*Ms. 240446489.R1 (International Interactions)*

**Author’s response to final reviewer comments**

Dear editors,

Once again, I am sincerely grateful for the organization of this insightful review process and I am very happy about your decision to conditionally accept my work. I have prepared and submitted a full replication archive in line with the II data policy. Here I also want to highlight the changes to the final text in line with the few additional suggestions that two of the reviewers shared. Below you will find each reviewer comment with my response and a pointer to the respective text changes directly beneath it. In case anything is unclear, please do not hesitate to reach out.

With kind regards,  
the author

**Comments by reviewer 1 (former reviewer 2)**

*First of all, I sincerely appreciate the thorough and diligent revisions you have made in response to my initial comments. The revised manuscript is significantly improved, particularly due to the additional methodological clarifications and validation efforts. The introduction of human-coded comparisons for the semantic role labeling (SRL) method and the robustness checks for word embedding-based policy area classification have substantially strengthened the reliability of your approach. These additions make the study more transparent and methodologically rigorous, enhancing its overall contribution to the literature. That said, I have a few minor recommendations before final acceptance:*

Appreciated, everything in the replication archive

*1. Clarification on the Inclusion of OAU Data in the AU Comparison*

*I appreciate the effort to address my concern about the fairness of the AU comparison by incorporating data from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) before 2002. However, this update is not explicitly mentioned in the text or figure captions. To ensure clarity for readers, I suggest adding a brief note in either the main text or the caption of Figure 3, explicitly stating that the AU data includes OAU references from the pre-2002 period.*

Sorry, hidden in the appendix in R1, now in main text

*2. Balance in the Conclusion Section*

*The conclusion effectively summarizes the key findings and their implications for understanding EU actorness. However, the discussion remains somewhat EU-centric, focusing primarily on how the EU could strengthen its international recognition and influence. Given that this study introduces a novel computational approach to measuring actorness, it would be valuable to explicitly discuss its broader applicability beyond the EU case.*

*For example, how might this method be used to assess the recognition of other international organizations (e.g., UN, NATO, IMF) or major states (e.g., China, the US) over time? Additionally, this technique provides an opportunity to quantitatively examine how different actors are perceived globally, which could challenge or complement traditional qualitative approaches in international relations research. Addressing these points would highlight the methodological contribution of the study and broaden its impact.*

*3. Language Clarity and Minor Errors*

*While the manuscript is well-written overall, I noticed several instances where the phrasing was overly complex, making certain passages difficult to follow. Additionally, a few grammatical errors and typos remain. To improve readability, I recommend a careful proofreading of the manuscript to refine sentence structures and correct minor mistakes. Below are a few examples:*

* *“The more security concerns cook up, in contrast, the less EU recognition we expect to see.” → This phrase is overly informal and could be reworded for clarity.*
* *“Only a comparative perspective allows to tell how much or how little actorness the EU possesses in the eyes of third countries.” → “allows to tell” is grammatically incorrect; “allows us to determine” would be more appropriate.*

*These are just a couple of examples, but similar refinements throughout the text would further enhance the clarity and professionalism of the manuscript.*

Two examples handled (p. 9 third para; p. 13 first para). Foreign language assistant with few additional suggestions

*Final Remarks*

*Overall, I believe the authors have done an excellent job of addressing the core concerns from the initial review, and I appreciate the careful and thoughtful revisions. Aside from the minor clarifications and refinements mentioned above, I do not see any major issues that would prevent publication. Once these final adjustments are made, I fully support the acceptance of this manuscript.*

**Reviewer 2**

*I apologize for the delay in submitting my review and thank you for your patience. I have now carefully reviewed the manuscript, along with the comments from the previous round of review. Overall, I find that the author has responded effectively to the reviewers’ suggestions. I agree with the reviewers that the manuscript offers a novel methodology and presents a compelling new framing of the EU’s “actorness.” In my view, the manuscript is ready for publication. That said, I would like to offer a few additional comments, in case the author is open to incorporating further revisions.*

*Reviewer 1 recommended characterizing the manuscript as an “explorative study.” I would encourage the author to consider instead framing it as a “descriptive study.” A descriptive study goes further than an exploratory one in terms of analytical depth but still stops short of making causal claims. The core argument—that EU actorness emerges from a combination of internal capabilities and external recognition by third-party actors—is an important contribution to the study of the EU’s role in global governance. However, establishing causation may be overly ambitious in this context, given the multitude of factors that influence third-party recognition of the EU. Indeed, the data presented suggest that major international crises (e.g., the wars in Yugoslavia or the collapse of the Soviet Union) have elevated the EU’s visibility and actorness at the United Nations. Comparative data on other international organizations similarly point to the importance of external events—for instance, recognition of the World Bank and IMF surged in conjunction with lending activity in post-Communist countries.*

Terminology, reviewed causal language, maybe clarifications in conclusion

*From a conceptual standpoint, as someone relatively new to the literature on EU actorness, I*

*believe the manuscript could benefit from a clearer justification of the concept. What is the*

*rationale behind studying actorness? Why is it significant to know whether the EU is recognized by third actors? In this respect, how does the concept of “actorness”, defined as external recognition, differ from the concept of “state sovereignty”? Would literature on state sovereignty be valuable in conceptualizing and thinking through the concept of “actorness” for the EU?*

Specific literature, but general pattern, study of sovereignty in conclusion (cf. reviewr 2 above)

*One compelling motivation to address these questions could be the evolving transatlantic relationship, particularly the push for US-EU realignment under the current US administration. Viewed through this lens, the manuscript becomes especially relevant in helping us understand the rise of “political Europe” in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine—especially at a time when US commitments to European security appear to be under strain. While the manuscript does not address this context, likely due to the timing of its writing, it would strengthen the paper to acknowledge these recent developments.*

Good idea, RUS/UKR as well, tariffs individual states instead of (competent) EU

*The manuscript makes a valuable effort to distinguish between the EU’s internal capabilities and its external recognition. However, I believe the literature review could be further refined to clarify the article’s central claims. If I understand correctly, the two independent variables—internal capabilities and external recognition—may be interrelated, which raises some concerns. For instance, external recognition appears to be influenced by internal capabilities, such as treatymaking and regulatory power. This suggests a need to disentangle the independent effects of these variables on EU actorness. If the study aimed to make causal claims, this covariance would be particularly problematic. However, by framing the analysis as descriptive, the author gains more flexibility to explore the interaction of these variables within a single framework. Still, a more explicit discussion of this issue would be helpful.*

Internal capabilities is indeed descriptive, analytical part focusses on post-Maastricht for that reason

*The conclusion could also be sharpened, particularly in its policy and theoretical implications. The data suggest that EU actorness—defined as external recognition—increases in the aftermath of major crises. While the manuscript highlights Yugoslavia, the current war in Ukraine could be integrated into this framework. Theoretically, the paper offers useful insights for thinking about Russia’s decline as a global power. It also invites reflection on the competing discourses from Washington and Moscow about the role of “spheres of influence” in global security. The evidence presented here suggests that EU actorness challenges the utility of this framework—especially in the Eurasian context. The importance of geographic proximity to the EU as a factor in actorness underscores the limits of Moscow’s influence-based logic.*

Cannot lean out of the window too much

*One small note: in Figure 4, the label “Russia” should be replaced with “USSR.”*

To Do