

Foreign Policy Analysis and European Foreign Policy

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I have been asked to speak in this final session about foreign policy analysis approaches to theorising about EU or European foreign policy. I will introduce some ideas that might structure a discussion by locating my comments in four sections:

1. I will start by talking about the current nature and status of foreign policy analysis, providing a brief historical context.
2. I will then reflect upon the nature of foreign policy-making in Europe as it appears to this foreign policy analyst.
3. The third section looks at a couple of established theoretical perspectives that have sought to make sense of Europe as a global actor, but which may or may not be helpful in trying to make sense of European foreign policy.
4. The final section looks in more detail at the contribution that FPA has made to an understanding of European foreign policy to date and its potential as a broadly-based approach in the future.

1. Foreign Policy Analysis

For reasons that will become clearer later on, it's worth reminding ourselves that FPA emerged in the 1950s (and soon established itself as a major sub-field within IR in the 1960s), as a direct consequence of two related developments: the preoccupation of classical realists like Hans Morgenthau with trying to explain external state behaviour from a scientific perspective and the Cold War international context with its associated crises which appeared to make it crucial to the

survival of all of us to make sense of state behaviour before states (and the superpowers in particular) destroyed the international system.

Very quickly, however, FPA became embedded in the behavioural movement in Political Science in the United States which served to sharpen its scientific pretensions but more importantly - by orientating the study towards human behaviour, decision-making and consequent action - it provided a lasting perspective from which to attack the simplicities of state-centric, rational actor analysis and the straightjacket of realist theory. These two separate sets of ideas - rational actor models and realist theory - were linked together by Jo Nye (unfortunately perhaps in hindsight) in the famous phrase, circa 1975, 'state-centric realism'. The work of Graham Allison par excellence initiated a continuing preoccupation of foreign policy analysts over the last thirty years with disaggregating the state and exploring the linkages between actors, policy processes and policy outputs. But, despite the subtleties of this work which challenged successive orthodoxies in the home discipline of IR, it has remained in practice difficult to detach FPA from both state-centricity and classical realism. As both state-centric analysis and realism became challenged, so the perception at least grew that FPA as a distinctive approach in IR has itself been under threat.

This began as early as the 1970s when neo-liberals like Keohane and Nye began to develop their notion of complex interdependence. While there was, of course, much in their pluralist analysis that supported the development of what we might call an Allisonian direction in FPA, critics saw the introduction of new non-state actors and processes like interdependence and transnationalism as challenging a state-centred FPA. In the 1980s, following the publication of Ken Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, the challenge switched to the alleged reductionism implicit within a state-centred analysis in the context of a neo-realism which focused on the system rather than its constituent units as the determining dynamic of IR. By the 1990s, there appeared to be something of a full-blown crisis for FPA. First, the end of the Cold War and the implosion of one

of the superpowers suggested a new period in which the traditional foreign policies of states appeared less pressing, certainly less urgent as a focus of study, particularly in the context of a host of new actors and issues that crowded onto the post cold war agenda.

Second, in theoretical terms, one pillar of the neo-neo consensus may have been the common recognition that states are the most important actors in IR, but this did not mean that the 'neos' were prepared to privilege the state or the state as actor. Whether structure meant the international system or other institutional arrangements, neoliberals and neorealists offered variants of a highly influential structuralist approach to IR that did further damage to the perceived importance of an FPA approach. Finally, the broadly based attack on the neo-neo consensus that gathered pace in the 1990s together with the more philosophical turn in IR theory appeared ironically to leave FPA adrift in the mainstream orthodoxy with nothing to contribute to the so-called positivist/post-positivist debate. It is significant from a gatekeeping perspective that a former foreign policy analyst of the stature of Steve Smith not only became a leading figure on the post-positivist side of that debate but declared on several occasions that FPA is hopelessly and irredeemably locked into a positivist epistemology.

I hope it is clear from what I have said so far and from my writings on this subject that I don't accept this narrow pigeon-holing of FPA in term of content, methodology or epistemology. Thus, I see the potential of FPA approaches (not an FPA approach) to both an explanation and an understanding of European foreign policy in much more optimistic terms. As for the current status of FPA, to conclude this first section, I agree with the distinction drawn by Walter Carlsnaes in his useful chapter on the history of FPA in the recent *Handbook of International Relations*. He argues that there is a 'relatively stable consensus' on the subject matter of FPA. But if there is some measure of agreement on the *explanandum* this is not the case with the *explanans*, as Walter puts it. There is no consensus, he argues, with respect to methods of

explaining or understanding foreign policy nor on broader theoretical and metatheoretical perspectives.

2. European Foreign Policy

But if I turn to the second section of my comments, there are clearly at least two important new challenges that the domain of European foreign policy poses to the foreign policy analyst. First, it is bound to erode the existing consensus about subject matter. However European foreign policy is defined, it cannot easily be contained within a traditional state-centred analysis with relatively clear boundaries between internal and external policy environments. The absence of consensus on the nature of this new foreign policy domain, itself contested, must add a distinctive new dimension to existing debates about appropriate theoretical perspectives from which to make sense of foreign policy. The second challenge then to foreign policy analysts posed by the notion of a European foreign policy is to conceive and apply appropriate methods of analysis to a very different subject matter. It is apparent that European foreign policy must be the 'object' as well as the 'subject' of analysis in a qualitatively different way from national foreign policies.

So, what is European foreign policy? Well, for time reasons, I won't deal here with the case for labelling this policy domain 'European' as opposed to 'EU' or some other qualifying adjective - this is dealt with in the Sage chapter and elsewhere. I will move straight on to trying to characterise the 'foreign policy' bit. Roy Ginsberg, in his recent book, *The European Union in World Politics*, offers a broad definition that provides a useful focus here. European foreign policy activity, he suggests, 'refers to the universe of concrete civilian actions, policies, positions, relations, commitments and choices of the EC (and EU) in international politics'. He goes on to note that 'EFP activities - broadly defined to include the competence or purview of the EC, the EU, CFSP, or a mixture thereof - have expanded to cover nearly all areas and issues of international politics'.

It is immediately clear from this definition that we are dealing here with a complex and unique policy domain in at least two senses - context and types of activity. First, EFP emerges from and is contextualised by a unique experiment in political integration in Europe. The outcome of this process is an actor, the European Union, that is quite unlike any other international actor. While it may be possible to characterise the EU by reference to possible analogies, most obviously to states and/or international organisations, the EU is sufficiently distinct from both extant types of institution to be labelled a unique type of international actor or *sui generis*. Analysing any aspect of this new polity is problematic, but its external behaviour is particularly challenging to the theorist. Second, it is clear from Ginsberg's definition that EFP does not emerge from a single, authoritative source but comes in at least three forms or types of activity. To the policy analyst, these types can be characterised by different sets of actors and appear to be driven by different sorts of policy-making processes.

The first form can be identified as the foreign policy or "external relations" of the European Community which emerged as a direct consequence of the establishment of the original European Communities in 1957 and cover principally trade, aid and development relations with third parties. Despite the continuing preference in Brussels for the label 'external relations' to maintain the fiction that these areas of activity are not 'real' foreign policy which might threaten the sovereign prerogatives of member states, this type of policy can be regarded by the foreign policy analyst as constituting the foreign *economic* policy dimension of European foreign policy.

If EC foreign policy is constituted by economic issues, the more overtly *political* dimension of European foreign policy, since Maastricht the Common Foreign and Security Policy, can be differentiated from it not only by issue area but also by its location in the "pillar" structure established by the Maastricht Treaty. To make this distinction clear, I suggest that CFSP might be labelled generically as EU foreign policy.

There is also a third type of EFP implied at least by Ginsberg's separate references to CFSP *and* activities which come under the purview of the EU - namely the foreign policies of the *member states* themselves. Though some studies of EFP implicitly or explicitly exclude national foreign policies, analysis of European foreign policy should include, in Hill's words, 'the sum of what the EU *and* its member states do in international relations'. Agency is clearly fragmented at the European level and the variety of forms of action should be reflected in analysis. What is important from a policy analysis perspective is to understand the two-way relationship between national foreign policies and EC/EU policy. The key analytical questions here are, to what extent is European foreign policy shaped by national policies and to what extent have national foreign policies themselves been transformed or "Europeanised" by operating over many years within an EC/EU institutional context?

Having identified important economic, political and national dimensions of European foreign policy, it is appropriate to ask what other significant types of activity are omitted from this typology. The most obvious omissions include activities associated with security and defence (since 1999 the European Security and Defence Policy), humanitarian issues, and the external dimensions of Pillar three - Justice and Home Affairs - which have become much more high profile over the last couple of years in the context of responses to 9/11. Given both the complexity of this policy agenda as well as the uniqueness of this policy domain, how can we explain European foreign policy? What theories or approaches to analysis might we adopt? Much more ambitiously, can we develop a theory of European foreign policy - and indeed, should we try?

3. Approaches to Analysis

In the third section of the paper, I suggest that there are two different approaches that dominate existing analyses of the EU's international role but which may or may not inform a foreign policy analysis of European foreign policy. In epistemological terms, one is essentially actor-based, the

other more broadly structure-based. The first, the “European Union-as-actor” approach, concentrates on the impact of Europe on world politics. Working backwards, as it were, from impact, scholars have tried to identify what sort of an “actor” Europe is that has enabled it to be such an influential global player. Implicitly or explicitly, the working model has been the state, but increasingly scholars have moved beyond a statist model to identify a distinctive non-state but nevertheless collective entity, with the European Community and latterly the European Union providing the “actor” focus of the analysis. This approach has made a major contribution to our understanding of the EU’s global role in both empirical and conceptual terms.

Important though this body of work as a whole has been in developing our understanding of Europe’s global role - as a guide to analysing European foreign policy, the EU-as-actor approach is limited in two particular respects. First, the focus is on outcomes rather than processes. As Bretherton and Vogler admit in one of the best works in this genre, they are essentially concerned to assess ‘the overall impact of the EC/EU’ on world politics’. They are much less concerned with analysing the processes through which the external policy of the EU is formulated. Indeed, they explicitly reject the relevance of a policy analysis approach to understanding EU external policy.

A second problem area with this approach is the persistent assumption that the EU can be appropriately analysed and evaluated as a single actor. My position here is that to conceive of the EU as *an* actor, *a* presence or *an* international identity - in short to adopt an approach to analysis which focuses on “singleness” or “unitariness” - is to misrepresent what Knud Eric Jorgensen calls the ‘multiple realities’ that constitute the European Union and by implication European foreign policy. Hence my assumption is that the EU is more appropriately analysed in foreign policy terms as a non-unitary or disaggregated entity in world politics.

The other established approach to explaining the EU's international role is the structuralist approach that I touched on earlier which explains actor behaviour either in terms of the international system or in terms of institutional structures in which actors are located.

Structuralists too, and Liberal Institutionalists in particular have made a distinctive contribution to our understanding of Europe's global role. But, as a guide to analysing European foreign policy, structuralist approaches of either a neorealist or neoliberal variety have their limitations, stemming largely from the level at which they analyse the behaviour of states and other actors - and I have written elsewhere about this. Clearly there is a problem relating the imperatives of structuralist approaches to an understanding of European foreign policy, and there is arguably a need to complement the "macro" approach of structuralism with some form or forms of "micro", actor-centred analysis but which, unlike the EU -as-actor approach, do not make inappropriate assumptions about single actorness.

More fundamentally perhaps, if we locate these two approaches within debates about levels of analysis and the actor/agent-structure relationship, we find that they offer the putative European foreign policy analyst some stark and limited choices. In terms of levels of analysis, we are offered a choice between "macro" and "micro", system and unit. Structuralist approaches clearly privilege the former, the "EU as actor" generally the latter with the additional limitation that the unit - the EU - is conceived in unitary terms. With reference to the relationship between actors and structures, these are also in effect polarised by our two approaches. With the notable exception of Bretherton and Vogler who take a structurationist position, the "EU as actor" approach favours an actor-based explanation while structuralist approaches, of course, privilege a structuralist explanation. Additionally, the dominant theoretical orientation is rationalist. To use Hollis and Smith's now famous distinction between 'two stories' to be told, explanation from the "outside" rather than understanding from the "inside" is the dominant epistemological perspective here, even with respect to the "EU as actor" school.

If we reflect upon the conceptualisation of European foreign policy in the last section, the limitations of these approaches becomes apparent. EFP clearly operates at different levels of analysis, most obviously at both the European and state levels. We need, therefore, an analytical perspective that enables us to explore the linkages between them. Given also what Ginsberg calls the 'partially constructed' nature of agency within EFP and its interaction with a constantly evolving institutional structure, it would be unwise either to separate actor and structure for explanatory purposes or to privilege a particular epistemological position with respect to them. In my chapter in the Sage book, I go on to explore the idea of connecting levels of analysis through the concept of Europeanisation and connecting actors and structures through the contribution of social constructivist approaches.

4. The Contribution of FPA.

I want to move on to the lengthier final section of the paper to review the contribution that FPA has made to understanding European foreign policy to date and its potential for the future. To link back briefly to the last section (and indeed to the workshop as a whole), we clearly have a variety of approaches in the frame, as it were, but what we don't have is an agreed theory of European foreign policy. But let me say immediately that I don't regard this as a problem.

I agree with Ginsberg on this who makes a point of eschewing any single theory of EFP for some important reasons. These include 'the complexity and multidimensionality of EFP which does not lend itself to a single theory; the moving nature and unfinished construction of the CFSP and ESDP; the still elementary level of theoretical analysis of EFP; the still limited scope of empirical research; and the remaining differences among scholars over concepts most suitable to explaining the role of the EU in world politics. For many of the same reasons, I argue that an eclectic approach to theory-building is positively desirable. Some EFP issues might best be explained by rationalistic methods, while others might be more amenable to an interpretative approach. The important point to be derived from the last section is the need for analysts to practice theoretical

reflexivity, to be theoretically aware and conscious of the assumptions that underpin different approaches. But in the absence of consensus, desirable or not, how do we proceed with the process of theory building? In particular, what has foreign policy analysis contributed to our understanding of European foreign policy to date and what is its potential?

An evaluation here has to underline again the central point that I started with, that FPA is not tied to 'state-centric realism'. Indeed, I prefer to characterise the development of FPA as a field of study since the 1950s as a continuing adaptive response to challenges to traditional assumptions emerging from a transforming world politics. There is no necessary connection between FPA and classical realism nor, for that matter, between FPA and structuralist approaches based upon a rationalist epistemology. I like Manners and Whitman's useful distinction between "traditional" FPA and a "transformational" FPA. The latter is characterised by a focus on a wider range of policy actors than states, a grappling with a "foreign policy" that is far more interconnected with other areas of policy-making and hence a far less distinct domain of activity, and it deals with a much broader agenda of issue areas than the traditional (military) security politics agenda. But, most importantly perhaps, analysing the "transformed" foreign policies of EU member states, in their view, necessitates challenging the dominance of traditional approaches to FPA.

Roy Ginsberg goes beyond national foreign policies to characterise European foreign policy as an integrated system of foreign policy-making. From this perspective, a foreign policy system approach to analysis which links variables such as actors, processes and outputs has the distinct advantage of offering, in his words, 'a useful and neutral characterization of EFP'. This approach also, in his view, 'breaks free of debates about whether or not the EU can have a foreign policy and over whether or not liberalism [neofunctionalism and/or supranationalism] or realism [intergovernmentalism] is the theory of choice'. In the absence of a consensus on theory, I would add, the attraction of a foreign policy system approach is two-fold: it neither privileges a particular theoretical position, nor does it rule out alternative theoretical perspectives. In this sense, a 'transformed' FPA focused essentially upon actor-directed policy with outputs and outcomes at the international level, offers an eclectic "pre-theoretical" approach to the European foreign policy analyst.

Let me illustrate the contribution and the potential of this approach by comparing two recent applications which take the form of policy system models - my *Understanding European Foreign Policy* and Ginsberg's *European Union in World Politics*. Both studies start from the assumption that EFP can be conceived as an interacting system of action. My study has three objectives. First, it tries to understand Europe's relations with the rest of the world as illustrative of a relatively new area of foreign policy activity - European foreign policy. The second objective is to analyse whether a common European foreign policy is emerging. The third objective is explicitly to test out in a relatively simple format the utility of an adapted FPA approach to analysing EFP. The three types of European foreign policy identified earlier - Community foreign policy, Union foreign policy and National (member state) foreign policy - are developed as 'sub-systems' of a European foreign policy system that constitute and possibly dominate it.

The core chapters of this book are devoted to applying an FPA framework to these three sub-systems of EFP, identifying differences between them but, more significantly, charting over time the growing overlaps between them with a view to drawing conclusions about the current nature and status of European foreign policy as a whole. Each chapter has the same structure and the analysis is framed by the key elements of the framework. The comparative framework is constituted by the *context* within which policy is made, the *actors* involved and the *process* that characterises policy-making, the *instruments* used to achieve policy objectives, and the *outputs* that emerge from the policy process. Each chapter concludes with a detailed case study of a particular type of EFP in action

Ginsberg, on the other hand, has developed a much more complex system model. Inspired by Easton's classic input-output model of governmental decision-making, his model consists of contexts, inputs, the EFP system itself, outputs and feedback loops. The central foci of Ginsberg's study are the outcomes of the EFP process, the point at which outputs generate what he calls 'external political impact'. Significantly, where this analysis differs from earlier 'EU as

actor' work, is the explicit linkage Ginsberg makes between policy outcomes and the policy process through the feedback mechanism. Having established the model and the focus of the analysis, Ginsberg then develops three comparative cases studies to test empirically the external political impact of EFP: on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia; on Israel, the Palestinians and the Middle East peace process; and, finally, the impact on the United States.

So, what do we learn about European foreign policy from these applications? Let me select two sets of insights, one pertaining to the empirical domain of EFP, the other relating to theorizing about EFP. One important result of focusing on the outputs and outcomes of the EFP system is that we are beginning to get a clear sense of both the scope and the impact of European foreign policy. Ginsberg concentrates on the Balkans, the Middle East and the United States in his analysis but, as he notes, 'EFP activity also extends to Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Central and Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia' The genuinely global scope of this activity is confirmed by the findings of a more recent empirical study by Hazel Smith that adopts an issue area approach to policy analysis.

Smith argues persuasively that the range of issues dealt with in EFP cross the now hopelessly breached divide between "high" and "low" politics and extend well beyond the 'classic issues of high politics and military security'. In her view, the five most important issue areas that substantiate EFP at the beginning of the 21st century are security and defence, external trade, development aid, interregional cooperation and enlargement. The scope of EFP is further underlined by her 'unpacking' of the concept of security to include issues like transnational crime, drugs, migration, and environmental protection. She also maintains that other key issues associated with the "new", post-cold war Europe - ensuring political stability and promoting economic growth - lie at the core of the current agenda.

Detailed empirical studies not only establish the scope of EFP but also its impact. Ginsberg's study is particularly useful here because it establishes criteria for evaluating impact without making unhelpful judgments about "success" and "failure". Several writers have argued that EFP activity addresses more or less effectively the particular issues and problems of a post-Cold War world. Thus not only is EFP activity highly germane but arguably Europe can and does play an agenda-setting role, on some issues at least (international environmental policy and human rights, for example). Clearly, the world has changed radically again in the aftermath of the horrific events of September 11 2001, and a European approach to 9/11 that highlights the virtues of multilateralism, "soft" power, peacebuilding and economic and political reconstruction looks if anything even more relevant today, especially when contrasted with the more overtly traditional approach of the United States to the so-called "war on terrorism". The more general point here is that the nature of foreign policy activity itself appears to be changing and there are already indications that Europe and EFP are in the vanguard of those changes.

How do FPA applications contribute to our ability to theorise about European foreign policy? The first important point is that conceptually "European foreign policy" is established as focus of description and analysis. EFP is not simply a convenient shorthand for the collective foreign policies of member states. Nor is it simply EU or EC foreign policy. EFP provides a term that encompasses them but goes beyond a narrow focus on any one of them. Second, FPA frameworks that highlight the relationship between policy processes and policy outputs effectively highlight the evolutionary trends at work in EFP. The two frameworks I have selected here are both heuristic and productive. They are also complementary in the sense that they pick up and highlight different aspects of the actor-process-output/outcome relationship. My focus on actors and processes enables me to track the growing interrelationships between different 'sub-systems' of activity particularly at the operational end of activities. I note the 'ratcheting up' of cooperation and a capacity to act which is improving incrementally over time. Ginsberg's focus

on processes and outcomes shows the growing impact of EFP on non-member states and on a range of issue areas and in a number of regions.

Third, these applications also highlight the continuing importance of member states in EFP but raise major questions about whether these states act as the classic interest-maximising 'rational actors' of realist theory. Member states' foreign policy is certainly unrecognisable as traditional foreign policy. My case study of British foreign policy illustrates radical changes in terms of context, process and instruments though there is clearly an incomplete transformation in ideational terms. But it is important to remember that Europeanisation is not a one-way process. Ginsberg stresses the input of 'national actors rooted in domestic politics and political cultures'. I comment upon continuing national discourses on foreign policy as evidenced, for example, by Henrik Larsen's work. The link between member states and European policy is clearly a two-way process - in Ben Tonra's phrase, a 'reciprocal relationship' that needs further research.

Both studies, I would argue, underline the adaptability of FPA and also the utility of this general approach. But it is also apparent that studying European foreign policy poses wider theoretical challenges to the foreign policy analyst with implications that go beyond the European focus. To return to the issue raised earlier, studying EFP does indeed challenge the *explanandum* - that which FPA seeks to explain or understand - as well as the *explanans* - the theoretical approach adopted. Let me conclude by identifying four related theoretical challenges to traditional FPA.

First, to the extent that 'state-centric realism' remains an organising focus of this field, making sense of EFP offers perhaps the most fundamental challenge to date. Foreign policy analysts clearly must be prepared to 're-tool' in order to study the international policy outputs of a wider range of actors and policy processes. Second, EFP powerfully illustrates a different actor focus for analysing policy at the international level. The assumption that this actor is unique poses particular problems for foreign policy analysts who have been traditionally wedded to a

comparative cross-country methodology. The contested nature of statehood in Europe highlights the problem of making comparative generalisations about state behaviour. Nevertheless, both the White and the Ginsberg studies illustrate that different types of comparative methodology can still be important and useful.

Third, the contested nature of statehood in Europe also means that foreign policy analysts can no longer avoid trying to develop an explicit theory of the state, an evident lacuna in traditional analysis. As Chris Brown has noted, there is a problem trying to understand foreign policy if we have no 'clear sense of what it is that states are motivated by, what their function is, how they work'. Fourthly and finally, mirroring wider debates in International Relations, studies of EFP illustrate the limitations of traditional approaches and the potential of newer theoretical ones which have an applicability in FPA beyond the European case. But again it is the contested nature of statehood in Europe together with the partially formed nature of EFP that opens up important questions at best underplayed by traditional FPA - about the role in particular of ideas, identity, social beliefs, discourse and socialisation. Already, I would suggest, the range of possible theoretical approaches of both a positivist and a post-positivist orientation is more clearly delineated now than it was, say, five years ago. The work of Ben Tonra and others shows the clear the applicability of constructivist approaches but there is also interesting work emerging from more mainstream public policy perspectives that are now being applied to EFP, on transnational policy networks, multilevel governance and policy entrepreneurs.

My general conclusion then is that if FPA is conceived as a 'broad church' which can and indeed should house a variety of different theoretical perspectives and epistemological positions, then it has already made a distinctive contribution to theorising about European foreign policy and is well placed to make significant contributions in the future.