The EU’s diplomatic machinery

Caterina Carta

In studies of non-state diplomatic systems two problematic analytical dimensions intersect. The first dimension concerns the relationship between a given political system and the institutional framework it establishes to act internationally. This dimension concerns an array of processes through which a political system takes political decisions (Almond, 1956; Easton, 1957), through a set of institutions, sustained by rules, procedures and values (Peters, 1996; March and Olsen, 1989). The European Union (EU) can be considered a political system. It holds ‘a stable and clearly-defined set of institutions for collective decision-making and rules governing relations between and within these institutions’; it draws on demands/inputs coming from the societal level; it puts into place authoritative outputs/decisions, which dynamically interact among each other and impact over the EU polity (Hix, 2005: 2). Similarly, by focusing on actors, processes, issues, instruments, contexts and actions related to the EU foreign policy system, it is possible to conceptualise European foreign policy ‘as a part of a political system (Jørgensen, 1993: 226), with inputs from national actors […] and from external sources; and with the outputs or foreign policy actions and positions’ (Ginsberg, 2001: 39). However, as highlighted by difficulties in defining what kind of beast the EU is (Risse Kappen, 1996), the diplomatic representation of such a political system needs to rely on complex mechanisms of sophisticated institutional and organisational engineering.

The second dimension concerns relations between foreign policy and diplomacy. With regard to the second binary relation, foreign policy embodies decisions taken by ‘authoritative policymakers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policymakers’ political jurisdiction’ (Hermann, 1990: 5). Diplomacy can, hereby, be defined as an instrument, a method, a technique whose main functions are ‘information, negotiation and communication’ (Wight, 1979: 115–17). Diplomatic representation reflects the attribution of foreign policy competences. Within the EU, the management of foreign policy issues is entrusted to four sets of actors who intervene to the building up of foreign policy measures on the ground of attributed competences. These sets of actors are the (1) European Council and the Council of the EU, which negotiate common positions in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and ultimately decide on all common decisions; (2) the Commission, which has the right of initiative in so-called low foreign policy competences such as trade and development; (3) the High Representative – Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) and (4) the European
External Action Service (EEAS), which mostly contributes to the making of CFSP measures. Not least, the member states still hold some exclusive competences in foreign policy and external matters.

In light of these two analytical dimensions, bringing down to the earth the sentence ‘the EU opens negotiations with X’ is an extremely puzzling exercise. This chapter introduces readers to the diplomatic machinery of the European Union (EU) and to the literature on this machinery. It firstly reviews the literature on the EU’s diplomatic service, proposing a framework based on six foci of analysis. It then proceeds by introducing the diplomatic structure set up by the European Economic Communities (EEC) first and the EU later, with particular regard to issues related to its organisational structure and of coordination among European actors.

Studies of the EU’s diplomatic service

Due to its atypical status, scholars progressively devoted growing attention to the political, legal and organisational configuration of the EU’s diplomatic system. By the 1960s, literature on the EU’s diplomatic system was mainly legal in nature, aimed at tracing the line between the legal attribution of competences and the institutional set-up of the Service. The attention of political scientists was inaugurated by an article on the diplomatic delegations (Bruter, 1999), followed during the early 2000s by a tiny body of literature on the process of institutional development and organisation. A more consistent body of literature started to consolidate in the aftermath of the Convention process, when a proper EU (quasi) diplomatic service started to be put on the EU’s political agenda.

Overall, this literature shares the problems and limits of approaching a cross-cutting and extremely complex topic: the diplomatic system of a non-state. The overall impression stemming from most of this literature recalls the famous parable of the blind men and the elephant (Puchala, 1971), where different scholars tackled authoritatively with a partial aspect of the phenomenon, reaching, despite intellectual leverage, a limited vision of the overall picture. In order to overcome this common problem, Carta (2011) invited to study the Service by analysing it on four levels of analysis: (1) an analysis of the international system which allowed non-state actors to perform diplomatic activities; (2) an analysis of the physiognomy of the EU as an international actor and of the margins of action of its foreign policy; (3) an analysis of the organisational sinews and of the institutional culture which informs its action; and (4) an analysis of the diplomats who conduct diplomatic relations on behalf of the EU. Such an approach would allow researchers to confront the multidimensionality of the concept of diplomacy, by adopting different theoretical tools for each level of analysis. Table 3.1 roughly summarises along six analytical puzzles the main research questions that scholars advanced in relation to the diplomatic organisation both in the headquarters and in the delegations.

Some studies focus on the conditions which allowed non-state actors to enter the diplomatic world. These studies reveal that the emergence of new actors depends on structural elements, tied up to the question of ‘resource assets and deficiencies’, ‘knowledge assets and deficiencies’ and ‘legitimacy assets and deficiencies’ (Cooper and Hocking, 2000: 367–70), whereas states look at deeper interaction with non-state actors in order to cope with new challenges. In this general framework, the EU stands as a powerful and sophisticated example. The unprecedented level of institutional cooperation that it sets up internally and the wide range of activities that it performs externally are told to challenge the institution of diplomacy (Bátora, 2005). Bruter highlights that, more than a challenge, the EU’s presence in the diplomatic arena reflects the general change in the ‘dynamic, adaptive’ institution of diplomacy (Bruter, 1999: 185), whereby changes in communication and the predominance of economic and development-related issues.
have modified the physiognomy of state diplomacy as well (Bruter, 1999: 203). These studies have the merit of linking the analysis of the EU diplomatic system to the more general literature of diplomacy and international relations, whereas, in general, most studies do not trace the border between studies of foreign policy and diplomacy.

Legal scholars (Pescatore, 1961; Reichling, 1964; Alting von Geusau, 1975; Sobrino Heredia, 1993) have done research on the legal basis, attribution of competences, scope and limits of the EEC’s model of diplomacy. Formal-legal criteria explain the scope of action of a given international legal person. International legal personality (ILP) defines the legal wherewithal to act under the umbrella of international law. For international organisations, ILP means ‘possessing rights, duties, powers and liabilities, etc., as distinct from its members or its creators on the international arena and in international law’ (Reparation for Injuries Case, 1960, quoted in Amerasinghe, 2005: 78). Therefore, for international organisations, ILP is explicitly or implicitly

Table 3.1 An overview of the literature on the EU diplomatic service

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<th>Main research question</th>
<th>In the diplomatic headquarters</th>
<th>In the delegations</th>
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<td>International considerations</td>
<td>What kind of evolution does the EU entry in the diplomatic word entail?</td>
<td>Jørgensen, 2011; Bátora,</td>
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<td>Hocking and Bátora, 2009;</td>
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<td>Whitman, 2011</td>
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<td>Legal issues</td>
<td>What are the boundaries of the EU’s international legal personality?</td>
<td>Pescatore, 1961; Reichling,</td>
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<td>2006; Piris, 2010</td>
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<td>Institution building</td>
<td>How did the EEC’s and EU’s diplomatic service come into being?</td>
<td>Dimier, 2003, 2004; Dimier</td>
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<td>and McGeever, 2006</td>
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<td>Organisational issues and the issue of coordination with other European actors</td>
<td>How is the EU’s diplomatic system organised?</td>
<td>Nugent and Saurugger, 2002;</td>
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<td>Hillion and Lefebvre, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>External representation and identity building</td>
<td>What is there to be represented through diplomatic practices?</td>
<td>Dimier, 2003 and 2004a;</td>
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<td>Emerson et al., 2011;</td>
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<td>Carta, 2011</td>
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<td>Lisbon and future challenges</td>
<td>The sum of these questions related to the new institutional machinery.</td>
<td>Duke, 2008 and 2009;</td>
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<td>Dony, 2009; Jørgensen,</td>
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<td>Missiroli, 2010; Vanhooenacker and Reslow, 2010; Dashwood and Maresceau, 2008; Hillion and Wessel, 2009; Hillion and Lefebvre, 2010; Lloveras Soler, 2011</td>
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<td>Missiroli, 2010; Vanhooenacker and Reslow, 2010; Dashwood and Maresceau, 2008; Hillion and Wessel, 2009; Hillion and Lefebvre, 2010; Lloveras Soler, 2011</td>
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Chaban, Kelly and Bain, 2009; Wouters and Duquet, 2011; Comelli and Matarazzo, 2011

43
attributed by the founding members and it ‘depends on its purposes and functions’ (Reparation for Injuries Case, 1960, quoted in Frid, 1995: 16). In diplomatic terms, ILP can also entail the *jus legationis*, which defines ‘who has the capacity to send embassies and messages representative of his thought’ (Constantinou, 1996: 3). These studies represent the precondition for any politics oriented work on the Service, as it would be difficult to grasp the institutional set up, the attribution of competences, and the organisational structure without taking into account what the member states and European institutions were able to transform into legal obligations. As is the case nowadays, the answer to the ‘who speaks for Europe’ question is to be found in the nature of competences, whether exclusive, mixed, and so forth. Legal analyses offer, hereby, a preliminary answer to this question and highlight the kind of inconsistencies inherent in the current architecture to deal with external affairs (Nuttall, 2005).

Historical investigations have shed light on the evolutionary path of all aspects of the European system of external relations (Spence, 2004; Dimier, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Dimier and McGeever, 2006; Viñas, 2004). In particular, the work of Dimier provides a crucial understanding of the development of the external service of the Commission and the incremental process that led to the transformation of a *foreign legion* into a *foreign service* (Dimier and McGeever, 2006). Indeed, the first delegations constituted rudimental external offices, maintaining few contacts with the headquarters (Dimier, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Carta, 2011). Throughout the evolution of the Service, the process of institution-building involved a change in both the delegations’ scope of action and their role within the Community’s framework. From an organisational point of view, this overall process of institutional adaptation engineered a continuous politics of reforming (Nugent and Saurugger, 2002), aimed to both define a coherent system of external representation and to ensure sound management of the network. In particular, Dimier sheds light on the complex dynamics of institution-building which characterised the birth and evolution of the network. On the one hand, she focuses on the way in which national and institutional actors’ interests converge in the set-up of the Directorate-General dealing with development (then DG VIII). On the other hand, she conducts an in-depth study on the relationship between institutional leadership and institutionalisation, where institutionalisation refers to ‘the process whereby an organization and its officials who operate therein develop its own identity or culture’ (Dimier and McGeever, 2006: 485). Extending the time span of this kind of research could definitely enrich our knowledge of the Service and provide crucial knowledge on the dynamics of institution- and identity-building at the EU level.

Related to this latter point, a growing body of literature studies the institutional and organisational issues related to the overall diplomatic system of the EU. In particular, this literature depicts the extremely fluid evolution of the diplomatic structure of the Commission first and of the EEAS later. Divisions and the absence of a clear perspective among the member states have been widely recognised as the main cause for this pattern (Dimier, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Spence, 2004). These studies account for the need to compose different and oft-conflicting interests within a non-state diplomatic system, a process which required a constant work of adaptation with alternate strategies and results (Nugent and Saurugger, 2002). This adaptation has regarded both the structure and division of work within the Directorates-General dealing with external relations (Nugent and Saurugger, 2002; Dimier 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Dimier and McGeever, 2006; Lamy, 2000) and the network of delegations (Spence, 2004; Dimier, 2004a). In this regard, much of the literature adopts an institutional approach, but neglected both to locate themselves in the general framework of studies on diplomacy and to compare the evolution of the Service with those of states or international organisations. Some studies specifically devote attention to patterns of cooperation between the member states’ embassies and the Commission’s delegations in third countries (Taylor, 1980; Tomkys, 1987; Holland, 1991; Bale, 2000). By...
relying primarily on case studies from different countries, this research identifies a series of hypotheses concerning patterns of interactions between the member states in third countries and the kind of factors which may ease or hamper cooperation. Due to the geographical scope of the network and the different interests of member states, these studies mirror the difficulty to produce general conclusions on the functioning of the system.

Some studies focus on the external representation of a non-state diplomatic system from the point of view of identity-building (Carta, 2008, 2011). This literature establishes a link between institutional socialisation and diplomatic representation, by tackling the question: ‘what do the EU’s diplomats represent abroad?’ The role of ‘the EU’s diplomats’ is not straightforward: the officials do not represent a state; they do not enjoy a fully-fledged diplomatic representation but a functionally limited one; they are not necessarily perceived as traditional diplomats by their peers. Therefore, EU officials need to create a more nuanced conception of international identity, defined within the narrow limits of functional attributes and elaborated via an extremely dynamic and case-by-case process of collective definition of priorities. This study is characterised by two significant limits. On the one hand, the sample does not (and could not, at the moment of writing) comprehend diplomats from the new member states, with a significant loss of information on how new organisational cultures interact within the system. Linked to this, the sample only comprehends the Commission’s officials, as it was conducted before the entry into service of the civil servants of the Council Secretariat and the diplomats of the member states. On the other hand, the size of the sample, although representative enough if compared to other similar works, does not allow one to make any statistical inference on relevant factors, like previous socialisation or country of provenience of the civil servants. In this sense, the scope of the analysis needs to be further expanded, with evident difficulties of meeting such a demanding purpose in a Union of twenty-seven member states.

In the aftermath of Lisbon, several contributions followed closely the state of ‘institutional and procedural vacuum’ (Missiroli, 2010: 342) experienced at all levels of European diplomacy. Legal studies (Dashwood and Maresceau, 2008; Eeckhout, 2004; Hillion and Wessel, 2009; Wouters and Duquet, 2011) timely and extensively reviewed the legal framework underpinning the new institutional architecture, in revealing the limits of the new structure in terms of delegated competences. The institutional reform inaugurated by the Lisbon Treaty in matters of external relations was interpreted as urged by three related needs: (1) the political need to strengthen coordination among the member states in an enlarged Union; (2) the operational need to increase synergies among the EU’s foreign policy instruments; and (3) the institutional need to provide for ‘centralised decision shaping agencies’ (Howorth, 2011: 303–4). This body of literature shares the view that this process of reform had the effect of an institutional earthquake, whose outcome is still uncertain. The creation of the High Representative – Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) and the EEAS are generally envisaged as the key institutional novelty of Lisbon. In parallel, it is acknowledged that the administrative fusion epitomised by the creation of both the HR and VP does not represent a combination of the old functions of High Representative and Commissioner for external relations, but rather the assignment of these two jobs to the same person (Crowe, 2005: 3). Some contributions highlight the institutional misfits of the process of reform: the new arrangement of the presidency of the Council, the new arrangements within the Commission (Carta, 2011; Duke, 2008), and the structure of the EEAS (Duke, 2009; Missiroli, 2010; Vanhoonacker and Reslow, 2010), together with a preliminary assessment of the new leadership of both the EEAS and the European Council (Howorth, 2011; Morillas, 2011). However, as with the necessity to account for changes in the institutional structure in a timely manner, this stream of research still suffers from a policy-oriented approach and needs to be both empirically and theoretically enriched.
The EU’s diplomatic machinery and Lisbon arrangements: institutional improvement or misfit?

The Lisbon Treaty has not significantly changed the previous decision- and policy-making arrangements. The general guidelines for CFSP and CSDP are unanimously decided on by the European Council (Article 26(1) Treaty on the European Union – TEU). The Council of Ministers adopts decisions and actions on the basis of these guidelines (Article 26(2) TEU) and defines the Union’s approach on thematic or geographical issues (Article 29 TEU). The Commission maintains its power of initiative within its areas of competence. The HR/VP takes part in all these activities. She contributes to the CFSP through her power of initiative (Article 30 TEU) and her role in its implementation (Article 27(1) TEU), assisted by the EEAS, the Commission and the member states. She also contributes to the definition and the implementation of first-pillar competences – through her role as Vice-President of the Commission and mère de la Famille RELEX – while ensuring diplomatic representation to all institutions of the Union. The external activity of the EU is, hereby, still managed through different procedures regimenting so called ‘high’ (i.e. foreign policy and security) and ‘low’ (i.e. trade, development) politics issues.

The bestowal of ILP to the EU, therefore, does not simplify the task of acting at the international level on behalf of the EU. In Brussels, no single institution represents the Union on an exclusive basis. While ending the rotating presidency for both the European Council (now chaired by the permanent President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy) and the newly established Foreign Affairs Council (chaired by the HR/VP, Catherine Ashton), current arrangements confirm a two-pronged form of external representation, respectively imputed to the President of the Council (Article 9(b)TEU) and the HR/VP (Article 13.2(a)TEU). With the exception of CFSP, the Commission also ensures the Union’s external representation (Article 17(1) TEU). In parallel, the rotating Presidency still chairs all other Council configurations, a fact that complicates proceedings both in the Working Groups of the Council and external representation.

While the decision- and policy-making arrangements have remained largely unchanged, the new figure of a HR/VP was specifically designed to bridge the two pillars, in order to increase inter-institutional dialogue, consistency and visibility (Nuttall, 2005: 93; Duke, 2006). The idea to place alongside the HR/VP an External Service emerged during the European Convention. The EEAS has an organisational status reflecting that of the HR/VP’s unique role in the EU system, that is, one of an independent sui generis body, separated from both the Commission and Council Secretariat. As with its status of institutional bridge, the EEAS is fruit of an unprecedented institutional merger between part of the RELEX Family in the European Commission and of the Council Secretariat General (CSG).

In the management of the EEAS, the HR/VP is sided by an executive ‘Secretariat’ comprising an executive secretary general, a chief operating officer and two deputy secretary generals, for political affairs and for inter-institutional affairs, respectively. Below, a corporate board is in charge of ensuring policy coordination and strategic planning to the EEAS, while ensuring relations with the European and national parliaments and the legal underpinning of its activities. As in a foreign ministry, below the board, together with directorates dealing with administration and finance; audit and inspection, a number of managing directorates deal with the bulk of traditional foreign-policy activities performed collectively by the EU. As is the case in other ministries of foreign affairs, the organisation of the managing directorates reflects two main organisational principles, with both thematic and geographical desks to manage international affairs, together with a directorate dealing with multilateral affairs. As with the responsibilities of
the HR/VP in the Foreign Affairs Council proceedings, these managing directorates are also in charge of chairing working groups in the Council, while the pertinent Commission’s directorates take part to the proceedings of first pillar competences. The new organisational chart reflects an enhanced role in foreign and security policy, with departments like the newly established Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD), the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), the Military Staff (EUMS) and the Joint Situation Centre (SitCen). Compared to the past, this could guarantee a more pronounced foreign policy and strategic role for the EU diplomatic service.

At a glance, the new organisational structure to deal with external affairs resembles organisational arrangements adopted in several states. This organisation comprises a ‘Foreign Ministry’ with a general responsibility for external relations and some specialised ministries dealing with some policy areas, such as trade, development, environment and so forth. This was also the case in the past structure, when the Commission held the bulk of external policy competences: DG External Relations (RELEX, from the French acronym) was in charge of coordinating six specialised DGs dealing with trade (DG Trade), development (DG DEV and AIDCO), enlargement (DG ELARG), humanitarian aid and civil protection (ECHO), and liaised with all other DG involved (i.e. horizontal DG like Budget, and, for instance, ECOFIN for macro-financial assistance).

However, the decision to assign to the EEAS some of the desks which previously were under the Commission’s roof poses new challenges. While the EEAS holds the bulk of geographical desks and assumes responsibilities for foreign policy matters, the Commission still manages specialised directorates dealing with trade, enlargement and the European neighbourhood policy. DG DEVGO maintains its special character within the EU’s architecture. The institutional location of Development is divided between the Commission and the EEAS. As an effect of the merger between DG AIDCO and DG Development, the DG changed name into EuropeAid Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO). Horizontal issues, thematic issues, evaluation and audit remain, therefore, within the Commission.

As it stands, both in terms of thematic and geographical desks, the reorganisation will require intense coordination between the EEAS, the Commission and Council, both in Brussels and in the delegations. Intense inter-service coordination both between the EEAS and Commission and within the Commission among DGs is also required because the Commission executes the budget and manages external programmes. Therefore, while external programmes are jointly prepared by the Commission and the EEAS, the Commission is still in charge of the management of EU external cooperation and financial instruments. Issues of horizontal coordination between all services will, in consequence, largely determine the ability of the new architecture to produce sound policy measures. Possible institutional and horizontal inconsistencies are apparent in the same broad definitions that the EU gives to the concept of security or of development. \(^2\) It makes it nearly impossible to draw a border between contiguous, yet managed under different procedures, policy areas. \(^3\) In this regard, inter-institutional conflicts still arise, as with the impossibility to disentangle different policy components in the management of political dossiers. \(^4\)

Problems of competences flow from the engine room in Brussels to the delegations. Abroad, the ‘Union delegations’ are placed under the authority of the HR/VP and the EEAS. With the bestowal of ILP to the EU, the Union delegations officially represent the EU (Article 221 TFEU). The delegations carry on performing the same tasks as far as duties of representation, information, political reporting, commercial and economic affairs and development and cooperation are concerned, but also contribute more decisively to the coordination of CFSP matters. With the end of the rotating presidency in CFSP matters, therefore, delegations chair political
meetings on the spot and, upon the request of the member states, assist and support them ‘in their diplomatic relations and in their role of providing consular protection to Union citizens in third countries’. In the management of the whole mission, heads of delegation act under the instructions of both the HR/EEAS and the Commission, ‘in areas where the Commission exercises the powers conferred to it by the Treaties’. This means that the delegations execute common policies due to a system of multiple mandates (Carta, 2011), under the overall responsibility of the head of delegation. Therefore, DG ELARG, DG DEVCO and DG Trade still play a part in terms of both internal coordination in the preparation of the EU’s meetings abroad and in terms of external representation, while ECHO still maintains separated staff for humanitarian aid.

In parallel, decisions were made to bring civil servants from the Commission and Council and diplomats of the member states together. While officials from DG RELEX in the Commission, a number from DG DEV and from the CSG were mainly transferred en bloc, the absorption of 1/3 of national diplomats that compose the EEAS happened gradually, due to the exigencies of the rotation process. The first EU ambassadors, selected under the new rules in September 2010, confirmed the intention to give the EU an extremely qualified foreign service, with all new heads of delegation beneath ambassadorial or equivalent rank. Recruitment, however, has been characterised by harsh turf battles among the member states and EU institutions over the most prestigious positions of the Service. This antagonistic mood among European actors potentially constitutes a severe impediment to the development of an EU esprit de corps.

As with its special status and composition, the establishment of the EEAS brings with it two categories of organisational problems: one relates to its policy role and the other to its composition. On the one hand, in terms of its policy role, on highly fragmented policy areas, such as peace-building, therefore, the EU still works due to a ‘pillarised’ logic in search of deeper integration and a sense of direction. On the other hand, in bureaucratic terms, the EEAS relies on collaboration of different categories of civil servants, with differing interests, previous socialisation, working habits and role conceptions and skills. The ways in which these differences are composed within the Service determine both the level of cross-fertilisation of different policy expertise and the institutional ethos of the EEAS.

As this brief account shows, although an effort to unify diplomatic representation was done, the EEAS is still a maimed diplomatic service, which represents ‘instances’ of foreign policy and relies on formula of coordination among all European actors. The EU is, therefore, still represented by a constellation of diplomatic actors, rather than a single diplomatic star. At times the interests and preferences of these diplomatic actors converge, at times, they conflict.

**Conclusions and wider perspectives**

This chapter aims at shedding light on the atypical conditions characterising a non-state diplomatic service. Considering the swift changes in institutional and organisational patterns and the new challenges that this reorganisation imposes on both European actors and external partners, all the above mentioned bodies of literature offer fruitful research agendas. In order to answer new research questions, future studies should more decisively combine theoretical and empirical oriented research.

In the aftermath of the Lisbon Treaty, legal issues need to be further inquired. From the legal point of view, the Lisbon Treaty gave to different actors the overlapping responsibility of speaking on behalf of the EU. The ambivalence of the treaties in matters of diplomatic attributions reverberates into the organisational structure of all institutions. In the new structure, competing and separated bureaucratic bodies manage segments of the EU’s foreign policy and
diplomatic representation. This suspended condition paves the way to inter-institutional and national rivalries and requires attentive research on how concretely the interests of all actors will be embodied in the making of common policies. Studies of the EU’s system of external relations should, therefore, respond to the theoretical challenges issued by Jörg Monar (Monar, 2010), and enquire on the new balance of institutional powers in the EU’s structure for external affairs. Accordingly, the ‘who gains what’ question should receive further attention and try to grasp a highly complex set of institutional equilibria. Future research needs also to focus on the issue of leadership, which proved to be not only fragmented, but also highly contested. Finally, in terms of identity, further research is needed to explore how the new diplomatic body will both develop a new esprit de corps and contribute to shaping the EU’s international identity. With three different sets of actors converging in the EEAS and collaborating with the Council, the Commission and the member states, specific studies are needed to highlight how factors such as role conceptions, perceptions, interests, previous socialisation contribute to forge varying interpretations of ‘what ought to be done’ to best represent the EU. Studies on dynamics of institutionalisation and socialisation might help at shedding light on the living dynamics which inform the EU’s external relations. The ‘what do we represent’ question, therefore, could be immensely beneficial to the study of both elite studies and complex international organisations in the delicate field of foreign policy.

Starting from these premises, research on EU diplomacy should follow three important and innovative lines of enquiry. In the first place, it should focus more decisively on the promising line of enquiry adopted by Keukeleire, Smith and Vanhoonacker (Keukeleire, Smith and Vanhoonacker, 2010) and Whitman (Whitman, 2011), who invite other scholars to locate studies on the EU diplomatic system into the more general framework of studies on world diplomacy. Diplomatic services have often been included among the indicators to indexing international power of states (for instance, Alger and Brams, 1967; Bernstein and Weldon, 1968). Together with studies on the leverage that the EU diplomatic service gives to the EU as a political system, current research needs to locate resources of international power into the general framework of studies on the balance of power at the global level. New research questions should therefore, paraphrasing Keukeleire et al., address issues such as ‘does the diplomatic service fit the purpose of increasing the EU’s power, visibility and capability to act on the global scene’.

Second, as with the temptation to treat the EU as an $n=1$ international actor, an appealing line of research should adopt a comparative perspective. It would be rewarding to compare studies of the EU’s diplomatic service to the literature on foreign and external services of both states and international organisations. This current of research is particularly needed, above all if considered that not much has been written so far on other non-state diplomatic practices (Natsios, 1995; Peck, 2004). How do (other) international organisations pursue diplomatic activities? Do they really differ from the EU’s diplomatic system? Which kind of profile do international diplomats have and how are they selected? What kind of policies do they serve? In parallel, although the EU’s foreign policy system could be regarded as a reversed federal system with the federate states maintaining most powers in foreign policy matters, studies on EU diplomacy would definitely benefit from a comparison to the foreign services of states. In particular, a comparison with federal states like Canada (Wolfe, 1998) and Germany (Regelsberger, 2002), or highly bureaucratic foreign policy systems, such as Japan (Collins, 2002: 292–303) could enrich our understanding of the bureaucratic and institutional features of the EU system.

Third, and linked to the relation between foreign policy and diplomacy introduced at the beginning of the chapter, future research should focus more decisively on the dynamics which leads to the acquisition and negotiation of common interests. In line with the goals of this volume, techniques of diplomatic representation and negotiation need more and better investigation. As other contributions in the volume highlight, the EU pursues foreign policy objectives vis-à-vis
the multilateral system. Especially given the highly fragmented machinery, the ‘who does what’ question would help us to improve our knowledge about the EU’s diplomatic representation and the Union’s interventions in multilateral negotiation processes.

Notes

1 The most recent organisation chart is available at www.eeas.europa.eu/background/docs/organisation_en.pdf
3 See extensively Wessels, 2009: 554–55; and Wouters and Duquet, 2011.
7 Author’s interview with a Commission’s official, October, 2011.

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50


