An alternative reading of EU foreign policy administration

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Introduction

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty the EU foreign policy was comprehensively rearranged. The former High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Commissioner for External Relations are now combined in the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP) – a position from autumn 2019 held by former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell Fontelles. According to the Articles 18 and 27 of the TFEU, the HRVP ‘conducts the Union’s common foreign and security policy’; ‘contributes by her proposals to the development of that policy, […], and ensures implementation of the decisions adopted’; ‘presides over the Foreign Affairs Council of Ministers’; ‘is one of the Vice-Presidents of the Commission and thus ensures the consistency of the Union’s external action’; […]. In the wake of this institutional rearrangement, by Council Decision (427/2010) the member states in cooperation with the EU Commission, created a dedicated administrative apparatus, the European External Action Service (EEAS) in order to assist the HRVP in achieving ‘[…] consistency and coordination of the Union’s external action as well as by preparing policy proposals and implementing them after their approval by the Council’. The EEAS is a ‘functionally autonomous body’ placed ‘under the authority of the HR/VP’. The HR/VP heads the EEAS and assumes political responsibility for this bureaucratic apparatus.

In spite of the current crisis and tendencies for re-nationalisation, the EU system of multi-level governance is seen as the world’s most advanced system of power transfer via supra-national delegation (Pollack 2003). Therefore, insights on preference-formation, goal-definition and strategy-design in the EU’s tightly interwoven governance network, coupling national and EU administrations together, may be particularly telling and can be seen as a case of collapsing Principal-Agent relationships in transnational public administration. The transformation of delegation processes may alter governance and accountability structures, the sources for legitimising and justifying behaviour, and modify roles, rules, identities and allegiances, understandings of purposes, as well as fundamental norms and beliefs of actors and institutions. ‘Integration of the core state functions’ (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2014) such as external representation, diplomacy, security and defence, external or extended governance or ‘governance transfer’
(Börzel 2015) can signify a contribution to a retrenchment of the administrative system in Europe (Olsen 2010). Together, such evolutions may build up the transformative potential to contribute to the emergence of new behavioural patterns – and gradually but sustainably affect political and organisational accountability arrangements, central to European states and societies (Bovens et al. 2010).

Taking the European External Action Service as a living laboratory for such processes, this chapter aims at advancing the inter-(sub)disciplinary debate of what institutional innovations in the field of international public administration (IPA) can tell us about the transformation of the state. Along these lines, the chapter generally suggests that public administration scholarship may offer valuable observations, and perspectives largely neglected by contemporary international relations (IR) studies or scholarship on delegation in EU foreign affairs and EU public policy more widely. More specific inferences point to the fact that EEAS officials are primarily inward-looking officials abiding by core roles and rules of the EU’s supranational community administration (the Commission). The remaining degree of variance in their decision-behaviour may be explained by reference to the flow of information, contact patterns, routines, and informal practices that supply the organisation with decision-premises and motivation to act (‘action orientation’). In short, the primary organisational affiliation, institution of origin and supposedly the hierarchical position of EEAS officials seems to affect (or ‘bias’) their behavioural patterns and practices also with regard to their independence vis-à-vis MS governments.

The chapter is structured in the following manner. The first part briefly engages with the existing literature on EEAS, showcasing an analytical gap regarding the investigation of the behavior of EEAS officials from a sociological administration studies perspective. In the second part, the analytical framework is sketched out, before presenting methodology and data in the third section. The fourth and fifth parts contain evidence from an exploratory analysis of practices and role enactment among EU foreign policy makers, approximating these by means of studying firstly contact patterns and information flows (attention paid to steering signals and instructions) and secondly the more informal concerns and considerations informing day-to-day decision-making processes. The findings and their implications are summarised in the final section together with suggestions for further investigation.

**Spotting the gap in the existing literature on EEAS**

The EEAS, as the supporting bureaucracy of the HRVP, is an organisational hybrid with inbuilt ambiguities stemming from the inherited pillar structure and divided competence areas between community institutions, intergovernmental structures and the member states. In the Council (Foreign Affairs Council, FAC), the HRVP is regarded as one of their own by the foreign ministers of the member states. As can be seen from Figure 35.1.

![Figure 35.1](image-url)

displaying the institutional embedded-ness of the EEAS, multiple oversight relations can be discerned as an expression of simultaneous ownership claims and as an organising principle inbuilt into the service in order to secure and manage political and ideational influence and control from both the intergovernmental and the community spheres, involving notably the Council, the Commission, and the European Parliament (EP) in a struggle over power and institutional turf (Blom and Vanhoonacker 2015). This new form of hybrid or ‘nested’ delegation has been demonstrated to induce various and distinct action logics into processes that couple organisational members together in the joint performance of tasks (Henökl 2015). In addition to the previously set goals, the chapter sets out to disentangle these multiple and competing action...
logics, asking to what extent have the institutional innovations of the EEAS made EU external action more (or less) penetrable to new practices.

Taking stock of the nascent literature on the EEAS we detect a recently evolving focus on diplomatic practices and institutional emergence (Adler-Nissen 2015; Bicchi 2014; Lequesne 2015; Novotna 2017). Much work has also been done on macro-level practices such as coordination and the quest for consistency or coherence of EU foreign policy (e.g. Balfour 2013; Baltag and Smith 2015; Dijsktra 2013; Ponjaert 2013; Portela and Raube 2012; Sjursen 2011; Smith M.E. 2013; Thomas and Tonra 2012). Legal scholars have engaged in an interpretation of the framework set out by the Lisbon Treaty and the Decision founding EEAS (Blockmans and Hillion 2013; Henökl 2014a) and have discussed its competences and role within the EU’s institutional architecture, as well as its status with regard to international law (Cardwell 2012; Wouters et al. 2013). Frequently, the EEAS has been described as a long missing bridge over the divisions of the old EU pillar structure, pre-Lisbon (Cross 2013; Duke 2012; Whitman and Juncos 2011). Antecedents to a public administration approach to the EEAS to understand the nature of the organisation and its behaviour have been adopted by Bátor (2010, 2013), Formuszewicz and Lisczycz (2013), Henökl (2014b), and Juncos and Pomorska (2013). The extent to which and the conditions under which international administrations may act independently of member state governments has become increasingly vibrant, but the autonomy of the EEAS remains surprisingly unexplored in a mounting EEAS literature, contributing to contradictory assessments of it (Furness 2013; Mérand and Angers 2014; Vanhoonacker and Pomorska 2013). The EEAS is seen as rifted between member-state dominance (Helwig 2013; Juncos and Pomorska 2013; Kluth and Pilegaard 2012), the concern for the collective European good (Maurer and Raik 2014; Thomas and Schimmelfennig 2011), administrative fragmentation and portfolio concerns (Blom and Vanhoonacker 2015; Furness 2013; Morgenstern-Pomorski 2018), as well as the professional independence of its organisational members (Bátor 2013; Spence 2012). As a consequence, academics, politicians and EEAS officials have different views of what the EEAS is and what it should be.
The gist of the rapidly growing EEAS literature has so far shown a bias to treat the EU external affairs apparatus mainly from an international relations and EU studies angle (e.g. Duke 2012; Howorth 2011, 2013; Morillas 2018; Portela and Raube 2012; Sjursen 2011, 2012; Smith 2013; Thomas and Tonra 2012; Whitman and Juncos 2009, 2012). However, the traditional angles of IR and EU studies do not fully account for the increasing importance of administrative networks, institutional ‘engrainage’ and transforming governance modes, facilitated by direct unit-to-unit interaction between layers of national and inter- or supra-national bureaucracies (linking departments cross-sectorally and transcending governance levels). Therefore, an organisational analysis of the EEAS, needs to put the focus on these novel administrative arrangements and study their implications on policy- and decision-making features so as to grasp which decision premises are pre-dominant in the EEAS and which behavioural logics EU diplomats follow. The organisational approach would assume that rational choice – limited by cognitive and computational restrictions and tainted by provenance patterns, in combination with ‘habitualization’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967) and development of organisationally engrained scripts – can partially explain the ongoing institutional changes in EEAS. The pre-dispositions for action have been studied according to varying sources of recruitment and types of employment of EEAS staff (Henökl 2015) as well as according to geographical location/place of assignment, hence ‘dissecting’ the factors benefitting organisational autonomy (Henökl and Trondal 2015).

In the sections that follow I highlight the scope of behavioural independence of individual organisational members from national foreign offices and other ministerial departments (international development, defence, trade, etc.). The praxis dimension, defined here as the process of interactions, emphasises the importance of ‘endogenous drivers of change that lead extant organizational practices and identities to be problematized’ (Thornton et al. 2012, 147). Noting a ‘practice turn’ in organisational sociology (Knorr-Cetina et al. 2005; Simpson 2009; cf. Bourdieu 1989; Joas 1996) towards increased importance attributed to the real-life activities and quotidian twists and turns of organising, it appears evident ‘that to adequately explain how organizational practices and identities change, researchers must identify multiple mechanisms and their interrelationships because we know very little about how different forms of social interaction combine over space and time to produce outcomes of interest’ (Thornton et al. 2012, 147).

Conceptual considerations and analytical tools

How can we understand and what is the link between ‘decision-behaviour’, practices, and organisational rules and roles? An organisational analysis puts the emphasis on the structural features of an administration or bureau and sets out to test how these structural elements influence behaviour (Cohen et al. 1976; March and Olsen 1989; Simon 1957). The EU’s newly merged external governance apparatus is an organisational hybrid combining multiple sources of behavioural traits from different models or affiliations of origin. Recent research on the EEAS (Henökl 2015; Henökl and Trondal 2015, Henökl, 2017, 2020) has shown that different, potentially contradictory and conflicting institutional logics are at work and co-determine a base on which FP decisions are actually taken. Such an analysis is based on a long tradition within behavioural and cognitive sciences. In essence, the way an individual understands, interprets and fulfils his organisational role depends on several underlying descriptions, narratives and scripts which are not easily and, in all detail, spelled out in the job profile, directives or instructions. Concomitantly, role theory assumes that the interpretation of one’s own position, functions and tasks in an organisational context influences the exercise of these tasks, which frequently consist
of making decisions and performing acts of choice. This concept refers to Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus' (1990), that is, habits, routines, standing operating procedures as the 'default- or fall-back option' when it comes to decisions about the appropriate course of action (March and Olsen 1989; Olsen 2009; Peters 2011). Relevant is also the link to an individual's character (as in properties of the persona).

Scholars contend that the formation of the basic character traits and development of core personality structure mainly happen during childhood and tend to 'crystallize by the time an individual reaches adulthood, with relatively little change thereafter' (Ban 2011; Inglehart 1997, 34). Challenging this static view of personality and especially of professional attitudes and values, one may assume that public officials are continuously formed and trained in and with their environment and throughout the exercise of their office. Thus, their professional contacts, communication and work patterns affect their values and ideas, their concerns and considerations (March and Olsen 1998).

Finally, the normative and symbolic dimensions are central to EU politics (Manners 2006) and even more so to foreign policy and diplomacy since the latter signify the external reenactment of state images and representations. Traditionally, states have been acting as the 'central bank for legitimacy and symbolic power' (Adler-Nissen 2014, 4), wielding monopoly not only of physical but also of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1989, 22). International relations and diplomacy, then, form the arena for struggles about the definition of political order and its legitimate domination, about what a state is and how it should behave. Legitimacy however also links to issues of representative bureaucracy (Gravier 2008, 2013; Meier and Jurée Capers 2012; Meier and Nigro 1976; Peters et al. 2015), emphasising a need for justification regarding to who is acting on behalf of the citizens, and based on which premises decisions are taken. The professionalisation and standardisation of representational and behavioural roles, the 'esprit de corps' as well as codes of ethics and integrity rules for diplomats have been ascribed a foundational and consolidating effect for formation of executive authority at the nation-state as well as at the EU levels (Bartolini 2005; Henökl and Trondal 2015; Kuus 2015). The professional behaviour of diplomats, their recruitment and identity as well as the exclusivity of their relationship with their domestic governments has arguably a decisive impact on executive control over foreign relations. With regard to centre-building, formalisation of roles and rules for public officials based on behavioural appropriateness defined by administrative practices, standard operating procedures, codes of conducts for ethics and integrity in government, also contribute to the development and professionalisation of impartial public authority and to the legitimacy of state bureaucracies (March and Olsen 1989; Peters 2011; Rothstein and Teorell 2008).

A public administration approach seems particularly well-suited for a more systematic study of the practices and the organisational premises of decision-making, mapping the different factors influencing preference formation in EU external policies. Examining data from official documents, semi-structured interviews and a survey among policy-makers, the chapter maps out the changing diplomatic practices and patterns by studying the formal rules as well as empirical evidence on

- officials’ role understanding;
- day-to-day embedment in working relations and accountability structures;
- and institutional orientations and decision behaviour.

A sociological view adds crucial insights to the 'why' and 'how' of organisational interaction by exploring the relational context in which identities are formed or conflicts arise and settle, and by establishing a connection between capacities and dispositions to act. A way to understand the
internal operation of intergovernmental and supranational organisations is by investigating their established practices, that is, ‘competent performances’ in the patternised and reiterated processes which have socially ascribed meaning and context (Adler and Pouchot 2011). Practices involve groups of practitioners or ‘epistemic communities’ sharing a professional ‘domain’ (DiMaggio 1997). Domain according to Ranson et al (1980) signifies a common context of associative schemata or mental models, that is, semantic or symbolic typifications and categorisations that influence perception, interpretation, planning and action (Berger and Luckmann 1967; DiMaggio and Powell 1991). In diplomacy, for instance, the international and cross-level transfer of practices through epistemic networks is less centrally steered and rather driven by lessons learnt among peers. Being a toolkit for action, actors can pick from sets of practices available, depending on questions of appropriateness, utility and interaction context (DiMaggio 1997, 267–268). Behaviour is reactive, following a mode of ‘implicit, unverbalized, rapid and automatic’ cognition (DiMaggio 1997, 269), and it favours the confirmation and reproduction of schemata. In contrast, action is strategic and goal-oriented, forward-directed and intentional, yet it is in essence situational, and hence individual and unique and not necessarily generalisable. An individual may act differently, facing the same problem in a different situation or in the same situation at a different point of time.

Having ingested the cognitive focus of actions as a conscious and directed type of behaviour, the administrative units practice a particular kind of action (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). Further, through individual professional postures which are informed by ‘traditions and dilemmas’ (Bevir et al. 2013, 167), practices may associate with certain roles. This is because a practice is likely to be employed or activated by a certain type of agents in a certain type of situation. Practices can thus bridge the gap between behaviours at individual and wider organisational levels since commonly accepted, institutionalised practices become the repertoires and vocabularies of groups of actors.

An example can shed light on how the combination of public administration studies and notions from sociology can help us understand the behaviour of EEAS officials. The importance of language routines in an inter- or supra-national body as everyday practices (Thornton et al. 2012) may explain the increasing use of the French language in DG RELEX, DG AIDCO, DG DEV and other external relations-oriented departments even after the 2004 enlargement. Judged by the use of French as ‘vehicular and drafting language’ (Ban 2013, 203), these were predominantly ‘French-speaking’ administrative environments, at least this has been corroborated in the case of the Commission (e.g. Ban 2013, 202–224). Switching to a new common linguistic code, where the majority of EU officials felt more comfortable at the expense of French speakers, may account for numerous small scale adjustments of practices and customs, making the bureaucracy more accessible to different types of staff and more permeable to new ideas and practices. This was additionally facilitated by the introduction of an Anglo-Saxon management style and of new public management (NPM) tools and techniques introduced by the Kinnock reforms. The dynamics of formal and informal organisational change, even when meeting resistance, appear to reduce the threshold for de- or re-institutionalisation (Olsen 2007, 125) and transform institutional logics, at least within the foreign policy related departments of the EU’s political system.

Methodology and data

To determine the different practices and action logics predominant in an organisation, I look at the importance attributed firstly to political steering signals and accountability relations (by a number of relevant actors or forums), secondly to normative standards, concerns and
considerations, and thirdly to the allegiance to formal rules and roles of the organisation – EEAS in the present case. Distinguishing between different staff categories (permanent vs. temporary staff), the survey data are then analysed in more depth according to institutional provenance (supranational vs. intergovernmental recruits) to see whether there are distinct behavioural characteristics, and if so, what the markers of these differences are. My objective has been to determine whether beyond the formal role scripts, also informal relations (stemming from secondary affiliations or previous institutional roles) matter.

Organisational structure can provide explanatory elements for the behavioural dynamics within a particular organisation. To what extent it is possible, at the same time, to account for concrete and precise behavioural phenomena and from this to infer larger and generalisable trends for organisational decision-making depends on a number of parameters, and contains an element of uncertainty. As March and Olsen (1989, 5) put it: ‘Outcomes at the system level are thought to be determined by the interactions of individuals acting consistently in terms of the axioms of individual behavior, whatever they may be. Thus, we make assumptions about individual consumers to understand markets, about voters to understand politics and about bureaucrats to understand bureaucracies’ (a point also found by Mayntz, 1999). Frequently, organisations are thought of as ‘unitary actors’, where individual agents fulfill their ‘membership roles’ according to organisational goals and interests (Mayntz 1999, 81; Luhmann 1964).

In the most immediate sense, the HRVP has to render account to her political principals. EEAS as a body is ‘[…] placed under the authority of the HRVP’ and it should be seen as the HRVP’s executive arm. Subsequently, a number of actors or fora exercise a certain influence on EEAS, having leverage over the organisation. This leverage is traditionally depicted as a Principal-Agent (P-A) relationship. While P-A modelling frequently analyses the delegative relationships of bureaucracy by looking at the situation between (parts of) administrations, I draw attention here to the transforming practices of delegation surrounding EEAS. The argument is that much is to be gained by looking at the agents (as in P-A modelling) in order to include the micro-level relationships within the context of direct and individual constellations between hierarchical superiors and subordinates at EEAS. Yet, the relevance of the findings may stretch beyond the case of EEAS, since Brehm and Gates (2015, 40) find that ‘the problems of overlapping hierarchical arrangements, as when multiple principals engage with a single agent, may be much more ubiquitous in politics than we acknowledge’. Goal ambiguities and conflicts are left uncovered when treating government organisations as ‘black boxes’ and looking only at the formal relationships between them. Consequently, to understand what is really going on inside and between administrations, the micro-level cannot be left aside since it is these individuals who make decisions, perform choices and implement policies; and since it is these ‘individuals who interact with multiple levels of supervision, potentially multiple agencies, sometimes with an occasionally hostile public, and perhaps also with political principals who may have no direct authority at all but the persistent beliefs in entitlement to intervene’ (Brehm and Gates 2015, 40). The difference in approach is basically the unit of analysis, where the methodology suggested here does not treat administrations as monolithic and unitary actors but applies the P-A framework as dyadic relationships between superiors and subordinates, and to individuals within bureaucracies. Key issues for this study are recruitment and composition of agents, informal intra- and trans-organisational relations between principals and agents, communication of instructions, and chains of command and reporting.

The chapter draws on three main sources of data; relevant official documents, semi-structured interviews with 52 EU officials working in or closely with the EEAS as well as a
survey among foreign policy decision-makers. The methodology used to analyse the survey data basically consists of looking at the relation between officials’ previous and present affiliation and their role concepts defined by personal, professional and institutional orientations. Officials were asked about commitment to organisational rules, accountability, loyalty and allegiance, importance of political guidance by relevant actors, job description and instructions, in an effort to profile the professional concerns and considerations building the premises for decision-making.

Mapping practices and decision-premises in EEAS

Preference formation, goal definition and strategic action

The identification of particular goals, studying choice sets and structure of interaction may be seen as an apt approach to learning about bureaucratic politics. Comparing goals and choices at different hierarchical and organisational levels informs us about ambiguous or diverging choices and opportunity structures among various actors embedded in several chains and layers of delegation. To do this, the present study draws on survey and interview data (total N=232) from superiors and subordinates within the administrative complex of the EU foreign policy machinery. It compares the importance attributed to political signals and objectives, attention given to various concerns and considerations, clarity of goals and instructions, institutional loyalty and the patterns of communication of officials by hierarchical level, recruitment source (permanent vs. seconded staff) and institutional affiliation (supranational vs. intergovernmental officials). The data serve to highlight the effects of nested delegation, ambiguity and conflicting goals, stemming from multiple parallel principals, overlapping authorities and complex lines of delegation, introduced by organisational integration of EU level and national level administrative structures. In organisation studies it is generally assumed that the decision premises, based on which bureaucrats actually make their choices, are largely forged by their receptivity to political steering signals as well as the communication and perception of professional concerns (Schattschneider 1975, Simon 1957). As a result of different sources of recruitment and diplomatic career paths, EU member states exercise considerable influence over policy making and implementation – most notably via their national seconded staff. The establishment of permanent and relatively independent bureaucratic and operational structures in Brussels and in the 140 EU Delegations, with a rather broadly defined mandate for designing, coordinating and implementing European external action may be seen as a qualitative change as compared to previous arrangements, which were institutionally and organisationally keenly separating community from intergovernmental competences and capacities. The new organisational setting and its formation under important political pressures, for example, the ‘migration crisis’ in 2015/2016, is highly conducive to bureaucratic and political drift, opening large pockets of discretion to agents at different levels and introducing ambivalence as to their decisions, choices and goals (Carpenter 2001).

Regarding political signals, concerns and considerations there are systematic correlations between both levels of hierarchy and institutional origin and the importance attributed to political signals (in contrast to a series of other independent variables, which seem to have less or no significance). Controlling for these other independent variables, empirical evidence can be interpreted in a way that ambiguity and divergences regarding political goals or at least a lack of clarity as to these goals are present within the EU foreign affairs administration. Such a result would also corroborate the argument that organisational mergers have a tendency to internalise goal- and role conflicts into the new organisation and to push them downward the hierarchy (Hult 1987).
There is clear emphasis put on signals from EU-level institutions, such as the Commission or the European Parliament. Here, an interesting observation concerns the relative importance that is given to the EP (Wisniewski 2013). Even if not a full co-legislator in all policy areas covering EU external action, MEPs’ ability smartly playing their hand throughout the negotiations resulting in the Decision establishing EEAS, and thus gaining more influence and political weight vis-à-vis other EU institutions is reflected in the answers of EEAS officials. However, this is an observation that is also shared by Commission officials, for instance in a quote, summarising a trend detected by Ellinas and Suleiman (2012, 80): ‘For many years the EP was unimportant and it was ignored. It had the least standing among the institutions of the EU. It is undergoing a process of transition – gaining power and knowing how to use it’.

Empirics indicate a rather sharp difference when it comes to political orientation between the two staff-groups of EEAS: Former Commission staff is much more receptive towards signals from supra-national signal-emitters, such as the European Commission and the EP, than their counterparts recruited from the member states. The latter are paying slightly more attention to the European Council and the FAC and significantly more attention to signals from the big member states. Less surprisingly for hierarchically structured organisations, the officials’ sense of accountability is most strongly developed. Former Commission personnel tends to be slightly more Community-minded and much less attuned (by 20%) to relations with the MS. In addition, the intergovernmental recruits are overall more politically oriented, and feel less strongly accountable to the supra-national organs, represented here by their service (the EEAS) or unit, or the ‘interest of the EU’ in general.

Concluding remarks

The chapter argued that there is a transformation of diplomatic practices and role conceptions ongoing in the EU’s external affairs administration. Overall, diplomats accommodate and apply signals and instructions stemming from several sources. Their concerns and considerations that form the basis of their decision-making resemble those of other supra-national EU officials, although the seconded staff may have a tendency to be more perceptible to the views of (especially the bigger) member states. The EEAS may be seen as an example of an organisational hybrid, created to resolve the steering/governance paradox of simultaneous coordination between levels and within levels of administration. Its mission is to square the circle of combining intergovernmental policy prerogatives with supranational action capacities (and vice versa), connecting departments of national administrations at the EU level and, beyond, linking up into global institutional structures, transnational IGOs and the UN system, for example, Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organisation (WTO), or the G20.

Hybrid administrative organisations, such as the EEAS, are frequently an expression of the search for a solution to diverging or conflicting demands for coordination and decision-making (Egeberg and Trondal 2016). The Service has also been conceptualised as an ‘interstitial organization’ (Bátora 2013), combining political, diplomatic and administrative structures and tasks, ranging from co-responsibility for foreign aid and development, to civilian and military crisis management and from EU-internal foreign policy coordination to defence cooperation. The appearance of the EEAS on the international scene, representing the EU as a non-state entity – yet endowed with state-like structures – disposing of an interstitially organised foreign policy administration, may be seen to challenge the state monopoly of diplomatic representation, a system of institutionalised practices and standardised interactions between sectorally...
compartmentalised and government-controlled ('government-bound') services. Consequently, its organisational members expose different and partly conflicting institutional orientations and decision premises with a potential to profoundly affect and alter traditional structures of representation, negotiation and legitimisation.

For the study of the EU's foreign policy system, I would argue that foreign policy and international politics need not be studied and treated as fundamentally different from other political spheres; emphasising the bureaucratic components of EU politics and administration, EU external action can be seen as a special case of public policy, in particular on the following grounds. First, the administrative decision-makers are EU bureaucrats, following certain institutionalised patterns of behaviour. Second, given the EU's multi-level character, EU-level foreign policy-making also reveals some important parallels to other, chiefly distributive, sectors of public policy, notably the EU core executive branch composed of Commission departments. Third, policy fields (as are policy-makers) are increasingly interconnected and have, since long, 'gone' international, trans-national or global, from economy and finance, energy, transport, to science and technology or environmental policy. Foreign affairs, in its full sense, takes a horizontal or cross-cutting position and needs to adopt an approach of 'integrative diplomacy' (Hocking et al. 2012, 29) or 'a full-spectrum EU diplomacy' (Smith 2013) in relation to those issues, as all of these are part of the external dimensions of the EU's competences and activities. At the very least, there is no reason why the study of international relations or foreign policy should not benefit from the – sensible – confluence of analytical devices that have proven to be useful in other sub-disciplines and fields of public policy, management, administration and organisation studies.

Note
1. Cf. http://www.eeas.europa.eu/what_we_do/index_en.htm However, the EEAS is also obliged to assist ‘...the President of the European Council and the President as well as the Members of the Commission in their respective functions in the area of external relations and ensures close cooperation with the Member States. The network of EU delegations around the world is part of the EEAS structure’. (ibid.)

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Official documents
