Still an “unidentified political object”?:
the European Union enters the 21st century

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“Altes Fundament ehrt man, darf aber das Recht nicht aufgeben, irgendwo
wieder einmal von vorn zu gründen”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

An ancient foundation is to be respected, but does not remove our right to
start over again somewhere else.

9th September 2009

Jacques Delors, 9 Sept. 1985

expressed a range of concerns, including
“the social, culture, the desire to live
together”:

“it cannot be dismissed that in thirty or
forty years Europe will form a UPO—a
sort of unidentified political object—or
an ensemble which, once more, will be
able to give to each of our countries the
effect of a dimension which will permit it
to prosper internally and to hold its
place [tenir son rang] externally.”

• What then, in 2009, binds the EU
together and gives it a firm image
perceivable elsewhere?
Basic points

• Is the EU a normative power?
• Is this power exclusive, either within the EU itself or as a means of negotiation?
  – cp. affinities with Gramsci’s “war of position” or any strategy to get things done);
• Gradualism and optimism for coalescence;
• Areas:
  – Peace
  – Atomic power;
  – Overseas aid.

The “normative turn”

• Richard Bellamy and David Castiglione (2003): “normative turn” in EU Studies:
  • e.g. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt (1980); Percy B Lehning and Albert Weale, eds. Citizenship, Democracy and Justice in the New Europe (1997), esp. essays by Nida-Rümelin and Weale; Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?” (2002); Thomas Diez (2005); Christopher Lord and Erika Harris (2006); Andreas Fallesdal and Simon Hix (2006); Myrto Tsakakita (2008); Zaki Laïdi, ed., EU Foreign Policy in a Globalised World: Normative Power and Social Preferences (2008), esp. essays by Manners and Postel-Vinay; Frank Decker and Jared Sonnicksen (2009);
• A simple definition:
  – “normative arguments are arguments about why things ought to be one way rather than another…. Their aim is, first, to demonstrate which normative assumptions, basic principles and theoretical traditions lie behind particular descriptions of reality and, second, to provide reasons why we should prefer one set of assumptions, principles or traditions over another” (Myrto Tsakatika 2008)
Normative power: theoretical self-critique

- Ian Manners (2002): “normative power Europe”:
  - “augment” civilian and military conceptions of the EU;
  - “Accepting the normative basis of the EU does not make it a normative power”;
  - “the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is”
    - Simple essentialism?
    - Internal self-conception vs. perceptions elsewhere?
  - cp. Manners (2008): too “early” to tell about EU’s normative power;
- Jan Zielonka (2006):
  - “legitimacy is not only a function of efficiency, but also of democracy and affection”:
    - Normative definitions are subordinate to such affective judgements;
  - “in a system with fuzzy borders and plurilateral governance, democracy assumes different meanings and features” (p. 183);
  - The *acquis communautaire*: “technical rather than normative” (p. 69);

E.H. Carr 1892-1982

- “the red professor of Printing House Square” (was assistant editor of the *Times*—the “threepenny *Daily Worker*” during WW2);
- Manners ([2003] 239) would follow Carr (1939) in distinguishing “economic power, military power and power over opinion”:
- Yet in his *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, Carr is clear to smudge the edges of such a distinction, referring to “the illusory character of the popular distinction between economic and military power” (p. 119);
- “in the pursuit of power, military and economic instruments will both be used” (p. 110);
- “power plays a part in determining our moral outlook” (p. 199)
- Cp. Jean Monnet “The beginning of [the European Community project] was a political view, but it was more a moral view. Europeans had little by little lost the ability to live together and to group together their creative energies (*associer leurs forces créatrices*)” (*Mémoires*);
The EU indubitably has military and economic power

- EU nations’ combined military expenditure about half that of the US and twice that of China;
- The world’s largest trading entity, highest donor of development aid;
- Yet five countries dominate:
  - Germany, France, the UK, Italy and Spain (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008).

The EU’s normative dimension, some areas

- Good governance;
- Labour standards;
- Environmental standards;
- Human rights;

  - EU as force for good:
    - Yet in whose terms?
    - Why want to exercise an influence?
  - Yet on some of these, is there a danger of the lowest common denominator winning out, or of the “race to the bottom” (Laïdi 2008);
  - Universals or “European preferences” mainly/only?
  - Even if, qua Laidi, the EU would envisage a world very different from Carl Schmitt’s model of essential and insurmountable conflict, this might be more John Lennon than Realpolitik.
% coincidence of UN votes with the US, 2003-2007

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Source: [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/votetoc.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/votetoc.html); author’s own calculations.

Comments on the table

- General stability of EU support, if at relatively low level (some 44%, apart from the UK and perhaps France);
  - Decline of some 5% points;
  - Yet some of this attributable to decline from the UK;
- National differences apparent (15% difference);
- Convergence to those non-EU European countries, or to liberal-perceived countries like NZ;
- EU values then are western ones?
- YET lower coincidence of EU votes in the UN with those of other countries, while such coincidence is increasing for China, India and Russia (Franziska Brantner and Richard Gowan 2008);
- Manners (2002) notes that indirect means to get norms across internationally are supplemented by “embassies of the member states”:
  - but would these be EU or European norms, and does the difference matter, except to legitimation theory?
the role of perceptions

• “The global flow of mass-mediated, sometimes commoditized, images of self and other creates a growing archive of hybridities that unsettle the hard lines at the edges of large-scale identities” (Appadurai 2006);
• Integration depends not only on “national economic or defence interests, but also on people’s ideals and perceptions” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2003);
• “extension of the EU’s powers” involves “different ideological and ethical stances” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2003);
• V.I.P.s (values, images of the world and principles): Lucarelli and Manners, 2006:
  – Yet what is the link between the three?
  – How can they be related to/integrated into sociopolitical rhetoric?
• Power over opinion:
  – people change their ideas under influence of others (eg Steven Lukes 2005).

Eurobarometer 69 (June 2008)

• 44% of Europeans thought there was little distinction between European and “global western” values:
  • Might question the collocation of “global” and “western” in the light of the table;
• 54% thought that the EU nations shared close values;
• Legacy of the European diaspora/ colonisation/ imperialism:
  – Under way long before 1957;
perceptions of the EU within the Union: information costs

• A Eurobarometer Post-referendum survey in Ireland (June 2008):
  – of the 48% who did not vote, 94% either did not understand the issues or felt that they were not informed, and 22% of the 53.4% who voted no professed ignorance of the Treaty;
  – some 56% of potential voters expressed a significant degree of unfamiliarity;
• Similarly, in the run-up to the Dutch referendum 2005:
  – 70% felt badly informed about the European Constitution: “voelt zich slecht geïnformeerd over de Europese Grondwet”;
  – Incidentally, before the French referendum, a CSA (Conseils-Sondages-Analyses) survey found that if the Constitution didn’t pass, 46% of the respondents noted, «Cela ne changera pas grand chose» (20% thought it would provoke a crisis in Europe.)
• In 1955, a French survey of business people found that 70% had not heard of the ECSC High Authority (Haas 1958);

European Cultural Values: what unites EU citizens
the pragmatic dimension

• Special Eurobarometer 278 (September 2007):
  – Values to uphold: e.g. peace (61%); the environment (50%) only 14% innovation and 12% cultural diversity as values to uphold;

• Eurobarometer 71 (2009):
  – 57% of respondents thought that unemployment should be a primary theme for the 2009 EP elections (up from 47% a year earlier), while only 26% seemed that concerned about climate change (down from 33%) and only 10% each the EU institutions and European values and identity;
**Eurobarometer 68 [Dec 2007]**

- The “personal meaning” of the EU: over 50% only for “freedom to travel,” mostly among managers and students:
  - Yet very few students take up SEP opportunities (Alain Lamassoure June 2008 report to President Sarkozy);
  - Basic impetus to study in another part of the EU?
  - Cp. Enzensberger’s “Theorie des Tourismus” (1958) and Lasch’s *Revolt of the Elites* (2006) on market forces;
- 45% say they enjoy eating foreign cuisine;
- 27% travel to another EU country at least 3 times annually (how many by plane?);
- 22% have a family member living in another European country.

- Yet only 9% can read newspapers in another language
  - Seems low to me; perhaps “feels the need to”?

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**The EU in a persistent, relentless pursuit of its goals**

- Goals largely consistent 1957-present;
- The EU arose at a time of an "explosive development" of European industry, which—at least in Germany (Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich 1967)—pasted over the wounds of Fascism, WW2, etc. and which precluded a sustained examination of past events;
  - Cp. the faith in technology/technocracy, the mid-1950s concern for the location of the associations of the Common Market etc., the *acquis communautaire* (the equivalent of 700 novel-length volumes?).
- While then there was a pressing economic and structural need for Monnet’s reforms, they accorded well with the need for the psychological mask over this trauma;
- Nationalism was discredited as the problem, yet this lingers in the 21st century as a spectral trauma.
A ‘fear of small numbers” (Appadurai)?

- Jean Monnet, “Note de reflexion”, Alger 5 August 1943:
  - European countries too “narrow” ("étroits") to ensure prosperity under modern conditions;
  - Need wider and bigger markets;
- Action Committee 16-17 October 1958:
  - “Continent-States” make “greatest progress”;
- Yet Europe remains “a one-ocean continent”:  
  - The other two mentioned in the 1950s texts are essentially two-ocean (the US and the USSR), the Arctic becoming of greater strategic importance in the 21st century.
  - Needs outreach to the south and east, the “oceans” of the steppes and the “middle sea”;

MS2004: members which joined in 2904
CC-13: these 10 countries plus BG, RO and TR.
CC-3: these three countries.
• European/EU subject?
FDR to the US Congress, 6 Jan 1941  
(11 months before Pearl Harbor):  
“four freedoms”

“The first is freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world.  
The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world.  
The third is freedom from want — which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants - everywhere in the world.  
The fourth is freedom from fear — which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor — anywhere in the world.”

• Cp. EU’s four freedoms (movement of goods; capital; services; persons)

EU/European integration:  

A wide spectrum: writers, academics, union and religious leaders, politicians, students.  

“Europe must unite, not merely to preserve the peace and the freedom of her peoples, and to recover and augment her material prosperity, but to assert once more those principles which are now menaced and which must be preserved and given new life by being enshrined in a new structure.  

We further believe that the individual exists only in relation to his fellows and as a member of organic communities. Such communities must, within the limits of their competence, enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy, provided always that the necessary collective discipline is maintained.  

An economic and social system or political institution is never an end in itself; it is merely a means of creating favourable conditions in which the human personality can develop and expand. Economic power should be regarded as a responsibility, to be discharged in the best interests of all. The methods employed, as well as the political and economic institutions to be created, must, above all, inspire a sense of personal responsibility and must encourage individual initiative to the maximum.”
Peace

- 1951 European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC):
  - Connection between prosperity and “the works of peace”;
- EU citizens take peace for granted?
- Does union guard against internal conflict?
- New definitions of peace (i.e. not just the absence of war) after 9-11;
- “freedom and security” “nebulous concepts” (Oltmanns 1980)?

Nuclear power

- A once, current and future contentious issue;
- Some EU nations for (e.g. France), others not (e.g. Denmark):
  - “Er der noget, danske politikere er enige om, så er det atomkraft” (“if there’s something Danish politicians agree on, it’s atomic power” [Kristeligt Dagblad, 13 Feb 2009])
- After a hiatus for several decades, the argument in 2009 is about the same as for EURATOM more than 50 years ago:
  - “the most grave and urgent problem for our countries is that of facing their growing deficit in power supplies—a deficit which exposes them to dangerous threats to peace” (Action Committee, 1956, during Suez);
  - “[Nuclear energy] increases the security of energy supply in Europe, since uranium sources are widely distributed around the globe, in geopolitically stable areas” (EC communication Nov 2008);
    - Also, low carbon;
    - Among the “most economic energy sources”;
- Eurobarometer survey 2008 revealed that “European citizens’ attitudes towards nuclear energy were more positive than in 2005” (incidentally, still 44%, the increase largely in 2004-accession countries, and the survey was taken at a time when the oil price was increasing rapidly)
Overseas development assistance

- Development aid from the EU, both as individual states and as a collective, is higher than that of most OECD members (Manners 2008);
- EU states contributed €49 billion out of €83 billion in 2008;
- Listed as a collective, the EC would be the third largest donor;
- Development aid underpins the Community from the beginning, again for both altruistic reasons and for those of fears of insecurity and risks of conflict (cp. e.g. Action Committee resolutions from 1956-1959)
- One-fifth of the EC aid goes to the “near abroad”;
- France gives significant aid to Mayotte [to become France’s 101st département in 2011], Senegal and Viet Nam;
- The UK to Commonwealth countries;
- The Netherlands to Suriname and Indonesia;

Value-adding to the UN Millennium Development Goals

- UN MDG:
  - to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger;
  - to achieve universal primary education;
  - to promote gender equality and empower women;
  - to reduce child mortality;
  - to improve maternal health;
  - to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
  - to ensure environmental sustainability; and
  - to set up a global partnership for development.
- Normative dimension: the EU would add (European Consensus on Development 2005):
  - good governance;
  - respect for human rights
  - “A balance between activities aimed at human development, the protection of natural resources and economic growth and wealth creation to benefit the poor”.
A normative goal: Constitutional patriotism

- **Dolf Sternberger** 1979 (two years after the “German Autumn”), *FAZ* article on “Verfassungspatriotismus”:
  - “the national feeling remains wounded, we don’t live in the whole Germany, but we [i.e. the BRD] live in a whole constitution, in a whole constitutional state, and that is itself a kind of fatherland”;
  - “a certain measured discontentment is of benefit to the state. This does not lessen the loyalty due to the constitution. The constitution must however be defended against declared enemies; that is a patriotic duty”;

- **Jürgen Habermas** (1999):
  - “the only form of patriotism that doesn’t alienate us in the West is a constitutional patriotism”;
  - Yet this is anchored in “convictions on universal principles” and “enduringly linked with the motivations and convictions of the citizens”;

- **Jan-Werner Müller** (2007):
  - “traditional ethnic definitions of citizenship” of less importance to European governments;
  - Yet such patriotism might not be enough without hospitable civic dispositions, to guard against discrimination (Cp. Mattias Kumm 2008).

Conclusion

- Europeans abound, but EU subjects are still reticent;
- Monnet essentially desired a fresh start in a new town (but not necessarily two):
  - This is largely in the process of accomplishment.
- Monnet’s strategy was gradualist, patient and humble:
  - The goals are worthwhile, the strategies generally sound, and one should not expect too much from or overly fear what, in historical terms, can be accomplished in a short period;
  - Federalism and states rights can fruitfully engage, an the latter need not be seen as coded parlance for segregation or secession.