

EU Institutions and Policies

Reassessing the EU's
place in international
system



UNIMC
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Key issues:

1. The place of the EU in the international system:
what the EU is NOT/main functions
2. Assessing EU role and performance in the international system: 'practical' perspectives
3. Lessons (5) learned on EU FP and IR
4. What's next? (after the war in Ukraine...'EU Strategic Compass')

1. The place of the EU: what the EU is NOT/functions



What can we say about the EU's role in IS?

If we look at IR theories there are different positions, e.g.:

- Realism >> scepticism over EU FP
- Constructivism >> EU future role depend on the capacity to build a common identity, idea of 'Europe' in FP

Different theoretical perspectives >> shape the analysis and evaluation of the EU international role

But, it could be useful to conclude with some points about what the EU is NOT and about some limited functions EU has in IS

What the EU is NOT (i)

There are 3 things which is clear *the EU is NOT*:

1. EU is NOT a coherent 'pole' in multipolar system >> the EU is not a traditional power!
2. EU is NOT a subordinate subsystem of a US-led hegemonic bloc in the 'West'
 - US has a privileged position in terms of access to EU decision-making and some special-relationships with MS
 - ...but the US does not simply control EU or manipulates the EU FP as an instruments of its global strategy

What the EU is not (ii)

....

3. EU is NOT only a functional response to economic interdependence >>
EU has a means of 'managing globalization'

- EU is not only a defensive tactic of MS, but also a strategic effort to shape the international system
- EU as a means to promote values, goals and interests, not only in the economic areas but also in many political domains

Moreover >> EU has at least some (3) (distinctive) functions in the international system....(continue...)

EU functions in the international system (i):

1. EU represents a bloc of 'constitutional relations' among states and a 'zone of peace' between democratic countries
2. The EU could be a model for other regional organizations >> the idea of regional integration remains strong (also) because of the existence of the EU
3. EU can be a practical reference point inside multilateral IOs (UN, WTO, IMF, WB, etc.) to form coalitions to balance great powers that want to challenge international cooperation and global order

2. Assessing EU role and performance in the IS: different 'practical' perspectives



There are 3 'practical' perspective on EU:

- i. EU as a subsystem of international relations
 - ii. EU as a 'player' in international policy processes
 - iii. EU as an actual or potential 'power'
- >> We can use these perspectives for assessing/examining the EU's performance in the light of the past lessons

i) The EU as a subsystem of IR (i):

- In the European subsystem of IR the level of trust between states is unprecedented in the history of world politics
- The international relations between MS have been '*domesticated*' >> process of 'domestication' = IR become similar to domestic politics
- EU is also a means of coordinating the MS for the purpose of collective action in world politics
- EU represents a dense set of interactions and decision-making process that is difficult to manipulate from the outside
- ...although there are 2 basic problems...

i) The EU as a subsystem of IR (ii):

1. Other states can penetrate into the EU subsystem
 - >> US special relationships with some MS >> problem of 'defection' when US poses strongest demands (??)
2. Vertical inconsistency >> differences between MS FP and EU FP

ii) The EU in the international policy processes:

- Thanks to its capabilities (diplomatic, economic and military) EU can shape international policy processes
- But issue-area determines the EU's impact: low politics vs. high politics
- There are two more problems in the EU's involvement in international policy processes:
 - The high degree of fragmentation in the decision-making >> lack of coherence in many policy areas
 - The limited geographical reach of EU FP >> regional? Global? How to allocate resources...?

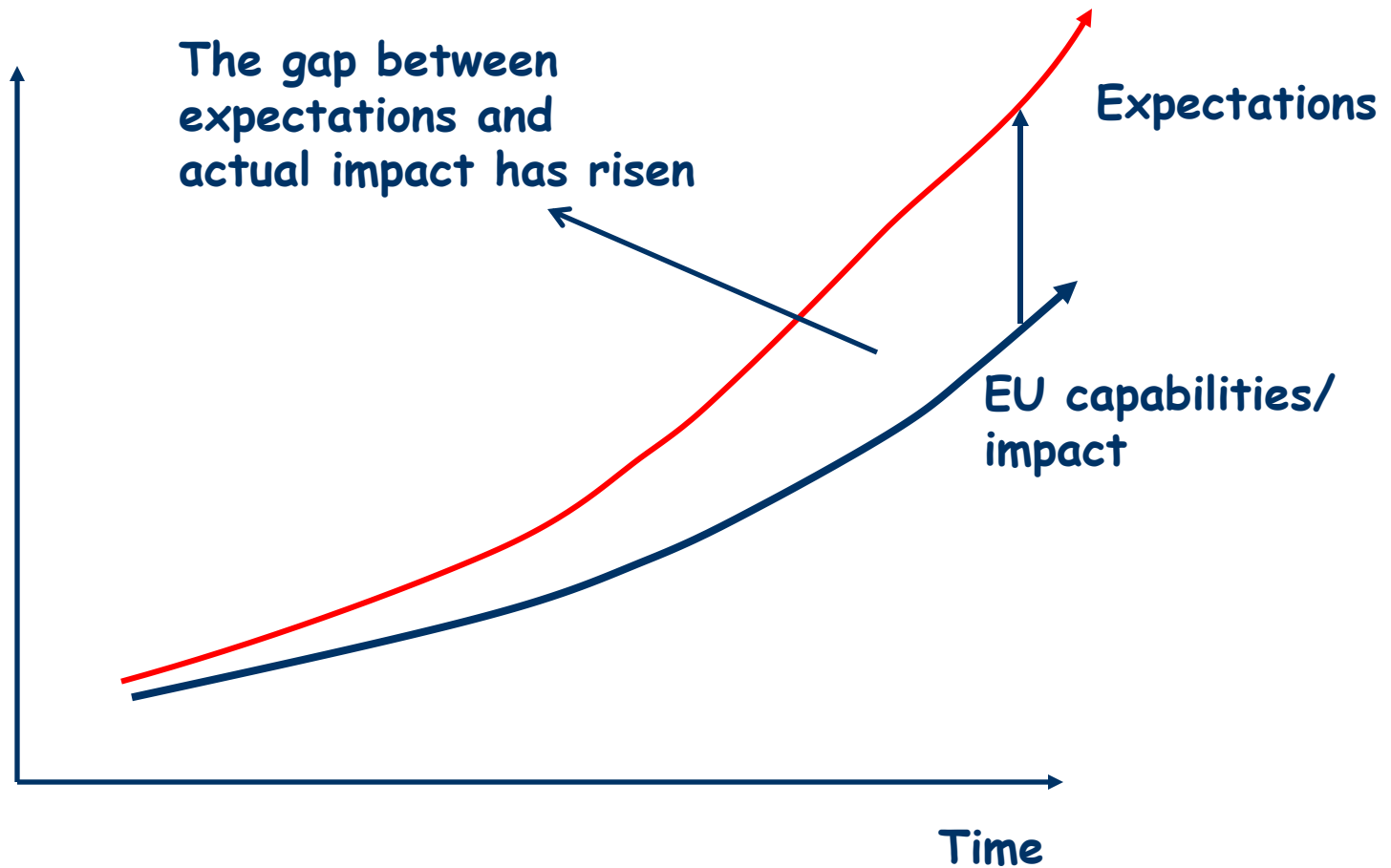
iii) The EU as a 'power' in the world (i):

- The EU is not a traditional power, in some policy areas the EU has considerable capacity to achieve its goals
- ...and to ensure that its positions are factored into the calculations of others
- But perceptions are important in international politics >> the EU's impact need to be measured against the expectations of both insiders and outsiders
- In historical perspective, the EU has more capabilities and impact across more issues in world politics today than it did 20 years ago

...but expectation have risen even more...the result is (often) less credit!

iii) The EU as a power in the world (ii):

Expectations/actual impact in EU FP



3. Lessons (5) learned on EU FP and IR



Lesson # 1:

It's not possible to understand the evolution of the EU without reference to the international dimension

>> there is a 'two-way' process of influence between IS and EU and EU FP and IS!

It's important to analyse the meaning and impact of EU FP for the IS....

....and conversely the impact of IS on the development of the EU

Lesson # 2:

The EU is a significant presence in the IS, along most dimensions

Economically it is a major player; politically it can represent an alternative voice within the 'West'...

But the EU countries are also the most important allies for the US

Military >> EU has started to build a more strategic approach...but the process is only at its very first stage...
and the final result is unclear (see next)!

Lesson # 3:

The theory and practical study of IR needs to put more attention to the EU FP

On the empirical side >> no student of the post-Cold War order can neglect the EU, even those who take the view of the national foreign policies have to put MS policy-making (in Germany, France, etc.) in the framework of the EU FP

Theoretically >> IR theory will benefit from incorporating the EU more fully into its paradigms (interpretations of world politic and IS)

Lesson # 4:

The EU should fit into the general categories of IR scholarship

Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism >> have to be applied - and increasingly are being - to the problems of explaining and understanding the EU's international role

Even if EU is a unique political experiment its comprehension depends on comparison with other actors

Comparative analysis >> is very important to understand EU FP policy-making and impact

Lesson # 5:

The EU is better thought of as having powers than as being 'a power'

Its presence in the IS varies a lot from one area to another

Yet EU has developed toward a more coherent actor than in the past years...and others international actors have started to recognize this development of the EU

...despite there is still a gap between expectations/actual impact

4. What's next?



The EU as a 'military/strategic' actor? (i)

- 24 March 2022: European Council endorsed the 'EU Strategic Compass' > a 'roadmap for becoming a stronger security and defence actor (by 2030)'

"The more hostile security environment requires us to make a quantum leap forward and increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience, and invest more and better in our defence capabilities...

...The objective of the Strategic Compass is to make the EU a stronger and more capable security provider. The EU needs to be able to protect its citizens and to contribute to international peace and security....

(continue...)

The EU as a 'military/strategic' actor? (ii)

"A stronger and more capable EU in security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members. It will also intensify support for the global rules-based order, with the United Nations at its core...

...the Strategic Compass provides a shared assessment of the strategic environment in which the EU is operating and of the threats and challenges the Union faces..."

Strategic Compass > 4 pillars: act, invest, partner, secure

Strategic Compass: ACT

In order to be able to act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible and alone when necessary, the EU will:

- establish a strong EU Rapid Deployment Capacity of up to 5000 troops for different types of crises
- be ready to deploy 200 fully equipped CSDP mission experts within 30 days
- conduct regular exercises on land and at sea and enhance military mobility
- reinforce the EU's civilian and military CSDP missions and operations by promoting a rapid and more flexible decision-making process

Militarization and three conceptions of the EU's international identity

	Normative Power	Realist Power	Liberal Power
Justification of FP	Human security	Geopolitical security	Economic security
Priorities and instruments of FP	Exclusive focus on non-military goals and instruments	Priority of security interests and military instruments	Priority of economic interests and instruments
Effect of militarization	Corruption of the EU's global power position and its normative credibility	Reinforcement of the EU's global power position	Not necessary, reluctant and risk-averse use

Source: Adapted from Palm and Crum (2019).