

New Horizons in European Studies

Aston University, 24-25 April 2014

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EU foreign policy coherence towards Latin America: Strategic or accidental?

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Paper presented at the UACES student forum 15th Annual Conference, Aston University, Birmingham, 24-25 April 2014

Abstract. Researchers and policymakers alike have lauded the European Union's foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean as an example for successful EU policy coordination across different policy areas internally, and across regional partners—countries and organizations alike—externally. Since the early 2000s the EU has slowly moved away from such a unified foreign policy approach towards the continent. However, the success of the policy at the time, and the degree of coherence observed still make the 1990s a prime example for studying how EU foreign policy coherence can originate. While past research on EU-Latin American relations has pointed to the policy's success overall, less attention has been paid to its origins. The aim of this paper is thus to understand whether the EU's foreign policy at the time was truly the result of strategic choices. To achieve this, the origins and further development of the EU's Latin America policy will be traced in line with the EU's institutional development. The paper will argue that EU-internal institutional and political conditions after the Treaty of Maastricht allowed for the development of a strategy for a foreign policy towards Latin America. Its ultimate success, however, can be explained by a political and economic opening in Latin America.

Introduction

Researchers and policymakers alike have lauded the European Union's (EU) foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as an example for successful EU policy coordination across different policy areas internally, and across regional partners—countries and organizations alike—externally (See for instance Börzel and Risse 2009; Grabendorff and Seidelmann 2005; Grisanti 2004; Grugel 2004; Söderbaum, Stålgren, and Van Langenhove 2005).

Latin America has never been at the top of the EU's foreign policy agenda. The region is geographically distant from mainland Europe; and the United States have been keen on maintaining exclusive and close ties with much of LAC throughout most of the 20th century. Certain policy instruments, such as a EU membership perspective, often times considered the ultimate element of political conditionality in the EU's external relations, are absent in the Union's relations with Latin America. Nevertheless, the European Union and its member states have to be considered important actors in LAC since the 1980s and especially after the end of the Cold War (Youngs 2002) when the EU conducted policies that were supportive of democratic transitions on the continent.

More recent European interest in the region despite its geographical distance and the relatively low economic stakes involved can be explained by certain similarities between both continents. Its cultural cohesiveness and the LAC's degree of political integration have made it the prime target for the EU's policy of promoting regionalism. During the 1990s such aims of promoting interregional ties have formed the core of the EU's foreign policy towards Latin America. Developing a "one-size fits all approach" (Börzel and Risse 2009, 10), the EU has aimed at applying this goal uniformly across the different subregional organizations in LAC. The conclusion of various agreements with the Central American Common Market (1993), the Andean Community (1996), as well as

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Mercosur (1995) underline the EU's attempt to structure its relations with LAC on such a basis.

The so-called EU-Mexico Global Agreement is a perfect example for the success of the EU's attempts to negotiate comprehensive Association Agreements in LAC for multiple reasons. This is due to the fact that it covers multiple of the EU's key foreign policy dimensions in the region.

Overall, the EU has sought to link different aspects of its foreign policy; namely connecting trade policy to development questions and elements of political dialogue. This phenomenon of emergent foreign policy linkages across policy fields could be observed in different scenarios despite a division of the EU's foreign policy across the different institutional pillars created with the Treaty of Maastricht (Stetter 2004, 2007). Subsequent treaties have furthermore aimed at an institutional integration of the different aspects of the EU's foreign policy that used to be separated by the EU's pillar structure. The EU's relations with LAC regional organizations and countries are structured along three dimensions: 1. Trade/commerce 2. Cooperation (primarily development policy) 3. Political dialogue. The EU's aim in deepening ties with partners in Latin America has been to establish and further relations across all three dimensions in parallel, so as to ensure coherence across the different policy fields.

However, since the coming into force of the so-called EU-Mexico Global Agreement in 2000—a perfect example of the success of the policy—the foreign policy that the EU conducts towards LAC has shifted in two important ways: Firstly, agreements that the EU has entered into with the region are no longer exclusively comprehensive in nature. This means that unlike the latter agreement, the treaties concluded since then often times cover only one policy area instead of multiple ones. Secondly, the EU's stated aim has been to negotiate such agreements only with relevant regional organizations in LAC. Mexico presented an exception in this regard as it does not belong to any substantive regional organization in LAC. However, since the coming into force of the latter agreement, the EU has concluded treaties increasingly on a bilateral basis despite the existence of suitable regional partner organizations. The emergence of so called strategic partnerships with a limited set of third countries shows a similar separation of political issues from other substantive policies.

The exploration of the change of policy that has occurred since the early 2000s as well as its underlying reasons is a key subject in research on the topic at present and has sparked a renewed debate on the concept of interregionalism (See for instance Hardacre and Smith 2009; Santander 2010a, 2010b). However, a necessary debate as to the reasons for the recent change of the EU's policy will necessitate a re-evaluation of the successful prior policy of the 1990s. While its merits have been discussed extensively in the literature cited at the beginning of this paper, the underlying reasons for the emergence of such a coherent and successful LAC policy at that time have not been explored sufficiently. Such an analysis is necessary, however, when wanting to comprehend the reasons that drove the EU's later policy change.

This paper argues that the EU has indeed managed to entertain a coherent LAC policy during the 1990s that is the short-term manifestation of broad and longer-term policy aims. This could be achieved principally due to dynamics at play after the adoption of the Treaty of Maastricht. More specifically, the European Commission and particular Member States have been key in advancing such a policy, which was particularly well-received in Latin America at the time. The paper will not discuss the emergence of a change of policy since then, but lay the groundwork for comprehending the underlying reasons for this change in future research.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The next section elaborates on the concept of EU foreign policy coherence that is the basis for the article's overall

argument. The paper then provides an overview of important developments in the EU's relations with LAC during the 1990s, followed by an elaboration of global factors that have shaped the EU's LAC policy at the time. The remainder of the article discusses the specific influence of the European Commission as well as that of Member States and individual Council presidencies on the development of the EU's LAC policy during that time period.

EU foreign policy coherence: What does it mean?

There is an inherent difficulty in studying the foreign policy of a non-state entity such as the European Union. While the study of foreign policy is well developed for state actors, it has been used less with regards to international organizations. After all, the EU is not a state, does not dispose of a foreign ministry, and conducts multiple policies that have a foreign policy remit. As a researcher, one has to accept that an embryonic foreign service in the form of the European External Action Service (EEAS)², other European-level institutions such as various Directorates' General (DGs) of the European Commission, as well as national foreign ministries are all involved in what can be termed a European Union foreign policy.

Michael E. Smith (2008) has pointed to these challenges for conducting research into what he calls European Foreign Policy (EFP). For him, this term encompasses the co-ordination of European states' foreign policy, either at the national level, or by making use of the EU's institutions and policies, or as a mix of both.

While this term certainly encompasses the object of interest for this project, it is too broad in that it includes specific national foreign policies that, when taken together, form part of a European Foreign Policy.

Another concept used in research is that of a "European foreign policy system" as developed by various authors (K. E. Smith 2003; M. E. Smith 2008; White 1999). The definition used for this concept developed largely as a result of the fact that the EU's foreign policy is broader than what falls under its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This paper's scope takes into account that many European Union policies have consequences beyond the Union's borders, as well as the parallel existence of Member State foreign policies. One therefore has to take note of the existence of multiple levels of decision-making in the European foreign policy system, as well as of the complex interaction of the different actors involved in it. The methodological approach of a "Multilevel Foreign Policy" (Foradori, Rosa, and Scartezzini 2007) of the EU furthermore cautions not to see EU-level foreign policy in isolation from the member state level.

While the above concepts are useful in delimiting the potential scope of European foreign policy overall, the definition of EU foreign policy used will be narrower for the purposes of this paper as its aim is to understand the EU's relation with LAC. The main level and scope of the analysis are hence EU-level decision-making on the policy that underpins the EU's relations with the region.

This follows the approach taken by Frennhoff Larsén (2007) which posits that EU foreign policy making is based on a three level game, namely the international, the EU-level, as well as the member state level. What is key, however, is that the EU level is at the centre of the analysis. It is only under such an assumption that one can consider the emergence of a coherent EU foreign policy.

² Before the entry-into-force of the Treaty of Lisbon these responsibilities were shared—amongst others—between the High Representative, DG Relex, as well as the European Commission's delegations. The argument remains the same for the time period relevant in for this paper.

Literature on the issue of EU foreign policy coherence can help identify which mechanisms to consider in particular when discussing the EU's LAC policy. Hartmut Mayer (2013, 107) has developed a conceptualisation of EU foreign policy coherence that is based on five different factors: vertical, horizontal, strategic, narrative, and external engagement coherence. All of these factors are key to determine whether the EU's LAC policy during the 1990s can indeed be considered to be coherent. What follows is a brief elaboration of all these factors in the context of the EU's LAC policy. While all the terms are borrowed from Mayer's classification, some will be defined somewhat differently given the scope of this paper.

Horizontal policy coherence describes the coordination of various policy areas across different decision-making bodies at the EU-level. Given the complexity of different institutional actors at the EU-level intra-actor coherence is equally key. This refers in particular to the European Commission and its different Directorates General, but to a certain extent to the Council as well. Only when these different actors coordinate their policy stance can the EU's foreign policy be considered coherent.

The same is the case for *vertical policy coherence*, meaning that the EU-level policies are coordinated with that of the EU's member states. It is key that "Member States carry on trying to exert influence from *within* these institutions [the Council or the Commission]" (Carta 2012, 3), rather than subverting the EU-level foreign policy by an independent and different foreign policy position. Even if one were to establish the coherent nature of the EU's foreign policy horizontally, this can be undermined by contrary Member State policies. It is therefore necessary to consider the role of key EU member states for this policy in particular.

The issue of *strategic coherence* needs to be considered as well. Mayer describes what needs to be fulfilled for strategic coherence to occur: "[s]imilar or overlapping policies would follow the same principles, values and aims", as well as being adopted according to the same procedures (2013, 107). The key element to take away from this definition is the procedural dimension, where similar situations are being treated in a similar way. Due to the remit of this paper, this is closely related to the issue of *external engagement coherence*. Since the EU has identified LAC as a target for its regionalism policy, the relationship that it enters into with specific countries or regional organizations should be coherent across the board.

Lastly, the EU's *narrative* has to fit its policy action so as to avoid a gap between its rhetoric and what it actually does.

In the elaboration of the EU's LAC policy in the remainder of this paper, the EU-level forms the point of departure of the analysis. The decisions taken at that level are compared to the different factors necessary to establish policy coherence, followed by an analysis of which elements were necessary for the emergence of the policy.

EU-LAC relations during the 1990s: An overview

This paper takes a closer look at EU's Latin America policy during a time period that stretches from the signature of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 to the ratification of the EU's Global Agreement with Mexico in 2000. The focus is in particular on the negotiations of the latter agreement, as well as the progress made in the relationship with different LAC regional organizations. Of additional interest is the beginning of the EU-LAC summit format that emerged during this time period, with the first summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1999. A discussion of the EU's relationship with the Caribbean countries is excluded from this overview, as it operates under the different umbrella of the ACP group of states.

General developments: The basis for the EU's promotion of regionalism was laid at the 1992 Lisbon summit. The summit's conclusions phrased this aim as "promoting regional political stability and contributing to the creation of political and/or economic frameworks that encourage regional cooperation or moves towards regional or subregional integration" (European Council 1992, 31). The promotion of regionalism was thus one of the goals for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) established with the Treaty of Maastricht.

The EU's view towards LAC as a unit is present in the first documents that outline the organization's stance towards the region. In October of 1994 the Council published a 'basic document' on the EU's relations with LAC (Council of the European Union 1994). The document outlines the state of EU's relations with the region at the time overall, equally offering a differentiation by subregional organizations. While the outline of the relationship provided is detailed, the only concrete proposal for an enhanced relationship is contained in the section on the EU's relationship with Mercosur and Chile³, as it specifically mentions the prospects of negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the region.

In the same month, based on the Council Conclusions of the Corfu summit earlier in the same year, the European Commission published a Communication on a proposed strategy to enhance the EU's relations with Mercosur (European Commission 1994). The technical document outlined an enhancement of the relationship in two phases that would end in a comprehensive Association Agreement with the region. As a first step the negotiation of a so-called Framework Cooperation Agreement that would allow for further negotiations was proposed.

1995 saw the European Commission becoming more and more active in the relationship. Without being specific to LAC, a document from 1995 establishes regional integration policies as a core part of the EU's aims to support sustainable economic development in developing countries (De Lombaerde, Pietrangeli, and Schulz 2009).

The Commission equally issued a communication on the perspective for the EU's relations with LAC in the 1996-2000 period (European Commission 1995). This can be considered as an outline for a broad EU-LAC strategy. The document contains a long list of reasons for the EU to increase its cooperation with the region, and particularly the favourable political climate that preceded a stabilization of the region's economies. Aside from these more general reasons for an increased cooperation, the document mentions that Europe is the region's most important development aid donor, that the number of political meetings between the EU and the region has increased, and that it is an important export market for the EU. An emphasis on these issues follows the tripartite structure of the different policy areas to be covered under comprehensive Association Agreements. On the basis of the underlying analysis the document then proposes to further the relationship across all three policy areas, using an interregional cooperation framework overall. The document even goes so far as to specifically name Mercosur, Central America and the Andean Community of Nations as subregional organizations with which Association Agreements should be pursued.

The next important set of documents relating to the relationship overall was published in 1999. During the first half of that year the European Commission published an update to its 1995 strategy document (European Commission 1999a), outlining new goals for the relationship. This fell in the immediate preparation period of the first EU-LAC summit due to be held later that year. In this document the Commission proposes to develop a "strategic partnership" (European Commission 1999a, 8) with the region,

³ Throughout the 1990s the EU has treated Mercosur and Chile as a single entity, due to a general belief that the country would eventually join the regional organization (See Garcia 2011).

based on the same three principles developed earlier. The document thus serves to reemphasize the Commission's, and thus ultimately the EU's goals in LAC.

The 1999 Rio summit between the EU and LAC was a novelty for the relationship between the two continents. It brought together the heads of state and government from both regions and has to be seen primarily as a symbolic act that emphasised the relationship between the two continent. The summit's Rio declaration (EU-LAC summit 1999) underlined the common interests between the two region, listed existing areas of cooperation and outlined general areas to strengthen the relationship. However, the document did not outline concrete proposals as to how the relationship between the regions would be strengthened in detail. Nevertheless, the summit proved to be an important factor to relaunch the relationship overall, as well as to accelerate negotiations on various agreements with different subregional organizations.

The Rio summit also caused a flurry of public information activity, with the European Commission publishing an information booklet on the EU's relations with LAC in June of that year (European Commission 1999b). In 2000 the Commission published a follow-up document to the Rio summit (European Commission 2000). Much like the summit's declaration it does not contain any radically new proposals for enhancing the relationship with the exception of the Commission's aim to implement the so called EU-Mexico Global Agreement that had been reached by then. Rather, the document is primarily concerned with the reaffirmation of prior goals in the relationship.

Mercosur and Chile: While the EU has interacted with Mercosur since its inception in 1991 (Faust 2004), the relationship was substantiated and formalized during the Spanish Council presidency in 1995. On the first day of the Madrid European Council, a so called Framework Cooperation Agreement was signed with Mercosur (Council of the European Union 1995), which was meant to pave the way for negotiations on a comprehensive Association Agreement with the regional organization. A similar agreement was reached with Chile at the Florence European Council in 1996 (Council of the European Union 1996).

There were several attempts at beginning negotiations on an actual Association Agreement with Mercosur, and the European Commission became particularly keen to start negotiations in 1998 (Allen and Smith 1999, 103). Due to disagreements concerning the negotiation mandate on the European side, this was significantly delayed. The major impetus for the beginning of negotiations can be attributed to the 1999 Rio summit, which ended with high expectations in terms of a renewed cooperation between the regions for all the participants (Kegel and Amal 2012). The EU's negotiation mandate for an Association Agreement was finally agreed on in September of 1999, and negotiations began in April 2000 (European Commission 2005). These have, over time, run into significant difficulties and an agreement had not been reached by April 2014. Negotiations on a similar agreement with Chile that began at the same time were finalized by 2002.

Mexico: A Framework Cooperation Agreement with Mexico (Council of the European Union 1991) was reached as early as 1991, before the entry-into-force of the Treaty of Maastricht. By 1997 the EU had concluded a comprehensive agreement with Mexico, called the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)*. While its name differs from that of an Association Agreement, its contents are similar, as the agreement spans across all three dimensions of interregional cooperation. However, the 1997 agreement did not cover the trade dimension yet, as this had to be negotiated separately. Agreement in this dimension was reached in November of 1999 and it entered into force in 2000.

The agreement represented the first successful instance of a transatlantic free trade accord that was equally unprecedented in its depth and cross-policy linkage at the time (Szymanski and Smith 2005). The EU's conclusion of the agreement stands out due to the bilateral nature of negotiations from the outset and it has to be considered as an outlier when comparing it to the EU's other attempts at negotiating agreements with partners in LAC. This is due to Mexico's geographical disconnection from LAC that is reinforced by its membership of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA)⁴, making it more of a North American, rather than Latin American partner that can serve a 'bridging' function between the North and the South of the continent (Grevi and Khandekar 2011; Hess 2009). The speed of reaching an agreement (negotiations began in 1996) despite important difficulties can equally be attributed to the EU's strategic considerations due to the country's NAFTA membership (De Lombaerde, Pietrangeli, and Schulz 2009).

Despite the uniqueness of the case, the conclusion of the agreement with the country represented a first occasion for the EU to negotiate and establish a comprehensive Association Agreement in LAC in accordance with its policy goals. This is particularly relevant, as Mexico, despite its support for Free Trade Agreements, was initially reticent to accept the components of a treaty with the EU that has come to be known as the 'democracy clause' (See Szymanski and Smith 2005 for an overview of the negotiation process).

Other actors: The relationship with the two remaining regional organizations, the Andean Community of Nations and Central America⁵, were not a focus of the EU's policy during the 1990s. The relationship to these two regions still progressed along similar lines to the two outlined above. In 1993 a basic Framework Cooperation Agreement was reached with Central America, establishing a political dialogue between the EU and the region. The 1996 Declaration of Rome achieved something similar, albeit less formalized, with regards to the Andean Community⁶. The negotiations for Association Agreements with the other partners took precedence, but a similar approach to these two regional organizations was never ruled out, and negotiations eventually began with both in 2007.

Comparing the EU's strategy documents on LAC and the progress in the relationship with different subregional organizations with criteria for a coherent EU foreign policy, one can conclude that these have been fulfilled. While it is impossible to judge as to the element of *vertical coherence* from this overview, the EU's *narrative* on LAC certainly fits with the policy undertaken. Furthermore, it has outlined a clear *strategy* for the enhancement of its relationship with the region on the basis of Association Agreements. Given that these link different aspects of the EU's policy and that a common approach has been used with regards to all subregional organizations, the criteria of *horizontal* and *external engagement coherence* have equally been fulfilled. On this basis one can begin to explore how such a coherent EU policy towards the region came into existence.

⁴ A Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico that dates back to 1994.

⁵ The EU regional partner organization in Central America is the Central American Common Market.

⁶ The EU's interaction with the Andean Community of Nations precedes this agreement and remains the oldest established relationship with a Latin American regional integration organization.

Background dynamics: A new Europe, a new global structure

With the Treaty of Maastricht, European integration had taken a qualitative leap forward. The creation of a single European Union as a result of the treaty, the creation of a specific Common Foreign and Security Policy, as well as a general enlargement of the organization's competencies made for a period of dynamism that occurred in parallel to the strengthening of Europe's relationship with LAC. On this basis, part of the EU's commitment to Latin American regional integration need to be explained by factors that go beyond traditional models of rational decision-making.

The extensive literature on the EU-LAC relationship emphasizes that the EU's commitment to interregionalism and policy-linkages cannot be explained by the rational model alone (Börzel and Risse 2009; Grabendorff and Seidelmann 2005; Grugel 2004; Meunier and Nicolaidis 2011; Söderbaum, Stålgren, and Van Langenhove 2005). After all, insisting on a "one-size fits all approach" (Börzel and Risse 2009, 10) for all of LAC can have economically detrimental effects for the EU. What has been claimed instead is that the promotion of the EU's own *identity* as a norm-based non-state actor influences its foreign policy-making as well. While the importance of this factor is contested (Woolcock 2012, 70–1), it should nevertheless be considered as a potential factor for the development of the EU's LAC policy during the 1990s.

A reasoning along these lines is able to account for the EU's emphasis on regional integration in LAC similar to that in Europe, and hence the insistence on negotiating agreements with subregional organizations only. Furthermore, this can account for Europe's aim of linking the different policy fields of development aid, cooperation and political dialogue, as well as trade together in the form of Association Agreements.

Another element to consider in the relationship with the region is the return of democracy and stability during the 1990s. All of the above-mentioned strategy documents refer to this important development in LAC, citing that this taken together with the resulting better conditions for doing business in the region should be reason enough for the EU to enhance the relationship. Furthermore, with the end of the Cold War, ideological differences and cleavages have become less relevant, opening up the possibility for enhanced globalization processes. Given Europe's importance as a global trade power, the EU was well placed to negotiate with LAC.

The return of democracy and stability in the region equally coincided with the willingness of many Latin American governments to open up their economies. Mexico's participation in NAFTA or the founding of Mercosur are indicative of this development. Mexico has been particularly active in the early 1990s to push for an enhanced relationship with Europe (Grabendorff 1991, 138–150). Mercosur countries were equally keen on deepening the relationship with the EU, and particularly in the trade realm (Allen and Smith 1999, 103).

The influence that the United States yields in the region should not be underestimated, and a consideration of this country is relevant for all analyses of EU-LAC relations, and is a regular theme in research on the relationship (Garcia 2008, 234; Grabendorff 2005; Gratius and Legler 2009; Roy 2010). In the context of Latin America's return to democracy and a generally more open economic attitude, a potential competition on market access between the EU and the US is an important factor. Europe's speedy negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Mexico, for instance, need to be seen in the context of the coming into effect of NAFTA in 1994, which risked a worsening of Europe's economic relationship with the country. From the Latin American perspective, a closer cooperation with the EU can also be interpreted as offering a potential alternative to a closer cooperation with the United States, or at least a

safeguard against unilateral dependence. The 1996 EU-Chile Framework Cooperation Agreement was particularly regarded as such in the country (Gabara 1996).

While the above general factors for an enhanced EU-LAC relationship are contrary in terms of their normative remit, they should nevertheless be considered as an important backdrop for the EU's relations with the region during the 1990s.

The European Commission: Structure and opportunity

The European Commission has a central role in the different policy areas that are relevant for the EU's policy towards LAC. It is responsible for negotiating trade agreements with third states (or organizations), and equally administers the EU's development cooperation funds. It is thus crucial to analyse its contribution to the emergence of a coherent approach towards the region during the 1990s.

The Commission is not a unitary actor and other institutions are involved in the relevant policy processes as well. Inside the European Commission, competencies for its LAC policy are split between different Directorates' General. DG Development, DG Trade and DG Relex⁷ in particular have stakes in the EU's Latin America policy. Adrian van den Hoven (2007, 62–64) has noted, for instance, that various interest groups within the Commission and across DG lines influence the EU's foreign trade policy. The division that he observed is along pro-trade and pro agricultural protectionism lines.

The way in which different Directorates' General are involved in those policy-areas has equally changed over time. Subsequent 'cabinets' in the European Commission have altered the responsibilities for different aspects of its foreign policy in important ways. The influence of the internal division of competencies on foreign policy outcomes has been noted by various authors (Frennhoff Larsén 2007; Garcia 2008, 225–6; 229–30; Holland 2002, 85–91).

The internal division of labour within the Commission during the period in question proved beneficial for developing a coherent policy towards LAC. "The Santer Commission's administrative logic emphasized region rather than policy area in designating responsibilities" (Holland and Doidge 2012, 102). Responsibilities were hence distributed among different Directorates General according to geography (Garcia 2008, 225). From this organizational perspective Latin America was regarded as a regional, rather than policy-focused issue (Orbie and Versluys 2008, 69), with the main responsibility lying with DG Development. Such a division of labour would obviously favour a policy that would see LAC as a single entity, and be beneficial to the aim of coordinating an overall policy towards the region across different policy fields.

Even when responsibility for LAC shifted to DG Trade under the following Commission in 1999, the tripartite structure of the external policy towards the region was upheld, as the aim of the administrative reform was to "define a coherent global approach that combined trade, aid and political dialogues" (Holland and Doidge 2012, 105).

As outlined above, the European Commission has defined the EU's LAC strategy to a large extent, and on some occasions even exceeded the Member States' aims at the time. For instance, the Commission had already aimed at negotiating Free Trade Agreements in LAC during the first half of the 1990s, but rapid progress was blocked by the EU's member states (Bergsten 1996, 112–13).

It was equally the European Commission that proposed to open negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Mercosur as early as 1998. While the Commission appears to have been united in furthering the policy towards some regions in LAC, this was not the case on this occasion, as the proposals were backed by a large number of

⁷ This is a part of the European External Action Service (EEAS) today.

Commissioner's but were opposed by the Commissioner responsible for agriculture (Allen and Smith 1999, 103).

Overall the European Commission has thus been a driver of the EU's coherent strategy towards LAC. This has been facilitated in particular by the internal organization of responsibilities for the region at the time.

Member States and Council Presidencies: Key junctures for the EU's policy

As in most EU policy areas, Member States played a key role in the evolution of the relationship with LAC. While, as the paper has shown before, progress in the relationship did not always occur as quickly as initially aimed at or as the European Commission would have preferred, Member States were largely in favour of an increased relationship with LAC on the basis of interregional Association Agreements. It is true, however, that certain Member States have been particularly active in promoting and furthering the relationship.

The commitment by all Member States to a general LAC strategy can be seen in an annex to the conclusions of the 1995 Madrid European Council (Spanish Presidency of the European Union 1995) in which Member States comment on the Commission's EU-LAC strategy document of the same year. The remarks are largely limited to a reaffirmation of the analysis present in the Commission document and they stress Member State commitment to the proposed policy, hence underlining Member State ownership of the policy.

This is not to say, however, that Member States have been continually united on the EU's LAC policy. For instance, in 1996 the United Kingdom initially attempted to block the signature of the Framework Cooperation Agreement with Chile over questions unrelated to the EU-LAC relationship, but eventually reversed its position (Gabara 1996). The beginning of negotiations with Mercosur has been delayed by an EU-internal split on the issue of the liberalization of agricultural products (Allen and Smith 2000, 116). In contrast, the negotiations with Mexico—where agriculture was not a key issue—did not face major opposition in Europe (Allen and Smith 1999, 104).

While differences in Member State stances on specific aspects of the EU's LAC policy have thus been present, these have proven to be limited and have not put the overall approach to the region into question. In the most relevant case of internal disagreement on Mercosur, the opening of negotiations on an Association Agreement was merely delayed and not halted.

A particularly important influence of individual member states on the EU's LAC policy can occur under the rotating Council presidencies of the European Union. Presidencies can serve to initiate and render policies more important that are of particular interest to the country at the helm. Furthermore, if a significant policy success occurs under a presidency this will likely be credited to the negotiations skills of that particular member state.

Germany and Spain have been particularly active in promoting and furthering the relationship with LAC. Both Member States have important economic interests in the region, supplemented by natural historical and economic ties in the case of Spain.

The publication of the first key document on EU-LAC relations, the basic document, falls into the period of Germany's 1994 presidency. However, the presidency did not put much of an emphasis on the relation with LAC overall. The concluding document of the 1994 Essen European Council (German Presidency of the European Union 1994) only devote two sentences to Latin America. These mention the basic document and reaffirm its goal, and furthermore refer to the possibility of opening negotiations with Mercosur on a Framework Agreement that would precede an eventual Free Trade Agreement.

In contrast the relations with the Mediterranean and with LAC were one of the foreign policy priorities of Germany's Council presidency in the first half of 1999. The priorities for the presidency published at its beginning emphasized the Rio summit due to take place towards the end of the presidency, as well as to progress on negotiations of different agreements with Mexico, Chile and Mercosur (von Kyaw 1999, 14). The 1999 Cologne Council Conclusions (German Presidency of the European Union 1999), written before the Rio summit, emphasized the summit's importance for the EU's relationship with LAC. The document also appeared hopeful that negotiations on the trade aspect of the Global Agreement with Mexico would be concluded within the same year. Germany was thus able to oversee significant progress in the relationship with LAC.

Spain was particularly keen to further the relationship with LAC during its Council presidency in the second half of 1995. The official document outlining the priorities for the presidency specifically refers to establishing stronger ties with LAC, namely by "increasing the existing cooperation and negotiating new treaties" (Comité Organizador de la Presidencia Española del Consejo de la Unión Europea 1995, 29; translation mine). In particular, the document refers to the negotiation of new treaties with Mercosur, Mexico, Chile and Cuba. As outlined earlier in the paper, the country was indeed successful at making significant progress along these lines.

While Italy has a lesser interest in the region than Spain or Germany, its presidency in the first half of 1996 equally contributed to a significant progress in deepening the relationship. The conclusions to the Florence Council (Italian Presidency of the European Union 1996) lists progress in the EU-LAC relationship across all subregions. The presidency aimed in particular at renewing and restructuring the dialogue and cooperation with Central America within the existing framework. This resulted in a declaration to that end signed in Florence under the auspices of the so-called San José dialogue. On the last day of Italy's presidency, the EU and the Andean Community furthermore signed the so-called Rome Declaration. Under this document the EU entered into a political dialogue with the region similar to that with Central America. Most notably, however, the Italian presidency negotiated the compromise that allowed the EU to enter into negotiations for an Association Agreement with Mexico.

Member States and specifically particular Council presidencies thus played an important role in the development of the EU-LAC relationship during the 1990s. Despite the fact that there were disagreements on specific issues between Member States, these did not put the overall nature of the relationship and the strategy based on interregional Association Agreements into question. While these factors are only indicative in judging as to the *vertical coherence* of the EU's policy, there is no indication that any of the Member States has undermined the EU's policy through its own actions.

Conclusion

Based on the adaptation of Mayer's framework for EU foreign policy coherence, this paper has shown that the EU has indeed entertained a coherent policy towards LAC during the 1990s. All relevant strategy documents treat the continent as an entity, and a similar approach to all its subregional organizations was proposed. The deepening of the relationship progressed more rapidly with some actors, while there were significant difficulties in negotiations with others. However, this did not lead to an abandonment of the overall goal of a one size fits-all approach towards the region.

The development of such a coherent policy was possible due to the European Commission's positive contribution to the process, as well as the entrepreneurship of different EU Member States during their Council presidencies. Ultimately, however, the policy needs to be seen in the context of the foundation of the European Union with the

Treaty of Maastricht and a number of global conditions that were beneficial for such a policy. Without a basic willingness in LAC to further the relationship with Europe, any attempt to implement such a policy would have been futile.

Based on the findings of this paper, it is possible to study the evolution of the EU's relationship with LAC since 2000 along the same lines. This will help to determine whether the EU's later policy still fulfilled all the criteria for foreign policy coherence, and if any of the underlying factors that have helped the policy to emerge have changed since then.

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