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RSCAS 2007/12

International Cooperation and Environmental
Security: The Worldview of Joseph Borg

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ISSN 1028-3625

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Printed in Italy
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy
<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/>
<http://cadmus.eui.eu>

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Abstract

This article focuses on the worldview of Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Joseph Borg, former Maltese diplomat and legal practitioner whose career includes a brief incursion into academia and the holding of strategic positions in the Maltese government. His main challenge in the Barroso Commission is to develop a comprehensive European strategy for seas and oceans, integrating maritime-related policy-areas such as fisheries, environmental protection, transport and employment, among others.

For Borg, the international system is marked by interdependent actors who constantly face collective action problems. The language he adopts stresses the need for *cooperation* and *partnership*—key terms in his discourse—along multiple political levels. Bringing together various *stakeholders* such as industries and local communities is essential to enhance democratic governance, and to allow Europe to exercise leadership based on multilateralism and respect for institutions. Also worth mentioning are the repeated references to the Central Mediterranean and the North Sea—regarded as strategically important partners. A priori there are no ‘enemies’, but deleterious practices that threaten the marine environment and its related activities.

Drawing on his speeches, as well as his hearing before the European Parliament (EP), the present article lays down a few considerations on the role of the EU as a global actor regarding an issue that brings together economic, environmental and social aspects displayed along multi-level polity systems. Data stems mainly from the literature, FAO and OCDE’s statistical databases, and Commission’s archives accessible through the *Gateway to the European Union*.

Keywords

Joe Borg, EU, European Commission, Common Fisheries Policy, Maritime Affairs, Maritime Strategy, Operational Code, Worldview, cooperation

Introduction¹

Over the last few years, the EU has significantly increased its role on the international scene. What was initially an arrangement with commercial purposes has become an important player in a wide variety of organizations and institutions. The policy domain addressed in this paper is that of maritime affairs. Its core concerns fisheries-related issues, but the agenda also encompasses topics as varied as energy, transport, environmental protection, research and regional development. The more comprehensive approach proposed by the Barroso Commission focuses on the external relations of the EU, in particular on its participation in international institutions. The task of Commissioner Joseph Borg, a former diplomat and legal practitioner educated in Malta and in the UK, is to carry out this plan by bringing together governments and social groups – Europeans or not - related to this policy area. The way that he perceives the international system and its main actors (states, local communities, international organizations, economic groups, scientists, and so on) has extremely important implications for EU maritime strategy. As will be shown later, ‘cooperation’ is, in his view, a keyword.

Borg’s worldview highlights important aspects regarding the EU’s international relations. Of particular relevance is the idea of leadership through partnership, and cooperative agendas like the promotion of sustainable development, aid provision and assistance. The first part acquaints Joe Borg. The subsequent section deals with the main features of the agenda, focusing on the European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. An overview of EU’s international (maritime) relations is also presented; the Commissioner view of the international system the importance of Cooperation and the role of institutions are analysed in the following section. The last part explores the European Vision for the Oceans and Seas in the light of the recently launched Maritime Strategy, and lay down a few considerations.

Who is Joseph Borg?

Born in 1952, Joseph Borg was educated as a lawyer, and to this he has added experience as a legal adviser in the private sector in Malta and abroad. His academic career began in 1979 at the University of Malta and comprised a short sojourn at the Manchester University Business School. By the end of the 1980’s he had acquired expertise in European Law in the University of Wales Aberystwyth, followed by teaching activities after returning to his home country. Despite the posts he held at the University of Malta and Malta Institute of Accountants, Borg has not become an academic as other EU officials have, like Robert Cooper, for example (Foley: 2006). Instead, he entered Maltese politics, becoming a member of the Christian-Democrat and pro-European local Nationalist Party (PN). His interest in foreign affairs has streamlined his political career, as reflected in the positions he occupied before joining the Commission. Politician, diplomat and former member of the board of directors of Maltese Central Bank, Joe Borg formally became an EU citizen in April 2004. Malta’s accession to the Community and his subsequent designation represent a victory for the PN. In addition, they also reflect Borg’s role in broadening communication channels with Brussels. As a Commissioner he continues to do this, but across different political and economic actors, and between institutions situated in different levels of governance.

1 This paper is one of a collection of six related RSCAS working papers (EUI-WP RSCAS 2007/07 to EUI-WP RSCAS 2007/12, inclusive). Earlier versions of these papers were presented at the workshop ‘European Worldviews: Ideas and the European Union in World Politics’, European University Institute-Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, 6 June 2006. For an overall presentation of the research project, see Pascal Vennesson, *Introduction to ‘European Worldviews: Ideas and the EU in World Politics’*, EUI Working Papers RSCAS 07_07. I would like to thank the participants in this workshop, as well as professors Marise Cremona, Virginie Guiraudon, Ulrich Krötz and Pascal Vennesson for their helpful comments. I benefited from the financial support of the Brazilian Ministry of Education, ‘CAPES’ agency’s Overseas Doctoral Scholarship programme.

‘Long-standing believer in the European project’ in his own words, Borg was by 1989 placed in charge of the preparations for Malta’s application to the EU, later to be followed by intense accession negotiations (Malta’s Designated Commissioner Joseph Borg -Hearing before the European Parliament, 2004). Given its geographic position and the several occupations that have taken place over history, it comes as no surprise that sea affairs have always been a critical issue for the Maltese. For instance, two outstanding representatives of this area are the former Justice Minister Joseph Fenech, who contributed towards increasing the role played by Malta in the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and Ambassador Arvid Pardo, who took part in launching the Conference on the Law of the Sea in the 1970’s. The idea that all the problems of the ocean are interrelated is reflected in UNCLOS, 1982 provisions and streamlines Borg’s discourse. In fact, the definition of a Maltese Fisheries Conservation Zone was already on the agenda by 1999; commercial exploitation of the continental shelf (petroleum in particular) has already been discussed with Tunisia. His nationality, as well as academic and working experience in other member states could be an asset to the position he occupies. However, rarely does Borg explicitly refer to them. His worldview gathers diplomacy and entrepreneurship, with political diversity being regarded as an asset rather than an obstacle to European leadership. He makes explicit that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution regarding fisheries, but does not focus on particular cases.

Borg’s trajectory indicates not only familiarity with the European project, but also a major concern with his country’s international relations. These characteristics can be noticed in his education – which comprises a specialization in European Law in the University College of Wales and responsibilities as international secretary of the Nationalist Party. Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1999 and 2004, he took part in the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (independence from the UK came in 1964), in addition to chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2002 / 2003. At that time, the overriding issue was the re-activation of Malta’s application to the EU, which had been put aside by the previous Labour Party government. Borg’s political agency was critical to bring together local interest groups in order to catch up with the other applicant countries and to fulfil the criteria to join the Union. Designated by the Maltese government, Borg’s hearing before the European Parliament took place on 5 October 2004, and was then followed by his nomination as Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs in November of the same year.

During the hearing, Borg describes the abilities and contributions to help carrying out the ambitious project put forward by the Barroso Commission: the development of a comprehensive and integrated Maritime Strategy, with the participation of other DGs such as Environment, Transport, Research and Development, Internal Market, Energy, and so on. The EP decided he was indeed suitable for the job, but what is interesting for us to ask is how his understanding of the world system can influence the pursuit of this new role for DG XIV. Of special interest are his views on cooperation, main actors in European and world politics, and the perceived challenges and obstacles. Before analysing such elements, however, some considerations on Fisheries and Maritime Affairs must be laid down. After all, knowledge about the area is not widespread, and there are some particularities compared to other agendas. The following sections depict the agenda and lead the way forward to the analysis.

Fisheries and Maritime Affairs

Specific Characteristics of the Agenda

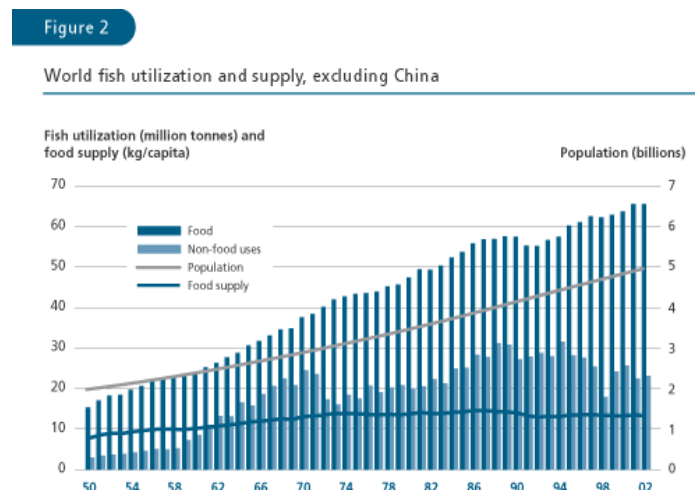
Maritime affairs encompass various policy areas, as discussed further down in this article. However, much of the debate in this policy arena refers to the regulation of common pool resources (CPRs) in both local and global scales. Avoiding the tragedy of the commons² is the single most important goal

2 The term became widespread by the ecologist Garrett Hardin. The concept is developed in Hardin, G. (1968, 1243-1248).

of a myriad of regimes and institutions which must take into account the size, renewal capacity, dynamics and homogeneity of fishing stocks, not to mention economic aspects such as the populations dependent on its exploration, market fluctuations, etc, in the design of effective instruments. Systematic attempts to draw up principles for the use of the oceans dates from the beginning of the 17th century (Vogler: 2000). This old branch of international relations and international law is by and large a dynamic one: new issues permanently arise, therefore calling for the (re)formulation of the rules capable of addressing them, as Borg states:

(...) the international community has a long history of co-operation with regard to high seas fisheries and that this history is also a very important part of our heritage. We now have a well structured body of international laws and instruments, and a significant number of organizations that channel their energies to ensure sustainable fisheries. It is on this that we must continue to build (Borg: 01/05/2005).

Nevertheless, marine fish scarcity remains a major problem. At least 60% of the most important commercial stocks face serious risk of extinction, as put shortly by the report on The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture: 'the global potential for marine capture fisheries has been reached, and more rigorous plans are needed to rebuild depleted stocks and prevent the decline of those being exploited at or close to their maximum potential' (FAO 2004), as illustrated in the figure below:



Source: FAO, 2004

Global production from capture fisheries and aquaculture totalled about 101 million tonnes in 2002, providing an apparent per capita supply of 16.2 kg. Despite the remarkable development regarding aquaculture in the past decade, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total amount of food fish still comes from catches in natural environments. Rules prove necessary to conserve these; however, as stated by Borg at a UN conference in 2005, moving from 'words to actions' is fundamental – 'we must commit to do more' (Borg: 01/05/2005). Doing more, in this case, means not only adopting strict regulations and enforcing the existing ones; it also involves addressing several policy-related areas altogether. Traditionally fisheries, maritime transport, industry, offshore energy, environmental protection and tourism are usually addressed separately, which may in turn lead to conflicting measures. The Commission now seeks to develop a more integrated strategy that takes into account: 1) the links between different policy domains, and 2) the relations between member states and third countries who share maritime resources.

(Contd.) _____

The Green Paper Maritime Policy for the EU recognises the perils of fragmented analyses and spells out the need for ‘holistic’ initiatives. The underpinning argument is that complex systems (biological, social) are more than just the sum of the elements that compose them. In areas with strong transnational and cross-sectoral features holism has become a quite common *figure de language*. The term relates closely to Borg’s entrepreneurial - diplomatic background, and constitutes a central part of his discourse, as will be shown in the second half of the paper.

European Fisheries and beyond: Community, Bilateral and Multilateral Strategies

The main problems regarding the management living resources stem from the need of coordinate actions. Gains are perceived in relative terms, and actors frequently claim that they are losing out. The stronger this perception, the more incentives they have to engage in illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) practices. That is, as in other environmental policy domains, free-riding is a permanent problem. In this case it ranges from the use of banished equipment such as driftnets to piracy and sovereignty violations (fishing in the territorial sea of another state, for instance). The guidelines to circumvent these sources of conflict are spelled out in the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), formally established in 1983 and reformed in 2002. Its overarching goal is to promote the sustainable use of fish stocks, but the real challenge is to reconcile the preferences of the groups involved. That is, EU policy-making in this sector requires (re-) negotiating compromises between governments and various social actors – or stakeholders - such as local communities that are highly dependent on fishing activities; harvesting and processing industries; environmental groups and consumer organizations.

The conservation of fish stocks depends on three fronts: the promotion of aquaculture, catch reduction (limiting vessels’ carrying capacity and restricting harvesting seasons) and the establishment of sustainable exploitation standards. The third point is by far the most critical. Estimating fish populations and their renewal capacity varies considerably depending on the methods adopted. Thus, the definition of total allowed catches (TACs) per country is hindered by the political and economic interests of national governments and private groups that exploit and trade these resources.

It is worth stressing that this problem is observed not only on a global scale, but also within the European polity system. For example, the diverging preferences of EC member states and the strong intergovernmental character of negotiations at the Community level have been directly criticized by Joe Borg: ‘the current fragmentation of decision-making makes it difficult to reconcile competing uses of the oceans and seas and to define priorities’ (Borg: 04/04/2005). This point is quite important, since it suggests that national governments have ‘too much’ power to determine the quotas. As a consequence, harvesting limits remain above sustainable levels. Borg does not state this explicitly, but the language adopted indicates he is in favour of expanding the authority of supranational bodies in order to attribute (or allocate) fishing quotas among member states in a more effective way.

Borg also emphasizes the EU fisheries’ external dimension – the strong inter relation with non-member states due to the EU’s geographic position and the intrinsic characteristics of fish stocks (migration patterns, for example). Indeed, it is hard to think of a Community strategy that does not take into account resources shared with third countries, as well as global regimes (Borg: 14/09/2005). First, because important European industries – namely Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Danish and British operate beyond the Union’s exclusive zone, especially in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic areas. Second, because food processing – in which Germany is a major power – is the end of a supply chain where imports from Africa, Asia and the Americas have become critical. Last, some states maintain a special status because of overseas territories (France, Denmark, Spain, UK). EU fisheries have a tradition of relations with third countries or distant regions that should be strengthened. Borg pushes for a more systematic establishment of joint initiatives between member and non-member states coordinated by the Community, therefore strengthening its role as an international actor. Even though Fisheries falls under EC’s exclusive competence, many fishery-related agreements contain provisions

(ex, environmental protection) where authority is not clearly attributed to either member states or the Community. The distribution of competences is, in turn, decided on a case basis. It is not surprising that Borg always mentions the CFP and Community developments, even in speeches aiming at a much broader audience (UN, FAO and the exclusively intergovernmental IMO). His view of international politics is not only about actors or units, but also about the relations and processes that link them. Institutions operating at regional and international levels are pivotal in the definition of marine-resource regulatory frameworks. Borg regards these institutions as important arenas where the EU can express its interests and proposals aiming at long-term partnerships based on the principles of sustainable development. They offer the Community an opportunity to 'exercise leadership in the debate at both a multilateral and bilateral level' (Borg: 14/09/2005). The two spheres are addressed in the next section.

Bilateral Agreements

Borg's vision of bilateral partnership also provides links to other EU agendas currently under discussion, namely Neighbourhood Policy, advocating the inclusion of fisheries in the ENP Action Plan with our Southern and Eastern neighbours, thus providing a better basis for cooperation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

As Borg points out, despite the evolution regarding bilateral agreements' design, they must look beyond immediate goals; they must do more than providing access to other markets and granting the provision of exotic species to Europe. Today, they establish the general framework for the access of Community fleets to the waters of these countries, followed by protocols that define specific conditions (technical, financial, type of resources, etc.) for implementation. They are also a platform for the EU to project its values and strategies to other states and regions of the world. The amount set aside for fisheries agreements in 1998 was around 5% of the Community's budget for external operations. It provides for three kinds of relationship between the EC and third countries (IFREMER, 1999):

- 1) Agreements with financial compensation have been concluded with non-member countries whose fleet under explore their fishing capacity. Access to stocks is acquired through financial compensation provided by the Community in the form of yearly instalments, in addition to license fees paid by individual EU vessels. Generally known as 'southern agreements', they were signed with 14 ACP countries signatories of the Lomé Convention, in addition to Greenland. These arrangements have been criticized on several grounds. First they stimulate over-fishing - the larger the number of catches and time period, the higher the compensation. Second, agreements were negotiated separately with each country, regardless of the fact that such resources are shared. Third, data was not fully accessible to coastal countries despite contractual obligations: as illustrated by the case of tuna catches in West African waters, the volume and composition of catches were frequently altered (that is, not fully reported) by vessels flying member states' flags. Completion of the Single Market programme in 1992 and incompatibility with GATT/WTO rules caused the Lomé Convention to be replaced by alternative instruments, namely the Cotonou agreements. In a nutshell, they set provisions that have points in common to 2nd generation agreements (see item 'c' below) such as the concept of joint enterprise based on constant communication between the parties. Development, dialogue and partnership set the tone of Borg's speech, even when negotiations prove difficult. This in the case of the agreements with Morocco, for example:

Today, with this Partnership Agreement, we are at a turning point, at the beginning of a new era. This Agreement will promote the development of responsible fisheries, based on economic, financial, technical and scientific co-operation in the field of fisheries, between the European Community and the Kingdom of Morocco. This Partnership Agreement will be based on a permanent policy dialogue and consultation between the two Parties (Borg: 28/07/2005).

- 2) Reciprocal agreements involve exchanges of fishing opportunities/rights between Community fleets and the fleets of non-member countries. They are established with countries that can fully explore their fishing resources – they are also called as ‘northern agreements’. Norway, Sweden (before 1995), the Faroe Islands and Iceland have concluded agreements of this type. The Baltic countries had agreements of this type before accession, but in this case reciprocity was accompanied by financial compensation.
- 3) The ‘second generation’, by contrast, seek to set up short-term joint ventures between community vessels and non-member states. An example is the agreement made with Argentina: vessels from the national fleets of some Member States, whose activities were restricted to Community waters, are now able to harvest elsewhere, therefore ‘reducing’ the amount of catches in the EU. Subsidies from the EU and the state of origin, mainly Portugal, Italy, Greece, France and Germany encourage this practice. Such instruments are a step towards the privatization and liberalization of the sector – in the future such agreements are expected to be signed directly between third states and private companies such as Pescanova-Spain and Unilever.

Borg admits that these three categories are now obsolete – they no longer fully express the Community’s strategy. Instead of talking about ‘northern’ and ‘southern’ agreements, he prefers to mention the need ‘to engage in a new relationship with our partner countries to find solutions to their most pressing development and conservation problems’ (Borg:13/05/2004). Fishing quotas are more than just numbers: they are the result of joint efforts that comprise scientific cooperation, conservation, monitoring and control, investment and processing. His view of the international system values ‘teamwork’ not only with respect to fish stocks themselves but to a whole chain that comprises research, capacity building, fisheries policy strategies, and the support and financing of infrastructure.

Critical Regions

The literature usually separates fishing powers into Coastal and Fishing States. Nevertheless, this division according to geographical and exploitation capacities paints only a limited picture of the international system with respect to maritime affairs. The ranking of EU priorities and main partners in terms of marine resources is coherent with other policy domains, namely Neighbourhood Policy (Portela, 2007). Different from Commissioner Waldner, Borg does not use the terms ‘friends’ or ‘enemies’; all players are possible partners interested in conserving the stocks. East Asia stands out as a critical region for fisheries and sea farming, though Borg rarely mentions these states. He does not rank every state or actor in the international system. Instead, he takes into account areas that are sensitive to European maritime strategy, namely the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic. As shown in the following paragraphs, their importance is strongly related, but not limited to fishing activities.

The Central Mediterranean appears as a priority, offering ‘a useful springboard for the growing European involvement in the development of the region’ (Borg: 15/02/2000). Though this sea area was always been strategic for the EU, it is possible to identify particular emphasis in his discourse, especially before Malta’s accession. Indeed, the region represents an opportunity for the Union to further promote the ‘objectives for partnership and mutually beneficial co-operation which it (the EU) seeks with all Mediterranean countries’ (Id.). It is worth mentioning that in this case serious security matters such as immigration and drug trafficking are involved, and are somehow related to the few options available to former fishery-dependent populations, notably in Spain and Morocco. The North Atlantic is also a strategically important region. The International Relations north/south debate leaves room to disputes between states with heavy fishing capacity fleet such as Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Canada. Some of the region’s important stocks (codfish) are under severe risk of extinction, or are essential for fish processing industries (tuna-like species). Regional fisheries management organizations play a key role in further developing and implementing the Community Action Plan for the Region, designed according to the FAO guidelines. Finally, the Baltic Sea also appears in some of Borg’s statements. In his case, however, he does not mention common traditions or history: emphasis

remains on compliance by new member states and the application of EU policy on renewable energy namely with regards to wind power.

Multilateralism – Global Affairs and New Regionalism

The conservation of sea resources cannot rely exclusively on bilateral agreements; it also depends on multilateral initiatives with a wider scope. The UNCLOS addresses the issue by reforming the legal ordering of fishing activity, regulating practices on the high seas and conferring new obligations and rights to coastal states. Provisions worth mentioning involve delimiting territorial seas and Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZs), as well as rules for the exchange of scientific information that will guide conservation-oriented norms. The need to heighten our present role and seek leadership in the United Nations Law of the Sea institutions and in regional organizations is another point Borg has emphasised. Existing global regimes such as the UN Agreement on Highly Migratory species (1995) appear in his speeches, but do not figure among the most frequently addressed topics. When referring to them, he focuses on the importance of their application and on assessing the impact on stocks maintenance– which may be a future opportunity for EU agency.

Many provisions of the UNCLOS transfer to international regional fishing organizations (RFMOs) the responsibility for the sustainable use of their respective stocks. As a result, a set of institutions have been established in order to make, adjust and enforce specific rules and procedures to the commercially relevant fish stocks. RFMOs – which have played an increasingly important role in the international governance of fisheries - usually require cooperation between regions, which is different from purely state-based cooperation. The EU has been a critical and particularly successful actor in drafting agreements in these organizations – some of which do not comprise European waters. This is in accordance with Borg's guidelines about focusing on issue areas and regions that share interests and priorities. The following statement made by the Commissioner mentions specific points regarding RFMOs and summarizes the present situation:

There is strong international consensus today to extend RFMO coverage to international waters where no governance and conservation regimes are yet in force. The Community is a member of all RFMOs to date, except IATTC (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission) to which we are observers. (...) I am pleased that the EC has become an initiator of most conservation, control and anti-IUU (Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported Fisheries) proposals adopted by the RFMOs. Equally, it is the EC which has pushed RFMOs to adopt multi-annual management plans.

The EU, in turn, also shows strong support for UNCLOS bodies and resolutions. These set the guidelines for the formal establishment of the CFP in 1983, thereby influencing the institutional development of the Community in this realm. The main reason for this alignment is the UNCLOS' support for peaceful settlement of disputes, an essential element of good governance of the oceans. Borg links the importance of the EU to the implementation of the Convention to 'Europe's relation with the oceans and seas has a number of very particular characteristics. One example is the strength of the European fleet and its global importance as a backbone for international trade' (Borg: 05/09/2005). The UN institutional framework allows the EU to advance its maritime strategy thus seeking to set up standards to be followed by other parties. We see that Borg's speeches at the UN/UNCLOS make several references to the latest Green Paper, the EU plan to address the economic, environmental, social, and governance challenges relating to the oceans and the seas, in accordance with the Lisbon agenda.

The International System According to Borg: Cooperation through Institutions

For Borg, the international system is marked by interdependent actors. Although states are sovereign and equal entities in the eyes of international law, they are far from being 'units alike': they differ not only in their resources, but also with respect to the position they occupy vis-à-vis other states and organizations, their values, beliefs and projects. His statements suggest that international cooperation

is perceived as a 'natural' response to problems of collective action and to common threats (e.g., stock collapse). States are never black boxed in his speeches: rather, the role of various stakeholders appears as crucial to the achievement of efficient solutions. These groups do not act only through their respective national governments in a liberal intergovernmentalist fashion (Moravcsik: 1998).

International cooperation, however, needs to be supported by rules. Borg does not refer explicitly to specific scholars or schools of thought, but Krasner's definition of regimes might well apply: a set of explicit or implicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given issue area (Krasner:1983). The basic causal variables in the development of regimes can be identified in Borg's announcements: European interest is on the conservation of elements that are important to the world as a whole (living resources, clean environment, energy, etc). Its political power is exercised through institutions. The other variables – norms, principles, custom and knowledge are brought together according to a more general discourse of the role of the EU in today's world politics and international relations.

The Commissioner repeatedly brings up the 'necessary' changes in maritime policy, contained in a recently issued Green Paper – a first achievement of his mandate which, in turn, highlights the importance of a more integrated approach to seas and oceans. Self sufficiency is not advocated in this domain: he acknowledges that European waters cannot yield certain species demanded by the market (e.g. tropical fish). The goal is not to avoid or minimize dependence on other states, as recommended by Realist strands; the key is to support institutions, in order to render political systems more stable. He does not refer explicitly to security very often (and never in conventional, military terms). Provided that no disasters or natural catastrophes occur, stability suffices.

How Imminent Is the Danger?

Language elements present in Borg's statements situate threat along two dimensions: ecological and economic. The importance of advancing a maritime strategy for the EU is due not only to the commercial value of the stocks, but also because extinction is *worth* preventing and because the continuity of such resources 'must' be assured to future generations. Both concrete (tangible, or *material*) and 'ethical' (subjective, or *ideational*) arguments can be pointed out (Wendt: 1999). This division serves analytical purposes, since both aspects can be identified in the Commissioner's argumentation. Still, two points are worth stressing:

- 1) This division gives Borg leeway to adapt his language to different audiences, and allows him to identify common grounds on which negotiations can be based.
- 2) Interactions with other actors are soft-power oriented, which is consistent with Borg's overall discourse and personal background as a diploma. Despite the 'hard' dimension of maritime affairs – take the example of clandestine migration through the Mediterranean, the limits set by environmental ethics and economic concerns virtually banish hard power talks from Borg's repertoire. In short, the language adopted by Borg supports the conception of the military and diplomacy as separate fields.

Soft power, however, does not imply an absence of threat; its role remains pivotal in international politics. The question is not whether danger exists, but how probable and serious it is considered to be. No recognition leads to a lack of mobilization (Cohen: 1978); however, an exaggerated representation is politically costly and entails the misallocation of budget, time, personnel, etc. The following paragraphs address how Borg models threat and incorporates it into his political discourse. The EU seeks to develop a positive, proactive agenda for distinct policy areas. Regarding fisheries, the discourse – namely after the CFP reform in 2002 – indicates that in Europe, as elsewhere, we have come to the conclusion that the intense development of maritime activities is a challenge to the sustainable development and exploitation of sea resources and activities (Borg: 11 /10/2005).

If more stringent measures are not taken soon, such resources might not be available to future generations. A comprehensive Maritime Strategy – the present Commission’s dearest aim – could set up global-level guidelines, because it takes the economic dimension, the necessities of other regions and cultural aspects into account. The defence of a cross-disciplinary approach favours issue-linkage and widens the possibility of more specific cooperative arrangements with different partners (states or RFMOs, for instance). Regarding fisheries, threat must be perceived as existing (*real*) but relatively ‘light’. The bottom line is: we haven’t reached the point of no return *yet* – but we are close. *Environmental security* – in the sense that exceptional measures and less participative decision-making processes become justifiable (Buzan: 1992) – is not integral part of Borg’s repertoire. He does not refer to a human security agenda on a frequent basis, being in favour of more localized (e.g. region specific) approaches, rather than nationally designed ones. Thus, food security is rarely mentioned, and left for international organizations to deal with. Terms like ‘alimentary crisis’, mass starvation or disputes for nearly exhausted marine resources are quite unusual. At most, his statements point out possible changes in the supply of fish products – which, to date, have referred to commercially important fish commodities that are currently available in the market. Groups dependent on coastal activities and their low political participation in Community institutional bodies are indeed a concern. Human security, however, is not a central element of his code, as its ultimate object – the individual person – is not frequently mentioned.

What? Where? Who?

As in most environmental affairs, the definition of *what* constitutes a threat to marine resources is quite fuzzy. Two main reasons account for this: first, the impact of many practices on distinct ecosystems can hardly ever be assessed accurately- global warming being a classical example; second, environmental harm can be offset by economic and/or social payoffs. But what threats does the Commissioner talk about? For him, menaces stem from two main sources. The first is related to over-exploitation caused by technological improvements. That is, technical development may lead not to higher efficiency but to ecological degradation. The second source is not related to fisheries *per se*, but to activities that threaten the long-term livelihood of coastal areas such as piracy, illegal migration and terrorism. As stated above, Borg does not elaborate much further on these: focus remains on soft power.

The main threats to maritime affairs, in Borg’s view, do not jeopardize the EU as a project; they do not place security at stake, nor do they risk destroying relations with other states. From the political point of view, however, failing to adequately manage marine resources affects the EU’s credibility and leadership potential, in addition to the direct economic and commercial impact. Another question is *where* the threat lies. This is a relatively less problematic issue for other policy areas, despite the de-territorialisation of threats and enemies. When it comes to common resources’ management the scenario is different: the threat can be diffuse – in distinct regions various actors continue to carry out environmentally dangerous practices, either because they do not acknowledge the risk involved or because feasible and compensatory alternatives are lacking. *A priori*, there are no ‘enemies’, but deleterious behaviour. Hazardous practices, either within or outside the Community, can be changed through institutions and other initiatives such as the multidisciplinary task force carried out by seven DGs, currently chaired by Joe Borg. In a nutshell, *where* and *who* are circumstantial.

Designing an European Vision for the Oceans and Seas

The development of a comprehensive Maritime Strategy – a ‘very real and tangible political priority for the Barroso Commission’ (Borg: 11/10/2005) requires a lot of work. Borg is aware that the success of this enterprise depends on coordinating economic, political and ethical interests. This coordination takes place simultaneously at many levels, forcing Borg to keep a permanent eye on localized interests without missing the external implications for the EC and the leadership it seeks to exercise.

In addition to the CFP and multilateral regimes there are other ‘sources of inspiration’. The elaboration of a broader and more integrated initiative for seas and oceans entails critical changes for DG XIV in terms of scope and importance. At the global level, Borg refers to USA, Canadian and Australian maritime policies as examples of new and comprehensive strategies for the sector. These share with the EU the extension of the coast and its economic weight. It should be mentioned that, although the contribution of fisheries to the European economy is relatively unimportant, 90% of the EU external trade is transported by sea. 40 % of the oil and 60% of the gas consumed in the Community are drilled off-shore from the European mainland (Borg: 04/04/2005). Thus, cooperation with North America is fundamental for the management of intensively harvested living resources such as salmon and tuna-like species, which straddle the North Atlantic. Conversely, Borg diverges from his American colleagues with respect to the participation in regimes under the UN and FAO frameworks, and regarding the role of international law. Moreover, research in the EU is conducted in large part by public institutes and universities. In other words, it seems that the common points mentioned by Borg diplomatically suggest a will to cooperate, rather than the actual implementation of certain models. Anyway, the Commissioner recognizes that such strategy is still ‘embryonic’ (Borg: 04/04/2005) and that more specific measures will be determined in the future.

Two main cooperative strategies are present in Borg’s discourse. These reflect two different cleavages of the international system: the first follows geographical criteria (sea regions). The North-East Atlantic, the Baltic and the Mediterranean are primordial; fishing capacity cutbacks and pollution control appear as major concerns. The second reflects socio-economic aspects and is related to the north/south debate.

We must ensure that our own fishing activity outside EU waters is carried out responsibly, and I fully intend to maintain and develop the ‘partnership’ approach to fisheries agreements. The EU must be a strong force for sustainable management at the international level and in the waters of developing countries. As part of this commitment to responsible fisheries, we will have to make further efforts to improve scientific knowledge and scientific advice in this field (Borg: 04/04/2005).

References of this type are common in Borg’s discourse. The EU is associated with the idea of partnership and sustainable development. By contrast, commentaries on enforcement, implementation and compliance are normally accompanied by references to international organizations.

On Values

Borg’s view is translated into a broad maritime strategy dependent on the further participation of stakeholders who are not compelled to engage in policy elaboration at the EU level, so he seeks to encourage stakeholders to *help* him with the definition of the main goals and ways to pursue them. The participation of such actors in Community policy allows Borg to advance the agenda in the international realm because, at the end of the day, it is they who are held responsible for implementation and compliance. It is worth remembering that these groups are European but that their activities are international, extending to the Mediterranean, North Atlantic and distant waters. Borg also refers to values. However, a discourse that puts too much emphasis on European (general) values, but aims at an EU-sceptical audience marked by strong regional (specific) identities could simply backfire. So, in order to circumvent potential resistance to Community institutions, he prioritizes medium and long-term economic payoffs and highlights the spaces Brussels has made available for the expression of regional identities. This is congruent with Borg’s view of a world system composed of diverse actors in which not only states and national governments are on the main stage.

Maritime affairs are envisaged as not only an intersectoral policy and part of broad initiatives such as the Lisbon Agenda and the Barcelona Process, but also as an expression of European *solidarity* within and between member states, and towards third parties. The Commissioner refers to values that underpin European policies and diplomacy, but which can be found in other states. The values he brings forward in the discourse - respect for institutions, democracy, solidarity, etc - do not put the

players in opposite fields. Rather, they set relationships with rights but also duties and responsibilities. In his view, Brussels needs to *manage expectations better, to accept responsibility for public policy problems, and to explain the limits of what they (third parties) can do*, in order to regain the necessary credibility and support to increase its importance as a global player.

Borg's Contribution: Between Diplomacy and Policy-Making

The projects of the present Commission are ambitious. As stated by President Barroso: I have created a portfolio on Maritime Policy in my Commission and I have asked Commissioner Borg to come forward with an integrated Maritime Policy. Ocean governance and the role of the oceans for mankind are crucial.

It is hard to distinguish Borg's views from the Commission's official position. The scarcity of academic production and personal interviews do not necessarily hinder the applicability of Alexander George's operational code. On the contrary, this feature itself constitutes part of the analysis. Probably Borg's European values and beliefs made him push for integration during his mandate as Minister of Foreign Affairs, or even before that. It is also possible that, as an officer coming from a new Member State, he is still defining his position, or role, in the Community framework. What is most likely is that he will continue to undertake diplomacy-related tasks. Borg has been an 'ambassador' for maritime affairs at both Community and global levels. After all, the present Commission regards maritime affairs as an important sphere of integration and exercise of influence by the EU towards neighbouring regions and at the global level. The person in charge has to deal with several actors and institutions. Furthermore, he/she must be able to act in distinct polity levels and across various policy areas. *We want to ensure that a Maritime Policy puts in place a decision-making process that conciliates conflicting interests in marine and coastal areas so as to create a climate that encourages financial investments and the development of sustainable economic activities.* Who could better carry out these tasks than a diplomat?

These plans have major implications for DG XIV, now vested with a much more important status. It calls for stakeholders' participation in policy-definition and implementation. The EU political and bureaucratic framework is portrayed as the most adequate arena to reconcile diverse preferences and to provide satisfactory solutions for the (many) actors involved. Not only EC communication channels, but also other media are used as a platform for the idea of a stronger and necessary common maritime policy. This view is made explicit in an article recently published in the French daily *Les Echos*:

Il est toutefois clair que la mer fournit bien d'autres richesses que la pêche dans les domaines du transport, de la production de pétrole et de gaz, dans l'aquaculture et bien d'autres... L'Union est engagée dans la gestion de nombre de ces activités, secteur par secteur. Au fur et à mesure que l'on réalise leur potentiel de développement, il devient de plus en plus nécessaire de trouver la meilleure manière de les gérer afin d'en retirer un maximum (Borg, 2005).

Statements made by both Borg and Barroso clearly stress the need to increase Community competencies and alleviate the weight of national governments. Important factors are: regional disparities are more relevant than national ones; today, member states can limit the agency of the Commission by not issuing mandates that allow the latter to negotiate at international level, or by leaving considerable leeway in order for them to pursue specific goals; after all, implementation depends on fishing communities, aquaculture producers and private companies. They have to become aware of the need and the benefits of being more active at EU level. Borg does not portray Brussels as a 'philanthropic' entity: he also calls attention to the work and the effort that will be required from the stakeholders. This suggests a challenge and can be seen as an entrepreneurial trace typical of the language he adopts.

The extension of EP competences (for example, the extension of co-decision procedure instead of consultation) foreseen by the Constitutional Treaty would have given unprecedented leverage to maritime strategic plans, and was by and large defended by Borg on many occasions. Since the results

of the referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 in France and in the Netherlands, Borg has emphasized even more firmly the role of regional bodies and the importance of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), set up in 1994, but which is still not perceived by European interest groups from various sectors as an effective arena to discuss and define policies.

Borg frequently stresses the potential of the CoR while calling for what the business management literature calls ‘empowerment’ – here meaning the development of expertise. Fishing communities often face geographical and social marginalization; problems such as functional illiteracy are also present within the EU. In speeches directed at these groups, Borg mentions the need for appropriate education to deal with satellite navigation, to understand the mechanisms of microfinance, to use new information and digital technologies, and so on. The applicability of community solutions to other spheres comes up once again: the EU has also supported programs to reduce illiteracy in fishing communities, carried out under the auspices of the FAO. So far, however the CoR is still fairly important in the definition of localized and sometimes transnational policy programmes.

Conclusions

Commissioner Joe Borg’s education background, in addition to his career as a scholar, politician and officer in charge of international affairs, show not only an interest for international law and IR, but also a strong support for the European project as a whole. His worldview suggests that the feeling of making part of Europe – i.e., sharing values, principles and goals – can precede formal political accession by a state. He is positive that the EU can enhance its role in international affairs with respect to fostering cooperation and promoting sustainable development worldwide. His view is strongly entrepreneurial and also very diplomatic, as shown by his inclusive, inviting speeches. They invite different social actors to *help* him draw not exactly a grand strategy, but an all-embracing policy framework. Rivalries are phased out – actors prone to oppose to EU maritime affairs (member states’ national governments comprised) are not mentioned, but are smoothly criticised and never directly attacked.

Borg also frequently raises the question of the impact of various sea-related sectors such as transport, energy, and tourism on the marine environment. He stresses not only the value of primary resources, but also the potential for generating jobs, knowledge (research) and cooperative arrangements. From his perspective, European groups such as fishermen, scientists, entrepreneurs, consumers and environmentalists – in other words, associations and epistemic communities - are considered essential to the development of sound and integrated maritime policy; they should therefore participate in policy-making in a more direct way and not only through their national governments. In his view it is important to move beyond the strong intergovernmentalist character of decision-making processes in order to surmount implementation problems (at the EC level) and to foster EU initiatives towards third states, thereby strengthening its *actorness* on the international scene. Borg does not draw a thick line between Community and international attributions or responsibilities. Although the Community has its own instruments such as the CFP, or the Green Paper on Maritime Policy, the two levels are deeply and permanently connected, especially when issues affecting ocean regions like the Mediterranean, Baltic and North Atlantic areas are dealt with.

Some of Borg’s statements recall the evolution of the EU: an integration process that began with steel and coal, which now addresses a wide range of affairs and continues to call for the participation of Community institutions in European as well as in global matters. This vision is expressed in the shift from *fisheries policy* to *maritime strategy*. Most of his rhetoric is in tune with neo-functionalism conceptions of the EU and the world system in general (Mittrany:1975), exemplified by the entrepreneurial, less state-oriented tone that he adopts: he refers not only to the future sustainability of resources, but also to jobs, the added value of the sector and their contribution of these elements to a more competitive EU. This provides a link to the ‘Lisbon Strategy’ and has two advantages: first it places DG XIV amid an extensive European enterprise, making it more relevant in the eyes of the public; second, it enables Borg to discuss the Community agenda with audiences often regarded as

‘euro sceptic’. In addition, he stresses the long-term benefits of being part of this strategy. This fits a definition of cooperation that is commonly used in both economics and political science: to leave aside immediate gains in the name of future higher revenues. As stated below:

Without a healthy and sustainable marine environment, any economic benefits we can derive from the oceans will be short-lived. It is therefore crucial that we preserve this resource-base and improve the EU’s long term competitiveness in a sustainable way. Not only will this preserve our industries that rely on the seas, it will also enable future generations to enjoy the seas to the extent we have (Borg: 11/10/2005) .

The Commissioner claims the existence of a ‘maritime tradition’ (related to a certain *savoir faire*) more often than the prevalence of a certain ‘identity’. His discourse is not built upon a certain European maritime identity; on the other hand he stresses general values and principles that are consolidated in the EU, but that are shared by other states and issue areas. To put shortly, the values he mentions do not oppose the EU to other regions or states and do not position the EU as either ‘better’, or more evolved than them. They seek instead to move beyond the north/south dilemma and to establish institutions capable of overcoming collective action problems. That is, there are no ‘enemies’, but practices that threaten the (marine) environment and that can affect various regions without distinction. There is no zero-sum game and all actors are, a priori, potential *partners*.

The speeches available on the Commission’s internet portal do not place any particular emphasis on the last enlargement. They focus on cooperation across policy areas much more than across member states, highlighting the inter-disciplinary character of the agenda and the importance of developing more holistic approaches to bring together the various *stakeholders* - a term used repetitively to designate the social actors affected by Community policies to the sector. Given the sharp differences observed at local (rather than national) level, his statements seek to portray Brussels as a possible, accessible and efficient arena to debate specific interests of these groups. Local fishermen and fish-processing associations, aquaculture producers and small entrepreneurs from leisure & tourism sector are some of the groups Borg seeks to mobilize by showing the under explored potential of bodies such as the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries itself.

Together with the above, Borg strongly supported the Constitutional Treaty as a means of making policies more efficient, and enhancing the role of the EU as a global actor. Shifting the focus away from policy pillars helps the Barroso Commission’s project of creating more comprehensive policies. For the Commissioner, the extension of powers of supranational institutions foreseen in the Constitution - namely the Parliament, whose present participation towards fisheries consists in consultation procedures – allows for more expressive advances in his agenda and can be regarded as an alternative to reduce the EU’S much criticized *democratic deficit*. The challenges to the full implementation of Community policies - another commonly mentioned weakness of the Union – are mentioned in many of Borg’s speeches. Borg’s project seeks to ‘make the new CFP happen’ by positioning it in a more encompassing, democratic and dynamic context. This movement can establish a pattern to be followed by other states, and therefore account for a more robust role of the EU in global politics. However, he needs to increase legitimization and public support for these policies - especially among groups that, due to scarce information and preconceived visions of Brussels as an ‘ivory tower’, do not make any concrete moves towards exerting political voice through Community channels.

The key to a more integrated policy strategy, and also for a more decisive role of the EU in world maritime affairs, is the development of new institutional mechanisms and the improvement of the existing ones. This claim is coherent with his conception of the international system: cooperation is paramount, but dependent on rules, regimes and organizations that are capable of reducing the costs of decision-making and detracting predatory behaviour. However, the construction of a more robust actor also depends on identifying opportunities for establishing firm leadership without contradicting the values that are linked to aid and development. The response to the Tsunami was one of those

occasions on which the EU could have provided not only relief to local populations; it could have delivered a model in a direct and immediate way, together with the support of the FAO. No doubt dialogue is essential, but sometimes action is even more crucial.

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Notes:

Commissioner Borg's speeches and hearing before the parliament are listed at http://ec.europa.eu/comm/commission_barroso/borg/speeches/speeches_en.htm

Information on Dr. Borg's activities at the Council of Europe can be found at http://www.coe.int/T/e/Com/files/CM_chair-sessions/chair/malta/CV_Borg.asp

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