positive to the EU taking on a larger share of responsibility in the sphere of security, and tends to perceive of the EU in capacity of being a pole in a multipolar world. However, there is a pronounced risk that Russia will clash with the content of EU policies.

If the EU functions as a lion that largely lacks the qualities of a fox, Russian leaders can more easily manipulate the union for its own interests. When they succeed, i.e. when Russia's and the EU's interests coincide and they act together in the international arena, the EU can function as a tool for Russian interests, as a kind of megaphone which helps Moscow to get its voice better heard in the international arena.

⁶⁸ Putin 2000, Ivanov 2000, Ivanov 2001.

Russia would thus most likely favor that the EU played down its long-term strategic goals of spreading norms and values, instead focusing its efforts in the global arena on timely political issues where it can provide Russia with an opportunity of alliance-building, either as an alternative to allying with the United States, or as a possibility to ally against the US. As in the case of Iran, Russia can ally with the EU, making the 'European voice heard' in international affairs, thereby strengthening its image as a great power with influence in global affairs. Conversely, when interests do not coincide, Moscow can largely neglect the EU without risking serious retributions. Russian leaders would obviously not consent to this, but they have reasoned according to a parallel logic, arguing that the most efficient way for the EU to become a great power in international affairs is to ally with Russia's great resources and potential.⁶⁹ This means that Russia welcomes the EU as a 're-actor' and pole in international relations, with whom Russia can ally when suited.

This logic is valid not only for Russia, but for leaderships of some other traditional states, for example China, which like Russia maintains a particular zeal for keeping the states together, and safeguards the principle of non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states. To such actors, the maintenance of the Westphalian state system is a paramount interest. Consequently, they do not look sympathetically upon EU attempts to export values, promote democratisation in other regions, or justify interventions into sovereign states with reference to human rights.⁷⁰ This weariness springs from China's and Russia's identities as nation-states with long historical traditions, and for which not only territorial integrity, but also national self-esteem, is paramount.⁷¹ A strategic actor strongly coloured by ethical zeal do probably not appear appetizing to either of these actors, because of the serious risk that it will try to 'meddle' into the internal affairs of sovereign states.

In the case of China, the EU has waged a discreet but long-term security policy

⁶⁹ Putin 25/09/2001.

⁷⁰ This conclusion corresponds with Marsh's and Mackenstein's analysis of the EU's relations to China and Russia in the sphere of security. Marsh and Mackenstein 2005:pp.207-208.

⁷¹ C.f. Panebianco 2006:143-144.

building on a wide range of projects including for example, environmental and technical assistance, support to China's Accession to the WTO, people-to-people contacts in the shape of exchange programmes and so on.⁷² However, China's sensitivity to interference in internal affairs makes it awkward to express direct critique with respect to human right issues and the like. China would probably also not look favourably upon EU interventions justified with reference to human rights in other regions.⁷³ It is thus plausible to assume that China would be weary of a development of the EU towards a strategic actor, more assertive and perhaps even willing to use force to accomplish its normative goals.

For the same reasons, the current Russian leadership prefers the EU to remain a somewhat diffuse pole, and a non-unified re-actor, in the international system. The simple explanation is that if the EU evolves into a strategic actor, it might appear more threatening to Russia. Briefly, the vision of an 'ethical EU' does not appeal to Russia. It would clearly prefer the EU to be a traditional strong power, but one without far-reaching normative ambitions – an actor taking on the role of a 'pole' and an ad-hoc 're-actor' – than a strategic actor with a strong ethical zeal.

Finally, the USA also seems somewhat weary of the EU's ethical ambitions. In this case, however, the picture is more complex. In some areas, for example with regards to environmental security and human rights issues, and in particular as regards the ideal method for managing security – multilateralism or unilateralism – the EU has repeatedly clashed with the US. In other areas, for example as regards the export of democracy for the sake of stability and security, the two giants wage a similar policy.⁷⁴ The next few chapters approach the issue of EU actorness from 'the outside', taking a closer look at how key players in the international area interpret the EU's involvement in the sphere of security.

⁷² Commission policy paper for transmission to the council and the parliament 10/09/2003.

⁷³ Marsh and Mackenstein 2005:pp.207-208

⁷⁴ C.f. Nygren's chapter on the US, the OSCE and the EU's export of democracy to Russia. See also Dombrowski and Ross on the US's inclination towards liberal internationalism (Dombrowski and Ross 2006: pp. 154-155.)

Conclusion

In conclusion, although an EU *strategy* exists ‘on paper’, it is hard for the union to realise its *identity* as a strategic actor due to the EU project’s character as a sometimes ‘too many level game’. The EU’s official policy deviates from some of its major member states’ key positions on security policy, and the member states differ among one another. If the EU continues down the path of becoming more of a strategic actor, it is unclear what *kind* of strategy it will pursue and *how* it will carry out this strategy. Member states and external states share this uncertainty about the EU’s future path. To this we might add that it is quite unclear what kind of strategic actor EU citizens would endorse.

These multi-level divergences inhibit the EU from being termed a *strategic actor*, but not, as argued above, from being conceptualised as a *pragmatic re-actor* and *passive pole*. This might even be all for the best from a EU point of view. The EU’s roles as passive pole and pragmatic re-actor are important enough so as to provide the union with a significant place in the international structure. Moreover, the double roles as pole and re-actor are not only the most probable ones, but in relation to a few central counterparts in the international arena, it also seems to be the ones that will cause the least friction in world affairs. Given the hesitance, if not resistance, on the part of a few central external counterparts with regards further development of the EU’s ethical actorness, these roles might best favour the growth of a co-operative and largely multilateral international system.

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