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Ole Elgström

Leader or Foot-Dragger?

Perceptions of the European Union in Multilateral International Negotiations

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FOREWORD

The increased influence of the European Union in world politics has sparked a lively debate on what influence it actually has, its degree of coherence and on the qualities that characterise its behaviour. This report assesses how the EU is perceived by other states in international multilateral negotiations. Using concepts and ideas from role-theory, the author asks what roles and characteristics other actors attach to the EU.

The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, SIEPS, conducts and promotes research and analysis of European policy issues within the disciplines of political science, law and economics. SIEPS strives to act as a link between the academic world and policy-makers at various levels. By issuing this report, SIEPS hopes to make a contribution to the debate on the role of the EU in the international system. The report is the first to be published within the research project "Borders of the New EU".

Stockholm, March 2006

Annika Ström Melin
Director
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ole Elgström is Professor of Political Science at Lund University. He has published articles on negotiation and mediation in the European Union in several academic journals and is the editor of European Union Negotiations (Routledge 2005, with Christer Jönsson) and The European Union's Roles in International Politics (Routledge 2006, with Mike Smith). He is a board member of the ECPR (European Consortium for Political Research) Standing Group on the European Union and of the Swedish Political Science Network for Research on Europe.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is characteristic of the European Union (EU) as a foreign policy actor, and what impact does the EU have on the international arena? As the EU has emerged as an autonomous source of influence in world politics, a lively debate has ensued on what influence it actually has, its degree of coherence and the qualities that characterise its behaviour. This study focuses on the EU as *others* see it: the purpose is to investigate how non-EU state actors perceive the roles, role performance and impact of the EU in three concrete cases of international multilateral negotiations. Despite the fact that many observers have underlined the necessity of probing what expectations and images actors outside the Union have of EU foreign policy, very little empirical research has been carried out in this area. This study is an attempt to fill this void. It is argued that it is important to study external perceptions because, a) these are a source of knowledge of EU foreign policy, b) others' views help to shape EU identity and roles, and c) outsiders' expectations influence the impact of EU role performance.

The three empirical cases involve negotiations in the United Nations Forum on Forestry (UNFF), at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The findings reported here are based on 35 interviews with respondents from non-EU countries, carried out in 2004-05. In all three cases, the ambition was to cover non-EU representatives from all continents, and from both developing and developed countries.

Using concepts and ideas from role theory, I analyse how non-EU participants in these multilateral talks perceive the power position of the EU, if and how they picture the Union as playing a leadership role and what other roles and characteristics they attach to the EU. My results present a picture of the EU as a "restricted leader". The undisputable great power role that the EU is claimed to perform in all three cases is not necessarily transformed into a leadership role. The reasons vary: in two cases it is internal disunity that creates obstacles to intellectual leadership, in the third case it is rather perceived role conflicts that make the EU less than credible in its leadership aspirations. The existing potential for structural leadership is therefore not translated into practice.

Apart from the potential leadership role, the EU is also associated with a number of other roles, with closer links to the perceived substantive ambitions of the Union. The EU was thus also portrayed as an exporter of norms, as a champion of the Third World, and as a positive force in world politics – but also as a stout defender of self-interests. When comparing

the EU to the US, the similarities predominate: both were in all three contexts regarded as the most powerful actors. The fact that the EU consists of 25 member states was considered to make it more difficult for the Union to act in a consistent manner. On the other hand, it was suggested that the EU might function as a softer alternative to the "American superpower". The distinctiveness of the EU, compared to the US, according to my respondents lies mainly in its overall approach and attitude to multilateral negotiations and less in goals and values.

The findings of this study confirm that "the EU is both a key part of the multilateral structures of world politics, and a player of growing resource and influence in its own rights" (Hill and Smith 2005: 400), and are consistent with Bretherton and Vogler's (1999: 30) conclusion that the EU is by third party representatives considered a significant global force. External actors clearly picture the Union as an extremely important actor in the three negotiations studied here. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the EU may be perceived by outsiders as one, single actor in its own right also when exclusive EC competence is not at hand. Not only at the WTO, where the EC has full authority, but also in the UNFF, where competences are shared, and in CITES, with exclusive competence but with a major role for the Presidency, was the EU seen as one actor, speaking with one voice. This result strengthens the conclusion by Groenleer and van Schaik (2005) that the EU may have a high degree of international actorness also when it is an "intergovernmental actor", represented by the Presidency. Whether the EU is seen as one actor or not is not so much dependent upon the formal institutional set-up as upon the capacity and will of member states and EU institutions to agree on common polices.

The deliberate attempts by the EU to increasingly speak with one voice, not least in order to have a greater impact on its environment, seem, however, simultaneously to give rise to some negative effects. Co-ordination becomes increasingly necessary, but co-ordination takes time and sometimes results in less-than-clear final compromises, which provide little guidance for other actors. In this way, aspirations of actorness may take place at the expense of leadership.

Another crucial determinant behind perceptions of the EU as a leader (or not) is whether the Union is seen as consistent or inconsistent. In the cases discussed here, the major problems concerned horizontal consistency, in other words, that different policies with external implications should be coherent. The diverse goals of agricultural, environmental and human rights policies clash, especially in trade negotiations, resulting in role conflict and perceptions of an inconsistent EU policy.

This study spreads new empirical light on a hitherto under-researched phenomenon: external perceptions of EU foreign policies. My research has arguably provided additional insights into the debate on EU actorness and novel perspectives on current discussions on "the EU as a great power" and "the EU as an international leader". It has also probed further into the existence and consequences of the inconsistency of EU policy. More research is, however, needed in order to broaden the empirical focus by investigating the role conceptions of outsiders also in other policy areas, such as security policy, thereby providing a more solid empirical ground for generalisations about EU roles and role performance.

1 INTRODUCTION

What is characteristic of the European Union (EU) as a foreign policy actor, and what impact does the EU have on the international arena? As the EU has emerged as an autonomous source of influence in world politics, a lively debate has ensued on the influence it actually has ("is the EU a new superpower?", see e.g. McCormick 2006; Reid 2004; Rifkin 2004), its degree of coherence ("does the Union speak with one voice?") and the qualities that characterise its behaviour ("is the EU a leader in international negotiations?").

Most analyses of EU foreign policy consist of detached scholarly assessments of EU behaviour over time. At times, EU policy documents or speeches are used to characterise the identity of the EU as a foreign policy actor. Instead this research puts its focus on the EU as *others* see it: the purpose is to investigate how non-EU state actors perceive the roles, role performance and impact of the EU in three concrete cases of international multilateral negotiations. Despite the fact that many observers have underlined the necessity of probing what expectations and images actors outside the Union have of EU foreign policy, very little empirical research has been carried out in this area. This study is an attempt to fill this void.

The three empirical cases are negotiations in the United Nations Forum on Forestry (UNFF), at the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and at the World Trade Organization (WTO). More specifically, the aim is to describe and analyse how non-EU participants in these multilateral talks perceive the power position of the EU, if and how they picture the Union as playing a leadership role and what other roles and characteristics they attach to the EU. I will also explain the role performance of the EU in terms of internal and external factors that non-EU states refer to when trying to interpret EU behaviour, and to compare the images these observers have of the Union with those they have of another major actor, the US.

The argument proceeds as follows. First, I present my arguments as to why it is important to study the perceptions others have of EU foreign policy. In the following section I introduce the concepts of role conceptions and role performance and link these to actor behaviour in international multilateral negotiations. I then start the empirical sections of the study with an analysis of the outsiders' views on EU power and leadership, followed in the next section by a presentation of their observations on other EU roles, and on characteristics of EU role performance. After discussing how non-EU actors choose to explain EU role performance, I compare the accounts

given of EU roles and role performance with my respondents' analysis of US behaviour in the same three negotiation contexts. The study ends with some concluding remarks and with suggestions for future research.

2 WHY STUDY OUTSIDERS' PERCEPTIONS?

The literature on EU foreign policy often underlines the importance of other actors' perceptions, and expectations of EU policy. Bretherton and Vogler (1999: 45) submit that "the relationship between internal coherence/consistency ... and perceptions of the EC's presence" is "of central importance", while Laffan *et al.* (2000: 171) venture that "the Union forms a highly significant presence in the perceptions and actions both of its members and of outsiders". Others' expectations are a central component in Chris Hill's (1993; 1998; cf. Rhodes 1998) ideas on a "capabilities-expectation gap", where he argues that there is a disturbing mismatch between hopes for and demands of the EU as an international actor and its relatively limited ability to deliver. Nevertheless, there is in fact a lack of theoretical probes into this area, as well as an absence of empirical investigations of actual role conceptions (Bretherton and Vogler 1999 is a partial exception). As noted by Nicole Gnesotto in her motivation for a recent collection of scholarly essays on "Global Views on the European Union", "Quelle image projette aujourd'hui l'Union européenne sur des continents…? …C'est cette curiosité – renforcée par la rareté des études … sur ces perceptions lointaines de l'Union – qui fut largement à l'origine de ce Cahier de Chaillot" (Gnesotto 2004: 7). Thus, this study indeed fills a gap in EU foreign policy studies.

To study external perceptions is important for several reasons. First, they are a *source of knowledge* of EU foreign policy, "important indicators of how well intentions have been translated into observable actions" (Rhodes 1998: 6). To gain information about the objectives, capabilities and implementation of EU external policy, researchers may utilise the EU's own foreign policy documents or policy statements from its leading representatives. This type of research has lead to a relatively large number of studies on the "foreign policy identity" of the Union (e.g. Bretherton and Vogler 1999; Cederman 2001; Lucarelli 2006; Lucarelli and Manners 2006). Other scholars scrutinise the EU's activities in the field, what the EU "actually does", to draw conclusions on goals and capabilities (cf. H. Smith 2002). In my view, there is clear theoretical and analytical purchase in also analysing perceptions of other actors. In doing so, careful account is taken of political reality as it is experienced by external observers. This provides insights into how the EU is actually judged as an international actor (cf. Rhodes 1998: 6) and therefore complements other sources of information.

Second, others' views on the EU help to *shape EU identity and roles*. Foreign policy roles (Elgström and Smith 2006; Aggestam 2004; 2006) are

created through a continuous interaction between own role conceptions and structurally based expectations, often chiselled out in processes of negotiations. EU foreign policy, while being to a large extent driven by internal ideas and processes (i.e. by agency), is also partly shaped in response to others' expectations and reactions (cf. Herrberg 1998). Thus, others' role conceptions, related to the social structure at hand, contribute to the development of specific international roles. More generally, third party understandings about the EU and its roles form a part of the intersubjective international structures that help shape the practices of both member states and the EU as such (Bretherton and Vogler 1999: 29, 33).

Third, outsiders' expectations and perceptions *influence the impact* of EU foreign policy role performance. Whether policy initiatives taken by the EU reach their goals, and whether (and to what extent) the Union may play a leadership role in a given policy area, are partly determined by the images and expectations others have of the EU: Are its activities considered legitimate? Are they seen as consistent and coherent? Paying attention to how the EU is viewed abroad helps us to evaluate the "reach" of EU influence.

3 THE EMPIRICAL BASIS

The study is based on interview data, collected within the framework of the research project "New roles for the EU in international politics?" financed by SIEPS. The three cases selected are all in the trade-aid-environment nexus, and generalisations of my findings to other areas of EU external policy must therefore be made with caution. The data material is unique in the sense that no systematic documentation has previously been carried out of other actors' perceptions of the EU as a fellow negotiator.

At the fourth session of the UNFF in Geneva, 3-8 May 2004, 16 interviews – including 17 respondents – were conducted. One background interview had previously been carried out in Stockholm. Out of the in total 18 interviewees, 6 represented EU member states or the Commission, while 12 came from non-EU states. At the CITES 13th Conference of the Parties in Bangkok, 2-8 October 2004, 17 interviews were carried out, while 2 persons had already been interviewed in Brussels. Out of the in total 19 interviewees, 12 represented countries from outside the EU. In the time period 9-13 May 2005, 15 interviews, one including 2 respondents, were conducted with delegates from the permanent representations of WTO member states in Geneva. Out of the 16 respondents, 11 were from countries outside the EU.

At the CITES and UNFF, the individuals interviewed were in most cases Heads, or Deputy Heads, of Delegation. These interviews were carried out at the premises of the conference. At the WTO, interviews were held with Permanent Representatives (Ambassadors) to the WTO or their deputies; in two cases with embassy Counsellors. They took place at the embassies concerned. In all three arenas, the ambition was to cover non-EU representatives from all continents and from both less developed and developed countries. Out of the in total 35 respondents from outside the EU, 8 respondents were from Africa, 8 from Australasia, 6 from Latin America, 7 from North America and 6 from Europe. The interviews focused on representatives from "important" and/or active actors within each negotiating area. Advice was here taken from contact persons within the Swedish (UNFF and WTO) or the Commission (CITES) delegations. The interviews, which were performed under the promise of anonymity, were semi-structured, meaning that they centred round a limited number of basic questions (concerning the themes of this study) but left a great deal of room for the respondents to elaborate and choose direction themselves. They lasted from half an hour to over an hour.

The total number of interviewees was obviously limited. The semi-structured nature of the interviews implied that respondents did not necessarily comment upon the same things; on the other hand, the format meant that the topics brought up by the respondents were not predetermined by detailed questions. The validity of my results is strengthened by the fact that perceptions of the EU turned out to be quite homogeneous both across countries of origin and across cases. Whenever different perceptual patterns were detected between the three issue-areas, or between, for example, delegates from developed and less developed countries, this is noted in the text. Furthermore, it is also pointed out when conclusions are drawn from just a smaller number of observations.

4 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ROLES AND ROLE PERFORMANCE

The role concept refers to "patterns of expected or appropriate behaviour" (Elgström and Smith 2006). What roles a state actor plays, and the effects of its role performance, is dependent on both the actor's own role conceptions and on the expectations and reactions of other actors. Roles are often associated with positions in social structures, with relatively firm expectations on what role(s) an actor in that very position (e.g. a "great power" or a "chair") should play and on how the role(s) should be performed (Holsti 1970: 239-40; Wendt 1999: 227). Role taking is, however, no automatic or mechanic process; what role will be played is to a certain extent a result of learning and socialisation in interactive processes of negotiation (Aggestam 2005), where self-images are confronted with expectations. In these processes, individual actors have a certain room for manoeuvre to select the role they will perform. "Purposive roles are the result of a dynamic interaction between institutional constraints and the actor's preferences" (Aggestam 2005: 11). Thus, although roles are partly determined by context, there is still room left for agency. The EU has, for example, been claimed to diverge from a traditional great power role to instead act as a "civilian" or "normative" power (K. Smith 2002; Manners 2002). In short, role formation is in this research seen as a complex and dynamic interplay between self-images and actor autonomy on the one hand, and structurally driven role expectations on the other. The focus of this study is not, however, on the interplay between self-images and others' expectations, but limited to an investigation of how "outsiders", representatives of state actors outside the EU, perceive the roles and role performance of the Union; an area of research where very little has so far been done.

Kalevi Holsti (1970: 7-8, 40), in his pioneering work on foreign policy role analysis, argued that a state's national role conception could help explain its foreign policy choices and orientation. He thus saw a direct link between role conceptions and role performance, the actual foreign policy behaviour in specific situational contexts. He also claimed that differing role conceptions could be of assistance when addressing variations in foreign policy behaviour between states. The connections between roles and foreign policy behaviour are not clear-cut, however. First, since role conceptions are often broadly defined they do not precisely determine policy choices, but rather indicate a potential range of options. Second, actors ordinarily have multiple roles that they wish to enact, and their selection or balancing between these role conceptions may result in various policy behaviours (Aggestam 2006). Nevertheless, knowledge of role conceptions

and of other actors' role expectations does, in my view, help us understand and interpret an actor's (like the EU) particular foreign policy orientation and its choice of policy.

Actors in multilateral negotiations are claimed to perform various roles. Their "multi-role nature" is even seen a special characteristic of such negotiations (Zartman 1994: 5). When actors engage in different roles, this serves to simplify and to structure the complexity, which is typical of multilateral negotiations; "without such role diversity, the issue and party complexities could not be combined into an agreeable outcome" (Zartman 1994: 5; cf. p. 220). It is maintained that the number of roles "on offer" is limited and may be related to the various functions, expected to be filled in such a negotiation, but also to the various goals and role conceptions that the actors bring with them to the negotiation table. Thus, observers refer to the roles of leader, mediator, defender of own interests, foot-dragger and followers (Larsson 1996; Sjöstedt 1993; Zartman 1994). The mediator seeks to find compromises in order to reach a negotiated consensus, the defender is more interested in protecting his self-interests than in a successful overall outcome, the foot-dragger tries to block every type of solution, the follower looks for guidance from fellow actors. Since roles are highly dependent on context, it is natural to assume that the same actor may play different roles in different forums – but the actor's structural position (i.e. its power position), on the other hand, creates expectations regardless of forum. It is therefore important both to investigate how external actors perceive the power of a certain actor, and the specific roles associated with this actor.

5 THE EU – POWER AND LEADERSHIP

> The European Union drove the negotiations forward with an ambitious agenda to fight poverty and to protect the environment, and we reached much of what we wanted … The EU will continue to show the way.
>
> EU Commissioners Margot Wallström & Poul Nielson after the Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg 2002

> The EU will have the same role in the post-ratification phase… We will have to have the same high profile and political leadership
>
> EU Commission spokesperson on the environment Ewa Hedlund after Russia's decision to ratify the Kyoto protocol 2004 (Vallières 2004)

> The EU is one of the key players in the World Trade Organisation…. The EU is one of the driving forces behind the current round of multilateral trade negotiations…
>
> (DG Trade 2005)

This section sets out to analyse the leadership role of the European Union (EU) in international multilateral negotiations. The quotes above illustrate well the self-images promoted by EU leaders: the EU as an active initiator and driver to reach its global objectives. The purpose of this section is to problematise the role of the EU as a multilateral leader by contrasting these self-images with other negotiating actors' perceptions of the Union. I do this by investigating the images of EU leadership and power presented by delegates from non-member states in the three different multilateral negotiating contexts covered in this study. What power position is ascribed to the EU? Is the EU portrayed as a leader? What types of leader roles, if any, is the EU perceived to play? What restrictive factors, making a leadership role difficult or impossible to play, can be discerned?

My results present a picture of the EU as a "restricted leader". The undisputable great power role that the EU is claimed to perform in all three cases is not necessarily transformed into a leadership role. The reasons vary: in two cases it is internal disunity that creates obstacles to intellectual leadership, in the third case it is rather perceived role conflicts that make the EU less than credible in its leadership aspirations. The existing potential for structural leadership is therefore not translated into practice.

I start with a theoretical discussion on leadership in international multilateral negotiations. What does it mean to be a leader in this context and how can the leadership role be related to other possible roles? What types of leadership may be distinguished? In the following section, the empirical results are presented. In each of the three cases of multilateral negotiation I describe how other negotiating actors perceive the role played by the EU. The results are analysed in terms of degree and types of leadership and the

relationship between influence and leadership is penetrated. In my conclusion, I discuss the factors that may inhibit the EU's potential to play the role of a leader in the three contexts.

5.1 The Role as a Leader in Multilateral Negotiations

In multilateral negotiations, leadership is supposed to be decisive for the success of the negotiations (Metcalfe 1998) and analyses of leadership are claimed to increase our understanding of the processes at hand (Underdal 1994: 178). Leadership may be defined as "an asymmetrical relationship of influence in which one actor guides or directs the behaviour of others towards a certain goal over a certain period of time" (Underdal 1994: 178). This definition signifies that the leader needs to have a *vision*, or at least clear objectives, which guide the negotiations (Dubet 1985: 162; Kaufman 1988: 69; Larsson 1996: 115). These objectives are collective ones, and the leader should therefore "look beyond his or her interests and concerns, to the interest of a wider group, notably his or her followers" (Malnes 1995: 93-4). This does not imply that the leader has to be totally altruistic; the leader provides guidance in order to satisfy his own interests, but is prepared to compromise to arrive at a joint decision. The definition also underlines the need for a leader to *push the negotiations forward*, for example by *taking initiatives* (cf. Sjöstedt 1993, who writes about the leader as a "driver", and Cox and Jacobsen 1974, who use the term "initiator").

In the negotiation literature, there is a lively debate on various *types* of leadership (Antrim 1994; Malnes 1995; Underdal 1994; Young 1991). In this context, the classification of Oran Young is found to be the most fruitful. Young (1991) makes a distinction between *structural*, *intellectual* and *entrepreneurial* leadership. Structural leadership is closely linked to the material and immaterial resources of the leader, as translated into negotiating strength. Influence may be exerted by material or social pressure, but also by acting as a role model or an example to follow (cf. Underdal 1994: 183-6). Intellectual leadership is performed by providing visions and inspiration and by constructive formulation of problems and solutions ("framing"). Entrepreneurial leadership is exerted using informational advantages and shaping procedure and institutional frames (Tallberg 2004; cf. Malnes 1995).

Acting as a mediator or broker is at times akin to being a leader, especially if the mediator or leader also stands for a vision. Both brokers and leaders aim to reach a compromise solution and consensus. However, mediators are usually supposed to be impartial (see, however, Elgström 2003), whilst leaders hardly have this ambition – despite the expectations that a leader

should "look beyond his or her interests and concerns" – in his aspiration to promote the visions he stands for. It should also be noted that the leadership role tends to compete with the role of a defender of own interests. Although not expected to be altruistic, a leader is expected to consider everyone's concerns and the over-arching importance of reaching a joint agreement. As every actor is subject to pressures, not least domestic ones, to protect his own interests, this may result in a very precarious balancing act for any potential leader.

5.2 EU Leadership in Three Multilateral Negotiation Contexts

5.2.1 The EU in International Forestry Negotiations (UNFF)

The UNFF is a multilateral round of negotiations with universal membership, which deals with various aspects of forestry management. The Forum was created in 2000 by the UN Economic and Social Council with the objective of promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The UNFF is engaged in facilitating implementation of already existing proposals for action in the forestry area and has, *inter alia*, been active in discussions on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. The negotiations include both environmental and developmental issues. The balance between conservation and protection, on the one hand, and resource use and (sustainable) development, on the other hand, is a recurrent theme of the negotiations.

In these negotiations, the EU is represented by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It is the head of the Presidency delegation that speaks on behalf of the Union, though individual member states may take the floor on issues where they have a special interest or have specialist competence. The representative of the Commission (from DG Environment) holds a relatively low profile. The EU actively strives to speak with one voice in the negotiations. Every new day of negotiations starts, for example, with one hour of co-ordinating discussions. Whenever internal disunity occurs, there is a search for a compromise position; individual member states never openly speak in favour of their specific positions in the intergovernmental negotiations.

The EU is beyond doubt perceived as one of the most influential actors in forestry negotiations. The Union is "de facto a great power in these kinds of multilateral negotiations", as one interviewee put it. It is the economic strength and its economic ties to other actors that make it a key actor. "Others listen to the EU because of its economic strength … They wake up when the EU speaks". The fact that the EU is also an important actor in

the forestry sector as such contributes to the influence of the Union, but is not decisive in any way. The size and capacity of the EU as a donor of foreign development assistance is, however, of central importance for many developing countries, which expect links between the EU's rhetoric on sustainable development and transfers of resources to facilitate such a policy. In brief, the EU may be claimed to play a structurally driven great power role in these negotiations.

The image of the EU as a great power also creates expectations regarding leadership. But despite the fact that other actors carefully listen to the EU and closely monitor its positions, as these are decisive for what decisions will be taken, the EU is hardly seen as a leader. My interviewees agree that the EU only rarely sends unambiguous, clear signals that may push the negotiations forward. Some respondents do claim that the Union at times takes on the role as a leader, but only when there is internal agreement and it can speak with one voice. Far too often, the EU is internally divided (not least as regards how to reach common objectives) or is only capable of uniting around vague compromises. Under such circumstances, it is – according to my informants – not possible for the EU to provide clear guidelines for others to follow. Therefore, it cannot, and does not, act as a leader.

To *summarise*, in the eyes of non-EU observers the EU plays a structurally driven great power role in the UNFF, but it does not consistently play the role of a leader. The Union does not stand for a distinct and consistent vision and its initiatives are too few. It is reactive rather than proactive. Thus, there is primarily a lack of intellectual leadership. The reason lies, it is claimed, in a lack of unity within the EU, which results in a need for consultations, in watered-down positions and inflexibility in negotiations. In the background is the peculiar institutional construction of the Union, where 25 member states, together with supranational actors, have the outspoken ambition to always speak with one voice, and therefore need to unite behind a common policy stance.

5.2.2 The EU in Negotiations on Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (CITES)

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is a global intergovernmental organisation (IGO) with 166 member states. Its main objective is to protect endangered species of animals and plants. One main task is to decide on whether or not to place such species on three different lists, reflecting various levels of sensitivity to trade for species survival and putting in place more or less

stringent restrictions on international trade in that particular species. Decision-making is made by qualified (2/3) majority voting of the parties present (146 at the 2004 Conference of the Parties, CoP), where each party to the Convention has one vote. During one CoP, around 50 proposals for listing amendments are introduced. The basic line of contention within CITES goes between those actors who want to "conserve", who in principle do not allow any use of, or trade in, the animals and plants under discussion, and those who favour "sustainable use", with restricted trade allowed, of these natural resources.

CITES is placed under exclusive Community competence. The legal premise is that there should be a common EU position. All individual listing proposals from member states have to be supported by a management committee under the Commission in order to be sent to the CITES Secretariat as an EU (formally, Presidency) proposal. Things are, however, complicated by the fact that the EU *per se* is not a party to the Convention, as membership is restricted to state actors. A decision taken already in 1983 to amend the Charter to allow for non-state entities as members has yet to be ratified – eleven more states need to adopt the amendment. The consequence of this is that in actual negotiations, the EU is always represented by the Presidency, speaking on behalf of the Union (other member states as well as Commission representatives may, however, take the floor when issues of special concern to them are debated). The EU delegates, that is to say the Commission representatives, are formally observers, with seats reserved along with other IGOs further back in the plenary hall. Ordinarily, however, a member of the Commission delegation sits next to the Presidency. If the EU were to become a party to the Convention, the Commission would take over the tasks today carried out by the Presidency.

The EU is seen as an extremely important actor within CITES. It is "incredibly important" and "almost decisive". Everyone agrees that the reason for this lies in the decision-making system of CITES. The EU has today 25 votes and always votes as a block. Furthermore, it can count on having "followers", who vote in the same way as the Union, for example aspirants for membership and former colonies in Africa. In practice this means that the EU can block any decision; if the EU is against a proposal, it is "sunk", if it is in favour, the chances of reaching a positive decision are high. Hence, other delegations tend to follow the position of the EU closely. The fact that the EU is always well prepared and has the capacity to offer opinions on all proposals (something which far from all other states have) strengthens this tendency, as does the general economic power of the Union.

The importance attached to the position taken by the EU makes some respondents also view the Union as a leader. Many state actors turn to the EU "to look for a lead and for a cue on how to vote". But if it is a leader, it is a "quiet leader"; it leads by means of the position it takes, but not by intellectual leadership. The majority of my interviewees do not see the EU as a leader, but rather as a defensive and reactive actor, not least because of its internal decision-making process, which is portrayed as cumbersome and protracted and as often resulting in an unclear position. The decision-making process leads to inflexibility and makes it difficult for the Union to act as a problem-solver. Thus, there are also problems associated with the entrepreneurial leadership qualities of the EU. When the EU is internally divided, often in domestically sensitive issues (like elephants and big cats) it abstains from voting in CITES. This does not happen very often, but when it does it results in substantial frustration among those actors with strong interests in the issue at hand.

To *summarise*, the EU's position as the most influential actor in CITES has not, according to external observers, been transformed into leadership. The EU does have followers that "vote as the EU does" (a kind of structural leadership) but there are weaknesses both in its intellectual and in its entrepreneurial leadership. The EU does not offer a clear and consistent policy line, partly because of domestic considerations among individual member states. So, while it speaks with one voice, this is not done in a way that provides distinct guidelines for others to follow.

5.2.3 The EU in International Trade Negotiations (WTO)

The WTO was established in 1995 as a result of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) Uruguay Round. Its task is to develop and decide upon global rules for trade between its members. It is an IGO with decisions usually taken by consensus. In October 2004 it had 149 members. The decision-making body of the WTO is the Conference of Ministers that meets once every second year. The General Council meets regularly at the WTO headquarters in Geneva, which is also the home of its Secretariat. The WTO is currently engaged in a comprehensive round of negotiations, the so-called "Doha Development Agenda".

The EU has a common trade policy (the "Common Commercial Policy"). The EU thus constitutes one actor in trade negotiations with the Commission negotiating on behalf of the EU, often on a relatively broad mandate given by the member states. The legal basis for trade policy is Article 133 of the European Community Treaty. Commission co-ordination with the member states is carried out in the so called 133 Committee, which meets

weekly. There is also a daily co-ordination process during ongoing WTO negotiations in Geneva and elsewhere.

The EU is unanimously viewed as a great power in trade policy. The EU is described as a "key player" and as "pivotal". Without the support of the EU, nothing happens in trade negotiations. The main reasons, it is claimed, are the general economic weight of the Union, its large share of world trade and the capacity and expertise it demonstrates in trade issues. During the GATT era, the EU and the United States (US) were overwhelmingly dominant, and often decided in advance between themselves what position they would take, and subsequently present their joint agreement as a *fait accompli* to the other members. This scene has, however, changed somewhat – although not dramatically – with the advance of the so-called group of G-20 during the Doha round. This group consists of "important developing countries", led by Brazil, India and South Africa.

The EU is perceived by a majority of my respondents as an obvious leader in trade negotiations, but only "sometimes" and "in certain areas" – and with mixed success. It is a leader in the sense that it is active and takes initiative. This is illustrated with references to, for example, the Commission's activities at the ministerial meeting at Cancún 2003, but also to EU initiatives directed towards the Third World (the "Everything but Arms" initiative; the so called "G-90 initiative", more about this below). The EU's attempts to broaden the WTO agenda to include environmental issues and social aspects of trade are also mentioned by some informants as examples of leadership, primarily by those who are positively inclined to include such considerations in trade agreements. The problem is, according to my sources, that these initiatives are often highly controversial. The EU does have followers at the WTO – not least the former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (the so called ACP countries) – but most of the EU initiatives are met with suspicion by most WTO member states.

The background is, as explained by my respondents, that the EU is generally perceived as a potential leader, but also as an actor with obvious double standards. Expectations are high on the EU to show leadership, to "take its responsibility", not least because other countries have been affected by EU rhetoric, which includes aspirations of general leadership as well as being a "champion of Third World interests". At the same time, the credibility of the EU is considered low. Here, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has a particularly negative influence. As long as the Union is considered protectionist in agriculture, it is also seen as inconsistent and less than credible. So while the over-all multilateralism of the EU, and its forceful defence of a multilateral system of rules in the trade area are

praised by many, it is still not conceived as a leader with a clear free trade profile.

The perceived role as a protector of self-interests in the area of agriculture is the main reason for the accusations of having double standards, but has clearly spread also to other trade issues. Many of the initiatives, taken by the EU, mentioned above have met with suspicion: efforts to protect the environment are suspected to be a veiled attempt to create advantages for EU enterprises; efforts to introduce common rules for investments are suspected to favour companies from rich nations; the proposal to exclude a relatively large group of poor nations ("G-90") from requirements to decrease trade protection is by many (and not only by less developed country representatives) interpreted as an attempt to divide a united front of less developed nations. The EU is clearly and unequivocally perceived as *one* actor, with one voice and one policy. This provides the Union with the potential of being a strong leader. But the delicate balancing act between being an "advocate of free trade" and simultaneously a "defender of own interests" results, in the eyes of my respondents, in minimal credibility, which influences the capacity for leadership in a negative way.

To *summarise*, the EU is by non-EU actors perceived to play the role of a leader at the WTO – but it is a challenged, problematic and restricted leadership. Non-EU delegates stress the double messages sent by the Union and the ambiguities of EU policy. Its defence of its own interests in some areas, results in low credibility and in a suspicion that such motives are behind also initiatives in other areas. This is mirrored in a lack of both structural and intellectual leadership. The EU is typically not seen as a good example and does not stand for an unequivocal vision of the future.

5.3 The EU as a Leader – Comparing the Cases

Taken together, the three cases present a picture of the EU as a great power in the environment and trade areas, confronted with high expectations of taking the role as a leader and with ambitions also to play such a role – but also facing huge problems in qualifying for that role. The EU is a potential leader, but also a restricted leader. In the UNFF and within CITES, the difficulties in exerting leadership were primarily due to internal disunity, leading to inflexibility in negotiations. At the WTO, the problem is rather that the EU is perceived to play double roles, where the role as a defender of own interests collides with the role as a free trade-oriented leader, resulting in low perceived credibility. Nevertheless, it is mainly at the WTO that the EU is actually portrayed as a leader, albeit within restrictions.

Using the terms of leadership theory, there is above all a lack of intellectual leadership. Internal disaccord and role conflicts, respectively, result in an absence of visions for the future. The power position and "size" of the Union provides it with a potential for structural leadership, but this is not realized because of the lack of political vision. The EU does have followers; countries that look to the Union for cues on how to position themselves in concrete decisions. This is, however, not enough for leadership when guidance on where to go is not provided.

6 OTHER ROLES AND ROLE PERFORMANCE

Besides the potential leadership role, the EU is also associated with a number of other roles, more linked to the perceived substantive ambitions of the Union. In the three cases I have looked into, the EU was thus also at times portrayed as an exporter of norms, as a champion of the Third World, and as a positive force in world politics – but also as a stout defender of self-interests. In this section, I first analyse these roles, and detail their problematic and challenged nature, as described by my interviewees. I subsequently turn to EU role performance, in terms of how the EU's negotiation behaviour is characterised by my respondents. What characteristic traits are ascribed to the EU in international multilateral negotiations? In my presentation in this section I will not deal with the cases one by one, instead I focus on shared characteristics with, however, due regard to differences across the empirical field.

6.1 Disputed Roles

The role as a promoter of norms is most clearly visible at the WTO. The EU is basically, despite the persistence of flagrant instances of self-interested behaviour, perceived as a champion of free trade. It is also – and not only at the WTO context – seen as a principled multilateralist, and especially so in the light of a perceived US unilateral policy stance in the last few years. The EU was thus described as a "prime defender of the multilateral trading regime", taking over this role from the US. This does not prevent non-EU actors also from noting and emphasising a simultaneous trend of regionalisation in EU policy, as illustrated by the post-Cotonou negotiations between the EU and the ACP countries on regional free trade agreements. Turning to other examples of spreading norms, the efforts of the EU to introduce social and environmental issues onto the WTO agenda have been ambiguously received. While a few of my respondents – often from developed countries – praised these attempts in principle and saw them as emerging from genuine concerns, many more were sceptical, interpreting the EU initiatives as either an excuse for protectionism or as efforts to placate internal pressure groups. There was a broad consensus, however, that these initiatives just made it more difficult for the EU to win support, as they created a spirit of confrontation, and that they were in the end counterproductive, and even undermined the WTO system. Human rights and environmental issues do not, according to almost all of my respondents, belong in the WTO.

In the same vein, the perceived pretensions of the EU to be a champion of the Third World received very mixed reactions. Some interviewees repudi-

ated such aspirations as "pure propaganda" and as an attempt to turn attention away from EU protectionism in agriculture. More generally, many observers deemed the role of "spokesman for the less developed countries" as less than credible as long as the EU keeps protecting its agricultural self-interests. Others were more positive, however, and saw some EU initiatives (for example, the "Everything but Arms" initiative) as indicative of normative leadership in this area. The fact that the EU is a major donor of development assistance helps to give the EU a positive image, as witnessed by interviewees from developing countries, especially in the UNFF.

This ambivalence is also reflected in a differentiated evaluation of EU roles on a more general level. The Union is thus both regarded as a "positive force in the world" (in the WTO context), or as a "moderate force" (in the UNFF context), and as a patronising and colonial-minded great power actor (at the WTO and in CITES). There are, at least in the area of trade, clear links to the EU role as a defender of self-interests. We have already described how perceptions of double standards undermine EU leadership aspirations and how EU support to its own agriculture weakens its chance to be seen as a champion of less developed nations. The united characterisation of the EU as a defender of self-interests seems to be a major obstacle to other role aspirations. The EU becomes "the enemy to beat", rather than an example to follow. It should be added, however, that this is indeed mostly a WTO phenomenon: the role as a defender of self-interests was not clearly spelled out in either the UNFF or in CITES. Furthermore, some of the observers who emphasised the EU's self-interests as a problem simultaneously demonstrated an understanding attitude: playing roles both as a "free trader" and as a "defender of self-interests", they contended, is a difficult balancing act, and a problem shared by many WTO member states. Still, of course, the dominant position of the EU in trade negotiations makes its handling of this act particularly delicate.

6.2 Characteristics of Role Performance

In this section, the way in which the EU performs its roles is portrayed. What images exist among non-EU actors of the EU's mode of negotiation in the multilateral fora analysed in this research? To begin with, it is worth emphasising that the EU is indeed seen as *one* actor in the negotiations studied. The Union is generally perceived as "speaking with one voice". This is perhaps not so surprising at the WTO, where there is exclusive Community competence. The only voice that others hear is the Commission's (although many non-EU representatives are obviously well aware of the differences that do exist within the EU), regardless of the issue area.

The EU is also perceived as a unitary actor in CITES negotiations. It is described as a "monolithic bloc" and its negotiating behaviour is characterised as "orchestrated". The Union is thus ordinarily heard as speaking with one voice – although not always in controversial, politicised issues. All member states always vote in the same way (when they are in disagreement, all abstain from voting). The fact that the EU is represented by the Presidency in CITES does therefore not seem to play a role at all (and the Commission is in reality a major player in internal EU negotiations). The EU is also claimed to increasingly act as one in the UNFF. Here, however, the picture is a little bit more complicated, as the EU is at the same time described as "fragmented". The at times conflicting positions of member states emerge, and contacts are more frequently taken between outsiders and individual member states. The Commission representatives seem to have a less leading position than in the other two cases. However, the overall tendency is clearly that the EU is becoming more and more united.

In all cases, EU unity is claimed to make it a more effective actor, giving the Union more potential political clout. At the same time, however, unity sometimes carries a price: internal compromises may result in less-than-clear overall EU policy positions, resulting in outsiders perceiving EU policy as "directionless" or "ambiguous". This, however, is not entirely true at the WTO where the Commission is claimed to pursue clear, though not always consistent, policies.

The internal EU co-ordination process that clears the way for its common position is also widely linked to inflexibility in its external negotiation stance. Once the member states have reached a common position – often after long internal negotiations – it is extremely hard for others to change this consensus. When compromises are needed, as they often are in the final hours of negotiations, the EU is claimed to be "paralysed". Regardless of who is in charge (the Commission or the Presidency), this representative does not have the mandate to concede and new internal EU consultations are therefore required. This makes others look at the EU as an inflexible negotiator. In CITES, this was held to be particularly true of "public perception issues" with active European public opinion. Internal EU co-ordination is also claimed to result in long, drawn out EU decision-making processes. It is sometimes not so easy for the EU to take a decision, and others may have to wait until the internal EU process has been completed. A CITES respondent described how all other nations in a concrete negotiation situation patiently had to wait out a long interruption, while the EU tried to get its act together. In this way, the EU is seen at times as blocking negotiation processes, especially in the UNFF and in

CITES. The Union is in these cases generally perceived to have become increasingly inward-looking or even "unapproachable". It is, respondents reported, often difficult to arrange informal, unplanned meetings with EU representatives, as they are too busy co-ordinating.

The Union is also perceived as being "opaque". Its organisational structure is for many delegates – especially from small developing country representations – difficult to understand, and outsiders are left in the dark as to who is in the driving seat, why the EU holds a certain position and, at least in the UNFF and CITES, whom to approach. This corresponds to Bretherton and Vogler's findings (1999: 43) that the complexity of the EU was a persistent theme in the interviews they carried out with non-EU mission representatives in Brussels. The EU's agenda is often unclear to observers, leading to uncertainty about EU priorities. With regard to the organisational structure, some interviewees from Third World countries demonstrated huge knowledge gaps, primarily related to the role of the Commission. These respondents had, for example, problems in clarifying the distinction between the Presidency and the Commission.

Some of the delegates interviewed accused the EU of having a somewhat "arrogant" (in CITES and at the WTO) or "patronising" (at the WTO) attitude towards other nations. At the WTO, some observers were irritated by the tendency, as they saw it, of the EU to "preach" (not least in favour of its own model) and to tell others what lay in their best interests. In CITES, the EU has not hesitated to point out its position of power; EU representatives unnecessarily often tend to emphasise that "we are 25", to the irritation of parties that are well aware of this fact (the author personally experienced how the Presidency on several occasions started its remarks by stating that "The Presidency, speaking on behalf of the 25 members of the European Union, namely …", then enumerating all member states before continuing the speech).

At the WTO, the EU was considered to have been "undiplomatic" in some of its initiatives directed towards the less developed countries. The so called "G-90 proposal", suggesting special preferences for around 90 developing countries, was, for example, generally qualified as an attempt to "divide and rule" by promising some, but not all, developing countries better conditions. This was characterised as "not very helpful" and "not a brilliant proposal", one that created unnecessary animosity. On the other hand, many interviewees in all three cases also spoke in positive terms about the EU's mode of negotiation. Its approach was called "moderate", "conciliatory" and "accommodative". The EU was also consistently praised for being well prepared and well organised.

7 THE EU: A DIFFERENT GREAT POWER?

The distinctiveness of EU foreign policy is a hotly debated issue. While some scholars underline fundamental similarities between EU and nation-state foreign policies, a large number of observers tend to emphasise the uniqueness of the EU as an actor in international politics. The notions of the EU as a civilian or normative power bear witness to the latter argument (e.g. Duchêne 1972; Hill 1990; Manners 2002; Orbie 2003; Rosecrance 1998; K.Smith 2002; 2003). Explicit or implicit comparisons are often made with a traditional great power role, exemplified in today's world by the US. The EU, the argument goes, differs in important respects from its Atlantic partner. It is unique – to summarise this literature – in the set-up and character of its goals and values; in the configuration of political instruments used; and in its peculiar institutional construction (see Elgström and Smith 2006).

In the interviews carried out within this project, the respondents were asked to comment upon similarities and differences between the EU and the US. Power-wise, the similarities predominate: both are in all three contexts regarded as the most important participants. No major decisions can be made – my interviewees concur – without the consent of these two powers. Though other actors may also at times play important parts in decision-making, the EU and the US are the two "superpowers". While they are treated mainly as equal in influence at the WTO and the UNFF, there is in CITES a perceived difference. The US is widely seen as a major actor, but it only has one vote, while the EU represents 25. Therefore, the EU is the "absolutely most important actor" in this area. Furthermore, the US has under the Bush administration devoted radically fewer resources to the protection of endangered species, which emphasises the EU lead.

On the other hand, the fact that the EU consists of 25 member states with partly diverse opinions, makes it more difficult for the Union to act in a consistent manner. Internal compromises and trade-offs tend to send ambiguous signals to its environment, making it unclear in what direction the EU is heading. It is considered easier for the US to have a clear, distinct position, allowing it to sometimes take the driver's seat in negotiations. Moreover, interviewees in both CITES and the WTO contrast the perceived rigidity of the EU with a more flexible US. It is easier, it is claimed, for the US representatives to make quick decisions, while the EU is constrained by its internal co-ordination process (at the WTO, however, a few respondents argued the other way round: they saw the US as more tied by Congress than the Commission is by the member states). The US is perceived as being easier to approach than the ever-self-coordinating Union.

American delegates "use corridors and breaks" to make informal contacts to a much larger extent than their European counterparts. This difference in flexibility and openness might be attributed to the internal institutional characteristics of the EU.

In forestry negotiations, there is a tendency to contrast the "accommodative" approach of the EU with a more "confrontational" US. Quite a few of the respondents argued that the EU is "less contentious" and has a conciliatory negotiating style, while the US is "tougher" and more direct in putting pressure on other actors. It was suggested that the EU might be seen as a counterbalance, or a softer alternative, to the "American superpower". Also at the WTO, references were made to the EU "still being more civilised" than the US and being slightly more accommodative and compassionate, leading to better relations with less developed countries. The EU also seems to have a more multilateralist image than the US. To a certain extent, these assessments seem to be the result of spill over from the broader international context: respondents often referred to more well-known cases of alleged US unilateralism, like its attitudes towards the Kyoto agreement and the International Criminal Court. The distinctiveness of the EU, compared to the US, thus lies mainly in its overall approach and attitude to multilateral negotiations and less in its goals and values.

8 EXPLAINING ROLE PERFORMANCE

In explaining EU role performance, all respondents stressed factors that are internal to the Union itself. Most of the flaws and weaknesses associated with the EU in these negotiations (and in particular in the UNFF and in CITES), often resulting in weak leadership and unfulfilled influence potentials, are linked by the respondents to its "obsession" with internal co-ordination. More time is spent on "co-ordinating its own statements and negotiating with each other than on consulting its negotiating partners", in the words of one of my sources. Co-ordination is, it was suggested, time-consuming and produces the image of the EU as the inward-looking and unapproachable actor described above. It also creates rigidity, not least during the crucial final hours of end-negotiations. In CITES, two of my respondents independently told me stories about how they had seen delegates from all member states "flock together like a herd of sheep" around the Presidency, trying to find a common position in response to new developments.

The need for co-ordination is obviously linked to the peculiar construction of the Union, and in particular to the fact that the EU is not a unitary state actor. Another institutional feature that was perceived to create problems by some interviewees – in the UNFF and in CITES, but not at the WTO, where the Commission speaks for the EU – is the rotating Presidency. Here, however, the assessment varied. While a few observers maintained that the short Presidency periods result in inconsistency, others saw more of a difference in emphasis and style (the EU "is shifting complexion" with each new Presidency, in the words of one interviewee) than in substance, and emphasised the overall continuity of EU positions. "We know what to expect from different Presidencies", claimed one respondent, well versed with the peculiarities of domestic member state contexts. Some Presidencies are seen as more knowledgeable and as having a clearer presence and impact. Personalities seem to play a role here.

Furthermore, the complex division of competences between Presidency and Commission is by many (in the UNFF and especially in CITES) seen as difficult to comprehend. Many observers seem uncertain about the division of labour between the EU institutions and therefore also become unsure about whom to approach if they need to negotiate with Union representatives. In "technical" issues, and in issues where certain EU member states are known to have special interests, outsiders may (in these two cases, but not at the WTO) turn to these countries directly. One respondent in this context mentioned the possibility of "jurisdiction jumping", that is, to approach different EU actors at different occasions depending on tactical considerations.

The existence of internal divisions within the Union was underlined by quite a few respondents. In CITES, these firstly concern ideological variations across the member states, where in general the northern members are perceived to be more oriented towards conservation and the southern towards "use". Germany is cited as the member state most sceptical of using species, which might be in danger for commercial purposes (it wants to "ban everything", as one respondent put it), but it is also pointed out that France has been extremely susceptible to domestic opinion ("the Brigitte Bardot factor") in the case of a few highly visible species. In general, domestic factors – including pressure from active non-governmental organisations (NGOs) - are submitted to have a large impact upon EU policy, but only in the limited number of cases that do become politicised. Secondly, divisions within the Commission were noted: as species of fish are becoming increasingly relevant for CITES listing, the fishery General Directorate (DG) has become increasingly involved in EU decision making, not seldom leading to acrimonious debates between this DG and the environment DG, which is otherwise solely responsible for CITES negotiations and implementation within the Commission.

At the WTO, EU policy is in the view of my observers closely associated with notions of *inconsistency*. According to my respondents, many EU policy positions are the result of domestic politics and pressures, with their roots in some or all of the member states. Most of these pressures are seen as efforts to promote the special and limited interests of various organised groups in society. The most obvious example is of course agricultural policy ("French farmers"), but also EU initiatives in the areas of the environment and human rights are interpreted as emanating from domestic concerns, either emanating from norm entrepreneurs ("the green lobby") or from industrial interests ("veiled protectionism"). The problem is – in the eyes of my sources – that domestically driven policies produce a fragmented and inconsistent overall EU approach to international trade issues. Protectionism is living side by side with free trade promotion and efforts to spread environmental and human rights norms. In this sense, perceptions of ambiguous and amorphous EU role performance at the WTO are associated with the variety of interests found in the internal EU arena.

Leaving the internal characteristics of the EU as explanatory factors, there are also some external structural elements that influence perceived EU role performance. The international presence of the Union, in terms of economic influence, seems to have a huge impact on evaluations of the EU in all three negotiation contexts. The role of the EU as a major donor seems to be foremost in the minds of many developing country representatives.

Such structural traits contribute to the perceived importance of the EU. The expectations that arise from viewing the EU as a major power obviously impact on the assessment of EU behaviour. Also, the bureaucratic resources of the Union and the perceived expertise of its delegates influence external role conceptions and images. EU delegates are seen as well prepared, knowledgeable and highly organised.

In brief, effects of internal institutional structures temper negatively the positive preconditions of influence created by external structural features. While EU power resources give the Union potential leadership qualities, the multi-member state construction of the EU is perceived to lead to a mania for co-ordination and a lack of consistency that hamper the actual attainment of a leadership role and contribute to the image of the EU as an at times inflexible and irresolute actor in multilateral negotiations.

9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study offers an illustration of the complex interplay that gives rise to roles (cf. Aggestam 2004; 2006). An actor's (in this case the EU's) self-image, based on internal dialogue and on an emerging EU identity (Lucarelli 2006; Manners 2002), is confronted with expectations that are based on the EU's structural position in the world economy and on the structurally given position it has within the concrete field of negotiation, but also on outsiders' perceptions of internal EU characteristics. At the same time, various internal role conceptions confront each other (for example, the role as a promoter of human rights versus the role as an advocate of free trade versus the role as defender of industry interests at the WTO). Role performance is, in the end, an outcome of multi-level game negotiations, where roles are shaped in the processes of negotiations.

The findings of this study confirm that "the EU is both a key part of the multilateral structures of world politics, and a player of growing resource and influence in its own rights" (Hill and Smith 2005: 400), and are consistent with Bretherton and Vogler's (1999: 30) conclusion that the EU is considered a significant global force by third party representatives. External actors clearly picture the Union as an extremely important actor in the three negotiations studied here. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the EU may be perceived by outsiders as one single actor in its own right also when exclusive EC competence is not at hand. Not only at the WTO, where the EC has full authority, but also in the UNFF, where competences are shared, and in CITES, with exclusive competence but with a major role for the Presidency, the EU was seen as one actor, speaking with one voice. This result strengthens the conclusion by Groenleer and van Schaik (2005) that the EU may have a high degree of international actorness also when it is an "intergovernmental actor" represented by the Presidency. Whether the EU is seen as one actor or not is not so much dependent on the formal institutional set-up as on the capacity and will of member states and EU institutions to agree on common polices.

Another key finding is that in all three cases the EU is characterised as a great power, at least on par with the US. This may appear to contradict the conclusion by Hill and Smith (2005: 400) that despite EU advantages with regard to resources and political instruments "this is not to say that the EU rivals the US in power; on most indicators*, including the perceptions of third states*, it does not come close" (my emphasis). Still, the choice of empirical cases in this study may bias the results. International power is arguably divisible, and the EU may be considered a great power in some areas, but not in others. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the

EU is an economic superpower due to its share of world trade, the importance of its currency and its sheer size and wealth. But when it comes to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), EU power is much more disputed, and even more so in terms of military force (cf. Hill and Smith 2005: 402).

The deliberate EU attempts to increasingly speak with one voice, not least in order to have a greater impact on its environment, seem, however, simultaneously to give rise to some negative effects. Co-ordination becomes increasingly necessary, and co-ordination takes time and sometimes results in less-than-clear end compromises, which provide little guidance for other actors. In this way, aspirations of actorness may take place at the expense of leadership.

Another crucial determinant behind perceptions of the EU as a leader (or not) is whether the Union is seen as consistent or inconsistent. Nuttall (2005) makes a distinction between three types of consistency: horizontal, institutional and vertical. To this can be added a fourth category, chronological consistency. Horizontal consistency means that policies with external implications, pursued by different parts of the EU machinery, should be coherent with each other (for example, that the Common Agricultural Policy should be consistent with development policy). Institutional consistency refers to external relations policies being coherent, regardless of whether decisions are taken in a supranational or an intergovernmental context (for example, that decisions by the Commission and the High Representative are compatible). Vertical consistency addresses coherence among member states and between member state and EU policies. Chronological consistency, finally, refers to consistency over time.

In the cases discussed here, institutional consistency does not seem to pose any problem: the EU is pictured as one, monolithic actor across the board. Nor is chronological inconsistency mentioned as a problem. Rather, the overall impression – especially in the WTO context – is that the EU is seen as increasingly trying to get its act together in order to be able to present a coherent package of policies to the outside world. For example, the "Everything but Arms" initiative and recent efforts to change the CAP are seen as steps in the right direction. Vertical inconsistency, which in the literature is alluded to as the major type of consistency-problem in the CFSP (*nota bene*, the different positions taken during the Iraq crisis of 2002-03), does not really seem to be a problem either in my three cases, though splits between member states are noticed, and made use of, in particular in the UNFF. The major irritant is linked to horizontal consistency: according to my respondents, the diverse goals of the CAP, environmental

policy and human rights policy (reflecting pressures from various strong domestic constituencies) come to the fore and clash with the EU approach to trade negotiations, leading to role conflict and perceptions of an incoherent EU policy. The WTO case thus demonstrates that while inconsistency is not necessarily something negative, "it matters a great deal if the perception of inconsistency brings the Union into contempt and thereby impairs its effectiveness to act" (Nuttall 2005: 94). EU leadership aspirations are clearly damaged by perceived incoherence.

In general, perceived inconsistency provides an impetus for policy change (Goldmann 1988: 25; cf. Aggestam 2006). External pressure to bring policies into coherence is added to the inherent desire of human beings to maintain cognitive consistency. These types of processes are amply illustrated by the vociferous internal and external demands for changing the CAP. Still, it is "not uncommon to find what appears to be contradictory role-conceptions within a 'role-set'" (Aggestam 2006), especially if – as in the WTO case – there are strong political reasons to continue with what by others is claimed to be "schizophrenic policies".

To *summarise*, this study has spread new empirical light on a hitherto under-researched phenomenon: external perceptions of EU foreign policies. My research has arguably provided additional insights into the debate on EU actorness (since I concur with Bretherton and Vogler (1999: 1) in their assumption that actorness is constructed through an "interplay of internal political factors and the perceptions and expectations of outsiders"), and novel perspectives to ongoing discussions on "the EU as a great power" and "the EU as an international leader". It has also probed further into the existence and consequences of EU policy inconsistency. More research is, however, needed, in order to broaden the empirical focus by investigating outsiders' role conceptions also in other policy areas, such as security policy, thereby providing a more solid empirical ground for generalisations about EU roles and role performance. Another step forward would be to compare the EU's own role conceptions with external observers' expectations. Finally, more efforts should be devoted to clarifying the analytical links between role conceptions, role expectations and role performance, as well as the links between (in)consistency, performance and role change.

SAMMANFATTNING PÅ SVENSKA

Vad karakteriserar Europeiska unionen (EU) som utrikespolitisk aktör och vilket inflytande kan EU utöva på den internationella arenan? I och med att EU har börjat ses som en självständig aktör i världspolitiken har en livlig debatt uppstått om Unionens inflytande och om vad som utmärker dess utrikespolitiska agerande. Denna studie fokuserar på *EU i andras ögon:* syftet är att undersöka hur statliga aktörer utanför EU uppfattar Unionens roller, rollbeteende och inflytande i tre konkreta fall av multilaterala förhandlingar. Trots att åtskilliga observatörer betonat vikten av att undersöka vilka förväntningar och bilder av EU som finns hos aktörer utanför Unionen har mycket få empiriska studier gjorts inom området. Denna studie är ett försök åtgärda denna brist. Jag argumenterar för att det är viktigt att studera externa perceptioner eftersom a) de är en källa till kunskap om EU:s utrikespolitik, b) andras uppfattningar bidrar till att forma EU:s identitet och roller, samt c) andras förväntningar påverkar vilken effekt EU:s utrikespolitiska agerande får.

De tre empiriska fall som studeras är förhandlingar i FN:s Forum on Forestry (UNFF), i Konferensen om handel med utrotningshotade djur- och växtarter (CITES) och i Världshandelsorganisationen (WTO). Resultaten som presenteras bygger på 35 intervjuer med representanter för icke EU-länder, utförda under 2004–2005. I samtliga fall var ambitionen att täcka in delegater från alla världsdelar, representerande såväl i- som u-länder.

Genom att använda begrepp från rollteori analyserar jag hur dessa deltagare uppfattar EU:s maktposition, om och på vilket sätt de ser EU som en ledare och vilka andra roller och karakteristika de åsätter EU. Mina resultat ger bilden av EU som en ”begränsad ledare”. Den odiskutabla stormaktsroll som EU hävdas spela i alla tre fallen översätts inte nödvändigtvis till en ledarroll. Orsakerna varierar: i två fall är det intern oenighet som skapar hinder för intellektuellt ledarskap, i det tredje fallet är det uppfattade rollkonflikter som gör att Unionen inte ses som trovärdig i sin ledarskapsambition.

Vid sidan av den potentiella ledarrollen associeras EU också med ett antal andra roller som är mer knutna till Unionens uppfattade ambitioner. EU utmålas således ibland som en normexportör, som en talesman för Tredje världen och som en positiv kraft i världspolitiken – men också som en förvarare av egenintressen. När EU jämförs med USA dominerar likheterna: båda aktörerna uppfattas i alla de tre förhandlingarna som de allra mäktigaste aktörerna. Att EU består av 25 medlemmar anges göra det svårare för Unionen att agera konsekvent och enhetligt. Å andra sidan framförs att

EU ibland fungerar som ett mjukare alternativ till den amerikanska supermakten. EU:s särdrag ligger, enligt mina respondenter, framför allt i dess övergripande ansats och attityd till multilateralism.

Studiens resultat bekräftar att ”the EU is both a key part of the multilateral structures of world poltics, and a player of growing resource and influence in its own right” (Hill & Smith 2005:400) och ligger i linje med Bretherton och Voglers (1999:30) slutsats att EU av tredje parter uppfattas som en ”significant global force”. Externa aktörer uppmålar EU som en central aktör i samtliga de tre förhandlingar jag undersökt. Dessutom visar det sig att EU kan ses som en enhetlig aktör även när exklusiv EG-kompetens inte föreligger. Detta resultat stärker Groenleer och van Schaiks (2005) slutsats att EU har hög aktörskapacitet även som ”mellanstatlig” aktör, representerad av Ordförandeskapet. Huruvida EU ses som en enhetlig aktör beror inte så mycket på den formella ordningen som på medlemmarnas och EU-institutionernas vilja att komma överens om en gemensam linje.

EU:s avsiktliga försök att tala med en stämma, inte minst för att nå ökat inflytande på sin omgivning, kan dock ha vissa negativa effekter. Det blir allt nödvändigare med koordinering och koordinering tar tid och resulterar ibland i oklara kompromisser, som ger föga vägledning för andra aktörer. På så sätt kan strävan efter en gemensam ståndpunkt gå ut över möjligheten till ledarskap. En ytterligare avgörande faktor för om EU ska ses som en ledare eller ej är graden av uppfattad konsekvens och enhetlighet. I mina fall är huvudproblemet att olika externa policies inte uppfattas gå åt samma håll. Målen för jordbruks-, miljö- och utvecklingspolitik ses som delvis motstridiga, särskilt i WTO, vilket leder till rollkonflikt och anklagelser om inkonsekvens.

Denna studie sprider nytt ljus över ett hitintills relativt outforskat fenomen: hur EU:s utrikespolitik uppfattas av andra aktörer. Min forskning ger nya insikter i debatten om EU som internationell aktör och nya perspektiv på frågor om ”EU som stormakt” och ”EU som internationell ledare”. Den har också utforskat förekomst och konsekvenser av inkonsekvens och rollkonflikter inom EU. Mer forskning behövs dock, bl.a. för att vidga det empiriska fokuset också till andra politikområden, såsom säkerhetspolitik, för att bygga en mer solid grund för generaliseringar om EU:s roller och rollbeteende.

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