



The European Union as a  
**Global Actor**

Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler



second edition

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## Preface to the second edition

A far greater time has elapsed, since publication of the first edition, than we had originally anticipated. During that period the European Union has undergone very significant alterations, necessitating rather more fundamental revisions than we had envisaged when undertaking to produce a second edition. Indeed, in most respects this is an entirely new book, although it retains and extends the model of actorness developed in the first edition. In researching it, from 2001 to 2005, we were once again indebted to the many officials of EU institutions and external missions who gave of their time to answer our questions about the changes in which they were immersed.

Very shortly after completion of the first edition we saw the launch of the euro which, despite its mixed performance, has inevitably enhanced the Union's *international presence*, and entry into force of the *Treaty of Amsterdam*, which brought important innovations in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy. Subsequently there have been unprecedented developments in the field of security. The European Security and Defence Policy, which saw EU involvement in two small-scale operations in 2003 (in Macedonia and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and a continuing policing operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was unimaginable at the time of writing the first edition. 2003 also saw the production of a European Security Strategy that responded, in part, to the terrorist attacks on the USA of 11 September 2001. It also raised questions about the international roles and identity of the Union that must necessarily concern us in this volume.

The Amsterdam Treaty also initiated a process of 'communitarising' the Justice and Home Affairs policy area, particularly in relation to immigration and border control matters. Progress in this area has also been rapid, introducing a new dimension to EU external policy that doubtless merits its own chapter in a work claiming to cover all areas of EU external policy. Nevertheless we have chosen to integrate this policy area into those dealt with in the first edition, but also to discuss it more fully in a completely new chapter dealing with meanings of EU identity.

The most significant change affecting the Union since the first edition was, of course, its enlargement, in May 2004, to include ten new Member States from Eastern and Southern Europe. This has substantially changed the internal dynamics and external borders of the Union, necessitating a new approach to 'neighbours' which as yet remains in embryonic form. Meanwhile further candidates await accession.

Primarily to accommodate enlargement, the Treaty of Nice (which entered into force in February 2003) introduced interim changes to the Union's decision-making procedures. This was followed by establishment of a Convention on the future of Europe, charged with revising and consolidating the founding Treaties and, *inter alia*, ensuring the Union is equipped to play a major role in twenty-first century international affairs. The Constitutional Treaty that finally emerged did, indeed, include provisions intended to facilitate decision-making and to strengthen the Union's capacity for external action. The rotating presidency and the entire pillar structure were to be removed while the EU was to acquire its own legal personality, foreign minister and External Action Service. The Treaty's rejection by popular referenda in France and the Netherlands (in mid-2005) inevitably raises questions about the future direction of the EU.

These recent, momentous events impacted upon the process of completing this book. In order that it should not be outdated immediately upon publication, we decided to await the successful completion of the 2004 enlargement. It was clearly not practical, however, to await ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. Initially we included references to the Treaty's provisions wherever they had relevance. Latterly, as it became clear that the Treaty faced rejection, we removed many of these references. However, we have retained discussion of those provisions, for example in relation to the proposed External Action Service, that have particular relevance; and that are likely to reappear in some form once the current 'period of reflection' is completed. From a purely selfish viewpoint, delivery of a manuscript during such a period may mean that its contents will not be too quickly outdated. Events may prove us wrong.

Charlotte Bretherton, Liverpool  
John Vogler, Keele  
June 2005

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## **Authors' note**

It has become customary, in recent years, for commentators to refer exclusively to the European Union (EU) – despite the continuing existence of the European Community (EC). Since this makes matters simpler for all concerned, we have referred to the European Union when speaking in general terms about external action. Nevertheless, in some contexts, the differing responsibilities of the Community and the Union have considerable significance for the arguments we are making. Thus, in circumstances where we wished to emphasise that the policy area under discussion falls within Community competence, we found it necessary to continue referring to the European Community.

# Abbreviations

AAMS	Associated African and Malagasy States
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group
ALA	Asian and Latin American countries
AMCHAM	American Chamber of Commerce
AOSIS	Association of Small Island States
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meetings
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy of the EU
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization (programme for Western Balkans)
CCAMLR	Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCP	Common Commercial Policy of the EU
CCT	Common Customs Tariff of the EU
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism (of the Kyoto Protocol to the FCCC)
CEEC	Central and East European Countries
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Area
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States (of the former Soviet Union)
CIVCOM	Committee for Civilian Crisis Management (of the EU)
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (also known as Comecon)
CoP	Conference of the Parties
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives (to the EU)
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now OSCE)
CSD	Commission for Sustainable Development
DAC	Development Assistance Countries (of the OECD)

DDA	Doha Development Agenda (of the WTO)
DDR	Doha Development Round
DG	Directorate-General (of the European Commission)
DSACEUR	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (of NATO)
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry (of UK government)
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
EBA	Everything but Arms (concessionary trade provision for LDCs)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Community
ECAP	European Capability Action Plan
ECB	European Central Bank
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
ECU	European currency unit
EDC	European Defence Community
EDF	European Development Fund
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement (with ACP countries)
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERTA	European Road Transport Agreement
ESDI	European Security and Defence Identity (within NATO)
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUFOR	EU Force (military deployment)
EUJUST	EU justice mission
EUMC	European Union Military Committee
EUMS	European Union Military Staff
EUPM	EU Police Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
EUPOL	EU police mission
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FCCC	Framework Convention on Climate Change
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FDI	Foreign direct investment



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FTA	Free Trade Area
GAERC	General Affairs and External Relations Council (of the EU)
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross domestic product
GMES	Global Monitoring for Environment and Security
GMP	Global Mediterranean Policy (of the EU)
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
HDI	Human Development Index (of United Nations Development Programme)
ICJ	International Court of Justice (the World Court)
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia
IFOR	Implementation Force (NATO led deployment in Bosnia)
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
INF	Intermediate Nuclear Forces
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPC	Integrated Pollution and Prevention Control
IR	International Relations
ITO	International Trade Organization
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
JI	Joint implementation (provision for the Kyoto Protocol of the FCCC)
JUSCANZ	Japan, the United States, Canada and New Zealand
LDC	least developed countries
LRTAP	Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution Convention
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
MEDA	MEsures D'Accompagnement (programme of the EU)
MEPP	Middle East Peace Process
Mercosur	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern cone common market)
MFA	Multifibre Agreement
MFN	most favoured nation
MNC	Mediterranean non-member countries (of the EU)
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGDO	non-governmental development organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIC	newly industrializing countries
NIEO	new international economic order
NIS	new independent states (of the former Soviet Union)

NTA	New Transatlantic Agenda (US–EU)
NTB	non-tariff barrier
ODA	official development assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (between EU and NIS)
PfP	Partnership for Peace
Phare	Poland–Hungary: Aid for Reconstruction of the Economy (subsequently extended to other countries)
PIC	prior informed consent
PPEWU	Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (of the EU)
PSC	Political and Security Committee (of the EU)
QMV	qualified majority voting (in EU Council of Ministers)
REIO	Regional Economic Integration Organization
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement (with Western Balkans countries)
SADC	South African Development Community
SAP	Stabilization and Association Process (in Western Balkans)
SEA	Single European Act
SEM	Single European Market
SFOR	Stabilization Force (NATO led replacement for IFOR)
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (of NATO)
SIA	sustainability impact assessment
SITCEN	Situation Centre (of the EU)
Stabex	System for the stabilization of export earnings (in ACP countries)
Sysmin	System for the promotion of mineral production and exports (in ACP countries)
Tacis	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TEC	Treaty establishing the European Communities
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TNC	Transnational Business Corporation
TOA	<i>Treaty of Amsterdam</i>
TRIMS	trade related investment measures
TRIPS	trade related intellectual property measures
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

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UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force (in ex-Yugoslavia)
USTR	United States Trade Representative
VER	voluntary export restraint
WEU	Western European Union
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

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# Introduction

Our principal aim, in the first edition of this book (published in 1999), was to establish the extent to which the European Union was capable of functioning as an effective actor across the full range of its external activities. Our conclusion was that the *importance of the Union in international affairs was greater than we had anticipated*, but that its capacity as an actor was limited, in some policy areas more than others, by its distinctive character. That assessment remains valid. We also concluded that, in view of the challenges it then faced, the Union would be unlikely to develop further as an external policy actor.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of submitting this second edition (May 2005), the Union is again at a turning point. Enlarged to a membership of twenty-five, and confronted by numerous further demands for membership, but seemingly unable to agree the reforms necessary to accommodate such numbers, real questions are raised about the Union's future. Nevertheless, in the period since 1999, a number of important developments combined to strengthen the Union's capacity as an actor. In consequence, this second edition, while maintaining a focus on actor capability, also addresses questions concerning the *nature* of the EU as an actor. These include the extent to which the Union has attained a distinctive collective identity that informs the broad direction of its external activities; and, more specifically, the extent to which there has developed a capacity and willingness to provide strategic direction for external policy. A final question must concern the extent to which the enlarged Union can operate effectively in the absence of fundamental reform.

Our initial interest in the EU stemmed from a gradual realization that, in our areas of research (global environmental diplomacy, development policy), the activities of the Union impinged significantly. We were thus encouraged to develop an approach that, when we began researching the first edition in 1996, differed considerably from contemporary studies dealing with the external policies of the EU. Such studies, focusing almost exclusively upon the Union's halting attempts to develop conventional foreign policy capabilities, and explicitly or implicitly using the state as comparator, inevitably concluded that the EU had yet to develop a significant role in international affairs. Traditional analyses, we believed, were unable fully to capture the external impact of EU activities.

Hence, our second aim was to engage with contemporary debates within the discipline of International Relations (IR). Divergent approaches to the entities that

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may be considered actors in international politics have long characterized the discipline. While traditional (Realist) analyses have prioritized states as actors, pluralist approaches have conceptualized a multi-actor system that includes, *inter alia*, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. None, however, has effectively conceptualized the EU as an international actor.

Our approach has self-consciously avoided entering into debates that seek to categorize the Union. The EU is not an intergovernmental organization as traditionally understood, nor is it a partially formed state. While it is clearly a regional organization, its degree of integration, and the range of policy competences and instruments it possesses, render comparison with other regional organizations such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) meaningless. We thus concluded that the Union should be treated as *sui generis*; and that our study would focus upon the extent to which the EU had acquired qualities of actorness. In particular we were and are interested in the processes through which such qualities might be constructed.

We have found a process-oriented approach to be invaluable, both because the Union is, itself, a project under construction; and because it is our view that actorness cannot be fully understood through study of the behaviour of the entity in question. Rather, actorness is constructed through the interplay of many factors, both internal to the Union and in the external environment of ideas and events that permit or constrain EU action. Our approach to actorness, which we develop in Chapter 1, comprises three elements – opportunity, which denotes the external context; presence, which captures the ability of the EU, by virtue of its existence, to exert influence beyond its borders; and capability, which signifies the ability to exploit opportunity and capitalize on presence.

In developing our model of actorness we have attached great importance to the understandings of those closely involved with the Union as an international actor, whether in the formulation and implementation of EU policy or as its interlocutors. To elicit these understandings, an intensive programme of interviews was undertaken between January 1996 and July 1997 (for the first edition) and, for this second edition, intermittently between March 2001 and April 2005. Interviewees involved with the internal policy process comprised officials of the European Commission and the Council Secretariat, staff of Member State Permanent Representations to the EU and national officials. To elicit understandings from the Union's external interlocutors, we interviewed third country diplomats from all regions of the world and representatives of non-governmental organizations. We are, of course, very much aware that the insights gained (with the exception of those from nationally based officials) reflect the view from Brussels, and are thus likely to accord greater prominence to EU activities than might otherwise be the case. Nevertheless several of the third country diplomats interviewed had been in post only a short time. While they knew their way around the complex EU system less well than their more experienced colleagues, their views on key points relating to EU actorness were not substantially different.

These exercises proved highly productive, giving insights concerning the manner in which shared understandings are constructed. We refer to our interview material in all the chapters that follow. Of particular interest, for this second edition, is the evolution of understandings over time – a matter we return to below. First, however,

we provide a brief overview of the evolution of the EU itself as an external policy actor.

### **Evolution of the EU as an external policy actor**

Since its creation in 1958 the European Community, and subsequently the Union, has evolved considerably. It has expanded, through a series of enlargements, from six to twenty-five members. Four additional states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey) are candidates for membership and others have been offered membership in the future (the Western Balkans countries) or are actively seeking candidate status (Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics). Alongside this continuing expansion of membership, the years since 1958 have also witnessed a considerable increase in the scope of the Union's policy competences, most recently with the introduction of Economic and Monetary Union and the launch of the euro in 2002. The tensions between these processes of widening and deepening, and the institutional changes required to accommodate them, remain very much a current issue.

The early phases of community building in Europe took place in the aftermath of the Second World War, at a time when Cold War tensions were increasingly evident. Thus European policy elites faced two major challenges – the need to reconstruct their economies and societies; and the need to ensure a stable and secure external environment in which the processes of reconstruction might prosper. In 1950 this latter concern was largely met through the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which effectively linked United States military capabilities to the defence of Western Europe. Nevertheless, the need to secure peaceful relations between the states of Western Europe remained, as did aspirations to create a strong, united (Western) Europe capable of playing an important role in the post-War world.

To this end, two 'community-building' proposals were launched in the early 1950s. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), established in 1952, aimed to initiate a process of economic integration, sector by sector, which would gradually reconfigure the political landscape of Europe. Alongside the ECSC proposals, ambitious plans were launched for a European Defence Community (EDC). This essentially federalist proposal envisaged a fully integrated European army under supranational control. The defeat of this proposal, after more than two years of debate, was a major setback for federalist aspirations. It ensured that the traditional subject matter of International Relations – foreign and security policy and defence – were excluded from the formal policy agenda of the European Community. They remained so for decades.

The European Community, established in 1958, was an exclusively civilian body. The Treaty establishing the European Communities (TEC) made no mention of foreign or security policy; nor, indeed, of the environment, an area of external policy where the Union has become an important global player. Responsibility for 'external economic relations', however, was entrusted to the Community. This flowed directly from the aspiration to create a common internal market, which necessitated formation of a customs union and levying a Common Commercial Tariff (CCT). In consequence the EC was accorded responsibility for formulation and implementation of external



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trade policy – a responsibility which was to include external representation and negotiation by the Commission (on behalf of the Member States) in matters of international trade.

A further sphere of external activity accorded to the Community by the TEC was the creation of association agreements with third countries, ‘involving reciprocal rights and obligations, common action and special procedures’ (TEC Article 310). This provision formed the basis for the construction of a vast network of differentiated and multi-faceted agreements between the EC and countries and regional organizations in all parts of the world. More specifically, it provided the foundation for a distinctive ‘Community’ approach to development cooperation. Chapters 5 and 6 consider in some detail the development and current scope of the Union’s complex networks of external relations.

This significant growth of the Community’s external economic activities was strengthened by the provisions of the 1987 Single European Act (SEA). The SEA, in providing for completion of the internal market, greatly increased its attractiveness to third parties, bringing demands for privileged market access from all regions of the world. The ability to grant, deny or withdraw such access remains among the most important policy instruments available to the Union. Moreover the magnetic effect of the single market continues to generate demands for membership or closer association, thus providing the Union with its most important source of external influence. Undoubtedly it is the economic strength of the Union that provides the foundation for all its external activities, and Chapter 3 carries a heavy burden in establishing the Union’s roles as economic power and trade actor.

The SEA had significance, also, for the growth of the Union’s roles as foreign policy actor and in global environmental diplomacy. Both these policy areas had developed outside the TEC provisions but were formally incorporated by the SEA. In relation to environmental diplomacy, the SEA explicitly recognized the importance of this policy area. It also provided for qualified majority voting, thus enabling the Community to participate more effectively in international negotiations on ozone depletion in the late 1980s (see Chapter 4).

In terms of foreign policy, the SEA began a process of institutionalizing a system of foreign policy coordination between Member States, known as European Political Cooperation (EPC), that had begun in 1970. In this ‘high politics’ area of traditional international relations, however, the EPC process remained outside the Community framework. While habits of cooperation were established among Member State foreign ministers, diplomats and officials, it was not until the end of the Cold War, followed by entry into force of the Treaty on European Union in 1993, that attempts were made to develop a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for the newly created European Union, and thus to give overall political direction to external policy.

The TEU undoubtedly had importance for the development of the Union’s roles as a global actor. It incorporated the aim that the Union should ‘establish its identity on the international scene’ (Article 2) and provided, for the CFSP, a set of general objectives (Article 12) and policy instruments (Articles 13–15). For the first time, too, an institution to support the formulation of foreign policy was established within the EU framework, in the form of Directorate-General E of the Council Secretariat.