

The EU in World Politics

by

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With the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the further process of the European integration, the European Union (EU) has increasingly been perceived as an international actor. Some political scientists such as Ian Manners (2002) argue that the EU since then has increasingly begun to act in a "normative" way when pursuing its policy goals. In regard to foreign policy, this implies being an active player in promoting certain standards and norms in the world. The global impact of the EU's system of governance, which can be described as a system of supranational governance, is not to be understood as giving lessons to others, but rather as acting in a more subtle manner by setting examples, i.e. there is a "power of example" (cf. Manners 2002). The term "normative" means here acting in an ethically good way, and the EU considers itself as advocating peaceful strategies. Robert Kagan (2002) speaks of a "peaceful [European] strategic culture" (3); according to him, this concept derives from a "very different strategic culture that dominated Europe for hundreds of years and at least until World War 1" (ibid.). The driving force that led to Europe's continental war can best be described with the term "Machtpolitik". After World War Two, the understanding of power has shifted intensively. An economic integration should create interdependences that would make military conflicts on European ground impossible or at least less likely to happen. This ideological thought originally led to the creation of the EU. The creation of a powerful political and economic unit, expressed by the "historic accomplishment of the Maastricht treaty in 1992" (ibid.), set hopes to "recapture Europe's old greatness [...] in a new political form" (ibid.). This new hope of establishing a European powerhouse was especially set after the Cold War had ended "Europe's strategic role [...] to defend itself" (ibid.: 5). Considering the EU nowadays, after the Treaty of Lisbon formally reinforced a common security policy in 2009, the EU is still not speaking with one clearly

perceivable voice, and something like a common European army is still far away from being established. The reality is that "European military capabilities steadily fell behind those of the United States" (ibid.). When it comes to security and defense policy, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) still remains as the most powerful instance. This could be seen in the Crimea crisis in 2014 or in the ongoing military conflict in Eastern Ukraine. A common approach is also missing in the Syria crisis or with regard to the ISIS threat. There is no mission led by Brussels. The EU has therefore been criticized for being weak. This weakness is best demonstrated in Europe's handling of the on-going migration "crisis:" A united European approach is missing and nationalist solo efforts are increasing.

However, is the EU a global "normative" power despite its weaknesses? Ian Manners (2002) argues in favor of considering the EU a "normative" rather than a civilian or military power because of its "unhealthy concentration on how much like a state the EU looks" (239). He advocates focussing the analysis "away from the empirical emphasis on the EU's institutions or policies, and towards including cognitive processes, with both substantive and symbolic components" (ibid.). The concept of normativeness seems therefore important. Thus, the "notion of the EU representing a normative power in world politics is not a contradiction in terms" (ibid.: 253). Manners argues that this notion is located in a "discussion of the 'power over opinion' [...] or 'ideological power', and the desire to move beyond the debate over state-like features through an understanding of the EU's international identity" (ibid.: 239). There is an assumed "power of example" (cf. ibid.), carried out in a "hybrid of supranational and international forms of governance" (ibid.), through which the EU promotes certain norms that are regarded as ethically "good," such as liberty, peace centrality, democracy and human rights. However, this needs to be questioned and in the following I will discuss to what extent the EU can be regarded as a "normative" power in world politics. The EU's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will therefore be analyzed as well as the current Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations.

Since one often hears about a transatlantic partnership, it is necessary to demonstrate to what extent European foreign policy is at variance with American foreign policy. Analyzing the term "power", Kagan (2002) demonstrates how "American and European perspectives are diverging [when it comes to] the efficacy of power, the morality of power [and] the desirability of power" (1). Regarding international issues, Kagan compares America and Europe to different planets. He writes that "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus" (ibid.) since they "agree on little and understand one another less and less" (ibid.). He argues that a common point of view shared by many Europeans towards American society is that "every man has a gun and the death penalty reigns" (ibid.). He argues that American society is more violent and this reflects on its foreign policy while European foreign policy is seen as being more diplomatic, affected by the Enlightenment and aiming at solving the problems of the world in a more peaceful manner than the United States. Negotiations are regarded as a preferable option over violent conflict solving strategies. To sum up, the EU is perceived as acting in an ethically more correct way than the United States and this view has become part of the EU's self-portrait as a "normative" power. This, of course, appears quite simplistic and generalizations are usually fundamentally flawed, especially regarding the EU. Is there really one united European point of view on world politics? Especially the current "Brexit" debate shows that the EU is not as united, sharing the same values and speaking with one voice as it is often perceived. It is a lot more complex. Great Britain doesn't even seem to know whether it wants to stay in the EU or not. In June 2016 Great Britain will decide through a referendum whether they will remain in the EU. US President Barack Obama recently warned Great Britain about the risks of leaving the EU since the USA is more interested in trade negotiations with "big powers" and Great Britain would then have to go to the back of the "queue."

A "Normative" Middle East Policy of the European Union? - A Partial Analysis of its Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

With the following case study, the construction of the EU as a "normative" power and its global role will be further analyzed. It is often taken as granted and also expressed by the EU's self-identification that the term "normative" implies something inherently good and progressive. However, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains intractable even though "the quest for a just and lasting solution has long been one of the EU's top foreign policy priorities" (Pace 2007: 1042). It must be acknowledged that this conflict likely remains very difficult to solve for decades to come, in fact has been from the start since the birth of the state Israel in 1948, because it is "a protracted, violent, and drawn-out struggle, wherein generation after generation is socially conditioned to continue fighting" (Handelman 2011: 1). Since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is "influenced by so many different elements, factors, and variables" (ibid.), there is no obvious solution on how to establish Palestinian sovereignty without accepting a lack of Israeli security. With regard to game theory, a zero-sum approach is applied where neither Israel nor Palestine can gain something without having the other side losing something. We must then ask the question to what extent EU actions or non-actions contribute to moving the peace process forward and what norms are promoted while doing so. As a major global actor it must be a top priority for the EU to resolve this conflict, especially because Europe is not far away from the Middle East: A solution could offer more stability and perhaps fewer refugees in Europe. The main idea here is that "a more peaceful periphery means a more secure Europe" (Pace 2007: 1046). Resolving this long enduring conflict could also reinforce the EU-Israeli economic relationship as well as offer new economic possibilities with an independent and strengthened Palestine. Normatively spoken, the EU argues in favor of "social development, the creation of employment possibilities, the related stability and hope" (ibid.) since this will, assumed by its proponent, advance peace negotiations. However, the EU must be aware that "intentions to promote peace and stability can [sometimes] create more harm than benefit, in the final account" (Handelman 2011: 2). The situation has become especially complex and put

the EU in a dilemma when the Sunni-Islamic Hamas Organization, defined by the EU as well as the USA as a terrorist organization, won most of the Palestinian votes in 2006 and took over the control of Gaza in 2007. The EU basically refused to accept the election results since Hamas representatives were not found suitable as dialogue partners for the peace process. The EU has been criticized, especially from the "wider Muslim world" (Pace 2007: 1044), for applying double standards and not accepting the election results. This reveals that the attribute "normative" is subject to certain restrictions and the EU's claim of promoting democracy in the world seems hypocritical from this angle. In order not to be misunderstood, I want to stress that I strongly agree with the EU that Hamas cannot be a partner for the peace process since a look in its charter reveals its ongoing aim to destroy Israel. Hamas states that "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it" (Hamas Charter 1988, Preamble). The Hamas charter even includes a call to Jihad as article 15 states: "The day the enemies usurp part of Moslem land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In the face of the Jews' usurpation, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised." Its antisemitic ideology makes it impossible to regard Hamas as a potential partner for the peace process. This is even more evident when reviewing article 7 of the convention: "The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him'" (Hamas Charter 1988, Article 7).

However, the limits of the EU's self-construction as a "normative" power promoting democracy are revealed since the Palestinian election results must be acknowledged. Favoring this argument Pace (2007) states that "the construction of the normative power of the EU has certainly not been effective in the Israeli-Palestinian case" (1044). The success of norm-settings is described by its visibility and impact. With the "Horizon 2020" program that allows fundings for innovation and research, the EU also wanted to address Israel's settlement policy and create a normative impact since funding would not take place in the Israeli occupied territories beyond

the "green line." However, the EU guidelines covering the "Horizon 2020" program "do not set a precedent since Israel had already signed similar research agreements with other countries that specifically limit funding to entities inside the 1967 borders" (Gordon/Pardo 2015: 417). The guidelines that were set in 2013 state that "EU bodies (as opposed to the Member States themselves) can no longer fund or dispense awards and grants to Israeli companies, public bodies and NGOs working within Israeli settlements [and] all Israeli applications must include a declaration stating that their planned activities do not take place in the [occupied territories]" (ibid.: 418). The guidelines aimed at setting norms symbolically revealed that the "Union does not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the [occupied territories] irrespective of their legal status under Israeli law" (ibid.). This shouldn't have come as a surprise to Israel since agreements had been sealed under the same premise before. For instance, the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development specifically explained in 1986 that "the Foundation does not support research projects in the [occupied territories and it] will [therefore] be conducted only within the geographic areas under the jurisdiction of the State of Israel prior to June 5, 1967" (ibid.). Since Israel had signed similar treaties in the past, one could assume that the normative impact of the EU guidelines is rather small, if it exists at all. However, the reactions in Israel were enormous and enabled the EU to portray itself as a "normative" power. It was Israel's outrage that "made the guidelines visible, and in this way empowered [the concept of the EU as normative power]" (ibid.: 416). When the guidelines were published in 2013 Israel's economy minister Naftali Bennett called upon the Israeli government to "end all cooperation with the EU" (ibid.: 421), since he considered the guidelines as a "financial terror attack." Israel's minister of transport, Yisrael Katz, even proposed the "annexation of East Jerusalem and other settlement blocs' as the adequate response to the Guidelines" (ibid.). Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a relatively mild manner that Israel "will not accept any external dictates regarding borders" (ibid.: 422). To sum up, it "was Israel's furious reaction, rather than the Guidelines themselves, that really made the issue newsworthy" (ibid.) and advanced the notion of the EU as "normative" power. Stated simply, according to French philosopher Michel

Foucault, it can be seen that the truth is constructed by discourses. The construction of Hamas as a terror organization, which therefore cannot be accepted as a peace negotiation partner, also demonstrates this view.

A "Normative" Trade Policy of the European Union? - A Partial Analysis of the "TTIP" Negotiations

Across continents the EU is perceived as the economic powerhouse in the world and, in fact, the "common commercial policy is one of the oldest common policy domains of the EU and also the most powerful area of its foreign policy" (Kerremans/Orbie 2013: 2). The political significance of the EU's trade policy has steadily increased over the past decades. With the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the EU's role in the creation of trade policy has further been expanded since the EU has been equipped with more competences regarding "'behind the border' issues such as investment, intellectual property rights and services" (ibid.).

Ian Manners (2002) argues that the EU is an "actor committed to exporting its constitutive principles and shaping the conceptions of what is normal in international relations" (Sicurelli 2015: 23). Manners also states that the EU has the ability to set those principles and norms, which are "economic liberalism, multilateralism (understood as support to international law), universality of human rights, solidarity and sustainable development" in its foreign policy agenda (ibid.: 25). Sicurelli (2015) argues that the "EU emerged as a supporter of international law and as an actor preferring soft means of foreign policy to military ones" (ibid.), thus contributing to "shaping a unitary identity of the EU" to a large degree (ibid.). However, while the EU is perceiving itself as a "normative" power, its external view is mainly "that of an economic power and, only to a certain extent, a political leader" (ibid.: 35). The question then must be to what extent the trade policy of the EU is affected by promoting certain norms and standards. Especially with regard to the current Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations it is questionable

if and how the EU will be able to guarantee environmental standards, consumer protection, labour rights, social regulations, and its approach to sustainable development.

The proposed trade agreement would create the largest free trade zone in the world and therefore it is of global and historical importance. The USA and the EU are the biggest producers worldwide and a tariff dismantling would have a huge impact on both economies. It is also aimed to set common standards which, argued by its proponents, would lead to an increasing competition in location and innovation. All this would then lead to economic growth, more employment opportunities and more consumer options. Ever since the first TTIP negotiations in 2013, there were demonstrations on both sides of the atlantic especially due to a perceived lack of transparency in content and negotiations, which are mainly kept secret. However, it must be acknowledged that a lack of transparency can be found in almost all international trade negotiations and it is not necessarily unique regarding the TTIP negotiations.

The European Commission is currently conducting talks for the EU member states which will then have to vote in favor of or against the negotiated trade deals. The thirteenth round of negotiations took place in April 2016 and an agreement still seems far away, as I write this in May 2016. The geopolitical significance of the EU-US trade negotiations, however, are immense, "not at least in reaction to the emergence of China and the proliferation of trade agreements in Asia" (Kerremans/Orbie 2013: 494). The EU and the USA could become closer and more dependent on each other by forming the world's biggest economic area. Opposed to the EU Commission's argument that "a transatlantic trade agreement would stimulate economic growth in Europe" (ibid.: 494), critics doubt it and state that TTIP would do more harm than good. Reducing the costs of trade between Europe and the USA also raises the question of how developing countries will be able to compete. The EU's self-assumed principle to sustainable development seems in danger and the notion of a "normative"

power must be questioned since it is unanswered how the EU will be able to hold on to it when enforcing TTIP.

On May 2, 2016, Greenpeace Netherlands released an excerpt of the secret TTIP negotiation documents in order to "provide much needed transparency and trigger an informed debate on the treaty [which is] threatening to have far reaching implications for the environment and the lives of more than 800 million citizens in the EU and US" (Greenpeace Netherlands 2016). Greenpeace states that it fights for "environmental issues, animal welfare, labour rights [and] internet privacy" (ibid.) while TTIP is assumed to threaten these efforts by transferring "power from people to big business" (ibid.). In fact, when reading the released documents it becomes clear that the USA wants to guarantee the lobby's exertion of influence on certain regulatory processes to a greater extent than the EU as the following excerpt demonstrates:

"When a regulatory authority of a Party is developing a regulation, it shall, under normal circumstances, make publicly available: (a) the text of the regulation it is developing; (b) an explanation of the regulation, including its objectives, how the regulation achieves those objectives, the rationale for the material features of the regulation, and any major alternatives being considered; (c) data, other information, and scientific and technical analyses it relied upon in support of regulation" (ibid.).

In contrast, the EU only speaks of a certain "reasonable opportunity for any interested natural or legal person, on a non-discriminatory basis, to provide input through a public consultation process [w]hen preparing regulatory acts at central level" (ibid.). The "non-discriminatory"-amendment is also missing in the US statement. To sum up, it remains to be seen how TTIP will affect the notion of the EU as "normative" power, depending on how far the EU will be able to set its standards and principles in a potential treaty. However, the challenges are huge and the question can be posed if it may not be more credible for a successful construction as "normative" power if the negotiations were ended.

Conclusion / Reflection

In this paper, I tried to demonstrate how the construction of the EU as a "normative" power is advanced. The visibility of norm-settings is most important in the "sense of being seen and heard" (Gordon/Pardo 2015: 424) in order to create an impact. Visibility and repetitive public perception contribute to the creation of the image of a "normative" power and this creation of normativeness can be seen by analyzing Israel's negative response to the norms that were set in the EU "Horizon 2020" guidelines. Israel's rejection made these guidelines visible since "hardly anyone would have heard of the Guidelines and they would have had little, if any, impact on the political arena" (ibid.). Without visibility, the concept of a "normative" power is therefore entirely power- and meaningless. The remaining question is: Did the EU guidelines put pressure on Israel's settlement policy? The answer is: No. Israel's settlement policy was not affected by those guidelines. They only helped to reinforce the EU's self-depiction as a "normative" power and to shape a European identity. The character of the EU guidelines must therefore be regarded as symbolic. According to Pace (2007), the process of the EU's "normative" power construction is "an open-ended process" (1047) since a "forward-looking process" (ibid.) is always involved when constructing "normative" power. With regard to the current TTIP negotiations, the EU's notion as a "norm promoter through trade" (Sicurelli 2015: 36) will further need to be questioned since the treaty has not been signed yet. In addition, the question must be raised if European standards were really to suffer if an agreement is reached. With regard to Volkswagen's recent emissions scandal, US officials uncovered the breach and not EU authorities.

The central aspect of "normative" power that comes from the EU is expressed in setting examples with regard to "the level of economic integration, peaceful relations and closer political ties the EU Member States themselves have achieved" (Pace 2007: 1046). For the construction of a "normative" power the mechanism of conducting dialogues with conflict parties is most important. This is based upon the assumption that "[a]s long as they are kept talking, they cannot be shooting" (ibid.:

1051). The purpose of a foreign policy based on the mechanism of dialogue is to seek "bridge-building opportunities for and between conflict parties [by] creating the 'right' [...] environments for conflict parties to meet, negotiate and exchange their honest views on the situation" (ibid.: 1052). This objective helps explain why "dialogue initiatives are particularly important for EU actors to represent the EU as a normative power" (ibid.). The weakness of foreign policy based on dialogues, however, becomes obvious when two conflict parties are not willing to negotiate any longer. In regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the EU's response can then be summed up in a nutshell by saying "inaction rather than coercion is the option in such a case" (ibid.).

I'd like to conclude by saying that the construction of the EU as a "normative" power is restricted by its practical meaningfulness, i.e. "[i]f the EU is to project a credible image as a 'normative' power in international affairs, there is a constant need for questioning of what it entails to be a 'normative' power" (Pace 2007: 1060). This construction of a "normative" power is an on-going process with an open end. Furthermore I would like to acknowledge that the notion of a "normative" power can also be applied and questioned with regard to other international players such as China, Russia or the USA since "the EU does not hold the monopoly of normative power" (Sicruelli 2015: 26). This comparative approach remains subject of further research.

Sources

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