BOOK REVIEW

The European Union's Superpower Revisited*

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(Hill, Christopher; Smith, Michael; and Vanhoonacker, Sophie (Eds.), *International Relations and the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

'International Relations and the European Union', edited by Christopher Hill, Michael Smith and Sophie Vanhoonacker, is the 3rd edition of a book which is part of 'The New European Union Series', by the Oxford University Press. The book is a collection of 20 articles by several authors engaged in research on the European Union (EU), and highlights the importance of creating a link between the internal integration and the policymaking process of the EU, and the development of its international relations[1] in a broader sense. It aims to understand, first and foremost, how the EU produces international action, followed by how the international dimension comes into its policymaking and, in so doing, help identify and enlighten the key elements leading to change in the Union's international stance.

Its main objective is to contribute to the process of opening European Studies to a desired overlap with the fields of Political Science and International Relations. According to Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker (2017), the small group of experts on the EU's external relations did not traditionally use to reach out to wider fields of knowledge, but to focus rather on the institutions of European foreign policymaking and/or the relevance of external relations regarding the integration process. Gradually, these experts started to "emerge from the European Studies fortress" (HILL at al., 2017, p. xiv) in order to engage in dialogue with mainstream Political Science and International Relations.

[1]For purposes of clarification, the term 'international relations' refers to the EU's international affairs. The term 'International Relations' refers to the field of study.

In an attempt to follow this trend, the book tries to conceptualize European issues in terms dear to the above-mentioned areas of knowledge. But how has this been done in practice? The editors invited the authors to use International Relations' theories and show how they can be potentially relevant to understanding Europe's reality.

In this sense, the collection of articles widens the agent-centered perspective of the 'European Union as a global player' to a more systemic view, interested in 'international relations and the EU'. Because of its advanced theoretical discussions and refined empirical material, this is a research-led text, intended for researchers and postgraduate students with previous knowledge about the inner workings of the Union and its intricacies.

The book has 20 chapters distributed in four parts. The first one is composed of four chapters (01 to 04), and is dedicated to presenting the theoretical and empirical parameters that will guide the discussions forming the core of the book. The editors, who are also co-authors of the first chapter, chose to adopt what they call 'methodological pluralism', arguing that there is no one single perspective that explains the European phenomenon, but rather a combination of three complementary perspectives on the EU and its international relations.

These perspectives are defined in terms of three analytical frameworks that form the spine of the book: 01. the EU as a subsystem of international relations, comprising the way in which the EU deals with its internal foreign relations and its capability of generating collective action; 02. the EU as part of broader international relations processes through the creation of legal, institutional and political mechanisms which enable its member states (MS) to deal with external challenges; and finally, 03. the EU as a major power, questioning the extent to which it impacts on its external environment, the way it is perceived by other actors when doing so, and what position it occupies in the international hierarchy of power. The methodological and conceptual choice made by Hill, Smith and Vanhoonacker (2017) is similar to the pluralistic approach designed by Andrew Hurrel (2007) in 'On Global Order', who identified the coexistence of three frameworks to analyze today's global political order.

In the second chapter, Simon Duke and Sophie Vanhoonacker (2017) tackle the first framework and claim that before encompassing an intelligible subsystem, the EU comprises three subsystems: 01. a larger setting of policies that now belong to the supranational level, 02. policies regarding the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and 03. the national foreign policies of its member states, which overlap several degrees with other areas. The debate proposed by the authors revolves around whether

and to what extent the EU, as a subsystem of IR, is capable of molding international relations. The constant change in the international system and the challenges to the liberal and democratic principles of the EU provoke, and at the same time, sustain its definition as a subsystem.

In chapter three, Geoffrey Edwards (2017) analyzes the European Union and its roles in international relations, aiming to understand how it engages with the global arena's main processes. The research focuses on the patterns of relationships and interactions in which Europe has been active, mainly within the continent itself, but also in its former colonies in Africa, Asia, and throughout the Atlantic. Moreover, it also analyzes the centers of lingering tensions regarding European foreign engagement, elements that involve its commitment to processes of cooperation and international conflict amongst collective and national European positions. The latter, in particular, are seen by the author as a greater source of what he labels as 'schizophrenia' in MS European politics: its member states constantly pressure the EU and its institutions to pursue their own national aspirations, thus undermining intentions of collective action, which results in incrementalism and inconsistency.

The last framework is presented in the fourth chapter, written by Filippo Andreatta and Lorenzo Zambernardi (2017). The authors go beyond the Weberian concept of power, which involves threat and the coercive use of force, and work the concept under two prisms: power to produce and power to integrate. They argue that there is a long way ahead before the EU establishes itself as a power, although some progress has been made. On the one hand, the MS exert a significant economic and military power; on the other hand, Europe has been associated with ideas of stagnation and conflict, especially after successive crises and Brexit. Andreatta and Zambernardi (2017) also highlight two challenges to the EU's international coherence, in case it wishes to consolidate itself as a power in international relations: 01. the international environment, which has radically changed since the end of the Cold War; and 02. the Union's absence of democratic accountability. They believe that only full democratic legitimacy will empower the EU with sufficient resources to authorize the use of armed forces, for example. The discussion put forward by the authors resembles the classical academic debate about an alleged democratic deficit that characterizes the decision making in the European Union, discussed by names such as Andrew Moravcsik (2002), Giandomenico Majone (1998), Andreas Føllesdal (2014), Andreas Føllesdal and Simon Hix(2006) and Simon Hix (2014).

The second part of the book, composed of five chapters (05 to 09), scrutinizes the nature of the EU's policymaking in international relations and focuses, inevitably,

mostly on its internal institutions and characteristics, without forgetting, however, to connect them to the external context. Sophie Vanhoonacker and Karolina Pomorska (2017), in chapter five, analyze the institutional basis of the EU's international role, focusing not only on the constitutional entities and the Treaties' policymaking rules, but also on the political practices and ways of informal interaction. Regarding the international relations of the Union, the authors claim that these go beyond the interaction between states and their external partners. Supranational actors (e.g. Commission, Parliament and Court of Justice) also play a major role and impact the political debate. They conclude by saying that the institutional framework of the EU's international relations is complex, since it reflects an array of distinct histories and pathways, and that fully understanding this scenario is a sine qua non condition for an accurate comprehension of the European reality.

Returning to the question of coherence in the EU's international relations, Carmen Gebhard (2017) (chapter six) advocates the need to unite the various parts that compose the external dimension of the Union, thereby increasing its strategic convergence and ensuring its procedural efficiency. This issue, according to Gebhard (2017), is exacerbated by the multilevel nature of the integration. Defying the slogan of 'Europe as a single voice', the EU did not build an institutional framework capable of engendering a coherent external action for itself. The MS chose to deal with the international system in a way that does not produce synergy between them and the supranational arena, among the Union's wide range of institutions and its various domains. In this sense, incoherence - although significant - would not be Europe's biggest problem; this would be the member states' attempt to retain sovereignty in several issue areas. In spite of all that, Gebhard (2017) contends that the EU has shown itself able to deliver solutions despite its institutional flaws and deficient policies.

The seventh chapter, written by Reuben Wong (2017), carries on the discussion concerning the member states' role in the process of Europeanization of the EU's foreign policy. Wong describes it as the repeated interactions between states and European institutions in the process of creating and changing policies. He indicates that the context of internal and external crises led to a contrary trend of renationalization. Nonetheless, regarding the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the process of Europeanization can be seen in the intense coordination of foreign policy under pressure for convergence. Wong points out that, wherever there is convergence, the common interest will also rise, which does not imply the suppression of national identities and preferences.

The very relevant topic of implementation is presented by Michael Smith (2017) in the eighth chapter. The author explains that the Union's ability to implement common policies varies considerably among its instruments, which can be diplomatic or economic, military or civilian. These instruments are developed in an ad hoc manner for each area of performance, involving supranational processes and intergovernmental decision making. Smith claims that the EU's complex dynamics make it difficult to measure its real capacity as an independent international actor and its power of policy implementation. Despite the advances, the EU is still a treaty-based organization projected to promote international cooperation 'via' soft power and subject to the domestic political imperatives of its member states.

Christopher Lord (2017) brings back, in chapter nine, the debate about the international role of the EU as a legitimate and democratic actor, understanding legitimacy as the justifiable use of political power. Lord (2017) argues that the Union does not lack legitimacy, since this feature can only exist where there is a discharge of political power; this power, in turn, is absent in the EU's external scope. The author claims that understanding this delicate question may help to comprehend what kind of international actor the European Union is and what kind it could, de facto, become.

The third part of the book, composed of nine chapters (10 to 18), is devoted to an analysis of how EU policies are pursued in the international arena and what their consequences are. Sophie Meunier and Kalypso Nicolaïdis (2017) suggest that the European Union not only derives power from trade, which is its 'raison d'être', but uses it as a backbone in the exercise of its normative power. According to them, as one of the three biggest trade actors in the world (along with the United States and China), the EU aims to ensure its central role in the multilateral system of trade with the ultimate goal of promoting its own interest. In the last decade, responding to a wide range of challenges, the EU changed its focus in order to also encompass more bilateral and regional trade policies. In this sense, the Union has tried to become a significant foreign policy actor, enhancing its power 'on' trade so as to establish itself as a power 'through' trade.

Amy Verdun (2017) (chapter 11) presents the discussion about the European Union in terms of the processes of the global political economy. She believes that the EU is not an integrated economic actor, since it lacks legitimacy and the ability to pursue a truly coherent European interest. Furthermore, the Union is also far from being a dominant force due to its weakness as a political actor and to its governance structure which, sometimes, works as an obstacle to a clear and strong action in the global settings of IR. According to Verdun (2017), in periods like the 2010 Eurozone crisis, the absence

of an economic supranational government led to mal-administration of its effects. The solution, therefore, would be the federalization of the Union or the acceptance that its deliberation process is slow.

Chapter 12 brings the distinguished contribution of John Vogler (2017) regarding the EU's environmental, energy and climate change policies. Vogler (2017) considers that the Union was able to exert leadership in the global environmental governance and in the development of a climate change regime. However, it still faces the challenge of aligning, effectively, the energy and climate policies both internally and externally. The author explains that the EU did not develop an effective common energy policy and walked into international negotiations without a solid internal basis. This happened, to a great extent, due to the Union's immense difficulty in conciliating the needs of its member states, the Commission and the Parliament. Given that it is an issue of shared competence between the Union and the States, these policies lack continuity and, according to Vogler (2017), will have their weight and significance reduced in the light of Brexit, since the United Kingdom - along with Germany - used to take the leadership in international environmental and energy negotiations.

Maurizio Carbone's article (2017) (chapter 13) sheds light on the debate about the relation between the European Union and international development. He points out that, initially, the EU used development policies as part of a broader and more ambitious external agenda, aiming to establish itself as an influential global actor. Carbone's chapter (2017) portrays the historical evolution of the EU's development policies in the past decades and emphasizes the Union's challenge in the face of the transformation in the 'rationale' of foreign aid, which went from being a poverty reduction instrument to an empowering tool of financial resources - a notion of aid 'beyond aid'. Development policies could be seen as a representation of what Helen Sjursen (in chapter 19, 2017) calls a 'principled foreign policy', as these policies link themselves to broader and wider considerations about the EU's role in the international arena. However, it could also be pointed out, it is quite intriguing that despite the Union's attempts to move away from postcolonial accusations when it comes to international aid, a growing group of emerging powers have been contesting the EU's evolving development paradigm, which they have never contributed to forge.

The book's 14th chapter, written by Karen Smith (2017), addresses the process of enlargement, defined by Ulrich Sedelmeier (2015) as the European Union's biggest foreign policy instrument. According to Smith (2017), through its enlargement the EU hoped to consolidate economic and democratic reforms in the post-communist coun-

tries, using conditionalities to encourage these reforms. The enlargement 'momentum' elapsed and affected the EU as a subsystem of international relations and the definition of the EU as a power. At the same time that it increased the Union's weight and expanded its foreign interests, the enlargement complicated its policymaking process, as it included new members that had distinct political traditions. Smith (2017) believes that the challenge to the EU as a subsystem is clear and needs to be considered by the Eurocrats. Despite being a very informative chapter about a subject of the utmost importance for the EU, it fails to dig deep enough into the tensions on how to reconcile the EU's human rights approach with any eventual enlargements, including with countries such as Turkey.

Jolyon Howorth (2017), who wrote the 15th chapter, deals with the European defense and security policies which, according to him, experience a constant tension: how to reconcile the collective interest of the EU in the international arena and the member states' specific interests, especially those of the bigger states. Howorth (2017) asks why the Union was willing to create new international posts, through the Treaty of Lisbon, if its own member states continue to exert their sovereignty in security and defense issues. The author also states that the most adequate instruments to deal with new international challenges are 'soft' ones, and include, among others, multilateral bargaining, institutional capacity building and humanitarian aid. The Union's real success is dependent on the understanding, by its members, that it is necessary to align their own interests to the European interest as a whole.

The external dimension of the EU's internal security is addressed by Sarah Wolff (chapter 16, 2017), who argues that the Union's influence in this area is constrained by normative, national, institutional, political and legal challenges. The Justice and Home Affairs policies have evolved into a dynamic and complex area and their external success relies on the Union's internal development and its response to new challenges. According to Wolff (2017), throughout the integration process the EU gained competence to regulate in matters of police cooperation, immigration policies and border control. However, there is no discursive consensus regarding a deeper external and internal integration because its actions lack coherence and consistency. The author maintains that the EU should disengage from a Eurocentric political agenda and pay close attention to other countries and transnational stakeholders, such as migrants and refugees.

The last two chapters of Part III are devoted to an analysis of the European Union's relations with its most important strategic partners. Michael Smith and Rebeca Steffenson (chapter 17, 2017) point out to an ambivalence in the relation between the

European Union and the United States: the US is seen, at the same time, as a key partner and an international leader and as a potential rival. This competitive cooperation, a term coined by the authors, was further enhanced by Donald Trump's election, whose 'America First' rhetoric, if fully implemented, could affect the country's relations with the EU. Stephan Keukeleire and Tom de Bruyn (chapter 18, 2017) tackle the EU's relations with the BRICS and other emergent actors. They believe that the EU does not possess an effective strategy to deal with emerging powers and the concomitant decline in its own weight in the current international relations. Keukeleire and de Bruyn (2017) extend this impasse to the International Relations' academia which, according to them, needs to overcome its Eurocentric and Western perspectives regarding foreign policy and global governance.

The fourth and last part of the book is composed of two overview chapters. Helen Sjursen (2017) takes over the 19th chapter about the EU's foreign policy principles – an issue addressed by Andrew Linklater (2005, 2011) in the previous two editions. Sjursen (2017) defies the vision of the EU as a distinct actor of international relations and suggests that the Union's foreign policy aims to ensure that the current international system is sustained and improved. She identifies three principles subjacent to the EU's foreign action which, according to her, is one of the world's biggest normative powers: sovereignty, human rights and common good. The most noteworthy of them is sovereignty, but all three are identifiable in the Union's declarations, although they also bring to light a tangible tension between the European theory and practice.

The twentieth and last chapter of the collection is written by the book's editors. They highlight, once again, the importance of including the EU in the academic study of International Relations and not confining the subject to the scope of European Studies. Christopher Hill, Michael Smith and Sophie Vanhoonacker (2017) conclude that the European Union has significant powers and a prominent presence in the international system, despite not being labeled as a superpower. They argue that the EU is not a subsystem subordinated to Western capitalism, suggesting that the Union's decision-making process is not manipulated by its biggest strategic partner, the United States. This last chapter also stresses the impossibility of explaining or understanding the European Union, in general, and its international relations, in particular, through the lens of a single theory. The authors' tripartite model would be a way of bridging the gap between Europe's ongoing multilevel governance and diplomacy.

The book constitutes an important contribution because it has an innovative way of approaching age-long problems. The majority of handbooks dedicated to Euro-

pean themes usually have long theoretical chapters that serve as a basis for the empirical analyses in the rest of the book. In 'International Relations and the European Union' the authors have innovated by including theoretical insights throughout the whole piece, showing how important they are in order to understand such a complex reality. The editors' pluralistic approach can be identified and understood in all 20 chapters of the book.

This edition includes the insights of Professor Sophie Vanhoonacker, from the University of Maastricht, who was not part of the team in previous editions. She was invited to add new perspectives and expertise to the book, thus helping the series to continue evolving. With this aim in mind, the book has also counted on the unique contributions of Simon Duke, Lorenzo Zambernadi, Sarah Wolff and Helene Sjursen. Despite covering a wide range of topics regarding the EU, it must be pointed out that the book has overlooked some sensitive and controversial issues. The most noticeable one is the immigration crisis faced by the EU, which is among Europe's biggest challenges, and is only briefly referred to in chapter 16, alongside other Justice and Home Affairs' problems. In spite of that, the book fulfills its promise of pairing European Studies and the international relations of the EU in a practical and pragmatic way, thus becoming a valid tool for those interested in the European Union.

'International Relations and the European Union' constitutes an important and useful educational instrument for those who dedicate themselves to understanding the European reality, as it links robust theoretical analysis and an impressive number of empirical examples. Even faced with a context of multiple crises and challenges that haunt the European Union, its presence in the global international relations cannot and 'should not' be underestimated. The work, besides being informative, also reflects the empirical importance and the analytic challenge of dealing with what constitutes a unique kind of international 'corpus' and one of the world's greatest integration and cooperation initiatives.

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