Explaining the organisation of the European External Action Service

- A new institutionalist analysis of the EU’s new foreign affairs service

Author: Joakim Pallin
Abstract

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The primary aim of this essay and qualitative case study is to identify different explanations of why the European External Action Service (EEAS) was organised and why it resulted in today’s organisation. Existing research not entirely updated highlighted the need for new information. Furthermore, since existing research mostly focuses on other aspects, such as the character of EU foreign policy or the role of the EU internationally, this motivated an alternative approach. Three main branches of New Institutionalism (rational choice, historical and sociological) constitute a theoretical framework, aimed at identifying explanations perhaps not earlier contemplated. Findings suggest for example that a major reason for the organisation of this service is due to self-interest maximising, increasing the EU’s political and economic influence by acting more coherent. The need to attain legitimacy and resemble other established actors by adopting institutionalised practices and structures in the homogeneous diplomatic field is another explanation. The Service is partially organised the way it is because of the successes of major EU institutions and the member states in ‘locking-in’ their preferences. Organisational characteristics can also be explained as results of several historical, institutional upgrades in relation to earlier treaties and debates on the future of Europe.

Keywords: European External Action Service, European Union, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, New Institutionalism, Organisation.
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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFSP</td>
<td>Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSDP</td>
<td>Common Security and Defence Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Directorate-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG RELEX</td>
<td>Directorate-General for External Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEAS</td>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>European Defence Agency</td>
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<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPC</td>
<td>European Political Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR/VP</td>
<td>High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGC</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>SEA</td>
<td>Single European Act</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1. Introductory problem statement

After a long process involving several treaty suggestions on how to make the European Union better functioning, more effective and democratic, the Lisbon Treaty entered after a difficult ratification process into force on December 1st 2009 (Tallberg 2010: 188). An innovation of the Lisbon Treaty (besides an improved High Representative of the Union for Foreign affairs and Security Policy as well as an European Council President etc), that has (at least in Sweden) received surprisingly little attention, is the new European foreign affairs organisation, more precisely titled the European External Action Service (EEAS). This new service is at the moment and since its creation headed by British baroness Catherine Ashton, which also lately has been criticised in some media. However, besides this basic information, what do we really know about it? Why was it formed and organised the way it is today?

This is what triggered the writing author to investigate the specific organisation within the scope of this study. Which actors were instrumental in the making of this new service? Does it constitute a case of ‘sue generis’, unique in its character and some kind of institutional innovation? Is it similar to other European institutions and traditional foreign affairs services of national states? The questions are many indeed but since the EEAS is a very young organisation, theoretical research and information about it might be limited, which makes this study perhaps a little bit uncertain but at the same time needed and necessary in order to make a contribution to the research gap.

Since existing and contemporary research has seemingly and mainly shown interest in the foreign policy of the EU and how this is conducted, an essay which focuses more on explaining the organisational backgrounds of the foreign affairs service of the EU should therefore be justified and of value to augment the understanding of this new organisation.

The definitions of the new service varies, it is sometimes in media and research described as a body, an institution or an organisation. To facilitate for the reader, the author will mainly use the term organisation or service when referring to the EEAS, since it is not entirely clear at a first glance whether it can be compared to other “EU institutions” such as the European Commission (the Commission) or the Council. An organisation can traditionally be understood as a system with aims or purposes which is characterised by action towards a predestined goal (Thompson & McHugh 2009: 17). Or, defined in a simpler way: “a group of
people who work together in a structured way for a shared purpose” (Cambridge dictionaries online 2012). This passage aimed to explain how the author roughly understands organisation.

The Amsterdam Treaty (signed in 1997) established that a high representative for the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was to be created to represent the union externally and to help formulate, prepare and implement CFSP decisions, a post held by Spanish Javier Solana for ten years since 1999 (Smith 2008: 40 – 42; Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 37, 54). However, during this time the EU also had a commissioner for external relations within the Commission. This structure changed with the Lisbon Treaty in that one person henceforth was to be responsible for both posts at the same time, assisted by a European External Action Service. (Tallberg 2010: 68, 191; Smith 2008: 42, 43).

Yet more formal responsibilities add to this new post, which will be discussed further on, but it still illustrates briefly that this new transition and structure in managing EU foreign policy and external relations could be complicated in the formative stage. Especially when taking into account that stakeholders in the policy area of external relations, prior to Lisbon, might not voluntarily want to lose influence to a new actor.

1.2. Purpose and research question

As illustrated on the previous page, several questions can no doubt be raised concerning this new foreign affairs arrangement of the EU. The author has consequently elaborated a research question that aims at explaining, from different theoretical perspectives, why the EEAS was organised and why it resulted in today’s organisation. To better understand the appearance and organisation of the research object a theoretical choice has been made in employing several branches of new institutional theory. By conducting the investigation through three different (but related) conceptual and theoretical lenses it will hopefully be possible to present a variety of explanations that may or may not complement each other, and at the same time possibly point out the most reasonable ones.

The essay aims thus at answering the following research question:

- How may we explain the organisation of the EEAS?
1.3. Existing research on EU foreign policy

Regarding existing research in the field of interest, there are mainly two types of research that could be highlighted. Firstly, there is a lot of research and literature written on EU cooperation on foreign policy in general and prior to the Lisbon Treaty. However, since existing research mostly focuses on other aspects, such as the character of the foreign policy or the role of the EU internationally etc, this motivated an alternative approach, by utilising different (theoretical) perspectives. Since the research object is a rather young foreign affairs organisation (and indeed the latest innovation and the result of cooperation on EU foreign policy), literature about it is therefore accordingly limited, which also motivates the author’s choice of research topic in question.

The goal is to contribute with research and knowledge that might be useful to other researchers and by applying three different new institutionalist theoretical models, complementary facts to the existing research will hopefully be found. The goal is to provide a multifaceted and updated picture of the organisation that could fill in the research gap and perhaps work as a good theoretical structure and model for future research on other cases as well. Secondly, there are seemingly many researchers interested in the EEAS and the evolving foreign policy of the EU and many of them have through think tanks and various research institutes written articles on the issue at hand. These articles are in some cases up to date and might be of great value, a couple of them will be briefly discussed.

Maria Strömvik investigated why EU-members choose to cooperate even further in a rather sensitive policy area that is normally conducted by and between nation states. She presented three hypotheses which argue that it is either successive institutional changes that may explain why member states agree and cooperate more frequently, or that external events and threats (to the EU) periodically have driven them to agree further over this policy area, or finally that deeper cooperation could be explained by a desire to act more as a union in international security issues characterised by a disagreement with the USA (at the time of the book the world’s only dominant superpower). Interestingly, her findings show that the desire to balance the influence of the USA on the global scene seems to be the best explanation (Strömvik 2005: 1, 2, 18).

Keukeleire and MacNaughtan have identified different dimensions of foreign policy and with the aim to broaden how foreign policy can be understood, they have reconceptualised it in making a comparison between Conventional foreign policy (state-oriented, self-regarded
interests, handling military security, crises etc.) and *Structural foreign policy* (focuses on sustainable political, legal, socio-economic, mental and security structures and relations between states, societies and the international system) (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 20, 25, 26).

The authors state that the foreign policy cooperation of the EU has largely been of this “structural” type but has often been presented and understood through a “conventional” conceptual lens, though adding that this conventional foreign policy dimension has received more attention from member states since the late 1990s. Finally, they also point out that further cooperation in the foreign policy area has been linked to an expression of a desire to pursue integration and identity objectives of inter-relational character rather than pursuing external objectives (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 64).

Christopher Hill and Michael Smith has contributed to the discourse stating that “In some respects the EU fits Stephan Keukeleire’s model of ‘structural power’” and that the EU has some capacity to shape important aspects of the context/milieu where it operates and affect the choices of other states. They conclude by stressing that the EU is a “significant presence” on the international arena and that it is better to understand it as “having powers” instead of as “being a power” (Hill and Smith 2005: 404 – 406). One could of course also pose the question concerning the conception of the EU’s international role anno 2012, if it is still relevant to talk about a ‘Capability-Expectations Gap’ as Hill did in 1993 (Christopher Hill 1993) or if this gap (with the launch of the EEAS) is nearer to closure? The EU foreign policy capabilities have certainly changed, but how about the expectations?

There are however as mentioned as well plenty of articles treating this new organisation of EU-foreign policy emanating from various research institutes and think tanks from a variety of authors. They are often more up to date than the conventional research literature and deserve therefore likewise to be looked into and mentioned. Many of these policy papers and articles seem however to some extent normative, while others more descriptive, which is necessary to bear in mind.

"The arrival of the EEAS gives the EU an opportunity to take stock of its global role, and to move from institutional fiddling to strategic thinking.” -writes Charles Grant, Katinka Barysch and Tomas Valasek from the Centre for European Reform. The authors discuss potential obstacles for a service like the EEAS but also potential winnings that such a service could bring to the table. For example, the organisation could help smaller member states that
lack the resources (to cover the entire world) to be heard on the global scene while the risk is that Berlin, Paris and London might see it as a competitor (Grant, Barysch and Valasek 2011).

The institutional setting of the EEAS has to some degree been discussed as well in some articles (mainly prior to the launch), where various expectations and fears are emphasised. For example, as diplomats from the member states will join the service, this could hopefully generate a common diplomatic culture, and in the long term an integrated EU diplomacy. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that the EEAS may internalise past bureaucratic competition in that employees from the Commission (mainly DG Relex) will bring an communitarian-like culture, while another culture, inherited from the Council will take place as well (Lefebvre and Hillion 2010: 2, 7, 8).

To conclude, the presented related research above serves to illustrate what researchers and scholars in the research area have focused upon up to this point. By conducting three sets and steps of new institutional analyses to find explanations behind the organisation of this new European foreign affairs service will thus enable the author to continue research on EU foreign policy cooperation and at the same time fill in the potential research gap that have been left unexplored. Appropriate references to and comments on earlier research will as well be made in the essay’s final conclusion.

1.4. Method and material

1.4.1. Conducting qualitative research

The author will in this section demonstrate an understanding of the norms and practices that are linked to qualitative research in order to show that this study was pursued according to these established aspects of research within the social sciences. In practice, after having finished the necessary preparations for the analysis, collection of data etc, the author analysed the empirical material step by step, according to each theoretical model (later presented) and their various included concepts. Finally, tentative conclusions were drawn from all the analytical sections and summarised in one last chapter. However, before we arrive at the analysis and its conclusions some methodological considerations will now be presented.

In the role of the qualitative researcher, you are obliged to explain to your readers how you collected and interpreted the data. The way to go is by providing enough information of how your research was conducted so that it enables the readers to understand it and also in the
context of how it was carried out (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 168). This is the meaning of this very section, i.e. to discuss certain issues that are important to be aware of when conducting research, and in this case related to this study. For example, it will be discussed which type of research the author pursue, implications along the way, which type of research design that is used, how data are collected and the need to remain critical towards the empirical sources.

Given that the study of the EEAS will be of a qualitative art, some info on qualitative research will now be presented. In general, qualitative research stresses often the value of description, understanding and theory development. Qualitative research is normally about understanding the reality through the perspectives of the people or objects that are being studied (Teorell and Svensson 2007: 10, 11) and this is why the author tried to contact people in the relevant organisation(s).

Qualitative research is furthermore a researcher-close approach to investigation and it focuses on rich, deep data in a natural setting. Researchers are normally concerned with explanation and often are “Why” questions posed within this line of work (Bryman and Bell 2011: 403, 410). Even if this description also characterises this investigation and its approach in explaining why the specific organisation was organised the way it was etc, it is likewise necessary and important when in the role of the qualitative researcher to not get “too embroiled” in descriptive details so that these do not overwhelm or obstruct the analysis of data (Bryman and Bell 2011: 403, 404). This is a key point which the author kept in mind all along the writing.

Concerning critique vis-à-vis qualitative research methods (that needs to be contemplated in conducting this research), qualitative research has been criticised for being too subjective. The reason for this is because this type of research often relies on the researcher and his unsystematic views about what is considered important and significant. Secondly, it has also been pointed out that a qualitative study can be hard to replicate since this type of research is often reliant upon the ingenuity of the researcher and since there are hardly any standard procedures when replicating a study. Thirdly, problems of generalisation have also been spotted as a critique towards qualitative research, which is of course understandable since one specific situation should be very hard to generalise to other settings as well. Lastly, a critique based on lack of transparency has been pointed out which indicates that it can be hard to establish (from the readers point of view) how the researcher conducted the investigation and how he finally arrived at the conclusion of the study (Bryman and Bell 2011: 408, 409).
Having assessed these critiques above, certain precautions will have to be made by the author. Consequently, in being as transparent, clear and systematic in the writing as possible in every chapter and motivate choices and conclusions, I hope to facilitate replication in the best way possible and increase the chances for the reader to understand how the study was conducted. In providing all the sources to the empirical material used in the essay, it should not be impossible to replicate a very similar investigation.

When conducting research one should also have validity and reliability in mind, in other words to try to reach a high degree of both in order to make sure that your results are adequate and make sense. Validity is about whether you are really observing, measuring or studying what you say you are, and reliability whether the same method can be used by you at several occasions and still show the same results, or alternatively by several researchers at the same occasion (Teorell and Svensson 2007: 57, 58, 59; Bryman and Bell 2011: 395). Concerning validity, to maintain a high degree of validity the author has tried to be as particular and precise as possible in formulating and answering the research question and more precisely by letting other people scrutinise these as well. Regarding reliability on the other hand, I am almost certain that I could execute the same investigation with the same results at another time, for example in another six months. However, it is also likely that the results would differ if performing the same investigation in one or two years from now, given that unforeseen events or contextual circumstances might be influential. Finally, I do believe that several researchers or students conducting the same study at the same time would draw very similar but perhaps not identical conclusions.

1.4.2. Research design

“In qualitative studies, researchers follow a flexible design”, -states Taylor and Bogdan, an argument which gives the researcher considerable freedom when designing and outlining the study (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 8). The point here is not to declare a total freedom in conducting research, but more to underline the fact that qualitative research tend to be open for different kinds of research designs and for reformulation of research questions etc while the project is still continuing and in operation. Collection of additional data might sometimes be necessary as well (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 8; Bryman and Bell 2011: 389, 390, 392).
In the case of this study, the author has chosen to conduct an explanatory case study which proceeds in three theoretical and analytical steps, aiming at complementing each other in answering the research question. This seemed to be the best approach when investigating the EEAS (as a single and new phenomena) and with regards to the research question at hand. The author has written essays with case study research designs earlier and therefore hopes to succeed also now, while hopefully refining the quality and structure at the same time. Concerning the ‘case study’, Robert K. Yin wishes to define this, similar to Bill Gillham’s definition of a case (2001: 1) as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomena within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2003: 13). This is a definition that facilitated the choice of research design in the author’s case since the task (and case) here is to investigate the contemporary organisation of the EU’s foreign affairs service within its actual context. While taking into account that the organisation’s boundaries to its context may not be entirely clear, given that many stakeholders are involved, such as other institutions and member states.

An advantage with the case study design is that it provides a frame in which several and different kinds of qualitative data collecting methods can be combined and this could help avoiding a too great reliance on one data collecting method. Furthermore, a strength of the case study is also that it enables particularisation rather than generalisation. It provides thus an opportunity to focus on the uniqueness of the specific case and to produce a deep understanding of its complexity (Bryman and Bell 2011: 60, 61). A main goal of this essay is thus to provide solid information on the unique case and organisation of the EEAS while utilising and combining different data collecting methods (which are to be presented).

However, the author is aware that case studies are limited in that they depend on the sensibility and integrity of the researcher and that he actually becomes the main instrument of data collection and also of analysis (Merriam 1994: 47, 48), which however to some degree seems inevitable when contemplated (someone must conduct the research). There is also the remark about generalising when it comes to case studies, some researchers mean that this is difficult and therefore limits the case study and that it lacks representativeness (Merriam 1994: 48; George and Bennett 2005: 30, 31). However, I do firmly believe that case studies are absolutely necessary in order to provide deep information on specific objects and phenomenon and even if this case study hence only focuses and explains this sole case, its findings and experiences might anyway be useful to a wider set of people and organisations.
1.4.3. Methods of data collection and material

As the case study enables different data material to be used within the framework of the same investigation, -this became an aim to accomplish for the author. The material that was possible to collect will be discussed in this section. Given that the EEAS is still to be found in its formative phase, prior- as well as post-launch information have thus been gathered and analysed. The material has not been strictly divided between the three analyses, it was rather used where deemed most appropriate (by the author). A document may thus be used in several analyses. The writing author collected, in line with a lot of qualitative research and especially political science, public documents deriving from the organisation(s) subject to the study and also from other organisations and (EU) institutions, as well as from think tanks.

Thanks to the internet, these types of documents are often today easier to locate then for a couple of decades ago. This is of course to a great advantage for today’s social scientists. But even if the internet today constitutes a great source of useful documents, one has to be very critical when using or referring to documents and websites found on the internet since anybody can set up a website and since websites also tend to be updated very frequently, sometimes even on a daily basis (Bryman and Bell 2011: 558). The author has therefore noted in the ‘References’ section the date of when a text was found or used to raise transparency and facilitate replication.

Concerning documents, it is indispensable to be cautious when working with and reading different kinds of texts. Some researchers also mean that documents in fact constitutes a different reality, a ‘documentary reality’ which cannot be equated to a social reality and that texts and documents alone do not reveal how an organisation actually operates on a daily basis (Bryman and Bell 2011: 558, 559). This was in fact a serious issue and did to some degree trouble the author when pursuing this study. Repeated efforts were made (some successful) to contact various persons inside relevant organisations for recent information and insights in order to alter documents as a main source of information. However, when realizing that documents are indeed absolutely necessary, attempts were made to collect them from several sources to enjoy different perspectives and not to be dependent on one source.

When conducting research, we should be as systematic as possible in our approach, even to documents. The author therefore decided to use several general criteria for assessing documents, developed by researchers. These criteria are:
• **Authenticity** – is the material of unquestionable origin and genuine?

• **Credibility** – is the document free from distortion and error?

• **Representativeness** – is the material representative/typical (of its kind), if it is not, is its deviation known?

• **Meaning** – is the document comprehensible and clear?

• **Temporal association** – the longer the time has passed since an event and the story about this event by a source, the greater is the reason to doubt that source.

• **Independent and free of tendency** – it should stand on its own and not be a reference to another source and not affected by/distorts its picture because of (for example) someone’s economic or political interest.


Consequently, when examining documents concerning the EEAS the author has been cautious and did exclude some documents that did not pass several of the criteria mentioned above. However, I would like to state that it is very rare that a document passes all the criteria above (i. e. is totally ‘perfect’), and only using such documents (very few) when conducting this type of research would be nearly impossible or produce unrealistic results. It is therefore a good idea to look at the overall ‘status’ of a document assessed according to the criteria above and consider to use it even if it fails one or two criteria.

For example, when official documents and decisions from the European Commission or the Council were assessed in the essay’s analysis, they were surely authentic, but not entirely describing the whole picture of the organisational phase, did not include critique towards the new organisation and were not entirely updated. It was therefore also necessary to collect other articles and texts more updated and with critical points and other perspectives included. A couple of articles emanating from think tanks, policy institutes and Brussels-based internet magazines where thus used as well, even if their tendency and independence could be questioned. They could of course have hidden agendas, various interests and their sources could not be established every time. However, without these texts (which were quite updated) the author could not have pointed to certain facts that were now found in the analysis. The solution was therefore to not use these articles too often and in this section to highlight the potential problems related to them.
Sometimes when conducting qualitative research the researcher finds himself, as in this case, at a long distance from the research object and this could pose a problem if one does not have the financial funds or the time to travel to the object (if needed to go there at all, that is). Thanks to the technical development there are however ways around this problem. One fashion is to contact the respondents and interview them by telephone, the other manner is to send them an E-mail and conduct an “online interview” (Bryman and Bell 2011: 479). Since the author in this case does not have the possibility to go to Brussels to interview civil servants at the EEAS headquarters, he concluded that doing this via E-mail and telephone might be the best solution.

Of course, there is unfortunately the risk that nobody will have the time to answer the questions sent to them by E-mail. Consequently, the author got to experience what Fowler concluded, “the internet eliminates the time waiting for delivery, but it still usually involves repeated contacts and reminders” (Fowler 2002: 68). This is very true, even though numerous contacts were taken with EEAS staff, civil servants from the Commission and from Swedish research agencies, only two persons responded in the end to the questions within the time frame of this study. Given that the time frame was rather short, this rendered a dialogue with Brussels-based people difficult. Despite these negative points above, there are positive ones as well regarding this data collection method. For example, the administration around the E-mail based surveys is relatively fast, cheap and the method is also suitable for asking sensitive questions and it minimises the impact of the interviewer’s characteristics (Bryman and Bell 2011: 666, 667).

An ‘embedded’ E-mail survey implies that the questions/surveys are already to be found within the main text of the e-mail. This implies that the respondent can easily write the responses in the same e-mail and then just click on the ‘reply’ button to send it back (Bryman and Bell 2011: 661). A decision was taken to use embedded E-mail surveys since this simplifies to answer and send back the questions and thus enhances the chances of a response. Some semi-structured, open-ended questions were therefore written and included in E-mails. Responses were received, and used as empirical material, from the European Commission (office for Trade Commissioner) and from FOI (Swedish Defence Research Agency). Unfortunately, staff from the organisation of interest, EEAS, did not respond to the questions.

Next, a telephone interview (the interviewee’s choice of interview method) was done with a civil servant from the Ministry for Foreign affairs of Sweden. These types of interviews have
similar benefits to that of the E-mail surveys; they are cheap, practical and useful for interviewing people that are hard to reach. The author set up a so called semi-structured interview with a list of questions already decided to be asked, but where the order of these can be changed during the conversation etc (Bryman and Bell 2011: 467, 488, 489; Andersson 1994: 77).

However, it is also possible to combine different grades of structure within the same interview. For example, maybe it is a good idea to start the interview with a more structured part, and then finishing it in a more open style (Alvesson 2011: 62) and in this interview, the author did have to change the questions a bit according to the direction of the interviewee’s responses. So in fact, the structure of the interview did become more open towards the end. An audio recorder was used during the telephone interview in order to be able to capture the responses correctly and later have the chance to transcribe the whole interview.

Finally, the telephone interview and the E-mail surveys were conducted with persons towards whom I was directed that had extensive information on the topic at hand. Note, these sources of empirical information should be seen as complementary sources regarding this essay. The documents and texts used are thus the main source of information.

1.4.4. Outline

This political science essay aims at providing a simple and well organised research outline. The essay contains five main chapters with various subheadings attached to them. Chapter one constitutes the introductory chapter, it presents the problem statement, the research question, existing research and it discusses questions related to research methods, research design and material. Finally, it ends with an introduction of the essay’s theoretical framework.

Starting with chapter two, the essay proceeds in three major steps (chapter 2, 3 and 4), with an outline and analysis that build upon the design of Graham T. Allison’s Essence of Decision (1971) in that one theoretical perspective (model) is presented at a time and followed by an empirical analysis. Chapter five presents the conclusions of the study summarised, relates to existing research and finally addresses relevant implications for existing and future research.
1.5. Theoretical framework

To be able to look at the chosen organisation from a set of different angles, with the aim of analysing its formative phase from a wider point of view, this essay will make use of New Institutionalism as a main theoretical framework. However, as New Institutionalism contains several theoretical branches, the main schools of thought will be explained one at a time, summarised by ideal-types developed as tools for conducting empirical analysis. Each theoretical section or model (starting in the next chapter) is followed by a theoretical analysis on the empirical material. This section briefly introduces New Institutionalism in general.

1.5.1 New Institutionalism

Often, New Institutionalism is said not to be particularly coherent or unified as a theoretical school. Instead it is supposed to include several ‘branches’ of thought, developed to some extent in isolation to each other. Normally, three branches or variants of analysis are identified (even though more have been suggested): Historical Institutionalism, Rational choice Institutionalism and Sociological (organisational) Institutionalism (Lecours 2005: 16; Greenwood et al. 2008: 1; Hall and Taylor 1996: 936). These variants will be used here also.

(New) Institutionalism constitutes a wide theoretical enterprise that contains a variety of different approaches (Peters 2012: 18, 19). Sometimes it is viewed differently depending on whether the researcher in question comes from a political science camp or a sociological one. It has also been argued that perhaps it is more correct to speak of ‘many new institutionalisms’ since the diversity and heterogeneity has troubled scholars. Even a synthesis between historical and rational choice institutionalism has been advocated (Lecours 2005: 17, 18). However, all the differences in approaches towards this theoretical school of thought cannot be profoundly problematised within the frame of this study and therefore the author will only briefly explain the fundamental meanings, in general regardless the origin of the theorists referred to.

James March and Johan Olsen are regarded as central to the new institutionalist movement (Lecours 2005: 10; Peters 2012: 16, 25). Guy B. Peters describes a ‘counter-reformation’ taking place (in the 1980s) which reinstated interest towards previous concerns with formal (and informal) institutions and structures of the public sector (Peters 2012: 1). A renewed attention and interest towards institutions is thus one factor explaining the emergence of the New Institutionalism. The theoretical importance of institutions, giving them analytical
primacy, signifies New Institutionalism even though the opinions on how to carry out these types of analysis may differ severely (Lecours 2005: 3). The statements above mainly concerns the U.S. since institutions in research here were marginalised during the 1960s and 1970s whilst in Europe new institutionalism constitutes continuity rather than rupture (Lecours 2005: 4).

‘Old Institutionalism’ regarded institutions as material structures (Lecours 2005: 6). It was also concerned with law, formal structures and rules. Structures determined behavior (Peters 2012: 1, 7, 8). Institutions often referred to constitutions, parliaments and courts etc. In other words, institutions normally referred to the state, or the ‘government’. In New Institutionalism, the focus is often also on institutions in that aspect that (political) analysis often starts off with institutions, but basically it is about “extending the notion of institutions beyond formal structures” (Lecours 2005: 6, 7).

Furthermore, society-centered approaches can focus on individuals, groups, social movements etc. How to define institutions were contested from the first days of New Institutionalism. Another departure from a materialist view consists of regarding institutions in terms of norms and values, or why not as “collections of interrelated rules and routines” (Lecours 2005: 7). New Institutionalism is also concerned with the institutions’ relations to their organisational fields (Peters 2012: 127). A great divide in new institutionalism thus lies in between the materialist and the normative/ideational views on institutions (Lecours 2005: 7).

‘Institutions shape action’ – that is one of the most central arguments in New Institutionalism alongside ideas that institutions constitute an autonomous force in politics, they effect action and outcomes. Considering change, here the dynamic of continuity is preferred, rather than change, meaning that it stresses institutional reproduction rather than plain transformation. Institutions adapt imperfectly, with delay to events in society and resists change. Exogenous events or shocks are however supposedly producers of change. (Lecours 2005: 8 – 11, 12).

Critics of New Institutionalism mean that it unfortunately suffers from conceptual and theoretical confusion, that it lacks explanatory powers or that it doesn’t really represent anything new. On the other hand, the old institutionalism also received its fair share of critique, meaning that it was too descriptive, narrow and a-theoretical (Lecours 2005: 3).

The basic tenets and main conceptions of the three branches mentioned in New Institutionalism will now consecutively be explained and applied in analysis.
2. Rational choice institutionalist model

This branch of New Institutionalism aims at producing general theories of politics and can be considered as an extension of rational choice theory, thus adding something more. It emanates from the work of rationalist choice theorists who increasingly emphasised the importance and inclusion of institutions within the frame of the strategic calculations of actors (Lecours 2005: 16, 18). Hence, Rational choice Institutionalism is to some extent built on the idea of the utility-maximising and logically consistently-behaving actor, the so called ‘economic man’ (Sundström 2003: 12; Peters 2012: 47). The first version of a rational choice approach on institutions was supposedly done by Elinor Ostrom in 1986 (Peters 2012: 52).

Guy B. Peters argue that even though Rational choice Institutionalism is (normally) referred to as one single entity, there are in fact different approaches within this perspective. Amongst others he mentions: principal-agent models, game-theoretic models and rule-based models (of institutions) (Peters 2012: 51). However, since they also have similarities and since the essay is limited, the author will treat Rational choice Institutionalism as one single perspective. Moreover, the analytic purpose (in these types of analyses) is often to assess impacts of structure on behavior as well as on policy (Peters 2012: 63).

Rational choice Institutionalism understands institutions mainly in materialist terms. This can also include rules that govern the political game, offering opportunities as well as imposing constraints (Lecours 2005: 6, 16). This perspective also has a behavioral element to it, in that it admits that humans and behavior are central; “humans design and create institutions but then are constrained by them”, also meaning that institutions are designed to constrain non-satisfactory behavior of individuals and to produce more (socially) desirable outcomes. It is as well recognised that individuals are the central actors in political processes. Concerning the logic behind, a functionalistic logic underpins this approach since institutions are thought of as emerging, given that actors act rational and if a logical need for a specific institution can be identified (Peters: 2012: 50, 51, 61, 65).

Considering institutional change within this perspective, this occurs normally when the institutions become dysfunctional or produce sub-optimal results, leading to a point at which relevant actors take conscious decisions to remodel the specific institution(s). The argument is furthermore that “institutions are demanded because they enhance the welfare of rational actors” and thus are transformed when they no longer produce desired results (Lecours 2005: 12, 16). Hence, institutional change is more the result of a strategic decision by actors rather
than the product of a mechanism of adjustment, endogenous to the institution. Consequently, change within the institutional environment is linked to actors, while the source of changes is to be found inside institutions, in their dysfunctional character (Lecours 2005: 12).

A word that is reoccurring in the literature about Rational choice Institutionalism is strategies, mainly because actors are assumed to be utility-maximising individuals who pursue strategies of self-interest. It has been realised that institutions shape strategies and therefore institutions are of interest, they cannot be ignored, in fact they are features of a strategic context (Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992: 7, 8).

This leads us to the question of preference formation. Since a person’s preferences are not always obvious, we often make assumptions about her preferences (Shepsle and Boncheck 1997: 17). Preference formation is thus based on assumptions (it is assumed that political actors are self-interest maximising and rational), actors adapt to different situations by operationalising their self-interest. Preferences based on utility maximisation are considered exogenous while some preferences also appear to grow endogenous to the organisation (Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992: 8, 9; Peters 2012: 49).

A concept that also has been applied within Rational choice Institutionalism that has its origins in economics is transaction costs. Here it often focuses on the ways structures and institutions can be designed to reduce collective action problems, enhance decision making and efficiency by reducing transaction costs among groups, individuals and between institutions. This instrument, or concept, can be used by designers of policies to (suit their purposes) ‘lock in’ their preferences in making changes away from status quo expensive (in transaction terms). However, the concept itself focuses less on individuals and their rational action (Peters 2012: 48, 49; Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992: 10).

The ideal-types below (as well as the following) constitute a simplification of the theoretical perspectives and the arguments they contain. Various concepts and themes have been operationalised in order to make them manageable and applicable on the empirical material. Unfortunately, due to the limitation of the study, not necessarily every original concept have been picked and used and the author is therefore aware that a subjective choice has been made. However, since this measure (selection and limitation) was necessary, made transparent and discussed, the issue should not be considered as too serious. Finally, if an explication below appears hard to grasp, it might be necessary to go back and review the specific passage.
Table 1. Ideal-types based on Rational choice Institutionalism

| Main theme: | Emphasises the importance of institutions within the frame of the strategic calculations of actors. Humans and behavior are central; individuals are the central actors in political processes. Institutions are designed to constrain human behavior. Purpose: assess impacts of structure on behavior as well as on policy. |
| Defines institution: | Mainly in materialist terms, also as rules that govern the political game, offering opportunities as well as imposing constraints. |
| Explains change: | The source of changes is to be found inside institutions, in their dysfunctional character. Institutional change is the result of strategic decisions by actors, trying to better the results and dysfunctions of an institution. |
| Preference formation: | Political actors are assumed to be self-interest maximising and rational, adapting to different situations by operationalising their self-interest. Utility maximised preferences are exogenous but some preferences grow endogenous to the organisation. |
| Transaction cost: | Structures and institutions can be designed to reduce collective action problems, enhance decision making and efficiency by reducing transaction costs among groups, individuals and between institutions. However, this instrument can be used by designers of policies to ‘lock in’ their preferences. |
| Strategies: | Actors are utility-maximising individuals who pursue strategies of self-interest. Institutions shape strategies and are thus of interest, they are features of a strategic context. |

The ideal-types above refer to, and are developed upon the previous theory section of this essay. Hence as well based upon work already referred to, particularly: Lecours 2005, chapter 1; Peters 2012, chapter 3; Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992, chapter 1; Sundström 2003, chapter 1; Shepsle and Boncheck 1997, chapter 2.

2.1. Rational choice institutionalist analysis

On this step and in this section, as well as in the following analytical sections, the theoretical ideal-types presented above will be applied on the empirical material. Arguments and issues concerning the organisation of the service will be related to some of the concepts and reasoning of the specific theoretical branch.

“The creation of the EEAS is aimed at enabling greater coherence and efficiency in the EU's external action and increasing its political and economic influence in the world.” (Council Press Release 26 April 2012). The phrase is part of a ‘political orientation’ reached by the Foreign Ministers of the member states within the Council, prior to the establishment of the EEAS. It illustrates pretty well a formal aim behind the establishment of the new service and at the same time it is an expression of the preferences of the member states when working together as a unitary actor towards a common goal.
Like the Rational choice branch often understands ‘preference formation’ via assumptions, we can assume that political actors positioned at high levels of the EU-system (and foreign ministers of member states etc) are rational and self-interest maximising individuals and strategists. We can then as well assume, after observing statements like the one above that their preferences as regarding the role of the EU on the international scene should likely be to enhance this role and its influence by creating a better functioning foreign affairs regime.

However, it is at the same time apparent that other EU institutions (the Commission) and the member states (within the intergovernmental framework of the Council) as actors did not want to let go of all their influence over this rather wide policy area. The Commission still house several DG’s (Directorates-General) that relate to external policies (the enlargement, trade, development policy) (Presidency report 2009: 3) and the decision making as regards the CFSP is still intergovernmental. Since other actors and foreign policy stakeholders have together designed and established this new service after their preferences, it should be assumed that they are as well maximising their self-interest in different fashions they have found rational. Apparently, the Presidency, the member states, the Council Secretariat and the Commission undertook “preparatory work” on the EEAS (Presidency report 2009: 2). Participation by the EP (European Parliament) in the preparatory work appears thus limited.

It is very likely that certain ‘preferences’ have been ‘locked in’ in the institutional arrangement and perhaps difficult to influence after Lisbon. Michael Dover (Dover in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 256) proposes even that it might take several decades more (or never at all) before member governments relax their grip over policies related to the EEAS and the European Defence Agency (EDA, which Ashton heads as well). Indeed, these are sensitive policy areas normally managed by sovereign states.

However, it is probable that the utility-maximising individuals (especially in the Council) that were instrumental in the creative stage of the organisation of the EEAS (and prior to Lisbon) pursued ‘strategies’ of self-interest that meant reaching agreements with, and to satisfy other EU-colleagues on aspects of the new Service, while at the same time promoting a conservative (intergovernmental) view on important decision making to satisfy domestic opinions. Member states have varying agendas etc (Telephone interview).

Even though the presidency didn’t mention the actor EP as a part in the preparatory work, it is only logical that it must have played some part. However, because of the traditional intergovernmental character of the CFSP, the European Parliament has historically had a
minor role, which is the case this time as well given that the views on the matter by MEP’s (members of the European Parliament) are only being solicited twice each year (Dover in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 251). The European Parliament was however supposedly determined to establish “oversight powers” (Civitas “European External Action Service” 2012-04-03) and were formally consulted on the functioning and organisation of the EEAS.

In negotiations before the establishment (of the EEAS), the MEPs succeeded in demanding changes to the original plan, or proposal, put forward by the High Representative. They announced to have won an undertaking in making sure that at least 60% of the new EEAS staff will consist of permanent EU officials (from the Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council) while one third of the EEAS staff is to be drawn from national diplomatic services. This would foster a “community identity” which would perhaps not have been the case if following the original plan of sourcing the majority of personnel from diplomatic services of member states (European Parliament Press release 2010-07-08; Civitas “European External Action Service” 2012-04-03). This is also interesting from the point of view that the strategies and preferences of the actor the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, were originally of another kind in staffing this new organisation.

Furthermore, it was decided that the Service was to have a political and budgetary accountability towards the EP, which in turn was to have “full budget discharge rights over the service”. This implies that, even though the EP is not involved in CFSP decisions, it is still to be consulted by the High Representative on key CFSP strategies and policy options (certain MEPs will also have access to some confidential documents) and since it exercises budgetary powers over the EEAS it might be more influential than it appears to be at first sight (European Parliament Press release 2010-07-08). This is as well similar to the findings of Rosa Balfour and Hanna Ojanen when stating in their working paper on the Service that even though the EP do not possess a formal mandate on foreign policy matters, it is still emerging as a player in the foreign policy area. Apparently, it has already pushed through significant changes thanks to its budgetary powers and the authors add: “budget control over the EEAS implies control over its activities, including on defence matters, and thus opens up the door for the EP to a field where it is formally not competent” (Balfour and Ojanen 2011: 6).

In accordance to Rational choice institutionalist thinking, of cause there are rational and self-interest maximising individuals within the EP likewise who must have sought to influence the design of the new foreign affairs service in the best ways possible. When analysing statements
from the Parliament itself, it is evident that the Parliament as an actor aimed strategically at influencing the designing of the EEAS in a fashion that would henceforth structure behavior and policies of the new organisation according to its preferences.

Regarding the Commission, even though the institution lost its Directorate-General for External Relations to the EEAS and its delegations to third countries now are under the responsibility of the Service as well, we already know that the Commission still house several DG’s that relate to external policies. In addition, the operational budget of the EEAS became the responsibility of the Commission, which will pass along to the EP a document with external action expenditures. As an instrument to handle this task, along with the creation of the EEAS a new unit was accordingly created within the Commission titled the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments. This service administers the financial instruments for external and foreign policies and coordinates the external relations budget of the EU (European Parliament Press release 2010-07-08; Carta 2011).

This signals that the European Commission is still a very active actor in external actions, and that gaining this new responsibility as well as still being responsible over other areas of certain external character (trade, development, enlargement) illustrates that parts of the new EU-institutional framework are probably the results of strategic calculations of the Commission. Controlling this new instrument implies as well good insight into the activities of the EEAS. In an article for EUobserver.com entitled “Commission still pulls the strings on EU foreign policy”, Andrew Rettman indicates that the Commission is still very much active in the foreign policy area. Heads of Delegations employed by the EEAS supposedly take orders from various Commissioners, and the Commissioners for Aid, Development and Neighbourhood policy fully control designing and implementation of projects in 104 countries (Rettman 2012).

Concerning preference formation according to Rational choice Institutionalism, it appears that utility maximised preferences are often exogenous, which we have seen here as well in that different stakeholders in the foreign policy area have tried to maximise their interests and participation. Some preferences can however grow endogenous to the organisation as well, which might be the case here, when Catherine Ashton (who may have operationalised her self-interest after having adapted to the new situation) seemingly tries to enforce the Service given that it is still in its formative phase.
The Lisbon Treaty entered into force 1 December 2009. Catherine Ashton was as well on the same date appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy by the European Council with agreement of the President of the Commission (European Council Decision 2009-12-01) and the creation of the EEAS took place on 1 January 2011¹ (Report by the high representative 2011-12-22, p. 1). Besides appointed High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, this person is also appointed Vice-President of the Commission (thus giving her the nick name HR/VP), and as well president over the Foreign Affairs Council (in the Council). In practice, she inherits the tasks of the former High Representative for the CFSP, the former Commissioner for External Relations and foreign affairs functions handled by the six-monthly (rotating) Presidency (European Parliament Press release 2010-07-08; Council Press release November 2009).

Indeed, since the Lisbon Treaty left the design of the EEAS pretty much in the open, by merely stating that the High Representative in fulfilling her mandate should be assisted by an external action service (of which the organisation is to be decided by the Council after proposals from the High Representative etc), one can understand that the formative moment would be heavily debated (Civitas “European External Action Service” 2012-04-03; Lisbon Treaty, consolidated version 2008: 40).

Understanding the new position of the High Representative as the main innovation according to the treaty, ahead of the service might be a good way to also explain parts of the organisation behind it. This is also what the E-mail survey respondent from the Commission recommended in saying that: “The real change was the creation of the post of High representative/Commission Vice President. Setting up the EEAS was a logical institutional adaptation.” (E-mail survey 1).

Given also which was showed above, that the High Representative was appointed one year before the launch of her service, it is obvious that she should have been very instrumental in organisational aspects of the EEAS, and according to the theoretical perspective should assumed have acted in accordance with her strategic self-interest maximisation. Unfortunately, other influential powers and strategic actors were also at work. We have already seen how her original plans of sourcing the main part of staff from member states were changed in favour of the Parliaments opinion. It has also been reported that Catherine Ashton also originally proposed that control over external co-operation programmes.

¹ Some documents date the launch of the EEAS to December 2010 (Joint letter from 12 Foreign Ministers 2011, etc).
(neighbourhood and development policies) should be under the domain of the EEAS (which would have enhanced its powers), a proposition which were not granted, the programmes remain the responsibility of the Commission (European Parliament Press release 2010-07-08).

The formal goal in advancing EU foreign policy arrangements through the Lisbon Treaty was first and foremost to enhance coherence in the EU’s foreign policy. By merging its levels of influence in a more effective manner the new service was thought to increase the political and economic influence of the Union in the world, hence a very utility-maximising reasoning from a rational actor indeed (Joint letter from 12 Foreign Ministers 2011; Draft Council Decision 2010: 2; E-mail survey 1; Telephone interview). In the end, the member states are still key in the foreign policy decision making of the Union. Prior to a first report by Catherine Ashton on the first year in action of the Service, 12 Foreign Ministers of the EU² sent her a joint letter with “some suggestions” on how the functioning and the effectiveness of the Service could be improved. The Ministers stressed the importance of tighter cooperation between EEAS units and the Commission as well as a closer interaction between the EEAS and the member states (Joint letter from 12 Foreign Ministers 2011).

Finally, in line with Rational choice institutionalist thinking, hence a functionalist logic, it is observable how transaction costs are destined to be reduced between institutions and countries by merging external policy departments of the EU into a new service. The (12) Foreign Ministers, as well as the High Representative desire to further cooperation between EU delegations and embassies of member states by pooling available resources and by providing consular protection to EU citizens etc (Joint letter from 12 Foreign Ministers 2011; Draft Council Decision 2010: 5; Report by the high representative 2011-12-22, p. 2).

2.2. Summary

By having applied Rational choice institutionalist conceptual lenses during the analysis, a certain picture emerged of the organisation of the EEAS. The formal explanation behind the organisation is no doubt explicit and self-interest maximising indeed, as the goal of the rational actor (the EU) was to enhance coherence in the foreign policy area as well as increasing its political and economic influence in the world. Some of the stakeholders have

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² From the Foreign Ministers of: Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. Note, Great Britain was not amongst the senders.  

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also promoted further cooperation between the Service and the member states in hope to reduce transaction costs. However, since the Lisbon Treaty to a large extent left the organisation of the Service open for interpretation, it is obvious how the EU institutions acted by strategies of self-interest, adapting to the new situation by trying to secure influence and ‘lock in’ their preferences. As illustrated by how the EEAS is accountable towards the EP (politically and economically) and as well in how the Commission has received the budgetary responsibility of the EEAS’s operational budget. The Commission does also de facto still run several DG’s characterised to some degree by external policy questions as well. We have also seen how some preferences grow endogenous to the organisation when Catherine Ashton on several issues had pushed for further influence of her Service, but evidently not successful in all attempts. At the end of the day, the member states of the EU have successfully locked in their preferences as decision-makers and still constitute the major player in EU foreign policy.
3. Historical institutionalist model

“Institutional change shapes the way societies evolve through time and hence is the key to understanding historical change.” (North 1990: 3). Historical Institutionalism has supposedly emerged as a reaction to behaviouralism. It often focuses on middle-range theorising and on historically grounded generalisations. As a theoretical perspective it stresses order and stability and emphasises timing and sequences. Unintended consequences are more important than strategic constrains concerning the impact of institutions on action. Institutional tension or external shocks may be used to explain institutional change or creation (Lecours 2005: 14, 16).

Typically, historical institutionalists understand or define institutions as formal organisations but also as formal or informal procedures, rules, routines, norms and conventions that structure conduct. They are generally closer to a view that institutions consist of formal structures, even though some have started to include ideas into the perspective. There is also a bit of disagreement in the literature since all branches accept formal organisations like governments and trade unions (for example) as institutions, but everybody do not agree that norms or class structures should be viewed as institutions (Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992: 2; Lecours 2005: 7; Peters 2012: 74; Hall and Taylor 1996: 938).

Historical Institutionalism constitutes an attempt to illustrate how political struggles are mediated by the actual institutional setting in which they take place. Analyses within this approach demonstrate the ways of how institutions structure (political) battles and in this process influence their outcomes. However, even though institutions do constrain and refract politics, they are not the only cause of outcomes; other political forces affect outcomes as well (Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992: 2, 3).

According to Göran Sundström Historical Institutionalism is a less theory developing perspective than are its two fellow branches in New Institutionalism (Rational Choice and Sociological Institutionalism). A research case doesn’t constitute a mean to reach a theoretical goal, rather is it a goal in its own meaning. The purpose here is still to explain events but the explanations are qualitatively different than in traditional variable-oriented analyses. The aim is via the study of historical processes to explain the stability and continuity within complex phenomena and it can be fruitful to study the same event from different levels of analysis (individuals, units, administrations etc.) Furthermore, the perspective may borrow more specialised middle-range theories to complement analysis (Sundström 2003: 12, 13, 17).
The specific theoretical perspective is sometimes blamed for that it simply declares that ‘history matters’. However, the main point is that history actually does matter, in that (sometimes randomly) events in the initial stages (of policy formation for example) may trigger historical processes in ways that will signify (increasing) stability and to some extent, a determinative character. To explain this argument historical institutionalism uses ‘path dependency’ as a main concept, which contains processes of critical junctures as well as of increasing returns (Sundström 2003: 17, 18, 21; Peters 2012: 70).

Path dependency basically means that patterns of initial (policy) and institutional choices made in a specific policy area will persist unless there is some force which is sufficient to overcome or change these patterns. This path dependency can be explained by positive feedback from the early policy choices which reinforce these initial decisions. However, it has also been suggested in the literature that perhaps path dependency is not such a strong force as is claimed by some (Peters 2012: 72, 73, 77).

Processes of path dependency are supposed to arise in special situations, formative episodes or so called ‘critical junctures’ (Sundström 2003: 18; Hall and Taylor 1996: 942). These moments consist of uncertainty in that several alternatives of action are possible. When a path is chosen it is however increasingly difficult to change direction or return to the point of departure. The institutional arrangement that was chosen accumulates forces which reinforce the path or direction chosen. These forces tend to become self-reinforcing and uphold the direction and development, which produces a certain solution or goal. These self-reinforcing powers and positive feedback that arises constitute the concept of increasing returns, which provides the development with significant stability and continuity (Sundström 2003: 18).

However, this doesn’t mean that a specific goal or direction of path will be prevalent forever, change can occur when the self re-enforcing powers weaken. Exogenous and endogenous events which cannot be integrated into the path chosen will eventually cause an institutional crisis, which produces a new critical juncture where the path is abandoned (Sundström 2003: 18). Besides enough political or environmental pressure that generate changes, Guy B. Peters also states that institutions seem capable of changing through learning by responding to new information derived from experiences from their path or other institutions (Peters 2012: 79).
Table 2. Ideal-types based on Historical Institutionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Institutionalism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main theme:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘History matters’, stresses order and stability, emphasises timing and sequences. Study historical processes to explain stability and continuity within complex phenomena. Initial stages and decisions of policy formation are important since patterns are difficult to change. Institutions structure (political) battles, influence their outcomes, political struggles are thus mediated by the actual institutional setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defines institution:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal organisations and structures, also formal or informal procedures, rules, routines, norms and conventions that structure conduct. Some also include ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explains change:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political or environmental pressure, institutional tension or external shocks can explain change. Change occurs also when self re-enforcing powers weaken (‘Increasing returns’ decreases). Exogenous and endogenous events can cause an institutional crisis; a new critical juncture arises where the path is abandoned. Institutions can also change through learning, by responding to new information derived from experiences or from other institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Path dependency:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns of initial (policy) and institutional choices made in a policy area will persist unless there is some force (which is sufficient) to overcome or change these patterns. Positive feedback from early policy choices reinforces initial decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical junctures:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative moments of uncertainty in which several alternatives of action are possible. ‘Path dependency’ arises out of such moments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increasing returns:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reinforcing powers and positive feedback that arises when following the same path (in the process of path dependency). Provides the development with stability and continuity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ideal-types above refer to, and are developed upon the previous theory section of this essay. Hence as well based upon work already referred to, particularly: Lecours 2005, chapter 1; Peters 2012, chapter 4; Steinmo and Thelen et al. 1992, chapter 1; Sundström 2003, chapter 1; Hall and Taylor 1996.

3.1. Historical institutionalist analysis

Like in the previous analytical section, the theoretical concepts and arguments provided for above will here be applied on the material. Historical Institutionalism emphasises and studies historical processes to explain stability and continuity within complex phenomena. It is therefore here indispensable to point towards and also in describing certain historical decisions, institutional arrangements and agreements in order to understand today’s EU foreign policy arrangements and external action organisation.

Even if it can be debatable when the EU, or its former versions, first started to focus upon foreign affairs, or behave as an ‘actor’ on the global scene, a good point of departure in explaining the foreign policy organisation and development of the EU today could be to start with the European Political Cooperation in 1970, like Strömvik (2005) did.
The EPC was a product of the Luxembourg Report of 1970, a step towards a common foreign policy and primarily a means of promoting dialogue and coordinating meetings between member states’ foreign ministers. Hence, purely intergovernmental, where decisions required consensus. It was led by the country which at the moment held the Presidency. A small EPC secretariat was established in the 1980s and the EPC was incorporated into the European Community (EC) by the entry into force of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987, but the regimes before and after were quite similar. The EPC were often criticised for lacking substance, being weak and reactive and it did lack common actors (Robert Dover in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 242, 243; Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 43 – 45).

Viewed from the horizon of a Historical institutionalist, the creation of the EPC should probably be seen as a start of a new path in (EU) foreign Policy, as the collaborating countries through agreement institutionalised a forum for its foreign ministers to regularly meet and discuss foreign policy issues (Strömvik 2005: 1). Thus have we here according to the writing author’s point of view a debut of classic ‘path dependency’, indicating that these initial decisions taken on this policy area were, to a large degree, remain over a considerable period, even if the institutional arrangement in itself was carefully and gradually developed.

However, even if this formal structure of collaboration in the foreign policy area seem to have been satisfactory to its constituents and probably yielded some positive feedback over time, its ‘re-inforcing powers’ appear to have weaken towards the end of the 1980s. There are most likely several reasons for this. We saw above how it was criticised (for lacking substance and common actors, being weak and reactive) which must have pushed for institutional change. Besides this (political) pressure, we should also keep in mind that the community by this time had expanded, hence a need for upgrading or developing appears logical.

In line with Historical Institutionalism, change can also occur due to exogenous events in the environment. Accordingly, with large scale events taking place such as the reunification of Germany, the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait etc., these happenings functioned as a catalyst for the member states in agreeing on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. A ‘Common Foreign and Security Policy’ was hence agreed upon (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 48, 49). This time the instruments consisted of formulating ‘Common Positions’, an EU-position on an issue which then requires compliance from national policies. Furthermore, ‘Joint Actions’ could then follow, an operational action agreed upon by the member states (Robert Dover in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 244, 45).
Several factors have been presented that motivated institutional change, however, it doesn’t appear that the ‘path’ chosen earlier was abandoned, but rather more that it was an ‘upgrade’ of arrangements, hence continuation at large. Decision-making was made by the members in the Council, by unanimity, enabling any country to veto any operation or policy initiative (Which also points to continuity in that the framework for collaboration was still mainly intergovernmental). However, the Commission was given an “equal right of initiative on external relations with member governments” as well as it was supposed to be “associated with all aspects of the CFSP”, while the European Parliament was to be “kept informed” (Ibid p. 244, 45).

By this time it should be added that the Commission had a large number of overseas representations and extensive responsibilities in trade policy, making it an important part of EU foreign policy. Unfortunately, this foreign policy arrangement was not optimal either, as common positions were weak, disagreement common amongst member states and cooperation and collaborative work was limited (Ibid. 244, 245). One thing that could be noted is the roles given to the European Commission and to the European Parliament, for according to Historical institutionalist reasoning, patterns of initial policy choices often tend to persist. In this case indicating that the new roles of the Commission (especially) and the EP might be hard to change afterwards.

The Amsterdam treaty agreed upon in 1997 sought to rectify problems with the foreign policy arrangements that had been highlighted. A major innovation was to finally install a common actor that would support the CFSP. A ‘Secretary General/High Representative of the CFSP’ was installed which was to assist the Presidency and the Council in formulation, preparation and implementation of (policy) decisions. To succeed, he was to be aided by a new ‘Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit’ residing in the Council Secretariat. Also a new ‘Common Strategies’ instrument was created as well as an instrument for (less than a third of member states) opting out of ‘Joint Action’ without vetoing it (‘constructive abstention’). Finally, talks began about realising a military dimension (which had been taboo for many years) of EU-Foreign Policy. Consequently, a European Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was established in 1999, which was gradually developed to also contain civil dimensions (Robert Dover in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 246 – 249; Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 37, 54, 55).
The passage above shows how EU’s new foreign policy regime seems to have listened to its critics and accordingly changed institutionally by ‘learning’. It could of course be debatable whether this new arrangement is an example of how a new path is chosen in foreign policy or not, given that a new common actor was installed amongst other innovations. However, it is perhaps more accurate to understand it as an adaption or upgrade of arrangements already in place, moving along on a path already chosen. The main ingredient appears still to be the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which should leave us to assume that this intergovernmental policy has, and still enjoys positive feedback working as ‘self-reinforcing powers’ providing stability and continuity to the foreign policy development and organisation.

Another central concept in Historical Institutionalism is ‘critical junctures’ which constitute formative moments of uncertainty in which new paths or alternatives of action are possible. These moments can arise as a consequence of exogenous or endogenous events. I would like to argue that in explaining the organisation of the EEAS according to the Treaty of Lisbon, it is necessary to take the ‘Convention on the future of Europe’ into account and the events that followed, since this event appears to have been important (Speech by David O’Sullivan January 2011; E-mail survey 1).

Having reached the millennium, a debate about the future of Europe was set in motion at the Nice European Council (2000). Just after, “Noting that the European Union was coming to a turning point in its existence, the European Council which met in Laeken, Belgium, on 14 and 15 December 2001 convened the European Convention on the Future of Europe.” (Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe 2003, p. 1) which was to debate options and produce proposals (Church and Phinnemore in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 50).

The Convention, led by former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing comprised representatives from national governments, members of the European- and national Parliaments, from the Commission and from the candidate countries as well as observers from other institutions of the EU. The Convention started in Brussels in February 2002 and ended in July 2003, resulting in a ‘Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe’. The draft treaty was revised and signed by an intergovernmental conference (IGC) In Rome (October 2004. Unfortunately, this treaty did not make it passed the ratification process due to negative referendums in France and the Netherlands. A “period of reflection” took place and by initiative of the German Council Presidency, the aim was to agree on a new IGC and a new
version that would preserve many innovations of the failed treaty. A new IGC was realised and a new treaty was agreed upon and signed in Lisbon in December 2007 (Ibid p. 49, 50).

So, these series of events illustrated above, what type of implications did they have for the later organisation of the EEAS? Interestingly, when reviewing the Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, it is remarkable how similar it establishes the duties of the EEAS and the High Representative to that of the Lisbon Treaty. Article III-197 states that “In fulfilling his or her mandate, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be assisted by a European External Action Service. This service shall work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States” (Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe 2003, p. 157).

Attached to the draft Treaty is as well to be found a ‘Declaration on the creation of a European External Action Service’ which in turn prescribes that the rationale behind such a Service is “To strengthen the coherence and efficiency of the Union's action in the world”. It is also established that its administration shall be mandated by the Council and that the organisation shall be “an integral part of the Commission administration, one joint service” (Proposal, Declaration on the creation of a European External Action Service, 2003?).

Having analysed the material and considered the passages above, it becomes apparent that the period around and prior the European Convention on the future of Europe seems like a ‘critical juncture’ indeed; a formative moment where debates took place and alternatives about the future structures of the European Union were discussed. New paths and path dependencies could have arisen out of this period. However, due to unforeseen consequences or in Historical institutionalist terms, external events (shocks) took place that for a moment hindered institutional change and development. However, some choices made and patterns taken in creating the Constitutional Treaty were to survive and later on become implemented by the Lisbon Treaty. It could perhaps therefore be argued that a somewhat different path was chosen but that it became temporarily paused because of the two negative referendums.

According to Historical Institutionalism, institutions can also change through learning, thanks to new information and experiences. It could be argued that this happened after the failed treaty in several ways but the focus here is of course on foreign policy. The Constitutional Treaty envisaged for example a ‘Union Minister for Foreign Affairs’, a provision that certain had doubts about (Church and Phinnemore in Cini and Pérez-Solórzano 2010: 50) and likewise a title that was changed in the Lisbon version. In reference to the essays previous analytical section we can also establish that the rational objective (strengthen the Union’s
coherence and efficiency etc) behind organising this Service seems to have its roots in the preparatory work for the Constitutional Treaty.

Concerning the foreign policy of the EU and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (in which the CSDP will constitute an integrated part) after Lisbon, the treaty stipulates that decisions according to this chapter will be decided by the European Council and the Council by unanimity, if not prescribed otherwise in the chapter (Lisbon Treaty, consolidated version 2008: 38, 41, 48). Hence, the Council will formulate the CFSP and take the necessary decisions while it will be implemented by the High Representative and the member states by using national and EU-resources.

However, the High Representative may, concerning the CFSP (as well as the Commission may in other areas of external action) present joint propositions to the Council (Lisbon Treaty, consolidated version 2008: 37, 39). Thus, decision making within this policy area is still mainly an intergovernmental procedure between member states even if the High Representative (and the EEAS) is closely linked to the Commission which de facto constitute an important actor in EU external policy as well (Telephone interview). It could also be taken into account as I showed (in the previous analysis), that the Lisbon Treaty left it rather open how the EEAS should be organised. Some variations might thus have been available and it is likely that the institutional setting finally chosen will persist for a long time, until a sufficient strong force comes along and provoke changes (if having confidence in path dependency).

3.2. Summary

One can still trace EEAS’s origins (in terms of decision making) back to the intergovernmental days of the EPC and its policy- and organisational origins to the Maastricht-, Amsterdam- and the Constitutional Treaties. Upgrades have been made along the way and external events pushed for or affected plans for institutional change. An influential, critical juncture has arisen on the path towards the organisation of the EEAS (the formative moment starting with the debate and the Convention on the future of Europe). However, it has been illustrated how institutions can change through responding to and ‘learning’ by their experiences, both as regards the events presented around 1990 (reunification of Germany, the fall of Communist regimes in eastern Europe etc), and in ‘correcting’ the failed Constitutional Treaty.
The upgrades chosen along the way also had a tendency to persist, given that the roles of the Commission and the EP show similar characteristics today as mandated back in the 1990s according to the Maastricht Treaty. The role of Catherine Ashton today is an updated and enhanced version of the High Representative installed via the Amsterdam Treaty. To conclude, initial patterns of institutional- and policy choices chosen early on, appear to be important when explaining how foreign policy and external action is organised and decided upon in the EU today. This gives bearing to the concept of ‘path dependency’, while I would like to argue that institutional ‘updates’ or ‘adaptations’ appear just as important when explaining the organisation of the EEAS.
4. Sociological institutionalist model

Historically, early prominent figures in sociology concerned with institutions were of course Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Weber was concerned with and the development of ‘rational’ institutions, rational-legal bureaucracy, cultural values and formal structures. Durkheim occupied himself with the role of institutions in political and social life, rational organisations and stressed objective societal characteristics (Peters 2012: 129).

However, we are here interested in the Sociological (organisational) Institutionalism that arose out of Organisation Theory (Lecours: 2005: 17), with a starting point around 1977, when John W. Meyer published two influential articles (one with Brian Rowan) (Powell and Dimaggio 1991). In this line of thought, institutions are defined in a non-materialist fashion, more in terms of values, beliefs, norms, culture and ideas. This stream of institutionalism focuses not so much on historical or strategic dimensions, but rather on the cognitive dimensions of institutions. Institutions can be understood as ‘mythic’ since they internalise elements of cultural and normative contexts. Briefly, Institutions shape the perceptions of actors which results in behavior that encourages reproduction of institutions (Lecours 2005: 7, 17).

Sociological institutionalists tend to understand institutional change in terms of convergence. Coexisting institutions in similar domains tend to resemble one another; they become more alike after being exposed to mechanisms of isomorphism (Lecours 2005: 12). Isomorphism, is a concept which suggests a process of homogenisation, meaning that one unit (or organisation) in a population becomes exposed to a constraining process that forces it to resemble other units which faces the same type of environmental conditions. In other words, organisations become isomorphic with the institutional context around them in order to gain legitimacy and increase the chances for survival by reaching social approval (Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 66; Greenwood et al. 2008: 4, 6).

There are two types of isomorphism, one that is competitive in that it emphasises market competition and system rationality etc. The other one is institutional, which should be more relevant here since the first one does not present an adequate image of the modern world of organisations. Institutional isomorphism is useful for comprehending the ceremony and politics that characterise a lot of modern organisational life since organisations do not just compete over resources and customers but also over political power, institutional legitimacy and for social and economic fitness as well (Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 66). There are three
mechanisms identified that are supposed to explain change according to institutional isomorphism: Coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism.

*Coercive isomorphism* means change that results from formal and informal pressures from other organisations and institutions that are important for the specific organisation or from the cultural environment in which it functions. Pressures may take different forms; it can be felt as persuasion, force or simply as invitations for collusion (Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 67; Lecours 2005: 12). *Mimetic isomorphism* symbolises basically organisational imitation and standardisation based upon uncertainty. When solutions seem unclear or ambiguous, modeling upon the practices or structures of other organisations can be a solution. *Normative isomorphism* as a mechanism for change stems from professionalisation, meaning that members of a certain occupation strive to define conditions and methods of their work in order to reach autonomy (Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 69, 70; Lecours 2005: 12).

*Legitimacy* is here an important concept as well and a value which organisations strive for and is a factor that also can explain why they become more alike. Incorporating societal institutionalised elements and to reach acceptance and be up to date with social and cultural codes can be necessary (even more important than efficiency) for an organisation to survive and reach approval (Greenwood et al. 2008: 6; Lecours 2005: 13; Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 53, 66). Furthermore, to succeed with an incorporation of institutionalised structures and technologies (considered by society as rationalised myths) which may conflict with the efficiency criteria, an organisation may undergo ceremonial conformity by building gaps between formal structures and technical work activity, the activities become *loosely coupled/decoupled*. Avoidance of internal integration minimises conflicts and facilitates broad external support (Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 41, 57, 58; Greenwood et al. 2008: 6).

The institutional environment is also of fundamental meaning to organisations, it has been described how *institutional contexts* are of great importance (and influential) to organisational structures. The institutional context contains rationalised concepts that come to work as *myths* which become indispensable. Thus will institutionalised practices, procedures and programs function as powerful myths, which need to be adopted by any organisation in search of success and legitimacy. Organisations operate in organisational fields which in the beginning display diversity in form, but once established, there is a push towards homogenisation and the field becomes structured. This concerns organisations operating in similar domains (Powell and Dimaggio 1991: 41, 60, 64, 65).
Table 3. Ideal-types based on Sociological (organisational) institutionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sociological (organisational) Institutionalism</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main theme:</strong></td>
<td>Focuses on cognitive dimensions of institutions. Institutions shape the perceptions of actors which results in behavior that encourages reproduction of institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defines institution:</strong></td>
<td>Institutions are defined in terms of values, beliefs, norms, culture and ideas, non-materialist fashion. The institutional environment is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explains change:</strong></td>
<td>Institutional change in terms of convergence, homogenisation. Change results from formal and informal pressures, organisational imitation and standardisation based upon uncertainty and by professionalisation to reach autonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decoupling/loosely coupled:</strong></td>
<td>Building gaps between formal structures and actual technical work activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional context:</strong></td>
<td>Important and influential to organisational structures, contains rationalised concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Myths:</strong></td>
<td>Institutionalised (structures) and rationalised practices, procedures and programs that need to be adopted by organisations in search of success and legitimacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimacy:</strong></td>
<td>Organisations strive for legitimacy and approval, explains why they incorporate institutional elements and become more alike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Isomorphism:</strong></td>
<td>Suggests a process of homogenisation, institutions in similar domains tend to resemble one another, become more alike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational fields:</strong></td>
<td>The beginning displays diversity in form, once established, a push towards homogenisation and structuring follows (Concerns similar organisations operating in specific domains).</td>
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</table>

The ideal-types above refer to, and are developed upon the previous theory section of this essay. Hence as well based upon work already referred to, particularly: Greenwood et al. 2008, chapter 1; Lecours 2005, chapter 1; Powell and Dimaggio 1991, chapter 2, 3.

4.1. Sociological institutionalist analysis

The final analytical step and section follow the patterns of the previous ones. The ideal-types developed above will be used and applied on the collected data with the aim of hopefully identifying other arguments and explanations behind the organisation of the new Service. Given that this branch of New Institutionalism rests on a different logical fundament, of a more social constructivist kind and is quite different in how it understands institutions and change (generally in a non-materialist fashion), the analytical product might be different.

When the European Convention presented the draft Constitutional Treaty, the EU had already deeply disagreed on the war (intervention) in Iraq, proving that the Union can have a hard time to act as a coherent actor in times of crisis. At the time (March 2003) the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, presiding over a EU summit, stressed supposedly (according to an official EU website) in the light of the Iraq disagreement “once again the necessity for the
strengthening of the EU’s common foreign policy and the policy of security and defense, which, he said, is still under formulation and has not taken its final form.” (EU at the UN website 2003). This moment of uncertainty that arose seems thus have made the member state(s) realise that a more coherent approach to foreign policy and external action is necessary in order to be taken seriously as an international actor and be able to manoeuvre.

However, on the international diplomatic scene, or in Sociological institutionalist terms, the ‘organisational field’, the institutional structures, culture and norms appears rather homogeneous. I would like to argue that this organisational field in particular was established a considerable time ago, even though it might have (according to sociological institutionalism) displayed diversity in form in the beginning. A development towards homogenisation has no doubt taken place given that national states worldwide cooperate through agreed forms and norms and by established working titles and methods. Amongst other things settled in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations in 1961 (United Nations Treaty Collection website 2012). In fact, it is clearly prescribed in the Draft Council decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service (2010, p. 19) that:

In particular, the High Representative shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the host States grant the Union delegations, their staff and their property, privileges and immunities equivalent to those referred to in the Vienna Convention of 18 April 1961 on Diplomatic Relations.

The point is, in striving towards becoming more influential on the global scene as a coherent foreign affairs actor, it is probably necessary to adopt the established structures and rationalised practices and procedures that are already in place in order to enjoy legitimacy and approval. A good example of this is when the Union wanted to install a ‘Union Minister for Foreign Affairs’ via the Constitutional Treaty (Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe 2003, p. 157), indicating a desire to resemble foreign affairs representatives of other established actors (states) in the specific organisational field.

This could moreover be understood as an expression of (Mimetic) Isomorphism meaning that the organisation (EU) sought to model its practices (or structures) upon other organisations, thus a process of homogenisation by imitation. However, the treaty was not ratified and consequently the title ‘Union Minister for Foreign Affairs’ did not take effect. It appears that not all were ready for this institutional change or application of state-like titles (Public Service
Europe 2012); hence the new title was to be more modest: ‘High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (European Council Decision 2009-12-01).

Returning to the draft treaty establishing the EEAS, article 1, paragraph 4 prescribes that “The EEAS shall be made up of a central administration and of the Union delegations to third countries and to international organisations.” (Draft Council Decision 2010: 14). The first thing that comes to mind when reading this phrase is of course how much it resembles the formal structure of a random national state’s Foreign Ministry. The only thing diverging at first sight is that the term ‘Foreign Ministry’ is missing and that instead of Embassies they chose to call them ‘Union delegations’.

At the moment (winter/spring 2012), the European Union is represented across the world through a network of 140 delegations (Report by the high representative 2011-12-22, p. 2). According to my telephone interviewee, when the former international offices of the Commission were ‘transformed’ to Union delegations, becoming the responsibility of the EEAS (High Representative), at first they just “switched signs more or less” (Telephone interview 1). Which, (according to Sociological institutionalism) could hint that it does not really imply that the core activity inside changed radically but could instead be a case of ‘decoupling’, i.e., a gap between the formal structure and the actual technical work performed is created in order to present a certain, familiar image externally and reach approval and external support. Given that people from the Commission still work within the delegations, work activity might however be similar to prior the transformation.

Furthermore, as regards the delegations, instead of calling the chiefs ambassadors, they are titled ‘Heads of Delegations’ which appears to be meant the equivalent; they are supposedly beneath ambassadorial or equivalent rank (Carta 2011). Moreover, when scrolling through the EEAS’s ‘delegation directory’ (EEAS website 2012, delegations’ websites) and visiting some of their websites it becomes apparent that the Heads of Delegations normally are ambassadors or former holders of other top positions. According to the theoretical perspective it would probably have been more logical to call the Heads of Delegations for ambassadors and delegations for embassies etc. But there are certainly other factors that prevented this action (the treaty etc). However, ‘Head of Delegation’ and ‘Delegation’ as words are not new formulas; they are already widely used by states and organisations on the international scene in different contexts and can therefore be considered (according to Sociological Institutionalism) as ‘rationalised concepts’.
In organising and setting up the new Service, “Steps shall be taken in order to provide EEAS staff with adequate common training, building in particular on existing national practices and structures” (Draft Council Decision 2010: 7). This clearly implies that the designers of the organisation wishes to adopt rationalised practices, structures and norms that may work as ‘myths’ (in sociological institutionalist reasoning), in hope to achieve success and legitimacy. To improve the chances of becoming more influential as an actor on the diplomatic scene it may thus be necessary to supply training that builds on established practices and structures, accepted and widely used by the other organisations and actors that are active in the homogeneous organisational field.

Organisational researcher Kjell Arne Røvik means that institutionalised standards in the world of organisations has come to function as (institutionalised) recipes (instead of myths). In most cases, these recipes are basically general ideas, which means that they can be alternatively interpreted (Røvik 1998: 13 – 16) and this could possibly be said is the case in the setting up of the EEAS. Established practices and structures will seemingly be adopted but alternatively interpreted and titled something else more contextual and fitting.

Given that the EEAS is still in its formative phase (it has only been up and running for about a year – a year and a half), it will need much more time to function as planned (E-mail survey 2). It is therefore understandable that it can be exposed to various kinds of pressures, which is also a factor that explains change according to Sociological Institutionalism. The joint letter presented earlier written by 12 Foreign Ministers of EU member states to High Representative Catherine Ashton constitutes a good example, where closer cooperation between the Service and the Commission, between the Service and the member states as well as enhancing the delegations are explicitly desired (Joint letter from 12 Foreign Ministers 2011).

In consequence, in her anticipated report released two weeks after the Foreign Ministers’ letter, the High Representative concludes by highlighting the future priorities and mentions likewise having taken into account the ‘welcome suggestions’ from the 12 Foreign Ministers. Stating that the work of the EU delegations should be emphasised and increased substantially, through strengthened cooperation with member states’ embassies and that attention will be given to resolving issues between the EEAS and the Commission actually illustrates that the ‘pressures’ delivered through the joint letter had an initial effect (at least on paper) (Report by the high representative 2011-12-22, p. 12, 13). This of course hints that institutional change due to formal and informal pressures as according to Sociological Institutionalism seems
likely. Similar formal (and informal) pressures prior to the launch from various actors might have been influential to the organisation but are unfortunately rather difficult to identify afterwards (the launch).

Continuing on the topic of pressures as factors for change, the High Representative Catherine Ashton has been criticised considerably in the last 12 months. She has been understood as weak, there have been complaints about how she meets the media, how she speaks in public or how she carries out leadership. Criticism appeared at one point having reached the degree to where senior EEAS officials defended her work and management to media, while some media spoke about a rumored ‘change’ of High Representative (Carroll 2011a; Carroll 2011b; Svenska Dagbladet 2012-03-09-; E-mail survey 2). After all it is rumors and should maybe not be taken too seriously, it shows however that the post (or posts) she has is much debated and exposed to constant pressures and comments from various directions and could possibly produce change if not ceased. Perhaps there are certain expected norms, ideas or cultures established by the previous High Representative that are not sufficiently adopted by the present High Representative in order to reach approval and acceptance. On the topic, when defending and praising his chief, EEAS Executive Secretary General reportedly said “Of course, she has a different personality from Chris Patten or Javier Solana.” (Carroll 2011b).

4.2. Summary

Having applied a sociological institutionalist view in conducting the analysis has to some extent helped to understand why the Service looks like it does today and why it is organised like it is. Organisational imitation is a likely factor in explaining the organisation. A major finding is that the formal operational structure builds upon the diplomatic system at large and that established and ‘rationalised concepts’ (practices and structures) appears to be comprehended as necessary to adopt in order to become successful and understood as serious and legitimate in the organisational field. The international diplomatic scene as organisational field appears furthermore established a long time ago and consequently exhibits a homogeneous character, a contextual condition that seems to have forced the EU to adapt to this environment. The war in Iraq was suggested a ‘moment of uncertainty’ which appears to have revealed the need for institutional change. Given that the EEAS is still in a formative phase, it appears to be exposed to various pressures trying to influence its organisation and its operations (for example, the 12 Foreign Ministers’ ‘joint letter’).
5. Conclusions

After having used three different theoretical branches and conceptual lenses of New Institutionalism in conducting the empirical analyses, several explanations for the organisation of the EEAS have successfully been identified. Regarding theoretical conclusions, I would like to argue that the three theoretical perspectives were indeed complementary and helpful in filling in the existing research gap. Organisations (especially as in this case with several stakeholders) and their formative phases are indeed theoretically complex phenomenon and without having utilised all three theoretical models, the results would have looked very different and the conclusions would have been much narrower. This essay’s research approach could therefore be seen as a theoretical contribution (by giving a more multifaceted picture of a case) on institutional/organisational change in general and to the research field on cooperation and organisation within EU foreign policy in particular. The theoretical models and design used can thus be recommended to apply on other cases as well.

However, it should be taken into account that this organisation constitutes de facto something new, something of a ‘sue generis’ character and contemporary knowledge and research on the object is therefore limited and uncertain. With this being said, the author would consequently like to stress that the conclusions should be conceived as tentative, while aiming at contributing to the field of research. Although admitting that generalisation after case studies can be difficult, the results should anyway hopefully be of value to other scholars etc.

On step one of the analysis, according to Rational choice Institutionalism, when understanding the European Union as a rational actor, the formal explanation behind the organisation of the EEAS is characterised by self-interest maximising, aiming at increasing its political and economic influence in the world by acting more coherent. The organisation can also be explained by the fact that the EU institutions acted prior to Lisbon and prior to the launch of the EEAS by strategies of self-interest, trying to secure influence over the new organisation and its policy area by ‘locking in’ their preferences. Hence, the EEAS became politically and economically accountable towards the European Parliament while the European Commission landed the responsibility over the operational budget of the EEAS and still houses several Directorate-Generals responsible for issues characterised to some degree by external policy as well. At the end of the day, the member states are still key in EU foreign policy, having succeeded in locking in their preferences as decision-makers. This all illustrated the importance to theoretically understand the involved actors in a case like this as
rational, utility maximising actors who pursue strategies of self-interest. However, it is a fact that these various actors have together succeeded in establishing this global Service and while Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (2005) argued that it is better to understand the EU as ‘having powers’ rather than being one, I would argue that its powers have now increased and could, if managed correctly and enhanced further, transform the Union into a power.

In applying the concept of ‘path dependency’, yet more historical explanations have been found even though Historical Institutionalism on step two of the analysis understands institutions with a similar logic to the Rational choice version, normally in a functional, formal and rather materialist way. In terms of decision making in the area relevant for the EEAS, one can trace the origins back to the intergovernmental days of the European Political Cooperation (introduced in 1970). The innovations of the Maastricht-, Amsterdam- and the (failed) Constitutional Treaty can instead explain the policy- and organisational aspects of the EEAS. The debate prior and during the Convention on the future of Europe has been identified as an important episode for the later organisation, duties and functioning of the EEAS. It has thus been discovered that the EEAS and its characteristics can partially be explained as a result of several institutional upgrades or adaptations made by the EU over a longer period of time, in some cases as responses to external events that have highlighted the need for a coherent foreign policy or external action service. It appears therefore of great value to include a theoretical perspective equipped with tools for identifying historical events of importance when analyzing and explaining a new organisation.

During the third step of the analysis it has also become apparent that another, theoretically alternative perspective, could be very complementing. Given that Sociological Institutionalism rests on a different logical fundament, that of a more social constructivist kind which focuses on the cognitive dimensions of institutions and understands them in a rather non-materialist way did in fact help in explaining the Service’s organisation. Consequently, it became obligatory to look at its institutional environment. Accordingly, it has been illustrated how the formal operational structure of the EEAS builds upon the diplomatic system at large and that established and ‘rationalised concepts’ in the forms of practices, structures and norms appears to be imperative in order to attain legitimacy, acceptance and become successful in the ‘organisational field’. The organisation of the EEAS can therefore also be explained by an imitation of other established actors and institutionalised structures in the specific, rather homogeneous field, to which an adaptation seems necessary. The European disagreement over the war in Iraq is suggested to have revealed a need for a
more unified approach towards foreign policy. Finally, given that the EEAS is still in a formative phase, its organisation and structures could potentially be somewhat altered, a fact that seems to have made the Service exposed to various pressures seeking to influence its organisation (exemplified by the 12 Foreign Ministers joint letter in December 2011). This can also be linked to Christopher Hill’s (1993) ‘Capability-Expectations Gap’. It could be argued that with the organisation of the EEAS and its global network of 140 Union delegations etc, the EU foreign policy capabilities have certainly changed (even if they are still under refinement). However, this does not necessarily imply that expectations have decreased. Instead, the various critique from media that the present High Representative has suffered, as well as the ‘suggestions’ on improvements from several Foreign Ministers, imply that expectations on the new Service and its highest chief are considerable.

In having studied the launch of the EEAS, a reference to Keukeleire and MacNaughtans’ dimensions of foreign policy can be made. The EU’s cooperation in foreign affairs do now seem to take on a more ‘conventional’ character as in contrast to that which might have been the case before. As the authors stated (2008) that the conventional foreign policy dimension had received more attention from member states since the late 1990s, it could now be added and implied that this development seems to continue and perhaps of value to future research.

The conclusions presented above build thus on a three step analysis where the author has tried to be as systematic and transparent in his work as possible. These results are of course conditioned on the three theoretical branches employed and the material available. By using other theories and material the results would probably have been different. For future scholars and researchers attempting to investigate the same research object, the inter-institutional arrangements and responsibilities in Brussels (especially Commission-EEAS coordination) and inside the delegations could be investigated further.

The implications of, and between the formal roles of the HR/VP (High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission) should as well be analysed further. Are the effects of this new post actually satisfactory and successful to the EU? It could perhaps also be a good idea to look into the Union delegations to see what has changed in detail and to examine how their operations develop. Do their activities and duties change towards more conventional embassy related tasks? Such a study could perhaps build on Keukeleire and MacNaughtans’ dimensions of foreign policy presented earlier.
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