

# Network Power Europe and Competition at the UN Human Rights Council

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This contribution discusses the networked character of competition in world politics. While it follows the theoretical argument of competition for scarce objects in world politics (Werron 2014, 2015), the chapter engages with the question of what a scarce object in international organizations could be. Based on network theory, this chapter suggests that actors in international organizations significantly contribute to their competitiveness through the enhancement of their structural positions in networks relative to other actors. Actors establish and sustain networks to exert influence via control over communication flow within a network. In the case of networks within international organizations, the degree of centrality of an actor in the network determines their final access to the scarce objects of power, wealth, or status. The main structural positions in networks that actors compete for have tended to be largely associated with the terms of ‘a network leader’ and ‘a network broker’. These positions enable actors to exert their influence in international organizations and, on a larger scale, in world politics.

Studies of the EU’s actorness in competition have tended to concentrate around the question of what kind of power the EU is or should be. Two suggestions have framed this debate: ‘normative power Europe’ and ‘market power Europe’. This debate continues to resonate in recent research focused on the EU capacities to set world regulatory standards and exert influence over global corporations (Bradford 2020). ‘Normative power Europe’ presupposes that the EU sets world regulatory standards because of its normative basis (competition for status) (Manners 2002). ‘Market power Europe’ argues that the EU’s market is a strong impetus to compete for wealth (Damro 2012). The chapter returns to the methodological framework of EU regulatory networks, applying it to the EU external action at international organizations. The core of the EU’s networks has comprised EU institutions that bridge all relevant stake-

holders, thus uniting them to achieve the EU's priorities (cf. Dehousse 1997; Mathieu 2016). On that basis, the hypothesis is that the increasing complexity of international organizations pushes the EU to act as 'network power Europe' and compete for the structural position of a 'bridge' in complex networks. To test the hypothesis, this chapter poses the question of how the EU's attempts to build networks behind human rights promotion improve the EU's position relative to other actors and stakeholders at the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC).

The subsequent sections of this chapter deal with the following objectives. The first section examines competition in world politics from the perspective of network theory. It highlights the deficiencies of a 'one-level' focus in studies of world politics, and more specifically, in research on international organizations. This tendency regards competition in world politics as exclusively competition among states and, rarely, among international legal subjects, where states constitute the international political system and all other stakeholders are considered as the system's environment. Even if the role of non-state stakeholders in world politics has been persistently highlighted by liberal institutionalists and scholars of global governance, the restricted 'one-level' focus has remained, with states and non-state stakeholders constituting their respective levels of governance or systems. At the same time, the complexity of actors and stakeholders that compete in world politics has been increasing, leading to the establishment of complex ties both within levels of governance and across them. The theoretical argument developed in this chapter pinpoints the complexity of these ties, which determines the network character of competition in world politics. It asks what 'scarcity' could mean in this context, and explores how varied actors in world politics gain advantage in network competition within international organizations.

The second section of the chapter investigates the case of network competition at the UN Human Rights Council. The section describes the institutional setting of the UN HRC and elaborates on the types of networks that have emerged at this intergovernmental body of the UN system. I argue that actors and stakeholders at international organizations, and particularly at the UN HRC, sustain complex network across three main 'levels' of governance: intergovernmental, interinstitutional, and interorganizational.

The final section of the chapter deals with the 'actorness' of the EU as one of the formal diplomatic networks at the UN HRC. Existing research on this matter points to EU attempts to compete for status or wealth, to exert external pressure through norms and regulations or through market-related benefits.

To gain advantage, the EU competes with external actors as ‘normative power Europe’ and ‘market power Europe’, the two concepts that have framed the academic debate on the EU’s influence in world politics. In terms of competition for scarce goods, as ‘normative power Europe’, the EU competes for status, as ‘market power Europe’—for wealth. Following the methodology of network theory, I argue that the EU acts as ‘network power Europe’ at the UN HRC, establishing complex ties with actors and stakeholders, and gaining relative advantage through network brokerage. The complex institutional setting of the EU’s external action improves the EU’s capacity to establish and sustain complex ties at the intergovernmental, interinstitutional (among international institutions), and interorganizational levels (among private enterprises and NGOs).

## Network Competition in International Organizations

Despite its centrality in many theories of international relations, the definition of competition in international organizations has never attained scholarly consensus (see introduction to this volume). A recent general definition of competition involves “... the attempt to gain advantage, often relative to others believed to pose a challenge or threat, through the self-interested pursuit of contested goods such as power, security, wealth, influence, and status” (Mazarr et al. 2018: 5). A more sophisticated understanding of competition relates to the ‘scarce goods’ in world politics. From this perspective, actors and stakeholders in world politics compete for the attention of a third party while third parties frame the scarcity of attention, legitimacy, and prestige (Werron 2014). In the complex networks of international organizations, the management of the scarce goods is run by the ‘brokers’ that bridge all relevant nodes in a network (Kwon et al. 2020). Based on such understanding, this subsection aims to exploit how the EU ensures the position of a ‘broker’ within complex networks of the UN Human Rights Council.

In the nineteenth century, the Concert of Europe preserved the aspirations of ‘great powers’ to control the balance of power in world politics. While international organizations often follow this structural pattern today, a few of them—especially, the principal organs of the UN—maintain the principle of equal sovereignty based on the UN Charter. This principle presupposes that every state member of the UN has one vote in the UN intergovernmental bodies. The principle of equal sovereignty was a novelty introduced by the UN and

changed the understanding of what a scarce good in world politics could be. Since the UN Charter entered into force on 24 October 1945, the 'great powers' have been in need for votes from 'medium' and 'small' states (Klein 1974).

At least according to their founding documents, international organizations formally function to ensure international cooperation rather than competition. Still, the formal umbrellas of international treaties have never prevented international actors and stakeholders from entering antagonistic relations with others and seeking advantages in international relations. The predominant focus on international legal treaties in theories of international relations has resulted in the view of international organizations as institutionalized forms of cooperation and competition among states. International relations scholars explain international organizations as instruments of states or arenas for state competition and cooperation that mandate international organizations to function (Koch 2009, 2015). According to the neorealist school of thought, meanwhile, an international organization is "a set of rules in which states should cooperate and compete with each other" (Mearsheimer 1994: 8). The other characteristic of competition in the realist and neorealist schools of international relations have referred to enhancement of hierarchies among 'great powers' and their environment. Competition is an intense form of international conflict embracing struggles for power, influence, and hegemony, which is an exclusive prerogative of a few states regarded as 'legitimate players' in the international arena.

This preoccupation with hierarchical intergovernmental competition in international organizations has avoided a consistent analysis of transnational and domestic stakeholders, who are also involved in world politics. Besides domestic stakeholders presenting diverging views within states, the UN system and particularly the UN Secretary-General have become more influential in peaceful settlements of conflicts (Zacher 1966). The realist assumption that the UN simply reflects the interests of the 'great powers' has been confronted by the process of autonomization of the UN and its augmenting interdependence with transnational actors, including networked cities, parliaments, commercial enterprises, and non-governmental organizations (Castells 1999).

The improved capacities of networks of transnational stakeholders in international organizations should widen our understanding of scarcity or a contested good at international organizations. According to the leading theorists of liberal institutionalism, increasing interdependence among actors and stakeholders in world politics has moved the focus of competition from absolute security gains and the struggle for power to economic growth and

status (Keohane/Nye 1972; Grieco 1988). If earlier studies in realist thought promoted the view of competition as an intense form of conflict, liberal institutionalism mainstreamed the network component of competition, insisting that international organizations play a significant role in world politics due to complex interdependence. Relative advantages in attaining attention, legitimacy, and prestige can also, therefore, be a scarce good in complex networks of international organizations (Werron 2014; 2015).

Sociological studies of world politics suggest that not only the distribution of power in the world system but also the mode of power distribution have become a scarce good in world competition. The 'global transformation' of the 'long nineteenth century' has changed firstly, the distribution of power in world politics, and secondly, the mode of power (Buzan/Lawson 2015). The modern distribution of power stems through increasingly complex network relations (Buzan/Albert 2010: 22, 131). These complex network relations frame the power of actors and stakeholders in world politics, making ties and connections a 'new' scarce good in world politics. Even if the 'great powers' aim at security, wealth, and power, the activities of 'big players' are constrained by a multiplicity of non-state actors, groups of activists, and advocacy networks. These stakeholders, being interconnected with states, may not only constrain, but also enhance the states' capacity for action at international organizations.

Do all ties or specific sets of ties represent scarce goods in complex network in world politics? How do actors and stakeholders compete for a scarce good in networks? Network studies at international organizations are often combined with international relations and organizational theories, which efficiently explore cases of international organizations and governance but do not fully exploit the added value offered by network theory.

According to Hafner-Burton et al., networks at international organizations are commonly understood as sets of relations among all nodes that form a structure enabling or constraining its individual nodes (2009: 560). As Kahler finds, two approaches to networks at international organizations have emerged: networks as actors and networks as structures (Kahler 2009). In the actor-oriented approach, a network is an acting force complemented by various international legal actors and organizations. In the structure-oriented approach, a network is a form of permanent communication: a flow-forming structure, enabling or constraining its node or agents.

Scarce goods in networks at international organizations reflect varying centralization patterns among its constitutive agents or nodes (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009: 582). Networks comprise of nodes and the ties among

them; and their characteristics derive from the position of a node in a network. Numerous patterns of hierarchical structuring (centralization) can therefore be observed. Some depend on the number of ties, others on the capacity to bridge isolated parts of networks or to connect to nodes that are themselves better connected (Cudworth/Hobden 2010: 403; Bovaird 2008; Bousquet/Curtis 2011: 47).

In network theory, these patterns of centralization are called 'centralities'. Centrality is the main scarce good in networks at international organizations. Centrality shows a family of properties related to the structural importance or prominence of a node in a network (Borgatti et al. 2009; Freeman 2004). With high centrality measurements a node—an actor at an international organization—has better access to resources and information flow among the other nodes. From such a standpoint, the more central an actor is, the better opportunities an actor has to expect support in a conflict, to withhold the benefits of recognition, and to coerce other actors. As argued by Beckfield, structural inequality is based on the unequal centralization of networks at international organizations, which in its turn opens room for states and societies with privileged positions to set the agenda, implement policies, and frame instruments of international regulation and cooperation (Beckfield 2008).

Measurements of centrality may be computed via a set of techniques (Gloor 2017). Two main scarce structural positions correspond to high centrality measurements. The first is that of a leader, connected to the highest number of nodes in the network. The second is that of a broker: a position that enables the actor to form a bridge between isolated clusters of a network (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009: 571).

Due to the increased complexity of international organizations, a large and varied number of actors and stakeholders are involved in networks at international organizations. These include states, NGOs, institutions, private enterprises, and transnational corporations. According to rational choice theory, each actor or stakeholder would have its own motivation to compete, seeking a scarce good of security, wealth, or status (Glaser 2010). In network competition at international organizations, actors and stakeholders would exert their influence and reach their objectives through complex network relationships and competition for structural positions of the core leaders or brokers.

## Network Competition in the UN HRC

Together with relevant stakeholders, the institutional mechanisms of the Human Rights Council constitute a complex system of governance, where actors, such as the European Union, compete for brokerage across governmental, institutional, and organizational levels of governance. These networks include various types of actors and stakeholders falling into categories identified by Kaasch and Martens (2015): public and private actors, epistemic communities, states, NGOs and national human rights institutions, transnational corporations and large enterprises.<sup>1</sup>

The promotion of human rights at the UN Human rights Council is ensured via a multi-actor approach. Actors seek to improve their network brokerage in order to set international standards in human rights, draft international treaties, promote a particular view on the international system, or establish financial instruments to support civil society and create relative advantages in international negotiations. In doing so, actors and stakeholders establish and sustain ties across three main levels of governance at the UN HRC: interstate (among governments), interorganizational (among non-governmental organizations), and interinstitutional (among international organizations as self-sufficient actors).

At first, competition for brokerage occurs at the intergovernmental level. State diplomatic networks have been a longstanding structural characteristic of the UN system, since states hold the principal position at the UN under the sovereignty principle stipulated by the UN Charter. It is states who are members of the UN and parties to international human rights agreements. It is states, too, who take formal decisions at the UN and contribute to the UN's regular budget.

Since the UN Human Rights Council was established as an intergovernmental body, states have borne the responsibility for decision-making at HRC sessions, producing resolutions, summaries, recommendations, and conclusions. The HRC sessions are held three times per year: in March (four weeks),

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1 The term 'relevant stakeholders' has been widely used at the UN. The UN HRC rules of procedure include states and 'other relevant stakeholders including NGOs and NHRIs'. To keep the existing lines at the UN, this contribution refers to actors in case of entities with international legal personality, and to 'relevant stakeholders' in case of entities without international legal personality, cf. Shaw 2008.

June (three weeks), and September (three weeks). The Council may hold a special session upon a request of one-third of the Council's member's request. By 2020, almost all 30 special sessions have focused on situations in a country or a region. The sessions include numerous discussions, side events, presentation of reports from the OHCHR, and the HRC subsidiary bodies.

Though the decisions at the UN HRC are taken on the intergovernmental level, the transnational access of the UN for other relevant stakeholders forces the diplomatic actors to compete for brokerage not only at the intergovernmental but also at institutional and organizational level—for the attention of NGOs, groups of people, and non-state actors, in general (Tallberg et al. 2013; Tallberg et al. 2018). How do the EU's diplomatic networks operate within this institutional context?

To address this question, we must understand clearly the nature of the diplomatic networks that act within the UN HRC. Firstly, diplomatic networks involve coalitions that exist within the UN system as well as those outside the UN. Secondly, the network perspective on diplomacy reflects the complexity of situational coalition making—networks are dynamic and may adapt to changes of environment. These networks may reconfigure themselves based on a thematic issue and exist in three main forms. The first are regional diplomatic networks—state coalitions based on five regional UN Charter groupings. The second are formal diplomatic networks—state coalitions based on formal international organizations. The third are informal diplomatic networks—informal political coalitions of 'like-minded' states.

Table 1. UN HRC Diplomatic networks

Regional diplomatic networks	Formal diplomatic networks	Informal diplomatic networks
African states (African group), Asia-Pacific States (Asian-Pacific group), Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), Western European and other States (WEOG), Eastern European States (EEG)	<i>European Union, African Union, Eurasian Economic Union, Union State, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, ASEAN, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), G77 (or G77+China), Arab League, Commonwealth, Francophonie</i>	<i>Like-Minded Group of largely developing and ex-communist countries (LMG), JUSCANZ group of US allies in the Pacific, various 'Groups of Friends'; and contact groups, such as the Contact Group on the Council membership, Group of Friends on Responsibility to Protect, Group of Friends of the Syrian People, Group of Friends of the Small Island Developing States, Group of Friends on national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up (NMIRFs), Lima Group</i>

Even though the process of human rights promotion should in theory be based on cooperation, actors and stakeholders get actively involved in competition for structural positions in complex networks of the Human Rights Council through coalition formation. It is widely acknowledged in research on the UN Human Rights Council that the main actors in this competition are coalitions of states. The UN system has been subject to bloc politics since its establishment. Coalition formation at the UN, as claimed by Chané and Sharma (2016), allows states to increase lobbying capacities and bargaining power by maximizing their total number of votes; and reduce 'time' costs through 'burden-sharing' mechanisms. As argued by Smith, Wouters and Chané, the UN HRC is an illustrative case of the regional and political concurring blocs that have emerged since 2006 (Wouters/Chané 2016; Smith 2017; 2015). At the same time, openness to stakeholders also ensures that the UN HRC exhibits a strong degree of stratification, both among states and stakeholders. The latter has not yet received significant consideration, nor have interlinkages across the interstate, interinstitutional, or interorganizational levels.

The wealth of academic research on respective coalition formation through voting procedures or resolution co-sponsorship has yet to be re-inforced with network research that extends beyond interstate coalition formation. Yet the process of human rights promotion at the UN HRC involves more than states' coalitions. It is not only state blocs who engage constructively in communication or competition but also networks of states, NGOs, private enterprises, and international institutions. Since the process of communication involves all of these, states operate within a field constituted by a range of non-state actors. It is this reality that leads to the emergence of complex networks at international organizations.

The EU represents a formal diplomatic network that has emerged at the HRC on the basis of a coordination process among states. Regional and alliance organizations usually enjoy the status of an observer to the General Assembly and are thus observers at the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly (with the exception of the EU with the status of an enhanced observer, due to the organizational changes to the Union after the Lisbon Treaty). Formal diplomatic networks have been regarded as a consistent pattern of UN politics as these networks allow the states to build sustainable coalitions and coordinate their actions at the UN regularly (Chané/Sharma 2016; Wouters/Chané 2016).

Formal diplomatic networks are based on the coordinated priorities of groups of states and regional institutional mechanisms. Coordination within these networks allows the states to increase the effectiveness of negotiations and reach their priorities through 'burden-sharing' actions, in other words, through the distribution of roles in negotiations. On the one hand, these networks may sometimes prioritize political solidarity against universal promotion of human rights, which can serve as a cause of politicization of the Human Rights Council and a decrease in consensus (Freedman/Houghton 2017). On the other hand, such political solidarity, though it may constrain the space for international dialogue, still establishes a system of checks and balances, which can foster international cooperation. The necessary condition for such enhancement of international cooperation is the bridging of various subgroups in complex networks.

To compete effectively at the UN HRC, formal diplomatic networks have to consistently augment their brokerage power: between other diplomatic networks and coalitions as well as between non-governmental stakeholders. Diplomatic networks operate through coordination and burden-sharing

practices: diplomatic networks do not speak with 'one voice' but via 'multiple voices' (Smith 2010).

At the same time, these networks are no longer 'blocs' as they may have divergent thematic priorities on certain issues (Smith 2017). For example, EU human rights promotion at the UN Human Rights Council takes three main forms. The first is the adoption of respective HRC resolutions submitted 'on behalf of the EU' as a whole. The other share of priorities is reached through HRC resolutions submitted on behalf of EU member states. The second option is usually taken in case the EU is not completely unanimous on the operationalization of a priority. The third formula is the submission of EU priorities not by the EU member states but instead by the members of the EU+ network. This includes states that are to become the EU members, closely cooperate with the EU, or are beneficiaries of the EU financial instruments. Finally, the priorities of diplomatic networks are implemented not only through coordination among states but also through regional institutional mechanisms, i.e. through the EU financial instruments of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human rights and the European Neighborhood Instrument operated by the European Commission.

Table 2. EU Resolutions of the UN HRC in 2020 (43rd and 44th sessions)

<b>On behalf of the EU</b>	<p><b>Situation of human rights in Myanmar</b></p> <p><b>Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea</b></p> <p><b>Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material</b></p> <p><b>Freedom of religion or belief</b></p>
<b>On behalf of the EU member states</b>	<p>Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic</p> <p>Freedom of opinion and expression: mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression</p> <p>Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran</p> <p>Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities: mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues</p> <p>Mental health and human rights</p> <p>Adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context</p> <p>Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights</p> <p>Promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</p> <p>Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment: mandate of the Special Rapporteur</p> <p>The right to education</p> <p>Trafficking in persons, especially women and children: strengthening human rights through enhanced protection, support and empowerment of victims of trafficking, especially women and children</p> <p>Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions</p> <p>Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members</p> <p>Independence and impartiality of the judiciary, jurors and assessors, and the independence of lawyers</p> <p>Situation of human rights in Eritrea</p> <p>Situation of human rights in Belarus</p> <p>Fifteenth anniversary of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as enshrined in the World Summit Outcome of 2005</p> <p>Business and human rights: Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises and improving accountability and access to remedy</p> <p>Freedom of opinion and expression</p> <p>Extreme poverty and human rights</p>

<p><b>On behalf of the non-EU states (EU+ network)</b></p>	<p><b>Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders</b>  <b>Cooperation with Georgia</b>  <b>Promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua</b>  <b>Awareness raising on the rights of persons with disabilities, and habilitation and rehabilitation</b>  <b>The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests</b>  <b>Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities</b></p>
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Compiled by the author. Data from the UN HRC extranet. URL: <https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/> (accessed 17.09.2020)

Table 2 illustrates the variety of formats to build the EU networks at the Human Rights Council. The notable EU+ network includes states from the other formal diplomatic networks that are part of other regional organizations. While these regional organizations have their own priorities and sometimes even contest those of the EU, on some thematic matters a few states from other diplomatic networks join the EU. The HRC institutional structure reflects that formal diplomatic networks are simultaneously cooperating with and contesting the other formal networks at the HRC dependent on the particular thematic scope of an initiative (Laatikainen/Smith 2017).

The overall capacities, cohesiveness, and visibility of these networks vary. For example, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) comprises 120 states; the G77 networks consists of 134 states; the formal diplomatic network of the Commonwealth, 53 states; the EU network, 28 states; the African Union, 55 states; the Organization for Islamic Cooperation—57 states, and so on. These networks are often based on regional economic integration organizations—like the EU or the Eurasian Economic Union—or intergovernmental regional political organizations—like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. These networks depend on the structural cohesiveness of the respective international organizations; they decompose once an organization ceases to exist (as in the case of the Warsaw Pact network).

While there are a variety of international organizations outside the UN with coordinating functions, not all of them visibly set and coordinate their objectives at the HRC. Only some of them can be regarded as consistent formal diplomatic networks as they coordinate their activities permanently be-

fore the HRC meetings and at the UN Office in Geneva. Among those networks, the most sustainable are those that present their statements and resolutions on behalf of their respective group and coordinate their activities at the HRC during sessions every day. In this regard, the most visible networks are the networks of the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union, and the Organization of American States. 42% of all resolutions of the Council, submitted from 2006 to 2015, were sponsored or co-sponsored from these five formal diplomatic networks (Chané/Sharma 2016). The other sustainable formal diplomatic networks are those of the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77, and the Commonwealth of Independent States. These networks are dynamic—the G77 network has shown a high degree of cooperation with China in the coordination of priorities and has started to make statements on behalf of the G77+China network, especially, in promotion of the UN Charter and the principle of state sovereignty (Okano-Heijmans et. al 2019). Besides declaratory statements, the G77 together with China started to strengthen the UN human rights machinery by contributing extra funds to the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Lock 2006).

## Network Power Europe at the UN HRC

The European Union is one of the exemplary international actors involved in network competition at international organizations. Its simultaneous operation as an intergovernmental and supranational organization has produced the complex institutional setting of the EU machinery across levels of governance in world politics, and particularly at the UN. What is the scarce good the EU competes for, however, remains a question that raises intriguing disputes. One of the earlier layers of these disputes differentiates between the civilian and military attitudes of the EU developed by Duchêne and Bull (Manners 2002; Orbie 2008). A more recent discussion follows the deepening of the European integration and suggests that the EU is able to act as 'normative power Europe' and thus competes for the definition of what is 'normal' in world politics; and also that the EU operates as 'market power Europe' hence competing on the basis of market and for power and wealth (Damro 2012). Both normative and market dimensions integrate in the sense of the general attitude of the EU to export regional standards on the global level, however, these dimensions vary in the understanding of what is the EU identity that drives

the capacities of this regional economic integration organization: norms or market.

The debate on what kind of identity the EU has—‘normative power Europe’ or ‘market power Europe’—refers respectively to the political and market-related bases of the history of the European integration. For example, since the EU has been founded on the core value of liberty, the EU competes for the promotion of this value externally. At the same time, having a significant single market, thorough institutional legislation, and interconnection with interest groups, the EU externalizes its internal economic activities to compete for economic power in the world. These bases of the EU integration, as argued by Damro, predispose the EU to act as market power Europe and compete for economic power (2012: 689).

From the perspective of network theory, EU external action is based on sustaining complex networks during the internal decision-making and externalization of the EU internal policies. The EU acts as ‘network power Europe’ due to the great scope of institutions and stakeholders involved in the EU external action. EU external action at international organizations involves actions of the EU member states and the EU institutions as well as all other relevant stakeholders represented by consultative institutional bodies, institutions, NGOs, and enterprises from the European region. A great variety of intergovernmental and non-governmental stakeholders represent the EU network at an international organizations and compete for the EU’s structural position of a broker in world politics. Network power Europe is exercised through what Delreux and Keukeleire call the “informal division of labor” (2017). The emergence of network power Europe has a political background. The EU has given strategic priority to the HRC in both action plans on human rights and democracy in 2012-2014 and 2015-2019 (European Union 2012, 2015). The internal process of adoption priorities for the HRC involves a great variety of mechanisms. Besides the adoption of the priorities by the Council of the EU, the EU diplomatic network coordinates its actions at the HRC with the Guidelines that are developed by the European External Action Service (EEAS) after discussions at the European Council’s Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) and the European Commission. The coordination may also involve meetings of the UN Working Party (CONUN) and geographical working groups.

How does the EU compete for structural brokerage at the UN HRC? The EU has been one of the most complex actors at the HRC. Firstly, the EU aims at being a broker on the diplomatic level, among states. The diplomatic network

of the EU comprises more than its 27 member states, and is often referred to as the EU+ network. It is often the case that the EU network augments its capabilities with the other countries aligning their positions with the EU one: the candidate countries to the EU (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, plus, Bosnia and Herzegovina as a potential candidate, the members of the European Single Market); together with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland; and the states participating in the European Neighbourhood Policy, including Morocco, Israel, Mauritania, Tunisia, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova (Weber 1995; Blauberger/van Hüllen 2020). Notwithstanding the national capacities and priorities in the EU diplomatic network, it is the 'big two'—France and Germany—that constitute the core of the network and are capable of mobilizing the entire network (Krotz/Maher 2016).

The complexity of the EU network is reflected in the variety of thematic priorities initiated at the HRC on behalf of the EU, on behalf of the EU member states. In the first case, the thematic scope of the EU as a formal organization remains allegedly limited and focuses on country-specific resolutions (on situations in Belarus, Burundi, Myanmar, or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), plus, rights of the child and freedom of religion or belief. Still, the thematic scope of the EU diplomatic network is much wider in terms of its thematic coverage as it comprises the national priorities of the EU member states, such as the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the provision of safe spaces for civil society and human rights defenders, and the centrality of prevention to the work of the HRC.

Secondly, the EU has been effective in performing brokerage in connecting intergovernmental level with institutional (international organizations) and organizational (NGOs and businesses) stakeholders. As suggested by Zaru and Geurts (2012), the EU's ability to stimulate networks at the UN is provided by the complexity of the EU external representation. Even if the HRC is an intergovernmental body and the promotion of human rights at the HRC relates to the intergovernmental EU Common Foreign and Security Policy matters, the EU network extends beyond its intergovernmental nature.

First of all, EU brokerage is supported by the functioning of the EU Delegation—in case of the UN HRC, the EU Delegation in Geneva. The EU Delegation represents the EU together with the Rotating Presidency at the Council of the EU. The EU Delegation to the HRC is responsible for the coordination of the network and, sometimes, for informal negotiations that involve non-

governmental stakeholders (Biedenkopf/Petri 2019; Tawhida/de Jesús Butler 2006; Maurer/Morgenstern-Pomorski 2018). The European Commission also has its own additional representation, especially in matters related to the voluntary budget of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, which in the end enables the EU institutions to be directly connected to the HRC Secretariat and subsidiary mechanisms (Willa 2017). The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as well as the EU Special Representative for Human Rights can also participate in the High-Level Segment and expert meetings of the HRC respectively (Smith 2010).

To ensure and finally benefit from brokerage with institutional and organizational stakeholders, the EU diplomatic network continues to intensively cooperate with the HRC mandate holders of the Special Procedures, notably, via the OHCHR and mandate holders' briefings before the Political and Security Committee on Brussels (Kaddous 2015: 38). The EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EU SR) communicates to non-governmental stakeholders at the HRC side events, delivers speeches at the HRC, addresses the HRC sessions on behalf of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, cooperates with the HRC special procedures and with the OHCHR, and ensures the implementation of the EU human rights guidelines. The EU network includes the outcomes of the HRC sessions in bilateral human rights policies that further reach civil society of third countries. In Geneva, the EU, together with the other countries, NGOs, representatives of international organizations, delivers demarches and declarations. The Union finally ensures worldwide monitoring through interconnection between the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the EU Human Rights Focal Points with civil society organizations. The EU also includes human rights as essential elements of agreements, and promotes human rights through the other instruments and bodies, e.g. the Development Cooperation Instrument (Smith 2015).

## Conclusions

The network perspective on competition in world politics stresses that scarcity in competition is a dynamic multidimensional phenomenon. In this regard, international organizations ensure communication flow for an increasing complexity of actors and stakeholders in world politics. The formal procedures of international organizations, and particularly, of the UN HRC, ensure sustainable communication within the levels of governance, i.e.

states with states, international institutions with international institutions, NGOs with NGOs, and so on. The formal procedures lead to the emergence of within-level networks. But what about communication flow across levels of governance? The institutional setting of the UN HRC is open for participation of NGOs, but NGOs or institutions do not bear the same capacities in decision-making as states do. Therefore, brokerage in communication across levels of governance becomes a scarce object in network competition at international organizations.

Brokerage in communication flow could be performed not only by 'great powers' but also by complex coalitions of states, NGOs, and international institutions. According to dominant schools of IR theory, competition in world politics is an exclusive prerogative of states, or even of just a few 'great powers'. The network perspective highlights the dynamic character of network competition in international organizations. Competition for brokerage is conditioned on communication flow and not on the formal decision-making of an international organization.

Acting as network power Europe, the EU exerts its economic, social and political influence through complex network relationships at international organizations, and particularly at the UN HRC. The EU exercises this power to compete for the scarce object of brokerage in world politics. There are three main types of brokerage depending on the actors and stakeholders involved: the EU becomes a network broker in intergovernmental affairs, the EU performs brokerage between third state-parties and NGOs, and the EU bridges non-state organizations from the EU and non-EU member states. The competition for brokerage is exercised via complex networks of the EU member states, institutions, institutional bodies, and civil society organizations.

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