

# How to Assess the European Union's Influence in International Affairs: Addressing a Major Conceptual Challenge for EU Foreign Policy Analysis

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## Abstract

In the discipline of European Union foreign policy analysis, quite a number of debates have focussed on determining what type of actor the EU is in international affairs (e.g. a normative power). While intellectually stimulating, these debates have regularly been held at too high a level of aggregation. Breaking the question about the EU's clout in international affairs down to the micro-level, this contribution takes up a conceptual and methodological challenge that is currently unaddressed in the discipline: developing a method suited for studying the EU's concrete foreign policy activities and their effects so as to assess its actual influence on global politics. Importing insights on the concept of influence from public policy analysis, it designs an analytical framework that allows for statements about whether, how, to what extent and - ultimately - under what conditions the EU exerts influence in one important arena of international affairs, namely international regimes.

## Keywords

European Union foreign policy; Influence analysis; International regime

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ORIGINALLY A PREDOMINANTLY INWARD-LOOKING REGIONAL INTEGRATION project, the European Union (EU) has gradually developed an impressive array of external activities. This evolution becomes strikingly apparent if a broad notion of EU foreign policy takes precedence over a definition solely in terms of its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). From this perspective, the EU has come to substitute or actively supplement the foreign policies of the member states, not only in the domain of external trade, where it enjoys exclusive competences, but also in such areas as development, human rights or environmental policy, where it shares competences with its members (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008).

This remarkable development has not gone unnoticed, since research activity on the broader theme of "the EU in the world" is booming (Jørgensen 2007). To date, the EU foreign policy analysis literature has, however, remained in many ways, incoherent, "pre-theoretical", and inconclusive (Øhrgaard 2004: 42; Carlsnaes 2007). This observation appears to be particularly accurate when considering the not so banal question of what

impact the external activities of this new foreign policy actor actually yield on the global stage. Very little effort has been spent on thinking about methods for empirically assessing the EU's external effectiveness and efficiency in international politics (Ginsberg 2001; Jørgensen 2007). The absence of sound conceptual and methodological reasoning about the Union's impact in international affairs stands in stark contrast to the plentiful scholarly attempts at identifying what kind of power the EU can be or already is in the global arena. The desire of giving the Union some kind of a label has found its expression, inter alia, in the revival of the classical controversy about whether the EU is (or should be) a civilian or a military power (Duchêne 1972; Bull 1982; Orbie 2008), and in the emergence of concepts such as "normative power Europe" (Manners 2002) or "European superpower" (McCormick 2007). A major problem common to these power debates is the high level of aggregation at which they are held. Since affirmations about the EU being this or that type of power regularly tend to be insufficiently grounded in empirical findings, much of the Union's actual external activities is left unexamined.

In a highly inspirational speech about the challenges contemporary EU foreign policy analysis is facing, Karen Smith acuminates this critical observation and formulates a desideratum (2007: 13): "Debates about whether the EU is or is not a civilian power, a normative power, a superpower and so on, are not really leading us anywhere right now. (...) We should instead engage in a debate about what the EU does and why it does it and with what effect, rather than what it is." Consequently, she proposes that:

[m]uch more research needs to be done on the EU's influence in the wider world, and particularly on the EU's impact on the international system (...) Too often, we lapse into assertions that the EU has either considerable or little influence, without the backing of clear, substantial evidence for such influence. 'Proving' the EU has influence (or not, and what sort and why) requires considerable empirical research (...) - but unless we try to get to the bottom of this, we are left with unsubstantiated assertions about the EU's place/role/influence" - and, one needs to add, "power" - in the world (Smith 2007: 12-13).

This article engages in such an endeavour by proposing a method designed to assess the EU's *influence* in international affairs. More precisely, it strives to develop a comprehensive analytical framework that allows for carrying out the "extensive empirical research" thought necessary by Smith in order to ultimately answer the questions of whether (did the EU exert influence?), how (by which foreign policy tools did it exert influence?) and why (under which conditions did it exert influence?) the EU influences global politics. Conducting such rich empirical research is a very time-consuming task, which may be one of the reasons why researchers have, so far, shied away from it. What may have been even more discouraging, however, is the noticeable absence of readily available conceptual and methodological bases for influence analysis. Taking up the major challenge of assessing EU influence in international affairs requires, first and foremost, such basic operations as concept development (what is influence?) and the design of an appropriate method. Another key reason for why this sort of analysis has to-date not been carried out may lie in the way research results are currently predominantly published: explaining the development of a method, virtually from scratch, *and* applying it to a case is hardly manageable within the length constraints of a journal contribution, certainly if there is to be a balance between methodological and empirical sections. For that reason, the present contribution deliberately focuses on developing, step by step, one possible way of assessing EU influence. In doing so, it strives to stimulate a debate on this methodological challenge. To compensate for the absence of detailed empirical application of the

proposed method, examples from the field of EU engagement in the United Nations (UN) climate change regime illustrate how the method could be employed.<sup>1</sup>

Designing an analytical framework will require multiple choices to reduce the complexity of the social instances analysed. One such choice pertains to the global arena. Contemporary global politics takes innumerable forms, ranging from loose bilateral coordination over more institutionalised multilateral regimes to genuine global institutions. The contribution focuses on international regimes, defined here, in short, as a form of “collective self-regulation by states” (plus, increasingly, non-state actors) on issues that transcend national boundaries (Mayer *et al.* 1993: 402). The EU is involved in a range of regimes, *inter alia* in such areas as trade, security, development, and environment.

The design of the influence analysis method proceeds in several steps. Firstly, the concept of influence itself is specified through a cross-fertilization of concepts and methods designed by public policy analysts with regard to interest group influence in national, European and global contexts (Huberts and Kleinnijenhuis 1994; Dür 2008; Dür and de Bièvre 2007; Betsill and Corell 2007; Arts and Verschuren 1999) and concepts used in (EU) foreign policy analysis and International Relations (IR). In linking the findings of these research areas, the logic that foreign policy is the exercise of influence in international relations is thought all the way through (Hudson and Vore 1995: 215). Secondly, these considerations will be embedded into a case study design relying on process-tracing and reputational analysis as primary research methods. To reduce the complexity of the analysis, the conceptual foundations will then be concretely applied to the potential influence-wielder (the EU) and its target (an international regime). In a further step, variables will be isolated that can eventually be used to explain EU influence on an international regime. All components will be recomposed to design a five-step analytical framework whose usability is illustrated with the help of empirical examples. The virtues and limits of the framework will be discussed in a brief conclusion.

## The concept of influence and its analysis

Influence represents one of the core concepts of political science.<sup>2</sup> Despite its non-negligible centrality to their discipline, policy analysts regularly lament the “absence of standard terminology” (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003: 12): substantial definitions of the concept are still frequently avoided (Betsil and Corell 2007: 7; Michalowitz 2007).

Without standardised terminology, influence demands thorough concept formation. According to Goertz, the social sciences mostly deal with complex, “three-level concepts” (2006: 6). Initially, a concept needs to be defined at the “basic level”, delimiting it from neighbouring concepts (Goertz 2006: 30-35). This is usually done by way of sampling and typologising existing definitions (Gerring and Barresi 2003: 205). At the “secondary level”, the “preliminary idea (...) formed (...) at the basic level” has to be expanded via the inclusion of ontological and causal components, making for the “constitutive dimensions” of the concept (Goertz 2006: 6, 35-39). Regularly, this is achieved through the identification of the necessary and sufficient conditions a concept comprises. At a third “operationalisation level”, the concept needs to be dissected further into sub-categories and embedded into methodological considerations to allow for data collection and categorization (Goertz 2006: 39-46). Following this reasoning, influence will now

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously, limiting the contribution to a methodological discussion without sufficiently demonstrating how this method has been applied to a case can easily expose the piece to criticism. Acknowledging this limitation of present account, the author considers this type of criticism as desirable, since it marks the beginning of a debate on a topic considered, from both an academic and a policy-making viewpoint, highly significant.

<sup>2</sup> Some go even as far as claiming that “all politics is the exercise of influence” (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003: 34).

successively be defined, delimited and operationalised for usage in a foreign policy analysis context.

### *Defining and systematising the concept of influence in a foreign policy analysis context*

The concept of influence has originally, but not exclusively, been employed by public policy analysts. Typical definitions see influence as an interaction between an influence-wielder and an influence target, during which both change into the same direction (Braam 1975, see Huberts 1994), as "control over outcomes" (Dür and de Bièvre 2007), as "mind change" of the influenced (Michalowitz 2007), or as "one actor intentionally communicat[ing] to another so as to alter the latter's behaviour from what would have occurred otherwise" (Betsill and Correll 2007: 24). Employing such short-hand formulas, these definitions often remain basic, typically focussing on specific elements of what appears to be a much more complex causal relationship. Further, they often come quite close to the classical definition of relational power as "getting another actor to do what it would otherwise not do" (Dahl 1957).

This amalgamation of influence and power can equally be found back in early attempts to conceptualize influence in the discipline of International Relations (see Betsill and Correll 2007: 21-22). Two scientific concepts (ideally) do not refer to the same social phenomena, though, and a clear distinction between power and influence can indeed be made. Without going into the details of the vast literature on this concept (see Baldwin 2002), power has commonly been defined as "the *ability* to influence the behaviour of others in a manner not of their choosing" (Heywood 2000: 35, emphasis added; Handy 1993; for French and Raven 1968: 152, "power is potential influence"). As an ability or "capacity to exert influence", power is based on (material) resources and (non-material) capabilities and implies a notion of "can (or could) be done" (Kuypers 1973: 87, 84). By contrast, influence implies activity and is an "actuality" - the actual "modification of one actor's behaviour by that of another" for the purpose of reaching the latter actor's aims (Cox and Jacobson 1973: 3; Lukes 2005: 69). An actor's power "may be converted into influence", but might not be "converted at all or to its full extent" (Cox and Jacobson 1973: 3).

In essence, all definitions emphasize thus that influence presupposes - in contrast to power - an *activity* involving an influence-wielder and a target (another actor) which the influence-wielder affects in order to attain its preferences or goals. The effect on the influenced takes the form of a modification of behaviour (Cox and Jacobson 1973: 3) or mind change (Michalowitz 2007). Re-composing these elements, and elaborating on Cox and Jacobson (1973: 3), a new definition of influence - at the basic level - emerges. Influence must then be defined as *the modification of one or several actors' behaviour, beliefs or preferences by acts of another actor exerted for the purpose of reaching the latter actor's aims*.

Dissecting this definition into its components allows for identifying five constitutive dimensions at the secondary level of the concept.

1. INTERACTION: Influence is a (causal) relationship between an influence-wielder and one or, as frequently the case in a multilateral foreign policy context, several influence targets (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003; Cox and Jacobson 1973).
2. PURPOSIVE BEHAVIOUR: The influence-wielder "wants to affect" the influence target in some way (Carlsnaes 2002: 333; Cox and Jacobson 1973).

3. TEMPORAL SEQUENCE: Actions by the influence-wielder precede any type of change in the influenced (Michalowitz 2007; Braam 1975; Cox and Jacobson 1973).

4. GOAL ATTAINMENT: Change need not be restricted to a modification of behaviour or preferences (Cox and Jacobson 1973), but can also take the form of a "mind change" regarding the beliefs - *i.e.* the acceptance of and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something (Free Dictionary 2008) - of the influenced (Michalowitz 2007). It must go "in a direction consistent with (...) the wants, preferences or intentions of the influence-wielders" (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003: 17). In other words, the goal-oriented behaviour of the influence-wielder must be successful: its goal must be attained. On this point, it has to be borne in mind that influence is a continuous, not a dichotomous concept (see Goertz 2006: 34). Partial goal attainment by the influence-wielder does not rule out that this actor has exerted influence.

With this, the "positive pole" of the concept (what is influence?) has been determined (see Goertz 2006: 30-35). Examining also the "negative pole" (when is what we observe not influence any more?), a fifth dimension comes into play:

5. ABSENCE OF AUTO-CAUSATION: Logically, what is observed qualifies only as influence if the mind or behavioural change can be - at least in part - attributed to the activity of the influence-wielder and not exclusively to some other reason *inherent* to the influence target (Braam 1975; Huberts 1994).

All five components of the concept ought to be regarded as necessary conditions. Together, they are sufficient to determine influence. An influence analysis method must allow for performing the causal conditional analysis needed to determine whether influence has been exerted in a given context.

Employing influence in a foreign policy context necessitates one further adaptation to the concept. Generally, the discipline of foreign policy analysis holds influence central to its research, as expressed, for instance, in the definition of foreign policy as the "area of politics which is directed at the external environment with the objective of influencing that environment and the behaviour of other actors within it, in order to pursue interests, values and goals" (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 19; see also: Hudson and Vore 1995: 215; Manners and Whitman 2000: 2).<sup>3</sup> In classical foreign policy analysis, activities aimed at influencing the external environment are referred to as "foreign policy implementation", which is the stage in the policy process following "foreign policy making", *i.e.* an actor's internal formulation of foreign policy aims (Webber and Smith 2002: 79-104). Foreign policy implementation, however, does not systematically result in influence. The possibility that the actions of a foreign policy player yield no effects is not accounted for by the concept of influence. Yet, assessing influence without examining what will be defined here as "influence attempts" would omit the complete picture of the activities, successful or not, of a foreign policy actor (see Baldwin 1985).<sup>4</sup>

Influence attempts can be defined, at the basic level, as *acts by an actor exerted with the purpose of bringing about change in the beliefs, preferences or behaviour of other actors in order to attain its aims*. They are analytically distinct from, but conceptually complement influence. An actor's influence is, in this view, the product of a successful exercise of an

<sup>3</sup> Despite this centrality of influence, virtually no attempts have been made in this discipline to specify what influence means and how to assess it (with the partial exception of Ginsberg 2001, who employs the term "impact").

<sup>4</sup> In his discussion of foreign economic policy, Baldwin uses the term "statecraft" instead of foreign policy implementation, which he defines as "governmental influence attempts" (1985: 9).



influence attempt. At the secondary level, the constitutive dimensions of the concept "influence attempts" overlap with the first two of the concept of influence: interaction and purposive, goal-oriented behaviour. It is reasonable to assume that, in the realm of international relations, influence attempts of states or the EU take the form of foreign policy acts such as economic and diplomatic instruments (Brigh and Hill 2008: 131-132; Webber and Smith 2002: 87-90; Baldwin 1985: 13-14).

*A mixed method for analyzing the influence of a foreign policy actor: combining narrative process-tracing with reputation analysis*

Determining the influence of an actor in a complex international context requires the design of a method capable of establishing whether the necessary conditions identified at the secondary level of the concept are actually fulfilled in a given situation. To-date, a "surprising lack of specification about (...) how to identify (...) influence in any given political arena" exists, which is not exclusive to EU foreign policy analysis (Betsill and Corell 2007: 7; Michalowitz 2007; Smith 2007). Paradoxically, the study of foreign policy implementation quite regularly stops - at best<sup>5</sup> - with the consideration of the instruments through which an actor attempts to exert influence, while "the effect of the foreign policy tool used has been a neglected area of research" (McGowan and Shapiro 1973: 193; Callahan, Brady and Hermann 1982: 257; Webber and Smith 2002: chapter 4).

Turning once again to public policy analysis for inspiration, "three classical approaches" to influence analysis have been identified: positional, reputation and process analysis (Arts and Verschuren 1999: 414; Huberts and Kleinnijenhuis 1994; Dahl 1961). Positional methods aim at determining the (in)formal position of an actor in a given context and deduce its influence from it (Schendelen 1981: 118-119). Reputation-based methods strive to determine influence on the basis of an investigation of how an actor is perceived by others (Arts 1998). Finally, process methods examine, on the basis of previously established criteria, political decision-making processes over time to see how actors attempt to impact on these and with what success (Braam 1975; Huberts 1994; Bos and Geurts 1994). The first two methods have received much criticism for failing to investigate into an actor's concrete influencing activities and for black-boxing interaction processes (see Bos and Geurts 1994: 61-62; Dür 2008: 568). By contrast, process-based influence analyses have generally been advocated as more useful for the study of influence of single actors in national and international decision-making contexts (Huberts and Kleinnijenhuis 1994; Betsill and Correll 2007).

Arguably the most advanced attempt at developing an instrument suited for the assessment of political influence (of non-governmental actors) in complex international negotiation contexts is the "EAR instrument", developed by Arts and Verschuren (1999, also Arts 1998). The key to this approach is the idea that triangulation, *i.e.* the use of multiple points of view in data collection and analysis, can enhance the validity of findings. The instrument combines process and reputational methods through the use of three perspectives (Arts and Verschuren 1999: 416-419): (i) the **Ego**-perspective, *i.e.* the self-perception of the influence-wielder E about its impact (or lack thereof); (ii) the **Alter**-perspective, which covers the view that other key players have of the performance of E; and (iii) the **Researcher's** analysis, which allows through the study of E's goal achievement for correcting potential misperceptions of both the ego and the alter. Central to applying the method is the choice of key respondents, key topics and key levels of decision-making in order to reduce the complexity of the analysed processes (Arts and Verschuren 1999: 422).

<sup>5</sup> A significant number of analyses, especially in EU foreign policy studies, actually stop already with the consideration of an actor's foreign policy-making.

For the purpose of studying an actor's influence in international affairs, the core principle of the EAR instrument will be reproduced: the combination of process and reputational analyses allows for crucial triangulation. The logic of the instrument will, however, be fully reversed. The analytical framework outlined here holds the researcher's (process) analysis central by advancing a more detailed narrative process-tracing approach, and uses the perceptions of the studied (in this case: representatives of the EU) and others (non-EU negotiators, observers) to validate its findings.

Process-based influence analysis methods advocate a thorough reconstruction of negotiation processes by way of a case study (Huberts 1994: 57; Arts and Verschuren 1999). More recently, social science methodologists have discussed this technique under the term "process-tracing" (Gerring 2007). Different interpretations of this research tool appear to co-exist. In a positivist tradition, process-tracing has been employed to test hypotheses about causal mechanisms and the scope conditions under which these are triggered (Checkel 2005). Accordingly, positivist process-tracers operate with "covering laws" and *ceteris paribus* conditions, aiming at reconstructing all the (micro-)steps in a process leading from previously specified independent variables to outcomes (Checkel 2005: 5; Bennett and Elman 2006).

For the analysis of complex and lengthy international regime negotiation processes, such an amalgamation between covering laws and causal mechanisms seems inappropriate because,

a law does not exhibit a cause. How do we exhibit a cause? We tell a story, a causal narrative about the causal pathways by which one class of events is actually affected by another. Since food has calories, and calories are energy, when we reduce our intake then the body has less energy to draw from external sources so it has to turn to internal sources of energy (...) and the body uses up fat when it draws that energy (...) Along the way we may use general laws but they are not in themselves explanations for why and how, when we eat less, we lose weight (Somers 1998: 770).

In such an interpretive reading, process-tracing becomes thus narration in search for patterns (Gysen *et al.* 2006). Narratives, defined as a discourse "with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way" (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997: xvi), not only provide a concise account of social events as they unfolded, but are also deeply causal in nature because "any explanation resides in its accounting for temporality and sequence" (Somers 1998: 771). Practically, interpretive process-tracers confront social reality thus openly by making numerous loose assumptions about "how the world works", and "rightly focus[ing their] attention on those links in the causal chain that are (a) the weakest and (b) the most crucial for the overall argument. (...) There is no point in investigating the obvious" (Gerring 2007: 178, 184). Ultimately, they produce sense through ordering, categorizing - in short "narrativising" - social facts (Gerring 2007: 180).

Narrative process-tracing requires thorough pre-framing. It is most persuasive if first, theoretical and methodological choices are made explicit prior to and during the research; second, the boundaries of the study are clearly circumscribed; third, each step in the process is explained, abstaining from disruptions and shifts of focus; and fourth, enough detailed evidence has been presented (Bennett and Elman 2006: 459-460). The outcome of narrative process-tracing efforts has been referred to as "a 'probable causal explanatory modus'" (Gysen *et al.* 2006: 108), producing in the first instance idiosyncratic explanations (Elliott 2005: 98).

This approach to process analysis lies at the heart of the analytical framework developed here. It allows for analysing a foreign policy actor's influence attempts and their effects over time, embedded in a broader narrative of how a concrete international outcome has

taken shape (e.g. a regime has been created or reformed). It requires the conception of a thoroughly pre-framed case study. Framing becomes necessary not only with regard to the time period, but also concerning the targets of influence attempts and the issues within a regime that an influence-wielder wants to impact on (see Arts and Verschuren 1999: 422). The necessary choices can be made on the basis of conceptual and theoretical considerations, as detailed in the following section. Other than reducing the complexity of the analysis, such considerations also provide ideas on how influence may ultimately be explained.

To further strengthen the validity of the entire influence study, a reputational variant of influence analysis is added to the process-trace. Both the perceptions of the ego (EU foreign policy-makers) and of others (negotiators from outside the EU, observers) about the EU's influence on the selected regime will be used to validate the results of the process analysis. The integration of a reputational component into the analysis of EU influence also allows for exploiting synergies with two thriving research areas within EU foreign policy studies, one on the Union's roles in international affairs, including its self-perceptions (see Elgström and Smith 2006), and the other on "how others perceive the EU" (e.g. Lucarelli 2007).

In terms of concrete research techniques, a combination of three instruments for data collection has been suggested as most useful for a case study based on process and reputation analysis (see Huberts 1994: 52): document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and direct or participant observation. Data analysis becomes possible through narrativisation, but also through explanation-building (see Huberman and Miles 1994).

### **Refining the analytical framework: injecting insights from EU foreign policy analysis and regime theory**

With the general contours of an influence analysis method for foreign policy contexts spelled out, concrete choices with regard to both the subject (the EU) and object (an international regime) of the intended analysis allow for the necessary reduction of complexity. For framing purposes, successive looks will be taken into concepts developed in EU foreign policy analysis and into regime theory.

#### *The perspective of the subject: specifying the notion of EU influence attempts*

Insights from the discipline of EU foreign policy analysis can help to specify how the EU implements its foreign policy to exert influence. EU foreign policy does not differ from foreign policy as it has been defined in general terms above - in short, an "area of politics which is directed at the external environment with the objective of influencing that environment" (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 19) - with regard to the overall logic and aims, but certainly with regard to who designs and conducts it. One can speak of *European Union* foreign policy whenever genuine EU actors (the European Commission, the Council Presidency, etc.) or EU member states act explicitly on behalf of or in line with EU values, interests and goals. Its implementation presupposes the existence of foreign policy tools suited for exerting influence.

A detailed elaboration on the EU's foreign policy instruments has been suggested by Smith (2003: 52-68, see also Ginsberg 2001: 49-50). Her approach concentrates on two types of instruments: economic and diplomatic.<sup>6</sup> In the *economic* sphere, she

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<sup>6</sup> The discussion of a third category of foreign policy instruments - military means - would go beyond the scope of this contribution and will therefore not be pursued.



distinguishes between positive (carrots) and negative (sticks) measures (Smith 2003: 60; Ginsberg 2001: 50). The EU can exert influence positively by, inter alia, concluding trade, cooperation or association agreements, reducing tariffs or providing aid. On the negative side, the EU can impose embargos or boycotts, delay or suspend agreements, increase tariffs etc. Smith refers to these latter tools also as “coercion” (2003: 22). In the *diplomatic* sphere, she identifies a range of EU instruments for influencing others: issuing demarches or declarations, visiting other countries, imposing diplomatic sanctions, granting diplomatic recognition, opening dialogues, offering EU membership, and so on (Smith 2003: 61).

Smith’s catalogues provide useful bases for specifying EU influence attempts. Two clarifications seem, however, in order. Her discussion of negative economic measures omits the fact that such instruments cannot only be employed coercively, *i.e.* actually be used to the detriment of the EU’s interlocutors, but can also have the status of threats. In the latter case, e.g. if sanctions are only invoked as a possibility, this activity belongs to a different sphere of interaction than coercion: together with all positive economic measures, it falls under the broader category of “bargaining”, *i.e.* a form of negotiation between two or more parties that is characterized by strategic interaction and the exchange of promises and threats (Holzinger 2004). Secondly, diplomatic tools, as specified by Smith, cannot only be used in a bargaining context, but also as a means of “persuasion”. Table one takes these clarifications into account by classifying EU foreign policy acts into three major categories (see Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003): persuasion, bargaining and coercion.

**Table 1:** EU influence attempts as concrete foreign policy acts

Categories of influence techniques (see Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003)	EU foreign policy instruments (adapted from Smith 2003)
<b>PERSUASION</b>	Issue demarches, declarations, statements Visit Make proposals Initiate political dialogue Send envoys, experts Sponsor conferences Support action
<b>BARGAINING</b>	Offer diplomatic recognition Offer membership Offer trade, cooperation or association agreement Reduce tariffs Increase quota Grant inclusion in the general system of preferential treatment Provide aid Extend loans Threaten with embargo (ban on exports) or boycott (ban on imports)
	Grant diplomatic recognition Grant membership Conclude trade, cooperation or association agreement Reduce tariffs Increase quota Grant inclusion in the GSP Provide aid Extend loans
	Threaten diplomatic sanction Threaten to refuse recognition Threaten with embargo (ban on exports) or boycott (ban on imports) Threaten to... ... increase tariffs, ... decrease quota ... withdraw GSP ... reduce or suspend aid ... delay conclusion of agreements ... suspend or denounce agreements
<b>COERCION</b>	Impose diplomatic sanction Deny recognition Increase tariffs Decrease quota Withdraw GSP Reduce or suspend aid Delay conclusion of agreements Suspend or denounce agreements

The differentiation between types of foreign policy acts helps to examine the EU's influencing strategy by guiding data collection and analysis. All acts qualify as influence attempts.

*The perspective of the object: limiting the actor-specific, thematic and temporal scope of the influence analysis*

International regimes constitute significant objects of EU influence (attempts), but they can take numerous, at times very complex, forms. To deal with this complexity, insights derived from regime theory can make the influence analysis study more manageable by specifying the targets of EU influence attempts, its ultimate objectives and its temporal

scope. For illustrative purposes, examples of how to make these choices have been selected for the UN climate change regime.

The oft-employed “consensus definition” of a regime (Hasenclever *et al.* 1996: 179) stems from Krasner (1983: 2):

implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of [behaviour] defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective action.

It has proven helpful “as a guide for empirical studies” in dissecting regimes into their constitutive components (Hasenclever *et al.* 1996: 179-180). Aggarwal further increased the usability of the definition by introducing a distinction between the rules and decision-making procedures on the one hand and the political gist of any regime, *i.e.* “the principles and norms underlying the development of a regime [which] can be termed a ‘meta-regime’”, on the other (Aggarwal 1985: 18). Taking Krasner’s or Aggarwal’s definition as starting points, one can assume that influence on a regime passes - per definition - by the modification of one or several actors’ behaviour, beliefs or preferences with regard to the four (or two) core constituents of this regime. For the purposes of this analytical framework, this observation implies that focussing an analysis of EU influence on its attempts to impact on these issues and on the actual effects of these influence attempts allows for an assessment of its influence on this regime in its entirety. In a study of any given regime, it should be possible to select core constituents, thus limiting the thematic scope of the analysis.

To give an example, in the global climate change meta-regime, two issues have continuously been of central importance. The core *norm* of the regime is, firstly, without doubt its ultimate objective and *raison d’être*: the obligation to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In the founding document of the regime, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992, this is vaguely embodied in the objective of Article 2 (“achieve (...) stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”). Filling this norm with meaning necessitates a definition of the emissions limit needed to attain this aim. Secondly, arguably the key principle of the climate regime is the *principle of common but differentiated responsibilities* (Article 3 UNFCCC). A contested, but often referenced principle in international environmental law, it represents a true “belief of rectitude” because it comprises a notion of how the burdens for abiding by the core norm should be divided, namely according to a *common* responsibility of all states, but taking into account *differences* in both past and present contributions to the environmental degradation and in the capacities to deal with environmental problems (Rajamani 2000). In regime negotiations, it becomes necessary to fill this principle with concrete meaning, answering the question “who does what?” in the combat against climate change. Focussing the analysis of an actor’s influence on these two core components of the climate meta-regime allows for broader inferences regarding its influence on the regime as such. Similarly, key pillars of other regimes could be carefully selected to determine the EU’s influence in those domains.

Further insights from regime analysis permit two additional choices. Regime creation and development “usually result from multilateral negotiations” (Hasenclever *et al.* 1996: 186), which are typically complex, multi-party, multi-issue, and multi-role settings requiring consensual decision-making (Zartman 1994a: 3-4). In such a context, the “prime imperative of practitioner and analyst alike is thus to decomplexify” (Zartman 1994b: 219). In practice,

this is regularly done by applying two techniques: sequencing and coalition-building (Zartman 1994a: 4-7). Both can help to limit the scope of the study.

On the one hand, the number of actors whose behaviour, preferences or beliefs need to be changed to exert influence can be considerably restricted. Since states regularly organize themselves by forming coalitions in regime negotiations, it is often essential for an actor to exert influence on the leader(s) of this coalition rather than on each of the countries that forms part of the group. When designing an influence analysis, core actors in a regime can thus be pre-selected. In a climate regime context, for instance, there have been various negotiation coalitions throughout different phases of the regime. During the negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol, the EU(-15) was, by and large, confronted to a group operating under the acronym JUSSCANNZ (Japan, the US, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, Iceland), often led by the US, the coalition of economies in transition, led by Russia, and the G-77/China block of over 130 developing countries, often led by China and India. An influence analysis can usefully focus on examining the subject's interactions (here, the EU) with such leading players, which exist in all regimes.

On the other hand, the idea of sequencing can be further exploited. Negotiations for the creation or development of a regime go through various phases, not all of which are of equal importance. For assessing an actor's influence, a limited time period can be chosen, e.g. the negotiations on a treaty. For the climate change regime this could, for example, be the negotiations on the UNFCCC, which were formally started in early 1991 and concluded in the summer of 1992. Once the temporal boundaries of the process to be analysed have been clarified, further steps can be taken to dissect this process into phases and identify crucial turning points in the negotiations. Turning points can usually be detected at the transition between phases within a closed negotiation process. In her "phased process analysis" approach, Chasek suggests that regime negotiations can be broken down "to a more manageable level" by distinguishing between six such phases: a pre-negotiation phase, a problem diagnosis/issue definition phase, a phase during which initial positions are stated, a formula-building phase, a detailing phase, and a ratification/implementation phase (2001: 35; 44-49; 150). The transitions between phases/turning points are usually marked by a minimum of one of the following three events: First, several actors change their behaviour, converging at least to some extent into one direction; second, proposals are eliminated; and/or third, only one or a combination of several options is maintained as basis for further negotiations (see Chasek 2001: 151-55; Huberts 1994). By focussing the process analysis on what happens at these turning points, the influence of key actors involved in the negotiations can be assessed, as illustrated below.

In synthesis, if prior knowledge about the regime is available, insights from regime analysis concerning the core constituents, actors, phases and turning points in a regime negotiation process can help to make informed choices in order to considerably reduce the task of the influence analyst.

#### *Accounting for EU influence: potential explanatory factors at multiple levels of analysis*

As Dahl and Stinebrickner (2003: 38) note, the modalities of, and reasons for, the exercise of influence are "immaterial to the question of whether influence has occurred." The concept itself, therefore, provides little if no explanations of an actor's influence. It can be assumed that the explanatory factors for the EU's influence on an international regime must be searched for at both the international level of analysis (exogenous factors) and the actor-specific level of analysis (endogenous factors). To tentatively pre-specify explanatory variables, recourse can once again be made to EU foreign policy analysis and regime theory. In the first instance, explanations of why influence has been exerted in a given

regime context will always be idiosyncratic and take the form of plausibility rather than probabilistic statements (Huberts 1994: 39).

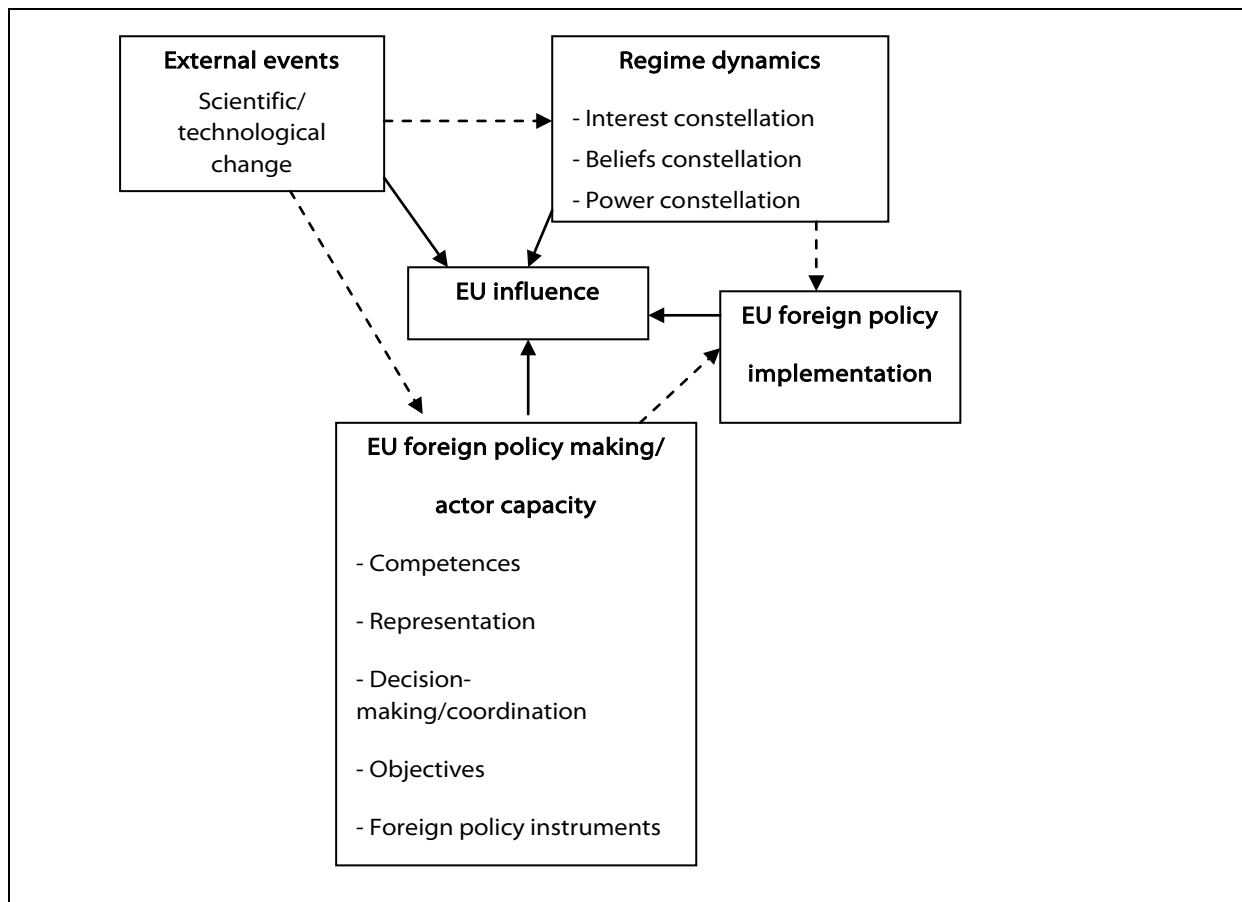
Turning to the *exogenous factors* first, it is obvious that regimes are not usually created or developed as the result of the influence of a single actor or hegemon, but as the product of a multiplicity of factors including the activities of other actors, the issue(s) the regime deals with (e.g. new scientific insights or technological advances may increase or decrease the urgency with which a topic has to be treated), and the political, economic or social context the regime is embedded into (Young 1989: 95-96). All these factors can also determine a single actor's influence on others in this regime by either opening windows of opportunities for impact or constraining its influence (attempts). It is above all the patterns of interaction between actors in regime negotiations that will co-determine the influence of a single actor. Interactions can be structured according to different logics, corresponding to the three main strands of regime theory (power, interests, ideas) (Hasenclever *et al.* 1996). Power asymmetries can play a role, as changes in the capacities of actors may alter the way they interact (Krasner 1991). Further, divergences of preferences leading to strategic interaction between actors can dominate regime dynamics (Keohane 1989). Finally, exchanges on the basis of shared or differing ideas can determine the shape of a regime (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). The beliefs, interests and power constellations in a regime are thus potentially significant factors for explaining an actor's influence (or its absence) in a regime. To uncover those constellations, it is necessary to discuss in some depth the beliefs, interests and capacities of the key actors in this regime.

One of the players who determine the inner dynamics of a regime is self-evidently the analysed actor itself: *endogenous determinants* of EU influence are its capacity and activity. Without a doubt, as an economic heavyweight, the EU possesses supreme material capacities, which "can generate expectations that it will exercise political influence" (Smith 2003: 7). Furthermore, it is assumed here that the EU generally possesses the capacity *to be* a foreign policy actor. But the singular nature of the EU raises nonetheless the question to what extent it disposes of the non-material capacities (institutional set-up, foreign policy tool-kit) necessary for it to exert influence. The EU's actor capacity depends on the existence of legal competences to act, procedures for internal (foreign policy) decision-making and coordination and external representation, treaty and strategic objectives for external action and the necessary foreign policy tools to become active on the world stage (Wouters *et al.* 2009). The degree to which the EU possesses all these elements may vary over time and across policy domains. Being more or less capable of making foreign policy (competences, coordination) and implementing it (representation, instruments) can have major repercussions for the Union's exercise of influence. Furthermore, the way the EU actually employs its instruments in practice in order to exert influence, in other words its foreign policy implementation, is crucial.

To sum up these considerations, figure one provides a tentative model incorporating the range of variables that may determine EU influence on an international regime. It also indicates how the various factors that determine EU influence (black arrows) can co-determine each other (dashed arrows).



**Figure 1:** Key variables for explaining EU influence on international regimes



Attempting to account for EU influence necessarily adds to the considerable descriptive effort required for the analysis. It is assumed, however, that gathering data on the different variables ultimately allows for explanation-building on the Union's influence on the analysed international regime.

### Assessing the EU's influence on international regimes: a five-step analytical process

Bringing the threads of above general considerations on influence, its analysis, and the specific application to the case of EU activity in international regimes together, an analytical framework can be designed for a step-by-step assessment of EU influence. Its usability will be illustrated with the help of examples chosen from the EU's activities during the negotiations on the creation of the UN climate regime.

#### *Step 1: screening the general context*

Both the context into which the international regime is embedded and developments concerning the issue under discussion can play a major role in explaining the way actors interact and decisions are taken within that regime. A brief screening of the context for (i) major scientific and technological advances influencing the perception of the issue; and (ii) important events outside the regime arena is therefore needed in order to present what may be called the "background narrative", which may prove essential for explaining EU influence.

In a global climate policy context, major new findings of climatologists, but also climate change-induced natural disasters could provide a favourable context for an EU desiring to promote ambitious climate policies. Conversely, a major financial crisis might detract attention from climate change, and thus render EU influence on the climate regime less probable.

*Step 2: identifying the EU's and other key actors' beliefs, preferences and positions*

The players within the regime and their interaction have been considered as central to any influence analysis. Accordingly, any investigation needs to start with a sound overview of the beliefs, preferences and negotiation positions of the key actors in the regime, as they were at the outset of the studied time period with regard to the issues selected for in-depth study. This enables a mapping of the evolution of these parameters over the course of the studied process. Obviously, the EU's actor capacity should occupy a central place in the analysis at this point, as it may prove crucial for accounting for its influence.

A brief illustration of how this analytical step could be carried out in practice focuses exclusively on the positions (omitting beliefs, preferences) of the main actors on one of the key components of the climate regime identified above, namely the level of ambition of emission reductions. At the outset of the negotiations on the UN Framework Convention in 1991, the positions of the two major coalitions in the emerging regime - the industrialized countries and the G-77/China - were fairly clear: the latter wanted the industrialized countries to adopt an ambitious emissions reductions target (without citing a number), while the vast majority of the former considered a stabilization of GHG emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 as necessary (see Bodansky 1993). The EU itself, although at the time with a limited foreign policy capacity,<sup>7</sup> had advocated this target already in 1990. The big exception within the industrialized world was the US, which was strongly opposed to any binding target.

*Step 3: telling the general story - the evolution of international regime negotiations and the EU's influence attempts*

To understand the interactions between regime participants and assess EU influence, it is necessary to trace a clearly delimited regime negotiation process. The narrative process-trace should focus first specifically on the EU's foreign policy implementation to see how and at what points in time this actor attempted to exert influence on other key actors; second, the overall regime dynamics, *i.e.* the interaction between key actors on main events; and third, all this with particular attention to the key issues selected. EU influence attempts can ultimately be identified and typologised on the basis of the conceptual considerations detailed earlier, allowing for the extraction of patterns in the EU's foreign policy behaviour.

The story of the negotiations leading up to the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992 has been constructed in detailed fashion elsewhere (Bodansky 1993; Mintzer and Leonard 1994). It highlights the role of the EU as an antagonist to the US with its minimal "no target" position. After unsuccessfully attempting to "persuade the US of the political feasibility of committing itself" to the EU's stabilization target during the first year of the negotiations (Germanwatch 1991: 4-5), the Union changed course to break the gridlock the talks were caught up in. Engaging in bilateral bargaining with the US, the EU helped to craft formulas that would later make it virtually unchanged into Articles 4.2(a) and (b) of the UNFCCC

<sup>7</sup> Despite limited formal actor capacity, "member states and the Community were intertwined in such a way that the EC could be seen as a unitary actor using multilateral diplomatic channels" during this negotiation episode (Sbragia 1998: 298-299).

(Bodansky 1993: 491). Apart from Article 2 with its opaque stabilization objective cited earlier, the EU obtained that industrialized countries should provide “detailed information on its policies and measures (...) *with the aim of returning individually or jointly to their 1990 levels these anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases*” (Art. 4.2(b) UNFCCC, emphasis added). While this “aim” remained vague and not legally binding, the Convention did stipulate a review of the adequacy of the substantial provisions of this paragraph (Art. 4.2(d) UNFCCC), laying the foundations for future negotiations that would end in the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. Step 4 will determine the share of EU influence on this key outcome of the negotiations.

#### *Step 4: detailing the narrative analysis - determining the EU's influence*

This step represents really the heart of the influence analysis exercise. Establishing EU influence necessitates, firstly, the identification of turning points in the regime negotiation process and, secondly, the telling of an in-depth narrative and a causal conditional analysis of what occurred at these points and whether this can be interpreted as EU influence.

The identification of turning points can be steered by regime analysis (see part 3.2; Chasek 2001: 44-49; 150; Huberts 1994). Once turning points have been identified for the studied issues, it becomes possible to eliminate actors that can logically not have been influential by monitoring the evolution of their positions and activities: only if their previous position was completely or partially in concordance with the decision taken at a turning point, they can have logically been partially influential (Huberts 1994: 41-43; 57-59). If the EU remains among those that may have been influential, it can be determined whether it has actually exerted influence or not by utilizing the constitutive dimensions of the concept of influence for a causal conditional analysis (Has there been an interaction with other(s) in which the EU approached the other(s) first with the purpose of altering their behaviour (*interaction, temporal sequence, purposive behaviour*)? Has the EU *attained its goals* (at least partially) (Huberts 1994), *i.e.* have others changed behaviour, preferences or beliefs in the direction of the EU and/or does the overall outcome reflect EU aims? Can the change be attributed to the EU, *i.e.* was it *not* the result of *auto-causation* in the other actors or of another factor that has to be considered more important than the Union's intervention?). Answering these questions requires triangulation in data collection and thorough data analysis based not only on narrativization of the information, but also on counterfactual reasoning to check the “negative pole” of the concept of influence and explore whether no alternative explanations of the outcome exist (Goertz 2006). The researcher's analysis is, at this point, supplemented with the insights gained through reputational analysis, *i.e.* data gathered from interviews with EU representatives and external observers about their perceptions of whether the EU has been influential or not, particularly at the chosen turning points.

Without going into detail, a brief reconsideration of the process, as sketched out in the previous step, and of its outcome can help to assess EU influence. The major turning point in this negotiation process occurred at the transition between the formula-building and the decision-taking phase: where all options had remained on the table until then, the EU-US deal on what would become the key paragraphs of the UNFCCC would, in retrospect, open the way for an agreement. Up to this major turning point, the EU's position had remained fully on the table. Therefore, the Union was influential. Its activities fulfilled all the necessary conditions/constitutive components of influence: the Union stated its position early in the process (1990), and was among the agenda-setters for this item (temporal sequence); it interacted closely with other major players, notably the US (interaction), and with a clear intention of impacting on this actor to alter the final outcome of negotiations (purposive behaviour); further, it partially attained objective of having a target mentioned in the treaty (goal attainment). Finally, the slight adaptation of position by the US during the final stages in the negotiations was the result of other parties' pressure, first and foremost the

EU's, more than of internal developments in Washington (absence of auto-causation). While it is thus possible to establish *that* the EU exerted influence on the final conclusion of this item, the determination of its share of influence demands further counterfactual arguments. On the one hand, even if the EU was certainly not the only actor that demanded a change in position from the US, it was without doubt the most fervent defender of the 2000 stabilization target among the industrialized players. Arguably, "despite its non-binding character, Article 4 (2) of the Convention would certainly have been much weaker without the EC's prior position" (Haigh 1996: 162). On the other hand, "had the U.S. not taken such a hard line on commitments, the Convention would no doubt have been stronger" (Hunter *et al.* 2002: 618). Weighing both parties' concessions against each other, the EU's and the US shares of influence on the final outcome regarding this agenda item were thus of comparable magnitude. These observations derived from the narrative are confirmed by reputational analysis (see, e.g., the testimonies of EU and non-EU negotiators in Mintzer and Leonard 1994).

#### *Step 5: explaining EU influence on the analysed regime*

Once EU influence has been established, tentative explanations of the Union's influence become possible. Relying on the previously identified potential explanatory factors of EU influence (see figure 1), patterns can be extracted and hypotheses brought forth on the conditions that enable (or constrict) EU influence. Further explanatory factors may be brought into the picture to give a coherent account of why the EU exerted influence on this regime in the studied time period.

Obviously, the examples provided here do not make for a coherent narrative process analysis and can therefore not serve as a basis for explaining EU behaviour. Based on the model provided in the previous section, several factors nonetheless suggest themselves even from the limited empirical bits and pieces presented here: factors that enabled EU exercise of influence were its fairly coherent position and the ability to advance this position through a variety of channels and to engage in bargaining as major influence attempt when this was needed. Constraining factors were both domestic and external in nature: internally, the EU did not yet possess the indispensable tool-kit to build enough momentum among industrialised countries to convince the US. The major external factor limiting EU influence in these negotiations was the overall importance and difficult bargaining position of the largest emitter US.

#### **Conclusion: grounding European Union power debates in thorough influence analyses**

This contribution parted from the assumption that the evaluation of the European Union's increasing foreign policy activity could benefit from empirically grounded statements about its actual influence in international affairs. Pinpointing and explaining the Union's influence constitutes a considerable methodological challenge EU foreign policy analysts have not sufficiently addressed. The influence analysis method advanced in this contribution represents an initial attempt at filling this void by importing insights from other disciplines (public policy analysis, IR). In doing so, it intends to stimulate a debate. Deliberately, the proposed method has not been fully applied to a case in this contribution. Ongoing research by the author<sup>8</sup> suggests, however, that assessing influence by way of this method is possible, albeit at the expense of considerable data collection efforts and of decreased internal validity: the method may not - and can never - qualify as

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<sup>8</sup> In a multi-year research project, the author uses this method to analyse the EU's foreign policy activities and assess its influence in the UN climate change regime over time.

"exact science", since inferences made from the narrative process-trace of complex negotiations are always plausibility rather than probability statements (Huberts 1994: 39). These limits should not stand in the way of addressing this methodological gap, however, as the expected benefits outweigh the costs: the method helps laying the necessary empirical foundations for debates about the EU's power and for improving EU foreign policy performance.

Arguably, the most interesting question with regard to studies of EU influence in international regimes is why the EU sometimes successfully converts its potential into actual impact, and fails to do so at other times. To answer this question, and in doing so make more general assumptions about the Union's performance across regimes, the idiosyncratic explanations inherent in the narrative about a specific instance of EU activity in a regime can be upgraded through what has been referred to as "theory-carried generalization", *i.e.* the act of generalising from empirical findings to "phenomena, cases (...) that belong to the scope or the domain of the theory involved" (Smaling 2003: 27). The most obvious assumption would be that analogies exist between regimes in the same policy field (e.g. in the environmental domain: UNFCCC regime and biodiversity regime).

Transcending the discussion of EU activity in international regimes, the analytical framework could also be adapted and applied to other global policy contexts in order to test, e.g., the EU's influence on policies in a specific region (e.g. the Middle East), country (e.g. Russia) or institution (e.g. the Food and Agriculture Organization) within a given time frame. To do so, thorough pre-framing would have to be achieved through theoretical lenses appropriate for the given international constellation. A wider empirical application and further development of methods like the one proposed here would not only improve the understanding of EU foreign policy strategies, (types of) effects and performance, but also help to refine the analytical tool-box of the discipline of EU foreign policy analysis.

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