THE UNITED STATES AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE POLITICS OF 'BI-MULTILATERAL' NEGOTIATIONS

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Paper Presented at the Eighth Biennial International Conference of the European Union Studies Association, Nashville, Tennessee, March 27-29, 2003

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Abstract

The paper starts from the evident significance but also the problematical nature of bilateral EU-US negotiations within the global political economy. It deals first with some of the issues raised by the multitude of negotiation processes that occur in and around EU-US relations, and proposes some examples of the kinds of areas in which investigation might be centred. It also relates the enquiry in this paper to other approaches in the study of EU-US relations, and argues for the benefits of a negotiation perspective. The second section attempts to clarify what is meant by 'bimultilateral' negotiations, and some of the questions this raises about the nature of negotiation processes and outcomes, in the light of the negotiation literature. This section goes on to pose a number of potential research questions dealing with the issues from the perspective of 'bi-multilateral' negotiation. In particular, it points to the different ways in which bi-multilateral negotiations can occur: as part of the construction or reconstruction of international regimes, as part of a designed and institutionalised process and as a result of 'contagion' through which bilateral issues call into question multilateral processes. The final section of the chapter briefly addresses the further development of the framework and the selection of case studies.

Introduction

This paper is the first (provisional) product of what is designed to be a substantial research project focused on the politics of EU-US negotiations since the end of the Cold War. It is thus at this stage very much a ground-clearing exercise, and one which is as concerned with the questions that might be asked as with any answers that might emerge. The paper is based on the premise that EU-US negotiations can fruitfully be analysed as what are termed 'bi-multilateral' negotiations. This approach promises not only to contribute to our understanding of what goes on between the EU and the US, but also to clarify a number of key issues about the nature of negotiation in the post-Cold War period.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section deals with some of the issues raised by the multitude of negotiation processes that occur in and around EU-US relations, and proposes some examples of the kinds of areas in which investigation might be centred. It also relates the enquiry in this paper to other approaches in the study of EU-US relations, and argues for the benefits of a negotiation perspective. The second section attempts to clarify what is meant by 'bi-multilateral' negotiations, and some of the questions this raises about the nature of negotiation processes and outcomes, in the light of the negotiation literature. This section goes on to pose a number of potential research questions dealing with the issues from the perspective of 'bi-multilateral' negotiation (which will form the basis for later research programme proposals). In the final section, I address briefly the question of case studies, and propose some criteria for selection of case studies. The second draft of the paper will

contain a range of mini-case study 'probes' as the basis for initial empirical testing of the framework.

At present, the paper is minimally referenced, and is aimed more at clarifying the contours of the issues. The second draft will put much more flesh on the review of the literature as well as on the case studies.

EU-US Relations in the Post-Cold War Era

A very large amount of literature exists on the subject of EU-US relations since 1990, and I will not refer to it specifically here. Rather, I am concerned to justify the addition to this literature of a negotiation perspective and to identify where that perspective might take us.

Three key areas of the existing literature can be identified for the sake of discussion here:

- First, approaches that are essentially realist or neo-realist in their foundations. These approaches conceive of EU-US relations after the Cold War as a reflection of the shifting power structure in the international arena, and as relations either between states or between state-like entities. Studies based on this approach tend to privilege the ways in which the changing international security arena has put pressure on the EU-US relationship, and sometimes (in mercantilist vein) to look at the ways in which this set of changes has or has not fed into other areas such as political economy. From the point of view of the EU, the key issues here have been seen as the continued (if reformulated) predominance of the USA, the reassertion of US priorities, and the tensions this creates between developments in the security realm and the realm of political economy. These tensions reflect the fact that whilst the EU has continuing weakness in the political-security realm, it performs a number of key 'state functions' in the international political economy. Approaches from a realist or neo-realist perspective do not always neglect the political economy aspects, but they privilege the dominance of the USA in the realm of 'hard security' and related areas. EU-US relations are thus seen as a subset of the ways in which international structure, US power and US preferences have made themselves felt in the post-Cold War era; the EU is judged by the extent to which it has or has not matched up to this 'American challenge'.
- Second, approaches that take an approach based on interdependence and transnational relations. These approaches take as their baseline the fact that despite radical changes in the political-security domain, these do not explain everything about EU-US relations. They point to the fact that EU-US interdependence has continued to intensify during the post-Cold War period, using indices drawing attention to commercial policies broadly defined and to private linkages created by economic agents such as multinational companies as much as to actions in the realm of 'high politics'. They note that these structures of interdependence and transnational relations have continued to deepen and to strengthen despite apparent threats of divorce or divergence in the transatlantic arena. Essentially, much of the argument from this perspective is liberal in nature, pointing to the ways in which private agents can maintain relationships and contribute to transatlantic integration, and arguing that the role of governmental

authorities is to ensure broad stability within which private agents can operate to their mutual benefit.

□ Third, approaches based on the growth of governance structures, both at the transatlantic level and more broadly in the global political economy. These approaches see transatlantic relations as a reflection of the demand for establishment of rules and institutions, as well as a reflection of the supply of those rules and institutions themselves. They draw attention to the massive growth in institutional contacts and institutional structures across the Atlantic, and they often link it with the growth of mechanisms of global governance. Some of the attention of this perspective is focused on the construction and operation of transatlantic networks, often with a public-private complexion. As such, these approaches partake of the broader interest in policy networks and policy communities, and they attempt to discern the impact of these networks and communities on the social learning and normative convergence of those involved. The recent studies in the collection edited by Mark Pollack and Greg Shaffer make a number of key distinctions here, between intergovernmental relations, transgovernmental relations and transnational relations, and link these to elements of communicative rationality which are clearly important in sustaining the notion of transatlantic governance (Pollack and Shaffer 2001).

These existing conceptualisations contribute a lot to our understanding of the broad changes that have affected EU-US relations since the end of the Cold War. However, with the exception of some of the governance studies referred to above, they are much stronger at showing the 'big picture' of structural change than they are at showing the finer grain of the changes that have taken place in specific areas of policy. They can postulate linkages between a variety of levels and domains, but (again with the exception of some of the governance studies) they cannot tell us in any useful detail how those linkages work. In dealing with EU-US relations, we are confronted by a set of relations with a number of key properties, not all of which can be accessed through conventional approaches. Among those properties are:

- □ Multi-level relationships with strong elements of public-private interaction as well as intergovernmental interaction.
- Growing structures of institutionalisation, but issues about the gaps between institutional potential and institutional performance.
- □ Strong linkages between what goes on at the transatlantic level and what goes on at the global level in the context of institutions such as the WTO, the G-7 and a range of other multilateral bodies.
- Intensifying integration especially in areas of the political economy, but unevenness of that integration across sectors.
- A proliferation of relevant networks, but lack of clarity about how those networks relate to each other and interact with each other.
- Co-existing 'languages' of EU-US discourse, ranging from coercion to coalition-building and collaboration but often in an uneasy coexistence.
- ☐ Issues of choice about forums for interaction, about strategies and about priorities which affect both EU and US policy-makers.
- As a result, an 'adversarial partnership' or relations of 'competitive cooperation' which are arguably suboptimal for all concerned (but which may also serve the purposes of policy-makers on both sides of the Atlantic from time to time).

These qualities, as many have noted, make EU-US relations complex and often messy, with growing institutionalisation ranged alongside continuing and even intensifying competition and the potential for crisis arising from the 'hyperinteractivity' of transatlantic dealings. One thing seems clear: that what goes on in huge areas of EU-US relations can be characterised as negotiation. To be sure, this negotiation is not all of one type or within a settled framework of rules or assumptions. Bargaining and problem-solving seem to co-exist, mutual interests are accompanied by threats and coercion, protestations of commitment are uttered almost simultaneously with recriminations and statements of potential or actual defection. But that is why a negotiation approach is arguably an important addition to the armoury of those studying EU-US relations. Negotiation perspectives ask a lot of the questions that inevitably arise when one looks in any detail at EU-US relations, and they promise to provide at least some of the answers in the form of detailed negotiation analysis.

Another indisputable feature of EU-US relations conceived in terms of negotiation is that they raise one of the crucial issue of negotiation in the post-Cold War period. How does the continuing bilateralism of many negotiation processes in the global arena coexist with and interact with the explosion of multilateral negotiations? Bilateral EU-US negotiations are in the vast majority of cases embedded in broader multilateral negotiations, and the relationships between these levels and arenas must form a key datum for the pursuit of negotiation - and the improvement of negotiating practice - among both Europeans and Americans. Both at the bilateral and at the multilateral level, EU and US negotiators are engaged in what has been termed the 'management of complexity' (Zartman 1994); to use another image, both EU and US negotiators are engaged in 'negotiating the world (political) economy' (Odell, 2000), and the ways in which they do so are on a priore grounds going to be significant both to the parties and to the world political economy.

With this initial position in mind, the paper aims to explore the nature of EU-US negotiations by using the device of 'bi-multilateral negotiation', to think about the issues this raises for negotiation strategy and negotiation outcomes, and to think about the implications of these processes for the broader global order. The paper implicitly focuses on the world political economy and on the political economy of EU-US relations; at this stage, this is enough to take on, without looking more at the issues of 'hard security' which would generate a new if not completely different range of avenues for enquiry (see for example Smith 2003 presented at this conference). By looking at issues in the political economy, the paper also hopes to hold constant to a significant degree the issue of EU competence and resources (although as will be seen later, variations in these are one of the key areas for investigation when it comes to specific case studies).

'Bi-Multilateral' Negotiations

In this part of the paper, the focus is on the attempt to clarify the concepts with which it will later attempt to work on case studies. As noted above, the second draft of the paper (as a chapter for the book) will contain 2-3 more detailed 'probes' in the form of mini-case studies. This section proceeds by presenting the qualities of bilateral negotiations, multilateral negotiations and then 'bi-multilateral' negotiations. It then

summarises these in the form of a table, and goes on to suggest a range of research questions that arise from this initial treatment. The exploration is based on six features of any negotiation process, enabling the comparison to be made more effectively.

The six features reviewed are:

- Occasions (why negotiate, and why negotiate on a given subject at a given time?)
- Contexts (what are the constraints and opportunities built into the negotiation context, including institutional, resource, cultural and other features?)
- □ Participants (who participates, what assumptions are made about agency and about roles?)
- □ Agendas (what are the negotiations about, how are agendas set and how do they change?)
- □ Strategies (how do participants make choices, how do they communicate, how do they conceive of the negotiation process, what goals do they set?)
- Outcomes (what formal agreements result, what informal outcomes in the shape of learning or understanding emerge, how are any agreements or understandings implemented?)

These are fairly standard features for negotiation analysis; others might be proposed, but the purpose here is to make them explicit for the purposes of comparison.

Bilateral Negotiations: in bilateral negotiations, negotiations occur (it might be argued) because of internal or external pressures on the participants, because of recognition of mutual interests or because of the attempt to promote the interests of one party or the other. The context is one that is shaped by positional factors (the place of the participants in the broader structure of the world political economy), by domestic factors broadly defined and by the prior institutional and other commitments of the participants (which may of course mean that many negotiations are effectively programmed into the relations between the participants). The participants are two (or the agents of two entities), although this rather obvious feature is importantly modified by the internal makeup of the two participants and by the respective resource positions and preferences of the two parties. The agenda(s) for negotiations are in turn affected by positional factors, by intensity and priority of commitments and by the extent of programming available in the circumstances. Agendas may well be complex and cross-cutting, and one of the issues for the participants in bilateral negotiations is that of agenda management, both for their own benefit and for the sake of the negotiation process itself. Strategies for participants in bilateral negotiations can be analysed from a number of perspectives, depending on whether one's initial position is rationalist or reflectivist: perhaps the most plausible approach is to position oneself with the social constructivists to the extent that apparently rational sets of preferences and strategies are also intensely reflective of prior relations, expectations and mutual learning, especially where bilateral negotiations (as in the case of EU-US negotiations) have lengthy histories and many lessons have been (mis)learned. Finally, the outcomes of negotiations within a bilateral process can also be conceived in terms of social learning by the participants, and of institutionalisation; the consequences can be of three kinds, distributive, integrative or what I would describe as 'generative'. Where bilateral negotiations are at issue, analysis can focus on the ways in which these outcomes are in theory or in practice to the benefit of either of the parties or of their mutual relations.

Multilateral Negotiations: There is a significant literature on multilateral negotiations. prompted by the observable growth of these processes and of associated institutions in the 1980s and 1990s (Hampson 1995, Zartman 1994). Perhaps equally significantly, there is a literature on multilateralism itself (Ruggie 1993) which makes the important, not to say fundamental distinction between multilateralism as a 'fact' and multilateralism as a principle. In multilateral negotiations, the occasions for negotiation have frequently been defined in terms of the creation, maintenance or modification of international regimes. These regimes may be formally encapsulated in institutions, or they may take a less formal but powerful normative form, shaping not only the process of multilateral negotiation but also the behaviour of individual actors within the relevant domain. This has implications for the assumed motivations of the participants, which can be many and diverse as compared to those expressed in bilateral negotiations. The context for multilateral negotiations is best described in terms of complexity and diversity, reflecting not only the positions of the many participants but also the impact of broader international change processes to which multilateral negotiations are not only a response but are also subject. Importantly, multilateral negotiations are almost by definition subject to cultural pluralism and to cross-cutting cleavages among participants; this is however modified importantly by the scope of the negotiations, whether they are effectively sectoral and insulated or cross-sectoral and open to wider influences. The participants are thus many and varied, and the problems of synthesising and understanding information (widely defined) about other participants are basic to participation; this process may be facilitated by agents such as secretariats or other international representatives. The number of participants itself can vary, often influenced by conventions or rules about inclusion and exclusion, and there can be mechanisms for distinguishing between core participants and others. Agendas as already noted can be (often are) complex and fluctuating, and the art of agenda construction is not merely a technical one, since it can have important political consequences. Different participants or groups of participants can come to the table with profoundly different understandings of what is desirable or possible. Such problems have implications for strategies, since the construction and management of coalitions is often seen as integral to multilateral negotiations, and the generation of leadership either via coalitions or through other channels is a key requirement in the eyes of many analysts. Where there is a requirement for leadership, there is automatically a question of legitimacy and efficacy: how do leaders gain and maintain a leadership position, especially where there are diverse and complex issues to be confronted? Finally, there is the issue of outcomes, where there can be a strong contrast between outcomes cast in terms of results (especially formal agreements) and outcomes cast in terms of process or understanding and the generation of a normative consensus. Formal agreements are often large-scale, subject to package deals and often therefore suboptimal; informal process and understanding can often be difficult to assess and to embed within the acquis of the negotiations. As in the case of bilateral negotiations, outcomes are often difficult to discern in the short term, and may best be expressed in a willingness to go on negotiating in what is a virtually continuous process. Multilateral negotiations, more perhaps than bilateral negotiations, also have to grapple with problems of ratification, implementation and compliance where agreements formally made are informally undermined, postponed or re-interpreted.

'Bi-Multilateral' Negotiations: Bi-multilateral negotiations are in a sense defined by what has been said above, and from this follow important analytical and policy issues.

The occasions for bi-multilateral negotiations are defined by the coexistence of occasions both at the bilateral and at the multilateral level; this poses a challenge for negotiators in terms of 'event management', strategic choice and the planning of negotiations that may be related in a linear way, or in forms of parallelism. Occasions also raise major issues of motivation: the coincidence or the close relationship between bilateral negotiations and multilateral events puts a new twist on the formation of preferences and priorities, and may tax the attention of those engaged in the coexisting processes. In negotiations, timing is a vital variable, and in bimultilateral negotiations it is likely to be at least a two-dimensional matter, affecting both adjustment to different 'rhythms' and schedules and the potential manipulation of timing as a matter of strategy (see below). Context enters into bi-multilateral negotiations in a very specific way: the bilateral will form part of the context for the multilateral, and vice versa. Not only this, but institutional structures and positions might be different for different parties in the different negotiation arenas, with significant results for their resources or their ability to recognise contextual constraints or opportunities. Participation again enters into the bi-multilateral mode in a significant way: the bilateral participants as members of the larger group may well also have affiliations and institutional links that can be exploited or may prove problematic. This of course has a strong resonance, but with a different twist, of the well-known issues attending two-level or three-level games (Putnam, Evans et al. many others). But whereas in two-level games it is assumed in effect that the COG participates at two levels or three levels with different constraints and resources, in bimultilateral negotiations this cannot be assumed: the agents involved may or may not be the same, and the difficulties of coordinating across linked arenas may or may not be resolved. The other essential issue of the two- or three-level game, that of ratification, again has a different twist in a bi-multilateral context, since the existential linking of the two arenas may not overcome profoundly different rules of engagement or agreement. The question of what happens when the ratification of bilateral and linked multilateral agreements is at issue is one that demands further exploration (as do many of the issues raised here!) In terms of agendas, the specific properties of bimultilateral negotiations again create potential difficulties: how do the results of bilateral negotiations find expression in multilateral agendas, and vice versa? This is of course linked to issues of strategy, in which one obvious result of bi-multilateral negotiations is the formation, reinforcement or modification of coalition arrangements at the multilateral level. There is an 'audience problem' here, given that by definition the participants in bilateral negotiations have taken an explicit or tacit decision to exclude other potential coalition members, thus raising issues of transparency or legitimacy. To this extent, bi-multilateral negotiations raise in a potentially acute form the issue of 'minilateralism' as explored for example by Kahler (in Ruggie 1995). There is also in the broadest terms a problem of externalities, whether these are designed and managed or not: the impact of multilateral strategies on bilateral strategies, and vice versa, is one that demands further exploration. Finally, for bimultilateral negotiations there is a potentially severe problem of outcomes which is partly embodied in the issue of externalities just mentioned: one of the central qualities of these negotiations is the mutual dependence of outcomes at the different levels and in the different arenas. How are unintended outcomes to be handled in such a context, and how are the issues of ratification and implementation to be grasped when they might impact upon negotiations at the other level in unpredictable ways? For example, how can the credibility of commitments made in different contexts and at different levels be maintained?

It can be seen from this discussion of the analytical issues that one of the key problems in bi-multilateral negotiations is what might be termed 'co-dependency' - of occasions, contexts, participants, agendas, strategies and outcomes. This is not simply a contingency or an accident, in my argument: it is an integral part of the negotiation process, although it can come about in a number of ways (see below). Further, I argue that because of the intensity and range of EU-US relations, there is a high incidence of bi-multilateral negotiations which raise issues for analysis and for the practice of negotiation itself.

Consider in this context the range of EU-US negotiation encounters that has characterised the past five years. The following is a sample:

- Construction of the agenda for the Doha Development Round of negotiations within the WTP, involving structured negotiation occasions with both the USA and other WTO members, but also a host of less formal and structured encounters.
- □ EU-US disputes about bananas, steel, Foreign Sales Corporations, hormone-treated beef, hush-kits and a wide range of other issues.
- □ The long-running disputes over the Helms-Burton Act and the Iran-Libya Solidarity Act (ILSA).
- EU-US negotiations in the context of the broader dispute about ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Convention on climate change.
- □ EU-US contacts and competition in the context of the admission of China to the WTO.
- EU-US contacts in a wide range of competition policy and anti-trust issues, both at the level of specific disputes and at the broader level of international regime-building.

Each of these - and many more - raised or raises the questions outlined above, about the nature and impact of bi-multilateralism. The list also suggests that there are at least three ways in which bi-multilateralism can arise, and that these ways have implications for the process and outcomes of negotiations:

- □ First, bi-multilateral negotiations can occur as part of the construction or reconstruction of international regimes (for example, as in the case of the Kyoto Protocol or in the development of the Doha agenda).
- Second, they can occur as part of a designed and institutionalised process (for example, in the WTO dispute settlement procedure).
- Third, they can occur as a result of 'contagion' through which bilateral issues call into question multilateral processes, and in which the multilateral processes in some way become hostage to the bilateral process (for example, in the Helms-Burton and ILSA context.

It is not the purpose of this draft paper to explore these examples in any depth, given constraints of time and space. But it is the argument here that these three types of negotiating occurrence will have important shaping effects on the ways in which bimultilateral negotiations are defined, take place and produce outcomes.

In this context, a number of research questions arise, among which are the following:

- What influence do EU-US bilateral negotiations have on the occurrence of key multilateral negotiations, and on the willingness of the EU and the US to commit to those negotiations? Conversely, what influence do processes of multilateral negotiation have on the occurrence of EU-US bilateral negotiations, and on the willingness of the EU and the US to commit to those negotiations?
- □ What influence do EU-US bilateral negotiations have on their participation in multilateral negotiations and on their aims in those negotiations? Conversely, what influence do multilateral negotiations involving the EU and the US have on their participation in bilateral negotiations, and on their aims in those negotiations?
- Do EU-US bilateral negotiations increase agenda complexity in multilateral negotiations, or do they reduce that complexity? Conversely, does EU and US involvement in multilateral negotiations increase agenda complexity in their bilateral negotiations, or do they reduce it?
- Do EU-US bilateral negotiations facilitate coalition management in multilateral negotiations, or act as an obstacle to it? Conversely, does EU and US involvement in multilateral negotiations involving coalition management increase or reduce their capacity to undertake bilateral negotiations?
- Do EU-US bilateral negotiations facilitate leadership and consensus building in multilateral negotiations, or do they make it more difficult? Conversely, does EU and US involvement in multilateral negotiations involving leadership and consensus building facilitate or make more difficult their capacity to engage in bilateral negotiations?
- Do EU-US bilateral negotiations facilitate outcomes for multilateral negotiations, or are they a barrier to agreement? Conversely, does EU and US involvement in multilateral negotiations facilitate outcomes in their bilateral negotiations, or is it a barrier to bilateral agreement?
- Can the EU and US involvement in bilateral negotiations act as a management device, a displacement device or an incentive to agreement in the multilateral arena? Conversely, does EU and US involvement in multilateral negotiations act as a management device, a displacement device or an incentive to agreement in bilateral negotiations?

The Table in Annex 1 attempts to summarise the argument so far and to provide a brief link to EU-US relations for illustrative purposes.

Further Development and Cases

As noted at the beginning of the paper, the argument made here is a very preliminary one, but it appears to have potential as a way of gaining leverage on EU-US negotiation in the post-Cold War era. At the moment, the approach has a certain 'catch-all' quality, and my next aim is to refine both the range of research questions and the potential case studies. In choosing case studies, I will use the criteria outlined above in relation to the three ways in which bi-multilateral negotiations can occur. In addition, it appears that the following are important potential criteria for selection:

- □ Extent of EU-US interests and stakes in a given area.
- Density and shape of the bilateral and multilateral institutional processes (i.e. choosing differently structured areas).

Prominence of negotiations for world order concerns and use of multilateralism as
a norm as well as multilateral institutional contexts.

References

Annex: Bilateral, Multilateral and Bi-Multilateral Negotiations in EU-US Relations: Components and Issues

Components	Bilateral	Multilateral	Bi-Multilateral
Occasions	Multiple bilateral; intense bilateralism and intense transgovernmentalism	Regime creation and regime maintenance	Sequential or simultaneous? Competitive or complementary? Designed or contingent?
Contexts	EU-US power/resource balance; domestic forces; multilateral institutions and rules	Complex, linkages; normative as well as substantive agendas; information and uncertainty factors; cultural factors	Interaction of BL and ML; normative uncertainty? Cultural issues (transatlantic and ML?)
Participants	'political' vs 'official' vs 'expert'; public and private; linkages between participants (designed or unintentional?)	Multiple public/private; same individuals/groups as in BL? Issues of leadership? Use of minilateral devices?	Overlapping participants/roles; selection of participants? Third party issues?

Agendas			Complemetarity/competition of
	Broad NTA/TEP; inter-regional cooperation; 'integrative' vs 'competitive' definition of issues	Linkages/diffusion; sectoral vs those concerned with order and institutions	BL and ML; role of ideas about ML institutions and their uses
Strategies			Use of ML context/rules/norms as
	BL bargaining and problem- solving; dependence on resources and skills	Results-oriented bargaining vs process-oriented strategies. Issues of leadership, management, coalitions/consensus	resources or stakes; integrative vs distributive bargaining across levels; choices, linkages (forum shopping?)
Outcomes			Externalities from both BL and
	Competitive cooperation; learning and understanding at transatlantic level; institutionalisation; generative as well as distributive functions	Normative consensus; regime creation/maintenance/revision; collective goods?	ML; costs and risks; credibility of BL and ML commitments; defection vs coalition-building; internalisation of ML norms?