Steffen Bay Rasmussen. 2018. *The Ideas and Practices of the European Union's Structural Antidiplomacy: An Unstable Equilibrium*. Leiden-Boston: Brill Nijhoff. Pp. vii + 266. €150.00 Hardback. ISBN 9789004372924.

For this review, the chapters in Steffen Bay Rasmussen's book referring to the way in which the European Union (EU) is set as a diplomatic actor in an international context that redefines the role of diplomacy itself is emphasized. The way and mechanisms in which the EU participates in the challenges to multilateralism in the 21st century is also a relevant dimension, as well as the institutional and social constraints affecting the diplomatic style of the EU.

The sudden end of the Cold War spawned structural changes still in force in international politics. The abrupt disappearance of real socialism, the effects of free trade and information massification throughout the 1990s set up an entirely new international system, highly economically interdependent and extremely diverse and unstable in political terms. In short, the diplomatic and strategic context prevailing for forty years gave way to a different, seemingly less rigid, somewhat optimistic one, but above all less well known.

Such optimism was apparent in the creation of the European Union in 1993 and throughout the following decade. In that setting the Nice Treaty of 2003 encouraged shared stances in international matters among EU member states, instituting complex guidelines as detailed by Professor Rasmussen. However, the 2005 failure of the constitutional process, the ensuing consequences of the subprime crisis in the USA in 2008, and the beginning of the Greek fiscal and financial crisis in 2009 dimmed this optimism, for the first time strongly affecting both the EU international status and the Eurozone legitimacy. Nonetheless, the 2007 the Treaty of Lisbon enacted the creation of a European diplomatic service and henceforth the EU displays an *ad hoc* institution dealing with all international interactions of the European Union. The author's analysis in this regard is a meaningful contribution in this matter.

In any research, the first question is always the most important one, and the question the author raises here is no exception: how can we analyse the structure and functioning of EU diplomacy if the latter does not resemble a Westphalian nation-state and its actions differ from those produced by a standard decision making process? Since diplomacy in its traditional sense is the art of mediation and understanding among states, the next question becomes how the European Union properly inserts itself in such a context as an international actor. In other words, how flexible the current international political system in allowing concord among actors with both orthodox and heterodox diplomatic organizations. A third question is how the EU defines its interests

as an international actor, how it understands its agreements with other actors and how it acts or reacts facing the effects of economic interdependence.

It is worth noticing the way in which the EU's chief institutional organs agreed to implement the Treaty of Lisbon given a financial situation that threatened to undo substantial integrationist achievements and that questioned the euro's feasibility as an international currency. The author outstandingly deals with the chapter on how the EU organizes as an international political actor. The book also highlights how difficult it has been for the European External Action Service (EEAS) to achieve status in regional diplomacy and security, as long as its attributions collided with those of entities as the European Commission and the European Council *de facto* monopoly of first steps in European foreign and security issues in the 90s. There were not a few bureaucratic tensions between the EEAS and the European Commission when launching the European Neighbourhood Policy at the time of acceptance of several new EU member countries in 2004. The views of EEAS were, besides, intensely debated in the European Parliament trying to develop joint criteria referring to the social and legal implications of migration during the 2015–2017 period.

The EEAS' diplomatic role has proven challenging when attempting to represent the EU's collective interests before multilateral organizations, although in this case a distinction is in order, as Professor Rasmussen suggests. Of course, it is relatively easy to agree on and present a common EU position in organizations related to functional topics, like, for instance, the World Intellectual Property Organization. An altogether different matter is to stand for them at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Board of Trustees of the International Monetary Fund, or the General Assembly of the United Nations, all realms where national proficiencies are far more complex. That being so, the EEAS has a pragmatic role to tackle when combining national and regional interests at multilateral bodies, which usually blur the distinction between them. It is also the EEAS's responsibility to play a persuasive part before the diplomatic services of its member states, by advising mechanisms and proceedings leading to feasible multilateral resolutions

Some comments on the incidence of social structures on EU diplomacy. Although the EU is not a Westphalian-nation-state as such, the permanent interaction of its diplomatic bodies with European social structures allows it to refine its particular antidiplomatic style with other actors of the political international system. This interaction permanently generates ideas, proposals and diplomatic action, lines that are subsequently implemented by the EEAS, the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament, each one in its respective sphere. Such interaction also allows us to grasp the

great sensitivity about the implications of certain events, such as the diplomatic and military reaction of the EU to resolution 1973 of the UN Security Council in February 2011 regarding the situation in Libya. The positive and negative implications of this experience put the European defence and security issues on the table again, a debate that the author takes up very clearly.

In short, it is a methodologically comprehensive, up-to-date and a very well founded book, considering that it is an issue covering a myriad of processes. However, the author effectively deals with most of these impediments.

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