

# EUROPEAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS REVIEW



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##### **Professor Sven Biscop**

EGMONT, Royal Institute  
for International  
Relations (IRRI-KIIB)  
Rue de Namur 69  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 (0)2-213-40-23  
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#### *EDITORIAL OFFICE*

##### **Dr Saïd Hammamoun,**

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University of Montreal  
C.P. 6128, Succursale Centre-ville  
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Daniel C. Thomas, *Making EU Foreign Policy. National Preferences, European Norms and Common Policies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), ISBN 978-0-2302-8072-4 (hbk), GBP 60.00, 256 pp.

The book *Making EU Foreign Policy. National Preferences, European Norms and Common Policies* edited by Daniel C. Thomas is a remarkable contribution to the theoretical and empirical research on EU foreign policy decision-making. Based on a multi-year transnational collaborative research project, the volume offers insights by leading authors of EU foreign policy conferring strength to the book argument. Reading throughout the volume one gets a clear impression of the logical structure, the coherence running all along the chapters and the careful editorial work undertaken by the editor.

Aiming at understanding EU's role in world affairs and at developing an under-researched aspect of the EU's literature, the book research question reads as 'how do Member States overcome their divergent preferences and reach agreement on common policies regarding issues and actors beyond their collective external border?' (page 4). The editor proceeds to answer the question first proposing a general theory of EU decision-making, and then testing it by means of fourteen case-studies on EU foreign policy and external relations, according to whether unanimity or qualified majority as decision mechanism applies. Finally, contributing to the general purpose of the book to initiate a new and promising field of enquiry, three eminent scholars are called to provide final comments and suggest further venues for research on the matter, pointing out critical aspects emerged from their reading of the book.

In the introduction to this volume, Thomas proposes 'Normative Institutionalism' as a theory to explain EU foreign policy decision-making in a context characterized by thinly socialized actors with differences in initial policy

preferences (Chapter 1). In introducing Normative Institutionalism, he argues that Member States' behaviour is tempered by responsiveness to the 'substantive' and 'procedural' norms of the Union (an 'institutional setting') which encourage certain negotiation practices and legitimate certain outcomes and discourage others. The editor aims at testing the theory explanatory power comparing it with two competing theories of EU decision-making: intergovernmentalism (according to which decisions are subject to veto threats) and constructivism (according to which moral arguments cause policy preferences to converge). Each case-study evaluates the relative power of the competing theories, while a comparison within and between sub-cases allows assessing the impact of further factors on EU decision-making. The last part of the introduction deduces hypotheses from the three theories proposed (Chapter 2). According to Normative Institutionalism, explains Thomas, Member States value being seen as acting in accordance with EU normative and policy commitments, and value acting jointly. Thus, substantive norms (ends-oriented) and procedural norms (means-oriented) lead to two main hypotheses: entrapment – where 'policy-making behaviour (is) shaped by shared perceptions regarding which policy options are consistent or inconsistent with pre-existing EU norms and commitments' (p. 15); and cooperative bargaining, where the consensus norm and consultation reflex have transformed the process by which Member States deliberate, so that cooperative tactics prevail over competitive ones (pp. 18–19). Hypotheses deduced from competing theoretical explanations of EU decision-making envisage either a situation of 'deadlock or lowest common denominator' in the case of intergovernmentalism or 'policy learning or normative suasion' in the case of constructivist approaches.

The second part on case-studies proposes a variegated panorama of empirical research aimed at testing Normative Institutionalism. Richard Youngs' chapter (3) considers two separate analytical tests related to EU policy on Ukraine during and since the Orange Revolution: the moment of democratic breakthrough and the post transition period. The author states that Normative Institutionalism explains a lot of the cases under investigation, although exogenous factors played a role in EU bargaining and negotiation process. Daniel C. Thomas assesses EU policy on the International Criminal Court (ICC) by investigating ICC immunity for peace-keepers and bilateral agreement on ICC immunity (Chapter 4). He finds out that both intergovernmentalism and Normative Institutionalism exhibit explanatory power in these cases, and that the institutional setting within which negotiations are undertaken counts to a great extent for the outcome of the bargaining process. Jeffrey Lewis' chapter on EU policy on the Iraq war and its aftermath (5) shows that while a situation of discord over military action prevailed in the run up to the conflict because of the role of veto-player actors, both normative entrapment and cooperative bargaining are observable in the

reconstruction assistance to Iraq. Chapter 6 by Simon Duke analyses the case of EU decision-making on operation Artemis, pointing out the role of normative and policy commitments and highlighting the function of specific factors, such as the contribution of France to the operation as important enabling and permissive condition for decision. Frank Schimmelfennig considers EU membership negotiations with Turkey with a specific reference to decisions advancing negotiations (1999 and 2004–2005) and inhibiting progress toward membership (1997 and 2006) (Chapter 7). The author remarks how initial intergovernmentalist perspectives created the conditions for entrapment to become effective (although conditioned) in the future. He also points out the paramount role of domestic change in softening positions against membership. Chapter 8 by Ole Elgström investigates first the agreement on an EU negotiation mandate on Economic Partnership Agreements in 2002 and then the agreement on the Union's final negotiation offer in 2007. He highlights the existence and relevance of a competitive normative framework for the decision-making process, especially observable in the domestic arena. Finally, chapter 9 by John Vogler analyses a key issue in EU aspiration as a global actor: global climate change. The author focuses on two periods of the regime creation: EU's response to the Berlin mandate between 1995 and 1997 and the search for a post-2012 regime from 2005. Although the author stresses that normative and policy commitments are significant in EU's policy on climate change, the author also emphasizes the role played by favourable circumstances in the bargaining game, such as the willingness of specific countries to share a higher percentage of emissions reduction.

Part three of this book is dedicated to general conclusions. Thomas and Schimmelfennig present the main findings of the book, showing them also by means of tables (pp. 178, 181). They maintain that Normative Institutionalism proves to be a robust theory of EU decision-making on foreign policy and external relations; in fact, nine out of fourteen case-studies match one of the two hypotheses envisaged by the theory. While intergovernmentalism is said to exhibit a certain explicatory power, normative suasion or policy learning hypotheses found place in none of the cases investigated in the book, although the authors concede that social processes build up over time. In the table at page 181, they also specify under which conditions normative entrapment is more likely to unfold, conferring a special role to 'determinacy' (no doubt about which norm applies) and 'relevance' (external conditions are consistent with the assumptions that underlay the existing EU norm or policy commitment, page 17). Forum (deliberation within EU forums) and (no) publicity (in camera deliberation) clearly emerge as essential in the cooperative bargaining hypothesis. Extremely helpful to the general aim of the book are the concluding contributions by Risse (Chapter 11), Menon (Chapter 12) and Smith (Chapter 13), aimed at

commentating and suggesting avenues for the improvement of the theoretical scheme proposed by the editor. A shared opinion is the unconvincing difference between Normative Institutionalism and other 'institutionalisms' in the literature. Also, how 'normative' effectively is and with which effects Normative Institutionalism plays out is a common concern, together with the criteria guiding case-studies selection. Leaning towards preferred theoretical orientations, the authors offer specific recommendations to improve further research on the matter: thus, Thomas Risse advises for a much more serious consideration of sociological institutionalism, constructivism and mutual constitutiveness of agent and structure. Entrapment works, explains Risse, because norms and rules define what it means to be a member of the EU. Conversely, Menon's main suggestion is for an increased attention to the role of power, given that consensus may often mask the deployment of power to secure agreement. Finally, Smith points to what seems to be an overstatement of 'entrapment' as an hypothesis in the volume, given the presence of multiple causal factors at work and suggests logical steps to build a clearer and more robust typology of norms and a clearer understanding of normatively inspired outcomes, so as to derive an active normative causality process at play.

Overall, the book is an admirable attempt at advancing theoretical research on EU decision-making on foreign policy and external relations and, notwithstanding the problematic aspects appropriately evidenced by leading commentators, it emerges as one of the most relevant works of recent years on the matter deserving utmost attention.

*Dr Michela Ceccorulli  
Research Fellow  
University of Bologna, Italy*

## *AIMS*

The aim of the *Review* is to consider the external posture of the European Union in its relations with the rest of the world. Therefore the *Review* will focus on the political, legal and economic aspects of the Union's external relations. The *Review* will function as an interdisciplinary medium for the understanding and analysis of foreign affairs issues which are of relevance to the European Union and its Member States on the one hand and its international partners on the other. The *Review* will aim at meeting the needs of both the academic and the practitioner. In doing so the *Review* will provide a public forum for the discussion and development of European external policy interests and strategies, addressing issues from the points of view of political science and policy-making, law or economics. These issues should be discussed by authors drawn from around the world while maintaining a European focus.

## *EDITORIAL POLICY*

The editors will consider for publication unsolicited manuscripts in English as well as commissioned articles. Authors should ensure that their contributions will be apparent also to readers outside their specific expertise. Articles may deal with general policy questions as well as with more specialized topics. Articles will be subjected to a review procedure, and manuscripts will be edited, if necessary, to improve the effectiveness of communication. It is intended to establish and maintain a high standard in order to attain international recognition.

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