Weak Power, Great Influence: Small States in EU Foreign Policy. The Case of Belgium and Greece.

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I Introduction

While the study of small states\(^1\) has passed its climax in International Relations (IR), the progressive development of the European Union (EU) over the past few decades has given rise to a proliferation of studies on the subject of small states in Europe. The questions scholars aim at answering relate to the difficulties in defining small states, their behavior and their opportunities for influence (Goetschel 1998, Archer and Nugent 2002, Thörnblad and Wivel 2006, Steinmetz and Wivel 2010). Even though several studies have addressed the role of small states in the EU’s rapidly expanding international activities, most authors continue to disregard their role. The prevailing Realist reading of EU foreign policy\(^2\) (Hoffmann 2000, Gégout 2002, Hill 2004) states that it is dominated by the large member states, i.e. France, Germany and the United Kingdom, with success foremost dependent on the extent to which they have common interests. The ‘big three’ are considered to be a leadership group, precooking decisions which are then formally adopted by all member states. For small states there is not much choice other than to accept the authority of large member states.

Recent advances point out, however, that under specific conditions small states may yield substantial influence in EU foreign policy (Arter 2000, Ojanen 2000, Romsløe 2004, Björkdahl 2008, Bunse 2009, Jakobsen 2009). Based on a literature review, Jakobsen (2009: 86-88) has given an encompassing overview of factors explaining small states’ possibilities to influence EU foreign policy. He suggests that small states need to have a forerunner reputation, provide convincing arguments, excel in building coalitions and commit sufficient capabilities to support EU initiatives. Individual scholars place a different emphasis on the importance of all or a number of these factors.

Whereas these studies have expanded our understanding of the role of small states in EU foreign policy, they suffer from two shortcomings. First, they tend to cover separate policy areas of EU foreign policy (Finland and the EU’s Northern Dimension Initiative (Arter 2000, Bunse 2009), Sweden and the EU’s international environmental policies (Kronsell 2002) and EU conflict prevention (Björkdahl 2008), and the three Scandinavian countries in the development of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) (Ojanen 2000, Romsløe 2004, Jakobsen 2009). It can, nonetheless, not a priori be assumed that a given small state may be able to play an influential role in all areas of EU foreign policy. Studies demonstrate that there is neither a single group of actors nor a single resource of power that is strong enough to dominate the policy process across all policy areas (Willetts 1990; Hofmann and Türk 2006: 575). Whether and how small states’ possibilities for influence vary across policy areas is thus an empirical question. Second, studies of small states in IR remain largely cut off from studies conducted in the field of EU integration. This is remarkable given that the study of small states in IR has received significant scholarly attention over the past fifty years (for an overview, see Ingebritsen et.al. 2006). Linking the findings from studies of small states in Europe to the substantial body of scientific findings in IR might for that reason offer additional insights in the role of small states in EU foreign policy.

This paper therefore wishes to examine if, to what extent and in what manner small states may influence EU foreign policy. Without discounting the role of large member states, it is argued that, contrary to Realist thinking, small states are able to play an influential role in EU foreign policy. The paper proposes a framework for analysis that is based on a review of the small states literature in IR as well as EU studies. It is argued that this may not only add to our understanding of the role of small states in EU foreign policy but also lead to a better understanding of the EU’s foreign policy-making system as a whole. The framework is applied on a comparative study of two small states regarding two foreign policy dossiers which are of particular interest to them: the role of Belgium in EU foreign policy towards the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the role of Greece in EU foreign policy towards Turkey.\(^3\)
The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. A first part reviews the small states literature in IR and EU studies and proposes a framework for analyzing small states in EU foreign policy. The two subsequent parts examine the role of Belgium and Greece in EU foreign policy towards the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Turkey respectively. The conclusion rounds up the main findings and indicates areas for further research.

II A Framework for Studying Small States in EU Foreign Policy

The beginning of a ‘genuine school of small state studies’ can be situated in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. Early work was foremost preoccupied by the question of the survival of small states among the big powers. Besides the definitional issues related to the concept of ‘small states’, the bulk of research focused on what has become conventional wisdom to explain small state behavior, namely the system level of analysis. A consensus emerged that, in contrast to big states, small states try to maximize joint actions by targeting regional and international institutions (Rothstein 1968, Keohane 1969, Vital 1971, East 1973, Hey 2003). Subsequent scholars moved their attention to ‘the possible strategies small states might utilize to mitigate the effects of structural constraints’ (Ingebritsen et.al. 2006: 10). Authors like Vogel (1983) and Lindell and Persson (1986) proposed analytical frameworks that differentiate between ‘structurally determined behavior’ and ‘voluntary behavior’ of small states (Neumann and Gstöhl 2004: 7-10). This differentiation reflects two distinct levels of analysis, namely the systemic and state level respectively. Whereas the former can be referred to as the general environment which is impossible or very difficult for a small state to change, the latter relate to more direct causes of small state behavior (Lindell and Persson 1986: 80).

With the progressive development of the EU, several scholars turned their attention to the position of small states in Europe. In contrast to IR literature, this has resulted in a proliferation of studies which have almost exclusively focused on the strategies of small states. Regarding the systemic level, EU studies do not go beyond the prevailing consensus which sees the EU as a favorable policy context for small states to pursue their interests and to fend off raw power politics (Grieco 1998, Joenniemi 1998). Baillie (1998: 195) and Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006: 658) are one of the few authors that link structural factors to state strategies in the context of the EU. They emphasize the importance to take the institutional set-up into account within a given policy area when studying the role of small states. Consequently, this paper argues that additional insights might be offered when those systemic factors identified in IR are linked to small states’ strategies identified in EU studies. Figure 1 summarizes the factors identified in IR and EU studies, integrating both the systemic and the state level of analysis.

Systemic Level of Analysis

As Vogel (1983) does, Lindell and Persson (1986) propose an integrated analytical framework that embraces both systemic and state factors. Especially Lindell and Persson (1986: 80-85) have indentified three systemic factors which are particularly relevant for the study of small states in EU foreign policy: the structure of the system, the state of the system and the prevailing norms within a given system.

The structure of the system is defined as the extent to which a system is hegemonic or hierarchical, or whether it is characterized by a balance of power or not. In the context of the EU, this differentiation could be seen in terms of institutionalization: whether the policy area under investigation is densely institutionalized or whether it remains highly hierarchical. The varying extent of institutionalization is defined as a continuum designating the locus of decision-making, with at the one end a situation in which no or few EU-level decision authority has appeared (hierarchy) and at the other end a situation where policy decisions are governed by Community processes (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970, Risse-Kappen 1996, Jachtenfuchs 2001). As extensively discussed in the small states literature, the degree of institutionalization is positively
correlated with possibilities for small state influence. Conversely, when EU institutions play hardly any role in the policy process, it will be harder for small states to exert influence and they may find themselves within the ‘sphere of influence’ of one of the large member states.

A second systemic factor is the state of the system. This refers to the degree of tension and conflict between the dominating actors. It is generally assumed in IR that increased tension between the dominating actors leads to more possibilities for small states to exert influence. Lower tension or close cooperation between the dominating actors makes it much harder for small states to exert influence. This does, however, not imply that the relation between conflict among dominant actors and possibilities for small state influence is linear. It has been argued that there is an ‘optimal intensity of conflict or tension’. Up to this point, every increase in tension seems to be favorable to small states while when the degree of tension rises above this point, the possibilities for small state influence deteriorates (Frei 1969, Lindell and Persson 1986: 81-83).

Prevailing norms are a last systemic factor, especially those norms that restrict the right to use certain (material) resources. Norms are generally associated with a constructivist reading, stressing the importance of informal rules, roles and identities. Especially in a context of dense institutionalization such as the EU, the importance of socialization processes is underlined. Rather than calculating their behavior in order to maximize utility, actors will also act in accordance with socially constructed roles and institutional rules (Pollack 2005: 22-25, Tonra and Christiansen 2004). Smith (2004: 121-25) has identified five such norms in the context of EU foreign policy: confidentiality, consensus, consultation, ‘domain réservés’ and a prohibition against hard bargaining. The degree to which member states live up to these norms varies depending on the issue at stake and member states under consideration.

State Level of Analysis

Even though Baillie as well as Thorhallsson and Wivel integrate some systemic factors for explaining small state influence, subsequent studies have almost entirely focused on domestic sources of power to explain small state behavior and influence (Arter 2000, Kronsell 2002, Romsloe 2004, Björkdahl 2008, Jakobsen 2009). In his study of Finnish influence regarding the Northern Dimension Initiative, Arter (2000) points at the importance of innovative ideas and alliances as well as the ability to present oneself as an honest-broker. Kronsell (2002) argues that a small state’s reputation, expertise, national policies and undisputed national interest constitute key elements for small state influence. Whereas Romsloe (2004) highlights the importance of deliberation as a mode of interaction that facilitates small state influence, Björkdahl (2008) has drawn attention to the normative power of small states, their ability to use the rotating Presidency as an influence-enhancing tool and their diplomatic tactics. In his study, Jakobsen (2009) has made a first attempt to bring together those factors that small states must obtain to exert influence. He identifies four factors: a forerunner reputation, the use of convincing arguments, an engagement in honest-broker coalition building and the backing of initiatives with sufficient material capabilities.

For the purpose of this paper, four factors are put forward for explaining small state influence: commitment, network capital, immaterial resources and the ability to deliberate. These factors have been drawn from a review of the small states literature, the governance approach as well as theories of communicative action (see Nasra 2010).

The commitment of a small state is a first factor explaining influence. This commitment is measured in terms of relative salience or ‘the extent to which an actor will put into effect its potential to influence other actors and the decision outcome’. Those states that attach higher levels of relative salience to a policy issue are likely to display higher levels of activity, strengthening their position in the policy process (Arregui and Thomson 2009: 658-72).

Second, in a context of increasing functional interdependence, networks become important formations to accommodate member states’ interests, to forge a consensus and to involve those actors that are necessary to elaborate and implement EU policies (Keukeleire 2006). Small states’
embedment in these networks or their ‘network capital’ therefore becomes an important factor explaining influence. Network capital refers to the depth and breadth of the networks in which states are embedded. It has both a qualitative and quantitative dimension: while the former refers to contacts with those actors that have the necessary power resources, the latter is about the amount of contacts (Naurin 2007: 8-14).

The resources of small states are a third factor. These are assumed to be immaterial rather than material: the extent to which actors can add value through their expertise, contacts and knowledge. This refers primarily to content specific as well as procedural knowledge. While the former is about information of a subject specific matter, the latter indicates the process of negotiation and is about the command of the negotiation procedure (Tallberg 2006: 30, Björkdahl 2008).

A last factor explaining small state influence is its capacity to deliberate and argue strategically and to justify its national preferences. This implies the ability to steer debates towards a reasoned consensus: a situation in which actors try to ‘get the facts right’ and to acquire ‘common knowledge’ (Risse 2000: 8-14). To this end, small states may refer to some external authority to make validity claims, they need to project credibility and truthfulness in so far as the persuasiveness of their reasoning is concerned and arguments have to resonate with prior knowledge, agreed upon principles and norms, or commonly held worldviews (Ulbert and Risse 2005).

Figure 1 summarizes the systemic as well as the state factors and establishes their causal links. The next part turns to the empirical analysis that investigates the broad trends in the variations in the explanatory factors that determine the level of influence small states may wield.

Figure 1. A framework for analyzing small state influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>systemic level</th>
<th>state level</th>
<th>dependent variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. structure of the policy area  
2. state of the policy area  
3. norms | 1. commitment  
2. network capital  
3. immaterial resources  
4. deliberation | level of influence |

III Belgium and EU Foreign Policy towards the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Initial relations between the EU and the DRC date back to the late 1950s and were primarily centered on development and economic relations. From the 1990s onwards, political considerations were more explicitly pronounced and member states enhanced the EU’s visibility by appointing an EU Special Representative (EUSR) to the Great Lakes region (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and Uganda). The ensuing Congolese peace process (2002-2006) allowed the EU to deepen its role in the DRC, deploying two civilian (EUPOL and EUSEC) and two military (Artemis and EUFOR RDC) operations. Today, the EU is one of the key strategic partners of the DRC.

Until the late 1980s, Belgium pursued its relations with the DRC largely bilaterally with a focus on commercial and economic issues. As Central Africa largely lost its economic and commercial significance by the early 1990s, Belgium moved its Congo policy into a multilateral framework and pursued a more ‘political’ policy. The waning of the initial troika formula (United States, France and Belgium) incited Belgium from the mid-1990s onwards to look to the UN and, more in particular, the EU to pursue its objectives (Coolsaet and Soetendorp 2000: 141).

In what follows, some key issues characterizing EU foreign policy towards the DRC will be looked at, namely political relations, civilian missions and military operations. Table 1
summarizes the level of influence Belgium exerted vis-à-vis the main EU initiatives towards the DRC.

**Systemic Level of Analysis**

*Structure of the policy area.* For Belgium, the institutional context to pursue its objectives regarding the DRC has posed considerable challenges. The political relations, the civilian missions and the military operations that the EU has been conducting with and in the DRC all fall under an intergovernmental regime in which the role of the EU’s institutional actors is limited. Moreover, the issue of the DRC is of a very low priority to the majority of EU member states. Given that EU policies towards the DRC are primarily driven by member states, Belgium is faced with the constant challenge of keeping the DRC on the Council’s agenda, reinvigorating policy debates and fostering consensus among member states.

Although the role of the EU’s institutional actors is limited, Belgium has often relied on the High Representative (HR) and his/her Special Representative for the Great Lakes region (EUSR). Given that most member states lack expertise and diplomatic resources in the region, the HR/EUSR’s position as a neutral actor that provides EU-made information has allowed it to shape and frame Council debates, set the agenda and guide member states in the elaboration of their common positions. The launch of the civilian missions illustrate this role. From 2003 onwards, the EUSR together with the Africa desk of the High Representative’s Policy Unit explored the possibilities to integrate the European Security and Defense Policy’s (ESDP’s) civilian instruments in EU policies towards the DRC. After recurrent reporting by the EUSR, the HR sent a fact finding mission headed by officials from his Policy Unit to undertake an in-depth assessment to be presented to the Political and Security Committee (PSC). Even if a civilian dimension to EU policies towards the DRC were at that point at least debatable, the HR managed with the support of only a handful of member states to gather a critical mass to approve the launch of two limited civilian missions (Nasra 2010).

*State of the policy area.* The DRC is of little interest to most EU member states. Apart from those member states that have extended development programs, such as Germany, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, and those with a general interest for Africa, such as Italy, Portugal and Spain, only France and the United Kingdom have shown a particular interest in the DRC. The historic tension between France and the United Kingdom has for long been the main reason why the EU’s role did not go beyond mere development and humanitarian relations. In order to advance its objectives, Belgium thus had to aim at bridging the differing positions of both countries. Belgium skillfully used its Presidency of the second half of 2001 to that end: by putting the Great Lakes on the agenda of every Council meeting, issuing Council conclusions and launching the first-ever troika mission to the region, Belgium ‘set the locomotive in motion for long-term EU commitment towards the region’ (Bunse 2009: 123-54).

In the following years, relations with the big countries would be important to advance EU policies, in particular regarding military operations. In the run-up to the Artemis and EUFOR RDC military missions in 2003 and 2006 respectively, the bilateral contacts between France and Belgium were important to steer the plans for the operation through the decision-making machinery. The close cooperation of the two countries in the Council bodies incited a political dynamic that fostered a critical mass of member states to support the (French-led) missions. Making use of the window of opportunity created by France, Belgium actively rallied for support to launch the missions (especially among the smaller member states).

However, when the large member states’ positions where at odds with Belgium’s, it has been very hard to advance its national objectives. At the end of 2008 member states discussed the possibilities to send a military mission to the east of the DRC. While Belgium, among other small states, pleaded strongly and openly for an EU mission and was very active in supplying its analyses and points of view in the various Council bodies, all large member states remained...
unfavorable to an EU intervention. The lack of a common appreciation of the situation in East Congo as well as the outspoken opposition of the large member states reduced the influence of Belgium to virtually none. One participant acknowledges that a country like Belgium cannot do much as long as there is no window of opportunity created by at least one large member state (Nasra 2010).

**Norms.** While the notion of special relationships is gradually losing its significance in a Union where global ambitions are rapidly expanding, the particular historic relations between Belgium and the DRC creates expectations on the part of member states towards Belgium. Participants in the Council acknowledge that a non-intervention of Belgium on the issue of the DRC in the Council would be remarkable. Member states expect it to play an active role and to share its first-hand information, contacts and analyses with other member states. In return, Belgium is offered a platform where it can defend and pursue its objectives. Even when most member states oppose a given initiative, such as the military option discussed in the Autumn of 2008, member states will still be interested to listen to Belgium. This relates to the unspoken rule stipulating that the considerations of member states with a specific interest in a given issue are taken into account.

Furthermore, Belgium greatly benefits from the prevailing culture of problem-solving in EU foreign policy and the inappropriateness of hard bargaining as a mode of interaction. This implies that member states have a tendency to deliberate and share information and points of view in order to come to common positions and actions. Several national and EU officials recognize the disproportionate amount of information Belgium has about the DRC vis-à-vis other member states. In a context where a problem-solving logic prevails, a member state is offered the opportunity to valorize these immaterial resources.

The discussions on a merger of EUSEC and EUPOL illustrates the possibilities that are offered by such a problem-solving style of policy-making. In early 2007, the Council Secretariat was working on an initiative to merge both civilian missions. While most member states supported the idea, hoping to cut costs of implementation, Belgium did not. Rather than isolating Belgium, it was offered the possibility to supply information and analyses based on the assessments of its national programs to both the Secretariat and key member states. Arguing that the missions were not yet fully fledged institutionally, Belgium claimed that the integration of both missions would risk jeopardizing the efficiency achieved on the ground. In the end, the Council Secretariat did not issue any formal proposal (Nasra 2010).

**State Level of Analysis**

**Commitment.** Belgium’s willingness to put into effect its potential to influence EU foreign policy towards the DRC is reflected in its high level of activity in Council bodies and in its elaborate national policies towards the DRC. Several participants in the Africa Working group (COAFR) and the PSC confirm that only a handful of member states are actively and regularly involved in the discussions on the DRC. Belgium takes up a central role among EU member states, aiming at keeping the DRC on the Council’s agenda and at fostering consensus among member states in favor of (or not to obstruct) EU initiatives towards the DRC.

In addition, Belgium maintains elaborate and extensive bilateral relations with the DRC: it maintains the biggest foreign mission in the DRC, its ministers frequently visit the country and its foreign minister has his/her own personal envoy for the region, complementing traditional diplomatic staff. Belgium is the only member state to run bilateral military programs in the DRC. These national policies are crucial: when one is able to draw upon and refer to own experiences and commitments, one’s arguments and points of view gain in importance and are taken into account, by both small and big member states (Nasra 2010).

**Network Capital.** Belgium is firmly embedded in a dense network of actors, existing of EU member states, the EU’s institutional actors and external actors. Belgian officials are foremost in
touch with a group of EU member states that are recurrent partners in relation to the DRC: France, the UK, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Especially with France, contacts are intense and bilateral coordination and information meetings are frequent, in Brussels as well as in Paris. Examples are a joint paper of France and Belgium in which both countries urged the Council Secretariat to work out a civilian dimension to the existing policies as well as the coordination of national positions such as in the run-up to the March 2009 visit of France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy to the DRC.

A second group of actors through which Belgium exerts influence are the EU’s institutional actors, inside as well as outside of Brussels. The Council Secretariat’s and the EUSR’s entrepreneurial role in particular has offered extensive possibilities for Belgium to advance EU activity into areas in which it has an interest. For Belgium, it has been of utmost importance to be on the same line as the EUSR, either to move him/her to its position or to align itself with him/her. The secondment of national officials is a useful tool in this respect. Even though these officials are assumed to be independent, they can help to get national perspectives more easily taken into account. In the Council Secretariat, Belgium has seconded various national officials in the High Representative’s Policy Unit, in the services of the EUSR as well as in the missions in the DRC.

Lastly, forums and partners outside the EU have been important allies for Belgium too. Close contacts with international partners have reinforced Belgium’s possibilities to wield influence in the EU: either directly by strengthening its expertise and credibility or indirectly via EU institutional actors, seconded officials (e.g. in the civilian and military missions) and key member states that are active in the DRC. Belgium maintains frequent bilateral diplomatic contacts on the DRC with Canada, Japan, Norway, South Africa, the United States and to a lesser extent China as well as multilaterally in the framework of the Worldbank, International Monetary Fund, Club of Paris and regional contact groups. Also in the UN, Belgium actively tries to advance its views and analyses. During its membership in the UN Security Council (2007-08), Belgium invested substantially in the DRC, namely in the issue of illegal exploitation of natural resources and in the renewal of MONUC’s mandate (Nasra 2010).

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**Immaterial resources.** Belgium has devoted relatively little material resources to EU initiatives towards the DRC. Most of its efforts are immaterial, keeping the DRC on the agenda, sharing of information and fostering consensus among member states. In elaborating the plans for the civilian missions for instance, the High Representatives’ Policy Unit picked up the concept of brassage from Belgian programs in the DRC. This idea denotes the integration of the DRC’s four regional military factions into one national army. The concept was subsequently translated into a proposal that laid the ground for EUSEC. Another example is the above-mentioned discussion on a possible integration of the two civilian missions. Employing its information and analyses, Belgium managed to convince its counterparts in the Council and the Council Secretariat not to merge both missions (Nasra 2010).

Also its procedural knowledge can be cited as a factor that allowed Belgium to advance its interests. Its 2001 Council Presidency allowed Belgium to ‘set the locomotive in motion for long-term EU commitment towards the region’ (Bunse 2009: 154). The immediate challenge was to move Africa, and the DRC in particular, from the development into the foreign domain in the Council. To this end, Belgium focused on easing out the tensions between the UK’s and France’s Africa positions which had long been at odds. By putting the Great Lakes on the agenda of every Council meeting, issuing Council conclusions and launching the first-ever troika mission to the region, Belgium used its unmatched expertise on the topic as well as the power of the chair to commit the EU more deeply to the Great Lakes (Bunse 2009: 123-31).

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**Deliberation.** Over the past decade, Belgium has proposed – on its own or in concert – several innovative ideas and arguments that have shaped the EU’s engagement in the DRC. In the run up to its Presidency, Belgium published an action plan that sketched out the core elements for a future EU approach towards the Great Lakes and which was later adopted by all member states (Bunse
2009: 123-26). Another example is the development and continuation of the civilian missions. Besides their intrinsic value, these ideas were also strategic as they facilitated a consensus-building process: they eased the suspicion of those member states that viewed Africa solely in terms of development policies and which were reluctant to link a strong political, civilian and military dimension to the EU’s engagement in the DRC.

Table 1. Overview of the level of influence of Belgium vis-à-vis the main EU initiatives towards the DRC (2000-2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>initiative</th>
<th>preferences of Belgium</th>
<th>preferences of other member states</th>
<th>influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-DRC political relations</td>
<td>outlining the EU’s political relations/objectives towards the DRC in a body of Council conclusions</td>
<td>FR-UK positions at odds; IT, ES, PT in support; other member states neutral/reluctant.</td>
<td>high: troika mission and Council conclusions (12330/01, 13802/01 and 15078/01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artemis</td>
<td>support United Nations (UN) request to launch EU military mission</td>
<td>strong support of FR; DE remains absent; UK is hesitant; support of AT, ES, IE, IT, PT, SE.</td>
<td>high: mission launched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUSEC/EUPOL</td>
<td>supports a civilian dimension to EU policies</td>
<td>member states are favorable; overall little practical support</td>
<td>high: missions launched and BE concept is backbone of EUSEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUFOR RDC</td>
<td>support for UN request to launch EU military mission</td>
<td>FR in favor (refuses lead); UK hesitant/absent; DE reluctant/negative</td>
<td>medium: mission launched but remains short and geographically limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion to merge EUSEC and EUPOL</td>
<td>opposed to merge the two missions</td>
<td>member states and Council Secretariat in favor</td>
<td>high: no merger of missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion to launch military missions</td>
<td>support to launch a military mission</td>
<td>opposition of DE, FR, GR, IT and UK; support of ES, FI, IE, SE</td>
<td>no mission launched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nasra (2010)

Additionally, Belgium emphasizes that it has no hidden political and/or mercantile agenda. As one Belgian official puts it: ‘Belgium no longer has any vital interests to protect in Central Africa, even in the DRC, despite its potential riches. But it is convinced that it has a moral responsibility to demonstrate solidarity with the region in Africa it knows best and where it still has numerous ties’ (cited in Bunse 2009: 129). Belgium has acquired a reputation among EU member states as a predictable and consensus-minded country that openly seeks to establish a strong European profile in the DRC. As Belgium realizes that its actions may arouse possible suspicion from its European counterparts, it aims at resonating its arguments by appealing to the overall aims and values of the EU. It makes a strong moral case and argues that the EU has a historical responsibility to assist member states’ former colonies with their difficulties today. In addition, Belgian authorities highlight the general EU’s strategic interest to engage in regions that are geographically close to it.
Belgium’s argumentative efforts have also contributed to the launch of Artemis and EUFOR RDC. Along the support of France and the backing of the UN, Belgium pursued a very active multilateral and bilateral diplomacy in Council bodies in Brussels and in some key European capitals (notably London and Berlin), aimed at fostering a critical mass of member states to support (or not obstruct) the launch of both missions. In contrast, the non-intervention of the EU at the end of 2008 illustrates the limits of a small state’s deliberative efforts. While some member states favored a rapprochement of the DRC and Rwanda (France, Germany and the UK), Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Spain and Sweden were (strongly) in favor of launching an EU military mission. Despite their argumentative effort in the various Council bodies and their willingness to contribute combat forces, the opposition of all three large member states (and external actors – Rwanda, the US and South Africa) reduced the leeway for deliberative processes to take root and, as a result, for small states to exert influence (Wivel 2005: 402; Nasra 2010).

IV Greece and EU Foreign Policy towards Turkey

The relations between the EU and Turkey go back to the early days of the European Economic Community (EEC). In 1963, the EEC and Turkey concluded an association agreement which, although tentatively, included the possibility for EU membership. In 1995, the EU and Turkey established a Customs Union. Turkey’s application for membership in 1987 was lodged until 1999 when the European Council granted it candidate status. Even if Turkish membership has been considered highly problematic by many in the EU, member states unanimously agreed to open negotiations in December 2004. To date, twelve out of thirty-five thematic chapters are opened for negotiations, one chapter is provisionally closed and five chapters have been formally blocked by France (Nugent 2007: 481-82).

Whereas instability long reigned Greek-Turkish bilateral relations, the rapprochement in the late 1990s preceded a period of relative stability and closer cooperation between the two countries. This evolution reflects a changing Greek attitude within the EU as well. In contrast to the obstructionism and the unilateral making of foreign policy that characterized Greek foreign policy during the times of European Political Cooperation (EPC), today Greece’s foreign policy towards Turkey is firmly embedded in the EU’s foreign policy framework. Subsequently, Greece has actively aimed at influencing the way EU foreign policy is defined, formulated and produced (Kavakas 2000: 144-61; Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005: 225-26).

In what follows, several issues that are dealt with in the framework of the negotiations between the EU and Turkey will be looked at: Greek minorities, the Orthodox Patriarchate, good neighborly relations (delimitation of territorial waters, continental shelf, airspace) and the conclusion of a readmission agreement. Table 2 summarizes the level of influence Greece exerted vis-à-vis these issues.

Systemic Level of Analysis

Structure of the policy area. Since 2005, EU-Turkey relations are primarily dealt with in the framework of accession negotiations. Within this framework, Turkey is expected to adopt the EU’s acquis, comprising thirty-five thematic chapters. Before a thematic chapter can be opened for negotiations, the Commission screens the chapter and member states are required to agree unanimously. Before opening a chapter, member states define a list of benchmarks which involve a series of minimal conditions to which Turkey needs to comply. A similar procedure is followed to close chapters. As a result, the negotiations with a candidate country involve even more negotiations between EU member states and institutions than between the EU and the candidate country. This puts the candidate country in a highly asymmetrical context where there is little to negotiate about apart from the length and the quantity of transition periods. This leads analysts to
conclude that one cannot speak of real negotiations where two parties try to reach a mutually acceptable agreement (Verheugen 2000; Schrijvers 2007).

The process of intra-EU negotiations is characterized by specific institutional features. First, accession negotiations are a strict intergovernmental process granting each member state a veto-right. Second, the process is highly structured: the Commission publishes an annual progress report which forms the basis for discussions in the Council. At least once a year, at their December meeting, Heads of State and Government discuss the issue in the European Council. The accession dossier is frequently tabled on the Foreign Ministers’ agenda in the General Affairs Council (GAC) and is discussed by working groups on a weekly basis. Third, the Commission holds a strong position in the accession process. It prepares reports, submits its opinion and takes active part in discussions in the Council and European Council.

Even though the conclusion of a readmission agreement between the EU and Turkey is linked to the negotiations process (it figures as one of the opening benchmarks of chapter 24 ‘Justice, Freedom and Security’, although the screening report is still being negotiated), it does not follow the same institutional pattern. Two points need to be stressed. First, member states define the negotiating mandate for the Commission who conducts and concludes negotiations. The Council and the European Parliament (under Lisbon) have to approve the agreement. Contrary to the accession negotiations, readmission agreements are voted by qualified-majority. Second, the EU depends on the willingness of the external partner in order to proceed with the negotiations of the agreement. The Turkish refusal to negotiate such an agreement on the basis of the EU’s conditions has long constituted an obstacle to start negotiations. The more flexible EU stance and the linkage to chapter 24 of the accession negotiations has lured Turkey into negotiations.

Whereas Greece has not been able to advance much of its interests regarding readmission because of Turkish hesitation to start negotiations, the quasi-automatic character of the accession negotiations combined with the requirement for unanimity creates an optimal context for Greece to pursue its objectives. As every Presidency has wished to open at least one thematic chapter, Greece only needs to wait for the acting Presidency to put proposals on the table after which it can gradually increase its demands.

State of the policy area. EU accession negotiations with Turkey arouse great and increasing interest in the EU, both among member state governments and public opinion. Even though member state governments unanimously agreed to grant Turkey candidate status in 1999 and to open negotiations in 2005, member states remain divided over the issue. The three large member states do not agree on how future relations with Turkey should look like. While the United Kingdom wishes to see Turkey accede, France has made it clear that Turkey has no European vocation and has therefore blocked several chapters that are directly related to accession. Germany’s current government coalition holds opposing views, resulting in a rather ambiguous position. But even if the three large member states disagree about the outcome of negotiations, they do agree that the accession negotiations should continue as agreed in October 2005.

The current degree of tension between the large member states is highly favorable for Greece’s ambitions to define and formulate EU policy towards Turkey. Principally agreeing to Turkish accession, Greece openly aims at influencing the process of negotiations in line with its national priorities. Issues of prime importance to Greece are the situation of the Greek minority in Turkey, the situation of the Orthodox Patriarchate, good neighborly relations (delimitation of territorial waters, continental shelf, airspace) and the conclusion of a readmission agreement. Regarding the latter, only a few member states have shown an active interest in the issue. Apart from the countries directly concerned (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta), Germany, France and Sweden are the member states showing most interest. Given the pressing issue of illegal migration, no member state is opposed to the conclusion of the agreement. Yet, certain member states such as the UK are wary of the utilization of the issue to serve other goals related to the negotiation process.
Norms. Member states recognize the particular importance of Turkey to Greece, bringing it in a position where other member states pay particular importance to its position and arguments. The historic ties, the geographical proximity as well as the outstanding bilateral issues give Greece a prominent position among member states. Moreover, Turkey is a ‘securitized’ issue for Greece: Turkey is brought out of party political debate, Greek ‘national position’ is beyond any public debate and Turkey gives a perception of threat to Greek territorial integrity (Kavakas 2000: 150-51). All of these elements nurture this ‘special relationship’ in the eyes of member states. An important condition for member states’ understanding is the open and favorable position of Greece vis-à-vis Turkey’s EU bid. An example of this goodwill by member states can be found in the discussion about the readmission agreement. While the definition of the mandate and the conclusion of the readmission agreement is voted by qualified majority, member states would not easily outvote Greece on the issue given the possible national repercussions of an EU decision. Also the importance for Greece of the principle of third country national (TCN6) figures prominently in the Commission’s mandate. Although countries such as France and Germany might favor a less stringent EU position on TCN in order to grant the Commission sufficient leeway to negotiate an agreement, they support a strong reference to the principle.

The strategic importance of enlargement to the EU imposes, however, certain limits on the room for maneuvering for Greece. The European Commission, Germany, Sweden and the UK in particular are very cautious that Greece does not interpret the negotiating framework too broadly and solely in function of its national interests. This could not only jeopardize the process of accession with Turkey, it may also set precedents for future enlargement to the Balkans, where (future) member states like Slovenia (towards Croatia) and Croatia (towards Bosnia and Serbia) may follow the Greek example.

State Level of Analysis

Commitment. Greece and Turkey maintain intense and active bilateral relations. They are tight together by century-old historical bonds and shared cultural traits. Since the rapprochement of the late 1990s, the value of trade flows, joint ventures and foreign direct investment has grown rapidly (Tsarouhas 2009). Furthermore, Turkey carries a great political weight in Greece’s public debate. As pointed out, the securitization of Turkey makes it one of the key foreign policy priorities of Greece, regardless of the ruling government-party. Participants in the Council note the very active stance of Greek officials: they are very well prepared, they supply their colleagues with ample information and analyses and they advocate their points of view with vigor. Their behavior clearly reflects the strong national interests of Greece and the considerable amount of human and political capital that it invests in the issue. This active stance mirrors Greece’s appreciation of EU policies. Those bilateral issues that Greece addresses in the EU are often issues that it has not been able to resolve on a pure bilateral level. The readmission agreement illustrates this point. Apart from Bulgaria, Greece is the only member state to have concluded such an agreement with Turkey on a bilateral basis. But since the signing of the agreement in 2002, little has changed. Despite skyrocketing flows of illegal immigrants via Turkey to Greece during the past few years, Greece has not been able to convince Turkey to fully implement the agreement. Consequently, Greece sees the EU as the best and most privileged channel to promote its national interests (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005: 229) and, hence, a way to move beyond its limited material weight in its relation with Turkey.

Network Capital. Given the highly institutionalized, intergovernmental and quasi-automatic process of accession negotiations, Greece has little incentives to actively pursue coalitions. As each Presidency since 2006 has wished to open at least one thematic chapter, Greece has been able to apply a ‘wait-and-see strategy’: it just needs to wait for the acting Presidency to find a way out of discussions, and see if the tabled compromise meets its priorities. However, Greece can count on a handful of loyal allies (Bulgaria, Cyprus and to a lesser degree Slovenia) which prevent it of
being entirely isolated in discussions. Within such a ‘negative coalition’, Greece still appears as a cooperative member state. In addition, the presence of Greek nationals in several crucial Commission departments, such as the Turkey desk in Directorate-General Enlargement, further helps Greece to advance its analyses and points of view.

The context in which the readmission agreement is negotiated is quite different. The external dependence of the EU to achieve progress, the possibility to vote by qualified majority and the general low interest of member states in the issue poses considerable challenges to Greece to keep the issue on the agenda, to reinvigorate policy debates in the Council and to foster consensus. Together with Cyprus, Italy and Malta, Greece has formed a small informal group that addresses the issue frequently in the Council. This so-called ‘olive group’ or ‘quatro group’ actively rallies for support among member states to keep the issue on the agenda, to foster consensus and to give sufficient political impetus to the activities of the Commission.

**Immaterial Resources.** While the material capabilities Greece invests in EU policies remains limited, it has ample immaterial resources at its disposal. The expertise and knowledge of Greece on Turkey is disproportionately strong, leading several participants in the enlargement working group to state that there exists a clear informational imbalance vis-à-vis other member states. Greece shares its first-hand information, its expertise, its analyses and points of view with other member states. Regarding the respect of Greece’s territorial integrity and airspace, Greek officials supply their colleagues in the Council with plenty of information of what they consider to be Turkish violations. Also on the issue of illegal immigration, the numbers of arrested illegal immigrants that entered Greece through Turkey is communicated on a regular basis to other member states. This is also an important source of information for the Commission as it has no capacity to count, let alone control, immigration flows across the Aegean.

Also the procedural knowledge of Greece is considerable. Contrasting Greece to Cyprus, two countries with similar interests and comparable issue salience regarding Turkey, participants point at their different strategies and knowledge of how the EU functions as a factor of influence. Whereas Cyprus tends to block or veto EU positions on and policies towards Turkey (Pop 2009), Greece acts more cautiously and formulates its positions in a rather moderate fashion. It gradually increases the strength and the tone of its demands and asks a lot of questions to both the Commission and member states on a whole range of often very technical issues. Subsequently, Greece actively formulates suggestions, both formally and informally, to advance discussions and to find a way out on those points that it raises. So even if Greek positions are often bordering the more extreme positions in the Council, their moderate behavior adds considerable credibility to its actions and interventions.

**Deliberation.** Colleagues in the working groups consider Greek officials as credible and truthful partners that speak with authority: their arguments are well-researched, follow a logical line of reasoning and include references to existing situations on the ground. Its positions are consistent and do not depend on the ruling government. Additionally, Greece often refers to fundamental EU norms and values in its interventions, appealing to the solidarity between member states. While Greece tends to interpret the *acquis* broadly, its arguments are embedded in or at a minimum linked to it.

The Council conclusions of December 2009 under the Swedish Presidency illustrate the power of Greek argumentative efforts. Even though France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Swedish Presidency did not want to include a reference to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the GAC conclusions, Greece managed to insert the following reference: ‘the EU stresses again all the sovereign rights of EU Member States (…) in accordance with the EU *acquis* and international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea’ (European Union 2009a: 12). Greece’s argumentative efforts consisted of four crucial elements. First, it argued correctly that UNCLOS needs to be adopted and ratified by all candidate EU countries before entering the EU. UNCLOS, which does not constitute an integral part of the
Table 2. Overview of the level of influence of Greece vis-à-vis the EU’s accession talks with Turkey (2005-2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>initiative</th>
<th>preferences of Greece</th>
<th>preferences of other member states</th>
<th>influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek minority</td>
<td>inclusion in EU documents</td>
<td>DE, ES, FR, IT and UK accept inclusion, yet do not want to overload the ‘list of priorities’</td>
<td>high: Turkey 2009 progress report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Patriarchate</td>
<td>inclusion in EU documents</td>
<td>DE, FR, UK accept inclusion, yet do not want to provoke TR</td>
<td>high: Turkey 2009 progress report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delimitation of territorial waters/continental shelf</td>
<td>aims at including references to UNCLOS</td>
<td>DE, FR, UK agree principally but consider this as a secondary issue. CY, BG favor reference.</td>
<td>high: Association Council 19/05/2009; GAC conclusions 07/12/2009; European Council conclusions 12/12/2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>airspace</td>
<td>include condemnations of TR violations in EU documents</td>
<td>DE, ES, FR, IT and UK remain prudent. CY, BG favor reference.</td>
<td>high: GAC conclusions 17217/09; European Council 6/09.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readmission agreement, chapter 24</td>
<td>reinvigorate debates, inclusion in political declarations, emphasis on third country national (TCN) in mandate</td>
<td>CY and BG strongly favor agreement. DE, FR, IT, ES and MT favor agreement. No opposition.</td>
<td>medium: European Council conclusions 19/06/09; Stockholm Program; European Council conclusions 12/12/2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own interview

*acquis*, is referred to in relation to aspects of conflict resolution. Even though not all member states agree with Greece’s broad interpretation of these aspects of the *acquis*, the discussion tends to narrow down to a mere appreciation of the moment when the Convention should be adopted by Turkey. Interesting to note, however, is that the Central and Eastern European countries did not adopt the Convention but at the end of the negotiation process. Second, Greece argues that the respect of its airspace is an integral part of the ‘good neighborly relations’ each candidate country needs to aim at (European Union 2005: 8), even so territorial disputes between (future) member states do not fall under Community *acquis*. Third, Greece appeals strongly to the overall EU values and norms, in particular the importance of solidarity between member states. This point was reinforced by the numerous Turkish military flights over Greek island in the summer of 2009. Fourth, EU member states previously referred to UNCLOS in the 2009 Association Council with Turkey where the exact same phrasing was inserted (European Union 2009b: 6). The practice of ‘recurring language’, whereby the EU refers to previously used language in its official declarations, facilitated Greece to push for the inclusion of the UNCLOS reference.

The issue of Greek minorities in Turkey and the Orthodox Patriarchate tends to follow a similar pattern. These issue touches upon core values of the EU, the treatment of minorities and freedom of religion form a key aspect of the rule of law and it are issues that can easily be referred to in previous EU documents and declarations. It is therefore very difficult for other member states to temper Greek demands regarding these issues, let alone argue against the inclusion of such references. Despite the complex nature of these problems, and the absence of references to the issue of Turkish minorities in Greece for instance, Greece relatively easily manages to include
This paper has sought to balance the view that large member states dominate EU foreign policy and leave small states no choice other than to play at the margins of the game. It has not been contradicted that large states are dominating actors able to set the opportunities and to impose the limits of what small states can achieve. As pointed out in IR, the success of a small state’s behavior depends foremost on the existence of a window of opportunity. Whilst the preferences of large member states remain one of the dominating factors that influence the probability for such a window of opportunity to emerge, it has also been demonstrated that the structure of the policy process and the existence of generally accepted norms of behavior need to be taken into account as well. The former refers to the institutional characteristics of a given policy area whereas the latter connotes the existence of generally accepted practices and norms that temper the use of material resources.

Nevertheless, a small state still needs to pursue active national strategies in order to valorize the existence of a window of opportunity. The study suggests that such successful national behavior needs to entail four elements: commitment, network capital, immaterial resources and the capacity to deliberate. All four variables where found to a varying degree in the activities of both Belgium and Greece. In the respective cases, both countries are one of the most committed member states, they share their unmatched expertise and knowledge with other member states, they maneuver skillfully through Council discussions and they aim at reinvigorating policy debates.

The paper has also argued to include the role of small states in analyses of the EU’s foreign policy-making system. Rather than dismissing their role from the outset, the notion of a state should be seen in relation to the power it exercises rather than the power it possesses (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005: 4; Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006: 654). Whereas being small is a characteristic of states at a systemic level, i.e. states that are unable to change the conditions for policy-making, the difference between small and big can be significantly reduced when it comes to a state’s actions and strategies. This relates to the inherent informational asymmetries that exist in complex policy settings (Beach and Mazzucelli 2007). Whether small or large, states tend to be dependent upon those actors that have extensive informational resources and that use these to match concrete solutions to problems. The subsequent demand for leadership can be filled by large as well as small states.

Notes

1 A small state is defined as a state that has a limited resource base, characterized by factors such as population size, geographical size, economic weight, diplomatic network and military capabilities (Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006: 653-4).

2 EU foreign policy is understood in terms of relations with third partners. It thus comprises all (aspects of) policy areas where the EU establishes relations with third actors, thus including policies from all three pre-Lisbon pillars (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008).

3 The methodological choice of cases is grounded in the most different systems design: the selected units of research are as different as possible with regard to extraneous variables. By conducting tests in a variety of sub-systemic settings, i.e. different policy areas, the problem caused by too many variables and too many cases is remedied (Anckar 2008: 390). The selected extraneous variables are the presence of EU institutional actors, the prevailing decision-making procedures, the relevance of the EU as a foreign policy actor and the salience of given issues to large member states. The similarities between the small states are their size defined in terms of material power, their position in the EU, a pronounced national interest in the selected foreign policy issues and the consideration of the EU as relevant platform for foreign policy action.
Important differences between the two countries remain of course, such as the general foreign policy orientation (Atlantic solidarity or European integration), the attitude vis-à-vis European integration (intergovernmental or supranational) and the geographical position in the EU. Yet, on the basis of previous research (Manners and Whitman 2000, Larsen 2005, Jakobsen 2009, Nasra 2010), it has been shown that these factors are not determining the capacity to influence EU foreign policy.

Empirically, the paper draws on academic literature, primary EU documents and semi-structured elite interviews conducted by the author. In total 35 officials have been interviewed in the period 2006-10. For the Belgian case, the selected officials work(ed) for the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including the Belgian embassy in Kinshasa and Permanent Representation to the EU), the Permanent Representations to the EU of the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the European Commission (including its Delegation in Kinshasa) and the Council Secretariat. For the Greek case, the selected officials work(ed) for the Permanent Representations to the EU of Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the European Commission, the EU Delegation in Ankara and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4 The readmission agreement is ought to facilitate the process in which a third-country national, who is residing without authorisation in the EU or who has crossed the EU’s frontier illegally, is reintegrated into his or her country of origin (European Union 2010).

5 The CDU/CSU opposes EU membership for Turkey and advocates the idea of a ‘privileged partnership’. Chancellor Angela Merkel restated this position on her visit to Turkey in March 2010 (Martens 2010). The junior coalition partner, FDP, has no fundamental objections to Turkish accession to the EU. Yet, they emphasize a strict adherence to the Copenhagen criteria. Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle reiterated the commitment of the German government to what has been agreed between the EU and Turkey in 2004, i.e. ‘the negotiations (…) with the aim of accession’ (Westerwelle 2010: 6).

6 The third country national principle implies that the country with which the EU has concluded a readmission agreement also accepts people that immigrated through its country but do not have the country’s nationality.

7 The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has long been a bone of contention between Greece and Turkey. UNCLOS stipulates that every country can claim twelve nautical miles from its borders. Whilst Greece claims ten nautical miles on its islands bordering Turkey in the Aegean Sea, Turkey recognizes only six nautical miles. Turkey is not a party to UNCLOS and has always opposed the full application of the Convention in the Aegean Sea, arguing that it does not fully take the particular situation of the Aegean Sea into account.

8 The issue of the Orthodox Patriarchate relates to the Ecumenical title of the Patriarch. This title refers to his ranking as primus inter pares in the Eastern Orthodox communion. It was agreed in the Lausanne Treaty, establishing the Republic of Turkey (1923), that this title could not be used because Turkey feared it could grant Greece a source of influence in Istanbul and it is at odds with the strict secular character of Turkey, risking to incite certain groups to claim the restoration of the Caliphate. Therefore, Turkey has always been highly skeptical about a possible reintroduction of this title.
Bibliography


