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The EU and US as International Actors in Disaster Relief

Bruges Political
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European Political and Administrative Studies /
Études Politiques et Administratives

Bruges Political Research Papers / Cahiers de recherche politique de Bruges

No 22 / January 2012

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Abstract

The European Union and the United States both claim international leadership in disaster relief, a high profile area of public concern and a part of each side's broadly defined foreign policy. The 2010 Haiti earthquake tested the capacities of each side to participate actively and deliberately in international disaster relief. Although both the EU and US mobilised a response effort and undertook a range of relief activities, both received criticism from internal critics and external observers. To offer a unique comparative perspective, this paper applies the concept of 'actorness' to the EU and US in order to enhance our understanding of their respective responses. Normally applied only to the EU, the actorness concept helps to capture behavioural dynamics within a complex, multi-level system which also characterises the US. We find substantial degrees of actorness in both polities, with the EU scoring highly in contextual determinants of actorness but lower in internal factors shaping actorness. The US, normally assumed to be a complete global actor, scored well in most categories but showed a degree of incoherence related to inter-agency and inter-department relations at the federal level. These results improve our understanding of EU and US disaster relief efforts and hold promise for comparative studies of actorness.

1. Introduction

Assisting stricken countries in the aftermath of a major natural disaster has become a priority for the international community, led by the United Nations' drive to build on-going and institutionalised cooperation. Within that effort, both the European Union and the United States feature prominently. As two powerful economic blocs with foreign policy ambitions, public support for humanitarian relief and two-thirds of the world's humanitarian assistance resources, the EU and US play leading roles in what might be called an international disaster relief regime (Krasner 1983). Participants in that regime meet regularly in institutionalised fora, are guided by (mainly informal) rules regarding interaction and are called upon to act in disaster situations (Steets and Hamilton 2009; Ray-Bennett 2007). At the same time, both the EU and the US have been highly criticised for their roles in international disaster relief. During recent emergencies such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the EU, although increasingly speaking and spending as a 'single voice' in humanitarian crises, was seen as slow and incoherent in its overall approach to disasters. The US, although typically quicker to deploy help internationally, was criticised for poor internal coordination and inconsistent public communication (Brattberg and Sundelius, 2011).

The ambitions of the EU and US to play a strong role in international disaster relief, combined with apparent obstacles to such efforts, demand further investigation into each polity's 'actorness'. This paper applies the concept of actorness to unpack the empirical features most relevant to determining the extent to which either bloc has 'the capacity to behave actively and deliberately' in international affairs (Sjöstedt 1977, 16). The actorness concept was first developed in an EU context, but can be applied elsewhere

and is constituted by variables that, in principle, are 'abstract from any particular institutional form' (Jupille and Caporaso 1998, 214). Thus, as the EU continues to evolve as a foreign policy entity and as the US continues to struggle with its international role in disaster assistance, a comparison can offer useful insights regarding the capacities of each bloc to participate actively and deliberately in international disaster response.[1]

The paper proceeds in the following steps. In section two, we examine existing frameworks for studying actorness and devise a re-categorised approach combining mainstream perspectives. The analytical sections of the paper begin with section three, which analyses EU and US actorness in international disaster relief according to our framework of context-, coherence-, capability- and consistency-related categories. The conclusion draws together the findings and encourages further research addressing the shortcomings of our approach.

2. Studying Actorness: A Proliferating Field

The actorness concept evolved as a way to conceptualise the EU's role in world affairs without relying on traditional indicators based on statehood and rationality. There is no need to fully explore here the existing literature, since that task has been undertaken competently elsewhere (see, for example, Koops 2011). It is important to note that since Sjöstedt's path-breaking study (1977), the two dominant explanatory frameworks designed by Jupille and Caporaso (1998) and Bretherton and Vogler (1999, 2006) have

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[1] As argued elsewhere, the EU and the US share enough qualities to merit comparison. Many authors have noted that the EU, although not a federal state, embodies significant federal features including different branches of government in the Brussels political system, executive responsibilities carried out by agencies, and supranational authority over member states in some policy areas (see (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Menon and Schain, 2006). For a direct comparison of the EU and US in foreign policy matters, see Smith 2003, 14-23.

been progressively dismantled for a variety of reasons. Authors argue they are too legal-rationalistic, too constructivist, not relevant in the light of recent empirical developments, or not empirically verifiable (for various critiques, see Missiroli 2001; Van Schaik 2010; Thomas 2010). While constructive criticism is useful, it is sometimes motivated by ontological orientations or methodological preferences. We fear a proliferation of 'actorness' frameworks will undermine an accumulation of knowledge on this topic and undercut explanatory richness. For this section, therefore, we construct a synthetic framework for focusing on actorness *per se*. This framework includes the main variables traditionally associated with actorness, acknowledges more recent contributions, and discusses questions of operationalization. The result, we believe, is a more serviceable framework for assessing actorness to a deeper degree.

The prevailing variables used to account for actorness generally fall into four categories simply described as context, coherence, capability and consistency. *Context* variables include whether an entity is a recognised actor by counterparts in a permissive international system, or in the case of the EU by the member states themselves. *Coherence* variables address whether the entity can aggregate values, preferences, institutional procedures and policies. *Capability* variables consist of factors related to the availability of instruments, mechanisms and other resources, and the ability to mobilise these towards policy goals. *Consistency* variables ask whether the entity can carry out agreed policies, highlighting compliance of various federal departments and agencies (in the case of the US) and Brussels institutions and member states (in the case of the EU) with common positions. These four categories are commodious enough to combine prevailing perspectives yet specific enough to offer concrete indicators.

2.1 Context: 'Favourable conditions for action'

Actorness variables related to context are typically the starting point for an analysis of the EU's role in the world. Allen and Smith's discussion of the EU's structural presence in the international arena is premised on the notion that 'the EU is perceived to be important by other actors within the global system' (1990). These perception-oriented aspects of context match the emphasis by Bretherton and Vogler on 'opportunity'. They describe opportunity as 'factors in the external environment of ideas and events which constrain or enable actorness. Opportunity signifies the structural context of action' (2006, 24). Jupille and Caporaso include a context-related variable in terms of 'recognition' from others. Recognition can be measured using two standards. Bearing resemblance to opportunity, *de facto* recognition relates to perceptions of the EU, namely how legitimate an actor is in the eyes of others in the international context. *De jure* recognition pertains to diplomatic recognition under international law. This latter aspect is particularly relevant to the EU (which is not universally recognised in the international system in comparison to the US). We also group 'authority' related variables, outlined by Jupille and Caporaso (1998), in this category. The EU's authority to act stems from treaty provisions, internal policy implications, or the judicial principle of 'parallelism'. The US's authority to act is conditioned by constitution provisions which, for example, gives the executive branch considerable (but not total) power over foreign policy. Although the conditions for authority are primarily determined by internal governance conditions, we follow Woolcock (2010) in grouping authority as a relatively

constant contextual variable.[2] In sum, context variables in the literature share a number of common assumptions and can be measured in formal and informal ways, namely by assessing national and international legal provisions, by examining third-country expectations (via participant interview data and in camera proposals), and by pouring over post-event reports.

2.2 Coherence: 'Agreement and alignment'

The next category includes determinants of actorness related to coherence. Distilled to their essence, such variables concern the extent to which four essential elements – values, preferences, procedures, and policies – are compatible and clear in an EU context. As set out by Jupille and Caporaso (1998, 219), 'value coherence' implies similarity of goals amongst constituent units (notably member states in the EU, but including agencies and institutions in both polities) and, as Bretherton and Vogler state (2006, 30), shared commitment to a set of overarching principles. 'Preference coherence' is an important element in explaining actorness, as the range of preferences amongst actors will be a major determinant of political cohesion. The more that the core interests of member states and supranational institutions (in the EU) and states and federal institutions (in the US) align, the more cohesive an actor either polity is likely to be. The question of how to measure national interest, of course, is a long-standing, contested problem shaped by ones' view of the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy (and is especially problematic in the case of identifying coherence in the US 'national interest'). 'Procedural coherence' comes from Jupille and Caporaso, who focus

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[2]   We note, however, that some forms of authority for the EU can accumulate incrementally and are situation-specific. For instance, member states may 'allow' the Commission to speak for them in mixed competence negotiation situations. See Rhinard and Kaeding 2005.

on the importance of the 'rules and procedures used to process issues where conflict exists… Procedural cohesion implies some agreement on the basic rules by which policies are made' (1998, 219). Coherence on the rules of the decision game is seen as essential, not least because a lack of agreement on rules, or a dysfunctional set of procedures for processing policies, is a major handicap to resolving conflicts internally. Bretherton and Vogler take a similar approach when they describe the importance of coherent internal coordination procedures (2006, 30). Finally, 'output coherence' concerns whether an actor can devise collective positions in the form of policy outputs. As Jupille and Caporaso put it, 'if member states succeed in formulating policies…more cohesion is said to exist' (1998, 221). Thomas elaborates on that point, noting that common policies alone are not enough to influence actorness. He writes that 'the simple adoption of a common policy is less important than its determinacy, meaning how clearly it articulates the goal and narrowly it specifies the behaviours incumbent upon EU member states and institutions in order to achieve those goals' (2010, 7-8). We should note that the classic condition of 'autonomy', found in both Sjöstedt (1977) and Jupille and Caporaso (1998) is captured by variables measuring different aspects of coherence.

Coherence-related variables are the most diverse in any actorness framework, encompassing four relatively distinct aspects of cohesion. They can be measured in multiple ways, albeit with some difficulties. Value coherence can be assessed by evaluating texts and proclamations (especially from a historical perspective) while preference coherence is notoriously challenging. Deducing preferences by assuming how states will behave under certain conditions is one method, while inducing preferences by reviewing diverse empirical sources are other options. However, both must be done by

clearly stating assumptions and acknowledging limitations. Procedural and policy coherence can be studied in a relatively straightforward way through institutional understandings and text analysis.

2.3 Capability: 'Having instruments, using instruments'

A third set of variables concerning actorness pertains to the practical tools required to act. Hill (1996) argues that 'true actorness requires not only a clear identity and a self-contained decision-making system, but also the practical capabilities to have effective policies'. Similarly, Sjursen states that 'actorness cannot and should not be viewed separately from actual capabilities, even though that is the common approach' (quoted in Toje 2008, 204). Although Jupille and Caporaso downplay the importance of actual tools and resources to pursue policy goals, Bretherton and Vogler make it a central to their definition of actorness. They call for attention to 'the availability of, and capacity to utilise, policy instruments' (2006, 30), thus setting out a two-part definition of capability. The 'availability of instruments' sheds light upon the kinds of resources available, which could range from diplomatic tools to aid mechanisms, and from military missions to trade agreements. The 'capacity to utilise' those instruments is a slightly different question, not least in the EU context where complex decision procedures may hamper the deployment of missions or the disbursement of aid. It should also be relevant in a US context where a multiplicity of actors within a multilevel governance context is involved (Feiock and Scholz 2010). This latter element of capability focuses attention onto whether existing resources can be brought to bear on a particular problem in a reasonably direct, adaptive and swift way.

Measuring capability-related variables can be done in two steps, one assessing the presence of instruments via scrutiny of texts (being careful to gauge the gap between intentions and realities; some tools and instruments are paper tigers) and the other assessing the extent to which these were deployed (in a specific case) or easily deployable (in general). Empirical sources must be drawn upon here, including policy texts, public information, and interview data drawn from key participants.

2.4 Consistency: 'Sticking to the Line'

The last category of determinants related to actorness asks whether the actor can carry out its decisions and commitments in a consistent fashion. Jupille and Caporaso's approach to consistency (although grouped under a 'coherence' label) concerns implementation. They argue that EU actorness depends on avoiding conflict at the horizontal level amongst national governments or amongst EU institutions or vertical level between national governments and EU institutions (1998, 220). The same holds true, one can reasonably posit, for states and the federal government in the US. Thomas places strong emphasis on whether the EU will carry out what it has agreed: 'if the purpose of EU foreign policy is to have an impact on world order, then the most determinate common policies matter little if member states and institutions ignore them and pursue their own agenda' (Thomas 2010, 8-9). This is a familiar problem in the EU, when states may agree on a general EU position but then pursue actions that contradicts the common position (at worst) or ignores it (at best). For the US, powerful departments and agencies can pursue goals in ways that contradict one another, or which even contradict presidential or 'lead agency' edicts. In short, the faithfulness by which

constituent parts of a polity carry out a policy in question shapes the extent of actorness. Measuring consistency involves close familiarity with debates surrounding the adoption of a policy, the content and nuances of the policy in question, and detailed information of what member states and EU institutions actually do, both in national capitals, in Brussels, and in the 'field'. Analysing behaviour is a first methodological step (by scrutinising steps taken by national governments, for example, or what threats and reassurances national officials give to international partners). Empirically tracking where officials place their attention and resources is another method to identify consistency in carrying out an EU line on a particular international issue.

To summarise, the major determinants of actorness, as contained in prevailing approaches and typically applied to different cases, are most clearly grouped into the four categories of context, coherence, capabilities, and consistency. Each refers to an essential element of what defines the EU's and the US's actorness. Measuring variables within each category may take a variety of forms, but must be empirically observable. We summarise our re-categorisation in Table 1.

Table 1. A Synthetic Categorisation for Assessing Actorness.

Category	Simplified Description	Sub-Variables
Context	'Favourable Conditions'	i. Recognition ii. Opportunity iii. Authority
Coherence	'Agreement and Alignment'	i. Values ii. Preferences iii. Procedures iv. Policies
Capabilities	'Having Instruments and Using them'	i. Instruments ii. Deployment
Consistency	'Sticking to the Line'	i. Horizontal ii. Vertical

3. Analysis: Actorness in international disaster relief

We begin our analysis by applying the actorness framework devised in Section 2 to EU and US international disaster response. The goal here is to unpack the various aspects of actorness which may—or may not—characterise each bloc in regards to its participation in the international disasters response regime, generally, but with reference to the specific Haiti case when required for empirical clarity.

3.1 European Union

Context

The European Union is a recognised player when it comes to development and humanitarian assistance, accounting for a significant portion of the world's total aid in these areas. The EU Commission is the second biggest humanitarian assistance donor followed by several EU member states. Combined, the Commission and EU member states accounted for around 39% of the global humanitarian assistance in 2009 (Steets and Hamilton 2009; see also Bretherton and Vogler 2006). It is also a leading player in terms of disaster relief, both in terms of responding to emergencies and in terms of supporting the international system. What might be called the international disaster management regime has its origins in UN-sponsored programmes and strategies to make local communities more resilient to disasters and to improve international disaster response (Coppola 2007). Following years of coordination problems, in 1989 the UN initiated an agenda intended to focus effort on improving local capacities, fostering greater scientific understanding of disaster response, and better coordinating international

response (Borton 1993). Those goals were further elaborated by the Yokohama Strategy (1994), the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2002) and the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005).[3] These strategies provided the rules and parameters around which a regime evolved (Krasner 1983), progressively populated by actors such as national aid agencies, international NGOs, and international organisations such as the EU.

Indeed, since the late 1990s and the expansion of EU treaty authority in international disaster relief (evidenced by the appointment of a European Commissioner for international cooperation and crisis management in 2010), the EU has played an increasingly high-profile role in the international disaster regime. Most recently, the EU took a leading role in the UN's Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHDI) and the UN Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative, a concerted push towards improving resilience in local communities and ameliorating the impact of disasters. By way of comparison, European funding for the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction far out outweighs that of other actors, including the US.[4] NGOs, such as the International Red Cross/Crescent and Doctors without Borders, are well-integrated partners in the EU's development initiatives, partnerships which tend to carry-over into disaster incident response. The EU has also deployed disaster response teams and supplies at an ever-increasing rate (Hollis, 2011), raising its profile in international disaster response staging posts. The EU thus appears to score rather highly in 'context' related aspects of incidents as an entity with opportunities to legitimately act, as a recognised player in disaster

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[3] For more on these agreements, see http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa.
[4] For more information on DRR funding, see http://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/donors

response and as a shaper of norms and practices in the international humanitarian aid and disaster response regime as a whole.[5]

Coherence

There are notable examples of 'value coherence' in the EU. Meyer makes the case that EU member states, following so-called 'formative moments' such as large-scale humanitarian disasters in Bosnia have developed collective norms encouraging humanitarian intervention. These have also made it possible to overcome differences in national interests amongst countries focusing on self-defence (e.g. Germany and Sweden) and countries more prone to intervene (e.g. France and the UK). Additionally, all EU member states endorse the humanitarian assistance principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality (Steets and Hamilton 2009, 21). The EU's formal commitment to these principles appears quite strong and even proactive, as for example documented in the widely publicised drive to towards *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* in 2007, which specifies common values and interests for guiding EU action. The EU has also collectively endorsed and implemented the global initiative aimed at linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) (Commission 2001), although LRRD is reportedly low on the list of priorities of EuropeAid, despite it being the Commission service officially charged with seeing to LRRD issues (Mowjee 2004, 12).

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[5] We should note, however, that the colonial past of some EU countries shapes the EU's recognition by third countries and opportunities to act. In some contexts the EU is seen as a more legitimate actor than individual EU states, especially in areas where an EU state has colonial links (e.g. France and Belgium in sub-Saharan Africa). France was keen to work through the EU to address the Haiti disaster not least because of its chequered past as a colonial power in the area. EU officials emphasise, and continuously strive to protect, their 'neutral' status in disaster relief so as to avoid political conflict and boost perceptions of the EU as a legitimate actor abroad.

In terms of procedural coherence, EU responsibilities in the area of humanitarian assistance date back to the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy in 1967, which deepened Community involvement in food aid issues. As the Community's economic presence grew, this led to increased EU responsibility over trade-related aspects of development. By 1982, the Community had assumed a more proactive role in development policy. The end of the Cold War heightened EU ambitions to become a player in the area of short-term humanitarian assistance. As such, DG ECHO was created to provide emergency assistance. While funding comes from the Community budget, DG ECHO sub-contracts field operations to more than 180 organizations which have partnership agreements with the Commission. [6] When it comes to using military contingents in disaster relief, most (but not all) EU member states have signed the 'Oslo Guidelines' for the deployment of military personnel during disasters. There is some divergence between some member states as to the interpretation of the 'last resort' principle, which states that foreign military assets should be requested only where there is no comparable civilian alternative and where only military assets can meet a crucial humanitarian need (Wiharta 2008). Today, responsibilities for responding to international crises in the EU are dispersed among various EU institutions and the 27 member states. While the member states have traditionally been responsible for handling international relief operations, recent disasters such as the 2004 Asian tsunami highlighted the need for closer EU cooperation and coordination in this area. Recently, common and stand-by civilian capacities are slowly being built to be able to enhance the readiness for future external assistance needs. Still, the divisions of judicial and political mandates across the

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[6] For a list of EU partners, see http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/actors/partners_en.htm

many relevant institutions and between the sovereign member states and the supra-national level remain unresolved.

Regarding policy coherence, the Commission has taken steps towards developing a comprehensive and integrated approach to global disaster risk reduction. A key document in this regard is the 2009 Commission Communication on 'EU Strategy for Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in Developing Countries', endorsed by both the General Affairs and External Relations Councils. A steering group has also been established to gather and analyse the EU's external actions on disaster risk reduction. The EU's own strategy for disaster risk reduction is fully in line with the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

The Lisbon Treaty held the potential to improve the procedural and policy coherence of the EU in the area of international disaster response, but does not guarantee greater value or interest coherence in the near term. The Commission itself has reorganised to bring disaster relief and humanitarian assistant under the same administrative roof (DG ECHO) which should promote more consistency between short and more long-term objectives at least in principle.[7] A point of concern though is the creation of a separate disaster response unit inside the new European External Action Service (EEAS). Both its mandate and its relationship with ECHO are still unclear. The Council retains its Humanitarian Aid Committee, which meets regularly to address financial decisions regarding humanitarian assistance. In addition to budgetary issues, the

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[7]   Additionally, In October 2010, the Commissioner for International Cooperation, Disaster Relief and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva, announced plans to merge the ECHO and the MIC crisis rooms to create a European Emergency Response Centre located inside the Commission. This Center is envisioned to serve as a platform to provide a more effective EU response in the face of natural disasters. It will link the civil protection and the humanitarian aid authorities in member states to ensure a coherent approach to crisis response. A further change would be that that the new Center would have access to pre-committed member state capacities on stand-by for EU operations and pre-committed contingency plans.

Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid is responsible for policy questions regarding humanitarian assistance (Steets and Hamilton 2009, 12). While the Commission's role is mainly focused on proposing long-term policy decisions to be adopted by the Council, the Commission also possesses some short-term relief decisions, including the mandate to provide up to € 300 million allocated in immediate relief, which gives it significant leeway and flexibility over the Council.

Capabilities

In the areas of external crisis and disaster relief, the European Union has developed a number of distinct instruments for action, responding to a variety of policies and mandates, including humanitarian assistance, stabilization, reconstruction, and sustainable development goals. For international crises, the Community Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) can be activated either on an autonomous basis or contribute to an intervention organised by an international organization such as the UN. Coordination of these activities will then be carried out by the European Commission and the rotating EU Presidency.

The main role of the CPM is to facilitate cooperation in national civil protection assistance interventions in the event of major emergencies, requiring urgent response actions. The Mechanism has a number of tools intended to facilitate both adequate preparedness as well as effective response to disasters. The operational heart of the Mechanism is the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC). Operating on a 24/7 basis, MIC monitors all disasters worldwide and activates for emergency assistance. MIC also allows countries – both inside and outside the EU – to access to the community civil protection platform, and launch a request for assistance through MIC. Another key role of

the Mechanism is coordinating member state assistance. To this regard, the Mechanism has at its disposal the Common Emergency Communication and information System (CECIS), which connects the 31 participating countries (Åhman and Nilsson 2009; Ekengren et al. 2006). In addition, the CPM can deploy assessment and coordination teams to carry out needs assessments and coordinate incoming assistance from Europe (Commission 2010b). While contributions to the CPM from the member states are still voluntary, the Mechanism can co-fund transport of assistance up to 50% and help organise transport of assistance. Moreover, tension has historically existed between the Commission directorates-general responsible for humanitarian assistance, civil protection, development and external relations, respectively. The main thrust of this tension stems from disagreements over strategic or operational provisions of emergency assistance during disasters. DG ECHO has been criticised for emphasizing response at the cost of prevention. Furthermore, DG ECHO maintains a large field presence with offices on the ground and with stand by teams ready to respond to overseas disasters.

The EU instruments for funding disaster preparedness and response, the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), also deserve mentioning. Currently, the overall budget of the IfS amounts to € 2.06 billion. The IfS consists of two components. The first is a short-term 'crisis response and preparedness' component, providing rapid and flexible funding to prevent conflict, to support post-conflict political stabilisation and to carry out early recovery after natural disasters whereas the second component is more long-term-oriented and is intended for use in more stable contexts.[8] DCI was initiated in 2007 with a budget allocation of about

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8   For more information on the Instrument for Stability see http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/delivering-aid/funding-instruments/index_en.htm

€ 2.2 billion. The instrument is divided into three components, all with the aim of providing aid to developing countries in post-crisis situations.[9]

Another set of organizational considerations the EU is civil-military relations at the operational level. Following the so-called Petersberg Tasks[10], European military units have the authority to engage in 'humanitarian and rescue tasks', but have not yet been deployed on strictly humanitarian missions, although military personnel and assets of EU member states are increasingly being used in emergency situations (Steets and Hamilton 2009). Furthermore, with the creation of the External Action Service (EEAS), the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) now exists alongside the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) and the Civilian Planning Conduct Capability (CPCC) within the EEAS organizational structure, which could improve coherence between military and civilian planning assumptions.

Whereas the EU has guidelines and processes for requesting and coordinating the use of military assets in international crises and disasters, some member states remain reluctant to employ these assets, taking a more principled stance on humanitarian assistance that favours civil protection means. There is also an on-going debate around the need to grant DG ECHO and DG Development access to military capacity, such as airlift capability and an EU civil protection force, and whether the established EU Battle Groups could be deployed to a disaster site. These debates are bound to increase as the officials consider how to implement the Lisbon Treaty's call for a 'European Humanitarian Aid Corps', an initiative likely to confirm divisions amongst EU member states regarding capabilities: although the EU has considerable international disaster

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[9] For more information on the DCI, see http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/dci_en.htm

[10] The 'Petersberg Tasks' are a list of military and security priorities stemming from the Petersberg Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Council of the Western European Union (WEU) in June 1992.

response instruments in principle, mobilising those instruments is sometimes hampered by member state disagreement.

Consistency

While jurisdictional divisions and political disputes between national and supranational levels and amongst institutional actors persist, the EU has taken steps over the past years to enhance consistency during operations. This includes training and jointly agreed protocols amongst European member states and between the EU and UN. More generally, a 2010 reorganisation of the Commission seeks improve the 'ground-level' coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (a task complicated by the Lisbon Treaty's introduction of the European External Action Service which serves an unclear role in international disasters). One should recall, however, that despite efforts over the years to approximate national policies on disaster aid, ultimately each member state remains responsible for providing assistance. The plethora of differing, parallel humanitarian assistance policies in member states means that priorities are not necessarily compatible with each other and/or with the EU institutions, thus potentially (and often in reality) undermining combined efforts. Indeed, officials interviewed in DG ECHO confirmed that a 'main challenge' for them is simply to coordinate national actors prone to follow national priorities and to acting spontaneously. As Bretherton and Vogler point out, however, to some degree coordination of EU and member states has been successful, in that pre-existing contracts between member states and ECHO officials can be put in place and a system for exchange of information on humanitarian assistance exists (2006, 134).

3.2 United States

Context

Like the EU, the United States is a major humanitarian donor, counting for a fifth of overall global humanitarian assistance in 2009 (Steets and Hamilton 2009). Its share of the world's total development assistance spending is considerable, accounting for about a fifth of overall assistance according to the OECD and making the US the largest bilateral donor of humanitarian assistance.[11] The US also plays a key role when it comes to international disaster relief, both in terms of supporting the UN system and by providing resources and personnel at disaster sites. Like the EU, the US actively supports and plays a leading role in the UN's Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative (DRR) and the Hyogo Framework. For example, the two relevant US aid agencies, USAID and the Office of Foreign Development Assistance (OFDA) participates actively in influencing the development of DRR policies among the UN humanitarian agencies and other organizations. In addition, US experts have contributed to the development of technical guidelines, such as the 'Sphere' standards,[12] and provide regular technical expertise to other countries on DRR (USAID 2010). Furthermore, the United States has traditionally assumed certain responsibilities for assisting its associated territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean with disaster management. It also has bilateral treaty obligations to offer disaster assistance to other neighbouring countries in the Western hemisphere. It seems reasonable to conclude that the US is a leading player in the international disaster

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[11] For more information on international humanitarian assistance figures, see http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en_2649_34447_44981579_1_1_1_1,00.html

[12] The Sphere Standards is an in initiative by a number of NGOs to define and uphold the standards by which the global disaster community responds to natural disasters through a set of guidelines contained in the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.

relief system, and is generally seen as a legitimate player by receiving countries, especially those in the Western hemisphere.[13]

In terms of the authority to act, US disaster relief activities are guided by the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, the legal basis for all forms of foreign aid, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. US Congress, through its budgetary and legislative authority, therefore maintains significant authority over US disaster relief policies. The President also possesses significant authority, among other things the ability to declare emergencies and authorise the use of resources earmarked by Congress. The US has a designated lead agency for disaster relief: US Agency for International Development (USAID). Within USAID, the Bureau for Humanitarian Response coordinates the agency's response to overseas emergencies. However, in recent years it has become apparent that several other agencies within the US federal government have disaster assistance responsibilities. In some cases, as we review below, this can lead to coordination challenges within the US government.

Coherence

In the case of the US, one can identify a number of overarching values that stretch across the federal government (and possibly into states) regarding disaster aid and humanitarian relief. For instance, the latest National Security Strategy from 2010 establishes international assistance as a key part of US foreign policy to be considered across the agency/department spectrum. More specifically, the US has created a Global Development Strategy that sets out the importance of value coherence within the US

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[13]   This is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East, where the US is perceived as an illegitimate actor by some countries.

government, such as the importance of balancing 'civilian and military power to address conflict, instability and humanitarian crises.'[14]

Another key document is the First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review from 2010. The US is also a signatory and participant in global programmes which are norm-based, including the UN's Disaster Risk Reduction plans, the LRRD initiative linking relief to rehabilitation and development (LRRD), and the acknowledgement of common principles in providing humanitarian aid (e.g. impartiality, independence and neutrality) (Steets and Hamilton 2009, 21).

However, we discern some enduring conflicts amongst both branches of government and agencies. A closer examination of operating assumptions within USAID, for instance, reveals a strong set of principles and values (e.g. 'multilateralism', civilian solutions, and human security) which are acknowledged but not necessarily shared by other government departments such as DoD (Steets and Hamilton 2009).[15] Thus, although there is considerable value coherence in the US government regarding disaster relief, that coherence does not appear to be complete.

Similarly, such considerations are likely to affect the degree to which a single national interest can be identified and assessed within the US federal government. While the US has also signed the Oslo guidelines for the use of military assets in humanitarian relief, it has traditionally taken a more pragmatic approach than most European countries. A study by the Institute for Defense Analysis from 2001 concludes that the US government's approach to international disaster relief is fundamentally flawed for the

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[14] Document is available online at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/22/fact-sheet-us-global-development-policy

[15] Nevertheless, international disaster relief also represents a growing area of work for the US military, documented, for instance, in the most recent version of the Quadrennial Defense Review. See http://www.defense.gov/qdr/images/QDR_as_of_12Feb10_1000.pdf

following reasons: lack of leadership of the overall international disaster response system, lack of institutionalized interagency process, unclear funding mechanisms, and lack of strategic planning for response; and international disaster response (Lidy et al. 2001). There are few reasons to believe that things have improved significantly since.

In terms of procedural coherence, the US has experienced cross-governmental planning problems in recent years (Coppola 2011; Hermsmeyer 2001). Several agencies take role in planning and reacting to disasters. USAID, as mentioned above, takes a lead role. Within USAID, which has close connections with the US Department of State, the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) takes responsibility for facilitating and coordinating US emergency response abroad. The State Department, in order to improve its ability to respond to international crises, recently appointed its first Director of Foreign Assistance who is in charge of the broader restructuring of US foreign aid programs that are currently under way. The Department of Defense also maintains certain responsibilities in foreign disaster relief and response. At the same time, the external use of internal 'homeland security' resources is also becoming more common, as demonstrated by the recent Haiti case. FEMA personnel and the Coast Guard – both entities now located within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – actively participated in the relief efforts in Haiti. In addition, other major US government agencies relevant to humanitarian relief are the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. Procedures for inter-agency coordination are undergoing regular revision within the US government (Coppola 2011).

For instance, a vexing problem in disaster planning and operations within the US government has been the civilian-military interface (a problem in Europe, too, as the Oslo Guidelines attest). There are now procedures in place for staff secondments in different agencies (Department of Defence staff can now be found inside USAID, for example, USAID officials are now located in every US regional military command worldwide). USAID established an Office of Military Affairs (OMA) to ensure less conflictual relations in disaster relief (Steets and Hamilton 2009, 24), while the Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs in the Pentagon directs military response to disasters overseas (Sylves 2008). The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, under the US Pacific Command, provides and facilitates education, training, and research in civil-military operations. Additionally, DoD operates the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System (OHASIS), which enables US government personnel involved in humanitarian assistance to manage humanitarian and disaster programs by providing time-sensitive data relevant to the response using the military's GIS system.

Finally, policy coherence appears fairly substantial, in that the US appears to have at least an embryonic overarching policy on international disaster relief. While no single strategic document for international disaster relief exists, it is possible to decipher such a policy through looking at a number of key strategic documents. However, since many of these documents were created through inter-departmental consultation, final decisions were taken by certain departments (such as the State Department), suggesting that not all policy preferences within the US government can be taken into account. Moreover, the

fact that US national policy on disaster relief co-exists with department-level policies can potentially conflict in both principle and practice.

In short, the US suffers from some degree of coherence problems as an actor in international disaster relief. This stems less from value and interest coherence as from procedural and policy coherence: an artefact of the sprawling and oft-disjointed nature of agency coordination across the US federal government.

Capabilities

The United States has significant military resources on stand-by which can be deployed for use in disasters across the world. Responding to humanitarian disasters is increasingly becoming a central activity for the US military, especially for military command structures CENTCOM in Africa and SOUTHCOM in Central and South America (Steets and Hamilton 2009: 15). Potential relief roles for US forces include immediate response to prevent loss of life and destruction of property, construction of basic sanitation facilities and shelters, and provision of food and medical care (US Department of Defense 2009). Concerns surrounding the sovereign debt crisis and the US budget deficit (2008 and 2011, respectively) have led to increased concerns that funding cuts to the US Department of Defence will reduce its role, and desire to engage in, overseas humanitarian assistance and disaster response (especially in cases where the US has no 'strategic interests'[16]. Beyond military assets, the US also has a number of (growing) civilian capacities. Similar to the EU's DG ECHO, OFDA works with a network of implementing partners. But whereas the EU tends to work with international NGOs such as the International Federation of the Red Cross, the US is more prone to

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[16] During the Libyan crisis of mid-2011 many leading US politicians argued that the US cannot simply afford conducting another humanitarian mission due to budget constraints.

work with the UN agencies (Steets and Hamilton 2009, 17). OFDA can also mobilise Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs) to provide additional support during specific crisis. These teams can conduct analyses and needs assessments, recommend action to headquarters and oversee cooperation with local partners (Steets and Hamilton 2009, 14-15). DARTs are typically accompanied by a so-called Response Management Team (RMT) to coordinate response activities in Washington, DC is also activated. This cursory analysis suggests that US capability in terms of disaster response instruments and its ability to deploy them is substantial.

Consistency

The ability of the US (and its departments and agencies) to 'stick to the line' of earlier disaster decisions is fairly strong. A political declaration from the President, or more likely a set of goals outlined by the head of USAID, will provide the framework for action. Having a lead agency take care of negotiations over the UN's Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative has allowed the US to act in a consistent manner on these issues. Where consistency problems are more likely to surface is in operational matters, where a broad, national position on a certain disaster will be pursued in different ways by different agencies. These conflicts are legion in US disaster response history (namely between the DoD and State Department), but procedural coordination reforms (see above) have dampened the tendency for conflicts between US federal agencies when acting abroad. When the President, Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of State have determined to respond to an overseas disaster or crisis, the National Security Council (NSC) normally directs the Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance to convene an International Development and Humanitarian Assistance NSC Policy

Coordination Committee (PCC) to review all pertinent information and recommend policy and specific actions. The PCC typically consists of senior State Department and DoD representatives, USAID, and heady of other relevant agencies. This helps to promote consistency in Washington, but does not guarantee it in the field.

4. Conclusion

This paper set out to make a rare comparison of the US and EU in international disaster response, adding insights to the actor capability of each in this growing area. We found significant degrees of actorness on both sides, with the EU scoring highly in context related actorness but lower in coherence and consistency-related actorness. The US, normally assumed to be a complete global actor, scored well in most categories but showed a degree of incoherence related inter-agency and inter-department coherence at the federal level. On balance, we would thus assume the US to be more effective in the international community concerning disaster relief.

While these findings may not seem particularly surprising, our analysis does offer useful new insights into the concept of actorness, generally, and the extent to which we find actorness in the EU and US in international disaster relief. Several aspects of the study deserve further attention in future analyses. One such aspect concerns our re-categorized actorness framework, which is fairly specific to international disaster response, also can reflect general phenomenon that might be applied more broadly? Another related aspect relates to the level of analysis. Is the actorness framework intended for 'field level' analysis? We believe that a case study like Haiti sheds light on

all actorness-related variables. It may be debateable, however, as to whether this is the level of analysis at which to best operationalize actorness.

In addition, to make this assumption more transparent and specified, future studies should also examine the cases against the backdrop of effectiveness. The 'actorness' concept has traditionally been a heuristic device, offering a useful characterization of a polity's potential to impact upon international affairs. Divorced from the concept is the link with effectiveness in shaping outcomes. In lieu of theorizing this link, analysts typically equate 'more actorness' with 'more effectiveness', rather than stipulating how actorness may lead to different kinds of effectiveness (which can then be empirically verified). Future studies should thus analyse the link between actorness and effectiveness. In order to do this it is necessary to derive preliminary hypotheses regarding how different actorness variables may relate to effectiveness in influencing international relief outcomes. Since actorness is expected to have a practical impact, using the January 2010 Haiti earthquake as part of the empirical analysis of EU and US capacity to behave actively and deliberately – as well as effectively – in international disaster relief would seem particularly appropriate.

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