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The UN Security Council reform debate

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Introduction

One particular feature of the growing international ascendance of the EU in recent years is its evolving relationship with international organisations (IOs) that has produced a distinct stream in the EU literature examining various aspects of this interaction (Emerson et al., 2011; Kissack, 2010, as well as the various contributions in the collective volumes of Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2011a; Jørgensen, 2009a; Laatikainen and Smith, 2006; Elgström and Smith, 2006). These works examine *inter alia* the parameters that condition this interaction as well as its impact upon the EU structures and the *modus operandi* of the respective international organisations alike. Although the research questions may be articulated in a different way, the insights of this literature are not contradictory. They focus primarily on the *politics* of the EU international engagement, complementing other works in the field that adopt a formal-legalistic approach (Wessel and Wouters, 2008; Eeckhout, 2004; Govaere et al., 2004; Macleod et al., 1996; Brückner, 1990).

The EU interaction with the various IOs is a key dimension of the EU international presence, the latter conceptualised in broad terms as the ability to exert influence and shape the perceptions and expectations of the other international actors (Allen and Smith, 1990, cf. Jupille and Caporaso, 1998). To our understanding, this presence and interaction have both an internal and an external dimension. The internal dimension encapsulates the intra-EU institutional and political implications of the interaction, comprising issues of intra-EU policymaking coordination and institutional representation. The external dimension captures the effect of the EU’s presence on the functioning of the respective IOs, in particular the EU effect on their institutional format and policymaking process and outputs. However, in this interaction we need to be aware of two general issues. First, the ‘EU international presence’ is not limited to the EU collective actions alone, but incorporate the ‘presence’ and contributions of individual member states with an effect on the EU dimension, especially given that in several cases the two cannot be easily disentangled. Such a broadening of the concept remains extremely useful, not least because it sheds light to the co-existence of the two sets of contributions. This scarcely researched relationship may not always be symbiotic, with national contributions also functioning potentially in an antagonistic way to the EU ones. Second, the form of the EU interaction with IOs may vary substantially and different kinds of relationship may emerge. The international
presence of the EU is not only an issue of formal membership or some type of informal participation in IOs. The EU may and does also function through IOs, outsourcing or delegating tasks to other IOs; with IOs, in parallel institutional structures with some or no degree of overlapping but largely in a symbiotic relationship; or even against other IOs, in a competitive and antagonistic relationship (Ojanen, 2011).

In the paper, we discuss one particular aspect of the EU interaction with the UN system, focusing on the UN Security Council (UNSC). As highlighted in many official EU documents, not least the European Security Strategy, the UN constitutes one of the most important venues for the EU to establish its international presence (European Commission, 2005, 2004, 2003; European Union, 2004). The UNSC is the most important political organ of the UN, entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security (Lowe et al., 2008; Malone, 2004). Thus, the EU institutional representation and political presence in the UNSC are especially important for the molding of the EU international identity. Besides that, we look at the ongoing debate on the UNSC reform, the necessity of which the EU has acknowledged rhetorically to increase its efficiency, representativeness, and legitimisation in reflection of the changing international conditions. The embrace of ‘effective multilateralism’ as the cornerstone of the EU’s international engagement, since 2003, renders the ongoing reform debate a critical test for the assessment of the ‘multilateral’ credentials of the EU (Chevallard, 2005: 23). Naturally, given the ongoing nature of this debate, we can only keep following the negotiations and draw some tentative conclusions about the EU performance in it and the relevance of the EU for its constituent member states.

In the following section, we discuss in brief some relevant aspects of the EU–IOs relationship and the implications of ‘effective multilateralism’ in this relationship. Then, we move on to how the EU interacts with the UNSC and the EU contribution to its functioning. Following that, we provide an overview of the UNSC reform debate and the positions of the EU member states in it. Finally, we conclude by revisiting the overall EU performance in the UNSC.

**EU and international organisations: studying a complex and dynamic relationship**

The relationship between the EU and IOs is conditioned by two sets of parameters (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2011b). The endogenous set (i.e. EU-related) revolves primarily around the EU political system and its institutional architecture. The former depends largely on domestic politics in member states and their effect both on the evolution of the EU per se and the EU–IOs relations. The most important feature of the latter is the existing leadership vacuum in the EU foreign policy, associated with the political and institutional limitations of the rotating EU presidency and other forms of EU external representation (like the ‘new’ troika, comprising the Commission, the Presidency and the High Representative) to provide such leadership. Besides systemic considerations, the exogenous set identifies as key parameters of the EU–IOs interaction the US presence and the exact functions (security or non-security related) of the respective IOs. The broadening of the security agenda to encompass issues beyond the hard core of military security has not only significant repercussions in the EU engagement with a few IOs but also theoretical implications for the study of European integration. It arguably adds considerable analytical leverage to neo-functionalist approaches that stress the spillover effect of these horizontal EU policies to the evolution of the EU international actorness and the articulation of an EU grand security strategy.

The latter point highlights an also very important aspect of the EU–IOs interaction. It is important to bear in mind that this relationship is not static but dynamic in nature and has no
teleological or deterministic connotations whatsoever. In that respect, its evolution depends on two issues: first, the changing membership both of the EU and the IOs and second, the changing international role and aspirations of the EU and the IOs alike. The continuous EU enlargement has increased the EU role in several IOs. However, at the same time, intra-IOs balance also changes as a result of a membership expansion in numerical terms or the ascendance of new powers that result in the shrinking of the EU role in a few of them like the WTO. In a similar vein, the emergence of the EU as a security provider affects its relationship with other security organisations like NATO and OSCE, without this predisposing for an antagonistic relationship. Reflecting the trend of ‘new interregionalism’ (cf. Hardacre and Smith, 2009; Telò, 2007), there also exist other IOs in ascendance that pursue a more balanced relationship with the EU than in the past, reflecting the emerging, multi-polar, economic and political world order.

In terms of ‘bottom-up’ effects, the obvious starting point is the commitment of EU resources and their significance for the functioning of an IO, without suggesting that increased contributions always translate to influence. A second dimension of these effects refers to the EU impact on the IOs institutional format. A deep and well-structured interaction provides a substantial opportunity for the EU to export its organisational blueprint and shape their institutional format, especially in other geographical areas that seek to pursue regional integration. An issue of concern remains the bridging of contradictions deriving from interactions with IOs that are active broadly especially in other geographical areas that seek to pursue regional integration. An issue of concern is the security realm, where the EU struggles to combine NATO-like autonomy and the interest-based functioning of the alliance with the UN-like emphasis on international inter-dependence based on global norms and collective interests (Ojanen, 2006: 51).

Having said all that, there still remains the general question of ‘how the EU goes international’. Embracing multilateralism goes well beyond embracing multilateral organisations. It constitutes a generic institutional form with general principles that specify appropriate courses of action, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence. A direct corollary is that these principles entail a behavioral indivisibility among the members of the collectivity that abide to multilateralism (Ruggie, 1992: 11). It is not supposed to be a ‘pick and mix’ option, of which the principles are to be followed or obeyed only occasionally and at will, but rather generates pressure or expectations of cross-time, behavioral isomorphism.

However, if we adhere to the view that states are conscious, goal-oriented international actors with exogenous preferences, then multilateralism as an institutional form of international cooperation and coordination emerges as one—among others – functional means to resort to according to the calculus of each member of the international community (cf. Koremenos et al., 2001; Pierson, 2000). In other words, multilateralism is a policy option to which states may turn only if it serves their purposes best, whatever these purposes may be (Martin, 1992: 91–92). In contrast to this mode of ‘instrumental multilateralism’, states may simply prefer to do things multilaterally not because of a hidden agenda but in appreciation of the principled course of action embodied in multilateralism. In that case, multilateralism is not chosen according to rigorous calculations of costs and benefits, but becomes part of an ongoing, taken-for-granted subjective understanding of international life, which may comprise deliberative and communicative aspects of international interaction, an emphasis in cooperation through mutual understanding, and norms-oriented behavior (Caporaso, 1992: 56). In its various applications, this ‘principled multilateralism’ embodies the values that international actors may consider as indispensable components of a functioning (not necessarily functional) international system (Coicaud, 2001). Thus, in the question, whether multilateralism is a means or an end per se or
perhaps both, the answer depends on the variation of multilateralism embraced by each international actor.

The problem is that in practice it is often very difficult to identify these two variations in states’ attitude in IOs. Not only states’ preferences are most often hidden behind diplomatic language and rhetorical embellishments, but also a longer temporal frame of reference is required to capture broader behavioural patterns in international interactions. The way states conceptualise multilateralism depends on domestic political factors (administration in office, interest groups and civil society, policymaking ethos, etc.) as well as the country’s status, current engagement and historical trajectory in the international system, which point to the distinctive national political and security culture that informs a country’s international presence (Katzenstein, 1996). The EU approach to multilateralism tilts arguably to a ‘process’ mindset emphasising multilateral cooperation as an end product in itself, rather than its functional appropriateness in any given circumstances (Jørgensen, 2009b: 5–8). Multilateralism seems to have an intrinsic value for the EU order, very much compatible and in congruence with the European values, self-images, and principles that dictate the European political action at the international level (Lucarelli and Manners, 2005). In general, such an understanding of multilateralism bodes well with the normative twist in the EU’s foreign policy (Manners, 2002). Still, the EU’s purported normative commitment to multilateralism in principle is often not sufficient to overcome strong domestic political preferences and casts in doubt, for example, the strong self-perception of some EU countries as the ‘better peoples of the United Nations’ (Fassbender, 2004: 859).1

Two distinctive EU features reinforce these doubts to the rhetorical adherence of the EU to multilateralism. First, the EU is in itself a constantly evolving, negotiated multilateral order (Elgström and Smith, 2006). Thus, the interaction of the EU with the international system is a typical case of ‘intersecting multilateralisms’. The EU member states spend most of the time in intra-EU negotiations to reach a position. If a single one eventually emerges, the EU has little flexibility in subsequent negotiations for fear of undermining the hard-reached, internal consensus (Laatikainen and Smith, 2006: 19–20). However, such rigidity does not bode well with core working assumptions of multilateralism that presupposes some degree of negotiating flexibility to accommodate the concerns of the others partners engaged in any multilateral order. Inevitably, this situation generates bottlenecks in the practical application of the EU multilateral doctrine, with the EU being unable to pay due consideration to basic principles of multilateralism. Second, especially in IOs whereby membership and representation is shared between EU bodies and member states, the exact meaning of the EU ‘effective multilateralism’ remains blurred, since different actors may espouse a different conceptualisation of the notion. Such is the case particularly in the UN system, in which member states (i.e. national delegations) as well as intergovernmental (i.e. Presidency) and supranational (i.e. Commission) EU bodies are interchangeably present in different forums, acting and/or speaking potentially on behalf of the EU.

The EU in the UNSC: institutional representation and political presence

To start from the very basics, the EU is not and cannot be a member of the UN, let alone the UNSC, since states only can become members. Thus, when referring to the ‘EU presence in the UNSC’, the institutional dimension of this interaction takes overwhelmingly the form of EU member states occupying a permanent or non-permanent UNSC seat.2 True, the country holding the rotating presidency has taken the floor in the past to deliver a common statement on behalf of all EU member states. However, these statements have had usually a declaratory and symbolic nature and have occurred rather rarely (usually less than forty per year). In the pre-Lisbon Treaty EU institutional environment, the High Representative (HR) had also the
opportunity to address the UNSC, but that was a very complicated and cumbersome undertaking (Rasch, 2008: 179–80). The Lisbon Treaty has reinforced the role of the HR, stipulating that ‘when the Union has defined a position on a subject which is on the United Nations Security Council agenda, those Member States which sit on the Security Council shall request that the High Representative be invited to present the Union’s position’ (A. 34, para. 2.iii). In that respect, whereas in the past the EU relied primarily on member states to represent it in the UNSC, in the new institutional architecture, the HR becomes more actively engaged in the UNSC functioning. Thus, besides individual EU member states in the UNSC, the EU has acquired the institutional potential for a strengthened collective presence in the UNSC. This development reflects broader intra-EU policy dynamics on foreign policy and the external representation of the EU, in light of EU aspirations to provide leadership in international organisations, not least in the UN (cf. Laatikainen, 2010).

The main condition for the strengthening of the EU presence in the UNSC is the capacity of EU member states to articulate such a common position on a UNSC agenda item and avoid centrifugal tendencies. Besides the fundamental issue of diverging national interests, which often creates big rifts like in the 2003 Iraq case, this has also an organisational component, entailing ways to address coordination failures among EU member states and the appropriate fine-tuning of their stance. Coordination and information-sharing in the UNSC has lagged behind in comparison to the other UN main and subsidiary organs (Brantner and Gowan, 2009: 47–50; Degrand-Guillaud, 2009). In contrast to the UN General Assembly, whereby the appropriate former-A.19-based mechanisms have evolved in a pragmatic and incremental way, translating gradually the duty of information into practice, coordination in the UNSC is problematic (Farrell, 2006). The EU member states that serve in the UNSC and especially the two permanent members have been urged repeatedly to improve such coordination. Sporadic attempts to enhance information exchange and concertation (for example, by Spain and Germany as incoming elected UNSC members in 2002 and Italy in 2007) have not gained the desirable political momentum (Rasch, 2008: 78–86, 177).

No regular coordination mechanism has been formally established, although more recently pragmatic arrangements have increased the flow of information, prospective coordination, and EU visibility in the UNSC (Marchesi, 2010: 101–3; Pirozzi, 2010: 3–5).

However, focusing exclusively on coordination problems may distort the picture of the EU political presence in the UNSC. The EU member states do make a notable contribution in the UNSC functioning, which often translates in a strong EU political presence, in two substantive ways. First, acting individually or collectively, they have sponsored many UNSC draft resolutions and have effectively supported multilateral UN-centred efforts in concordance with the strategic objectives of the European Security Strategy. Thus, there is an implicit and sometimes explicit association of individual member states’ actions in the UNSC with the EU security doctrine that generates positive connotations of political actorness for the EU as a whole. For instance, on the non-proliferation issue, the EU-3 (UK, France and Germany) have been actively engaged in the negotiations with Iran and the building up of the necessary coalitions within the UNSC to ensure Iran’s compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Throughout these negotiations, in which the HR has also played a key role, the EU-3 have acted on behalf and under a broad mandate of the EU. On terrorism, the EU members in the UNSC have fully endorsed and pushed forward the various measures adopted by the Council. They have also backed the UNSC efforts to prevent regional conflicts, manage crises and build stability and sustainable peace, in cases that range from the Balkans to Congo to Haiti. They have also supported and sponsored UNSC resolutions on human security issues.

Second, the EU has taken actions to ensure the implementation of UNSC resolutions, among others by imposing sanctions and orchestrating peacekeeping operations. Besides the
contributions in the regular UN budget, which goes beyond the focus of this paper, the EU member states commit substantial personnel and financial resources, covering in aggregate approximately 40 per cent of the expenses of UNSC-authorised peacekeeping operations and about 8 per cent of the troops and other personnel involved in these operations. The most successful cases of close cooperation between the UN and the EU in the implementation of a UNSC resolution comprise military and civilian interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 and 2006, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003, Lebanon in 2006, Kosovo in 2008, and the naval force against piracy in Somalia.

The EU and the UNSC reform debate

The new international environment that emerged after the 1989 systemic changes exercised severe pressure to the UNSC to adjust in order to retain its legitimacy and political relevance in an evolving world. De facto reform of the UNSC occurred in 1991–92 with the Russian takeover of the Soviet permanent seat after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In this development, the role of the British Presidency in the UNSC summit of 31 January 1992 was critical in orchestrating the transition (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2011c). Giving boost to the British initiative, the twelve at the time EU member states had already endorsed this development, in December 1991, in a common statement on the future status of Russia and the other former Soviet republics. The de jure reform has been proved more difficult and complicated, evolving in three stages: first, around the ‘quick-fix formula’ between 1992–95; second, around the ‘two plus three formula’ that featured in the 1997 Razali Plan; and third, following the 2004 Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change after the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration (Bourantonis, 2005). Since the release of the Report, UN members have regrouped forming three major blocs: first, the Group of Four (G4 – Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil), supported by the UK and France; second, 53 states of the African Union; and third, the ‘Uniting for Consensus’ (UfC) group, with the participation among other countries of Italy, Malta, and Spain. Since 2007, UN members, while retaining more or less their initial positions, have explored possible alternative avenues for making progress, seeking intermediary arrangements with a mandatory review to take place later at a predetermined date. Building on the progress of negotiations in 2008 and 2009, an all-encompassing text that compiled the positions of the UN member states in a single document was submitted in May 2010 by the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on UNSC reform.

Throughout this period, the intra–EU cleavages and battle lines have remained quite constant (Missiroli, 2005: 44). ‘Effective multilateralism’ and the articulation of the EU security doctrine in 2003 has had seemingly little – if any – effect on member states’ positions. In general, the UK and France have shared on the whole converging views on the issue, given their special UNSC status (Hill, 2006: 63), although they differ on the issue of extending the veto power to new permanent UNSC members. The German candidacy in different wrappings splits the remaining EU countries (Roos et al., 2008: 47–48). Italy and to a lesser extent Spain have been in all the phases of the negotiations the most prominent and consistent critics of envisaged reform within the EU. These two countries are unwilling to consent to a permanent UNSC membership for Germany, which would entail the upgrade of Germany’s international political status and have sponsored alternative proposals, including ‘an embryonic EU seat’ (Fulci, 1999). The common feature of both status quo proponents and these reform demandeurs is their engagement in the UNSC reform debate in clear pursuit of particularistic, national interests. Both sides often invoke the European interest in their rhetoric, arguing from different perspectives that their favored proposals contribute to the strengthening of the EU international presence.
Another EU cluster comprises ‘middle powers’ and ‘EU neutrals’ like the Netherlands, Ireland, Austria, and the Nordic trio – Sweden, Finland, Denmark (Laatikainen, 2006). An overview of their involvement in the UNSC reform debate suggests a considerable degree of continuity and consistency, supporting membership expansion but diverging considerably on the issue of veto extension. However, their positions stem from a different underlying logic, according to which the institutional architecture and *modus operandi* of the UN in general and the UNSC more specifically should be based on multilateral organisational principles. These positions emanate – especially for the Nordic countries – from their prior firm commitment to multilateralism centered on the UN system, well before the EU endorses multilateralism as the guiding principle for ‘going international’. Likewise, their strong opposition to granting the veto right to new permanent members have intended to safeguard the role of small states in the UNSC decision-making, the Nordic countries traditionally perceiving their UN role, *inter alia*, as guarantor of the rights of small states (Laatikainen, 2003: 414–15).

As regards the ‘EU newcomers’, their record of UNGA activities in relation to the pre-enlargement EU caucus suggested evidence of shopping around, shifting coalition-patterns and pragmatism *vis-à-vis* the delicate balance between the US and the EU, all in attempt to serve best national interests (Johansson-Nogués, 2006, 2004). Still, when the ‘new’ Europe embraced the Razali Plan, in 1997, the candidate – at the time – countries of Central and Eastern Europe referred to the need to ensure one additional non-permanent seat to their regional grouping where the number of states had more than doubled in recent years. This position has remained unchanged in the following stages of the negotiations, alluding to the UNSC reform as a springboard to project national aspirations.17

**Besides the positions of the EU member states, it is also important to see the intra-EU policy dynamics on the question of UNSC reform, since the UNSC reform debate is closely associated with developments in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy and the course of European integration.** Already at the end of the first stage of the debate, and in view of the 1996–97 Intergovernmental Conference, the European Parliament (EP) made a futile effort to bring up the issue of a single EU seat in the UNSC.18 Since then, the EP has repeatedly reinstated its advocacy for a single EU seat in the UNSC.19 Public endorsements of this perspective came, in 2007, also from other EU officials, like the High Representative, Javier Solana, and the Commissioner for External Relations and the European Neighborhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner (Roos et al., 2008: 49). Especially for Solana, this was not the first time he expressed his support, having backed in 1999 the Italian short-lived proposal for an ‘embryonic European seat’.20 These endorsements do not exactly constitute path-breaking developments and have not led to a substantial formal upgrading of the EU representation in the UNSC. They have triggered some short-lived interest without acquiring a broader intra-EU reform momentum that could overcome the reactions of the most militant EU member-states.

**The overview of the UNSC reform debate suggests that despite the EU rhetorical commitment to UNSC reform, member states have been active mostly on a national basis. They have invested their resources to safeguard their own privileged position (UK and France), pursue own national priorities (Germany, ‘new Europe’), and undermine other EU partners’ political aspirations (Italy and Spain to a lesser extent). For the majority of member states, some exceptions notwithstanding, the EU is seemingly of little relevance in the UNSC reform debate. This feature, however, has little to do with the question of UNSC reform *per se* or more broadly the EU international presence. It is a constitutive element of the European integration process, in which member states’ heterogeneity leads to different degrees of EU relevance for the priority stakeholders, i.e. the member states. In that respect, the EU stance in the UNSC reform debate – or more accurately the lack of such a stance – does not come necessarily as a surprise:**
the member states’ different status in the UN system and their diverging political aspirations predispose against such a uniform approach.

In that case, developments are bound to be incremental in nature. For the greater part of the reform debate, external observers have monolithically associated the strengthening of the EU presence in the UNSC with a single EU seat or an additional seat for an EU member state, proposals still not feasible politically twenty years after they were first launched in the early 1990s. Although the political potential of these proposals, especially of the single seat, is not negated, we should pay more attention to the increasingly effective coordination mechanisms – discussed in the previous section – that have been set in place in the last decade and the constitutional developments in the Lisbon Treaty that cater for a more important role for the EU ‘Foreign Minister’ in the UNSC. These arrangements offer opportunities for the time being for the High Representative to intervene on behalf of the EU in the UNSC where common positions exist. While a comprehensive reform remains a huge political challenge, such intermediate solutions encourage coherence among EU member states and reinforce the role of the EU itself at the UN (Emerson et al., 2011: 70). Without overemphasising their significance, they may create an impetus for additional small-scale adjustments, further enhancing the cohesion and the collective presence of EU member-states in the UNSC. The emphasis on coordination and information sharing reveals that member states attribute an increasingly greater value to their common standing in the UNSC. Thus, it becomes evident that in a changing international environment with the ascendance of new countries in international politics, the relevance of the EU for member states as a means to ascertain collectively their international clout rises in general. This feature or better this necessity will find its way in the aspirations for a strengthened collective EU presence in the Security Council.

The latest developments from 2008 to 2010 provide some further backing to this argument. Following almost two decades of protracted but pointless negotiations, key EU members have shifted emphasis towards an intermediate solution, before international political reality creates difficult to oppose faits accomplis. France and the UK, in their joint contribution, have supported such a pragmatic intermediate solution that could provide for a new category of seats with a longer mandate than that of the currently elected non-permanent UNSC members. The two permanent UNSC members have moved away their initial positions and have endorsed, even as an interim option, this core point of the Italian position. This development indicates the potential for a gradual convergence on a common EU position in the forthcoming negotiations. This would enable the EU to show some political leadership and substantially strengthen its international presence, even if the proposal fails to break the negotiating deadlock. Although Germany has also acknowledged the need for intermediate solutions, the country remains convinced that expansion should cover both permanent and non-permanent members and that all other variations of the intermediate model are just disguised forms of an enlargement in the non-permanent category only.

Conclusions

The capacity of the EU to sustain its commitment to multilateral cooperation is inexorably linked with the different understanding by EU member states of ‘effective multilateralism’ and the political connotations it entails for them. While the UNSC reform issue divides the EU members, this issue should not constitute the litmus test of the EU’s presence in the UNSC. The EU members contribute notably to the UNSC functioning and the implementation of UNSC resolutions, overwhelmingly in concordance with the articulated EU security doctrine. However, this contribution often remains in the shadows, as a result of which EU member states feel urged to enhance the visibility of EU positions and contributions in crisis
management and beyond. To avoid traumatising the EU–UN relationship, the threshold of the EU presence in the UNSC should remain low in institutional terms, with the principal evaluation criteria being the degree of achieved coordination and the actual implementation of the relevant treaty clauses. Reflecting the current relevance of the EU for its member states vis-à-vis international politics and the UNSC more specifically, these two criteria have the potential to increase significantly the collective EU presence in the Council, without necessarily awaiting the outcome of the UNSC reform deliberations.

In broader terms, what does the study of the EU–UNSC interaction tell us about the more general problématique of the EU relationship with IOs? Reinstating the obvious, this interaction illustrates the lack of cohesion in EU negotiation positions, triggering in extremis powerful centrifugal trends among member states or affecting the intra-EU inter-institutional power constellation. Although such cases may appear rarely, the 2003 Iraq case is illustrative of the damaging effect of such a crisis on the EU functioning and the potential paralysis it may cause. Furthermore, the EU participation in IOs in general and the UNSC more specifically may uncover tensions between the inevitable EU engagement in redistributive bargaining with intra-EU winners and losers, and its self-description as a problem-solving actor. The EU interaction with an IO may raise substantial ontological and identity issues (what is the EU?), not least since international settings like the UN and the UNSC exercise pressures on the EU to become more a state-like actor – to ensure, for example, UNSC permanent membership. Thus, the interaction with the UN system and the UNSC brings in the foreground unequivocally the problematic EU’s conception of its international role and its limited capacity to supply leadership within IOs on a consistent and continuing basis. But, of course, this is only the ‘half-empty glass’ perspective of the EU international presence.

Notes

1 To give an illustrative example, from the field of political economy, the EU was able to shape the WTO’s rules in reflection of its own economic interests. Whenever these rules have generated inconvenient obligations, the EU, very much like other international state actors, has struggled to comply, not least for reasons of internal political complexity (Young, 2011).

2 Besides the two permanent members (UK and France), EU member states appear in three different regional groups, the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), the Eastern European Group (EES) and Cyprus in the Asian Group.

3 All UNSC members had to agree upon inviting the HR and explicitly granting him the right to speak. From 2000 to 2006, the EU HR, Javier Solana, was invited to address the UNSC only four times.

4 See, for instance, the statements of the EU HR, Lady Ashton, in the UNSC meetings on 4 May 2010 and 8 February 2011 (UN Doc. S/PV.6306, 4 May 2010 and UN Doc. S/PV. 6477, 8 February 2011).

5 Some caution is required, though, as regards the achieved level of successful coordination in other UN organs, as often operationalised with the split votes in the UN General Assembly, for example (Luif, 2003, 2008; Young and Rees, 2005). Such an approach prioritises analytically the existence of common positions over their substance, failing to differentiate between major and minor issues as well as the watering down of strong positions to achieve a weak intra-EU compromise (Kissack, 2007).

6 See, for example, European Commission, The European Union and the United Nations: The Choice of Multilateralism, COM (2003) 526 final, 10 September, paragraph 18. The Lisbon Treaty does not bring any substantial changes, reinstating the previous arrangements: “[M]ember States which are also members of the United Nations Security Council will concert and keep the other Member States and the High Representative fully informed. Member States which are members of the Security Council will, in the execution of their functions, defend the positions and the interests of the Union, without prejudice to their responsibilities under the provisions of the United Nations Charter.” (Article 34, para 2.ii).

7 Res. 1737 (23 December 2006), Res. 1747 (24 March 2007), and Res. 1803 (3 March 2008). Together with other European non-permanent UNSC members (Italy, Belgium, and Croatia) as well as the US and Russia co-sponsored Res. 1835 (27 September 2008). The EU-3 along with the US drafted Res. 1929 (9 June 2010).
See, for instance, UNSC Res. 1536 (26 March 2004), Res. 1526 (January 2004), Res. 1624 (13 September 2005) and Res. 1707 (11 September 2006).

9 In most of these cases, the EU members have acted as sponsors of important UNSC resolutions. See, for instance, Res. 1913 (12 March 2010) for Chad; Res. 1944 (14 October 2010) for Haiti; Res. 1965 (22 December 2010) for Somalia; Res. 1857 (22 December 2008) and Res. 1844 (November 2008) for Congo.

10 For example, all EU members in the UNSC sponsored UNSC Res. 1888 (30 September 2009) that calls all parties in conflicts to respect women’s rights in armed conflicts.


12 However, the EU failed to respond to a UN request for intervention again in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in autumn 2008, following the opposition of Germany and the UK as well as the hesitance of Italy and France (Pirozzi, 2010: 9).

13 In this Statement, the twelve member states noted that ‘the international rights and obligations of the former USSR, including those under the United Nations Charter, will continue to be exercised by Russia. We welcome the Russian Government’s acceptance of these commitments and responsibilities and in this capacity will continue our dealings with Russia, taking account of the modification of her constitutional status’. EC Press Statement, Brussels, 23 December 1991.

14 The G4 used the backing of most EU member states as leverage to the African countries to overcome their reactions. Still, the proposal was shelved in view of the imminent negative reaction of the US and China as well as the African states’ continued reluctance for a compromise.

15 The UfC group is a direct descendant of the ‘Coffee Club’ that blocked the Razali initiative in 1997. Italy and Colombia, which are members of this group, submitted in 2009 their own alternative plan, according to which there should be longer-term and regular non-permanent seats. In 2010, the UfC re-proposed its earlier plan but also declared that it backs the Italian-Colombian proposal (Ronzitti, 2010).


18 Question No H-856/95 by Mr. Kranidiotis on the representation of the EU in the Security Council, Doc. 95/389, 12 December 1995. According to Mr. Westendorp, the then President-in-Office of the Council, the IGC would not be an appropriate venue to discuss the issue, reinstating the lack of a common EU position on this matter.


References


