Abstract:

The book aims at illuminating the EU' foreign policy perspectives by analysing in a systematic manner the foreign policy of its member states. To this end, six Western European states were chosen representatively for the geographic, cultural and structural heterogeneity of the EU. These countries are Germany, Denmark, Italy, France, Greece, and the Netherlands.

The book starts from the observation that foreign policy analysis as well as traditional IR theories have difficulties to explain the apparent ups and downs of the member states' attempts to establish a coherent Common Foreign and Security Policy. To illuminate this, in a first part the **foreign policy behaviour** of the EU member states under study are systematically compared. By using positivist tools as structured and focused comparison evidence suggests that the counties' foreign policies are largely idiosyncratic.

In a second part and building upon the concepts of constructivism, the research design operates with **national identity** as a promising sub-systemic factor suited for a better understanding of the foreign policy behaviour of EU member states. A construct such as 'national identity' is normally considered too elusive to exert a direct influence on foreign policy decision-making and foreign policy behaviour. Therefore, identity is understood as a cognitive frame of reference to be activated through social communication processes. As a methodological tool to approach 'national identity', **discourse analysis** allows to examine closely these communication processes. After having proposed a corresponding research design the national identities of the member states are 'unveiled' via the empirical analysis of historical discourses. Theoretically speaking, by so doing national identities could be endogenised. In an empirical perspective this serves to unpin the aforementioned idiosyncratic spectre of each country's foreign policy behaviour.

In order to demonstrate the applicability of the approach the book finally examines the EU's nascent Common European Security and Defence Policy. As a plausibility probe, it is argued that most of the recommended strategies for the future development of the **ESDP** are likely to be contested and therefore do not look sustainable.