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GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH REPORT ON THE PROJECT:

THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – PHASE TWO -

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* This is the second phase of the research project *The External Image of the European Union*, conducted in the Framework of the Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research report includes the contributions of the second phase of the research project *The External Image of the European Union*, conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). The project has been a challenging enterprise which has benefited from the constructive suggestions of a significant number of people. We are particularly grateful to Furio Cerutti, Andrew Gamble and Mario Telò for having believed in this project since the beginning and having accepted to include it within the framework of their Garnet jointly integrated research project on normative issues. A special recognition is due also to Richard Higgott, Eleni Tsingou and Angela Liberatore, for having supported the project since its inception. Thanks also to David Ringrose for his interest and support to our research. We wish to thank also our fellow contributors in the Survey project and the other participants to the March 2008 seminar on *The external image of the EU*, namely Maria Grazia Enardu, Nicola Todaro Marescotti, Arturo Marzano, Arlo Poletti, Alberto Tonini, Maria Stella Rognoni, Angela Romano, Federico Romero, for their useful insight, as well as to Sirkku Salovaara, Giuseppe Sorgente and Lisa Tormena for their organizational support. We are grateful also to the scholars who accepted to play the role of external reviewers for individual reports, namely Ali Ansari, Knud Erik Jørgensen, Karen Smith, Walter Posch and Roberto Toscano.

Finally, we acknowledge the financial contribution of both Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sonia Lucarelli and Lorenzo Fioramonti
Florence, 26 January 2009

FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

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RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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EUROPEAN POLITICAL IDENTITY, FOREIGN POLICY AND THE OTHERS' IMAGE: AN UNDER-EXPLORED RELATIONSHIP

Sonia Lucarelli

The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive summary

EUROPEAN POLITICAL IDENTITY, FOREIGN POLICY AND THE OTHERS' IMAGE: AN UNDER-EXPLORED RELATIONSHIP

Looking at a Survey on the external image of the European Union (EU) one might wonder why bother: why should we pay attention to the image of the EU that other countries or international organizations have? Indeed, there are several reasons to bother: (i) there is a severe gap in the literature that needs to be overcome; (ii) external images shape the way in which other actors interact with the EU, which implies that the EU foreign policy's efficacy is due to be influenced by they way in which its counterparts perceive it as an international actor; (iii) the external image of the EU eventually influences also the way in which the Europeans perceive themselves as a political group (and the extent to which the do). This report focuses attention precisely on this latter aspect and investigates if and how foreign policy at large and external images in particular influence political identity.

About the Author

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Introduction

Looking at a Survey on the external image of the European Union (EU) one might wonder why bothering: why should we pay attention to the image of the EU that other countries or international organizations have? Indeed, there are several reasons to bother.

The first reason is that this is a rather novel area of investigation in the academic scholarship on the role of the EU in the world which suffers a significant gap that needs to be overcome. The second reason is that the EU behaves "as if" the external image of the EU was not too dissimilar from the EU's self-representation. This might lead to dangerous cognitive dissonances that inevitably have a negative effect on the EU's external relations and its actual impact. The third reason is more crucial, in my view: the external image of the EU is a fundamental component of its political identity. The EU's effort in developing as a full-fledged actor has three main components: the gradual definition of a process of self-identification by the Europeans with the EU as their political referent (political identity), the EU's actual political performance at "home" and abroad (role performance), and the Others's view of the EU as a political actor. The process is complex and highly interactive as political identity contributes to shape roles and, thereby external images, but is also subject to reinterpretation once the external images that are acknowledged by domestic constituencies diverge dramatically from those of relevant Others. Roles are the connecting element between internal political identity and external images. In other words, we fail to understand a fundamental component of the EU's international role as well as of the Europeans' self-identification process if we do not investigate what the external images of the EU are.

Despite this relevance, however, the literature on European identity neglects external image. Moreover, despite the fact that the literature on European identity is large and ever growing and approaches to the topic variegated,[1] none of them focuses on the impact that foreign policy[2] has on

* I am grateful to Furio Cerutti, Chiara Bottici, Lorenzo Fioramonti and Arlo Poletti for comments on an earlier draft. A version of this report has just been printed in F. Cerutti & S. Lucarelli (eds) *The Search for a European Identity. Values, policies and legitimacy of the European Union.*

[1] Several European projects have been devoted to the analysis of the role of the media in the emergence of a European public sphere or more specifically of European identity. Among them: EMEDIATE - http://www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/EMEDIATE; EURONAT - http://www.iue.it/RCSAS/Research/EURONAT; EUROPUB - http://europub.wz-berlin.de; IDNET - http://www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/Tools/IDNET; ConstEPS - http://www.monnet-centre.uni-bremen.de/pdf/flyer_2.pdf; EU-CONSENT - http://www.eu-consent.net . Other projects mainly deal with opinion surveys, cf. Fuchs and Schlenker 2006; and the projects EURONAT - http://www.iue.it/RCSAS/Research/EURONAT - and InTune - http://www.intune.it.

[2] Here we consider foreign policy in the broad sense of 'the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor… in international relations' (Hill 2003:3). In the EU's case, this includes both Pillar I and III external relations and the more "traditional" foreign policy developed in Pillar II.

the process of identity-building. Such an absence of focus on foreign policy is striking, particularly if we consider that, according to the Eurobarometer surveys, not only do Europeans have their own image of the role of the European Union (EU[3]) in the world, but they tend to find the EU's international stance legitimate, positive and worth pursuing (Eurobarometer 2007; Transatlantic Trends 2006).

Given this interest shown by citizens in foreign policy, it is striking that, thus far, so little attention has been paid to the role of the EU's foreign policy in the processes of self-identification of the Europeans as a political group. Equally noteworthy is the fact that the literature dealing with the EU's distinctive role in world politics - frequently described as the 'EU's international identity' - does not pay any attention to the "domestic" repercussions of the EU's international stance on the European polity-building process at large, and the processes of identity and legitimacy construction among EU citizens in particular. All this reflects theoretical developments in the field of International Relations (IR) where, in spite of a general rediscovery of identity as a fundamental component of politics, there is a widespread tendency to treat identity as if it were an attribute of an institution, being it a state (Wendt 1992) or the European Union (Whitman 1998; Manners and Whitman 1998), rather than as a defining element of a group of *people*.

This analysis aims to bridge the gap between these branches of literature and to propose a framework for the analysis of the EU's foreign policy which draws both on social identity theory (SIT) and IR and underlines the relevance of foreign policy for processes of identity construction in the EU.

The report first deals with the literature on the EU's international role and on political identity in the EU in order to highlight the theoretical and empirical gaps between the two (§ 1). It then proposes a theoretical framework, which builds on SIT and IR literature and combines it with specific attention to the role of external perceptions in the processes of self-identification (§ 2), and finally it offers some general conclusions (§ 3).

1. The EU's foreign policy and the political identity of the Europeans: a missing link

During the first five decades of its life, most discussions on the EU's relations with the rest of the world focused on politics, policies and practicalities: the study of the EU's external relations was

[3] From here onwards I will use the EU to refer to both the EU and the European Community (EC).

primarily concerned with 'what are the policies?' rather than 'what do the policies tell us about the EU?' More recently, discussions of the EU's relations with the rest of the world have changed, with emphasis increasingly placed on how the EU participates in world politics and how this participation reshapes the EU. This has been the case particularly since the end of the Cold War, with the launch of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty and the subsequent efforts of the EU to combine widening (enlargement), deepening (treaty reform), as well as broadening the international tasks (from peacekeeping to conflict management) of the Union. Building a more efficient foreign policy and making sense of the EU's international role have become essential components of the overall integration process. Recently, EU documents have underlined that the EU has a specific international stance in world politics, it is guided by values 'which have inspired its own creation' (Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Part III, Title V, Art. III-292) and is inspired by an ethics of responsibility (Lucarelli 2006b). At the same time, scholarly literature has rediscovered more than a mere interest in the concept of a civilian power Europe (Whitman 1998; Telò 2006).

As a matter of fact, building on François Duchêne's idea of a 'civilian power Europe' from the early 1970s (1972, 1973), a large stream of scholars has since emerged following in his footsteps (e.g. Whitman 1998; Telò 2006). Terms such as *civilian power*, *normative power* (Manners 2002), *structural foreign policy* (Keukeleire 2000, 2004; Telò 2001: 264), *normative area* (Therborn 2001: 85), *gentle power* (Padoa-Schioppa 2001) and *norm-maker* (Björkdahl 2005; cf. Checkel 1999) have been coined to capture the idea of the EU as an international actor with specific qualities which make it different from "traditional powers". Whether it is to enrich the concept (Telò 2004) or to revise it (Manners 2002), these authors share Duchêne's views that the EU is internationally different because its initial *telos* (peace through integration), its historical developments and its current institutional and normative framework make it better suited to spreading universal values.

This literature frequently refers to the EU's international distinctiveness in terms of 'identity', based on the idea that the EU possesses a distinctive 'international identity' (Manners and Whitman 1998; Manners 2002), characterized by its history and values. What is completely missing in all this literature is an investigation into the extent to which this alleged distinctiveness is associated with a specific European political identity *of the Europeans*. In other words, what can we learn about the Europeans' self-awareness (as a group) by looking at the EU's foreign policy? One might say that they are two completely separate matters since identity is something that the individuals and groups develop on the basis of their own historical and cultural experiences. Moreover, one might argue

that the EU's foreign policy is shaped by the interlinking of bureaucratic constraints and political negotiations among the member states, rather than by political identity. I believe, on the contrary, that there is a close link between policy (including foreign policy) and the self-identification of the Europeans as a political group. Not only is foreign policy one of the contexts in which the political values of the group are brought into existence through political implementation (regardless of how compromised and mediated this can be), but it is also one of the mirrors in which the Europeans can view themselves as a political group. This first type of mirroring exercise (as we will see there is another mirroring exercise activated by foreign policy) is fundamental for the process of identity formation (see Cerutti 2008; see also Taylor 1994; Turner et al. 1987). A fully-fledged research project on the EU's distinctiveness should also emphasize the link between the EU's distinctive international role and the European political identity, avoiding treating 'identity' as if it were a given attribute of the polity in its "objective" existence.

The following section deals with the relationship between identity, legitimacy, foreign policy and the role of external Others, so as to clarify how a focus on self-identification and foreign policy can be merged into a conceptualization also apt for use in analysing the case of the EU.

2. Identity, legitimacy, foreign policy and external image

When taking political decisions, individuals are influenced by their normative and cognitive framework of reference. Identity produces the cognitive lenses through which they conceive themselves, the world and the others. If we translate it into foreign policy, political identity matters since it provides the structural context of meaning and norms within which state representatives and decision makers shape 'their appreciation of the world, of international politics, and of the place of their states within the international system', to use the fitting words of Jutta Weldes (1999: 9).

But *which* identity are we talking about? How does it influence foreign policy? Can we also analyse the possible feedback of a policy into self-awareness? And, finally, are there conditions in which the political identity of a group is more vulnerable to such feedback? I will touch on each of these questions respectively.

The term "identity" happens to be all too frequently confused with other forms of social identity. This is particularly the case of *cultural* identity, which a large amount of literature considers to be

indispensable for political identity and the main form of identity behind the role definition of a state Antony Smith (1992), for instance, treats political identity as the 'essence' of a nation which is pre-given with little possibility of being affected by politics, including foreign policy. A variant of this position is represented by those who regard political identity as a phenomenon which is 'constructed' (instead of pre-given) but predominantly through sharing cultural experiences rather than through political history (Rudolph 2001). Samuel Huntington takes a similar approach on American identity, when he claims that the core of this identity is the Anglo-Protestant culture of the initial settlers (2004: 69). Others are more articulated in describing the relationship between political and cultural identity and tend to attach an ambiguous role to culture - for instance for Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein culture is "a collective model of identity" and at the same time influences identity (Jepperson et al. 1996: 52, 56).

Here I focus attention on *political* identity as the type of identity which is most relevant to political action. With Furio Cerutti, I regard political identity as a construction that is not and cannot be derived *directly* from a common culture, as 'the set of social and political values and principles that we recognize as ours, or in the sharing of which we feel like "us", like a political group or entity' (Cerutti 2003: 27; see also Cerutti 2008,). Such values and principles do not shape the identity of the citizens by themselves: they need to be *interpreted* (Lucarelli 2006a). Culture, history, policies and institutions are the frameworks in which values interpretation takes place and thereby play a paramount role in shaping political identity, but do not coincide with it. Policy is also an explicit framework in which values interpretations are observable, as we will see.

The importance of values *interpretation* for self-identification is recognized by some parts of socio-psychological literature (cf. Fox 1996). In the case of the EU's foreign policy, a close investigation reveals that the EU's peculiarity in world politics derives precisely from a European interpretation of some widely shared values and principles (Lucarelli 2006b; Lucarelli and Manners 2006). The EU interpretation of very general values and principles frequently diverges from that provided in other political contexts, in that we see (i) the translation of a value into different guiding principles, or (ii) the peculiar interpretation of a value in the light of another (here, clearly, what counts is the hierarchical order among values in different political communities) (Lucarelli 2006b).

Where do such interpretations come from? "Our" specific interpretation of a value/principle is the result of our culture, history (or, better, of the shared meaning attributed to this history), constitutional and legal practices, and coherence with respect to other shared values. Another

fundamental framework of interpretation is *policy*. Policy-making is a sort of communicative act which turns values into action, thereby interpreting them. This communication is immediately visible to the informed public that is constantly engaged in a *process* of self-identification (Bloom 1990). However, policy is not only an intervening variable in the process of identity-building, but also a framework in which identities are observable.

As we have seen, policy is both a context in which interpreted values can be observed at work, and an intervening variable in the process of identity formation. Foreign policy has the specific characteristic of producing - more than other branches of politics - external images of the *polity* that can then feed back into the domestic self-identification process. This relationship between identity and foreign policy, however, has been largely neglected in the literature.

Current research on foreign policy and international relations makes frequent reference to the concept of identity, but - although with rare exceptions (Hopf 2002) - it shows similar shortcomings to those that we have seen affect research on the EU's international distinctive role (§ 1). Alexander Wendt (1992) had the merit of drawing the attention of mainstream IR to the issue of identity by using the concept to challenge Realism's epistemological foundations (though sharing part of its ontological basis).

In Wendt's view, identity is the 'property of international actors that generates motivational and behavioural dispositions' (1999: 224). According to Wendt, it represents a relatively stable (1999: 21) intersubjective structure within which *a state* defines its interests, role and expectations about its Self, in interaction with relevant Others. However, according to Wendt, the state, which exists prior to interaction, has some interests which are independent from the social context - physical security, autonomy, economic well-being and collective self-esteem (1999: 235ff).

Precisely due to his state-centric approach, though recalling that identities are constituted in interaction, Wendt ends up treating both states and their identities as given. His anthropomorphic concept of state, the exclusion of domestic processes of articulation of a state's identity are among the most serious criticisms of Wendt's constructivist approach (Zehfuss 2001; Hopf 2002: 281-94). I believe that the greatest pitfall of Wendt's approach lies in its absence of reference to the *peoples'* political identity. An anthropomorphic treatment of states as actors with an identity is by no means Wendt's prerogative, rather it has long been a somewhat popular practice in IR, but it is striking that it has also been maintained in a social constructivist framework.

What is the link between political decision makers and the (political) identity of the group? As political self-identification is reproduced through a series of habits (Hopf 2002: 10-1), experiences of "everyday life" (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 23), norms and roles, it is deeply rooted in society, shaped through a social interaction process in which policy-makers also take part. Not only are decision makers part of the social game of the production and reproduction of social identities, but, like each member of the group, they are influenced by the meanings that such identities provide. Moreover, identities imply interests: this means that interests are not endogenously given - as assumed by most traditional IR literature - but are identity-contingent.

Decision makers take political decisions on the basis of a social cognitive structure developed in the context of socially shaped identities. Their decisions are all at once telling of the political identity of their group and likely to give rise to debate within the same group and outside it. This brings us to the next question: Can we conceptualize a feedback between politics and identity?

As we have seen, politics is one of the main frameworks in which political values are interpreted. The observation of political performance is equally the observation of "values at work". At the same time, policy is the framework within which the legitimacy of the political entity that took the decision for the group is put to the test. It should be underlined, however, that political decisions have different prospects of entering the public debate, depending on their *salience*.

Alongside this direct feedback from politics to the political identity of the citizens, there is indirect feedback which passes through the relationship between the latter as a political group and outside groups - the so-called 'Others'. In IR, Others are usually associated with other states or group of states. However, Others may also refer to other categories of referents, such as our own past (Wæver 1998; Bottici 2008). The relevance of 'Others' (particularly of physical Others - other individuals, other states, etc.) is appreciated in both socio-psychological (Taylor 1994; Turner et al. 1987) and IR literature (cf. Rumelili 2004; Neumann 1996b). Upon reviewing the available literature, Others are seen to be treated as relevant to the self-identification process in three broad respects:

Recognition. The main theorists of recognition (Charles Taylor, Alessandro Pizzorno, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser) have underlined the relevance of this process in identity formation. In his

illuminating work on rationality and recognition, Pizzorno (2007) reads recognition as 'the reciprocal attribution of identity, […] constitutive of any form of sociality […] simply reflects the arrival on the scene of new actors' (2007: 190). The relevance of recognition in identity formation is also underlined by a popular author on the topic, Charles Taylor. Taylor's treatment of recognition entails a normative theory of multiculturalism, however his description of recognition is also useful for our purposes. He asserts that 'our identity is partly shaped by recognition […], often by the *mis*-recognition of others'. (Taylor 1994: 25).

Distinctiveness and Otherness. Others, however, are not only relevant to processes of identity formation for what they actively *do* (recognizing or not-recognizing the group) but also as inactive objects of our comparisons. Self-categorization theory finds a key psychological motivation for an individual's endorsement of group affiliation in his/her need 'to differentiate [his/her] own groups positively from others to achieve a positive social identity' (Turner et al. 1987: 42). This is what Furio Cerutti calls 'wall identity' (1996, 2008). Such differentiation is not necessarily oppositional but entails assuming the positive distinctiveness of one's group with respect to comparable Others.

As far as the EU is concerned, some scholars have pointed to a modern mode of differentiation based on a net juxtaposition with respect to external Others (Neumann 1998, 1999), while others have pointed to a postmodern mode of differentiation, grounded in the fear of disunity rather than fear of the Others (Wæver 1998; Schimmelfennig 2001). Bahar Rumelili argues that in reality the EU uses both modes of differentiation according to the specific Other it is dealing with (Rumelili 2004: 29-30).

External labelling, boundaries and meaning. The likelihood of a group member internalizing group identity depends both on 'less permeable group boundaries and higher incidence of external labelling' (Huddy 2001: 140). Others' labelling is an important element in that it creates cognitive boundaries between members of a group and outsiders. Labelling is more or less difficult depending on the main criteria adopted, which can be more or less subject to ascription (e.g. labelling based on the colour of skin is easier than labelling based on the political orientation). In this regard, external observers find it easier to label a 'European identity' rather than an EU/ropean one (Lucarelli 2007).

The role of boundaries in identity formation is debated in several branches of literature from the socio-psychological literature mentioned above, to sociology (e.g. George Simmel, Shmuel Eisenstadt, Bernhard Giesen), from political science (e.g. Albert Hirschmann), to anthropology

(Frederik Barth) (for an overview, see Cederman 2001). In an SIT perspective, boundaries are both created by the members of a group as a by-product of self-categorization processes, and imagined by outside Others. Moreover, they can be seen as identifying the contour of a group of people either sharing some similarities (e.g. having a European passport) or having internalized the *meaning* of group membership (e.g. the difference between having European citizenship and having a European identity). Boundaries as meanings are what count more for identity- formation processes. The Others can influence internal debate on meaning, perhaps even expressing a different view of what meaning is attached to belonging to the 'in-group'. This can generate significant interaction between the Others' views and internal processes of identity construction.

To conclude, foreign policy is relevant to the process of the political self-identification of the individual in a group, not only because it is one of the important frameworks within which core values and principles of a political group are interpreted (assume a specific meaning around which political identity can be articulated and legitimization processes can take place), but also because it is the main context in which the group interacts with external Others. Others are both passive and active actors in the self-categorization process. *Malgré eux* they are a term of comparison to state *distinctiveness* (in more or less oppositional terms); as active players, they reproduce an image of ourselves with which we can compare our self-representation, particularly if those Others are relevant sources of our self-esteem from whom we demand *recognition*.

3. Conclusion

In this report I have attempted to sketch a relationship between the political identity of the group, foreign policy and external images. Moreover, I have underlined how foreign policy is relevant in several ways. In the first place, foreign policy is relevant to identity directly, as a context in which values are interpreted and acknowledged by the group. In other words, foreign policy provides a first type of mirror in which the group can view itself and its values. However, foreign policy is also relevant to self-identification indirectly, insofar as it has an impact on external Others who function as a second mirror in which the Europeans see themselves reflected. Others are also relevant to self-identification as active providers of recognition, an indispensable component of self-identification processes. I have also underlined that such a relationship between foreign policy and self-awareness is particularly important in cases of less consolidated political identities, such as the one developing among Europeans.

In the other reports of this survey, we will acknowledge the image of the EU within a group of non-European countries as well as international organizations and transnational actors. This image that we draw is due to influence not only the interaction of these actors with the EU, but also the representation that the Europeans develop of the European union, a fundamental component of their political identity.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
The EU through Israeli Eyes

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive Summary

I Introduction

This study tries to explore some of the main images and perceptions in Israel of the EU. By providing empirical findings concerning the attitudes towards the EU of the Israeli public, the political elites, the organised civil society and the press, the study analyses these images and perceptions and offers insights into how the EU is actually judged as an international actor by Israelis. The underlying assumption of this study is that only by understanding these images and perceptions – and in some cases only by dispelling them – will Israel and the EU be able to improve and upgrade their relations.

II The EU as a global power

Our interviewees place both the EU and France together in the fourth place on the list of global superpowers after the U.S., China, Russia and Germany – but they also expect the EU move up to third place by the year 2020. About 50 percent of our interviewees were of the opinion that the U.S. is the best country to maintain peace and stability in the world, while 33 percent were of the opinion that it is the EU rather than the U.S., which holds the best framework for assuring world peace. As for the Union's role in the Middle East peace process, the study confirmed the initial assumption that the EU is not perceived in Israel as a key player in the Middle East peace process.

III Public opinion and political elites

The study shows that Israelis hold three major perceptions about the EU. First, that the Union represents a hospitable framework for Israeli accession, and therefore that Israel could and should join the EU within the foreseeable future. This Israeli perception is driven by Israelis' hopes, desires and expectations of joining the Union. Second, is that good political relations with the EU are not really essential for Israel. The third fundamental perception, which follows from the second and accentuates the tension with the first, is that anti-Israeli attitudes and geo-strategic views detrimental to the security of Israel are deeply rooted in the EU. Underlying this perception are Israeli feelings that large parts of the EU are antisemitic.

IV A view from civil society

In analysing Israel’s civil society, we conducted a study of 100 websites of major Israeli trade unions, academic institutions and NGOs. The internet search was based on a search for the terms 'European Union' and 'Europe'. An additional component of this analysis consists of personal interviews with 20 leaders, directors and board members of Israel's leading trade unions, academic institutions and NGOs. The Israeli civil society is not unified in its approach to the EU. Organisations that enjoy the Union's financial support include leftist and liberal civil society organisations that see the EU as a potential political and ideological partner. These organisations perceive the EU as the global defender of human rights and as an independent global power. Unlike other Israeli sectors, most of the civil society organisations do not perceive the EU as an antisemitic entity, quite the opposite. Most organisations would like Israel to strengthen relations with the EU; some of them would even like to see Israel as a full member of the EU.

V Israeli media perceptions of the EU

This section is an analysis of the content of the three leading national Hebrew newspapers, *Haaretz, Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv.* The analysis spans all news items in the printed editions of these newspapers between 1 October 2007 and 31 March 2008, in which any of the names of the 27 EU Member States or the terms 'European Union' (or EU) and / or 'Europe' were mentioned in the headline or in the sub-headline.

While our initial assumption was that the Israeli media would take a neutral to negative approach towards the EU with regard to internal and external affairs, this study reveals that Israel's three leading newspapers took a neutral or positive stance on the Union.

This study finds that the majority of the EU media representations in Israel's three leading newspapers during the six months period framed the EU as 'a powerful political system', sometimes even 'a power of passive aggression', acting internally and externally. But the Union is framed as a marginal economic power with an anti-Jewish character. Notwithstanding this antisemitic image, the Union and its Member States were portrayed as possessing democratic values, an advocate for human rights, a leading aid donor and an active international negotiator on the Iranian nuclear crisis.

VI Conclusions

However problematic some of these perceptions and images might be, we should not lose sight of the fact that they play a critical a role in relations between Israel and the EU. If Israel wants to continue developing and upgrading its relations with the EU, however, it should do much more of an effort to understand, and in some cases even dispel, its perceptions and images of the EU. The same responsibility lies, of course, also on the European side.

VII Recommendations to Israel and the EU

1. Realise the crucial importance of Euro-Israeli relations.
2. Recognise and explicate shared long-term interests.
3. Give high priority to improving Euro-Israeli relations, including investing larger resources and avoiding unessential irritating acts.
4. Understand better EU / Israel values, interests and world views.
5. Move from debate on current issues to clarification of fundamental disagreements.
6. Reduce EU / Israeli images, perceptions and issues in debate.
7. Strive to cooperate on global issues, such as ecological concerns, dangers of a clash of cultures and the revision of international law.
8. Map shared strategic interests and offer more cooperation in advancing EU-Israeli objectives.
9. Initiate shared professional discourse on long-range futures of the Middle East and on global geo-strategy as a whole.
10. Formally consult EU / Israel on major local, regional and global initiatives.
11. Strengthen the socio-cultural policy dimension of Euro-Israel relations.
12. Craft EU / Israeli grand strategy towards each other.

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The European Union through Israeli Eyes

Sharon Pardo[1]

I Introduction

Despite its growing power and importance, the European Union (EU) has not taken a central place in Israeli politics and decision making. Among the reasons for this are Israeli images and perceptions about the EU, which are the focus of this study. These images and perceptions have pushed Israel to behave more as if it were an island in the Atlantic Ocean rather than a Mediterranean nation neighboring the EU.

Historically, geographically and even religiously, it has been argued that "Israel is from Europe, but not in Europe" (Heinrich Böll Stiftung quoting Dan Diner 2007), and indeed the Union is Israel's economic, cultural and, in many respects, political hinterland. Israel enjoys a unique status in the EU, a status that grants the country extensive rights in many areas such as research and development and economics. For all these reasons, one of Tzipi Livni's most important public statements on Europe, as Israel's Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, was dedicated to declaring her belief in Israeli-European relations: "I truly believe that the road should ultimately lead us to a significant participation of Israel in the European integration project. And here the sky is the limit" (Livni 2006:4).

This study tries to explore some of the main images and perceptions in Israel of the EU. By providing empirical findings concerning the attitudes towards the EU of the Israeli public, the political elites, the organised civil society and the press, the study analyses these images and perceptions and offers "insights into how the EU is

[1] I am grateful to Sonia Lucarelli and Lorenzo Fioramonti for their constructive suggestions and comments at earlier stages of my research. I would also like to express my gratitude for the invaluable assistance of Michal Eskenazi and Ayal Kantz, Programme Coordinators at CSEPS; Some sections of this paper draw on an article co-authored with Yehezkel Dror, which was published in the *European Foreign Affairs Review* (Dror and Pardo 2006). Special thanks to Alberto Tonini for his comments and suggestions.

actually judged as an international actor" by Israelis. At the same time, it also serves as an important indicator "of how well intentions have been translated into observable actions" (Rhodes 1998:6). The underlying assumption of this study is that only by understanding these images and perceptions – and in some cases only by dispelling them – will Israel and the EU be able to improve and upgrade their relations. Of course, in order for Israeli-EU relations to fulfill their potential, the EU too should significantly re-examine its images and perceptions of Israel, but EU-based images and perceptions are beyond the scope of this study.

II Bilateral relations between Israel and the EU

Israel and the EU first established diplomatic relations in 1959. The two share a long history, marked by growing interdependence and cooperation. In 1975 Israel and the European Community (EC) signed their first Co-operation Agreement and since then, trade, economic, political and cultural cooperation have consolidated Israel-EU relations. The EU is Israel's most important trading partner. In 2007 35 percent of Israeli imports (without diamonds; totaled about EUR 14 billion) came from the EU, and 35 percent of Israeli exports (without diamonds; totaled about EUR 11 billion) were directed to the European market.[2] The EU ranks number one in Israel's imports and two in its exports (Central Bureau of Statistics 2008). Israel, of course, is a much smaller trading partner for the EU, yet it is one of the EU's biggest trading partners in the Euro-Mediterranean area. In 2006, for example, Israel ranked 30th in the EU's imports and 22nd in the EU's exports.[3]

[2] Israel displays a trade deficit vis-à-vis the EU, which has stabilised in recent years at about EUR 4 billion.
[3] Approximately one percent of total EU trade; See <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/israel/index_en.htm> (accessed 15 June 2008).

Israel is a full partner in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP/the 'Barcelona Process') and participates in all its programmes. Because of the state of its economy which is on par with that of many EU countries, Israel was not eligible for bilateral assistance under the Partnership.[4] Israeli participation in Euro-Mediterranean regional activities is difficult in the absence of bilateral diplomatic relations between Israel and most of the Mediterranean partners. Israel is something of an odd partner in this regional partnership. Politically, Israel is neither a candidate for EU membership nor an Arab state. Economically, Israel is developed and advanced well beyond all other Mediterranean partners. While the direct economic impact of the Partnership on Israel is negligible, politically the EMP has enhanced Israel's regional legitimacy (Dafni 2002).

To intensify their political, economic and technological-scientific relations Israel and the EU signed in 1995 the 'EU-Israel Association Agreement' in the framework of the EMP. The Agreement entered into force in 2000 and since then forms the legal basis for Israel-EU relations. It is much more than a free trade agreement and it enables continuing dialogue and cooperation between Israel and the EU in a wide variety of fields. The Agreement outlines the framework for regular political dialogue and aims at promoting peace, security and regional cooperation. It includes provisions for the strengthening of economic and socio-cultural cooperation on the widest possible basis.[5]

[4] Israel receives bilateral assistance from the United States. In August 2008 Israel and the United States signed an agreement that includes American assistance totaling USD 30 billion in military aid over the next decade (Forbes.Com 2007).

[5] Israel's unresolved conflict with the Palestinians impacted on the terms of the Association Agreement, specifically relating to Israeli exports from the Palestinian Occupied Territories. In 2005, after a long dispute between Israel and the EU (the so-called 'rules of origin dispute'), it was agreed that the preferential treatment granted under the Association Agreement will be refused to goods originating in the Palestinian Occupied Territories (European Commission 2005).

Israel is the first and one of the only two non-European country fully associated with the EU's Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development (FP) since 1996. Israel is an active member in the EU's FP and has proved to be a source of innovation in both basic and market-oriented research conducted in Europe. The EU is now Israel's second biggest source of research funding, after the Israel Science Foundation. Israel will contribute approximately EUR 440 million to the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7) over the period 2007-2013.[6]

Following the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in December 2004, the EU and Israel adopted the EU-Israel Action Plan. The Action Plan, "reflects a different starting point for the Euro-Israeli relations and it is also indicative of the well-developed bilateral political and economic relations" (Del Sarto, Schumacher, Lannon and Driss 2007:43). According to the Action Plan, Israel and the EU are to intensify political and security cooperation, introduce a significant element of economic integration, boost socio-cultural and scientific cooperation and share responsibility in conflict prevention and resolution. The Action Plan stipulates that the EU-Israel political dialogue should also focus on the adoption of measures to combat antisemitism, and on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, the economic dialogue focuses on actions to promote further liberalisation of investment and trade between Israel and the EU. All in all, the ENP has acted as a catalyst in boosting Euro-Israeli relations and the Action Plan has provided the platform for developing Euro-Israeli cooperation across various fields.[7]

[6] By 16 June 2008, over 1,300 proposals involving Israeli researchers were received under FP7. Of these 267 were accepted with EU contribution of over EUR 51 million (General Secretariat of the Council 2008: 3).
[7] European Commission 2008.

It is worth noting that Euro-Israeli relations are also conducted in the context of the Union's wider involvement in the Middle East peace process. After the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005 and the November 2005 Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) to and from the Gaza Strip, Israel and the Palestinian Authority invited the EU to be the third-party at Rafah crossing point on the Gaza-Egyptian border. In response, the EU decided to launch the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), to monitor the operations of the Rafah border crossing point. The Mission has been viewed as a significant step forward for Israeli-EU relations, since it is a precedent that marks the first time that Israel agreed to give the EU a responsibility in what Israel deems the 'hard security' sphere. The operational phase of the Mission began on 30 November 2005 for a duration of 12 months. In May 2007 the mandate of the Mission was extended until May 2008 and has since been extended again until 24 November 2008. In the wake of the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 the EU monitors are inactive, having withdrawn their observers back to Israel.[8]

In August 2006, upon the cessation of the war between Israel and Hezbollah, EU Member States provided more than 7,000 soldiers to the upgraded UN Interim Force (UNIFIL II) in southern Lebanon. European troops lead the ground contingent of UNIFIL II and its maritime force. Although UNIFIL II is not an EU operation, the European participation in the mission is the backbone of this new force and is a testimony to the Union's growing involvement in the Middle East in the field of security.

Finally, in March 2007 Israel and the EU established the so-called 'Reflection Group', which was charged with examining areas in which cooperation between Israel

[8] Hamas wants Egypt to reopen the Rafah border crossing and give Hamas a role in monitoring the border. This demand has been rejected by Egypt, which calls for a return to the 2005 Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) to and from the Gaza Strip.

and the EU could be enhanced. Based on the preliminary work of this Reflection Group, the EU-Israel Association Council convened in June 2008 and expressed the political will to intensify Euro-Israeli relations as well as agreed to develop these relations gradually within the framework of the ENP. The upgrade is to be carried out in three areas:[9]

1. Increased diplomatic cooperation – there will be an institutionalisation of the diplomatic dialogue, by means of regular annual meetings at a senior level. In addition, there will be increased meetings between government ministers, senior officials and parliamentarians from both sides;
2. Israeli participation in European agencies, working groups and programmes – with a view to achieving grater convergence towards the EU *acquis*. This will bring the Israeli society and economy closer to European norms and standards and will increase the competitiveness of Israeli companies in the European market. This will also lead to recognition by European academic institutions of degrees awarded by Israeli universities and colleges.
3. Israel's integration into the European Single Market – A joint working group will examine the areas in which Israel is capable of integrating into the European Single Market. This will lay the groundwork for further upgrading of Euro-Israeli relations in the future.

In order to implement this political decision, the EU and Israel will start negotiations reviewing the content of the EU-Israel Action Plan. The process of identification of concrete actions in each area will be carried out jointly in the following months. The existing institutional mechanism will provide the necessary expertise to formulate the content and scope of a political / legal instrument, which is

[9] General Secretariat of the Council 2008: 3; Ravid 2008a; and Keinon 2008.

expected to replace the current EU-Israel Action Plan that expires in April 2009. Upcoming meetings of all joint subcommittees will be tasked to develop the content of the upgrade in each field, which is to be included in a document that will guide Euro-Israeli relations past April 2009.[10] The success of this process, however, requires that Israel and the EU both agree on how they want to craft a tailor-made model for their relations.

All in all, thanks to reciprocal intentions and interests by the EU and its Member States, much has been achieved, including increasing economic interaction and scientific cooperation.

Even as the EU and all its Member States repeatedly state their commitment to the existence and survival of Israel,[11] they do not shy from criticising key Israeli policies.[12] Undoubtedly, these criticisms contribute to some of the most dominant images and perceptions shaping Israeli attitudes toward the EU.

III The EU as a global power

In the course of this study we distributed among 40 interviewees a questionnaire on the dominant powers of the 21st century and on the nature of international politics. The interviewees include Israeli politicians, decision makers and decision shapers; leaders, directors and board members of Israel's leading trade unions, academic

[10] General Secretariat of the Council 2008: 2-3.

[11] Two examples for such commitment: "All democracies are accountable for Israel's security, which is non negotiable…" (French President Nicolas Sarkozy; Sarkozy 2007:238); "I unreservedly acknowledge Israel's lasting right to exist and Israel's right to live peacefully within secure borders among neighbours who recognize the State of Israel" (Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament, in the Israeli Knesset; Pöttering 2007:2).

[12] For instance, the EU is officially against Israel's construction of the separation barrier along its current route inside Palestinian territory, claiming the move is illegal.

institutions and NGOs; and leading journalists and foreign news editors of major Israeli newspapers, television channels and radio programmes. The results of this questionnaire are summarised in Table 1.

***Table 1* – Results of a questionnaire on the dominant powers of the 21st century and the nature of international politics, 40 Israeli interviewees (Jan-May 2008)**

Statement / Opinion	**Percentage Points / Challenges / Goals**
The EU is a superpower already today	33%
The EU will be a superpower in 2020	50%
The biggest challenges to the world's superpowers	1. Climate change 2. International terrorism 3. Poverty
The top goals of any superpower	1. Protection of the environment 2. Peace keeping 3. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
The EU is the best framework to maintain peace and stability in the world	33%
A unipolar international system might have a positive effect on the maintenance of world peace	17%

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

The interviewees place both the EU and France together in the fourth place on the list of global superpowers after the U.S., China, Russia and Germany – but they also expect the EU move up to third place by the year 2020. According to our interviewees, among the biggest challenges the world's superpowers have to tackle, climate change, international terrorism, and poverty top of the list, followed by weapons of mass destruction, religious conflicts and the scarcity of natural resources. Consequently, protection of the environment, peace keeping, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the eradication of poverty should be the top goals of any superpower.

About 50 percent of our interviewees were of the opinion that the U.S. is the best country to maintain peace and stability in the world, while 33 percent were of the

opinion that it is the EU rather than the U.S., which holds the best framework for assuring world peace. Only 17 percent of the interviewees think that a unipolar international system might have a positive effect on the maintenance of world peace, while 33 percent are of the opinion that world peace can be maintained under UN leadership or under balanced regional superpowers.

As for the Union's role in the Middle East peace process, our study confirmed our initial assumption that the EU is not perceived in Israel as a key player in the Middle East peace process. Be that as it may, it is important to note that Israelis understand that the EU's policies toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reflect the EU's increasing role in external relations. In other words, Israelis recognise that the recent involvement of the EU in the Middle East, and in particular the Union's contributions to solving the Israeli-Arab conflict (such as the European missions in Southern Lebanon or in Rafah-Gaza), mirror the EU's slowly emerging standing in the international arena.

In a national survey from February 2007, which was conducted by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) together with the author of this study, 75 percent of the Israeli public were of the opinion that the U.S. or EU Member States should be part of the peace process between Israel and its neighbours (KAS and Pardo 2007:16).[13] When the respondents to this survey were asked which country / entity

[13] The KAS and Pardo survey was carried out between February 5-7, 2007, by KEEVOON Research, Strategy & Communications and Mutagim Call Center in Tel Aviv. Tabulation and Cross-tabs were prepared by DataWise, Salt Lake City, Utah. 511 people responded to the survey, which is a representative sample of Israel's adult population. Of these, 442 respondents were Israeli Jews who were interviewed in Hebrew and 69 respondents Israeli Arabs who were interviewed in Arabic. The survey had a 4.5 percent margin of error.

Other variables: Gender: Male - 49.7 percent, Female - 50.3 percent; Age Group: 18-22 – 7.8 percent, 23-30 – 13.7 percent, 31-40 – 20.5 percent, 41-50 – 21.1 percent, 51-60 – 19 percent, 61-55 – 5.1 percent, Over 65 – 11.9 percent, Refused – 0.9 percent; Religion: Secular Jew – 46.2 percent, Traditional Jew – 24.1 percent, Orthodox Jew – 8 percent, Ultra Orthodox Jew – 6.7 percent, Arab/Muslim – 13.5 percent, Refused – 1.5 percent; Heritage: *Ashkenazi* – 47.1 percent, *Sephardic* – 43.4 percent, Neither – 5.9 percent, Refused – 3.6 percent; Number of Years in Israel: 10-19 Years – 5.9 percent, 20 Years or More – 23.7 percent, Born in Israel – 68.3 percent; Refused – 2.1 percent;

they preferred to be involved, 69.5 percent of the respondents replied the U.S. as opposed to 13.7 percent who said they preferred the EU. Notwithstanding these results, 59.3 percent of the respondents to the national survey thought that EU involvement in the region in recent years prevented progress in the peace process (KAS and Pardo 2007: 17).

IV Israeli perceptions of the EU: public opinion and political elites

Understanding Israeli perceptions of the EU, and in some cases dispelling them, is necessary if Israeli-EU relations are to be improved and upgraded. Currently, three major perceptions affect Israeli attitudes toward the EU and influence Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Union.

Before identifying and examining these perceptions, a quick word on methodology. Following widespread practice in international relations theory and even more so in policy discourse, where states and multi-state entities are often discussed as if they were single actors having a coherent set of interests and policies, Israeli perceptions are often analysed as if Israel were a single, coherent and consistent actor. This is clearly incorrect, as Israel is a pluralistic society. Naturally, different Israeli sectors hold different views on the EU, and differences exist within each sector as well. Nevertheless, it is easy to identify certain core perceptions widely shared by both the general public and the political elites.

1. Public opinion

Perception #1: Israeli membership in the EU

2006 Vote: *Kadima* – 20 percent, Labour – 12 percent, *Likud* – 9 percent, *Meretz* – 3 percent, *Shas* – 3 percent, *Mafdal/Ichud Leumi* – 4 percent, *Yisrael Beitenu* – 2 percent, *Shinui* – 1 percent, *Yahadut Hatorah* – 2 percent, Pensioners – 4 percent, *Rakah/Hadash*/Other Arab – 4 percent, Other – 1 percent, Non-Voter – 21 percent, Refused – 14 percent.

The most fundamental Israeli perception of the EU is that the Union represents a hospitable framework for Israeli accession, and therefore that Israel could and should join the EU within the foreseeable future. This Israeli perception is driven by Israelis' hopes, desires and expectations of joining the Union.

In a Dahaf 2004 survey of Israelis' perceptions of the EU, 70 percent of those surveyed thought that joining the EU is either very important or important (see Table 2).[14] In the KAS and Pardo 2007 national survey on Israelis' attitudes towards the EU and its Member States, an overwhelming majority of 75 percent of the Israeli public either strongly supported, somewhat supported or tended to support the idea that Israel should join the EU (see Table 3). In addition, following the January 2007 EU enlargement, about 42 percent of the Israelis were identified as eligible for EU citizenship (KAS and Pardo 2007:20).[15]

***Table 2* – Importance attributed to Israel joining the EU**

	Entire sample	Jews	Immigrants	Arabs
Very important	44	44	27	43
Important	26	25	45	34
Somewhat important	14	15	16	10
Not very important	9	10	9	5
Not important	2	2	2	5
Not important at all	4	4	1	3

[14] The Dahaf 2004 survey was commissioned by the European Commission's Delegation to Israel and was conducted by the Dahaf Institute. The first part of the survey was carried out in December 2003 and its second part was carried out in February 2004. The survey is based on interviews of 997 persons. Of these 688 respondents were Israeli veteran Jews who were interviewed in Hebrew, 161 respondents were Jewish immigrants who were interviewed mainly in Russian, and 148 respondents were Israeli Arabs who were interviewed mainly in Arabic. The sample was drawn by strata sampling method. The strata were defined by the following variables: Immigrants (Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union), ultra-orthodox Jews, settlers, kibbutz members, other Jews, Arabs, and characteristics of town of residence (geographic area and size of town).

[15] In contrast, the 2004 Dahaf survey reported that one fifth of the Israeli Jewish adult population either had EU citizenship (six percent) or intended to apply for citizenship (14 percent). Note that the KAS and Pardo 2007 survey examined eligibility for EU citizenship, while the Dahaf survey examined actual citizenship. Hence, the KAS and Pardo survey did not ask the respondents whether they intend to apply for citizenship. Rather, the respondents were asked if their parents and grandparents were born in one of the 27 EU Member States (the respondents were presented with a list of all EU Member States).

Don't Know	1	--	--	--
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Dahaf (2004: 60)

***Table 3* – Degree of support for Israel joining the EU**

	Entire sample	**Jews**	**Immigrants**	**Arabs**
Strongly Support	32	32	27	35
Somewhat Support	16	17	10	12
Support	27	28	33	20
Oppose	9	8	7	19
Somewhat Oppose	4	4	10	6
Strongly Oppose	5	6	7	1
Don't Know/ Refused	7	5	6	7
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: KAS and Pardo (2007: 11)

Perception #2: good political relations with the EU are not critical for Israel

An additional perception, which might be said to be contradictory to the first perception, is that good political relations with the EU are not really critical for Israel.

In the above-mentioned Dahaf 2004 survey of Israeli public opinion towards the EU, more than two thirds (68 percent) of people polled considered relations with the U.S. as more important than relations with the EU. Only six percent considered relations with the EU as more important than relations with the U.S. About one-quarter (26 percent) thought that both relations are equally important (Dahaf 2004:24). Furthermore, 69 percent of the respondents to the KAS and Pardo 2007 survey said that in thinking about Israeli culture, they think that they have more in common with Americans than with Europeans. Only 20 percent of the respondents felt they had more in common with Europeans than with Americans (KAS and Pardo 2007:17).

Perception #3: EU policies towards Israel are deeply rooted and rigid

The third fundamental perception follows from the second and accentuates the tension with the first: namely, that anti-Israeli attitudes and geo-strategic views detrimental to the security of Israel are deeply rooted in the EU. Underlying this perception are Israeli feelings that large parts of the EU are antisemitic.[16]

The 2007 survey of Israeli attitudes towards the EU and its members reveals that 78 percent of those surveyed thought that the EU is not doing enough to prevent antisemitism in Europe (KAS and Pardo 2007:18).[17] Likewise 64 percent of the respondents to the Dahaf 2004 survey agreed with the claim that the EU positions towards Israel are antisemitism thinly disguised as moral principles (Dahaf 2004:41).

2. Political elites

At the political level, a number of Israeli leaders share the public's perception that Israel could and should join the EU within the foreseeable future. Thus, for instance, a group of Israeli parliamentarians, representing a broad spectrum of Israel's political parties, signed a manifesto in 2002 advocating for Israeli membership in the EU (Transnational Radical Party 2002).[18] In November 2002, former Israeli Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, declared that Israel favours joining the EU and asked Italy to help Israel achieve this goal (Israeli Army Radio 2002). Likewise, former Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom stated in May 2003 that the Israeli government was weighing the possibility of applying for EU membership, adding that "we will be glad to be accepted by the EU" (Walker 2003).

[16] See discussion in Section VI below.
[17] In addition 64 percent of Israelis thought that the EU is not doing enough to prevent Islamophobia (KAS and Pardo 2007:19).
[18] Of course, this is not to suggest that should there be a vote on EU membership, the Israeli parliament would approve it.

In January 2007, Avigdor Liberman, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Strategic Affairs, declared that "Israel's diplomatic and security goal ... must be clear: joining NATO and entering the European Union" (*Haaretz* 2007).

A different approach is taken by Israel's President, Shimon Peres, who holds that if the Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians sign a peace agreement, "they should be accepted as members of a united Europe", in which the three countries could form a trading partnership or "a modern Benelux". According to Peres such a membership "will give hope to the three parties" (CBC 2004).

Importantly, there are also voices in the EU that support such thinking, feeding this Israeli perception that Israeli membership in the EU is possible. Among these voices, for instance, is Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who for several years, and especially during the 2003 Italian Presidency of the EU, has been advocating Israel's EU accession. In 2004 Berlusconi declared that "Italy will support Israeli membership in the EU…As far as Italy is concerned, Israel is completely European in terms of standard of living, heritage and cultural values. Geography is not a determinant" (Manor 2004). Israel is a natural candidate for EU membership also for French President Nicolas Sarkozy—or at least more natural than Turkey. As Sarkozy writes in 2007 election campaign book: "if Turkey entered the EU, I also wonder on what basis we could exclude Israel, so many of whose citizens are at home in France and in Europe, and vice versa" (Sarkozy 2007:148). Support for Israeli accession to the EU can also be heard in the European Parliament. The Transnational Radical Party, for instance, has for several years been running a campaign for full Israeli membership of the EU (Transnational Radical Party 2002).

Although Israeli policy makers are aware of the importance of the EU to Israel, like the general public, many of them share the public's perception that good

political relations with the EU are not critical for Israel. In a statement that hyperbolically reflects Israeli dismissal of the EU, former Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, told a group of Israeli ambassadors to Europe they can disregard criticism of European governments since we in Israel "do not owe anyone [i.e. the Europeans] anything. We are obligated only to God!" (Eichner 2004). For Sharon, as for others in the Israeli political elites, Israel can dismiss the EU mainly because of Israel's special relationship with the U.S.

Israeli political elites also share the general public's perception that EU policies towards Israel are deeply rooted and rigid, coloured by antisemitism. In the last 8 years European antisemitism was discussed several times by the Israeli government in its weekly meetings. In press statements issued by Israeli politicians following meetings with European officials, the topic of European antisemitism is regularly on the Israeli political agenda. This is invariably the case when it comes to Israel's Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers.

In November 2003 in an interview to *EUpolitix.com*, former Prime Minister Sharon said that "an ever stronger Muslim presence in Europe is certainly endangering the life of Jewish people… I would say …. EU governments are not doing enough to tackle anti-Semitism… Of course it is dangerous to generalize, but it is possible to say that the majority of countries in Europe do not have a balanced policy towards Israel" (Shuman 2003). Later on in 2004 Prime Minister Sharon warned the Israeli Knesset that "the antisemitism virus woke again [in Europe] and is beginning to infect large parts of the continent" (Marziano 2004). In mid 2004 Prime Minister Sharon told a meeting of the American Jewish Association in Jerusalem that Jews around the world should relocate to Israel as early as possible. But for those living in France, he added moving was a "must" because of the rising antisemitism

against Jews in France and in Europe. In Sharon's words: "we see the spread of the wildest [European] antisemitism in France" (BBC News 2004). Also for Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, "anti-Semitism is still very much alive [in Europe]. As the home of the Jewish people, this is a fight that should be led by Israel" Livni told in February 2007 to the participants of the Foreign Ministry's Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism. According to Livni, "modern anti-Semitism is spreading from fringes to the mainstream, in parallel with the growth of radical Islamic ideology in Europe. It poses a significant threat. We are witnessing new types of cooperation in Europe between the racist right, radical left and the Jihadist Muslims in this campaign" (Livni 2007:2).

As mentioned above, the fight against antisemitism in Europe is also included in the EU-Israel Action Plan. While several chapters and sections of the Action Plan include references to antisemitism, the Action Plan's section on 'shared values' contains a special sub-section on 'combating anti-Semitism' in which both parties commit themselves to the struggle against all forms of anti-Semitism in Europe.

3. Analysis of public opinion and political elites' perceptions of the EU

It is easy to understand the general public's perception that the EU represents a hospitable framework for Israeli accession, and therefore that Israel could and should join the EU within the foreseeable future. Such a perception can best be explained by Israeli wishful thinking. What is surprising is the degree to which senior Israeli officials as well as European leaders, policy makers and others who are familiar with the EU, cling to this idea. For these views on Israeli accession to the EU ignore

fundamental incongruities between Israel's self-definition as a Jewish state and the state of the Jewish People, on the one hand, and the guiding principle of the EU of an open and unified space without sharp distinctions between citizens of Member States in terms of "insiders" and "others", on the other hand. However democratic and liberal Israel is, and however much universal human values are part of its system, Israel's reality and aspirations as a Jewish state and the state of the Jewish People make it exceptional and radically different from other states. This difference would present great obstacles for Israeli accession to the EU even if Israel were invited to do so. Yet this difference would not be something that Israel could easily give up, since for many Israelis this difference underscores the very *raison d'être* of their country.

It is easy to give concrete illustrations, such as the contradiction between the *Israeli Law of Return*[19] and the EU principle of freedom of movement of persons, even if realised in phases. One can add many further factors, such as the ethnocentric tendencies and policies of Israel with regard to promoting the welfare of the Jewish people. Needless to say, such tendencies and policies are not in line with EU values.

On a different level of realpolitik, Israel is not regarded by EU institutions and officials as a likely candidate for joining the Union in the foreseeable future. As explained by Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner: "in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy we still have a lot of work to bring Israel and the European Union closer… as for the question of [Israel's] EU membership – this question is not on the agenda!" (Primor 2005).

At the level of Israeli-EU relations, Israeli perception that it can join the EU harms the future development and upgrading of the relationship. Indeed Israeli and European recognition that Israel cannot and should not try to become a member of the

[19] *The Law of Return 5710-1950* stipulates that Jews immigrating to Israel may be granted the status of *Oleh*, which automatically entitles them to citizenship, unless the applicant is deemed likely to endanger public health, the security of the State or public welfare etc'.

EU, in distinction from deep and comprehensive cooperation agreements, is a basic starting point for strengthening, developing and upgrading Israeli-EU relations.

The second Israeli perception that good relations with the EU are not critical for Israel is particularly harmful for the country, since political relations with the EU are essential for the future of Israel. Not only does the Israeli economy and significant parts of its research and technology depend on cooperation with the EU, but the EU standing in global affairs, in security policies, not to mention its desire to be more involved in the Middle East, are likely to remain strong. As the EU's Security Strategy fully makes clear: "As a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world's Gross National Product (GNP), and with a wide range of instruments at its disposal, the European Union is inevitably a global player…The increasing convergence of European interests and the strengthening of mutual solidarity of the EU makes us a more credible and effective actor. Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world". As for the Middle East conflict itself, the European Security Strategy considers the Middle East conflict as a violent conflict that persists on Europe's borders and threatens regional stability. The Strategy further emphasises that "resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict is a strategic priority for Europe… The European Union must remain engaged and ready to commit resources to the problem until it is solved" (Council of the European Union 2003:1, 4, 8).

Furthermore, the perceived difference in Israeli attitude toward Washington and Brussels is itself exaggerated, since the U.S. and the EU are increasingly working together, especially on the Middle East. The Quartet of the U.S., EU, Russia and UN

has become the principal international framework for the international community in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[20]

For a meaningful upgrade of Euro-Israeli relations the EU must be recognised by Israel as a major global actor bordering on the Middle East which has a potentially constructive role to play in shaping the political-economic-cultural-strategic future of Israel. Europe would certainly like to assume a key role in the international arena, as was clearly declared by the Union's Council: "The European Union has the potential to make a major contribution, both in dealing with the threats and in helping realise the opportunities. An active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global scale. In doing so, it would contribute to an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world" (Council of the European Union 2003:14).

And these are not empty words. The role that the EU has chosen to play in the Lebanese crisis following the 2006 war and in defusing the Iranian nuclear crisis may prove that the EU is committed to its international role and may help Israel dispel its own perception with regard to the value of good political relations with Brussels.

The Israeli perception that EU policies towards Israel are deeply rooted and rigid and that large parts of the EU are antisemitic will not be easy to dispel, especially as there are also some voices in the EU that approve such thinking, feeding this Israeli perception. A case in point, in June 2008 former Vice President of the European Commission and the current Italian Foreign Minister, Franco Frattini, had set off a minor storm at the meeting of the Annual Europe–Israel Dialogue, after "confessing" that the EU has taken in the past an unbalanced stance on Israel, at times

[20] The joint framework should not obfuscate the fact that some European officials quietly complain that the EU has become subservient to the U.S. within the Quartet.

blurring the line between legitimate criticism and antisemitic sentiments (Ravid 2008b: 2).[21]

All Israeli interviewees to this study identified Europe's Muslims as a main source of the current rise of antisemitism in Europe. For them, in combination with growing Islamic populations in EU Member States and some features of globalisation, the results are radical versions of European antisemitism fused with anti-Zionism, anti-Israelism and anti-Americanism. All interviewees concluded that these culminate in the manifestation of a 'new' European antisemitism superimposed on the traditional core of European antisemitism.[22]

V A view from civil society

In analysing Israel's civil society, we conducted a study of 100 websites of major Israeli trade unions, academic institutions and NGOs (8 professional organisations and 92 academic, civil, communal organizations). The internet search was conducted in March-April 2008 and was based on a search for the terms 'European Union' and 'Europe'. An additional component of this analysis consists of personal interviews with 20 leaders, directors and board members of Israel's leading trade unions, academic institutions and NGOs.

Thirty websites (30 percent) of the examined organisations made some kind of reference to the EU / Europe in their websites. Five websites (five percent) of the organisations made a reference on their homepage and 25 (25 percent) of them referred to the EU / Europe in other pages of their websites. Two percent of the

[21] In Frattini's words: "I have to admit, if I look at the past, the EU has on some occasions taken an unbalanced stance toward Israel, even by making an unacceptable confusion between legitimate political criticism of Israel and intolerance against Jewish people that can become anti-Semitism" (Ravid 2008b: 2).
[22] For further discussion, see Section VI below.

organisations included a picture of the EU flag in their websites, one in a positive context and one in a negative context. In the thirty websites (30 percent) that mentioned the EU / Europe, we counted 134 items and links referring to the EU and 749 items and links referring to Europe. We then catalogued all items and links under 11 themes. The results are summarised in Table 4.

***Table 4* – Distribution of items and links to EU/Europe by theme in 100 websites of Israeli civil society organisations (Mar-Apr 2008)**

Theme	Percentage
Human Rights	25
Professional Cooperation	12
Social	12
Health	9
Education	9
Economic and Trade	9
Financial Support	9
Middle East Peace Process	6
EU-Israel Political Relations	3
Environment	3
Legal	3
Total	**100%**

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

On the face of it, the figure of 30 percent of organisations that made some kind of reference to the EU / Europe in their websites represents a significant quantitative measure. However, a qualitative analysis of these references evinces a far less central role for the EU / Europe than the merely quantitative figure suggests.

That said, it is important to emphasise that the Israeli civil society is not unified in its approach to the EU. It is possible to divide the Israeli civil society organisations into three categories: 1) Organisations that are not concerned with the EU and for which the Union has no direct relevance to their work; 2) Organisations that know that the EU can assist them but are not part of the group of organisations that enjoy the Union's financial support; 3) Organisations that enjoy the Union's financial support. This third group includes leftist and liberal civil society organisations that see the EU as a potential political and ideological partner. They believe that the Union respects the work of the civil society even if their work is in tension with the policies of the Israeli government. As the director of one Israeli NGO explained, to him the EU exemplifies “how a democratic system should behave". Not surprisingly, these organisations perceive the EU as the global defender of human rights and as an independent global power.

Most of the Israeli civil society organisations are financially dependent on foreign financial sources for their funding. The U.S. is thought to be the largest financial supporter of these organisations. However it is important to note that most of the financial support does not come directly from the U.S. government but rather from the Jewish communities in the U.S. Echoing the implicit political fault lines between American and European funders, those civil society organisations that get their funding from the EU, and especially the organisations that work on Israeli-Palestinian/Arab issues, often stress that they "feel better with funds that come from the EU rather than from rightist organisations in America".

Unlike other Israeli sectors, most of the civil society organisations do not perceive the EU as an antisemitic entity, quite the opposite; most of them report that they never faced with any antisemitic behaviour. Yet all the organisations report that

the issue is not on their agenda. In the words of one NGO senior staff member, "We have other crucial things on our agenda".

Most of the Israeli civil society organisations reported that they would like Israel to strengthen relations with the EU; some of them would even like to see Israel as a full member of the EU. According to the director general of one of the largest Israeli civil society organisations: "if Israel were to join the EU, Israel would finally be a member of a family of nations that believe in human rights and in equality; a family of nations that fight for the protection of the environment. It is not that Europe is a perfect place, but the European society is an enlightened society. Israeli EU membership will release us from our historical siege".

VI Israeli media perceptions of the EU

Although newspaper circulations are currently in decline worldwide[23], leading newspapers are believed to remain a major source of information for the general public, as well as for the country's elite and opinion leaders, playing a central role in forming foreign images and influencing the character of international relations.[24] This section is an analysis of the content of the three leading national Hebrew newspapers, *Haaretz, Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv.*[25] These three newspapers cover the Israeli ideological spectrum from left to right. While *Haaretz* targets a narrow readership mostly associated with the left, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv* target a wider readership mostly associated with the centre and right of the Israeli ideological

[23] Anderson and Weymouth 1999: 15.
[24] Schulz 2001:4.
[25] While *Haaretz* covers around 7.5 percent of Israeli readers on weekdays and 8.4 percent on weekends, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv* cover together around 56 percent of Israeli readers on weekdays and around 73 percent on weekends (Zelikovich 2008).

spectrum, and they are the most widely read newspapers in Israel.[26] The analysis spans all news items in the printed editions of these newspapers between 1 October 2007 and 31 March 2008, in which any of the names of the 27 EU Member States or the terms 'European Union' (or EU) and / or 'Europe' were mentioned in the headline or in the sub-headline, either in a value-laden context or in which it was used in a descriptive, factual manner. We then used a simple matrix to catalogue each news item according to the position it related and whether the context was positive, negative, neutral or a simple presentation of general information.[27] We also checked to see whether it concerned Israel, Jewish communities / Holocaust / antisemitism, foreign affairs, economy, security, culture, gossip or immigration. The results are summarised in Tables 5-13.

1. Understanding the media findings

***Table 5* – Press coverage of the EU in Israel's three leading newspapers (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

Month	*Haaretz*	*Yedioth Ahronoth*	*Maariv*	Total
October 2007	71	14	46	**131**

[26] *Haaretz* is commonly referred to as "a newspaper for thinking people", *Yedioth Ahronoth* is known as "the nation's newspaper" and *Maariv* is known as "everybody's newspaper".
[27] Note that some of the articles were checked twice as they both presented the reader with general information in a positive context for example.

November 2007	86	14	51	**151**
December 2007	88	15	44	**147**
January 2008	92	16	15	**123**
February 2008	84	10	28	**122**
March 2008	100	22	25	**147**
Total	**521**	**91**	**209**	**821**
Average Per Month	86.83	15.16	34.83	

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

The number of news items relating to the EU and its Member States varied greatly across Israel's three leading newspapers. *Haaretz* published 63.45 percent of all news items, while *Maariv* published 25.45 percent of the news items and *Yedioth Ahronoth* published the remaining 11.1 percent of all news items. Even though *Maariv* is considered the poorest and shortest daily, the paper published more than double the number of news items than *Yedioth Ahronoth* during the studied period. Yet *Maariv* published more than half of these news items in its *'In Brief'* column and this may constitute the main reason for the variance between the two dailies. On the other hand, the news items published in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, which does not have an *'In Brief'* column, are longer and detailed. Furthermore, the number of news items published in *Haaretz* and *Yedioth Ahronoth* per month on average during this period was more or less constant, compared with *Maariv* where there was greater variance from month to month.

In terms of the content of the news items, it is interesting to note that most of the items do not overlap in the three dailies and many news items tend to appear in only one daily. Still several events were covered by all three newspapers, including the October 2007 general elections in Poland, the French proposal to appoint former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to the presidency of the European Council, the

December 2007 visit of Col. Muammar Qadhafi to Paris, the collapse of the Italian government in January 2008 and the Spanish general elections of march 2008.

***Table 6* – Number of times the EU/Europe and EU Member States are mentioned in *Haaretz* (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	POSITION				
	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Informative**	**Total**
EU/Europe	6	1	34	43	**84**
France	9	1	54	64	**128**
Germany	4	1	28	51	**84**
UK	3	0	29	39	**71**
Italy	3	1	22	16	**42**
Poland	4	0	9	6	**19**
Spain	0	0	9	17	**26**
Netherlands	0	0	7	8	**15**
Belgium	0	0	7	5	**12**
Austria	0	0	5	2	**7**
Sweden	0	0	2	5	**7**
Cyprus	0	0	5	2	**7**
Denmark	0	0	2	5	**7**
Ireland	2	0	2	2	**6**
Greece	0	1	2	2	**5**
Other EU MS	2	2	8	16	**28**
Total	**33**	**7**	**225**	**283**	

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

***Table 7* – Coverage in *Haaretz* of EU/Europe and EU Member States by theme (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	THEME								
	Israel	**Jewish Communities, Holocaust, Antisemitism**	**External Affairs (excluding Israel)**	**Internal Affairs**	**Economy**	**Security**	**Culture**	**Immigration**	**Gossip**
EU/Europe	5	2	31	18	14	3	3	2	0

France	15	9	39	35	0	6	9	5	16
Germany	22	26	16	14	0	7	4	6	0
UK	9	7	16	28	1	1	3	0	5
Italy	0	2	1	32	1	0	4	2	0
Poland	0	4	3	9	0	2	0	0	0
Spain	3	0	3	17	0	0	2	1	0
Netherlands	1	3	0	6	0	0	0	5	0
Belgium	0	2	0	9	0	0	0	1	0
Austria	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	1
Sweden	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	0
Cyprus	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Denmark	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	0
Ireland	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	0
Greece	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	0
Other EU MS	2	4	2	8	3	0	2	3	0
Total	**61**	**61**	**112**	**195**	**19**	**21**	**27**	**34**	**22**

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

In its coverage of the EU and its Member States, *Haaretz* clearly tends to focus on internal affairs, external affairs, Israel, the European Jewish Communities, the Holocaust and European Antisemitism. In many cases *Haartez* published original articles of its Israeli journalists; in other cases the newspaper published translated articles that were originally published in the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*. The news items published by *Haaretz* tend to be longer as well as more substantive and analytical than those published by *Maariv* and *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

***Table 8* – Number of times the EU/Europe and EU Member States are mentioned in *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	**POSITION**				
	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Informative**	**Total**
EU/Europe	1	1	0	2	**4**

France	3	2	4	24	**33**
Germany	2	4	1	3	**10**
UK	1	0	1	4	**6**
Italy	0	1	5	2	**8**
Poland	2	0	0	2	**4**
Other EU MS	2	1	1	4	**8**
Total	**11**	**9**	**12**	**41**	

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

***Table 9* – Coverage of EU/Europe and EU Member States in *Yedioth Ahronoth* by theme (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	**THEME**								
	Israel	**Jewish Communities, Holocaust, Antisemitism**	**External Affairs (excluding Israel)**	**Internal Affairs**	**Economy**	**Security**	**Culture**	**Immigration**	**Gossip**
EU/Europe	4	1	3	5	1	4	0	1	0
France	3	3	7	8	0	2	2	1	14
Germany	5	4	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
UK	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Italy	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	0
Poland	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Other EU MS	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	1
Total	**14**	**12**	**11**	**27**	**1**	**8**	**2**	**4**	**17**

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

***Table 10* – Number of times the EU/Europe and EU Member States are mentioned in *Maariv* (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	**POSITION**				
	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Informative**	**Total**
EU/Europe	2	0	1	2	**5**
France	3	4	12	60	**79**
Germany	6	3	5	13	**27**
UK	2	0	8	26	**36**

Italy	0	2	1	4	**7**
Poland	1	2	1	9	**13**
Other EU MS	1	2	6	23	**32**
Total	**15**	**13**	**34**	**137**	

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

***Table 11* – Coverage of EU/Europe and EU Member States in *Maariv* by theme (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	**THEME**								
	Israel	**Jewish Communities, Holocaust, Antisemitism**	**External Affairs (excluding Israel)**	**Internal Affairs**	**Economy**	**Security**	**Culture**	**Immigration**	**Gossip**
EU/Europe	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	4	0
France	4	9	11	20	1	5	5	4	22
Germany	3	10	0	5	0	1	0	1	0
UK	0	2	1	11	1	2	5	2	5
Italy	1	0	0	5	0	1	1	0	0
Poland	1	6	1	3	0	1	0	0	0
Other EU MS	1	7	2	13	1	2	2	5	0
Total	**11**	**34**	**15**	**58**	**5**	**12**	**13**	**16**	**27**

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

The news items in *Maariv* and *Yedioth Ahronoth* are shorter and more superficial. A case in point, on 11 March 2008 *Yedioth Ahronoth* published a news item titled "Carla's Wine and Secret", which focuses on President Sarkozy's personal life, carries a large picture of Ms. Carla Bruni and details subjects related to her personal life. The last paragraph of this item refers in 2-3 sentences to actual policy statements made by the French president. Another example relates to Col. Muammar Qadhafi's visit to Paris. On 29 October 2007 *Yedioth Ahronoth* published an article titled "Paris Gets Ready: Qadhafi brings his Tent with Him". The news item focuses on the dilemma regarding the exact site where Qadhafi's tent was to be placed and refers to the political and economic implications of the visit itself only in last paragraph.

The percentage of news items mentioning the EU / Europe was much greater in *Haaretz* (16.12 percent of all news items published in *Haaretz*) compared with *Yedioth Ahronoth* (4.4 percent of all news items published in *Yedioth Ahronoth*) and *Maariv* (2.4 percent of all news items published in *Maariv*). It is important to point out that although during the period examined the Treaty of Lisbon was signed, this event attracted little attention in the three leading Israeli newspapers. While *Haaretz* published three news items on the Treaty, both *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv* published only one item each. When the dailies did pay attention to the Treaty of Lisbon, they focused either on Poland (*Haaretz* highlighted the role that Poland played during the negotiation process) or on the new function of the President of the European Council (*Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv*).

***Table 12* – Summary: Number of times the EU/Europe and EU Member States are mentioned in Israel's three leading newspapers (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	**POSITION**				
	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Informative**	**Total**
EU/Europe	9	2	35	47	**93**
France	15	7	70	148	**240**
Germany	12	8	34	67	**121**
UK	6	0	38	69	**113**
Italy	3	4	28	22	**57**
Poland	7	2	10	17	**36**

Other EU MS	7	6	56	91	**160**
Total	**59**	**29**	**271**	**461**	

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

***Table 13* – Summary: Coverage of EU/Europe and EU Member States in Israel's three leading newspapers by theme (Oct 2007-Mar 2008)**

EU/Europe/ Member State	**THEME**								
	Israel	**Jewish Communities, Holocaust, Antisemitism**	**External Affairs (excluding Israel)**	**Internal Affairs**	**Economy**	**Security**	**Culture**	**Immigration**	**Gossip**
EU/Europe	10	3	34	24	17	7	3	7	0
France	22	21	57	63	1	13	16	10	52
Germany	30	40	17	20	0	9	4	7	0
UK	10	10	17	39	2	4	8	2	12
Italy	1	2	1	44	1	1	5	3	0
Poland	2	10	4	15	0	3	0	0	0
Other EU MS	11	21	8	75	4	4	6	25	2
Total	**86**	**107**	**138**	**280**	**25**	**41**	**42**	**54**	**66**

Source: Eskenazi, Kantz and Pardo 2008

Out of the 27 EU Member States, France is mentioned the most often by the Israeli newspapers. One may think that the focus on France stems from rapprochement in French-Israeli relations. Yet while about 38 percent of the news items published in *Maariv* focused on France, a majority of them were dedicated to pure gossip regarding the personal life of President Sarkozy. This is also the case with *Yedioth Ahronoth,* in which 36 percent of the news items centered on France, with the majority of items reporting gossip stories from the French Élysée. *Haaretz,* too, focused on France more than on any other EU Member State during the said period (25 percent of the news items), but most of these items covered French foreign and domestic affairs (30.5 and 27.4 percent, respectively). Only 12.5 percent of the news items discussing France in *Harretz* were gossip items on the presidential love life.

Next to France, Germany received the most attention in Israel's three leading newspapers, with 14.74 percent of all news items referring to Germany. In *Yedioth Ahronoth* 90 percent of the news items on Germany related also to Israel, the European Jewish communities, Holocaust or European antisemitism. In *Haaretz* 57.14 percent of the news items did so, and in *Maariv* 48.15 mentioned Germany in one of these contexts.

The KAS and Pardo 2007 national survey of Israeli attitudes towards the EU and its Member States also reveals that Germany has a very favourable image among Israelis, with 67 percent of those surveyed expressing their wish to see a more dominant Germany within the EU. Not surprisingly, Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel comes out as one of the most favoured leaders in Israel, with ratings of 50 percent favourable as opposed to 9 percent unfavourable.[28]

2. Analysis of the media data

An initial assumption of this study was that the image of the Union in the Israeli media would be significantly dominated by Israeli, European Jewish Communities / antisemitism and economic themes. It was assumed that the Israeli media will frame the EU as an 'economic power', as 'a political power of weakness' and as an anti-Jewish entity. Yet the first two parts of this assumption proved to be wrong. This study finds that the majority of the EU media representations in Israel's three leading newspapers during the six months period framed the EU as 'a powerful political

[28] KAS and Pardo 2007:35.

system', sometimes even 'a power of passive aggression'[29], acting internally and externally. But the Union is framed as a marginal economic power with an anti-Jewish character.

It is interesting to point out that the EU's internal policies and Member States' domestic affairs received the largest share of media attention – 34.10 percent of all news items. The second most visible media framing of the EU was around the Union's external affairs – 16.80 percent of the sampled news items. While our initial assumption was that the Israeli media would take a neutral to negative approach towards the EU with regard to internal and external affairs, this study reveals that Israel's three leading newspapers took a neutral or positive stance on the Union. In 89.15 percent of all sampled news items the media presented the Israeli readers with a neutral position and in 7.19 percent of all sampled news items the media presented its readers with a positive position. In only 3.53 percent of the items the Israeli media clearly took a negative position.

Considering the EU's global economic role and the well developed economic relations between Israel and the EU, this study initially assumed that the Israeli media would frame the EU as an economic power. However, media coverage of the EU as an economic actor turned out to be marginal. During the examined period, only three percent of the news items focused on this theme.

As discussed above, based on the general public feeling as well as statements by political elites regarding antisemitism in the EU, an initial assumption of this study was that the image of the EU in the Israeli media would be framed by questions concerning Jewish communities, Holocaust and European antisemitism themes, and that the Union and its Member States would be perceived as anti-Jewish entities.

[29] To borrow the term from Mark Leonard; see Leonard 2005: 49-56.

Unfortunately, this assumption proved right. Our study finds that representations of the EU as an anti-Jewish and maybe even an antisemitic entity received the third largest share of media attention – 13.03 percent of all news items.

These figures are troubling, and go against a positive trend across the EU. As reports commissioned by the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)[30] on the issue of antisemitism in the EU since 2002 reveal, although the number of violent antisemitic acts in the EU grew dramatically between 2002 and 2004, it has since decreased.[31] Despite this encouraging trend, this study shows that Israel's three leading newspapers framed the Union as an entity with anti-Jewish bias.

Explaining the frequency of news items on the Holocaust and European antisemitism, some of the foreign news editors of these dailies who were interviewed for this study admitted that the decision to report extensively on antisemitic incidents in Europe and on the Holocaust was "simply because antisemitism and Holocaust sell newspapers in Israel". And indeed quiet often news items on antisemitism and Holocaust reach the front pages of the Israeli dailies. Notwithstanding this antisemitic image, the Union and its Member States were portrayed as possessing democratic values, an advocate for human rights, a leading aid donor and an active international negotiator on the Iranian nuclear crisis.

VII Conclusions

This study examines images and perceptions of the EU across a broad spectrum of the Israeli society. The study further provides empirical material on Israelis' attitudes towards the EU.

[30] Formerly known as The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC).
[31] The decrease is attributed to better police work and more effective law and order policy by the Member States.

The study shows that Israelis hold three major perceptions about the EU. First, that the Union represents a hospitable framework for Israeli accession, and therefore that Israel could and should join the EU within the foreseeable future. This Israeli perception is driven by Israelis' hopes, desires and expectations of joining the Union. Second, which might be said to be contradictory to the first perception, is that good political relations with the EU are not really essential for Israel. The third fundamental perception, which follows from the second and accentuates the tension with the first, is that anti-Israeli attitudes and geo-strategic views detrimental to the security of Israel are deeply rooted in the EU. Underlying this perception are Israeli feelings that large parts of the EU are antisemitic.

However problematic some of these perceptions and images might be, we should not lose sight of the fact that they play a critical a role in relations between Israel and the EU. If Israel wants to continue developing and upgrading its relations with the EU, however, it should do much more of an effort to understand, and in some cases even dispel, its perceptions and images of the EU. The same responsibility lies, of course, also on the European side. While this study did not examine European perceptions and images of Israel, there is no reason to think that they deserve any less attention. As François Duchêne has already cautioned us: "Israel can never be wholly foreign to […] Europeans… Jews are so much part of the fabric of European history and contemporary life that relations with Israel must, in some sense, be an extension of folk memories on both sides" (Duchêne 1988:11). And without understanding these memories, it will be difficult to address the perceptions and images on which the future of EU-Israeli relations ultimately lies.

VIII Recommendations to Israel and the EU

Based on the analysis above, the following twelve recommendations are tentatively proposed:

1. Realise the crucial importance of Euro-Israeli relations.
2. Recognise and explicate shared long-term interests.
3. Give high priority to improving Euro-Israeli relations, including investing larger resources and avoiding unessential irritating acts.
4. Understand better EU / Israel values, interests and world views.
5. Move from debate on current issues to clarification of fundamental disagreements.
6. Reduce EU / Israeli images, perceptions and issues in debate.
7. Strive to cooperate on global issues, such as ecological concerns, dangers of a clash of cultures and the revision of international law.
8. Map shared strategic interests and offer more cooperation in advancing EU-Israeli objectives.
9. Initiate shared professional discourse on long-range futures of the Middle East and on global geo-strategy as a whole.
10. Formally consult EU / Israel on major local, regional and global initiatives.
11. Strengthen the socio-cultural policy dimension of Euro-Israel relations.
12. Craft EU / Israeli grand strategy towards each other.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
PHASE TWO

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REPORT ON
Iranian perceptions of the European Union

Ruth Hanau Santini & Raffaele Mauriello

The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive Summary

The **nuclear issue** is currently the main diplomatic dossier on the table between the European Union and Iran since all policy formats devised at the end of the 1990s were abandoned in 2002 after allegations of an Iranian secret nuclear programme. This is undoubtedly the main issue elites and the press underline as having determined the ongoing diplomatic stalemate between the two sides. Tehran reads these negotiations as poisoned by a twofold misunderstanding from the West, especially the US (with the EU following suit, albeit adopting a damage limitations policy towards Washington stances). Firstly, Iranian elites deplore the conviction shared by most Western diplomats that an eventual suspension of the uranium enrichment process will induce Tehran to give up its nuclear program in exchange of comprehensive security guarantees and acknowledgment of its regional status. Secondly, Iranian elites point out that the consensus for the nuclear programme is cross-sectional and encounters no opposition in the public discourse. While the EU3 –subsequently enlarged to the 5+1 format– has tried to purport itself as an international mediator, not only is the output of this engagement subject to criticism even among European diplomats in Tehran, but due to the adoption of sanctions European countries have lost the economic and partly political leverage they could previously count on.

In terms of **public opinion**, half of Iranians hold a positive view of the EU (53%), while a quarter expresses a negative opinion. The EU score is the double of the US one and relatively higher than the degree of appreciation for France (35%) and the UK (29%). The highest scoring ones are India with 71% and China with 66% (World Public Opinion survey, January 2007). This is mainly linked to the increasing economic relations and the lack of criticisms coming from both sides on Iranian perceived domestic issues, as the nuclear issue.

The main **newspapers** refer to the EU in terms of economic power bloc, politically jelly-shaped and sometimes adopting double standards, setting however fairer balances in the international arena than the US does. The EU High Representative for the CFSP is taken quite seriously and the divergences among member states (MS) are seen as detrimental to the Union's quest for political relevance at the international level. This relevance is hoped for, particularly within the framework of an emerging multi-polar world in a possible counter-balance function vis-à-vis the US. The lack of coherence among MS influences the overall picture of the Union, scarcely seen as a unitary project. The big three (Germany, France, UK) are especially singled out as economically, politically and ideologically driving the Union. Iranians underline the difficult marriage the EU faces between economic interests and diplomacy. The EU is acknowledged in terms of economic power, however unable to translate this potential leverage in political influence on the world stage.

Civil society, analysed across the spectrum of Iranian **NGOs**, holds a much more realistic and concrete perception of the EU. NGOs expressed a real interest to improve relations with European countries and to some extent with EU institutions. This interest is, however, more directed towards activities and fields not connected with politics. A prerequisite always pointed out by the NGOs for an exchange of experiences is that this should be based on an equal footing.
Compared to other global players (China, Russia), European policies are deemed less transparent and less pragmatic, thereby being more difficult to fully understand. EU common interests are perceived as getting lost in diverging national interests on the one hand and US demands and Israeli security concerns on the other. This contrasts with Iranians' overall perception and positive evaluation of EU foreign policy general tenets.

Policy findings indicate that the EU should act more ambitiously towards Iran. In particular, the Union should distance its stances from the US and show a better understanding of the Iranian

concerns for regional security and the peculiarities of the regional landscape. Addressing real security and energy concerns, opening up the possibility to devise a new regional security framework as well as an energy agreement between the EU and Iran, could possibly unlock the stalemate.

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Iranian perceptions of the European Union

Ruth Hanau Santini and Raffaele Mauriello[1]

I. Introduction

In order to approach Iranian politics and foreign policy as well as Iranian elites' account of the outside reality, some basic concepts should be borne in mind: realism as it is understood in International Relations –the relevance of national interest, to which ideological factors are submitted to, even under the Islamic Republic–, knowledge of Iranian history, with particular reference to Western interferences and their consequences[2], awareness of the complex domestic balance of power system[3] and, finally, a culturally specific understanding of how discourse is used.
Before trying to depict the image Iranians hold of the EU, a psychologically challenging 'Other', it is useful to give a snapshot of their self-perception. There are at least three layers on which this perception is stratified.

Externally, Iranians feel their country has been repeatedly betrayed by foreign powers, especially the UK and Russia in the First and Second World Wars[4] and the UK and the US in the 1950s.

[1] The authors would like to thank the Cultural Institute of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Rome as well as the Centre for Cultural Cooperation of the Islamic Cultural & Relations Organization of Research & Education Department of Education & Cultural Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran for their support. Special thanks goes to all European diplomats and those journalists (Najmeh Bozorgmehr, Pierre Célérier, Alberto Zanconato, Morteza Geranghadr, others), particularly those at E'temād-e Melli, and Iranians we interviewed in Tehran, particularly Hossein Rassam (Political Analyst of the British Embassy in Tehran) as well as Mr. Höstrup from the Iran desk in DG Relex at the European Commission. We owe a debt of gratitude to Ahmad Salari (Programme Analyst and Head of Democratic Governance & Trade Cluster at the UNDP in Tehran) for putting us in contact with the Iranian NGOs and organising a meeting at the UN Premises in Tehran, and to Ali Ansari and Walter Posch for reading the draft of the paper, suggesting improvements and referring us to complementary studies. Our acknowledgement also to Roberto Toscano, Italian Ambassador in Teheran, for his support and to Sharon Pardo for his comments and suggestions. Last, but not least, we are particularly thankful to Leila Karami Nogurani, an Iranian doctor candidate at the University of Rome "La Sapienza", for her invaluable collaboration in the preliminary process of conducting the press survey.
The research has been conducted mainly in accordance to the specific competences of the researchers. The sources for the NGOs and the newspapers are drown almost entirely from materials in Persian. This is a *condicio sine qua non* in dealing with Iranian issues in order to overcome the possibly "acculturated" or at least mainly pro-European perceptions of English speaking Iranians and to offer a wider spectrum of the Iranian society. The language element is also a cultural one, as it becomes clear when we consider, for example, the Iranian press. (From a syntactical point of view, it is charged with: distortion; paraphrasing of direct quotes; misquote; loaded or marked vocabulary; comment on quotes; contradiction; use of the 3rd, impersonal, instead of 1st person; use the expression "he claims" when reporting someone's affirmation; refusal to use direct quotes: all these elements need to be carefully evaluated and taken into account in order to avoid getting a distorted perception of what is said or proposed by Iranian elites.) Last, but not least, in the all country there are no more than 3000 expatriates from "Western" countries, a very strong indicator of the low "presence" of European languages in the country and of the overwhelming role of Persian in Iranians' every day, cultural, economic and political life.

[2] The two major foreign interferences in Iranian domestic politics occurred with the US-UK orchestrated overthrow of prime minister Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeqh in 1953, as well as during the eight-year war between Iraq and Iran when Western powers mainly supported Saddam's regime.

[3] The parliament (*Majles*), the President and the Assembly of Experts (*Khobregān*, entirely composed of clerics, which oversees the appointment of the Supreme leader) are all selected through popular elections. This is not the case for the Supreme leader, who appoints the head of the judiciary, the head of the broadcasting system, half of the members of the Council of Guardians (the body in charge of determining the legality of laws or veto the slate of candidates for elections) and the members of the Expediency Discernment Council of the System (*Majma-'e Tashkhīs-e Maslahat-e Nezām*), an organism established in 1988 to overcome potential differences of views between the *Majles* and the Council of Guardians. The Leader is the ultimate authority in the Islamic Republic.

[4] Cfr. Mokhtari, F. (2005) 'No one will scratch my back: Iranian security perceptions in historical context', *Middle East Journal*, 59 (2).

Moreover, after the fall of the Shāh, Iran was to be contained in anti-Soviet perspective. From this half century history they derive a sense of being alone in a hostile region.

The regional perception is the second dimension, including recent examples such as the 1980 invasion by Iraq, Sunni Arab countries' isolation of Iran (with the relevant exception of Syria, the Arab state *par excellence*) and the existence of a nuclear, economically and politically strong Israel. 'Nearly every one of Iran's neighbours sit on a land that constituted Iranian territory at once', notes Mokhtāri[5], while Iran never harboured territorial aggressive ambitions as manifested by the territorial agreements it signed with many Arab countries (with Kuwait 1965, Qatar 1969, Saudi Arabia 1968, Iraq 1975). Iran shares boundaries with seven states (Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan), across the Persian/Arabian Gulf six further states (Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman), and across the Caspian Sea two further states (Russia and Kazakhstan). Iran's eastern boundary marks the edge of the Middle East, while its western border with Iraq defines the edge of the Arab world. Although it is in a sense peripheral, it provides the Middle Eastern links with the Trans-Caucasus, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent (Anderson, 2000: 216). It also shares a boundary with Turkey, one of the two other major Middle Eastern non-Arab states, a potential future member of the EU, which would further draw Iran up to European borders.

The third layer is a domestic one, revolving around the awareness of being caught among several contradictions: between different worlds –Europe, the Middle East, Asia–, with different populations –Persians, Kurds, Balouchīs, Lors, Gilaks, Māzandarānīs, Torkamans, Qhashqhaīs, Āzarīs (at least 25% of the population), Arabs–, and also economically –enjoying huge energy potential as well as highly skilled labour force but suffering from chronic corruption, mismanagement, inflation and unemployment.
Iran has more than 70 million inhabitants (20% of the overall Middle Eastern population) and a literacy rate in between 72% (Anderson, ibid) and 79.5% (Digard, Hourcade, Richard, 2007: 452). It occupies 14,5% of the Middle Eastern land. In terms of population and land, Iran could be a Middle Eastern superpower, its GDP however represents only 9% of the total Middle Eastern GDP (Anderson, ibid). Moreover, the economic sector is hardly diversified. In fact, 85% of the overall revenues (Anderson, ibid), the 89.5% of its exportations (Digard, Hourcade, Richard, 2007: 455), comes from oil and hydrocarbons. Petrol and gas represents 23.3% of Iran's GDP.

Last but not least, from a religious standpoint, Iran is almost entirely Ithnā'asharī Shia, the second major branch of Islam. It is based upon a sense of historical injustice, due to the fact that the successors of the Prophet in the political guidance of the Muslim community (*Umma*) did not follow the line of his family towards Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, and Fatima, one of his daughters, and hence have been considered illegitimate. This religious element is a powerful identity component, both in national and transnational terms. Notwithstanding the lack of exact statistical data related to the overall Shia presence in the Middle East, they are deemed to represent around 60-65% of Iraqi population, 40-50% of Lebanese population, and 70-80% of Bahrain population. Their presence is also particularly significant in Saudi Arabia (15% of the overall population), in Kuwait (30%) and in Syria (16%). It should be reminded that the Shia constitute 89% of Iran's population[6]. Indeed, according to some experts, Shia Islam, imposed on the country in the XVI century by the Safavids, should be considered 'le ciment de l'Etat iranien moderne' (Digard, Hourcade & Richard, 2007: 13).

[5] Ibid.
[6] For a more extensive analysis, see: Mauriello, R. (2006) 'Identitá sciita tra potere e democrazia', *Rivista di Intelligence*, anno II, No. 3: 38-56.

II. Background

It is important to remark that while current analysts tend to depict Iranian relations with the European Union as having reached its historical low, the rapid evolution of diplomatic events should be borne in mind. The dire events of the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) are a possible starting point as this period is often remembered by politicians and intellectuals in Iran in order to explain their outlook on Western powers.

Meaningful remarks by Saeed Jalilī (Secretary of Supreme National Security Council and Iran's top nuclear negotiator) show the extent to which Iranians never forget about their past and the role outside players have had. He stated: 'Chemical weapons have no place in our defence doctrine", referring to Iran's refusal to use chemical weapons during the eight-year war imposed by former Iraqi regime leader Saddam Hussein, though 100,000 of its citizens fell victim to such weapons. "At those times, Saddam, backed by certain European countries, applied chemical weapons against Iran. Later, the supplier countries themselves began to object. At that time we considered such weapons inhuman and unethical' (IRNA, 23/1/2008).
Thus the accusation of adopting double standards is one Iranians never fail to address, not just with respect to the US but also to the European Union.
When the Second Gulf War erupted, in summer 1991, Iran remained neutral but supported UN resolutions against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Moreover, Tehran played an important role in welcoming hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees on its soil. In 1995, however, just a few years later, this political and humanitarian engagement was already a souvenir of the past, as new accusations of sponsoring terrorism and rumours of a hidden nuclear weapons programme triggered an US economic embargo.

Khātamī's foreign policy (1997-2005)

In May 1997, a previously little known reformist cleric[7], *Hujjat al-Islam*[8] *Sayyed*[9] Mohammad Khātamī, was elected as President. Among his foreign policy goals was improving strained relations with the EU, especially after the 1997 Mykonos verdict. In 1992, Kurdish opposition's members were killed in a Berlin's restaurant (Mykonos restaurant). In 1997, the defendants (an Iranian and three Lebanese) were found guilty. The judge, Frithjof Kubsch, concluded that Iranian senior clerics were involved and that the Supreme National Security Council, directed by Rafsanjānī, was responsible for planning the assassination, while the mission was initiated by the Intelligence

[7] Khātamī had, however, been Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance from 1982 to 1993; a job hereafter gone to Ali Lārijānī. Cfr. Hiro, Dilip (2001) *Neighbors, not Friends: Iraq and Iran After the Gulf Wars*, London: Routledge: 198-9.

[8] There is much debate among the scholars about the nature and characteristics of the Shia modern "clerical" hierarchy and on the suitability of considering it a proper clergy, given the unofficial role Muslim Shia scholars (*'ulamā'* or *mullāh*) have had in the overall history of Islamic Civilization, at least until the advent of the Safavids and, to a far greater extent and with a new ideological framework, until the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the last decades of the last century. Simplifying in order to offer a viable framework for reference, we can say that: *Hujjat al-Islam* is a respectful title used to indicate a cleric with a medium rang in the clerical hierarchy that has a specific knowledge in one of the different branches of the Islamic science but has still not reached the level of *mujtahed/Ayatullah*, a scholar with a strong knowledge of the Islamic law capable of exercising *ijtihād* (independent interpretation of the Islamic law) and provide *fatwā*s (Islamic law independent legal opinions). The higher title of the Shi'a informal clerical hierarchy is *Marja' Taqhlid* (source of emulation) and is used to refer to a cleric who is qualified to be followed in all points of religious practice and law by the generality of Shi'as. The attribution of these titles is somehow controversial. A case in point is Khāmeneī. The Iranian media label him as *Ayatollah*. However, most of the highest Shia clerics worldwide, and partly even in Iran, refer to him "simply" as *Hujjat al-Islam* (based on the consideration that he is an expert of Islamic philosophy and not of Islamic law). This element has important religiously legal implications, as a *Hujjat al-Islam* does not have, traditionally, the competence to issue *fatwā*s. A similar case apply to Rafsanjānī.

[9] Title used to indicate the descendants of the Prophet Mohammad, either cleric or not. *Sayyed* clerics wear a black turban, while non-*sayyed* clerics wear a white one.

Section of the President's Office[10]. This implied that the Supreme leader *Ayatollah Sayyed* Ali Khāmeneī, President *Ayatollah* Ali Akbar Hāshemī Rafsanjānī, the then Intelligence minister Ali Fallāhiyān and Foreign minister Ali Akbar Velāyatī were involved. As a result, all EU members recalled their ambassadors from Tehran. After extensive negotiations with Khāmeneī, Khātamī asked European ambassadors to come back, which they did in November 1997. In February 1998, the EU suspended its ban on ministerial contacts with Iran and called for a new 'constructive dialogue', replacing the previous 'critical' one. After Iran signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in October 1997, eight European foreign ministers welcomed new political developments. The way was open to reciprocal diplomatic visits. The first to pay homage to the Islamic Republic was Italian prime minister Romano Prodi, in July 1998. The Euro-American agreement also facilitated things (17 May 1999), stipulating that the US would not impose sanctions on French oil firm TOTAL, which had signed a $2 billion petroleum exploration deal with Iran. Khātamī made further progress when in September 1998 he told the UN that his government would not carry out Khomeinī 1989's *fatwā* (Islamic law independent legal opinion) concerning Salmān Rushdie. This paved the way for a substantial warming of relations with the UK until the exchange of ambassadors, in July 1999. In early March 1999, Khātamī paid visit to Italy, the first by an Iranian head of state since 1979. Just before that, Iran had reached agreement with Italian ENI and French Elf-Aquitaine regarding new investments in the Iranian oil sector amounting to $1 billion (Buchta, 2000: 130). Khātamī also visited France, in August 1999, where he assured that Iran would increase economic cooperation with Europe. In March 2000, for the first time since 1991, a German foreign minister, Joshka Fischer, visited Iran (Buchta, 2000).

Institutionally, following the election of Mr. Khātamī, in 1998 the EU established a renewed *Comprehensive Dialogue* in the form of semi-annual troika meetings, substituting the *Critical Dialogue* launched in 1993. The political basket intended to deal with regional issues, including the Middle East peace process, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, human rights and the fight against terrorism. The EU also decided to explore possibilities for co-operation with Iran in the areas of energy, trade, investment, refugees and drugs control. In that respect, a *High-level Working Group on Energy and Transport* was established in 1999. After the Iranian parliamentary elections in February 2000, the European Council of Ministers mandated the Commission to prepare a proposal on how to develop closer relations with Iran. In November 2000, a newly created *High-level Working Group on Trade and Investment* met for the first time[11]. Since 2003, with the nuclear issue and the ongoing diplomatic stalemate, all negotiations on other issue areas have been suspended. On 7 February 2001, the Commission adopted a Communication -approved by the Council in May 2001- setting out the perspectives and conditions for developing closer relations with Iran having as one objective the conclusion of a Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA). The TCA, however, was never signed.

Despite the West's great expectations of Khātamī, two factors were seriously overlooked. First, he was far from free in his foreign policy room for manoeuvre, the main domestic constraint being represented by a series of policy tenets held by *Ayatollah Sayyed* Khomeinī during his ten years-Guide. In its foreign policy practice, Khomeinī adopted and abided by a 'neither East nor West' approach[12]. Secondly, in spite of his conciliating gestures towards both the EU and the US, it was in the region and towards Asia that the Islamic Republic under Khātamī reinforced its international position.

This was facilitated by Khātamī's predecessor, Hāshemī Rafsanjānī, who had paved the way for warmer relations with Russia and China. Khātamī sought to redress the balance on the Western

[10] Cfr. Hiro, Dilip (2001) *Neighbors, not Friends*: 218-222.
[11] Cfr. http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iran/intro/index.htm.
[12] Cfr. Amuzegar, J. (2006) 'Khatami's legacy: dashed hopes', *Middle East Journal*, 60 (1): 57-74.

side, especially through well-calculated openings to the US. In June 1998, they were somehow reciprocated by President Clinton and Secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

Often remembered in the West for his proposal to the UN to inaugurate a year devoted to 'cultural dialogue among civilizations' –a motto re-used by the 5+1 in their recent "Proposal to Iran", on 14 June 2008– and similar well-intended gestures, Khātamī failed to build on the 'constructive dialogue' with the European Union which got back to 'critical dialogue' during his presidency, in April 2001. Even as far as the nuclear issue was concerned, the reformist leader placed great importance over Iran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes and forcefully resisted US-EU demands and offers, an opinion he reiterated after the end of his presidency[13].
Despite the missed opportunities with the US and the EU, the balance sheet of Khātamī's foreign policy is far from negligible: while at the beginning of his tenure only Syria was a staunch ally of the Islamic Republic, by the end of his two terms in office the list included North Korea, Venezuela and Cuba, in addition to Russia and China. Especially with Russia and China, relations have intensified under Ahmadīnejād's Presidency, economically and politically. Both countries have delayed two UNSC resolutions threatening to use their veto to water down harsh measures against the Iranian regime.

Ahmadīnejād (2005-till now)
After two terms served by Khātamī and the 'dashed hopes' linked to his Presidency, in the Presidential elections of June 2005, it was the least known candidate among the seven allowed to run by the Council of Guardians to unexpectedly win. An engineer and laic[14], Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadīnejād, only stood out as former hard-liner governor of a fourth-tier province and former mayor of Tehran.
Beyond the superficial image of a drastic change in recent Iranian foreign policy, a number of important continuities have characterized its history. First of all, following the *Rahbar*'s (the Leader of the Islamic Revolution) tripartite principles, the country's foreign policy is based on 'dignity, rationality and national interest'. Over time, the latter dimension has imposed itself as the foremost one to be fulfilled. According to David Menashri, some historical facts exemplify this attitude: in 1991 Iran presumably chose not to support the Shias uprising in southern Iraq against Saddam Hussein, fearing that a probable failure would have negatively impacted on Iraqi-Iranian relations. Moreover, where Tehran could have easily extended its ideological influence, as among Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union, national economic interests gained the upper hand over ideological ones (2005: 156).

Nuclear issue
The nuclear issue is the first dimension around which EU-Iranian relations have revolved, at least in the last six years.
Iran's nuclear program began in the mid-1970s thanks to Western assistance (West Germany, France and the US). At that time, Iran was considered an anti-Soviet bastion in the Middle East[15].
In the aftermath of the Islamic revolution (1979) and the hostage crisis (when 52 American diplomats were kept hostages in the US Embassy in Tehran for 444 days), the US broke off diplomatic and economic relations, including nuclear cooperation, with the Islamic Republic. Tehran found alternative energy partners: from 1995, Russia assisted Iran with the completion of a

[13] Cfr. An interview Al-Hayat on 19/06/06, http://english.daralhayat.com/Spec/06-2006/Article-20060619-ec7edee9-c0a8-10ed-0101-7643fba8d270/story.html.
[14] We use the term 'laic' in the meaning intended by the Roman Catholic Church of "all the people not included among the clergy".
[15] Cfr. El-Kawas, M. A. (2005) 'Iran' s nuclear controversy: prospects for a diplomatic solution', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 16 (4): 20-41.

nuclear reactor at the Gulf port of Boushehr, which had been built initially with the help of West Germany in the 1970s.
The diplomatic crisis between Iran and the international community originated over the revelation, in 2002, that Tehran had had a secret nuclear program for over 18 years in violation of its Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations[16]. The basic trade-off in the NPT is that countries are allowed to acquire a vast range of dangerous capabilities as long as they openly acknowledge them. The international community accused Iran's uranium enrichment programme to be intended for the development of nuclear weapons and not for energy-related purposes, in other words aiming at the development of a military nuclear programme instead of a civilian one. Launched in December 2002, the negotiations over a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU were suspended in 2003, because of lack of progress in several areas, ranging from terrorism and human rights to the Arab-Israeli conflict and WMD.

In the second half of 2003, when Italy was at the helm of the European Presidency, Great Britain, Germany and France formed an informal *Directoire* in charge of diplomatic negotiations with Tehran. To defuse imminent threats from the US, in a concerted EU-UN effort, in mid-December 2003, Iran signed an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog, accepting more intrusive inspections to all its nuclear installations, 'anytime', 'anywhere'[17]. Despite abiding by the NPT, the fear was that the country was using the cover provided by the right to develop civilian nuclear programme under international supervision to get closer to the nuclear threshold.

In June 2004, the Union expressed its desire to cooperate more fully with Iran, making clear its 'concerns': the nuclear programme, the existence of a terrorist threat, the lack of respect for human rights and the opposition of Iran to any step in the direction of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In November 2004, Iran agreed in Paris to freeze its entire uranium enrichment program until a long-term agreement was reached[18]. The EU was linking prospects for future EU-Iranian cooperation to the country's willingness to maintain the suspension[19]. Subsequently, however, IAEA inspectors were not granted access to Natanz nuclear facilities. Since 2005, Iran has occasionally refused entry to IAEA inspectors visiting some of its nuclear facilities, and more importantly, in August 2005 Ahmadīnejād's government refused a European offer and terminated the suspension.

In early 2006, the negotiating troika was enlarged, thanks to Italian and other small member states' pressures[20], to the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. Shortly after, the US, Russia and China joined in another move aimed at gaining more international legitimacy for the *ad hoc* negotiating team. As a consequence, the format changed from the EU3 to the EU3+3 or UN Permanent 5+1 (Germany). In mid-June 2006, the EU3+3 formulated a proposal in Vienna including trade concessions and assistance with Iran's civilian nuclear program in exchange of which Tehran would stop the enrichment process of uranium.

At the end of the year, the Iranian leadership rejected the Vienna proposal. The EU stigmatized this move and started considering sanctions within the UN framework. Then, the 23rd December 2006, the UN passed unanimously a resolution asking Tehran to stop its nuclear activities (UNSC

[16] This revelation was made public by an exile group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran ("Group: Iran's Nuke Program Growing", *New York Times*, 15/8/2002).
[17] Cfr. Everts, S. 'The EU and Iran: how to make conditional engagement work', *CER Policy brief*, 19/12/2003.
[18] Cfr. IAEA, 'Iran-EU Agreement on Nuclear Program' information circular no. 637, 26 November 2004, available at: http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/2004/infcirc637.pdf.
[19] Cfr. Posch, W. (2006) 'Dialogue with Iran: the EU way out of the impasse', *EUISS Newsletter*, no. 19.
[20] Interviews with officials from DG Mediterranean and Middle East, Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, May 2007; Italian and German Embassies, Tehran, February 2008.

resolution 1737), simultaneously adopting the first sanctions, which were then strengthened further a few months later (UNSC Resolution 1747, 24/3/2007, submitted by France, Germany and the UK). 'In the absence of action by Iran to meet its obligations, the European Council supports work in the Security Council towards the adoption of measures under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter' (Council Presidency Conclusion, 14-15 December 2006).
Finally, sanctions were reinforced with UNSC Resolution 1803 in March 2008[21], calling for a financial freeze of individuals assets deemed to be involved in the nuclear programme as well as increasing vigilance over two Iranian banks found to be connected to the proliferation efforts. All members of the Security Council, except Indonesia, voted in favour of the new Resolution, with the Iranian spokesperson accusing the international community of acting outside international law.

The stalemate over nuclear negotiations is still going on. In the words of a European ambassador in Tehran this is due to a double misunderstanding: one the one end, the US-EU belief that pushing for a suspension will induce Tehran to sit at the negotiating table for good, abandoning the idea of enriching uranium, and, on the other, Western diplomats' under-estimation of the popularity of the nuclear programme in Iran. As a matter of fact, the nuclear programme enjoys a very large consensus both among political elites and public opinion, as can be seen in the "press" and "opinion polls" sections. Examples of this stance can be found among political elites: reformist Mohājerānī argued that 'because the enemy (Israel) has nuclear facilities, the Muslim states should be equipped with the same capacity' (in Clawson and Rubin, 2005: 143). The most famous remark was probably the one by Rafsanjānī in 2001: 'If one day, the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialists' strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, it will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality' (ibid).
Related to the first remark, the EU has activated its diplomatic force in order to avoid US unilateral military strikes against the Islamic Republic, but it has accepted US demands of a suspension of uranium enrichment as a pre-condition for talks with Tehran, which in Washington is considered a *sine die* suspension, while for Tehran any suspension is time-bound[22].

Beyond the apparently cohesive EU threat assessment of a nuclear Iran, however, national perceptions show some differences, and this is reflected to some extent in how Iranians evaluate single member states and the EU as a whole. Answering to the question over whether a nuclear Iran is a threat *per se* or this depends from the nature of the political regime, European diplomats agree on the bottom-line of their common approach, but while Germany stresses the existential need to preserve Israeli security and a balanced regional landscape, the UK are more concerned of the consequences of failures in non-proliferation in the Middle East and consider Iran as a negative example in the region[23]. To this, it can be briefly added what Europeans think of a nuclear Iran: for 53% of the public, 36% of MEPs, 17% of EU officials, it would be a direct threat to European security. The majority think this would spark a regional nuclear arms race: 71% of the public, 74% of parliamentarians and 65% of officials. A great majority of the public thinks Iran will supply NW to terrorists (71%), while only 51% of MEPs and 31% of officials agree. Lastly, while for 72% of Commission and Council officials Iran will use NW only for defensive purposes, only half of the public and MEPs hold the same view[24].

[21] Cfr. http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9268.doc.htm.
[22] Interview, Italian Embassy, Tehran, February 2008.
[23] Interview, English Permanent Representation, Brussels, May 2007.
[24] Cfr. *European Elite Survey, key findings 2007*, CIRCaP, Centre for the Study of Political Change, University of Siena, supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin, Italy.

III. Analysis

1. Elites

EU strengths	• Economic power • democratic institutions • human rights • efficient regional organization • success case of supra-national integration;
EU weaknesses	• ethnic and national heterogeneity;
EU foreign policy	• lack of foreign policy independence (see economic sanctions) • reliance on soft power • Old Europe vs. New Europe • unpredictable foreign policy especially towards developing countries • weak democracy promotion agenda vis-à-vis national economic interests;
EU-Iranian relations	• nuclear issue • economic relations • lack of EU acknowledgement of Iran's role in Asia • aggressive Iranian • issue of Lebanon • Israeli-Palestinian conflict • acknowledgement of good relations, especially economic, with only some EU countries (France, Germany and Italy);
Future EU-Iran relations	• will improve if the US-Iranian relation will improve;
Other global players	• UN as a tool used by others • Russia as important player for its global re-balancing act but not trustworthy • East Asia increasingly important economically.

Table summing up opinions from several members of political and intellectual elite (Interviews conducted from February to May 2008 in Tehran).

Following mainstream accounts of how the Iranian political spectrum is structured[25], three main factions can be identified: the traditionalist conservatives (*mohāfezeh-kārān*), the reformers (or liberal reformists), and the radicals (or neoconservatives). Each faction has its own agenda and foreign policy preferences. However, alliances are characterized by a considerable degree of fluidity according to the issues at stake.

Traditional conservatives are partly represented by clerics (based in Qhom, Tehran or Mashhad) and Western-educated technocrats[26], and are closely associated to former President of the Republic and current head of the Expediency Council and the Assembly of Experts Hāshemī Rafsanjānī. To the same political field belongs also the Association of Militant Clergy, dominant in the Guardian Council, which functions in practice as a parliamentary upper house. Another affiliated organization is the Servants of Construction (*Kārgozārān-e sāzandegī*), composed of powerful regime bureaucratic insiders. Their electorate is composed by *bāzārī*s, merchants, lower middle classes and upper rich middle classes. Despite the rise of the "New Right", traditional conservatives occupy the most important unelected offices that are at the centre of the state system of the Islamic Republic.

From the end of the 1980s, a number of clerics started advocating a more pragmatic and moderate approach to domestic and foreign policy. They broke off from the Association of Militant Clergy and created the Society for Militant Clerics. The most common themes in the discourse of the clerical reformists concerning the EU can be summarized by the words of the *Marja' Taqhlīd Ayatollah* Montazerī, one of the most important spiritual "Guides" of the reformist clerics. In an

[25] This classification and the structure for this paragraph are drawn from Kamrava, M. (2007) 'Iranian national-security debates: factionalism and lost opportunities', *Middle East Policy*, 14 (2) and Ehteshami, A, Zweiri, M, (2007) *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, London: I.B. Tauris.

[26] Among the 23-member cabinet proposed by Rafsanjānī in 1993 there were eight PhDs and nine engineers. Moreover, among the 22 ministers of his previous cabinet, in 1989, eight had degrees from American universities. In this cabinet there were "only" four clerics, but all of them held relevant seats, such as the Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry, held by Mohammad Khātamī. Cfr. Hiro, Dilip (2001) *Neighbors, not Friends*: 25, 205.

official answer he gave to a small set of questions we submitted, he stated: 'Unfortunately the European Union usually follows the diplomacy of America in the world and also vis-à-vis Iran and its diplomacy is not independent from that of America. On the other hand, the rights of Muslim religious minorities fail to be respected in several European countries; and many troubles have been caused to women in regard to wearing their *hijāb* (veil). It's evident that such kind of attitude is in contradiction with their slogans on freedom and human rights. Therefore, if the EU wants to implement its humanitarian principles, it should first adopt an independent diplomacy and secondly it should try to fulfil its slogans. If the mottos and propagandas are different from reality, their effect would be contrary to what is expected'.
In 1997, these clerics were identified as 'reformists'. Capitalizing on a long tradition of 'nationalist-religious' activism, reformists could count on large segments of the middle classes, in addition to the National Participation Party and the Islamic Revolution *Mojāhedīn*, made up of civil servants, which became supporters of the movement. They are mainly represented by intellectuals[27].

The third faction is largely non-clerical and gathers diehard revolutionaries. It is dominated by security and military actors, many of whom volunteered in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the *Basīj* forces at the time of the Iraq-Iran war. These 'radicals' believe in the original slogans of the Islamic revolution: supporting the disadvantaged, fighting moral and economic corruption and defending the Islamic Republic against its enemies. Their organizational force remains partly under-developed and seems to be dependent on the resources and state institutions linked to the Traditional conservatives.

While in domestic politics the cleavage between conservative and reformists is considerable, in foreign affairs the main opposition is between these two camps and the radicals, with one notable exception, namely the consensus over Hezbollah, perceived as a legitimate organization defending the Lebanese Shias from Israeli attacks. Vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the reformist-conservative axes has never called for the destruction of the Jewish state and some of its most well-known representatives have gone so far as to *de facto* recognizing Israel's existence and call for a 'mutually satisfactory' resolution to the conflict '(foreign minister Ali Akbar Velāyatī in the early 1990s).

Those reformists we could interview expressed dissatisfaction and frustration for the lost opportunities during the Khātamī era, arguing that the EU acted in an economic-oriented way, trumping its democratization agenda and showing a double standard approach in its foreign policy[28]. A former Foreign Minister deputy added that this is even more so as Europe represents "the Other" through which Iranians look at the world, as an Iranian word for "foreign" –particularly used during the Shāh period, "*farangi*"– indicates, namely "European". Perceptions differ slightly among conservatives, as exemplified by declarations of Morteza Geranghadr, Head of International Relations Department of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). In an interview he gave to us in his office in Tehran, Geranghadr argued that 'there is mutual understanding between Iran and the EU', despite short-term changes in the European political landscape (as with the change from French President Chirac to Sarkozy). The EU continent is viewed strategically as bridge-builder between the US and Iran, especially in terms of building confidence. Reformists we talked to seemed to hold a bleaker vision of Europe, as mentioned above, and of EU-Iran relations. A social sciences professor in Tehran argued that the Iranian regime has a twofold approach to Europe:

[27] Among the 22 cabinet members Khātamī proposed to the Parliament, in 1997, there were at least seven PhDs and eight engineers; moreover, there were only three clerics and all of them had advanced theological degrees.
[28] Interview with some professors from the University of Tehran and a couple of former deputies in the reformist camp, Tehran, February 2008.

fostering intra-EU divisions and using Europe in order to slow down potentially harmful US initiatives against Tehran[29].

When not addressed in terms of economic power or interest-oriented, the EU is depicted as an ideological power with whom it is difficult to deal with. According to this view, the Union is characterized by an ethnocentric attitude, internally, and, outside, failing to exert an international leverage comparable to the American one.
Vis-à-vis relations with the West in general, reformists consider their legacy a constructive one, epitomized by the improvement of the country's relations with the EU, the UN and the relative *détente* with the US[30].

The stance taken by the radicals could not differ more: what they contest is the US regional hegemony, which should be supplanted by Iran's regional hegemony, as General Rahim-Safavī, commander of the IRGC, argued in a speech in February 2007[31]. In *Resālat*, one of the leading state-linked newspaper, a commentator declared that 'The global power and influence of Islamic Republic of Iran have frightened the US' (4 February 2007). For them, Iran is the centre of Islamic power in the Middle East. It logically follows that stabilization efforts in Iraq should, for the radicals, be sustained by Iran alone, the greater stakeholder in the neighbour's future, while, for the conservative-reformist camp, it should be an alliance as inclusive as possible.

Lastly, in terms of the nuclear issue, the two camps agree that Iran has the right to master nuclear technology. However, regarding the methods and price to be paid to obtain it, the approaches differ. Reformists were willing to slow down the enrichment process in order to start comprehensive negotiations with the international community, while, for the radicals, the EU and the IAEA 'act at the behest of the US and are determined to prevent Iran's progress and advancement'[32].

The mixed signals coming from the political system as a whole with regard to specific national security issues have to do with the complex institutional architecture, centred around multiple poles often competing for influence. According to some analysts, this partly responded to domestic demands for finding an Islamic viable conception of democracy from an institutional point of view. In part, it is possible that it was 'deliberate constitutional engineering' elaborated by Supreme leader Khomeinī, aiming at making it almost impossible for external powers to influence Iranian policy-making[33]. If these were the intentions of the founding father of the Islamic Republic, for sure they have produced a certain outcome: never have the signals coming from Tehran been so difficult to decipher as today, both for Iranians and for foreign audiences. From an historical point of view, however, the loose connections between institutional bodies and the architectural structure of the Constitution represent and respond most probably to the long-established organizational experience of the *hawza 'ilmiyya* (Islamic study circles) and, more recently, the *marja'iyya*, the main organizational references for the Shia "clerics"; a clear example of this system being represented by the case of *Marja' Taqhlīd Ayatollah Sayyed* Sistānī's power-structure in Iraq.

2. Public Opinion

[29] Interview with a former deputy foreign minister in the 1980s and 1990s, Tehran, February 2008.
[30] Declaration by Mohsen Aminzādeh, former deputy foreign minister under the Khātamī administration: 'Iranian foreign policy', available at: http://1384.gooya.com/politics/archives/2006/04/046129print.php.
[31] Cfr. *Iran*, No. 3578, 22 February 2007. Or, to find similar quotes, see: *Resālat* No. 6091, 22 February 2007, or *Resālat*, No. 6076, 4 February 2007.
[32] Cfr. *Hayāt-e No Ejtemaī*, No. 1139, 22 February 2007.
[33]Cfr. Sadjapour, K. (2007) 'Guidelines for approaching Iran", *Policy Outlook*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

In a February 2006 poll, conducted by World Public Opinion, PIPA and Globescan for the BBC on global views of the main world powers[34], one can extrapolate Iranian views of the EU (as a whole and looking specifically at France and Great Britain), US, China, India, Russia and Japan.

IRANIAN VIEWS	Positive	negative
India	71%	21%
China	66%	25%
Japan	57%	33%
Europe	53%	36%
Russia	50%	44%
France	35%	58%
United Kingdom	29%	66%
United Sates	26%	65%

Table 1. World Public Opinion, PIPA and Globescan, 2006.

A specific poll for Iran was conducted in January 2007 by World Public Opinion with reportedly face-to-face interviews, nationwide with 1000 respondents. According to this survey[35] almost half of Iranians shared a positive view of **Europe** and expressed the wish the EU will become stronger vis-à-vis the US (the percentage decreased from 53% in the 2005 BBC/Globescan poll to 48%). However, a fourth of the interviewees said they did not have a positive image of Europe. It is important to stress that the EU as a whole scored higher than individual member states, such as France, of which 42% had a positive image, and the UK, which enjoyed positive responses only among 21% of the interviewees, with a stronger 60% holding negative opinions.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD

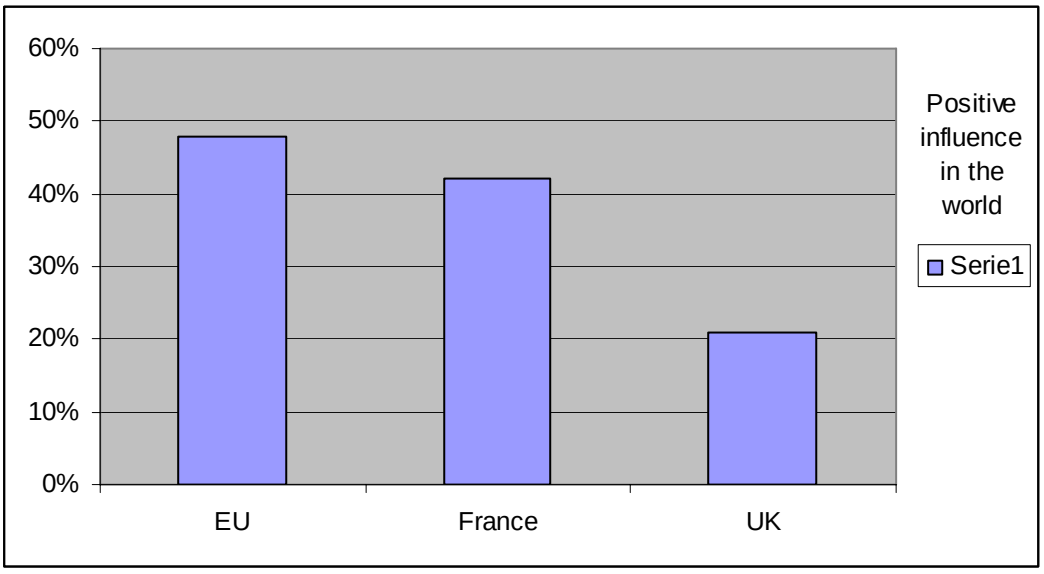


Table 2. World Public Opinion, 2007.

[34] Cfr. http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/168.php?nid=&id=&pnt=168&lb=hmpg1.
[35] Survey conducted by World Public Opinion, in partnership with Search For Common Ground and US Institute of Peace, Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland, 2007: 42. Available at: www.worldpublicopinion.org.

One of the issues at stake in Iranian-EU relations is the **nuclear dossier**. The nuclear issue is often portrayed in the West as being the catchword by Iranian extremist policymakers to stir controversy, assert the country's great regional power status and latently provoke Israel's security. Looking at what Iranians think produces a slightly more nuanced picture: 90% of the population support the nuclear program, mainly for energy needs (76%), increasing technical expertise (71%), increasing the country's great power status (61%) and only half of the respondents for deterrence vis-à-vis regional countries. The most significant carrot (for 40% of the people) for giving up the nuclear program is getting entry into the WTO (vis-à-vis lifting the embargo, granting exchange of nuclear technology, providing enriched uranium, promising not to attack, repealing US regime change policy). 70% are aware of what the NPT is about, and 66% are in favour, while 10% consider it a 'bad idea'. Surprisingly, however, 70% declare themselves in favour of a WMD-free Middle East, including obviously Israel. Reading the support for the development of the nuclear programme in this light, then, would change the overall picture with more a reactive posture by Iranians vis-à-vis potential threats coming from Israel than potentially aggressive aims.

REASONS FOR ACQUIRING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

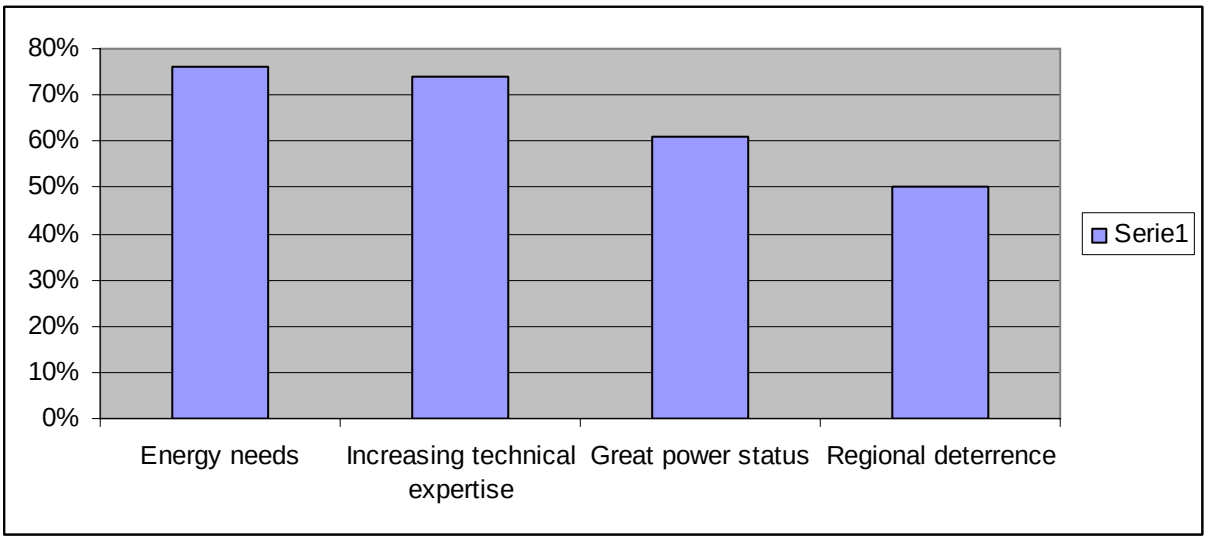


Table 3. World Public Opinion, 2007.

The image of the UN: The IAEA enjoys a positive image among 54% of the respondents, while a negative one for 10%. While more than the majority think the UN acts as a positive force worldwide, the percentage decreased from 63% to 58% between December 2005 and December 2006. Also, quite surprisingly, 70% wish that the UN will become a more powerful actor in world affairs, and almost the same percentage (69%) think that a military action is legally more justified with a UN backing.

Among regional players, the most appreciated are Hezbollah (75%) and the Palestinians (73%), then Hamas (56%) and Syria (61%). Lastly, half of the respondents considered China and its economic growth not at all a threat, more than half deemed India a positive influence on global affairs (60%, however down from 71% in 2005) and only 44% said the same for Russia (down from 50% in the 2005 BBC poll).

3. Civil society

There are mainly two understandings of civil society[36] (*jame'ye madanī*) in the country: the first identifies civil society as an arena of freedom and autonomy outside the state, the second identifies

[36] However, the concept's application to Middle Eastern realities is still object of debate. See: Bellin, E. (1994) 'Civil Society: Effective Tool for Analysis of Middle East Politics?', *Political Science and Politics*, 27 (3): 509-510, in favour

the capitalist economy as only one of many spheres in complex post-modern societies (Khiabani, in Semati, 2008: 18). In Iran it is the former understanding that has gained some popularity.
The reform movement took over after Khomeinī's death, a period named "The Second Republic" by Ehteshāmi (1995: 27). The reformist camp drew its main force from the embittered Iranian bourgeoisie, battered and bruised for much of the revolutionary period. After the sharp decline of standards of living between 1979 and 1996, civil society became a Trojan horse for the bourgeoisie to begin to argue for de-regulation, political and economic liberalization and privatization. While many gathered under this umbrella, promoted by Khātamī in 1997, different groups understood different things meaning civil society (Khiabani in Semati, 2008: 20). Defining what constitutes civil society in Iran is a hard challenge, as many bodies and organizations are illegal, while others cross the thin line of what is public and what is private. For example, should *bonyād*s[37], very important religious foundations carrying out partly typically NGO activities but enjoying economic and political ties with political institutions, be considered as part of civil society? Was the answer to be a positive one, it should be stressed that these foundations are allocated 58% of the state budget[38]. One of them, the Imam Reza Foundation in Mashhad, with an estimated 15.000 employees, is the larger employer of its province, Khorāsān, and has an estimated budget of $130 million per year (Buchta, 2000: 76).
Given the difficulties in defining what constitutes the Iranian civil society as compared to the understandings offered in the mainstream literature, we focused our attention on the main clearly definable element of this kind in Iran: NGOs[39]. Our research is mainly based on a meeting we organised at the UNDP premises in Tehran, where we gathered with a NGOs Coordination Committee, which counts most Iranian NGOs, as well as the members of nine of its member organizations, three based in Tehran, six from different Iranian provinces (see Annex I).

NGOs Vision of the European Union

Nature of the EU	• economic power bloc; • Realpolitik actor;
EU attractive points for Iran	• important economic relations; • transfer of knowledge hardly replaceable with third countries;
EU Shortcomings	• not autonomous foreign policy actor but following the US agenda; • internally divided; • fails to effectively promote democracy in the Middle East;
EU Iranian policy	• the EU falls prey of negative biases concerning Iran; • the EU fails to acknowledge Iran's role in the region;
Desired future developments	• upgrade institutional relations; • develop stronger collaboration on cultural projects;

of using the concept for Middle Eastern societies as a tool to combat authoritarian regimes; Norton, A. R. (ed.) (1995) *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, focusing on Islamist societies as key elements of otherwise passive civil societies etc.

[37] For an analysis of the *bonyāds*, see Chapter 8, 'A State within a State: The Revolutionary Foundations', in Buchta, W. (2000) *Who Rules Iran?*, pp. 73-77; Amirahmadi, H. (1996) 'Bunyad', in J. L. Esposito, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 234-237; 'Bonyad-e Shahid', (1987) in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. II, pp. 360-361; 'Astan-e Qhods-e Razavi, in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, pp. 826-837.

[38] *Salam*, August 17, 1994, p. 3.

[39] It appears that only one study of this kind has been conducted so far, namely a "Technical Paper" published by the United Development Programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in 2000: *Non-governmental Organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Situation Analysis*. However, according to the UNDP office in Tehran and to the NGOs Coordinating Committee, this report, based on an on-the-field research carried out in the early 1998, is currently out of date in terms of the specific NGOs it takes into account (a large percentage of them do not exist anymore) and of the overall social, political and economic set-up of the Islamic Republic (the report was carried out during the first year of the first term of Khātamī's presidency).

There is very much interest by the Iranian NGOs to improve their relations with the NGOs in **Europe**, and to a certain extent with EU institutions. This interest seems to be more directed towards activities and fields not connected with economy and politics. In their opinion, the Iranian government should clear the path for cooperation while the EU should try to step up cultural and political relations. So it would be productive if the NGOs of Europe would put steps in getting closer to NGOs in Iran.
Asked if there has been any change in the status of NGOs comparing the Khātamī's presidential mandates and the first Ahmadīnejād's mandate, NGOs underlined that there have been many quantitative and qualitative changes.
Quantitatively, there has been an increase or decrease in the number of NGOs depending on their field of activity. During Khātamī's period the number of environmental NGOs decreased but there was a boom among socially and culturally active NGOs. Starting from Khātamī's mid-term, the social participation to the activities carried out by NGOs sharply decreased. This was most probably linked to Khātamī's lack of capacity to follow words (the well advertised idea to develop a strong civil society) with deeds.
However, our interviews findings suggest that starting from Khātamī's Presidency, NGOs have increased their activities. Now, they enjoy relations with foreign countries, especially institutions such as the UN (UNDP). Under Khātamī's presidency the relations between NGOs and the government significantly improved, but they deteriorated after the end of his second term of Presidency and the election of Ahmadīnejād.
Qualitative aspects are a decrease in NGOs contact with each other and their relation with the government. But in their opinion, the decrease is not related to the acts of the government but is due to unspecified problems occurred within the organizations themselves.
According to some NGOs, a positive role is played by the Asian Parliament Assembly (APA), whose permanent base is in Iran, and by its Secretary General, Dr. Mohammad-Hādi Nejād-Hosseinyān, who is said to have a good knowledge of the EU.

4. Press

<u>The nature and role of the press in Iran</u>
In Iran the press is considered an agent of modernization, which is a top-down and by definition authoritarian process. In other words, the state has played a dominant role. However, the press is also is the main tool for political opposition and political tendencies are represented by newspapers. The picture is more blurred than one could imagine. Not only are the main conservative newspapers heavily subsidized by the government, but even some of the oppositional press is somehow financially linked to it.
The Iranian press is one of the most vibrant in the region, only Turkey has more dailies than Iran. Moreover, in 2005, in Iran 15000 books were published, against 9700 in Egypt and 600 in Syria (Digard, Hourcade, Richard, 2007: 407). The analysis of the press is also central in consideration of the fact that it appears to be the main source of information for Iranians, as the answers given to our questionnaire prove.
The editorial situation in Iran is pretty rich and complex. This is especially true for reformist and leftist newspapers, due to the difficulties they encounter in discussing political issues and the frequency with which they are closed down or censored. This engenders an ongoing evolution and change. Most times newspapers that had been shut down by the Government re-born with a slightly different shape or editorial façade, managing somehow to continue the previous work. By looking at the editorial situation in 1999 (during the Khātamī's presidency[40]) and the current situation, one can

[40] Cfr. Kariman, R. and Bahrampour, A. 'Iran Press Update', (1999) in *Middle East Research and Information Project* (*MERIP*), n. 212: 38-39.

easily find that while "right" and "conservative" newspapers are mostly un-changed, leftist and reformist newspapers have almost entirely done.

The European Union in the Iranian Press: a preliminary assessment

We took into account the current main Iranian newspapers:

- Reformist:
  - Āftāb-e yazd (www.aftab-yazd.com), E'temād-e Melli, Kārgozārān, Ebtekār (www.ebtekarnews.com).
- Centre right:
  - Hamshahri (Owned by Tehran city council, www.hamshahri.org), Jām-e Jam (Conservative), Tehran Emrouz (Centrist), Abrār (www.abrarnews.com).
- Hardliner:
  - Jomhouriy-e Eslāmi (pro-Rafsanjānī, anti- Ahmadīnejād, www.neda.net/j-eslami/), Hezbollah, Jahān (both anti- Ahmadīnejād).
- Pro-governmental:
  - Iran (Government mouthpiece, newspaper of the Islamic Republic News Agency), Keyhān (www.kayhannews.ir), Siyāsat-e rouz (Conservative), Ettelāāt (www.ettelaat.com).
- Economics:
  - Sarmāye (www.sarmayeh.net) .
- Websites:
  - Bāztāb (state-run), Rouzonline, Alef, Peyke-iran, Rajānews.

The research was topic based. After a survey of a period spanning from a minimum of one week to a maximum of two months for the above newspapers, and considered the limited resources and the extreme complexity of the task, we choose to analyse the two that appear to be expression of the current main trends in Iranian politics: Keyhān and E'temād-e Melli. Nonetheless, some of the indications coming from the preliminary survey have been taken into account in the report.

Considering the data collected and the interviews we conducted in Iran with major news representatives (Associated France-Press, Ansa, Financial Times, IRNA, others) and analysts (British Embassy Political Analyst, others), both Iranians and Europeans, and newspaper journalists (mainly Keyhān, E'temād-e Melli, Abrār, Āftāb-e Yazd), the panorama appears as such:

Main issues covered in the last two years:

- Nuclear issue.
- Internal economic situation.
- Reformists vs. conservatives (who's who).

General attitude towards the European Union:

- Seen as an economic block that seeks political hegemony towards economy.
- Main members [Great Britain (seen more as an American ally than a European member, or at best perceived as bridge-builder between the US and the EU), France, Germany, with the sporadic addition of Italy] vs. Independents.
- Not directly challenging the US.
- Jelly-shaped block: a case in point is the attitude of France now under criticism, but Iranian do look at long term relationships.
- European Union is considered a rival, in terms of dominance and influence, of Russia, Japan, China and the US. But the links in the EU are loose, some members go independently, particularly when dealing with serious issues.
- The EU is a marriage of convenience: why some members go independently if they want harmony?

- Solana is taken quite seriously as a voice of the EU[41], so Iranians are surprised when he doesn't have the last word.
- Expectations: good economic relations and a more independent stance vis-à-vis the US.
- Emphasis on differences among European members (mainly "Old Europe" vs. "New Europe" and pro-Americans vs. pro-independents).
- Emphasis when the EU has a different position from that of the US.
- Emphasis on economic difficulties, especially if it is a state enjoying close relations with the US like France under Sarkozy.

General attitude towards other countries in Iranian press:

- China: a fast growing merciless economic power of which the EU is afraid of.
- Japan: Japan and EU are big economic powers which prefer to stay away from tough politics.
- Russia: and old power who wants to raise onto its feet again, feared by the EU. The EU for fear of Russia gets closer to the USA. Russia still has expansionist ideas.

Human rights:

- The reformists (E'temād-e Melli) are very happy every time the EU is concerned with human rights in Iran and acts collectively. But their concern is the overshadowing of economic interests and their objectives are not translated into action.
- The right (Keyhān) tries to address the concerns of the EU in order to use the Union against the US. However, they do accuse EU countries of having double standards. For example, they remind France of having been pro-Saddam during the Iraq-Iran war, and of not acting to defend Palestinian rights today. For this reason (double standards), they discuss the very principles that EU tries to promote.

The majority of the articles appear to have an "internal" scope or projection and are almost exclusively directed to an Iranian audience. This somehow seems to reflect the general attitude of Iranian politics at large. In this regard many analysts and journalists stress that Ahmadīnejād does use International organizations (such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference) or treaties as tools to increase domestic consensus around governmental policies as a whole.

There is some scepticism towards the EU. This seems to be partially linked to the apparent difficulty to fully understand the EU integration project. This is due, perhaps, to the different nature of the Iranian state (*mellat*), unitary and with a strong historical identity, as opposed to the federal project of the EU (*ettehād*) based on the voluntary pooling of sovereignty by European states in order to reach a higher level of political cooperation. The EU is perceived more as a supranational organization than a coherent unitary body and is "read" through the lenses of individual states' will prevailing over the others. This element is partially confirmed by the centrality given in newspapers to the change of Presidency of the Union, which Keyhān never fails to report, and by the interviews we conducted in Iran. A case in point is Mortezā Gerānghadr, who underlined as Solana was positively seen in Iran because of his Spanish nationality, given that his country has historically been a good partner of Iran.

Another element that emerges is the lack of reference to the EU as such in Ahmadīnejād' speeches. The only times he does it, he simply refers to 'the Europeans', mentioning 'the three'. This points out a major element in the perception of the EU, the conviction that it is basically headed by three countries: Germany (mainly seen as an economic power), Great Britain (considered the bridge-

[41] In contrast with this conclusion, we report the opinion Najmeh Bozorgmehr, Correspondent of the Financial Times in Tehran, an Iranian, who voiced her scepticism saying that this had been the case in the recent past but it is no longer the case currently.

builder between the US and the EU) and France (the main ideological power of the Union). This element has probably been enhanced by the EU3 or the "three members", to which a remarkable number of articles refer to.
Solana also seems to be perceived as the spokesman of the interest of specific countries and not of a supranational institution. This element is particularly present in Keyhān articles that portray a supposed ongoing clash between major (namely "the three" plus Italy) and minor European countries. The main thing that European countries seems to have in common is that they are generally depicted as being all submitted to US interests.
As far as individual member states are concerned, Italy and Spain enjoy the most positive perception. This appears to be linked to the emphasis put by these countries to economic rather than political elements in their relations with Iran, a factor that has been confirmed by many of the interviews we conducted.

As far as other international bodies are concerned, the UN are perceived as guided by France, Great Britain and the US, all deemed to be against Iranian's nuclear ambitions. In this respect, Russia and China are perceived as Iran's friends whose economic relations with the US, however, limit their autonomy. In general the "three enemies" of Iran (France, Great Britain, US), are stronger than "Iran's friends" (China, Russia)[42].

Keyhān: Quantitative data
It is the leading right wing newspaper. It is directed by Hossein Shari'atmadārī, a powerful and feared editor. Keyhān never surpasses 16 pages in length.
We examined the issues going from 22nd December 2005 to 22nd December 2007. The issues were downloaded from the online archive. As there is no way to search through them online, they had to be opened page by page. This has obviously complicated the research, forcing us to concentrate on page 1 and the external affairs section, including two pages:
-page XII, dealing with Islamic countries' related topics, especially "occupied Palestine";
-page XVI, the paper's last page, with news concerning the EU.

<u>The European Union coverage by Keyhān:</u>
In 105 headlines citing explicitly the European Union mostly in the international pages of the newspaper in the last two years, the repartition appears as such:

European Presidency ریاست اتحادیه اروپا	European Commission کمیسیون شورای اروپا	European Parliament پارلمان اروپا	European Union اتحادیه اروپا	Europe اروپا	Europeans اروپای	Solana[43] اروپا فرستاده	Council of Europe شورای اروپا
4	2	7	29	46	8	3	6

Table 4. Frequency and occurrence of specific European bodies and institutions in Keyhān when reporting news linked with the European Union.

Main issues addressed in Keyhān in last two years concerning the European Union (119 articles):

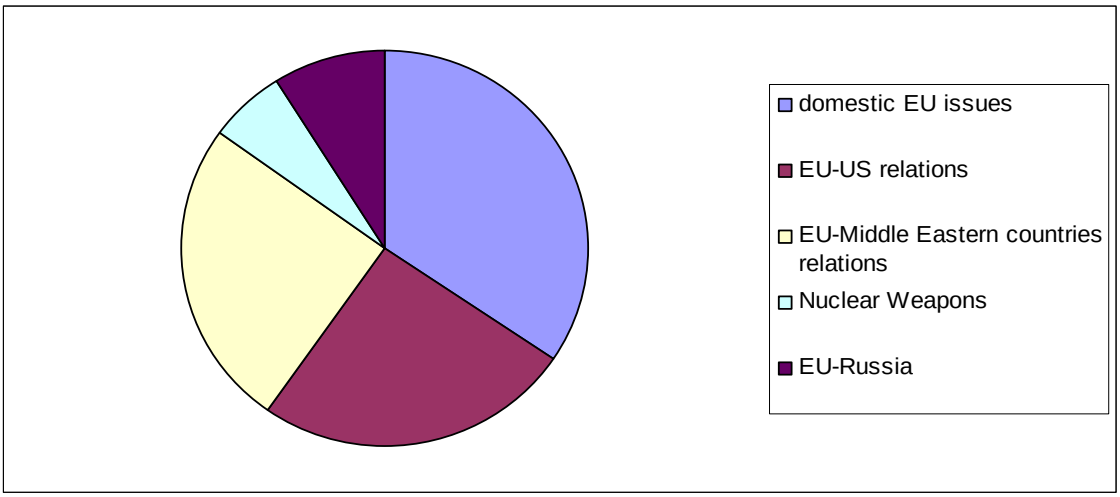
- Embargo and energy (1).
- EU internal issues (general 7 + 32): the taking over of the Presidency (3); the EU constitution (3) and Lisbon treaty (5); EU enlargement (2) and Turkey (4); EU countries

[42] The views presented here are in part due to the insights and suggestions we got through our interview with Hossein Rassam.
[43] Referred in newspaper headlines as "European envoy".

elections (1); EU representatives meetings (3); European Muslims (2) and human rights (4); EU relations with Byelorussia (2); economy (2); terrorism (1).

- Human rights (12 + 9): Guantanamo (3), CIA secret prisons in Europe (2), European Muslims human rights (4).
- Islamic Conference Organization (1) and the Islamic world (1).
- NGO's (2).
- EU-USA relations (17 + 11): Guantanamo (5) and CIA secret prisons in Europe (6).
- UN (2).
- NATO (2).
- Russia (6 + 4): elections (2); Russia and Kosovo (2).
- Middle East (4 + 25): Palestine (2) and Hamas (4); Israel (4), Zionism (2) and the holocaust (2); Hezbollah (2) and Lebanon (3); the Arab League (1) and EU-Arab relations (1); Syria (2); Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (1); Iraq (1).
- Nuclear weapons and Nuclear dossier (7).
- Kosovo independence (4).
- Asia (2 + 2): Nord Korea (2), Myanmar (1), Pakistan (1), Kirghizstan (1), China (2), India (1).
- Africa (6): Darfur (1).
- Latin America (2).
- Ecology (global warming) (1).

In the graphic below, the main issues related to the EU are represented as follows: domestic EU issues (24,6% recurrence), EU-US relations (18%), EU-Middle Eastern countries' relations (18%), nuclear weapons (4,4%), EU-Russia (6,3%) and relations between the EU and other major countries (6,3%).



Keyhān: Qualitative analysis

Summing up the analysis of how the EU is dealt with in Keyhān, it can be said that it refers to a substantially positive image:

- Keyhān criticizes European countries which do not respect human rights.
- For Iranian policymakers, the EU does not stand for imperialism or capitalism.
- The EU is somehow perceived as a possible and needed mediator in the international arena. Keyhān particularly underlines the positive role of the EU in setting more fair political balances.
- EU is considered to be worthy of dialogue.

- EU appears somehow as a victim of US politics.

Keyhān shows a strong interest in the EU rotating Presidency, an element confirmed by several interviews and linked to the Iranians' perception of the different stances towards their country that some specific EU member states have had historically.

E'temād-e Melli (National Confidence)

It is the most relevant reformist newspaper in Iran. It contains from 16 to 20 pages. This newspaper was first published on February 2005. *Hujjat al-Islam* Mehdi Karrobī, head of E'temād-e Melli and one of the most influent personalities of Iranian political scene, launched the newspaper as a major effort to recompose and give voice to the coalition that had brought Khātamī to victory in the previous elections. The paper mainly deals with social and cultural issues, as well as covering particularly pre-Islamic history. It is very critical towards the policy of the regime and openly voices its opposition to current President Ahmadīnejād, expressing not only discontent but manifest disenchantment. There are no journalists from this newspaper working in Europe. Hence all news related to the European continent are translated from external sources and commented on.

The issues taken into account cover the time span between 27th December 2005 and 27th December 2007. Methodologically, the research of the relevant articles (by searching the term 'Europe') was made possible by an online function of the newspaper's website, which became unavailable from January 2007. We found out that Europe is mentioned, when it is the case, only in pages 3 or 4, but never in the cover page. Comments referring to the Union are mostly analytical and long, and are written by academics or experts. Out of two issues of the newspaper, at least one contains references to Europe. Reference is more easily found to Europe rather than to the EU, and this might be accounted for by the perceived and criticized lack of unitary approach and lack of strong political will by Brussels. One of the most recurrent topics is the nuclear issue.

E'temād-e Melli: Qualitative analysis and interviews

Major issues present in the newspaper:

- Nuclear issue: referred to as 'nuclear dossier' or 'nuclear programme'. E'temād-e Melli appears to manifest and reflect a national consensus on Iranian expectations on the nuclear programme: the newspaper refers to this issue as *hoqhuqh-e hasteī*, 'a right'.
- EU-Russia relations.
- Kosovo.
- EU internal issues: strikes, Lisbon treaty, the European constitution. E'temād-e Melli refers constantly to Brussels as 'the capital' of the European Union.
- EU-USA relations, where EU is perceived as a possible and needed alternative partner.
- Human rights: in this respect, E'temād-e Melli is never critic towards the EU, as is sometimes the case in Keyhān, and depicts the Union as an example to follow.
- The EU enlargement process and Turkey: this is a central issue in E'temād-e Melli and in the Iranian press at large.

Oral interviews with 8 journalists from different sections (political, economic, cultural) of E'temād-e Melli main office in Tehran:

- EU-Iranian relations have developed into two dimensions: political and economic (some point to the opportunity to travel freely from Iran to Europe or to cultural similarities in the two civilizations).
- Among the problems in the EU-Iran relation there are the nuclear dispute, alongside the status of Lebanon, the un-resolved Israeli-Palestinian crisis, Western interference in Iraq and Afghanistan, Iranian support to Hezbollah, as well as Arab governments' cold relations with Tehran. Regarding nuclear power, E'temād-e Melli believes in continuing negotiations of Iran in regard to the nuclear programme.

- The problems attributed to European foreign policy mostly stress its lack of staying on an independent course, following the US lead, while some argue that the EU is mainly interested in pursuing economic interests to the detriment of human rights.
- The images associated to the EU mostly refer to the economic dimension, mentioning its trading and industrial power, the still developing nature of the European economy, currently more oriented towards the East. When mentioning politics, the reference is to Europe's diplomatic role and to France and Italy as the most important players.
- The images associated to European foreign policy are mostly negative, staring from being un-coordinated and unstable, to having adopted economic sanctions and not just following the US but depending on them in foreign policy choices. Only one journalist compared EU foreign policy to that of European states before the unification process, arguing that it is now much more effective and clearer.
- However, the newspaper emphasizes that EU's position or approach towards Iran is different from that of the USA: 'if the EU stays more coherent with its own position and approach towards Iran, it gets closer to Iran and the USA goes to the margin'.
- The images associated to the US are extremely critical, ranging from being a stable, power-seeking giant, to behaving in an obstinate, unquiet and unilateral fashion, to launch military strikes and wars, with or without coalitions.
- The images associated to Russia depict it politically as an untrustworthy, unfair and unstable power. Moscow aims at recreating a bipolar system and that is why it objects US world policies. Economically, Russia is profit-oriented and pursues them aggressively.
- Lastly, China is either seen as keen on quietly pursuing its strong economic interests worldwide, following regional logics, to adopting forceful international stances in an anti-US or anti-Russian posture.

CONCLUSIONS

The image Europe has in Iran is influenced by several factors, ranging from good historical economic and political relations held by some European countries, to the difficult years of "Critical Dialogue", characterized by strong criticisms especially over human rights issues, to the nuclear dossier, having blocked negotiations over a close-by Trade and Cooperation Agreement which would have paved the way for easier and upgraded trade exchanges.

Albeit perceived as a divided and multi-faceted power, the EU is seen as an important player in Tehran's brinkmanship game within the international community, slowing down potentially harmful US initiatives.

The EU is attributed different labels: interest-oriented, sometimes ideology-driven, and incapable of resisting US pressures. When accused, however, tones range from cynicism whereby the EU is caught in the middle of a power game between Washington and Tehran and its internal differences are not only played out by the two countries according to their agendas to disillusionment, whereby Brussels is depicted as having failed to seize the window of opportunity under the Khātamī era, unable to understand Tehran's ambitions more, to strike compromises and to implement a comprehensive agenda for bringing democracy into the region.

As far as general policy recommendations are concerned, they could be summarized as follows:

- The EU should distance more its stances from current US approaches, as well as showing more understanding for the specific regional security landscape and regional security Iranian concerns.

- The EU should act more ambitiously towards Iran, devising bold security proposals for the region, to be discussed in international fora, foreseeing an active role for the Islamic Republic within boundaries set also with its Middle Eastern neighbours.
- Unfortunately, with the adoption of sanctions and the overwhelming focus on non-proliferation, the EU is now associated purely to high politics issues, which bear no direct link to the population. Cultural exchanges at all levels, from universities to facilitating VISA and scholarship opportunities for young Iranian students and artists would be a tangible sign of appreciation of the country's culture.
- The EU could get more involved in the country's rich media landscape, following the case of the BBC, with a Farsi version of its programmes[44], so as to provide Iranians with more opportunities to learn about the EU as a whole and its policies vis-à-vis their country.

[44] Such an eventuality should, however, take into account the extremely negative perception the Iranian regime has of this kind of operation. As a case in point, we cite the words of Khāmeneī pronounced during a speech given on April 1999: 'Unfortunately, some of the newspapers [referring to Reformists] have become the bases of the enemy. They are performing the same tasks that the BBC Radio and the Voice of America, as well as the British, American and Zionist television broadcasts intend to perform [undermine Islamic principles and create social discord]', as reported in Hiro, Dilip (2001) *Neighbors, not Friends*: 260.

ANNEX I

IRANIAN NGOs INVOLVED.

Background information.

According to the Coordination committee, there are 9761 officially recognised NGOs in Iran. This number refers to the entire number of NGOs registered in the country. However, the committee itself acknowledges that only 1500 are currently operational. It means that there are around 15 to 30 active NGOs in each province. The fields of activity are: youngsters, environment, culture, health, advocacy, and financial support (microcredit). Among them, four main networks can be detected: women rights, charities (international), social problems, environment. There are no official figures concerning the number of people working within the NGOs. The NGOs that work as charities have a fixed number of members, around 50, and usually do not accept new members. The NGOs whose activities concern advocacy also have a fixed number of members. Nevertheless the number of other NGOs members may exceed 1000 (i.e. NGOs working with special diseases or environment, such as an NGO in Mashhad with 5000 members).

Asked about their financial sources, the Committee pointed out that the Iranian NGOs are mainly national and they derive their finances from the government and, on a minor basis, from private donors.

Schematising we can say that:

1. Many NGOs get the permission from the government on a project base, provided that their activities fulfil the goals of a governmental institution, in which case they get support from the specific institution;
2. "charity-NGOs" are mainly supported by private donors. They have a board of trustees and sometimes the government co-finances their projects;
3. there are some financially independent NGOs. On the one hand they educate their members and in return the members work for them, on the other hand through their projects they make contracts or sell things or activities, thereby gaining money.

According to the law code 182 of the Third Development Program, the government of Iran supports projects mainly related to women, youngsters, and the environment. In this respect, the environment governmental organization supports projects related to both health and environment.

As far as the international financial support is concerned:

1. UN agencies have funded projects related to the protection of the environment;
2. UNDP and some embassies partially contributed to this effort.

Some NGOs have contact with non-governmental organizations of Asian countries.

Our interviews' findings suggest that for the last ten years, having as a starting point Khātamī's Presidency, NGOs have increased their activities. As a consequence, they now enjoy relations with foreign countries, especially institutions such as the UN (UNDP). Under Khātamī's presidency the relations between NGOs and the government increased sharply, but they decreased after the end of his second term and the election of Ahmadīnejād.

NGOs' empirical data and raised expectations on the EU.

1.Kārdouk Researchers Institute (Mo'asses-e dāneshpajohān-e Kārdouk) (www.kardok.org)

- Based in the Kurdistan province;
- can count on 50 active members, with 300 collaborators, projects covering 3000 people;
- scientific and research activities;
- had a joint project with IFAT (Italy) for removing poverty in Kurd villages;
- other activities include teaching IT, AIDS sensitization policies, and poverty reduction policies (improvement of conditions in the Kurdistan province);
- got some help from the government and international institutions;

- the only newspaper in Kurdistan is published by this NGO under its name, Kārdouk.

Expectations:

In order to contact international institutions they should proceed through governmental organizations (i.e. to contact IFAT they had to go through Keshāvarzi Bank).

They suffer from the lack of applied knowledge coming from the EU which they supplement with knowledge transfer from other countries, especially India and Bangladesh. The EU is seen in terms of an economic giant weakened by divergences among member states and by its ineffective penetration in many world regions in other domains.

2.The Society of Women Against Environmental Pollution (Anjoman-e zanān-e mobārez-e āloudegi-e mohīte zist)

- Active in the Āzarbaijan Gharbi province;
- can count on 586 main members;
- 4 main projects:
    a) the restoration of a marsh land: financed by private donors, four local institutions and UNDP,
    b) training on natural disasters' response, carried out in 3 villages (support from the Swiss government),
    c) financial support for capacity building among women and youngsters: overall 1100 people (partially co-financed by IFAT, Italy);
    d) poverty reduction projects;
- they are equipped with an office, a conference room, some computers, and a fax machine;
- they have a board of directors.

Expectations:

In terms of relations with the EU, they expressed the desire to see cultural cooperation substantially increase at the institutional level.

3. The Society for Research and Development of Today's Science of Golestān (Anjoman-e tahghigh va tose'-ye elm-e rouz-e Golestān)

- Based in the Golestān province;
- can count only on 10 members;
- its aim is to empower young people to develop their skills.

Expectations:

In order to see a significant upgrade of cultural cooperation with European countries and European NGOs political problems should first be tackled and resolved.

4.Eshā' Centre (Kānoon-e Eshā')

- Located in Ghazvin;
- has 15 active members;
- its main field of activity is capacity building among teenagers and imprisoned women.

5. The Network of Industry and Mine (Shabake khāne san'at va madan)

- They have around 10 centres in each province, each counting on about 10 members (around 3000 members in the country);
- active in industry and research;
- proudly financially independent in the fulfilment of the projects.

Expectations:

These activists held the view that as long as Iranian political leaders will not be acknowledged as important players in the region by European policymakers, relations on a society-to-society level will hardly improve. They added that as relations with Europe fail to improve, Iranian institutions are seeking cooperation with third countries, despite their lesser capacity of transferring knowledge.

Somehow in a naïve way, they added that a step that might help paving the way for facilitating better communication would be the establishment of an official EU representation in the country, under any guise.

6. The Healthy World (Donyā-ye sālem)
- Based in Tehran;
- can count on 20 members;
- operational for the last 3 years in water related issues;
- financially autonomous.

Expectations:

What Iran and Europe should strive for are cultural and scientific cooperation projects. European countries lack adequate information about Iran and suffer from negative bias towards the Islamic Republic. European foreign policy is judged as out of pace within an ever faster world and is accused of falling prey to Realpolitik logics rather than promoting a democracy-oriented agenda.

7. The Society of Female Relief Forces (Anjoman-e bānovān-e emdādgar)
- 3800 members who are trained for emergency help in case of an earthquake;
- they help coordinating different organizations such as water, electricity and army during disasters.

Expectations:

Vis-à-vis the Union, they would very much like to upgrade contacts with European non-governmental organizations in order to be able to exchange educated people to make use of their knowledge.

8. Farhikhteh Institution
- Ardebil;
- 37 members, active since 11 years;
- projects covering around 2000 to 5000 people;
- voluntary work;

Expectations:
- Human rights activists should not take into consideration race and differences among nations;
- being Iran a rich country, what NGOs look for is scientific and research cooperation;
- the Union and Iranian NGOs should make use of each other's experiences;
- the Union can make use of its political capacity to build a more civil atmosphere;
- the problem NGOs face in Iran is the lack of information about the broader role NGOs could have in society, they would appreciate an exchange of information and experiences with the EU.

They aspire for policy changes from the EU towards the Islamic Republic. The EU is deemed an important global player whose relevance vis-à-vis Iran will augment in the near future and a source of inspiration portraying the model of a future global society. What is reproached to the Union are both its lack of a comprehensive approach towards the Middle East with its subsequent ad hoc policies and bilateral approaches and the lack of acknowledgement to Iran's role in the region.

9. Civil Actor (Fa'āl-e Madanī)
- This is a new born NGO. It has one member that works for the government and acts as a 'facilitator' between the government and NGOs;
- NGOs in Iran are deemed to be far more developed than in many other neighbouring countries.

Expectations:

The EU is looked at as a young international actor affected by internal divergences and external pressures, i.e. the US policy agenda, which constrain its outreach. Although there is a positive historical record especially insofar as economic exchanges with European countries are concerned, the current political stalemate, deemed to be heavily influenced by the nuclear and human rights issues, does not leave room for alternative scenarios soon.

Conclusions.
Some questions cannot be answered by NGOs because of their position in the country in relation to the Government. Among the main problems pointed out by the Coordination Committee there is the fact that in Iran people have no role or power, and all the activities are carried out by the State.
According to the committee, NGOs currently do enjoy some form of policy relevance in Iran, although they are not in the position to strongly oppose governmental stances. NGOs see the EU as a young institution, 'born just 15 years ago'. They are not aware of the scope and outreach of the Union. The information they have is the one they acquire as citizens, informally.

The main worry of the Iranian NGOs appears to be the lack of necessary experience and development in dealing with foreign relations. Nonetheless, they prefer to avoid open relations with international institutions because of fear of a backlash by the Government.
In particular, they appear to have relations with Germany, England, and Italy. These relations are mainly distinguished from relations at a governmental level. Iranian NGOs representatives have expressed their strong interest in upgrading their relations with NGOs in Europe.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT

THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
Mexico

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive Summary

Context

Nowadays, the European Union (EU) is an economic, political and social point of reference for Mexico. The EU is seen as a successful integration process and a leader on human rights issues, democracy and defense of multilateral institutions. Visions clearly converge about European "moral" leadership in the international concert. For that reason, the country's collective awareness gives to the EU a privileged place among Mexico's political partners, and all sectors want this to lead to a balance in our relationship with the United States of America.

Public Opinion

In general, Mexicans feel affinity for the EU, considering it a counterweight to the United States, The EU is an important partner in the international environment and a second choice for diversification of Mexico's foreign relationships just after Latin America. Nerveless, in the case of economic and commercial issues, the surveys show that the United States is still perceived as the most important partner for the country and, in the case of identity and political relationships Latin America is still preferred over the EU.

Political elites

Since 1990s the EU has been considered a priority region in Mexico's trade strategy, and in the last years, Mexican Presidents recognized the UE as an important political reference point and a strategic partner in the international context. Felipe Calderon's first trip abroad as the representative of the Mexican government was to the EU, a clear sing that he aimed to strengthen Mexico-EU relations. Mexican legislators as well are very interested in taking full advantage of the EU as a "civil power", and strengthen ties with their European counterparts by holding meetings and forums (inter-parlamentary ties).

Also, it is important to note that seven of the eight political parties in Mexico mention the EU in their basic documents or electoral platforms to a greater or lesser degree. Despite their

ideological diversity, the political parties agree on their view of the EU like a decisive actor in the international community and a Mexican strategic partnership.

Business community and civil society

The Mexican government's official version of how the EUMFTA benefits the country differs from the perception of most local businessmen, particularly regarding the access to the benefits of this treaty. An important number of businessmen's associations believe that the EUMFTA has fundamentally benefited the subsidiaries of European companies and has only marginally benefited national industry because of the lack of a national development policy.

For this part, Mexican civil society recognizes the EU as a fundamental political actor in international relations (especially in issues like democracy, human rights, development, social inclusion and multilateralism). From their standpoint, links with the EU in political and social matters can help ensure that the Mexican government listens to social demands.

Newspapers

The attention of the newspapers is concentrated on the United States; followed for the issues of Latin America, leaving in the third place those of the EU. In general, the EU is considered a political and social point of reference (continually cover European positions on issues like terrorism, security, drug trafficking and the environment, as well as social advances) and a priority region for Mexico (they constantly refer to the economic and trade benefits derived from this relationship).

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Are the European Union and Mexico Strategic Partners?

Mexican Perceptions of the European Union

Introduction

Relations between Mexico and the European Union (EU) have a long history. Cultural, political, economic and social links make this bilateral relationship strategic for both partners. While the Mexican government has made efforts to disseminate the image of the EU as a priority trade partner, domestically, a diversity of perceptions about the EU extend beyond its economic leadership, approaching more to the idea of the EU as a "civil power" and a strategic political partnership in the international context.

The aim of this document is to present a mosaic of the different Mexican sectors' perceptions about the EU. We begin with a brief historical account of contemporary relations between the EU and Mexico, emphasizing the last stage called the Strategic Partnership, in which relations have become closer on all levels. The central part of the document develops the perceptions of different sectors about UE.

1. Historical Background of Mexico-UE Relationships

For historical and cultural reasons, relations with Europe have always been very significant for Mexico. The EU's great importance and political influence on international relations have consolidated it as Mexico's second largest trade partner and its second source of foreign investment.

Contemporary relations between Mexico and the European Union can be divided into three broad stages: a) initial contacts from the 1960s to the 1980s, characterized by political dialogue; b) the stage begun in the 1990s characterized by Mexico's economic opening and the beginnings of its strategy of diversification of trade relations, concretized in the signing of the Global Agreement; and c) the stage beginning in 1999 with the development of a strategic

partnership based on the Global Agreement and the European Union-Latin America and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summits.

a) Initial Contacts

Formalization of Mexico's relations with the European Communities began in 1960 when Mexico opened its mission in Brussels. In this first stage, political dialogue was the centre of the relationship, fostered initially in the framework of the dialogue between the European Community and Latin America begun after the 1970 Buenos Aires Declaration. This was heightened by the crisis in Central America, which spurred Europe to actively participate in the peace process through the San José Dialogue, the Contadora Group and finally the Rio Group, mechanisms in which Mexico was a regional leader.[1]

It was also during this first stage that the bases were established for closer economic relations between both partners with the 1975 signing of the first economic cooperation and trade agreement between Mexico and the European Economic Community (EEC). Its central objective was to "order trade relations, foster contact among economic operators and encourage bilateral cooperation." Starting in 1985, into the context of the so-called "lost decade" and the launch of the first structural adjustment program, the Mexican government made intensifying bilateral relations with the EEC member states one of its aims. This first stage of bilateral relations finished in 1989, when the European Commission set up its delegation in Mexico at the same time the economic issues would begin to be more important for both partners.

[1] Faced with the possibility that the United States might toughen its position on the Central American conflicts and intervene militarily, the alliance with Latin Americans and Caribbeans was fundamental in Mexico's strategy for seeking a negotiated end to the crisis, averting a major escalation of a conflict that threatened the security along its southern border.

b) Emphasis on Economic Issues: the Challenge of Mexico's Diversification

For Mexico, the 1990s marked its opening to the world. President Salinas de Gortari's "modernizing" project was based on establishing the neoliberal model in the country and an active foreign policy centred mainly on economics, aiming to promote growth and attract foreign investments. These new foreign policy's central strategies were the trade opening, Mexico's entry into international economic organizations, the diversification of markets and Mexico's incorporation into the new trade blocs. (Salinas, 2000: 42)

In early 1990 the Salinas de Gortari administration considered the possibility of forging a trade agreement with Europe, before any agreement with the United States. That is why during his European tour, the Mexican president told German Prime Minister Helmut Kohl about his concern that Mexico might be left out of the trade blocs. The European response was clear: Mexico should become part of the North American bloc, and then be able to compete and have access to the European market. (Salinas, 2000: 60)

Therefore, at the same time that it was negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada, Mexico's strategy toward Europe centred on deepening and broadening all kind links, especially economics. It prioritized the European Union, but Mexico did not ignore relations with the new states emerging from the geopolitical changes in Central Europe and the Balkans, at times consumed with their efforts to overcome their own internal problems.

Part of this effort crystallized in Mexico's entry into the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as a founding partner in 1990, and its 1991 signing of the EC-Mexico Framework Agreement for Cooperation, known as a third generation agreement, to stimulate exchange and cooperation.[2] The entry of Mexico in 1994 into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was another advance in the deepening ties with EU member countries. Later, between 1995 and 1999, Mexico signed Agreements on

[2] Signed April 26, 1991, this agreement included 23 priority areas for cooperation in the following fields: industry; investments; technological development and intellectual property; norms; trade; science and technology; agriculture and rural areas; fishing; mining; information technologies and telecommunications; transportation; public health; the fight against drugs; energy; the environment; tourism; social sectors and planning for development; public administration; cooperation among financial institutions; culture; training; regions and economic cooperation.

Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments with 10 EU countries[3], Agreements for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with 12 EU countries[4], and established mechanisms for high-level bilateral political consultations with 11 EU members.[5] (Chanona, 2003: 277-292)

On May 2, 1995, Mexico and the EU announced their decision to broaden and deepen bilateral relations creating a new framework that would allow them to strengthen political dialogue, establishing a free trade zone and intensifying cooperation in order to contribute to the long-term promotion of the fundamental values of respect for human rights, the rule of law, democracy and security.

The major benchmark in the growing of Mexico relations with Europe during the 1990s was undoubtedly the signing, on December 8, 1997, of the Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement, also known as the Global Agreement, the most complete and ambitious text that Mexico has ever signed and the only one of its kind that the EU had negotiated with a non-European country. The Global Agreement reaffirms renewed bilateral relations and inaugurated a new stage in bilateral relations: the strategic partnership.

Also, were signed an Interim Agreement on Trade and Trade-Related Matters and a Joint Declaration on the exchange of services, investments and copyrights. These established a mandate to negotiate a free-trade zone, a process begun in April, 1998 and culminating successfully with the signed of the Free Trade Agreement (EUMFTA)[6] on March 23, 2000, in Lisbon.

We should add to this the first EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit in 1999, presided over by Mexico and Brazil from Latin America and Germany from Europe. Mexico also became a permanent observer of the Council of Europe (made up of the Committee of

[3] The only ones not signed were those with the United Kingdom, Sweden, Ireland, Greece and Denmark.
[4] The only ones not signed were those with Luxembourg, Greece and Austria.
[5] All except Luxembourg, Austria, Ireland and the Netherlands.
[6] The EUMFTA ensured European capital the privileges that the United States achieved in Mexico with the "NAFTA parity", given that the EUMFTA not only includes an elimination of tariffs similar to NAFTA (in many cases an even greater percentage and more rapidly), but also chapters on investment, government procurement, trade incentives, competition policies and intellectual property rights. For its part, Mexico hopes to benefit from the great potential for European investment and transfers of technology as well as to take advantage of the enormous European market.

Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly) in 1999. These were both significant steps forwards in strengthening bilateral links.

c) The Strategic Partnership: Beyond the economic issues

The first EU-LAC Summit in 1999 and the entry into force of the Global Agreement and the EUMFTA in 2000, marked the beginning of the stage of strategic partnership built on the pillars of economic partnership, political dialogue and cooperation. From then on, bilateral relations have evolved from the dominance of economic issues, with the signing of the EUMFTA under the aegis of the Global Agreement, to a gradual recovery of the political and cooperation agendas, particularly in the framework of the EU-LAC Summits.

The entered into force of the Global Agreement and the EUMFTA in 2000 sparked big expectations about economic relations, which, in the first years of the twenty-first-century, dominated over political relations and cooperation. But, the UE-Mexico relationship based fundamentally on economics has demonstrated its limitations: eight years after the EUMFTA came into force; the results continue to be unsatisfactory for Mexico. While it is true that the EU has been consolidated as our country's second trade partner and investor, and that trade has increased 33 percent since 2000; trade continues to be concentrated with the United States[7], and Mexico continues to have a trade deficit with the EU. At the same time, investments have gone mainly into the service sector, not into developing industry, which implies low levels of technology transfer.

As a result, economic relations between Mexico and the EU have not become a driving force stimulating the country's growth and economic development: even with the EUMFTA, Mexican exports to the EU have not recovered their 1990 levels of 9 percent of Mexico's total exports, and Mexico also is only marginal to EU foreign trade as its twenty-second trade partner, representing 1.2 percent of its trade, less than countries like Canada (ninth) or Brazil (eleventh).

[7] While in 2006, 86 percent of Mexican exports went to the United States, only 5.3 percent went to the European market. Also, between 2000 and 2003, the average growth of Mexican exports to the EU was close to 2 percent, compared to a 5.6 percent growth in trade with the United States.

Nevertheless, Mexico-EU political dialogue is one of the areas with the most potential in the framework of the strategic partnership, based on a series of common values like democracy, respect for the rule of law, the defence of human rights and individual liberties, a shared view of international security, a commitment to international institutions and compliance with international law. In this sphere, we can pinpoint two major themes: 1) the strengthening of multilateralism and the multidimensional vision of security in the international system; and 2) cooperation for fostering democratic governance in Mexico, particularly in the framework of the Global Agreement.

Mexico and the EU aim to strengthen multilateralism in order to jointly face world challenges and counteract the United States' growing unilateralism. The understanding among France, Germany and Mexico in the Security Council, the consensuses reached in the UN Human Rights Commission and the support for the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol show the broad possibilities of advancing in the political dialogue.

From the EU perspective, as one of Latin America's leading countries, Mexico can contribute decisively to the reconfiguration of the international system. The European Commission has expressed its wish that Mexico could take on more responsibilities in international security issues and contribute more on matters like humanitarian and peace-keeping missions. (Ferrero-Waldner, 2006:4). For Mexico, the political alliance with the EU is fundamental for its traditional foreign policy, which emphasizes non-intervention, respect for sovereignty, the peaceful solution of conflicts and international cooperation.

It should be pointed out here that, in addition to the natural alliance between both partners on issues like the defence of multilateralism and their broad understanding of international security, recently climate change has become another priority issue on the common agenda. Both partners base themselves on the principle of shared responsibility to foster international cooperation and take urgent measures about this issue in international forums.

With respect to Mexico's democratic governance, the EU has centred its efforts in cooperate to strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law, the consolidation of a culture of respect for human rights and the promotion of social inclusion in Mexico. The EU's interest in issues related to the democratic transition and the protection of human rights in Mexico is widely recognized. Thanks to the Global Agreement, the areas of bilateral cooperation were

broadened out, incorporating political issues such as human rights, democratization and refugees.

The EU considered the election of Vicente Fox as president in 2000 a big democratic step forward, and in recent years, it has recognized efforts to protect and promote human rights. But, it is true that these efforts have had more results abroad (thanks to a foreign policy that promotes human rights and the ratification of a good number of international agreements on this issue) than domestically because of the weakness of our institutions and the remains of our legacy of an authoritarian culture.

Our European partners followed Mexico's 2006 presidential elections closely. The EU sent an Electoral Observation Mission to check on the transparency and trustworthiness of the electoral process, a very polarized, competitive race between frontrunners Andrés Manuel López Obrador, candidate for an alliance of left parties, and Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, the candidate fielded by the right-wing government National Action Party (PAN). Headed up by the Spanish European Deputy José Ignacio Salafranca, the mission included almost 80 observers from 21 EU member states. It concluded that the July 2 presidential and legislative elections took place in a transparent, competitive environment, and called them "impartial, professional and transparent." This paved the way for EU recognition of the electoral results after the Electoral Tribunal found in favor of Felipe Calderón. (EUROLAT, 2006)

Finally, cooperation for development is the third cross-cutting theme of the Mexico-EU Strategic Partnership, an issue which has taken on new life since the Third EU-LAC Summit in Guadalajara. There, social inclusion was incorporated as one of the key issues in the broader spectrum of bi-regional relations, with a positive impact on the Mexican-European agenda.

From the European perspective, Mexico is a country in transition whose social deficits require immediate attention.[8] For that reason, fostering social cohesion is fundamental for creating an

[8] Certainly, Mexico has enormous social deficits, characterized by a high concentration of income and gaps between the country's North and South, where the highest levels of marginalization are found. Guerrero, Chiapas and Oaxaca head the list of states where extreme marginalization exists, followed by Veracruz, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Puebla, Campeche, Tabasco, Michoacán and Yucatán. Only Mexico City, Nuevo León, Baja California and Coahuila have very low levels of marginalization. (Anzaldo & Prado, 2006). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) figures show that in 2005, 35.5 percent of the Mexican population lived below the poverty level, while 11.7 percent (and 21.7 percent in rural areas) lived in extreme poverty. With regard to income distribution, ECLAC states that, while the poorest sector of our

atmosphere of social stability that will allow for economic growth and a better use of markets. Mexico, for its part, given the continuing inequality within its borders, recognizes the European social model as a reference point with regard to social inclusion. At the same time, the EU's bilateral and regional cooperation programs are considered of primary importance in the task of fostering national development. According to Foreign Relations Ministry, in May 2007, there were 47 projects for cooperation with the EU running on both bilateral and regional levels.

On a regional level, it is important to point to the educational programs (Alβan and ALFA-II),[9] productive programs (like AL-Invest)[10] and Mexican participation in sectoral activities of EUROsociAL through the Ministry of Public Education (education), the National Public Health Institute (health); the Monterrey Technological Institute (justice); and the Tax System (taxation).

The European Commission's priority areas for cooperation with Mexico for 2007-2013 are: 1) social inclusion and support for dialogue about sectoral policies (which includes coordination around specific regional development and decentralization policies, the rule of law, the consolidation of institutions and the environment); 2) the economy and competitiveness (which includes strengthening cooperation programs aimed at developing small and medium-sized businesses); and 3) education and culture. Gender equity and the indigenous population are issues that cut across these three priorities.

Finally, we should point out that one disadvantage that Mexico has in obtaining more funding for cooperation is its membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since its development levels are generally considered relatively higher

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population (40 percent) receives only 15.4 percent of national income, the richest 10 percent concentrates 35.4 percent of national wealth. (CEPAL: 2006)

[9] Mexican students are increasingly participating in the Alβan graduate studies scholarship program, going from 8.4 percent of Latin American students given scholarships for the 2003-2004 school year, to 18.4 percent in 2004-2005 and 24 percent for 2005-2006. Also, 47 Mexican institutions of higher learning participate in 100 of the ALFA-II academic program's 250 projects, acting as coordinators in four of them in areas like engineering and technology, economic and social sciences, environmental studies, education, medicine, architecture and urban planning and the natural sciences. (European Commission: 2007:6-7)

[10] In the framework of the cooperation program aimed at fostering productive investment (AL-Invest), four Euro-centers have been set up (Canacintra, Bancomext, Nafin and Monterrey Technological Institute) that run 108 of 590 projects in which the main operator is a Latin American country. At the same time, it has actively participated in AL-Invest-organized activities. As a result, contracts signed between European and Mexican companies were valued at 97,348,870 euros in sectors like mining, fuel and oil, electrical equipment, machinery, photography and organic chemicals. (European Commission: 2007:8)

than those of its Central American neighbours, which limits the cooperation that EU member countries can offer independently. Nevertheless, countries like Italy, Finland and Denmark continue to fund projects mainly sponsored by non-governmental organizations in areas like social development, the environment and sanitation.

The setting for this re-emergence of politics and cooperation on the bilateral agenda is a very adverse international context in which, after 9/11, the fight against terrorism became the priority. In this framework, the Mexico-EU alliance (particularly with countries like France and Germany) has been fundamental in efforts to contain the United States' growing unilateralism and to defend multilateralism, international institutions and a broad vision of international security.

Despite the transcendence of the political alliance between both partners and, the EU's avowed intention to foster cooperation to promote social cohesion and democratic governance not only in Mexico but in all of Latin America, from the standpoint of Mexico, we can perceive a certain retreat by the EU. This is given that, in addition to facing endless difficulties of its own integration process (like its enlargement to the East, the Lisbon Agenda or the debate about the Constitution), the EU has had to put a priority on the European Neighbourhood Policy and relations with North Africa. To this we must add the renewed emphasis on common security and particularly its fight against terrorism as a result of the attacks of March 11, 2004 in Madrid and July 7 and 21, 2005 in England.

2. Mexican Perceptions of the European Union

After describing current relations between Mexico and the EU and briefly explaining the study's methodology, we now present the mosaic of Mexican society's perceptions about the EU.

To analyze public opinion, we have used the Latinobarómetro surveys from 1995 to 2005 that allow us to look at the long-term evolution of Mexican citizens' perceptions and their connection to the general context of relations between the two partners. We also used the 2004 and 2006 "Mexico and the World" surveys carried out by the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) and the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI), plus two short-term polls: the first by Consulta Mitofsky on Mexicans' travel abroad, and the second by the Merchandising and Opinion Institute about the public's perception of the 2004 Third Latin American-European Union Summit in Guadalajara.

To examine Mexican political elites' perceptions of the EU, we looked at three general areas: a) the executive branch, divided into the president's office (based on the last three administrations' National Development Plans) and the different ministries (official documents and web sites); b) the legislative branch, based mainly on a review of the *Gazeta Parliamentaria* (Parliamentary Gazette) and documents produced by the lower chamber's research units; and c) political parties, for which we studied their basic documents (declarations of principles and action programs) and their electoral platforms, in order to discover just how much ideological differences among Mexico's political forces translates into differences regarding their perception of the EU.

In the case of the business community and civil society, the basic sources were the documents these organizations presented in sessions of the 2005 Social Dialogue for a State Foreign Policy and at the Second Forum of Dialogue among Civil Societies and Institutions of the Mexican Government and the European Union held at Mexico's Foreign Ministry. For academia, we reviewed institutional documents and the websites of research institutions dedicated to European issues as well as the agendas of the Mexican Association of International Studies annual congresses, which allowed us to analyze the degree of interest in these issues based on the number of papers presented.

Finally, we followed the four major national newspapers' coverage of the EU between June 2006 and March 2008 to make a comparative analysis of the correlation between their ideological tendency and the kind of articles they printed about the EU. In addition, based on the follow-up of news coverage on other countries and regions, we compared the degree of journalistic coverage of the EU *vis-à-vis* other actors on the international scene.

We should point out that the aim of the document is to present a general view of the perception that different sectors of Mexican society have about the EU. The complexity of each sector and the wealth of possibilities for study invite us to carry out a new research.

2.1. Public Opinion

According to the data of Latinobarómetro, positive changes in the opinion of the Mexicans towards the EU were registered during the decade between 1995 and 2005. As a result of the Global Agreement, with the consequent increase of the Mexican's knowledge on the UE, and the recognition of share values like democracy and the defence of human rights.

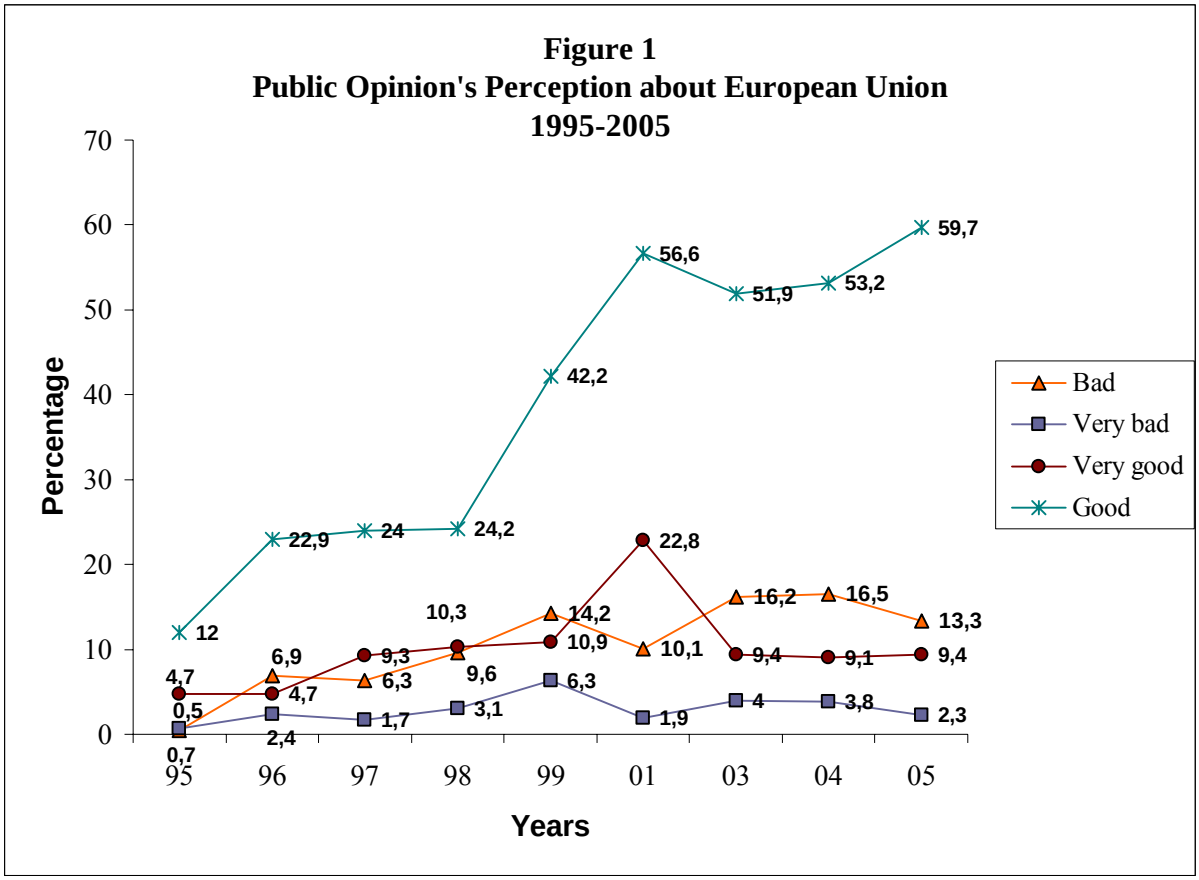
As show in the figure 1, in 1995 just 12 percent of the Mexicans have a "good" perception of the Union, whereas for the 2005 this percentage reached to the 59,7 of the interviewed people. The considerable increase of the favourable opinions occurs in 1999 (year of the first EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit) when was duplicated the preferences of the previous year (when the EUMFTA was negotiated).

In 2001, once year later to the entry in to force of the Global Agreement and EUMFTA and in the framework of Mexican transition to democracy, the favourable opinions of the EU were increased in more than 10 points ("very good" 11.9 and "good" 14.4), while the negative perceptions show a substantial decrease compared with other years ("very bad" 4.4 and "bad" 4.1).

The unfavourable opinions on the EU also were increased during the period: of less than one percent in 1995 to 2,3 percent in the most negative case ("very bad") and to the 13,3 percent in the case of the "bad" feelings. That situation can find an explanation in the debates on the

Global Agreement's "democratic clause" (the debates about the EU intervention in the Mexico's domestic politics) and in the increase in the country of the critics of the Free Trade Agreements.

Figure 1
Public Opinion's Perception about European Union
1995-2005



Source: Own elaboration with Latinobarometro data.

On the other hand, in Mexico opinion polls on foreign policy and the country's foreign relations are relatively recent, and few and far between. Polling companies generally pay little attention to people's perceptions about Mexico's foreign policy, and when they do, they tend to concentrate on relations with the United States given the strong ties we have as neighbours, our economic interdependence and, above all, migration.

Despite the dearth of surveys about Mexican citizens' perception of the EU, some polls helps give us an idea of the way in which Mexican society perceives it; specially the 2004 and 2006

versions of the "Mexico and the World"[11] survey carried out jointly by the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE)[12] and the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI)[13]

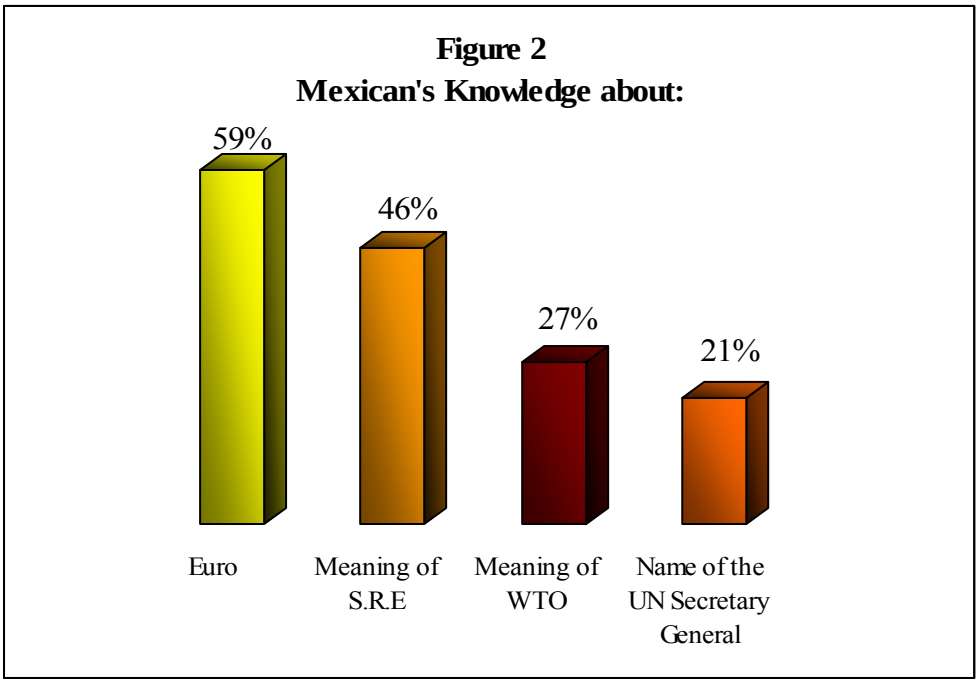
First off, we should point out that Mexicans hardly go to Europe at all: only 3 percent has visited the Old Continent. This is closely tied to their economic situation.[14] (Consulta Mitofsky, 2006) However, this does not mean that the average Mexican has no knowledge of what happens in Europe. For example, the "Mexico and the World" survey from 2006, indicate that 59 percent of Mexicans know that EU money is called the euro (more than the number who know the name of the UN Secretary General [21 percent] or who know what "WTO" stands for [27 percent]). What is more, more Mexicans are more familiar with the euro than with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since only 46 percent can correctly identify the ministry's acronym, SRE. (CIDE-COMEXI, 2006)

[11] The 2004 and 2006 "Mexico and the World: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in Mexico" surveys were result of a long-term research project that CIDE and COMEXI began in 2004, "with the aim of periodically filling in gaps in information and knowledge about how Mexicans, including the country's foreign affairs leaders, understand and respond to changing world realities". The project is composed of two mirror surveys: a) house-to-house visits of a representative sample of the adult population (general public opinion survey); and telephone interviews with political, economic, and social leaders in foreign affairs (leaders survey).
The 2004 general public opinion survey was realized from July 9 to 19, 2004. The survey consisted of 1,500 face to face interviews based on a probabilistic sample design. The survey to leaders consisted of telephone interviews to 82 members of COMEXI and was applied from July 13 to August 12, 2004.
The 2006 general public survey was conducted from July 22 through July 27, 2006, using the same survey method and field organization as the 2004 survey. The survey was conducted by 1499 in-person (house-to-house) interviews based on a probabilistic sample design, based on a list of 63,594 electoral sections defined by the Federal Electoral Institute for the 2003 Mexican federal elections. For the results, the sampling error for a 95% confidence interval is +/- 4%. The leaders' survey consists of telephone interviews with 259 political, economic, and social leaders in foreign affairs. (CIDE-COMEXI 2004 & 2006)

[12] "CIDE is a centre for research and teaching in the social sciences. It is publicly financed and guided by international quality standards for research and education. CIDE's central objective is to contribute to Mexico's development through the generation of rigorous and relevant knowledge and through the development of a new generation of leaders capable of creatively and responsibly succeeding in an open, competitive environment" (CIDE-COMEXI 2006)

[13] "COMEXI is a pluralistic, multidisciplinary forum for debate and analysis on the role of Mexico in the world. The Council is an independent, nonprofits forum with no government or institutional ties and is financed exclusively by membership dues and corporate support." (CIDE-COMEXI, 2006)

[14] Only 18 percent of Mexicans have visited another country, mostly the United States, one out of every seven Mexicans has been there, particularly because they have a relative working there. (Consulta Mitofsky, 2006)



Source: Own elaboration with CIDE-COMEXI data.

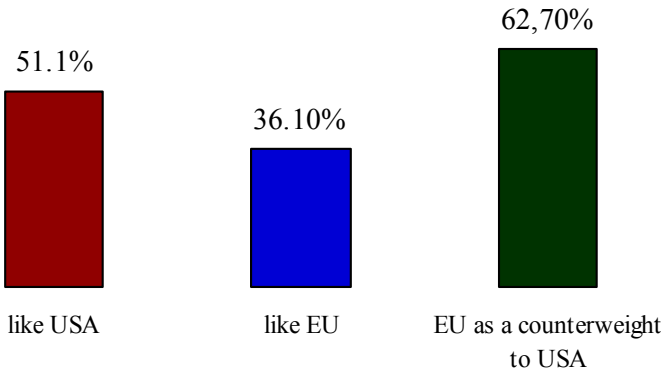
We can also say that Mexicans feel an affinity for the EU, considering it a counterweight to the United States internationally. In 2004, during the III EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit held in Guadalajara, Mexico, the Institute of Marketing and Opinion (IMO) did a survey "The Mexican and Spanish Societies Express their Opinion on Latin America-European Union Relationships"[15], that showed that 51.1 percent of those polled liked the United States and 31.6 percent, the EU, but the majority (62.7 percent) considered a partnership with the EU a counterweight to our northern neighbour. (IMO, 2004)

In this case, the results of the survey are an example of the contradictions in the Mexicans' perceptions on the EU and the United States. If it's true that the EU is considered a high-priority partner in the international scene, (51 per cent of the Mexicans said that the government should promote closer ties with the EU on international issues; and just 40.2 per cent preferred do it with the United States) in the case of economic and commercial issues, the survey show that the United States is still perceived as the most important partner for the

[15] The objective of the survey was to know the vision of the Spanish and Mexican societies about the regional integration in social, cultural, and economic matters. Was made in May, 2004, and consist in 440 telephone interviews selected on the bases of the stratified random sampling. (IMO, 2004)

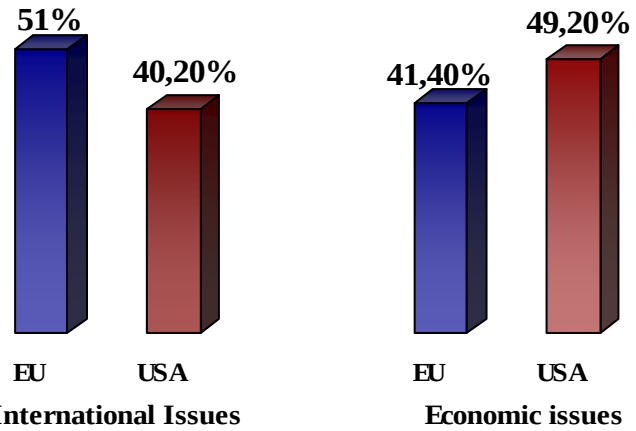
country (with 49.2 percent of the preferences, five points over the preferences on EU) (IMO, 2004)

Figure 3
Mexicans' preferences on USA and EU
2004



Source: Own elaboration with IMO data

Figure 4
What would you advise the mexican government to do, promote closer ties with European Union or with the United States on....?

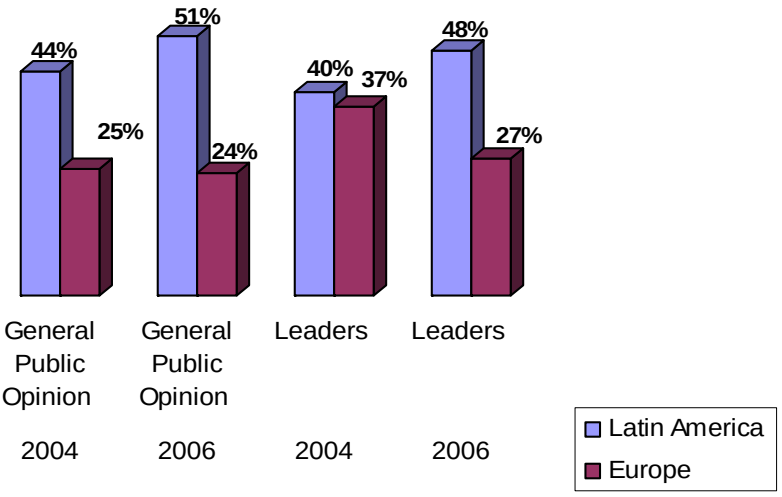


Source: Own elaboration with IMO data

Historically, Latin America has been considered for the Mexicans the first, and natural, option to diversify the foreign relationships. The 2004 and 2006 versions of "Mexico and the World" surveys revealed that Mexicans consider Europe the second choice for diversification, following Latin America.

The 2004 general poll showed that most Mexicans considered Latin America the priority for diversification policy (44 percent), followed by 25 percent who prefer Europe. In the case of the leaders, the preference by Latin America as priority for diversification policy decreases four points (40 percent) but on the other hand, in the case of Europe the preference increased considerably and approaches the preference by Latin America reaching 37 percent. (CIDE-COMEXI, 2004: 36) The 2006 survey shows an increase in the preferences for Latin America (51 percent in general and 48 for the leaders) but, in the case of Europe, the survey reveals a slight drop in the general preferences and an important decrease of 10 points in the case of the leaders (27 percent). (CIDE-COMEXI, 2006:20)

Figure 5
Priorities for Mexico's diversification policy



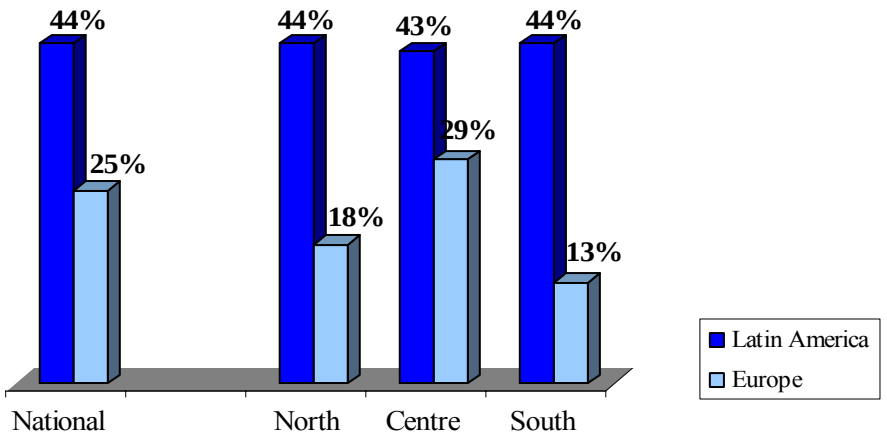
Source: Own elaboration with CIDE-COMEX data.

The failed in the preferences towards Europe and the ascending tendency of Latin America as priority in 2006 could be explained from two situations: a) the disagreement and

preoccupation of the Mexicans by the foreign policy of President Fox towards Latin America (with the bilateral "ideological" conflicts with Cuba and Venezuela and the problems about the Free Trade Area of the Americas with Argentina and Brazil in the framework of the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata) ; and b) the recognition, especially of the leaders, of the increasing importance of Asia in the international context.

Also, as is show in the figure 6, the 2004 poll reveals regional differences in Mexicans' perception of the EU. In contrast to opinions about Latin America, whose numbers remain more or less the same as a preference throughout the country (44 percent in the northern states, 44 percent in the south-southeast and 43 percent in central Mexico), perceptions about the EU differ considerably: while 29 percent of those interviewed in central Mexico thought the country should pay more attention to Europe, only 18 percent in the north and 13 percent in the south and southeast were of the same opinion. (CIDE-COMEXI, 2004:36)

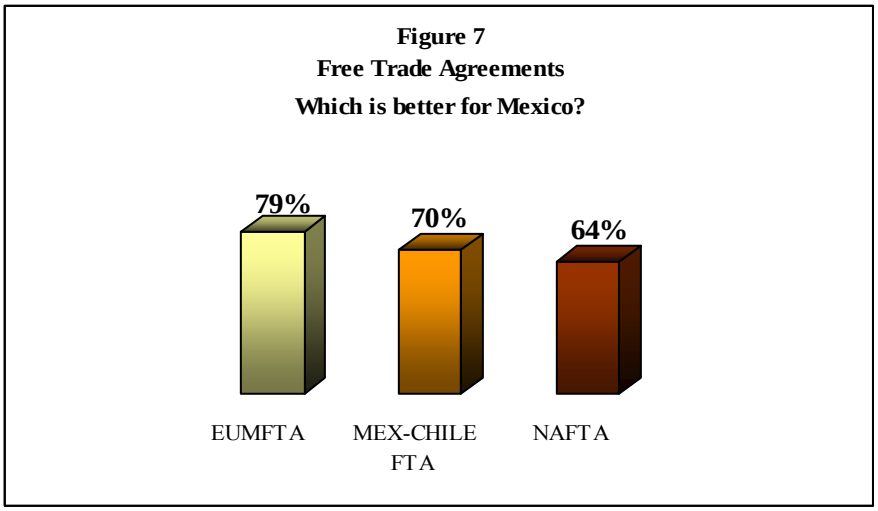
Figure 6
Priorities for Mexico's diversification policy
(General Public Opinion 2004)



Source: Own elaboration with CIDE-COMEX data.

However, this preference for Latin America as the priority for Mexico's diversification is nuanced when we review the results on people's view of the country's free trade agreements: seventy-nine percent of Mexicans consider the EUMFTA favourable to our country, followed

by the Free Trade Agreement with Chile (70 percent) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (64 percent). (CIDE-COMEXI, 2004:38)



Source: Own elaboration with CIDE-COMEX data.

2.2. Political and Economic Elites

The Executive Branch – The Presidency

Since the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), the EU has been considered a priority region in Mexico's trade diversification policy and its efforts to attract foreign investment. This has meant that the economic agenda has taken on a central role in Mexico's foreign policy toward the EU. At the same time it is true that little by little, the political agenda has regained ground with the incorporation of new issues like the promotion of human rights, security and the fight against terrorism or climate change, areas in which Mexico sees the EU as a natural, strategic ally.

During the Salinas administration, the EU displaced Latin America as the priority for the diversification of Mexico's foreign policy. Presidents Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) and Vicente Fox (2000-2006) agreed with their predecessor about the EU's political and economic importance. Their objectives with regard to tightening links with the EU were similar: establishing trade agreements and attracting investment through the dissemination of a positive image of the country abroad based on promoting a democratic, modern Mexico

concerned with human rights, as well as an attractive, risk-free market full of opportunities for investors.[16]

The National Development Plan 2007-2012 singles out the EU as a strategic region for Mexico to establish alliances to diversify trade. It states that the EU offers "great leeway for increasing trade, investment and capital flows and cooperation for social development and strengthening the Mexican population's capabilities through the transfer of investments, technology and know-how."(Presidencia de la República, 2007)

In the view of the Mexican executive branch, the EU has become an important political reference point, which is why the National Development Plan stipulates the need to continue strengthening ties with it. The aim is that Europe's experience with issues like the environment, migration, financing and cooperation for development, human rights, fighting against organized crime, disarmament, peace and security enrich Mexico's performance in the international sphere. It also emphasizes the shared vision about the role of multilateralism in the construction of a new world order.

The strategy that President Felipe Calderón is proposing refers to intensify Mexico-EU political relations and to continue actively participating in the different forms of multiregional dialogue which "offers to the country the opportunity to participate as a global actor and contribute to responding to transnational challenges such as market access and trade liberalization, climate change, the development of Africa, energy security and management, and the treatment, control and eradication of infectious diseases." (Presidencia de la República, 2007)

In this scenario, it should be mentioned that Felipe Calderón's first trip abroad as the representative of the Mexican government was to the European Union. Traditionally, the president's first official visit is to Latin America or the United States. That is why President Calderón's trip was interpreted as a clear sign that he aimed to strengthen Mexico-European

[16] It should be pointed out that among the obstacles that had to be overcome during the negotiations for the Global Agreement was the perception of a large number of EU countries, particularly France, about the violation of human rights and the weakness of the country's democracy, with specific mention of the case of the Zapatista National Liberation Army. In this regard, we should remember that a condition for signing the Global Agreement was that Mexico commit to the clause on democracy.

Union relations, specifically with regard to cooperation for development and strengthening political, economic and cultural ties. (Notimex, 2006)

In this first working visit, which took in Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain, as well as the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the president made clear his intention to strengthen ties, particularly economic, with the EU, in order to "reduce our almost unilateral dependence on the United States," and give momentum to the EUMFTA. As a part of this strategy, relations with Spain play a central role since this country is considered the "natural springboard" for Mexico to speed up its relations with Europe."(Villapadierna, 2007)

The news that in June 2007 Mexico's president would return to the EU on an official visit came as a surprise since it came only five months after his first trip there. This second tour of Europe, which included Italy, the Vatican, France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark, was characterized by including public security and the fight against international organized crime on the agenda, traditionally centred on economic issues. Mexico's president met with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, the National Anti-mafia Attorney General and the heads of Rome, Milan, Naples and Palermo's district Anti-Mafia offices to familiarize himself with Italy's successful experience in the battle against organized crime. Calderón's meeting with French President Nicolas Sarkosy centred on the possibilities for cooperation on issues of public security and the justice system. (AFP, 2007)

The emphasis on the issue of security and the fight against drug trafficking on this second EU tour should be situated in the framework of the National Security Strategy and the "all-out war against drug trafficking" that the Calderón administration has launched. Another issue that has taken on importance on the Mexico-EU agenda in recent months is the fight against terrorism. We should remember that Europe has hardened its position on this issue because of the terrorist attacks in Madrid (March 11, 2004) and London (July 7 and 21, 2005), the possibility of being targets again, specifically in England, like in the case of last June's thwarted attacks in London and on the Glasgow airport and the end of ETA's ceasefire in Spain.

In the case of Mexico, interest in the fight against terrorism arises in a specific context. On the one hand, Mexican drug cartels have engaged in extremely violent acts like executions and intimidation of both government officials and private citizens (such as messages left on

central means of transportation in the country's capital) which can be considered terrorist activities. At the same time, the elite of Mexico's right wing is sorely tempted to classify the alleged sabotage of oil pipelines (explosions in Pemex oil pipes in Guajajuato and Querétaro) and even social organizations' actions like those in the 2006 conflict in Oaxaca as terrorist activities. This creates the risk of focusing on social problems from the narrow view of the fight against terrorism.

Thus, in the framework of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's July 2007 visit to Mexico, the president's office renewed Mexico's support and solidarity with the Spanish government's anti-terrorist fight, emphasizing that "acts of provocation and violence [were] unjustified." This sent the clear message that the Mexican government's position on terrorism was toughening up, particularly domestically. (Presidencia de la República, 2007a)

Main issues of Calderon's tours to EU

October 2006 **(Davos/ Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain)**	**June 2007** **(Italy, the Vatican, France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark)**
• Transnational challenges • Trade & Investment • Climate change • Energy • **Security: Drug trafficking& terrorism (ETA-Spain)**	• **Public security** • **Fight against international organized crime** • **Justice System** • Trade & Investment

The Ministries

Beginning in the 1980s, Mexico's economic foreign policy began a process of "sectoralization," with the resulting loss of the Foreign Affairs Ministry monopoly on the definition of strategies and implementation of the country's policy abroad. Other ministries, like the Finance Ministry (foreign debt, monetary policy, international financial relations) and

the Ministry of the Economy (WTO, NAFTA and EUMFTA negotiations) began to take part, and they all participate in the relations between Mexico and EU. (Chanona, 2004: 34)

From the Foreign Affairs Ministry's standpoint, the EU is a decisive political and economic actor on the international scene, which shares with Mexico values like democracy, human rights, the peaceful solution of conflicts, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, multilateralism as the basis for the international system and a broad understanding of international security. This makes it a priority ally for our country, especially faced with the restructuring of international bodies, like UN reform.[17]

During the Fox administration, the promotion of human rights domestically and abroad became one of Mexico's foreign policy objectives. In that framework, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only recognized European leadership in the matter, seeking alliances with the EU at specialized international forums, but it also participates in the Mexico-EU Program for Cooperation on Human Rights through the General Office for Human Rights and Democracy, part of the Vice-Ministry for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights.[18]

Based on the premise that the EU is the world's leading trade bloc and Mexico's second largest trade partner and investor, the Ministry of the Economy thinks that it is necessary to make sure the country benefits in full from the EUMFTA.[19] To that end, it has established the following objectives: identifying trade and investment opportunities; carrying out negotiations on agricultural, services and investment issues; and follow up on the Program of Economic Cooperation with the EU (2007-2013), and projects to facilitate trade, support small and medium-sized companies and increase competitiveness.

[17] Inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relations with the EU are handled by the Office for the EU and Northern European Countries, which is part of the General Office for Europe. The General Office for Technical and Scientific Cooperation takes responsibility for disseminating cooperation programs between Mexico and the EU, and serves as the liaison between both regions and the other ministries and state and municipal governments.

[18] This program's aims are to contribute to the design of concrete actions and policies for incorporating international human rights norms and standards in Mexico, achieve an understanding of the international and regional protection of human rights and the country's international obligations, consolidate a space and foster a culture of dialogue between the government and civil society, facilitate the exchange of know-how and experiences to aid in developing proposals for public policies based on international human rights norms and standards, and design a publicity campaign to disseminate program-derived experience and knowledge.

[19] According to Ministry of the Economy figures, since the free trade agreement came into effect, there has been a substantial increase in trade, which reached U.S$42 billion in 2006, with a 100 percent increase in European investment. Despite Mexico's continued trade deficit, exports to the EU increased more than 160 percent between 2000 and 2006.

Also, the Ministry of the Economy considers that the EUMFTA's Facilitation Project has produced positive results, particularly in relation to strengthening the capabilities of government institutions and bodies responsible for implementing the treaty and promoting reciprocal trade and investment.

For its part, the Finance Ministry considers the EU "a fertile place for developing trade and the economy." This ministry is in charge of relations with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), institutions that the Mexican government considers strategic for supporting investments, promoting the private sector, strengthening financial institutions and legal systems and developing the infrastructure needed to support the private sector.[20] (SHCP, 2007)

The Finance Ministry thinks that Mexico's membership in the EBRD, together with intensified economic relations with the European Union, will give it the opportunity to have a trade presence in Central and Eastern Europe. For its part, the EIB is an important source of financing for the country's development.[21] Since 1995, the EIB has invested 210.2 million euros in four companies in Mexico with majority European capital: Volkswagen, Vidrio Saint-Gobain, Vetromex América and the Mexi-Gas consortium. (Olivares, 2006)

Lastly, we have the National Foreign Trade Bank (BANCOMEXT), an institution that perceives the EU market as an area of opportunity in which Mexican businessmen can get good yields from their investments, particularly because of its size and diversity. Thus, BANCOMEXT offers Mexican companies general information about the EU; studies about products that might have more access to consumers; strategies and know-how to access the market; research on profiles of European and Mexican businessmen; and reports on Mexican trade with the EU and main exports and imports.

Considering the economic and trade benefits the European Union offers Mexican investors, BANCOMEXT also serves as a liaison between the latter and financial institutions like the

[20] In contrast with the EIB, the EBRD is not made up of exclusively European members. Mexico is even a founding member of the bank, participating with 30 million euros in equity, or 0.15 percent of the institution's total capital stock, 3,000 shares. (SHCP, 2007)

[21] Founded in 1958 by the Treaty of Rome, the EIB has traditionally concentrated its financing operations in EU countries. However, over the years it has extended its mandate to be able to operate in other countries. In 1993, the Council of the European Union established the first mandate for Asia and Latin America authorizing the EIB to finance projects there. (Delaplace, 2005)

EBRD through the Mexico-European Union Business Centre. It also services cooperation programs for small and medium-sized businesses, which, in the eyes of the Mexican government "have made it possible to strengthen business relations… and promote competitiveness and Mexican small and medium-sized companies' export capabilities." (BANCOMEXT, 2005) To contribute to the expansion of Mexican products in Europe, it created the *Eurocentro BANCOMEXT*, whose main objective is to orient Mexican businessmen interested in that market.

The Legislature

Mexico's legislative branch, made up of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, also has a position on the European Union. Although in general it does not differ substantially from the executive branch's view, the topics and kind of meetings held in the parliamentary sphere are more specific and different from those of heads of state.

First of all, we should point out that Mexico's legislature conceives of the EU as an important political point of reference not only for our country, but for the international community as a whole. In that sense, this branch of government has been fundamental in designing a policy for creating closer political, trade and cultural ties with the EU. This is because, while it does not have the ability to define Mexico's foreign relations, it can have an influence on the direction of that policy through its constitutional right to ratify any international agreements Mexico may sign (Article 76, Subsection I), and through its ability to pass points of agreement.[22]

During its fifty-ninth period of sessions (2003-2006), the Mexican Congress approved only five points of agreement about the European Union, covering points like the III EU-LAC Summit in Guadalajara, feminicide and domestic violence, and electoral issues (observers and information about the 2006 elections). During the first year of the sixtieth Congress (2006-2009), four points of agreement have been approved on issues ranging from trade (the creation of the Transatlantic Marketplace), migration (guest worker programs in Spain and Italy), and the defence of Mexicans abroad (the specific case of the deportation of Mexican

[22] Points of agreement are exhortations, clarifications and positions that the legislative branch discusses and argues and then sends to representatives of the executive and the judiciary so the latter can then make a statement or explain their position about specific issues.

tourists by Spain in July 2007). The numerical comparison of the five points of agreement approved by the last Congress and the four presented in a single year of the current one show Mexican legislators' growing interest in Mexico's relations with the EU.

Points of agreement about the European Union

LX period of sessions 2003-2006	LX period of sessions First year (September 2006-July 2007)
1) A request that the federal executive include in the final declaration of the Third European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Summit of Heads of State and Government recognition and support for the work of the International Criminal Court. (April 2004) 2) The Congress decides to join the European Parliament campaign against domestic violence and exhorts the federal executive to concretize the Council of Europe-Mexico Cooperation Agreement with regard to feminicide. (July 2005) 3) An exhortation to the federal executive to come to an agreement with its European counterpart and the members of the Council of the European Union to follow up on and implement the program for cooperation and assistance with regard to feminicides, and so that at that time, this program of cooperation and assistance be included as an integral part of the current Mexico-European Commission Program for Cooperation on Human Rights. (January 2006) 4) Requesting that the executive inform the congresses of Latin America, North America and the European Union about Mexico's electoral process. (July 2006) 5) To express the legislature's pleasure in and approval of the participation of European Union representatives as observers of the Mexican 2006 elections. (July 2006);	1) An exhortation to the EU-Latin America Parliamentary Assembly for it to express its disagreement with the U.S. decision to build a fence along its border with Mexico. (November 2006) 2) A suggestion to the federal executive to consider the relevance of coming to bilateral agreements that would make it possible to implement guest worker programs with some countries of the EU, particularly Italy and Spain. (March 2007) 3) Exhortation to the federal executive to express Mexico's interest to the EU, the United States and Canada in participating in negotiations for the creation of a Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement. (April 2007) 4) Exhortation to the federal executive to begin consultations with the government of Spain about the arbitrary expulsion of Mexican tourists and the unfair treatment they were subject to, as well as to request moral and material restitution for damages derived from an unfair, unilateral procedure. (July 2007)

Source: Own elaboration with *Gaceta Parlamentaria* data.

Mexican legislators have also sought to shore up inter-parliamentary ties by holding meetings and forums, creating commissions, trying to exchange opinions and experiences that could be the basis for creating a body of norms more in accordance with Mexican society's needs and to try to harmonize human rights and gender legislation.

From their point of view, in addition to being a natural ally for Mexico in international forums on matters like the defence of multilateralism and principles of international law or the

recognition of the principle of shared responsibility on international issues like the fight against drug trafficking or climate change, the EU can support Mexico both in its internal development (through cooperation) and in its efforts around such specific issues as migrant workers. In other words, in addition to recognizing the EU's economic potential, Mexican legislators are very interested in taking full advantage status as a "civil power."

The Mexican Congress initiated relations with the European Parliament in 1994 in the framework of the European Union-Latin America Inter-Parliamentary Conference. During the 1990s several parliamentary meetings were held, but it was not until 2004 that bilateral political parliamentary dialogue was institutionalized with the establishment of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Created in September 2004 and made up of 28 legislators from each institution, the committee's essential objective is to increase and institutionalize legislative dialogue in order to contribute to the well-being of the citizens of both regions. Joint committees are the highest-level mechanism that the European Parliament gives to its strategic partners like Mexico and Chile in Latin America.[23]

By July 2007, the committee had held meetings in Strasbourg (September 2005), Monterrey (January 2006), Brussels (May 2006) and Mexico City (February-March 2007). The agendas reflect the renewed dynamism of political issues in Mexico-EU relations, dealing with questions like migration, climate change, national security and the fight against terrorism.

Also, in the broader sphere of bi-regional relations, Mexico actively participates in the European Union-Latin America Inter-Parliamentary Conference[24] and in the recently created

[23] The committee's specific objectives are to: a) deepen parliamentary dialogue through existing mechanisms and parliamentary meetings to prepare the Summits of Heads of State and Government; b) intensify relations between the European Parliament and the Mexican Congress and establish mechanisms to directly link up legislators from both bodies; c) defend positions of common interest in international forums; d) explore the potential of the Global Agreement for benefiting all citizens of the EU and Mexico; e) work for bigger budgets for cooperation projects, particularly in the areas of science, technology and education; f) study and propose solutions to conflicts that might arise due to the adoption of measures that would constitute trade barriers; g) foster cooperation in agriculture; and h) hold seminars about the benefits of the agreement for small and medium-sized companies and on the functioning of structural and cohesion funds in Europe. (Trejo, 2007)

[24] Established in 1974, the Parliamentary Conference is a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Latin American and European legislators, as well as a means to do follow-up on the state of relations between Latin American and Europe and bring the two regions closer together. Conference topics include peace, democracy, human rights, bilateral trade relations, foreign debt, investment, cooperation for development, strengthening democracy and regional integration.

EU-Latin America Parliamentary Assembly.[25] Through this body, the Latin American and European countries have expressed their solidarity with Mexico by stating that the U.S. construction of a border fence is incompatible with relations between good neighbors and increases the vulnerability of migrants, and that dialogue and cooperation are the appropriate means for dealing with immigration issues between our two countries.

Political Parties

Currently, eight parties of different ideological persuasions and membership are registered with Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). These are the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the National Action Party (PAN), Convergence, the Labour Party (PT), the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM), the New Alliance Party (PNA) and Social Democratic Alternative (today Social Democratic Party)

Despite the ideological diversity of these political forces, they agree on their view of the European Union: they consider it a decisive actor in the international community given its strength and political, economic and cultural development. Also, the political parties' recognition of the EU's important role in international relations encourages them to agree that Mexico should strengthen its links to it, centring on economics.

Seven of the country's eight political forces mention the European Union in their basic documents or electoral platforms to a greater or lesser degree. Nevertheless, we should point out that while practically all of them mention the EU in their electoral platforms, only the PRI, the PAN and Convergence refer to it in their basic documents, specifically in their work or action programs. Thus, the PRD, PT and Green Party took a position in their 2006 electoral coalition platforms for the Coalition for the Welfare of All (PRD-PT-Convergence) and the Alliance for Mexico (PRI and PVEM), as did Social Democratic Alternative in its platform. The only party that made no explicit mention of the EU is New Alliance, whose 2006

[25] Created in mid-2006, the assembly held its first meeting in mid-November in Mexico. Its aim is to strengthen relations between the two regions in extra-economic areas, seeking "common positions and actions for fostering comprehensive, sustainable development of nations and to fight poverty and social exclusion." It will be made up equally of members from the European Parliament and representatives of Latin American parliaments (Parlatino), the Andean and Central American Parliament (Parlacen), of the Mercosur Parliamentary Commission, and the EU-Mexico and EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committees. Mexico will have two seats: one for the Joint Committee and another for its representation in the Parlatino. (Senado de la República, 2006)

platform refers to the need to diversify the country's trade without specifying what countries or regions would be the targets of that policy.

The European Union and the Mexican Political Parties

Political Party	Basic Documents Program of Action	Electoral Platform 2006-2012
National Action Party (PAN) (Right)	✓	✓
Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (Centre-Left)	✓	✓
Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) (Left)		✓
Labour Party (PT) (Left)		✓
Convergence Party (Centre-Left)	✓	✓
Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVM) (Centre)		✓
New Alliance (Right)		
Social Democratic Alternative (Centre-Left)		✓

Convergence's Action Plan states that one of Mexican foreign policy's objectives should be the diversification of relations in order to not depend on a single power or economic bloc. It therefore considers that this objective can be achieved through the Global Agreement with the European Union. (Convergencia, 2005)

In the same way, in their electoral platform the Coalition for the Welfare of All (PRD-PT-Convergence) states that its diversification strategy requires consolidating relations with the European Union, and, in addition to optimizing the Global Agreement, reversing the trend of decreasing bilateral exchange. (PRD-PT-Convergence, 2006)

For its part, the PAN emphasizes the importance of boosting collaboration between Mexico and Europe to strengthen the role of the first geographic, historical and cultural bridge between the two continents. It says that the Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement should be used to bolster exchange and take full advantage of all opportunities. It also states that Mexican participation as an observer in the Council of Europe should be taken as an opportunity to intensify links and work on issues of common interest. (PAN, 2004 & 2006)

The Institutional Revolutionary Party proposes intensifying relations with the EU because of its central role in Mexico's efforts to diversify its diplomatic relations and given its political and economic weight in the international community. However the PRI considers that Mexico has still not concretized its relationship with the world's foremost trade power, and therefore that spaces for political dialogue, fostering investment, trade and cultural exchange still must be opened up with the European Union. It therefore proposes strengthening the ties we have with Europe through the already existing Global Agreement, the Council of Europe and the European Union Summits and the Ibero-American Summit. (PRI, 2007)

This same sentiment is expressed in the Alliance for Mexico Platform, where the PRI and the PVEM argue that it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with the EU, maximize the utilization of the Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement and increase cultural exchanges and educational, scientific and technological cooperation. (PRI, PVEM, 2006)

Finally, Social Democratic Alternative states that Europe is a region with which Mexico should ensure closer ties and that the advances concretized in the EU-Mexico Agreement must not be ignored, but rather deepened and followed up. (Alternative, 2006)

The Business Community

The Mexican government's official version of how the EUMFTA benefits the country differs from the perception of most local businessmen. Although trade has increased 33 percent since it came into effect, the benefits have not spread to all sectors of the business community, 86 percent of whose exports continue to go to the United States of America, while the European market has only a 5.3 percent share. (European Commission, 2006)[26]

Along these same lines, there is a gap between official reports and those of different business organizations, particularly regarding access to the treaty's benefits. Factors like language, geographical distance and the continued unfamiliarity with the European market join together

[26] Delegación de la Comisión Europea en México, *Estadísticas del comercio México-EU*, December 2006.

so that in most businessmen's minds, the EU continues to be conceived of as an inaccessible market.

Mexican different businessmen's associations, like the Mexican Businessmen's Foreign Trade, Investment and Technology Council, the National Chamber of Industry (CANACINTRA), the National Association of Mexican Importers and Exporters (ANIERM), the Businessmen's Coordinating Council (CCE) and the National Confederation of Industrial Chambers (CONCAMIN) recognize the opportunities the EUMFTA opens up, particularly in sectors that have not yet been fully explored, like processed foods, auto parts, furniture and footwear.

However, these same business groups think that the EUMFTA has fundamentally benefited the subsidiaries of European companies that do intra-firm trade and has only marginally benefited national industry because of the lack of a national development policy. The Mexican business community thinks that this has led to sharper trade asymmetries between Mexico and European countries, increasing Mexico's trade deficit with the EU and maintaining the concentration of exports to the United States.[27] It also thinks that information and dissemination of the support programs for small and medium-sized industries are still deficient,[28] and that the government has shown no commitment whatsoever to creating awareness in business institutions about the importance of seeking proposals and better conditions for participating in EUMFTA bodies.

During the early months of 2007, Mexican government officials even expressed their concern about Mexican businesses' not taking sufficient advantage of the opportunities offered by the EUMFTA, despite meetings between Mexican and European businesspersons.[29] For this

[27] Between 2000 and 2003, imports of European products, particularly intermediate and capital goods, grew 9 percent a year, reaching U.S.$17.8619 billion in 2003. On the other hand, between 2004 and 2006, European imports were an average of 11.32 percent of all Mexican imports. Thus, by January 2007, Mexico's trade balance with the EU was negative, -U.S.$1,952,674,290.

[28] One of the sectors that has gotten the most attention in government speeches and statements and in EUMFTA development programs is the small and medium-sized company. Given this, the Ministry of the Economy, through the Mexico-European Union Business Center (CEMUE), promotes and supports small and medium-sized companies so they can participate in strategic sectors and place their products in the European market. Another government mechanism is the Project to Facilitate the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the European Union (PROTLCUEM), developed by the Ministry of the Economy and the European community to promote bilateral trade cooperation and facilitate government and business administrative processes to simplify some of the activities included in the EUMFTA.

[29] Outstanding among these are the sectoral meetings organized in the framework of the AL-Invest and the AL-Partenariat.

reason, they have agreed to work together with businessmen to detect the obstacles preventing Mexican companies from benefiting from the agreement. (El Sol de México, 2007)

With regard to investment, these business groups agree that the 15 Agreements on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments signed with the EU and the changes to Mexican legislation have been very beneficial to their European counterparts. [30] This is especially the case for the control of the country's financial system ―more than 50 percent of all assets in Mexico's financial system are managed by European banks― which, in the eyes of small and medium-sized Mexican businessmen endangers the Mexican government's ability to orient national development, weakening it on the international stage. (SRE-UNAM & CELAG, 2006) In this same vein, benefits to Mexican businessmen have been minor: Mexican investments in the EU come to about U.S.$10 billion, outstanding among which are those by companies like Vitro, the Grupo Modelo and IMSA in Spain.

The Mexican business community faces several challenges regarding the EUMFTA. Given the presence of actors from other countries like Poland, Turkey, China and Korea, the Mexican government and private enterprise must make their companies more competitive without neglecting their social corporate responsibility. Another challenge is to take full advantage of the EUMFTA and compete with the large companies that have already benefited from it, particularly with intra-firm trade that has the experience and financial capability to place their products in the European market.

2.3. Civil Society

Mexican civil society recognizes the EU as a fundamental political actor in international relations. At the same time, it sees the Union as a social reference point, given the robust, successful results of European programs and policies aimed at developing and creating well-being for their societies, and the leadership the EU provides around issues of human rights and democracy internationally.

[30] The EU is firmly entrenched as Mexico's second largest foreign investor, with 25.5 percent of FDI, concentrated in the service sector (51 percent) and manufacturing (32 percent). By September 2006, 7,020 companies with at least some EU capital had been registered in the country, making up 24.5 percent of all 31,060 companies with FDI nationwide. The main EU investors are Spain (45.2 percent), Holland (32.4 percent), the United Kingdom (9.7 percent) and Germany (8.3 percent). Secretaría de Economía, *Reporte de los flujos de inversión extranjera directa en México*, Dirección General de Inversión Extranjera, Secretaría de Economía, Mexico City, 2007. Available on line at www.simie.economia.gob.mx

During the six-year administration of President Vicente Fox, Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry launched a process of dialogue and consultation with civil society organizations (CSOs) to gather proposals about Mexican foreign policy. This dialogue contributed to furthering the participation of civil society in bilateral meetings held with European social organizations (the EU-Mexico Social Dialogue) and in the framework of the EU-Latin America Summits.

From the standpoint of civil society, links with the EU in political and social matters can help ensure that the Mexican government listens to social demands, given the importance it gives to disseminating the image of a democratic country, respectful of human rights abroad, particularly in the European Union. However, this positive perception about Europe is not repeated in the case of the Global Agreement. Some have roundly criticized the treaty because it does not establish a central body to monitor compliance with the clauses on democracy, human rights and the protection of the environment. (Döler & Castro, 2004)

Also, organizations like the Mexican Network against Free Trade say that the EUMFTA is making the same mistakes that NAFTA does by ignoring all social issues and concentrating only on trade. Some organizations have also expressed their disapproval of some European companies' not complying with Mexican labour legislation.

Despite having achieved the institutionalization of the EU-Mexico Civil Society Dialogue Forum, the civil society organizations have expressed their displeasure at the government's refusal to create a citizens' observatory, and demand the establishment of a Joint Consultative Council that would advise the authorities about Mexican-European relations regarding EUMFTA impact in different fields.

Research Centers (Academics)

Studies about the European integration process have sparked great interest in Mexico, particularly in the framework of North American integration. Mexican academics consider Europe's successful integration model the reference point *par excellence* for regional integration processes worldwide, including, of course, the Mexican case. They agree that the greatest potential of the Global Agreement is not in the field of trade, but in that of political dialogue and cooperation for development, particularly with regard to social inclusion.

The study of community mechanisms for dealing with regional inequality, like structural funds, the European model for social well-being and its problems and the difficulties in legal cooperation within the EU are all part of the research agenda, which also includes a common foreign and security policy, European community law and, of course, relations between the EU and Latin American and Mexico.

Research centers for European studies are of recent creation, but the number of academics and students interested in European topics is growing exponentially. For example, the 2005 Annual Congress of the Mexican International Studies Association (MISA) included 10 panel discussions and three book launches on European topics (out of a total of 113 panel discussions). This was a significant increase *vis-à-vis* the previous year, when there were three panel discussions and two book launches about Europe of a total of 110 panels.

The Institute for European Integration Studies (IIE) of the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM) was founded in 2000, with European Commission funding. The institute's fundamental objective is to foster studies about European integration and its relations with Latin America, built around the European Studies Chair headed by Ambassador Olga Pellicer. (IEE, 2008)

The National Autonomous University of Mexico's Center for European Studies (CEE) was founded in 2002 with the aim of carrying out multi- and interdisciplinary research on Europe and European countries, on Europe and its relations with other international actors and on the EU regional integration process. CEE research projects include "The UE and NAFTA: A Compared Perspective. Convergent or Divergent Regionalisms?", "The Challenges of Regionalisms in the Face of the New International Security Agenda" and "Relations between Mexico and the EU: Promoting Governance and Social Inclusion." (CEE, 2008)

The CEE also fosters the dissemination of knowledge of this subject in society through organizing lectures by EU ambassadors and high-level officials and through the annual Inter-university European Studies Conference that brings together the country's most renowned European studies researchers.

In addition to the CEE, the UNAM has a European Community Studies Program (PECE), which is part of the Graduate Studies Division of the Acatlán Faculty of Higher Studies. The PECE gives a diploma course about European community law and, together with the Barcelona University Institute for European Integration Studies and the Veracruzana University, jointly develops the project called "Legal Expressions and Socioeconomic Implications of Migration in Times of Globalization," financed by the Spanish International Cooperation Agency. (PECE, 2008)

The private Monterrey Technological Institute has also fostered study about the EU. For the last two years it has held a Europe Week in Mexico at its State of Mexico campus, including a series of lectures mainly about the economy. It should also be pointed out that this school has a Eurocenter that is part of the EU cooperation programs for supporting trade with small and medium-sized companies.

The nationwide Mexican Association for European Union Studies is part of the world network, the European Community Studies Association. There are other, local, organizations, like the University of Guadalajara's Program for European Studies, the Veracruzana University's Virtual Strategic Center for European Studies and the state of Tlaxcala's Cultural Center for European Studies.

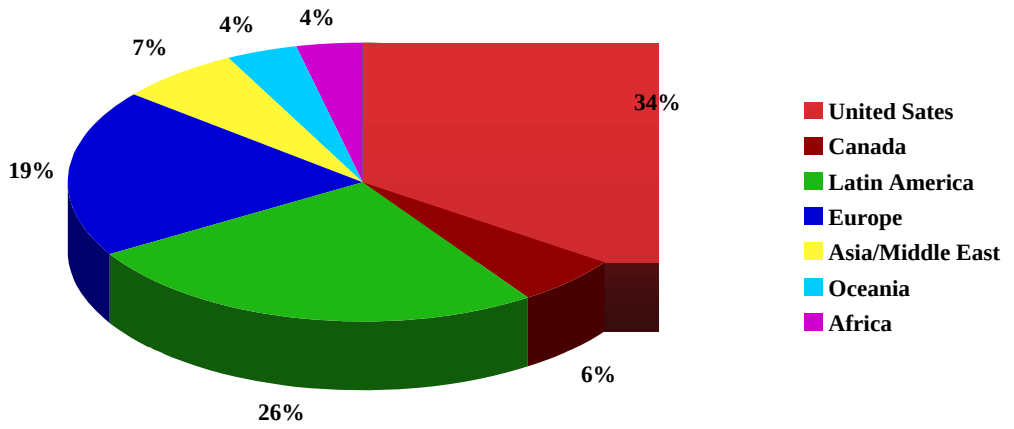
2.4. Media

To get an idea about the coverage of the EU in the Mexican press, and in order to made a comparison of the levels of cover of the EU versus other regions of the world (specially North and Latin America), we took four national dailies *La Jornada* (left), *El Universal* (center), *Reforma* (center right) and *La Crónica* (right), and looked the articles (leading articles and news) from the different regions from January 2006 though March 2008 (for all details see Appendices II and III).

In total we found 6,904 notes on international issues, classified in six regions: North America, Latin America, European Union, Asia and Middle East, Oceania and Africa. The analysis of the coverage of the press shows that the treatment of the European issues is still very far from

the attention stages to the United States, whose extensive cover is a clear sample of the degree of concentration and interest that prevails in the foreign relations of Mexico.

Figure 8
Mexican Press Coverage for Region
January 2006-March 2008



Source: Own elaboration with newspapers data.

The reporting of North and Latin America and Europe, go beyond 80 percent of the international subjects coverage of the four newspapers, but North America concentrate 40 percent of the attention (especially the United States that reaches 36 percent), follow for Latin America with 26 percent and Europe in the third place with 19 percent. Also, it is important to note that, independent of its ideological tendencies, all papers concentrate their attention in the United States.

In the case of the perspectives of the Mexican press about UE, from January 2006 to March 2008, *La Crónica* published 461 articles about it; *El Universal*, 380; *Reforma*, 255; and *La Jornada*, 247. These newspapers all cover the economy, politics, culture, society and the environment, but they differ in their emphasis. In general, their slant is positive, given the EU's economic and political importance internationally and its social and cultural development. They consider the Union a political and social point of reference (all four

continually cover European positions on issues such as terrorism, security, drug trafficking and the environment, as well as social advances) and a priority region for Mexico (they constantly refer to the economic and trade benefits derived from this relationship).

The EU within the Mexican Press

2006-March 2008

	La Crónica	*El Universal*	*Reforma*	*La Jornada*
Leading Articles	32	73	19	2
External Relations	129	55	58	47
Partnership with Mexico	95	34	41	12
Human Rights	5	9	-	0
Politics	84	62	5	164
Environment	20	12	15	3
Society	10	12	3	-
Economy	16	57	64	1
Security	57	48	27	17
Culture, Science and Technology	-	16	9	1
Other topics	13	2	14	-
Total	461	380	255	247

Source: Own elaboration with information and data of the Newspapers.

La Crónica emphasizes articles about the European Union's foreign relations, particularly with Mexico. The most frequently recurring themes are trade and investment, political links, the 2006 elections, bilateral relations and presidential visits. We should point out that this paper's perception of Mexico-EU relations is that Europe is a potential market for Mexican exports and that Mexico is an attractive place for European investment. Paradoxically, it makes little reference to news about the EUMFTA.

Politics is another of the issues most touched on by *La Crónica*, particularly the relationship among EU-member countries, migration, the historical process and the enlargement and consolidation of the union. With regard to security, the main points are terrorism, international security, fuel, air security and the bird flu. The points least dealt with are culture, science and technology, human rights and health; plus, there are few op-ed pieces about the union.

El Universal, on the other hand, is inclined to publish op-ed pieces, dealing mainly with European elections, its enlargement, politics, energy, history, migration, terrorism, the common currency (the euro), climate change, the EU position in the world order and foreign relations (with the United States, the Middle East and Latin America). The editorials tend to take a positive view of the EU given its international economic and political importance, but also because of its cultural and social development.

This paper also emphasized more articles about the economy, security and EU foreign relations. About the economy, topics included telecommunications, trade, investment, protectionism, employment and financial regulation. About security, the themes were terrorism, migration, fuels and bird flu. And about foreign relations, the regions most mentioned were the Middle East, Latin America, Russia, Cuba, the United States and Africa. The topics least frequently touched on were the society, culture and science and technology.

European Union foreign relations are the focal point of *Reforma*'s coverage, particularly links to Mexico (trade and investment, political relations, Mexico's 2006 elections and Mexican presidents' visits to Europe). Other relations frequently mentioned are those with Eastern Europe, the United States (particularly trade) and Iran (politics and security).

Reforma also frequently publishes economic news, security and op-ed pieces. The main economic issues touched on are commerce, investment, finances and EU in general; and with regard to security, drug trafficking, common security measures, missiles and air and port security. The editorials tend to have a positive vision of the EU's integration process, economy and political situation. They also ponder the future of integration given the rejection of the European Constitution. Other less frequently mentioned topics are society, culture, science and technology, migration and politics. The lack of attention to politics seems peculiar given the other dailies' emphasis on it and the EU's activity in this sphere.

La Jornada, gives special attention to news related to Political issues like the expansion and consolidation of the European Union are highlighted. In contrast, topics like the economic sector, the environment, the security and opinion editorials were mentioned in lesser proportions.

European Foreign Affairs take up an important section of the newspaper; especially the topics concerning relations with Mexico, some issues are pointed out such as free trade, political relations, and the July 2006 presidential elections. Concerning relations with the United States, the observed issues are trade, politics, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) approaches and the hot topics concerning Iran and Palestine. Regarding with Latin America, the outstanding headlines were related to the Birregional partnerships, Central America, the Andean Community, Brazil and Cuba; while the relations between the European Union and Middle East were also registered.

Conclusions

For Mexico, today the EU is an economic, political and social point of reference. While differences exist about the potential for economic relations, around the issue of our political partnership, all sectors of society agree. Thus, in the framework of the twenty-first-century reconfiguration of the world, the EU is seen by all sectors as a successful integration process and a leader on human rights issues, democracy and the defence of multilateral institutions.

In addition to creating positive attitudes in the sectors we have analyzed, this means that the EU is considered one of our country's fundamental allies in the international concert. Visions clearly converge about European "moral" leadership in the international concert. For that reason, the country's collective awareness gives the EU a privileged place among Mexico's political partners, and all sectors want this to lead to a balance in our relationship with the United States.

Nevertheless, if it is true that the EU is seen as a counterweight to the United States and a strategic partner in the international sphere, there are significant differences between the leaders and public opinion about the importance to the EU for the diversification policy of the country. As was show, the surveys indicates that in 2004, virtually the Mexican leaders gave the same weight to Latin America and EU, if it is true that in the 2006 survey the attention was concentrate in Latin America (as a result of the problems with Venezuela and Cuba). But in the case of the public in general, Latin America is still considerate the most important region for Mexico's diversification policy and, as the data illustrate, in general the preferences about the EU is concentrate in the central part of the country.

One very noteworthy matter in the political sphere is the Mexican government's renewed interest in political dialogue with its European counterparts and the inclusion of issues like the fight against organized crime and terrorism, not necessarily with an eye to forging an alliance in international bodies to promote a vision of shared responsibility, the defence of human rights in the fight against terrorism or a broad interpretation of international security, but because of the current administration's need to strengthen its National Security Strategy and seek support from its European counterparts. This was clear in Calderón's second trip to Europe during which he mainly dealt with the fight against organized crime, specifically drug trafficking, and the emphasis during the Spanish president's recent visit to Mexico on the issue of terrorism. In this case, it is not a matter of seeking a counterweight to U.S. unilateralism and its narrow understanding of national and international security, but of seeking new allies in the battle the Mexican administration has undertaken domestically.

With regard to the economic agenda, we see a continuation of Mexican government's trade diversification strategy launched at the end of the 1980s, with the EU as the priority region. Despite the fact that the government discourse about the benefits and potential of the EUMFTA continues, the administration has begun to recognize that the diversification strategy has its limitations and that it needs to respond to the Mexican business community's demands that it design a policy for domestic development that supports companies and gives them sufficient backing to enter the European market. Clearly, only a few Mexican companies have been able to enter the European market, while most of the country's businessmen continue to view the EU as a distant, relatively inaccessible partner, meaning that the option continues to be the familiar U.S. market.

For their part, civil society organizations recognize in the EU an important reference point for the defence of human rights and democracy in Mexico. Despite this, they have expressed criticism of the way in which the Global Agreement has been implemented and the fact that few spaces have opened up for dialogue with them, as well as their concern that the Mexican government has abandoned the social agenda and that trade dominates bilateral relations. Nevertheless, the dialogue carried out in the framework of CSO forums is very valuable in that it not only allows the organizations to express their concerns and views about relations between Mexico and the EU, but it also contributes to our societies' mutual understanding.

Interest in and study of EU-related themes is growing in Mexico, as can be seen in the number of institutes created in recent years to that end and the growing numbers of academics and students who choose Europe for doing research and graduate studies. National newspaper coverage also reflects Mexican society's growing interest in the EU, an interest that definitely perceives Europe as one of Mexico's main international partners and an option for counterbalancing our heavily concentrated relations with our neighbour to the north.

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Reforma,	www.reforma.com.mx
El Universal	www.el-universal.com.mx
La Jornada	www.jornada.unam.mx

Gaceta Parlamentaria *(Parlamentary Gazzete)*	www.gaceta.diputados.gob.mx

Academic and research centers

Instituto de Estudios de la Integración Europea (Institute for European Integration Studies) http://ieie.itam.mx/

Centro de Estudios Europeos de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM Center for European Studies) www.estudioseuropeos.unam.mx.

European Community Studies Program, under the aegis of the Acatlán Faculty of Higher Studies. http://www.peceacatlan.com/.

Appendix I

The European Union and the Mexican Political Parties

Political Party	*Europe*
National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional) PAN	To intensify the cooperation between Mexico and Europe means to strengthen our role as a geographical, historical and cultural bridge between both continents. We must take advantage of the force that our Agreement of Economic Association, Political Concertation and Cooperation with the European Union is giving us in order to energize our trade and promote our economic opportunities. The participation as observers within the European Council must be understood as a gateway to strengthen our links in order to work out together common issues. (*Program of Action)* Mexico is a main actor in the world. We will create mechanisms that allow us develop our Agreement of Strategic Association with the European Union, in order to let our society to take advantage of its commercial, political and cultural capabilities. *(Electoral Platform, 2006)*
Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) PRI	To deepen our partnership with Europe: Traditionally Europe has played a central role within the Mexican efforts to diversify our diplomatic relations because of its political and economical power in the international community, besides its historical importance regarding to our country. However, the opportunity to establish a strategic partnership with the European Union, the largest commercial power in the world, has not been fully reached. Our political party assumes that it is still necessary to have more forums for political dialogue, promotion of the investments and trade, and cultural exchange with the European Union. For these reasons, PRI is looking for a deeper partnership between Mexico and the European countries under the framework of the Agreement of Economic Association, Political Concertation and Cooperation; besides it, a stronger promotion of an active participation in the European Council, the European Union and the Ibero-American Summits are needed. *(Program of Action)* The government that we want: Sovereign country and International Policy: To strength the cooperation with Europe. To maintain the promotion of a deeper link with the Ibero-American region and to participate in all the cooperation initiatives of the region. To promote, along with the European Union, a stronger Agreement of Economic Association, Political Concertation and Cooperation, joined by the strength of the cultural exchanges such as the educational, scientific and technological cooperation. *Electoral Platform 2006 (Political Coalition with PVEM- Alliance for Mexico)*

Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) PRD	Diversification of the International Relations: To consolidate a foreign policy with Europe and the European Union that does not just optimize the Global Agreement within this region but reverts to the decreasing tendency of the bilateral trade. *Electoral Platform 2006 (Political Coalition with PT & Convergencia –For the Well of All)*
Labour Party (Partido del Trabajo) **PT**	The EU only is mentioned in the documents regarding to the Coalition for the Welfare of All.
Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (Partido Verde Ecologista de México) PVEM	The EU only is mentioned in the documents regarding to the political coalition Alliance for Mexico.
Convergencia *(Convergencia)*	To diversify our relations with the world: With the purpose of not depending on the decisions of one hegemonic country or an economic block, we must diversify our international relations, for this reason it is important to capitalise the Global Agreement with the European Union. (*Program of Action)* Also, the EU is mentioned in the documents regarding to the Coalition for the Welfare of All
New Alliance Party (Partido Nueva Alianza) **PNA**	The EU is not mentioned in any basic document of the party. The Electoral Platform only has a short mention to diversification of foreign policy without giving specific cases.
Social Democratic Alternative (Alternativa Socialdemócrata)	Diversification: Mexico should look for a closer relation with Europe. A fundamental step has been given after the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. However, the aim to keep the attention focused in other regions (the United States and Canada), cause us to search for an additional effort in order to gain better benefits from this association. International Cooperation: To promote regionalization as a mechanism to lead us to a balanced participation in the world, in this way it is important to strengthen the Agreement of Economic Association, Political Concertation and Cooperation with the European Union. *(Electoral Platform, 2006)*

Appendix II

Mexican Press Coverage for Region
(January 2006-March 2008

Region	Newspaper	Number of notes
North America	La Crónica	698
	El Universal	627
	Reforma	1009
	La Jornada	465
	Total	**2779**
United States	La Crónica	608
	El Universal	517
	Reforma	871
	La Jornada	402
	Total	**2398**
Canada	La Crónica	90
	El Universal	110
	Reforma	138
	La Jornada	63
	Total	**401**
Latin America	La Crónica	411
	El Universal	421
	Reforma	541
	La Jornada	405
		1778
European Union	La Crónica	461
	El Universal	380
	Reforma	255
	La Jornada	247
	Total	**1343**
Asia/Middle East	La Crónica	99
	El Universal	103
	Reforma	171
	La Jornada	87
	Total	**460**

Region	Newspaper	Number of notes
Oceania	La Crónica	90
	El Universal	72
	Reforma	50
	La Jornada	64
	Total	**276**
Africa	La Crónica	61
	El Universal	55
	Reforma	62
	La Jornada	70
	Total	**248**

Appendix III
The European Union in Mexican Newspapers

La Crónica
January 2006-March 2008

	Topics				Total
Leading Articles	United Kingdom Foreign Policy		1	**32**	**32**
	Turkey's Admission		3		
	EU 50th Anniversary		2		
	Relationship EU-Mexico		3		
	Security		2		
	Health		1		
	Mexico-Spain		3		
	Spain's Economy		2		
	EU Consolidation		2		
	EU's Enlargement		1		
	Spain Election		6		
	Kosovo Independence		5		
	Migration		1		
External Relations	EU-Mexico	Trade and investments	22	**95**	**224**
		Political relationship	17		
		Mexican Elections 2006	23		
		Bilateral relationship	18		
		Official Tours	10		
		Cooperation	2		
		Women serial murder	3		
	United Sates		9	**9**	
	China		2	**2**	
	Byelorussia		1	**1**	
	Russia		2	**2**	
	Kosovo		17	**17**	
	Middle East	Overall	20	**53**	
		Iran	16		
		Lebanon	3		
		Palestine	14		
	Africa		3	**3**	
	Other Regions		2	**2**	
	Latin America	Overall	13	**40**	
		Cuba	8		
		Brazil	2		
		Colombia	11		
		Andean Community	1		
		Nicaragua	1		
		Chile	4		
Human Rights			5	**5**	**5**
Politics	History	History	2	**13**	**84**

		Enlargement & Consolidation	7		
		Constitution	2		
		Lisbon Treat	3		
	Migration	EU	4	**13**	
		Spain	9		
	EU's Countries	France	10	**35**	
		Spain	8		
		Rumania	1		
		Italy	9		
		Hungary	2		
		U.K	3		
		Poland	2		
	No EU's Countries	Russia	9	**23**	
		Turkey	3		
		Byelorussia	4		
		Ukraine	1		
		Montenegro	6		
Environment	Global Warming		17	**20**	**20**
	Waste		3		
Society	Health		10	**10**	**10**
Economy	Economic situation			**16**	**16**
	EU overall		1		
		EU's Countries	6		
Security	Terrorism		10	**57**	**57**
	International		8		
	NATO		2		
	Common Security		2		
	Fuels		8		
	Aerial		2		
	Bird flu		20		
	EU's Countries		4		
	Russia		1		
Other topics	Culture		8	**13**	**13**
	Science and Technology		5		
Total					**461**

El Universal

January 2006-March 2008

		EU	Members Countries	No Members Countries	Sub Total	Total
Leading articles	History	3	1		4	**73**
	EU's Enlargement	5			5	
	Politics	1	5	4	10	
	European Elections		14	3	17	
	Terrorism	5	3	1	9	
	Migration	2			2	
	Euro	1			1	
	Fuel	3			3	
	World Order	2	2		4	
	Global Warming	3			3	
	EU-USA-Middle East	8			8	
	EU-Latin America	6			6	
	EU's Security	1			1	
External Relations	Mexico	34			34	**89**
	EU-LA	9			9	
	Middle East	20	2	1	23	
	Cuba	5			5	
	United States	9			9	
	Russia	5			5	
	Africa	4			4	
Politics	Elections		8	11	19	**62**
	Political disputes		21		21	
	EU's Enlargement	11			11	
	Constitution	7			7	
	EU's History	3			3	
	Lisboa Treat	1			1	
Economy	Protectionism	13		3	16	**57**
	Employment	4			4	
	Trade	9			9	
	Investment	3	1		4	
	Financial regulation	2			2	
	Telecommunications	20			20	
	Davos	2			2	
Society	Health	10			10	**12**
	Education	2			2	
Culture		11			11	**11**
Science and Technology		5			5	**5**
Environment	Climate Change	12			12	**12**
Human Rights		9			9	**9**
Security	Terrorism	14	3		17	**48**
	Migration	1	6		7	
	Fuels	10			10	
	Bird Flue	8	2		10	
	Kosovo	3		1	4	
Other topics				2	2	**2**
Total						**380**

Reforma
January 2006-March 2008

	Topics				Total
Leading Articles	European Constitution		2	19	19
	National Policy		4		
	Political Topics		5		
	Economical Topics		2		
	Relationship with Mexico		3		
	Relationship with Latin America		2		
	UE-Islam		1		
External Relations	UE-México	Commerce and inversions	9	41	99
		Political Relationship	22		
		Mexican Elections 2006	8		
		Official Tours	2		
		Science and Technology	2	2	
	Iran		4	4	
	United States (Trade)		45	45	
	Rusia		7	7	
Politic	Migration		5	5	5
Environmental	Climate Change		6	15	15
	Environmental Threats		9		
Society	Demography		3	3	3
Culture			6	6	6
Science and Technology			3	3	3
Economy	East Europe		3	64	64
	UE in general		30		
	Employment		1		
	Commerce, inversion and financial topics		10		
	Members Countries	Italy	4		
		Ireland	1		
		Spain	8		
		France	6		
Security	Overall		2	27	27
	Traffics Drugs		5		
	Security Actions		3		
	Air, port and maritime security / Borders		3		
	Fuels		3		
	Bird Flue		2		
	Kosovo		2		
	Misils		4		
Other topics			14	14	14
	Science and Technology		3		
Total					255

La Jornada
January 2006-March 2008

	Topics				Total
Leading Articles	Security		2	**2**	**2**
External Relationships	EU-Mexico	Trade and investment	3	**12**	**59**
		Political Relationship	8		
		Mexican Elections 2006	1		
	UE-EE.UU	Trade	1	**7**	
		Politics	2		
		CIA	1		
		Iran	2		
		Palestine	1		
	Latin America	Overall	3	**13**	
		Central America	1		
		Andean Community	2		
		Brazil	1		
		Cuba	2		
		Colombia	4		
	Middle East		3	**3**	
	Vatican		4	**4**	
	International Organisms		1	**1**	
	Africa		2	**2**	
	Russia		6	**6**	
	Kosovo		11	**11**	
Politic	Enlargement and Consolidation EU		7	**164**	**164**
	France		55		
	United Kingdom		17		
	Spain		58		
	Italy		12		
	Germany		9		
	Greece		4		
	Poland		2		
Environmental	Climate Change		3	**3**	**3**
Economy	Anti-monopolists Actions		1	**1**	**1**
Security	Terrorism		6	**17**	**17**
	International		6		
	Aerial		1		
	Bird Flue		1		
	Nuclear energy		3		
Other Topics	Culture		1	**1**	**1**
Total					**247**

FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT

THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON

Palestine (West Bank and Gaza)

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive Summary

Palestinians across different segments of society see the EU mainly as a donor and provider of financial and humanitarian assistance. Other aspects of the EU-Palestinian bilateral relationship such as the Interim Association Agreement, the ENP or the Palestinian participation in the Barcelona process appear to play a very marginal role if not none at all.

The political dimension of the EU is primarily seen through the lenses of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Palestinian goal of establishing an independent State. Despite the EU's emphasis on the importance of Palestinian democratic reform, the view of the EU as a promoter of democracy and the rule of law is also seen from the point of view of its principled positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (for instance, its position on Israeli settlements) rather than from the angle of the expansion of their bilateral relationship and the democratic development of the Palestinian Authority.

Palestinians across the political spectrum acknowledge that the EU has a more balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than the US. While Palestinians would welcome an enhanced EU role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pragmatic views on the US actual capability to influence the position of both parties in conflict and broken an agreement prevail.

Palestinians seem to give more importance to the EU's statements and declarations on Israeli policies and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than to specific programs such as EU BAM Rafah or EU COPPS. The EU is not considered the first choice for a possible international presence in the West Bank and Gaza. The presence of the EU Special Envoy on the Middle East Peace Process is scarcely acknowledged. While the Quartet is seen as having raised the profile of the EU, its multilateral nature is put into question as this mechanism is seen influenced by the US. Finally, the EU is seen as having given more importance to the international repercussions of Hamas' victory in 2006 than to its weight

in domestic politics, although it is considered more flexible on the issue of recognition of Hamas than the US.

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The View of Brussels from Palestine

Rami Nasrallah and Simona Santoro[1]

"Be sure that Europe does not forget you; we will never let you down. The agreement I just signed is a clear sign that we are and will be supporting Palestinian refugees. The EU has no other agenda than to help build sustainable peace and prosperity."[2]

Louis Michel, Gaza, November 2005

FIRST SECTION - INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Introduction

This research addresses Palestinian perceptions of the European Union (EU) over a period that covers roughly the past two decades. The study focuses on the view that Palestinian elites and the Palestinian public have of the EU. It also explores the view of the Palestinian print media. This paper focuses on the perceptions of Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza.

At the roots of EU-Palestinian relations is a clear-cut interest for co-operation. The EU has declared stability in the Middle East as one of its priorities and makes no secret of its desire for a more active role in the efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Solana 2003). The Palestinians are heavily dependent on the EU's financial assistance and would

[1] Special thanks to Ruth Hanau Santini and Arturo Marzano for their comments and suggestions on an early draft of this report.

[2] This statement was given by EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel on the occasion of the signing of a 14 million EUR fund to support UNRWA food aid programme. See European Union @ United Nations 2005.

welcome an intensified diplomatic role for the Union, which is broadly considered more favorable to the Palestinian negotiating position than the United States.[3]

Before discussing the issue of perception of the EU, one must understand the context in which these perceptions are developed. Firstly, Palestinian politics and life in the past two decades have been absorbed almost completely by the Oslo process and negotiations with Israel. Inevitably, this has had an impact on Palestinian relations with third-party actors and on Palestinian action and stance in the international arena.

Secondly, in the time span analyzed in this paper, major developments have taken place. Developments from the early 1990s until 2000 include the mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel of each other's right to exist, the beginning of the Oslo process and the establishment of a Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Gaza. But this period was followed by the demise of the "political, institutional and security framework" of the Oslo process, the quasi collapse of the PA, and the Hamas takeover of Gaza (Sayigh 2002). As a consequence of these latter changes, the PA and the population of the West Bank and Gaza have been confronted with a very serious political and humanitarian crisis.

2. Outline of the Research

In the Second Section, the context to the research on Palestinian public perceptions of the EU will be provided. A short outline of the developments related to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and Palestinian domestic politics serves as a chapeau to an overview on EU-Palestinian relations.

The Third Section will be devoted to an analysis of the results of the authors' empirical investigation. The authors will firstly illustrate the methodology used for the research. Then, the data collected on the view of the EU of Palestinian elites and the Palestinian

[3] According to Ghassan Khatib, former Palestinian Minister of Labor and Planning, Vice President of Bir Zeit University, and co-editor of the online journal Bitterlemons.org, "it is about time that other countries, particularly European countries, take a more proactive role. Europeans need to promote an alternative approach infused with European understanding to coordinate international efforts and base them on international legality to solve this conflict and potentially many more. It can only be hoped that such a rational approach will eventually win the full backing of the US." See Khatib (2007a).

public opinion will be presented. This includes an illustration of the perceptions of Palestinian elites based on data collected through interviews and secondary sources. It also focuses on the analysis of Palestinian public opinion polls conducted between 1993 and 2008. A short overview of the results of a research conducted on the Palestinian print media will also be given. A note on Hamas' perceptions of the EU will conclude this Section.

In the Fourth Section, concluding remarks will be made, which are followed by a number of recommendations to the EU.

SECOND SECTION – THE CONTEXT

3. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

The term Oslo process refers to the Declaration of Principles (DoP), negotiated in the capital of Norway and signed by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the State of Israel on 13 September 1993, and a package of subsequent agreements concluded between the two parties between 1993 and 2000. The DoP was negotiated by representatives of the PLO and the Israeli Labor-led government and based on a land for peace formula, and a step-by-step approach founded on the strategy of tackling the easiest problems first and subsequently engaging in the negotiation of the underlying causes of the conflict.[4]

Practically, the agreement established a five-year interim period of autonomy for Gaza and in the West Bank leaving the core issues of the conflict – the political status of a Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza and its geographical dimension, the return of

[4] There is a vast literature on the Oslo process, for example see Abbas (1995), Aggestam (1999), Andoni (1997), Bar Zion (2004), Bar-Siman-Tov (1997), Benchikh (1995), Corbin (1994), Dajani (1994), Dajani(2004), Elmusa (1995), Fouet (1998), Kelman (1997), Makovsky (1996), Savir (1999), Shehadeh (1997), Singer (1999). For the text of the DoP and other Israeli-Palestinian agreements, see the web page of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO www.nad-plo.org or the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs www.mfa.gov.il. The Negotiations Affairs Department has been headed by Mahmoud Abbas (1994-2003) and Saeb Erekat (2003 until present).

Palestinian refugees and displaced persons, the control and sovereignty of water resources, Israeli settlements and Jerusalem - as the object of following negotiations scheduled for start in 1996 and to be implemented in 1999, after the five-year interim phase. Whereas the agreement was reached on procedural norms and general principles regulating the interim phases, the definition of details and goals for the final status was left as the object of future negotiations. This framework should have nourished confidence building and created the conditions for negotiating the core issues of the conflict. In practice, however, the transitional period of the Oslo process, extended beyond the foreseen timetable, proved to be replete with obstacles and was characterized by missed deadlines, incomplete implementation and the erosion of confidence. The parties failed to reconcile their different preferences on the transitional arrangements and the final status. Moreover, instead of being sidelined by progress in the negotiations and the dividends of peace, the opponents of the Oslo process on both sides were able to profit from the recurrent crises and became more and more influential domestically. On the Palestinian side, Islamic rejectionist groups like Hamas gained popularity and were able to mount a terrorist campaign against Israel; on the Israeli side, for three years, from 1996 to 1999, the peace process was led by a government which opposed both the agreements and the very concepts on which they were based.

The parties engaged in final status negotiations between 1999 and 2000 and between 2000 and 2001 but did not reach an agreement.[5] The Camp David summit hosted by US President Bill Clinton was held in this framework. Shortly after, the visit of former opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem sparked Palestinian protests and subsequent confrontation between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli security forces, which resulted in a spiralling of violence known as al-Aqsa/Second Intifada.[6] Post September 2000, the institutional product of the accords, the PA, became the target of Israeli military offenses, while it developed as a springboard for Palestinian attacks against Israel.

[5] On the Camp David negotiations see for example Agha, Malley (2001, 2002a, 2002b), Ross, Grinstein (2001); Morris (2002a, 2002b), Shavit (2001a, 2001b), Sontag (2001).
[6] On the al-Aqsa/Second Intifada see for instance Abdul Hadi (2000c), Hammami, Tamari 2001, Luft 2000, Sharm el-Sheikh Fact Finding Committee (2001).

As a way out of the stalemate, a new strategic 'Roadmap' was elaborated in 2003 which set new political and practical contours for the path towards a settlement of the conflict (A Performance Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 2003). The Roadmap defined steps to be taken by the parties with a view to reaching a final status agreement by 2005. These include: the normalization of the security situation on the ground and the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian security co-operation; a freeze on Israel's settlement activities and progress in Palestinian institution building; the creation of a Palestinian state with provisional borders; progress in permanent status negotiations in the context of an international conference (International Crisis Group 2003). The Roadmap was put forward by the United States (US), the EU, the Russian Federation and the United Nations as members of the Middle East Diplomatic Quartet, a diplomatic and mediation mechanism established in April 2002 to co-ordinate conflict resolution efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Whilst the Oslo process and the subsequent peace initiatives were the result of Israeli-Palestinian peace-making, the Roadmap opened the way to an increased role for third parties in the conflict. With the Roadmap, the framework for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was designed by the international community. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict underwent a further change when in April 2004, former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon presented a Disengagement Plan from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank (Disengagement Plan 2004; Revised Disengagement Plan 2004). Sharon put forward a unilateral plan on the grounds that there was no partner on the Palestinian side. The settlements were evacuated in August 2005.

Alongside the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the Oslo process has also been the catalyst for national reconstruction, and institution building and transition to democracy in the West Bank and Gaza (Shikaki 1996). After the signing of the DoP, the PA was established in the West Bank and Gaza and the PLO leader Yasser Arafat returned to the occupied territories along with the majority of PLO officials. The Palestinian Police was set up, whose members were recruited amongst the PLO's Palestinian Liberation Army

(PLA) and Fateh's followers from the West Bank and Gaza (Luft 1999; Usher 1996). Discontent with the Palestinian leadership's management of the PA and the peace negotiations is considered to have been mobilized with the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, thus causing fragmentation within Fateh (Abdul Hadi 2000; Hammami, Tamari 2001; Roy 2001; Sayigh 2001; Shikaki 2001, 2002a).

Within the Palestinian camp, the Islamic movement motivated their rejection of the Oslo process on the grounds that they entailed recognition of the State of Israel and partition of Islamic Palestine. Giving up Palestine amounted to giving up the Islamic religion (Abu Amr 1994; Brynen 1995; International Crisis Group 2004a; Lindholm Schulz 1995). Since the collapse of the Oslo process, Hamas increased its popularity also due to the fragmentation in the Fateh camp (Shikaki 2007). This happened in parallel with an enhanced support within the Palestinian public opinion for violent actions against Israel and the political decline of the PA (Shikaki 1996). A major transformational change took place with the 2006 elections and the victory of Hamas, which won 74 out of 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The international community decided not to entertain diplomatic relations with the Hamas government and severed its provision of funding to the PA, the institutional expression of the Oslo agreements (Middle East Quartet 2006).

Ultimately, Hamas took control of Gaza in June 2007. PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas dismissed Prime Minister Ismail Haniya's, appointed by Hamas after the 2006 elections, and established an emergency government led by Salam Fayyad. As a result, Gaza and the West Bank are currently split between the control of Hamas and Fateh.

4. Overview of EU-Palestinian Relations

For the purpose of analysis, EU-Palestinian relations will be approached from two different angles. The first is the bilateral relationship between the EU and the Palestinian people as part of the EU's external relations with non-Member States. This is primarily the competence of the European Commission (EC). More specifically, the Commission's

relationship lies with the Palestinian population, the PLO and the PA and is most active in the fields of economic and financial assistance and the support for the development of democracy and the promotion of the rule of law and human rights.[7] The second angle is that of the EU's involvement as third party in the Middle East peace process: in this sphere the EU efforts are aimed at supporting the parties in the achievement of a peace agreement. When the EU wears this hat, the main actors are the EU Presidency, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process.

It is important to underline that the term 'angle' used in the paragraph above has been explicitly chosen to highlight the fact that this division is not to be interpreted as straightforward: these areas overlap and complement each other. This is amply evident from a first glance at the European Commission's web page on the Middle East peace process, which makes a clear connection between the EU's economic assistance to the PA and the Palestinian population and its support to the peace process.[8] However, the division between EU-Palestinian bilateral relations and EU's role in the diplomatic process is useful as there are different perceptions of the international community in the roles as donor versus mediator.

4.1. EU-Palestinian Bilateral Relations

In its role as bilateral partner, the EU has played an increasing role in providing financial and economic support to the Palestinian people. Began in 1971 as a contribution to the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), the EU's financial assistance has grown to become the largest source of funds to the PA.[9] While during the Oslo process, the EU's assistance to the Palestinians was focused on development aid, inter alia infrastructure, small-scale business and PA institution-building, in the post-Oslo face, the

[7] The EC's External Relations Directorate-General is responsible for the programming of financial assistance. Information on this topic is available on the web page of the EC at <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/occupied_palestinian_territory/ec_assistance/index_en.htm>

[8] On this point, see also Moratinos (1998).

[9] UNRWA was established after the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees. UNRWA is the main provider of basic services - education, health, relief and social services - to over 4.5 million registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

EU has shifted to humanitarian and emergency aid (Asseburg 2003 : 12; Peters 2000 : 163).[10] Since the suspension by Israel of the clearance system that transferred to the PA VAT and other indirect taxes, the EU has started providing direct budget assistance to the PA to compensate this loss and cover its operational costs.[11] According to data provided by the World Bank, the running costs of the PA amount to two billion US$ yearly. Salaries of the over 170,000 employees of the PA, security forces, maintenance costs of schools and hospitals are covered out of this budget. (International Crisis Group 2006 : 22). The EU has disbursed almost two billion EUR between 2000 and 2006 (EC Support to the Palestinians 2006).

The EU also acquired a primary role in the administration of funds with the creation of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) in 2006, a framework set up to administer the EU's and other donor's direct assistance to the population of the West Bank and Gaza (as opposed to the PA) after the international community, including the EU, severed its political and economic ties with the PA in the wake of Hamas' electoral victory and the establishment of an Hamas-led government.[12] In 2007, the EU donated 350 million EUR to the TIM; and 200 million EUR to UNRWA and specific projects related to food and humanitarian aid as well as to the support to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, for a total of 550.5 million EUR.[13] In 2008, following the presentation by the Palestinian caretaker government of a Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) at the Paris donor conference (December 2007), the EU renewed its financial support to the PA through the

[10] Just before the signing of the DoP, the EU provided a support package of 35 million ECU for the PLO to respond to emergency needs in the West Bank and Gaza. More funds were pledged after the launch of the Oslo agreements, in October 1993 and at key junctures throughout the Oslo process. From 1993 to 1998 the EU is considered to have contributed to the process with 1.68 billion ECU (Peters 2000 : 162-163).

[11] The Oslo agreements established a semi-customs union between Israel and the PA, which, except for specific products, basically shared the same import policies and regulations (Albin 1999; Elmusa, El Jaafari 1995; Fouet 1998). The Palestinians were also linked to Israeli taxation policies as these could not be more than two percentage points lower that Israeli. For VAT and other indirect taxes, a special mechanism of clearance based on the principle of destination was set up. According to this principle, indirect taxes on products bound for the West Bank and Gaza transiting via Israel were transferred to the PA. See Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip 1995 : art 6.b, Annex V.

[12] The TIM was a new financial mechanism established to allow to by-pass the PA and provide assistance directly to the Palestinian people through support in education, social services, provision of electricity (fuel delivery to the power plant in Gaza), health care, sanitation, direct cash assistance to vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population. See TIM Overall Implementation Progress 2008.

[13] This information can be found on the website of the EC Technical Assistance Office at <http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu/en/cooperatio_development/aid2007.htm>

Pegase mechanism. The EU supports both the costs of the PA (salaries, pensions and fuel) and development projects (EC Assistance to the Palestinians 2008).

As with all EU relations with non-Member States, the basis for economic interaction also includes an Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Co-operation. Signed in the framework of the bilateral track of the Barcelona Process in 1997, the Euro-Mediterranean Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Co-operation is considered the basis for the contractual relations between the EU and the PLO for the PA. The Agreement aims at the liberalization of trade and the establishment of a comprehensive dialogue between the two actors. Moreover, the agreement is aimed at the economic and social development of the West Bank and Gaza and it encourages regional co-operation. The Agreement provides for the establishment of an EU-PA Joint Committee on trade and cooperation, which should meet annually. Since the collapse of the Oslo process, and "the imposition of closure and curfews within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, implementation of various aspects of the Interim Association Agreement has been extremely difficult".[14]

In 2005, the PA, along with other States in the region, became part of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). An action plan for the Palestinian participation in the ENP was adopted in 2005, which supports reforms in the area of democracy and good governance. In the EU's vision, the European Neighborhood "involves a ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration" (European Neighborhood Policy 2004). The action plan for the Palestinian participation in the ENP is forward-looking as it envisages the prospect of "moving beyond cooperation to a significant degree of integration, including through a stake in the EU's Internal Market, and the possibility for the [PA] to participate progressively in key aspects of EU policies and programmes". In the action plan, the Commission also foresees the possibility for a European Neighborhood Agreement or a full Association Agreement. Importantly, the action plan extends the scope of political

[14] The quotation is taken from the web page of the EC Technical Assistance Office at <http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu/en/eu_and_palestine/ec_plo.htm>

dialogue between the EU and the PA to the facilitation of the peace process and the implementation of the Roadmap (EU-Palestinian Authority Action Plan 2005).[15] The action plan sets out priorities for the PA: establishing a functioning judiciary, effective enforcement of legislation and strengthening the rule of law; strengthening institutions and reinforcing administrative capacity and building on the progress already made in establishing an accountable system of public finances. These agreed priorities provide guidance for the Commission's financial assistance programme to the Palestinians (EU-Palestinian Authority Action Plan 2005). Since 2007, part of the funds delivered to the PA are transferred to the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument.

At the level of its presence in the field, the Commission opened a delegation, officially a Technical Assistance Office, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1994. The Office is located in East Jerusalem. The role of the Office is to follow-up on the implementation of the Interim Association Agreement, keep the PA informed about developments in the framework of the Barcelona Process, and co-ordinate financial assistance.[16]

Finally, election observation falls under the scope of bilateral relations with the PA. The EU organized election observation missions in 1996, for the first political elections in the West Bank and Gaza, and then in 2005 and 2006. According to the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) issued a statement, Palestinian latest elections were open and well-administered and demonstrated political maturity.[17]

4.2. The EU's role in conflict resolution

Reams of paper have been written on the EU's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moving from the rationale that Europe has close historical, cultural and economic links with the Middle East and represents a model of integration, much of the literature on this

[15] The EU-Palestinian Authority Action Plan is available at the website of the EC Technical Assistance Office at <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/pa_enp_ap_final_en.pdf>

[16] See the website of the EC Technical Assistance Office, <http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu/en/about_us/role.htm>

[17] The post-election press release of the EU EOM is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/westbank/legislative/press_release_260106.pdf>

topic portrays the EU as still in search of a political role (Peters 2000). While the EU has affirmed itself as a primary actor in the donor's sphere, it is still a secondary player in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making. As the historical mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967, the US has until now retained a monopoly on power politics resulting in concrete peace initiatives (Quandt 2001; Tessler 1994). The EU is often depicted as the normative or soft power, which, in the capacity of a facilitator, complements the mediator role of the US. [18]

The EU's role in the process started as a facilitator and can be traced back to a document titled, "The Return of Peace in the Middle East" written for the European Commission by PLO Ahmad Qurie in the early 1990s. It is considered to have stimulated the interest of the then Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin to establish direct contacts with the PLO, thus opening the way to the Oslo secret channel (Qurie 2006). However, once the agreement was concluded, both Israel and the PLO reverted to the US as the guarantor of the agreements. In the early stages of the peace process, the EU remained on the margins of the bilateral track of negotiations and only played a more active role in the more general multilateral Arab-Israeli talks, which however were stalemated soon after they began (Peters 2000).

The EU tried to enhance its involvement when the peace process started experiencing periods of stalemate after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the election of Benjamin Netanyahu and a series of terrorist attacks in Israel. In 1996, to acquire more visibility and have a constant in situ presence, the EU established the position of Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process (Moratinos 1999). The mandate of the Special Representative includes observing negotiations between the parties and offering

[18] A "facilitator" has a more neutral role and instead of aiming to change the positions of the parties, it acts as a guarantor and confidence-builder. A "mediator" is able to influence the preferences of the parties through threats and concessions, utilizing its position of power. See Kriegsberg 2001. See also Asseberg 2003 and Moratinos 1998. For Silvestri, it is now clear that the European 'civilian power' is not effective when dealing with Middle Eastern crises (Silvestri 2003).

good offices, contributing to the implementation of international agreements between the parties and engaging with the parties in case of non-compliance with the agreements.[19]

The first Special Envoy, Miguel Angel Moratinos, is considered to have played a behind-the-scenes role in specific instances during the peace process, as in the case of the negotiations for the Hebron Protocol signed in January 1997, the first agreement to be signed between the PLO and the Likud-led government of Netanyahu (Peters 2000 : 160-161).[20] After the Hebron agreement, the EU also became involved in security co-operation between Israelis and Palestinians although in a less overt fashion than the US. An EU-Palestinian security committee was set up that provided guidance and advice to the PA on security co-operation with Israel, principally aimed at combating Hamas and its infrastructure (Interview with Alistair Crooke, 10 May 2001). This platform became the springboard for further EU ad hoc mediation initiatives in the past years, one example often cited being the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in 2002.

Moreover, since the beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada and the collapse of the Oslo process, the EU has institutionalized its third-party role through the Quartet (Solana 2001). Together with the Quartet, the EU has been the promoter of democratic reforms within the Palestinian camp, which included strengthening public institutions and rendering the political process more inclusive (Shikaki 2007). When Hamas was elected to power in January 2006, the Quartet conditioned its recognition of Hamas to three factors: recognition of Israel; acceptance of previous agreements signed by the PA and the PLO; and renunciation of violence (Tocci 2007).

The EU has also put in place CFSP police missions specifically formulated in support of the implementation of the peace agreements, the EU Co-ordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EU COPPS) and the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM Rafah), both established in 2005. With the first, the EU

[19] See Peters 2000. See also Council Joint Action 2006.
[20] The Hebron Protocol provided for the Israeli redeployment to one part of the city and defined the terms for the step-by-step continuation of the Oslo process.

provides advice to the Palestinian Civil Police, namely to the Chief of Police and its senior commanders as well as to the Ministry of Interior. With the Palestinian Civil Police Development Programme (PCPDP), the EU supports the establishment of an accountable and professional police administration.[21] At the recently held Berlin Conference in Support of Palestinian Civil Security and Rule of Law, more than 200 million EUR were pledged for police training in the West Bank (Irin 2008).[22]

EU BAM Rafah was established in the wake of the Agreement on the Rafah border after Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and it is aimed at monitoring the border and the performance of the PA in border management. Control over international passages of the West Bank and Gaza has been a contentious issue between Israelis and Palestinians since 1994, when the parties started negotiating the vague provisions of the DoP. Israel considered the full control of international passages a condition sine qua non, on the basis of the argument that everyone entering the West Bank and Gaza was in fact entering Israel, yet the Palestinians considered the administration of the passages to be an exclusive Palestinian area of jurisdiction, pertaining to the powers of the autonomous government, tangibly symbolizing the end of the occupation (Aggestam 1999 : 175; Savir 1999 : 103-105). After months of negotiations, the parties settled on the notion of an Israeli security envelope for external borders, which implied Israeli security responsibility over international passages with Jordan and Egypt with a joint Israeli-Palestinian presence at the terminals (Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement 1995 : Annex I).

After Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, the issue emerged again. The agreed documents on movement and access from and to Gaza foresee the control of the Rafah border by the PA on one side and Egypt on the other but also include the presence of a third party mandated to monitor the PA performance and ensure that international

[21] There are various EU COPPS Factsheets that give an overview of its mandate. They are available at <http://consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=1017&lang=EN&mode=g>
[22] A similar plan coordinated by the US put forward plans to establish five major security bodies in the West Bank (Abdul Hadi 2007).

standards are followed (Agreement on Movement and Access 2005; Agreed Principles for Rafah Crossing 2005).[23]

EU BAM stopped its work at Rafah after Hamas's takeover of Gaza in June 2007, despite remaining deployed at its headquarters in Ashkelon. In its press statement on the suspension of activities EU BAM mentions "the situation" in Gaza (Agreed Arrangement on the EUBAM at Rafah Crossing Point on the Gaza-Egypt Border 2005). Other explanations for temporarily halting its presence at Rafah include the justification that the mission had been established on the basis of an agreement with the PA and not with Hamas, which had been declared a terrorist organization (International Crisis Group 2008). In May 2008, the EU prolonged the mandate of the mission until November 2008 (Council Joint Action 2008).

The EU has never presented its own practical peace initiative aimed at Israeli-Palestinian peace-making. However, in 2001, in the wake of the Taba talks on final status negotiations, Special Envoy Moratinos compiled a non-paper based on interviews conducted with negotiators on both sides. The document has no official status but it has been considered by the parties a reasonable description of the outcome of the last leg of the permanent status negotiations conducted in the framework of the continuation of the Camp David summit (The Moratinos Non-Paper 2001).[24]

Moreover, the EU has developed a vision for permanent status. Since its first declaration on the conflict in 1980, the European position has been unambiguous regarding the support for Palestinian self-determination. The Venice Declaration of June 1980 clearly states that

> "a just solution must be found to the Palestinian problem [and that] the Palestinian people must be placed in a position by an appropriate process

[23] According to its mandate, the "EU BAM shall actively monitor, verify and evaluate PA performance with regard to the implementation of the Agreed Principles for Rafah Crossing and will act with authority to ensure that the PA complies with all applicable rules and regulations conerning the Rafah Crossing Point and the terms of the Agreed Principles for Rafah Crossing" (Agreed Arrangement on the EUBAM at Rafah Crossing Point on the Gaza-Egypt Border 2005).

[24] The Moratinos Non-Paper was published by the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz for the first time on 14 February 2002.

> defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination" (Venice Declaration on the Middle East1980).

This standpoint has been reinforced by further landmark declarations: the Berlin Declaration of 1999 and the Seville Declaration of 2002. These documents reflect the EU vision of the Middle East peace process, according to which "the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and through negotiations would be the best guarantee of Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region" (Council Conclusions 1999). Furthermore, they state that

> "a settlement can be achieved through negotiation, and only through negotiation. The objective is an end to the occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties. The end result should be two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbors. In this context, a fair solution should be found to the complex issue of Jerusalem, and a just, viable and agreed solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees" (Council Conclusions 2002).[25]

In addition, a variety of EU documents clarify the Union's position on other critical aspects of the conflict, such as the Israeli settlement policy or the question of the separation wall built by Israel since 2002. The EU opposes the Israeli settlement policy, which it considers to be in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and an obstacle to the Palestinian economic recovery. Additionally, it the EU believes that Israel should not confiscate Palestinian land to build the barrier that threatens the contiguity of a future Palestinian state.[26]

Recent European-based analyses on the EU role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provide quite a negative assessment of the Union's policies. The EU has been criticized for its

[25] See the Commission's webpage dedicated to the EU and the Middle East Peace Process available at <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/mepp/index.htm>
[26] See the document Frequently Asked Questions, also available at <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/mepp/index.htm#3>

inconsequential declaratory policies and for not having shaped an autonomous role for itself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also in areas such as the respect of human rights and the rule of law, which constitute the basis of the acquis the Union promotes in its neighborhood policy (Asseburg 2003; Ortega 2003; Tocci 2007). An example is continuing its presence at Rafah but subjected to Israel's terms and decisions (Tocci 2007). Moreover, the EU is seen as having made a strategic mistake in not establishing a dialogue with Hamas, not even in the context of the national unity government with Fateh; the consequence is a deepening of the intra-Palestinian divide and the marginalization of moderate voices (de Vasconcelos 2007; Tocci 2007). During the Oslo process, the EU has not invested in a long-term democratization process, preferring to support those Arafat despite his authoritarian stance, and only paying attention to technical details of the institution building process as opposed to its content (Asseburg 2003).

THIRD SECTION – THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

5. Methods

This part of the research focuses on the empirical investigation of the attitudes of both Palestinian elites and public opinion vis-à-vis the EU. One section of the research will also be devoted to the view of the EU in the Palestinian print media. The next paragraphs illustrate the methodology used to conduct the empirical investigation.

The time frame of the research covers a period which starts at the beginning of the Oslo process in 1993 and ends in 2008. Focusing on such an extended period of time allows gaining a broader perspective on the Palestinian views of the EU in critical periods of recent Palestinian history. These include significant developments such as the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993, the conclusion of key agreements during the Oslo process, the establishment of a Palestinian autonomous government in the West Bank and Gaza, the establishment of the PA and the first elections of the PLC, the beginning of the al-Aqsa/Second Intifada, subsequent diplomatic initiatives, Israel's

disengagement from Gaza, the Hamas victory in the 2006 elections and the split between the West Bank and Gaza following Hamas' takeover of the strip. In addition to adding depth to the research, the selection of this time frame allows one to identify a possible change in the perceptions of the EU before and after the collapse of the Oslo process, when the EU increased its engagement.

The research methods utilized for the analysis of the views of Palestinian elites include both interviews, carried out in situ and via telephone, as well as analysis of secondary sources such as autobiographies, academic literature and editorials. Ten interviews have been conducted in the spring/summer of 2008. The choice of the authors opted for open, semi-structured interviews performed with the guidance of a questionnaire.

The selection of the interviewees has been based on sociological analysis of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza. Elites in Palestinian society have been roughly divided into three groups: traditional commercial class and landowners, who were in power before Israeli occupation of 1967; national bourgeoisie who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which included professionals, intellectuals and the middle-class; and grass-roots activists and professional organizations, which rose during the 1980s and the Intifada (Hilal 1993; Shikaki 1996). At the outset of the return of former PA Chairman Arafat and the PLO to the West Bank and Gaza, support was sought among professionals from the national bourgeoisie and the traditional commercial class as well as the myriad of PLO cadres and members of the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) that resided in exile and went back to the West Bank and Gaza after the signing of the Oslo agreements and the set up of the PA and the Palestinian police. PA cadres and negotiators were co-opted from these cohorts (Brynen 1995).

The other important factor that has to be taken into consideration when studying Palestinian perceptions is the ideological stance on peace negotiations with Israel. Palestinian attitudes on this issue can be roughly divided into three categories. Firstly, the pro-peace camp of Fateh, the party of the late Chairman Yasser Arafat and current Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, which as explained has been involved in negotiations and

signing of agreements and the establishment of the PA. Secondly, the national opposition of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), two political parties based in Syria. The leftist opposition's criticism stemmed from the consideration that the Oslo agreement neglected the fundamental elements of the Palestinian struggle for independence and that Arafat had negotiated and signed agreements without a consensus within the PLO (Lindholm-Schulz 1995). Thirdly, the Islamist opposition of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, other Islamist parties and independent Islamists (Shikaki 1996). These, as mentioned before, opposed the peace process on the basis of the fact that it made Israeli occupation legal (Lindholm-Schulz 1995).

It is important to recall here that while none of these stances is monolithic. A major split within Fateh emerged during the al-Aqsa/Second Intifada, which mobilised long-standing discontent of the *young guard* of the Palestinian leadership, Fatah's supporters in the occupied territories, who had fought during the first Intifada against the *old guard* of the PLO returnees who emigrated from Tunis since 1994 to take up governmental positions in the Palestinian Authority (Abdul Hadi 2000; Hammami, Tamari 2001; Roy 2001; Sayigh 2001; Shikaki 2001, 2002a). This is how Khalil Shikaki, a prominent Palestinian political analyst defines these two groups

> "The old guard is composed of the founders of the Palestinian national movement, together with the leaders of various guerrilla organizations and the PLO bureaucracy. These men, few of whom are under 50, have spent most of their political lives outside the Palestinian territories. This political establishment dominates both Fatah and the PA. Key figures in this group, such as Mahmoud Abbas […], Ahmad Qurei […], and Nabil Shaath, have also controlled the Palestinian team in the peace negotiations. The young guard is composed of newly emerging local leaders as well as the leaders of the first intifada. Most are no older than 40. A few serve in the PA cabinet and the PLC, and as heads or senior members of different security services. But as a whole, the group lacks cohesion, leadership, and formal authority" (Shikaki 2002).

Based on this background, for the purpose of this research Palestinian elites have been deemed as including current and former representatives of the PA as well as intellectuals, academics, political analysts and exponents of civil society movements. Only PA officials

from the Ramallah-based caretaker government of Salam Fayyad have been selected for the interviews. For security reasons it has not been possible to conduct interviews with Hamas de facto government in Gaza.

Secondary sources include the vast corpus of literature on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the establishment of the PA, which include journal articles and monographs, autobiographies of Oslo negotiators as well as analyses, newspaper articles and editorials. The research has focused, although not exclusively, on sources authored by Palestinian intellectuals, academics and political analysts.

For the analysis of Palestinian public opinions, more than three hundred online opinion polls by Palestinian research institutes have been consulted. Six main institutes located in the West Bank and Gaza conducted opinion polls in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, roughly in the past two decades. The Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) and the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR/PSR) started their polling in 1993 and have released regular surveys since. The Center for Development Studies (CDS) and the Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Center (OPSSC) are university research centers located respectively at Birzeit University in Ramallah and Najah University in Nablus. Polls from Birzeit University are available from the year 2000 onwards, whilst the first survey of Najah University dates back to 2003. Additionally, the new institute Near East Consulting (NEC), also located in Ramallah, began conducting its research in 2006; and the website of the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion (PCPO) in Beit Sahour, a predominantly Christian town near Bethlehem, offers polls starting from 2005.

Some opinion polls provide disaggregated data on the residence of the respondents, as well as for instance on age, education, income and political views (Hamas vs Fateh). All the polls provide disaggregated data on the West Bank and Gaza.

Finally, throughout the text, reference is made also to the perceptions of Palestinians vis-à-vis other international actors, such as the US and the UN. This comparative aspect has been considered important to give more complexity to the research.

6. A comment on Palestinian perceptions

An analysis of Palestinian public perceptions of the EU cannot be understood without taking into consideration the broader Palestinian perspective. For the Palestinians, statelessness, and hence statehood, are existential issues.[27] Embarking in the Oslo process meant abandoning a decades-long armed struggle, accepting a negotiated and phased settlement aimed at establishing a Palestinian state. Further, Palestinians perceive the conflict with Israel as asymmetric in that it involves dissimilar parties, a state and a national liberation movement, which struggles to become a state (Miall, Rambsbotham, Woodhouse 1999 : 12).

Self-determination and asymmetry are the basis from which the Palestinians pursue their objectives and form their attitudes towards Israel and the other parties in the conflict, including third parties such as the EU.

7. Palestinian elites

The views of Palestinian elites on the EU will be considered according to the two angles defined at the outset of the paper: the bilateral relationship between the EU and the Palestinian people as part of the EU's external relations with non-Member States, and the EU's efforts aimed at supporting the parties in the achievement of a peace agreement. The first dimension is more linked to economic and financial support; the second is related to diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and sustaining initiatives and agreements. The role of the EU and Europe as a model for democratic development is considered to be part of the first dimension.

[27] See Sayigh 1995 for an analysis of Palestinian security issues.

The perception of the EU that emerges from the recent round of interviews conducted in Jerusalem and the West Bank in spring/summer 2008 project an image of solid acknowledgement of the EU's role in the sphere of economic and financial assistance. However, Palestinian elites seem to hold clear-cut opinions regarding the marginal position of the EU as a third party in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The words of the former Minister of Planning and Labor of the PA and the current co-editor of the website Bitterlemons.org express this concept in a nutshell

> "Palestinian perception of the EU is very positive in regard to financial and development assistance, but it is a negative one when it comes to its political role which should be based on the international legitimacy and law" (Interview with Ghassan Khatib, 21 June 2008).

It is interesting to note that the 'political role' of the EU is considered mainly in relation to its efforts in the context of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, in other words as a third-party in the conflict. The 'political image' of the EU as a model for democratic and civic values did not emerge in the discourse of the Palestinian interviewees.

The arguments used by interviewees regarding the marginal role played by the EU in the diplomatic process between Israelis and Palestinians are twofold. The first is related to internal EU politics and what is perceived to be a complicated mechanism to reach consensus in the area of CFSP. This creates what they view as an absence of a European foreign policy in the Middle East (Interview with Roger Heacock, 4 June 2008). The second is linked to the subordinate position of the EU in respect to the US' on Middle East issues. The EU is seen as merely supporting the American diplomatic efforts (Interview with Gadah Araft, 16 June 2008) Some also see Israel's aversion towards an increased EU role in negotiations as another impediment. Moreover, one interviewee made reference to historical factors explaining the European support for Israel (Interview with Lily Habash, 6 June 2008).

Some interviewees distinguish between the EU's policy and the role of individual European States such as France and the United Kingdom. The influence of these actors at

the bilateral level is seen as more preponderant than the one of the EU. However, it is interesting to note that some of these players, France, Italy and the new Member States, are seen as having shifted their once independent policies on the Middle East towards the US position.

This view does not change when interviewees are asked to give their opinion on the role of the EU in the Quartet. Again, the EU is seen as influenced by the US also within this format. According to one interviewee, the Quartet has strengthened the American's influence on the EU (Interview with Lily Habash, 6 June 2008).

On the EU policy vis-à-vis Hamas, the interviewees seem to agree on the fact that the EU should have heralded an inclusive policy and put in place efforts to integrate Hamas within the Palestinian political system. However, the EU followed the wrong path by interrupting its relations the PA when controlled by Hamas and later with the national unity government. The EU is accused of following a policy of double standards; on the one hand it asks Hamas to recognize Israel while on the other it does not request Israel to respect international law and the UNSC resolutions (Interview with Ghassan Khatib, 21 June 2008).

One interviewee portrayed the EU is a "negative watcher" that cannot influence Israeli policies even on issues on which it has a clear standing, such as the destruction of some of its projects in Gaza bombed by the Israeli military, or on issues related to the construction of the wall and the building of settlements (Interview with Khalil Assali, 2 July 2008).

The EUBAM is perceived positively by the majority of the interviewees. This force is considered as the only formula under which open borders with Egypt are possible. However, some see the EUBAM as merely a humanitarian mechanism and not a political arrangement under which a border control system can be developed (Interviews with Roger Heacock, 4 June 2008; Eyad Muhammad, 18 June 2008). One voice argued that the EUBAM mainly serves Israel, resides in Israel and holds allegiance to it (Interview with Nasseif al-Deek, 1 June 2008).

Palestinian elites and civil society actors have been also interviewed on what they believe is the image of the EU within Palestinian civil society. Traditionally, Palestinian civil society movements have not refrained from criticism of the donor community and the EU. At the beginning of the peace process, the donor community, including the EU, shifted its attention from support to Palestinian civil society to assistance to the PA and institution building of the latter (Shikaki 1996). The donors' tendency to fund pro-peace actors, and hence those that backed the PA and its policies, has been seen by many as an incorrect interference in the democratic transition process that had the effect of weakening the Palestinian civil society (Roy 1994).

According to the interviews conducted for this research, the view of the EU of the Palestinian civil society mirrors the perception of the elites described in the above paragraphs: positive acknowledgment of the EU financial and humanitarian role, while less optimistic on the Union's political role (Interview with Ghassan Khatib, 21 June 2008). In this context, the interpretation of the 'political role' seems not to be limited only to the third-party function in Israeli-Palestinian relations but expands also to the way the EU interacts with civil society actors and Palestinian domestic politics. It has been argued that the EU is deeply involved in maintenance of the PA but not in the long term process of national and state building of Palestinian society and institutions (Interview with Khalil Assali, 2 July 2008). The EU is sometimes seen as using its funding to pursue a specific agenda that reflects its interests.

When looking at the discourse of Palestinian elites in statements and literature, it important to reiterate the driving force of peace negotiations and the establishment of an independent State as a primary issue in Palestinian politics. The discourse of Palestinian elites in both the academic and political contexts reflects this predominance and takes into consideration the leading role of the US as a third-party in the conflict.

In a speech given by the former Head of the Preventive Security Branch of the Palestinian Police in the West Bank and National Security Adviser, Jibril Rajoub, the PA official clearly stated that the Palestinians were

> "looking for more involvement and effort on the part of the Americans because they can actually influence the process" (Rajoub 2004).

In a similar fashion, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat affirms

> "I don't think politics is about honesty or dishonesty, politics is about shared interests and currently the US is the only superpower on Earth. Its efforts are needed in this peace process; they can influence the Israelis" (Palestine-Israel Journal 2003).

Palestinian political analyst Khalil Shikaki adds

> "What's the difference if instead of Clinton we're sitting with anybody else the EU or the UN secretary-general? What is necessary is for Israel to change its position; everything else is cosmetic. The international community, if it wanted, could impose sanctions on Israel, but, again, this is not realistic because the U.S. would prevent it. It's essentially between Israel and the Palestinians and we have to find a way of living together" (Palestine-Israel Journal 2001).

The predominance of the US in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making is a determinant of the discourse of Palestinian intellectuals especially in the first years of the peace process. Although the Declaration of Principles was negotiated secretly in Oslo, the memoirs of one of the negotiators, Ahmed Qurie reveal that the attentions of the Palestinians were directed at the American reaction to the Israeli-Palestinian groundbreaking agreement (Qurie 2006). Despite the fact that the EC was the gavel holder for the multilateral Arab-Israeli talks on economic development, Qurie's account of that period indicate how the World Bank was considered as the primary interlocutor for financial support of the peace process.

The presence of the EU in the discourse of Palestinian elites increased after the collapse of the Oslo process and the heightened importance devoted by the Palestinians to the role of

the international community. The enhanced role of the EU in the peace process was welcomed by the Palestinians because of its financial support to the PA (Brookings Institution 2002) and its balancing of the US monopoly with the establishment of the Quartet (Khatib 2003). However, the EU is principally mentioned in connection to the Quartet (Frontline 2002; Palestine-Israel Journal 2003) or the US (Abdul Hadi 2001, 2002; Hammami, Tamari 2001; Shikaki 2001, 2002). The Annapolis conference held in November 2007 is seen as having strengthened the US influence in the Quartet (Khatib 2007b). In addition, it is argued that both the EU and the US are focusing on ad hoc assistance projects for the PA in the area of security while what is really needed from the Palestinian side is a comprehensive security plan based on the concept of national security, able to recruit the youth otherwise enlisted by Hamas or other factions. The integration of resistance movements into national armies in the post Second World War Europe should serve as an example (Abdul Hadi 2007).

Four main themes characterize the language used by Palestinian elites on the EU. There is certainly recognition of the EU stance on the peace process as being more respectful of international standards and Palestinian rights, for instance on the issue of Israeli settlement activity (Sayigh 2001). In addition, the EU is portrayed as a promoter of human rights both in the international context (Asharq al-Awsat 2002) and internally, with reference to Palestinian domestic politics.

> "Europe's strength lies in the uniformity of values it aims to promote – those of democracy, tolerance and adherence to human rights. It is these same values that we, Palestinians, also hope will underpin our future state" (Fayyad 2007).

The EU, however, draws criticism as well. One of the reasons is related to what is interpreted to be the EU's passive acceptance of Israel's violation of Palestinian rights (Eldar 2007) as well as the rhetoric rather than substantial pressure exerted on Israel (Abdul Hadi 1999). PA Chairman Abbas has called the EU's policy in the Middle East discriminatory and expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that Israel enjoys close ties with the EU notwithstanding its human rights violations (Eldar 2007). Moreover, in a recent letter

to Brussels, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad is said to have urged the EU not to upgrade its ties with Israel in light of the latter's violation of basic commitments, such as the halt to the construction of settlements (Kershner 2008). The Palestinian leadership has also demanded from the EU to substantiate its declarations with a more assertive policy

> "Europe has spoken in the past but a louder voice is needed. […] It is now time to bolster the credibility of the peace process and preserve the viability and global acceptance of the two-state solution" (Fayyad 2007).

Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad has for instance referenced to specific areas of intervention where the EU's role could be instrumental in influencing Israeli policies, such as the issue of settlement expansion and detention of Palestinian prisoners.

The major issue that has arisen in the past between the EU and the Palestinians is the EU decision not to maintain contacts with Hamas and suspend its aid to the Hamas-controlled PA. According to some the EU is not to be blamed; the EU followed an American-Israeli decision (Shikaki 2007). However, the non-recognition of Hamas and the consequent diplomatic and financial isolation of this political movement made it very difficult for Hamas to govern and strengthened the Fateh-Hamas divisions (Shikaki 2007). Moreover, by punishing the Palestinians for having democratically elected Hamas, the international community is penalizing the population of the West Bank and Gaza for having exercised their rights. The Palestinian population attributes the increasing economic and humanitarian crisis to the blockade imposed on Hamas by the international community and Israel, thereby strengthening Hamas (Khatib 2007a, 2007b, 2007c).

8. The Palestinian Public Opinion

This section will focus on the Palestinian perceptions of the EU on the basis of the opinion polls made available by Palestinian institutes mentioned in the methodology section. These are the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC), the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR/PSR), the Center for Development Studies (CDS),

the Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Center (OPSSC), Near East Consulting (NEC), and the Center for Public Opinion (PCPO).

The data provided by the surveys will be complemented with information obtained through interviews with researchers from these institutes. It is important to note that none of these centers has conducted a specific poll on the EU. Nonetheless, the existing polls provide enough data to draw conclusions on the Palestinian perceptions of the EU. A clear indication of this can be found in Table 1. This list gives an overview of the number of available polls on the Palestinian public opinion, indicating in the second row how many have been used for this chapter. Rows 4 and 9 specify how many polls have been devoted to the themes such as the perceptions of the EU and the international community. The scarce number of surveys on the international community is compensated by the relatively high number of questions on this issue, as shown by the data in rows 5-8 and 10-17.

This section will be divided into two parts. The first will try to provide the broader framework, giving a brief background on the six research institutes and illustrating the topics covered in their work. This part will also attempt to explore the issue of Palestinian public perceptions of the EU by looking at the questionnaires utilized by the research centers and comparing the questions asked not only on the EU but also on other relevant actors such as the US and the UN, and in general, the international community. The rationale for this is that the data on how the Palestinian public opinion perceives the EU cannot be seen in a vacuum but needs to be read in a broader setting and also in a comparative perspective. Interviews with relevant researchers have played the important role of enriching the numerical data with their analysis of the issue.

The second part will look specifically at the answers on the EU that were given by those polled. In line with the two different angles of the EU-Palestinian relations that this research is highlighting, the two images of the EU as assistance provider and as mediator in the conflict will be taken into consideration.

	JMCC	PCPSR	NEC	Najah University	Birzeit University	PCPO
1. Available opinion polls	70 (1993-2008)	111 (1993-2008)	86 (2006-2007)	31 (2003-2007)	34 (1999-2007)	22
2. Consulted opinion polls	69 (one not available)	89 (some not relevant)	75	30 (one not available)	33 (one not available)	22
3. Average number of questions in one poll	20-25	25-30	15	25-30	(40)	10-15
4. Polls on the EU	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Questions on the EU	1	1	3	4	5	13
6. Questions on Europeans or Member States	4	11	11	2	1	13
7. Options for answers including the EU	0	3	1	0	0	2
8. Answers including Europeans/Member States	0	7	3	0	0	0
9. Polls on the international community	1	2 (partially)	1 (not available online)	0	2 (partially)	2 (partially)
10. Questions on the international community (including Mitchell Report)	12	34	4	12	28	5
11. Answers including the international community	1	0	0	2	1	0
12. Questions on the Quartet	0	18	0	1	0	1
13. Answers including the Quartet	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Questions on the US/the West	18	40	3	19	45	25
15. Answers including the US/the West	1	8	12	0	5	0
16. Questions on the UN	4	1	5	0	12	2
17. Answers including the UN	2	2	1	2	10	2

Table 1. Breakdown of questions included in questionnaires

8.1. Framing the Context: The Questions

This part introduces the reader to the research conducted by the six Palestinian polling institutes thereby attempting to provide a basis for the interpretation of the data on the public perceptions of the EU. Looking at what type and how many questions have been asked on the EU, especially in comparison with other similar players such as the US and the UN, provides information on how relevant the EU is considered and what aspects of the EU role the polling institutes see as most important.

As mentioned earlier, Table 1 offers a breakdown of the number of questions and answers on the EU, the US, the UN and the international community included in the questionnaires. References to Europe have been considered separately although it is importance to underline that in certain instances the words are used interchangeably (Interview with Jamil Rabah, 8 May 2008).

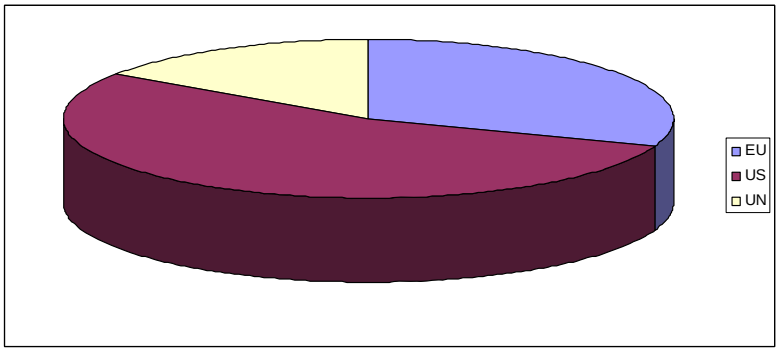

Figure 1. Total number of questions asked on the EU, the US and the UN

A first analysis of the data shows a relatively low number of questions and answers on the EU. As described more in detail in the next paragraphs, other important aspects that emerge are the following: the EU is mentioned mainly for issues related to donors' assistance; in questions on its role as third-party in the conflict, the EU is often included under the category 'international community' or coupled with the US; there are no questions on the EU Special Envoy; there are very few questions on Europe as a model for democracy; no questions are asked on the other component of the EU-Palestinian relations,

such as the Association Agreement, the ENP, the Barcelona process or election monitoring.

JMCC was established in Jerusalem in 1988 as a research institute specializing also on opinion polls and the media. Its director was Ghassan Khatib, former Minister of Labor and currently co-editor of the online editorial Bitterlemons.org. JMCC issues regular opinion polls mainly on democracy and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (for instance, in the year 1997, opinion polls were issued in April, May, July, August, November and December) in addition to publishing analyses on the Palestinian Opinion Pulse (utilizing the data from the opinion polls) as well as ad hoc polls on specific issues. JMCC also issued joint polls with the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research on Israeli-Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process.

In the first years until 2000, the questions included in the polls focused mainly on the domestic politics and Palestinian attitudes and preferences regarding specific aspects of the negotiations. The main themes included the public's opinion on Palestinian political parties and factions, trust in institutions, approval regarding the performance of the Palestinian Authority and the services provided as well as support for reconciliation with Israel and for the continuation of the peace process.

As noticeable from Table 1, JMCC has included only a small number of questions on the EU and Europe in its polls as compared to other institutes. Questions on the EU/Europe ask the opinion of the Palestinian public on the performance of Germany in its role as holder of the EU Presidency and on its level of neutrality vis-à-vis Israelis and Palestinians (JMCC, Poll No.61, March 2007). In a similar fashion, another question focuses on the difference between the politics of the US and Europe (JMCC, Poll No. 51, June 2004). Interestingly, when discussing the issue of an international force in the West Bank and Gaza, a European force is not given as one of the options but Europe is seen as part of an American-European joint presence. The other possibilities include an American force and a UN-led mission (JMCC, Poll No.51, June 2004). In addition, the Quartet's Roadmap initiative is presented as an American proposal in the question that asks the polled citizens

to determine whether the Palestinian leadership should accept the plan (JMCC, Poll No.47, December 2002). Additional questions on international actors focus on the US and their mediation role as well as on the demands of the international community to Hamas to recognize Israel and renounce terrorism (JMCC, Poll No.64, April 2008).

The survey activity conducted by PCPSR/PSR has both elements in common and yet different with the research of JMCC. One similarity consists in the focus on Palestinian domestic politics especially during the 1990s until the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada. However, until 2000 and after, PCPSR/PSR polls devoted more space to the role of external actors, including the EU and Europe.

Until 2000, the EU and European countries were only mentioned in two questions that were repeatedly asked in the polls. One was related to the democratic development in the West Bank and Gaza: the polled were asked to evaluate the level of democracy in Palestine as well as in foreign countries. The US and France (neither the EU nor Europe) were given as options for the answer, alongside with Israel, Jordan and Egypt. In the second question, the Palestinians were invited to chose the most important fields of assistance (for instance, health, water, education, institution building, democracy and human rights, gender issues) and to determine the most relevant contributor among the EU, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the US, Japan, the Arab countries, and international organizations. Interestingly, the EU is also mentioned in opinion poll No. 41 issued in June 1999: it is interesting to note that reference is made to the US-EU calls to extend final status negotiations until 2000 (according to the Oslo agreements, talks on the permanent settlement should have been completed by 1999). This is one of the rare cases where the EU is mentioned for a specific initiative in the peace process.

The opinion polls released after 2000 include more questions on international actors and the international community. Various polls mention the EU as part of the Quartet's Roadmap proposal and try to determine the Palestinian support for this diplomatic initiative. One specific question addresses the discussions for an EU observation mission at Rafah, asking the Palestinians whether they supported this plan, and specifically whether

an EU presence was positive. In addition, the polls include a large number of questions on the US and their mediation initiatives, which also make a reference to the influence of US decisions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the support for US foreign policy in the region. Finally, the Palestinians are also polled about their opinion on the donor's community conditionality relating Hamas.

It is important to note that, as the rest of the Palestinian polling institutes, both JMCC and PCPSR/PSR included questions on the fairness of the election process without making a specific reference to the EU. In its poll on the 1996 elections, the first elections in the West Bank and Gaza, but did not make a reference to the EU election observation mission (JMCC, Poll No. 12, January 2006). Similarly, the exit polls conducted on the day of the 2006 include a question on the fairness of the election process but there is no mention of the EU observation role (PCPSR/PSR, Special Poll – Results of the PSR Exit Polls for Palestinian PLC Elections, February 2006).

The questionnaires of OPSSC at Najah University in Nablus reflect the enhanced focus on the role of the international community after the collapse of the Oslo process and the humanitarian emergency broken out in the West Bank and Gaza. The EU is mentioned specifically regarding its assistance to the PA: the Palestinians are asked to assess the support provided by Brussels on the political, financial and infrastructural front. A further area of interest regarding the EU is its real concern with the success of the Palestinian government led by Hamas (OPSSC, Poll No.19, March 2006). Furthermore, the EU is considered when the polled are asked their opinion on the international community's reaction to Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip. In this case, the EU is compared with the European States, the US, Egypt, Jordan as well as the rest of the Arab countries (OPSSC, Poll No.22 July 2006, Poll No.23 September 2006). Also OPSSC, as JMCC, seems to present the Roadmap as an American proposal.

The research of CDS at Birzeit University is similar to the one conducted at Najah University. Questions on the EU are always asked in the context of a comparison with other international players, mainly the US and the UN but also some Arab countries. These

include references to the support given to the Intifada, a possible international administration of Gaza, as well as allusions to the negative role played by these actors and the lack of support for the unity government.

The smaller PCPO conducts regular polls on the view of the Palestinian public on their economic and humanitarian situation, their support for the PA and their preferences factional politics. As in other cases, the level of support for peace talks with Israel is polled as are the various mediation initiatives. As for other research centers, questions on the EU converge mainly around the issue of donors' assistance but two references to the EU role in Rafah have been included.

NEC consulting was established in 2006 by Jamil Rabah, a very prominent Palestinian political analyst and a pollster, who had previously worked for JMCC. NEC conducts regular monthly polls on the Palestinian 'political pulse' and other surveys on poverty and social status, peace and security perceptions and ad hoc polls on elections and other issues of interest to local and international actors. Only one portion of the surveys conducted by NEC is accessible on line; the rest is available upon subscription.

Rabah confirmed that the Palestinian public opinion is regularly polled by NEC on the perceptions of the international community. Specific questions on this topic are included in the polls, at least three or four times a year, focusing in particular on the donors' assistance, the possibility of an international presence in Gaza and Hamas' lack of international legitimacy. According to Rabah, while UN agencies and the US contact NEC to provide feedback or ask additional questions on the polls published online, the EU has not done so in the past. This is interpreted as an indicator of an EU broader policy of lack of outreach to the Palestinian people on the ground. As in the case of other research centers, questions regarding the political developments in the peace process and mediation activities focus on the role of the US (Interview with Jamil Rabah, 8 May 2008).

8.2. Evaluating the Answers

This session analyses the responses given by Palestinians interviewed in opinion polls that are relevant to the EU. As the previous parts of the research, it considers Palestinian perceptions of the EU from two angles, EU's support in the fields of economic and financial assistance and the support for the development of democracy and the promotion of the rule of law and human rights; and the EU's involvement as third party in the Middle East peace process.

As mentioned earlier, the democratization process of the PA is one element that has been researched by all six Palestinian polling institutes; many research centers have also looked at role of the EU and other international actors as an example to follow for Palestine. Some 72 per cent of Palestinians consider that their preferred system of government is a democratic system similar to the one in Europe or in Israel (CDS, Opinion Leader's Survey, February 2007). Europe ranked second also in a similar survey conducted in April 2006 (NEC, A Palestinian Perceptions Update, April 2006). However, this information should not be read in a vacuum: in a series of polls on the status of democracy in neighboring countries, Israel and the US ranked higher than the one European state chosen to represent Europe, France (CPRS, Poll No. 25, December 1996; CPRS Polls, Poll No. 47, February 2000). The US is perceived as democratic and respectful of citizens (respectively 52.6 per cent and 66.5 per cent of the polled answered definitely yes to the question). Only 22 per cent of Palestinians considered the US as promoting democracy around the world but 45 per cent would nonetheless like to see some features of American democracy applied in the Arab world (CDS, Poll No. 5, October 2001).

It is also important to note that strengthening democracy (84.4 per cent) does not seem to as high a necessity for the West Bank and Gaza, as compared to ending chaos (99.4 per cent), achieving national unity (98.5 per cent) and fighting corruption (94.4 per cent). Moreover, assistance in democratization and institution building is not a top priority area for international assistance as other spheres of support such as education, welfare, and health are ranked higher in the public's preferences (CDS, Poll No. 8, August 2002). Similar data are confirmed by another question on the same topic conducted in January

1999 (CPRS, Poll No.39, January 1999). In some cases, there is a general mistrust vis-à-vis donor's assistance: according to 62 per cent of the polled by the Center for Development Studies in 2002, donors countries were using funding to put political pressure on the PA, while 74 per cent saw international assistance as driven by political interests of donor countries rather than by the welfare of the Palestinian people (CDS, Poll No. 8, August 2002).

The EU definitely has a primary role in the eyes of the Palestinians in the sphere of donors' assistance and international funding (Interview with Hussein Ahmad, 9 May 2008). Data in support of this statement can be found before as well as after the beginning of the Second Intifada. In 2000, the EU and some Member States were seen as contributing the most to Palestinian economy (25 per cent) as compared to Japan (13 per cent) and the US (11 per cent) (CPRS, Poll No. 47, February 2000). In 2005, overall 79.5 per cent of Palestinians assessed positively the financial help provided by the EU; 74.2 per cent gave a positive evaluation of the support that the EU provides in infrastructure. The approval rate for the EU was slightly lower for its political support to the PA, 69.4 per cent. The Arab countries only received a 55.6 approval rate for their financial support (Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies, Poll No. 10, January 2005). Similarly positive data emerged from an NEC poll conducted in April 2006, which indicates that nearly half (48 per cent) of the respondents believe the EU is the international donor that provided most humanitarian and developmental aid to the Palestinian people, followed by the Arab countries (27 per cent), the non-Arab Islamic countries (14 per cent), the US (7 per cent) and Japan (4 per cent) (NEC, A Palestinian Perceptions Update, April 2006).

That this is the Palestinian outlook on EU funding has been confirmed also in interviews with researchers. According to Rabah, very positive data on the economic and financial assistance offered by the EU have come out also of polls on the specific issue of international assistance that are not available online. The EU is seen as the most important assistance provider, almost neck-to-neck with the UN (Interview with Jamil Rabah, 8 May

2008).[28] More importantly, the EU is perceived as providing assistance for humanitarian reasons more than political reasons, as opposed to the US. This is connected to a negative response towards US assistance, as opposed to EU support (CDS, Poll No.7, June 2002).

In addition, EU (and American) funding was considered as important for the well-being of the Palestinians by 81.3 per cent of the polled by PCPO in April 2006 (PCPO, Poll No. 153, April 2006). In November 2006, when asked who was most responsible for the deterioration of economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, 24.6 per cent answered Hamas, 30.6 per cent the US and only 3.1 per cent the EU. The majority of the respondents would also have a positive opinion of the EU and the US in case of resumption of economic and financial assistance to the Palestinians (PCPO, Poll No. 153, April 2006).[29]

This statement leads to the topic of freezing international assistance to the PA after the victory of Hamas at the PLC elections in January 2006 and the formation of a Hamas-led government. A recurrent question appearing in the polls since the elections is whether Hamas should recognize Israel and abide by the conditions imposed by donors. The data on this differ as the Palestinian public opinion seems to be divided on the issue. Right after the elections, the majority of Palestinians polled by NEC considered that Hamas should change its position (62.4 per cent). More than 60 per cent of the polled thought that Hamas would be capable of replacing the lost funding from the West with Iran's donor assistance (68.9 per cent) (NEC, Political Pulse, Poll No.2, February 2006). Still in 2006, 63.2 per cent questioned by OPSSC were against Hamas recognizing Israel (OPSSC, Poll No.21, June 2006). This number decreased slightly in March 2007, with 52.1 against the recognition and 39.4 in favor (OPSSC, Poll No.26, March 2007). In April 2008, 49.2 per cent versus 37.9 per cent were for accepting the demands of the international community (JMCC, Poll No.64, April 2008). It is interesting to note, however, that 64.9 per cent considered that Hamas had a bad record in maintaining relations with the international community (NEC, Political Pulse, Poll No.11, November 2006).

[28]Note on the UN and UNRWA. The UN and UNRWA are considered most relevant for international assistance. UNRWA is often included in the same category as Palestinian institutions.
[29] Similar polls conducted, for instance, in May and August 2006 and again in February 2007 show comparable data.

The next section will give an overview of the results of the polls focusing on the view of the EU as a mediator in the conflict. Two aspects will be taken into consideration: the reaction of the public opinion vis-à-vis specific instances of the EU political role in the peace process and the level of trust in the EU as a possible player.

As mentioned earlier, there are only a small number of questions in the polls regarding the role of the EU as a mediator in the peace process. The initiatives where the EU is considered to have played a role, such as the negotiations for the Hebron agreement in 1996-1997 or the Moratinos non-paper on the Taba talks of January 2001 do not appear in the polls. The EU Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process is never mentioned. Many of the polling institutes, as already argued, do not make a reference to the EU when mentioning the Roadmap or the Quartet. There are only a few instances where the EU is brought up in relation to a political initiative such as the EU-US request to the PA in May 1999 to continue permanent status negotiations and the proposal submitted by European personalities (OPSSC, Poll No. 25, January 2006). In addition, specific European countries are referred to, but only rarely.

One point that is important to highlight is the level of appreciation of the EU political role, at 69.4 per cent, as compared to the approval rate for its economic and financial assistance, which is in the high 70s (OPSSC, Poll No. 10, January 2005). This was also confirmed in interviews which portray the EU as not politically engaged enough in the peace process, while on the other hand also not reliable.

The second aspect is the level of trust that the public opinion has of the EU. The data do not present a uniform picture: the Europeans are considered to understand the Palestinian issues the most (34 per cent) if compared to other international actors but the Americans are not ranked too far below (25 per cent). The Europeans are also considered to show more understanding of the issue than the Americans (36 per cent vs. 10 per cent) (NEC, A Palestinian Perceptions Update, April 2006). More than 50 per cent did not see a difference between the EU and the US in policies on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (JMCC, Poll No.

51, June 2004). In a poll on which international actor was seen as possibly obstructing the national unity government, the EU was seen as potentially doing so - with 52 per cent (as compared to 88 per cent for the US). 55 per cent, however, considered that internal Palestinian forces would represent one of these forces (CDS, Poll No. 30, February 2007). The negative assessment continues with more than 50 per cent believing that the EU is not really concerned with the success of the Hamas Government. In the same question, the US obtained a negative answer by 67.7 per cent and the Arab states by 35.3 per cent of the population (OPSSC, Poll. No. 19, March 2006). During the EU Presidency, 61.1 per cent saw Germany as biased towards Israelis, while 21.5 per cent see Germany as neutral (JMCC, Poll No. 61, March 2007).

Finally, it is interesting to note that more than 82.2 per cent were against the attacks against the EU office in Gaza in the aftermath of the publishing of the cartoons allegedly depicting Prophet Mohammed in Denmark. 40 per cent continued to see Denmark as neutral with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian issue (NEC, Danish Cartoons Survey Results, February 2006). However, the 49.3 per cent saw the US and the Western countries as the external force responsible for the chaos in Gaza.

The third aspect relates to the international force in Gaza and the West Bank. In 2006, 56.2 opposed and supported an international presence to a certain extent compared to 39.2 who strongly opposed (JMCC, Poll No. 60, September 2006). In May 2007, 67.9 per cent opposed an international force (NEC, Political Pulse, May 2007).

In case of the establishment of an international force, however, there seems to be a preference for an UN-led contingent. A large group of those polled would like the international presence to be invested with authority and power and the majority of the polled would prefer to have an UN-led force than an American-European one. (JMCC, Poll No. 51, June 2004). The preferred international actor for a possible administration of Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal is the World Bank, followed by the Arab League, the United Nations and Egypt. The EU ranks ahead only of the US (CDS, Poll No. 16, June 2004).

9. The Palestinian print media

This section is based on the monitoring of the coverage of the EU in two major Palestinian daily newspapers, al-Quds and al-Ayyam, in coincidence with key events linked to the peace process and to Palestinian domestic politics since 1994.

During the Oslo process, the EU was mentioned in the pages of the two dailies in key moments such as the signing of the DoP, when Arafat was invited to tour European capitals and the EU pledged funding for the PA. Other instances are the EU condemnation of the Hebron massacre by the hand of a Jewish extremist in February 1994 or the EU's denunciation of Israeli settlement policy, when former Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the construction of a new settlement in Har Homa, near Jerusalem. However, any mention of the EU is missing on other important occasions such as the signing of the Hebron agreement or Palestinian elections, although international monitoring is mentioned in the newspaper. Since 2002, when Israel reoccupied large parts of the West Bank and started targeting Arafat's compound in Ramallah, the Muqata, the EU appears to be mentioned at key moments such as the death of Arafat, Hamas' election victory, the formation of the unity government and Gaza takeover.

As for the content, the Palestinian media coverage of the EU focuses mainly on meetings between EU and PA officials and the developments related to the EU's financial and economic support to the PA as well as the EU stance vis-à-vis Hamas and the unity government.

Finally, internal EU issues are rarely covered by the print media. Some media seem to confuse the EC, the European Parliament and the national states. According to a journalist of al-Ayyam newspaper, Palestinians would benefit from an enhanced knowledge about the EU's institutional organization. Palestinians should better understand the dynamics of the EU and the decision making process, how the national states affected the union agenda

and priorities. EU are not in the scope of interest of the Palestinian media, and not even in the scope of interest of the Arab media including the largest satellite news channels (Interview with Abed Arnaout, 4 March 2008).

One interviewee pointed out how the EC office in East Jerusalem is very conservative in dealing with the Palestinian media and in providing information on their activities, positions and projects that are supported through the public and the private sectors and the civil society (Interview with Khalil Assali, 2 July 2008).

10. A note on Hamas

Hamas' action and political stance have always been the focus analysis and debates in the Palestinian arena. Hamas represented a major spoiler during the Oslo process because of its violent attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets, which included suicide bombings. By attacking Israelis, Hamas wanted to signal that the conflict with the Palestinians was not over and to demonstrate that Islamic movements had the power to derail the peace process (Lindholm Schulz 1995 : 58). Hamas justified its attacks against Israeli civilians by contending that more than 30 years of occupation had demonstrated that violence was the only way to liberate Palestine, and that targeting Israeli civilians was a legitimate form of retaliation to Israel's use of force (International Crisis Group 2004 : 16-19). Palestinian security performance in acting against Islamic movements has been a major point of contention between Israelis and Palestinians during the Oslo process.

Further, Hamas' was the biggest contender to Fateh's monopoly of political support in the West Bank and Gaza. Since the decision of Hamas to run in the 2006 political elections and its victory, this movement has made it to the center stage of Palestinian politics. It is important to mention here that while Hamas has not bowed to the Quartet's requests to recognize Israel and the agreements signed by the PA and the PLO, according to some it has shown elements of flexibility in its actions and discourse. One example that is often mentioned is that after taking power in 2006, Hamas has not tried to alter the political system but has in fact agreed to play within the established structure (Shikaki 2007).

Hamas' language in political documents is also taken as an example: its electoral platform for the 2006 elections or the 2006 proposed program for a national unity government. The language, it is argued, shifted from the issue of resistance to governance and "change and reform" (Hroub 2006). Moreover, while Hamas has not recognized the agreements signed with Israel, it has agreed to respect them (Tocci 2007).

This section explores the view Hamas and Hamas supporters have of the EU. As no interviews were conducted with Hamas officials, this part relies mainly on secondary sources as well as opinion polls including disaggregated data on the political affiliation of the polled.

In its cabinet platform presented in March 2006, Hamas made reference to the EU and the international community, delineating an interest in sending out a message to these actors. According to an analysis of the cabinet platform by a Palestinian analyst,

> "The effort to reassure donors is similarly evident, though the bid for aid is prefaced by reference to the circumstances that make it necessary. Thus, while the aim of the economic program is to achieve 'sustainable development, by optimum utilization and tapping of our own human and natural resources,' the government recognizes that 'the surrounding political conditions created by the [Israeli] occupation, prolonged closure and siege of cities have severely destroyed much of our infrastructure,' thus 'forcing us' to seek 'badly needed aid and support from the international community, our brethren and friends in the world.' In an implicit but clear reference to donor concerns about PA corruption, Haniyeh stressed that the government would 'provide all necessary guarantees and mechanisms to monitor the spending process of the financial aid to make sure that the money is managed properly and in accordance with approved plans, projects, and programs'" (Hroub 2006).

Moreover, the platform

> "commended the European Union (EU) for its generous support of the Palestinian people and its 'serious positions' and criticisms of occupation policies, adding, however, that 'we expect it to play a bigger role in exercising pressure on the occupation forces to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories'" (Hroub 2006).

On the contrary, Hamas is very clear in condemning the US position in the peace process, the main reason being that the US is not perceived as a neutral mediator but one that is completely biased towards Israel (Abu Zuhri 2007).

> They should be fair. Instead, they are supplying Israel with F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopter gunships and other weapons, and providing financial support and even diplomatic support by way of the [U.N.] veto. They are opposing the Palestinian will even though we aren't the side committing aggression. We are just calling for our liberation, for an end to Israel's occupation, and we are looking to the United States. We hope the United States will one day not be biased against our dreams (Gaess 2002).[30]

Regarding the suspension of aid to the Palestinian population, Hamas officials condemn the international community's decision to interrupt dialogue with the PA after the establishment of the Hamas-led government but at the same time they are calling for engagement. The letter written by Hamas to the Quartet calling for action to achieve security and stability in the Middle East is an example (al-Nuno 2007). Moreover, the spokesperson for Mahmoud Zahar, the Foreign Minister of Hamas' government, seems to make a clear distinction between Europe and the US. Europe is mentioned as being interested in a dialogue with Hamas

> "We also maintain contact with European countries and understand from them that they too want to see an end to the isolation imposed upon the government and our people. It is because of these friends that we have withstood the American-Israeli siege and maintained the struggle for the rights of our people" (al-Nuno 2007).

A look at the disaggregated data provided by some public opinion polls shows a clear demarcation between Hamas and Fateh supporters on issues related to international engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Interview with Hussein Ahmad, 9 May

[30] This is a quote from Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, a senior official from Hamas, interviewed by the Middle East Policy Journal in 2002. The same interview was also conducted with Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Ismail Abu Shanab. Rantisi and Yassin were killed by Israeli targeted strikes in 2004.

2008). Only 5 per cent of those who declared themselves as being Hamas followers would see an international presence beneficial; this figure stands in sharp contrast with the 50 per cent of Fateh supporters (NEC, Political Pulse, July 2007). 90 per cent of Hamas supporters saw the appointment of Tony Blair as negative, while 58 per cent of Fateh supporter saw it as negative (NEC, Political pulse, October 2007) Finally, 67 per cent of Hamas supporters see Hamas' record of relations with the international community as positive (NEC, Political pulse, December 2006).

FOURTH SECTION – CONCLUSIONS

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The focus of this research has been the analysis of Palestinian perceptions of the EU. This paper has sought in particular to examine Palestinian views on both the bilateral EU-Palestinian relationship and the multilateral role played by the EU in the management and resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To give more depth to the analysis, both a temporal and a social dimension were added. The former aimed at taking into consideration the evolution of the image of the EU since the beginning of the Oslo process and the establishment of an autonomous government in the West Bank and Gaza until present. The latter has tried to describe the image of the EU through the eyes of the Palestinian elites, public opinion and main print media.

While this paper has shown the complexity of this issue and the importance of further analysis on this topic, it has also highlighted a few key elements that will be used to draw conclusions based on the data collected through this research.

1. Palestinians across different segments of society see the EU mainly as a donor and provider of financial and humanitarian assistance.
2. Other aspects of the EU-Palestinian bilateral relationship such as the Interim Association Agreement, the ENP or the Palestinian participation in the Barcelona process appear to play a very marginal role if not none at all.

3. The political dimension of the EU is primarily seen through the lenses of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Palestinian goal of establishing an independent State.
4. Despite the EU's emphasis on the importance of Palestinian democratic reform, the view of the EU as a promoter of democracy and the rule of law is also seen from the point of view of its principled positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (for instance, its position on Israeli settlements) rather than from the angle of the expansion of their bilateral relationship and the democratic development of the PA.
5. Palestinians across the political spectrum acknowledge that the EU has a more balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than the US.
6. While Palestinians would welcome an enhanced EU role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pragmatic views on the US actual capability to influence the position of both parties in conflict and broken an agreement prevail.
7. Palestinians seem to give more importance to the EU's statements and declarations on Israeli policies and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than to specific programs such as EU BAM Rafah or EU COPPS. The EU is not considered the first choice for a possible international presence in the West Bank and Gaza.
8. The presence of the EU Special Envoy on the Middle East Peace Process is scarcely acknowledged.
9. While the Quartet is seen as having raised the profile of the EU, its multilateral nature is put into question as this mechanism is seen influenced by the US.
10. The EU has given more importance to the international repercussions of Hamas' victory in 2006 than to its weight in domestic politics.
11. The EU is considered more flexible on the issue of recognition of Hamas than the US.

Finally, the following are recommendations to the EU provided by the interviewees:

1. Developing a more independent role and policy within the Quartet (especially in relation to US positions).

2. Enhancing its contacts with Palestinian civil society actors and expanding its network of local institutions.
3. Ensuring more transparency and open publicity on projects and programs supported by the EU.
4. Establishing exchange programs between European and Palestinian universities, especially programs on topics such as EU and European studies.
5. Improving the public relations of the EC Office in the West Bank and Gaza and having an open door policy.
6. Keeping the Palestinian media more informed about different aspects related to the EU role in the West Bank and Gaza, by providing more user-friendly information on its activities and including a special program for local media on EU institutions and functions.

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www.jmcc.org

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Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Center (OPSSC)
http://www.najah.edu/nnu_portal/index.php?page=178&lang=en

Palestinian Center for Public Opinion (PCPO)
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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
RUSSIA

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive Summary

Contrary to both parties' declarations on the development of their "strategic partnership", relations between Russia and the EU have in recent years been in a state which could be called one of crisis. The fundamental problem is that both have essentially different perceptions, aspirations and interests, which lead to mistrust and disillusionment. The causes of the crisis are various. We could mention the lack of clear definition of Russia's identity (weather it is a European or a Euroasian state), the great power option vs. the pro-integration option, supporters of Russia's actual integration with the European area are a minority among Russian elites, lack of understanding and a negative perception of the EU and its policies, and finally, the internal crisis of the EU (its unclear prospects for institutional reform, enlargement and neighbourhood policy) which adversely affects its policy towards Russia.

The future of Russian-EU relations depends on many factors. It should not be expected in the short term that the situation will quickly improve, nor that the crisis will be overcome; some positive changes from the European perspective in Russia's European policy can be expected in the long term. Yet, President Dmitrii Medvedev has limited foreign policy experience. In this context, the relation between the EU and Russia is better define as "strategic cooperation" (quoted by Angela Merkel) and not as "strategic partnership".

Russians' opinion about self-identity, other countries and international relations go beyond the framework of ideological myths. Those opinions also demonstrate that Russians pay little attention to the situation abroad because they are deeply preoccupied with domestic problems.

Russians have generally positive reactions to the European Union expansion. Of those surveyed, 35% (50% in Moscow) said that they have positive feelings when they learnt that new countries became members of the EU, while only 15% expressed negative feelings.

More interesting is the percentage of Russians who approve Russian membership in the EU. The trend has been declining recently from 73% in June 2003, 48% in June 2005 and to 36% in April 2007. Russians who do not approve the membership are 26% while 38% are undecided. Those who expressed are positive about the membership highlight the fact that it would lead to higher standards of leaving.

In short, the EU-Russia relationship is positive from an economic point of view but it is a threat from the political perspective. 'Russia and Europe (the West)' is a highly complex topic. The opinion polls demonstrate that Russians are able to make well-grounded comparisons between Russia and Europe but find several differences in details.

Within the NGOs Russian legislation framework, it will be difficult for the EU to work with Russian organizations unless the European Commission engages the Russian government in an open dialogue during their biennial human rights consultations. At the same time, NGO leaders express doubts about the effective role of the EU in such this issue. They indicate that it is a dialogue between the "deaf" and the "blind" in which the EU is ready "to trade oil for basic rights".[1]

Television programming reflects the mindset of Russia's leaders, their logic and interpretation of various world developments and domestic politics. Replicated and exaggerated by television, these perceptions are subsequently transmitted to the Russian people, shaping their views and choices. Largely due to television, Russians find it difficult to conceive the EU s a single entity.

[1] Prokhorova E. (2007), Can the EU work with Russian NGOs?, available at the webiste of the EU Russia Centre, www.eu-russiacentre.org/column.asp?id=2667&ing=en, 14th November.

About the author

Mara Morini is at the University of Parma since 2006. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science and Comparative Analysis of Democracies from the University of Pavia in 2004. She is involved in a number of research projects concerning democratization in post-communist regimes, transformations of Italian political parties, and the relationship between Russia and the EU. Her research interests include party politics and political institutions in Russia, the consolidation of democracy in post-communist countries and Russia's foreign policy. In December 2003, Morini was an Electoral Observer for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe monitoring the elections of the Russian Duma. She is also project manager of several Tempus Tacis Programmes with Eastern Europe.

Tsar Alexander III once said that Russia has two friends,the army and the navy. Nowadays Russia also has two friends, which are oil and gas

Janusz Onyszkiewicz,
vice-President of the European Parliament.

Introduction

The elucidation of the relationship between the European Union and its largest neighbor, the Russian Federation, is still relevant for the understanding of the EU's Eastern neighborhood policy in relation to Putin's Russia. Both realize the need for one another. This political relationship has, nevertheless, been marked by ups and downs, and diversity of opinions and strategies among Russian elites remains a feature.

From the EU's point of view, Russia is a difficult partner, while for Russia, the best way to describe the EU is, as Henry Kissinger puts it, "Who to call when you want to talk to Europe". If the last quotation best describes the attitude of the Russian political elites, what about the impact and influence that political actors and mass media have on the Russian public opinion about EU-Russia issues? How is the wider EU perceived by Russians?

In the framework of the second round of "The External Image of the EU" research project (Lucarelli et al. 2006), sponsored by the GARNET Network of Excellence and by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,[2] this preliminary study aims to address several issues implicated in the EU-Russia relations through survey analysis, and to offer, simultaneously, a general overview of the development of that relationship through different sources.

The first section describes the political environment in which the EU- Russia political strategy and cooperation have developed in recent years, focusing on the perspectives of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, expired last November 2007. The section offers a description of the institutional background in which the relationship between "the Elephant and the Bear" has defined the economic and political strategy implemented since the breakdown of the USSR.

The second section deals with data obtained from the main research Institutes of Moscow (Levada Center, All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center VTsIOM, Fund Oschestvennoe Mnenie)[3] which enables us to explore how the EU is perceived by Russians.

The most evident aspect from the data is the influence and role of the Russian culture and identity - which implies the unresolved Russian debate about belonging to the "West" or "East" - in defining the image about the EU in Putin's Russia.

This dominant issue remains present in the political debate analyzed in the third section, especially with reference to the statements of Russian political leaders during the latest EU-Russia Summits. In fact, European issues are absent from the domestic political arena, both in the political parties documents and also in the websites of political leaders.

This lack of political information about the EU is also evident in the Russian media as it is extremely difficult to find a large number of articles dealing with European issues in the last three years (this is particularly true for the press).

The fourth section presents some insights about the attitude of the Russian media through the content analysis of a large number of articles starting from 2004. These sources represent the most important Russian newspapers, and the entire domestic political spectrum. This study hopes to significantly improve our understanding of both the political strategy adopted by the Kremlin and

[2] I wish to express my gratitude to Sonia Lucarelli who encouraged me to become part of this important and interesting research. I would also like to thank Lisa Tormena for her assistance in the usage of the Factiva system, and Lorenzo Fioramonti for his punctual comments on previuos drafts. On the Russian side, I am grateful to Vladimir Gel'man, Natalya Nyargomskaya, Elena Belokurova, Maria Nozhenko, Aleksandr Afanasiev and Dmitrii Shevchenko for helpful discussions about this issue. Special thanks to Angela Romano for her comments and suggestions on a previous draft of this report.

[3] Levada Center: <HTTP://www.levada.ru>; All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center VTsIOM: HTTP://www.wciom.ru; Fund Oschestvennoe Mnenie: <HTTP://www.fom.ru>

the media's perception about the role of EU as an International actor and how this perception influences the image of EU projected by the media onto Russians.

The conclusion that this study reaches strongly underlines that the Russia's domestic situation, characterized by attempts to reduce the level of freedom of speech, civic and political rights as exemplified in the NGOs law, is the result of the vertical power introduced during the Putin administration. This has strongly influenced the political, economic and public attitudes towards Russian foreign policy and the image of one of its most important partners in International Relations.

1. The normative framework of the EU-RUSSIA relationship

It is widely believed that the relationship between EU and the Soviet Union was practicaly non-existent and characterized by the dichotomy Western vs. Eastern type of politics. Consequently, it is only with the period of Perestrojka and Glasnost which a new "rapprochement" between the two parties began.

The first concrete attempt at rapprochement was the establishment of the *Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States*[4] (TACIS) programme which aim at promoting those states' transition towards market economy and democracy, to reinforce democracy and the rule of law, and to ensure the observance of democratic principles and human rights. Nevertheless, the starting point of this new political link is the signing of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The PCA was prepared during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin within the framework of the previous "Europe Agreements" signed with the newly independent Central and East European countries that were seeking accession to the EU. The PCA was based on the mutual commitment of "streghtening the political and economic freedoms"[5] which constitute the very basis of the partnership. Among the main goals we found the promotion of trade and investment and political dialogue; to support Russia in its political, economic consolidation and the creation of a Free Trade Area (FTA).

The institutional basis of the EU-Russia relationship is linked to the presence of common values, interests and the assumption of the compatibility of their future cooperation considered to be as a continous process leading to growing similarity between the parties. This goal implicitly means that it is expected that Russia will reach Western standards and will strive to make their cooperation concrete.

By 2007 the PAC had expired.[6] The events of its tenth anniversary represented a new opportunity to create a new and different partnership, with an emphasis on equality between the two parties, rather than the unconditional acceptance of the EU norms – either political or economic – as the foundation of the relationship.

During the 1990s, there was a rapid development in the EU-Russia relations on the basis of a proper framework which includes not only the mutual Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1994), but also the EU's Common Strategy on Russia (CSR, 1999), the Russia's Mid-Term EU Strategy (2000-2010), the EU Country Strategy Paper on Russia (2002-2006), Communication on EU-Russia Relations (2004), Four Common Spaces (2005), Visa facilitation (2006), Readmission (2006), EU Presidency Work Programme (2007), Sectoral Agrrements, the Annual Cooperation Council, the EU-Russia Summits organized twice a year and regular exchanges between the European Parliament (EP) and the Russian State Duma as summarised in Table 1.1.

Other instruments developed by Europe during this period includes the EU Common Strategy on Russia (CSR), adopted in the Cologne European Council in June 1999, which was implemented by the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). The CSR states:

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[4] See the website HTTP:<www.ec.europa.eu/tempus>

[5] For the full text of the agreement with Russia see the website of the Directorate-General "External Relations" of the European Commission, http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/pca_legal/index.htm.

[6] The PCA says in Art. 106: "This Agreement is concluded for an initial period of 10 years. The Agreement shall be automatically renewed year by year provided that neither Party gives the other Party written notice of denunciation of the Agreement at least six months before it expires".

"The European Union welcomes Russia's return to its rightful place in the European family in a spirit of friendship, cooperation, fair accommodation of interests and on the foundations of shared values enshrined in the common heritage of European civilisation". (...) "The European Council recognises that the future of Russia is an essential element in the future of the continent and constitutes a strategic interest for the European Union. The offer of a reinforced relationship, based on shared democratic values, will help Russia to assert its European identity and bring new opportunities to all the peoples of the continent. The enlargement of the Union will further increase these benefits and opportunities".[7]

Table 1.1. The Institutional framework of the relationship EU-Russia

EUROPEAN UNION	RUSSIA
TACIS *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1997)* *Common Strategy on Russia (1999)* *Russia's Mid-Term EU Strategy (2000-2010)* *EU Country Strategy Paper on Russia (2002-2006)* *Communication on EU-Russia Relations (2004)* *Four Common Spaces (2005) - The Road Maps* *Visa Facilitation (2006)* *Readmission (2006)* *Sectoral Agreements* *EU Presidency Work Programme (2007)* *Annual Cooperation Council* *EU-Russia Summits*	
European Parliament	**Russian State Duma**

Source: www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_259.htm

The EU Country Strategy Paper on Russia (2002-2006), adopted by the Commission on 27th December 2001, provides the strategic framework, taking its basis from the Regulation for the provision of assistance to the partner countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia[8]. The paper indicates that "In its response strategy 2002-2006, the EU should lend its full support to the Government's socio-economic reform programme and should concentrate on building the legal, institutional and administrative framework to allow economic development through private initiative and market forces. Legislative, regulatory and institutional convergence on the basis of European models and standards should be supported".[9]

On the Russian side, the Russia's Middle Term EU Strategy underlines the fact that "partnership with the EU can manifest itself in joint efforts to establish an effective system of collective security in Europe on the basis of equality without dividing lines". The document goes on to establish that "The Strategy determines development objectives of Russia's relations with the European Union for the next decade and [the] means of their achievement. It is a consistent evolution of the general foreign policy concept of Russia in the European area and it stems from the objective need to establish a multipolar world, common histories of nations and responsibility of European States for the future of the continent, and complementarity of their economies. It is also directly coordinated with the concept of [the] economic security of Russia[10]".

The normative foundation of the EU-Russian cooperation,[11] as previously illustrated, relies on the concept of a "strategic partnership". This concept is largely ill-defined because the most evident characteristic of the relationship between the two is the lack of any strategic substance in the dialogue until, at least, the development of a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP).

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[7] See *EU Common Strategy on Russia*, Part I. Online. Available HTTP:<www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_259.htm> (accessed September 2007).

[8] Council Regulation (EC, Euratom), No 99/2000 of 29 December 1999.

[9] For full text: HTTP:<www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_259.htm>

[10] See The Russian Federation Middle Term Strategy towards the European Union (2000-2010). Online. Available HTTP:<www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_259.htm> (September 2007).

[11] Both the EU and the Soviet Union-Russia have always been bound a significant rise in trade and tourism. It is well known that the main bulk of Russian experts are gas, oil and other raw materials of which there is a dire need in the EU.

In particular, for Europeans, the term "strategy", developed through the TACIS and the PCA programme, implies a "stable, open and pluralistic democracy in Russia, governed by the rule of law and underpinning a prosperous market economy". Conversely, Russia's "Medium-Term Strategy for Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union" (2000-2010) does not mention any common values as quoted in the PCA and stresses other concepts such as balance of power and geopolitics. Russia sees the EU's role as subordinate to another, much more strategic relationship that with the USA. The relation with the EU, then, it could be considered as an attempt to counterbalance the USA influence in Europe.

In May 2005, a joint initiative, known as the "Road Maps for the creation of the Four Common Spaces" (economics; freedom, security and justice; external security; research and education), was approved at the EU-Russia Summit in order to further develop their relations to a fundamentally new strategic level of interaction. While the EU is Russia's main trading partner, the relation experiences a large trade deficit, originating mainly in the EU dependence on energy supplies from Russia. The EU has thus an important strategic and economic interest in Russia's development. The case for closer EU-Russia relations will be greater after enlargement.

The future of this interaction is now the main issue. Recently, different political forces both in the EU and in Russia have proposed different visions about to avoid a 'Russia-EU quandary 2007'.[12]

The problems and concerns implicated in this relationship, which emerged especially in the years following the first election of President Putin, have negatively influenced projects meant to reinforce the "special partnership".European and Russian scholars and political leaders have different opinions and solutions to this problem, taking into consideration either EU's interests[13] or Russian needs.

On the one hand, European conservatives do not think there is a need to change the PCA. At the same time, those who strongly believe in the need for a long-lasting cooperation between the two, proposed three basic options for the formalisation of EU-Russia relations after 2007:

1. Renewing the PCA (under the provisions of Art. 106) until both sides decide to replace the document;
2. Making amendments and additions to the existing Agreement (taking into account the current level of 'advanced partnership' and the prospects for the further development of relations within the next 10 to 15 years);
3. Creating and ratifying a new agreement between Russia and the EU and EU member states to supersede the PCA.

Considering recent political developments between Russia and some EU member states[14], the last option seems to be the most difficult because it requires the ratification of a fundamentally new document with which all the parties must agree. It is also true that failing to renew the PCA could cause a temporary legal vacuum that would affect the interests of both and undermine established PCA implementation mechanisms. Seemingly, the second option would be the most reasonable and realistic in the current context.

On the Russian side, there is another important factor which makes this relationship more difficult; that is, the concept of sovereignity[15]. If the EU is going to be a post-modern and post-sovereign political system, Russia indicates in its mid-term EU strategy that as "…a world power situated on two continents, Russia should retain its freedom to determine and implement its domestic and foreign policies, its status and advantages of a Euro-Asian State and the largest country of the CIS independent of its position and activities in international organizations".[16]

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[12] It is observed moreover that the EU and the US have never felt the need to establish a comprehensive treaty together, even though they share a large set of interests.

[13] These 'interests' are of two quite different kinds. The first general 'interest' currently is to secure energy supplies. The second is the 'interest' of some EU member state leaders to promote its political-diplomatic objectives in world affairs through close personal relations at head of state level (with President Putin, for example).

[14] Mutual claims, problems, distrust have been spreading throughout Europe and Russia concerning the "Polish case".

[15] For Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, Russia is a 'sovereign democracy', which seems to indicate that Russia has the right to define what democracy may or should mean in the Russian context.

[16] For full text: HTTP:<www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p_259.htm>

It is evident that it is futile and a losing political strategy to insist on a growing similarity and centrality of common values between Russia and the EU, when the unequal nature and assymetries of this partnership are apparent.

Beyond sovereignity, there is also the dual concept of globalization/regionalization. According to EU documents regions are part of the globalized system. For Russia globalization is a form of US hegemony in the contemporary international system, which threatens Russia's territorial integrity. In any case, Russia is interested in becoming part of such processes: what Russians want from the "Strategic Partnership" with the EU is equality and not to be excluded from important political processes occurring in Europe. But the unequal nature and asymmetries are the main characteristics of this partnership. A situation that is, undoubtedly, extremely difficult to resolve. Nevertheless there is one "area" in which the EU-Russia dialogue has led to positive results: the role of interregional cooperation especially between Northern Europe and North-Western Russia. This fruitful exchanges are due to several reasons.

First, the Northern area is the place where the EU and Russia share a border[17] which has become considerably important with the EU enlargement. Second, in the post-cold war period, Northern Europe was a centre of overlapping regional arrangements which led the North to become one of the most regionalized parts of Europe. Third, after the European enlargements the countries involved agreed on the need to develop new innovative forms of cooperation. Consequently, transboundary interregional cooperation is, at the moment, a partial solution to the EU's dilemma because the Russian government does not accept political engagements between its regions and the EU. The EU can only support the autonomous actions and networking by regional actors in order to achieve the best outcomes and more towards avoiding the worst.

This formula best fits the Russian conception of neighbourhood as an area predominantly marked by "enmity and competition". Conversely, the EU considers its neighbourhood as a 'ring of friends' on 'European values', which the EU naturally and hegemonically assumes to be its values. This conceptualization reminds us of the 'Old-New' Russian debate about the so-called 'junior Europeans' (Atlanticists, Eastern European Countries, and the Nordic Countries). Arguably, these countries are eager to shoulder responsibility for degenerating EU-Russian relations through their treatment of Russia's neighbours and criticize Russia's drift away from the rule of law, freedom of the press, and human rights. "Senior Europeans", conversely, represent the "different voices" of Europe which make the dialogue more open to negotiations. At the same time, however, it is difficult to determine with whom Russia is talking.

On May 2007, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin stated that it must not be permitted that relations between Russia and the EU, which are crucial for the future of Europe, become hostage to the attitude of some EU countries. This was a reference to Poland's decision to maintain its veto on the beginning of talks on a new agreement between Russia and the EU. In particular, in the Russian media Poland is currently represented as a country striving to undermine the current elites in Ukraine and Belarus, to hinder the EU-Russia rapprochement, and to play the role of a peacekeeper in the CIS.

In such a context, the political debate on Russia's European integration stresses that Russia, with its vast territory, will never fit into the EU and never lose a fraction of its sovereignty while the EU will never want to share borders neither with China nor with Turkey.

Arguably the rhetoric about the importance of partnership contradicts practical results. In contrast to official declarations, the level and intensity of EU-Russia cooperation are currently modest and characterized by separate actions and the absence of a strategic framework. Of course, it is always difficult to move from programmes and plans to implementation, but many political initiatives do not produce practical results.

The principal stumbling block for EU-Russia relations is the contradiction between Russia's claims for overall equality and the EU's desire to integrate Russia on a differentiated basis. Russian opposition to such an approach is perceived as an unwillingness to cooperate, which leads to an increase in practical disputes and to the overall stagnation of the relation. The EU's approach

[17] Common Northwestern borders are 1,330 km.

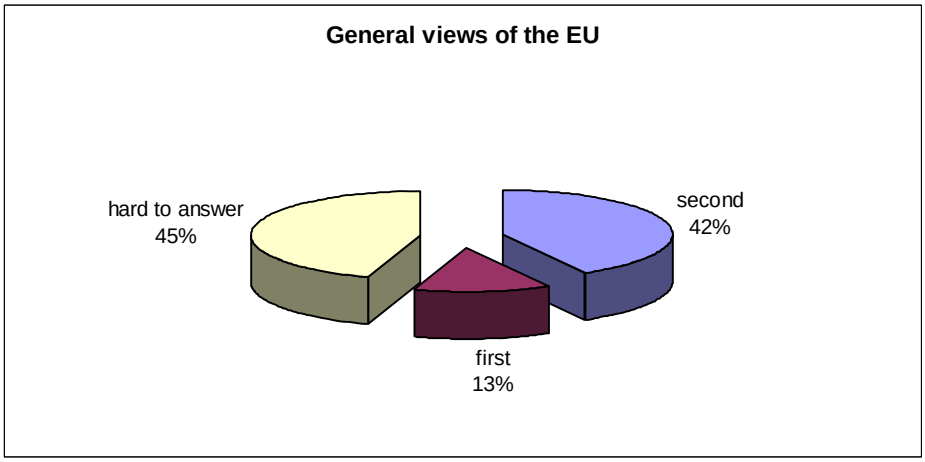
demonstrates a lack of perspective: it is not ready to make minor concessions in the name of near future strategic gains. Meanwhile bilateral agreements between Russia and EU's countries represent a real strategy and practice increasingly difficult to terminate.

2. Attitudes in public opinion: to be or not to be...Europeans?

Looking at the EU-Russian political discussion of the last decade, the presence of prejudices to substantiate anti-Russian or anti-European (anti-Western) policy is noteworthy. It is easy to find examples of 'Russian imperialism syndrome', 'pan-Slavonic solidarity' or 'organic hostility to the West' in Russian history and use them to explain contemporary Russia. By contrast, Russians'opinion about self-identity, other countries and International Relations goes beyond the framework of ideological myths and indicates that Russians pay little attention to the situation abroad. They are deeply preoccupied with domestic problems. Only extraordinary events, such as the Kosovo conflict, the NATO Eastward expansion, the European reaction to the Chechen crises, and anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan are able, albeit limitedly, to reduce this indifference barrier.

Talking about Europe, Russians have generally positive reactions to the expansion of the European Union. 35% of those surveyed (50% in Moscow) said that they have positive feelings when they learnt that new countries became members of the EU, while only 15% expressed negative feelings.

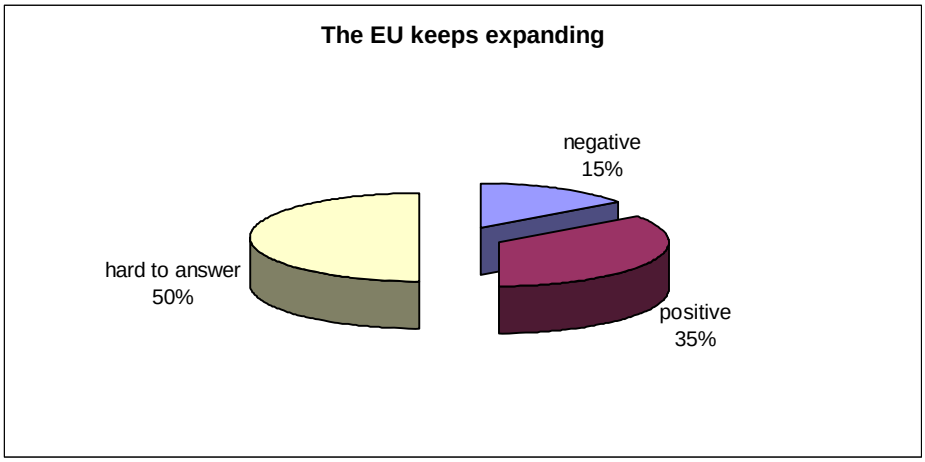
Figure 2.1. General views about the EU



Source: Nation-wide home interviews conducted March 31 – April 1 2007 in 100 residencies in 44 regions. A sample size of 1500 respondents. The margin of error does not exceed 3,6%. The document is published on the site english.fom.ru
http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/ct/frontier/blocks/russ_europe/ed071423

Figure 2.1 describes Russians' general views about the EU. These views were assessed through the following question: "*Some people predict that the European nations will eventually become a single state, while others say that it will never happen. Which of these two views come closest to your own?*" Only 13% of Russians believe that the European nations will eventually become a single state because of different cultures ("*each country is like an individual, they all have different personalities and rights. How can people whose personalities and age-old traditions are different get on withon other?*"), 42% think that it will never happen and 45% of Russians have difficulty answering this question. The latter could be interpreted as lack of knowledge about the issue.

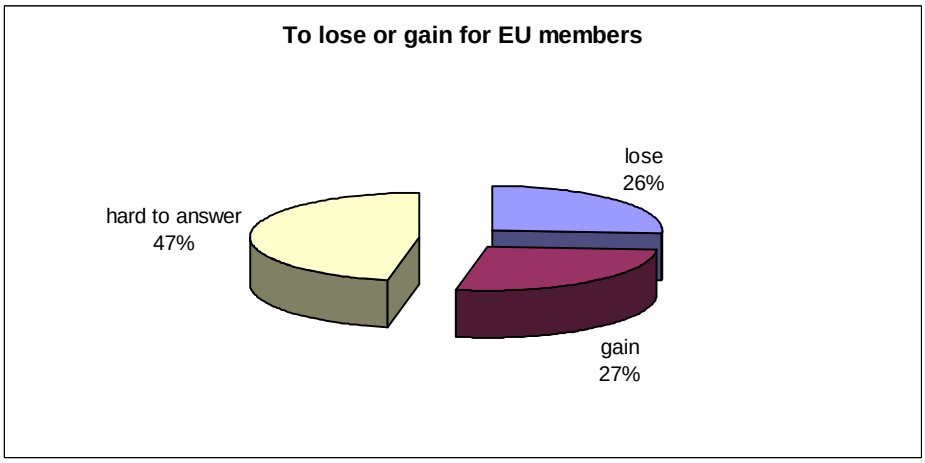
Figure 2.2. The EU keeps expanding



Source: Nation-wide home interviews conducted March 31 – April 1 2007 in 100 residencies in 44 regions. A sample size of 1500 respondents. The margin of error does not exceed 3,6%. The document is published on the site english.fom.ru
http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/ct/frontier/blocks/russ_europe/ed071423

The possible complete unification and the creation of a "European Empire" is the main question about the future development and expansion of the EU. Figure 2.2 presents some reactions to this issue. 50% of respondents find it difficult to answer because they do not have any opinions about it while among those who have expresed a negative attitude (15%) there is a increasing feeling that each country has its own interests (4%) and wants to keep its sovereignty (3%); European leaders are not able to divide their power among themselves (2%) and some respondents (3%) cited the disastrous experience of the USSR ("*even our Union fell apart, so the EU will never merge*") as a clear example of the EU's inability to complete the process of integration.

Figure 2.3. Do EU members lose or gain?



Source: Nation-wide home interviews conducted March 31 – April 1 2007 in 100 residencies in 44 regions. A sample size of 1500 respondents. The margin of error does not exceed 3,6%. The document is published on the site english.fom.ru
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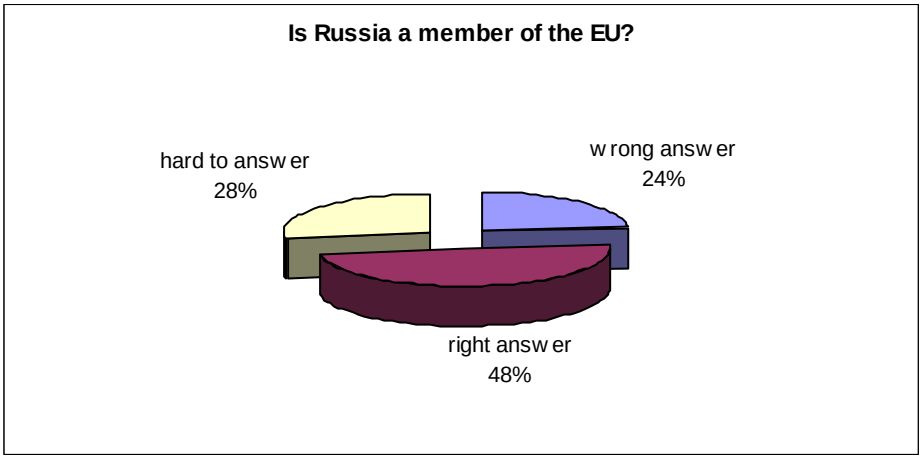
When asked (Figure 2.3) if they thought the citizens of most EU member countries would gain or lose something if their states were to unify, 47% of Russians expressed that it was too difficult to answer or their opinions were divided (27% "would gain something", and 26% "would lose something"). But what makes a difference is the presence of the single currency and open borders as the main positive advantages of a commonwealth system which has transformed Europe into a single space. Questions (figure 2.4) on wheather Russia is a member of the EU made it evident that 24% of those interviewed erroneously believe that their country is a member of the EU, 28% had difficulty to answer and less than on-half of Russians (48% but 77% in Moscow) knows that Russia is not a member of the EU. These answers highlight the limited knowledge about Russia's foreign policy and European issues in general.

Figure 2.4. Is Russia a member of the EU?



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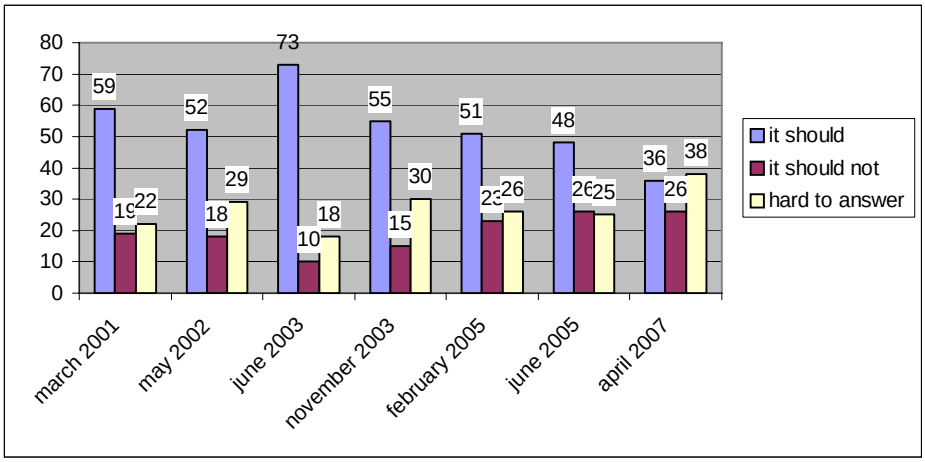
More interesting is the percentage of Russians who approve Russian membership in the EU. As figure 2.5 shows, thst percentage has been declining recently from 73% in June 2003, 48% in June 2005 and to 36% in April 2007. Russians who do not support EU membership are 26% while 38% are undecided. People who expressed their positive feelings about the membership underline the fact that it would lead to higher standards (5% "*we would live like Europeans*"), boost Russia's economy (5%) and is a sign of recognition (4% "*only highly developed countries are admitted to the EU, so it is something we should strive for*"; 2% "*it means honour and prestige*").

For the respondents, Russia deserves membership and leadership in the EU because of several reasons. They indicate that Russia could help strengthening world peace and security or to more effectively oppose other powers such as the US, China and the Islamic world. Some respondents also think that if Russia joined the EU it would mean progress for culture and civilization, and it also would bring benefit to Russia from the closer cooperation with EU countries. Russians who opposed membership indicate that Russia is a completely self-reliant and self-sufficient country (10%) which is "*not Europe, but Eurasia*" (3%) and not ready to join the community of economically and politically developed nations (3%). The main concern, however, is the fact that the country would fall under the influence of the West especially the USA, or that EU membership would undermine Russian economy.

In 2003[18] Russians strongly supported Russia's integration into the European Union because they thought that there were favorable conditions for drawing closer to the EU. They perceived that cooperation with the EU had developed more successfully than that with the USA. Two years later the number of people who were skeptical about the EU grew. The main reason behind such decline is the negative perception of EU's countries' experiences; even if the respondents believed that the European countries have mostly gained from EU membership, especially in the economic realm.

[18] It should be noted that the 2003 poll was conducted shortly after the visit of several European leaders to Russia the 300th anniversary celebrations of St. Petersburg, while the most recent poll was conducted shortly after the 60th anniversary of the Victory Day, where many European leaders participated as well.

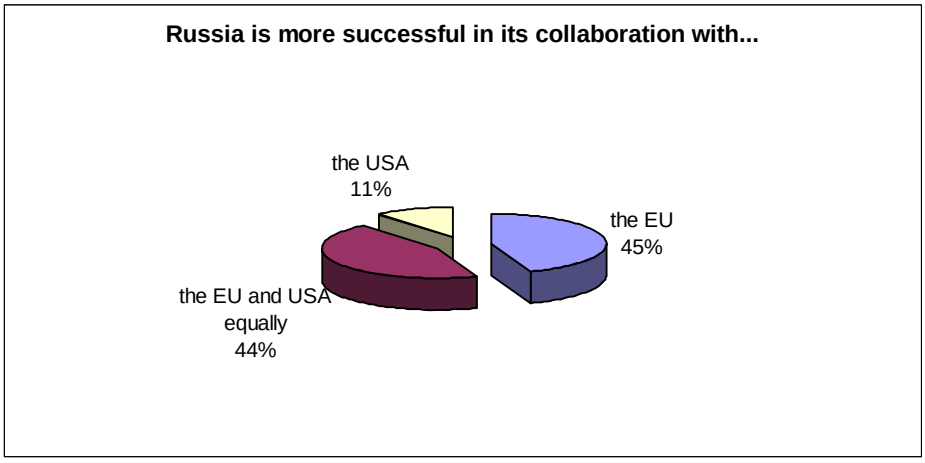
Figure 2.5. Support for EU membership



Source: Nation-wide home interviews conducted March 31 – April 1 2007 in 100 residencies in 44 regions. A sample size of 1500 respondents. The margin of error does not exceed 3,6%. The document is published on the site english.fom.ru
http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/ct/frontier/blocks/russ_europe/ed071423

Others pointed out that Russian membership to EU would decrease the country's independence, would lead loss of national identity, and to subordination to the EU. To sum up, it is good from the economics perspective but it is a threath from the political one.

Figure 2.6. Russia and Western cooperation



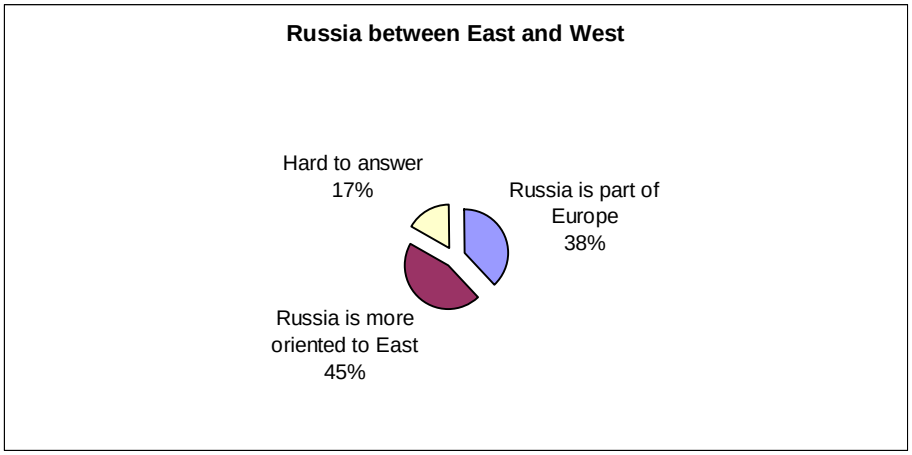
Source: The Public Opinion Foundation 2003-2007. Report 11.06.2003

Russian public opinion about the necessity to further develop cooperation with Western countries and about the current level of bilateral relations, clearly confirms the absence of anti-Western perceptions. Of course, public opinion reacts drastically to any contradictions in international relations. For example, in May 1998, 47% of Russians considered that cooperation with the West was positive for Russia, but a year later, in June 1999, only 39% or respondents supported this proposition. Military operations in Yugoslavia and unsuccessful negotiations of Russia's foreign debts occurred during this period, which negatively influenced the image of Western countries. Respondents' reactions to the question "*Should Russia strengthen economic relations with Western countries?"* showed a similar picture: 46% of respondents agreed with this suggestion in September 1998, but only 35% in May 1999.

However the percentage began to grow after May reaching 68% in January 2000. This trend highlights the support for cooperation. Fig.2.6. shows that according to 50% of respondents, it is better for Russia to improve relations with the West. Support is overwhelming and robust. Although it declined during the aforementioned foreign policy crises, it returned to a high level soon after the end of those crises. This trend testifies to Russians' unwillingness to assume a confrontational stand, and it demonstrates firm, if not well-grounded, hope for mutual understanding. The figure

shows that the Russia's relations with the EU and the USA are perceived as equal, and one-third of the respondents are convinced that collaboration with the EU is more important for Russia.

Figure 2.7. Russia between East and West



Source: The Public Opinion Foundation 2003-2007.

A survey carried in March 2007 assessed how Russian public opinion perceived Russia's role in the world. As we can see in Fig.2.7., 38% of respondents said that Russia was part of Europe and that in the XXI century both, Russian and Europe, would be closely tied, 45% answered that Russia is not a part of Europe because of its Euro-Asiatic civilization which leads to an attitude more oriented towards the East, while 17% had some difficulties in answering the question.[19]

Table 2.1. Attitudes towards Western countries and organizations

	Positive feeling	***Negative feeling***	***Hard to answer***
Europe	**77**	11	12
Western countries	52	31	17
Asia	**56**	24	21
USA	34	**50**	16
CSI	59	21	20
EU	**56**	18	**26**
WTO	49	19	**32**
NATO	19	**57**	24
FMI	42	21	**37**

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

Even if Russia is generally considered as an autonomus and independent state, table2.1. shows that both Europe and Asia are the main entities which Russians perceived positively. The negative feelings are oriented towards Western organizations such as NATO (57%) or countries such as the USA (50%). Arguably, thus, Russia is permanently divided between its European part, about 77% of respondents have a positive attitude toward the term "Europe", and the Eastern culture expressed through its membership to the Commonwealth of the Independent States and Asia.

A May 2007 poll asked: "*In which Country or Union of countries would you like to live?*". Thirty-Six percent of the respondents indicated that they would like to live in their own country (i.e., Russian) without becoming a member of any kind of union, 17% would like to return to the USSR, 9% would like to be part of the Commonwealth of the Independent States, 18% would like to create a poltical union with Ukraine,[20] Belorussia and Kazachstan, only 13% approves membership to the EU and 6% did not answer.

[19] Another question was about the European countries's attitude towards Russia. 49% of the sample underlined the fact that Russia's strenght worries European countries which are not interested in the development and prosperity of Russia; 34% think the opposite opinion and 17% of the respondent find difficult to answer.

[20] If a referendum were held on merging Russia and Ukraine to form a single state, 48% of Russians would vote in favor, according to a recent poll of 1,600 people in 46 Russian regions conducted by the All-Russian Center for the

Table 2.2.

In which country or Union of countries would you like to live?	% Sample	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	+60
My own country withouth any kind of Union	36	37	39	**38**	**36**	**33**
USSR	17	7	12	13	18	**28**
CSI	9	12	9	8	10	8
Commonwealth with Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia and Kazachstan	18	15	14	**21**	**21**	**18**
EU	13	**21**	**20**	12	11	6
Hard to answer	6	8	6	7	4	7

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

The attitude (table 2.2) towards this issue depends on the respondents'age. Youngers (18-34) would prefer to live in the EU more than middle-aged (35-54) people who are more oriented to live in their own country while the oldest people (above 60) support the return to the Soviet regime and are interested in a Commonwealth among Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine and Kazachstan; this latter "union" is also support by middle-aged respondents.

Table 2.3.

In your opinion with which country Russia should join in the future?			
	April 2006	**October 2006**	**May 2007**
Ukraine	**37**	**39**	**36**
Belorussia	**46**	**45**	**42**
Kazachstan	**30**	**29**	**30**
Azerbaijan	11	10	13
Uzbekistan	10	12	14
Kirghizistan	9	12	13
Tadjikistan	8	10	12
Armenia	11	12	15
Georgia	7	8	11
Moldova	-	11	14
Turkey	3	2	4
EU	16	16	17
None	**27**	**27**	**33**
Hard to answer	8	8	9

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

In table 2.3, it was asked which country should join with Russia. A large number of the respondents chose Belorussia (46%), Ukraine (37%) and Kazachstan (30%) while 27% would not like any kind of Commonwealth and only 16% of the respondents would join with the EU. It seems that the closer (i.e., geographically) a country is to Russia, the higher the support for a "union"..

In regards to the European issue, the support for the idea of becoming part of Europe with some kind (especially economic) of cooperation differs from the will to join it. This attitude is similar to that articulated by the Kremlin's policies, which can be summarized as "Russia, soul in Europe and body in Asia".

Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), the findings of which were summarized by regnum.ru on May 16. Twenty-nine percent would vote against such a unified state, 13% would not vote at all, and 11% were undecided. Support for a merger was far higher - 63% - among respondents over the age of 60 than in younger age groups, and marginally more residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg opposed such a merger (41%) than approved it (40%).

Table 2.4.

In your opinion, in which period the International situation was more calm and stable?	% Sample	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	+60
In the Soviet Era, in the 60s-80s	47	27	37	46	54	64
In the Nineties	5	4	8	5	5	4
Now	34	44	37	36	31	25
Hard to answer	14	25	18	13	10	7

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

What about Russians' estimation of the government's policies? The daily "Vremya novostei" reported on March 2007 that a new poll of an unspecified number of respondents carried out by the respected All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) indicated that most Russians approve President Putin's recent tough line in foreign affairs. The survey also suggested that most Russians "welcome the readiness of the authorities to discuss energy matters with the neighbors from the position of strength." About 47% of respondents said that Russia was most secure in the Soviet era, followed by 34% who argue that the current period has witnessed the best foreign-policy in security matters. The pollsters commented that approval for Soviet-era foreign policy cuts across generational boundaries, whereas nostalgia for the Soviet era is usually concentrated among the elderly.

Table 2.5.

Recently there is a spreading feeling that the period of the "Cold war" has come back. Do you agree with it?	% Sample	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	+60
It is possible	8	7	11	7	8	8
Ii is quite possible	32	20	32	33	33	37
It is not possible	41	49	39	45	38	35
Defnitely not	7	9	7	7	9	4
Hard to answer	12	15	11	8	12	16

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

The daily noted that this is why most Russians remain unconcerned about Russia's tougher foreign policy. They do not even fear another Cold War,[21] because they believe that their lives were good enough during the last Cold War (or better than current living standards, at least), and they believe that the security situation was certainly better back then. About 40% of respondents believe that another Cold War is more or less possible, while 48% do not think so. About 61% of respondents consider Putin's present course to be "well-considered and well-balanced". Only 29% believe that the United States is the sole world power and that the world is unipolar.

As described previously, the relationship between Russia and the EU has become weaker because of political events which negatively influence the European and Russian elites. How was this relationship evaluated by Russian respondents? Table 2.6 shows that only 17% of the sample thinks that this dialogue is bad while the majority of them (33%) do not see any change, and 29% express a positive attitude towards the present situation. This attitude is different according to supporters of the main political parties in Russia. Those who support the party of the President Putin, United Russia, express a positive evaluation of this relationship. Among the LDPR voters, 19% think that nothing has changed while the percentage of those voters who belong to the successor parties, PCFR, and indicate that the situation is bad (27%) is greater. It evident that

[21] Sergei Yastrzhembsky, who is President Putin's special envoy to the EU, told the state-run daily newspaper "Rossiiskaya gazeta" of February 22nd, that Putin's February 10th speech in Munich should be understood as a "cold shower [and not a return] to a Cold War," RIA Novosti reported (see "RFE/RL Newsline," February 12th , 13th, and 22nd 2007).

supporters of the parties in power do not perceive any issues in the dialogue with the West, in comparison to the opposition communist party, which clearly is more pessimistic.

Table 2.6.

How do you evaluate Russian relationship with the WEST in the last period, good or bad?	**% Sample**	**United Russia**	**CPRF**	**LDPR**	**Other Russia**
Quite bad	17	13	**27**	21	21
Quite good	29	**34**	21	**35**	**30**
Not changed	**33**	**32**	**33**	19	**33**
Hard to answer	21	21	19	25	**16**

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

The following tables present in more detail the reasons why respondents expressed either a positive or a negative evaluation, taking into consideration the approval level of President Putin's foreign policies. Generally speaking, the most negative perception is due to an anti-Russian politics implemented by Western countries, especially the US, with Russia (33%); about 31% of the sample had difficulties to answer. It is important to underline that among those who approve Putin's policy, 32% agree on the influence of an anti-Russia politics, 34% did not answer and only 15% think that Russia is autonomous and too competitive for Western countries (Table 2.7). Also, among Russian respondents who do not approve Putin's policy, the anti-Russian politics issue reaches about 45% and 20% had problems to answer to this question.

Table 2.7.

If in the previous question you answered "bad" can you explain why? *(open question until 3 answers, % of whom believes that relationship are bad)*				
	Total %	**To approve/not approve Putin's policy**		
		Approve	**Not approve**	**Difficult to evaluate**
Anti-russian politics of Western countries, USA	**33**	**32**	45	14
Russia is autonomous and competitive for Western countries	14	15	9	14
Russian politics of forniture of gas and oil	7	6	11	10
Nato Expansion	7	9		5
It is a struggle for leadership	4	4	5	5
Because of her conflicts with neighborod countries (Georgia, Ukriane, Baltic Republics)	2	2	2	5
Russian behaviour towards neighboroughs is dominant in leadership in International community	1	0		10
Other	8	4	18	19
Hard to answer	**31**	**34**	**20**	**29**

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

This issue is receives higher percentage among those who have difficulties evaluating the situation. Conversely, the positive evaluation of the EU-Russia foreign policy (Table 2.8.) depends on the fact that Russia has improved its economical and social ties with Western countries (41%).

Table 2.8.

If in the previous question you answered "good" can you explain why? *(open question till 3 answers, % of whom believes that relationship are good)*					
	Total %	**Supporters of political parties**			
		United Russia	**CPRF**	**LDPR**	**Other Russia**
Expansion of economical and social ties with Western Countries	**41**	**46**	**36**	**55**	**36**
Thanks to Putin's Strength	17	18	**25**	14	**27**
Revival of Russian leadership in International community	15	14	11	9	14
Russia actively defends her interests	1		4		
Other	5	5	4	5	
Hard to answer	**28**	23	**29**	**27**	23

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

This explanation of the positive relationship between EU-Russia is generally shared by both the "party in power" and Zhirinovsky's LDPR. What is extremely interesting is that opposition parties recognize credit President Putin for the improvement of Russia's image in the West through the use of order, security and strength rather than his party, United Russia. If asked directly to express an evaluation on a specific issue concerning President Putin's foreign policy, a large number of respondents indicated that Russia has an unbalanced relationship both with the West and the East. This is evident among all the parties' voters except for the Communists (48%) who declare that Russian foreign policy is more oriented to the West (Tab.2.9.).

Table 2.9.

How do you evaluate Putin's foreign policy in the last years?	**Supporters of political parties**				
	Sample %	**United Russia**	**CPRF**	**LDPR**	**Other Russia**
Russia's Foreign policy became too severe in relationship with West	8	7	8	10	4
Russia's Foreign policy became too in favour of West	16	14	**30**	16	14
Russia's Foreign policy became completely unbalanced in relationship with West and East	**61**	**68**	**48**	**61**	**70**
Hard to answer	15	11	14	13	12

Source: www.wciom.ru (Russian version, 2007).

In conclusion**,** "Russia and Europe (the West)" is a highly complex topic. Opinion polls have demonstrated that Russians are able to make well-grounded comparisons between Russia and Europe, and find several differences in details. Conversely, Russians have little information about Asia and cannot emphasize similarities or differences between Russia and Asia. All speculations about the Asian nature of Russia are founded on a lack of understanding of what Asian societies and the Asian way of life are.

As Vladimir Popov noted, "Before I visited Asia, I thought Russia was not Europe. But from Asia, it becomes clear that Russia is a part of Europe. The difference between Russian and European lives seems negligible when compared to the difference between China and Europe, be it Holland or Russia".[22]

Thus, if Russia is not Europe in the West-European sense of the term, neither it part of Asia. "Russia is a*nother Europe*" where one of the most important shifts in Russian society is the emergence of a new type of personality, in Kantor's[23] words, "modern Russian European" (*russky*

[22] See, Kaveshnikov N. (2003) "EU-Russia Relations: How to overcome the deadlock of mutual misunderstanding?", *Iee Document*, n.29, p.10.
[23] Kantor, V. (1999), 'Fenomen russkogo evropeytsa', *Nauchnye doklady*, Moscow, MONF, IMEMO, n° 101.

evropeets). “Modern Russian European” people often cannot define themselves as Europeans but their behaviour patterns are quite European. Their standards of living are Western, which means good household conditions, a car, electronics and all modern household appliances, good quality education for their children, tourism travelling and other kinds of active leisure. People with such a value system do not rely upon the state but rather upon themselves. They appreciate the emerging possibilities for choosing their sphere of activity and ways to earn money, and they are ready to work hard in order to achieve a high standard of living for themselves and for their families. Based on this value system, a civil consciousness and political positions have begun to be formed.

It is impossible to estimate the number of such “Russian Europeans” in the total population of the country, but undoubtedly their percentage is high. These people have not yet become the moving force of further economic and political reforms, but their influence on the political process is increasing steadily. Russia is *another Europe.* Nobody questions the European nature of such countries as Greece, Poland or Slovenia, but nobody can deny the great differences between them and France, Germany or the UK. Today the boundary of Europe is moving eastward, but it is not a boundary between European and non-European societies. This new boundary is separating those who have adopted new economic and political cultures, and those who are still in transition.

3. Political elites: to integrate into Europe does not mean to join the EU!

Despite the relative importance of public opinion, everyone realises that foreign policy in all countries is primarily a matter for an elite. This is especially true in Russia, where state institutions are, at best, limitedly influenced by civil society. The debate within the Russian elite about the country’s identity, its place in the world and paradigm of foreign policy, emerged just after the collapse of the USSR. Initially, the discussion was characterized by three traditional concepts, all rooted in the 17th century: Atlanticism (*zapadnichestvo*), Eurasianism (*evrasiystvo*) and anti-Westernism. The main idea of contemporary Atlantism was formulated by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Kozyrev, who considered the countries of Western Europe “as natural allies of the new Russia” and believed that the “establishment of qualitatively new relations with them is the single priority of foreign policy”. According to this logic, Russian national interests correspond to Western interests, and Russia should simply follow their policy.

The anti-Western approach (i.e., neo-imperialism) is based on ideas about a conspiracy against Russia and proposes to create a new counterweight to the US, and for Russia to lead the opposition of the Third World against the West. Finally, the traditional concept of *eurasiystvo* (originality) proposes that Russia should play the role of intermediary, a bridge between East and West, or even isolate itself in order to concentrate exclusively on domestic development.

Space limit makes it impossible to analyse all the strengths and weakness of these concepts. But it is important to mention that in recent years a degree of elite convergence about the idea of a “realistic foreign policy” has emerged. The first signs of a more balanced and pragmatic foreign policy appeared after the 1996 nomination of Evgeny Primakov as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The end of the Cold War did not bring “a stable and predictable world”; it was insufficient to neutralize “old and new dangers and risks”, such as terrorism, the spread of nuclear weapons and regional conflicts.

Relations between Russia and the West should be based on “equal partnership” and Russia should protect its interests “more energetically and effectively”, but without new confrontations. The concept of realism was developed after the election of President Putin in 2000. Realism demands that Russia should concentrate on problems of national development, avoiding isolationism and confrontation in foreign policy. The main goal of such a perspective is to integrate Russia into the world economy as deeply as the competitiveness of the national economy allows, and to use new opportunities to attract foreign investment and stimulate domestic industry. Foreign policy is regarded as a way of stimulating economic growth and providing optimal conditions for the development of the national economy.

The most unusual phenomenon of contemporary Russia is that “foreign policy has ceased to be a subject of fierce debate for domestic political forces, on the contrary it is a sphere on which a

broad public consensus is forming". Of course, some contradictory opinions still exist but the main political forces support the above-mentioned guidelines of foreign policy, which does not exclude disagreements on specific policy questions.

Russia should - and aspires to - cooperate with European countries (and the US as well) in a number of spheres in which their interests coincide, and in which cooperation can bring added value. A majority within the elite understands that further democratic development is not only a prerequisite for this cooperation, but also a vital necessity for internal stability and economic growth. Russian politics has been often characterized by some political phases which have had a great impact on the transition process. Arguably, the most important political event has been the change occurred in 1999 with the end of the Yeltsin's Era and the emergence of a new political phase with Putin's election.

Starting from 2000 the political strategy adopted by the Kremlin has significantly changed towards a more hegemonic role of Russia around the world. Since his early Presidency, Putin clearly expressed his intention to make Russia stronger and stable in order to enter into a new era. This political strategy led to a different attitude not only within its boarder but especially in its relationship with the West and also with its closer East.

The second presidential legislature has witnessed a significant political and economical change which has provoked different attitudes and policies towards the West. Moreover, the fifth European enlargement has undoubtedly had an impact on this new perception of the Russian foreign policy and it seems, especially in the last year, to have worsened the dialogue between the EU and Russia. It also true that speaking about the EU, this difficult relationship seems to be related more to a single country's behaviour than to a more unified European foreign policy. During the 2006 Finnish EU Presidency, Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, in a speech to the European Parliament, stated that Russia is important for the EU [and] "we are bound together by many ties, but it is fair to say that certain trends in Russia give us cause for concern ... We need to see a firmer commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and the market economy. We do not want Russia to go in an authoritarian direction. We are fully entitled to be concerned about the way things are going in Russia".[24]

Following the EU Finnish Presidency, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, whose country hold the EU Presidency, told the European Parliament in Strasbourg on January 2007 that EU needs "reliable relations" with Russia because "we cannot ignore issues like freedom of the press, civil liberties, or conflicts in Russia's neighboring countries".[25] She underlined the need to negotiate a new EU-Russia comprehensive cooperation pact to replace the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, even if Poland is blocking talks on the new pact because of Russia's prohibition on imports of Polish agricultural products, which Poland calls illegal and politically motivated.

On the Russian side, opening the summit in Samara,[26] Putin said that he wanted "to discuss everything openly and sincerely, without any 'taboos'; there is no conflict of interests between his country and the European Union, but mainly differing viewpoints on how to reach solutions on various issues".[27]

Elsewhere, Dmitry Danilov, who heads the European security section at the Institute of Europe at the Russian Academy of Sciences, wrote for RIA Novosti that "far from concealing its expectations, [Russia] has made it clear that it hopes Germany will lead the EU towards rapprochement with Russia during its EU Presidency".[28]

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[24] See "RFE/RL Newsline," October 23rd, 24th, and 26th, and November 13th and 27th, 2006. For the full report, HTTP:<www.eu2006.fi>

[25] See "RFE/RL Newsline," January 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 16th 2007.

[26] Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso met on May 18th at the Volzhsky Utyos resort, located between the Russian cities of Tolyatti and Samara, for a summit whose agenda has been significantly downgraded due to friction between Russia and some new EU member states. See "RFE/RL Newsline," May 16th and 17th`, 2007.

[27] Sergei Yastrzhembsky, as saying that "like Mark Twain who said, 'the rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated' we can say that reports of a crisis have been exaggerated to say the least". Yastrzhembsky reiterated Putin's words that Russia and the European Union are not experiencing a crisis in their relations.

[28] For the development of this paragraph some newslines from RFE/RL were taken into consideration for Russian leaders' quotations during the Samara meeting.

Konstantin Kosachyov, who heads the State Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, told "Izvestia" of 21st December that "the governments of Old [Western] Europe seem to have a good understanding of where the real risks to Europe's energy stability lie. The real problems in the relations between Russia and the EU do not stem from Europe's excessive dependence on Russian gas, which has been supplied reliably for decades."

He went on to state that "the real threat comes from unpredictable transit states", which he did not name, except for Ukraine. Kosachyov believes that "if overt opponents of closer relations with Moscow come to have decisive influence on EU relations with Russia", Moscow will seek bilateral deals. He added that "European politicians should realize for themselves that it is futile and counterproductive for opponents of cooperation to be present in structures which are supposed to ensure cooperation."[29]

Russian politicians discussed whether such summits are the most effective way to uphold Russia's national interests in its relations with EU member states. The deputy head of the Federation Council's Committee for International Affairs, Vasily Likhachyov, noted that Russian diplomacy should adopt a differentiated approach to contacts with EU members. Russia "should be working more actively with those EU countries that are interested in cooperation with us and want to see Russia as their strategic partner and integrate with Russia". At the same time, Russia should restrict itself to limited interaction and curtail certain bilateral programs with those EU states "that don't heed the voice of reason", he added in an apparent allusion to some new Central and East European members of the EU. That view, which is widely shared among Russian politicians, is also the subject of comments in the Russian media.

At the Russia-EU summit in Samara, no formal agreements were reached between the two parties. Moreover, there were a number of issues that divided them, including the Russian ban on Polish meat imports, the dispute over Estonia's removal of a Soviet war memorial from central Tallinn,[30] the US plans to deploy its missile-defence system in Eastern Europe, problems facing the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, and the status of Kosova.

EU leaders expressed concerns about Russia's human rights issues.[31] European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told reporters that democracy and rule of law are "sacred principles for the EU", they are "values [that] I'm sure, unite, not divide us. It's very important for all European countries, and Russia is a European country...to ensure the full respect of those principles and values". Barroso added that the deaths of Kremlin critics, including the October 2006 killing of "Novaya gazeta" reporter Anna Politkovskaya, are "a matter of concern".[32] As far as the US plan missile-defense, Sergei Lavrov wrote in Britain's "Financial Times" of April 11 that this plan amounts to an attempt by Washington "to use the continent as [its] own strategic territory" and "alter the continent's geostrategic landscape". He maintained that the project "would also be an affront to all Europeans, as it would devalue the continent's pan-European and multinational organizations - including NATO and the [EU] - which we were told until just recently were the keystones of European security".

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[29] See "RFE/RL Newsline," June 19th and 26th, 2006.

30 Russian officials on May 3rd criticized the European Union, NATO, and the United States for their stance on the Russian-Estonian row over the removal of the Soviet war memorial from central Tallinn. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier by telephone that backing Estonia, an EU and NATO member, "contradicts European values and culture". See "The Moscow Times" reported on May 4th. Interfax on May 3rd quoted Russia's representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Aleksei Borodavkin, as saying that the "gross violations of human rights in Estonia that we have witnessed recently are the result of indifference and connivance on the part of the EU and NATO -- organizations that have granted their membership to a country trampling upon values that form the foundations of European culture and democracy." Borodavkin added, "Instead of condemning the illegal, inhuman actions of the Estonian authorities, concern was expressed over the peaceful demonstration by Russian citizens outside the Estonian Embassy in Moscow".

[31] German Chancellor Angela Merkel, for example, told journalists in Samara on May 18th that she was "concerned" that opposition leaders had problems traveling to the city to participate in a March of Dissent opposition rally, RFE/RL reported. Former chess champion Garry Kasparov and other opposition figures – including Eduard Limonov, leader of the banned National Bolshevik Party -- along with several Western journalists, were prevented from boarding a plane to Samara at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. See "RFE/RL Newsline," May 18th, 2007.

[32] "The Moscow Times" reported on May 21st.

Lavrov added that “we should like our U.S. partners to understand that a strong Russia, or a strong Germany or France, or a strong Europe, living in peace and harmony, cannot pose a threat to U.S. interests”. He expressed concern that the missile defense, which will consist of ten interceptors in Poland and a radar unit in the Czech Republic, “may well grow significantly, with the appearance of a new generation of antimissile missiles with a range of not hundreds but thousands of kilometres, multiple warheads, and also hypersonic interceptor missiles”. Lavrov wrote that the project should be discussed at the session of the NATO-Russia Council in Oslo in late April. He argued, moreover, that “no such [external] threat exists for Europe or the U.S. today, or [will exist] in the foreseeable future. None of the so-called rogue states possesses missiles that pose a real threat to Europe. The construction of missiles capable of reaching the U.S. is an even harder task”. Lavrov stressed that possible threats from rogue states “could become a self-fulfilling prophesy as a consequence of ill-considered actions”. Former president Vladimir Putin said that “there are fewer and fewer ways to influence and pressure Russia”, whose economic position is becoming ever stronger, news agencies reported. Seeking to play up differences between Western and Eastern Europe, he told his hosts that “unfortunately, some countries have transposed their bilateral problems with Russia on to the European level. Those in Central and Eastern Europe ... should play according to common rules”. He also attempted to drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies by saying regarding the planned US missile-defence system, “We ask our American friends: ‘have the Europeans asked you for this?’ We get no response. It was not pretty”.[33]

During his brief stay in the Grand Duchy, Putin also participated in the signing of a power-generation joint venture between Russian gas giant Gazprom and Soteg, Luxembourg's main gas and electricity supplier, and a Russian-Luxembourg banking cooperation pact. Luxembourg's banking and financial-service sector is becoming increasingly attractive to Russian business interests. Gazprom now effectively can be considered as a monopoly, while seeking greater access to European markets for itself. In Hungary, the opposition recently criticized the government for signing a pipeline deal with Russia, which they argue works against EU attempts to formulate a joint energy policy.[34] Elsewhere, in an apparent reference to Russia's use of energy as a political weapon against some of its neighbors in 2006-07, he warned, however, that "the interests of Russia and the EU will not always coincide ... One should not see political intrigues behind purely economic measures. One should not superimpose Cold War ideological labels on legal and quite understandable actions aimed at protecting our national interests”.

In addition, President Putin marked the EU's celebrations of what is effectively its 50th anniversary by publishing an article on EU-Russian relations in several newspapers, including Britain's “The Sunday Times”. He argued that Russia is Europe's natural ally and added that “the Russian people's choice in the early 1990s ... actually determined the path of further European integration”. Putin stressed that Russians “share the values and principles of the vast majority of Europeans. Respect for international law, rejection of force to settle international problems, and preference for strengthening common approaches in European and global politics are factors that unite us ... We always feel we share a common view of the world”. Putin also wrote that “a stable, prosperous, and united Europe is in our interests. European integration is an integral part of the emerging multipolar world order ... [although] for obvious reasons, we have no intention of either joining the EU or establishing any form of institutional association with it”[35]. In such a framework, President Putin “found an ally in Portugal” during talks about bilateral and EU-Russia relations with Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates and his delegation.[36]

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[33] See "RFE/RL Newsline,"May 22nd, 23rd, and 24th 2007.

[34] See "RFE/RL Newsline," March 13 th, 23rd, and 30 th 2007.

[35] Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said that unnamed Russian opposition figures knowingly harm their country's image abroad, mid.ru and Interfax reported on August 27 th, citing the daily "Trud." He added that Moscow closely monitors "the writings and thoughts” about Russia available abroad. He argued that some unnamed Western media outlets often portray Russia in a bad light because the worldwide “rivalry for resources is becoming more intense”, and because some people are unwilling to come to terms with the existence of today's “dynamically developing Russia”. Kamynin said that “a great deal of the harsh criticism of Russia derives from our opposition, which does not hesitate to neglect elementary ethical norms in the pursuit of its political goals. Where does this strange and shameful wish to sacrifice the interests of one's home country for personal gain come from?”

[36] Portugal has taken over the rotating EU Presidency from Germany on July 1st.

Russia has tried to split the EU and NATO. Putin said of the planned US missile system "We consider it harmful and dangerous to turn Europe into a powder keg and fill it with new types of armaments", kremlin.ru and Russian media reported. He stressed that "this creates new, unnecessary risks for the entire system of international relations in the world and in Europe". In response to Western criticisms of Russian human rights policies, Putin said that "the death penalty in certain Western countries, ... secret prisons and torture already in Europe, problems with the mass media in some countries, and immigration legislation in some European countries that doesn't correspond with the commonly accepted norms of international law and democratic norms" are all not in keeping with "common values". Putin added, "So, let's not talk as if we're dealing on one side with white, clean, and furry partners, and on the other side with monsters who have just come out of the woods and have hooves instead of feet, and horns". Socrates said that "the task is to arrive at a common strategic agreement that will unite our historic missions. With that idea, Portugal will embark on its EU Presidency". He warned Western countries against lecturing Russia on democracy, and stressed, "our relations have received an amazing impulse" thanks to his two days of talks. Putin said that Russia is "hoping that when Portugal chairs the EU, a new impulse will be given to Russia's relations with its European partners".[37]

If the Russian ruling class is well involved in the EU-Russia matter, strongly defending their position in the political order, it is very difficult to find both in documents and in political leaders' speech a reference to the EU among the main political parties. It is evident that Russian political leaders are more involved in domestic politcs rather than in the international issues. This situation also concerns Russian media's attitudes.[38] TV and newspaper do not waste time in reporting Putin's quotations or meetings with European leaders underlying the President's behaviour and his capacity to spread throughout the world a stronger and powerful Russia's image.

When talking about the EU the mass media underlines the economic interests of the European business community. As a matter of fact, Russia is the EU's fourth-largest trading partner, and the EU is easily Russia's major trading partner. Russia is going to be a potential economic powerhouse for decades to come, quoting studies that project a growth rate averaging as high as 6.5% from now to 2025, by which time Russia's GDP per capita could be reaching the levels of the main EU economies.

In such a context, the Round Table among European Industrialists is strongly supportive of the Common Economic Space agreement. It sets out a clear list of priorities for Russia's full economic potential to be achieved:

- improvement of the investment climate through strict and non-discriminatory enforcement of the rule of law;
- a continued fight against corruption;
- a "mainstreaming" of investment friendly criteria in the policy-making process;
- effective protection of intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights;
- trade facilitation through standardisation and mutually compatible IT procedures;
- use of international product standards and conformity assessment procedures;
- consistent application of the latest international accounting and auditing standards;
- a continuous process of policy dialogues within the framework of the Common Economic Space.

The general message is one of strong commitment to the EU-Russian economic relationship. It emphasizes, thus, the difference between the importance of economic and that of a weaker political and cultural partnership.

The EU for its part is unease over political and foreign policy developments in Russia, which are perceived to be increasingly divergent from the EU's conception of European values. This

[37] See "RFE/RL Newsline," May 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 25th, 2007.

[38] On the other hand, Western media often use a metaphorical sterotype of the EU-Russia relationship. The elephant image was chosen for the European Union, as representing a huge beast, but one that is vegetarian, placid and readily domesticated, and one that moves only slowly but with great weight. The Russian bear is of course an image that has been familiar for a long time, as in West European cartoons of the 19th century, carrying the idea of a powerful animal too, but one that is not so easily domesticated.

"values gap" is perceived to have widened especially during President Putin's second term in office as a result of two developments, one internal and one external. The first, internal development has been the strengthening of the Kremlin's "vertical power", the absence of pluralist party politics, the erosion of media and NGO freedoms, and the lack of an independent judiciary and of rule of law. President Putin, during his first term of office, was widely credited with having reversed the comparative chaos of governance in Russia under Yeltsin. He is now perceived in Europe, however, as having gone unnecessarily and undesirably far in reverting to a semiauthoritarian and only pseudo-democratic state. These tendencies have interacted with the great incentives offered by Russia's oil-gas resources to create a rent-controlling and distributing regime. The second, external, but related development has been the emergence of the new Russian geo-politics, in which the Kremlin-Gazprom complex exerts pressure on former Soviet states bordering now both Russia and the EU with a combination of commercial-energy and politico-diplomatic instruments. Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov has published a similar view in a Western newspaper, in terms that appear to aim at a cross between a new Yalta and the old US Monroe Doctrine. Perhaps, he wishes to go down in history as originator of an Ivanov Doctrine. Unsurprisingly, however,this doctrine is fundamentally unacceptable to the EU and no less so to independent states such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

The value gap has – in a typical EU view – become distressingly and alarmingly wide when Russia punishes former Soviet states with gas supply or wine import sanctions for trying to become more democratic or simply not being Russia-compliant. Generally speaking, there are two main tendencies on the issue of Russia's EU membership. On the one hand, "we need a strong European Union with Russia's participation" and "we don't want Russia to enter the EU", the weaker the organization the better for us. On the other hand, it can be quoted the popular Russian singer Vladimir Visotsky: "it's good there, but I don't need to be there!"

4. Russian civil Society and the media

As far as the the limits of the relationship between the EU and Russia's third sector is concerned, the new Russian legislation has resulted in a bill, implemented in April 2006, which undermines the role of 450,000 NGOs and foreign NGOs operating in the Russian Federation. This bill has caused widespread concerns among civil society organizations as well as the reaction of the Council of Europe, the EU Civil Society Contact Group, EU politicians, media and Russia's own Public Chamber. President Putin strongly defended the need to counteract terrorism and money laundering, saying that foreign funding of any political activity in the country should have been placed under state control.[39] Moreover he told human right activists that he would wholeheartedly, support civil society organizations as long as they do not get involved in politics.

Nevertheless the proposed legislation, according to the EU Civil Society Contact Group which represents seven large rights and value based NGO sector at EU level (environment, social, development, women, culture, human rights and public health), would "dangerously increase the intrusive power of the state by allowing unprecedented control over independent NGOs; create an overly complicated registration procedure for NGOs and permit government officials to deny registration arbitrarily; subject NGOs to inspections and audits at any time without limitation; liquidate NGOs unable to obtain registration; outlaw foreign representative offices; diminish the necessary check and balances intrinsic to a democratic society".[40]

The EU Austrian Presidency and the Council of Europe stated that this bill could violate the European Convention on Human Rights and it does not comply with standards and commitments undertaken in the framework of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In such a hostile context, it will be more difficult for the EU to work with Russian NGO unless the European Commission will be able to engage the Russian government in a open dialogue, during

[39] NGOs interpretations on the bill submitted in the Duma stress that the Kremlin wanted to react to the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine where NGOs palyed an important role which could undermine the Russian electoral cycle 2007-2008.

[40] EurActiv, After European pressure, Putin announces softer NGO law, available at the website: www.euractiv.com/en/enlargment/european-pressure-putin-announces-softer-ngo-law/article-150717?-print

their biennial human right consultations. At the same time, NGO leaders express their doubts about the effectiveness of the EU role in such an issue, saying that it is a dialogue between the deaf and the blind in which EU is ready "to trade oil for basic rights".[41] As Lev Ponomaryov, chairman of the For Human Rights Activist Group, stated there is a spreading feeling that the existing consultations with the European Union are not effective because Russian authorities ignore the role of civil society in the country without any follow-up. Consequently, the only body that may legally represent the public in Russia is the State Duma, while the construction of the civil society has slowed down, and in some sectors stopped or even turned back.

If this scenario shows the level of state control over politics and society, the analysis of Russian media can further confirm such a political strategy implemented during President Putin's Presidency. Russian mass media organizations gained their independence from the government in the early 1990s. Reforms that, for the first time, paved the way to private ownership of media appeared in June 1990 (Krug and Price, 1996). Previously, mass media organizations were owned and controlled by the government. During the last 15-18 years, Russian mass media companies have been in "transition from [an] administrative-bureaucratic model to the market and democratization – the Fourth Power model" (Zassoursky, 1997: 221). Nevertheless, the government, as an owner of mass media organizations, is still seen as an agent interested not in profit, but in content and ability to affect the opinion of the public (Zassoursky, 1997).

The Russian media landscape and information flow has undergone a series of transformations during last 2-3 years (table 4.1). If President Yeltsin's second term was characterised by the intensity of the so-called "media wars" between competing business-political groups, the first years of the Putin administration can be characterised by the new wave of media centralisation under clear guidelines and control of the Kremlin.

Table 4.1. Russian Media Ownership and Influence

TELEVISIO	**Institution**	**Individual**
ORT (Russian Public Television) 80% of Russia"s territory; 98.8% of population or 148,000,000 potential viewers	Federal Government-51%. Consortium of banks (Alpha-Bank, "Menatep," "SBS" and United Bank)-38%. LogoVAZ-11%. Berezovsky-8%.	Boris Berezovsky is rumored to have control since 1995, though formally directed by 11-member board, 6 of whom represent the Federal Government
NTV (Independent Television) 104,000,000 potential viewers	MOST Media-70%. Gazprom-30% (although Gazprom has given control of its shares to MOST Media).	Vladimir Gusinsky Igor Malashenko
RTR (Russian Television and Radio, Channel 2) 145,000,000 potential viewers	Federal Government	Minister of Information Mikhail Lesin (formerly RTR director of advertising)
TV Center 44,200,000 potential viewers in Moscow and 50 other regions	Moscow City Government-90%. Sistema-10%.	Yuri Luzhkov Vladimir Yevtushenkov
PRESS	**Institution**	**Individual**
Argumenty i Fakty	Closed joint stock company Argumenty i Fakty	Leading journalists are major shareholders.
Komsomolskaya Pravda	Oneximbank	Vladimir Potanin
Moskovsky Komsomolets	Closed joint stock company. Linked to Moscow City Government	Yuri Luzhkov Pavel Gusev-editor loyal to Moscow City Government Vladimir Yevtushenkov
Izvestia	Oneximbank LUKoil	Vladimir Potanin Vagit Alekperov
Kommersant-Daily	Purchased by Boris Berezovsky	Boris Berezovsky
Rossiiskaya Gazeta	Federal Government	Minister of Information Mikhail Lesin
Novye Izvestia	LogoVAZ	Boris Berezovsky
Segodnya	MOST Media	Vladimir Gusinsky Igor Malashenko
Nezavisimaya Gazeta	LogoVAZ	Boris Berezovsky
RADIO	**Institution**	**Individual**
Ekho Moskvy (Echo of Moscow)	MOST Media	Vladimir Gusinsky

[41] Prokhorova (2007), Can the EU work with Russian NGOs?, available at the webiste of the EURussiaCentre, www.eu-russiacentre.org/column.asp?id=2667&ing=en, 14th November.

Radio Rossiya	-	-

Legend: ranked in descending order by number of readers
Source: Morini, 2005.

Two leading media magnates of the Yeltsin era - Mr Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky - not only lost control over the biggest parts of their media empires but also had to flee the country. The battle over the NTV channel marked the beginning of the media outlets' redistribution (Morini, 2005). That battle was won by Gazprom, the biggest creditor of Media-Most, the state-owned oil company and NTV's mother company. Both, Gazprom and Russian state officials did their best to present the conflict as an entirely financial one. However, independent and critical news coverage of events by the NTV team, which brought together the most prominent Russian TV journalists, presented evidence to suspect political motivations behind the conflict. Suspicion grew when Gazprom changed the editors and leading journalistic teams in two other outlets of the Media-Most group - the daily Segodnya and a weekly magazine, Itogi. Another popular outlet, the independent radio station Echo of Moscow, has faced some financial and managerial troubles. Although it survived in its previous form, its editor-in-chief and all leading journalists launched a new radio station, Arsenal. Online news site NTV has also experienced certain difficulties and it was obliged to change its name to NEWSRu, and its new director has little experience in media and journalism.

After the NTV crisis, the core of the NTV journalistic team, headed by their director Yevgeny Kiselev moved to TV-6 channel. That channel, like NTV was formerly owned by Mr Berezovsky, had got into a financial conflict with one of its shareholders, Lukoil, another large Russian oil company. As a result of this conflict, the channel went off the air and a competition for air frequencies of TV-6 was issued by the Ministry of Press. The competition was won by Mr Kiselev's team and the former TV-6 channel was transformed into TVC.

Lawsuits against journalists, as well as their persecution, arrests and physical threats are common. The September 11 event and the hostage drama in a Moscow theatre a year later, reinforced the priority of state security and state secrets over media law and the right of journalists to receive and disseminate information. Several media outlets and individual journalists faced legal difficulties while covering the military conflict in Chechnya and the hostage drama in Moscow.

As the result of these and other changes in the media and information policy and practice in Russia, two leading international journalist organisations - the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders - have expressed their concerns about the degree of media freedom and state control in Russia. In 2001, the CPJ included President Putin in its annual list of the Ten Worst Enemies of the Press. The same year, Reporters Without Borders named Mr. Putin among the predators of press freedom while the Press Freedom Index 2006 places Russia at the 147th position in the world.[42]

In Russia, the level of journalists' freedom, some of which died during President Putin second term, it is always a matter of debate. The most famous journalist who was recently shot was Anna Politkovskaya who wrote many artciles about the lack of human rights during Chechen War.

This short description of the situation surrounding th Russian media is necessary to understand the way in which public information has spread throughout the country and has facilitated a sort of manipulation of public opinion characterized by the lack of information on specific issues, the absence of pluralism, poltical events filtered and skilfully packaged, ideological messages and by a TV system to be considered as the main source of information.

Tha latter is important to better understand how and what kind of image of the EU is disseminated throughout Russia. From a recent study by Nikolay Kaveshnikov,[43] it is possible to obtain an overview of the kind of EU image – positive or negative – spread in Russian media, and the characteristics that are associated with the EU. This research is especially devoted to the

[42] The report is available at the website www.eu-russiacentre.org

[43] See, Kaveshnikov (2007), "The European Union in the Russian Press", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 23(3):396-424. This research was carried out with the financial report of INTAS Fellowship Grant for Young Scientists No. 03-55-887, Project "Russian elite awareness and perceptions of the EU" and of the Russian Foundation for Humanities, Project No. 06-03-02106a, "Image policy of the European Union: Experience for Russia".

Russian elite's perception of the EU, as reflected in newspapers publications[44] in 2004 but there are also some related material in 2005-2007, which will allow us to have a broader idea about the trend towards the EU.

The first aspect to underline is the newspaper's political orientation and the relation between that orientation and EU image represented. All the opposition newspapers that are critical of the Kremlin have "democratic" views about the EU[45]. Table 4.2 offers a general overview on the editorial position towards the Russian government (pro or critical). Looking at the selected newspapers, the mean is scored near zero while RG seems to have a moderate orientation.

Considering the feedback on the public opinion there are some important political events which took place in 2004 and could influence the EU image and the image of the EU-Russia relations. As far as the positive influence is concerned there are several political events to mention: the first meeting of the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on 27th April, the EU-Russia summit, the agreement on Russia's entry into the WTO, Russia agreement to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and the EU summit in which member states agreed with the text of the EU consititution, signed on 29th October.

Table 4.2. Image of the EU and EU-Russia relations in Russian newspapers, 2004

Newspaper	Type of newspaper	Editorial position towards the official policy of Russia	EU image	EU-Russia relations image
Vedomosti	Business	Neutral	0.30	0.18
VN	Political	Moderately critical	0.22	0.24
Gazeta	Political "yellow"	Critical	- 0.21	- 0.20
Izvestiya	Political	Moderately pro-government	0.13	0.01
Kommersant	Political and business	Neutral	0.15	0.59
NG	Political	Critical	0.33	- 0.09
RG	political	Pro-governmental (official publication of the government of RF)	0.16	0.02
Seven newspapers in total			0.17	0.11

Compiled from the content analysis of seven Russian newspapers, scaled from +2=very good, +1=good, 0=neutral, -1=bad, -2=very bad.
Legend: NG: Nezavisimaya Gazeta; RG: Rossiiskaya Gazeta; VN: Vremya Novostei.
Sources: Kaveshnikov (2007: 398).

The negative influence is related to the possible consequences of EU enlargement for Russia that were summarized by a Russian list of 14 concerns and, especially, the Communication on Relation with Russia (COM (04) 106) that questioned "Russia's ability to uphold universal and European values and pursue democratic reforms", followed by a critical resolution on relations with Russia by the European Parliament. Some other negative aspects concern the European approval of the Barroso Commission, the statement of Dutch foreign minister and EU council President Bernard Bot about the hostage taking in Beslan, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the postponement of the signature of the road maps in May 2005.

Tabble 4.3. Mentions of the EU in Russian Print Media in 2004 (Number of articles)

[44] The database consists of articles published in 2004 in seven Russian newspapers: Vedomosti, Vremya Novostei (VN), Gazeta. Izvestiya, Kommersant, Nezavisimaya Gazeta (NG) and Rossiisskaya Gazeta (RG). They were chosen according to three parameters: the newspaper's circulation, the number of articles on issues (EU and EU-Russia relations), the political position of the newspaper's editorial board, reflecting the Russian political spectrum. The number of articles is 528, equivalent to 26,178 column-centimetres.

[45] As the author stresses, the Communists and the so-called national-patriotic opposition were excluded from the research because of the number of articles on EU were a few.

Ios/countries	NG	Izvestiya	VN	Vedomosti	Kommersant
EU	380(84)	306 (73)	495 (117)	422 (65)	757 (113)
CIS	127	327	633	541	684
NATO	122	232	347	90	433
United Nations	545	342	555	174	686
OSCE	167	99	176	53	149
USA	2,393	2,211	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
France	788	881	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Poland	294	300	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ucraine	903	745	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kazakhstan	366	214	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
China	852	503	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: the number of articles included in the main database (those in which the EU is the key topic) is given in parenthesis.
Source: Automatic search at the websites of the newspapers by Kaveshnikov (2007: 399).

Table 4.3 shows the quantity of articles that mention International Organizations (IOs) or countries which deal with the European issue. The EU is at the top of this rating in comparison with other IOs in all the Russian newspapers. Nevertheless the articles about the US and China are relevant even if Kaveshnikov underlines the fact that the European issue is developed in two different meanings: the European Union (EU) and the European countries. This aspect leads to a different approach in the quantity and quality of articles.

According to a quantative perspective it is evident the majority of articles (59.5%) devoted to EU-Russia relations, 35.3% about issues on EU domestic policy and only 5.2% about EU relations with other countries. In particular NG, RG and Izvestiya have a large number of articles about the future of EU-Russia relations, the transformation of the system of international relations, the choices that Russia's foreign policy should make and the dispute between Westernizers and Slavophiles. Other issues mentioned are the problem of Kaliningrad oblast (8.7%), the WTO negotiations (10%), the economic and political implications of EU enlargement (25.3%), trade disputes between the EU and Russia (4.8%), and competition in the CIS area with reference to the Orange revolution in Ukraine (3.8%).

These issues represent the negative "agenda" of EU-Russia relations in contrast with the positive ones related to the creation of the four common spaces, the energy dialogue and the facilitation of visas.

Table 4.4. Basic characteristics of the EU

N articles	Length of articles, col-cm	Positive characteristics	Negative characteristics	N articles	Length of articles, col-cm
3,439	46	Community of values; benchmark of respect of human rights; EU institutions are democratic	Interferes in the political life of member states infringing on of the sovereignty of their peoples;	10	476
			Democratic deficit of EU	8	500
1,250	16	Great progress in integration; unity; the hope of a larger unity came ture	Fragility of integration; disputes between member states; differentiation Superstate; loss of sovereignty; "the Brussesl yoke"	11	559
914	16	Compromise as a base of politics	"Directorate" if big member states	19	917
2,210	32	An attractive club	Colonization of new member states; incomplete membership of new member states	12	695

411	7	Brings peace, stability and propsperity to new member states	Toleration as "an idiotic political correctness"	9	587
163	3	Toleration as a base of social life	Toleration in Europe has its limits	7	501
385	4	Well-qualified bureaucracy	EU institutions are very bureaucratic; slow decision-making; low efficiency	27	1,434
1,062	13	Hugh standard of living	Life is very expensive	3	142
9,834	137	Sub-total 1	Sub-total 1	172	10,131

Source: Kaveshnikov (2007: p. 405)

According to a qualitative perspective table 4.4 summarizes both positive and negative characteristics about the main images of the EU; images that are ambivalent. Some issues deal with the principles of democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. Theare also some references to a Europe in which "peace and prosperty, security and freedom prevail". Some journalists, analysts and experts underline the value gap between Russia and EU and the main differences about their political system.

While the EU has been depicted as a political system in which democracy, respect for human rights, the role of the justice courts and the level of political freedom is rather good, there are also certain negative aspects such as the democratic deficit, the level of bureaucracy and the absenteeism of Europen voters, the inadmissable interference in domestic political affairs and the disparities of economic development among member states.

As far as the enlargement of the EU is concerned, the majority of articles stress the positive aspects because of the level of attractiveness and a centre of gravity that make all the neighbouring countries join it. Nevertheless some articles describe the enlargement process as a new kind of colonization. If commenting on the European economies, Russian media agree on the fact that EU stimulates competition, eliminates state interference in the economy and illegal forms of state support.

The EU as a foreign policy actor is presented as an important international actor or as a pole of power that can influence the post-Soviet space. Several authors think, however, that the relations between Russia and the EU are unbalanced lacking common European foreign and security policies.

The EU is Russia's largest trading partner. The EU is conceived as a promoter of democracy, human rights and modernization in neighbouring countries; even if its policies are based not on values but on interests. The main negative EU image is one of hypocrisy in diplomacy which creates illusions about the further development of EU-Russia relations.

To summarize, it is possible to argue that the EU receives great attention in the Russian media, at least comparable, to the degree given to CIS and the US. Published articles often reflect the EU-Russia political agenda except for some critical articles of NG, RG, and Izvestiya. Even if journalists stress negative aspects in order to search for striking facts, the image is somewhat stable and positive but there is an ambivalent nature of the EU's image. For instance, the EU brings prosperity and peace but it is perceived as a new colonizer.

Nevertheless, Russian newspapers disseminate a rather adequate image. According to Kaveshnikov, however, the better the EU image offered, the more likely it is that Russians strongly think that their country should not join the EU.

Regarding news about European matters spreading in the Russian television, a recent study on TV Review by Elena Prokhorova has shown how the European issues are depicted in the *Vremya* daily newscast. She reported that the image of the EU reflects Moscow's strategy of considering the EU as a bloc of countries with increasingly divergent interests, never missing the opportunity to drive a wedge between individual member states. Moreover, the Estonian affairs[46] became an opportunity for the mass youth movement –Nashi- whose members are seen as the Kremlin's

[46] The theme of European solidarity was recently raised in a widely televised coverage of Estonia's trial of protestors in the "bronze soldier" affair – the removal of the statue to the Russian soldier in Tallin in May 2007 which led to a series of diplomatic conflicts between Estonia and Russia.

henchmen, to be seen on Russian TV-screens in front of the European Commission office in Moscow protesting against the EU "black list"; that is, a ban on their activists' travel to the EU. The ban was seen as instigated by Estonia. "All nation-wide TV channels ran comments by one of their leaders "Today the bell tolls for European democracy".[47]

In addition, Putin opened "The Year of Russia" in Bulgaria leading to numerous comments and historic parallels. TV presenters pointed out that it was the first "year of Russia in Europe"; that so far similar events had only occurred in Central Asia countries or China. Reporters also noted that it was timed with the 130th Anniversary of Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman rule (largely thanks to Russian support) and that Bulgaria respects Russian culture, traditions and language serving as an example of friendly relations between a member of a Western alliance and Russia.

Interestingly, Putin made a pronouncement in Sofia which could mark a shift in Russia's position towards countries that until that poiny were seen as part of Russia's legitimate sphere of influence. Putin was quoted by all leading TV channels commenting on Bulgaria's EU and NATO membership. "Russia respects the country's choice pertaining to security issues and other questions linked to her evolution", he added that "Contemporary democratic Russia cannot view the choice of other peoples differently" (RTR, *Vesti*, 17 January 2008).

In conclusion, television reflects the mindset of Russia's rulers, their logic and interpretation of various developments in world and domestic politics. Replicated and blown up by television, these perceptions are subsequently passed down to the Russian people, shaping their views and choices. Largely due to television Russians find it difficult to conceive the EU s a single entity. The Union is projected as a heterogeneous group of countries with divergent interests.

5. Conclusions and policy advice

Contrary to both parties' declarations on the development of their "strategic partnership", relations between Russia and the EU have over recent years been in a state which could be called one of crisis. The key problem is that both have essentially different perceptions, aspirations and interests, which leads to mistrust and disillusionment. The causes of the crisis differ: the lack of a clear definition of Russia's civilisation identity - weather it is a European or a Euroasian state-; the great power option vs. the pro-integration option; supporters of Russia's actual integration with the European area are a minority among Russian elite; a lack of understanding and a negative perception of the EU and its policy; the internal crisis of EU – its unclear prospects for institutional reform, enlargement and neighbourhood policy.

The future of EU -Russian relations depends on many factors. It should be not expected in the short term, that the situation will quickly improve, nor that the crisis will be overcome; some positive changes, from the European point of view, of Russia's European policy can be expected in the long term but current President Dmitrii Medvedev lacks foreign policy experience. The EU-Russia relation is better define as "strategic cooperation" (quoted by Angela Merkel) rather than a "strategic partnership".

Russians' opinion about self-identity, other countries and international relations go beyond the framework of ideological myths and demonstrate that Russians pay little attention to situations abroad because they are deeply preoccupied with domestic problems.

Contemplating EU issues, Russians have generally positive reactions to the expansion of the Union. Thirty-five percent of those surveyed (50% in Moscow) said that they have positive feelings when they learnt that new countries became members of the EU, while only 15% expressed negative feelings. More interesting is the percentage of Russians who approve Russian membership to the EU. The trend has been declining recently from 73% in June 2003, 48% in June 2005 and to 36% in April 2007. Russians who do not agree with that membership are 26% while 38% are undecided. People who expressed positive feelings about the membership underline the fact that it would lead to higher standards of living.

To summarize, the EU-Russia relationship is good from an economic point of view but it is a threat from the political perpecrtive. "Russia and Europe (the West)" is a highly complex topic. The

[47] Channel 3, Tsentr, Sobytija, 19th January, 2008.

opinion polls here assessed have demonstrated that Russians are able to make well-grounded comparisons between Russia and Europe and find detailed differences between them.
Regarding the NGOs Russian legislation framework, it will be more difficult for the EU to work with Russian NGO unless the European Commission is able to engage the Russian government in a open dialogue, taking advantage of their its biennial human right consultations. At the same time, NGO leaders express their doubts about the effectiveness of the EU role in such an issue. They indicate that it is a dialogue between the deaf and the blind in which EU is ready "to trade oil for basic rights".[48]"
Television reflects the mindset of Russia's rulers, their logic and interpretation of various developments in world and domestic politics. Replicated and blown up by television, these perceptions are subsequently passed down to the Russian people, shaping their views and choices. Largely due to television Russians find it difficult to conceive the EU s a single entity.

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[48] Prokhorova E. (2007), Can the EU work with Russian NGOs?, available at the webiste of the EURussiaCentre, www.eu-russiacentre.org/column.asp?id=2667&ing=en, 14th November.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
Lebanese Perceptions of the European Union

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial contribution to the project.

Lebanese perceptions of the European Union

Executive Summary

The EU has increased its visibility in Lebanon especially since the Cedars' country, after eight years of negotiations, in 2002 signed an Association Agreement with the European Commission. Lebanon is therefore strongly embedded in Euro-Mediterranean relations through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and also thanks to the ENP Action Plan, agreed with the EU in 2007.

While historically relations between Lebanon and Europe were mainly a French prerogative, in the last decade, both for economic and political reasons, the EU has upgraded its presence on the ground, both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, evaluations of the kind of European involvement are subject to criticisms: the EU is sometimes perceived as biased, for example for failing to engage in national dialogue without preconditions or as behaving in an un-coordinated manner, exemplified by the different outlooks on Lebanese politics held by different European foreign ministers.

A deeply torn country, Lebanon has often been on the verge of falling into another civil war, played out and exacerbated by external powers' interferences and interventions. Following the Israeli-*Hizbullah* war of summer 2006, several EU member states committed their forces within an international peace-keeping mission, UNIFIL II, currently operational in the southern part of the country. This endeavour, while generally acknowledged, was attributed to some member states' strong feeling towards Lebanon while subsequent EU efforts to extend its scope of action (as with the EU proposal to patrol Syrian borders) were evaluated as inconsistent.
A similar assessment was given by most commentators concerning the European attitude towards *Hizbullah*, with the Union openly trying to back PM Siniora's government at the detriment of the Islamic movement political designs but without explicitly boycotting it (failing for example to insert it in the terrorist list organizations' list, but, on the other hand, having France banning its TV Al-*Manar* in France and in all Europe) and more in general with the High Representative for CFSP, Mr. Solana, supporting at the same time PM Siniora, strongly linked to the Sunni Hariri clan of Sidon (whose powerful ally is Saudi Arabia) and Nabih Berri, Shiite speaker of the Parliament, a long standing ally of Damascus.

Despite acknowledging the difficulty of engaging with a confessional society and a failing state, the EU and European countries are deemed to invest little in increasing cultural ties with the Cedars' country. The approach so far adopted based on the combination of strong economic incentives, political support to the existing government and beefing up the international peace-keeping mission is incapable of providing a new strategic vision embedding Lebanon in the changing regional balance of power or even putting forward effective policy changes.
In terms of public opinion, the US is the country attracting stronger feelings, with 80% of Shiites and 50% of Sunni expressing negative views, more than the majority of Druzes and a third of Christians expressing openly positive comments. When asked for an alternative superpower to the US, France fares very good among all confessions except Shiites, who would rather opt for Russia, while the European Union is not even mentioned. This contrasts with views expressed when directly asked about the EU, which 70% of the interviewees considered an essential political partner.

Refraining from direct intervention in Lebanese domestic affairs, together with pushing for political reforms –acknowledging the existing distribution of forces and legitimizing the political branch of islamist political forces- looks as the most promising approach to the ongoing stalemate.

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Lebanese perceptions of the European Union

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Background[1]

Almost every two decades contemporary Lebanon is the theatre of violent confrontations among its internal factions[2] and the regional powers: in May 2008, another "crisis" took place in Beirut and in other areas of the country[3], reminiscent of the dark days of the civil war of 1975-90, when 100.000 people died in the clashes.[4] Seventeen years before, the "First Lebanese civil war" had broken out, leaving around 2000 dead and more than 3.500 wounded.[5]

Lebanon is the smallest mainland State in the Middle East and one of the least populated. It is located centrally in the Levant[6] and it comprises a mixture of Christian and Muslim communities.

Since its official independence in 1943, Lebanese history has been heavily influenced by its two most powerful neighbours: Israel and Syria. Recent history has been dominated by the bloody 1975-1990 civil war during which two Israeli invasions (1978 and 1982) triggered a UN Interim Force deployment in Lebanon (UNIFIL, 1978). The Syrian military presence remained in large parts of the country from 1976 until Spring 2005. Before the 16 years long war, Lebanon was the financial hub of the eastern Mediterranean, as well as the cultural and social reference point in the region (the so-called 'Paris of the Middle East').

A note of caution needs to be spelled out at the outset of this brief exploration of recent Lebanese history, before providing a short overview of Lebanon's relation with Europe and an analysis of Lebanese perceptions of outside powers, in this case the European Union. The note of caution reads as follows: by looking at the history of this recent country, one is left suspicious of the viability of that state surviving because of an uncomfortable geo-political location, a long civil war and repeated Israeli attacks. The reason why the country endures however, has less to do with the solidity of national institutions and national sense of identity than with the capacity of sects to endure (the Maronites, the Druzes, the Sunnis, the Shiites).[7].

[1] We would like to thank all those experts, analysts and officials who kindly agreed to meet us and in particular, for having read our first drafts, Professor Timur Goksel, Mr. Hofmokl, Desk officer Lebanon, DG Relex. For his kind help, we would like also to thank Mr. Micheal Miller, head of the Political, Commercial and Economic affairs, Delegation of the European Commission to Lebanon. Special thanks to Donatella Della Ratta and the other contributors to the second survey for their comments and suggestions.

[2] According to unofficial estimates, as the last census was performed in 1932, around two million Muslims live today in Lebanon: 1,2 million of Shiites (32%), 750.000 Sunnis (20%), 50.000 Alawis (1,4%). The Christians are represented by nine different churches dominated by 850.000 Maronites (23%). Considered neither Christians nor Muslims, there are also 210.000 Druzes (5,7%)."Lebanon" in *Encyclopedia of the Orient*, 1996-2008. Online: http://lexicorient.com/e.o/lebanon_4.htm.

[3] More than 65 people lost their lives, while almost 250 were wounded.

[4] It is estimated that more than 100,000 people were killed, and another 100,000 permanently handicapped by injuries. Approximately 900,000 people, representing one-fifth of the pre-war population, were displaced from their homes. Perhaps a quarter of a million emigrated permanently. Figuié, G., (2007), *Le point sur le Liban*, p.494, Beirut: Editions LB.

[5] Alain Gresh & Dominique Vidal, "Guerre civile libanaise" in *Les 100 clés du Proche-Orient*, Paris, 1996, p.222.

[6] An historical-geographic category used by Anglophone experts to describe the Near East, corresponding to the French expression 'Proche Orient' used to distinguish Syria and Lebanon from the Middle East, or 'Moyen Orient'.

[7] Cobban, 1985: 10

I. Brief historical overview of the Lebanon up to the present

I. 1 Domestic power-sharing arrangements: neither a state, nor a Nation

The modern history of Lebanon begins in the 18th-19th centuries, when Western religious and diplomatic missions started to penetrate the Levant. In 1842, the Maronite Mount Lebanon and the Druze Shuf region united under the formal authority of the Ottoman empire under a regime called the *Qaimmaqam*. It was the first expression of "Lebanese" identity. In 1860, after bloody clashes between Christians and Druzes, European powers obtained from the Ottoman authorities the permission to intervene in the Mount Lebanon region. The *Mutasarrifiyya* (*mutasarrif*, a Christian non-Lebanese governor) was created in the area, going from south of Tripoli to north of Sidon (although both cities remained outside the borders of the *Mutasarrifiyya*) and from the Mediterranean to the Mount Lebanon.

After WWI, in 1920, the Greater Lebanon was created under the French Mandate ("A French State for the Maronites") with the inclusion of the southern province of Jabal 'Amil (now Southern Lebanon), the Beqaa Valley (originally part of the Syrian-Ottoman Damascus province) and the Northern regions of Tripoli. With the birth of the Republic (1923) and the first Constitution (1926), the principles of sectarianism were formalised: the political and administrative offices were to be assigned on a confessional basis.

The co-existence of several sects is allowed and reinforced by the country's *sui generis* institutional architecture. Lebanon was caught, at the end of WWII, between a rapid decolonization and US-Soviet competition in the Arab world. In 1943, the major Lebanese political leaders agreed on a "National Pact", an unwritten understanding in which sectarianism was again formalised as a guarantee for the country's stability. This national covenant was more a political compact between religious clans than the basis for a new vigorous state, as neighbouring Syria was.[8] Reaching a delicate trade-off between representation and political stability, institutional mechanisms were devised to grant a fair representation to all components of society.

After acquiring independence from France in 1943, Lebanese Christian Maronite President and its Sunni Prime minister struck-up a verbal agreement whereby Christians would forego any alliance with Western powers, while Muslims would renounce any pan-Arab allegiance.

However, as George Naccache[9], a prominent Maronite journalist, wrote some years later, "Two negations do not make a Nation", referring to the fact that the contemporary state of Lebanon was born on the compromise between those (mostly Maronites) who wanted an independent state, and yet tied to France, and those (mostly Sunni) who wanted to maintain their links to former Ottoman Syria in the name of pan-Arabism and continuity. After years of internal strife between the two strands, Lebanon became formally independent under the slogan "Neither Paris, nor Damascus".

Behind an especially elaborate institutional engineering exercise, the hope was to create a sense of Lebanese identity. In order to fulfil that, the President would be a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim while the speaker of the Parliament a Shiite. Similarly, Christians and Muslims would be represented in parliament according to a demographically-based 6:5 ratio (based on the 1932 census). One of the most prominent Beirut's intellectual and historian, MP Samir Frangie, underlined how the Lebanese state was founded on two impossible challenges: 1) the lack of capacity of each sect to live as a self-sufficient political entity and 2) the impossibility for each sect to prevail over the others in political terms.[10]

[8] Nezdi, L. N. (2006) 'Lebanon's contemporary significance", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 17 (4).

[9] George Naqqash was a prominent Lebanese journalist and politician during the 40s and 50s. He was on of the three founders of Lebanese Party of the Phalanges (*al-Kata'ib al-lubnaniyya*) with Pierre Gemayel and Charles Helou. Naqqash and Helou left the Party very soon its foundation. He wrote this famous sentence in "L'Orient" francophone daily newspaper the 10 of March 1949.

[10] Samir Frangie, Interview with the author. Beirut, February 2008.

At that time, sectarianism was logically perceived by Lebanese political elites, each of them representing one of the main sects, as a protection of the *status quo* against possible internal threats. Throughout the following decades, sectarianism gradually revealed itself as an obstacle toward the formation of Lebanon as a modern state in which citizens are part of an homogenous group going beyond sectarian fences.[11]
The brief civil war in 1958 exemplified the extent to which the system was already exacerbated, characterized internally by the fragility of the institutional architecture and externally by the strength of regional actors. Lebanon was born as a deeply divided inter-sectarian society with a scarce national feeling and national identity, whose democratic resilience and sustainability were considered a challenge. The twofold threat was constituted by the regional Arab non-democratic environment and by the way in which Lebanese sectarian tensions could be played out by regional powers for their own political goals, especially Israel and Syria.

I. 2 "Independent Lebanon" in the regional arena

The consolidation of the new State was undermined several times during the 1950s and 1960s by sectarian, political and social tensions, with a growing influence played by foreign (USA, USSR and France) and regional players (Egypt, Syria, Israel and Iraq).
With the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and after "Black September" in Jordan (1970), thousands of Palestinian militiamen were forced to choose southern Lebanon as a basis for their operations against Israel. The civil war started in 1975 as a result of high internal tension and foreign interference in local affairs. In the midst 1980s, Lebanon was subject to two sources of influence: Israel in the south, Syria in the North and East, while the new-born pro-Iranian militia, *Hizbullah*, made its appearance on the national and regional scene. After the formal end of the civil war in 1990, the collapse of the USSR and the arrangement between Syria and the US (followed by the Second Gulf War), Lebanon officially entered under Damascus' influence. This continued until spring 2005, when Syrian troops were forced to withdraw from the country as a result of huge international and local pressure followed by the assassination of former premier Rafiq Hariri (killed in Beirut in February 2005). Israel, from his part, in 2000 had withdrawn its troops from the South, giving *Hizbullah* free hand in the area as well as political legitimacy (the Party of God ran in the legislative elections in 1992, 1996, 2002 and 2005).

I. 3 The "Little Lebanese Cold War" (2004-2008)

In spring 2006, the Lebanese press started to use the term "Little Lebanese Cold War" describing the dangerous political situation in which the country was plunged since autumn 2004.
In September 2004, Damascus forced the Lebanese authorities to extend the mandate of the former pro-Syrian Lebanese president Emile Lahud for three additional years. At the same time, UNSCR 1559 was promulgated to press the Syrian regime to withdraw from Lebanon and dismantle the armed wing of *Hizbullah*. When Lahud's mandate finally expired (24th of November 2007), Lebanon continued to be paralysed by the longest political and institutional crisis since the end of the Civil War. Without a new president of the Republic, the country remained divided between a pro-western majority and a pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian opposition led by *Hizbullah*.
A wave of bombings[12] began with the assassination of former Druze minister Marwan Hamade on 1st of October 2004. After the massive protests following Hariri's killing (14th of February 2005), several terrorist bombings hit Lebanon, following a similar pattern: most of them occurred at night,

[11] On this point, the debate is ongoing between those who consider the confessional nature of the system as a Damocles' sword (Corm, G. (2005) *Le Liban contemporain, Histoire et société*, Paris: La Découverte) and those who stress sectarianism as a guarantee clause for the stability of internal equilibria (See Harik, I. (1994), 'Pluralism in the Arab world', *Journal of Democracy*, 5 (3).
[12] In 39 months, since October 2004 till December 2007, thirty bombings disrupted Beirut, Lebanon and its suburbs, causing the death of 81 people, mostly civilians, and wounding more than 500.

in Christian areas of the country, and often on Fridays. Though the perpetrators behind the bombings remained unknown, many in Lebanon and in the international community accused Syria to have masterminded these aggressions.

I. 4 The "July War" of 2006

During this "cold war" in Lebanon, an "open war" erupted between *Hizbullah* and Israel in July 2006. The 2006 Lebanon War, known in Lebanon as the July War and in Israel as the Second Lebanon War, was a 33-day military conflict in Lebanon and northern Israel. The conflict started on 12 July 2006, and continued until a United Nations-brokered ceasefire went into effect in the morning on 14 August 2006, though it formally ended on 8 September 2006 when Israel lifted its naval blockade of Lebanon.[13] On 11 August 2006, the UNSC unanimously approved UN Resolution 1701 in an effort to end the hostilities. The resolution, which was approved by both Lebanese and Israeli governments the following days, called for disarmament of *Hizbullah*, for withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon, and for the deployment of Lebanese soldiers and an enlarged United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL-2) force in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese army began deploying in southern Lebanon on 17 August 2006. The conflict killed over a thousand people, widely reported to be mostly Lebanese civilians (1191 persons), severely damaged Lebanese civil infrastructure, and displaced approximately one million Lebanese and 300,000–500,000 Israelis, although most were able to return to their homes. After the ceasefire, some parts of Southern Lebanon remained uninhabitable due to unexploded cluster bombs.[14]

I. 5 The "May War" and the Doha Agreement

In May 2008 the tensions between the government and the opposition escalated when the cabinet announced a series of security measures15. As a consequence, for six days, from the 7th till the 13th of May, heavy battles raged in Beirut and south-east and north of the city.[16]

In the aftermath of the "May 2008 War", Lebanon's pro-government parties and the opposition reached a deal to revoke the two decisions that had sparked the fighting. On the 14th of May, after the success of a mediation conducted by an Arab League delegation -led by the Emir of Qatar Hamad ben Jasem Al Thani- the opposition ended its "civil disobedience campaign".

In Doha, the two fronts started a non-stop session of the "inter-Lebanese dialogue" with the aim of reaching a comprehensive agreement. On the 21st of May, rival Lebanese leaders finally clinched a deal to end the 18-month political feud. In Doha, the parties agreed to: 1) elect Michel Suleiman, the Army chief, as the next President of Lebanon, 2) elaborate a new electoral law similar amending that of 1960, 3) form a "national unity" government in which the opposition, led by *Hizbullah*,

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[13] The conflict began when *Hizbullah* militants fired rockets at Israeli border towns as a diversion for an anti-tank missile attack on two armored Humvees patrolling the Israeli side of the border fence. Of the seven Israeli soldiers in the two jeeps, two were wounded, three were killed, and two were captured and taken to Lebanon. Five more were killed in a failed Israeli rescue attempt. Israel responded with massive airstrikes and artillery fire on targets in Lebanon that damaged Lebanese civilian infrastructure, including Beirut's International Airport, an air and naval blockade, and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon. *Hizbullah* then launched more rockets into northern Israel and engaged the Israel Defense Forces in guerrilla warfare from hardened positions.

[14] Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1", United Nations General Assembly (November 23, 2006).

[15] On the 3rd of May, the cabinet accused *Hizbullah* of setting up a hidden, remote-controlled camera in a container park overlooking the main runway of Beirut's international airport. In the same cabinet session, the government declared illegal *Hizbullah*'s fixed-line telecommunications network (It covers its strongholds of south and east Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut). *Hizbullah* made clear that it regarded the private network as an integral part of its defensive measures against Israel. The government also removed Brig. General Wafiq Shuqeir, commander of security at Beirut international airport, accusing him of sympathizing with *Hizbullah*. Four days later, an anti-government "labor strike", called by the opposition forces, turned into violence when pro-government and opposition gunmen started their shootings, leading to clashes among the two groups in Beirut. The clashes spread to the whole West Beirut. Around the city, protesters blocked roads with burning tires. The road toward Beirut international airport was blocked.

[16] Reportedly, 65 people were killed (other sources report 84 killed) while more than 200 were wounded.

would have a veto right.[17]

After 19 parliamentary sessions had been postponed in the previous six months, Michel Suleiman was finally elected as the new "consensus" head of state on 25th of May 2008, with 118 out of 127 votes. A few days later, former Premier Fuad Siniora was designated prime minister in charge of forming a new "national unity" government. The latter was finally formed after six weeks of intense negotiations at the beginning of July 2008. Eleven ministries over 30 (the "one third" that, according to the Lebanese Constitution, allows a coalition to block any crucial decision) were assigned to the *Hizbullah*-led opposition

II. Relations between Lebanon and the European Union

II. 1 Historical and political overview

In June 2002, after six years of negotiations, Lebanon finally signed a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union. This entered in force on 1st April 2006 after ratification from all EU member states. Both parties agreed to eradicate all tariffs and quotas over a 12-year transitional period. An expected positive by-product of the AA would consist in an increased capacity to attract foreign direct investments in Lebanon. Due to the domestic political crisis and correlated instability, this has not materialized yet as foreign investors remain wary of new potential turmoil.

In January 2007, moreover, a bilateral EU-Lebanon Action Plan was adopted for a period of five years, setting out the areas for cooperation. The plan follows a bilateral track, setting out to promote a reform of the political system as well as enhancing the performance of the economic sector.

In April 2008, the European Commission came out with a Progress Report on Lebanon in terms of actual implementation of the agreed action plan.[18] The Lebanese government´s efforts in the economic domain were acknowledged[19], while the lack of substantial improvement in civil liberties, judicial reforms was partly justified with the ongoing political and social instability.

Then European Commission President, Romano Prodi, declared that by signing the agreement, Lebanon had clearly indicated a commitment to the values espoused by the EU concerning democracy, human rights, economic liberalization and regional security.[20] In exchange to this, the EU committed itself to support Lebanese economic reconstruction plans and facilitating the entry in the WTO, where Lebanon so far enjoys only an observer status.[21]

The EU got politically more involved in Lebanese affairs since the assassination in 2005 of former Prime minister Rafiq Hariri, a Sunni Muslim. Long-time prime minister and billionaire magnate, Hariri was opposed to the extension of President Lahud's mandate, supported by Damascus.

The assassination pushed some Lebanese factions to unite and call for the end of Syrian hegemony over Lebanese political life. Another consequence was the decision to establish a formal mixed Lebanese-UN "Special Tribunal for Lebanon" –following UNSC Resolution 1757 (2007) - to try suspects in the 2005 assassination of Hariri. The international commission of investigation had already gathered evidence throughout 2005 and 2006, which had initially pointed to responsibilities

[17] Following the Doha agreement, the opposition ended, after one year and a half, its sit-in in the institutional and commercial centre of Beirut that contributed to the stalemate of the political and financial activities of the country.

[18] Commission Staff Working Document, "Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007. Progress Report Lebanon", SEC (2008) 397, Brussels. 3 April 2008

[19] Fuad Siniora, a close friend of former PM Hariri, adopted a middle-long term programme of socio-economic reforms aiming at increasing the country´s growth potential and reduce the immense debt stock, accumulated during the Hariri administration.

[20] http://www.hariri2000.com/news.htm, last accessed 4th July 2008.

[21] Lebanon had been a founder of GATT but had failed to enter in the WTO initially because of Israel's resistances.

of the Lebanese/Syrian security apparatuses.[22] Some see in the establishment of the tribunal an attempt to curtail Syrian influence and by proxy *Hizbullah* role in the country, while others greet the international tribunal the end to an era of impunity for the perpetrators of political assassinations.[23]
As a consequence of mounting international pressure, Damascus withdrew its troops from Lebanon in April 2005. Their presence on the ground since 1976 had facilitated the de facto control of Lebanese territory. With the withdrawal of estimated 14,000 troops and 3,000-4,000 intelligence agents, Damascus was complying with UNSC resolution 1559 (2004).
In 2005, other than supporting the UN investigations and pressing Damascus to abide by UNSC resolutions 1636 and 1644 asking Syria to fully cooperate, the EU did not exert a significant influence. However, for different reasons, some European member states enjoyed the spotlight: Lebanon signed a memorandum of understanding with the UK in December 2005 (at the time when the UK was holding the EU Presidency and had pushed for an EU counter-terrorism strategy adopted at the European Council in December 2005) to facilitate the extradition of persons suspected of terrorism-related activities. Then, in February 2006, a peaceful manifestation outside the Danish consulate in Beirut (protesting against the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad in Danish newspapers) turned violent (causing a dead and 28 injured).
In May 2006, UNSC Resolution 1680 was proposed by the UK, France and the US, and adopted by the Security Council (with the abstention of China and Russia). The resolution backed Lebanese 'national dialogue' decisions, asked Syria to respond positively to Lebanese requests to delimit their common border, and asked both parties to exchange ambassadors.[24]
In terms of economic cooperation, this has become more substantial since the Israeli-*Hizbullah* war of summer 2006. With its lack of raw materials and dependency on imported oil (imports as a whole constitute 90% of total GDP) the Lebanese economy was on its knees since the military confrontation with Israel, during which countless infrastructures, industries and facilities had been destroyed. At the Stockholm conference (31 August 2006), the international community committed itself to the reconstruction of the Lebanese economy, promising an overall economic contribution totalling $900 million, out of which $100 million only by the European Commission.[25]
Then, at the Paris III Donors' Conference (25 January 2007), the international community decided to do more for the re-launch the Lebanese economy.[26] After the presentation by prime minister Siniora of a medium-term fiscal package to reduce Lebanon's debt levels through expenditure cuts and increased taxes, the government secured up to $7,600 million in aid commitments.

II. 2 Unifil II

In the run-up to the escalation of the war between Israel and the *Hizbullah* in summer 2006, which ended with a ceasefire on 14 August, some European countries – especially France, Italy and Spain whom enjoy strong economic and historical ties with the region - quickly agreed to upgrade the small UNIFIL mission on the ground since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war. These countries responded to the UN General Secretary's request of 15,000 international troops needed to reinforce

[22] A UN Report on the Hariri murder released in late March 2005 did not make specific accusations but accused Syria of having created the climate of tension within which the assassination had occurred. In April 2005, the UNSC approved Resolution 1595 establishing the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC), headed by judge Mehlis and composed of 30 investigators. The October 2005 preliminary report pointed to direct responsibilities of high-ranking Lebanese and Syrian security and intelligence services. Damascus was accused of having failed to cooperate with the investigations. The same allegations were repeated in the December 2005 final report, but not in those in 2006 and 2007. In May 2007, with UNSC resolution 1757, the formation of an international tribunal to try Hariri's suspect was authorized.
[23] Irani, G. E. 'Lebanon´s choice: Dantes´s Inferno or Moro´s Utopia?', ARI 87/2007, 24/7/2007, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano.
[24] W. Harris, "Crisis in the Levant: Lebanon at risk", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Spring 2007: 51.
[25]www.finance.gov.lb/NR/rdonlyres/8B9C27A9-7424-4A34-80E0-FC0C2B7D121A/0/StockholmConference forLebanonForDissemination12Oct2006doc.pdf
[26] http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/focus/lebanon_conference/index_en.htm

the mission. After the approval of UNSC resolution 1701, Europe pledged a total of 6000 troops, mainly Italian and French. For Italy this represented a precious opportunity to re-position itself at the heart of European foreign policy, especially after the cooling-down of political relations with France and Germany vis-à-vis Italian involvement in the US-led Iraqi invasion. For Italian diplomats, this endeavour was particularly meaningful given the country's traditional interest in the Middle East and the recent exclusion from the EU-3 dealing with Iran.

The deployment of an ESDP mission was discussed in the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) meetings but then ruled out because of both political and organisational reasons. On the one hand, it could have been read as linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the risk for the European Union of losing its hard fought neutrality vis-à-vis the two parties, on the other hand the risk was of being considered another external actor conducting by proxy the fight against terrorism in the region.[27] The EU especially wanted to avoid the mission to be perceived as a 'Christian' mission, reason for which, remaining under the UN flag, it favoured participation by Indonesia and Turkish forces.[28]

The genesis of this mission saw an initial French enthusiasm to set up the force, followed by a reluctance to commit forces when the elements of the UNSC resolution authorizing the deployment of the mission became clear. While the international force was destined to patrolling the territory at south from the river Litani (40 km from the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel) and was granted the right of self-defence in case of attack, the provisions regarding disarming *Hizbullah* remained vague. Unifil II's right of self-defense, which since its inception was never actually used, would be employed, according to experts, only if the mission came under direct fire.[29]

The mission operates in agreement with the provisions of the UNSC Resolution 1701 and the ensuing mandate. On the 24th of August 2006, the EU proposed as further task for UNIFIL forces to patrol the Syrian border, provoking strong criticism from Damascus and the subsequent demise of the idea. Observers in Lebanon depicted the EU attitude as schizophrenic, showing itself unable not only to follow up words with deeds, but contradicting itself in the matter of days. The international mission is not explicitly devised to bring about a change in either the Lebanese domestic political equilibrium or in Lebanese-Syrian relations, but it aims at freezing the existing sectarian dynamics together with assuring Israel's borders.

The UNSC Resolution 1701 called for a full cessation of hostilities based upon, in particular, the immediate cessation by *Hizbullah* of all attacks and the by Israel of all offensive military operations. Upon full cessation of hostilities, the resolution called upon the government of Lebanon and UNIFIL to deploy their forces together throughout the south and the Israeli government to withdraw all of its forces from southern Lebanon in parallel. UNSC Resolution 1701 also called upon the government of Lebanon and its regular army to exercise full sovereignty in the South, so that there will be no weapons without the consent of the government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the government of Lebanon. Thanks to UNIFIL II, the Lebanese army has been able to re-position itself in southern Lebanon, which had been controlled by *Hizbullah* since the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. In addition to the high symbolic value, the army being the most respected institution among Lebanese[30], this is thought to have weakened the religious resistance

[27] Interview with German diplomat, German Permanent Representation, Brussels, June 2007.
[28] Interview with EU official, DG Relex, Brussels, June 2008.
[29] We thank Prof. Goksel for drawing our attention to this point.
[30] This respect begun to grow with the deployment of the Army to the south of Lebanon in Autumn 2006, after nearly forty years of absence. The army has been appreciated more and more by the Lebanese especially during the battle of Nahr al-Bared (Palestinian refugee camp close to the northern harbour of Tripoli, around 100 km north from Beirut) in which the Army fought the gunmen of al-Qaida-inspired group *Fatah al-Islam* for more than three months. In 105 days of battle death toll hit more than 300 people: 154 Lebanese soldiers - "martyrs", 120 militiamen – "terrorists", 42 Lebanese and Palestinians civilians (*ANSA bulletin*, Beirut, 9th of September 2007).

movement in these territories, but with the side-effect of having reinforced its activity in Beirut, where it has staged *Hizbullah*-led opposition mass protests against the Siniora government.
In Europe there have been several interpretations and evaluations of the meaning and implications of European engagement in Lebanon. The most optimistic outlook depicted the EU 'an indispensable actor in crises' stabilization', headed by the diplomatic leadership of Mr. CFSP, Javier Solana, on behalf of the Union and with the support of the UN.[31] A tool for enforcing peace in the region, and not the most important tool the Union could have deployed, UNIFIL II is seen by some commentators as an important and valuable effort facilitating the potential negotiating process among the different parties, *Hizbullah* and Syria *in primis*, which detain the keys to a way out.[32] Another reading of the European involvement underlines its lack of political strategy behind the set up of the mission.[33]

II. 3 Relations between the EU and *Hizbullah*

The Lebanese political landscape is deeply influenced by the Shiite movement *Hizbullah* (Party of God). The eventual creation of *Hizbullah* can be traced back to the early 1980s when Iranian authorities supported and encouraged an initiative by a group of Shiite clerics who had left *Amal* (Hope) in reaction to negotiations with Israel. From an informal group, it developed into a mass organization challenging the more secular Shiite *Amal*. The foremost contingent goal was the end of Israel's occupation in southern Lebanon, but the political programme also called for the destruction of the Jewish state, the creation of an Iranian-style Lebanese republic and opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.[34]
Far from being purely an idelogically-driven political body, *Hizbullah* decides, according to the changing circumstances, whether to opt for militancy or political pragmatism. Shiism as the basis of the movement characterizes the logics and discourse used by *Hizbullah*. They revolve around the idea of resisting the oppressor, be it Israel or the US or the West as such.
The European approach has been one of explicit endorsement of legitimate Lebanese government, attempting to sideline *Hizbullah* without however going so far as freezing assets or boycotting it. It would be excessive to argue that this is the result of an outspoken EU strategy, being merely the by-product of the search for a minimum common denominator among national policy preferences. Yet, different national evaluations have produced paradoxical results: in the EU terrorist list, released in December 2001, *Hizbullah* was not included: its omission appears to have been the result of a late intervention by France. The UK distinguished between *Hizbullah* as a domestic organization – which was deemed legitimate – and its external security branch, which had been declared illegal a terrorist organization in light of its repeated attacks against Israeli interests abroad.[35] The same view was shared by the European Commission which, following its 'colour-blind policy' approach, tried

[31] N. Gnesotto, "Leçons du Liban", *EUISS Newsletter*, no. 20, October 2006.
[32] J. A. Nunez Villaverde, "La Finul reforzada, un actor imperfecto en un conflicto in concluso", ARI N. 96, Fecha 6/ 9/ 2006, Real Istituto Elcano.
[33] R. Aliboni, "Dopo UNIFIL 2, che fare?", *Affari Internazionali*, 28/8/2006, www.affarinternazionali.it.
[34] Europa Regional Surveys of the World, *The Middle East and North Africa*, London: Routledge, 2008: 709
[35] ibid, p. 721. Ibid, p. 721. On the 3rd of July 2008, Britain moved to ban the entire military wing of *Hizbullah*, adding it to its blacklist of designated terrorist groups. Toughening its stance on the Shiite Lebanese movement, the Home Office move makes it a criminal offence to belong to, raise funds or encourage support for the group's military wing. The interior ministry said it took the action because *Hizbullah*'s military branch was supporting militants in Iraq and Palestinian terror groups. London has already banned *Hizbullah*'s External Security Organisation (ESO), which it considers the group's "terrorist wing". Home Secretary Jacqui Smith laid the order in parliament, which, if approved, would substitute for the existing proscription against the ESO. "*Hizbullah*'s military wing is providing active support to militants in Iraq who are responsible for attacks both on coalition forces and on Iraqi civilians, including providing training in the use of deadly roadside bombs", junior Home Office minister Tony McNulty said. "It is because of this support for terrorism in Iraq and Occupied Palestinian Territories that the government has taken this action. Proscription of *Hizbullah*'s military wing will not affect the legitimate political, social and humanitarian role *Hizbullah* plays in Lebanon, but it sends out a clear message that we condemn *Hizbullah*'s violence and support for terrorism," he said (Reuters, London, 3rd of July 2008).

to maintain working contacts with members of the islamist organization at least until November 2006 as well as financially supporting *Hizbullah*-led NGOs.[36] On the other hand, in 2003, the Palestinian Hamas movement was listed as a terrorist organization. Lastly, in June 2006, the EU – despite US pressures (a letter of 213 members of Congress containing the explicit request to Solana)- has avoided attributing the same label to the Lebanese *Hizbullah*.[37] The decision not to list the group signalled diverging views among Member States, with some-especially the Finnish Presidency- opposed to the listing and others –especially the EU High Representative of CFSP and the UK- supporting the US hardline. Had the EU listed the *Hizbullah*, an overall economic embargo would have been imposed, implying a complete freeze in any trade transaction or even humanitarian program. By including the *Hizbullah* in the EU terrorist list (already an obscure procedure from a legal standpoint, taken care of by a non-elected body, the so-called Clearing House residing within the second pillar, whose existence has never been officially acknowledged) any chance for the EU to help negotiations in Lebanon to find a way out of the political and institutional impasse would have been inhibited. This is what happened after the electoral victory of *Hamas* in January 2006 with the Palestinian Authority.

The EU involvement in Lebanon reflects other limits and contradictions. All EU leaders' statements are focused on the need of ensuring political stability and move towards institutional, administrative and economic reforms. On the one hand, the EU pushes for good governance in the public administration and asks for respect of democratic rules in political affairs. On the other hand, Brussels' way of dealing with Lebanese internal issues does not always reflect this transparency. In this respect, one of the most enlightening examples of this contradiction is the nature of the high-level political and institutional contacts EU leaders maintain in Beirut. During the long crisis (from the end of 2004 to mid 2008), Brussels dealt with Sunni Prime minister Fuad Siniora as well as with the Shiite Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri. Siniora was described by the EU as a real statesman, sincerely devoted to his mission, serving the interests of his people according to the Constitution.

It is widely known however that behind Siniora lies an influent circle of power linked to the Sunni Hariri clan of Sidon. The Hariris are among the most powerful allies of Saudi Arabia, a state with a regional agenda not necessarily the same as the EU's. Brussels also maintained intensive contacts with Berri throughout the crisis. Berri is one of the most prominent leaders of the *Hizbullah*-led Lebanese opposition backed by Iran and Syria. Originating from the southern region of Tyre, Berri is first of all a long standing ally of Damascus. A Lebanese warlord during the civil war, in the post-conflict era Berri, leader of the *Amal* party, remained one of the most important representative of the Shiite community (serving mostly the interests of the more powerful Party of God and being used by the movement as the head of external relations of Lebanese Shiites) and at the top of a huge network of power in the local and central administration of the state, based on political nepotism far from any standard of transparency and respect of the democracy.

Another example of the limits of the EU policy is linked to the need to cognitively and operationally simplify a complex Lebanese power structure. During the first Siniora government (2005-2008), the control of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (FSI), the local police, was under a ministry of Interior close to the Hariri clan of the *al-Mustaqbal* (the Future) party, founded by former late Prime minister Rafiq Hariri. On the other side, the control of the General Security (the security agency mainly responsible for airports, harbours, borders, tolls) remained in the hands of the opposition through a high official close to *Hizbullah*. Lebanese borders are controlled by the General Security units but are also patrolled by the ISF men. There is no unique Lebanese authority in charge for border control, while EU leaders often asked "Lebanese authorities" to prevent smuggling of weapons or other merchandises (see the press review quotations).

[36] Interview EU official, DG Relex, June 2008, ibid.

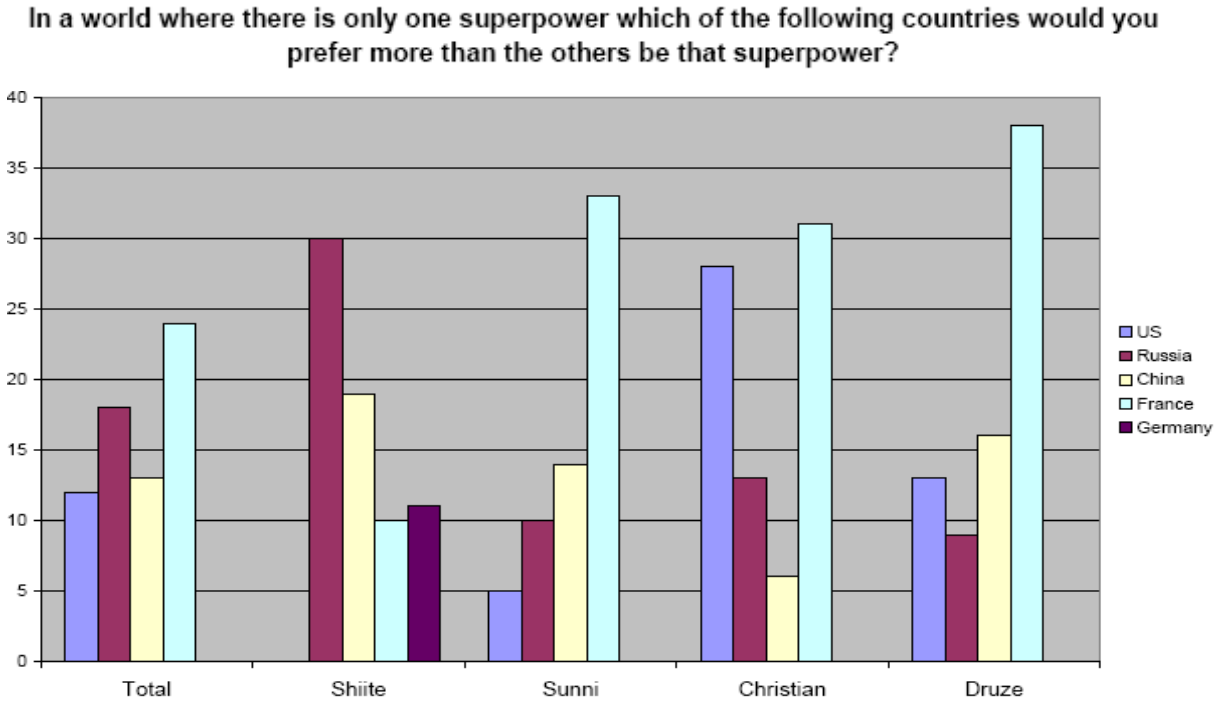
[37] http://www.cnsnews.com/ViewForeignBureaus.asp?Page=/ForeignBureaus/archive/200607/INT20060724a.html

III. Analysis of the image of the EU among public opinion, elites and the press

III. 1 Opinion polls: barely mentioning the EU, which however does not polarize opinions

Opinion polls on Lebanese elections, on the implications of the Israeli-*Hizbullah* war from 2006 or on the co-existence of different religious communities abound.[38] However, as far as the perception held by Lebanese of foreign policy actors is concerned, polls are almost non-existent. In 2005, the European Commission mandated a poll on how European policies are perceived on the ground.[39] There are no other sources covering the same topic or external powers' perceived role vis-à-vis Lebanon.

Out of the Annual Arab public opinion survey[40] conducted in November 2006 with 600 respondents, some interesting findings can be extrapolated. First of all, Lebanese respondents are divided into four categories: Shiites, Sunni, Christians and Druzes for all the questions they reply to. When they are asked about their attitudes towards the US (from very favourable to very unfavourable), more than 80% of Shiites describe their attitude as very unfavourable, as well as slightly more than 50% of Sunnis. Almost half of Druzes share a positive view of the US as well as a third of Christians. However, when directly asked whether they have confidence in the US, only 20% of Christians, 15% of Druzes and 10% of Sunni say they have a lot of confidence (ibid, p. 23), while 90% of the Shiites, 58% of the Sunni, 30% of Christians and 24% of Druzes acknowledge they have no trust at all. Asked to identify the biggest threat to their security, all communities indicated Israel. Lastly, given a unipolar world, asked to choose for an alternative superpower, Christian, Sunni and Druzes would opt for France, while Shiites for Russia (ibid, p. 25).



[38] See for that matter: http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=248 (last accessed 30 June 2008); or http://www.information-international.com/pdf/iipolls/2007/Pages%20from%20TheMonthly-issue64_NOV07-english.pdf on Lebanese splits on the eve of Presidential Elections, or, concerning the opinions expressed about *Hizbullah* by Lebanese: http://www.beirutcenter.info/default.asp?contentid=692&MenuID=46 , last accessed 1st July 2008.

[39] "Sondage sur l'Europe et le partenariat", un-fficial document, European delegation in the Lebanese Republic, *Note de dossier*, Beirut, 9/9/2005. The poll was carried out by Ipsos-Stat with 612 interviews of people aged between 18 and 55 years old from middle and upper-middle classes between 13th April-9th May 2005.

[40] "Annual Arab public opinion survey: the war in Lebanon", The Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, University of Maryland, Prof. S. Telhami principal investigator, 6-11 November 2006.

The Ipsos-Stat poll for the European Commission was the first and to date only such poll carried out on behalf of European institutions and it is remarkable how, in a such pivotal and volatile region, the EU has so far failed to sponsor a regional barometer following the example of the Latinobarometro (which has quickly become economically independent from the EU and works as a non-profit organization) or the independent Afrobarometer.
The results were mainly positive for the Union, though showing some inconsistencies: while the European Parliament appeared to be the most widely known institution (by 38%) and the European Commission being known by 35% of the interviewees, a considerable 70 % of the respondents declared that the EU was an essential political partner, with the Gulf states being second (36%) and the US third (27%).
More than the majority of the respondents deemed Europe a positive force in light of its freedom and democracy (54% of the people) as well as respect for human rights (53%).
For 68% of the people, Europe should improve its peace promotion policies on the global scene.
For 28% of the people, Europe should get more involved in the Lebanese economic reconstruction, while 10% of them would like to see Europe more actively engaged in peace and security promotion in Lebanon. Another 10% would like to see the EU helping Beirut to gain an effective independence.

III.2 Civil society: mirroring the political elites or playing an autonomous role?

Despite Lebanon enjoys a higher standard of personal and political freedoms compared to other Arab countries in the region[41], "civil society" as it is traditionally defined in the literature, does not exist. Civil society has historically preceded the state in Lebanon, quite differently from Western experiences, which implied that the state came into contact with a multifaceted, pluralist and composite communal society. Despite being logically prior to the state formation, as society is channelled into the political system through sectarian lines of representation, in the civil society as such, in addition to political elites and intellectuals, there are two main categories, often overlapping, namely human rights activists and aid and assistance NGOs. The former have in the past overlapped with Palestinian organizations present in Lebanon[42], while the latter includes all forms of assistance NGOs, from *Hizbullah*-supported ones to Sunni NGOs to international ones, such as the Red Cross.
In the post civil-war period, Lebanese society continued to be pulled between those encouraging particularistic allegiances and those favouring a sense of national loyalty. Meanwhile, citizens found themselves at an equal distance between communal society and the emerging civil society. The alliance between the State and the former participants in the war, who represent forces opposed to the State, has increased the conviction that it is necessary to develop and immunize national civil associations.
Former constituents of civil society, such as the nation-wide student movement as it was known during the pre-war period or the labour union movement no longer exist. Totally controlled by local and regional political actors, the latter is today just a phantom of the powerful civil institution who succeed to gather, even during the dark days of civil-war, employees' and workers' unions from different parts of Lebanon, public school teachers, the union of Lebanese University professors, professional associations, women' organizations, students' associations, as well as some cultural organizations and clubs. Today there are tens of so called civil society's organizations[43], all of them

[41] "Lebanon" in *Amnesty International Report 2008 – The state of the World's Human Rights*, London, pp.188-191.
[42] See, Suleiman, J. (1997), 'Palestinians in Lebanon and the Role of NGOs', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 10 (3).
[43] Thirty-eight civil society organisations are registered under this definition (*mujtamaa al-madani*) at the record of the Ministry of Interior (May 2008).

suffering from two main problems relenting or preventing their development. Some of them are linked, directly or indirectly, to a political, sectarian or clanic group, strongly influencing if not controlling the private and public behaviour of "civil society's activists". On the other hand, the more independent organizations, choosing not to follow a patron-client logic, hardly manage to widen their audience and fail to gather more consensus for their initiatives and proposals among the population, mostly due to their lack of economic resources and impossibility of lobbying among the local centres of power.

The "Khalass" experience: a civil society platform without a large base

In January 2007, after three months of political deterioration, '*Khalass*' ("Enough!") was created as the first Lebanese non-confessional umbrella organisation of tens of civil society local groups. One of its founder and current vice-president, Paul Sawaya, 33 years old, recall the first period of '*Khalass*' activity: "At the beginning we named our organisation '*Solve it*', because at that time we thought that our main aim was to suggest ways to solve the political crisis". "After some weeks - the name was changed into '*Wuaa'* ("Pay attention!") with the purpose of raising public awareness of the dangers posed by the ongoing deadlock".

"Later on we decided to call for an 'End to the deadlock', asking political leaders to go back to the negotiating table and pave the way to the election of a new president of the Republic, a comprehensive reform of the electoral law and above all to avoid the use of violence to obtain political results". In August 2007 - continues Sawaya - we made our manifesto public. We demanded all decision-makers to: 1) be aware of the critical nature of the current political crisis and the pressing need to overcome it and restore order; 2) ensure civil peace and reject all forms of violence; 3) refrain from inciting tension, including sectarian and communal, and abstain from exploiting the media to do this; 4) work immediately to reopen dialogue in a serious and sincere manner in order to develop peaceful mechanisms to bring an end to the crisis [...]. At the end of the 2007 - Sawaya continues - the group was named '*Khalass* - Together to save Lebanon', expressing the desire of the majority of Lebanese citizens to go out from the dark tunnel in which they have lived since autumn 2004". [44]

'*Khalass*' today can count on 15-20 executive members, with "many thousands" of activists in Lebanon and overseas. According to Sawaya, there are around 5,000 inscribed members on the group database, and last autumn almost 35,000 people (mostly from abroad) signed the '*Khalass*' petition. The organisation is based in Beirut, "where it maintains its core", while its presence in other regions and cities of Lebanon is less strong and assured just by the activities of some local partner NGOs. At present, 28 Lebanese civil society groups and local NGOs are under the '*Khalass*' umbrella: most of them are secular, only few are linked to religious organisations, but all of them ask for the development of a citizenship concept and the elimination of sectarianism in politics.[45]

'Khalass' does not follow a fund raising strategy: its main financial sources are private donors, mostly belonging to the Lebanese diaspora. According to its founder: "On the one hand we suffer from lack of funds, but on the other we are fully independent and we do not respond to any political party's agenda". "Of course, there are a lot of members, even among the executive ones, who are involved, at some level, in politics, however, this does not prevent them to work for the principles of citizenship, sovereignty of the state institutions and maintain the civil peace". *'Khalass'* can boast just few occasional foreign contacts, among them some French, US, Italian NGO and other national political or governmental organisations, but they do not enjoy official contacts with the European Union.

[44] Online: www.khalass.net/petition/index.php.
[45] Online: http://www.khalass.net/endorsements.php.

III.3 The press: same events, different agendas

The research has been conducted on two Arabic-speaking Lebanese newspapers, *an-Nahar* and *as-Safir* within a two years time frame, from January 1st 2005 to 31st December 2006. This time span represent the most crucial period for Lebanon during its long political and institutional crisis (2004-2008) in the context of broader regional frictions. The assassination of former Prime minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005 was followed by the historical withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon, while the sequel of terrorist attacks in Beirut and in other regions of the country continued to paralyze economic and social activities. After the legislative elections of June 2005 and the formation of the new Siniora government, Lebanon was more and more squeezed in the whirl of the tension between the pro-Syrian front and the pro-Western one. The summer 2006 war between *Hizbullah* and Israel changed again the political balance in the country, entering in the in the autumn of the same year in a dark tunnel characterized by the open confrontation between the parliamentary majority and the opposition.

The reason why these two dailies have been chosen as representative examples of the Lebanese press is their widespread circulation as well as their political orientation.[46] The latter element is particularly important especially since autumn 2004, which marked an increasing political, social and cultural climate of tension in the country.

An-Nahar (The Day) was founded in 1933 and belongs to the Christian-orthodox family Tueni (the founder was Gibran Tueni). It belongs to the Lebanese tradition of liberalism which, without denying its specific roots and Arab affiliations, looks at Europe and the West in general as a political and cultural reference point. With the deterioration of the domestic institutional crisis, worsened by the regional opposition between pro-US block and Iranian-Syrian axis, an-Nahar has become the voice of the popular campaign against Syrian interferences in the Lebanese political scene. The paper expresses criticism towards the Islamic movement *Hizbullah* and its main regional supporter, Iran. In the last three years of 'low-intensity conflict', an-Nahar has lost two of the paper's most important pillars, namely the editor Gibran Tueni (nephew of its original founder and son of the current editor, Ghassan Tueni) and Samir Qasir, one of the most prolific Arab intellectuals of the last decade. Qasir was killed the 2nd of June 2005, while Tueni found his death on 12th of December of the same year. Both died in Beirut in two different car-bomb attacks.

As-Safir (The Messenger) was founded in 1974 and belongs to Sunni Muslim Talal Salman. It stands today for the opposition leading reference point, in favour of *Hizbullah* 'Islamic resistance' and more broadly 'resistance against Israel and the US' spearheaded by Tehran and Damascus. In the last three years, *as-Safir*' political orientation has partly shifted towards more radical stances. For decades it had represented the newspaper of the laic and left-wing Arab Lebanese intelligentsia, opposed to Washington policies and loyal to Pan-Arab ideals until 1989 in order to avoid being torn between the two blocks' opposition.

Currently, *an-Nahar*'s readers can be identified with the anti-Syrian parliamentary majority, supported by the US, the EU and Arab Gulf states (*in primis*, Saudi Arabia). *As-Safir* readers are mainly to be found among the Lebanese opposition headed by *Hizbullah* and the Christian Maronite party of Michel Aoun, de facto backed by Iran and Syria.

News have been selected in both dailies (around one hundred for each paper, then again selected according to the real relevance of the topics discussed) according to the occurrence of the expressions: European Union (*al-Ittihad al-Urubbi*), Europe (*Urubba*) and combined expressions.[47] Eventually, 66 articles were picked out for *as-Safir* and 59 for *an-Nahar*. In both cases articles

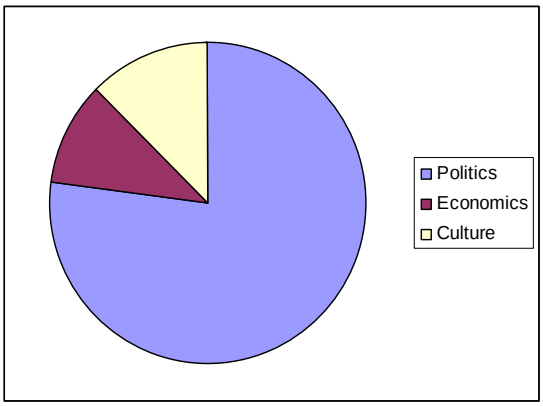
[46] When asked, the Lebanese Information Ministry supplied us with the following circulation data as to December 2007: *as-Safir* sells around 50.000 issues daily, while *an-Nahar* around 45.000. According to the "Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook" on Lebanon (updated on 15 May 2008), the total Lebanese population is estimated in 3.971.941 (Jan. 2008, est.).

[47] Other secondary key-words used to select relevant articles were: *Duwal urubbiyya* (European States), *hukumat urubbiyya* (European governments), *ru'asa' urubi-yuna/-iyyna* (European leaders), *al-Lajna al-urubbiyya* (The European Commission), *al-Barlaman al-urubbi* (The European Parliament), *al-Majlis al-urubbi* (The European Council). The adjective (*Urubbi/iiya/iyyun/* - European, male/female/plural) if placed in a relevant context.

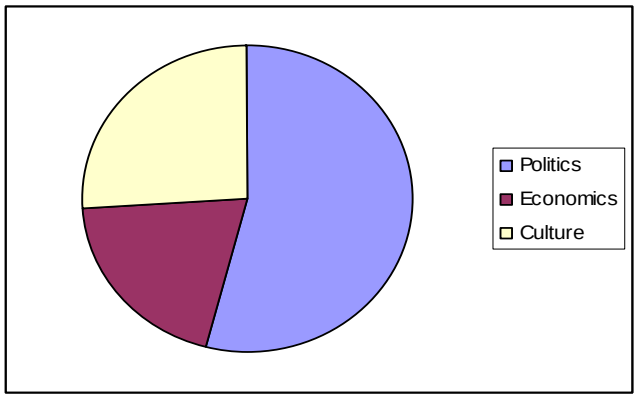
mainly dealt with: 1) EU political, economic or cultural initiatives in Lebanon, 2) EU-Lebanese institutional relations; 3) events somehow linked to the EU. In terms of op-eds by the two papers, it has to be signalled the extreme scarcity concerning the EU or its policies in the region.
The majority of articles (51 out of 66 for *as-Safir*, 32 out of 59 for *an-Nahar*) appeared in both newspapers pertain to political and diplomatic aspects, with a slight percentage dealing with economics (7 out of 66 in *as-Safir*; 12 out of 59 in *an-Nahar*) and cultural affairs (8 out of 66 in *as-Safir*, 15 out of 59 in *an-Nahar*). Moreover, between 2005 and 2006, the EU in Lebanon was indeed 'news-worthy' giving birth to a real critical debate on its presence and implications. The coverage per se (as well as the page number where the article appeared, the title chosen and whether pictures were attached or not) was analysed as testimony to a lesser or greater importance attributed by the newspaper to the EU and related issues.

	An-Nahar	*As-Safir*
Reference point	West	Arab world, especially Syria
Role and attitude of the EU	Supportive of PM Siniora and of the Lebanese state as such; EU as generous donor and involvement in Unifil as tangible proof of consistency;	EU divided and biased, bowing to Israeli demands and the US agenda;
Nature of the EU	Supra-national terms: focus on the High Representative for CFSP and the European Parliament	Predominance of member states, focus on their diverging interests;
World view	View of a more integrated world, whereby the EU democracy promotion agenda is not questioned.	Anarchic view of the world where Lebanon should be left to Middle East where different sets of rules for human rights, democracy, etc apply.

Nature of issues concerning the EU covered by As-Safir



Nature of issues concerning the EU covered by an-Nahar



General remarks

In quantitative terms, between 2005 and 2006, 96 articles appeared in *as-Safir* dealing with the European Union (over 75 different days), while EU-related issues were covered by 115 articles in *an-Nahar* (over 94 different days). Out of these articles, 66 were selected for the analysis of *as-Safir* and 59 for the analysis of *an-Nahar*. Almost all articles in *as-Safir* dealt with EU political issues (51, out of which 7 revolved around UNIFIL II, which however was a salient issue only in the last part of the time period we covered), while only nine articles dealt with economic issues and eight with cultural aspects. In *an-Nahar*, 32 articles out of 59 treated political aspects (eight concentrated specifically on UNIFIL II), while 12 dealt with economic issues and 15 with cultural affairs.

In both newspapers, "political articles" are mainly concerned with EU stances on the internal political Lebanese development or regional events affecting Lebanon as well as bilateral issues as Brussels' request for economic and political reform in order to make changes to the granting financial aid to the central and local institutions.

Coverage by topics

-Europe/European countries/European governments/European leaders (*Urubba, duwal urubbiyya, hukumat urubbiyya, ru'asa' urubi-yuna/-iyyna*) are present 13 times in *as-Safir*, while 17 times in *an-Nahar*;

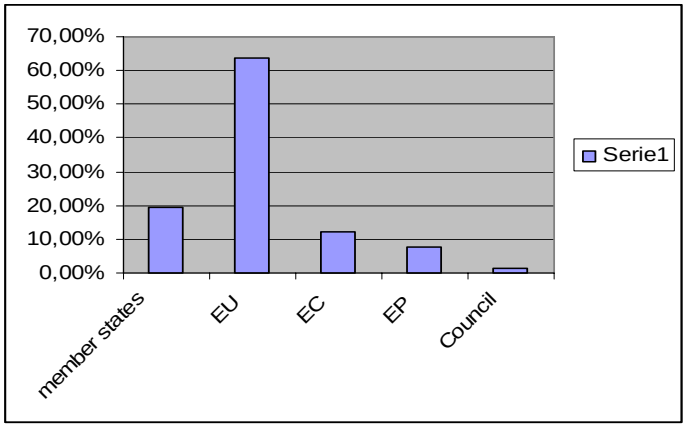
-the European Union (EU) *(al-Ittihad al-Urubbi*) is mentioned 42 times in *as-Safir* while 49 times in *an-Nahar*;

-the European Commission (EC) *(al-Lajna al-Urubbiyya)* is mentioned 8 times in *as-Safir* and only twice in *an-Nahar*;

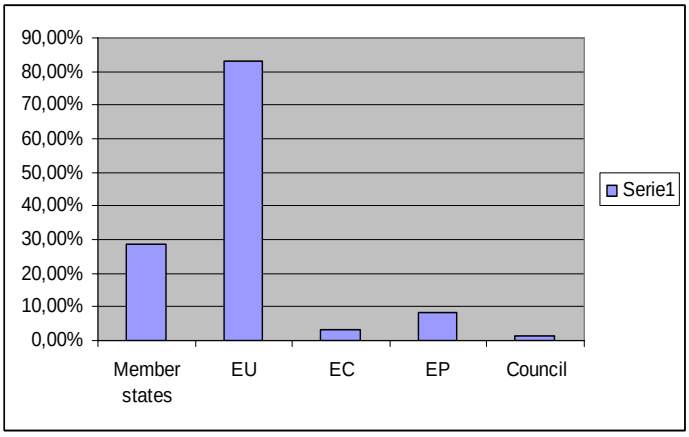
- the European Parliament (EP) (*al-Barlaman al-Urubbi*) is cited 5 times in *as-Safir* and 5 times in *an-Nahar*;

- the European Council (*al-Majlis al-Urubbi*) is mentioned only once in both newspapers;

Relevance of Member states and EU Institutions as-Safir



Relevance of Member states and EU Institutions in An-Nahar



As-Safir and an-Nahar: Two different looks at the EU

Analyzing the 2005-2006 key-events coverage made by *an-Nahar* and *as-Safir*, three main different time-periods have stood up: the first regarding the pre-electoral months (from January to June 2005); the second related to the legislative elections with the presence of an EU electoral observers' team; the third concerning the *Hizbullah*-Israeli war of the summer 2006 and the consequent creation of UNIFIL II mission to which several European countries contributed consistently. In each time frame, the different positions of the two newspaper regarding the EU role in the Lebanese events emerge clearly: *as-Safir* maintained its critic position towards Brussels' policy, while *an-Nahar* views fluctuated between a strong appreciation and a more neutral standing.

"The EU's ambiguous and partial policies" vs. "Brussels alongside a free Lebanon"

From the analysis of *as-Safir* (January-June 2005) it emerges a tone of clear-cut scepticism vis-à-vis European approaches in Lebanon, while *an-Nahar* describes the EU as an honest and loyal partner of an independent, free and sovereign Lebanon. The EU is represented by the main Arabic Beirut newspapers as forcefully backing Siniora's government.

As-Safir

The opposition newspaper, traditionally focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict, sees the EU as a blurred political entity, unable to promote clear and effective policies. Brussels is accused to un-critically side with US 'radical' policies as well as to bow to Israeli demands.

One the one hand, hence, the Union is criticized for adopting ambiguous policies, on the other for espousing double standards both vis-à-vis the regional crisis as well as the Lebanese one. During the war between Israel and *Hizbullah* (12 July-14 August 2006) the Union was for the first and only time represented across the spectrum as 'alongside' Lebanon.

The interest shown by some European countries, among which especially France, Italy and Spain, in supporting the reinforced UNIFIL II with their troops are interpreted by *as-Safir* as instrumental choices aimed at gaining more influence in the Lebanese context. The newspaper, on its side, fails to portray European viewpoints on the political situation in Lebanon in the aftermath of the Hariri assassination (14 February 2005).

The alleged ambiguities of the EU are spelled out by *as-Safir* in different ways. January 25, 2005, Beirut's editor Satei Nur ad-Din, sums up this image in his daily column (*al-Mahatta al-akhira*, Last Stop).

Nur ad-Din discussed in his column the fragile position of Lebanon toward outside pressure. He argued that "Israel may not need a huge effort to convince the US and the European Union that Hizbullah represents a serious threat to stability in the region. On the other hand, the US has no doubt that Hizbullah is one of the military arms that Iran would use in case of a confrontation between them (…)".

The following month, 25 February 2005 (the morrow from Hariri assassination), the Union is depicted again as being submissive to Israeli demands: "An Israeli diplomatic and media campaign against Lebanese resistance group Hizbullah has exacerbated during the past few days following pressures by the Jewish State on the European Union to place the Party of God on the European list of groups supporting terrorism".

Or again: "Israel began its aggravating campaign (against the Party of God) after resolution 1559 was passed taking advantage of the current international pressure against Hizbullah to achieve its objectives, which include disarming the resistance and besieging the group politically and diplomatically".[48]

According to *as-Safir,* the European approach is a schizophrenic one: on the one hand it depicts *Hizbullah* as a terrorist movement, while on the other it declares its interest in 'the development of Lebanon, albeit under certain conditions'. On 14 April 2005, it is written that: "The European Union has launched a five year plan to revive the Euro-Mediterranean partnership pact with ten countries in the Middle East on the tenth anniversary of its signing. (…)". According to the paper, "the plan states that political reform is key to achieving permanent security and stability in the region and as such the Commission is seeking more protection of human rights, empowerment of women, strengthening of democracy and pluralism in these countries". *As-Safir* questions what lies behind terms such as "permanent security", "stability", "protection of human rights", suggesting an attempt by Brussels to promote a US-Israeli agenda in the region.

An-Nahar

On the other hand, the pro-Western daily of Beirut chooses another perspective. Despite voicing criticism towards the Party of God, Brussels is still perceived by *an-Nahar* as supporting the

[48] According to the paper, the Israeli anti-*Hizbullah* campaign is aimed at achieving four objectives: 1- Tarnishing the party's image among the Arab and international public opinion. 2- Causing tension between the party and the Palestinians in an effort to worsen the dispute between them. 3- Levelling accusations against the party and pressuring European countries prior to the EU meeting scheduled on Wednesday Feb. 16 so that participants will agree to place *Hizbullah* on Europe's terror list. 4- Exploiting France's decision to ban *Hizbullah*'s mouthpiece al-Manar satellite TV station from broadcasting across Europe to pressure the French to besiege the party diplomatically (*as-Safir*, 15.2.2005, Beirut, p.5).

Lebanese State. Israel is vehemently condemned, but accusations also target leaders of the Lebanese Shi'a movement. Once reached a ceasefire in mid-August, the EU goes back to its previous twofold image: political support to Siniora's government and financial incentives for reforms and reconstruction. The paper described the EU and notably France as the closest partners of Lebanon.
When the Maronite Patriarch, the cardinal Butros Nasrallah Sfeir, visited Paris on January 21 2005, the paper wrote that French President Jacques Chirac stressed the "international community's determination to push Lebanon and Syria toward fully implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 and underscored Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and free decision-making".
On 15th February, the day after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, *an-Nahar* stresses the proximity of French and European stances (but not their submission) to American ones: "Bush and French President Jacques Chirac issued a joint call for a Lebanon 'free from foreign domination' (…). Bush and Chirac condemned Hariri's killing. Their joint statement did not blame Syria but backed a UN investigation into the attack". The paper outlined that "the European Union called for an international probe into Hariri's death and underlined its support for a United Nations resolution calling for Syria to withdraw.

Election time: two different depictions of the European Union role

When the domestic political crisis worsens before the legislative election in June 2005, the same accusation of *a-Safir* gains strength, while *an-Nahar* continued to stress the relevance of the EU efforts for a democratic and independent Lebanon.

As-Safir

Just after the Syrian troops withdrawal from Lebanon (26th April), on 28 April the opposition newspaper of Beirut reports that: "France and Germany urged the new Lebanese government to push ahead with plans to hold free elections after the last Syrian forces completed their withdrawal from Lebanon (…)". The French and German governments declared after a joint meeting that "the (Lebanese) government must organize free and democratic elections on schedule under a voting system on which there is a consensus of".[49]
Later on, 21 June 2005, *as-Safir* is again sceptical of the joint statement issued by the US and the EU in which both parties said they will "cooperate to promote peace, prosperity and development in the Middle East".[50] These declarations demonstrate 'the real intentions harboured in Washington and Brussels".[51]
In the following months, *as-Safir* keeps on publishing articles, mainly news, supporting the alleged double standards adopted by the EU.[52]

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[49] When the EU propose to send electoral observers for the summer elections, the paper sees a confirmation of previous allegations. On 16 May, the first EU delegation is composed of 30 people (out of a total of 80 people), it is headed by José Ignacio Salafranca Sanchéz-Neyra (Ppe) and it is accompanied by the motto: "*EU wants to support Lebanon's democratic evolution*". *As-Safir* stresses Salafranca's statements: "*Our presence here is a guarantee of more transparency and independence in elections in Lebanon.* (…) *I think we have the capacity, the methodology, the teams and the expertise in order to give an important contribution to the consolidation of democracy in this country and to prepare the way for the future*".

[50] "*We are aware of the difficulties facing the new government. We are committed to helping the Lebanese promote their democratic institutions and encouraging peace and stability in Lebanon (…) However, we are still looking forward for a complete implementation of resolution 1559, including disarming all militias (in a reference to Hizbullah and Palestinian organizations*)". The statement was released after a meeting held 20th of June in Washington between US President George W. Bush and Chief of the EU Commission Jose Manuel Durao Barroso and the Head of the European Council Jean-Claude Juncker.

[51] *As-Safir*, 21st June 2006, p.12, Beirut.

[52] Among them: "Spain Orders Stoppage of *Hizbullah* TV Broadcast to Latin America", 30th June 2005; "Bush Faces Uphill Battle Prodding EU to Act against *Hizbullah*", 4th July 2005; "Donor Conference to Be Held in Beirut before End of the Year", 20th September 2005; "The EU expressed its support Monday to the Lebanese government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and promised to assist Lebanon in strengthening its security services", 14th November 2005;

"The European Union has failed to react in a proper manner to continuous Israeli attacks on the Palestinians and the whole international community has failed too to take serious measures against daily Israeli crimes in Palestine", writes *as-Safir*'s editor in chief Talal Salman on July 13th 2006. "When the whole world does not react to Israel's attacks, how do you expect resistance groups, such as Hizbullah and Hamas to react?", he asked. These question marks continue to reverberate after the outbreak of the 2006 summer war between Israel and *Hizbullah* and continue to this date.

An-Nahar

For the main newspaper of Beirut "the European Union is willing to offer Lebanon the help it needs for initiating reform and change provided the Lebanese government appoints honest and credible people to undertake the task".

An-Nahar stresses the arrival of a European electoral observers' team welcoming them with satisfaction (17th May): "International and European Union observers deployed across Lebanon on Monday to prepare for the country's first parliamentary poll in the absence of Syrian troops for 33 years", adding that "Jose Salafranca, chief of what will be a 100-strong EU mission observing the elections due to start on May 29, said the EU wanted to support Lebanon's 'democratic evolution'".

When Siniora visited Brussels, in *an-Nahar* was written: "European Union Foreign Ministers stressed their commitment to the complete implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1644, on the assassination of ex-Lebanese Premier Rafik al-Hariri, and 1559 on the disarming of all militias in Lebanon. After meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, who was on a visit to Brussels, the European ministers voiced support for the Lebanese government's bid to exercise sovereignty over all its territory. (…) Siniora asserted that European assistance is unconditional".[53]

On the 4th April, the 2002 EU-Lebanese *Partnership Agreement* enters into force, which Siniora, quoted by *an-Nahar*, defines: "a way to strengthen ties between Lebanon and the EU at all levels (…). The pro-governmental paper also reports on 26 June, that 'European Union finance ministers will pledge continued financial support in exchange for more economic reform in southern Mediterranean states when they meet their counterparts from the region on Sunday and Monday".[54]

<u>The war breaks out: the EU's engagement in UNIFIL seen by *as-Safir* and *an-Nahar*</u>

During the whole *Hizbullah*-Israeli war period *as-Safir* and *an-Nahar* reserve a limited space to EU policies in Lebanon. The focus is mainly on the condemnation that Brussels and the European leaders give to the "disproportionate Israeli reaction", stressing the low efficacy of the EU policy. During the visit of the High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana in Beirut the 17th of July 2006, the two newspaper together with the rest of the Lebanese press give importance to the "brave move" of Solana, hinting however at possible concealed intentions. Solana expresses "solidarity with Lebanon, which is a good friend of Europe", stating he came "to see how we can help". But after the first reports, *as-Safir* and *an-Nahar* confirm their different political positioning.

As-Safir

On the 22nd of July the paper instrumentally reports Jacques Chirac's repeated and vain appeals to Solana and Barroso Chirac suggests Solana and Barroso should go back to Beirut to find a political solution to the crisis, ending the ongoing war. *As-Safir* presents again EU policy as hiding behind

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"Lebanon, EU Sign Agreement to Offer Financial Aid to NGOs in Lebanon", 17th March 2006; "European Union will help Lebanon", 20th March 2006; "Syrian, Lebanese Intellectuals Respond to Damascus-Beirut Declaration and accuse EU", 1st June 2006; "EU to Give Cash in Exchange for Reforms in Southern Mediterranean Countries", 26th June 2006; "To Present it to EU at December Summit; US Has No Details", 17th November 2006.

[53] The paper said that the ministers expressed then support for Lebanon's unity and sovereignty. Meanwhile, Siniora said at a press conference that his visit to Brussels was aimed at informing European officials about developments in Lebanon, and seeking European assistance. *An-Nahar*, pp. 1 e 5, Beirut, 21 marzo 2006.

[54] According to an-Nahar quoting sources of the European Commission: *in the 10 years leading to 2005, the European Union spent 15 billion euros in grants and loans to Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and the West Bank and Gaza*. *An-Nahar*, 26 giugno 2006, Beirut, p.7.

US policies. In the paper's opinion, the U.S., together with Israel, are the "*the key actors in the Lebanese-Israeli conflict*" (1st August 2006).
Between the end of July and the beginning of August, the European Union gains importance thanks to Solana's proposal of gathering an international army force to be sent to Lebanon (26th July 2006). Brussels' action is obscured by allegations of low transparency: the 3rd of August, *as-Safir* reports talk between "*European Governments with Hizbullah's Backers, Syria and Iran*". Such ambiguity, according to the opposition paper, continues also after the ceasefire, reached on August the 14th. In the following days the Lebanese press devotes more room to France, rather than to the EU, as the most interested party in shaping a reinforced UNIFIL force (August the 21st 2006: *France called on Sunday for a European Union meeting next week to co-ordinate what member countries plan to do about a U.N. force for Lebanon*) and *as-Safir* stresses, as always, a subordination of the EU policy to the US.
A clear signal about UNIFIL II comes finally from Brussels when the EU approves the gathering of a 15.000 strong UNIFIL force[55]. An editorial by Talal Salman on the *as-Safir* comments: "The EU decision was made away from the United States and, therefore, Nato". But Salman goes straitgh to the point as saying: "The international forces are needed to help the Lebanese army - which is unfortunately a weak army - to deploy in the south and replace Hizbullah in south Lebanon and of course, to enforce the arms embargo on Hizbullah". The whole EU involvement in UNIFIL is presented by *as-Safir* as lacking of coherence and clearness. Surprisingly, on the 11th September 2006, as-Safir writes that the "Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi said Europeans could train Syrian forces to clamp down on alleged arms smuggling into Lebanon, but denied he had suggested Europeans might patrol the border".[56] A more general analysis is published on the 16th December 2006: when *as-Safir* states that "The Europeans were split over how to deal with Syria" and "the EU policy appeared to reflect the ascendancy of France's hard line towards Damascus over those member states, which want to develop better relations with Syria now".
An other editorial article by Salman is also dedicated to the EU and its peacekeeping effort. The *as-Safir* editor in-chief pictures the EU as divided in its foreign policy and without clear-cut foreign policy goals in the Middle East: "European countries are refraining from playing a more effective role in the Middle East, despite their ability and qualification to do so". "(…) The presence of European troops under the UNIFIL command in Lebanon is a 'passport' for the European Union to play a more significant role in the Middle East at the expense of the United States, which many refuse to regard as an honest broker due to its continuous bias to Israel", Salman says. "Despite their military presence in southern Lebanon after the last war, some European countries have absolutely no idea of what their future role could be if the situation in the region witnesses further escalation", Salman continues. He advises Europe not to waste its chance to promote itself as a unbiased third party in the Middle East conflict. "The Europeans must be aware that US destabilization policies in the region might risk Europe's mission in Lebanon and cost the peacekeepers what they cannot afford or withstand", Salman warns.
An-Nahar
On the other hand, the pro-Western daily reports how the EU never fails to express its full support to Lebanon, exposed to Israeli aerial bombs in July and August 2006. At the beginning of the conflict, *an-Nahar* reports EU accusations of Israel: The European Union criticized Israel's strikes in Lebanon as a dangerous escalation of the Middle East conflict. French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy called Israel's bombardment of Beirut airport "a disproportionate act of war", saying there was a real risk of a regional war. Douste-Blazy also condemned Hizbullah's firing of rockets into northern Israel and the seizure of the soldiers (14/7/2006).

[55] "European Union countries agreed to raise around half of the projected 15.000-strong peacekeeping force for Lebanon". *As-Safir*, 26th August 2006, Beirut, p.1.
[56] An example of the low EU transparency is: "Syria denied that it would accept European Union guards to monitor its border with Lebanon, amid allegations of weapons shipments to *Hizbullah*". *As-Safir*, 11th September 2006, Beirut, p.5.

An-Nahar expresses its appreciation for the first signs of tangible economic help from Brussels: The European Union announced ten million euros in aid to help Lebanese fleeing fighting in their country and expressed grave concern over the humanitarian situation in the region. Leaders of all political groups in the European Parliament issued a statement demanding an immediate ceasefire to allow passage of humanitarian aid and backed the dispatch of a UN intervention force and an immediate start to negotiations[57]. The following day, the paper reports in its first page: An international donor conference is due to meet in Rome to try to hammer out a comprehensive settlement of the Lebanese-Israeli conflict.[58]

For *an-Nahar*, with UNIFIL II Europe has concretely shown its support and loyalty to Lebanon and the overall image of European foreign policy after the 2006 conflict which emerges from the analysis of *an-Nahar* is indeed positive. The paper distinguished European from American foreign policy, as the editorial by Samih Saab from 9th September confirms: "Europe's enthusiasm about maintaining the peace in Lebanon is accompanied by indications of a bigger European role in Middle East peacemaking. The success of the European role in Lebanon is likely to reinforce Europe's role in reviving the stalled peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbours", Saab writes. The author noted that Europe was pushing for a fresh and emboldened role in the Middle East, "while the United States is busy with the conflicts in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan". According to Saab, "the war on Lebanon provided a real opportunity for Europe to restore some of its influence in a region that is closer to it than the United States". Then he adds that Europe "is also more acceptable to the Arabs and to the key players Syria and Iran". The Union should nevertheless be warned: "It is obvious that the failure of Europe in Lebanon would disqualify the European Union from playing a wider role in the Middle East".

III. 4 General observations by selected Lebanese elites

What emerged from the interviews conducted in Beirut is an acknowledgement of the extent of the EU's knowledge of the Lebanese context and history and its traditionally good relation with the Cedars' country. [59] More broadly, the economic role of the Union and of individual member states is widely recognized as an important feature of European presence on the ground, though an un-coordinated and scarcely coherent one.[60] The economic-technical cooperation dimension seems to be more easily appreciated and acknowledged than European foreign policy as such.

Alongside this, EU shortcomings in the implementation of policies, especially in terms of democracy promotion are often underlined.[61]

Criticisms arise even related to EU cooperation policies in the Levant countries, accused of being poorly coordinated among them, faring worse than their UN counterparts. According to Timur Goksel, Turkish Professor at the Political Sciences Department of American University of Beirut (Aub) and former political advisor to UNIFIL: "there is a problem of explaining what the EU is about: too many programs, too many abbreviations. It seems that EU is racing with the UN, but the difference is that UN agencies have 'UN' letters at the beginning, while EU programs have too many different abbreviations.

[57] Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, said it was committing 10 million euros to meet the most urgent needs "in this very initial phase". *An-Nahar* also mentions the calls fora n immediate ceasefire from all parliamentary heads of groups denouncing the humanitarian catastrophe (especially after the civilian mass murder in 15 July 2007, in Marwahin, a village close to the Blue Line separating Lebanon from Israel). *An-Nahar*, Beirut, 21 July 2007, pp. 1 e 12.

[58] The organizers of the conference were the core group of countries that were preparing for the Beirut-1 conference-namely, the United States, France, Britain, Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and several European countries.

[59] Interview with Mona Fayyad, Shiite, Professor of Psychology at the Lebanese University.

[60] interview with Wajih Kawtharani, Shiite, Professor of History at the public Lebanese University.

[61] Interview with Mona Fayyad.

In Lebanon nobody understands this. Some programs here, other project of cooperation there... This is typical of international organizations, but the difference is that EU lacks long-term planning". This remark is shared by many. In the words of an NGO activist: "NGOs in Lebanon amount almost to 500, the majority of which are recognized by the Ministry of Interior, while few lack official recognition. The European Commission finances short-term projects[62] with little financing (20,000 or 50,000 Euro). This goes against what most foreign NGOs do in Lebanon with considerable budgets and long-term projects"[63]. Not only is there a problem of support to civil society organizations by the EU as institution, but on the ground different European countries support different programs without coordination among them and often duplicating projects and wasting resources[64]. Another kind of inconsistency associated to the Union's declared support to democracy promotion is its financing *Hizbullah*-sponsored NGOs in the Shiite south while politically staunchly attempting to strengthen anti-opposition forces such as Siniora.[65]

In terms of broader strategic outlook, Goksel added: "Compared to the US, the EU seems more friendly. But friendly does not mean influential. The Lebanese do not trust the EU as problem-solving actor in the region. They will still look at the US, because the US, right or wrong, follows words with actions".

Former Minister of Youth and Sport Ahmad Fatfat, a middle-aged Sunni policymaker close to the pro-US coalition, told us that economically European imports, which represent more than 50% of overall goods imported by Lebanon, are very expensive for the Lebanese, given the current evaluations of the Euro, while some tariff barriers complicate Lebanese exports to the European continent. He held that the EU is certainly stronger economically than politically, both in terms of its often weak diplomatic output and of its internal inconsistencies which further undermine its effectiveness (example of the lack of a comprehensive EU approach towards Syria). On the political level, however, is at least acknowledged as an autonomous player compared to the UN, which, despite their multifaceted presence in Lebanon (Unifil II as well as United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, ESCWA) are perceived as executers of the US agenda.

In terms of European engagement under the guise of UNIFIL II, both Lebanese commentator and UNIFIL military personnel acknowledge that nationality and the UN are the two frameworks within which the mission operates and is perceived on the ground.[66] In other words, despite its majority is composed by European forces, this is not read as a factor per se possessing any added value, but contingents are seen under a national and UN flag. In the words of a Lebanese army colonel: "The EU as an autonomous military force does not exist:, whereas Nato exists, Unifil exists". And, adds an Italian colonel of Unifil, "when the EU expresses its concerns, as it did when first some EU member states then the Union as such proposed to have Unifil II patrol the Syrian-Lebanese border, it only provokes strong reactions from Damascus and further confusion within the Lebanese political landscape, thereby hampering Unifil II job".

Related to how the EU is perceived vis-à-vis its member states, Saad Kiwan, a leading Maronite Lebanese independent analyst (former political affairs editor of *as-Safir* newspaper with a long experience in France, Belgium and Italy) argued that cultural and economic ties are the most important links between the EU and Lebanon today, while some European countries enjoy special relationships with the Levant country. France, for instance, which enjoys a friendly relationship dating back long time ago, or Italy enjoying very good economic relations built in recent times.

[62] The EC approach is to finance projects, without providing structural funding, fearing to distort cooperation logics and to concentrate funds in the hands of few. The EC also refuses to cover basic costs, such as electricity, rents, salaries, focusing on targeted projects.

[63] Interview, Lina, Christian Maronite, leading member of a leading NGO.

[64] Interview, Lebanese colonel of the Army.

[65] Interview, Kawtharani.

[66] Interview, anonymous Italian colonel UNIFIL II

The interview with Ali Fayyad, a representative of *Hizbullah* and director of the *Hizbullah* documentation centre, was particularly insightful as EU internal dynamics appeared to be very well known. The EU is not simply un-coordinated, but French, Italian and Spanish diplomacy have recently shown different approaches to Lebanese issues, France being at one hand of the spectrum trying to isolate the islamist movement and uncritically supporting the Siniora government, and Italy keeping the doors of dialogue open to all political actors, including critical regional players.
In this respect, UNIFIL II is seen in national and not supra-national terms, with the clear depiction that decisions concerning the mission will be taken in NY and not in Brussels, de facto implying that, so far, there is no European label or meaning in the participation of European troops into the mission. What is more striking are the examples offered exemplifying the lack of coherence in European foreign policy: in addition to the apparent EU double standards in labelling Hamas a terrorist organization while sparing *Hizbullah*, a specific case was stressed whereby France obscured in all Europe *Hizbullah* TV al-*Manar*, but on the other hand voted against the application of a European Parliament Resolution defining as "terrorist" the activities of *Hizbullah*.

IV. Concluding remarks

It is generally acknowledged a quantitatively and qualitatively increase in the European presence in Lebanon, thanks to economic cooperation, embodied also by the 2002 AA and the 2007 ENP Action Plan and politically by European member states' involvement in Unifil II.
Many praise the output of the technical and economic cooperation with the EU and with European countries, complaining however European expensive imports and the still existing EU trade tariff barriers hindering transparent trade exchanges.
The EU endeavour to promote stability and democratization is recognized as one of its main foreign policy drivers, in the Lebanese case, however, the first trumps the second goal, paving the way to several criticisms.
In its political and diplomatic behaviour, the EU is sometimes accused of being biased, for example for failing to engage in national dialogue without preconditions with all parties, including *Hizbullah*, or as behaving in an un-coordinated manner, exemplified by the different outlooks on Lebanese politics held by different European foreign ministers visiting Beirut.
The military engagement of some member states in Unifil II, following the Israeli-*Hizbullah* war of summer 2006, while mostly praised, is sometimes criticised for either following the US agenda in the region, or of exerting no autonomous role as strategic decisions are taken at the UN in Washington, seen as a political arena where the US drive the course of action, or, in the worst assessments as hampering Unifil job by proposing new policies which provoke strong reactions by Damascus thereby weakening the overall legitimacy of the peace-keeping mission.
Concerning the European attitude towards *Hizbullah*, the Union is reproached of choosing stability over democracy promotion., exemplified by its staunch backing of PM Siniora's government at the detriment of the Islamic movement political designs but without going so far as to boycott it. In this issue area, the Union is deemed to have a schizophrenic behaviour, failing for example to insert *Hizbullah* in the terrorist organizations' list, but having France banning its TV *al-Manar* in France and in all Europe.
Despite acknowledging the difficulty of engaging with a confessional society and a failing state, the EU and European countries are deemed to invest little in increasing cultural ties with the Cedars' country. The approach so far adopted based on the combination of strong economic incentives, political support to the existing government and beefing up the international peace-keeping mission is incapable of providing a new strategic vision embedding Lebanon in the changing regional balance of power or even putting forward effective policy changes.
In terms of public opinion, the US is the country attracting stronger feelings, with 80% of Shiites and 50% of Sunni expressing negative views, more than the majority of Druzes and a third of Christians expressing openly positive comments. When asked for an alternative superpower to the

US, France fares very good among all confessions except Shiites, who would rather opt for Russia, while the European Union is not even mentioned. This contrasts with views expressed when directly asked about the EU, which 70% of the interviewees considered an essential political partner.
The UE action in Lebanon has until today preferred to develop an economic and commercial initiative rather than a clear political one. However, Bruxelles continues to play a de facto political role, not just making its helps conditional on the Lebanese implementation of the reforms, but also having indirectly supported since 2005 to 2008 a political coalition rather than another.
With the aim of gaining more authority and credibility, it would be better for the to EU to abandon this unclear double-level action and to promote itself as a real foreign political actor capable of influencing, also with the power of its economic market, the choises of the different Lebanese leaders.
On one hand, Beirut demands to the EU to play a more independent role, far from the influence of the US, Russia, Iran or Israel. On the other hand, the European countries are worried for their own security and they are interested mainly in protecting their economic interests in the region. It is possible for both parts to satisfy the need of the other: in exchange for a more reliable attitude of the Lebanese leaders in order to protect the Europen interests, the EU should not just seek the appreciation of Washington nor should fear the possible accusations of the Bruxelles' pro-Israeli lobby.
The next parliamentary elections in Lebanon (Fall 2009) could be a crucial test for the EU in a changing regional scenario: what is now “the opposition”, led by *Hizbullah* and backed by Iran and Syria, would probably become "the majority" with a possible defeat of the present coalition of the “Forces of 14th of March”, backed by US, Saudi Arabia and the UE.
The end of the international isolation of Syria, the traditional power in Lebanese affairs, was de facto ratified in July 2008 in Paris by the new regional policy of France during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Furthermore, the orientations of the US policy for the Middle East could not appear in time to influence significantly Lebanese politics. This could give Bruxelles more space to play a better mediation role among Lebanese leaders and the different regional actors.
The EU realized, as Paris did, that it is not in its interests to follow the former US strategy of the “open confrontations against our enemies”. It is also worth remembering that Italy, Germany and France are among the first trade partners of both Syria and Lebanon from a long time ago: in the next future these three key EU countries would likely continue to adopt a more pragmatic and flexible strategy towards Syria and its allies in Lebanon.
Today the EU members have the chance to overcome their different approaches towards Lebanon and unite their efforts to build a more pragmatic and clear policy. And this for protecting their interests and contribute to the political, social and economic development of this fundamental Arab and Mediterrean country.

Annexes

Key-events, 2005-2006:

2005

Feb. - Former Lebanee Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri is killed (14) by a car bomb in Beirut. The attack sparks anti-Syrian rallies and the resignation (28) of Prime Minister Omar Karami's cabinet. Calls for Syria to withdraw its troops intensify.

Mar. - Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese attend pro- and anti-Syrian rallies in Beirut. President Emile Lahud charges (10) former Prime Minister Omar Karami to form a new cabinet. Syria starts (8-17) the first phase of military withdrawal from Lebanon (14.000 units reduced to 8.000).

Apr. – UN Resolution 1595 adopted (10) to create the Hariri UN Investigation Commission. Omar Karami resigns (13) as PM after failing to form a government. He is succeeded by moderate pro-Syrian MP Najib Mikati. Syria completes (26) its military withdrawal from Lebanon, as demanded by the UN.

May. – Former Lebanese maronite anty-Syrian general Michel Aoun is back (7) in Lebanon after 15 years of exile in France. Aoun announces (27) his candidature for the legislative elections along the pro-Syrian alliance.

Jun. - Prominent journalist Samir Qasir, a critic of Syrian influence, is killed (2) by a car bomb in Beirut. Less than three weeks later, George Hawi, anti-Syrian former leader of Lebanese Communist Party, is killed (21) by a car bomb in Beirut. The day before, anti-Syrian alliance led by Saad Hariri (son and political heir of former premier Rafiq Hariri) wins control of parliament following elections. New parliament chooses Hariri ally, Fouad Siniora (30), as Prime Minister.

Jul. - Lebanese PM Siniora meets Syria's President Assad; both sides agree to rebuild relations. Newly appointed Defense Minister Elias Murr is heavily wounded (12) by a car bomb in the outskirts of Beirut.

Sep. - Four pro-Syrian generals are charged (1) over the assassination of former PM Rafik Hariri. Christian journalist and critic of Syria May Chidiaq was seriously injured (25) when a bomb exploded into her car in Jounie (20 km north Beirut).

Oct. – Publication (20) of the first report of the Hariri UN Investigation Commission headed by German prosecutor Detlev Mehlis.

Dec. - Prominent anti-Syrian MP and journalist Gibran Tueni is killed (12) by a car bomb.

2006

Jan. – The Belgian judge Serge Brammertz remplaces (13) Mehlis as the head of the Hariri UN Commission

Feb. – Denmark’s embassy in Beirut is torched (7) during a demonstration against cartoons in a Danish paper satirising the Prophet Muhammad.

Mar. – The National Lebanese Dialogue starts (8) with the participation of all the most prominent

political and sectarian leaders of the country under the patronage of the pro-Syrian Lebanese parliament speaker Nabih Berri. The “dialogue sessions” continue till the beginning of the summer. One of the issues discussed is the legitimacy of the Resistance’s (*Hizbullah*) weapons.

Jul. - Israel launches (12) air and sea attacks on targets in Lebanon after Lebanon's militant *Hizbullah* group captures two Israeli soldiers. Civilian casualties are high and the damage to civilian infrastructure wide-ranging. Thousands of people are displaced.

Aug. - Israeli ground troops thrust into southern Lebanon. UN Resolution 1701 adopted (12) and after two days a truce between Israel and *Hizbullah* comes into effect after 34 days of fighting and the deaths of around 1,000 Lebanese - mostly civilians - and 159 Israelis, mainly soldiers. Lebanese government starts (17) forces deploy along the Israeli border for the first time in decades. A UN peacekeeping force, expected to consist of 15,000 foreign troops, begins to deploy along the southern border (UNIFIL-II). European countries (Italy, France, Spain) promise (25) around 7.000 units.

Nov. – Five ministers from shiite *Hizbullah* and the *Amal* movement resign shortly before (13) the cabinet approves draft UN plans for a tribunal to try suspects in the killing of the former prime minister Hariri. Leading Christian politician and government minister Pierre Gemayel is shot dead (21) in Beirut. In the same day, the UN Security Council approves the project of creation a Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Dec. - Thousands of opposition demonstrators in Beirut demand (1) the resignation of the government: *Hizbullah, Amal* and supporters of Christian leader Michel Aoun camp outside Prime Minister Fouad Siniora’s office in Beirut in open-ended campaign to topple the government.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
American Perceptions of the EU

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE EU:
Through a Glass, Darkly or Through the Looking Glass?

Executive Summary

Do Americans view the EU through a glass, darkly *or* from the other side of the looking glass? There is no answer to this question that hold across (or even within) the four foreign policy constituencies investigated in this working paper.

The material importance of the EU to American security and welfare is reflected poorly in public opinion, no doubt largely reflecting the absence of questions about the EU testing the publics' knowledge or understanding of it.

The political classes, while willing to acknowledge the EU as an actor, remain preoccupied with the nation-state and wedded to a traditional understanding of security, while the economic elite views the EU as a regulatory behemoth hell-bent on destroying the American market economy. Similarly, the print media is likewise infatuated with the national policies of European states, even where the EU is the dominant institutional player, and tend to treat the EU as having a security function that is more important than its economic function.

Arguably, three of the four foreign policy constituencies view the EU through a glass, darkly; the foreign policy and security roles of the EU are overestimated at the expense of the important role the EU does play in the economy.

Advocacy groups, which represent the fourth constituency, would appear trapped on the other side of the looking glass by comparison: they see the EU as a global regulatory and environmental actor capable of shaping global norms and American legislation for the better.

The EU remains an ill-defined actor in American foreign policy discourse, although economic interest and advocacy groups are best attuned to the continuing importance of Europe to the United States and the global reach of the EU.

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Through a Glass, Darkly or Through the Looking Glass?

James Sperling

Introduction[1]

International institutions have played an important role in the postwar American foreign policy calculus. The institutions initially constructed to govern the European security space, particularly the European Recovery Program and NATO, were devised as mechanisms for imposing American economic and security preferences on the Western Europeans. Institutions were not constructed in accordance with a strict universalism that would have subordinated American self-interest to a 'common Atlantic interest'. Rather, the institutions of the post-war period are better understood as mechanisms which allowed the United States to participate in the evolution of the European security space, to shape and constrain the policy choices (if not preferences) of its allies, and to legitimize the American role in Europe that it eventually assumed. Thus, the political and economic integration of Europe constituted an important instrumental goal of American foreign policy over the course of the post-war period.

American support for European integration has been always tempered by a corresponding suspicion that a more politically and economically unified Europe, particularly along the French conception of an autonomous Europe, would complicate American strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and pose a serious challenge to American leadership within the transatlantic alliance. Nonetheless, just as Europeans rarely deviated from an 'Atlanticist' catechism, American rhetoric rarely questioned openly the benefits of European integration for the American global strategy of containment. While the material and strategic importance of the European Union (EU) to the United States should be beyond question, the perception of the EU by America's attentive elites remains problematic. Despite the strides made towards by the member states towards consolidating EU prerogatives, creating a foreign policy and defense identity, and exerting influence as an internationally recognized actor, the American attentive foreign policy elite nonetheless remains largely infatuated with the European nation-state. There are three questions that this working paper seeks to answer: What degree of 'actorness' do Americans ascribe to the EU? How important is the EU vis-à-vis the member states? How relevant is the EU to solving wide variety of policy challenges facing the states of the transatlantic area?

[1] Special thanks to Federico Romero for his comments on an early draft of this report.

The working paper represents an empirical investigation of the attitudes held towards the EU by four broad constituencies shaping US policy: the public, political and economic elites, civil society, and the media. The purpose is to answer those three questions with respect to each sub-group and to arrive at a general assessment of the American perception of the EU as a foreign policy actor. This assessment requires, however, a brief sketch of the role of the EU and its institutional antecedents have played in American foreign policy calculations and the importance of the EU to the real and financial sectors of the American economy, relatively and absolutely.

I. How Important is the EU for the United States? Evidence from the Real and Financial Sectors of the Economy

As the previous discussion amply demonstrates, the founding and evolution of what has become the EU had been a central component of the post-war American foreign policy strategy of containing the Soviet Union and effecting the reconciliation of Germany and France. The importance of the EU continues into the post-cold war American foreign policy strategy, not only owing to the ability of the EU to contribute to the American designed international economic order but also to the task of global governance in its military and geostrategic dimensions. The EU's major member states are unequivocally the most important military partners of the United States. In the X NATO-led or US-led military operations since the end of the cold war, the Europeans have only been second to the United States in troop contributions and in some cases the Europeans have led autonomous missions supporting the overall American foreign policy objective of regional stability, particularly in Africa where France has played an outsized role and in the Middle East where Britain is the only ally who has made a significant and sustained contribution to the aggregate war-fighting capabilities of the 'coalition of the willing'. No other states presently allied with the United States, with the exceptions of South Korea, Japan and Australia, can make the same kinds of contributions to American military missions and other states with a significant war-fighting capability, particularly China and Russia, are more likely to be perceived as potential adversaries than partners. The relative economic importance of the Atlantic economy has been downgraded owing to the rise of China as a manufacturing and trading power, albeit of low value added goods. Has Europe's economic importance actually declined over the post-cold war era? The short answer is 'no'.

Table 1 presents four critical indicators of economic interdependencies between the US and its major trading partners, regionally defined: relative shares of merchandise trade, trade in

services, and direct foreign investment. It is clear that in terms of exports, the EU ranks third after NAFTA and APEC (net of NAFTA); and that its share has declined between 1990 and 2006 by a significant amount (approximately 30%). But the three other measures tell a much different story: 45% of US service exports are taken by Europe and Europe's share has risen by approximately 40% over the same time-frame.

Table 1. ***Economic Interdependencies: Relative importance of the EU to the United States*** **(%)**

	1990	**1995**	**2000**	**2006**
Exports of goods				
NAFTA	28.33	29.56	36.92	35.14
EU	26.72	21.65	21.56	20.82
APEC (excluding Mexico and Canada)	29.84	33.51	27.89	27.37
Exports of services				
NAFTA	16.97*	13.04	13.69	18.69**
EU	31.46	31.46	33.18	45.01
Asia-Pacific	29.59	32.2	27.94	34.99
Exports of services (by US MNCs)				
Canada			12.78	9.58
Europe			51.70	53.97
Latin America			12.20	11.65
Japan			7.48	9.89
United States DFI				
NAFTA		14.35	13.05	13.89
Europe		49.30	52.22	52.45
Asia-Pacific		17.55	15.74	18.11
Imports of goods				
NAFTA	24.50	27.82	30.00	27.04
EU	20.26	18.11	18.73	17.90
APEC (excluding Mexico and Canada)	38.57	41.22	36.75	36.85
Imports of services				
NAFTA	15.25*	14.72	13.86	13.08**
EU	34.10	35.41	37.55	37.75
Asia-Pacific	24.91	26.45	24.95	24.33
Imports of services (by foreign MNCs)				
Canada			14.58	9.57***
Europe			67.8	68.07
Japan			8.33	6.80
DFI in United States				
NAFTA		8.87	9.68	9.13
EU		56.43	64.77	62.24
Asia-Pacific		22.83	15.33	14.52
Ownership of US Treasury Securities				
NAFTA	7.83	2.85	4.24	9.17
EU	35.26	32.84	31.56	46.20
Asia-Pacific	56.91	64.32	64.20	44.64

*1992 ; ** 2005; ***2004

Sources: Bureau of Economic Affairs (2008); US Department of the Treasury (2008)

Over 50% of services exported by US MNCs are concentrated in Europe as is the stock of US DFI. On this later measure, NAFTA and the Asia-Pacific only account for 14% and 18% of DFI, respectively. What is more remarkable, however, is that five countries account for a little less than 60% of US DFI: the UK (16%), Japan (15%), Canada (11%), and Mexico and Germany (7% each). On the import side, APEC retains its importance as America's most important regional trading partner. APEC supplies 64% of US merchandise imports, while Europe only supplies 18%. Moreover, the 10% decline in the European share between 1990 and 2006 has been offset by a similar rise in American imports from NAFTA. The EU share of service exports to the United States accounts for approximately 38% of imported services, and that figure represents a 9% increase between 1992 and 2004 (with a compensatory decline of services supplied by NAFTA). Finally, Europeans account for 62% of the DFI made in the United States, dwarfing the stake held in the American economy by the states of the Asia-Pacific.

US imports have shifted dramatically during the post-cold war period: imports from China only accounted for 3% of US imports in 1990, while in 2006 China supplied well over 15% of US imports---a growth of 400%, while imports from the EU fell from 20% in 1990 to approximately 18% in 2006. The rise in China's importance was offset by the decline in the importance of Japan: its import share fell from 18% in 1990 to 8% in 2006. Europe still remains the primary exporter of services to the US. Its share has grown slowly between 1992 and 2005 at 34% and 38%, respectively, while the Asia-Pacific share has hovered around the 25% mark for the same period. The UK and Japan are the primary suppliers at 13% and 8%, respectively. The UK and Japan are followed by Canada (9%), Germany (7%), and Mexico (5%). The foreign MNCs selling services to the United States come primarily from Europe and account for 68% of imported services, while Japan (7%) and Canada (10%) follow. Germany, the UK, and France are in double digits, with the UK as the most important (17%). Finally, DFI in the United States is predominately EU in origin: 62% of the stock of DFI is European and represents an increase of 14% over this time period. Only Japan and Canada have significant holdings in the US (12% and 9%, respectively). Lastly, the position of the major EU creditor states in 2006 exceeds that of the major creditor states of the Asia-Pacific. Two caveats are in order, however. First, although the aggregate holdings of the EU exceed those of the Asia-Pacific, the individual holdings of China and Japan dwarf that of any other

country; and second, the EU hovered around one-half the holdings of the Asia-Pacific states between 1990 and 2000.

The importance of the Asia-Pacific to the American economy in academic circles, popular press, and policy debates has been perhaps exaggerated and is no doubt a function of China's role as the primary supplier of inexpensive consumer goods to the United States and the payments imbalance between the American and Chinese economies; a pattern reminiscent of the relationship between Japan and the United States prior to the lost decade of no or negative economic growth conjoined to an increase in off-shore production of consumer goods in Asia and the United States. Yet, the importance of the EU (and its member-states) can not be overlooked in the trade of services and flows of capital. Europe's importance remains largely unchallenged by any other region or country, including NAFTA. This importance is particularly critical if the evolution of the US into a service economy is a harbinger of the future trajectory of the US economy.

The different geopolitical consequences of the EU member states' economic importance to the US as opposed to that of China may also account for the emphasis placed on China's rise as a manufacturing power. The likelihood that Chinese economic power can be translated into coercive military or economic power threatening US strategic objectives and prerogatives in the Pacific Basin are not matched by similar fears of European encroachments upon American economic dominance. European goods and capital pose no threat and are largely 'invisible'; the identity of European corporations is commercial (Mercedes-Benz or Jaguar or Armani) rather than national (German, British or Italian) in the same way that Chinese goods are undifferentiated and generically 'Chinese'. Finally, the economic importance of the EU is complemented by the military importance of the major EU states, particularly Britain, France, Germany and Italy as allies for managing global conflict, while China's economic power is viewed as a likely source of military power adversely affecting the interests of the United States and its Japanese ally alike. Nonetheless, the strategic alliance between the EU states and the United States, built up over historical time, ethnicity, religion and political philosophy in conjunction with the consolidation of the EU as an international actor and its undeniable importance as an economic and strategic partner would suggest that the attention paid to Europe by attentive elites and government would be commensurate with that importance. Yet, it is not.

II. Public Opinion

The relatively low level of attention paid to the EU as a discrete or important actor public opinion data reflects the underrepresentation of the EU in the press (see below). The most surprising aspect of the public opinion data is the absence of questions by the major foreign policy public opinion surveys of questions about the EU as an actor until the recent past, beginning in 2002. Prior to that time, the longest running foreign policy survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations did not ask any questions about the EC/EU as a foreign policy actor. The public opinion surveys conducted jointly with the German Marshall Fund and Pew Global Attitudes surveys incorporated the EU into their surveys beginning in 2002. The data demonstrates that the EU is perceived as a positive force in global affairs, but the precise role of the EU is poorly defined. The respondents have consistently held that the EU should exert global leadership (ranging 81% in 2002 to 73% in 2005) and that Europe and the US should remain as close or closer (77% in 2004 and 63% in 2006) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Public Opinion data, 2002-2007

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
German Marshall Fund					
*EU exert global leadership**					
very desirable	33	43	37	27	30
somewhat desirable	48	37	42	46	46
somewhat undesirable	11	11	8	7	10
very undesirable	6	8	7	7	4
*EU-US relations**					
Improved				17	12
Gotten worse				40	46
no change				38	37
*Should EU and US become**					
Closer			60	54	45
Remain as close			17	18	18
more independent approach			20	25	30
Should the**					
US remain the only superpower	52	42	40	36	
EU become a superpower	33	37	41	47	
Neither	7	5	8	8	
If EU could share costs, then a superpower?**					
Yes		41	49	45	

No	50	45	49
If EU would oppose US policies, then a superpower?**			
Yes	83	80	80
No		14	14
Would a more powerful EU compete or cooperate with US**			
Compete			41
cooperate			45
Both			7
Neither			1
The EU should increase its military strength**			
agree strongly			20
agree somewhat			35
Disagree somewhat			19
Disagree strongly			18
The EU should concentrate on economic issues**			
agree strongly			21
agree somewhat			40
Disagree somewhat			20
Disagree strongly			10
The EU countries should create a single European army**			
agree strongly			14
Disagree strongly			27
Disagree somewhat			23
Disagree strongly			28
EU should have own seat at UNSC**			
agree strongly			13
Disagree strongly			23
Disagree somewhat			21
Disagree strongly			34

Sources: *GMF 2006; **GMF 2005

Moreover, there is support for the EU to emerge as a superpower presumably on a par with the United States (rising from 33% in 2002 to 47% in 2005). For those believing that the US should remain the only superpower, 45% would allow that the EU become one if it shared the military burden of global governance, while 80% of those who believe that the EU should emerge as a superpower did not change their mind with the prospect of an EU opposing US policies. What is also clear, however, is that a clear majority of the respondents view the EU's role as an economic rather than military one *and* the respondents do not believe that the EU should have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Arguably, the view of the EU as a superpower is qualified even by those ostensibly in favour of that development. Indicative of that ambivalence is the responses

to a question about the EU's security role in a Pew Global Attitudes survey conducted in 2002: only 1% of the respondents viewed the EU as the appropriate actor for assuming global security responsibilities.[2] Moreover, the EU has not been viewed as the world's leading economic power as compared with the United States, China or Japan: only 7% identified the EU as holding that position, while China was identified as the world's leading economic power, followed by the US (33%) and Japan (13%) (Saad 2008). These public assessments of the EU as a foreign policy actor, however, must be tempered by a significant lack of knowledge about the EU; only 22% of respondents in a Gallup poll self-assessed themselves as having either a great deal (2%) or fair amount (19%) of knowledge about the EU, while 77% claimed to have very little knowledge (37%) or none at all (40%) (Gallup 2004).

III. Political and Economic Elites

The divided nature of American government in combination with the diffused power and influence wielded by specific government bureaux and attentive foreign policy and economic elites, makes any generalization about the perception of the EU by American political and economic elites problematic. Elite attitudes towards the EU and the perceptions of it are divided into six subcategories: the Republican and Democratic parties, the executive branch (Office of the President), the executive branch (functional ministries), the legislative branch (House of Representatives and Senate), the foreign policy community, and peak economic interest groups.

Political Parties. The fractured nature of the American political system makes any generalizations about the role of parties in the shaping of foreign policy highly dubious. While the party platforms crafted at national conventions on a quadrennial basis do not carry the same weight or binding power of party programmes found in Germany or the UK, parties nonetheless enumerate those foreign policy issues that are of importance to the party rank and file. The relative attentive given to individual countries, regions and international institutions within the foreign policy segment of party platforms for the Republic and Democratic parties between 1956 and 2004

[2] This attitude no doubt reflects a population accustomed to American power, a low level of knowledge or awareness of the EU's current role as a security actor, and the continuing pull of national identity in the United States that is projected externally.

demonstrates that the parties are generally parochial in their orientation and appear relatively indifferent to (or unaware of) the EU or any of its institutional antecedents.[3] The Republican Party was more internationalist during the Cold War period. It was preoccupied with the threat posed by the Soviet Union (26%), the role of NATO (16%), and the status of Europe (13%), the Middle East (6%), Asia (9%), China (6%) and Israel (11%). The Democratic Party was similarly preoccupied with the same set of countries and regions, but gave greater emphasis to Israel (18%), the Middle East (9%) Asia (11%), and Japan (8%), and paid less attention to the Soviet Union (18%) and NATO (9%). The European Economic Community and European Community were referred to infrequently: the Republicans made only 2 mentions over the entire Cold War period (0.46%) and the Democrats made 5 mentions (1.4%). The European Union fared much worse in the post-Cold War Democratic party platforms (no mentions), but did figure in those of the Republican Party (8 mentions or 1.6%). Although it is likely that Europe and the EU are functional substitutes, it is as clear that the EU lacks a sharply defined identity with political purchase for the party faithful.[4]

***Congress*.** Tables 3 and 4 contain the number of references made to the European Union in Senate and House documents, hearings and prints between 1990 and 2007. Table 3 represents a title search for the major regions, states, and international institutions. China was clearly the most important foreign policy actor by this measure with 36% of the total titles. China was followed by the Balkans and former Yugoslavia (16%), Europe (11%), NATO (8%). Japan, Russia and North Korea fell between 6% and 8%. The EU only accounted for 4% of the titles. Table 4 measures the number of mentions by subject. The first column identifies those cases where the EU was identified as the subject with an economic or security term in the text (198); the second column identifies those cases where an economic or security term is the subject and the EU is mentioned in the text (22,289). Somewhat unsurprisingly, the EU as a trading partner accounted for 71% of the total titles on economic issues. More surprising, however, is the importance of the EU as a security actor: 41% of those documents with the EU in the title were security related, while 60% were related to economic affairs. In the second column, trade retains its position as the number one connection between the EU and the United States, but it is closely followed by energy, security, and defense (measured by number of mentions). More important, however, is the reversal of the

[3] It is important to note that the attention given to foreign policy is dwarfed by parochial domestic concerns.

[4] A summary table of political party orientations towards major foreign policy actors between 1956 and 2004 is available from the author on request.

ranking assigned to security and economic issues with respect to the EU: security affairs account for 62% and economic affairs 38% of Congressional documents.

Table 3 demonstrates that the American Congress endows the EU with a low level of actorness relative to the other major states in the international system, the EU identity remains subordinate to the geographic expression 'Europe', and that the EU is marginally more important than the major EU member states. As important, however, is the overwhelming attention paid to Asia (particularly China) and the Pacific orientation of the Congress despite the continuing material importance of Europe (and the EU) to the United States. Table 4 also demonstrates that the EU is *the* address for the Congress when it comes to US trade policy; the EU is recognized as the locus of decision-making for the European member states. Although much of the attention lavished on the EU with respect to trade and energy policy is negative (the common agricultural policy and energy dependence on Russia, respectively), almost all of the attention paid to the EU as a security actor raises fears of a Europe that is likely to seek greater autonomy from the US or form a caucus within NATO itself.

Table 3. ***Senate and House hearings, regions, countries and EU in title, 1990-2007***

	Number	**Share**
EU	27	3.73%
Europe	82	11.33%
UK	11	1.52%
Germany	8	1.10%
Italy	2	0.28%
France	7	0.97%
Turkey	7	0.97%
*Balkans or Former Yugoslavia**	73	15.62%
NATO	44	6.08%
transatlantic	16	2.21%
China	263	36.33%
Japan	43	5.94%
North Korea	45	6.22%
Russia	55	7.60%
ASEAN	1	0.14%
Total	724	

*Serbia, Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia

Sources: US House of Representatives and US Senate websites

Table 4. ***Senate and House documents, hearings, and prints by subject, 1990-2007***

	EU as subject, term in text		Term as subject, EU in text	
	Number	share	Number	Share
Economic				
Trade	83	70.95%	3,089	36.31%
Monetary union	3	2.56	0	0
Oil	4	3.42	272	3.20
Energy	6	5.13	3000	35.26
Natural gas	0	0	543	6.38
Finance	18	15.38	1368	16.08
Globalization	1	0.86	0	0
Airbus/aerospace	2	1.71	236	2.77
Security				
Security	25	30.86	3000	21.77
Defense	8	9.88	3000	21.77
NATO	9	11.11	289	2.097
Terrorism	11	13.58	2108	15.30
War	7	8.64	1603	11.63
Proliferation	2	2.47	56	0.41
Nuclear	2	2.47	1342	9.74
Foreign policy	5	6.17		
Migration	1	1.23	1193	8.66
Human rights	11	13.58	1190	8.64
Economic, aggregate	117	59.10%	8508	38.17%
Security, aggregate	81	40.90%	13781	61.83%

Sources: US House of Representatives and US Senate websites

Executive Branch: The Office of the President. The role of the President of the United States in the formulation and execution of policy is vastly more important than that of the Congress. Tables 5 and 6 identify the relative importance of the same set of foreign policy concerns and actors found in tables 3 and 4. Table 5 draws on the public papers of the Presidents (with the exclusion of press releases) from 1990 to 2005. In this case, I compare the importance of the EU as a security and economic actor as well as the relative importance of the EU as an actor in those two clusters of issue areas; and compare the importance of Europe (including the EU) relative to the Asia-Pacific and Middle East. On the first measure, EU is more important as a security actor than an economic actor (62.6% v. 37.4%), but the EU is only relevant 7% of the time in economic issues and 5% of the time in security issues overall. Moreover, although Europe retains its place as the most important region of the world for the United States (49%) as compared to the Asia-Pacific (18%) and Middle East (22%), the EU is only mentioned 2% of the time far below the attention given to NATO (20%), Russia (9%) or any of the major European states. The EU, despite its persistent

economic importance for the United States, also ranks below Japan, China, North Korea as well as Iran, Iraq and Israel.

Table 5. ***Public Papers of the President, the EU & issue area and region, country or organization, 1990-2005***

Issue Area	EU and issue	Total issue area	Share	Region, state, institution	Total	share
Economic				**Europe**	13538	49.03%
Trade	445	4145	10.74%	*NATO*	5,209	18.87%
Monetary	48	368	13.04%	*Atlantic Alliance*	100	0.36%
Finance	87	1382	6.30%	*Atlantic Community*	254	0.92%
Agriculture	61	1038	5.88%	*EC*	171	0.62%
Euro/EMU	16	16	100.00%	*EU*	350	1.27%
Energy	123	2757	4.46%	*Europe*	2764	10.01%
Oil	104	1606	6.48%	*Germany*	827	3.00%
natural gas	7	240	2.92%	*France*	595	2.16%
Globalization	22	151	14.57%	*UK*	764	2.77%
Deregulation	4	69	5.80%	*Russia/Soviet Union*	2504	9.07%
Airbus	22	22	100.00%			
Subsidies	37	248	14.92%	**Asia-Pacific**	5041	18.26%
Dollar	73	2167	3.37%	*Asia*	1635	5.92%
				Pacific Basin	26	0.09%
Total	1049	14209	7.38%	*Japan*	1435	5.20%
				North Korea	711	2.58%
Security				*ASEAN*	54	0.20%
Security	373	7041	5.30%	*APEC*	147	0.53%
Defense	154	3620	4.25%	*China*	1033	3.74%
NATO	281	5209	5.39%			
Terrorism	144	1980	7.27%	**Middle East**	6157	22.30%
War	436	12029	3.62%	*Middle East*	2314	8.38%
Nonproliferation	38	288	13.19%	*Israel*	1176	4.26%
Nuclear	214	2016	10.62%	*Iran*	624	2.26%
Foreign policy	116	1452	7.99%	*Iraq*	2043	7.40%
Total	1756	33635	5.22%	**terrorism/war on terror**	2874	10.41%
				Total	27,610	

Source: Woolley and Peters 2007

A more focused statement of American foreign policy objectives may be found in the National Security Strategies issued by the White House on an irregular basis (see Table 6). In the post-Cold War period, there have been six national security strategies issued by Presidents Bush (1991), Clinton (1996, 1997, 1999), and Bush (2002, 2006). Two things emerge immediately: the relative importance of Europe in the administration foreign policy calculations has steadily declined

(from 66% in 1991 to 18% in 2006), while the preoccupation with Asia and the Middle East have correspondingly risen (from 20% in 1991 to 36% in 2006 and from 12% in 1991 to 28% in 2006, respectively).

Table 6. ***National Security Strategies, 1991-2006***

	1991	**1996**	**1997**	**1999**	**2002**	**2006**	**1991-2006**
NATO	13.24%	18.21%	10.58%	12.74%	11.20%	5.37%	12.50%
Atlantic Community	2.45%	0.30%	4.01%	0.28%	1.60%		1.33%
European Community	1.47%						0.20%
European Union		2.69%	4.74%	2.77%	1.60%		2.26%
Europe	27.94%	10.75%	11.68%	11.91%	8.80%	4.39%	12.50%
Germany	2.94%	0.90%					0.60%
France	0.49%	0.90%					0.27%
UK	0.49%	0.60%					0.20%
Soviet Union Russia	16.67%	11.34%	8.39%	9.70%	12.00%	7.80%	10.70%
aggregate share	65.69%	45.67%	39.42%	37.40%	35.20%	17.56%	40.56%
Asia	3.92%	1.79%	5.47%	11.36%	7.20%	11.71%	6.85%
Asia-Pacific	5.88%	6.27%	10.95%	3.32%	2.40%	0.98%	5.32%
Japan	4.90%	3.88%	4.38%	7.48%	4.00%	2.44%	4.79%
North Korea	0.98%	5.37%	2.19%	3.60%	0.80%	3.90%	3.19%
ASEAN		0.90%	2.92%	3.32%	0.80%	1.46%	1.80%
APEC	0.49%	4.18%	3.65%	1.66%	0.80%	1.46%	2.33%
China	3.43%	7.16%	8.39%	9.14%	14.40%	13.66%	8.84%
aggregate share	19.61%	29.55%	37.96%	39.89%	30.40%	35.61%	33.11%
Middle East	2.94%	3.58%	5.11%	4.16%	0.80%	5.37%	3.92%
Israel	2.45%	3.28%	3.65%	2.22%	3.20%	2.93%	2.93%
Iran	0.98%	3.28%	3.28%	3.60%	0.80%	5.37%	3.13%
Iraq	5.88%	4.78%	1.09%	4.16%	0.80%	14.63%	5.12%
aggregate share	12.25%	14.93%	13.14%	14.13%	5.60%	28.29%	15.09%
war on terror					4.00%	4.39%	0.93%
terrorism	2.45%	9.85%	9.49%	8.59%	24.80%	14.15%	10.31%
aggregate share	2.45%	9.85%	9.49%	8.59%	28.8%	18.54%	11.24%

Source: White House 1991, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002, and 2006

The European Community/Union only accounted for 2.5% of the major foreign policy actors or regions identified and the EU was not mentioned at all in the 2006 Security Strategy. There has been a Pacific reorientation in the American foreign policy calculations independent of the War on Terrorism and the centrality of the Middle East to it. China has gone from being a peripheral concern of the United States (3.4% of the mentions in 1991) one of the most important foreign policy concerns in 2006, only eclipsed in importance by Iraq and terrorism.

One thing is clear from the post-Cold War national security strategies: the EU is not accorded a great deal of actorness; in 2006 the Bush Administration did not refer to it at all. 'Europe' rather than the EU remains the policy reference point for the Office of the President; and the importance of the EU (and Europe more generally) has waned since 1990 while the focus of attention has sifted to the Asia Pacific and terrorism originating in the Middle East.

Executive Branch: Departments and Agencies. The Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government represent vastly different constituencies which, in turn, are differentially affected by developments in Europe and the European Union. Table 7 examines the relative role and importance ascribed to the EU by those Federal actors most likely to have a foreign policy mandate: the Departments of the Treasury, State, Commerce (International Trade Administration and Bureau of Industry and Security), Agriculture and Defense, and three federal agencies with explicit external responsibilities, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.[5] Interestingly, the departments most preoccupied with the EU---or at least recognize the EU as an important factor in calculating the interests of the United States---are the Departments of Agriculture, State and Treasury, while the Commerce Department, Department of Defense, CDC, EPA, and Federal Reserve are either focused on the member states or on regions other than Europe. Only the Office of the Special Tread Representative privileges the EU over its member states, while Agriculture, Treasury, and State accord equal attention to the EU and the member states. The

Federal Reserve, Department of Defense, and CDC retain a largely state-centric orientation inside and outside Europe. If we allow currencies to function as proxies for the EU or major trading states, the picture changes somewhat: the Treasury department is far more concerned with the euro than the other major currencies, while the Federal Reserve is equally concerned with the euro, yen, and pound sterling (see Table 7a).

Table 7. ***Department and Agency Perceptions of the European Union, 1990-2007***

	Treasury	**State**	**STR**	**ITA ***	**BIS****	**Agriculture**	**DOD*****	**CDC**	**EPA**	**Federal Reserve**
EU	8.49%	7.52%	12.40%	3.79%	4.83%	8.90%	2.20%	2.88%	2.54%	0.45%
UK	5.85%	9.83%	1.91%	5.77%	7.72%	0.63%	8.32%	7.73%	4.14%	14.35%
France	7.67%	6.35%	2.58%	6.13%	6.77%	7.44%	4.94%	8.69%	6.81%	9.75%
Germany	8.56%	6.37%	3.53%	6.76%	8.08%	6.95%	14.65%	7.67%	7.36%	7.66%
Italy	5.48%	6.37%	1.92%	5.58%	5.17%	6.39%	6.51%	7.48%	3.16%	3.87%
China	11.11%	9.80%	7.60%	17.33 %	17.14%	12.05%	7.64%	8.38%	5.75%	7.80%
Japan	12.25%	7.23%	7.46%	9.49%	11.09%	9.16%	11.05%	8.25%	8.11%	13.11%
S.Korea	1.59%	4.82%	0.97%	2.21%	0.29%	5.21%	4.03%	1.75%	0.45%	4.51%
Russia	8.24%	7.44%	2.86%	5.25%	8.50%	6.58%	8.08%	4.66%	1.85%	0.86%
Mexico	11.56%	7.28%	7.14%	16.34 %	5.85%	11.87%	3.92%	22.44%	30.27%	10.39%
Canada	9.64%	6.57%	8.14%	9.90%	10.82%	13.77%	4.55%	11.84%	24.79%	19.55%
India	5.03%	8.34%	6.27%	8.19%	13.70%	8.18%	3.02%	8.25%	3.02%	6.56%
NAFTA	1.74%	1.91%	35.48%	2.64%	0.03%	2.60%			1.73%	0.07%
ASEAN	0.73%	2.68%	1.73%	0.62%	0.02%	0.29%			0.01%	0.04%
NATO		7.11%					20.85%			
ESDP		0.20%					0.09%			
ESDI		0.09%					0.15%			
ECB	2.07%	0.09%								0.54%

* International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce
** Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce
*** 1994-2007
Sources: US Department of the Treasury (www.ustreas.gov/); US Department of State (www.state.gov/); Office of the US Trade Representative (www.ustr.gov/); International Trade Administration, US Department of Commerce (www.trade.gov/); Bureau of Industry and Security, US Department of Commerce (www.bis.doc.gov/); US Department of Agriculture (http://www.usda.gov); US Department of Defense (www.defenselink.mil/); US Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/); US Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov/); Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (www.federalreserve.gov/)

Table 7a. ***Relative Importance of Trading Currencies***

[5] The search covered a broad variety of public documents listed on each departmental or agency website. These include, *inter alia*, research reports, press releases, congressional testimony, and policy directives .

	Department of Treasury	Federal Reserve
Yen	38.10%	27.05%
Euro	43.35%	33.44%
Pound	12.30%	23.24%
Yuan/renmimbi	6.25%	16.27%

Source: US Department of the Treasury and Federal Reserve

As compared to the rest of the world, however, the picture is mixed: China and Japan exceed the EU in importance for four departments (State, Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture); Canada or Mexico exceed the EU in importance for three departments (Treasury, Commerce, and Agriculture) and two agencies (CDC, EPA, and Federal Reserve).

Summary. What conclusions can we draw about the perception of the EU as a foreign policy actor by the major American political parties, the President and Congress? Political parties do not recognize the EU as an actor and are generally fixated upon the major security threat posed to the United States, at best, and tend to focus on parochial domestic affairs. The same can not be said of the Office of the President or the Congress. The Senate and House endow the EU with a high level of 'actorness' vis-à-vis the member states; it is also treated as an important actor globally: in issue-specific hearings, the EU emerges as a key actor in three economic domains (trade and finance), while it does the same in four security domains (security, defense, terrorism and war). The House and Senate hearings view the EU primarily as an economic actor (almost 60% of the EU-titled hearings are on economic issues), although its profile as a security actor is not insignificant. The Public Papers of the President do underscore the continuing importance of Europe to the United States, but at the same demonstrate that the EU is not yet recognized, at least rhetorically, as an important actor as compared to those states that can be considered historically important to US interests or to NATO. Moreover, the EU is not treated as a particularly critical actor in any domain of economic or security affairs, despite its responsibility for economic affairs in conjunction with the economic and financial importance of the EU to the United States. The Presidential *National Security Strategies* do provide a greater awareness of the EU as an actor, particularly as compared to the member-states, but still falls far short of the importance attributed to NATO, the Russian Federation, or the major states of the Asia-Pacific. The degree of actorness, relative importance to

the member states, and global importance attributed to the EU reflects the institutional competencies of the EU and the relative weight played by Europe for the Departments and Agencies of the executive branch. Perhaps the most important result from the analysis of the executive branch is the relative importance of the EU vis-à-vis its member states and the major states in the international system is that only the Defense Department, the CDC and the Federal Reserve do not treat the EU as a major or particularly relevant actor, a not too surprising result given the continuing locus of national responsibility for defense and epidemiological surveillance as well as the transfer of monetary sovereignty to the European Central Bank rather than the EU.

Attentive Security Elites.[6] Table 8 presents data on elite perceptions of the European Union's (EU) importance in addressing the security threats currently facing the United States.[7] On a 0-5 scale, where 0 = not important at all and 5 = absolutely essential, they collectively judged the EU to be of relatively high importance, with the mean responses ranging from a low of 3.23 (conventional war) to a high of 3.85 (man-made environmental threat). The EU was seen as an important partner for the United States in meeting ten threats (the mean was over 3.5); in only three instances was the EU viewed as of moderate importance (conventional war, nuclear and radiological attacks, and cyber-attacks). Although each category of threat drew a wide range of responses on the 0-5 scale, the standard deviations were not large, suggesting there is an elite consensus that EU involvement is of great importance, although it is not an essential partner in the vast majority of cases. It is considered an essential partner in the cases of man-made environmental threats, macroeconomic stability, and the criminalization of the economy. The relatively higher scores attributed to the EU in these three categories no doubt reflects the importance of the Euro in the international monetary and financial system, the EU states as an important partners for overcoming

[6] This section is drawn from Sperling and Tossutti (2007).

[7] A total of 113 individuals responded to the electronic survey. The distribution between the three categories of respondents was 18 from think tanks, 32 from academia, and 63 from the Foreign Policy Associaiton and Stennis Fellows.

the threat posed by climate change, and the growing transnational network of European and North American criminal organisations.

Academics assessed the role of the EU most sceptically. In five categories of threat (biological or chemical attack, cyber-attack, macroeconomic instability, and both categories of terrorism), a statistically significant difference emerged within the three occupation groups; in each case, academics took the most sceptical view of the EU as a viable partner for the United States. Moreover, academics consistently assigned the lowest scores to the EU as compared to the other two categories of respondent. This assessment would no doubt come as a surprise to academic specialists who have carefully tracked the emergence of the EU as a security actor across a wide spectrum of policy issues. Given the academic scepticism of the EU, it is puzzling that those with diplomatic or political experience (the FPA members or Stennis Fellows[8]) or those engaged in government supported or policy relevant research (those in think tanks) assign a higher value to the EU as a security partner. These results (while remaining fully aware of the sample's limitations) suggest that academic elites may want to reconsider their opinion of the EU as a strategic actor.

Table 8. ***Mean Importance of the European Union***

	Think Tank	**Academics**	**FPA, Stennis**	**Overall**
*Biological/chemical attack**	3.58 (1.38)	2.91 (1.19)	3.90 (1.26)	3.55 (1.31)
Conventional war	3.25 (1.42)	2.86 (1.52)	3.43 (1.43)	3.23 (1.46)
Criminalisation of economy	3.33 (1.30)	3.27 (1.20)	3.95 (1.23)	3.64 (1.26)
*Cyber attack**	3.58 (1.17)	2.86 (1.21)	3.65 (1.01)	3.41 (1.17)
Ethnic conflict	3.58 (1.38)	3.50 (.96)	3.50 (1.40)	3.51 (1.27)
*Macroeconomic instability**	3.75 (1.29)	3.23 (1.41)	4.06 (1.03)	3.75 (1.23)
Manmade environmental	4.00 (1.05)	3.33 (1.46)	4.08 (1.00)	3.85 (1.19)
Migratory pressures	3.50 (1.31)	3.50 (1.37)	3.80 (1.18)	3.66 (1.25)
Narcotics trafficking	3.58 (1.08)	2.45 (.96)	3.55 (1.26)	3.53 (1.14)
Natural disaster/pandemics	3.33 (1.30)	3.18 (1.22)	3.73 (1.15)	3.50 (1.21)
Nuclear/radiological attacks	3.50 (1.51)	2.95 (1.33)	3.78 (1.31)	3.49 (1.38)

[8] Stennis Fellows are senior-level staff of the United States Congress, including chiefs of staff, committee staff directors, and legislative directors.

*Terrorism: critical infrastructure***	3.42 (1.44)	3.09 (1.07)	4.03 (1.10)	3.65 (1.21)
*Terrorism: state or society***	3.42 (1.44)	2.91 (1.07)	3.97 (1.21)	3.55 (1.29)
Base n (can vary by question)	12	21-22	37-40	71-74

Standard deviations in parentheses; F-scores significant at **p < .01; *p < .05.

Source: Sperling and Tossutti (2007: 32)

The assessed utility of the EU as a security actor can also be inferred from the results of the questions posed about the relationship between the EU security and defence policy (ESDP), NATO, and the strength of American commitment to European security. Three questions were posed: Would a more autonomous ESDP weaken NATO? Would a weaker NATO lead to a retrenchment of the US commitment to European security? How important is the American commitment to European security? The answers to these questions, paradoxically, demonstrate the growing importance of the EU as a security actor and the incompatibility between American leadership and European autonomy.

A near majority (45.9%) claimed that a more autonomous ESDP would weaken NATO some or very much. Just under than 29% were undecided, while almost 26% did not believe it would have much affect at all on NATO (see Table 9). A simple majority of think tank and FPA/Stennis respondents believed that a stronger ESDP would affect NATO negatively, while academics were much more sanguine about its impact on NATO. Academics and the FPA members/Stennis fellows were similarly unsure about the outcome (approximately one-third), but the latter group of respondents were also quite certain that the consequence would not be negligible.

The geopolitical consequences of a stronger ESDP on the American security commitment exhibited a greater degree of uncertainty: slightly over 40% of the respondents answered 'maybe' to the question, while only 23% believed that a stronger ESDP would lead to the retrenchment of the US commitment to European security (see Table 9). One difficulty in drawing any firm conclusion about the consequences of a stronger ESDP on the American commitment is the prior understanding of that commitment held by each respondent: if the American commitment is considered a function of the American national interest rather than a mixture of interest and

community, then the ESDP is unlikely to have a marked effect on American intentions; if the respondent were an ideological Atlanticist, there would be a similar lack of concern. Either rationale could explain why 28% of the respondents see no change in the intensity of the American commitment. It would also suggest that those operating within think tanks, particularly, are more likely to see the US commitment as a bargain between Europe and America: American protection in exchange for American leadership and European followership. An autonomous ESDP would represent a renegotiation of that bargain which in turn would lead to a lower American commitment---a position held by half of that occupation group.

The perceived durability of the American commitment to Europe despite the evolution of the ESDP can also be explained by the importance ascribed to the American commitment to European security. A clear majority (85%) hold that the American security commitment to Europe is important, and 55% believe that that commitment is either essential or very important. Only 15% believe that the American commitment is inessential or not very important. What is remarkable, however, is the implication of these results for the expected future relationship between the EU and the US: the strong belief that the American commitment to Europe is essential is tied to the equally strong belief that a more autonomous ESDP will weaken NATO; and that weakening of NATO, in turn, will reduce the security of the transatlantic area (see Table 9).[9] These findings provide some basis for drawing the following conclusion: this position on the complex relationship between the US, NATO and Europe is similar to that found in the Congress and successive American administrations: a stronger Europe is only in the American (and European) interest so long as Europe remains the political and diplomatic subordinate of the United States.

Table 9. Perceptions of ESDP and US Commitment to European Security (%)

	Think Tank	Academic	FPA, Stennis	Total
More autonomous ESDP weaken NATO*?*				
Little/ not at all	33.3	36.4	17.5	25.7
Some/very much	50	31.8	52.5	45.9
Don't know	16.7	31.8	30	28.4

Weaker NATO lead to retrenchment of US commitment to European security?				
Yes	50.0	22.7	15	23.0
Maybe	41.7	27.3	47.5	40.5
No	8.3	36.4	30.0	28.4
Don't know	0 .0	13.6	7.5	8.1

Source: Sperling and Tossutti (2007: 33)

A title and content search of the publications from major think tanks and foreign policy associations provided a second method for inferring the relative importance of the EU as an actor. A content search of publications between 1990 and 2007 was done for four major research institutions that play a significant role in shaping US foreign policy: the Council of Foreign Relations, American Enterprise Institute, Brookings Institution, and CSIS (see Table 10). Taken together, the publications of these four research institutes favour studies on Eurasia to those on Europe by a ratio of approximately 2:3. Although the EU/Europe/NATO only accounts for 40% of the total publications of these institutes, it is also the case that the attention paid to Europe ranges varies widely between them: 60% of publications for the AEI and 30% for the CSIS. What is of more importance in the context of this analysis, however, is the relatively low level of attention paid to the European Union: it ranks slightly higher than Russia and Japan and significantly lower than China. The lack of attention paid to the EU becomes more manifest when the publications of the AEI are excluded: China accounts for 28% of the publications, while the EU only accounts for 9% of publications, a figure just about that of North Korea (6%) and below Japan (13%) and Russia (15%). One firm conclusion can be drawn: Europe is a less important arena for American foreign policy than is Eurasia *and* the EU does not have a sharply defined identity as a foreign policy actor.

Table 10. Think Tank content search, 1990-2007 [Source: Institute websites] *2000-2007

	Council on Foreign Relations		**AEI**		**Brookings Institution**		**CSIS***		**consolidated**	
	total	*Share*	*Total*	*share*	*Total*	*share*	*total*	*share*	*Total*	*share*
European Union	2620	8.43%	3541	29.47%	1426	10.51%	95	5.94%	7682	13.25%
Europe	5280	16.98%	3087	25.70%	3520	25.08%	309	19.31%	12196	21.03%

NATO	2600	8.36%	10	4.34%	659	4.86%	68	4.25%	3337	5.76%
Transatlantic alliance or community	537	1.73%	1482						2019	3.48%
Subtotal		*35.50%*		*59.51%*		*40.45%*		*29.50%*		*43.52%*
Pacific Basin	34	0.11%								Negligible
China	9460	30.42%	1580	13.15%	3270	24.11%	298	18.63%	14608	25.19%
Japan	3830	12.32%	1416	11.79%	1880	13.86%	215	13.44%	7341	12.66%
North Korea	1800	5.79%	571	4.75%	830	6.12%	125	7.81%	3326	5.74%
Russia	4790	15.40%	31	10.45%	1840	13.57%	452	28.25%	7113	12.27%
ASEAN	143	0.46%	42	0.35%	136		38		359	0.62%
Subtotal		*64.50%*		*40.49%*		*59.55%*		*70.50&*		*56.48%*
Total	31094		13017		13561		1600		59272	

A title search of publications was also conducted for the Brookings Institution, the RAND Corporation, and Institute for International Economics (Table 11). The title search for these institutes, particularly the RAND Corporation and the Brookings Institution, indicates a far greater awareness of the EU as a foreign policy actor: its share of publications ranges from 16% (Brookings Institution) to almost a third for RAND and the IIE. Remarkably, the EU emerges in the titles of more publications than any other state or region in the search list. The importance of the EU that can be reasonably inferred from the title search creates a paradox of sorts: how do we explain its low level of salience in a content search? I suspect that it discrepancy arises from the use of Europe as a proxy for the European Union in abstracts and descriptions. If that hypothesis is accepted, then the EU/Europe appears in 35% of total publications, a figure more easily reconciled with the title search. But that aggregated figure must nonetheless be treated with caution since there is no guarantee that Europe is indeed a proxy for the EU.

Table 11. Think Tanks, title search, 1990-2007 [Source: Institute websites]

	Brookings Institution		**RAND Corporation**		**IIE**		**Consolidated**	
	number	*share*	*number*	*share*	*number*	*Share*	*number*	*share*
EU	38	8.35%	8	0.95%	13	34.21%	59	4.41%
European Union	34	7.47%	266	31.52%			300	22.44%
Europe	114	25.05%		0.00%			114	8.53%
NATO	58	12.75%	154	18.25%			212	15.86%
Subtotal		*53.62%*		*50.72%*				*51.24%*
China	64	14.07%	232	27.49%	7	18.42%	303	22.66%
Japan	24	5.27%	59	6.99%	10	26.32%	93	6.96%
North Korea	28	6.15%	35	4.15%			63	4.71%
ASEAN		0.00%	7	0.83%	1	2.63%	8	0.60%
Russia	42	9.23%	67	7.94%			109	8.15%
Iran	53	11.65%	16	1.90%			69	5.16%

Subtotal		*46.37%*		*49.30%*				*48.24%*
NAFTA					7	18.42%	7	0.52%
Total	455		844		38		1337	

Summary. What can we conclude from the elite survey and survey of research institute publications about the importance of the EU? The title and content search of the six think tanks/research institutes indicates that the EU is endowed with a relatively high level of actorness and global relevance. The title search, which indicates that more volumes are devoted to the EU than China, Japan or NATO, suggests that the EU enjoys a high degree of actorness. The content supports a similar conclusion, although not as strongly: the EU has a higher score than NATO in each organisation's publications; the EU scores highest in the AEI publication list (the focus of which is economics), but scores lower than China, Japan, or Russia for the Council of Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, and CSIS. The elite survey suggests that the relevance of the EU as a security actor or partner for the United States in addressing key security threats is not uniform: it ranges from being very important for two issues where the US is perceived to be laggard rather than leader, macroeconomic stability and the mitigation of environmental threats, to being relatively unimportant actor for addressing the threats posed by cyberwarfare or cybervandalism, conventional war, or a nuclear (or radiological) attack. The EU is treated as a viable and important partner for the United States in addressing the remaining security threats identified in the survey. However, it is not clear how that importance should be interpreted. A number of threats, particularly ethnic conflict and migratory pressures would seem to be parallel rather than common threats insofar as ethnic conflict and migratory pressures are regionally localized, while the logic of transnational cooperation is more transparent to the task of mitigating the threats posed by biological and chemical attacks, narcotics trafficking, and pandemics.

Economic elites. Any generalization of the perceptions of the EU held by American capital is likely to be contestable and difficult to assess owing to wide variations in the specific interests of firms operating in the real and financial sectors of the economy. American labor, despite the

presence of the AFL-CIO as a peak organization, lacks the political clout exercised by other trade union organizations in Europe in the political process. Table 12 presents the relative weight of the EU in the external calculations of American business and labor policy studies, congressional testimony, and press releases.

Table 12. Interest Group recognition of the European Union															
	EU		**UK**	**France**	**FRG**	**Italy**		**China**	**Japan**	**Russia**	**Mexico**	**Canada**	**India**		**NAFTA**	**ASEAN**
Agriculture:																
NAEGA	11.41%		1.63%	1.09%	1.63%	1.63%		16.85%	20.11%	0.54%	20.65%	16.85%	4.89%		2.17%	0.54%
NCBA	1.75%		10.30%	10.16%	10.17%	10.14%		10.72%	11.70%	1.28%	11.60%	11.82%	10.18%		0.16%	0.02%
IDFA	23.68%		6.23%	5.48%	4.04%	4.86%		6.57%	5.89%	2.67%	15.47%	18.07%	2.94%		4.11%	0.00%
NCC	6.27%		4.32%	1.72%	7.81%	3.08%		17.75%	12.66%	2.01%	17.75%	5.38%	17.04%		3.85%	0.36%
Industry:																
AIA	17.38%		11.02%	11.64%	7.78%	5.14%		13.10%	8.14%	5.94%	6.00%	17.58%	7.78%		0.37%	0.12%
Pharma	7.21%		5.41%	4.50%	4.50%	2.70%		13.51%	12.61%	5.41%	5.41%	17.12%	18.92%		0.90%	1.80%
NAM	16.96%		7.78%	7.23%	7.04%	3.80%		15.01%	7.41%	3.15%	8.80%	7.60%	7.78%		6.02%	1.39%
BR	39.23%		1.23%	1.58%	1.93%	0.70%		20.49%	7.88%	1.05%	8.76%	5.43%	8.41%		2.98%	0.35%
ACC	9.58%		5.99%	4.49%	6.29%	2.40%		14.97%	7.78%	3.89%	17.66%	11.68%	11.68%		3.29%	0.30%
USCC	13.14%		0.53%	4.01%	4.73%	2.17%		13.14%	12.55%	5.12%	13.14%	12.16%	13.14%		4.80%	1.38%
USCIB	29.37%		2.33%	7.36%	5.10%	3.94%		16.98%	13.78%	6.63%	7.51%	9.99%	8.75%		4.30%	0.44%
Services:																
SIFMA	43.30%		7.45%	6.19%	4.70%	4.70%		8.71%	6.76%	1.49%	3.78%	8.71%	3.89%		0.23%	0.11%
AMA	5.15%		18.88%	7.85%	8.45%	3.23%		15.97%	8.12%	2.38%	8.32%	13.07%	7.85%		0.59%	0.13%
AbankA	3.05%		9.14%	7.61%	7.11%	6.09%		12.18%	9.64%	6.09%	18.27%	13.71%	6.60%		0.51%	0.00%
ABA	15.90%		11.44%	7.60%	7.54%	5.97%		8.30%	7.38%	5.64%	10.91%	9.82%	5.97%		3.14%	0.37%
Labour:																
AFL-CIO	1.16%		2.01%	1.35%	1.03%	0.57%		13.84%	2.45%	0.65%	57.75%	6.68%	3.62%		6.93%	0.01%
UAW	1.93%		1.64%	2.21%	4.49%	0.71%		20.33%	7.13%	0.36%	20.61%	22.33%	2.43%		15.83%	
IMU	4.03%		2.98%	2.85%	2.94%	2.02%		26.31%	3.07%	1.82%	10.24%	32.33%	3.87%		3.65%	3.87%
Media:																
MPA	0.18%		7.89%	8.85%	8.72%	8.17%		10.64%	8.85%	8.58%	9.36%	19.79%	8.97%			
MPAA	1.13%		3.76%	2.26%	4.14%	1.88%		14.85%	5.26%	4.70%	11.28%	46.99%	3.76%			
NAB	3.20%		15.60%	5.20%	4.40%	10.00%		6.80%	16.00%	3.60%	12.80%	20.80%	1.60%			
NAA	4.35%		36.65%	8.70%	14.91%	3.73%		18.01%	13.66%							

Labour is represented by the AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW). The real and financial sectors of the economy are represented by: four agricultural interest groups (International Dairy Farmers Association (IDFA), North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA), National Cattlemen and Beef Association (NCBA), and the National Cotton Council (NCC)); three industry peak organizations (Business Roundtable (BR), the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC), and the United States Chamber of International Business (USCIB) and three industry groups (Aerospace Industry Association (AIA), American Chemicals Council (ACA) and Pharma); four services industries (Securities Industry Association/Securities Industry and Financial Management Association (SIA/SIFMA), the American Marketing Association (AMA), the American Banking Association (AbA), and the American Bar Association (ABA); and three media groups (Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), Motion Pictures Association of America (MPAA), and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)).

The content analysis of the policy studies, congressional testimony and press releases for these various interest groups produces four important findings. First, as compared to member states, the EU is the single most important actor for all of the industrial interest groups, two of the agricultural interest groups (NAEGA and IDFA), two services groups (SIA/SIFMA and the American Bar Association), and one labour group (IAMAW); and second, a member state is the most important actor, relative to the EU, for two interest groups representing agricultural (NAEGA and NCC), services (AMA and AbA), and labor (UAW and IMU), and all three media groups. Third, Mexico and Canada are jointly the most important states for three groups representing agriculture (NCBA, IDFA, NCC), services (SIA/SIMFA, Aba, ABA), labor (AFL-CIO, UAW, IMU), and media (MPA, MPAA, NAB), and two industry groups (AIA and ACC). Finally, China is the preoccupation of only four interest groups (NAM, BR, USCIB and AMA), Japan only one interest group (NAEGA), and India the favorite of Pharma. Europe and North America are, despite the popular and press preoccupation with China, remain the focus of American economic elites.

The importance that these interest groups attach to the EU as an economic actor varies from sector to sector of the economy. The AIA and SIA/SIFMA represent two sectors of the American economy directly affected by the regulatory policies of the EU as well as competition in third markets. The preoccupation of the AIA vis-à-vis the EU concerns the launch aid and export subsidies for Airbus commercial aircraft which have disadvantaged American commercial aircraft manufacturers, particularly Boeing. These concerns with subsidies are conjoined with complaints about noncompetitive bidding practices that favour European aerospace manufacturers at the expense of American corporations, a restrictive regulatory environment, and the extra-territorial application of EU law to prevent the consolidation of the American aerospace industry (Commission on the Future of the United States Aerospace Industry 2002: 6-16 - 6-20). The AIA also points to the EU *Vision 2020* as a model of government-industry cooperation that should be adopted by in the United States, particularly given the EU objective of pushing European aerospace manufacturing to the 'forefront of the global market' at the expense of American dominance (Douglas 2001 and 2005). A final concern of the AIA reflects the loss of the American monopoly in the manufacture and sale of civilian commercial aircraft: EU policies have created an environment where the world will conform to an EU rather than American manufacturing and safety standard that will impose costs and lend an additional competitive advantage to European aerospace firms (AIA 2005).

Unlike the AIA, the SIA/SIFMA does not view the EU as a regulatory burden on the financial services industry or European firms as competitors driving American firms into the ground via subsidies or regulatory barriers to trade. SIFMA's interest in an integrated capital market reflects the composition of its membership (over 600 firms with 800,000 employees) and the size of the market (domestic revenue of $236 bn and global revenue of $340 bn, much of which is earned in the EU). SIA/SIFMA has adopted the global perspective that the best outcome for Europe and the United States is an integrated transatlantic capital market that will benefit Europe and America equally; SIA/SIFMA is interested in assuring that common standards are adopted to facilitate the trade in financial services (particularly accounting standards), that the extra-territorial application of

law (e.g., Sarbanes-Oxley and Exon-Florio in the US) does not constitute a barrier to capital market integration, and that there is greater regulatory convergence between the United States and the EU. SIA/SIFMA also tracks specific EU directives that affect capital markets and market access; the commentaries are neither laudatory nor critical, but simply identify the changes in the law and the steps that firms must take to be in conformity with the new regulations (Security Industries Association 2003, 2002, and 2003; Lackritz 2006; Huet 2007). As is the case with AIA, however, the industry looks to the EU as a model for US legislation, particularly the desire for the American Congress to adopt a US Action Plan to ensure that US law will be consistent with the EU's Financial Action Services Programme (FASP) (Litman 2003; USCC 2007; Thornburgh 2004; Lackritz 2005).

The four peak organizations---the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, the US Chamber of Commerce, and the US Chamber of International Business---recognize that the EU is the regulatory agency governing the European economy and that the EU market is the most significant market for the United States. They also share five categories of concern with respect to the EU. The first, and most important, is the divergent regulatory environment found in the EU and the United States, particularly the less 'business-friendly' regulatory environment in the EU, as a significant barrier to trade within the transatlantic area. Of particular concern for American business are the electronic privacy, integrated product policy, and the labeling directives as well as the Green Paper on corporate responsibility (UCIB 2001; Prescott 2000; Business Roundtable 2001 and 2006; USCC nd, Niles 2001 ; USCIB 2001 and 2007). Each of these directives has extra-territorial implications for American business, adds to the cost of doing business not only in Europe, but in the domestic American market as well, and creates a divergence in regulatory requirements in the two major markets for American goods and services (Vargo nd). The EU environmental and health directives are also castigated as imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens on US corporations, particularly the REACH proposal governing chemicals, and WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) directive governing the disposal and life-cycle treatment of electronic waste (USCIB 2003; National Association of Manufacturers 2004). A

second set of concerns revolves around the value added tax. In addition to viewing the VAT as an export subsidy for EU manufacturers, the USCIB also derided the EU for seeking to impose VAT on electronic trade at the origin of the sale rather than at the destination of the sale, a decision that would leave American firms physically operating outside the EU subject to taxation on the sale (Nichols 2000). American industry also shares common concerns with its counterparts in the EU. Third, each peak organization also identifies common interests that Europe and the US share in ensuring the protection of intellectual property rights and against counterfeiting in third markets. In creating a set of common or equivalent accounting standards, and in affecting greater regulatory cooperation to remove barriers to trade and enhance the competitiveness of American and European firms in third markets against firms operating in low wage economies (USCIB 2004). Fourth, there are a set of commonly understood barriers to trade, including the barriers to American agricultural products owing to the European distrust of biotechnology generally and genetically-modified organisms specifically, different labor standards that raise costs for American manufacturers and prevent transatlantic harmonization, European subsidies for specific sectors of the economy in addition to the VAT rebate (particularly aerospace), and the proliferation of third-party EU free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties that disadvantage US firms in third markets (USCIB 2001 and 2004; National Association of Manufacturers 2006; USCC 2004; Business Roundtable 2001). Finally, these peak organizations view the external projection of the EU regulatory regime to third markets as a threat to American competitiveness as well as a model for the externalizing the American regulatory regime (Business Roundtable 2006).

American agriculture is preoccupied with the tariff and non-tariff barriers to transatlantic trade in agricultural products. The underlying assumption of American agriculture is that the European Common Agricultural Policy not only prevents the penetration of more efficiently produced American agricultural goods in the European market but drives American producers out of third markets owing to agricultural export subsidies. These common (and valid) complaints are conjoined by concerns with the high bound and applied tariffs on agricultural goods that pose effective barriers to market penetration and are unlikely to be significantly lowered at the Doha

Round of trade talks (IDFA 2007 and 1999; Nuzum 1999; Helms nd; Lange nd; Green nd). As important for American agricultural are the non-tariff barriers to trade posed by the EU regulatory environment, especially the reliance upon the precautionary principle in assessing the safety of genetically modified foodstuffs, food hygiene (particularly sanitary and phytosanitary (PSP) measures), the banned importation of hormone treated beef, the possible introduction of Geographic Indications (GI)/Product Designation of Origin (GPO) for a broader range of agricultural products, particularly cheeses, which would make leave American manufacturers bereft of categories now considered generic (e.g., asiago, parmesan, etc.) (IDFA nd; Tipton 2004 and 2005; NCBA nd-a and nd-b; NAEGA 2001 and 2007: NCC 2001: 9).

American labour views the EU as an ally in limiting the loss of manufacturing jobs owing to a common interest in ensuring high wages, safety, and environmental standards governing production outside Europe and the United States that function jointly as non-tariff barriers to trade that limit market penetration of Third World producers, particularly in those sectors particularly susceptible to imports, and protect European and American manufacturing jobs (European Trade Union Confederation and AFL-CIO 2007). That perception of a natural alliance between US and EU labor, however, must be qualified: the IAMAW, for example, has expressed concern over EU subsidies to Airbus Industrie and EADS in the commercial and military sector as a direct threat to American jobs (IAMAW nd)..

Summary. One important finding from this exercise is that where the EU is the primary target of industry concerns, it is much less likely that the member states will play an important role in industry calculations; conversely, where the member states are considered the primary target of industry concerns, the EU will be a marginal actor at best. A second important finding is that the EU is the primary target of interest groups in the financial, agricultural and real sectors of the economy (with the exception of retail banking (AbA) and beef (NCBA)), but plays a minimal role in the calculations of those interest groups representing media, labor and services (with the notable exception of SIFMA/SIA). A third important finding is the relative importance of Europe as an economic actor as compared to the other major economic powers: as an aggregate, the EU and its

member states account are very important (> 50% share) for three interest groups, important (>25% and 50 %<) 12 interest groups, and of little importance (25% <) for seven interest groups. American manufacturing and services industries focus on the EU owing to the prominent regulatory role assumed by Brussels, the EU role in creating a European standard around which manufactures coalesce, and the EU's role in representing Europe in global and regional trading negotiations. The precise orientation of an industry towards the EU, however, is dependent upon the size of the European market for American goods and the nature and height of the barriers to market access. But where markets are still perceived as national markets, as is the case in media and retail banking, the EU plays a significantly less important role in the industry calculations.[10]

IV. Civil Society

The main advocacy groups for civil liberties, the environment, consumer protection, and religion and the relevance of the EU as an actor are represented in Table 13. Unlike the indeterminate quality of the importance and relevance of the EU for the economic elite as represented by select interest groups, environmental and consumer protection advocacy groups generally point to the EU as an exemplar for regulating industry and improving environmental conditions nationally and globally. The EU is portrayed less favourably by civil liberties groups, but in the majority of cases it is seen as serving as a benchmark for US policy, internally and externally.

Civil liberties groups are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Planned Parenthood Federation, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and the Southern Poverty and Law Center (SPLC). Environmental advocacy groups are represented by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). Consumer advocacy groups are represented by the U.S. Public

[10] The National Association of Broadcasters and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, for example, are primarily concerned with technical standards adopted in the EU, while the Motion Picture Association of America is preoccupied with national laws governing piracy.

Interest Research Group (PIRG), Consumers Union and National Taxpayers Union (NTU), while the National Council of Churches (NCC) represents organized religion (predominately mainstream protestant churches).

Table 13. Advocacy Group Recognition of EU

	PPF	PETA	ACLU	CU	PIRG	UCS	NCC	NTU	SPLC	ADL	HRW	NWF	Sierra Club
EU	0.89%	2.68%	25.88%	3.27%	9.15%	7.95%	3.00%	7.77%	7.26%	10.14%	14.48%	0.63%	4.32%
UK	6.41%	7.49%	6.06%	13.25%	4.17%	13.42%	4.80%	4.77%	14.77%	6.14%	8.96%	2.17%	7.13%
France	10.41%	15.73%	7.99%	3.81%	1.39%	11.78%	8.71%	8.58%	7.75%	14.01%	6.20%	4.04%	5.99%
Germany	5.60%	7.04%	17.30%	3.45%	2.19%	10.68%	7.21%	9.13%	16.22%	21.98%	5.17%	2.26%	5.15%
Italy	2.40%	5.28%	2.17%	1.45%	1.39%	3.97%	1.80%	5.59%	4.84%	6.82%	2.61%	1.44%	3.99%
China	10.41%	8.79%	5.66%	13.79%	21.07%	12.88%	11.71%	10.08%	1.45%	5.58%	21.16%	5.39%	9.65%
Japan	4.36%	5.34%	13.08%	15.43%	4.57%	13.29%	4.20%	13.76%	0.73%	5.77%	4.12%	4.38%	5.15%
Russia	2.14%	4.00%	4.57%	0.36%	2.39%	13.15%	7.81%	7.36%	2.18%	8.04%	12.88%	2.69%	3.81%
Mexico	34.07%	7.79%	0.00%	15.61%	34.00%	0.00%	10.51%	7.90%	43.58%	5.48%	5.57%	32.48%	15.37%
Canada	8.54%	27.15%	14.33%	25.41%	14.51%	12.88%	25.83%	18.39%	1.21%	11.42%	4.66%	40.52%	32.09%
India	14.77%	8.70%	2.97%	4.17%	5.17%	0.00%	14.41%	6.68%		4.63%	14.17%	3.99%	7.34%

The content analysis of the policy studies, congressional testimony and press releases for these various interest groups produces four important findings. First, as compared to the other major states, the EU is only the single most important actor for the ACLU and a European state is the single most important focus for the ADL and UCS. Eleven other advocacy groups are preoccupied with either Mexico or Canada; only HRW is most concerned with China. Second, the EU emerges as a more important policy actor relative to the member states for two civil liberties advocacy groups (ACLU and HRW) and one consumer group (PIRG). Third, the EU is of equal importance to the member states as a policy actor for two environmental groups (EDF and Sierra Club), two consumer groups (Consumers Union and NTU), and one civil liberties group (ADL). Finally, the EU is an unimportant actor as compared to the member states for Planned Parenthood, PETA, NWF, Sierra Club, Audubon Society and the NCC.

Three civil liberties advocacy groups, the ADL, PETA and HRW, represent the sets of attitudes towards the EU and its role as a regulatory or social actor. The ADL is perhaps the most critical of the civil liberties groups of the EU. The ADL focuses on three aspects of the EU as an actor: its (good) economic and scientific partnership with Israel; its hostility towards Israel on the

matter of finding a solution to the Palestinian question and 'weak' diplomacy towards countries hostile to Israel, and unwillingness to condemn Hezbollah as a terrorist group; and the inability to react effectively to growing anti-Semitism in Europe which is attributed to large Muslim communities, particularly in Germany and France (Anti-Defamation League 1998, 2006, nd, 2003, 2005, 2004). PETA views the EU as the exemplar for US legislation on the ethical treatment of animals, ranging from the EU phased elimination of testing cosmetics on animals, the adoption of alternative testing methods developed in the EU, replicating the EU ban on veal crates and gestation crates for pigs, and following the EU in banning steel-jawed traps that remain legal in the US and the importation of skins harvested with their use (Guillermo nd; Cromwell nd; GoVeg nd; PETA nd). The HRW not only treats the EU as an explicit actor, but as an actor with a global responsibility to secure human rights and civil liberty. As a consequence, its perception of the EU is positive insofar as the EU is treated as a human rights exemplar that is capable of mitigating human rights abuses globally. But HRW also criticizes the EU owing to the perceived hesitancy of the EU to use its not inconsiderable leverage to pressure states or impose sanctions to end human rights abuses in Burma, Serbia, the Russian Federation, Darfur and Central Asia (Human Rights Watch 2007 a-f).

The preoccupations of the environmental advocacy groups and their attitude towards the EU is on the other side of the looking glass reflecting the preoccupations and attitudes of American manufacturers: EU regulatory policies are largely viewed as the templates for US legislation that capture environmental externalities not reflected in the price of the good; the EU is seen as a mechanism for enforcing higher environmental standards on the United States through the extra-territorial application of law made possible by the importance of the European market to US industry; and the EU holds lessons for the United States in tackling the most critical environmental task today, the reduction of CO_2 emissions. The EDF and the UCS have praised the EU for implementing its Emissions Trading Scheme to reduce the production of green house gases to comply with their Kyoto Treaty commitments as well as the REACH proposal to ensure the safety and environmental consequences of over 30,000 industrial chemicals (Denison 2007;

Environmental Defense Fund 2004; Cleetus 2007). While the Sierra Club shares the EDF enthusiasm for the EU policies on industrial chemicals, it has also noted that 'Europe leads the way' with respect to vehicle recycling, stringent genetically modified food assessment and labeling, electronics recycling and ban on toxics commonly used in the production of electronics goods, and more stringent rules governing the use of chemicals for household use (Lowenberg 2004; Sierra Club 2005).[11]

The concerns of PIRG, the major consumer's advocacy group in the United States, overlaps significantly with those of the various environmental groups, while the NTU reads from the same script as the manufacturing industry. PIRG has commended the EU for its efforts to control and monitor industrial chemicals with the REACH program and criticized the Bush administration for its efforts to hinder EU progress towards implementing it fully. Moreover, PIRG advocates the EU 'precautionary principle' rather than the American principle of 'safe until proven otherwise', the preference for preventing harm rather than managing risk, forcing producers rather than Federal agencies to bear the cost of screening tests, and the preference for enforceable rules rather than voluntary compliance with them (U.S.-PIRG 2004). PIRG also commended the EU as a template for US legislation with respect to banning the sale of toys contaminated with phthalates (a toxic chemical that increases the plasticity of PVC), the strict regulation of products carrying a 'phthalate-free' label, and the EU ban the flame retardant polybrominated diphenyl ethers in consumer electronics. PIRG and the UCS also point to the EU as an exemplar with respect to food safety: PIRG recommended the US adoption of the EU labelling and traceability frameworks that inform consumers that food stuffs are or are not genetically modified, while the UCS recommended that the US ban the use of feeding antibiotics for promoting growth in livestock (U.S. PIRG 2005 and 2004; Powell 2004; Union of Concerned Scientists nd; Kucher and Purvis 2004). The NTU heaps criticism on EU regulatory efforts in equal measure to the approbation of the EU by PIRG and the UCS. The NTU condemned the EU ruling in the Microsoft case that, in their view, stripped

[11] The Sierra Club is also very critical of the Common Agricultural Policy on environmental grounds, see Pope (2003). The Union of Concerned Scientists, however, points to the US as having environmental regulations with respect to diesel engine emissions that are superior to those found in the EU. See Monahan and Friedman (2004: 5, 9, and 31).

US corporations of the intellectual property rights and the blocking of mergers already approved in the US. Generally, the NTU views the EU as a threat to the free market economy, claiming that its 'regulatory rampage' will damage the European and global economy (Berthoud and Sepp 2007; NTU 2007).

Summary. Every advocacy group other than the Audubon Society views the EU as an important actor, and in most cases the EU is seen as a progressive institution protecting civil society from avaricious industrialists and financiers. The EU is relatively more than its member states for two advocacy groups, the ACLU and PIRG, and lacks importance for five advocacy groups, the Audubon Society, PPF, PETA, NCC and NWF. The remaining advocacy groups treat the EU as equally important to the member states, a result that is consistent with the important regulatory and adjudicative role played by the EU and the European Court of Justice. Only the NTU expresses a consistently negative attitude towards the EU, viewing it as a barrier to the 'magic' of the free market, while the consumer and environmental groups express an overwhelmingly positive view of the EU and treat it as an actor capable of changing American environmental and consumer legislation for the better. What remains true, however, is that for all these groups, the EU (and the member states) is not the primary target of their concerns; almost all have a parochial agenda that yields an external agenda focusing on Mexico and Canada. Nonetheless, the EU is taken seriously as an actor with global impact and importance.

V. The Press

The three newspapers in the United States that drive or demarcate the parameters of the public foreign policy debate are the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times. One or all of these papers is read on a daily basis by members of the foreign policy, political, and economic elites. As a business, these papers supply information relevant to the preoccupations and needs of its reading public. In that sense, newspapers reflect events that are of importance to its readership; resources (foreign bureaus or the allotment of space) are distributed

over time to areas of importance as defined by the target audience. What do the headlines in these three papers since the end of the Cold War tell us about the priorities of the American foreign policy elite? First, it is clear that the EU does not hold much interest as a discrete actor for readers of the New York Times or Washington Post (see table 11). The EU appears in less than two percent of titles in those papers, although it has a higher profile in the Wall Street Journal, no doubt reflecting the readership's interest in the consequences of the EU's regulatory role in managing the flow of trade and capital across the Atlantic---an inference supported by the relatively low number of headlines devoted to Iraq as compared to the New York Times and Washington Post. As important, the major EU states appear more frequently in headlines by a wide margin: in the New York Times, for example, the UK appears in eight percent, France seven percent, and Germany six percent of the time as compared to less than one percent for the EU. The discrepancy between the major EU member states and the EU is less pronounced in the Washington Post; in the Wall Street Journal the EU is more important than any of the individual member states. China and Japan, however, individually and jointly, capture an arguably disproportionately large share of the headlines: 49% in the Wall Street Journal, 29% in the New York Times, and 21% in the Washington Post.

Table 14. ***EU in headlines: Wall Street Journal, New York Times and Washington Post***

	Wall Street Journal (1996-2007)		**New York Times** (1990-2007)		**Washington Post** (1990-2007)	
EU	3,333	9.85%	314	0.62%	363	1.98%
NATO	440	1.30%	1430	2.83%	1047	5.71%
Germany	1895	5.60%	2901	5.73%	645	3.52%
France	2193	6.48%	3392	6.70%	588	3.21%
Italy	1120	3.31%	2107	4.16%	278	1.52%
UK	740	2.19%	3823	7.55%	603	3.29%
Russia	2278	6.73%	4648	9.18%	1714	9.35%
China	9460	27.95%	7398	14.62%	2654	14.49%
Japan	7217	21.32%	7370	14.56%	1154	6.30%
North Korea	634	1.87%	1441	2.85%	383	2.09%
Iran	773	2.28%	2724	5.38%	1431	7.81%
Iraq	2929	8.65%	10000	19.76%	5580	30.46%
Israel	588	1.74%	3055	6.04%	1881	10.27%
ASEAN	137	0.40%	3	0.01%	11	0.06%
APEC	109	0.32%	1	0.00%	11	0.06%
Total	33,846		50607		18343	

Sources: Wall Street Journal (2008), New York Times (2008), and Washington Post (2008)

While Europe does enjoy wide press coverage----19.2% in WP, 27.61 in NYT, and 28.72% in WSJ---and accounts for 26.5% of total headlines in these three papers between 1990 and 2007, it is very likely that the number of headlines counted for the major EU member states, Russia, Japan and even the EU is low owing to the familiarity of the leadership and personalities (e.g., Delors and Solana for the EU; Robertson and Delors for NATO; Blair and Brown for the UK; Koizumi and Abe for Japan; Chirac and Sarkozy for France; Putin and Yeltsin for Russia) or the use of capitals (Brussels, London, Tokyo, and Moscow, respectively) for the readership of these three papers. That likely under representation also belies not only an intimate knowledge of the states and institutions of Europe (and Japan), but also their intrinsic importance as global actors.

A second line of enquiry determines how the EU is viewed as an actor. In Table 15, the EU is categorized as either an economic or security actor. Somewhat surprisingly (and consistent with government perceptions), the EU is viewed as a security actor in 54.25% and 57.44% of the articles published in the New York Times and Washington Post, respectively. Consistent with its readership, the Wall Street Journal treats the EU as an economic actor: 87% of the articles published deal with aspects of the EU's role as an economic actor. Trade is the most important economic subcategory for the Times and Post, while articles on airbus are the most prevalent in the Journal followed by the euro for all three papers. The distribution of articles by subcategory in the area of security is not particularly insightful, although security, defense and war combined account for 48.77% of the articles in the Times, 48.53% of the articles in the Journal, and 46.91% of the articles in the Post. Terrorism, the policy area where the EU has played an active internal role, does not figure prominently in either the Journal or Post, reflecting perhaps the assumption that terrorism is a problem best addressed unilaterally or bilaterally with individual states.

Table 15. ***New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post (EU (headline) + subject in text)***

	New York Times (1990-2007)			**Wall Street Journal** (1996-2007)			**Washington Post** (1990-2007)	
Economic subjects:								
Trade	106	38.55%		45	4.80%		22	36.67%
Agriculture	18	6.55%		6	0.64%		2	3.33%
Finance	32	11.64%		45	4.80%		7	11.67%
Euro	49	17.82%		88	9.39%		7	11.67%

EMU				5	0.53%			
Energy	15	5.45%		50	5.34%		6	10.00%
Oil	12	4.36%		15	1.60%		5	8.33%
Natural gas	16	5.82%		9	0.96%		2	3.33%
Globalization	9	3.27%		2	0.21%			
deregulation	5	1.82%		12	1.28%			
Airbus	0	0.00%		660	70.44%		4	6.67%
Dollar	13	4.73%					5	8.33%
Total	275	45.75%		937	87.33%		60	42.55%
Security subjects:								
Security	61	18.71%		15	11.03%		17	20.99%
Defense	40	12.27%		21	15.44%		7	8.64%
NATO	35	10.74%		18	13.24%		9	11.11%
Terrorism	31	9.51%		8	5.88%		1	1.23%
War	58	17.79%		30	22.06%		14	17.28%
Nuclear	12	3.68%		13	9.56%		1	1.23%
foreign policy	34	10.43%		8	5.88%		15	18.52%
Immigration	16	4.91%					3	3.70%
human rights	37	11.35%					11	13.58%
Iran				23	16.91%		3	3.70%
Total	326	54.25%		136	12.67%		81	57.44%
Total	601			1073			141	

Sources: Wall Street Journal (2007), New York Times (2007), and Washington Post (2007)

Summary. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* endow the EU with a relatively low level of actorness as compared to the member states and other major states of the international system, while the *Wall Street Journal* treats the EU as the third most important actor in the international system. This divergence can be ascribed to the sensitivity of the latter's readership to the impact of the EU on their quarterly profit and loss statements. Most striking, however, is the low level of significant ascribed to the EU as compared to the two Pacific powers, China and Japan, and states of the Middle East, particularly Israel and Iraq. As is the case with the political elites, the *Times* and *Post* seem more preoccupied with the EU's role as a security actor, while the *Journal* treats the EU primarily as an economic actor, a treatment consistent with its prerogatives under the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice Treaties.

VI. Conclusion

Do Americans view the EU through a glass, darkly *or* from the other side of the looking glass? There is no answer to this question that hold across (or even within) the four foreign policy

constituencies investigated in this working paper. The material importance of the EU to American security and welfare is reflected poorly in public opinion, no doubt largely reflecting the absence of questions about the EU testing the publics' knowledge or understanding of it. The political classes, while willing to acknowledge the EU as an actor, remain preoccupied with the nation-state and wedded to a traditional understanding of security, while the economic elite views the EU as a regulatory behemoth hell-bent on destroying the American market economy. Similarly, the print media is likewise infatuated with the national policies of European states, even where the EU is the dominant institutional player, and tend to treat the EU as having a security function that is more important than its economic function. Arguably, three of the four foreign policy constituencies view the EU through a glass, darkly; the foreign policy and security roles of the EU are overestimated at the expense of the important role the EU does play in the economy. Advocacy groups, which represent the fourth constituency, would appear trapped on the other side of the looking glass by comparison: they see the EU as a global regulatory and environmental actor capable of shaping global norms and American legislation for the better. The EU remains an ill-defined actor in American foreign policy discourse, although economic interest and advocacy groups are best attuned to the continuing importance of Europe to the United States and the global reach of the EU.

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GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
Venezuelan perceptions of the EU

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University of Bologna

The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

Is the European Union a 'better option'?
Public opinion and elites' discourse in Venezuela

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and public opinion

Venezuela is a polarized society, in which views of the European Union are inevitably affected by political allegiances. Time-series data from opinion polls reveals that the EU has been enjoying a more positive approval rate than the United States in the past ten years, even though only a small minority of Venezuelans are sufficiently informed about EU's activities. After 2000, the citizens' familiarity with the EU has gradually grown (although not enormously), but this increase in knowledge has happened simultaneously with a declining approval rate that, although higher than the one of the US, is likely to have been affected by the explosion of polarization which followed the turn of the millennium.

Political elites

The analysis of political elites and opinion makers also shows that the EU is generally perceived to be a 'better option' (as opposed to the US) in world politics, although political polarization comes into gear in this context too. Whereas the most common image of the EU for opinion makers and opposition forces is that of a 'democracy promoter', governmental voices have criticized what they perceive as 'double standards' of the EU in this field.

Policy recommendations

Due to the comparative advantage the EU enjoys vis-à-vis the US in terms of approval rate in Venezuela, this analysis argues that the EU should make a significant effort to strengthen its

relationships with the South American country in order to ease its internal polarization, support the inclusion of Venezuela in regional integration processes and aid Venezuela to make a more sustainable usage of its extensive energy resources.

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Is the European Union a 'better option'?
Public opinion and elites' discourse in Venezuela

Lorenzo Fioramonti

1. Introduction[1]

This paper presents a preliminary study focusing on how the European Union (EU) is perceived by the Venezuelan public opinion and how it is framed in the elites' political discourse. Given the availability of resources and the specific socio-political context in Venezuela, this is no easy task. As already found by previous research on this subject[2], the EU is not a 'bread and butter' issue in most countries, including Venezuela, as is revealed by the analysis of public opinion polls. In spite of the enormous amount of declarations by the Venezuelan government on various international issues, from social justice, to the reform of global governance and the fight against the 'American empire', the EU is quite seldom mentioned.

Another important element to bear in mind is that Venezuela is a polarized country, where political rivalries inevitably permeate the social and political discourse. In this context, it is difficult for politicians, the media and opinion makers to share their views on something (in this case, the EU) without framing it within their political rhetoric, ideological background and political objectives.

In such a polarized society, it is therefore rather difficult to distinguish between civil society and governmental organizations, even more so if one considers that the current Venezuelan government has actively promoted the establishment of a 'revolutionary' civil society to replace a supposedly 'regressive' universe of pre-existing associations, trade unions

[1] First and foremost, I wish to thank Sonia Lucarelli for providing invaluable guidance and leadership to all researchers involved in this project. I am also extremely grateful to Lisa Tormena (Forum on the Problems of Peace and War), who assisted me with the media review. Many thanks to Alejandro Chanona for his comments on the first draft of this report.

[2] See the collection of studies edited by S. Lucarelli in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 12 (3), 2007.

and NGOs. Within this context, the media is also incorporated into the polarization mechanism and is divided along the political cleavage, serving the interest of either political group.

This means that 'politics' is everywhere and the views of the EU, just like any other issue, are deeply politicized. Therefore, since it is impossible to escape the political perspective, this analysis decided to address this situation head-on by considering all citations of the EU as part of the 'political discourse', without distinguishing between political remarks and technical evaluations. In this regard, the analysis focuses explicitly on the opinions of politicians (from both government and the various opposition forces) and some of the most well-known columnists. Most of this information was found through newspapers' archives, press agencies and websites. Moreover, the analysis was corroborated by a systematic review of all articles referring to the EU or Europe, which were published by *El Nacional* (the most influential daily newspaper in the country) between January 2006 and February 2008.[3]

The report is organized as follows. Section 2 illustrates the recent developments of the relationship between Venezuela and the EU and explains why the high level of political polarization affecting the country is relevant for this analysis. Section 3 then analyzes the data regarding Venezuelan public opinion, with particular emphasis on the differences between the different approval rates of the EU as opposed to the US. The same comparison forms the main thread of Section 4, which focuses on the elites' discourse and the press. Finally, Section 5 offers some conclusions and policy recommendations for the EU.

2. A macro analysis of the relationship between the EU and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Hugo Rafaél Chavez Frias took over the Venezuelan presidency in 1998 vowing to impart a u-turn to the corrupt state of the country's democratic system, by giving citizens (and

[3] *El Nacional* is the only Venezuelan daily available on the international database Factiva. A more long-term analysis should also include a review of the *El Universal*, the second most influential newspaper in the country and some publication officially aligned along government's positions.

especially the marginalized poor) a stronger role in decision-making. Through a constitutional reform approved in 2000, Chavez's initiative gave birth to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (once simply Republic of Venezuela). The 'revolutionary' project of the Bolivarian republic has expectedly promoted radical change within the Venezuelan institutions, with a much stronger role played by the new 'chavista' elite in key institutional apparata, the economy and more recently the media. Moreover, the government's revolutionary rhetoric, which was exacerbated by the 2002 attempted coup and has led to the labeling of all Chavez's critics as 'oligarchs' and 'squallids', has pushed many groups who oppose the Bolivarian project (only a few of which represent the interests of the old economic elite) into a not-well-defined category of 'opposition forces'. Not only has this increased tensions and protests (including a two-month national strike in 2002-2003), but has generated a polarization fault-line between the 'chavistas' (who are those groups who side with Chavez) and the 'others', be it within civil society, the trade unions, the economy or the media (Schall-Emden & Fioramonti 2007).

In terms of geo-politics and international strategy, it would be fair to argue that Venezuela under Chavez's rule has had a somewhat distant relationship with the EU. In the past few years, political and economic relations between Caracas and Brussels have been carried out within the "framework of the institutional dialogue" between the EU and the Rio Group, since the EU is only a medium-sized trading partner for Venezuela. For an energy-rich country such as Venezuela, with a relatively limited manufacturing capacity, it is no surprise that the main products exported to the EU are oil and other energy resources (around 78% in 2006), while imports from Europe include machinery (43%) and chemical and related products (17%).[4] In this context, the balance of trade has traditionally favored the EU, while in the last couple of years this has changed due to the rising price of oil.

The last high-level meeting between the two sides was in February 2007, when the Venezuelan Deputy-Minister for Foreign Affairs Rodrigo Cháves (who is in charge of the

[4] http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113462.pdf

relationship with Europe) paid visit to the European Parliament and the European Commission. Earlier on, the EU had sent a mission of electoral observers to monitor the December 2006 presidential elections. This mission, which was formally invited by the Venezuelan National Electoral Council (CNE) and was led by the Italian MEP Monica Frassoni, issued several reports on the state of democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela. In a December 7 press release, the EU (then under the Finnish presidency) reported that: "the elections of 3 December 2006 took place in a peaceful and transparent atmosphere, thus providing a good basis for the further development of democratic institutions and political dialogue in Venezuela."[5] While the EU mission did mention that there were some irregularities in the voting process, they found that the overall event was transparent and peaceful, and this was often mentioned by the Venezuelan government as 'impartial evidence' of the soundness of their country's democratic system. This relationship has nonetheless worsened in 2007, after the European Parliament's critical remarks against the decision of the Bolivarian government not to renew the broadcasting licence to one of the most longstanding TV channels in Venezuela, Radio Caracas Television (RCTV). This decision was justified by Caracas on the grounds that RCTV would have given explicit support to the April 2002 aborted coup. The cooperation between Caracas and the Fuerzas Armadas Revocionarias de Colombia (FARC) has recently been another reason for tensions between Caracas and Brussles, particularly after the EU included the FARC in the list of terrorist organizations, a move which was deeply criticized by Chavez in person.

At the level of EU Member States, Chavez has maintained cordial relationships with several EU governments. During Chirac's tenure in France, the relationship between the Elysee and Caracas was quite cooperative. This level of cooperation seems to have been maintained by the new Sarkozy presidency, in particular due to the intermediary role played by Chavez with the FARC, which resulted in the liberation of some hostages in January 2008 and new guarantees

[5] Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the Presidential Elections in Venezuela, Press Release 520/2006 of 7 December 2006. Available at http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/cfsp_statements/vko49/en_GB/1165504485298/

regarding the condition of the Franco-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt.[6] The relationship with Spain has also been quite collaborative, at least until late 2007, when the Spanish King Juan Carlos directly attacked Chavez during the Iberian-American summit in Chile, resulting in a cooling of the hitherto cordial relationship with the Zapatero government. In February 2008, the relations between Italy and Venezuela have also taken a step forward when the Italian government sent a delegation to Caracas, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Massimo D'Alema, to seal a multi-billionaire deal to exploit the untapped oil resources of the Orinoco delta. On the other hand, relations with the UK (and partly Germany) have been rather cold, especially during the tenure of Tony Blair, regularly accused by Chavez of serving the interests of American hegemony.[7]

Bilateral relations with EU member states do not exhaust the array of more or less cooperative exchanges between Venezuela and the EU. Chavez's government has also developed some bilateral relations with local governments within Europe, the most notorious case being the one of London's mayor, Ken Livingstone, to whom the Bolivarian republic provides cut-price oil for the city's public transports, under a deal worth up to $32 million, in exchange of advice and cooperation in field of international finance.[8]

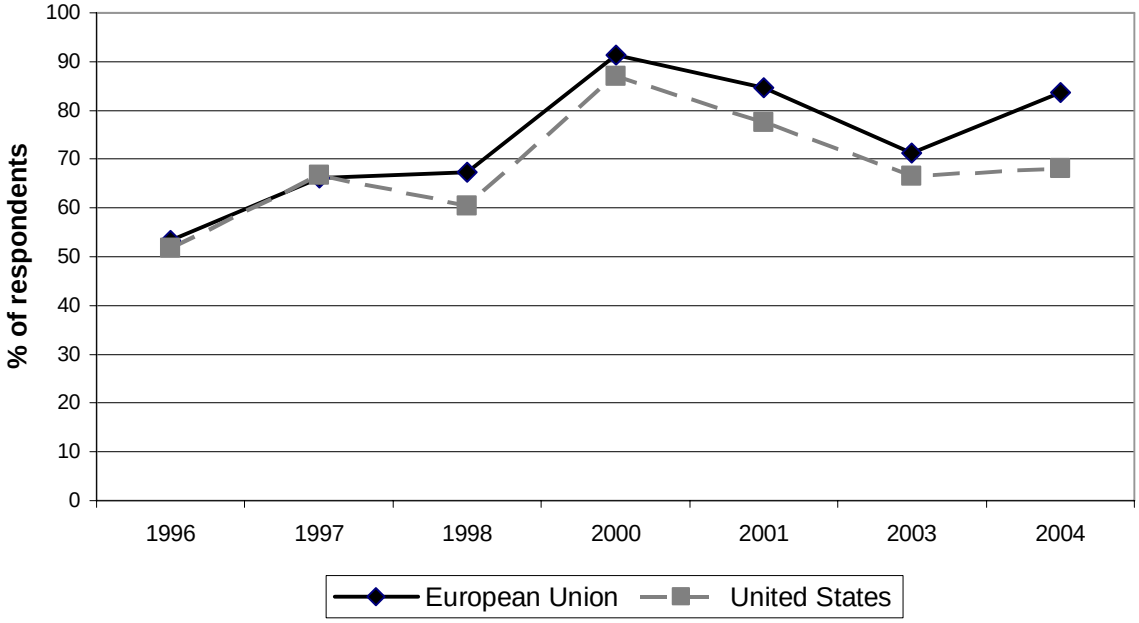
3. Public opinion's perceptions of the EU and the US

The *Latinobarometro* is arguably the most comprehensive opinion survey in Latin America. From time to time, this opinion survey has included some questions about the knowledge and evaluation of the role played by the EU in the region and at the global level. By comparing the data overtime, it is possible to show some interesting trends with regard to the perceptions of the EU held by Venezuelan citizens. As summarized in Figure 1, a majority of Venezuelans have a 'positive' or 'very positive' opinion of the EU (hovering around 50% in 1996 and around 80% in

[6] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/11/venezuela.colombia
[7] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/feb/09/venezuela.usa.
[8] http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4d8e3834-c0d8-11db-bf18-000b5df10621.html

2004). In greater detail, it is worth observing that the percentage of Venezuelans who have a positive opinion of the EU has been growing between 1996 and 2000, while the overall opinion of the EU seems to have worsened after then, along with the increasing polarization that dominated Venezuela after the turn of the millennium. During this period of time, the tensions between government-aligned groups and opposition forces escalated, particularly in the months preceding the April 2002 attempted coup and the run-up to the recall referendum of 2004.

Figure 1 – Positive opinions of the EU and the US



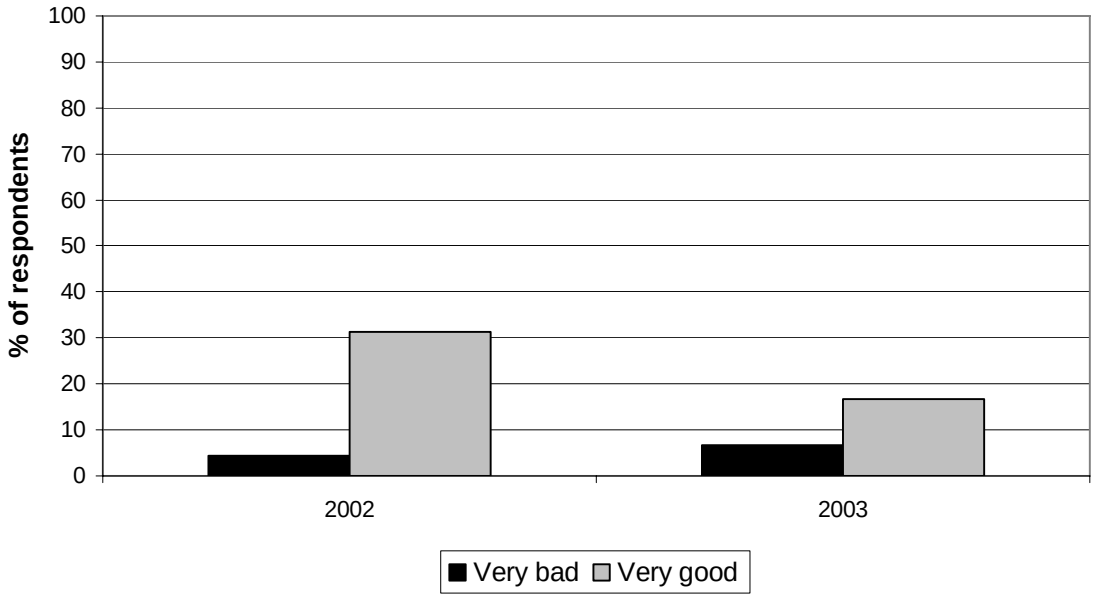
Note: percentage of respondents who have a 'very positive' or 'positive' opinion
Source: Author's elaboration on raw data from Latinobarometro (www.latinobarometro.org)

The time series also offers an interesting comparison between the approval rate of the EU and that of the US. Overall the EU has enjoyed a consistently higher approval rate, although one might have expected a much more stark difference in a population that experiences daily verbal attacks between its government and Washington. What is probably the most interesting finding is that up until 2003 the perceptions-trends concerning the EU and US have followed a rather similar path, with the two curves almost changing in parallel. This might offer some reasons to

argue that what affects the perceptions of Venezuelan citizens the most is the international context as a whole, rather than the specific differences between the EU and the US. In this international context, the approval rate of both the EU and US has worsened after September 11th and even more so with the escalation of polarization within the country between 2001 and 2003. Remarkably, the two trends disjoin in 2004 and it is possible that more recent data (not yet made available) might reveal that the EU has been growing in popularity in the past couple of years, while the approval rate of the US is more likely to have stagnated around the same levels.

The downward rate of approval for the EU between 2000 and 2003 is also confirmed when one compares the percentages of those who hold extreme opinions about the EU (Figure 2). In 2002, only 4% of Venezuelans believed that the EU was a 'very bad' global player, while this percentage had already gone up to 7% in 2003. Even more stark is the difference between how many respondents thought the EU was a 'very good' global player in 2002 (31%) and how many thought the same in 2003 (only 16%).

Figure 2 – Extreme views: is the EU 'very bad' or 'very good'?

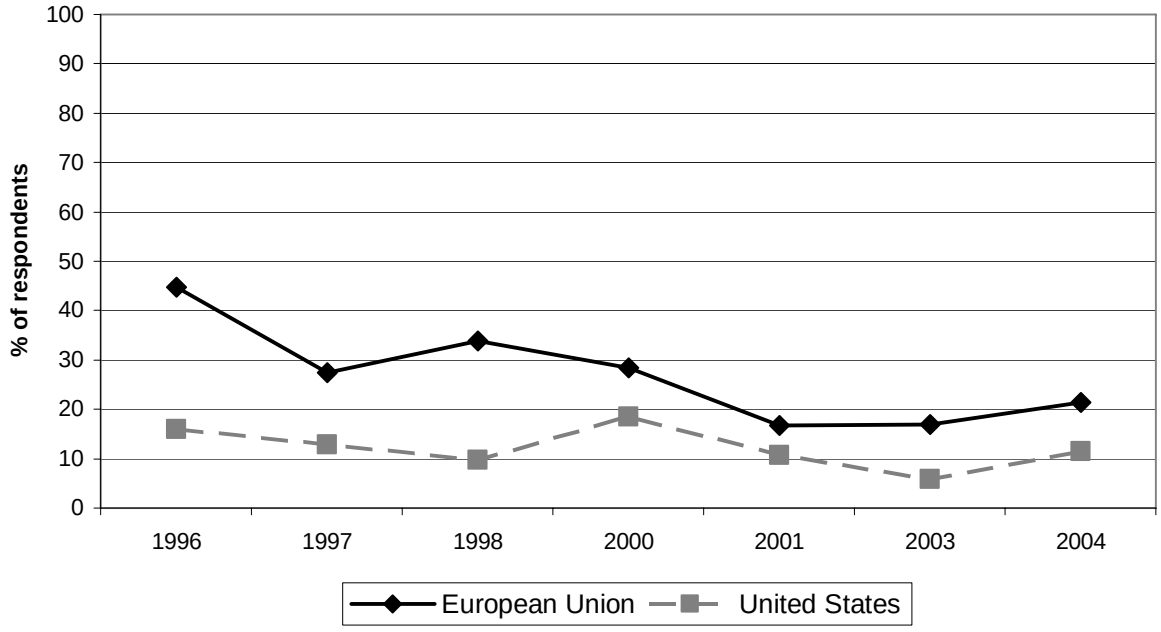


Source: Author's elaboration on raw data from Latinobarometro (www.latinobarometro.org)

This difference might reveal the fact that the 'halo effect' the EU enjoyed during the 1990s, when it was still a rather unknown entity and might have been perceived as being full of promises, has gradually disappeared, leaving more space for specific assessments of what the EU actually does or does not do. In a nutshell, the EU does no longer receive some sort of 'blank cheque' by Venezuelan citizens: on the contrary, opinions of the EU have become more nuanced and possibly subject to a more balanced evaluation of the achievements of the EU, at both the regional and global levels.

Another important result of the opinion polls' analysis is that, in spite of its proportionally higher approval rate compared to the US, the EU suffers from a knowledge deficit in Venezuela. For instance, if one compares the percentages of respondents who do not have a clear opinion about the EU, one finds remarkable differences compared to the US. The data shown in Figure 3 reveals this trend.

Figure 3 – 'No opinions' about the EU as opposed to the US



Source: Author's elaboration on raw data from Latinobarometro (www.latinobarometro.org)

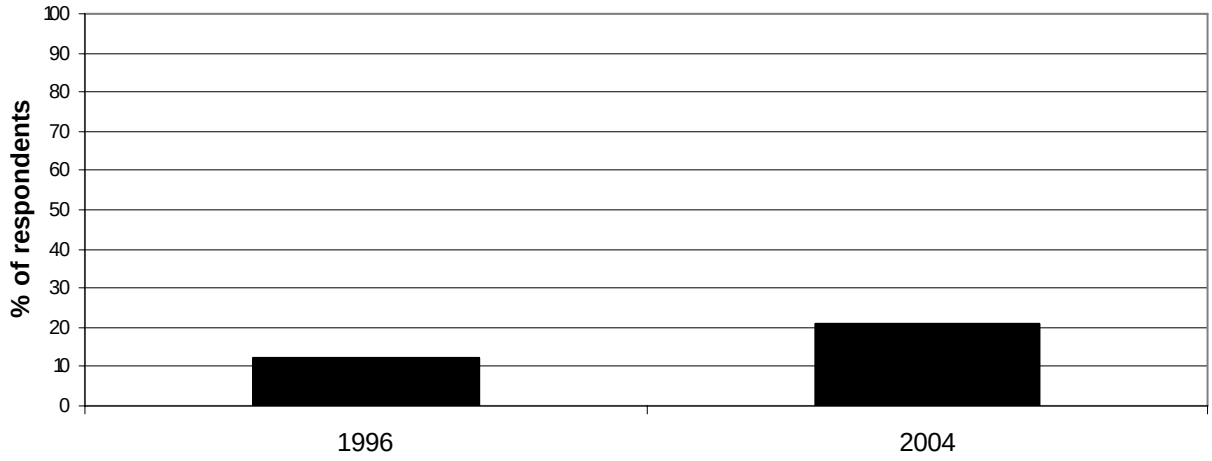
In 1996, almost half respondents to the survey (about 45%) did not have a clear opinion about the EU, as opposed to the 16% who was unsure about the US. However, while the amount of 'no opinions' about the US has remained rather constant (hovering around 10% and settling at 11% in 2004), the level of knowledge of the EU has gradually grown, although it remained lower than the US in overall comparative terms. If one compares the trend of Figure 3 with the one delineated by Figure 1, it emerges that the period of time during which the EU has enjoyed a higher approval rate (around 2000), it was also marked by a downward trend in terms of 'no opinion', which may suggest that the more Venezuelans got to know the EU, the more positive their opinion became. Partly, this trend seems to have stopped after 2000, when the negative opinions of the EU increased against the backdrop of relatively constant level of 'no opinion'. This would be consistent also with the results of Figure 2, which show that the overall evaluation of the EU's role become more nuanced in the past few years, with extreme (positive and negative) views becoming less frequent and leaving space for a more thoughtful assessment.

The trend regarding 'no opinions' also shows that, in the past ten years, the EU has somehow managed to close the knowledge-gap with the US, which is very encouraging if one considers the cultural and geographical proximity between Venezuela and the US. This does not mean, though, that Venezuelans are well informed about the EU. When respondents are asked to gauge their subjective level of information regarding EU policies, the data shows that only a small minority of Venezuelans believe they are 'sufficiently' informed about the EU (Figure 4). The positive aspect in this regard is that, as already confirmed by the analysis of 'no opinions', the trend has been upward: between 1996 and 2004, the perceived 'familiarity' with the EU policies has almost doubled, with 21% of respondents maintaining they were sufficiently informed about the EU in 2004 as opposed to only 12% in 1996.

Although the analysis shows a gradual increase in familiarity with the EU phenomenon, the overall percentages are nevertheless concerning and should be seriously analyzed by EU

institutions, as they seem to be quite consistent with data from other countries.[9] Poor information and no-opinions about the EU, although diminishing over time, are still major factors affecting the images of the EU. When this is applied to a polarized country like Venezuela, then it becomes particularly clear how the approval rate of the EU could be easily affected by the polarization trends of the socio-political struggle occurring in the country. Instead of being dependent on factual information concerning the EU activities in Venezuela and in the Latin American context (see Annexes for details), the view of the EU as a 'better option' could be very well dependent on the current relationship between Venezuela and the US. Yet, this might be radically modified by a turn in government on either side of the Caribbean sea.

Figure 4 – Venezuelans who are 'sufficiently' informed about the EU



Source: Author's elaboration on raw data from Latinobarometro (www.latinobarometro.org)

4. Polarized elites: views of the EU among political elites and opinion makers

4.1. An overview of some key themes

The high-level of social polarization in Venezuela possesses an undoubtedly political component. Political elites are by and large divided along two lines: those who support the

[9] See *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 12 (3), 2007.

Bolivarian revolution and those who oppose it. In general, governmental elites (the so-called 'oficialistas') are more skeptical of the EU, especially with regard to its free-trade ambitions in South America, while opposition forces and intellectuals are more likely to view the EU as a beacon of democratic and development standards, as opposed to the US that, also in the view of Venezuelan dissidents, has been largely discredited by the conduct of the Bush administration.

Through an analysis of all articles published by the country's most influential newspaper, *El Nacional*, it is possible to identify the following series of themes (Table 1):

Table 1 – Main themes and sub-themes associated with coverage of the EU

Themes	**Sub-themes**			
Energy and finance	Oil revenues (5)	Iran/Venezuela propose to adopt the Euro (4)	Biofuels (2)	Currency policy, Bolivar Fuerte and Euro (3)
Development aid	EU direct aid to LA or Venezuela (7)	Debt relief (1)	Poverty (3)	-
Conflict	FARC included in EU terrorist list (10)	Conflict with Colombia (2)	Middle East and Iraq (6)	Iran's nuclear plans (11)
Elections and reforms	Students' revolts (2)	Election monitoring and rule of law (79)	Media dispute (3)	EU internal (12)
Trade and bilateral relations	Regional integration and trade with the EU (28)	International trade (23)	Bilateral relations (15)	-
Cultural events	Music and cultural partnerships (5)	Catholic religion and the Pope (3)	-	-
Other issues	Abolition of death penalty (3)	Security standards (2)	Immigration (3)	Torture (2)

Note: 307 articles analyzed (1 Jan 2006 – 11 February 2008) but only most recurrent themes and sub-themes included in the table. Number of articles in parenthesis.

4.2 The EU as a democracy promoter?

The most recurring theme in Table 1 is 'elections and reforms' (96 articles). Most articles dealing with the EU (both directly and indirectly) focus on electoral processes (79), in particular the role played by the EU in monitoring the 2006 Venezuelan elections, the first presidential elections opposition forces decided to participate in after various years of electoral boycott. On that occasion, the EU committed a significant amount of resources to observe not only the electoral process, but also the run-up to the election day, through an analysis of the electoral campaign and the conduct of the media.

Since 2006, the EU has been publishing a number of reports on the state of the rule of law in Venezuela, which have generally been used by opposition parties and some sectors within civil society as evidence of the government's wrongdoings. For instance, in September 2007, the opposition leader Manuel Rosales maintained that "the European Union is interested in these themes" and will help Venezuela "find ways to eradicate abuse and address the lack of autonomy of the different institutional powers."[10]

However, while opposition groups have been appreciative of the role played by the EU in the field of democracy assistance and election monitoring, governmental representatives and other 'chavista' groups have been rather critical. For instance, the president of the National Electoral Council, criticized the EU 2006 report which highlighted the state of citizens' distrust in the electoral system by saying that the EU work "was not helping generate more confidence and imposing fundamentally biased survey was a strategy doomed to failure".[11]

Another reason for tensions was created by the government's decision not to renew the broadcasting licence to Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) on the basis of its purported support to the 2002 aborted coup against Chavez. If on the one hand, opposition groups and anti-government intellectuals applauded the European Parliament, which defined the government's

[10] 'Rosales: es el momento de arriesgarse', *El Nacional*, 28 September 2007.
[11] 'José Rodrìguez no quedò satisfecho', El Nacional, 16 March 2006.

measure 'an alarming precedent'[12], on the other hand, the Venezuelan government accused the EU of double-standards and inconsistency: in the words of the Venezuelan Ambassador to the EU, "Europeans would never allow a channel on their televisions to incite violence, support coups, or break the constitutional order."[13]

More recently, in August 2007, Chavez went as far as to argue that "cynicism rules in Europe" after being criticized by EU institutions for his constitutional reform plan, which aimed to eliminate presidential term limits but eventually failed to be endorsed by popular referendum in December of the same year. According to him, "there is a lot of noise in Europe for a system that has always existed there" since most European countries have no re-election limits for heads of government and some still have monarchies.[14] Against the backdrop of Chavez's longstanding dispute with the Bush administration, it must be noticed that the UK government is the most common target of harsh criticisms by the Venezuelan leader. In 2006, after being reproached by Tony Blair for his close connections to undemocratic Cuba, Chavez told the former British prime minister to 'go right to hell' and challenged the UK to return the Falklands islands to Argentina in the name of democratic sovereignty.[15]

Interestingly, the fact that the EU mission accepted the overall results of the 2006 elections was exploited by the Venezuelan government to criticize the US administration, which according to Caracas continued issuing "single-sourced condemnations of Chavez and mischaracterizations of Venezuela's political, economic and social process" in spite of the approval of "international organizations" such as the EU.

These examples show that the Venezuelan government's discourse in part depicts the EU has an international power marked by double-standards, which adopts inconsistent policies toward the Bolivarian government and often criticizes Venezuela for initiatives that would be

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[12] 'Europarlamento: Precedente alarmante', *El Nacional*, 24 May 2007
[13] 'Chavez accused of censorship over threat to close TV station', *The Independent*, 10 May 2007.
[14] http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/noticias/chavez-el-socialismo-sera-el-reino-de-la-igualdad-el-reino-de-la-justicia..html
[15] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/feb/09/venezuela.usa

acceptable (if not desirable) in the European context. At the same time, though, the EU's overall approval is purposefully exploited to account for the democratic record of the Bolivarian government.

The amount of coverage of the EU's actions in the field of democracy promotion remains relevant, although much more significant for opposition forces and anti-government groups. Obviously also some critics of Chavez's government recognize the inconsistencies of the EU's policies to support human rights and democracy, although from the opposite perspective. As remarked by a columnist critical of the Bolivarian government, "the results obtained by the EU in favour of democracy in Venezuela are not satisfactory. Yet there is a worse case. What has the EU achieved in Cuba? […] there have been many false promises and ambiguities, but no progress with respect to human rights and democracy."[16]

4.3 Trade and bilateral relations: opportunity or paternalist colonizer?

The sector labeled 'trade and bilateral relations' is the second most common context within which the EU is mentioned in this media analysis. Nevertheless, the Venezuelan polarization is also evident as to how the EU is perceived in the field of international trade and bilateral relations with Latin America and Venezuela.

Within this context, most of the articles analyzed directly refer the decision of the Venezuelan government to leave the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) in 2006, following the CAN decision to negotiate a free trade agreement with the US and the EU. As a response to what were reported as criticisms of the 'international community', the Minister of Foreign Affairs declared: "Who is the international community? […] The US and the EU are not the international community. What is important is what millions of human beings who live in the world think and this cannot be reduced to some great powers."[17]

[16] Ramòn Escovar Salom, 'Venezuela ante el mundo', *El Nacional*, 27 May 2006.
[17] 'Por la razon que salimos de la CAN nos vamos a retirar muy pronto del G3', *El Nacional*, 21 May 2006.

In the field of international trade, the Venezuelan government has not spared criticisms against the EU. In a speech delivered at the opening of the XII G-15 Summit in 2004, the Venezuelan leader reiterated the oft-mentioned criticism against EU agricultural subsidies: "I want to tell you – and this is true and verifiable data – that each cow grazing in the European Union receives in its four stomachs $2.20 dollars a day in subsidies, thus having a better situation than 2.5 billion poor people in the South who hardly survive with an income less than 2 dollars a day."[18]

Similarly, the Minister of Information Willian Lara explains why, from a the point of view of international trade and financial reforms, there is no big difference between the EU and the US as they both act as neo-liberal agents and perpetuate injustices:

> The fact that Venezuela takes control of its oil resources through the conformation of mixed enterprises, which has been accepted by almost all foreign companies […], this attacks the 'rule of law' according to Barroso. So, in order to make the EU happy, we should promulgate the private property of multinationals over all energy resources of Latin America […] and poverty and misery for the peoples of the sub-continent. Barroso's proposals are astonishingly similar to the FTAA proposed by Bush and remind us of the practices of the European colonizers toward the indigenous people.[19]

Inevitably, the 'defiant' pro-South discourse of the Venezuelan government affects the way in which the EU is portrayed, particularly when it attempts to influence the decisions of Latin American governments: the EU interference in domestic politics is often portrayed as a challenge to the notion of 'democratic sovereignty', which is quite central to the Bolivarian government's discourse. Moreover, Lara's remarks introduce an additional lens through which the Venezuelan government looks at the EU besides the north-south dispute, that is, the colonial past. In this regard, it must be noticed that, in the Bolivarian discourse, the 'colonial factor' is reinterpreted in a contemporary light to reinforce the cause of the new 'liberation' against a new form of

[18] http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27a/155.html
[19] Willian Lara, 'Bush Durao Barroso', *El Nacional*, 15 May 2006.

'empire', which is led by the US but is also made up of those neo-liberal forces that pervade Europe.

4.4 Conflict and international balance of powers

As regards the international balance of powers, the Venezuelan government has long been pushing for a radical reform in global governance institutions. In its quest to give Venezuela a prime position in the international arena, Chavez has not only ambitioned to a permanent seat at the UN security council, but he has also forged strong alliances with governments that have challenged the US hegemony, from Russia, to China and Iran. It was during a state visit by the Iranian president Ahmadinejad in 2007 that the Venezuelan president commented on the American plan to invade Iran and told the EU and European countries not to follow 'this invention, another big lie by the imperialist government of the United States to justify an aggression against the Iranian people'.[20] Together with Ahmadinejad, he also proposed to adopt the Euro for at least part of the international transactions of oil producing countries. At the same time, Chavez's Energy Minister reassured the EU that "they will have a guaranteed supply" of oil from Venezuela in spite of the instability they often create in the oil-producing countries, in particular Iraq.[21]

Once again, if the EU is distinguished from the US because of its diplomatic approach to the Iranian crisis, it is nevertheless assimilated to the 'Yankees' in other contexts, in particular as regards the fight against terrorism. In 2007, the Venezuelan government criticized the EU for having included the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), with which Caracas entertains close relations, in the list of terrorist organizations. Interestingly, though, the Venezuelan government spared no effort to convince the EU that the FARC were not a terrorist

[20] http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/11/20/europe/EU-GEN-France-Venezuela-Iran.php
[21] http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/117976.html

group and maintained that this was a 'misunderstanding', while no initiative has ever been taken to lobby the US to revise their policy toward the Colombian guerrilla.[22]

4.5. The EU as 'a better option': development policies, energy and the common currency

Notwithstanding common accusations, it would be inaccurate to argue that the Venezuelan government does not make distinctions between the US and the EU. Indeed, while the US is the specific target of the 'chavista' discourse and George Bush is described as 'the devil', the EU (and Europe more generally) is often seen as a global player with which dialogue is possible. For instance, in one of his recurrent attacks against the US administration, the Venezuelan president has recently affirmed that "the US empire is coming down" and called the European Union "a better option", which will also serve as an example for the Latin American efforts to constitute a common currency.[23] It appears that such a different attitude toward EU is due to the fact that 'Europe' is made up of many countries, with very different views on issues such as international governance, interventionism and globalization. If the UK can be easily assimilated to the 'American empire', Germany and Spain have been much more willing to listen to the demands of developing countries, while Chirac's France forged closed relations with Venezuela. Similarly, the former deputy president of Venezuela could maintain in 2006 that "we have excellent relations with the European Union", especially grassroots actors, such as cooperatives and social movements.[24]

In the government's discourse, it is also the social welfare of Europe to be used as an example of successful policy. According to a Chavez's advisor in charge of Ideological Education, the European continent is a good example of a "socialism of the 21st century", which

[22] http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/3087
[23] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/19/AR2007111900400.html
[24] 'Rangel: en Venezuela no enriquecemos uranio', *El Nacional*, 20 March 2006.

they reached through "a socialist tax system, where the ones who have more pay more" while in Venezuela "state capitalism coexists with redistribution of wealth and market socialism."[25]

Therefore, there seems to be an ambivalent perception of the EU and Europe at large. If on the one hand, the EU acts as a 'imperial' force when it laments the deterioration of the rule of law in Venezuela and the abuse of power by Chavez's government, or impose free trade plans on South America, on the other hand, it is at least a 'better option' than the US and a partner with whom Venezuela can establish a more enduring relationship, especially in the field of energy resources and development. In a recent interview, Rodrigo Chaves, Venezuela's former Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs for Europe, perfectly captures this ambivalence:

> I think that there are undoubtedly countries in Europe which are strongly influenced by the interests and opinions of the United States. But there are also a string of countries that have a capacity for constructive criticism, that have a capacity for self-determination in their decision-making. […] That has allowed for the balance which today exists in the European Union with regard to Venezuela […], to be in one way or another not biased towards a pro-U.S. position. […] Multipolarity for us is a central element of our foreign policy. From the outset we define ourselves as anti-imperialists, and if we are anti-imperialists we must promote multi-polar relationships between peoples and governments.[…] And today we are strengthening South-South relationships with entire continents such as Africa, with our own continent, Latin America and the Caribbean, and of course with Asia, with whom we have a close relationship today, with Eurasia, with countries such as Russia, Belarus and with Europe - and of course Eurasia is part of that great Europe. I would say we are intensifying our relations and alliances in an impressive way and I think that the balance at the moment is very positive in the relationship between Europe and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.[26]

A number of intellectuals and columnists who are not aligned with the Bolivarian government (which does not mean they are part of the opposition forces) share a generally

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[25] http://www.marxist.com/challenges-facing-venezuelan-revolution050907.htm

[26] 'Venezuela and Europe: Towards a Different Kind of Politics', 23 October 2007, available at http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2754

favourable perception of the EU too, although divergent opinions are also present among opinion makers. According to them, the EU "has grown slowly, because it does not depend on populism […] nor on ideology", but rather on "various points of convergence, such as wellbeing, support, solidarity and interrelation."[27] At the same time, though, the EU is accused of "contributing to poverty and unemployment, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, being complacent toward the use of drugs."[28] For those who are more interested in economic development, the EU is a reference point because it has shown how a form of pooled sovereignty can produce positive outcomes, while "the concept of national sovereignty endorsed by Chavez and Castro has been dismissed all over the world."[29]

In this regard, Europe is not only seen as being more advanced than Latin American states, but it is perceived as a more credible global player than the US. This is further confirmed by an op-ed dated 19 January 2008, according to which the European Union "is an example for the American continent":

> Will Europe be the light amid the darkness that surrounds us? Its contribution to global civilization can be transcendental because of its spirit and way of life, its moral standards, its commitment to peace and multiculturalism […]. It would be great! Europe will not achieve that through authoritarianism or imperialism, but will lead the world with wisdom and responsibility.[30]

5. Conclusions: policy recommendations and the 'way ahead'

As this paper shows, the 'images of the EU' in Venezuela are affected by the polarization of the country and must be analyzed and interpreted within this particular context. Although its popular approval rate has grown from 1996 to 2000, then declined until 2003 and increased

[27] Alvaro Requena, 'Quimeras', *El Nacional*, 2 March 2007.
[28] Idem.
[29] Andres Oppenheimer, 'America Latina se cayò del mapa', *El Nacional*, 5 March 2006.
[30] Alberto Krygier, 'Europa, una nueva luz', *El Nacional*, 19 January 2008.

again after 2004, the EU nevertheless remains a relatively unknown entity to most Venezuelans: only a minority of citizens know 'enough' about the EU, although the number of those who do not have an opinion about the EU has decreased in the past ten years, whereby closing the gap with the US. However, more recent data is needed to assess whether the growing familiarity with the EU's policies is contributing toward a more positive opinion or rather the opposite, that is, some sort of disillusionment with the EU.

By and large, this preliminary analysis (which was exclusively based on the currently available data) has also shown that the EU enjoys a particular status within the Venezuelan political debate: it is much less relevant than the Latin American region or the ideal community of 'emerging countries', but is a 'better option' than the US. Interestingly, this preference toward the EU (vis-à-vis the US) is common to governmental groups, opposition forces and independent intellectual alike.

This poses a number of opportunities and challenges for the EU, particularly in light of the strategic importance that Venezuela can play not only in Latin America, but in the whole world as a growing supplier of energy, which makes the relationship with this country even more crucial for an energy-thirsty EU.

The key opportunity is, of course, to exploit the comparative advantage the EU currently has to strengthen its relationship with Venezuela. This could be done through :

- support for the inclusion of Venezuela in the main regional communities existing in the continent (i.e. CAN and Mercosur) so as to avoid Venezuela becoming an isolated 'pariah' in the international community;
- commitment toward dialoguing with the Bolivarian government and the opposition forces without prejudices and preconceived ideas, in order to ease the longstanding polarization that stifles the country;

- new forms of collaboration in the social fields, which are of crucial importance to the Bolivarian government but do not receive significant support from European countries and are often left to bilateral cooperation (such as the one between Venezuela and Cuba);
- a new strategy to attract Venezuelan oil and gas, most of which is bound to the American market (in spite of the belligerent rhetoric of Washington and Caracas) because of infrastructural convenience.

Most likely, this comparative advantage will not last too long. As argued in the section regarding public opinion, it is possible that the more favourable approval rate of the EU (as opposed to the US) is very much dependent on the anti-American rhetoric that is widespread in the country, rather than on factual knowledge about the EU. In many respects, the rivalry that opposes Venezuela and the US is a rhetorical construction that will not live long after the upcoming turnover in Washington. Most probably, Chavez's anti-imperialist discourse will fade out once a more moderate president is installed at the White House and the two countries will inevitably come closer and closer. It is also likely that a new American administration will look at Latin America in a different way and will possibly attempt to strength regional integration, rather than undermine it.

Therefore, this is a time-bound opportunity for the EU that might not present itself again in the near future. The fact that Europe/EU is seen more favourably by all sectors within the Venezuelan society does not mean that disillusioned views are not present. As argued by a Venezuelan observer of the EU on the occasion of the constitutional reform of the EU :

> The European integration process has achieved much in the past half a century. […] Yet, the EU is likely to become a Babel tower in the next years due to the difficulties facing it. […] It is an unnatural project from an historical point of view. There has never been a more segmented, divided and deeply nationalistic continent. […] How can they accept it, if the only thing these countries have in common

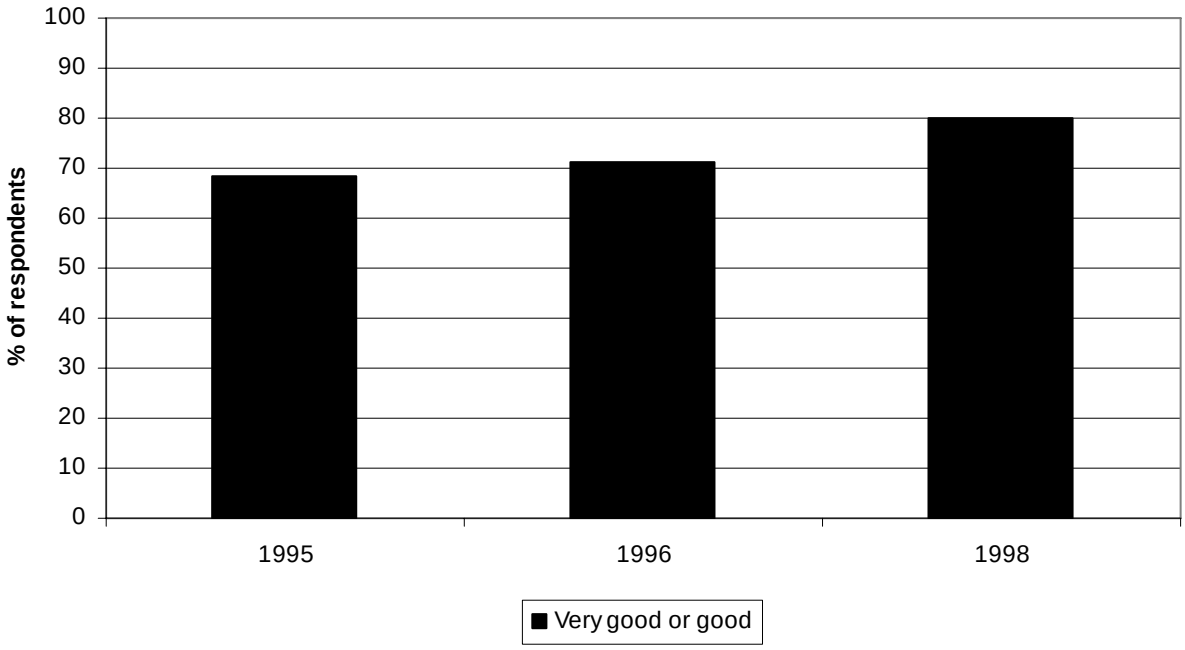
> is the hatred they inherited from wars and invasions? […] The European Union will continue being – who knows for how long – that utopia people invent to delude themselves.[31]

The opportunity would have been lost if views such as the this were to become more dominant.

[31] José Font Castro, 'La Europa de Babel', *El Nacional*, 21 October 2006.

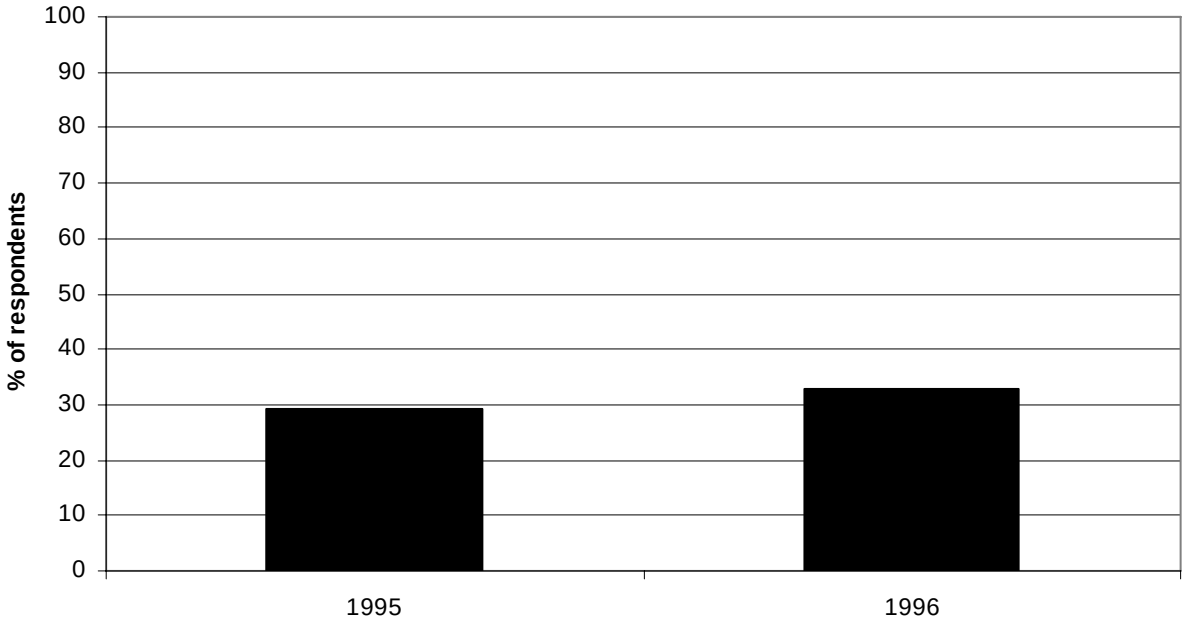
Annexes

Figure 5 – Opinion of the EU action in Venezuela



Source: Author's elaboration on raw data from Latinobarometro (www.latinobarometro.org)

Figure 6 – How many Venezuelans have heard of the EU's activities in Latin America



Source: Author's elaboration on raw data from Latinobarometro (www.latinobarometro.org)

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

Director of Research: Sonia Lucarelli (sonia.lucarelli@unibo.it)
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REPORT ON
The EU in the Eyes of the African Union

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial contribution to the project.

A CONTESTED MODEL AND PARTNER

The EU in the eyes of the African Union

Executive Summary

EU Africa policy triggers mixed reactions from Africa. The way in which the African Union represents the EU shows broad support to the founding principles of European foreign policies, but also criticism about the way these policies are promoted.

The EU is portrayed as a preferential partner in peace-building and democracy construction, a model to imitate and a leader in international negotiations. At the same time, though, several limits of EU foreign policy emerge from the declarations of some African leaders, especially in the Sub-Saharan region.

The EU is perceived as a rather weak actor in terms of peace-building capacity, and is depicted as a neocolonial player who provides development aid mainly on the basis of rigid conditionality measures.

Finally and foremost it is considered as a “hard power” in its attempt to impose its model of integration and its strategy to speed up liberalization of Sub-Saharan African economies.

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A CONTESTED MODEL AND PARTNER

The EU in the eyes of the African Union

Daniela Sicurelli

1. Introduction[1]

The African Union (AU) was founded in 2002 as a successor of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) and of the African Economic Community, respectively established in 1963 and 1981. The institutional structure of the AU has been explicitly modeled on that of the EU. Like the EU, the AU has a Commission, a Council, a Parliament and a Court of Justice. This similarity appears also in the range of policies the two organizations adopt. Both in the case of the EU and in the case of the AU, the integration process is primarily intended as a strategy to pursue peace, stability and economic development and covers several policy areas, from trade to security. The Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP), established in 2004 by the AU, is the African version of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). These similarities in the institutional structure of the two organizations and in the issues they cover can be considered as facilitating factors for Europe-Africa diplomatic relations and policy coordination. At the same time, with the emerging of areas of common concern and with the creation of institutional venues for dialogue, opportunities for African governments to express their feedback on European foreign policy have increased.

The EU and the AU have established dialogue on several topics, including issues that have traditionally dominated Europe-Africa relations as well as other areas that have more recently emerged in EU external relations. EU foreign policy towards Africa has historically focused on trade and development cooperation. More recently also other issues, such as peacebuilding and environmental protection, have started to play a major role in EU-Africa relations. The EU is the international actor that provides the greatest amount of financial aid to support peacekeeping and development cooperation, often in partnership with the United Nations (UN) and the AU. In this respect, its foreign policy differs substantially from that of the US, who provides less financial aid to support multilateral peacekeeping efforts in the continent and is less involved in programmes of capacity building in the fields of development and security. The key principles the EU aims to

[1] Special thanks also to Maria Stella Rognoni, Arrigo Pallotti and the contributors to the second survey for their comments and support.

promote through these policies are *regionalism*, the *integration of development and security goals* and the idea of *shared but differentiated responsibility* in tackling global environmental problems. Moreover, European official documents emphasize the aim to provide the AU and African states with the capability to implement these goals within their own strategies and instruments (that is to say by advocating the principle of *local ownership*).

This paper tries to draw the image of the EU emerging from official documents and speeches of the AU and other regional and sub-regional organizations representing African states involved in the AU/EU negotiations. Besides presenting collective documents, this paper takes into account also positions of the leaders of Member States of the AU. Moreover, interviews to actors involved in the negotiations are also considered. The time frame of this article covers the years after the creation of the AU (2002-2008). Indeed, special attention is provided to the AU-EU Summit (Lisbon, December 2007), which has been a key event in Africa-Europe relations and has produced relevant joint documents of the two institutions. Finally, with respect to peace-building and trade policies, this paper pays special attention to AU perceptions of EU policies towards Sub-Saharan Africa. A reason for this focus is that all ESDP missions are directed to this region and the negotiations for the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), which have dominated the agenda of the EU-AU Lisbon Summit[2], involve only the Sub-Saharan group of member states. Thus, while the overall analysis concerns the AU as a whole, the more policy-oriented evaluation is particularly focused on EU policies toward Sub-Saharan African countries due to their relevance at the recent Lisbon Summit.

The first part of the paper presents the way AU leaders react to EU principles related to peace-building, democracy and human rights, the second focuses on the impact of EU trade policies on AU views, and the third part investigates on the way European environmental policies are received. These findings allow me to conclude with a discussion of the impact of the perceptions of African leaders on EU foreign policy decisions.

2. EU foreign policy towards Africa

EU's Africa policy mainly concerns actions related to peacebuilding, democracy promotion, trade and environmental protection. Each of these policies, at least formally, is integrated within EU development cooperation programmes.

[2] EU-Africa relations have traditionally concentrated on two separate relations: EU-Sub-Saharan Africa relations (in the framework of EU development cooperation policy) and EU-North Africa relations (in the framework of EU neighborhood policy). With the creation of the AU, the two macro-regions have established bilateral relations, but Sub-Saharan Africa has maintained a special status for the EU: it is the target of the EDF and of the EPA negotiations.

Building peace and democracy

European involvement in peacebuilding, democracy support and human rights promotion in Africa has increased over time, especially since the 2000s. Between 1996 and 1999 the EU has allocated 115 million euro for supporting election assistance and observation (of which 71 million was spent in Africa) and has directed 180 million euro to programmes of direct support to *human rights and democratization* financed under the European Development Fund (EDF) covering the 1997-2000 time frame, followed by13.5 billion euro for the 2000-2007 period.

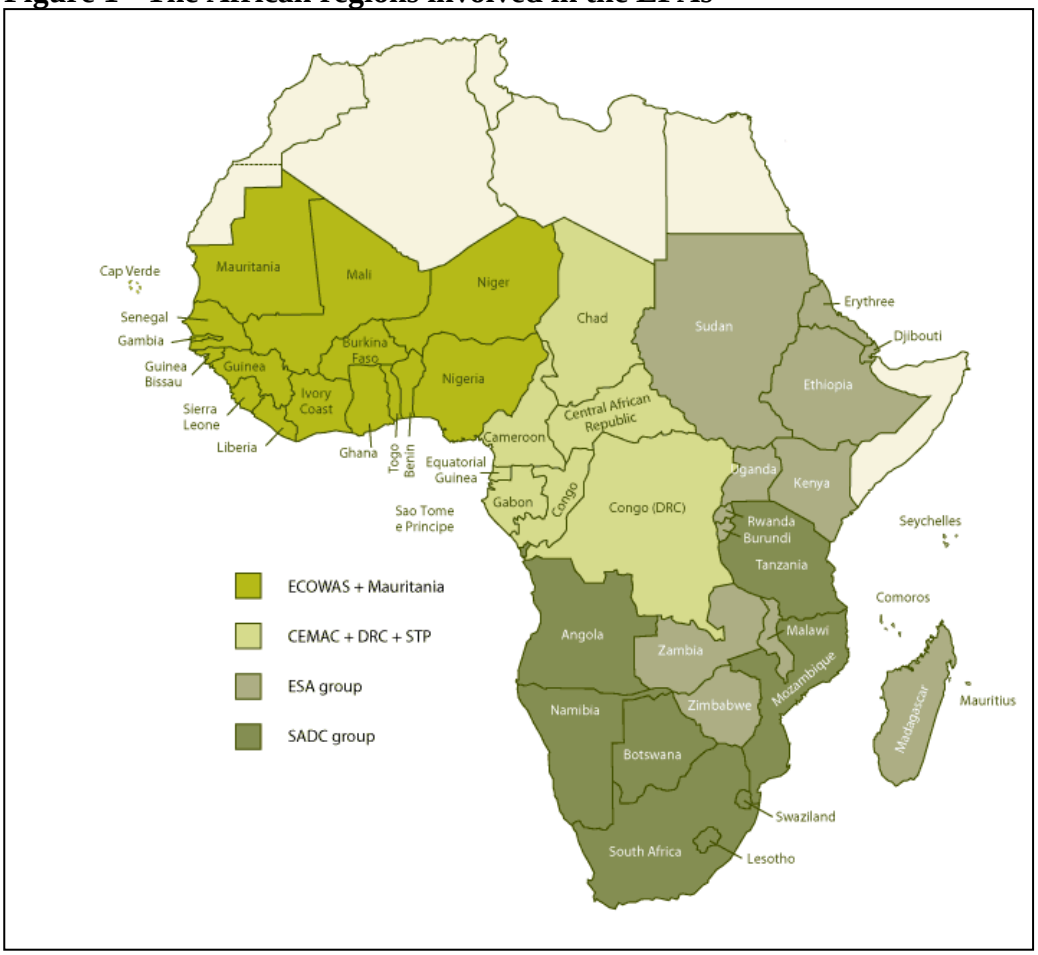
Since 2000, the EU has carried out nine election observation missions in Sub-Saharan Africa adopting both development cooperation programmes and military instruments. During the same period, the number of economic and diplomatic sanctions the EU imposed against African countries increased. Each of these sanctions was multilateral in character, both because it involved all the EU member states and because it was in accordance with broader UN initiatives. As far as human right promotion is concerned, the initiatives of the European Community in Africa have increased since the '70s. Also in this case, priorities have changed over time, with the reforms of European Community agreements with the African, Caribean and Pacific (ACP) Countries. Currently, EU external policy in the field of human rights mainly focuses on the campaign for the abolition of death penalty, the promotion of the rights of the child and indigenous people, the promotion of international criminal law, and the fight against human trafficking and torture.

Since the late 90s, the EU has been active also in programmes of *conflict prevention* and *peace-building* in Africa. With the establishment of ESDP in 2003 the EU started to carry out civilian and military missions aimed at conflict prevention and management in Africa (a military mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003, three civilian and military missions in DRC between 2005 and 2006 and a civilian mission in Sudan in 2005) and is currently carrying out a further military mission, lead by the French, in Chad and in the Central African Republic and planning a civilian mission to Guinea. Moreover, since 2004, the EU has developed a new strategy for contributing to peace and development in the African continent, involving allocation of funds to the African Peace Facility. In so doing, it supports AU-lead peacebuilding and development initiatives. The funds the EU provided the Facility with (€50 million in the short term and €300 million for the period 2008-2010) (Counci of the EU, 2006) have been used so far in peacebuilding activities in Sudan and Somalia. With these actions, the EU tries to promote a distinct set of principles, mainly related to regional cooperation, structural stability, human rights and democracy.

Trade and aid

As far as trade policy is concerned, the Cotonou agreement (2000) between the EU and the ACP states (including former European colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, Pacific and Caribbean countries) introduced major changes in their trade relations, putting an end to the preferential scheme that had been established by the various Lomè conventions since 1975. In Cotonou the two parties formalized the dialogue for liberalizing trade relations and started negotiations for new agreements (the EPAs). In carrying out these negotiations, the EU has fostered interregional dialogue with pre-existing and new ACP sub-regions. The Cotonou agreement created new geographical groupings, whose geographical borders differ from, and partially overlap with, pre-existing regional economic communities and customs unions (such as COMESA, SADC, SACU, EAC and ECOWAS). This agreement pushes Sub-Saharan countries into establishing free trade areas only with the countries that are part of the newly established regions, whereby undermining the role of pre-existing regional economic communities. Figure 1 presents the regional groupings of Sub-Saharan countries participating in the EPAs negotiations.

Figure 1 - The African regions involved in the EPAs



Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers and the European Commission, The EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements, http://www.sia-acp.org/acp/uk/index02.php

The Cotonou agreement provided least developed countries (LDCs) with an exceptional status in the reciprocity relationship. In order to avoid further marginalization of these countries in the international trade, the Cotonou agreement stated that until 2009 the EU would provide duty-free access to import of products from LDCs included in the ACP group, with the exception of trade of arms and ammunitions (Everything but Arms: EBA[3]). This preferential treatment of LDCs does not clash with WTO rules, since it is meant to be a form of discrimination based on a shared development category (Draper, 2007). The potential benefits of EBA in terms of development for the LDCs coming, though, appear limited if one considers that three key products for the export from these countries were excluded from such liberalization, namely banana, sugar and rice. At the same time the EU started to "untie" aid allocation to African countries, in order to make development cooperation autonomous from trade considerations. Finally, the EU included environmental and social clauses within trade agreements with AU countries, such as the promotion of sustainable development and human rights within WTO negotiations and the identification of UN treaties on climate change, biodiversity and human rights as a condition for trade deals.

Protection of the environment

EU environmental policy has been increasingly integrated with European development cooperation and has recently entered the agenda of EU-AU relations. In the framework of global environmental politics, climate change is the issue that attracts greater attention by the EU, but also biodiversity, and specifically the application of biotechnology to agriculture, has a central role in its Africa policy. These topics are being discussed within international negotiations such as, for instance, the UN Convention on Climate Change or the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The EU has adopted conditionality measures to promote ratification of international environmental agreements. In the so called "GSP Plus" agreement, which entered into force in 2006, the EU proposed to provide development aid to the ACP countries under the condition that those countries ratify, or show progress in the direction of ratifying and implementing, a list of international conventions concerning core human and labour rights, good governance and environmental issues. Moreover, both the AU and the ACP Secretariat have put into place joint actions on environmental matters.

[3] The EBA program is directed to all LDCs, including also non-ACP countries such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. These countries, though, being excluded from the Cotonou agreement, do not enjoy the same preferential system established by the EU for ACP LDC countries. Therefore, in other to provide assistance to the efforts of integration into the WTO of non-ACP LDC, the EU would need to draft a new agreement, compatible with WTO rules, with these countries.

In the following sections of the paper I investigate the way the elites of the AU (representatives of AU institutions and member states, AU delegates in international negotiations and representatives of sub-regional organizations) perceive EU policies towards Africa. I do not consider the way African public opinion sees the EU for two main reasons. First, there is only one major survey of African public opinion including a question on the general perceptions of the EU, namely the Afrobarometer. This survey poses a question related to the degree of knowledge of the EU, but does not include questions on how European policies are perceived. Second, the data from the most recent wave of the Afrobarometer (2006) confirm that almost the totality of respondents to the survey (which includes 16 Sub-Saharan African countries) do not have an opinion about the EU. It is important to note that respondents to this survey have declared a low knowledge also of other organizations, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the African Union, which suggests that public opinion's attitude is not particularly relevant for an investigation of external perceptions of the EU. An exception to this respect is that of South Africa (see an analysis of South African public opinion on the EU in Fioramonti, 2004). Nevertheless, in order to gather insights from the way civil society reacts to EU policies, I do take into account key positions of NGOs and interest groups expressed by some public documents.

3. Peace-building and democracy promotion

The reactions of AU leaders to European policies in the fields of peace-keeping, democracy and human rights provide a complex image of the EU, which appears as a preferential partner (especially when it finances AU-led operations) and an attractive model of peace-building. At the same time, though, its preferential status of partner in peace-building is increasingly challenged and its human right and democracy promotion policies are at time criticized for trying to impose certain European norms on other countries and cultures.

As opposed to other actors such as the US, the EU has long developed an approach to foreign policy based primarily (although not exclusively) on civilian means and structural stabilization processes, mainly due to a lack of conventional instruments of foreign policy such as an effective military power. This approach seems to find broad consensus in the AU. The "The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership" adopted in the Lisbon Summit (8-9 December 2007) presents a shared view of peace-building and pushes forward the idea of peace-making through long-term development and democratization. According to this document,

> Due to their history and experience, Africa and Europe understand the importance of peace and security as preconditions for political, economic and social development. On this basis, the two continents have

> laid the foundation for successful cooperation based on the need to promote holistic approaches to security, encompassing conflict prevention and long-term peace-building, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, linked to governance and sustainable development, with a view to addressing the root causes of conflicts.

AU leaders depict the EU as a model to achieve **peace through integration**. This perception of the EU as a model regional integration emerges in various speeches of African leaders during the initial stages of the AU. In 2002, Ambassador SAID Djinnit (the then OAU Assistant Secretary General in charge of Political Affairs) made reference to the EU as a model for African integration involving economic but also security issues. In a document by the title of *Building an effective African Union* he argued: "I strongly believe that an effective African Union should be built on a solid ground and on a set of shared values in the areas of security, stability, development and cooperation. The EU construction has been possible only when the European countries agreed on common values to sustain their common endeavour" (Djinnit, 2002). In the same year, the ambassador of Ghana at the UN Security Council reiterated even more explicitly this view of the EU as a model for integration, arguing that "Given the historical links between Africa and Europe, perhaps the infant African Union could benefit from the experiences of the European Union" (United Nations, 2002). The European model of peace-building appears also in recent statements of AU leaders. Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs at the AU Commission, referring to the challenges Africa is facing with respect to problems of peace and security, governance and to the challenges coming from economic globalization, clearly stated that the EU is the model for Africa: "In view of the significant progress made by the European Union (EU) in similar endeavours, the AU stands to draw valuable lessons from the European experience" (Mkwezalamba, 2007).

Nevertheless AU delegates seem willing to learn EU lessons only to a limited extent. First, AU representatives do not seem to share with Europeans **the need to pool sovereignty**. The African Commission argues that, while the OAU was based on a purely inter-governmental approach, the creation of the AU has made the "Community and inter-governmental approach possible". Beside the "respect for national authority", the AU has introduced also the "right to intervene" on the national politics of the member states. As the Commission stresses, though, the AU has this right to intervene only "in grave circumstances" (AU, 2004a, pp.23-24). Second, different interpretations of the way African integration should affect the politics of the AU member states emerge within the AU. On the one hand, a representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria during a presentation at the Second Conference of African Ministers in charge of Integration (2007) expressed his support for a Union that goes beyond negative integration. According to him, "a

resolute effort would have to be made to harmonise institutions and economic policies at continental level" (AU, 2007a). On the other hand, according to a Mauritian diplomat in Brussels and a representative of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture, **African leaders and public in fact do not share the willingness of Europeans for a political union** (Interview to a member of the Mauritius Embassy in Brussels and a representative of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture, 13 February 2007).

EU foreign and security policy receives positive feedbacks when it comes to the financially support of EU-led peacekeeping operations. The AU itself had asked the EU to finance the African Peace Facility, in order to combine "strong African ownership of programme design and implementation with provisions for strategic and political EU-level involvement" (Joint Africa-EU Strategy, 2007). The Chairperson of the AU Commission presented the African Peace Facility as an effective instrument to contribute to peacekeeping in Africa 'under the African leadership': "The Facility established by the Commission of the European Union to strengthen the Peace Fund is remarkable. I am convinced that the Commission of the European Union will trust the leadership of the African Union as regards its management to defend both the interests of the Regional Communities and the African countries" (AU, 2004b).

AU leaders have so far expressed positive reactions to the actual contribution of the Facility to peace-building in Africa, despite the difficult tasks it pursues. Said Djinnit (2003), Commissioner of the AU for Peace and Security, considers the Facility crucial in order to make AU peacekeeping missions possible. According to the Commissioner, "This is particularly true with the current efforts at peacekeeping in the Darfur region which enabled the AU to extend the mandate of the mission in Sudan by three months as a result of the contribution of 30 million Euro by the EU" (Djinnit, quoted in Reuters, 2006). Also the AU Ministerial Troika[4] expressed its "appreciation for EU support for African Mission in Sudan (AMIS), including the replenishment of the African Peace Facility and additional bilateral EU Member States contributions" (AU, 2007b). The Ministers of defence and security of a sub-region of the AU, the Eastern African Region, have pointed at the African Peace Facility as an opportunity for their peacekeeping goals, expecting that the Eastern African Standby will benefit from it (Eastern Africa Region, 2004).

That said, though, the **African Peace Facility was not spared some criticisms** by AU leadership. The most crucial problem raised by the Facility is related to the fact that the EU finances

[4] The AU Troika participating in the Accra meeting in 2007 included the following representatives: H. E. Akwasi Osei Adjei, MP Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ghana and current chairperson of the AU Executive Council, H. E. Luís Amado, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal and Representative of the European Union Presidency; H.E. Madame Adelaide Moundele NGollo, Minister of Trade of the Republic of Congo; Dr Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, and Ambassador Said Djinnit, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security.

this instrument with the EDF, which is formally meant for development cooperation with ACP countries. The AU Commissioner Djinnit expressed doubts about the risk that the allocation of EDF budget for the Facility has negative consequences for Africa since it erodes EU financial support to other development cooperation programmes. In his words, "The commitment of European funding initially earmarked for development to finance peacekeeping operations raised ethical and moral problems" (Djinnit, 2007).

Besides the African Peace Facility, also other instruments of financial support (e.g. EU allocation of funds to reconciliation, demobilization and other peace-building programmes) get positive reactions among AU leaders and representatives of the member states. The Peace and Security Council of the AU, meeting in its tenth Session in 2004, describes the financial support provided by the European Union to the peace process in Somalia as "badly needed" (AU, 2004c). In the same year, the Benin's ambassador to the UN Security Council stressed that "We (…) encourage initiatives, such as that of the European Commission, geared towards preparing demobilization programmes supported by community development projects so that former fighters will no longer have any incentive to continue fighting" (Adechi, 2004). Similarly, in the same occasion, the Ethiopian ambassador to the UN Security Council argued that "we are all grateful for the support rendered to the peace process during the past two years by the international community in general, and by the European Union in particular" (Sinegiorgis, 2004).

The EU's deployment of ESDP missions or support to national governments in conflict areas (from Darfur to the DRC and Somalia) has also been seen as tainted with **inconsistency**. With respect to the EU mission to Darfur, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Konare, "hailed the cooperation between the AU, the UN, the United States, the European Union, Canada and other partners, which led to the May 5 signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA)", as a report of the AU Commission official newsletter notes. Nevertheless, the newsletter continues, this international effort involving the EU was not completely effective in furthering peace in Darfur, since "two rebel groups are still holding out" (AU Commission, 2006). In order to assess EU contribution to peace-building in Darfur, the deputy secretary-general of the UN Mallock Brown pointed also at the need of the EU to strengthen its internal cohesion: "The EU is important because I suspect that (the government in Sudan) sees differences of emphasis even within Europe. If Barroso can narrow those differences and give a sense of demonstrating a common Europe anxiety and urgency, then that is the key" (Beatty, 2006).

The case of the EU Artemis mission in the DRC (2003) provides a further example of the AU leaders' mixed reactions with respect to the European efforts to improve security and humanitarian conditions. The South African contribution of troops to the first military mission of the EU

(Artemis) is evidence of a positive appreciation of the EU's role in this field, particularly, if one considers that South Africa has a key role in the AU security policy. This support is remarkable if one takes into account the fact that members of the South African government have often expressed negative assessments of other aspects of EU external policy, in particular trade. Nevertheless, the head of the MONUC mission in Bunia, Alpha Sow raised more detailed criticisms about Artemis, arguing that the mission was not effective because of its short mandate and because it focused only on a small region.

Also the Somali case shows the perception of limits in the EU peace-building strategy, due to the **lack of capacity of grasping the complex reality of local politics**. Abdullahi Mohamed Dualeh, the foreign minister of the self-declared state of Somaliland commented that attempts by the EU to build peace were bound to fail because of the EU support of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government, which appears unwilling to reconcile the country's many ethnic groups, as EU officials came to admitting later on (Beatty, 2007).

EU initiatives of *democracy promotion and human rights* have proved successful in gathering consensus among the African leaders, although also in this case support for foreign policy has its limitations. Back in 1994, the Council of the OAU considered the EU as a major partner of democracy promotion in South Africa. The Council of the Ministers of the OAU commented "the positive contribution of the UN, the Commonwealth and the European Union Observer Missions in South Africa" after the end of Apartheid (OAU, 1994). More recently, according to the Political Affairs Directorate of the AU, "The establishment of the Resource Center for Governance, Democracy and Human Rights of the AU testifies to the partnership between the African Union, the European Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote Governance, Democracy, Human Rights and Gender equality as the cornerstones of Africa's renaissance" (Shawul, 2005).

Nevertheless, EU conditionality measures used in the fields of *human rights* have raised harsh criticism among representatives of African civil society. According to the Chair of the Cluster session of the Consultation of the African Civil Society Organizations, Professor Bayo Olukoshi, Africa must be co-definer of conditionality measures as "there is no basis for Africa to accept **conditions that are pre-determined by others** as pre-conditions for partnerships" (AU, 2007c). Moreover, mixed feedback was given with respect to EU financial support to the governance instruments of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which includes the African Peer Review Mechanism, where African leaders are called to identify states lagging behind in terms of good governance. This mixed feedback is evident if one considers that as of May 2008, slightly more than half of the African countries (29 out of 53) had formally signed up to it.

A final critical issue was the EU position with regard to the participation of the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, in the AU-EU Lisbon Summit (December 2007), since all members of Mugabe's government are targets of EU diplomatic sanctions due to gross human rights violation committed against the Zimbabwean opposition forces. On the one hand, AU member states participating in the meeting supported the EU in expressing their concern about crucial cases of bad governance, included the case of human rights violations in Zimbabwe (Kotsopoulos and Sidiropoulos, 2007). On the other hand, the President of the AU Commission Alpha Ouman Konare said that "What we would like is the summit between the EU and Africa, a very important and historic summit, to concentrate on the documents which are to be approved and not on President Robert Mugabe." "We will not let ourselves be bullied or pressurised regarding who (from Africa) should attend the Summit or not. That is why we as Africans had insisted that everyone (including Mugabe) should be present". (The Statesman, 2007). "Let's be honest", Konare said, "there are problems of governance, but Africans themselves have to sort these out, to tackle them head on. Otherwise we won't be able to get beyond our difficulties" (Doyle, 2007). These statements show that although the AU officially shares the EU concern for human rights violations in Zimbabwe, it did not include this problem among the priorities of the Summit between the two institutions. Other representatives of the AU member states have been even more extreme in criticizing European opposition against Mugabe, condemning the EU **'hard' approach to human right promotion**. According to Senegal's President, Abdoulaye Wade "Zimbabwe is making progress toward democracy and should be helped, not sanctioned" (Castle, 2007).

Trade policy

EU trade policy towards African countries, and specifically towards Sub-Saharan Africa, is the most controversial chapter of the EU-AU relations. The feedback of AU leaders to European trade policies confirms the contradictions of the external image of the EU. Although the European model of regional integration and creation of a free market does exert a certain degree of attraction, reactions of African leaders to European decisions are mainly negative. Trade is the only field where criticism against EU policy appears explicit even in official documents and speeches of AU representatives. Criticism against EU trade policy mainly concerns its lack of attention to development issues, its imposition of regional groupings, the unequal position the EU and the African states have in the EPA negotiations in terms of expertise, and the protectionist features of EU trade policy.

First of all, it must be underlined that AU leaders see EU's proposals in the EPA negotiations as a threat to African development goals, since EU pressures for liberalization of African economies

are not equally supported by development assistance projects. To this respect, in 2006 the trade ministers of the AU expressed their "profound disappointment at the stance taken by negotiators of the European Commission in so far as it does not adequately address the development concerns that must be the basis of relations with Africa." (AU, 2006). In the same year, representatives of countries of Eastern and Central Africa claimed that they would withdraw from the negotiations with the European Commission on the EPAs until the EU won't put development cooperation at the core of the negotiations (Fleming, 2006). In 2007 the AU trade ministers noted the "delay by the European Commission to respond to certain issues submitted by the African negotiators related, *inter alia,* to the **development dimension, market access and regional integration**" (AU, 2007d). Mogae, the President of Botswana, expressed the fear that, without development support, African "economies will not be able to withstand the pressures associated with liberalisation" (Griffith, 2006).

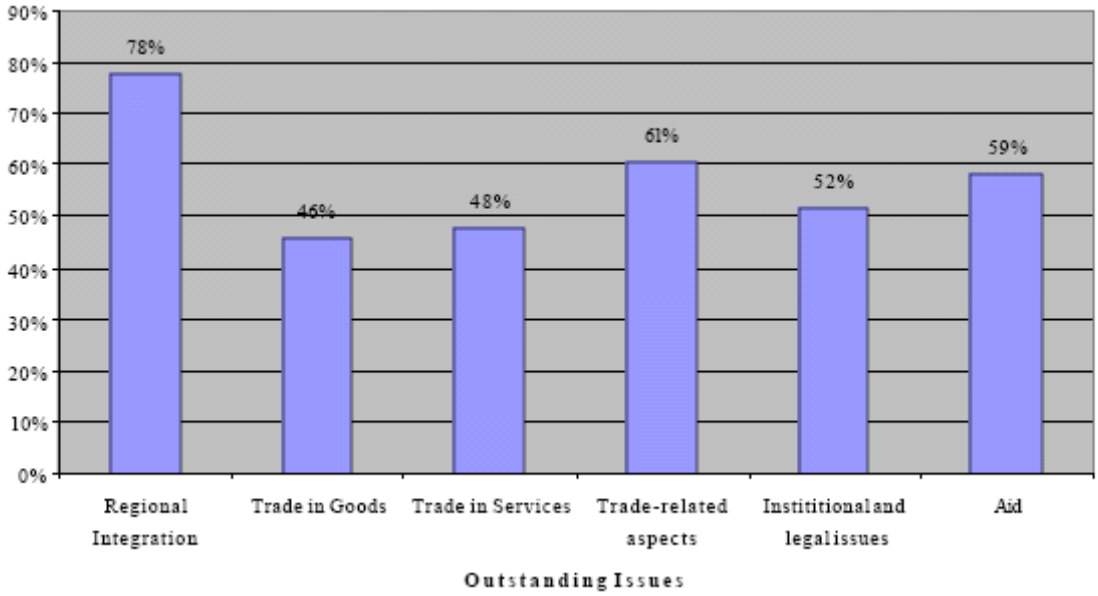
Even the EU's integration initiatives for African countries are viewed with mixed feelings by AU leaders. On the one hand, African countries participating in the EPA negotiations have endorsed the European proposal to deepen the process of integration within sub-regions in order to receive, in exchange, EU support for them to fulfill WTO requirements. In so doing, they would gain access to international economic agreements and, consequently, increase their status as actors in the international community. Ghanaian Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Chairperson of the economic commission of one of the regions involved in the EPAs negotiations –ECOWAS- stressed the positive role the EU has played in recent trade negotiations. He recognized with optimism the commitment of the Europeans to foster unity among African negotiators (Ndiaye, 2007). On the other hand, EU promotion of pan-African integration seems to clash with its parallel support of sub-regional organizations as partners of the EU in the EPA negotiations. A survey conducted by the African Trade Policy Center (2007), based on the results of interviews to negotiators of African sub-regions, shows that representatives of sub-regional organizations consider the **lack of coherence between regional integration and regional configurations** as the most outstanding issue within the EPA negotiations, followed by trade and aid issues of concern (see Figure 2[5]).

The Secretariat of one of the regions involved in the EPA negotiations, SADC, stated that one of the main challenges for its members was to ensure harmony between the various EPA agreements. SADC representatives complained about the difficulty of harmonizing "trade regimes with the EU in view of the existence of overlapping membership and trading arrangements is a

[5] The research project of the African Trade Policy Center (2007) is based on interviews to government negotiators (officials and experts) participating in the "Regional Negotiating Fora" of the sub-regional organizations involved in the EPA negotiations. This research project has been carried out with the support of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries Secretariat, the Economic Commission for Africa of the UN and the African Union, and sponsored by the Canadian and Danish governments. The sample of the interviewees is the following: 94 respondents comprising of sub-regional responses as follows: CEMAC (18); ESA (38); ECOWAS (15); and SADC (23).

challenge and concern from both an institutional and legal standpoint" (SADC Secretariat, 2005). These complaints are backed by AU leaders. Alpha Oumar Konare, the President of the AU Commission, criticized the trade agreements that the EU has proposed to the African members of the ACP group, arguing that they risk of "playing certain African regions off against each other" (Euractiv, 2007). Also the Council of the Ministers responsible for Trade of the Member States of the AU pointed at the "overlapping membership" between the EPAs and other regional agreements and at the "incongruence between the EPA negotiating configurations and regional integrating groupings" (AU, 2007d).

Figure 2 - Outstanding issues in the current EPA negotiations



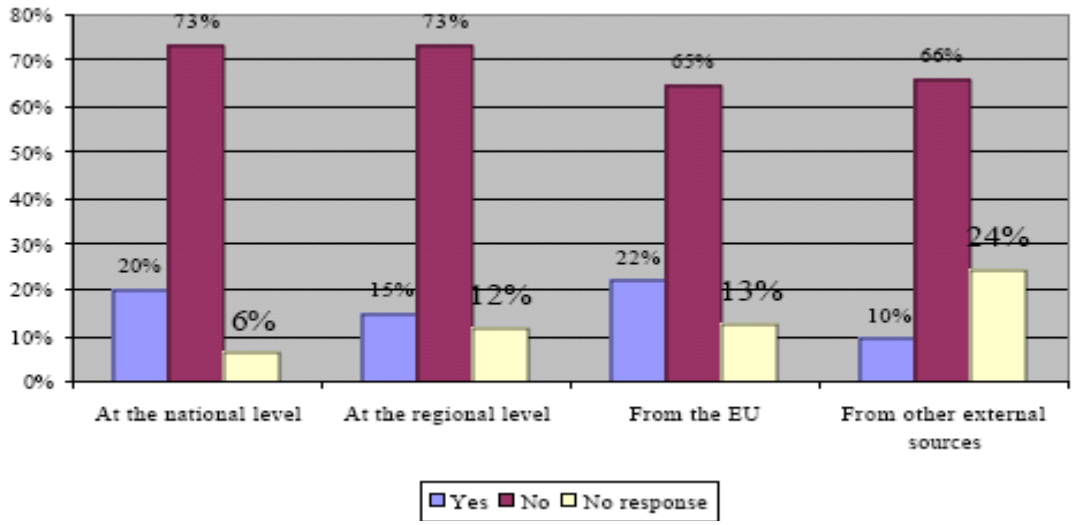
Source: African Trade Policy Centre, 2007, EPA Negotiations: African Countries Continental Review, 19 February, www.africanunion.org

AU representatives made it clear that African integration models and pace should be independent of the processes adopted by the EU. The trade ministers of the AU declared their expectation that "the African regions will be allowed to pursue their regional integration processes at a pace that is commensurate with their political, economical and social capacities" (AU, 2007d). Also the AU ministers in charge of integration have expressed resistance against the **imposition of models of integration** from the outside. To this respect, AU Ministers in charge of integration remarked that "it is (…) vital that the people of Africa own the process" of integration (AU, 2007a). Finally, a representative of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture and a representative of the embassy of Mauritius in Brussels argued that "the same formula of integration used by the EU in Europe cannot be superimposed on Africa. Africa is much more heterogeneous, in terms of goods production, than Europe 50 years ago. And it lacks infrastructures to link different countries. The problem is that either you believe in integration, either you don't. Many ACP countries don't

believe in integration. They still think in terms of preferential trade relations with the EU. They don't want a common Parliament, competition rules... As the EU experience shows, there is not exact science for integration. It is mostly trials and errors. Imposition of integration does not work" (Interview to a member of the Mauritius Embassy in Brussels, 14 February 2007). EU commitment to inter-regionalism is therefore considered inconsistent with the very experience of integration the EU is based upon.

A third problem that emerged in the EPA negotiations concerns the fact that, despite EU claims of "**equal partnership**" with the AU negotiators, African delegates are in a difficult position, given their lack of expertise and technical knowledge of some of the issues at hand. In this context, the EU does not seem to take the appropriate measures to reduce the gap between the parties as remarked by AU trade ministers, who pointed out the "lack of completion of country-specific impact assessment studies" by the time negotiations began (AU, 2007d). Representatives of African sub-regions involved in the EPA negotiations complained for the lack of expertise of African stakeholders and the limited economic resources to support the negotiations (Figures 4 and 5) (African Trade Policy Center, 2007).

Figure 4 - Whether Measures and Resources provided to conduct the negotiations have been satisfactory

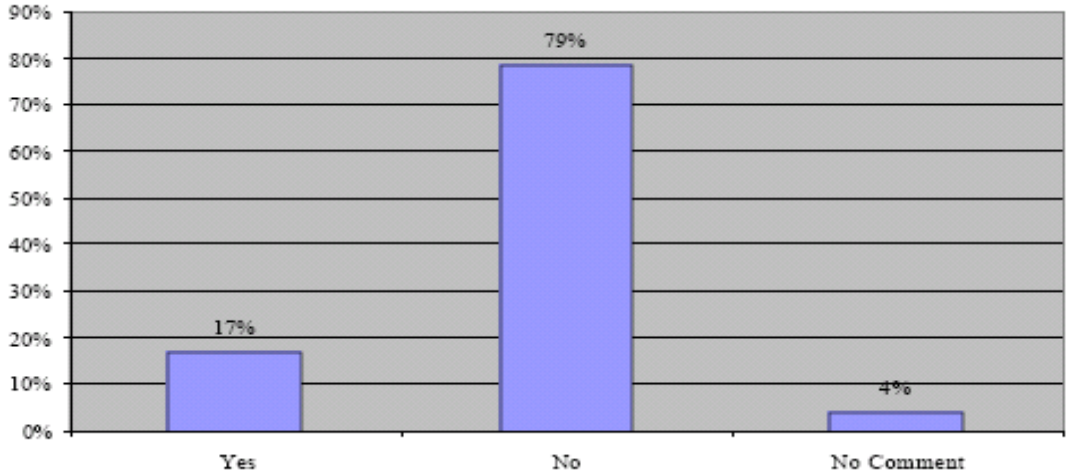


Source: African Trade Policy Centre, 2007, EPA Negotiations: African Countries Continental Review, 19 February, www.africanunion.org

The SADC secretariat argued that "Our main problem in trade negotiations is the lack of knowledge, skills and expertise [analytical and negotiating] on ACP-EU and WTO issues and trade negotiations skills" (SADC Secretariat, 2005). Representatives of AU member states expressed high expectations from EPAs, but also their frustration for the actual proceeding of the negotiations. During the 84th ACP council of ministers in Khartoum (2006), Kenya's Planning and National

Development minister, Mr Henry Obwocha, complained that ACP nations, being a party in the EPAs, should be treated as equals and allowed to have an active role in the negotiations to renegotiate trade quotas and other forms of development support (Mokaya, 2006).

Figure 5 - Whether respective region has the capacity and is prepared to timely conclude an EPA agreement



Source: African Trade Policy Centre, 2007, EPA Negotiations: African Countries Continental Review, 19 February, www.africanunion.org

It is worth noting that while Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade did not refrain from affirming that "Africa rejects the EPA", he also pointed at a renewed African interest in China, given the lower costs of Chinese products and the "more pragmatic" attitude of Chinese companies. "Europe is close to losing the battle of competition in Africa", he concluded. Shamsudeen Usman, Nigeria's minister of finance, echoed the same position: "Nigeria is becoming a beautiful bride. What is happening is the Chinese, the Koreans, everyone is coming around, and if European companies do not wake up, they will see that most of the best businesses are taken".

In the 9th summit of the AU that took place in Accra (Ghana) in 2007, AU member states remarked their dissatisfaction with the EU positions towards the EPAs and urged "the EU to consider putting in place transitional measures that will safeguard the continued entry of African exports to the EU market beyond December 2007, given the low likelihood of satisfactorily addressing all outstanding EPA issues as well as the impossibility of completing EPA ratification process by the end of 2007" (AU, 2007e). The EU tried to address this request, but even the interim dials that took place in order to overcome the stalemate of the negotiations are facing difficulties. Only two of the six regional groupings have signed these deals, including the East African Community (and specifically Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) and the Southern African Development Community (involving Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mauritius and Mozambique) (Crosbie, 2007). EPAs raised broad criticism also at the level of civil society. At the

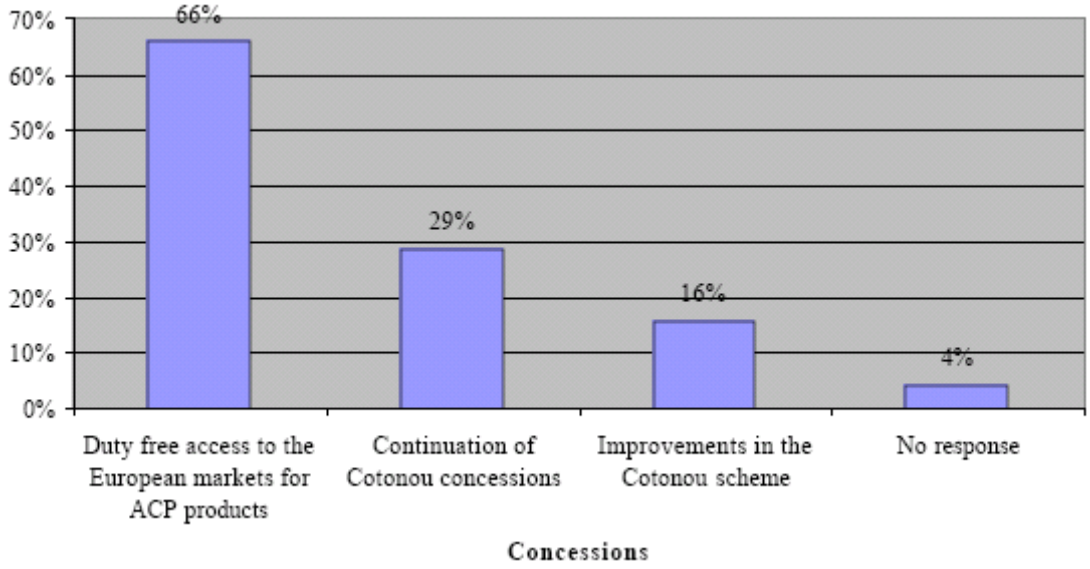
Nairobi Social Forum, held in January 2007, representatives of African farmers gathered in order to ask the EU a twenty-year moratorium in order to allow Sub-Saharan African countries to ratify the EPAs (ANSA, 2007).

Fourthly, besides the EPAs, another scheme introduced by the Cotonou agreement, namely the EBA, has raised criticism of African leaders and specifically among those countries that have been excluded by the EBA. African trade ministers criticized the fact that EBA undermines the principle of "equal treatment for all" which is the basis of the WTO (Epawatch, 2005). In a declaration by AU trade ministers, it was asked to maintain "duty free and quota free treatment for least developed countries" and extend "the same treatment to African non- least developed countries", while the European Commission was invited to "to consider the conclusion of binding agreements in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement […] in a manner that fully addresses the uncertainties associated with unilateral initiatives" (AU, 2006). Mukhisa Kituyi, the Kenyan trade minister, similarly stated his opposition to any progress being made in the EPA negotiations if states that are not included in EBA get less than they would get in the WTO negotiations (Kituyi quoted in Beatty, 2005).

A fifth problem emerged in the AU declaration is the perception of the lack of openness of the European markets to African trade. The Common Agricultural Policy, by subsidizing its farmers and products, is considered the cause of low prices, lost market shares, unfair competition for African countries and an imposition of high tariffs on the export for African products (Ogwu, 2005). EU sugar policy, in particular, has been highly criticized by AU member states. Currently, due to the preferential trade system, sugar imported from ACP member states to EU has higher prices compared to sugar from other countries such as Brazil, Australia and Thailand. The EU, though, declared that it will cut preferential prices of sugar from ACP states by 39 per cent by 2010, which raised broad criticism among African governments. The representatives of the ACP countries, in the 5th summit of the ACP Heads of State and Government, expected "the EU to honour its legal and political obligations enshrined in Article 36(4) of the Cotonou Agreement, in particular the safeguarding of the benefits derived from Commodity Protocols bearing in mind the special legal status of the Sugar Protocol" (ACP Secretariat, 2006). Kenya's ambassador to Brussels, Mr Max Kahende, asked for price cut to be gradual and complained with the speed imposed by the EU "Whether we like it or not, the prices will come down so as to be rational with the international market, but our plea is that it should be gradual to avoid hurting weaker economies. (…) the EU should take into consideration the aspect of time before implementing the proposal" (Kahende, quoted in Mokaya, 2006). Erastus Mwencha, the secretary-general of the Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), said that the EU should take special

care of nations which depend on sugar exports. Even in the EPA negotiations, where the EU officially tries to help African countries enter the global economy, protests of African negotiators emerged against EU protectionism (Mwencha, quoted in Mokaya, 2006). To this respect, the results of the survey of the African Trade Policy Center (2007) shows that duty free access to European market, especially with respect to agriculture goods, is the major concession the delegates of African regions participating in EPAs expect from the EU (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Concessions that a Country expects from the EU in terms Market Access



Source: African Trade Policy Centre, 2007, EPA Negotiations: African Countries Continental Review, 19 February, www.africanunion.org

Moreover, EU health, sanitary and phytosanitary, technical and market standards have raised complaints of AU trade ministers, who consider these barriers as a threat for market access openings. On this issue, AU trade ministers declared that the following:

> We note that many of the EU standards go beyond what would legitimately be appropriate. In this regard, we urge our trading partners to introduce appropriate control over standard setting undertaken by market-based non-governmental organisations including in the border enforcement of those standards. We have noted the positions adopted by the EU and other developed countries in WTO negotiations, which do not make it possible for African countries to benefit from the export of their agricultural products to the international markets including the European market. We call on the EU to adopt positions in WTO negotiations that are consistent with the development objectives of EPA negotiations (AU, 2006).

The European Commission appears particularly concerned about criticisms against European protectionism, which are considered relevant by European leaders for the reputation of the EU. EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson (since 2004) emphasized that the EU is paying attention to the feedback that comes from African countries. Specifically, he expresses concern about the

"caricature" provided by the media "of a continent of coddled farmers and sky high farm tariffs. Europe's reputation for agricultural protectionism may have been deserved two decades ago, but it is time that the caricature caught up with the facts" (Mandelson, 2006). Reactions of representatives of AU countries to European foreign policy have still to exert visible effects in the EU decisions, but the discourse of European leaders shows that this feedback appears more and more crucial for the credibility of the EU.

Finally, the European proposal to integrate trade with social and environmental policies raised different reactions. Elgström shows that within the WTO the efforts of the EU to push forward social and environmental principles into the WTO agenda have raised ambiguous reactions among African countries. On the one hand there is support for the inclusion of these principles in the trade negotiations, but on the other hand there is widespread fear that the EU attempt to push forward these rules is in fact an excuse for imposing protectionist measures or a strategy to address the demands of internal pressure groups. The human rights and environmental principles the EU proposes to include in the WTO agenda, according to representatives of developing countries, appear in contrast with the norms of the WTO itself (Elgström, 2006).

According to a representative of a Brussels based NGO, Climate Action Network, the GSP plus programme has positive implications. It can be considered a "structural aid" measure, since it helps developing countries to meet international obligations. "Through this programme, the EU helps African countries to develop their capacities to be involved in the negotiations" (Interview to a representative of Climate Action Network, Brussels, 7 February 2007). At the same time, though, the programme has raised suspicions among representatives of the African states, who consider EU conditionality measures an expression of "new colonialism" (Interview to a representative of the ACP Secretariat Headquarters, Brussels, 8 February 2007). In the case of AU member states the inclusion of environmental and social provisions within the GSP plus agreement has raised mixed comments. According to the above mentioned report of the African Trade Policy Center, the answers of negotiators for the CEMAC region to the survey suggest that the GSP plus agreement would only increase conditionalities to the countries (African Trade Policy Center, 2007).

Environmental policy

Despite the above mentioned criticisms of environmental conditionality included in European trade policy, EU promotion of sustainable development in its dialogue with African countries appears to have achieved positive results. The EU proved successful in its attempt to build its image as a preferential partner in the negotiations for global environmental policy. Also in this case, though, the support for EU policies has visible limits.

Given the fact that environmental policy is not a top priority for AU member states as opposed to peace-building and economic development, the reactions of these countries to EU proposals of aid allocation for environmental purposes tend to be rather cautious, if not skeptical. While they welcome without reservation initiatives of financial support in terms of infrastructures, in the case of environmental programmes they tend to explicitly request a clause which includes clear exit strategies (Interview with an officer at the EU Joint Research Center, Ispra, 29 November 2007). That said, several joint initiatives have taken place between the EU and African countries on this matter and the EU has been able to carry out environmental protection projects in the region.

The document which synthesizes the Joint AU-EU Strategy, "The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership" adopted in the Lisbon Summit (8-9 December 2007), identifies the terms of AU-EU cooperation on environmental policy by stressing the **link between environmental protection and economic development**: "Africa-EU cooperation in this field will link positively with economic growth, job creation, social stability, and the building of capacities for adaptation to, and mitigation of, negative effects of climate change. It will address interrelated areas such as food security, sustainable agriculture and land management and will cover a vast number of interrelated areas and issues such as land degradation, desertification, the preservation of biodiversity, bio-safety issues including GMOs, prevention of toxic waste dumping, environmentally sound waste management, sustainable use and management of natural resources including forest, fish stocks and integrated water management, weather observation and early warning systems to improve disaster risk management".

A study on the global perceptions of the international role of the EU (Elgström, 2006) shows that the latter is generally seen as an almost decisive actor within international environmental negotiations. Specifically, Elgström argues that the EU can count on broad support from former colonies in Africa, because of the **recognition of its expertise and economic power**. "In practice this means that the EU can block any decision; if the EU is against a proposal, it is *sunk*, if it is in favor, the chances of reaching a positive decision are high" (Elgström, 2006, p.452). The influence of the EU on African countries on environmental issues is visible both in the climate change negotiations and in the biodiversity case. A first indicator of this influence is the participation of the EU and African states in **alliances within the UN**. As far as the negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol on climate change are concerned, the EU has been followed by the African group, which gave full support to the EU proposal of differentiated responsibilities for industrialized countries and developing countries in tackling the issue of climate change. In supporting this proposal, most African countries have stigmatized the opposition of the US and have provided the largest support to the implementation of the Protocol. As a matter of fact this proposal appeared coherent with the

development interests of the African countries. Moreover, the partnership between AU and EU countries on climate change includes also post-Kyoto agreements. In the framework of the "International Solidarity Conference on climate change. Strategies for African and Mediterranean Countries" held in Tunis on November 2007, EU and AU countries reiterated the aim of "Building a Global Climate Change Alliance between the European Union and poor developing countries most vulnerable to climate change" set by the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (18.9.2007COM). Finally, the First Action Plan (2008-2010) for the implementation of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy (AU, 2007f) identifies the goals of the "Africa-EU Partnership on Climate Change":

- "Build a common agenda on climate change policies and cooperation;

- Cooperate to address land degradation and increasing aridity, including the *Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative*.

- Enhance environmental sustainability within the framework of regional and international environmental agreements".

Also in the case of biodiversity, the EU exerted substantial influence over African countries in the Cartagena (2000) negotiations. During the negotiations five groups of countries emerged: 1) the EU (at that time comprising 15 member states); 2) the group of Eastern and Central Europe; 3) the group of the Compromise (including Japan, Mexico, Norway, South Korea and Switzerland); the Like-minded group (comprising most developing countries) and, finally, the Miami group (Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, US and Uruguay. The Like-Minded group, including most African states, together with the group of Eastern and Central Europe and the group of the Compromise supported the EU proposal of including the precautionary principle in the Protocol, despite the opposition of the Miami group. Clear support to the EU precautionary position came specifically from African countries, since they have less interest in importing GMOs among the developing countries (Clapp 2006), even if this meant rejecting American food aid (the Economist, 2003)

A second indicator of EU environmental leadership with respect to the AU can be found in the declarations of African sub-regional organizations and Member States that represent the EU as partner in the global negotiations for environmental treaties. The representatives of the ACP Secretariat (Interview to a representative of ACP Secretariat Headquarters, 8 February 2007) and the government of South Africa (South Africa Department of Minerals and Energy, 2007), the country which leads the African group on environmental policy issues in terms of expertise and activism, identify the EU as a preferential partner for environmental protection and stress their preference for the European approach to global environmental policy than that of the US. The

representatives of the ACP Secretariat and the African Union delegation in Brussels stressed that most of the African countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol did so because they believe that there is a need to reduce the process of global warming, which, through increasing desertification in Africa, has dangerous effects on African agriculture (Interview with a representative of the African Union, Brussels, 13 February 2007, and to a representative of the ACP Secretariat Headquarters, 7 February 2007). They believe that the EU approach is more appropriate to this purpose than that of the US. According to a representative of the ACP secretariat, "the US is only thinking for itself. The US believes that climate change can be tackled nationally and relies too much on the Environmental Protection Agency in the solution of global problems. Plus, the US is one country, although influential, while the EU is a powerful block" (Interview to a representative of the ACP Secretariat Headquarters, 7 February 2007). Representatives of the South African government criticized the US refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and argued, instead, in favour of the EU, depicting it as a **model for policy coordination**. The position paper of the South African government in the energy summit of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change commented positively on EU climate change policy, arguing that "The success of the EU standards in conveying the message of efficiency to a diverse target-group, comprising a variety of cultural backgrounds, would be of particularly benefit to South Africa". The influence of the EU on the South African approach to climate change and energy policies can be also considered in reference to fact that the European automotive industry, together with the Japanese, dominate the South African market (South African Department of Minerals and Energy, 2004).

Representatives of other AU Member States expressed their support for furthering the AU/EU partnership on climate change. In an address to the EU-AU Summit on "Energy and climate change" held in Lisbon on 8th December 2008, the President of the Republic of Tunisia Zine El Abidine Ben Ali stressed the need for furthering the partnership of African and European Countries on the basis of **common interests**. "Given the geographic, historical and civilizational ties linking the African and European continents, and the mutual interests that can be geared towards fighting climate change, our European partners are called on to step up efforts in order to offer technological and financial support to African countries, and thus enable them to promote their sustainable development". The President of Tunisia also remarked the positive view of cooperation of the EU and the AU on climate change by stressing "The need to establish a long-term African-European partnership that helps our countries rationalize the use of energies extracted from oil product, and promote the use of environment-preserving alternative energies" (Portuguese Presidency of the EU, 2007b). During the AU-EU Lisbon Summit, moreover, Mohammed VI, the king of Morocco, called for a greater partnership of the EU with Africa, arguing that "The Summit should (…) enable us to

give new momentum to our partnership, commensurate with the challenges of sustainable development and climate change. Just as important is the need to enhance African capabilities to control these phenomena and restrict their harmful effects" (Mohammed VI , quoted in Portuguese Presidency of the EU, 2007a).

Also in the negotiations on bio-safety and GMOs a positive image of the EU emerges, in contrast to that of the US. The African intellectual elites and NGOs that appear more sensitive to the risks of GMOs for African agriculture have declared their appreciation of the interest the EU shows in their needs, in contrast to the US. Even African countries facing food shortages have refused to accept GM food donations because of the lack of certainty on their risks for health and the environment (Shacinda, 2006). African countries appear to embrace EU environmental principles to the extent that they are consistent with what they perceive is in their interest. As a matter of fact the European moratoria against GM crop imports raised fear among African exporters that the EU would block trade with them, if they exported goods containing GMOs. This fear contributed to increase opposition against biotechnology in Africa (Falkner, 2007). Also Clapp stresses that support of African countries to the EU precautionary approach is based primarily on economic interests. "When trade interests overlap with environmental concerns about biosafety, as was the case in Africa, the strong policy stance, in this case against the import of GMOs, was clear and swift" (Clapp, 2006).

Finally, a third indicator of the support of African governments to the environmental principles the EU has tried to promote is that most of them have ratified the Kyoto Protocol and the Cartagena Protocol. These decisions can be partially considered an outcome of EU promotion of the principles of sustainable development and precaution. As of May 2008, only three African countries have not accepted to ratify the Kyoto Protocol (Chad, Somalia and Zimbabwe) and twelve African countries have not accepted to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The decisions of AU member states to ratify international treaties on the environment indeed cannot be referred only to the outcome of EU pressure, since several factors, both domestic and international, may have contributed to this outcome. Nevertheless, given the leading role the EU has played in the negotiations on climate change and biodiversity, and the strong opposition of other major international players, notably the US, the ratification of these Protocols by most of the AU member sates can indeed be considered an indirect achievement of the EU. This broad support for international environmental Protocols appears striking if one takes into account the cumbersome procedures required in most African countries for ratifying international agreements, especially in the states where ratification requires parliamentary approval.

Conclusion

The way AU leaders talk about the EU shows a general support to European policies, but also criticism about the way these policies are promoted. The EU is portrayed as a preferential partner in peace-building and democracy construction, a model to imitate and a leader in international negotiations. At the same time, though, serious criticisms emerge from the various declarations of AU leaders. The EU is perceived to be weak in terms of peace-building capacity and is often depicted as a neocolonial actor that provides development help on the basis of rigid conditionality measures. Under this respect, it is usually viewed as a "hard power" trying to its model of integration on Africa as well as trade liberalization agreements.

This mixed feedback may have multiple consequences on EU foreign policy preferences. Given the fact that AU reactions to EU policies are expressed in official venues such as international negotiations, they can have implications on the overall image the EU builds of itself on a global level. The mixed feedback to European foreign policy suggests that, in order to become a model of integration and a credible and legitimate solidarity player, the EU needs to reconsider the way it promotes its policies.

In fact, the way AU leaders see the EU has already displayed some effect on European foreign policy. Specifically, in the field of trade policy, the EU has been forced to reconsider its proposal about the EPAs after failing to complete the negotiations in 2007. Moreover, the EU has started to change its approach, at least in the discourse of European authorities, to the promotion of its own model of governance. For example, João Cravinho, the Portuguese minister responsible for the EU-African Summit held in Lisbon, recognized that the EU has been "excessively simplistic" in insisting on the export of European models of government in Africa. In his view, the EU now needs to "focus on the essence of government [and be] less hung-up on particular forms of decision-making" (The Economist, 2007). Finally, following the complaints of AU countries, the EU has started to put into question its extended use of conditionality measures.

Policy recommendations

The EU is portrayed as a preferential partner in peace-building and democracy construction, a model to imitate and a leader in international negotiations. At the same time, though, it is perceived as lacking capacity to carry out ambitious peace-building missions and is depicted as a neocolonial player providing development aid encapsulated into rigid conditionality measures. Finally and foremost it is considered as a "hard power" in its attempt to impose its model of integration and its strategy and speed of liberalization of African economies.

These perceptions of the EU shed light on major challenges and opportunities for the EU in its relations with the AU:

- *Better knowledge of local dynamics:*

A major limit of the effectiveness of the EU approach to Africa seems to be the lack of knowledge regarding local dynamics in the African context. Notwithstanding its diplomatic presence in Africa, the EU has yet to improve its communication with its African counterparts in order to collect deeper information about the political and economic conditions of the AU member states. This lack of knowledge of the local context emerges especially with respect to peace-building and trade policies. In the case of peace-building, EU institutions should gather more information on the actual relationship between all parties involved in local conflicts, particularly in so far as it had an implication for civilian populations. As far as the trade relationship with African sub-regions is concerned, the EU - in coordination with local negotiators - should gather data on country-specific economic situations and provide AU sub-regions with greater expertise support and technical assistance in order to strengthen their capacity to take advantage of trade with Europe, which has never been the case. Moreover, the EU should improve the coordination of European delegates in Africa (the Special Representatives and the external delegations of the European Commission) in order to carry out this process of data gathering. Finally, it should further increase its diplomatic presence in the continent, appointing a Special Representative to Somalia, following a proposal of the Italian and Swedish governments.

- *Trade and development*

The most crucial criticism representatives of AU countries and institutions have directed to the EU is that of prioritizing the goal of liberalization of ACP-EU trade over development help. This problem, according to several AU sources, not only is considered as a limit to the development of the African economies, but also as a constraint to effective liberalization of intra-African trade. Emblematic to this respect is the fact that the lack of infrastructures in the African continent is a

constraint to effective free movement of goods. In order to tackle this problem, the EU should first of all try to promote intra-African trade liberalization, through capacity building programs and support for harmonization of customs policies within the AU. Moreover the EU should contribute to disseminating best practices of trade liberalization emerging between African states. The EU should also find an agreement with the AU on the timing of removal of the EU-ACP preferential trade relationship compatibly with the pace of the internal African trade liberalization process.

Another problem that has raised concern among AU authorities is that of European protectionist measures. The EU should decrease its barriers towards African goods, and especially towards those that are considered sensitive for the economy of African countries. In order to improve export of African products to Europe, the EU should increase its efforts of simplifying its non-tariff barriers such as rules of origins and production standards that imported goods should meet. This simplification should be compatible with WTO requirements.

- *Model of integration:*

The European model of integration is widely perceived by AU leaders as successful and as a primary reference for African integration. Nevertheless the commitment of EU leaders to export this model faces relevant challenges. The European model of integration has been driven by European actors (political leaders and pressure groups) and has taken place under a specific historical setting, which is hard to replicate in Africa. In the African continent, state sovereignty is becoming increasingly relevant for political leaders, which is a further obstacle to the adoption of the EU model of integration by pooling sovereignty. Finally, the pre-existent sub-regions within the AU tend to resist the EU top-down imposition of new regions for trade purposes. In the attempt to promote regional integration, therefore, the EU should take into account the steps African countries have already taken toward their idea of integration and, rather, provide AU institutions with incentives to build on them. While increasing its dialogue with AU negotiators, the EU should leave it up to the AU and the regional economic communities define the pace of integration. Moreover, it should encourage infrastructure development within these sub-regions, in order to improve internal communication and trade.

- *Conditionality:*

The EU competes with other major players that show increasing attention on Africa, such as Asian emerging powers. While the EU imposes conditionality measures for the promotion of human rights, democracy and environmental protection, these actors do not impose conditions, which makes them increasingly more attractive as partners for African governments. The EU should

therefore try to improve its image vis a vis these emerging players, and it should do so by following different strategies. First, the EU should decrease its imposition of conditionality measure and select alternative paths of promotion of the rule of law, good governance and democracy promotion. For instance, it should increase its attempts of strengthening local legal systems and institution building and should engage in the promotion of best practices of governance. A second strategy is that of flaking conditionality measures by addressing other demands of AU leaders and the OECD, such as negotiating non-tariff barriers to trade, increase development aid, and further untying its aid allocation.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
The EU according to Al Jazeera

Donatella Della Ratta

The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

The EU according to Al Jazeera

Executive summary

Al Jazeera's programming can be divided into two areas: news bulletins and talk shows. While news bulletins are consistently neutral in their reporting and remain focused on the news item, it is in the talk shows that political events are discussed more in depth. It is thus in the talk shows that one finds the sharpest and culturally significant perceptions of the EU.

In terms of EU's *newsworthiness* (news as well as in talk shows), EU issues are mostly dealt with when directly related to the Arab world. This is more verifiable in the case of talk shows while in news items we also find coverage of the EU when it is relevant as an international player; even if not directly related to the Arab world.

There seems to be some discrepancy between the *quantity* and *quality* of Al Jazeera's coverage of EU issues. The quantity of EU-related news is to an extent limited; although since 2003, there has been a slight increase in the number of talk shows discussing issues somewhat related to Europe. As for the quality, it is important to note the considerable differences between news and talk shows coverage. The news display extremely high levels of quality and professionalism, in terms of accuracy in reporting the story. Talk shows, conversely, exhibit limited coverage quality because often, the opinions of the host and those of his guests are combined haphazardly and with limited informative value.

Regarding the *definition* of Europe, on the one hand, news bulletins seem to carefully distinguish the EU from the US and refrain from using generic expressions such as "the West". On the other hand, due to their more confrontational style, talk shows rarely do differentiate between the two. Thus they bring together the EU and the US under the same label in order to deal with only one subject and to be more effective in terms of the "us" and "them".

In general, there seems to be lack of TV appeal and some difficulties representing the EU in TV terms: the EU is seen as "unattractive" for TV. There is also lack of media communication policy, which results in a total absence of EU representatives in TV programmes thus limiting an essential channel of communication with the Arab world.

There is, however, compelling value in the *EU soft power:* Arabs regard it as a model of unity. Therefore, the results of this analysis show that there are "two Al Jazeeras" that speak about EU. An Arab viewer who only watches news on Al Jazeera could have a completely opposite view of the EU when compared to that of a talk show viewer.

The production process of a news item is strictly monitored by a group of people, which grants its neutral value. Conversely, talk shows are not strictly submitted to such process,. Thus its content is closely linked to the 'personality' of its author rather than to a collective decision.

About the author

Donatella Della Ratta is an independent researcher specialized in Arab media. She is the author of a number of essays and books concerning Arab media, including *Media Oriente. Modelli, Strategie e Tecnologie nelle Nuove Televisioni Arabe*, Roma: Seam, 2000; "Why the West does not Understand Al Jazeera" (in Ars Electronica Festival Catalogue, Hatjie Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005) and *Al Jazeera. Media e Società Arabe nel Nuovo Millennio*, Milano: Bruno Mondadori editore, 2005. Della Ratta has lectured on Arab media in public audits held at the European Parliament in Brussels as well as in a number of international conferences. In 2005, Della Ratta was commissioned to select Arab TV programmes and advertisements for the international art exhibition "Occidente desde Oriente" organized by Centro de Cultura Contemporanea de Barcelona, Spain. In early 2008, she organized a two-day festival "West Viewed by the Arab Media" in Rome, featuring the most important Arab TV programmes dealing with "the clash of civilizations", terrorism, war as well as relations between Arab and western cultures.

The EU according to Al Jazeera

Donatella Della Ratta

1. Introduction[1]

Since its inception in 1996, and particularly after 9/11 when the West "discovered" it, Al Jazeera has proven to be an important tool in shaping Arab public opinion and to provide it with images of the outside world. After several years of terrestrial broadcasting strictly controlled and supervised by Arab national governments, Al Jazeera was the first media to break the "not trespassing" rule of certain taboo topics; more precisely, politics.

Beyond its acquired status of "Arab world taboo-breaker", Al Jazeera has strongly contributed to turning Arab TV viewers into Arab "public opinion" by articulating a significant vision of the outside world. If Al Jazeera plays a central role in shaping relations inside the Arab world, it is in addition extremely important at the external level: it is a powerful mechanism to articulate and distribute meaningful images of the non-Arab world to Arab audiences.

In this respect, the relation between Al Jazeera and the non-Arab world has dramatically changed, particularly after 9/11 and the subsequent attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. These events have driven the world's media systems to become polarized around the narratives of the "global war against terrorism" and the battle against "the axis of evil": those media-conveyed images have contributed to strengthen the idea of an existing "clash of civilization" between two different and opposite visions of world future.

The Arab world has begun to look at Europe, the US, Canada, Australia, and Israel as a single bloc, identified under the general label of the "West", referring to a generic "western culture and politics". This process has been effectively underlined and accelerated by a global media trend: a shift in their philosophy which has involved television programming, also effecting TV news. Within this trend, the core and primary value of the media has started to turn from the objectiveness and neutrality of reports to an emotional involvement.[2]

Many scholars[3] agree that the core target of Al Jazeera narratives is the Arab world, not in the "West": as it is an Arab channel broadcasting in Arabic, targeting Arab audiences and providing them with a view of the world "seen through Arab eyes"[4]. Nevertheless, this vision has been

[1] The author wishes to thank Al Jazeera International Media Relation Department, Al Jazeera Library, Al Jazeera Newsroom and Program Department for their support and kind help. In the lack of pre-existing sources on the discussed topic, this paper mainly results from a fieldwork and programme analysis conducted from December 2007 till May 2008. Special thanks also to Raffaele Mauriello and the other contributors to the second survey for their comments and support.

[2] This world trend, know as "commercialisation of the news" began in the early 90s. See for example, D. Hallin, "Commercialism and Professionalism in the American News Media," in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media and Society*, (London: Arnold, 1996).

[3] See D. Della Ratta "Al Jazeera. Media e società arabe nel nuovo millennio" (Bruno Mondatori editore, Milano, 2005).

[4] As stated the motto of another important TV channel, MBC, the flagship station of the group to which Al Arabiya belongs to. In 1991, when MBC was launched, it was important for the Arab world – and particularly for the Saudi Arabia royal family who was injecting capital into media operations- to provide its audiences with a local media. It was a political and media shock for the Arab world to be informed about an inter-Arab conflict (as it was the Gulf war) through a non-Arab media, CNN. That is why the quest for a world seen "through Arab eyes" had become so urgent. For several reasons, however, the Arab world had to wait till 1996, Al Jazeera's launching year, to see that dream becoming a reality.

slightly modified because Al Jazeera has followed the global trend of "emotional attitude" in the media; a swing that became visible after 9/11 and the subsequent US led attacks on Iraq .

Scholars indicate that these two events have marked a significant shift in Al Jazeera editorial line. The station now focuses more on the so called "clash of civilization" between the West and the Arab world in an attempt to please the "Arab street". Instead of driving its audience, Al Jazeera's editorial choices and decisions are driven by its audience. Therefore, the role of Al Jazeera in shaping opinions and images about the non-Arab world, particularly about the so called "West" (*gharb*), has gained importance.

In this respect, the launching of Al Jazeera-English in November 2006 attests to its willingness to expand so as to address larger audiences. Broadcasting in English might not have been just a decision to better target Western communities (e.g., US and UK). In fact, the non-Arabic speaking Muslim community is widespread on a global scale[5] and has an enormous strategic value for the station. It is nevertheless true that after 9/11 Al Jazeera –suddenly becoming an international news provider and a global brand[6]- has started to pay greater attention to the "West" than before.

Meanwhile, the station has also started to care more about *how* it talks to the "West": the programme of the English channel *is not* a direct translation of that of the Arabic, as many people incorrectly assume. On the contrary, it is a completely different channel designed to respond to the needs of a different global audience. The real problem for Al Jazeera-English lies exactly in dealing with this undifferentiated audience that does not share the same values, the same culture. In this regard, the English language is merely the easiest way to communicate with a broader community, without a real capacity to shape that community. Therefore the programming strategies, the style of the news and talk shows, and the general flavour of the Arabic and English channels strongly differ. In short, they are two completely divergent channels, only united by a logo and brand but with a different vision and audience. For this reason this study looks at the representation of the EU in the Al Jazeera Arabic channel. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that the findings of this paper—obtained through the study of the Arabic Al Jazeera channel—could be applied to Al Jazeera English. In addition, this paper focuses on how the Arabic channel reports and therefore represents the European Union (*al ittihad al urobi*). It does not purport to assess the representation of what Al Jazeera Arabic narratives conceive as the "West"..

The questions addressed in this study are: how does Al Jazeera speak about the EU? How is the EU described, analysed, reported, commented and represented? And what are the main reasons for covering the EU? In which cases does EU become a valuable news item for the Arab world? Which image of the EU is emerges from Al Jazeera programming? Does that image differ from that of the US? Is it projected as part of an united "West" which encompasses the US and Israel? Or, on the contrary, is it perceived as a close or potential ally against the US power? Finally, the study endeavours to assess if it is possible to conclude that there is one coherent EU image conveyed by Al Jazeera; or if conversely, there are several (and potentially contradictory) views emerging from the news programmes on the one hand and talk shows on the other.

The final remarks include some suggestions of how to improve the representation—and thus the image—of the EU projected to Arab audiences.

2. Methodological remarks

2.1. Audiovisual archives and keyword search

[5] Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, almost 300 million. To reach this community, English becomes essential.
[6] According to brandchannel.com, in 2004 it was the 5th most important brand in the world.

Due to the lack of sources dealing with the EU representations in Al Jazeera's programming, this paper builds on primary data collected during a period of fieldwork (December 2007) at Al Jazeera's headquarters in Doha, Qatar. The methodology used to acquire the audiovisual material necessary for such data collection experience several constraining factors. First, there were concerns about the system used by Al Jazeera to archive programmes in its library. In many cases, the common 'search by keywords' (e.g. using words such as EU-*ittihad urobi*- or European Parliament -*barliaman urobi*-) did not work as expected. In most instances, although, documents were available, the system was not able to find them. Similarly, broader searches for keywords relevant to EU politics in general (e.g., *indimam* or *dukhul*, referring to the possible entry of Turkey into EU) did not produce satisfying results.

In addition, Al Jazeera's archiving system differs by type programmes. For example, most talk shows are archived according to guests' names participating in a particular episode. It is thus difficult to establish a link between a guest's name and a specific topic. It was only through the kind support of talk shows' authors and producers willing to revise personal notes, that it was possible to identify show episodes that dealt with EU relevant topics. In some instances, a number of alternative keywords not directly related to EU politics but rather concerning events occurring in Europe (e.g. the Danish cartoons of prophet Mohamed) were used to find additional relevant audiovisual material. It is then important to emphasise that the search method differed according to the type of programmes and the system used to cataloguing them (e.g. whether it was done according to guests' name or other criteria)[7].

Considering this initial constrain, it was not possible to focus the research on a specific time period because it would have limited the search leading to scarce results. Moreover, the goal was also to analyse Al Jazeera as a dynamic and evolving institution whose evolution has paralleled global media transformations and geopolitical events. In order to gather enough data and to show how Al Jazeera's interest in the EU might have evolved over time, this research selected all relevant events and topics during the past ten years (1998-2008)[8]. Interestingly, the bulk of programmes and news items dealing with the EU (or related issues) was aired after 2003. As indicated in the introduction, the 2003 US attack on Iraq is the leading factor that contributed to the shift in Al Jazeera's attention and coverage of pan-Arab issues. Needless to say, all issues pertaining to Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon are consistently presented as related to European and American policies and attitudes towards the Arab region. Hence, this study assess *how* and *in what* manner Al Jazeera's renewed Pan-Arab focus has contributed to its discourse about Europe. This report covers, in short, some of the main EU institutions (e.g. Commission, Parliament) as well as several crucial events including: the failure of the French/Dutch referenda on the European Constitution; Turkey's possibility to join the EU; EU position towards the 2003 US attack on Iraq; EU laws on immigration and its position regarding illegal immigration; and the 2004 eastward EU enlargement.

2.2. In-depth interviews

An additional purpose of the Doha fieldwork was to conduct in-depth interviews with Al Jazeera's staff. The fist objective of these interviews was to obtain a clear explanation of how the organisational process works in Al Jazeera, both for news and for programmes. It is in fact unlikely to analyse the output of a TV channel without a solid understanding of its organisational system and its production routine (i.e. how the content production process evolves). The subsequent sections

[7] It is possible to search many Al Jazeera's programmes through its website using keyword search. However, the results thus obtained not always lead to video contents, rarely offering text transcripts of the programmes or mostly a summary of its main topics. Such results considering the objectives of this paper, (e.g., analyse audiovisual material taking into consideration the context together with the texts) are limited, at best.

[8] Al Jazeera was launched in November 1996. Initially it had only six hours programming slots, moving then to 24 hours. It is important to note that not all the programmes produced during the early years of the channel's existence are available at the Doha library.

analyze in-depth this system and attempts to underline how it affects the different representations of the EU projected by Al Jazeera through its news and talk shows perspectives.

The second objective of the interviews was to investigate the relevance of EU events for Al Jazeera's journalists and programme makers. The questionnaire employed in the interviews was divided in four sections. The first section assessed the *newsworthiness* of the EU (i.e. its news value from Al Jazeera's perspective). We asked, for example, when and how EU events reach enough news value to be included in the news bulletin or in a talk show episode; if those events are programming relevant only when they are directly related to the Arab region; and how and why the EU becomes newsworthy for Al Jazeera. The second section of the questionnaire covered the *quantity* and *quality* of the total Al Jazeera coverage of EU issues, both in news bulletins and talk shows. This section's questions focused on the interviewees' perceptions regarding the general programming and also his/her daily work in one of the two sections – news or programme–. The questions asked if the total coverage of the EU was sufficient and focused on relevant issues; if in recent years that coverage has evolved in regards to volume and/or quality; if and how EU coverage could have been improved.

The third section evaluates the *definition of Europe* and eventually its *differentiation from the US*. It is in fact essential to understand if the EU and Europe, in general, are considered as separate entities or are assimilated to the US within the generic the "West". As we will see momentarily, this differentiation/assimilation is a fundamental divergence between news and talk shows in Al Jazeera's programming. The final section of the questionnaire is concerned with the interviewees' opinions about the *EU benefits and critical points* in its *communication strategy* towards the Arab world. We asked them to judge the appeal, or the lack of appeal, of the EU as a TV topic; the EU's strongest and weakest points in communicating with the Arab world; and how the EU could eventually improve its communication strategy for the Arab region.

Seven members of Al Jazeera staff participated in such in-depth interviews: Faysal Al Kasim, author and host of the talk show "Al itiijah al mouakis"; Muetaz Al Khatib, author and producer of the talk show "Sharia wal hayat"; Ahmed Beshto, author and presenter of the programme "Iktisad wa nass"; Ayman Gaballah, Deputy chief editor; Aref Hijjawi, Head of programming; Samir Khader, programme editor; Hassan Shawki, programme editor. The talk shows here included–"Al Ittijah al moakis" and "Sharia wal hayat" –are two of the channel's flagship and most important programmes, and they have been part of its production since Al Jazeera's inception. Other important talk shows–such as "Hiwar maftuah" and "Akthar min ray" –have been included in this study; however, it was not possible to interview their authors because they are based in Beirut and London. Additionally, two other key interviews were conducted: one with Labib Fahmi, Al Jazeera correspondent and current bureau chief in Brussels; and one with Ahmed Kamel, former author of the programme "Min Uroba" and former Brussels bureau chief (2000-05).

3. Al Jazeera organizational system for news and programme production

Al Jazeera is internally structured as follows. There is a Managing Director (MD) – Wadah Khanfar- who manages the all channel. The two main content-output of the channels are news and programme, which are structured around a News and a Programme Department who reports directly to the MD. The Head of Operation, the Head of IT, the Head of Finance, the Head of Human Resources and the Head of Quality assurance also reports to MD.

The editorial committee supervises the general policy of the channel and is composed by the MD, the Chief Editor, the Deputy chief editor, the Head of Quality assurance, the Head of Programmes, and the two main news presenters: Jamil Azar and Mohamed Krishane.

The News Department is headed by the Chief editor–Ahmed Sheikh–and a Deputy chief editor–Ayman Gaballah–who supervises all the news items emerging from the main newsroom headquartered in Doha (Qatar) and from its overseas agencies located throughout the world. This department deals with breaking news, reports, in-depth analysis and current affairs. There are three main news bulletins: the first from 5.am to 7 am GMT; the second from 12am to 2 pm GMT; the third from 8pm to 9.30pm GMT. Ten hours before broadcasting each of the news bulletins, the team assigned to that shift starts work on the content output. Each shift starts with an editorial meeting tasked to discuss the priority of the news, the items to be produced and the guests who will be interviewed. The programme editor or the senior producer heads this meeting in which participate members of the interview desk and the assignment desk, and journalists developing the news items for that shift. This meeting's goal is to prepare the news bulletin for that shift which is subsequently approved by the programme editor. There are two programme editors who take turns for each shift: Samir Khader and Hassan Shawki. Their task is to ensure the link between one shift and the following one. They are entitled to approve the shift's news items in accordance with the channel's policy. If a controversy occurs during the shift, the programme editor makes the final decision; review the item, broadcast it or not. He is, in this sense, the 'policy maker' of the daily news process. If a greater controversy arises, the Chief Editor, the Deputy Chief editor or the MD must to be consulted.

In addition, there is an editorial committee who is entitled to supervise the news outputs and it is composed by the MD, the Chief Editor, the Deputy Chief Editor, Programme editor, the Head of Assignment, and the Head of Interviews. The Head of Assignment maintains contact with correspondents around the world and makes sure that those correspondents and the main newsroom are in constant communication. In fact, during the meeting the Head of Assignment proposes the items coming from the different Al Jazeera agencies while the Doha headquarters makes the final decision.

There are seven Al Jazeera agencies in Europe located in the UK, France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Norway, and Serbia. The station has 75 correspondents around the world, fourteen correspondents in Europe distributed as following: four in the UK, three in France, two in Spain, two in Germany, one in Belgium, one in Norway, and 1 in Serbia. The UK office also covers Ireland; the Germany office covers Austria; the agency in France covers Italy and Switzerland; that located in Belgium covers the Benelux countries; the Norway office covers the Northern European countries; and the office in Serbia covers Croatia, Kosovo and Bosnia. In the US, AL Jazeera has one agency located in Washington D.C. and six correspondents.

In regards to the talk shows, they depend directly on the Programme Department. The most important talk shows in Al Jazeera schedule are: Al ittijah al mouakis (Opposite Direction), Shariaa wal hayat (Religion and Life), Akthar min ray (More than One Opinion), Hiwar maftuah (Open Dialogue), Bila hudud (No Frontiers), and Mimbar Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera Platform).[9] Most of these shows have been part of Al Jazeera's programming since its inception. Each talk show has a team led by a producer who works directly with the author of the show. The latter is often the host of the show. The producer works with the author of the show to decide the contents of the episode, the debate issues, the features to shoot (if any), and the guests to invite. The producer and author usually enjoy complete editorial autonomy in deciding on the show's content; the author-host is the programme's most important figure and determines the success of the programme.

The location from which the programmes are produced is also highly important and directly influences the 'neutrality' of their contents. For example, Faysal Al Kasim and Ahmed Mansour, authors and hosts of Al Ittijah al mouakis and of Bila Hudud respectively, carry their daily work

[9] The English titles are given as they appears in Al Jazeera's archives (i.e., according to Al Jazeera's translation).

from a compound in Doha, located outside the channel headquarters. Ghassan Bin Jaddu–author and host of Hiwar maftuah-and Sami Haddad–author and host of Akthar min ray–are located in Beirut and London respectively. It is appropriate to say that, while the news section is articulated around a group of decision makers, the talk shows–particularly the most important ones–are shaped by the strong personality of their author who is in the majority of cases also the host of the show; for example, Faysal Al Kasim for "Al Ittijah al mouakis". We will see momentarily that the different organisational structures of the news and talk shows strongly influence their final contents.

In any case, it is clear that the distinction between news reports and talk shows in a TV are equivalent to the distinction between news items and column articles in the written press. While the accuracy in reporting the news is an added value for the media–whether written press or TV broadcaster–it is therefore the opinion expressed in the columns and in the TV programmes that makes the difference between a type of media and another. Those opinions build a particular flavour and style for columns and programmes.

4. Al Jazeera and The European Union. Case study: "Min Uroba" (From Europe)

In this section we will analyse in depth the programme "Min Uroba" broadcasted by Al Jazeera during 2003-2005. It is particularly interesting for our purposes because it was dedicated entirely to Europe. It gave coverage to the institutional and political aspects of the European Union, and the cultural and social issues regarding Europe in general. The first episode of the programme was broadcasted by Al Jazeera on 3rd February 2003; it was terminated in 2005. The number of episodes in 2003 was 38, in 2004 was 35, and in 2005 was 14, for a total of 87 episodes. This study analyses 35 episodes: twelve episodes from 2003, nineteen from 2004, and four from 2005.

In 2002 Ahmed Kamel, a Syrian journalist of Belgian nationality, submitted to the Al Jazeera management a proposal for a programme dedicated entirely to Europe. He had a university degree on EU issues and laws, and had lived most of his life in Brussels. At the time, Kamel had been working as a journalist for Al Jazeera since 1998, becoming head of the Brussels office in 2000. He held that position until 2005. The idea of creating a programme about Europe was warmly welcomed by the management[10] because it was coherent with the larger strategy of creating programmes dedicated to the different regions of the world (e.g., "Min Washington" on the US). The original plan for the programme was to deal with three core aspects of Europe: the European Union as an institution, Europe and its culture, and Arab immigrants in Europe[11]. In Kamel's words, "the European Union was the only idea of Union that had been fully accomplished. It could have worked as a model of unity for us Arabs, too. I wanted to present this model to Arabs, not to repeat it but as an inspiration. Unity starts from economic matter and then shifts to the institutional level; just like it happened in Europe, starting as an economic alliance and later becoming a political union". "My idea was also to present Europe "dans tout ses etats", in every aspects of its daily life and culture, even if not directly related to the Arab world. For me, it was a tour[12] around Europe. I wanted to show Arabs–who often stereotype Europe–how Europeans live and think. It was meant to be an educational programme"[13]. The programme structure was designed as follows: six to eight reportages from different European cities, the first half of the episode was generally dedicated to EU institutions (Parliament, Commission, and European Council) and the second half to culture and society. The episode was completed by "flash news", a sort of quick news bulletin about EU decisions as well as about European societies. The length of each episode was about 26 minutes. It was broadcasted weekly.

[10] The general manager of Al Jazeera at the time was the Qatari Mohamed Jassim al Ali, who held the position until mid 2003.
[11] Ahmed Kamel, personal interview, May 2008.
[12] The arabic word for tour (*giaula*) has always been used by Kamel to launch every episode of the programme.
[13] Ahmed Kamel, personal interview, May 2008.

As we can see from the programme statistics (apendix 2), in 2003 the programme produced a total amount of 260 features and 313 news items from a total of 70 cities in 33 countries. The programme in fact did not cover EU member states only but also countries like Serbia, Russia and Turkey adopting thus a wider concept of Europe dealing with "European culture" at large. The programme was produced thanks to the eight correspondent agencies throughtout Europe. The agencies functioned as a network of journalists that Kamel was cleverly using to produce reports so to present Arab audiences an idea of Europe's cultural diversity and of the unity achieved through this diversity. Each correspondent worked on one or more reports during the week, while the Brussels office had the task to coordinate these productions and edit the final episode, producing by itself most of the features and the entire flash news bulletin.

According to Kamel, the production costs of the programme were low because it was exploiting an existing network of journalists and cleverly taking advantage of Al Jazeera European agencies without adding extra human resources and logistics expenses. Moreover, if extra image material was needed, Kamel would use the European audiovisual database, which was provided without cost by the European Union. Regarding the topics, the 2003 edition contents can be classified into the following types of items covering Europe at large.

a) "Educational items" explaining how European institutions work, for example:
- the new Europe (new entrants in EU),
- the history of European Summits,
- European commission functions,
- European Council functions,
- European Parliament functions,
- European Constitution project.

b) "Political items" about current affairs and political developments which directly involve the EU, for example:
- Europe and the war in Iraq,
- the consequences of Yugoslavia's division,
- the war in Iraq: European positions,
- the war in Iraq: European divisions,
- the war in Iraq: demonstrations in Europe,
- EU-USA relations,
- EU-Israel relations.

c) "Cultural items" about events occurring throughout Europe or European culture at large, for example:
- Köln Carnival,
- European films,
- Greece as a bridge between East and West,
- Antwerp world capital of diamond production,
- Erasmus programme and universities exchanges,
- educational exhibition in Lisbon.

d) "Social items" about European societies and their lifestyles, for example:
- organic clothes,
- congestion in the European sky,
- fight against air pollution in Europe,
- pollution and health in Europe,

- anti globalisation movement,
- use of computers in Europeans daily life.

Most of the discussed items in the 2003 edition were, in short, dedicated to Europe as a whole. There were of course other items dealing with single EU member states, for example:
- the Blair government crisis,
- the UK and the euro,
- the UK's delays of the Euro referendum,
- Greece's preparations for the Olympic games,
- Berlusconi's mandate as EU president experiencing an early crisis.

Other items were dedicated to Euro-Arab relations or to social, political or cultural topics that directly interested the Arab world, for example:
- EuroMed ministers meeting in Cyprus,
- Arab-American partnership rivalling Arab-European partnership,
- Europe efforts to sponsor the Road Map,
- European Muslims pilgrimage to Mecca,
- Palestinian kids week in the UK,
- Arab tourists in Switzerland.

From the analysis of such contents, three major findings emerge. First, Kamel's editorial policy for dealing with EU institutions and cultures even if not directly related to the Arab world is confirmed through the analysis of the audiovisual material. In the 2003 twelve episodes here analysed–and from the written description of the remaining episodes–it is clear that the core of the programme is the EU and Europe at large, and not the relation between the EU or Europe and the Arab world[14]. The programme was therefore purely educational covering the EU and Europe in general; it strove to inform Arab audiences and eventually–even if not directly–to provide them with a model of unity.

The second finding concerns the "language" used in relating EU events. Seemingly, Al Jazeera possesses a rather precise knowledge of the different EU institutions. The various policy-making processes within the main EU institutions (e.g. Parliament, Commission, and Council), and the different roles and functions carry by those institutions are described in detail. There is a clear desire to inform Arab audiences about the functioning of the EU institutions in a precise manner, including technicalities mainly derived from the Brussels jargon. Perhaps, more importantly for a Middle-Eastern audience, the various procedures and processes governing the accession of new member states (i.e. the enlargement process) are exhaustively discussed. The political issues debated within the EU, including the divergent political positions across member states with regard to foreign policy, are consistently well analyzed and discussed. A case in point was the EU internal tensions preceding the 2003 Iraq war. The differences between member states official positions (*Uroba rasmia*) and the popular protests against the war (*Uroba shaabia*) are thoroughly assessed, as are the controversies between new member states from Eastern Europe supporting US (*Uroba gedida*) and the French-German axis (*Uroba qadima*).

In this analyses, the term West (*gharb*) is never used to refer to an undistinguished entity which would merge Europe with US. On the contrary, differences are clearly established even among the European states. It is difficult to find expressions like "European position" (*al mauqia al urobi*) except when referring to official EU decisions. Otherwise, member states' positions are clearly established and explained.

[14] This is also one of the main reasons, according to some interviewees like Ayman Gaballah, Deputy chief editor, that led to the programme's termination because it was not valuable for Arab audiences from an informative point of view.

The third major finding is related to the programme's guests. Most guests invited to provide comments or interviewed to further elucidate details regarding specific events were Europeans. To the best of our knowledge, there was no one case in which an Arab-national commented on European affairs.

Overall, these general findings indicate that the programme was well balanced in its contents and highly rich in informative content about the EU institutions and European culture.

In regards to the criteria employed to determine which events and news to report in the programme, Kamel indicated that, "concerning political events, it was not difficult to choose what should have been a priority since the international political agenda was already dictating which issue was more important and urgent to discuss. As for cultural features, we usually chose in a rather arbitrary way, according to the places where the correspondents were located at the moment. Europe is so rich in culture and cultural events that it was very difficult to make a choice and, by the way, I thought that the programme would last forever so we could cover all different angles of European culture"[15].

The 2004 and 2005 editions differed from the original 2003 version. The programme retained the same length but the number of reports and items diminished quite dramatically (e.g., a first longer section of about seven minutes plus an in-depth interview on the same topic). Flash news was cancelled and the programme turned into a thematic discussion around specific issues[16]. For example, the episode of 22nd march 2004 was entirely dedicated to the March-11 terrorist attack in Madrid and its impact on Spanish politics at the domestic level (i.e., the decline of Aznar's popular party and Zapatero's election) and on EU politics (i.e., Berlusconi and Blair loss of their main ally in Iraq-related issues). The same episode also examined how the Madrid attacks were reflected on the daily life of Arab and Muslim communities in Spain.

The episode of 10th May 2004 was dedicated to EU and Arab world relations after an Israeli official visit to Europe. The interview analysed the reasons why the European position regarding the Palestine issue is always judged negatively by the Arab world. Also, the episode of 23rd may 2005 was a thematic episode devoted to EU-Iran relations. Europe was never treated as a bloc in its attitude to Iran. On the contrary, the different and often controversial positions of the EU members towards the nuclear issue were clearly explained. El Baradei was interviewed to explain the Iranian nuclear dossier. The episode also explored why Iran was considered a nuclear threat by Europe, while India and Pakistan were not. This latter point befittingly reflects the general feeling of Arab public opinion on this issue.

The episode of 13th February 2005 was entirely dedicated to 'discover' the Netherlands and its long tradition of tolerance towards different religions and cultures. This episode also underlined how such attitude has changed since 9/11 illustrating the point with the case of Pym Fortune and Theo Van Gogh's murder. The 11th April 2005 episode focused on France and its attitude towards the Jews. It underlined the anti-Semitic accusations directed at France.

As it is evident from these summaries of some of the 2004-2005 episodes, despite format changes and reduction of news items, the programme's quality and richness of content did not suffer. The programme main goal remained to cover important issues occurring in Europe providing a different perspective on those issues that, in other Al Jazeera programmes, were often permeated by a

[15] Ahmed Kamel, personal interview, May 2008.

[16] According to Kamel, the only reason to change the format of the show was its tiring production routine. Most of the work was in fact in the hands of the Brussels bureau, not so many correspondents were willing to cooperate, therefore it was just for personal work reason that he decided to produce less features and to cancel the news items. Personal interview, May 2008

specific Arab-focus. Thus, "Min Uroba" provided a European perspective on current affairs while informing Arab communities about how Europeans approached a particular issue. For example, the episode of 31st May 2004 covered the case of the Bulgarian nurses imprisoned and condemned by Qaddafi in Libya. Importantly, the episode provided Arab audiences with the Bulgarian, politicians' and people's, point of view.

The "educational aspects" about EU institutions also remained in the 2004-2005 editions of the programme. Key events for EU development were underlined and explained. For example, the then new EU members from Eastern Europe were at the centre of the 3rd may 2004 episode. This episode began by explaining the EU history since its inception in 1957. It went on to explain the 'great' achievement of incorporating areas of Eastern Europe once under the USSR influence. The reporter underlined that, after the entry of Eastern European countries into EU, the Union had achieved a greater economic power which could lead the EU become financially more important than the US. Another report in the same episode asked if the doors of EU were opened to the Arab world pointing out that Spain is nearby the Maghreb and Cyprus is close to the Arab Levant. Another feature of the episode was dedicated to the countries which aspired to become members of the EU (i.e., the Balkans and Turkey) and those which did not show intentions to do so (i.e., Iceland and Switzerland). Russia was generally discussed as an improbable candidate for EU membership. All positions were explained clearly and the episode had a high informational-educational value.

The 2004-2005 editions echoed the 2003 series in presenting the EU as a model of unity to be followed by Arab countries. While comparing the Arab League to EU, the episode of 12th April 2004 emphasised how the latter offered an example of countries that have tried to remain integrated and to build a common economic and social model. The same attitude was showed in the episode of 26th July 2004 dedicated to the elections of the new Head of European Commission. The reporter underlined that this role could become fundamental if the EU Constitution would pass and if there was a common European foreign policy.

Lastly, "Min Uroba" projected a neutral attitude in regards to religion. It was not solely focused on Islam but covered all religions practiced in Europe. There were reports about Catholic festivities– such as Semana Santa in Spain (12th April 2004)–and several reports about Jews. The latter reports were occasionally implicit. For example, the episode of 26th July 2004 described the Berlin celebrations on the anniversary of the end of Hitler's regime, which implicitly narrated the Jewish people's suffering under Nazism.

In conclusion, it is possible to highlight some key characteristics of this programme. Notwithstanding its changing format (due to editorial policies), "Min Uroba" has been an extremely valuable, highly informative and educative programme about Europe as a political system, and as a cultural and social entity. It described the EU and Europe in considerably precise and balanced way, offering explanations and information not common to other Al Jazeera programmes. It conveyed an image of the EU as a model of unity for Arabs, while explaining how the integration process has worked for European states. It also touched upon many important issues about religion, culture and society. Ahmed Kamel states that there were no restrictions for the programme, with the only exception of Arab immigrants and Muslims in general, who were generally described positively because they composed Al Jazeera' core audience.[17] Kamel also added that, during the war in Iraq, the programme's editors generally focused on the opinions of Europeans who were against the war. "But I tried always to explain the reasons of those who were in favour and those who were against,

[17] "If I had to make the programme again, I would never present immigrants only in a positive way. There are in fact many negative aspects of Arab immigrants that should be presented, but at the time it was really a taboo to discuss them". Ahmed Kamel, personal interview, May 2008

underlining that the latter did not mean to be in favour of the Saddam Hussein regime. This was my main point when presenting the demonstrations against the war throughout all Europe"[18].

The reasons to stop "Min Uroba" are still unclear. Many journalists in the newsroom believe it was only due to budgetary reasons. Ayman Gaballah, Deputy Chief Editor of the newsroom, explains why the EU lacks appeal for Al Jazeera as opposed to the US:

> When you compare our programme *Min Washington* with *Min Uroba* a very important difference immediately emerges: dealing with American policy towards the Arab world means dealing with the policy of one country. Whether there are oppositions or not, it is still one country with one policy. In Europe, I feel that even if the EU exists we always have to deal with different foreign policies. Speaking about the EU, you never find any common decisions on foreign policy, excluding issues that involve directly the EU as an institution (like Turkey's admission to the Union). But when we speak about relations with the Middle East, it is always the US, or the UK, or sometimes France that play the leading role. Even when we say that the EU is supporting this or rejecting that, we know very well that this is never a unified decision and behind it there must be some disagreements or different views coming from the members"[19]. "The US is much more dynamic in TV terms if compared to EU. At the end of the day, in Washington you have one decision made by one administration, which has an impact on the Arab world and which can be discussed in our programmes, whether it is positive or negative. As for Europe, we might pay more attention to a decision issued by the UK or France as single countries rather than a EU decision. We look at Europe, we are interested in it and our audiences are interested in it, but we still look at it as a set of different states rather than a coherent bloc. The Union, in my opinion, still needs time to reach the status of a unified political body which in the future would drive our attention more than single nation-states. The US is a 'continent', a large one and incorporates so many different cultures but, at the end of the day, it deals with our viewers as one country[20].

Kamel perceives the cancellation of "Min Uroba" as an editorial policy change. In fact, in mid 2003, Mohamed Jasim Al Ali, the former general manager of Al Jazeera, was substituted by Adnan Sharif and, later, by Wadah Khanfar, who remains in that position to date.[21] The new management urged a change in the schedule as it wanted to convert Al Jazeera into a channel solely concentrated on news and not on programmes. In this new scheme, Kamel was offered a half-an-hour segment of one of the news bulletins to focus on Europe but he refused and left the channel. At the same time other programmes like "Murasilu Al Jazeera" (Al Jazeera correspondents) and other current affairs or in-depth programmes were cancelled. The number of talk shows, on the contrary, remained the same, even if they were now shorter in length. The new editorial policy was therefore reinforcing the news dimension, even if in the direction of breaking-news at the expense of in-depth analysis and reports.

Following the US attack on Iraq, there was a major shift in the channel's content as that attack became an important Pan-Arab issue and one of the major concerns of the station in its reports to its audience. As emphasised in the introduction, the year 2003 represents a dramatic shift in news-making trends worldwide (and not only inside Al Jazeera) towards a more emotional and mobilising approach. This shift came at the expenses of more educational and informative programmes; one of which was "Min Uroba" with its focus on the EU/Europe.

5. The two Al Jazeeras: EU images in news programmes and talk shows

As mentioned previously, Al Jazeera's programming can be divided into two main areas: news bulletins and talk shows. While news bulletins are consistently neutral in their reporting and reamin

[18] Ahmed Kamel, personal interview, May 2008.
[19] Ayman Gaballah, personal interview, December 2007.
[20] Ayman Gaballah, personal interview, December 2007.
[21] Al Ali was forced to resign under US pressure as he was judged to be pro-Saddam Hussein and overly involved with the Iraqi secret services. Adnan Sharif, one of the founders of Al Jazeera, covered the MD position only for a short period before the final Board decision to appoint Khanfar as Al Jazeera's MD.

focused on the news item, it is in the talk shows that political events are discussed more in-depth. Generally, the difference between news bulletins and talk shows is similar to that between columns and articles in newspapers. It is thus in the talk shows that one finds the sharpest and culturally significant perceptions of the EU.

This section will analyze the coverage of the EU in the news items and talk shows, the most popular TV programmes in Al Jazeera schedule. Regarding talk shows, this analysis considers the following episodes for each programme:

Table 1 – Talk shows and relevant topics discussed

Programme (episodes' date)	Topic
Sharia wal hayat (1 in 2005; 2 in 2006)	- Danish cartoons of prophet Mohammed - Muslims living in Europe - Consequences of 9/11 for Muslims living in the West
Al Ittijiah al moakis (1 in 1997; 1 in 2003; 2 in 2004; 1 in 2006)	- Euro-Mediterranean process after the Barcelona declaration - Europe vs. US in respect to the Arab world - French law on hijab, and secularism vs. religion - Danish cartoons of prophet Mohammed - Europe's position towards Iraqi war of 2003
Akthar min ray (1 in 2003; 1 in 2005; 1 in 2006)	- Debate about Turkey's admission to the EU - Dialogue among religions and the role of Christianity in the EU constitution - EU internal relations among member states, external relations with the US and with the Arab world
Mimbar Al Jazeera (2003)	- Europe's position towards Iraqi war of 2003 - Muslims living in Europe
Hiwar maftoua (2004; 2005)	- French law on hijab and secularism vs religion - Dialogue among religions, and the role of Christianity in the EU constitution
Bila hudud (1 in 2003; 1 in 2006)[22]	- EU presidency under Finland and its position towards Israel and Palestine, war in Iraq, alliance with the US, relations with Hezbollah and the 2006 Lebanon war - Europe's position towards Iraqi war of 2003

As discussed in the methodology section, the selection of talk shows was not linear because most programmes had been archived according to the name of the main guests. However, we are confident that the number of talk shows identified is representative of Al Jazeera's editorial line because those shows are flagship programmes broadcast during prime-time and with a tremendous

[22] All discussed talk shows–with the exception of Shariaa wal hayat and Mimbar Al Jazeera–are political talk shows which follow the formula of discussing one issue with one or more guests representing different points of views. Their success is very much based around their hosts, being strong TV characters as Faysal Al Kasim or Ahmed Mansour. Shariaa wal hayat is a religious programme that targets Muslims living in the West, offering advice about how to live a life according to the principle of their Islamic religion even if living in Europe or the US. Mimbar Al Jazeera is a viewers talk show, in which they can give their opinion on a given topic by calling on live in the studio.

influence on the Pan-Arab press (e.g., Ittihaj al moakis episode of Danish cartoons). The following sections discuss the other important findings.

The EU is relevant only when is linked to the Arab world

With the exception of *Akthar min ray* none of the flagship talk shows has dedicated an episode to EU as a political system or to its political decisions. Europe becomes relevant in the talk shows when it is directly linked to the Arab world (e.g., issues related to the 2003 Iraq war, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue) or in regards to laws (e.g., French law on hijiab) or episodes (e.g., Danish cartoons) having an impact on the lives of European Arabs and Muslims. In this approach to news, single member states are more important than the EU itself. There is less coverage about the EU if it is not related directly to the Arab or Muslim world.

The EU as a model of integration for the Arab world

However, when it is mentioned as an institution, the EU is always regarded as a model of unity that could be adopted by Arabs states. In the Al Ittijah al mouakis episode of 28th January 2003, the host Faysal Al Kasim reminded the audience that a union of 25 states clearly has a strong military and economic power which leads to a stronger global strategic position. Also Akthar Min Ray, in the episode of 27th June 2003, stresses the achievement of uniting 25 states under the same flag, indicating that this is General De Gaulle's fulfilled dream. As remarked by Faysal Al Kasim during our interview, "I wanted to tell Arabs: look at Europeans. They went to war more than once in history, they killed each others and look at them now! Even speaking different languages they are melting together and uniting! In this case I use the EU as an example to follow and encourage Arabs to do the same"[23].

In news coverage, the EU remains as an integration model to inspire Arabs. This image is found implicitly in different areas of coverage; for example, the coverage of Euro currency. The development of the European economy around a common currency is always reported as something that strengths the EU on a global scale. The EU is constantly depicted as the largest economic community in the world and the only one able to challenge the American economy[24]. As stated by Ahmad Beshto, author of the economic programme "Iktisad wa nass", "The EU model (first a monetary union, followed by a political one) represents a strong example for Arabs. I don't think it can be followed very easily by Arabs, for all the problems that we have in region. But the EU is definitely a model to be regarded as a successful example of union"[25].

Another example of this EU-as-model image is Turkey's entry to the EU. Turkey is repeatedly portrayed as a secular country that has been highly successful in achieving a fair degree of industrial development. Concomitantly, the EU is regarded as an institution able to integrate several different countries on an equality basis; this capacity is more accentuated in the case of economically weaker members (e.g., Eastern Europe). Samir Khader, the programme editor, clearly explains Al Jazeera editorial policy regarding the EU: "The official position of the channel in respect of the EU is to portray it as a model that could be followed by Arabs, that is, a model of unity"[26].

The EU and US as an undistinguished "West"

[23] Faysal Al Kasim, personal interview, December 2007.
[24] "For the Arab world EU is the most economically valuable partner. We are speaking of 25 countries, not just one! Therefore the EU always comes first in our economic bulletin". Ahmad Beshto, personal interview, December 2007.
[25] Ahmad Beshto, personal interview, December 2007.
[26] Samir Khader, personal interview, December 2007.

Most of the talk shows do not distinguish the European Union, Europe and US. They are all assimilated into a unit and classified under the generic label of the 'West' (*gharb*). This linguistic approximation mostly comes from the programmes' guests or from the audiences calling in the show. With few exceptions, the hosts of the programmes never use this generic term in the introduction of the show. It is possible, however, that the label would be used during the debate, when the host relaxes his initial impartiality and balanced attitude to become part of the discussion. In this case, the linguistic approximation of the West becomes stronger, as the person in charge of defending the editorial principle of "the opinion and the counter opinion"[27] would lose control for the sake of a good TV spectacle. Occasionally, as in Al ittijah al moakis episode of 28th January 2003, the guests use the expression "gharb" both for Europe and for US but underline that "it's true that the West is only one, but its origin are European (*asl al gharb asl urobi*)". In other ocassions, as in Mimbar Al Jazeera episode of 12th February 2003, some Arab residents calling from Europe did clarify, speaking of the 2003 Iraq war, that France, Belgium and Germany had different positions from other European countries. And, moreover, that those three countries were better than Arab states in their fierce opposition to the war. Generally speaking, however, the talk shows maintain a linguistic ambiguity and approximation when referring to Europe as an undistinguished West. In this regard is worth quoting Al Kasim's words, "We hardly distinguish between Europe and the US, we tend to put them into the same basket. Even Arab intellectuals think that is very difficult to distinguish between the two"[28].

To summarise the point, EU issues find a place in Al Jazeera's talk shows only when they are related to the Arab world. In this context, the EU often becomes linked to an undistinguished West which is immediately opposed to the Arab world.

There are significant exceptions to this trend of assimilating the EU with the US within the 'West'. For example, the Al Ittijah al moakis episode of 28th January 2003. Al Kasim's introduction to this episode–which is built around his powerful rhetoric of presenting the good aspects of one point of view and, immediately after, the good aspects of its counter opinion–proposes several questions to Arabs: "Why are Arabs the chicken, the caviar and the petrol in the American salad? Why don't they choose to be ingredients of another salad, the European one? Isn't it true that Europe and America are diverging about how to deal with the Iraqi affair? Isn't it true that European countries are opposing to war in Iraq in a stronger and more determined way than Arab countries themselves? Isn't Europe closer to us rather than America? Isn't the Mediterranean a shared affair that interests Arabs and Europeans?" Later in the introduction, however, Al Kasim wonders: "But how can we trust Europeans when France was the first to be involved in projects against Iraq? And Germany, that now pretends to be against the war, isn't Germany that gave Israel the missiles to be used against Iraq?"[29].

This episode of Al Kasim's show gives the differences between Europe and the US a flavour of TV spectacle. This inclination, however, is coherent with the programme's general philosophy of taking each opinion to its extreme in order to fight rather than looking for dialogue. As Al Kasim states, "The media after 9/11, particularly Western media, started talking about Europe and the US as one thing, portraying everything as a civilization clash. In TV, it is much better to have one enemy to fight against. It's all media hype; there is no doubt about that, both from the Western side and from our side. It's a strange process in which the Middle-East did forget European colonialism and it prefers to focus on Europe's role in the clash of civilization. And even stranger is the fact that this is

[27] Al ray wal ray al akhar, which is Al Jazeera's motto.
[28] Faysal Al Kasim, personal interview, December 2007.
[29] Al ittijah al moakis, 28th January 2003.

not a new conflict but an old one. It reminds us the Crusades and we call it "new Crusade" (*salihibia al gedida*). People don't like lectures in TV. A TV show is a spectacle"[30].

Al Kasim also underlines when and why he talks about EU in his programme; that is, when the EU becomes newsworthy for his show's TV values:

> Generally I don't deal with the EU because of its lack of TV appeal and the lack of a unified policy among its members. Sometimes I do debate European topics when it comes to Euro-Mediterranean partnership; the EU as a model of unity and political economic cooperation for Arabs; when Israel and Palestinian issues are involved; when there is clash or a divergent opinion between America and Europe; when it comes to the Arab presence in Europe; when there are laws effecting European Muslim communities like the French law against hijab; when it comes to new member states joining the EU, particularly Turkey, because it is regarded as a Muslim country. I remember I made a show on the Turkey issue where the core of the debate was: is it Turkey a part of the Muslim world or is it a part of Europe?[31]

It is clear from this last statement that Turkey could be either a Muslim country either a European one but not both at the same time. This suits perfectly with the style of Al Ittijah al moakis which is built up around opposite concepts. However, this is not true for all talk shows. Shariaa wal hayat – the only religious programme in Al Jazeera grid[32] focuses on finding practical solutions to problems affecting Muslims living in Europe or, more generally, in Western countries. As the programme producer Moataz Al Khateeb indicates, "We always try to find solutions to questions like how can we be Muslims and Europeans at the same time? We do believe there are solutions to those issues. For example, the episode which deals with Danish cartoons of the prophet Mohamed (19th February 2006) aims to find solutions to the issue, not to raise further problems among us. The key question was: how do we move on the cartoons' issue? By which means can we go beyond the problem and come back to the dialogue with Europeans?"[33]

The episode of 10th July 2005 is another example of this trend. The topic is Muslim communities' inclusion in Europe. It asked questions such as: can Muslims become a part of western societies or no? The answers show an inclination towards intercultural dialogue; despite the fact that programme was recorded a few days after the London underground bombings amid great tensions between Europeans and European Muslims. Asked how to go beyond the post bombings crisis, the guest of the episode addressed the audience in this way:

> First of all we have to know each other and build a bridge between us and the Europeans. We have to know our Islamic religion but at the same time we have to know the laws of the country where we live and we have to respect them. Islamic religion is built around duties and if we do respect those duties, we will respect the positive law of the country where we live even before it is required to us. We have to fulfill our duties as Muslims and also our duties as citizens contributing to public life by voting during elections. About Islamic schools, I think we are the first who have to give our children an Islamic education. If they are well educated by us, they will go to public schools and maintain their Islamic education without problems. We have to send our children to public schools, we don't have to isolate them; they have to live in Western societies. Otherwise, why did we come to live here? If they want to help us as Muslims living in the West, our Muslim brothers have to understand the reality of Europe which is different from the reality of the Middle-East.[34]

[30] Faysal Al Kasim, personal interview, December 2007.
[31] Faysal Al Kasim, personal interview, December 2007.
[32] The programme exists since the beginning of Al Jazeera but it has undergone several changes in the past few years. While it started as a "fatwa" programme featuring its creator, the famous Sheikh Al Qaradawi, it later became a show debating different issues concerning Muslims living in Europe.
[33] Moataz Al Khateeb, personal interview, December 2007.
[34] Shariaa wal hayat, 10th July 2005.

Generally, Shariaa wal hayat has dealt with the issue of Muslims living in Europe in an extremely moderate way, striving to understand the reasons behind the crisis and to go beyond them. About the terminology used, Al Khateeb states that, "We always try to distinguish between EU and US and to avoid the word "West". It is very clear to us that Muslims living in France and Muslims living in the UK have different problems and different ways to deal with the integration with local societies"[35].

Bila Hudud, a flagship talk show hosted by famous presenter Ahmad Mansour, employs a different approach. The episodes of the show that focus on the EU and related issues are very much oriented against the EU. The latter is always portrayed as a US (and Israel) ally against Palestine and the Arab cause in general. The episode of 2nd February 2006 is dedicated to Finland while it held the EU presidency. The style of the presenter and his questions are biased and openly provocative. For example, it is asked "Don't you feel guilty for EU committing a crime against Palestine, for supporting Israel whenever they kill innocent children? Aren't we Arabs human beings, too??"[36]

The Palestinian issue–together with war in Iraq–is one of the most debated topics in Al Jazeera programmes' covering the EU. Many programmes describe it as the central issue (*qadia markasia)*[37] in the debate about the EU attitude towards the Arab world. The only significant exception to the tendency to deal with the EU only when the issue is related to the Arab world or Pan-Arab issues is Akthar min ray. The talk show, headquartered in London, is more open to deal with EU issues as independent topics[38]; perhaps this is so because of its geographic location.

As regards news bulletins, this analysis included the following items (collected between 2002 and 2006): a) Turkey joining EU; b) French refusal of EU constitution; c) French law on hijab; d) EU position in the 2003 Iraq war; e) controversies between different member states on the Iraq war; f) EU enlargement; g) discussion within the EU about immigration laws and illegal immigrants.

The EU's newsworthiness

When does the EU become a valuable news object for Al Jazeera's newsroom in Doha?

The main EU aspects that Al Jazeera covers in news bulletins are the followings[39]:

- Items directly related to the Arab world. For example: the role of the EU in the Middle-East peace process and its position on the Palestinian-Israeli issue, controversies between the EU and the US on Arab-relevant issues (e.g., Lebanon, Syria and Iraq), Arab and Muslim immigrants living in Europe, EU laws concerning illegal immigration and terrorism.
- Items not directly related to the Arab world but valuable in terms of breaking news. For example: steps in the EU integration process (new EU member states are given great media attention), negotiations for Turkey's entry to the EU, the Euro currency achievements in international markets.[40]

[35] Moataz Al Khateeb, personal interview, December 2007
[36] Bila Hudud, 2nd February 2006.
[37] As in Al ittijah al moakis, episode of 28th January 2003.
[38] For example, in the episode of 27th June 2003 dedicated to the new member countries and the future of EU, the questions dealt with matters such as whether or not new member states will bring US interests to the EU; or if France and Germany would be able to maintain their leadership in an expanded EU. The need for a common policy in the EU was also debated.
[39] These findings result from the analysis of news items and from the interviews with Ayman Gaballah, Deputy chief editor; Hassan Shawki, programme editor; Samir Khader, programme editor; Ahmad Beshto, author and presenter of the programme "Iktisad wa nass" (all interviewed in Doha, December 2007); Labib Fahmi, correspondent and Brussels bureau chief (interviewed in Brussels, May 2008).
[40] As Samir Khader underlines:" There are two very important things for us: Arabs and Muslims. When we talk about the EU in the news it is because there is something that touches one of the following key points: immigrants, European constitution and the incorporation of new states, and the Euro and financial markets. We care a lot about foreign policy, both of member states and of the

Member States have more news value than the Union itself

Al Jazeera's newsroom prioritises, in terms of news value, the EU member states rather than the EU as an entity. In Ayman Gaballah words, "We might pay more attention to a decision issued by the UK or France as single countries rather than an EU collective decision. We look at Europe, we are interested in it and our audiences are interested in it, but we still consider it as different nation states rather than a coherent block. The Union, I believe, still needs time to reach the status of a unified political body which would drive our attention more than single nation states. Just to give an example, French refusal of the EU Constitution was very important for having a common foreign policy in the Union. We gave lots of coverage to this event but, again, it was because it was a decision coming from France; that is, from a single state member and a very important one, too"[41].

Labib Fahmi, the Brussels correspondent and bureau chief, adds that "Being based in Brussels, the EU is a priority for me. But Doha focuses mostly on single member states rather than on the Union. Paris and London are much more represented in Arab culture than Brussels".

> From Doha's perspective it is very hard to understand how Europe works. For example, it is very difficult to understand of something like a project (*mashroua*) discussed within the EU even if it does not become a decision (*qarrar*). But when I propose to Doha to feature a EU project, I always find it very hard to explain to them its importance. It is easier for them to understand nation states behaviour than this collective EU machine. This results in an average of ten news items per month (there are not that many "decisions" made by the EU), while the other agencies (like London or Paris) would do much more. [42]

Understanding of the EU

In the news, the EU is always described in a correct and fair way. There is no assimilation into a generic "West", and every divergent position in the EU is reported correctly and in a neutral and professional style. As Hassan Shawki points out, "We always differentiate between the US and the EU. Even within the EU itself we differentiate if there is a disagreement among the members. In the news department we are much accurately aware that the EU doesn't speak in one single voice when it comes to foreign policy and sometimes when it comes to internal policy too. We always comment about EU new member states and try to explain that those states are not at the same economic level as the core countries of the Union but that they have same rights within it".

"We never use the term "West"; Also in the case of Turkey, we never portray it as an Islamic country for it is a secular one. We could never say that their president is an Islamic president or that the party at the government is an Islamic one. We could just say that they have Islamic roots, but they are not pursuing Islamic ideals because the state remains secular and that is how we portray it"[43].

European guests

Union itself. We are interested in new countries joining the EU mostly because of Turkey, not because we regard it as a Muslim state but because of its geopolitical value. Turkey is our neighbour country; therefore, if it will be integrated into Europe we will become next door neighbours to the EU, too. We are also interested in the EU Constitution developments because if Europe establishes a common foreign policy it will become a real counterbalance to the US, therefore it will acquire more value for Arabs. Our interest in the Euro currency is because it represents a model of economic integration that Arabs could follow. Economic integration could be the first step towards political union". Personal interview, December 2007.

[41] Ayman Gaballah, personal interview, December 2007.

[42] Labib Fahmi, personal interview, May 2008.

[43] Hassan Shawki, personal interview, December 2007.

For the most part, in the news there are more European guests than in the talk shows and programmes. As Hassan Shawki indicates, "We have usually European guests even if they don't speak Arabic. Our first choice is to give visibility to indigenous experiences rather than having an Arab living in Europe. We would choose a European perspective to comment on European affairs"[44]. However, Labib Fahmi, the Brussels correspondent and bureau chief, stresses that "my job as Al Jazeera correspondent in Brussels is very hard when it comes to finding EU officials willing to appear on our screens. Even when we wanted to deliver European opinions to our audience, we discovered there are very few willing to appear in our programmes. There are many reasons to explain this behaviour, the first, of course is the lack of a common foreign policy which results in the absence of EU official spokespersons. There is maybe fear to express positions in a public way and in front of Arab audiences. There is also, I believe, a problem in the highly bureaucratic organisation in Brussels. EU representatives are so busy with meetings and other engagements that when they find the time to be interviewed it would be too late in terms of news values. Lastly, there is also an understandable attitude among EU representatives to prefer their own national media before releasing interviews to foreign media. All these problems together lead us to have fewer European guests in the news than we wish"[45];

General perception of the EU in Al Jazeera's news bulletins

Within the limits of a non-quantitative analysis of the news grid, we could attempt to establish a general impression about the news coverage of EU in Al Jazeera's schedule. Coverage is not extensive in TV hours and number of items; it is, however, extremely good in terms of quality and accuracy of the reports. EU coverage in Al Jazeera news is balanced, precise in terms of language and terminology, and rather "technical" and neutral; that is, it reports the news item without giving any judgement or opinion about it. This impression–resulting from the analysis of the news items discussed previuosly–has been onfirmed by many interviews. In Labib Fahmi's words, "Generally speaking, I think Al Jazeera coverage of the EU is sufficient, because the Brussels reports are complemented by reports originating in the UK or France. But if that coverage is compared to that of the US, I have to say it is extremely poor. This is due to the higher degree of television appeal of the US. The latter is one country only and it is easy to represent it in TV terms while EU news are less attractive and much more complicated to deliver to general audiences"[46].

Samir Khader states, "Our coverage of EU issues is less than satisfying in terms of volume of items. In my opinion, we should cover it more, both in volume of news and in terms of countries, because important European countries like Italy and Greece are under-covered by our programmes. Anyway, in terms of quality of the coverage I should say that I am happy because it is highly professional and balanced"[47].

6. Final remarks

It is worthwhile to summarise the main findings of this analysis. In terms of EU's *newsworthiness* (news as well as in talk shows), it has been determined that EU issues are mostly dealt with when directly related to the Arab world. This is of course truer in the case of talk shows while in news items we also found EU coverage when it is relevant as an international player, even if not directly related to the Arab world. As for the *quantity* and *quality* of Al Jazeera coverage of EU issues, there seems to be some discrepancy between the two. The quantity of EU-related news is quite limited;

[44] Hassan Shawki, personal interview, december 2007.
[45] Labib Fahmi, personal interview, december 2007.
[46] Labib Fahmi, personal interview, may 2008.
[47] Samir Khader, personal interview, December 2007.

although since 2003, there has been a slight increase in the number of talk shows discussing issues somehow related to Europe. Almost all the talk shows episodes that have we found in the archive are dated after 2003 (we will discuss this point momentarily). As for the quality, it is important to note the extreme differences between news and talk shows coverage. On the one hand, the quality of the news is considerably high and professional in terms of accuracy in reporting the story and in using the correct terminology. On the other hand, the quality of the talk shows coverage decreases, because often the opinions of the guests and the host are combined in a chaotic and confusing way which produces a coverage with poor informative value.

In regards to the *definition* of Europe, news bulletins distinguish very carefully the EU from the US and refrain from using generic expressions such as "the West". Conversely, talk shows very rarely differentiate between the two. Due to their more confrontational style, talk shows prefer amalgamating the EU and the US under the same label so as to deal with only one subject and to be more effective in terms of the TV narrative of "us" and "them".

Generally, there seems to be lack of TV appeal and other difficulties that limit the EU presence in TV terms. The EU is seen as "not being appealing enough" for TV. There is also lack of media communication policy, which results in an almost total absence of EU public officials; hence, reducing EU communication with Arab audiences through TV screens. Conversely, there is a strong news value in the *EU soft power*, because is considered as a model of unity by Arabs. Therefore, this analysis concludes that there are "two Al Jazeeras" that speak about EU. An Arab viewer who only watches news on Al Jazeera could have a dissonant and completely opposite view of the EU if compared to that of a talk show viewer. This kind of "dissonance" has always existed in Al Jazeera programming. It is, to an extent, normal. The same tendencies exist between news reports and columns in the written press.

It has been indicated that the different organisational structure of news and talk shows result in an "objectivity" gap between the two. The production process of a news item is strictly monitored by a group of people, which grants it its neutral value. Talk shows are not submitted to such scrutinising process resulting in a show linked to the personality of its author rather than to a collective decision[48].

The "routine-work" difference between news and talk shows in Al Jazeera has grown since 2003. This has is explained by a general shift in the editorial policy of the channel leading to a greater focus on Pan-Arab issues. The year 2003 marked the beginning of the Iraqi conflict which has resulted in a dramatic explosion of violence that has brought the Arab region to the centre of global news. In 2006, the Lebanon war contributed to the growth of Pan-Arab issues coverage in Al Jazeera grid at the expenses of other topics.

This shift in focus is a normal process: TV channels offer items targeted at their core audience. To put it differently, Al Jazeera increasingly expands its coverage of Pan-Arab issues because, first, they are closer to its audience's interests and second, they could be used to build up an emotional link with its viewers. Notwithstanding the debate about the causality of drive between TV channels and their audiences, it is important to underline that the EU coverage after 2003 has decreased in quantity and quality. In relation to quantity, the difficulties arise from the lack or cancellation of EU dedicated programmes (e.g., "Min Uroba"). The quality of coverage is negatively affected by the

[48] This is confirmed by Hassan Shawki's words, "In the news there is more accuracy and more supervision in respect to programmes. A piece of news goes under various levels of filtration before going on air, while in talk shows the anchorman and the producer are in charge of choosing the topics and the guests. The news department doesn't interfere in their work and they don't interfere in ours, but we are different. We filter and re-filter a piece of news before sending it on air, which results in more balance". Hassan Shawki, personal interview, December 2007.

prevailing "emotional trend" in talk shows, which results in diminished accuracy in terminology and limited informative value.

This is best explained by Hassan Shawki:

> "After the Iraqi occupation in 2003, the entire region has changed. There was a need to report extensively what was happening there and also to try to explain the reasons of the situation. That's why Al Jazeera grid started to depend less and less from issues not directly related to Iraq. The increased pan-Arab coverage would come at the expenses of other programmes. Those in charge of programming would find hard to position a programme about EU, or South America, or Asia while Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon are burning. I think that in 'normal' time it would be important to have such programmes but in this particular period everything is different. Talk shows after 2003 are not increasing in number. What has been increasing is the number of programmes that are not directly linked to world regions, like Europe. I think that the news items concerning these issues in terms of breaking news have been growing.[49]

This final consideration about the post-2003 period in the Arab region must be carefully considered by the EU when designing a media strategy to approach the Arab world. Media are moving more and more towards polarised positions and emotional mobilisation of viewers. Institutions like the EU have the critical task to attempt to balance this trend; if not, it may lead to an extremely precarious political situation.

To conclude, by developing a more respectful communication strategy towards Al Jazeera and towards the Arab media in general, the EU could greatly contribute to a more balanced view of world politics and a more objective analysis. If the EU wants to make such a crucial contribution, it should seriously analyse its communication strategy's weaknesses towards the Arab media and strive to develop a more adequate media strategy which takes into account the needs of the "other".

[49] Hassan Shawki, personal interview, December 2007.

FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
DELEGATES IN BRUXELLES

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

Postcards from Brussels: a view from third party state diplomats

Executive Summary

Diplomats hold a complex and well established vision of where the European Union stands in world politics. Their judgements and beliefs are grounded in considerations which encompass both the relationship with their country of origin and the contribution that the Union can make to the international system.

Their privileged position of “near abroad observers” helps diplomats frame a more elaborated position. It must be noted, however, that diplomats do not tend to assume different positions from their governments. Hence, any difference in their position consists in the way in which they portray the Union, contextualise in detail the institutional setting and the issues that it implies in terms of international actorness. Diplomats, regardless of their country of origin, tend to speculate on the limits and potentialities deriving from the EU’s peculiar institutional setting. In this sense, the exposure to European institutions helps substantiating their views with an analysis of institutional constrains.

In general, diplomats maintain that the Union should make its role more understood within Europe as well as in third countries. There is also wide spread perceptions that the EU is far from being understood by both European and third countries constituencies. In this context, the Union is often “accused” of over-bureaucratisation and slow-paced decision-making. It is also conceived as detached from “normal people” who normally do not understand the EU at all.

In terms of the European Union's role in world affairs, a distinction is made between the Union's presence and actorness, a distinction that reveals the limits and potentialities of its role. On the one hand, a mark of distinctiveness is attributed to the fact that the EU is not a state, both in terms of presence – mainly in relation to the EU's authoritativeness and representativeness – and in terms of actorness – in terms of the substance of its decisions.

With respect to its presence, the EU is said to be more inclined to assume a balanced and multilateral posture towards all international questions. Several images used by diplomats to describe the EU point to its “consensual” nature, its ability to spread peace in Europe and to stand for “universal values” such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Its presence in international fora is often valuable in this sense, so that it is a “good thing” to have “the EU on board” when dealing also with complex international issues such as the nuclear non-proliferation crisis with Iran or the global reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

In terms of its actorness, the plurality of identities and interests that the Union embodies is one of the most recurrent putative causes of its limited international performance. The EU is not a state and, for the EU, it is notoriously a difficult and time-consuming process to take decisions in international affairs. Above all, when foreign policy is at stake, the EU is unable to react quickly and consistently to world events. The fact that the EU is not a state undermines its capacity to act in the international scene and might disappoint some expectations that third party states bestow on it. So the EU, in spite of the acclaimed projection of a good and reliable international actor, is not necessarily seen as able to act out of rhetoric. The fact that the Union decides, above all in foreign policy matters, by adopting a Lowest Common Denominator positions gives rise to two main

perceptions: on the one hand, that this practice allows the EU to assume a balanced position and to have a natural tendency towards dialogue and cooperation; on the other, the belief that it is impossible for the Union to be a reliable partner and to be able to put itself in its “partners’ shoes”, when dealing with crisis situation, notably in the Middle East. This is reflected in the images that diplomats elaborate with regard to the EU. A clear distinction can be seen in their judgements and opinions when they conceptualise its *role expectation* and *role performance*.

The role performance of the EU, due to the limits imposed by its capability to act (or actorness) is one of the most controversial aspects of the EU's international role and constitutes one of the most quoted weaknesses of the EU in the international scene. Diplomats tend to refer to the institutional engineering of the Union to explain the limited potentials of its international role in matters of foreign policy, security, fight against terrorism and other intergovernmental sectors of cooperation.

Yet, the EU is progressively seen as an actor able to pursue its strategies in nearly all areas of external relations, even if within the limits just outlined. This position allows the Union to champion global efforts such as the fight against global warming and the promotion of sustainable development. In these areas, the EU is seen as a forerunner, and many diplomats see it as convenient to coalesce with the EU on these matters. Hence, in spite of the hindrances just outlined, the EU is generally portrayed as a positive *partner*, whereas this term suggests a great deal of importance for the respective countries’ strategies. To sum up, diplomats chorally recognise that the EU is a growing and powerful international actor, whose role cannot be ignored.

The EU is said to pursue its interests in an imposing and at times incoherent way, but it still proves to be an indispensable actor. The factors that influence diplomats’ visions of Europe the most are related to the overall state of the relationship with the EU, its economic weight and the leverage that it represents in the pursuit of international multilateral action. On the other hand, this vision is also qualified by the relative weight of each third country in the international system and on its alliances within the system. In this sense, even if the EU is not always seen as a first rank actor, or a point of reference (like the US), it is still important to maintain solid relations with it.

About the author

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Postcards from Brussels: a view from third party states diplomats

Caterina Carta[1]

Abstract

The aim of this report is to present the views and opinions that diplomats of third party states hold about the European Union and its external role. For this purpose a series of interviews was conducted with some 26 diplomats of third party states working in Brussels, as representatives of either the Mission to the European Union or the Embassy in Belgium. This report presents interviews with diplomats of 11 countries: Australia, China, Japan, India, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, South Africa, Russia, and the United States of America. The report is structured as follows: first, it analyses the descriptions of the state of the relationship between each country and the European Union, taking into account declarations, speeches and press releases presented in the websites of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Embassies and Mission to the European Union of the selected countries; second, it presents the state of the relationship as portrayed by the interviewed diplomats; third, it takes into account diplomats' assessments of the Union's international actorness, and the way in which, accordingly, its role is delineated. Finally, it focuses on diplomats' perceptions of the Union's international presence and its relations with "relevant others" in the international system. The text of the interviews is contained in Annex I.

1. Introduction

This report focuses on the views and opinions that diplomats of third party states hold about the European Union and its external actions. It complements the Countries' Reports by presenting the views of diplomats from some of the countries included in the two rounds of this research project.[2]

Third countries' diplomats to the European Union (EU) enjoy a privileged closeness to the EU, which constitutes one of the most interesting added values of this analysis. Due to the complexity of the EU's institutional machinery, it is expected that the views of diplomats posted in Brussels should be based on more grounded knowledge of the Union, thus revealing a complex and motivated portrait of the Union's external image.

The international identity and role of the EU is indeed a complex issue. It is characterized by a triangular system of external relations (comprising the foreign policy systems of the Commission, the Council and the Member States) and by a complex division of labour between the first and the second pillar. Furthermore, when talking about the EU, a claim for *distinctiveness* is often evoked (Lucarelli, 2006). This distinctiveness is not only in regards to its peculiar institutional setting, but also its international role: the EU has been described as a distinct international actor because first, its foundations are grounded in peace, its multilateral vocation, and second, the fact that it is claimed to pursue *milieu* rather than *possession* in international goals (Wolfer, quoted in Smith, 2004).

[1] The author would like to thank all diplomats that dedicated their time to answer her questions: a sincere gratitude to all of them. A special thank goes also to Sonia Lucarelli, who directs the project *The External Image of the EU*, developed in the framework of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: The Role of the EU* – GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005–2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract No. 513330), and to her collaborators, Lorenzo Fioramonti and Lisa Tormena. The author is also grateful to the other contributors to the Report on The External Image of the EU for their suggestions. Special thanks to Armin Mayer for his patient linguistic revision and to Eugenia Baroncelli for her comments and suggestions.

[2] The GARNET survey *The External Image of the European Union*, in the framework of the Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1. After having focused on the visions of Europe held by the elite, media, public opinion in China, Japan, India, South Africa, Egypt, Brazil, and by no global movements and the Commission's delegates, the second round of reports intends to focus on the visions of Europe held by Argentina, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, the Palestinian Authority, Russia and the US.

However, this acclaimed distinctiveness also entails precise and stringent limits to the EU's international capability to act, due to the plurality of national identities and interests which converge in the Union. These intrinsic inconsistencies, coupled with the complexity of the system, in turn, partially explains the difficulty that third party citizens and elites have in understanding what kind of "animal" the EU is and, on this basis, to elaborate strategies of interaction with it and/or appropriate judgements.

One might question whether these biases derive from the difficulty to deal with the EU, on the basis of the heterogeneity of interests and identities that it embodies, or from a misunderstanding of its perspectives, mechanisms and goals due to a lack of information. In both cases, one might argue that diplomats' direct interaction and exposure to the EU's system of international relations may contribute to a better understanding and a more sophisticated point of view.

In order to depict the visions of Europe held by the diplomats representing their country to the European Union, a series of interviews were conducted (see Appendix II). Recourse to the instrument of qualitative interviews provided the opportunity to focus on the points of view, perspectives, terminologies, experiences, problems and ideas held by the diplomats. The interview was structured around three main sets of questions:

1. One set examined how diplomats define the European Union. These general questions focused on diplomats' visions of the EU, through the use of images and metaphors, and of the strengths and weaknesses both in the internal and international context.

2. The second set of questions was directed at defining the relationship between each third country and the European Union. Questions focused on the definition of strategic areas of cooperation; the ability of the Union to act effectively towards their country of origin; and previsions for the future and margins for improvements.

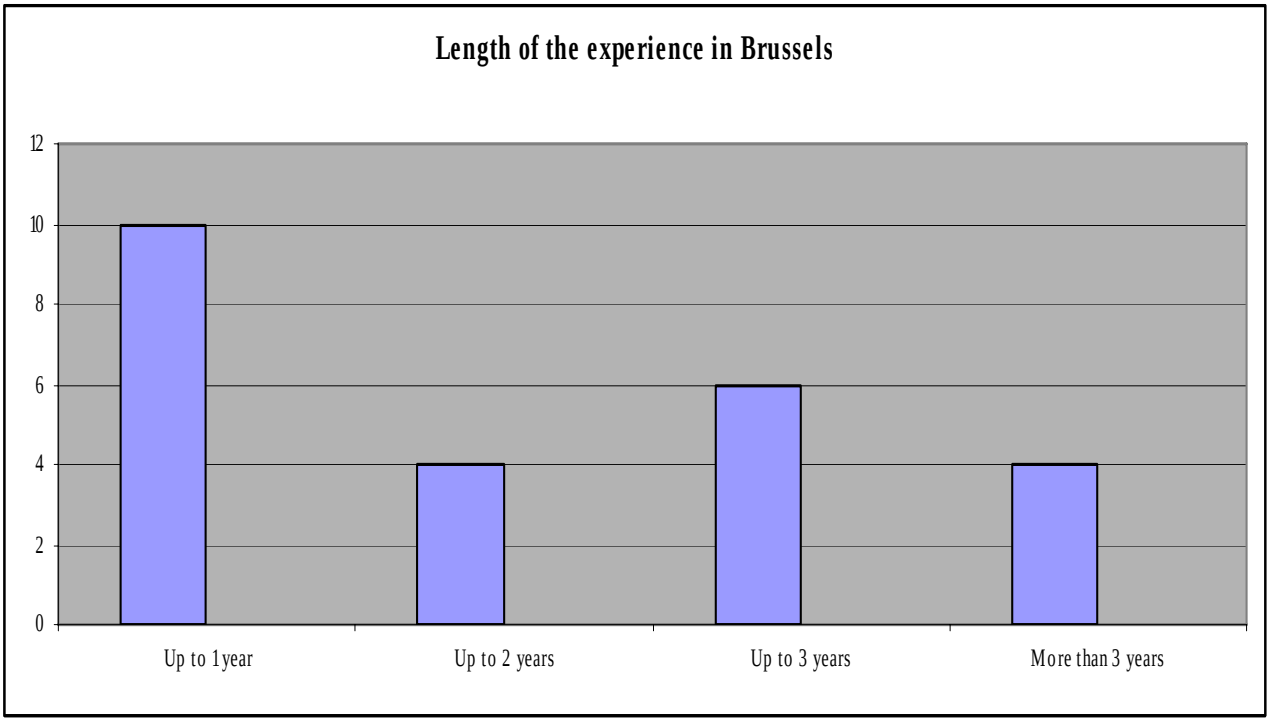
3. The third set of questions was related to the definition of the European Union's international role, on its strengths and weaknesses in the international scene, and the definition through metaphors of the goals and presence of the EU in the international system (as well as the one of other international actors, such as the US, China, India, Russia).

Interviews were conducted with 26 diplomats of third party states dealing with European affairs in Brussels either in their Embassies or in Missions to the European Union. Interviews were conducted between January and May 2008, with diplomats of the following 11 Embassies/Missions to the EU: three diplomats from Australia; two diplomats from China; three diplomats from Japan; two diplomats from India; two diplomats from Iran; two diplomats from Israel; two diplomats from Lebanon; three diplomats from Mexico; two diplomats from South Africa; two diplomats from Russia; three diplomats from the United States of America. For the sake of discretion, names and diplomatic ranks are not reported here. On their place, interviewees will be identifiable by a code, hereby indicated.

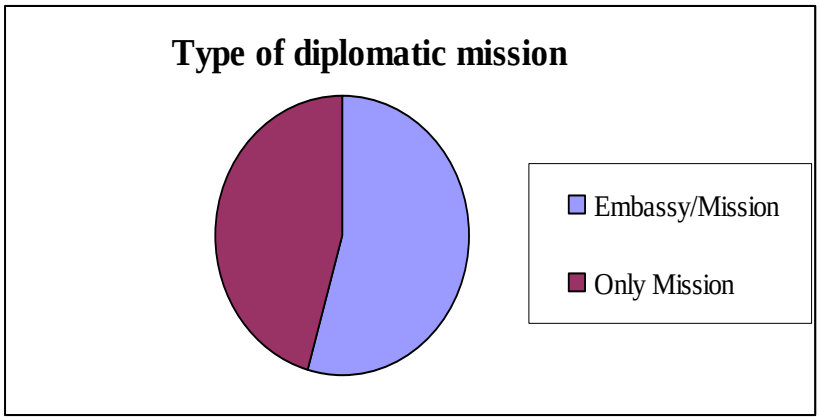
Country and interviews codes										
Australia	**China**	**Japan**	**India**	**Iran**	**Israel**	**Lebanon**	**Mexico**	**South Africa**	**Russia**	**US**
Au1 Au2 Au3	Ch1 Ch2	J1 J2 J3	In1 In2	Ir1 Ir2	Is1 Is2	Leb1 Leb2	Mex1 Mex2 Mex3	SA1 SA2	Ru1 Ru2	US1 US2 US3

Most of these diplomats have served in Brussels for less than one year, but, in general, they show a much diversified length of service within the Embassies/Missions, ranging from two months to four

years or more[3]. Among them, 12 are Counsellors, six are Ministries while eight hold other diplomatic roles.[4]



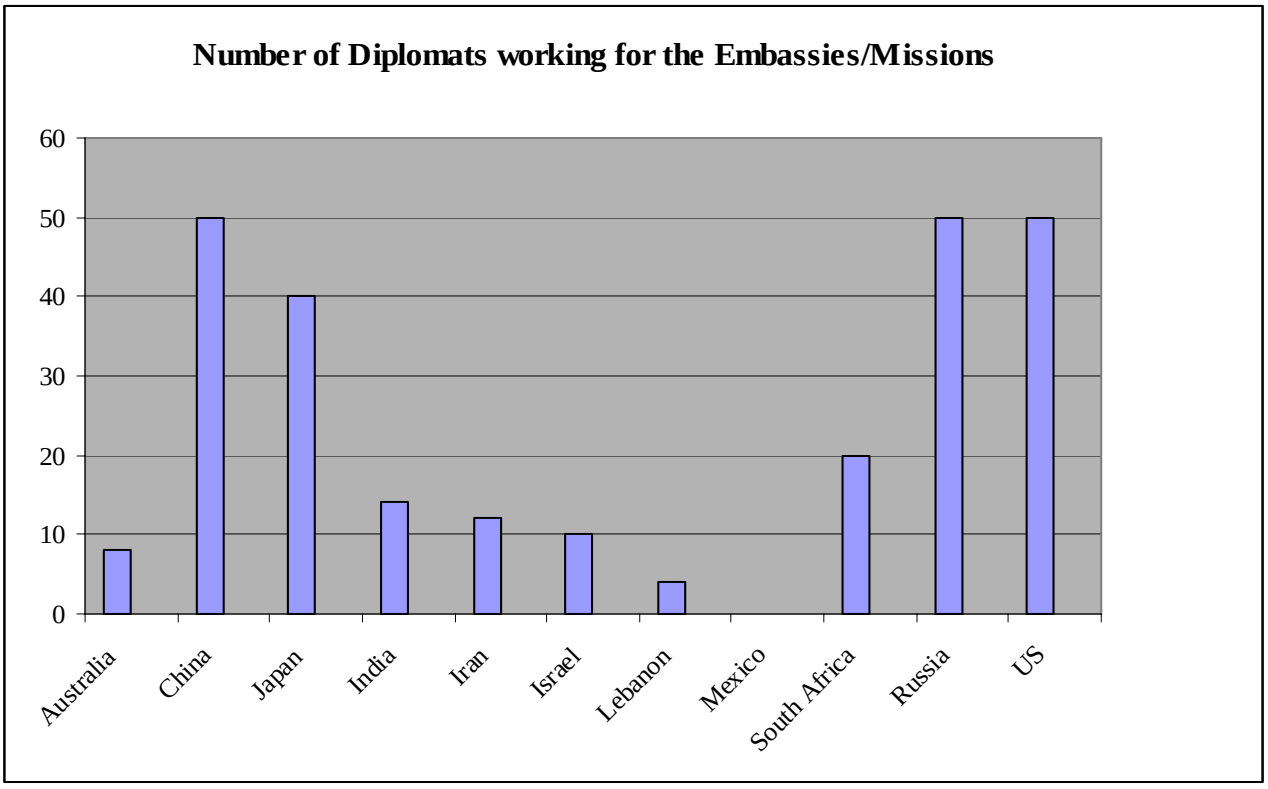
In some cases, the Missions to the EU has a proper, independent site (as is the case of China, Israel, Japan, Russia and the United States); in other cases the Mission and the Embassy are accommodated in the same building (as is the case of Australia, India, Iran, Lebanon, Mexico and South Africa). In this sense, the organization of the diplomatic service and its relative weight reveals the resources that each Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds for its diplomatic networks abroad. The organization of the diplomatic service is also telling of the strength of the relationship and importance that a country attributes to the EU.



[3] Among those, one isolated case of a technical attaché served in Brussels for 15 years.
[4] I have also met one Chargé d'Affaires, one Chief Counsellor, three First Secretaries, two Second Secretaries, one Third Secretary, and two Attachés.

There is also a significant difference among the Embassies/Missions of the selected countries in regards to the number of diplomats employed. In the case of China, Russia and the United States,[5] there are roughly 50 officials working at the Mission exclusively, in addition to those working at a separate national embassy. In the case of Japan roughly forty, in the case of India, South Africa and Mexico[6] around 15 and 20, and about ten for Australia, Iran and Lebanon.

Diplomats tend to underline that the composition of the Embassies/Missions to the EU is slightly different from that of general Embassies. Large and medium embassies are staffed not only by diplomats from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, but also by civil servants from other Ministries, such as Treasury, Trade and Commerce, Agriculture, Justice, Transport (US1, Ru2, Mex3). This is to allow diplomatic outposts to deal with a significant variety of different sectors of cooperation, which sometimes require very specific competence on behalf of the officials.



The empirical material collected is organised as follows: the first section presents the way in which the diplomats' respective Capitals define the relationship between their country and the EU at the highest level, by presenting an overview drawn from country reports and from declarations, speeches and press releases presented in the websites of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Embassies and Mission to the European Union of the selected countries. Section three backs the official position with the position of the interviewed diplomats, by providing a definition of the relationship between the EU and their countries. It is argued that, while major exposure to the EU does not bring about diplomats having substantially different points of view compared to their Capitals, it does lead to a common "diplomatic" assessment of the limits and potentialities of the EU's international action, based on a well established vision of the EU's institutional complexity. For this reason, section four identifies the diplomats' visions about the EU's international role, drawing upon well

[5] Many thanks to RG who called me to provide me with additional data.
[6] Out of which 13 are diplomats and eight are attachés from the Ministry of Economics and Agriculture. I would like to thank A.S. for this detailed information.

known distinction between the Union presence[7] – the signs it expresses by simply being an international entity – and the EU actorness[8] – its ability to act in the international arena, particularly in certain areas and not in others. These two components of the EU's international identity – its role and presence in the international arena – also constitute the main differences and commonalities with other relevant international actors.

2. Locating the relationship with the selected countries and the EU: the views of the Capitals

The selected states are very different in all aspects: in terms of geography, power, cultural and historical heritage, and stances in international questions. In one way or in the other, all of these countries assume that a good relationship with the EU is of vital importance, either in absolute or in relative terms. But the emphasis given to the importance of a partnership with the EU varies to a great extent, as well as the reasons underlining their positions.

2.1 From Europe to Europe: the Russian Federation

Starting with the Eurasian continent, the **Russian Federation** defines its foreign policy rationale in pragmatic rather than in normative terms, thus it recognises the relationship with the EU accordingly. In this framework, once Russian regional priorities and the foreign policy conception of the Russian Federation are introduced, the EU is not listed among the first priorities in the Russian agenda. On the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation[9] other goals are declared before good relations with the Union: "the development of good neighbourly relations and strategic partnership with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)", the definition of the status of the Caspian Sea, and, as a main aim of the Russia's foreign policy, "the creation of a stable and democratic system of European security and cooperation". In this regard, direct reference is made to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), rather than to the EU.

Nonetheless, relation with the EU is see as playing "a key importance", because "the ongoing processes within the EU are having a growing impact on the dynamic of the situation in Europe".[10] This sentence delineates an obvious, but often neglected element: the European Union is not Europe and, most obviously, a regional and global power such as Russia is there to underline it. Then, "the dynamic of the situation in Europe" influenced by the EU are spelled out as: "The EU's expansion, transition to a common currency, the institutional reform, and emergence of a joint foreign policy in the area of security, as well as a defence identity. Regarding these processes as an objective component of European development, Russia will seek due respect for its interests, including in the sphere of bilateral relations with individual EU member countries".[11] Within the Foreign Policy conception, the EU is generally seen as "one of its main political and economic partners"; but this might cause "concrete problems", primarily an "adequate respect for the interests

[7] Bretherton and Vogler suggest that 'presence' is a sort of 'latent actorness' (Bretherton and Vogler 1999, 257). The concept of presence was elaborated in order to capture tangible and intangible patterns which characterise the "complex and institutionalized expression of "Western Europe" (Allen and Smith, 1990).

[8] The concept of actorness was elaborated in order to set up a series of criteria for defining an actor capability to act, without aligning the EU to other existing category of international actors (such as States). "Such 'actor' focused approaches tend to stress the differences, as well as the commonalties that the EU shares with the nation-state as an actor in international relations" (Manners and Whitman, 1998: 233).

[9] For more information, see: http://www.mid.ru/

[10] The Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation, Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.Putin, June 28, 2000 , available at: http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm

[11] *Ibidem*

of the Russian side in the process of EU expansion and reform".[12]

2.2 Visions from the Middle East: Israel, Lebanon and Iran

All selected **Middle East** countries define the European Union as an important actor in the region. However, in all cases, official declarations are dampened by the climate of conflict that haunts the region. In all cases, as we will see, the Union is not always seen as a consistent or impartial actor, even if this criticism implies very different meanings.

When describing the relationship with the European Union, the **Israeli** Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni in 2007 pointed at the "relation of a special nature", a relation that, in parallel with the situation in the Middle East region, needs to be "enhanced" and "explored". The Minister alluded to the "same values, same goals, same interests", which allow Israel and the EU to work together in trying to confront the problems of a "very troubled" region,[13] together with all moderates who fight against extremisms.[14] The position of Israel in the region, in this sense, is portrayed as one of a special kind as well, since it represents "the front line of the Western world", who is constantly called to face terror attacks "by extremists who represent extreme religious ideology like Hamas"[15] who threaten Israel right to existence. In this framework, "Israel is fighting to protect its citizens", and to eliminate the threat posed by "the axis of terror and hate": Hizbullah, Hamas, Syria and Iran.[16]

As part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Israel acknowledges the positive role of the European Union in promoting and supporting measures of cooperation and confidence building in the region. The role of the EU, in the process of appeasement of the region is thus acknowledged as "friendly", marked by a good degree of understanding about the needs of the countries involve in the conflict[17] and based on a genuine solidarity. But this solidarity cannot be taken for granted, as sometimes there is in Israel the feeling that they are confronting this threat alone.[18]

Some shadows, however, might occasionally cloud this positive picture: the need to translate "shared ideas, values and visions" into action;[19] the temptation to "compromise with terror",[20] and

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[12] *Ibidem*

[13] Joint Press Conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem. Available at: http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Joint+press+conference+with+FM+Livni+and+EU+High+Rep+Solana+3-Sep-2007.htm

[14] Joint Press Conference on the Israel-European Union Association Council Meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Israel Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Brussels, 5 March 2007, available at: http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2007/Israel-European+Union+Association+Council+meeting+press+conference+5-Mar-2007.htm.

[15] Joint Press Conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem. Infra Note 10.

[16] Joint press conference by FM Tzipi Livni and EU Envoy Javier Solana: Israel is fighting to eliminate the threat posed by the axis of terror and hate: Hizbullah, Hamas, Syria and Iran, 19 July 2006. Available at: http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2006/Joint+press+conference+by+FM+Tzipi+Livni+and+EU+Envoy+Javier+Solana+19-Jul-2006.htm

[17] Joint Press Conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem. Infra note 10

[18] *Ibidem*

[19] *Ibidem*

[20] Joint Press Conference on the Israel-European Union Association Council Meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Israel Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Brussels, 5 March 2007. Infra note 11.

the risk of misunderstanding Israel's stance in the region, and in calling it to respect a misleading concept of "proportionality". According to the Foreign Affairs Minister, Israel is wrongly blamed to be disproportionate in its reaction to threats to the region and not only to threats to Israel.[21] In this sense, "some differences when it comes to the situation in the region can emerge".[22] Solana explicitly restated the need for proportionality in military action, even if recognising Israeli right to self defence, in expressing concerns about the involvement of innocent civilians in the conflict and warning about the risk of weakening countries such as Lebanon in the name of the battle against Hezbollah.

Addressing the European audience, Sami Haddam, **Lebanese** Minister of Economy and Trade, defined the relationship between Lebanon and the EU in terms of "strong ties" and "privileged relations".[23] On the website of the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade, the EU is listed as the most important strategic partner.[24] Yet, in spite of this positive portrait, this picture is not always confirmed by the analysis of the opinion polls and newspapers in Lebanon (Trombetta and Santini, forthcoming).

The EU is eventually seen as oscillating, unable to react to the flagrant violations of International Law and destabilization of the region perpetuated by Israel often, as a result of the endorsement of its "international ramifications".[25] Regional insecurity is attributed mainly to Israel's conduct, which is said to "escape responsibility and distort reality", in breaking international law repeatedly and systematically.[26]

Thus, even if the EU is contributing to establishing peace in the region through its role as international donor and peace keeper, it is not capable of raising its voice against the violations perpetuated by Israel in the Occupied Territories and in Lebanon, a view which is also shared by Iran.

Among the selected countries, **Iran** has the most controversial relationship with the European Union. This relationship, at present, seems to be heavily influenced by the ongoing crisis over Iran's intention to build nuclear power reactors, whether for peaceful or military purposes.

Currently, there is not yet a framework agreement between the EU and Iran, and, over the last ten years, their relationship has been characterised by an oscillating path, above all due to the issue of uranium enrichment. The elections of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 inaugurated the launch of a Comprehensive Dialogue between Iran and the EU. The dialogue served as a platform for exchange of views on global and regional issues and for the adoption of strategies of cooperation in the matter of political, trade and energy issues. This first step did not, however, foresee any contractual framework. In 2001, with the Communication 2001/71, the Commission set up the conditions for the conclusion of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with Iran, which in 2002 were adopted by a Council Conclusion. According to the analysis carried out by the Commission, the

[21] Joint press conference by FM Tzipi Livni and EU Envoy Javier Solana, Israel is fighting to eliminate the threat posed by the axis of terror and hate: Hizbullah, Hamas, Syria and Iran, 19 July 2006. Infra note 13.
[22] Joint Press Conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem. Infra note 10.
[23] Address of H.E. Minister Sami Haddad, To the EU in Brussels, available at: http://www.economy.gov.lb/NR/rdonlyres/6CD551CE-B496-45D2-BC13-6142FA41EA53/0/17EUinBrusselsen.pdf
[24] http://www.economy.gov.lb/MOET/English/Panel/StrategicPartners/EU.htm
[25] Address by his Excellency President Lahoud at the Arab Summit in Algiers, 22 March 2005, available at: http://www.presidency.gov.lb/president/president.htm.
[26] See for instance, the address by his Excellency President Lahoud at the at the Arab Summit in Beirut, 27 March 2002, available at: http://www.presidency.gov.lb/president/speech2002/speachofSummitofbeirut/27thmarchsummitarab.htm.

perspectives for technical and financial cooperation were difficult in all sectors, with the exception of drug trafficking controls and some humanitarian assistance. On this basis, negotiations for a TCA and for a Political Dialogue Agreement took place. The negotiation of the TCA came to a stalemate in 2003, due to the issue of uranium enrichment.

The so called "EU3/EU" - France, Germany and the UK and the High Representative Javier Solana - worked actively for finding a negotiated solution to the nuclear crisis, which culminated in the Paris Agreement. With it, Iran reaffirmed its will not to acquire nuclear weapons, in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that it ratified, to commit itself "to full cooperation and transparency with the International Atomic Energy Agency" (IAEA), and to implement on a voluntary basis the Additional Protocol pending ratification. In addition to these commitments, Iran decided to continue and extend its suspension to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities[27], and to allow the IAEA to verify and monitor the suspension, as a part of confidence building activities. In exchange, the EU committed to "support the development of a safe, economically viable and proliferation proof civilian nuclear programme in Iran"[28], in foreseeing forms of cooperation in technological as well as political areas. As an effect of the resumption of enrichment and reprocessing activities in 2005, the EU assumed a more inflexible position towards Iran. In spite of some initial resistance by China and Russia within the Security Council (UNSC), the breach of the Paris Agreement brought about the imposition of sanctions over Iran, in Resolution 1737/2006.

Iran dismissed the resolution as illegal and stated that it was inaugurating a sad day for the non-proliferation regime, as double standards are applied in the rules governing the non-proliferation regime. According to the Iranian Ambassador to the UN, Iran faces "groundless punitive measures" for its peaceful nuclear programme, while Israel has never been pushed to submit itself to the rules governing the nuclear non-proliferation regime.[29] The conditions posed by the Security Council were reiterated by Resolution 1747/2007, which, in its Annex II offered further incentives to Iran.[30] In spite of a first acceptance, Iran dismissed the proposal, as it would have required the country to suspend its uranium enrichment activities needed for its peaceful programme as well.

As a consequence, in a communication sent to the IAEA, the Foreign Minister of Iran, H.E. Mottaki, addressed a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations regarding the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Iran's nuclear issues, which explained Iranian reasons.[31] In the first instance, Mottaki made clear that cooperation between Iran and the IAEA proved to be positive and to have given start to a consistent follow up into a Working Plan, based on the "Understanding on the Modalities of resolution of all Outstanding Issues", agreed in 21 August 2007. In spite of this renewed cooperation, "malicious steps" were taken by few countries (the US and the EU/3), which also gave "false and erroneous information" to the IAEA. Iranian complaints towards the EU and the UNSC can be summarised as follows: inalienable and legal rights of the

[27] Communication dated 26 November 2004 received from the Permanent Representatives of France, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom concerning the agreement signed in Paris on 15 November 2004 - Information Circular IAEA **INFCIRC/637,** 26 November 2004.

[28] Statement by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union at the IAEA - Board of Governors, 9 August 2005, available at: http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaIran/bog092005_statement-eu.pdf

[29] Declaration of the Iranian Ambassador to the UN, Javad Zarif, echoed by the statements of the Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, Mohammad Ali Hosseini, "*Today is a sad day for the non-proliferation regime*". http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6205295.stm

[30] Including: "support [for] construction of light-water nuclear reactors, the sale of commercial planes to Iran, a conference on regional security issues, a long-term energy agreement between Iran on one side and the European Union and other partners on the other, and economic and trade cooperation".

[31] IAEA Information Circular INFCIRC/724, Communication dated 26 March 2008 received from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency.

NPT parties for the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; violation of international law by certain states (the US and the EU/3); evidence of cooperation with the IAEA on behalf of the Iranian Republic; unlawful engagement of the UNSC in the Iranian peaceful nuclear programme; and contradiction of the UNSC with the UN Charter and International Law.

2.3. The view of South Africa

An examination of **South African** official statements reveals a certain level of frustration with inconsistencies in the EU development policies.

The EU is South Africa's largest trading partner and its larger partner in terms of development cooperation.[32] The 2004 Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement (TDCA) foresees vast cooperation in matters of trade, development, science and technology, and includes "fruitful" discussions in matters of WTO negotiations, cooperation on customs, peace and security transport, human rights, climate change, and energy.[33] In 2007, South Africa and the EU established a Strategic Partnership, which provide an "overall political umbrella that now governs the relationship", which "elevated the status of the relationship to a higher level politically", as the EU has signed Strategic Partnership with a very limited number of countries.

In a statement published in 2006 by the Department of Foreign Affairs, the South African government maintained that the two strategic partners share many common objectives and positions. President Mbeki confirmed that the EU may represent an example of regional integration for the African Union (quoted in Fioramonti and Gerrit, 2007: 408). Based on their "common objectives", Europe is also seen as a major partner in the development process of the African continent and a determinant factor in "the advancement of a credible North-South Dialogue", with the central objective of fighting poverty in the African continent,[34] and of "promoting peace and security, good and effective governance, trade promotion, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, regional integration, infrastructural development and investing in people".[35]

Even if portraying a positive relationship, President Mbeki underlined the tendency of the Union to adopt double standards for socio-economic development: if many European states underwent a "developmental state model" during the post World War II period, they now negate the possibility to less developing countries to follow this example, and impose a development model based on free trade and private foreign direct investment (quoted in Fioramonti and Gerrit, 2007: 408). Linked to this main criticism, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) have often been regarded as a way of imposing European advantages at the expenses of South Africa and other African countries. In particular, the EU has been criticised for not promoting consistently a single trade regime for the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).[36] In this sense, South Africa complained about the treatment reserved to it in terms of access to the EU market: while all ACP countries will have a duty and quota free access, South Africa will not, because of the size of its economy and its competitiveness in some sectors. This, from a South African perspective, impedes the creation of a single trade

[32] Notes following South Africa – European Union Ministerial Troika Meeting Presidential Guesthouse, Union Buildings, Wednesday 10 October 2007, Remarks by Minister Dlamini Zuma. Available at: http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2007/dzum1011.htm
[33] *Ibidem.*
[34] Opening Remarks by Ms Sue van der Merwe, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the occasion of the Workshop to prepare for the Africa-Europe Political Dialogue, Diplomatic Guesthouse, 14 August 2007. Available under: http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2007/merw0816.htm
[35] *Ibidem.*
[36] Composed by Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

regime with the EU. Moreover, while fragmenting the trade regime in goods, the EU pushes for EPAs to cover the new generation issues, such as services, competition, government procurements, issues in which many SADC countries are weak and uncompetitive: "we are saying: first help us to develop our own structures, our legal framework and help us to build capacity in all of these areas".[37]

2.4 Asia and Australia's views: Australia, China, India and Japan

In defining **Australia**'s foreign policy response to international challenges, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, prescribed a three ingredients receipt: alliance with the United States, support for the United Nations, and a comprehensive engagement with Asia-Pacific, notably Japan, China, India, Indonesia.[38] The relationship with the EU is not among the first priorities of Australia's foreign policy. Nonetheless, the Minister acknowledged that Australia shares "a common approach with countries of the European Union and the 'increasing breadth' in bilateral engagement with the EU, based on the recognition of its growing economic and political relevance." Relations between Australia and the EU are said to be based upon "a dynamic work program and intensified exchanges", aimed at making "progress on a diverse range of common interests", such as "trade and economic matters, strategic issues, immigration and asylum, environment policies and bilateral cooperation projects in education and science and technology", and at guaranteeing a "frank but constructive" dialogue, also in areas where there are diverging perspectives.[39]

Although the EU is Australia's largest trading partner and a major source of foreign investment, divergences seem to occur precisely in trade and agricultural issues. In the framework of the negotiations of the WTO Doha Development Agenda, differences in agriculture, market access, rule-making, and issues related to development are acknowledged, even if the "will to further initiatives of mutual benefit" is confirmed. Differences also occur on bilateral agriculture and trade issues, such as the "Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) matters", and origin restrictions. Australia, once again, confirmed the will of resolving these differences "through intensified consultations, particularly in the Agricultural Trade and Marketing Experts' Group".[40]

The relationship between **China** and the EU is described in terms of a very fruitful one. Recently, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated that the "EU is China's largest partner for economic, trade, scientific and technological cooperation, and that Sino-EU practical cooperation brings about great benefits for both sides and promotes world peace and development".[41] He stated that in the past ten years, there has been a "deepening understanding and trust" between the two partners.[42] More specifically, China and the EU are "comprehensive strategic partners", who seek a "long term and stable relationship in the interest of both".[43] The bilateral trade volume between the two has grown exponentially over the last decades, making the EU the largest trading partner of China and China

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[37] Press Comments made by South African Ambassador to European Union Dr Anil Sooklal, Media Centre, Union Buildings Pretoria, Tuesday 9 October 2007, Media Centre, Union Buildings Pretoria. Available at: http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2007/anil1010.htm

[38] Speech of the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith, A modern Australia for a New Era, Speech of to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute National Security Dinner. Available at: available at http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2008/080309_nsd.html

[39] Briefing, Australia's Relations with the European Union, Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, available at: http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/european_union/eu_brief.html#anchor391879

[40] *Ibidem*.

[41] Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu's Regular Press Conference on April 8, 2008. Available at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t423126.htm

[42] Wen Jiabao Holds Talks with Barroso 2008/04/25, available at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t430014.htm

[43] *Ibidem.*

the second major partner of the EU.

China's Premier and spokespersons tend to portray a shared approach in international issues, which brings China to "support the integration of the EU" and to "welcome the EU to play a more active role in international issues", on the basis of "mutual respect, equality and mutual benefits to make greater contribution to the progress of the humanity".[44] Hence, China views the EU as a partner with whom consulting and coordinating on major international and regional issues, such as Africa, Myanmar, the Korean peninsula, Iran, the Middle East and Kosovo in order to promote common strategic goals, such as "world peace, stability and sustainable development".[45]

Chinese President Hu Jintao synthesized three priorities requiring major efforts on behalf of the EU and China: firstly, strengthening strategic mutual trust secondly to expand pragmatic cooperation and "realize mutual benefit, win-win and common development"; and thirdly to proceed, in the spirit of "mutual respect and negotiation on an equal footing", to the improvement of the strategic partnership, despite possible "new circumstances and problems emerging from the development of bilateral ties".[46]

Indian leaders emphasise shared values and common international goals as an important component of their relationship with the EU. India and the EU, "as the two largest democracies of the world and global actors in a multipolar world" recognise that their Strategic Partnership is based on a "shared conviction in the values of democracy, fundamental freedoms (including religious), pluralism, rule of law, respect for human rights and multilateralism in the international political architecture as the means to tackle global challenges effectively".[47]

Hence, beside the undisputed strengths of economic relations and the signing of the Strategic Partnership between the two, lies the belief that reciprocal relations are based on shared values, and comprehends a wide range of issues: "globalization, terrorism, proliferation, energy and environment". (Declaration of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, quoted in Fioramonti, 2007: 355). The EU is also portrayed as a good partner in international affairs, with which India share a multipolar and multilateral vocation. Their extensive international cooperation goes from innovation and reduction of greenhouse gas emission, research on clean development and climate change and on promotion of energy security and sustainable energy supply to commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system and to a deeper level of bilateral trade relations; from commitment to promote international peace and security to the support for a comprehensive UN reform; from the commitment to human rights dialogue, to the engagement in disarmament and in countering proliferation of weapon of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Furthermore, India and the European Union cooperate in promoting a "comprehensive peace plan for the Middle East/West Asia, with the objective of reaching comprehensive, just and durable peace and stability in the region" and support "the sustainable development of Africa and to promote the integration of Africa into the world economy on fair terms for the peoples involved".[48]

This overall picture of a positive relationship has not, however, prevented precise criticisms about the EU's inconsistencies in the area of trade agreements and non-tariff trade barriers: for instance, "Prime Minister Singh himself underlined that 'as tariff barriers disintegrate, non-tariff barriers

[44] Wen Jiabao Holds Talks with Barroso 2008/04/25, available at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t430014.htm
[45] Joint Statement of the 10th China-EU Summit, Beijing, 28 November 2007, available at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t386520.htm
[46] Hu Jintao Meets with Socrates and Barroso, Highlighting Three Priorities for China-EU Relations, 28 November, 2007, available at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t386394.htm.
[47] Joint Statement issued after the 8th India-EU Annual Summit, November 30, 2007, New Delhi, November 30, 2007, available at: http://www.indembassy.be/India-EU.asp.
[48] *Ibidem*

suddenly come up' and was echoed by the minister of commerce and industry, Kamal Nath, who accused the EU of not adopting a developmental approach to international trade, particularly during the WTO rounds in Hong Kong in 2005" (Fioramonti, 2007: 358).

Values and international commitments are also underlined by Japanese leaders in explaining the nature of **Japan**'s relationships with the EU. In a speech given in 2006, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Taro Aso, spoke extensively of Japan's commitment to peace, freedom global prosperity, to be pursued through a "value oriented diplomacy, which involves placing emphasis on universal values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and the market economy".[49] In this occasion, he defined Japan's foreign policy priorities: "to strengthen the Japan-US alliance, as well as a strengthening of the relationships with neighbouring countries, such as China, ROK, and Russia". Together with this overall goal, Japan is committed to designing an "arc of freedom and prosperity" able to embrace the Eurasian continent, in collaboration with "friendly nations", such as Australia, India, and the member States of the EU and NATO.

Hence, even if the EU cannot be listed among Japan's foreign policy priorities, Japan and the EU have "satisfactory strategic bilateral relations based on shared universal values".[50] Trade is perceived as the most important element in Japan-EU relationship, indeed, "despite recent setbacks" in Japanese economic growth, "Japan is the fourth largest source of imports of the EU after the USA, China and Russia, while the EU is Japan's fifth largest".[51] Beyond the consolidated trade relationship, the EU-Japan relationship relies on a solid political stance, which encompasses attention to environment, "the Middle East Peace Process, the Iranian Nuclear issue, and Sri Lanka situation, human rights, UN issues, disarmament/arms control/non-proliferation, the West Balkans, regulatory reforms, financial matters, industrial policy/cooperation, competition, employment, intellectual property rights, information policy, transport security and fisheries".[52]

2.5. Views from the North American continent: Mexico and the USA

Given the great influence that an important neighbour such as the US still maintains over its economic and political relations, **Mexico** aims at broadening and deepening its international relations, in particular with Latin American and European countries. In this framework, the EU seems to represent a "great leeway for increasing trade, investment and capital flows and cooperation for social development and strengthening the Mexican population's capabilities through the transfer of investments, technology and know-how."[53]

Mexico and the European Union signed a Global Agreement in 1997, with the aim of boosting economic, political relations and cooperation (Mex2). This is "the most complete and ambitious text that Mexico has ever signed and the only one of its kind that the EU had negotiated with a non-European country" (Chanona, forthcoming). An EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (EUMFTA) followed in 2000. The EU is Mexico's second largest trade partner and investor, after the US, and since the signing of the EUMFTA, the trade and investments relations between the EU and Mexico

[49] Speech by Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Japan Institute of International Affairs Seminar "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons", 30 November 2006, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html

[50] Speech of Takekazu Kawamura, Ambassador of Japan to the EU, The 16th Japan-EU Summit & Interparliamentary Relations Between Japan and the EU, available at: http://www.eu.emb-japan.go.jp/ambassador_talk_june_2007.htm

[51] Speech of Takekazu Kawamura, Ambassador of Japan to the EU, Japanese presence in Europe, available at: http://www.eu.emb-japan.go.jp/ambassador_talk_feb_2006.htm

[52] Speech of Takekazu Kawamura, Ambassador of Japan to the EU, The Year 2006 in Reflection, available at: http://www.eu.emb-japan.go.jp/ambassador_talk_dec_2006.htm

[53] Presidencia de la República, Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2012, Mexico City. Available on line at http://pnd.presidencia.gob.mx/, quoted in Chanona, forthcoming.

increased, even if, given the "difficult world economic environment",[54] not to the extent that Mexico would wish.

Mexico stresses the importance of defining political dialogue with the EU, both in multilateral fora and in their bilateral relation, on the basis of the sharing of fundamental values, such as the rule of law, the respect of human rights, a shared idea of international security, the fight against terrorism, a commitment to multilateralism and compliance with international law and protection of the environment.

The **US** Department of State describes the EU as one "of the United States' strongest strategic partners", "with the importance of the relationship reflected in close cooperation on regional crises and conflicts, extensive collaboration on a wide range of global challenges, from counter-terrorism to non-proliferation, and deep trade and investment relations".[55] In a speech given in Berlin, the Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs further elucidates his views on the special nature of the relation between the EU and the US: "there is no closer partnership in the world than that between the United States and Europe. The U.S. and Europe do not constitute a single polity. But they form a single community of values, interests, and responsibilities. Our roles in the world are not the same, but they are inextricably close, by choice but also by our very natures. [...] We may play different positions, but we do play the same sport, and we are on the same team".[56]

The strength of this relationship relies not merely on common interests, but on common identity: "Our identities are bound up by our commitments to human rights, rule of law, freedoms of religion and the press, and to market economics".[57] The awareness of being centres of power and wealth enhances the responsibilities that these two special partners have towards "fellow human beings". This identity concerns and informs, therefore, nearly all sectors of cooperation: the strategic, the economic, the commercial, on the ground of common principles. Indeed, the view of the EU as strategic partner is the image quoted at first in the presentation of the EU's role. Then, other important images picture the EU as the world's largest economic area, the world's largest exporter of goods and services, a major destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) and a major source of FDI.

On the basis of their common identity, the US and the EU are, therefore, natural partners in "pursuing the advance of democracy and freedom in the world".[58] This natural alliance is translated into three pillars of strategic cooperation: democracy and freedom; security; and global prosperity. According to the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs**,** "for the European Union, the promotion of democratic values comes naturally. The European Union is itself based on a shared attachment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. [...] America's own commitment to freedom is itself a European import". A "robust agenda of cooperation" in security matters range from "well known" areas, such Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans, to "less well known" areas in which regular consultations on supporting democracy take place, like "Ukraine and

[54] Third European Union – Mexico Joint Committee - Joint Press Release, available at: http://www.sice.oas.org/TPD/MEX_EU/Implementation/JointCommittee/meet3_e.pdf

[55] Fact Sheet, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Washington, DC, November 2, 2007. For more information, visit the website, http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/54126.htm

[56] Europe's Role in the World – Remarks at the Europa Forum Program by Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Berlin, Germany May 9, 2007, available at: http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/84621.htm

[57] *Ibidem.*

[58] Kurt Volker, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs**,** The United States and the European Union: A Renewed Partnership Delivering Results**,** Remarks at the Conference on "New Instruments of International Governance: Transatlantic and Global Perspectives", Diplomatic Academy, Vienna, Austria, May 11, 2006. http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/66175.htm

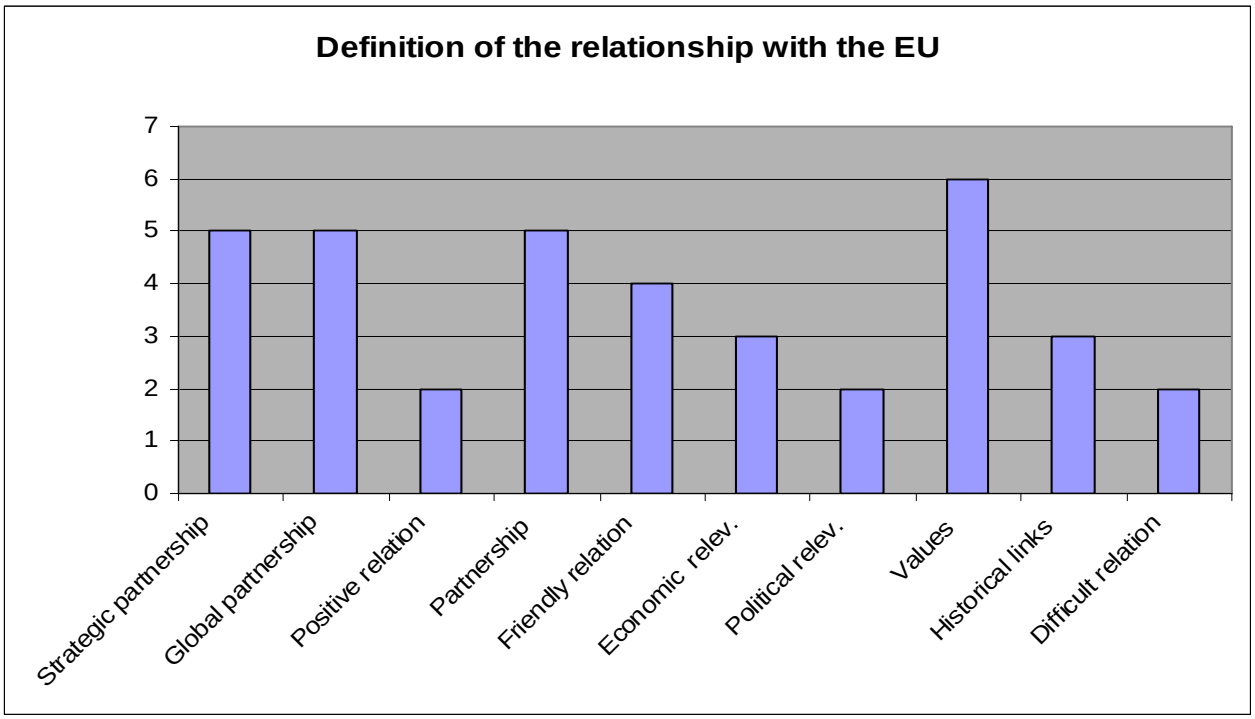
Georgia, Burma and Zimbabwe, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus".[59]

Certainly, as Daniel Fried recognizes, "This optimistic picture of transatlantic relations flies in the face of conventional wisdom about transatlantic rifts". However, he adds that popular support for the transatlantic alliance both in the US and in the EU is far much stronger than "punditry", an element which is also confirmed by the positive opinion polls both in the US and in the EU member states.[60] Nonetheless, "long terms challenges", more than problems or arguments, may eventually cloud over this shiny picture. On the one hand, there are "conceptual and organizational challenges", related to the need of an integrative approach to global crises, "one that brings together military capabilities and reconstruction and development". On the other hand, there is a "strategic" one, entailing the need to find "a common framework" in order to deal and work with Russia, which is called to be "a great nation that deserves respect and which we seek cooperation, but about whom we have concerns and with whom we have some differences".

3. Where the EU stands for my country? diplomats' views

In general, diplomats tend to echo the positions assumed by their respective governments, and substantiate those positions with more detailed comments about the structure of the Union. Indeed, because of their major exposure, diplomats tend to elaborate on the difficulties posed by its complex structure to its capability to act.

When looking specifically at the nature of the relationship between the EU and selected countries, some astonishingly similar definitions of the relationship emerge, in spite of the significant differences among the sampled countries, between the diplomats' countries of origin and the EU.



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In general, nearly all interviewees defined the relationship in terms of *partnership*, qualified by

[59] *Ibidem.*

[60] Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, *Europe's Role in the World*, Remarks at the Europa Forum Program, Berlin, Germany, May 9, 2007.

precise adjectives, in order to clarify its nature. Some interviewees preferred to use the term *relationship*. In those cases, it was related to the generally positive attitude towards the reciprocal relationship: “friendly”, “positive”, “beyond economic interests”, “grounded on shared values” or important “historical” or “people-to-people” links. Even if these countries are extremely different culturally, many respondents underlined a coincidence of fundamental rights, defined in terms of rule of law, democracy, human right (for instance Jap2, Jap3, In1, In2, Mex1, Mex2, Mex3, SA1, US1, US2, and US3), fight against poverty (Mex2) or similar international positions (Ch1). The only case in which a more difficult relationship has been portrayed is in the case of Iran. Even in that case, however, diplomats (Ir1, Ir2) declare their support for an improvement in the relationship.

3.1 From Europe to Europe: diplomats from the Russian Federation

In line with official declarations, **Russian** diplomats, tend to define the relationship as positive and based on overall policies of cooperation. Ongoing discussions are described as “very frank and fruitful”, allowing their points of view to become closer. Strategic Partnership is evoked in order to depict the width of the relationship and the intensity of bilateral contacts (RU1). Emphasis on dynamics of cooperation and frequent reference to sound Summit meetings can be explained by the difficulty in pointing out a single area of strategic cooperation, as cooperation encompasses all the domains from economic cooperation to energy, from investments to law enforcing, from trade to foreign policy, and from visa dialogue and migration to anti-terrorism cooperation (RU2). The weakest areas of cooperation are seen to be culture and education, but, according to Russian diplomats, this could be explained by saying that these are Member States competences, rather than Commission competence.

However, even if recognising the width of cooperation, diplomats point out that many goals (like the creation of the four common spaces) are not yet in place, due to the difficult path that the CPA is undergoing (Ru2). Russian diplomats are among those who emphasise least the existence of good cooperation with the EU to deal with international issues (although still fighting a common battle against terrorism), above all when management of regional conflicts come at stake.

First of all, Russian diplomats complain about the tendency of the European Union to promote values that it does not respect internally. In particular, Russian diplomats stated that enlargement brought about a worsening of the relationship between the EU and the Russian Federation, as new Member States are still trapped in the “fears of the past”, and tend to portray a misleading picture of Russia. Russian diplomats take the example of Baltic States, (e.g. Latvia and Estonia), in stating that Russian citizens are deprived of their basic rights, such as speaking their own language. They blame the EU for not acting in these cases, while, in other situations “imposing democratic conditions to other countries” (Ru1). In the eyes of a diplomat, this is also confirmed by the fact that there are no Committees which monitor human rights violations within the Member States. “There is only an Agency in Vienna and all it does is to gather information given by Member States themselves (Ru1). In this sense, the EU is starting to contract the “US illness”: “it feels powerful and tries to impose its will to others”, while externally disrespecting the values that it imposes (Ru1).

In line with the official positions, Russian diplomats criticise the EU's conduct with regard two regional crises, Kosovo and the so-called frozen conflicts. In the case of the frozen conflicts, the EU, like the US, is not perceived as having something to add to the peace process: it does not know the mechanisms (Ru1) and does not contribute positively to the creation of a “peaceful divorce”, based on trust-creation (Ru2). Hence, according to one diplomat, the EU does not propose anything constructive. In the case of Kosovo, the EU is blamed for having followed American dictates, regardless to the respect of international law. Indeed, in line with the Russian official position,

Russian diplomats stress the fact that Kosovo independence happened by means of external imposition. “This is something that EU should think about: international community has the right to impose the disintegration of a country?” (Ru1).

Russian diplomat also tends to highlight inconsistencies in energy related topics: whereas some Member States, like Italy or Germany, are keen to allow a mutual penetration on respective economies on equal footing grounds, the EU does not propose anything in return for the requested liberalisation of the energy sector (Ru1). In this sense, diplomats echo their national position, when saying that the EU seeks impose a compelling liberalisation of the pipelines, “without understanding that this is the heart of Russian economy” and without proposing anything in return for this liberalisation (Ru1).

3.2 Visions from the Middle East: Israel, Lebanon and Iran

Israeli diplomats, in accordance with the official position, underline the importance of trade relationship with the EU, grounded on “common values based on shared history and experience” (IS1). But gradually, they acknowledge, the EU is becoming a real player in the Middle Eat (Is2), with which it is possible to share strategic goals in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and in other areas, such as technology and research development (Is2).

Even if stressing the existence of common values, a Israeli diplomat speculates on the belief shared by a part of the Israeli public opinion that anti-Semitism in on the rise in the EU, bolstered by a “growing evidence that many European countries facilitated the Holocaust by action and non-action alike” (Pardo, forthcoming). More specifically, he underlined, more than holding an anti-Semitic attitude, European leaders tend to have a critical opinion of the “political shape” and the “Jewish character” of Israel, on the ground of their conception of a multicultural anti-secular state and of the repercussions that a Jewish state is said to have in the region (Is2). Hence, in a way, diplomats indicate that Israel is not understood properly by European partners.

Indeed, when talking about the MEPP, Israeli diplomats complain the unlikeness of the EU of deciding and acting cohesively (Is1, and Is2), both because of slow and inefficient decision making processes and because of divergences among the Member States. As pointed out in the previous section, some divergences may arise when talking about how to deal with regional conflicts. Israeli diplomats reveal the impression that the Union, whether for consolidated relations, for incapability to stick to its principles (Is1) or for its tendency to act due to a least common denominator when taking common decisions (Is1, and Is2), might eventually be too “soft” with terrorists in the Middle East or biased towards Arab counterparts. This tendency may impede the EU to understand its partner’s concerns (Is1) or to encourage the adoption of a “megaphone diplomacy” (Is2), which does not help to reach comprehension and agreement. As we might conclude, differences can raise in matters of strategies for reaching the common goal of a peaceful Middle East. However, from the declarations of both the Foreign Minister and diplomats interviewed the belief emerged that a positive change in the relationship between the EU and Israel is occurring (also, Is2). Israel and the EU have extremely positive economic relations, but the aforementioned differences in assessing the regional scenario eventually create tensions between these two strategic partners.

As stated in official declarations, **Lebanese** diplomats emphasise the sincere and friendly aspects of the relationship between the EU and Lebanon, rather than its commercial dimension (Leb1). This is motivated by the fact that there are shared, common values between the EU and “one of the most advanced democracy in the Middle East”, which make it possible to have very close relationship also at the people-to-people level (Leb1). The role of the Union in the region is seen as beneficial, as a result of the enhancement of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

In spite of the fact that the EU is presented as the major donor and the most important trading partner of Lebanon, stability and security is considered as the most strategic area of cooperation (Leb1), a belief probably reinforced by the deployment of 7500 soldiers in Lebanon in the framework of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon Mission (UNIFIL). This is confirmed, according to a Lebanese diplomat, by many Common Positions which state the EU's "complete support to Lebanon sovereignty". In the 2006 crisis, the EU's intervention has been seen as effective and prompt. This is explained due to the "importance of Lebanon as a strategic partner in the region". However, Lebanese diplomats complain about divisions in the EU foreign policy. This is the reason for which, they think, the EU is not able to keep a more vigorous position in the region, above all, vis-à-vis Israel.

Echoing the declarations of the **Iranian** Foreign Minister Ali Hosseini,[61] in spite of the expectations linked to its potential "non colonial" role in the region (Ir1), the EU is not able to pursue an independent Middle East strategy, and submit itself to American dictates (Ir1, and Ir2). This also brings into question its overall role in the sixty years old Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "what the EU stands for? What is the framework for its action? What does it support?" (Ir 2).

Thus, even if Iran would be eager to establish "friendly" commercial (e.g. energy and investment), scientific, cultural and social relationship, any such relationship has gradually deteriorated. For Iranian diplomats this is because there is no willingness on behalf of the EU, who tends to impose conditions, in impeding a mutual relationship, by adopting unfriendly and cold gestures (Ir1).

In accordance with Teheran's position, regarding the criticisms that the EU addresses to Iran in matters of human rights violations, diplomats tend to stress the fact that the EU adopts a contradictory approach, as Iran is not the worse case in the Middle Eastern context: it runs regular, democratic elections and tends to have a respectful approach to women (Ir1, and Ir2). The inflexible approach of the European Union, is thus said to be detrimental to the establishment of any reformist government, because it exasperates the population and exacerbates the regional climate, in creating an unnecessary isolation for Iran.

Lack of coherence is also mentioned by Iranian diplomats, both in relation to EU's stance in the Middle East Peace Process and in relation to the sanctions inflicted on Iran for its nuclear programme. In the former case, the EU is not seen as having a coherent, legible position: it stands for the respect of International Law and contributes massively to building infrastructures and other facilities in the Occupied Territories, but it does not firmly protest against Israel when it commits severe violations, even when "Israel's massive bombing destroys the buildings and infrastructures that the EU contributes to finance" (Ir1, and Ir2). In this case, as in the case of sanctions, the EU is seen as unable to assert an independent stance, and it is said to assume a prone, subordinated position to that of the US (Ir1, and Ir2). Interestingly enough, a similar criticisms is advanced by Israeli diplomats, who state that the EU tends to be more biased towards Arab States (Is1, and Is2), and unlike the US, does not dispose of an efficient system of "reassurances and guarantees" that allow it to pursue a coherent position.

3.3. The view of South Africa

South African diplomats portray an all encompassing relationship with the EU, which goes from trade relations to political and security related matters, from environment to scientific and technological cooperation, in constituting a substantial strategic partnership.

[61] Has the US found a new ally in Europe? An exclusive interview with Iran`s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini by Franak Amidi, Press TV, Tehran, 13 September 2008.

South African diplomats declared that the EU has been able to act in an effective way in foreign policy matters and to be active in supporting the African Union in different hotbeds of conflicts (SA1). Meanwhile, foreign policy is said to be the weakest area of cooperation, as all areas of intergovernmental cooperation (SA1).

But as stated officially, the EU is blamed for being “bullish” (SA2) and to tend to “preach” as a teacher may do with children (SA2). This is of course due to the tendency of the EU to impose conditions over development aid. At the same time, the EU is seen as taking advantage out of its position and to use preferential trade and development relations as a weapon. The EU is indeed seen as too protectionist and to adopt technical barriers (for instance, in the case of environment) while pushing down trade barriers.

3.4 Asia and Australia's views: Australia, China, India and Japan

For **Australian** diplomats, the relationship with the EU is defined in terms of “strategic Partnership” (AU1), or at least in terms of “an extremely positive relationship” (AU2; AU3), based on the historical links between Australia and many EU Member States (A3). On balance, the EU is considered as able to engage effectively with Australia, and to have undertaken some successful European Security and Defence Policy missions in the region (AU1).

Diplomats envisaged the most strategic areas of cooperation with the EU in wide terms: trade interaction and cooperation in the Asian Pacific, trade, service and manufactures, intellectual property (AU3); cooperation in foreign policy; aviation security; anti-terrorism, academic, sporting exchanges, energy and environmental affairs, even though some contentions on the Australian side may arise on those issues (AU1).

As stated at the official level, the interviewed Australian diplomats confirmed both the existence of some very important differences in the field of WTO negotiation and agricultural products (AU1), and the frankness and openness of negotiations even in “less happy” areas of cooperation (A2). Thus, in spite of the positive relations, some shortcomings contribute in defining the Australian perception of the EU. For instance, there is a general perception in Australia that the EU is inner-looking and trapped in its complex institutional structure. Criticisms are also addressed to the EU about its tendency to impose on partners a complex and slow system of regulation, which slows down cooperation and dictates the rules of commercial and business exchanges (AU1).

This is mitigated and balanced by strong linkages, at people-to-people, and bilateral levels (AU1). More than a lack of engagement, an Australian diplomat refers to some disincentives also at the level of official visits, due to Australia's isolated geographical position. “This is a matter of geography. But good will is there, in facilitating those relations!” (AU2).

A **Chinese** diplomat also refers to the geographical element to introduce the relationship with the EU; although she did so for underlining the absence of territorial conflicts or disputes (Ch.1). In line with official declarations, Chinese diplomats consider the EU as an effective strategic partner, with which China has a fruitful dialogue and cooperation in all sectors (Ch.1).

In spite of this positive picture, some difficulties arise when defining the relationship with the EU, due to the lack of a good understanding between the two partners. Once again, “distance” is mentioned, but, this time, in cultural, rather than in geographical terms. Reciprocal understanding is still lacking. “China is in the East and Europe is in the West”. Cultural distance and misunderstandings on both sides are evoked. European media are said to contribute to alimenting a distorted and simplified vision of China, rather than presenting complexity and contributing to

mutual understanding (Ch.1). The question seems a real one in the eye of these Chinese diplomats: "what can we do to make China more understood?" (Ch.2).

Moving westward across the Asian continent from China to **India**, we find a slightly different picture. Indian diplomats also define relations with the EU as extremely positive. As in the case of China, India and the EU have a strategic cooperation, entailing an overarching framework for cooperation (In1). Commercial relations are said to be "very good" (In1, In2), also at the bilateral level with the EU Member States. According to the diplomats, the signing of the Strategic Partnership improved the relationship between India and the EU in terms of investments, technological cooperation, and on all sectors. The EU, according to an Indian diplomat, has definitely been able to engage effectively with their country, on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. Discussions are told to be frank and opened: "when there are disagreements there is a great deal of respect: we agree to disagree" (In1).

Interestingly, Indian diplomats allude to "prejudices" in order to describe their first approach to the EU. They both stated that before being officially placed in Brussels, the EU represented either "nothing concrete" (In2) or "a visa dispenser", an entity to deal with in order to ensure Indian citizens could travel across a several countries (In1). In both cases, direct exposure radically changed their perception of the EU. For one of interviewees, exposure helped him to realise that the EU is "a technological, economic and industrial Union, rather than a political one". For the other, it meant to know "the EU as a group of countries that learnt to cooperate together, with which we share many values: human rights, democracy, a multicultural society" (IN1).

Thus, one Indian diplomat confirms an important common commitment in multilateral fora (Ind1). But precisely on the EU multilateral vocation, an Indian diplomat specifies that the EU is not necessarily coherent and that it pursues its "power politics" through the over-representation that it enjoys in all multilateral fora: from the UN to the WTO.

However, similar to what was stated by their Chinese colleagues, despite this positive picture, scanty knowledge about Indian political, cultural and social structure is lamented, as it is at the higher level. A diplomat lamented that European media are not vehicle of good, accurate information, and that contribute to ignorance towards other cultures (In2). However, what the EU is lacking is not only cultural understanding, but "information, update, specialisation", also at the higher level, as the EU officials do not always have a clear understanding and they might not necessarily be updated and well informed. In his view, the European Parliament often tends to adopt Resolutions which do not reflect reality (In2).

In portraying the relationship with the EU, **Japanese** diplomats also emphasize a solid basis of shared values, and common position in cultural, economic and political affairs (J1). As addressed by the Foreign Minister, common values are said to be: democracy, human rights, rule of law, and market economy. This element also distinguishes the relationship between the EU and Japan compared to other Asian countries like China.

According to two of the three Japanese diplomats interviewed, international affairs and external relations are among the most strategic areas of cooperation in the relationship between EU and Japan, besides the importance and solidity of commercial relations. Japanese diplomats confirm sharing common values and good bilateral and multilateral cooperation in security, environmental, and developmental matters (J1, J2, and J3). Trade is also considered as an important area of cooperation both at the bilateral and at the multilateral level within the WTO (J3). In case of trade disputes, the relationship with the EU is considered frank and open (J2). In general, the EU's effective engagement in the relationship with Japan is recognised, as witnessed by the intense

exchanges at all levels, from the level of Heads of State and Government to the inter-parliamentary level (J2).

However, Japanese diplomats express some concerns about the possibility that the EU-Japan relationship may be overshadowed by the impressive rise of other Asian countries and economies, China and India, and express the hope that the EU does not forget the stable, good relations that it holds with Japan. The element of cultural and affinity of values is, therefore, the best way to distinguish the EU-Japan relationship from the relationship that the EU may, for instance, have with China. In order to improve the relationship between the EU and Japan, there is a general claim for improving people-to-people exchanges and mutual understanding, also at the level of tourism and academic and business exchanges (J3).

As in the case of India and China, there is the feeling that the EU, as a "leading country of the era" (together with the US) shows a tendency to impose standards on others and to neglect or misunderstand different cultures (J1).

3.5. Views from the North American continent: Mexico and the USA

Mexican diplomats allude to the "special" relation between Mexico and the European Union, which relies on historical and values-related reasons, "common culture, shared history, alliances, shared value for the achievement of common goals" (Mex3). This special tie is also seen as a means to pave the way toward a full strategic partnership (Mex3). Mexico is said to be very important for the EU, not only on bilateral, but also on multilateral relations; also for its contacts with other Latin American and Caribbean partners; for instance, in the framework of the Latin American-Caribbean and EU cooperation (CUMBRE) (Mex2).

For these reasons, there are many fields considered strategic in the relationship with the EU, as witnessed by the EU/Mexico Global Agreement, structured into three relevant pillars: political, economic and cooperation. Mexican diplomats tend to emphasise the importance of the political relations with the EU, on the basis of "similar ethical values", also in international affairs (Mex1, Mex2, and Mex3). In this sense, the EU is seen as an important "cultural reference" (Mex2), with which Mexico shares goals such as human rights, democracy development and the rule of law (Mex1).

Hence, among the strategic areas of cooperation, many sectors are listed: social cohesion, fight against poverty, culture, economic sectors, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME); science and technology" (Mex2). This highlights Mexico's willingness to put into place a Strategic Partnership. However, as officially stated, the economic and commercial aspect of the relation is said to be less developed than the political, due to the closeness of the US, which makes it difficult to develop commercial relations with other countries/areas (Mex1).

The **US** diplomats seemed to agree deeply with the official definition of the relationship with the EU: "in the EU-US case 'strategic partnership' really means something" (US1). This is also witnessed by the intense flow of high level visits that connects the two Capitals, both at the political level and at the level of the business community (US3).

The goodness of this relation is grounded on the awareness that, in spite of some differences, the US and the EU share "overreaching goals" and find an added value in putting together "minds and resources" (US1). According to US diplomats, the main strength of the EU is that it is considered a moral example. It has gained credibility in human rights, thanks to its action, for instance, in Africa and in East Timor, and it is conceived as a neutral broker for negotiations (US2). The EU's

reputation thus allows to achieve a good synergy on international questions, such as in the Middle East, where the EU has ample credibility, better relations and good connections, as seen in the case of Syria and Lebanon (US2). Hence, despite the fact that many other diplomats talked about a harmony of values with the EU, in a way, there is a perception that the EU and the US consider themselves as an "us", while "others" stand somewhere else.

Two out of three US diplomats declared that foreign relations constitute the most strategic area of cooperation. Another diplomat, coming from the Ministry of Commerce quoted, in addition, the strategic importance of economic relations. He stateed that the EU and the US work intensively to define common strategies in terms of trade problems with emerging countries like China and India (US3), in order to maintain an "economic competitive position" in the world (US3).

Yet, there are two main issues which should be improved in economic relations between the EU and the US. These issues are in part related to the different conception of business in the US and the EU. On the one hand, there is the feeling that the EU generally mistrusts businesses more than the US. This is seen as a cultural difference. Another weak aspect is regulatory cooperation. Regulation in the EU is seen as less transparent and more complicated than in the US, on the basis of "different legal perspectives" (US3). The EU is perceived as using regulatory standards as a way to impose its economic power. The fact that the EU sets up standards to be imposed also on third states signals that the EU has its own way of being "imperious" (US1). So, notwithstanding the presumed vocation of a "neutral broker", the EU has its own way to pursue its power politics, even if not in a traditional sense of the term. Hence, diplomats refer to "a different way of projecting presence in the global scene", mostly pursued through international trade and regulation, fields in which the EU may be even more "aggressive" and "forceful" than the US (US3).

The perception that "Europeans are from Venus and Americans are from Mars" is strongly rejected and may cause some frictions (US2). However, it has to be pointed out that presumed differences between the US and the EU have been chorally downsized. Contrasts were rather circumscribed to the period of the second Iraq war (US2), which is considered as an "exceptional period of controversies and bad bilateral relations" (US1).

Thus, in spite of this feeling of strong partnership, there is awareness that the relation could be improved, in terms of "mutual understanding" (US2; US3), above all at the people-to-people level.

Americans, it is said, tend not to understand European affairs and do underestimate the benefits of the relations with the EU (US2). Overcoming this issue would require a major effort on behalf of the EU in order to "develop a constituency in the US. So, the EU should try to have more public affairs out of Washington and New York, in order to reach the hearts of the North American continent (US3).

3.6. The diplomats' views: national identities but a common diplomatic approach

From this overview, we can see that relations are, overall, portrayed in positive terms by all respondents, apart from Iran, which is currently undergoing sanctions on behalf of the European Union and the UN Security Council. The most recurrent weakness in the relation is said to be lack of "reciprocal" or "mutual" understanding (Ch1, Jap1, US2, and US3), and limited "cultural" or "people-to-people" exchanges" (Ru1, Jap2, Jap3, and US3). Inconsistencies are also highlighted, mostly in relation to the EU agricultural and commercial and regulatory actions. This might eventually bring into question the developmental vocation of the Union, since it shows a tendency to adopt double standards. Interestingly enough, in the Middle East, the EU is accused of lacking a clear, legible stance, even when major engagement is claimed. However, all interviewees seemed to

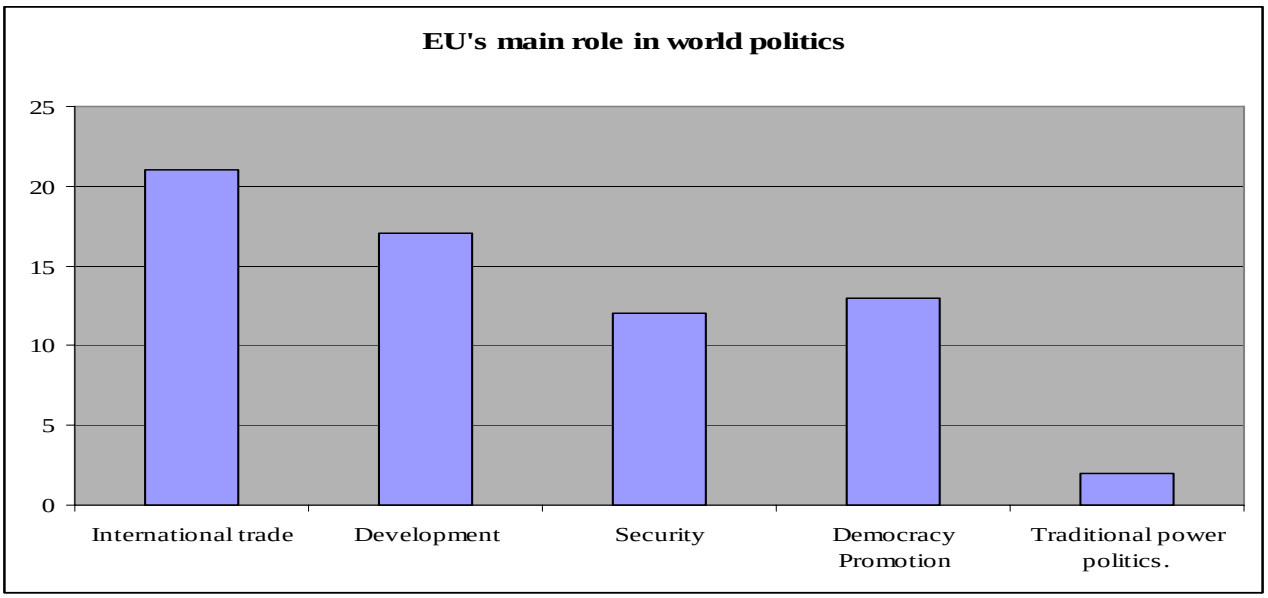
maintain a positive attitude. This can also be underlined in relation to sectoral cooperation: even where there are disagreements, exchanges are said to be frank and open, allowing a consensual outcome. Many weaknesses in the relationship between the EU and these countries also seem to derive from the peculiar nature of the EU as an international actor, which entails severe limitations in its capacity to act.

Indeed, in general, we can see that diplomats tend to confirm the positions stated officially by the respective Capitals. The definition of the relationship, thus, reflects profoundly the official definition of interests, priorities and assessments given at the highest level. One of the elements that distinguish the images of Europe portrayed in the Capitals and in Brussels concerns the peculiar institutional setting of the Union. Diplomats tend to speculate on this aspect and to reflect on the limits and potentialities stemming from the multinational composition of the Union far more than their "principals" in the Capitals. Thus, while the major exposure to the EU does not lead diplomats to develop a substantially different point of view from that of their Capitals, it brings about a common "diplomatic" assessment of the limits and potentialities of the EU's international action, based on a well established understanding of the EU institutional complexity.

4. The EU's international role and actorness

In depicting the EU's international role, we have to bear in mind that the concept of role in foreign policy is constituted by three components: (i) role expectations, (ii) role performance, and (iii) role conception (Aggestam, 1999). *Role expectations* "refer to roles that other actors or groups prescribe and expect the role-beholder to enact"; "*Role performance* encompasses the actual foreign policy behaviour in terms of decisions and actions undertaken – the outcome", and role conception refers to "the normative expectations of a certain kind of foreign policy behaviour expressed by the role-beholders themselves" (Aggestam, 1999). While the third component cannot be applied to our inquiry, the first two components prove to be very useful theoretical tools for depicting third party states diplomats' conceptions of the EU's international role.

As mentioned previously, with few exceptions, interviewees depicted the international actorness of the European Union as influenced by the atypical international position which stems from its multinational, non-state status. As we will see, this constitutes one element that limits the EU's *role performance*, but also a constitutive trait of its international presence, which can either raise *expectations* of the EU's *role* or fuel criticisms about it. Thus, not being a state represents the limits and the potential strengths of the Union as an international actor, as its strength stems precisely from the number of countries that it represents. In turn, what is meaningful in defining the EU's international presence becomes an inescapable limit to its *actorness*, above all when foreign policy is at stake. In this sense, some diplomats highlight how the distinction between *high* and *low* policies in the EU's external relations (Hoffman, 1966) contributes to delineating the EU's role (Ja2, SA1, and Mex3).



Whereas certain important competences – such as international trade – are handled at the Community levels, others – such as foreign policy, security and justice and home affairs – are conceived as standing firmly at the national level. The EU is generally said to be an effective actor in those areas where there are clear delegated competences at the Community level. In those areas, as we will see, the EU is seen to have a strong, undisputed role in the international scene.

This is the case in the areas of international **trade**, technological development (In2), but also for **regulation**, a sector in which the EU is thought to play a powerful and important role, probably more than the US. This is especially so in sectors such as environmental policies and climate change (Jap2, Is1, and US3). This role is, at times, seen as imposing and as a way of maintaining a privileged economic position in the international scene. As suggested by a South African diplomat, the developing world tends to see the EU as protectionist and able to use technical barriers in order to protect its market, even when lowering trade barriers (SA1). In addition, the powerful role that the EU maintains in international trade allows it to hold a disproportionate representation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (In2); a fact that brings into question the real multilateral vocation of the EU. The EU is also accused of lacking transparency in its regulatory process (Is1, and US3). Over-regulation is also blamed for being an instrument of power and also a burden that slows down cooperation (Au1).

Particularly in **foreign policy** matters, the EU is considered to be unable to express a common position, as in other areas where member states maintain unaltered their sovereignty. Hence, foreign policy could be seen as a trade off between the interests of different countries (SA1). In other words, the EU is a giant, but a political dwarf in foreign policy (Mex2) and, to quote Kissinger, does not have a telephone number (Is2). Even if the consolidation of a common European foreign policy tends to be encouraged by all, there is wide spread belief among diplomats that the development of such European foreign policy is impossible.

Of course, the degree of difficulty in reaching an agreement is seen as depending on the issue. In some issues, the EU is seen as able to perform a coherent, prompt foreign policy action even in situations of conflicts. This is the case of the peacekeeping missions in the Pacific (Au1, Au2, and Au3) or Africa (SA1, and Ch1). However, these successes, in general, do not alter the perception that the EU is not entirely capable to act on the international scene, above all when sensitive foreign policy questions are at stake (J1, J2, J3, US1, Au1, Au2, Leb1, Is1, Is2, Ir1, Ir2, Mex1, and Mex2). In cases in which the EU has been seen as more effective, the intervention tends to be regarded as

limited to humanitarian aid and conflict prevention (Ch1). An American diplomat also attributes the EU's inability to act in foreign and security policy matters to the lack of investments on behalf of member states above all in the military sector; indeed, if on the one hand the EU has been able to engage in a relatively successful way in some peacekeeping missions in Africa, member states should definitely contribute with more investments in personnel and materials in order to acquire decent military strength (US1).

Generally speaking, divisions among member states are regarded as the main factor impeding the EU pursuit of a coherent foreign policy. However, the EU is seen as divided in many cases, not only on particularly sensitive ones, such as the Middle East. On many issues the result of member states' bargaining over foreign policy decisions is a compromise position, which may eventually be seen as "a camouflage for the lack of a common position" (Is1). In certain situations, thus, the EU's inability to act is perceived as a reflection of not only *performance* but also of actorness, and presence: the EU as am entity is not able to produce sound responses in sensitive, complex issues. In turn, this represents a substantial problem affecting the nature of decisions taken at the EU level (Is1, Ru2, and US1). Even if decisions based on the lowest common denominator might sometimes represent a way to produce positions which allow it to build upon a large consensus, they are not necessarily based upon a clear strategy or a good understanding of the EU's partners' concerns (Is1).

This observation also concerns other levels of intergovernmental cooperation, such as **justice and home affairs,** and **security** related matters. In security matters, according to Australian diplomats, the EU has a "back sitting approach", which clouds the EU's visibility and makes international coordination difficult (AU3). In general, the EU is not portrayed a player on "big issues": "its strength does not obviously rely in its foreign policy and, post-September 11, not even in security related issues", where member states still play most of the game (AU1). Yet, the role of the EU in **security** matters is not delineated in net negative terms, and many diplomats look with interest to the developments of the ESDP, which is undoubtedly a developing policy space (Ru2, and Leb1). This offers possible avenues for the EU to pursue a greater role in security related questions.

Furthermore, the term "security" is subjected to numerous interpretations. This is due to the multivalent nature of the concept (Ch1, J1, Ru1, Mex3, and SA1). For a Russian diplomat, for instance, the EU pursues a security action only in so far as internal security is concerned (Ru1). Hence, the EU's security capabilities are highly dependent on how one defines security: whereas in human security the EU can play an important role, in military terms it is still questionable (SA1). Similarly, in **climate change**, the EU has been able to establish "concrete strategies and goals" and build upon "experience and technologies to play a leading role" (Ch1). Another diplomat states that the EU has a large role to play in security matters, based on the fact that it guarantees a different international climate with its presence, by acting as a negotiator without recent records of fighting (Jap1), and by advocating multilateralism (In1). This statement recalls the desire to see a more unified and coherent EU foreign policy in order to counter the hegemonic position of the US (Ir1, and Ir2).

Through **development**, the EU is also said to pursue an important role in terms of *human* security (Mex2). Of course, it is generally recognized that the EU "invests lots of money in development" (Au1). This guarantees the EU an almost undisputed role in this issue area (US, Mex, Leb, In1, Ch, Jap, In1, and Ir1). The idea that the EU pursues an overall approach – which combines trade and development strategies – is shared by diplomats, even if the EU is not always recognised for the effectiveness of its action (In2, SA2). In the fight against poverty, nonetheless, the EU does not necessarily invest sufficiently in all the regions, as for example in South Asia (In2). Furthermore, similarly to other rich countries, it promotes an "unequal partnership", based on a "superiority

complex" and a "top down" approach towards less developed countries (SA2). This threatens its credibility and its ability to build trust among its partners.

In general, it is common view that the EU does not perform **traditional power politics**, either for its incapacity to do so or for its manifest rejection of such approach. However, it should be underlined that this opinion does not necessarily refers to some member states, in particular France and Britain which, through their special relationship with former colonies, are seen as maintaining an area of influence, and pursuing a power policy on their own. But, as in the case of security, there are many less conventional ways of conceiving *power politics*. For instance, the EU is said to attempt to pursue this role, even if it does not necessarily fulfil it effectively. Apart from its disproportioned representation in the WTO, the EU has a fairly high representation and control stake within the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, not to mention the seats that three of its members have within the UN Security Council (In2). In this sense, the position of the EU regarding the reform of the UN Security Council might contradict its multilateral vocation. To an extent, this does not surprise many diplomats, as diplomacy and foreign policy "are all about [national] interests" (SA, In1, and Ch1), but stands in contrast to the EU's tendency to promote a "megaphone diplomacy" (Is2) and to "act as a teacher telling children how to act" (SA2). Moreover, the EU tends to neglect some communication related aspects of *power politics*: it lacks the ability to control media on a global scale and to "produce" effective, credible opinion makers, through the authoritativeness of its NGOs, media, universities and think tanks. This is still considered a monopoly of the US, who, in addition to this, also has the capacity to attract the best human resources from countries like India and China. In this sense, the EU seems to ignore that the **immigration policy** pursued jointly or by its members contributes in forging the opinions of the future ruling class of many countries, who, most likely, choose the US for studying and researching (In2).

A particularly contentious theme is the role that the EU pursues in **democracy promotion**. Even in this case, a terminological clarification is raised by a diplomat: "The EU stands for Human Rights, not for democracy promotion, while the US is the opposite way round" (Au1). To other diplomats, the EU is a credible living example of democracy promotion; and one that shares its experience in order in to spread democracy (Mex2) which makes it an "obliged term of reference" for democracy promotion (Mex1). This credibility derives from the fact that the EU stands for some universal values that *originate* within the EU, like democracy and human rights, (Ch1) and this is an important part of its strength (Jap3). In the words of a Mexican diplomat, the strength of the EU in this area results directly from "the philosophy of the EU: governance, democracy; fight against poverty; rules, norms, conciliation of interests" (Mex2), "because it is setting an example to other countries and, in doing so, it impacts on people" (US3). But, according to Russian diplomats, the EU, in fact, does not possess the credential to export democracy, as it neglect its internal situation, while "imposing standards outside" (Ru1).

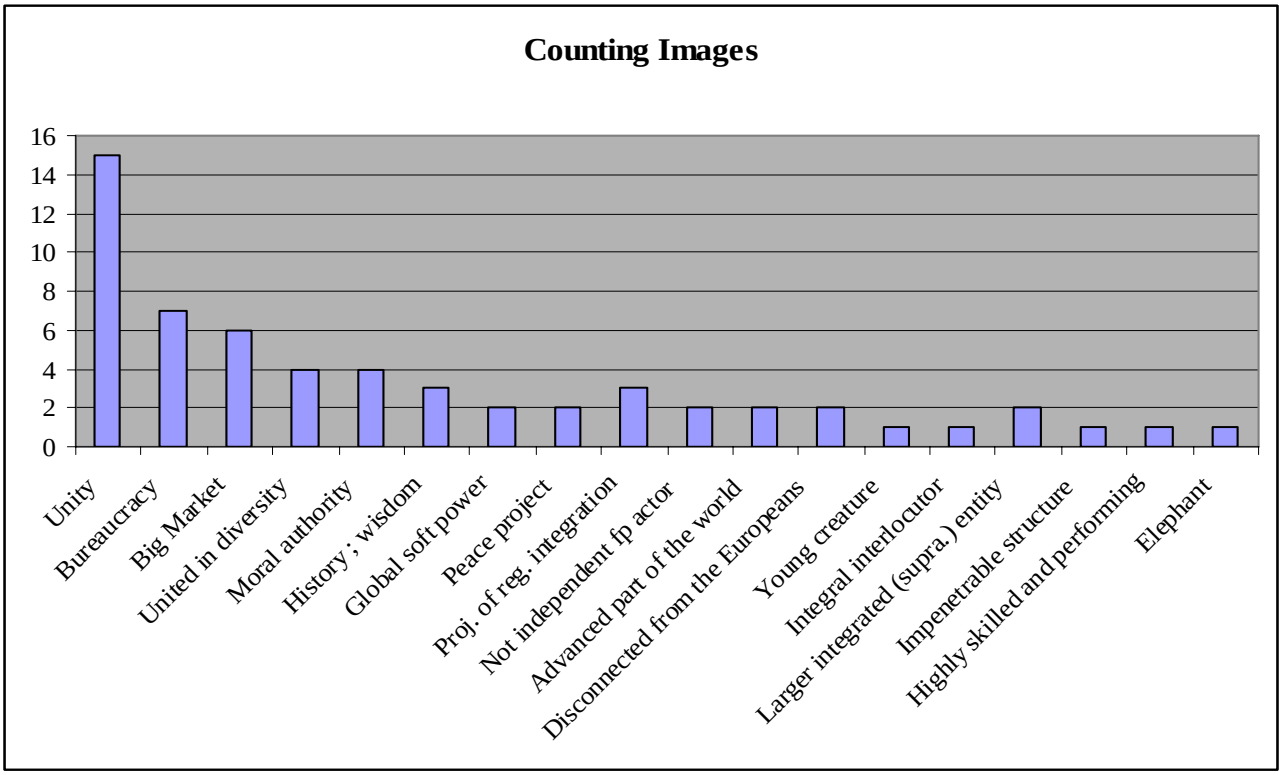
The risk of being an imposing actor in the international scene is, indeed, highlighted also by other diplomats. The EU is sometimes accused of boasting that its values are superior, and thus disrespecting other values or lifestyles. This accusation is, at times, linked to the claim for a multipolar international system (In2, and Jap1). In this sense, the main weakness of the EU, according to a Russian diplomat, is "arrogance", rather than inability to act as a first rank international actor in foreign policy (Ru1). A softer version of this criticism may also be accompanied with a general good opinion of the EU. In this case it seems that the Union is not imposing cultural standards but "dictating policies" or imposing commercial and regulatory standards (US2, and US3). Other diplomats warn against the risks of imposing standards and conditions through trade and development: namely, the policy areas in which the EU is more powerful. This vision is not necessarily shared by all diplomats, however. Some tend to see the

Union as carrying universalistic values, which should be shared by all (Mex1).

5. The EU and the others: claimed or real distinctiveness?

The EU is, thus, conceived as an atypical international actor, with some state-like characteristics. This limited state nature results in some important limits. But being a *Union of different countries* that naturally embodies the will of different members is a meaningful element which represents *per se* some of the stronger credentials of the EU in the international scene. This is synthesised by the assumption that "number is strength, because the EU represents the will of 27 Member States" (Jap3). The "power of numbers" is also conceived as an important element in enlarging and deepening the EU's relations with the rest of the world, as member states have a greater reach in terms of historical links with different countries, and of the possibility of relying on different expertise, depending on the issue (AU2, and Ir2). This is also the element that allows the Union *as such* to becomes an economic power, vis-à-vis other international actors (Ch1).

The EU's main weakness, therefore, is represented by the difficulty of creating unity out of this diversity (Ch2, Ir2, Is1, Is2, In1, Ja1, Ja2, Ja3, Leb1, Mex2, Mex3, SA1, Ru1, Ru2, Us, 1, Us2, and Us3). This peculiar international condition has a reverse side: the EU intrinsic weakness, above all when foreign policy matters come at stake (US2). Hence, even if "the power of number" is definitely an added value for its international presence, it also constitutes "a challenge and trial for the future" (Jap3); specially, in regards to its international actorness. In any event, whether this is conceived as a weakness or strength (or both), the image of the EU as a group of countries is definitely the most quoted by diplomats.



There is no doubt that this is positively related to the EU's international presence through a high number of images: peace, wisdom, honest brokering, potential mediating role, non-imperial power, balanced interlocutor, and a unique project of regional integration and innovation for the political development of Europe. One of the most quoted images refers to the capacity of the European

Union to be an agent of peace, both in its internal and the international context, both in relation to its role of appeaser of the European continent and to its tendency to solve international controversies through diplomatic means. This condition gives the EU “moral authority: as it is a supranational organization like no other. It is based on the idea of agreement, union, dialogue, and human rights” (IS1).This is an asset particularly in international fora, both for the moral authority (Is1) that the EU carries and for the added value and power it can add to common positions (Jap2, Jap3, and US3).

The complexity of the Union is said to encompass some limits as well: one such limit is that the growing number of members states is generating a bureaucracy “that nourishes itself” (Ru1). Bureaucracy is among the most quoted images of the EU. Indeed, among the few “internal issues” risen by diplomats while depicting the EU is precisely its institutional intricate system (Au1, Au3, In1, In2, Ir2, Is1, SA1, SA2, Ru1, Ru2, and US3). Presumably, this is also linked to the fact that dealing with the EU, from the perspective of a diplomat working in Brussels, implies getting involved in a very complex system, where responsibilities, interlocutors, and channels of communication cannot be taken for granted. This criticism, however, entails not only the over-bureaucratisation of the Union, but also its inability to be accountable to its citizens and as causing a dramatic detachment between the EU leaders and their constituencies (US3 and Ir2). European citizens, it is claimed, do not understand the EU integration process and the “strange institutional animals” that it produced (Ir2); they do not have access to public life, even when they are contributing with their taxes to the realisation of this process.

We have just seen that the EU is conceived as having a peculiar international presence and actorness, in light of its complex and multinational composition. But where does it stand when compared to other, powerful international actors? Interviewees were asked to express their views about the difference between the EU and other actors: the US, Russia, India, China, and some member states, notably the “big three”, France, the UK and Germany. When tackling this issue, interviewees tended to give two kinds of answers:

1. Those emphasising the non-state nature of the EU as an international actor argued about the impossibility of comparing the EU's actions to other powerful international actors; and

2. Those giving more substantial answers on the international presence of those actors, rather than alluding to their capability to project influence in the international scene. It must be noted, however, that some diplomats expressed some reservations in defining third party states’ foreign policy, either because this is not part of their political dossiers, or because they did not want to deal with sensitive issues related to third countries.

In relation to the first point, an interesting aspect concerns member states. Differences among the **member states** are often highlighted by assumming that “France, UK, Germany and other Member States follow their logics and interests” (Mex1). This is the reason why “we should ask whether there are strategies for a common European foreign policy” (Mex1). We might point out that reference to those differences mostly neglects Germany, which is seen as implementing a more European approach to foreign policy (US2 and AU1). Hence, these differences are outlined mostly in regards to **France** and the **UK**; namely, the two countries with the most colonial heritage (US2, and AU1). Yet, these differences are somehow understood, in the light of the fact that in international approaches and in the neighbourhood, there are different but complementary “national interests”, recognised in the framework of the Treaties (Mex3, and Ch1). This plurality of interests, as noted previously, is a major problem that affects the EU's coherence on a wide range of issues.

The majority of diplomats interviewed expressed the expectation that the Lisbon Treaty may

mitigate differences among the member states, by giving the EU a clearer voice in the international scene (AU2, AU3, CH1, SA1, Leb1, US2, US1, Mex3, Mex2, Jap2, and Jap3). In spite of these hopes, some interviewees noticed that already during the negotiation of the Treaty, some remarkable differences emerged among leaders such as Brown and Sarkozy. This is why new key players, such as the President of the Council or the European Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are seen as crucial in leading the EU towards a new role in foreign policy matters. The same can be said in relation to enlargement. In general, diplomats tend to look enlargement as a way of gaining further influence in economic and political terms, and as a means to appease the region. However, many expressed concerns on the ability to speak with one voice, as the EU group is becoming more heterogeneous.

Concerning third party states, the fact that the EU is not a state was a recurrent pattern, one element that made it difficult to compare the EU to any other international actor. This is highlighted, for instance, as a first element that distinguishes the EU from the US (Ch1). Hence, the EU, as an "organization of states" rather than a state, cannot perform a united approach as a state can (Ch2). This also reveals that the EU relies on a different system of decision-making and a "totally different toolbox" (Is1). Due to member states' differences and bilateral relations, "the EU produces an unclear political agenda" (Is1), an element that differs profoundly from the US (Au1, Is1). In turn, this also defines the lesser leverage of the Union in projecting its international presence: while the US relies on a single foreign policy and has a more visible and comprehensive role, the EU is still far from having this level of influence (US1).

In what concerns more substantial aspects of foreign policy, the EU and the US are also seen as somehow different: even when they have the same positions, as in the case of the Middle East Peace Process, they play "a different song, a different music", and have a different way of engaging, which expresses a different international leverage (Is1).

But, as mentioned in relation to the EU's international presence, being a Union of states can also bring about a more "cautious" and "moderate" position. The need to take on board all 27 member states leads to decisions based on the lowest common denominator; at the same time, however, it fosters further dialogue (AU3) and makes the EU less reliant on the use of force. The propensity to use force (Mex1, SA1, US1, US2, Ir1, Ch1, Ch2, Is1, Leb2, Au2, Au3, Au1, In1, Mex2, and Jap1) and the vocation of the EU to rely on diplomatic means for solving international controversies (SA1, US2, Ir1, and Ch1), marks a substantial difference between the EU and the US, in the eyes of many diplomats. This considerations ranges from the basic assumption that, even if the EU would like to, "it has no force to use" (Au1), to the idea of significant differences based on history and vocation.

Diplomats recognise that the EU is very close to the US in terms of fundamental values, specifically if compared to Russia or China. But a difference in approaches is outlined. The EU is seen as having a long history of solving controversies and an acquired wisdom which suggest not using military force (Jap2). Sometimes, this difference might give rise to criticisms about the tendency of the US to go unilaterally and to impose its idea of global order (Ch1, Ir1, Ir2, and Au3). This divergence is also outlined by US diplomats, who highlight a different way of being "full range powers": one relies mostly on political security and defence to exert power on a global scene, and the other on commercial and economic strength (US1, US2, and US3). Yet, the development of the EU security and defence policy might entail a risk of duplication and competition between existing instruments within the framework of NATO and the developing European Security and Defence Policy (US2).

Yet, the view that the US and the EU are from Mars and Venus is rejected or somehow downplayed

by many diplomats, and, in particular, by US diplomats. As we have seen, one of them, for instance, downplays the frictions between the US and the EU during the war in Iraq (US2).As noted previously, diplomats deny the fact that the EU is necessarily less imposing than the US. It is rather a matter of employing different tools: if the US is ready to use force, the EU is more than keen to use the commercial weapons to make its voice heard, not always taking a consensual approach. Two diplomats, in particular, said that the EU and the US show no difference regarding their "arrogant" attitude "negligent of third countries" (Ru1), and somehow judging and disrespectful of different cultures (Jap1). Then several differences are traced: diplomats referred to "different priorities" (US1), "different interests in foreign policy" (Leb1) and definition of these interests in the world (SA1), overall policies and positions in matters of climate change (Ch1), engagement in human rights (Mex1), and also domestic values or value systems, such as international rules, regulations and attitude towards business (SA1).

The fact that the EU is not a state is also highlighted vis-a'-vis other international actors, such as **Russia** or **China**. Differences are also, at times, related to the consensual and democratic nature of the EU, compared to other actors: "in economic matters, for instance, it always depends on the nature of the beast: Brussels fixes and the Member States have to respond and to be supportive. But China and Russia do not have to ask to anyone: they have their positions as national actors" (US3).

The reference to the EU more "consensual attitude" is one of the most quoted differences between the EU, and Russia and China. The latter two are said "not to operate in the same democratic sphere" (US2). Hence, the EU is said to be more inclined to dialogue in order to reach consensus (Au3). This aspect is usually linked to the belief that neither Russia (Jap2, Ch1) nor China can be regarded as consolidated democracies. This is obviously the case of China, which is regarded mainly as an evolving system, from both political and economic points of view (Au1).

Yet, the emergence of China in the world economy is not only portrayed as a 'yellow danger'. Many diplomats stated that they stand for a multipolar world, in which every international actor can pursue its goals in a climate of mutual respect. In this context, the EU is seen as one of the poles, together with the US, India, China and Russia (In1). Hence, the fear of a 'yellow danger' is probably a European (and North American) concern, rather than a world wide one. Indeed, some remarkable aspects are noted about China's economic expansion. China is seen as following its own interests in terms of market access and regulation, but in a less prescriptive and demanding ways (SA1). To put it differently, not all diplomats regard China with suspiciously. As it was noted (US3, and US2), the EU and the US share a position towards emerging countries, and a similar interest in keeping their competitive positions in world economy. But, for other countries (in particular, Japan and South Africa), China is also seen as a potential resource, that may contribute to the emergence of a genuinely "multipolar" world, the renaissance of a regional scenario (Jap1), or a new path for development (SA1).

From the developmental angle, South African diplomats raise some important questions about the Europeans' views regarding the role of China in Africa. According to them, frictions between the EU and China are all about competition over raw materials and natural resources, and also grounded on the consideration that "the EU labour market is not at all competitive on the global scale" (SA1). Regardless of the differences in terms of good governance, China is considered as a reliable trading partner, who possesses no colonization record in the African continent and who proves to be far less prescriptive than the EU when it comes to opening up the respective markets. The problem is that, unlike twenty years ago, China is now becoming more active in seeking natural resources, in giving rise to "a struggle for resources" (SA1). In this sense, South African diplomats recognise that even if the EU had and continues to hold a major role and preferential access to African market and resources on the ground of its "colonial heritage" (SA1), this is in the

process of changing because evolving nature of the international system.

Nonetheless, in their words, this is not a frightening perspective for Africa. The focus on China – both in the EU and the US – is acknowledged by a Chinese diplomat, who comments: "There are often differences and convergences between the US and the EU. The two powers engage for taking positions against China, but we need to study carefully the situation and assume an own proper position because we have also our interests. And we have to act due to our interests" (Ch1).

6. Conclusions: Images of EU's presence and actorness

Diplomats hold a complex and well established vision of where the European Union stands in world politics. Their judgements and beliefs are grounded in considerations which encompass both the relationship with their country of origin and the contribution that the Union can make to the international system.

Their privileged position of "near abroad observers" helps diplomats frame a more elaborated position. It has to be pointed out, however, that diplomats do not tend to assume different positions from their Capitals. Hence, the difference consists mostly in the way they portray the Union within a detailed analysis of its institutional setting and the problem that such setting implies in terms of the EU international actorness. In this respect, diplomats, regardless of their country of origin, speculate on the limits and potentialities deriving from the EU's peculiar institutional setting. In this sense, the exposure to European institutions helps substantiating their views with an analysis of institutional constrains.

In general, diplomats indicate that the Union should make its role more understood within Europe as well as in third countries. There is also wide perception that the EU is far from being understood by both European and third countries constituencies. In this context, the Union is often blamed for over-bureaucratisation and slow-paced decision-making, as well as for its detachment from "normal people", whether in Europe or in their countries of origin, who normally do not understand the EU at all.

In terms of the Union's role in world affairs, a distinction is made between the EU's presence and actorness. This distinction reveals the limits and potentialities of the EU's role. On the one hand, a mark of distinctiveness is attributed to its condition of "not being a state", both in terms of presence – mainly in relation to the EU's authoritativeness and representativeness – and in terms of actorness – in terms of the substance of its decisions.

With respect to its presence, the EU is said to be more inclined to assume a balanced and multilateral posture towards all international questions. Several images used by diplomats to describe the EU point to its "consensual" nature and its ability to spread peace in Europe and to stand for "universal values", such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Its presence in international fora is often valuable in this sense, so that it is a "good thing" to have "the EU on board" when dealing also with complex international issues such as the nuclear non-proliferation crisis with Iran or the global reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

In terms of its actorness, the plurality of identities and interests that the Union embodies is one of the most recurrent putative causes of its limited international performance. The EU is not a state and, for the EU, it is notoriously difficult and time-consuming process to make decisions about international affairs. When foreign policy is at stake, the EU is not able to react quickly and consistently to world events. The fact that the EU is not a state undermines its capacity to act on the international scene and might disappoint some of the expectations that third party states bestow on

it. So the EU, in spite of the acclaimed projection of a good and reliable international actor, is not necessarily seen as able to act out of rhetoric. The fact that the Union decides, in foreign policy matters, by adopting a lowest common denominator position, gives rise to two main beliefs: on the one hand, that this practice allows the EU to assume a balanced position and to have a natural tendency towards dialogue and cooperation; on the other, the belief that it is impossible for the Union to be a reliable partner and to be able to put itself in its "partners' shoes" while dealing with crisis situation, notably in the Middle East. This is reflected in the images that diplomats elaborate with regard to the EU. A clear distinction can be seen in their judgements and opinions when they conceptualise its *role expectation* and *role performance*.

The role performance of the EU, due to the limits imposed by its capability to act (or actorness), is one of the most controversial aspects of the EU's international role and constitutes one of the most noted weaknesses of the EU in the international scene. Diplomats tend to refer to the institutional framework of the Union to explain the limited potentials of its international role in matters of foreign policy, security, fight against terrorism and other intergovernmental sectors of cooperation.

A far more positive role performance is recognised in relation to the "Community method's sphere" (Smith, 1996), where the Commission has clear competences and mandates. Hence, in the areas of trade, development (which is a mixed competence) and human rights, the EU is recognised as a powerful international actor. But some inconsistencies might arise also in these areas, primarily in relation to sensitive issues, such as energy, trade barriers and over-regulation. Indeed, the reputation of the EU as an "honest broker", a "reliable partner" and a "moral authority" might be questioned in the context of first pillar competences. Even if the EU is portrayed as acting on the basis of the international "common good", its actions are not always coherent or consistent with this vocation. The EU is seen as imposing its own rules in regulatory, commercial and development matters. Furthermore, it is accused of double standards, because it does not always follow the rules that it imposes on others.

Yet, the EU is gradually seen as an actor able to pursue its strategies in nearly all areas of external relations, even if within the limits just outlined. This position allows the Union to champion global efforts such as the fight against global warming and the promotion of sustainable development. In these areas, the EU is seen as a forerunner, and many diplomats see it as convenient to coalesce with the EU on these matters. Hence, in spite of the hindrances, the EU is generally portrayed as a positive *partner*, where this term suggests a great deal of importance for the respective countries' strategies. To sum up, diplomats recognise that the EU is a growing and powerful international actor, whose role cannot be ignored.

In spite of this, it is clear that the EU has its own interests and that it is working to build more effective strategies to pursue them. These strategies are pursued through a dynamic and variable elaboration of a common lowest denominator among its members. This process makes the Union's interests and strategies difficult to predict and to assess. This is due to the tendency of the EU to adopt a rhetorical and "megaphone" diplomacy, while, at times, relying on double standards and relations of strength to impose its stance. Thus, its international presence is somehow diluted by the inconsistencies stemming from its plural identity. Hence, some member states are seen as adopting a different conduct when dealing with their interests in the framework of the EU or of their bilateral relations. This threatens the very basis of the EU's coherence and credibility.

Diplomats from powerful countries, such as the US, China, India and Russia are all keen to maintain or establish good relationships, based on reciprocal economic treatment (Ch, In, US, and Ru), shared identity and objectives (US), values (In, US), and international commitments (Ch, US, In, and Ru). To a various degrees and due to different reasons, they all accuse the EU of

inconsistencies, misunderstandings, double standards and excessive rhetoric.

The US accuses the EU of imposing in regulatory matters, even if maintains an overall positive picture. Russia blames the EU for being imposing, bullish, and for adopting double standards, particularly in human rights matters. India notes that the EU is not coherent in its trade and agricultural policies, maintaining a degree of ignorance when it comes to Indian culture, society and politics. These shortcomings were also underlined by Chinese and Japanese diplomats.

Diplomats from Middle Eastern countries tend to seek good relations for different reasons. Iran, which experiences a high degree of international isolation and a bad relationship with the US, hopes to build good relations with the EU, even if it accuses the EU of not taking an independent stance from that of the US. Lebanon, which enjoys some privileged relations with some member states (France, in particular), aims at building upon a better relationship with the EU rather than with the US; even if Lebanon regrets the EU's reluctance to denounce Israeli violations of international law, and its inability to have a single, united, coherent foreign policy. Israel, overall registers an improvement in the bilateral relations, still prefers to focus on its privileged relationship with the US and accuses the EU of failing to understand Israeli regional concerns.

Mexico, which seeks to reduce its dependency from the US, is keen to enhance its partnership with the EU on the basis of a shared vocation in international affairs, but still complains about the slow pace of improvements in commercial cooperation.

South Africa embodies many concerns and criticisms of other African countries towards the EU. Although it has good relations with the EU, it charges the EU with bullish behaviour and with adopting double standards in development policy, and trade in agriculture and services. In terms of special alliances, South Africa still maintains a good relationship with China, which proves to be less imposing and prescriptive than the EU.

Australia enjoys a privileged relationship with the US, and aims at keeping a good relationship with the EU. Yet, it recriminates the EU for its inability to act in foreign policy matters and for its imposing behaviour in commercial, agricultural matters and for its regulatory policy.

The EU is said to pursue its interests in an imposing and at times incoherent way, but it remains an indispensable actor. The factors that influence most diplomats' visions of Europe are related to the overall state of the relationship with the EU, its economic weight and the leverage that it represents in the pursuit of international multilateral action. This vision is also qualified by the relative weight of each third country in the international system and on its alliances within the system. In this sense, even if the EU is not always seen as a first rank actor, or a point of reference (like the US), it is still important to maintain solid relations with it.

Appendix I

Text of the interview

Name and Surname	
Diplomatic Rank	
Date of birth	
Nationality	

Preliminary questions

4. How long have you been in Brussels?
5. Where were you posted before?

General EU

6. When I say 'European Union', what images come to your mind?
7. In your view, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the EU, both in its internal and international context?

EU-your country (YC)

8. What are the most strategic areas in the relationship between YC and the EU?
9. Do You think the EU has been able to engage effectively with your country?
10. (If not) why would You say it happens?
11. How would You describe the position of YC towards the Union?
12. Do you think that the EU will become more or less important for YC in the future?
13. What could be done in order to improve the relationship between the EU and YC?

The EU and the world

14. According to you, what are the main strengths of the EU's role in world politics?
15. And its main weaknesses?
16. In your view, what is the EU's main role in world politics?

Probes:

- International trade;
- Development;
- Security;
- Democracy promotion;
- Traditional power politics.

Could You please speculate on this?

17. Some people argue that there is no difference between the EU and, for instance, the US in international politics. Do you agree with that? And why?

18. Do you see any differences in strategies and approach between the EU and other international actors, such as Russia, China, or even some Member States, like the UK, France and Germany?

19. Do you believe that the EU is more internationally powerful today 10 years ago?

20. and in 10 years time?

21. How could the EU improve its global role?

22. How could the EU improve its international image?

23. What are the first three images that come to your mind when I mention….EU FP:

1.

2.

3.

24. What are the first three images that come to your mind when I mention….US FP:

1.

2.

3.

What are the first three images that come to your mind when I mention….China FP:

1.

2.

3.

What are the first three images that come to your mind when I mention….India FP:

1.

2.

3.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
Perceptions of the European Union at the United Nations

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to Garnet and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial contribution to the project.

Executive Summary

The European Union has developed a strong public commitment to the UN. This commitment is encapsulated in the European Security Strategy's statement that "strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfill its responsibilities and to act effectively, is a European priority". At the United Nations, the EU speaks with one voice across a wide range of issue areas. In view of the complicated and complex relationship between the European Union and the United Nations, however, the translation of both commitment and increased unity into "visibility" at the United Nations is not straightforward,. This paper, therefore, merely offers a first glimpse at how the EU is perceived at the United Nations.

Across several issues, the European Union is perceived as an important actor within the UN. Unsurprisingly, however, the EU importance diminishes in the fields of "hard politics" or where member states' (especially French and British) prerogatives are concerned. Also, the EU is not clearly perceived as distinct from the "West" or the US; it is rather conceived as a lighter version of the 'West". Nor, is the EU clearly differentiated from its member states. Often, the positions of France, the UK and Germany are taken as tokens for EU positions. At the same time, the EU is often conceived as bearing responsibility for the actions of its members.

The UN secretariat's discourse presents the EU as an actor that shares universal values. It points out the EU's "comparative advantage" in its financial resources to which the UN adds the necessary legitimacy and experience. In the economic and social realms, the secretariat recognizes the positive effects of European enlargement on transition countries but criticizes the EU for the protectionist dimensions of its trade policies.

Third country diplomats at the United Nations perceive the EU as an alliance of states that acts together in order to defend the interests of its members rather than as an altruistic norm promoter. The perceived closeness of EU positions to the US, and the American preference for direct interaction with the developing countries prevents the EU from being perceived as a bridge builder.

About the author

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Perceptions of the European Union at the United Nations

A first glimpse at an intricate relationship

Franziska Brantner[1]

I. Introduction

The European Union has developed a strong public commitment to the UN. This commitment is encapsulated in the European Security Strategy's statement that "strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfill its responsibilities and to act effectively, is a European priority".[2] Across a wide range of issue areas, the European Union (EU) does act cohesively within the United Nations (Luif 2003, Smith 2006a, Young and Rees 2005, Wouters et al. 2006). But how does this effect external perception of the EU inside the UN hallways? Is the EU perceived as an actor in its own right? What characteristics do UN secretariat officials as well as the representative of other UN member states assign to the EU?

EU member states' cooperation at the UN is thriving. Diplomats from the 27 member states have about a 1,000 meetings per year in New York alone. In addition, other meetings are organized in Geneva and Brussels, home to the European Council Working Party on the UN (CONUN). The New York mission of the country holding the EU presidency issues approximately 150-200 statements on the Union's behalf during its six-month tenure.

One difficulty for the EU at the United Nations is the institutionalized inequality among its members in terms of representation and decision-making power: the Security Council with the two permanent members France and United Kingdom represents a constant challenge for unity. This puts the "actorness" (Hill 1996) question on the table. Jørgensen and Laatikainen (2006: 10) note that the need for coordination at the UN, highlights the EU's "split personality" as "both actor in its own right and an arena for the expression of member-state interests." Furthermore, not only is the EU forum and actor, but so are the United Nations. More precisely, the UN includes multiple political arenas –including the Security Council, General Assembly, Human Rights Council and

[1] I am grateful to Karen Smith, Knud Erik Jørgensen and the directors of this research for their detailed comments, and to all those who accepted to be interviewed for this study and shared their insights with me. Special thanks to James Sperling for his comments on an early version of this report.

[2] *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003 - Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament.

Economic and Social Council– but also engages in a huge array of operational activities, including conflict prevention, humanitarian aid and peacekeeping. To complicate matters further, the system also includes funds and agencies, such as the UN Development Programme and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), overseen by stand-alone inter-governmental boards (Brantner and Gowan, forthcoming 2008).

This complicated network of interactions has consequences for how the UN secretariat and other UN member states can and do interact with the European Union and how they perceive the EU. It is this perceptual dimension that this study aims at assessing. For this reason, this work will address the views of UN secretariat officials and also the perceptions of other UN member states' delegates to the UN.

First, secretariat officials come in many guises, from administrative employees to senior managers, from people on the ground in Sudan to headquarters in New York or Geneva, from those interacting directly with EU institutions and those who do not. This work focuses on officials that are in contact with EU institutions. Some divisions within the secretariat directly report on Europe and the EU; for example, the Division for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). These reports cover facts and figures about economic and social developments worldwide, including Europe, but also carry analyses and recommendations. This study analyses the representation of the European Union within those reports.

Second, non EU diplomats interact on a daily basis with the EU (presidency) as well as its member states. This work assumes that such daily interaction impacts how these delegates perceive the EU. Their "picture" of the EU is, on the one hand, tainted by such interactions; and, of course, on the other hand, it is determined by previous experiences and world visions. The difficulty of keeping these two levels of analysis apart is evident in most of the case studies of the research project to which this report contributes. Due to this difficulty, this work does not assess how these delegates perceive the EU per se, but how they perceive the *EU within the United Nations*. This paper thus collects and assesses UN member states delegates' perception about the EU in the context of the United Nations.

The views about the EU within the United Nations of both actors – UN officials and UN member states' diplomats – are assessed separately. This analysis is framed by two main questions. The first question examines if UN officials and other UN members' delegates see the EU –hence its

Presidency or even the Commission– as their interlocutors, or rather specific EU member states. Hill and Wallace argue that "the member states of the European Union have established a collective 'presence' in the international arena, without achieving the ability to act collectively except through cumbersome consultative procedures and partially effective diplomatic, economic and military instruments. … Its presence in the world is therefore real but incoherent, leaving third countries… to cope with relations with the European Community (through the Commission) alongside bilateral relations with the member states" (Hill and Wallace, 1996: 13). At the United Nations, is the EU perceived as an actor in its on right or rather as a coalition? Is the EU concieved in the same manner as the Group of 77 or the Non-Aligned Movement that play an important role in negotiations but are clearly identified with its protagonists?

This actorness issue brings about the study's second framing question. If the actorness question is relevant, *what kind of* actor do UN secretariat officials and other member states' diplomats see in the EU? It is not enough to ask about the degree of unity and actorness, the impact of this unity on other actors' perceptions is at the heart of this study. The self-portrait of the EU often falls in three categories: the ineffective divided EU, the normative leader and the bridge builder. Whereas the first sees the EU as an alliance of member states pursuing their interests, the second believes in the 'multilateral DNA' of the EU, and the last category emphasizes the fundamentally functional and constructive role of the EU in international relations. The adoption of any one of these categories has important implications for what kind of external perceptions we should expect. In the first case the EU should be seen as a self-motivated alliance of states; in the second, as the spearhead of universal norms; and in the third, as the honest, altruistic power in the middle.

I found that the EU is perceived as an actor in the General Assembly but not in the Security Council. Surprisingly, in the Council the EU is perceived as an alliance defending its interests, just as any other group inside the UN. While non-European member states' diplomats recognize the achievement of European integration in terms of bringing peace and welfare to the European continent, the EU is seen as an alliance that advances the economic interests of its member states. Moreover, it is argued that the EU works hard to maintain the control over the current UN system by EU member states.

This study begins by describing the cooperation between the EU and the United Nations system. It then discusses possible frameworks for guiding our expectations of outside perceptions about the EU. The analysis goes on to present an assessment of UN officials' discourse about the EU. The

study concludes by presenting the views from other member states' delegates.

II. EU-UN cooperation

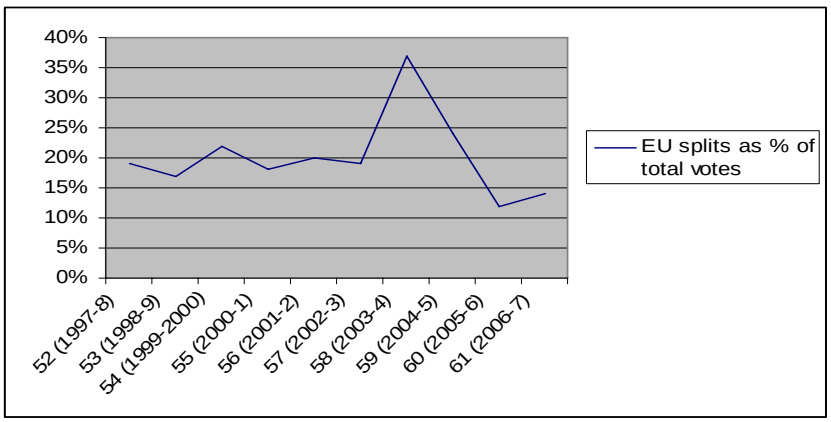
The UN provides a framework for cooperation with regional organizations. In the peace and security field, this cooperation is mainly defined in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Under this provision, the EU has cooperated with the UN, for example, in Chad and the Central African Republic. In 2007, two Security Council meetings were held to discuss the role of regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security. In his remarks to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made reference to the role of the European Union,[3] –as well as other regional organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – in Afghanistan and Kosovo. The EU engagement in military affairs seems to be increasing and represents an entire field for research; one that deserves much attention: how is the EU perceived in the countries where it is carrying out Security Council mandated peacekeeping or peace-building missions?

In the General Assembly, it is the Presidency that speaks on behalf of the European Union. At this point, it is important to note that the EU does not have an official status at the UN; it still lacks legal personality. It is the EC that possesses observer status in the General Assembly (but not in the Security Council).

A European Council on Foreign Relations' forthcoming study about the EU at the United Nations shows the coherence of EU voting in the General Assembly. Despite the inherent limitations of voting analyses at the UN - because only the minority of decisions is actually brought to a vote- voting patterns are nonetheless one indicator for EU cohesiveness (see Kissack, 2006). Even in the most divisive period of 2003 during the Iraq crisis, EU member states did vote together on more than 60 percent of the votes taking place in the General Assembly. Importantly, in "normal" periods (i.e., no divisive), the share of the EU cohesive voting is above 85 percent.

[3] Remarks UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the Security Council 6 November 2007, UN Press release

Figure 1 Number of EU splits in the General Assembly, 1997-2007



Source: The EU at the UN, Franziska Brantner and Richard Gowan,
Report by the European Council on Foreign Relations, forthcoming 2008

Operationally, EU Member States together are the largest financial contributor to the UN system, paying 38 percent of the UN's regular budget, more than two fifths of UN peacekeeping operations and around half of all UN Member States' contributions to voluntarily funded UN funds and programs. In 2005, the EC approved a total of more than 1 billion euros to be channeled to the UN for the implementation of projects and programs (www.europa-eu-un.org).

The European Commission has also signed formal strategic partnerships, or has initiated correspondence, with over ten UN agencies. In 2003, the EC and the UN agreed to update their Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA). The FAFA aims at facilitating programmatic cooperation between the EC and the UN. This applies to all contribution-specific agreements signed between both organizations and provides the legal, financial and administrative procedures for cooperation on contracting.

Furthermore, the EU is involved in a wide array of groups, such as the Middle East Quartet and the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group, which the Secretary-General established. Those groups bring together the African Union, the European Union and other multilateral organizations. The EU also finances other regional organizations so as to carry out UN Security Council mandates; for example, the African Peace Facility. Since its creation, the African Union has worked in close partnership with the United Nations to strengthen Africa's peacekeeping capacity. Europe has supported financially and logistically these efforts.

III. Conceptual framework

Considering the vast array of EU-UN cooperative interactions, what kind of perceptions about the EU should we expect to find within the United Nations? The self-portrait of the EU often falls in three categories: the ineffective divided EU, the normative leader and the bridge builder. The first category is underpinned by a realist approach. The EU is an alliance of states formed to pursue and serve its members' interests. The EU is thus categorized with other alliances such as the Group of 77 or the Non-Aligned Movement. EU members find a unified "voice" when they share interests and can together better defend those interests; they speak separately, when an unified voice does not reflect their positions or does not offer a better outcome (Walt, 1987). The EU should then be perceived as an alliance of European states that pursue their interests at the United Nations. The alliance is dominated by powerful member states such as the UK, France and Germany.

A "normative power EU"[4] approach would suggest that the EU is the driving force behind the values that define the United Nations: human rights, international law, environmental standards. . Francesco Francioni, for example, argues that the EU should play a leading role in the reform of the human rights system because "the EU has anchored its constitutional development" in the values of human rights (Francioni, 2005: 50). The EU's 'DNA' predisposes it to support multilateralism, and by acting through international organizations such as the UN, it gains the capacity to shape the behaviour of others. Ian Manners indicates that "the concept of normative power is an attempt to suggest that not only is the EU constructed on a normative basis, but importantly that this predisposes it to act in a normative way in world politics" (Manners, 2002: 252). Diez (2005: 622), furthermore, argues that "One difference between the EU and the US, however, is that the US has sought to project, and often impose, its own norms while (unlike the EU) refusing to bind itself to international treaties." Karen Smith (2003: 199) similarly argues, "The EU's foreign policy reflects the view that the imperatives of cooperation, and of compliance with international law and norms, limit the freedom of states to do whatever they wish domestically and externally." This school of thought suggests that it is possible for others to perceive the EU as a strong defender of international law and legal enforcement mechanisms.

[4] For a thorough overview of the "Normative power EU" argument, see Burckhardt, forthcoming.

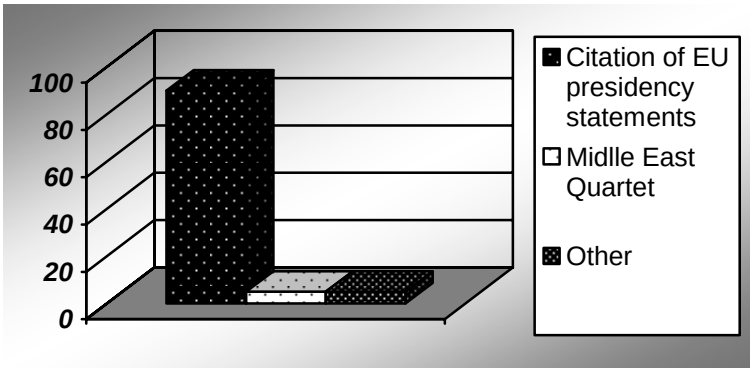
Thirdly, European officials and member states' diplomats represent the EU as the "middle ground" between the unilateral (Bush) Americans, and the "unsophisticated" and "paranoid" South dominated by pariah states. Giancarlo Chevallard, formerly responsible for UN affairs at the External Relations Directorate General of the European Commission, states for example that "It is fair to say that in decision-making on reform, the EU has consistently occupied the middle ground in the General Assembly" (Chevallard, 2005: 25). The transatlantic partnership (either in terms of pure material overall interests or in terms of a common 'Western' or security community identity) prevents the EU from differentiating itself to a great extent from the United States, even if the latter implements a polarizing policy. Nonetheless, attempts are made to bridge the widening gap between developing countries and the United States. We can expect, therefore, other countries to identify the EU with such a bridge-building role. We could then assess if the EU is seen as effective in such pursuit.

The following analysis assesses the extent to which perceptions about the European Union fall into any of these categories; or if the latter have to be redefined to accommodate other dimensions of the European discourse that have so far not been uncovered. It is, however, impossible to offer a final verdict on the perceptions about the EU in the United Nations. The field is vast and even narrowly focusing on the General Assembly is an over-ambitious endeavor. This study, therefore, presents a few impressions on the issue; it does not claim to be exhaustive or representative.

IV. Data presentation

The impressions offered by this study are based on a variety of sources. Regarding secretariat perceptions, I analyzed thoroughly the first and latest UN report about its cooperation with the EU aiming at tracing the representation of the EU. Furthermore, all UN Press releases from January 1st 2007 to the end of March 2008 have been examined. The words "European Union" were entered in the search system looking in the titles and the content of the press releases. Both levels combined resulted in a total of 420 hits. Of these 420 press releases, 90 percent refer to the EU member state holding the presidency and "speaking on behalf of the European Union". Five percent refer to an explanation of the Middle East Quartet, listing the European Union as one of the four actors of the Quartet. The remaining five percent directly engage the European Union.

Figure 2 Citations of EU in UN secretariat press releases



Also, in this study the following documents underwernt an exaustive qualitative examination: the major yearly UN publications in the economic and social field, the annual World Economic Situation and Prospects, and the annual World Economic and Social Survey (WESS) for the 2005-08 period, which are prepared by the Division for Economic and Social Affairs within the UN secretariat.

This paper draws, in addition, on two interview sets with diplomats representing UN member states and UN secretariat officials. The first set involved four weeks of interviews in New York: one week each in March and June 2006, and in March and June 2007. This interview set was conducted as part of my doctoral studies about the 2005 UN reform; and consisted of 63 interviews based on standardized questionnaires. The second interview set was undertaken specifically for this report and consisted of 12 interviews carried in New York during early March 2008. Finally, this study employs other written sources, such as government statements in the Third Committee of the General Assembly and monographs from former diplomats.

V. UN officials' perceptions of the EU

In order to assess the UN secretariat's discourse about the EU, I analyzed the recent UN report on the impact of EU support to the UN. I triangulate those reports with the content of press releases that does not cite the EU presidency or feature members of the Middle East Quartet. In addition, the main UN yearly reports about the economic and social field are analyzed.

1. Perception of EU-UN cooperation

The press releases and the report about UN-EU cooperation all present a similar pattern: first, the EU and UN are presented as sharing the same *universal* values; second, they are showcased as partners; and third, the UN is shown to provide the legitimacy while the EU provides the resources. The EU's leading role in combating climate change, for example, receives positive reviews, The same sources call upon the EU to engage more seriously in peacekeeping efforts in Africa. Its support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is praised. That evaluation, however, seems to be a reminder of the MDGs' importance and a plea to the EU not to reliniquish this policy.

a) EU and UN share the same "universal" values

UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, at the launch of the UN report on the impact of EU support for the humanitarian and development field, pointed out that "Our organizations are united by common values."[5] Similarly, Asha-Rose Migiro in her speech marking the 50th anniversary of the European Union stated that "The European Union and the United Nations have so much in common. We are founded on the same universal values. The Union represents an unprecedented project towards the peaceful unification of a continent, and serves as a guarantor of peace and security, based on fundamental freedoms as well as the ideal of unity in diversity."[6] Important in this respect is the reference to universal values, which is also made explicitly in the title of the press release: "the 'universal values' make the UN and the EU natural partners." Her remarks also allude to the EU model's capacity to bring about peaceful unification. The emphasis on common values hints to a perception about the EU that fall in the "normative EU" category. What the UN and the EU share are not necessarily specific interests but common values.

b) EU and UN are partners

The "partner" designation is present in each press release. The EU is the "natural" partner of the UN. In other instances, it is a partner when conceived in combination with other regional organizations. To illustrate the point, some examples seem pertinent. At the African-EU summit in Lisbon at the end of 2007, UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro delivered the following remarks: "How Africa fares in building development, human rights and peace and security is a matter of life and death for millions of Africans. It is also a test of the ability of the United Nations to carry out the mandate our membership has given us. The African Union and the

[5] United Nations, European Union share many objectives, Deputy Secretary-General says at launch of report in Brussels, 15 March 2007, UN Press Release.

[6] Universal values make United Nations, European Union natural partners, says Deputy Secretary-General at concert marking body's 50th Anniversary, 28 March 2007, UN Press release 29 March 2007

European Union are our indispensable partners in this endeavour."[7] Similarly, "Since the creation of the African Union, the African Union and the United Nations have worked in close partnership to build up Africa's capacity in peacekeeping. Europe has been an important partner in this critical endeavour."[8] At another occasion, Deputy Secretary-General Migiro contended, "That makes us natural partners in the multilateral system. And increasingly, we are working together in new and productive ways;"[9] more specifically, she indicated "ours is a vital and complementary partnership."[10] During a meeting of EU development ministers that took place in Bonn, Deputy Secretary-General Migiro went futher stating "Our growing collaborative efforts reflect the fact that, today, the European Union and the United Nations are not only natural allies, we are essential partners."[11]In another meeting, Migiro pointed out that "The EU is one of the great supporters of multilateralism, and is a good, close partner of the United Nations."[12] She then gave examples of how the 700 Million dollars contributed by the Commission to the humanitarian and development fund were spent, and concluded that "the message is clear: the United Nations and the European Union are engaged in a vital, tremendously complementary partnership."[13] This complementary point is highlighted in several other press releases. For example, in the European Union-Africa Summit of 2007 Migiro indicated, "The issues you will discuss here are at the centre of the United Nations' work. Our work in peace and security, human rights and development reinforce each other."[14]

c) UN brings the legitimacy the EU lacks, EU brings resources

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[7] Deputy Secretary-General says Africa's quest for development, human rights, peace, security is 'Life and Death' matter for millions, at European Union-Africa Summit, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro to the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, on 8 December, UN Press Release 10 December 2007.

[8] Deputy Secretary-General says Africa's quest for development, human rights, peace, security is 'Life and Death' matter for millions, at European Union-Africa Summit, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro to the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, on 8 December, UN Press Release 10 December 2007.

[9] Universal values make United Nations, European Union natural partners, says Deputy Secretary-General at concert marking body's 50th Anniversary, 28 March 2007, UN Press release 29 March 2007

[10] Universal values make United Nations, European Union natural partners, says Deputy Secretary-General at concert marking body's 50th Anniversary, 28 March 2007, UN Press release 29 March 2007

[11] Reforms will make UN more responsive, accountable, Deputy-Secretary General says in Bonn meeting with European Union Development Ministers, UN Press Release, March 13 2007

[12] United Nations, European Union share many objectives, Deputy Secretary-General says at launch of report in Brussels, 15 March 2007, UN Press Release.

[13] United Nations, European Union share many objectives, Deputy Secretary-General says at launch of report in Brussels, 15 March 2007, UN Press Release.

[14] Deputy Secretary-General says Africa's quest for development, human rights, peace, security is 'Life and Death' matter for millions, at European Union-Africa Summit, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro to the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, on 8 December, UN Press Release 10 December 2007.

These complementarities are identified as an exchange of legitimacy for material resources and innovation. Whereas the EU's resources are crucial and welcomed, the UN 'comparative advantage' is its universal membership and thus the legitimacy it can bring to EU activities.

The structure and substance of the report by the UN team in Brussels on the Partnership between the UN and the EU fairly illustrates this complementary conception. The report focuses on the results achieved through the joint efforts of the UN and the European Commission in a "relationship that combines policy and programmatic collaboration in almost 90 countries throughout the developing world." For the most part, the report focuses on the concrete results achieved in the development and humanitarian fields.

It indicates that "time and again the EC proved an indispensable partner to the UN when carrying out its mandated tasks as requested by EU governments." The entire report reads like a glossy advertisement booklet for the European Commission. It highlights how the money has been spent without assessing any failures or obstacles (which are likely to have occurred). Interestingly, the report attempts to categorize the cases in which the EC partners up with the UN; for example, when the EU prefers to spend its money via the UN rather than bilaterally. The report identifies the following partnership areas: (i) on sensitive issues that require the legitimacy and impartiality of the UN; (ii) in fragile country situations where consistent field presence and combined UN mandates facilitate transition out of crises; (iii) where donor coordination is at a premium (the Commission estimates that some three quarters of its interventions with international organizations (IOs), including the UN, involve a range of partners); and (iv) in thematic areas where the UN has particular expertise.

The perception of UN officials is thus that the UN's legitimacy and expertise is an important element for EU decision-makers when deciding to take bilateral or multilateral actions. UN officials assume then that the EU lacks legitimacy and expertise. We find this perception in several other statements. For example, "The UN's unique legitimacy, global presence and expertise have helped the EU to achieve greater impact."[15] During her speech at the European Parliament, the Deputy Secretary-General repeated that "The United Nations brings to this relationship its unique global legitimacy and impartiality; its longstanding presence, especially in fragile countries; and its deep expertise in economic and social development. The European Union brings the admirable solidarity of its citizens with the plight of the world's poor and with the agenda of the United Nations. You bring resources, creativity, innovation and the inspiring example of a continent that has proved to the world that peace, stability and human security can be achieved through cross-border

[15] United Nations, European Union share many objectives, Deputy Secretary-General says at launch of report in Brussels, 15 March 2007, UN Press Release.

cooperation."[16] In a similar manner, she stated elsewhere, "You bring to it resources, creativity, innovation and the inspiring example of a union of 500 million people that has proved to the world that peace, stability and human security can be achieved through cross-border cooperation." These two last statements nicely exemplify the EU-as-model dimension discussed previuosly.

The UN secretariat, as far as its public statements suggest, does perceive the EU as an important partner. The EC with its significant budget certainly is important to the UN secretariat. The latter, however, implicitly insists that the EU lacks the expertise and legitimacy of the UN. This conception of the EU's lack of legitimacy may be an implicit supposition; nonetheless, it is an important perception of the EU. This is more interesting when compared to the "shared values" based analysis of the EU-UN relationship. Despite the shared values, conceivably, the EU actions lack legitimacy; why is this so? If the EU acts upon the same values as those of the entire UN membership, then this lack should not be paramount.

d) Welcoming of specific EU policies

In addition to the overall welcoming of the EU's material support for UN activities, other policies are highlighted; for example, the EU's support of the MDGs. A report developed by UN officials in Brussels notes that "The EU has also demonstrated international leadership in promoting the achievement of the MDGs through its collective commitment to reach the UN target for official development assistance (ODA) of 0.7 percent of gross national income by 2015." During the speech at the European Parliament, the Deputy Secretary-General pointed out that "The United Nations welcomes the centrality of the MDGs in Europe's first-ever joint policy on development, the "European Consensus."[17] At another event, she stated, "The UN and the EU share many of the same objectives, including the MDGs. Indeed, I would like to thank Mr. Michel [EU Commissioner for Development Aid] for his personal leadership in mobilizing aid for the MDGs."[18] In addition, the

[16] United Nations, European Union engaged in vital, complementary partnership, says Deputy Secretary-General in Strasbourg speech, 14 March 2007, UN Press release. See also: "You bring to it resources, creativity, innovation and the inspiring example of a union of 500 million people that has proved to the world that peace, stability and human security can be achieved through cross-border cooperation." Universal values make United Nations, European Union natural partners, says Deputy Secretary-General at concert marking body's 50th Anniversary, 28 March 2007, UN Press release 29 March 2007

[17] United Nations, European Union engaged in vital, complementary partnership, says Deputy Secretary-General in Strasbourg speech, 14 March 2007, UN Press release.

[18] United Nations, European Union share many objectives, Deputy Secretary-General says at launch of report in Brussels, 15 March 2007, UN Press Release.

Secretary-General welcomed the decision by EU leaders to establish targets for energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.[19]

In the field of peace and security, the Security Council and the Secretary-General welcome EU missions, whether in Afghanistan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as financial assistance to war-prone countries such as Guinea-Bissau.[20] The Security Council's positive tone should not be surprising considering it incorporates two veto-empowered EU members. The Guinea-Bissau case illustrates the UN embracement of EU policies. The report by the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau welcomed the newly signed convention between the European Commission and the Government of Guinea-Bissau granting €6.2 million in budgetary support.[21]

e) Criticism of the EU's lack of engagement

Notwithstanding the positive tone, the EU is also criticized withih the UN as it argued that the EU lacks engagement in certain issues; for example, its engagement in Darfur. After the mandate for the deployment of the African Union-United Nations hybrid force in Darfur, the early deployment of an effective, robust peacekeeping force was a priority for the Secretary-General. The most urgent handicap for an effective force deployment was the lack of helicopters. The Secretary-General personally contacted every possible contributor of helicopters to no avail. At the 2007 African-EU summit in Lisbon, UN Deputy Secretary-General Migiro noted that "not one helicopter has been made available. In Europe alone, there are thousands of military helicopters of different types."[22]

The ICC Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo from Argentina summarized developments in Darfur and said his office would open new investigations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Darfur. He also argued that "The entire international community of parties to the Court, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the European Union, must all call on the Sudan to arrest and surrender those individuals."[23]

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[19] Secretary-General welcomes European Union decision to establish targets for energy efficiency, use of renewable energy sources, UN Press release 9 March 2007.

[20] See for an example on Guinea-Bissau: Security Council says drug trafficking undermines Guinea-Bissau Peace consolidation, calls for urgent steps to confront threat, UN Press Release, 19 October 2007.

[21] Economic and Social Council begins coordination segment, considers reports of coordination bodies, reports on Haiti, Guinea-Bissau, UN Press Release, 20 July 2007.

[22] Deputy Secretary-General says Africa's quest for development, human rights, peace, security is ‚Life and Death' matter for millions, at European Union-Africa Summit, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro to the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, on 8 December, UN Press Release 10 December 2007.

[23] Assembly of states parties to Rome Statute of International Criminal Court fill two of three judicial vacancies, UN Press Release, 30 November 2007

Related to the ICC context, Carla Del Ponte, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, pointed out that "European Union member States and the European Commission must maintain their principled position by insisting on Serbia's full cooperation as a condition in the European Union pre-accession and accession process."[24] By suggesting so, Del Ponte established a direct connection between the potential effectiveness of the UN mechanism and EU policies, wherein the effectiveness and credibility of the UN fully depends on the EU. Here the image of limited legitimacy and credibility seems to be reversed from that elaborated by Deputy Secretary-General Migiro in her speeches.

From a critical position, in 2007 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) while subjecting EU member states to review, criticized some members, such as Estonia, for not wholly implementing the Convention.

In addition, the UN press releases about the 2007 *United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace*, which took place at the European Parliament (Brussels), presented critical views expressed by the conference participants. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations stated "the convening of the Conference had a special meaning, adding that it had two objectives: to stress the importance of Europe, not only because of its weight, but also its genuine friendship with the Palestinian people; and because Palestinians wanted parliamentarians to work in support of their cause."[25] Jennifer Loewenstein, member of the Israeli Committee against Home Demolitions, reportedly indicated that "once an international consensus is realized, the Europeans must be pressured to act independently of the United States policies and actively ostracize the United States and Israel, rather than acting in servile obedience to the world only super-power and its principal client."[26] Similar views are expressed in the UN press reports on the meeting of an experts panel part of the United Nations African meeting in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people (May 2007). Ali Goutali, Ambassador of Tunisia to South Africa pointed out that "While welcoming the support of the European Union for the Arab Peace Initiative and the commitment of European countries to work with the Palestinian Unity Government, Tunisia would call on the Union and the wider

[24] Enduring Freedom of suspects indicted on genocide charges 'a stain' on former Yugoslavia tribunal's work, prosecutor tells Security Council, UN Press Release 10 December 2007.
[25] United Nations international civil society conference ends with call to oppose Israeli military operations, UN Press releases, 31 August 2007
[26] United Nations international civil society conference ends with call to oppose Israeli military operations, UN Press releases, 31 August 2007

international community to lift financial and resource embargoes on the new Government, in order to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in the Occupied Territory, and to make progress towards re-launching peace negotiations."[27] It is interesting to note that the UN press reported about these two events and the critical nature of the remarks made towards the EU. Reporting such critical and challenging views in an official UN press release does not necessarily suggest that UN officials share those opinions. Nonetheless, it shows a degree of support for these positions.

To summarize, the UN Secretariat employs a positive tone towards the EU, which entices the EU's normative discourse. The Secretariat also engages directly with all EU actors and not just the member states. In these interactions, it clearly draws the lines between the EU and the UN in order to avoid competition between the two. This leads the Secretariat to emphasize the funding dimension of the EU-UN partnership. In such conceptualization, the EU becomes the provider of essential funding; in the process, its image of a normative power diminishes.

2. Perception of the EU in the economic and social field

This section qualitatively assesses the major yearly UN publications in the economic and social field, the annual World Economic Situation and Prospects and annual World Economic and Social Survey for the 2005-08 period.

All World Economic Situation and Prospects, and WESS reports, "for analytical purposes," rely on the European Commission statistics as data source. However, the reports are inconsistent regarding the use of the EU as the relevant unit of analysis or the use of individual member state level. Within each report, both approaches are employed without explaining why either one is chosen. Seemingly, there is not a coherent pattern behind the use of either level. A possible reason could be data availability. This explanation, however, seems implausible because European Union statistical data is permanently available in both categories, national and aggregate. It is thus unclear why in certain reports the UN team would only use the aggregate or national data. In any case, it is interesting to observe that the pattern for data presentation and analysis remains unclear and randomly developed.

The 2008 World Economic Situation and Prospects report includes the EU only in terms of the euro area and recent currency developments. The economic situation is assessed by country. The 2007 World Economic Situation and Prospects report provides information about the micro and macroeconomic situation, mainly on specific European countries. The report's statistical tables

[27] African meeting considers situation on ground in occupied Palestinian territory, UN Press Release, 9 May 2007

somewhat inconsistent: some cover both EU member states and aggregate EU level; others include only EU member states (e.g., data on growth expectancies); more specifically, the foreign direct investments and textile imports table makes reference to the EU only and it presents the EU as an entity alongside USA.

The report, however, does analyze EU policies and developments concurrently to euro area developments. It notes signs of increased protectionism and other distortions to world trade; it cites for example, the EU and the US limits on imports of certain Chinese textiles and the use of non-tariff barriers. The report warns that such trade policies may well hamper the successful completion of the Doha Round. The reports goes on to positively describe the 2005 announcement by the EU and G-8 of their plans to substantially increase aid flows to Africa, and to improve the coordination of bilateral aid programmes and policies of the member States.

The 2007 report focuses, furthermore, on the new EU member states and argues that the exports from these countries continued to grow in real terms at a relatively fast pace. It indicates that such growth was partly due to considerable gains in productivity and product quality following several years of substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, relocation of production from the EU-15 to Eastern Europe, and continued market diversification. Intraregional trade among the new members increased as the remaining trade barriers fell in 2004, and their trade with South-eastern Europe and the Russian Federation also increased. Interestingly, the UN report is more open about such economic relocation than the EU internal reports.

The 2006 World Economic Situation and Prospects report presents the EU-15 and the new EU member states separately; coverage of each is rather extensively. Its overall position is that the European Union, with the exception of its new members and few other countries, has replaced Japan as the lagging economy. The report recognizes a substantial economic rebound in the new member states, but raises questions about the economic outlook for the EU 15. The report does not stop at identifying the sluggish growth, identifies the causes of such economic conditions and makes recommendations to improve them.

It identifies the euro area as the main problematic region because of the weakness of its domestic demand, which does not have the underlying momentum necessary to offset an adverse export shock. The 2006 report recommends that the European surplus countries should use their excess private savings for investment. This financial reshuffle, according to the report, will shift the balance of growth from the external sector to domestic demand. Interestingly, the report indicates that, alternatively, the excess in resources could be used to improve growth in developing countries.

The report goes on to give an account of the 2004 European Commission proposals aiming to increase the flexibility of the Stability and Growth Pact.

Regarding the international role of the EU, the European Union's "Everything but Arms" initiative is mentioned, as well as the European Commission efforts at increasing aid effectiveness.

The 2007 WESS titled "Development in an Ageing world," addresses migration and ageing patterns within the EU. The report states that the European Union would require a steady net inflow of 13 million immigrants per year in the next 50 years. While a 2001 UN study had focused on the so-called replacement migration in specific countries including France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and the United States, an identical exercise was performed for Europe and for the European Union (EU), treating them as if they were each a single country from 1995 onward.

The 2007 report twice mentions positively the European Union Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, which establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation requiring member States to enact legislation that would make age discrimination in employment and vocational training unlawful. The report cites, in addition, the European Employment Strategy and highlights the "European Institute of Technology" initiative in terms of improving R&D.

The 2006 WESS titled "Diverging Growth and development," positively comments on the "upward convergence" of some European countries—such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and, more recently, Ireland—with to the industrialized countries club. It argues that the reasons for such converge are the "upcoming" countries' geographical location and geopolitics in terms of EU membership. The latter membership created positive spillover effects and the transfer of technology. Similarly, the recovery of investment growth in Central and Eastern Europe is identified as "largely owing to the possibility of accession to the European Union (EU)." European enlargement, thus, is represented as a positive economic factor for development. Beyond this positive conception of the EU, the report examines at length the European colonialism's long-term effects on economic development. In this, it is highly critical of European colonial powers and often hints at parallelisms between colonial policies and current EU trade policies.

The 2005 WESS report, under the heading "Financing for Development" addresses EU official development aid flows. It highlights that while the EU and its member States continue to be the largest source of aid, providing more than half of total ODA, only Denmark, Luxembourg, the

Netherlands, Norway and Sweden meet or exceed the 0.7 per cent target.

The report further analyses finance sector developments in Eastern European countries highlighting the importance of EU integration in this respect and the EU implementation of the Basel agreements. The report also offers an extensive analysis of the transition from the STABEX and SYSMIN to the FLEX facilities of the European Union. These facilities provide support to beneficiary ACP countries to compensate Governments for the impact that earnings instability from exports of agricultural and mineral commodities may have on their budgets.

The report goes on to cite Mr. Peter Mandelson, the European Commissioner for Trade, on his call for the establishment of a special trade adjustment fund dedicated to the investment in trade capacities in poor countries and to assistan those countries in mitigating the costs of liberalization. The report has a special subheading about "The proliferation of trading blocs and free trade agreements," which narrates the story of the EC economic integration while distinguishing more recent integration projects, in contrast to the earlier EU project, as open towards the outside.

To summarize, the reports here studied do address EU-specific policies and developments. They do so without a consistent pattern or focus. Occasionally, the EU level of analysis comes to the forefront; it is not, however, assessed systematically. Some of EU developments receive positive feedback while others are seen more critically.

VI. Perceptions from other member states' delegates

a) "Actorness" of the EU at the UN.

It is a difficult task to assess the extend to which the EU is perceived as a distinct actor from "Europe" or from its specific member states and, thus, as an actor in its own right.

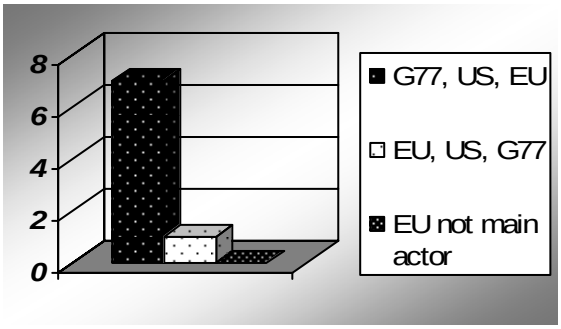
In my earlier research on the 2005 UN reform round, I conducted 63 interviews of which 40 were with non-European group leaders and actors, and UN member states' diplomats negotiating reform on behalf of their group. The interviews assessed their perception of the EU in five areas: development and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Security Council, peacebuilding in the UN, the UN's human rights machinery and the management of the UN secretariat. In that project, I developed a standardized questionnaire for each issue area mainly focusing on the specific reform items at stake; nonetheless, the first part required interviewees to identify the most relevant actors in the respective issue area. The answers to this question offer a snapshot for how and to what extent non-European diplomats consider the EU an actor. Did interviewees mention the EU or

rather Europe, the West or France, the UK and Germany? My endeavor was not presented as research on the EU. The answers, thus, can be considered less biased than those obtained through interviews openly addressing perceptions of the EU. The results are clear: the EU is considered an important actor across several issue areas but with certain limitations, which increase with the salience of the issue for EU members.

The following analysis draws on my earlier research's first round of interviews: eight interviews conducted in each of the five areas of research discussed previously. The findings give us a first glance of how the EU is perceived by non-EU member states' representatives within the UN.

In the ECOSOC area, seven of the eight interviewees identified and ranked the following three main actors: Group of 77, EU and US; the eighth diplomat answered: EU, US and G77. In the development and economics area, the EU is perceived as a relevant actor by all diplomats interviewed; all ranked the EU ahead of the US. This is not surprising as the US often engages less on economic and social issues than the EU. Furthermore, this perception reflects the EU's cohesive representation of its member states in this issue area.

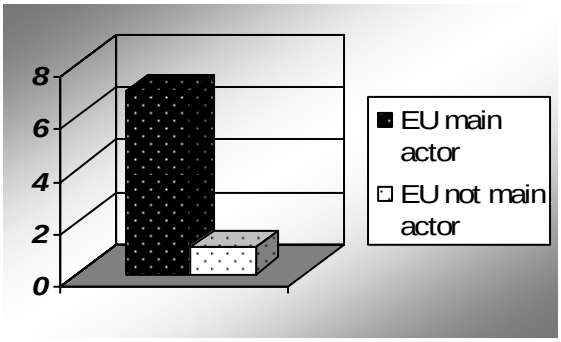
Figure 3 Perceptions of EU actorness in the ECOSOC area



On human rights, of the eight interviewees, only one participant did not mention the EU specifically, but listed instead "regional groups, US, Cuba and Pakistan." All others interviewees mentioned the EU explicitly, in addition to the African group, the US, often Cuba, Pakistan, India and smaller states such as Singapore and Switzerland. In the ensuing conversations, the majority of those participants did however refer to individual EU countries (e.g., Frace and the UK) in explaining the outcome. On the human rights area, then, despite the EU speaking with one voice in the official negotiations and its importance as an actor, the individual member countries are more

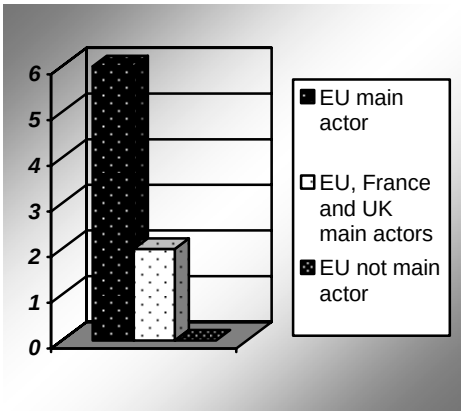
prominent than in the ECOSOC case. This is especially true, at the time of the human rights summit negotiations under the British presidency of the EU. Other member states perceived the divisions between the UK and Germany over how to handle the summit negotiations: should the outcome be a potentially weak compromise or leave details for member states to negotiate in the post-summit period? The latter risked losing the leverage from heads of states participation and cross-issue bargaining opportunities.

Figure 4 Perceptions of EU actorness in Human Rights



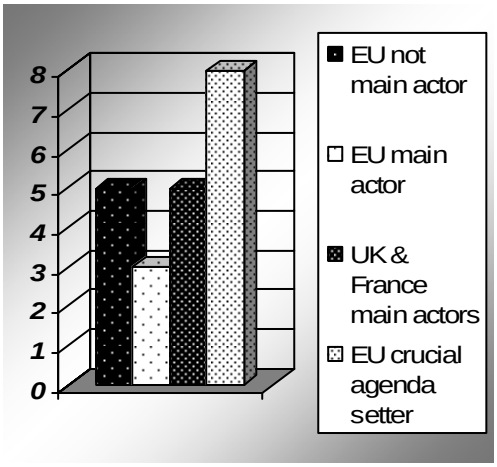
In the management case—the area concerned with the work, functioning and accountability of the UN secretariat—I interviewed a total of eight non European diplomats. All participants referred to the EU as one of the five key actors, in addition to the US, the G77 and Japan. Some participants also mentioned individual G77 and EU member states such as Pakistan, South Africa in the case of the G77, and France and the UK in that of the EU. Interestingly, two interviewees mentioned the EU, and in addition, France and the UK.

Figure 5 Perceptions of EU actorness in Management



The case of the Peacebuilding Commission is more complicated. Whereas the majority of interviewees, five of eight, did not mention the EU as central actor in the negotiations, all underlined the EU's crucial role in bringing the issue to the agenda. The same interviewees that did not mention the EU, did list the Permanent five (P5), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Latin American and other countries such as Pakistan, as central actors in the negotiations. France and the UK were included in the P5 category. During the interviews, the role of Denmark was often highlighted, as Denmark together with Tanzania had championed the Peacebuilding Commission.

Figure 6 Perceptions of EU actorness in the Peace and Security

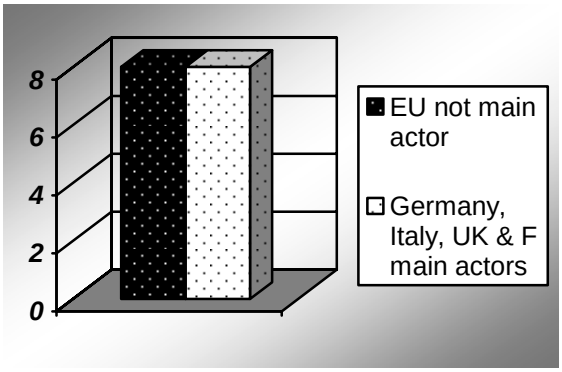


The clear distinction made by the interviewees between agenda-setting and negotiations, and the respective roles attributed to the EU, reflect the special role of France and the UK in these negotiations. The negotiations on the Peacebuilding Commission had to establish the exact role of the Security Council and its members. Specifically, they had to determine if the permanent five members of the Security Council should also have permanent membership in the Peacebuilding

Commission. Thus, France and the UK's P5 status were essential. The EU position, a compromise between France and the UK, on the one hand, and smaller states on the other, was frail and at points absent. The EU ability to intervene effectively was, then, limited at best. The EU's substantive engagement as a unit in pre-negotiations—dealing with the institutional and attention gap between peacekeeping and development efforts—was thus not reflected in or carried over to the negotiation phase.

Finally, in the Security Council case, none of the interviewees made reference to the EU. Instead they commented on the role of the P5, the G4 (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) and countries opposing new permanent membership such as Pakistan and Italy. This is not surprising as the EU had no common position on the Security Council reform because it directly affected the power position of EU member states in the United Nations system.

Figure 7 Perceptions of EU actorness in the Security Council case



The degree of perceived EU actorness in the reform process, thus, not only depends on the issue area at stake. It is also determined by the impact of the respective issue on the prerogatives of the P5 member countries; that is, France and the UK.

Building on this insight, during the interviews I conducted specifically for this paper (i.e, second round of interviews), I asked the participants to identify the major players in the same issue areas I assessed in the first interview round. The interviewees did not mention several the smaller and specific countries but listed the same larger groups (e.g., P5), thereby reinforcing the findings I obtained during the earlier research phase. Furthermore, I enquired into the extent to which the participants perceived differences among EU presidencies, and if the presidency rotation made a difference in terms of the EU distinctness, when compared to EU member states. More than half of

the interviewees provided similar answers. That view is summarized by a diplomat who bluntly stated, “It does not really matter who [holds] the presidency. You anyway know who you have to speak to inside the EU.” Similarly, most participants did not believe that the EU could not consolidate institutional memory because of the presidency rotation. According to the interviewees, some actors in the EU would feed and lead the process independently of the presidency. They noted, however, a difference in the style of the presidencies and in the individual diplomats’ tone, which could either exacerbate or lessen existing tensions.

The interviewees identified the cross-issue coordination within the EU as problem. Whereas many developing countries had one and the same person negotiating women’s rights and system-wide coherence, for example, EU member states had a plethora of diplomats dealing with those issues who did not always coordinate well their approaches. A diplomat from Nigeria gave one telling example: In the morning he had been involved in tough negotiations with a representative of the European Union presidency which had left him embittered. In the afternoon, on a different issue and confronted with another negotiator from the same presidency, he reacted aggressively to this negotiator even though the reasons for this had nothing to do with either the present issue or negotiator. He self-reflectively admitted that this was not in the interest of either side, but also insisted that it was sometimes difficult to switch entirely and act as if one and the other situation were not linked. If his mission had as many staff as the EU presidency, another person would negotiate in the afternoon and such incidents would probably not happen. Conversely, if the different diplomats from the presidency further communicated among themselves, they could also address some of the underlying difficulties.

To summarize, the EU is perceived an actor in most of the issue areas here studied. The degree of such actorness, however, depends on the issue area. Not surprisingly, areas affecting the prerogatives of the P5 countries, France and the UK, are those areas where the EU is least perceived as an important actor. In addition, some EU countries are perceived to dominate the EU agenda and policies, or at least to “pull the strings” behind the scenes, independently of who holds the presidency. Finally, the EU member states’ lack of coordination across issue areas was identified as an area of concern.

b) Characteristics assigned to the EU.

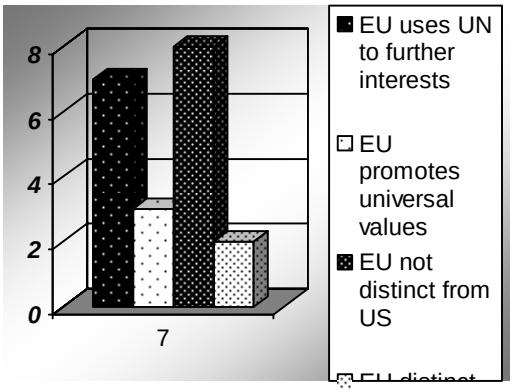
The plurality of non-European members of the UN—ranging from the US to Pakistan, and from Argentina to Tanzania—renders any attempt at identifying one role assigned to the EU impossible. This section, nevertheless, attempts to identify some common trends among such wide-ranging set

of countries. The trends, however, often remain issue-specific.

In this analysis, the current context at the United Nations has to be taken into account. At least since 2003 and the beginning of the Iraq war, the UN has been haunted by a resurgence of a North-South divide (Benner 2006, Traub 2006). This situation has been attenuated since the appointment of Ban Ki-moon, but has not yet been overcome. It is in this polarized political context that interviews have been conducted and must be interpreted.

Almost two-thirds of the participants (in the second round of interviews) felt that the US and the EU use the UN to further their agendas; for example, on North Korea or environmental standards. This was not necessarily expressed negatively, but rather stated as a fact. The US and the EU were mentioned in one blink of an eye. In this sense, diplomats from developing and middle income countries commented on the "Western triumphalism after the end of the Cold War," and a "We won" ideology. Across issue areas, interviewees lamented the Western attitude of "We know how things should be done without any interest in what others think." Such comments have to be taken in their context: diplomats commenting in a polarized United Nations. It is important to note, however, that the same diplomats describe a specific EU (and not Western) attitude towards the rest of the UN member states. Interviewees described the EU attitude as "having on the right, the crazy and unsophisticated US, on the left the stupid developing countries, and both need our help." In contrast, G77 delegates described the EU as a light version of the US. Moreover, after the last few years of experiencing EU policy at the UN under the Bush administration, the interviewees argued that they no longer believe there is distinctiveness between the EU and the US.

Figure 8 Perceptions of EU as norm or interest promoter and its distinctiveness from US



For the majority of the diplomats interviewed, the events that better illustrates the EU-US convergence were the 5th (Budget) Committee on management reform vote in 2006—when the OECD members were soundly defeated by the united front of all developing and middle income countries—and votes on resolutions condemning the United States for human rights abuses in Guantanamo Bay. In both cases, the EU has decided to side with the US. According to the interviewees, these moments "defined where the EU is" (e.g. with the US). This relation according to the participants, rendered it difficult or impossible for the EU to be the bridge-builder between the North and South on other issues.

Two interviewees provided further explanation for the confrontational perception about the EU, and also elucidated the shift and smoothening of those perceptions after the election of Ban Ki-moon as the UN secretary-general. According to participants, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan had been the "boy of the Clintons." After US president Bush discredited Kofi Annan for his critical stance on the US's Iraq endeavor, the Europeans "took him over." Allegedly, the Europeans then turned into the uncritical defenders of Kofi Annan against the Bush administration and any criticism and accusations emerging from the South. Kofi Annan had become a "European guy" and this prevented a critical engagement between the EU and developing countries on several issues. Because Ban Ki-moon is not perceived as a "European guy," and the EU has been critical of him, developing countries and the EU have again managed to find easier common ground on a range of issues (e.g., management of the UN, budget, funds and programs coordination, and peacekeeping).

Interestingly, we also find somewhat opposite comments from John Bolton, former US ambassador to the UN., Bolton became infuriated with the EU's "prodigious diplomatic 'bridging'" and concluded that the US should bargain with the G77, "cut the deal we want, and marginalize the EU, thus also frustrating their global governance agenda" (Bolton 2008).

Overall, the EU's attempts at "bridge building" are recognized. They are, however, rendered impossible by the perceived closeness between the EU and the US, and also by the Americans' rejection of such a role. This general picture can be refined by carefully observing specific issue areas.

Peacekeeping

When prompted to assess the EU's role in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding, half of all interviewees told, amusingly, the story of the EU representation in the Peacebuilding Commission.

The stated goal of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is to gather all relevant actors in a given post-conflict country, and to marshal and coordinate their activities in this country. The PBC has a standing organizational committee and country-specific committees with slightly divergent membership. The composition of its membership has been a difficult issue for the EU and other members of the UN because the Commission, the Council secretariat and the presidency wanted to play a role; to compound the problem, the EU as entity has no legal representation at the UN. The name tag for the EU's representation, thus, became a controversial issue with wider implications for the participation of other regional groups, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference or the League of Arab states. In the end, and only by December 2007 (two years after the establishment of the PBC), the Organizational Committee agreed to allow, during future country-specific meetings, the representatives of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission to have two seats behind a single "European Community" nameplate. Under that arrangement, those representatives would act and speak as one delegation. As they related these events, the interviewees wondered if this could reflect a EU cohesive actor. At the same time, however, the seriousness of the European integration project, bringing peace to the European continent, was highlighted by two-thirds of the interviewees; they did so, despite the fact that the topic was not part of the interviews.

The deployment of European Union missions was also consistently highlighted. During a summit of Heads of State and Government as well as Foreign Ministers of the Security Council Member States on "Peace and Security in Africa," Denis Sassou-Nguesso, President of Congo, for example welcomed Africa's partnership with the United Nations and other actors like the European Union and the League of Arab States.[28]

More generally, in relation to the interactions between the UN and regional organizations, two schools views were articulated during the interviews: one that conceives regional groups as competitors of the UN, and another that sees them as important partners. According to the participants, the majority of UN members welcome the EU's capacities. They also identified a shift towards greater openness in regards to regional groups in general (e.g., ECOWAS and the African Union) in their engagement on behalf of the United Nations. The "mantra of the day" and the mainstream discourse, was described as that of an "interlocking system" where different actors are

[28] Darfur, Somalia high on Security Council agenda as members hold historic summit on peace, security in Africa, UN Press Release, 25 September 2007.

brought together so as to fulfill a Security Council mandate. Nonetheless, the interviewees from developing countries insisted that "the UN had to remain the primary body."

The African interviewees, however, were skeptical about the current EU mission in Chad. They critically indicated that the mission lacked any political framework and that it was masterminded by France. All interviewees considered France as the leader of the EU's commitment and behind the EU missions to Africa. This leadership was conceived negatively: as the "Europeanization of French colonial policies", "an attempt by France to give a multilateral flavor to bilateral relations," but also as a welcomed "fair enough" coincidence of interests. In comparison, the participants argued that the British continued in their bilateral approach mainly via DFID (UK Department for International Development). The interviewees had no "illusions" as to the reasons for EU interventions: French and partially British interests on the issues, combined with a humanitarian concern in some areas.

In this sense, some of the interviewees questioned the strength and longevity of the EU's commitment to Africa's security. The limitations of any humanitarian incentive were depicted by references to the current situation in Darfur. One interviewee from Africa argued that the Europeans and Americans would not care much about a Chinese veto in other situations. This lack of illusions in relation to the EU motivations can easily become suspicions about those motivations.

Five interviewees, furthermore, criticized the EU's unwillingness to put its soldiers under "UN hats," the short-time commitment of its troops, and the withdrawal of needed material capabilities together with EU soldiers. The interviewees feared that the EU's short-term interventions undermined the credibility of the UN forces: "The EU comes and goes with all capabilities and the UN's lack thereof is even clearer once the EU has left the field." The fear is that rebel groups on the ground are well aware of the nature of the EU's commitment, thus they await for the troop's withdrawal.

Two interviewees commented on UNIFIL (in which EU troops participated under the UN "hat") and criticized the differences the Secretary-General had shown in negotiating the terms of engagement for European soldiers and for those from other countries such as Bangladesh. The Europeans, allegedly, did not have to negotiate with the Secretary-General but did set their conditions of engagement unilaterally.

Furthermore, the EU as actor was acknowledged at the tactical level but not so at the strategic level.

On the strategically, the individual member states were seen as more relevant, whereas the EU cooperation was important on a tactical level. For example, the interviewees noted the relative weight of the EU, in opposition to that of its individual members, in the development of the new peacebuilding strategy of the UN, where the UK was a crucial player.

When asked about countries where the EU could intervene as EU with a UN mandate, the majority of interviewees was skeptical about any involvement "below the DRC in Africa," and moreover, "French intervention even if with an EU hat would be impossible in the Great Lakes region." The inteviewees sowed similar concerns about intervention in North Africa, but they were less hesitant about involvement in Asian countries.

Interestingly, two participants said that they had the "feeling of an identity crisis in the EU" within the triangle of EU-NATO-UN. They argued that it was unclear if the EU wanted to be a provider of military muscles within NATO, or to support longer-term civilian peace-keeping by the UN. Even if the EU currently functioned as both, it never did all at once, and "I am not sure if we could hand it all over to the EU." They went on to wondered when they could truly count on the EU troops.

When prompted about existing distinctions between EU and NATO forces, the interviewees clearly distinguished between the two. Whereas "NATO was purely linked to geopolitical interests and 'Westerness,'" some participants concieved the EU's engagement as fair payback: Europeans had been "security importers and insecurity exporters" for long enough and could now "export security" for a long time period. Nonetheless, African diplomats were well aware that NATO helps in the deployment of EU troops to the African continent.

In contrast to direct EU interventions, all participants positively noted, without being prompted, the EU support to the African Union's peacekeeping capacities via the African Peace Facility. Also, some argued that the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) could have intervened in Congo, had SADEC been better equipped. Capacity building by the EU and financial support of African peacebuilding efforts was thus perceived positively by the African, Asian and Latin American interviewees and all welcomed its recent extension. Nonetheless, African participants wondered about the "ownership" question and that its understanding still required enhancement.

To conclude, the EU is conceived as an alliance of interests, which could be positive for the UN when interests coincided with the wider membership; an alliance where French interests dominate

the game and other relevant actors still prefer to play the bilateral card. Overall, although welcoming EU engagement, all interviewees saw greater merit in the EU's strategy to equip, train and allow other regional groups, such as the African Union, to carry their regional security mandates.

Human rights

The human rights picture is more complex. Some interviewees argued that, currently, the EU is perceived as a human rights defender only because the US "is so bad." The EU was seen as more helpful than the US because the latter would never surrender its red lines, or say what was more important to them, or "support any economic or social rights."

Besides this overall impression, perceptions diverged depending on the nationality of the interviewee. In the following analysis, I draw on debates about human rights issues at the General Assembly. The fall 2007 session meetings of the Third Committee (i.e., the General Assembly forum for human rights questions) give ample evidence of some trends. Framed most radically, the delegate of Zimbabwe for example stated that

> "Developed countries apparently lacked the political will to seriously reduce the inequalities that exist in the world [regarding] socio-economic rights. Instead of using human rights issues to settle political scores and carrying on arms races, the European Union and its allies should provide more resources to the fulfillment of those rights. The statement by the Union on human rights in Zimbabwe was inspired by the United Kingdom Government's objective of "regime change" in the country, after it lost the war to perpetuate its subjugation."[29]

Beyond the accusations, this statement shows that even though speaking with one voice, the EU is perceived as being dominated its individual members; in this case, by the UK. The implication is that the EU gives a multilateral shield to the UK. As to the content, this certainly seems an extreme accusation.

The delegate from Indonesia also openly criticized the EU and argued that Indonesia had come a long way in the past 10 years; that the country had also been pushing for the integration of human rights provisions into the draft ASEAN charter. Considering those factors, he firmly rejected the negative reference about his country's human rights made in a European Union statement. "The people of Indonesia, who had persevered to build respect for human rights and were human rights defenders themselves, found the Union's statement grossly incoherent, particularly since his country had already garnered praise for its [human rights] progress in other forums of the same

[29] Capital Punishment not prohibited under international law, Third Committee told, UN Press Release, 30 October 2007

European Union."[30] The latter statement also highlights a criticism consistently made throughout the interviews on human rights: the incoherence between the EU's action at the UN and its actions in other fora.

The discussion of the Draft on a moratorium on executions (death penalty related), introduced by the EU and other countries especially from Latin American, also highlighted points raised during the interviews. The representative of Singapore indicated that "over the years, the Third Committee had become a forum for recrimination and self-righteous morality, with some countries seeking to impose their views and systems of justice on others. That the European Union was introducing a resolution on the death penalty was extremely disappointing, though not surprising … Capital punishment was not prohibited under international law, yet the sponsors of the draft resolution on capital punishment had decided that there could be only one view on capital punishment. Surely, democracy was not about imposing one point of view and brooking no dissent."[31] In another meeting, a representative from Singapore commented that "Now that all States in the European Union had abolished the death penalty, it expected all others to follow … The Union wanted everyone to think as they did; when their values 'shift,' our values should also 'shift'. If anyone had the audacity to be different, then the European Union thought it was open season to badger them. That trait had been seen before."[32]

The accusation of the EU's desire to impose its own values has been raised by each interviewee. However, in interviews with diplomats from democratic non-European countries, the accusation was less adamant. Nonetheless, those interviewees also accused the EU of double standards and underlined the EU's utilitarian approach to the UN's human rights machinery. Just like other members, the EU would attack those members where the cost of the attack was not too high compared with the potential gains of condemnation. It was not so much that they criticized the EU *per se* for following such a utilitarian approach, but rather the accusations that the EU raised when other countries were taking the same approach. One delegate put it bluntly: "The EU blames us for not defending human rights because we refuse to accuse certain countries inside the UN because doing so would be too expensive for us. But the EU does not want to acknowledge that it is doing just the same." The arrogance with which such claims were made disturbed the interviewed

[30] Capital Punishment not prohibited under international law, Third Committee told, UN Press Release, 30 October 2007

[31] Capital Punishment not prohibited under international law, Third Committee told, UN Press Release, 30 October 2007

[32] Ten amendments to draft proposing moratorium on use of death penalty, rejected by recorded votes in Third Committee. Assembly Called Upon to Ensure Realization of Millennium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities, UN Press Release, 14 November 2007

delegates more than the double standards themselves. Another delegate argued that South Africa, for example, "was second to none on human rights and democracy and that the behavior of some EU ambassadors was just so humiliating." In this case, it is the behavior of individual EU member states' ambassadors that influences the perceptions of the EU – interestingly, the interviewee said 'EU' and not European – though there is only one EU ambassador at best (the representative of the European Commission is often called ambassador, a matter highly conflictual). Hence the EU is conceived as the relevant actor. Yet, what non-EU states' delegates perceive are the EU member states' diplomats; they acquire their perceptions about the EU through the EU member states' behavior.

Also, an African delegate noted that the EU has the same tendency as the African group to band together to defend a member of its group that is under attack. He indicated that the EU would also not allow any of its members to be criticized at the UN. In one meeting, the representative of Iran, for example, argued that "the European Union's statement turned a blind eye to its own problems with human rights." He stated that his delegation "wished to be informed of the existence of illegal detention centres within the European Union territory."[33] Finally, whereas the EU was described by all interviewees as the undeniable leader of the International Criminal Court, its lack of interest in economic and social rights was concurrently emphasized.

To summarize, the EU is perceived in this issue area as a "realist" actor; one that promotes human rights only when it is possible and not too costly in terms of other interests or alliances. The accusations of double standards are the main thread in the perceptions about the EU within the UN human rights framework.

ECOSOC

On the economic and social side, the EU is again concieved as playing a more positive role than the US; "the US under the Bush administration is playing such a negative one." All interviewees agreed that they did not believe, for example, the EU would want, in contrast to the US, to reopen the Monterrey consensus. Interestingly, two interviewees argued that in this case, the compromise reached within the EU helped the EU: "It is good that the Nordics guarantee that the other EU countries cannot bring the entire EU to renounce completely on its development commitments." The Nordic countries members of the EU are perceived as partners, whereas non-donors members overall play a less significant role.

[33] Third Committee calls on international community to focus on upcoming review of Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, UN Press Release, 25 October 2007

In this issue are, double standards were also mentioned. One example offered was the discontinuation of the *Economic Survey of Europe*. While all other regions continue to carry an analysis of the economic trends in their regions (in the UN regional commissions), this is no longer true for Europe. Also, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler, denounced what he called "'terrible hypocrisy in Brussels vis-à-vis agricultural subsidies, which led to the dumping of European foodstuffs in the developing world."[34]

During the 2007 General Assembly debate, S.R. Insanally, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, stated that "In a show of bad faith, the European Union denounced the Sugar Protocol, which protected sugar-exporting countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, contradicting its own sermons on partnership and good governance."[35] Similarly, Lisa Shoman, Belize's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, indicated that the "European Union's commitment on climate change was politically important, but it was necessary to move beyond symbolism to action."[36]

During the interviews, the WTO link was most dominant in determining the image of the EU at the UN in the social and economic area. It was only possible to interview three delegates in this field. Those participants constantly referred to the EU's stance in the current Doha Round, and to the extent these negotiations would paralyze much of the UN economic and social processes. The perception of the EU in this field is thus dominated by activities external to the UN.

Management

In the management issue area, the EU is seen as an actor defending its control prerogatives over the organization. Some member states' delegates, whose governments are in principle in favor of certain management reform proposals introduced by the EU or the US, still end up opposing them allegedly because of the EU's inconsistency, the lack of willingness to take others seriously, and for "crossing them." One diplomat from Latin America explained that his country was disputing with the EU on human rights, and that in return, the EU followed an extremely surpising behavior on "system wide coherence" (this is an attempt to bring greater coherence among the many parts of the UN system, especially in the field). For the system wide coherence process, Europeans had

[34] Third Committee calls on international community to focus on upcoming review of Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, UN Press Release, 25 October 2007
[35] National Security Strategies, Non-Proliferation, 'Credible Deterrence', Conflicts in Horn of Africa among topics as General Assembly debate nears conclusion, UN Press Release, 2 October 2007
[36] National Security Strategies, Non-Proliferation, 'Credible Deterrence', Conflicts in Horn of Africa among topics as General Assembly debate nears conclusion, UN Press Release, 2 October 2007

prepared policy recommendation papers within the OECD framework; that is, they discussed their strategy for UN reform at the OECD. Its Latin American allies had not been informed about this process and also were able to revise the papers only when they were circulated by some other country inside the UN. The feeling was then: "Why should we have a quarrel with Cuba, Syria, etc. on human rights if afterwards the EU sells you, double crosses you all the time? There is the feeling that they use us as "votes", but otherwise do not care. Why shall we put our country in the line of fire for nothing?" Interestingly, these papers were not from the "EU," but had been produced by the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and some others inside the OECD. Nonetheless, the perception was that the EU had tried to pre-empt UN discussions and to surprise its partners with all settled positions. In short, the EU as a collectivity paid the price for what some of its member states had undertaken in the OECD framework. The distinction between the EU, its member states and the OECD is not always clear for non-Europeans. This highlights the risks resulting from the lack transparency and the costs of the member states' policies for the image of the entire EU.

Conclusion

The relationship between the European Union and the United Nations is complicated and complex, ranging from policy making to implementation on the ground and from strong unity to exploding coalitions. This paper therefore only presents a first glimpse at how the EU is perceived at the United Nations. The European Union is an important actor across a variety of issues, lesser so in the field of "hard politics" or those issues in which certain member states' prerogatives are concerned.

The EU is not fully perceived as distinct from the "West" or the US, rather it seems to be concived as their lighter version, at least during the years of the Bush administration. Nor it is clearly differentiated from its member states. Often, the positions of France, the UK and Germany are taken to be those of the EU. Simultaneously, the EU is often summed up to take responsibility for the actions of its members.

Overall, member states' delegates perceive the EU as an alliance of states that acts together in order to defend their interests. The EU is not seen as an altruistic norm promoter, though the importance of the EU as facilitator of peace in the European continent is recognized. The perceived closeness of EU positions to those of the US, and an American preference for direct interaction with the developing countries, prevents the EU from being perceived as a bridge builder.

The secretariat discourse is more inclined towards a normative reading of the EU, observing shared

universal values as the basis for EU-UN cooperation. Nonetheless, the secretariat representatives also see the "comparative advantage" of the EU in its financial resources, and only a secondary advantage in its model of peaceful cooperation among countries. In the economic and social realm, the positive effects of European enlargement on new member states are recognized. Simultaenouly, however, the EU is criticized for the protectionist dimensions of its trade policies.

Preliminary recommendations

- Improve coordination across issue-areas between UN policies and external action in other forums/bilateral policies. Mainstream multilateralism, and specifically UN matters, into bilateral relations.
- Improve coordination across UN forums, not only across EU member states.
- Reformulate and articulate clearly EU positions, instead of attempting to bridge between the US and developing countries.
- Abandon the normative and arrogant discourse of "we are the better people" in favor of a discourse that is self-reflective and focuses on new alliances in order to define common agendas and policies aiming at promoting universal human rights and sustainable development.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT

THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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REPORT ON
Views from the World Bank

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University of Bologna (Italy)

The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EU IN MULTILATERAL SETTINGS: A VIEW FROM THE WORLD BANK

Executive Summary

Both documentary sources and interviews welcome and praise the achievements in the EU-World Bank recent coordination efforts on aid and donor harmonization. In the views expressed by the Bank 'impressive' results have been reached compared to the past, when the two institutions appeared to act in a totally uncoordinated fashion, and are likely to be further improved under the effort currently pursued by the new President, Robert Zoellick, who appears to have established good high level direct contact with the EU Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel.

The heads of the two institutions, President of the Bank and Head of the Commission, appear on a firm cooperation track on these issues, determined to enhance the potential that the Bank and the Union can best develop in their respective areas. However, when asked to elaborate on the effectiveness of the EU in specific policies and regions, some of the respondents have noted how 'politics can get in the way' and create 'substantial obstacles in client countries', and how, at the implementation level, the EU process of aid delivery is still 'cumbersome', 'bureaucratic' and 'slow'. In a number of occasions perceptions from top Bank officials suggest that the situation in the making of the policy processes at different levels is somewhat more complex.

While these effects probably surface more seriously in the implementation phases, critical views from top level Bank officials suggest that both policy and role definitional issues may be at stake for the Union. While regarded as a key partner in development, the EU is sometimes seen as lacking expertise or prey of old fashioned politics, sometimes questionable in its recruiting policies of hiring 'young EU professionals instead of building capacity at the local level'. To quote recurrent examples that have emerged in the interviews, non-synergic overlap between the Bank Action Plan and the EU Strategy for Africa, or World Bank-EIB competition in project financing for ECA and MENA countries are cases in point. It appears therefore important for the Union to carefully reflect on these aspects and possibly sharpen its current effort. While scaling-up is already underway, a re-consideration of methods and approaches may improve the effort to coordinate with the Bank.

First, less weight on immediate 'general visibility' targets, and a renewed emphasis on redefinition of goals and methods could be fruitful during this phase. Complex political and economic priorities should be better harmonized in own EU strategies, to ensure consistency both in the eyes of partner countries and at the Bank. If aid is linked to the attainment of governance standards, the EU should be clearer in the definition of these benchmarks, as well as more consistent in evaluating the countries' achievements and the allocation of funds. Ex-ante disbursements do not appear to go in this direction, while objectiveness in ex-post assessments can do a lot on both the policy effectiveness and reputational fronts.

Second, the EU should capitalize on the trusting relation that it enjoys with the Bank. A widened dialogue should be pursued by all the DGs involved in development policies, and DG Development (EuropeAid) could positively entertain more regular exchanges of information with

relevant counterparts at the Bank. Disturbing perceptions over competition between the EIB and the World Bank, or the EBRD and the IFC should be eliminated altogether, as voices from both ECA and MENA speak of largely positive interactions with the Commission and wish for increased cooperation within the respective areas of competences. Trust could also be enhanced by the EU on the commitment that the Bank appears to have with respect to a generally neutral pursuit of development goals. Closeness to the EU approach, especially in social issues such as cohesion and gender, as well as on environmental themes, proves that a substantial overlap exists between the two institutions also in these policy areas, in addition to the shared commitment to foster development and reduce poverty. Fears of undue influence of the US, and of the Bank's reliance on past strict conditionality approaches in privatization programs do not appear reflected in the current Bank's approach to investment climate improvement and private sector development strategies.

Third, closely linked to the two previous points, the Union should define more clearly its goals according to its mission and role, focusing on its comparative advantages and relying on the Bank to complement its efforts. This would provide a means to tackle the perceived lack of expertise, and the ensuing 'credibility effect', while allowing some time for the EU to improve its expertise where it deems it to be necessary. Alternatively, the EU could focus on prioritizing its strategic goals and coordinating them with those of the Bank in areas of mutual interest, sharing their pursuit in the respect of each other institutional and policy specificities. The political nature of the Union, its ideological drive and the 'emulation capital' that it enjoys in the eyes of the Bank and of partner countries provide an exceptional basis to develop more ambitious foreign policy goals.

The EU in the eyes of the World Bank has both the honors and responsibility of a major trade power, and a key actor in development. While it appears often as a negligible presence in security and military affairs in the world, remarkably less assertive than the US, and often unable to get attention as the American partner invariably –even if not always positively- does- some say that it may have a high potential in these fields as well. Extending the EU concept to the Balkans, for example, incorporating the coordination of police forces in addition to the military, or carrying further on the development of a new overall concept of security, including gender and environmental issues, especially with respect to its development policies in Africa, could potentially improve the chances of a wider and more coherent foreign policy role for the EU worldwide.

Finally, to develop synergies building on existing comparative advantages, the EU could positively rely on the extensive knowledge that the Bank has not just of technical issues in aid management but also of institutions in partner countries, which are key actors in the making, and the success, of development policies. Past failures and low effectiveness of development strategies have been found to be largely due to the lack of participation of partner actors in developing countries to the overall process of aid policymaking.

About the author

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THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EU IN MULTILATERAL SETTINGS:

A VIEW FROM THE WORLD BANK

EUGENIA BARONCELLI

1. Introduction

While momentum may have been lost on the policy side due to the somewhat difficult progress on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, now revised by the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has not ceased in these recent years to be the object of extensive research by the academic and policy communities. More so, the French and Dutch cold responses have intensified the debate on the ability of the Union to define common goals and strategies, and to act consistently according to a shared vision of its role in international affairs. Along with Japan and the United States, the EU has been among the main proponents of a renewed impetus for the process of multilateral trade liberalization behind the launch of the Doha Round in 2001. With the enlargement process, and the subsequent launching of the European Neighborhood Policy the EU has taken a clear stance on associating social and economic actions to the political redefinition of its borders. Partnerships with developing countries, notably the negotiation of the EPAs with African, Caribbean and Pacific partners, witness of the geographical breadth of the scope of the Union's action in various political economy fields.

A key feature of these diverse policy avenues has been the emphasis officially put by the EU on their multilateral nature, or on their compatibility with a multilateral vision of each particular field, whether institutional guidelines existed or not at the multilateral level. The EU has repeatedly affirmed its preference for a multilateral way to trade liberalization, and has claimed for more coordination in the ongoing process of harmonization among donors in the design and implementation of its development and aid policies in the world. A number of contributions, both in academic and policy circles, has praised the evolution of an elaborated institutional structure, lamenting however the gap between the EU's sheer resource weight in the international system and its ability to act cohesively and purposively in many of these policy fields.

Research in the area of foreign policy making has long explored the role of own beliefs in the decision-making of national leaders, while political and IR research on how perceptions form and evolve at the aggregate (national, multilateral) level has so far produced a consisted body of literature (Adler 1987; Goldstein 1993; Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Wendt 1999; Legro 1995, 2005). The debate on the role of the EU in international affairs has recently benefited from these

insights, with studies that explore the role of collective ideas on the EU from national and multilateral sources (Lucarelli 2007; Lucarelli *et al.* 2007; Elgström 2007). Previous research conducted by the author in the field of comparative political economy has equally shown how and when ideational elements have mattered in the making of the EU foreign economic policymaking (Baroncelli 2008a). The study presented here is part of the Second round of a wider Research project on the External Image of the EU (Lucarelli *et al.* 2006), sponsored by the GARNET Network of Excellence and supported by the Communication Unit of the DG Relex at the EU Commission. Building on the premises of these seminal explorations of external images of the European Union this study is the first to explore how the EU is viewed at present by one of the major international financial institutions in the world, as well as a key actor in the context of multilateral development policies: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), also popularly known as The World Bank.

A primary goal of this project, as well as a novel element in the literature on the EU external images, is that of providing both the academic and policy communities with a synthesis of the images of the EU retained by the World Bank. In addition to providing what to our knowledge is the first general portrait of 'what the Bank thinks on the EU and of the EU', this project has allowed the collection of records on own Bank's field-specific perceptions on what the EU does in some of its key external areas of intervention (cooperation for development –aid coordination and poverty reduction policies, trade, security) and specific geographical regions (Middle East and North Africa, South- East and Central Europe, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, South Asia). Additionally, it has explored views retained by the Bank's Senior Management Staff and Executive Directors on the EU's role in international affairs, its foreign policy agenda and its foreign policy style, with references to the agenda of the US; another major actor in world security and economic affairs. Finally, it has also gathered the diverse views of a large portion of the World Bank's technical and political top staff on how the EU is located in the current geography of partnerships in development and on their expectation about its future. The informative nature of the Report makes of it a reference tool for those who have either a professional or intellectual interest in deepening their knowledge on the World Bank's views on the European Union. Policy makers on both sides seemed to be interested in knowing more on how their institution appears when reflected through the eyes of external observers[1]. The Bank itself has been recently engaged in a growing number of survey activities on how its activity is perceived, not just on specific projects (collection of clients' feedbacks has long been a routine part of the own Bank quality self-monitoring and evaluation), but also with respect to its general mission and activity on a world scale (World Public Opinion Survey (hereinafter WPO), 2007).

This report summarizes the key findings of a research conducted between December 2007 and March 2008, both based on an extensive review of official documents and media products, and on site and phone interviews with World Bank Executive Directors, top and senior Management Staffs in Washington DC and Brussels. Off the shelves research has been conducted on both World Bank's own official documents (Reports, Press Releases, Speeches, Working Papers) and surveys on press coverages (FT, Economist, 2007, along with various other sources in selected years over the period 1999-2008).[2]

[1] Interviews with World Bank senior officials and feedbacks from the Commission.

[2] I wish to thank Sonia Lucarelli, who has made this Report possible, providing her advice and guidance all along the way, as well as Lorenzo Fioramonti, for his insightful suggestions. I am grateful to Chiara Franchini, for her excellent research support on the documentary survey, and to Lisa Tormena, from the *Forum per lo studio dei*

In Section 2 of this report a review is offered, on the nature and role of the two key actors around which the research is organized, the EU and the World Bank, with a description of their relation from both institutional and policy perspectives. Section 2 also aims at providing a synthetic illustration of how they are viewed by the public at large in the areas of overlapping action (development, aid and trade policy fields). The main empirical component is then presented in Section 3.1 and 3.2, respectively. Section 3 presents the results of a documentary survey on the World Bank views on the EU, based on World Bank official documents (WDR *World Development Report*, GMR, *Global Monitoring Report*, Policy Briefs, Working Papers and others) and official statements from Bank's representatives, as reported by both the Bank and external sources (the FT, China Daily, The Strait Times, The Wall Street Journal and others). Insights from the documentary survey are then deepened with the help of a body of on-site and phone interviews, whose key elements are described and elaborated in Section 3.2, detailing World Bank views on a wide range of aspects[3]. Finally, Section 4 highlights the main key perception themes that have emerged from the two investigation tracks, discussing their differences and concluding with a compact sketch of insights and suggestions for policy inputs.

2. The EU and the World Bank

'Let's not forget, we always say there is a difference between the World Bank and the European Commission. It is a good thing there are differences, or the world would be a sad place…but this difference stems principally from the different nature of our institutions. The World Bank is a bank and as such must comply with the imperatives of a bank, with all the rigor this entails. The European Commission is a political body, and so we are afforded a lot more flexibility in regards to intangible principles, so it is a little bit easier for us to take political stands and to express these in our actions than it is for a bank.'

Louis Michel, EU Commissioner for Development, Brussels, November 15 2006[4]

2.1 The EU and the World Bank: Mission and role in the global political economy

Originally created by six European countries through the Treaty of Rome in 1957, as a customs union with future goals in the creation of a common market and in the construction of a political Europe ('determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples

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problemi della pace e della guerra, who has kindly assisted me in a number of different tasks. I am thankful to the other participants to the overall Survey II Project, for providing me with their useful feedbacks and different perspectives. Last, I owe my heartfelt gratitude to all the World Bank Officials, top political and technical management staff, who have kindly agreed to provide me with their time and insight into the World Bank-EU relations. Many thanks also to Franziska Brantner for her comments on an early draft of this report.

[3] These are the importance of the EU with respect to its mission, both in a bilateral context (EU-WB) and in the wider context of trade and development policies, with reference to other actors currently, in the past and in projected expectations about the future; general perceptions on the WB-EU relation, perceptions on the EU's role as an international player, images of the EU, beliefs about its consistency/effectiveness in own region/functional area, perceptions in comparative terms with own mission, source of info on the EU and perception of own organizational coverage of EU issues.

[4] Press call -Paul Wolfowitz and EU Commissioner Louis Michel, Brussels, Nov. 15, 2006, accessed at: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21131393~menuPK:64255981~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html

of Europe'[5]), the European Union has to date evolved to fully endorse and expand a composite mission of promoting "peace, prosperity and freedom for its 495 million citizens — in a fairer, safer world" (EU 2008). In addition to pursuing 'the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples, recognizing that the removal of existing obstacles calls for concerted action in order to guarantee steady expansion, balanced trade and fair competition', and to contributing 'by means of a common commercial policy, to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade' the EU member states have devoted time and effort to strengthen the 'solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries' ensuring the 'development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations'[6]. In recent years the Union has considerably widened its external reach, both through the completion of several enlargement rounds, and through the refinement of existing forms of cooperation with developing countries beyond the group of 'overseas' partners (mostly former colonies in the ACP group).

As briefly sketched above, the EU has been extensively involved in the formulation and implementation of common external action in the fields of trade and development policies at the international level. By sheer size, the EU is the major player in the world trade system (accounting for 18% of merchandise trade in goods, up to 26% of trade in services; DG Trade, 2006). The EU is also the main source in the world of FDI, with a total of Euro 152 millions, or 42 % of the overall total of global FDI flows[7]. Lastly, the EU is the major donor in the global community, accounting for 59 billions (current USD) in total public aid flows[8]. The common commercial policy is perhaps the most quoted example of joint, long-lasting and successful case of external action. European actors have looked at it as either a template for the integration in other areas, such as monetary policy or the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). At the international level, the increasing number of regional approaches to trade liberalization has made of the European case an institutional model that is looked at by actors in search of alternative integration paths for their own countries. With the creation of a single currency, the Euro, provided for in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and adopted in 1999, the EU members have last shown their willingness to renounce their sovereignty in monetary affairs and pool resources together to increase internal macroeconomic stability and strengthen their role in the global monetary system.

The blue banner on the Bank's official website, 'IBRD and IDA: Working for a World Free of Poverty' eloquently displays the mission of the major multilateral lending group in the world economy.[9] Poverty reduction and the promotion of sustainable development in developing

[5] Preamble to the EEC Treaty (1957).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Data reported by DG Trade, October 2006.
[8] DCD/DAC/RD(2007) 15/RD2, Final ODA Flows in 2006, 5. Aid in constant 2005 USD totalled 57 billions (ibid. 8). While the datum refers to the combined ODA of the 15 DAC-EU members, it is worth noting how aid channelled through the EU Commission (a truly joint disbursement!) amounted in 2006 to USD 10.2 billion (current USD), putting EU-common aid disbursement at the 6th place after the US, Japan, UK, France and Germany within the DAC group.
[9] IBRD, IDA (International Development Association), IFC (International Financial Corporation) and MIGA (Multilateral International Guarantee Agency) are all part of The World Bank Group and consistently pursue the goal of promoting international development through the provision of 'loans, guarantees, risk management products and analytical and advisory services' (World Bank Website, IBRD, accessed on February 2007, at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTIBRD/0,,menuPK:3046081~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:3046012,00.html.). However, the emphasis on the poverty reduction component is shared mainly by the IBRD (which does lending to middle and low income-creditworthy countries) and IDA, which

countries (middle-income, low income but creditworthy, and least developed, poorest countries) through different forms of lending (financial assistance) and technical services is the business of a self-defined non-traditional bank. Created in 1946-47 within the framework of the Bretton Woods Agreements, the World Bank original mission was to finance the European reconstruction after the end of the Second World War. Once achieved this goal, the Bank redefined its mission into successive rounds, from the promotion of growth and industrialization in newly independent, post-colonial countries in the 1960s and 1970s, to the support to broader socio-economic development across the world during the debt crisis in the 1980s, including recently the smoothing of the transition from command to market economy in former communist countries, and the preferential lending to Asian countries that were most severely hit by the crisis at the end of the 1990s. Finally, parallel to the launching of the MDGs in 2000, the Bank has further pushed the envelope of poverty reduction, endorsing an increasing number of projects that enhanced the sustainability of different socio-economic development trajectories[10]. Its balance sheet has fluctuated across times, but has always remained strong, earning the institution a triple-A status on the credit market since 1959. Along with the excellent rating from the market, the capital commitment from its 185 shareholders (member governments) has allowed the Bank to borrow on capital markets at preferential rates (close to those of the US Treasury) and to consequently offer its client countries convenient borrowing terms. (World Bank 2008). Since the inception of its activity in 1946, the Bank has provided its borrowers loans for more than $ 400 billions, with a cost for member governments of around $ 11 billions.

2.2 The EU and the World Bank: Institutional specificities, common interests and policy complementarities

In addition to the importance of both the EU and the World Bank separately considered in the world of multilateral policies for development and trade, a key reason why this study focuses specifically on views from the Bank and not from other actors in the world of international economic and financial institutions, is the joint relevance of these two players in the composite geography of the partnerships for development. While different in their respective missions, both the Union and the Bank provide development assistance. The EU is also particularly keen in strengthening its ties with the developing world, or country clients for the Bank, both based on its colonial past and present economic and security interests. To the joint relevance of the Union and the Bank for developing countries, one should add the relevance of each partner to the other in providing development through poverty reduction. In other terms, the Union and the Bank are important for the overall cause of development, and for the countries and the people where development issues are at the core of policy agendas, both in their own respect and jointly. In this latter case, looking at their institutional and functional relations appears of crucial importance to set the context of the analysis on perceptions that will follow.

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finances development and poverty reduction only in the least developed, poorest countries.

[10] See United Nations (2000). Since 2002, the Joint World Bank-IMF Ministerial Committee on Development Bank has played a crucial monitoring function with respect to the UN MDGs. Starting in 2004, the IMF and World Bank have started issuing yearly Global Monitoring Reports on the progress being made in achieving the MDGs. While being a joint WB-IMF effort, the reports have been prepared with close cooperation from the UN, the WTO, the DAC at OECD and the EU Commission. See the World Bank site on Global Monitoring at: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTGLOBALMONITOR/0,,menuPK:2185108~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:2185068,00.html

If taken as a bloc, Member states of the EU are the largest shareholder of the WB, with their shares combined accounting for around 30% of own Bank resources representing collectively, the majority of funding to the multilateral lending institution. In 2006 the European Commission contributed on its part with more than 5 USD billion to the World Bank Trust Funds[11]. While the US also contributes with approximately 15% to the Bank's budget, the similarities in the World Bank and EU's approaches to aid are probably higher if compared to those between the Bank and the American partner. Poverty alleviation is indeed the primary focus of the development effort of both the Bank and the Union, while, through USAID, the United States appear to have adopted a stricter linkage approach between their development assistance activities and foreign policy goals. In their capacity of shareholders, EU Member States have an opportunity to influence the Bank's policies even though there does not exist so far a joint European seat at the Bank's Executive Board.

On the ground, i.e. in partner/client countries, the EU and the Bank often work side to side in multi-donor projects, either through individual bilateral agencies or through the disbursement of EU (mostly Commission) funds. At the country-specific level, the EU and the Bank are then major contributors of many developing countries, through their bilateral development agencies (such as DFID for the UK or SIDA for Sweden). The Bank mainly works with EU Member States and their development agencies, either by receiving funds to be then allocated according to global development priorities on specific thematic projects, or through trust funds that are tied to countries or policy areas, or, finally, by cooperating with them on the ground as partners in multi-donor projects.

Mostly regional, at times thematic, in focus, the EU and the Bank have adopted several soft law tools to enhance their cooperation on both regional and thematic issues. In retrospective terms, the EU (here broadly meant as including also European financial institutions such as the EBRD and the EIB) and the Bank have been key partners in the process of helping the political and economic transition in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and are currently the main providers of technical and financial assistance to the Southern Balkans. In this area, the collaboration between the EU and the Bank is covered by a formal mandate provided by the Stability Pact for South East Europe, and a World Bank-EC Joint Office for South East Europe Reconstruction was set up in Brussels in 1999.[12] To be sure, transition has occurred in the Bank itself, as the new EU members from Central and Eastern Europe have gradually moved out of their role of client countries[13].

While transition and security issues have been at the core of the Bank and EU agenda in the Balkans and Central Europe since the early nineties, current challenges to security appear tightly linked to development issues in a number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle

[11] See 'The World Bank in Brussels', June 2007, p.1, prepared by the World Bank Office in Brussels, http://www.worldbank.org/eu .

[12] See 'The World Bank in Brussels', June 2007, prepared by the World Bank Office in Brussels, http://www.worldbank.org/eu . Additional information on the World Bank-EC Joint Office for South East Europe Reconstruction can be found at www.seerecon.org.

[13] In 1998, an MoU was signed between the Bank and the European Commission (EC), along with other International financial institutions to cover project co-financing in pre-accession countries. Since 2005 the MoU has been revised to incorporate Western Balkans and other parties such as the IFC and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (World Bank Office in Brussels, quot., p.3). The Bank currently works together with the EC in new Member States, providing them with technical assistance in capacity building on the utilization of EC Structural and Cohesion Funds. Cooperation with the EC is ensured also with respect to Croatia and Turkey, and on policy dialogue for further inclusion of eight central and southeast European countries under the Roma Inclusion Process. See World Bank Office in Brussels (2007), p.3.

East and North Africa Regions. The presence in these two Regions of conflict-torn countries, as well as extreme poverty levels in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa call for carefully developed synergies between the two partners. Taken together, the EU Member States and the Bank account for half of the ODA going to Africa, undoubtedly the region where poverty is highest and most diffused in the world. Since April 2003, the EU (Commission) and the Bank (Africa Region and PREM) have started a round of annual consultations, called the 'Limelette Process', named after the Brussels' neighborhood where the first meeting took place, aimed at sharing strategies on key development goals for Sub-Saharan Africa (in the fields of adjustment policies, budget support, infrastructure development and governance, so far)[14]. The Paris Declaration, produced in 2005 at the Paris High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which brought together 30 donors, 60 partner countries and 30 development agencies, called for a redefinition in the global effort to improve aid effectiveness. Non-synergic overlaps, donors' conflicting schemes, as well as uncoordinated priority benchmarking and shifting accountability systems have been often translated into poor results and unnecessary waste of resources, with enduring poverty, low capacity and diffused exclusion of those most in need, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Limelette Process is therefore a framework within which the EU and the Bank are expected to harmonize their respective Strategy for Africa (EU) and Action Plan (Bank), coupling scaling-up with enhanced coordination to pursue the attainment of the MDGs.

Finally, the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East are the third major geographical focus of joint EU-Bank efforts to promote development and economic integration. Their cooperation in this area takes place under the umbrella of the Luxemburg Process, a high-level policy dialogue initiated in 2000, which also includes the EIB and, with an advisory role, the IMF. A Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed in 2004, formalizing the previous process and scaling up the contribution of the EC to the MENA Region (with a shift from less than USD 20 millions in 2003 to more than 120 millions in 2004). The Bank regularly provides the MENA partners with its expertise in policy reform and technical assistance, to promote regulatory convergence in the framework of the EU Neighborhood Policy. Major recipients of EU support through Bank's managed trust funds in the Region are West Bank-Gaza and Iraq. The EU crucially cooperated with the Bank to support West Bank and Gaza, with USD 65 million in 2004 and USD 120 millions to the Iraq Trust Fund, to which the Union is the largest contributor (33% in total ITF).[15]

Looking at institutional arrangements, the Bank has an Office for representation in Brussels, while the EU has its counterpart Office in Washington D.C. In either case, the Offices work as liaisons between the multilateral donor and the economic union, to deepen cooperation in existing areas of partnership but without any formal acknowledgement in the internal policy process of other institution[16]. Also, the Bank increasingly cooperates with EU common

[14] The collaboration between the EC and the Bank in the Africa Region dates back to 1987, when the two informally joined their efforts in the framework of the Strategic Partnership for Africa (SPA), an association of donors aimed at increasing and improving the quality of development assistance to Sub Saharan Africa. Further collaboration on PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) framework was set to tackle implementation problems at the country level. See 'The World Bank in Brussels', quot. p.2.

[15] See 'The World Bank in Brussels', quot. p.4.

[16] The World Bank Brussels Office was created in 1996, to improve cooperation with the EU institutions, and is currently also in charge of managing the World Bank with the three Benelux partners. To be sure, the EU Office for representation in Washington DC has an observer status at the IMF, and its staff has regular contacts with both political and technical staff of the Fund and the Bank, while the WB Office in Brussels equally has regular contacts with Cabinet members of the EU Commission, to ensure early and complete flows of information on matters of mutual interest. Finally, an average of 300 World Bank staff visits the World Bank Office, as well as other EU institutions for professional purposes every year. See World Bank Office in Brussels, 'The World Bank in Brussels',

institutions (mostly Commission DGs) in designing policy guidelines and training programs for senior management.

While sharing a number of goals and cooperating in a number of thematic and regional areas in the pursuit of their respective missions, the EU and the Bank are however different in kind, and have different missions and agendas on multiple counts. The first is a political-economic supranational union, to which the Member States have delegated authority in the making of relevant internal and external actions (within the broad *acquis communautaire*: common internal market, common system of core rights and values-direct applicability of a number of EU-produced internal norms, often actionable in courts by single individuals or groups, on the first front; exclusive competence in trade policymaking, common monetary policy and other areas of shared competence on the second front). The second is an international lending organization, composed by sovereign States, working according to intergovernmental procedures and technical principles, attaching weight to its Members'opinions according to their contributed resources, and ultimately requiring them to abide only to the agreed Articles of Agreement according to the principles of international law (customs and agreement).

A first key difference regards therefore the inherently 'mixed' nature of the EU (both political and economic), and the 'simple' (economic) nature of the World Bank. Relative to their mission, then, while the Bank pursues a 'simple' set of socio-economic goals, the Union aims at a multiplicity of goals that are both economic and political in nature. As a Senior Bank's Official conveniently put it, 'while the EU can and should talk about preferred political systems in partner countries, the Bank cannot and should not..we are an economic institution, with primarily economic goals'[17].

A second difference regards the rules of internal governance of each of the two actors. Intergovernmental criteria dominate the decision making at the Bank, where common positions are usually reached by consensus among EDs (who represent the interests of their respective constituencies, formed by shareholder States), whereas supranational ones inform most policy processes within the Union, where unanimity coexists with qualified majority voting (QMV) in areas of exclusive EU external competence. While one can disagree on how independent from the push and pull of its Member States the external action of the EU is, the idea that the Union has in fact external unified powers in certain policy areas seems to be a received one.

A third element, strictly linked to the previous one, concerns the actors that operate within each institutional umbrella. An intergovernmental organization as the World Bank formally acknowledges as key actors its constituent Members, e.g. the States. The role of individual technical staff is present –with varying degrees of relevance- in both the Bank and the EU, but their weight on the adoption of specific policies appears crucially mediated by top-level decisions.[18] Fourth, in strictly technical terms, relative to the field of development, the Bank provides both financial and technical assistance, while the EU is mainly concerned with financial assistance through the Commission[19].

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p.1.

[17] Author's interview.

[18] An organizational analysis of the differences and similarities of the two actors is beyond the scope of this study. For the sake of simplicity then, the role of individual technical staff has not been included as a key actor in the synthetic interpretation provided in Table 1.

[19] While nuances exist in both the Bank and the Union portfolio of development activities, a Senior Bank Officer has eloquently sketched his view of the main elements of difference between the two: "The Commission does not do analysis, it gives money". Author's interview.

TABLE 1. The European Union and World Bank: Actors, Goals, Decision Making Processes and 'Core Business' activities in development policymaking*

	Actors	Mission Goals	Internal Decision Making Processes	'Core Business' in development policies
EU	• Member States • Common Institutions • European Citizens	• Mixed (multiple objectives pol-econ) • Complex (internal-external reach)	• Mixed (Intergov-Supranational) • Unanimity, QM	• Financial assistance (coordin. With other EU policy areas)
WB	• Member States	• Single (only econ goals) • Mainly external (aside from internal organizational adj/trans)	• Intergovernmental • Consensus	• Financial and technical assistance

*Note: Author's elaboration

While one may stress the potentially conflictual aspect in these elements of difference between the two institutions, the goal is here one of describing the context within which each of these two complex actors operates, calling for further attention on the potential from the positive outcomes brought about by 'diversity in the same business'. As will be clearer throughout the Report, the mixed set of goals pursued by the EU provides the Bank with ample room to further develop complementarities with its –comparatively- narrower set of goals. However, a look at how World Bank officials perceive and have elaborated their experience in cooperating with EU officials in the pursuit of these common goals, suggests that such multiplicity has not always been matched by clarity of vision and coordination on the side of the EU, either internally or externally, which has at times reduced the potential for enhanced effectiveness in cooperation between the two partners.

To sum up, both based on the sheer size of the resources devoted to the cause of development, and on the relevance of their joint effort in coordinating aid policy design and delivery, it appears of paramount importance to focus on the World Bank as the most relevant multilateral image source in development policies. This Report then provides a first-cut look at the EU-World Bank relationship by exploring the view from the multilateral actor located on the Western shore of the Atlantic.

2.3 The European Union and the World Bank in the eyes of the world : A snapshot 'General' perceptions on roles, mission fulfillment and effectiveness

The elements presented so far provide a synthetic description of what the two organizations, the EU and the World Bank, are and do, as well as the main motivation behind the choice of the World Bank as the main source of images on the EU in the field of development. However, they do not return any third party view–e.g. fully external to their bilateral relationships- on how well or badly they carry on their respective businesses. In other words, what does the public at large think of them? While other contributions in this and previous GARNET Surveys on the external image of the EU deal with images in specific foreign contexts, prior to delving into the EU image in the World Bank, a look at how public opinion is oriented towards our two actors in the areas that are specific to their common interest (cooperation to development, aid, trade) seems warranted.

At a general level, recent results from global polls seem to indicate that the EU is perceived as playing a positive role in world affairs (53 percent on average, as surveyed by BBC World Service through its survey agency World Public Opinion, approve of the EU's influence in the world, WPO 2007). Many of these positive opinions come from individuals in EU member states, and the percentage of approval of the Union's influence in world politics declines below the 50% threshold (48%) when one excludes the EU countries from the sample (WPO 2007). However, when asked to compare the EU's growing role in the world to that of the US, a good 53% in non-EU surveyed countries currently favors an increase in the EU's influence worldwide over an increase in US' influence. (WPO 2007). Looking at the variation in these perceptions, it is fair to say that, perhaps not surprisingly, external views on the EU appear on balance context- and time dependent[20].

In the specialized press, publications known for their free-trade orientation, such as the Economist, have repeatedly joined with the Bank in calling for less restrictive preferences of the EU towards its ACP partners, pushing for faster phaseouts of reciprocity clauses incorporated in pre-Cotonou schemes (i.e. Lomé and Yaoundé Convention Agreements)[21], or noting how the EU emphasis on preference erosion effects of tariff reduction proposal in the Doha Round were at best unwarranted.[22] In the debate on the relative advisability, and pro-poor effects, of either a reduction in farm subsidies or cuts in tariffs, well known economists have at times sponsored the EU approach (bigger cuts in tariffs, relatively more conservative approach on farm subsidies) maintaining that rising farm prices would benefit rural producers in developing countries as well (Cline 2004), while others have endorsed the opposite view, maintaining that 'the members fighting hardest to retain subsidies, such as the EU, are those with most to gain from abolition' (The Economist, May 28 2005). Another element of criticism advanced towards Europe, more than towards the EU itself, is the negative effects of some colonial legacies, such as excessive red tape in countries that were former French, Spanish and Portuguese colonies.[23] On the links between economic and security policies, The FT picked on the many inconsistencies of EU choices relative to trade, aid, nuclear and wider security issues in Asia and the Middle East.[24]

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[20] For a seminal treatment of these issues see Lucarelli *et al*. (2007). In addition to countries in the Middle-East, where mixed views have recently emerged overall (with positive views in Lebanon and the UAE, and negative ones in Egypt and Turkey, WPO, 2007), and that are commonly quoted as the exception to the generally held view of a positive EU, other instances, such as that of eight Sub-Saharan African states surveyed between 2002 and 2004 by Afrobarometer, seem to prove that the picture is a more nuanced one. Between 2002-2004 respondents in the second round of Afrobarometer Survey appeared to have on balance a limited knowledge of what the EU was and did (59% of them did not know or had not heard enough about the EU to give their assessment of its effectiveness). Somewhat differently, in July 2004, WPO reported that, out of a sample of African respondents from the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Egypt 'a plurality (49%) said Europe [was] having a positive influence in the world' (WPO, July 2004). Samples overlap only partially, both under country- and time- aspects, which can certainly explain part of these discrepancies.

[21] See Ozden and Reinhardt (2003); along with a number of issues of the Economist: "Falling out of favour" Economics focus, The Economist May 28, 2005, U.S. Edition; 'Weighed in the balance", Global trade, The Economist December 10, 2005, U.S. Edition.

[22] " "Be aware", Peter Mandelson, Europe's top negotiator, warned the poorest countries last week, "that some of the alternative tariff-cutting proposals on the table will...wipe out whole sectors of your economy." However, the truth is that thanks to restrictive rules, tariff preferences, particularly the EU's, are less generous than they look. Nor are they all targeted at the poor: many of the world's poorest people live neither in the 50 least developed countries nor in Europe's ex-colonies." "Weighed in the balance;" Global trade, The Economist December 10, 2005.

[23] See the leading FT, 'Breaking poverty's chains. Regulatory reform', September 11, 2004.

[24] The FT, Facing responsibility, Special report, Europe in the world, November 23, 2002, U.S. Edition.

On the EPA negotiations, a subject that has attracted much of the interest in the specialized press between the end of 2007 (December of that year being the expiration date of the Cotonou Scheme) and the first months of 2008, soft-liners such as the Economist have restricted their criticism to the lack of assertiveness of the EU vis à vis China in Africa, and the softness on the human right issue (not surprisingly standing side to side to the British Prime Minister Brown when he boycotted the Lisbon EU-Africa meeting to protest against the invitation of Robert Mugabe, the controversial President of Zimbabwe).[25] The Financial Times, taking a somewhat more balanced stance, has however exposed the Union on multiple counts. The newspaper has amply, and often sympathetically, covered the work done by NGOs, critical of the deal that the EU offered to the African countries through the proposed EPAs, also giving voice to the concerns of different African leaders (which felt forced to consider closing a deal under duress, to avoid sudden inflows of excessively cheap subsidized EU imports that could disrupt domestic markets).[26]

The tone of the reviews that are provided in that same specialized press (The Economist, The FT) on the Bank's policies is generally much softer, and often praises, in line with the editorial choice of both products, the market-oriented approach to development that has been the trademark of the two Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Relatively recent articles have appreciated the adaptation effort that the Bank has undertaken for example with respect to the criticism of excessive pressure in terms of concessional loans tied to privatization and deregulation reforms in client countries. The new emphasis adopted on improving investment climate for example, and the call for better governance institutions and transparency in the utilization of aid and loans, their grounding in data (both perceptual and factual) collected at the country, sector, and, increasingly, firm level, has notably increased the credibility and the effectiveness of the Bank's own approach to conditionality in the eyes of the international economic press.[27]

While a review of the literature on the wider debate on the effectiveness of the Bretton Woods institutions is beyond the scope of this Report, some synthetic remarks appear useful in the light of the analysis that will follow. After the Mexican, Asian, Russian and Argentinian crises at the end of the past century, the validity of the neo-liberal recipes adopted between the eighties and the nineties by the IMF and the World Bank has been further questioned in the light of the poor results obtained through structural adjustment programs in other developing areas, notably Sub-Saharan Africa (Woods 2006). Widespread criticism from borrowing countries, advocacy coalitions and NGOs operating in the field of development (see among the many Oxfam 2002) has been coupled by other dissenting voices from former top management World Bank staff (Stiglitz 2002: Easterly 2007). Fast and full opening to capital mobility, privatization in the absence of sound pre-existing governance mechanisms to supervise the functioning of changing markets and their interaction with often unstable political institutions, coupled with rescue packages tied to the adoption of credit restriction and market liberalization have, as is now widely known and studied, led to complex setbacks in those countries. While staunch supporters of the Washington Consensus have highlighted the future potential incorporated in the adoption

[25] The Economist, 'After China and America, it is Europe's turn to woo Africa", December 6, 2007, Lisbon; "The sun sets on Cotonou-An end-of-year rush to replace an outdated trade agreement", January 3, 2008, Delhi;
[26] The FT, "Crying Wolf over aid and trade?", May 16 2007; "Africa-EU tariff proposal raises concerns", November 23 2007; "Brussels reaches deal with East Africa Bloc", November 28 2007; "Tariffs will rupture relations, Africa warns EU", December 9 2007.
[27] Ibid.

of these recipes (see among others Fischer 1998), the received policy input for the specific purposes of the Bank's business seems currently one of softer conditionality, with a shift of emphasis from specific policy choices on improving institutions (the 'governance' and 'business climate' envelopes), and on including client countries since the design phase of the policy advice attached to the loans (the 'inclusion and ownership' envelopes)[28].

Recent opinion polls, however, both regional, such as Afrobarometer, and global, such as the World Public Opinion Survey (conducted with the support of GlobeScan, the Program on International Policy Attitudes, PIPA, at the University of Maryland and The World Bank itself), return a generally positive image of the Bank, and a benign assessment of its effectiveness. On a scale from 0 to 10, the Bank obtained a 6.78 rating in effectiveness from people in eight African States, coming second after the UN (Afrobarometer 2002-2003). Among a group of global economic players, 55% of interviewed citizens in 32 nations believe that the World Bank has a mainly positive influence in the world (against a 47% of individuals attributing a mainly positive influence to the IMF and 41% rating global companies as having a mainly positive influence). Aside from the case of Argentina, where the majority of people believes that the Bank has a mainly negative influence on world affairs, a majority or a plurality of people in all the surveyed countries retain a positive view on the major multilateral world lender.

NGOs and advocacy coalitions in the field of development and development-related issues (such as human rights, environmental and consumer safety, gender issues at large) appear on balance to be equally critical of both the EU and the Bank (see among others Oxfam 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2007), on issues such as conditionality, transparency and ownership (Bank), and trade (EPAs, market access, trade facilitation), agricultural subsidies and biofuel-related poverty issues (EU) (Concord 2008). Their stance is either supported (FT) or criticized (The Economist), on grounds of plausible doubts on the substance of the EU altruism, the former (giving aid but taking back through at best trade deals with ambiguous effects), or quoting the 'overblown' nature of these criticisms and the 'strident' characters of these NGOs (The Economist, January 3, 2008).

3. The EU in the Eyes of the World Bank: Notes to a Global Player, Praise To a Global Partner

3.1 Documentary Assessment

This section summarizes the results of a survey conducted on Bank's documents and externally reported Bank sources on the EU, first providing a synthetic description of the ways in which the EU has appeared/has been quoted in the Bank's discourse up to the first two months of 2008, and then delving into specific themes which have provided an opportunity for the Bank to express views on the EU's action, role and potential.[29]

In numerous cases the opinions of the Bank on the EU are expressed with a factual language first (what the EU does/has done), then followed with clauses that imply varying levels of value

[28] Voices praising the results achieved by the Bank and other facilitators of globalization include Dollar and Kraay, (2002) and Bhagwati (2002).

[29] While the documentary survey spans across time, it does report positions that were either publicly avaible on the World Bank external websites as of December-February 2008, or in a number of Bank's paper publications mostly released between 1999 and 2008. While enjoying the benefit of an ample time-coverage, the documentary overview presented here does not claim the historical exhaustiveness of a detailed archive search.

ladenness (low, as when factual consequences of the EU actions are reported, medium, when conditional formulations are privileged, such as 'the EU could..' or high, when explicit judgments are advanced, such as in 'The EU has/has not..''-phrasal arrangements). Factual formulations appear somewhat privileged, consistent with the Bank's mission in providing knowledge to advance the cause of development, and with its style of linking policy advice to reported factual elements. The move from description to prescription (policy advice) is however developed at its best in the Bank's views on the EU. Detailing the EU's role in 'establishing coordination obligation for the Member States' is the door to introduce the subsequent praise, one sentence below, of 'the process [of EU integration and enlargement, which] has led to a series of common EU positions at international fora, and a common EU development policy framework', (World Bank 2007a).

In almost all the surveyed instances, the Bank also advises the EU on how to best handle the issue at stake, either by praising what the EU is already doing, or by suggesting its change of direction in accordance with the own Bank's policy assessments. This appears fully consistent with the Bank's role as a provider of technical advice and expertise in the different areas involved in the making of development policies, and suggests that one of the possible ways in which the Bank perceives itself with respect to the EU is indeed that of knowledge provider of strategic and tactic advice in its areas of interest. Second, the Bank explicitly refers to the EU as a partner in advancing the twin causes of development and poverty reduction, and a key ally in working synergistically towards reaching the MDGs (*Millennium Development Goals*). The process dimensions stressed in this second role-perception are those of coordination, harmonization in planning and delivering aid, avoid duplication of efforts, and increase the joint effort in promoting the adoption of 'sound governance' criteria and institutions, as well as ownership in recipient countries.[30]

3.1.1. Views on sectors

In either the own World Bank official documents (WDR *World Development Report*, GMR, *Global Monitoring Report*, Policy Briefs and other) and official statements from Bank's representatives, as reported by both the Bank and external sources (the FT, China Daily, The Strait Times, The Wall Street Journal and others) the EU is quoted in association with its role in two main global policy areas: trade and aid-development, as well as in policies that variously connect the effectiveness of trade for development and poverty reduction purposes. Agriculture and textiles are the sectors that appear most often related with these two policy areas, while in a small but growing number of instances the Bank refers to the role of the EU in managing key environmental issues, notably that of climate change[31]. Additional references concern the EU role in migration issues, mostly related to the MENA Region.

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[30] See World Bank (2007a) as well as Danny Leipziger, PREM VP, quoted in the News&Broadcast EXT website (headlines of June 15, 2007) the Bank, at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,date:2007-06-15~menuPK:34461~pagePK:34392~piPK:64256810~theSitePK:4607,00.html, quoted from EFE/Factiva.

[31] On the EU in trade issues see the World Bank News&Broadcast EXT website at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21202737~menuPK:51340323~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html (China Daily, Drop Barriers to Global Trade, December 14, 2002), 'Development Indicators Improve for a Continent in Dire Need', Comments on the release of African Development Indicators (2006), at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21107847~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html; former World Bank's President Paul Wolfowitz's Special to the Wall Street Journal of

With respect to trade and development policies, views appear to have a double-edged nature, as the EU is perceived by the Bank as an actor of enormous power and potential, even if not always using these assets to consistently support the Doha process towards employing trade as a tool to reduce poverty. Agricultural subsidies, tariff and non-tariff barriers to agriculture and textile-clothing exports, such as ROOs (*Rules of Origin*) and compensatory duties levied against imports in these two sensitive sectors, appeared to hinder the very process of the overall Doha round ("If trade liberalization is such good medicine, why don't the rich countries swallow more?" asks one reported rhetorical question in a 2002 speech by Nick Stern and Homi Karas, the then Chief Economist at the Bank and the then Chief Economist for the East Asia and Pacific Region at the Bank, respectively)[32]. Some of these criticisms lump the EU together with the other major industrialized countries, such as the US and Japan, which get their share of blame, especially in the areas of sugar, cotton and rice subsidies, respectively.[33] To a certain extent then, the EU shares the blame that the other major industrialized countries receive for protecting their agricultural sectors, perhaps a renewed 'rich man's curse', structurally related to the effect that globalization, and market opening, have on the natural obsolescence of products and sectors, and on the inherent tendency of incumbents to protect the 'lands of their early settlement'. However, in the words of the Bank, it clearly emerges that issues such as that of ROOs, and their often non pro-development formulation and incorporation in the recently negotiated EPAs (*European Partnership Agreements*), as well as the instrumental use of certain phyto-sanitary standards to bloc the entry of traditional agri-food imports from low-income countries fall into a somewhat enduring course. In 2006, the Regional series of own Bank Development Indicators (ADI, African Development Indicators) called for 'the lifting of the burdensome rules of origin through reform in the U.S. Growth and Opportunity Act and the EU's Everything But Arms initiative', while in 2007, a sub-section in the Bank's Global Monitoring Report, set forth a detailed list of suggestions to address the concerns that currently negotiated EPAs have a regressive impact on both development and integration trajectories of many of the African partner countries (GMR

July 1, 2006, 'Doha's Last Chance', accessed at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21168127~menuPK:51340323~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html, his op-ed to the FT of October 24, 2006, 'Everyone Must Do More for Doha to Succeed', accessed at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21168133~menuPK:51340323~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html

[32] China Daily, 'Drop Barriers to Global Trade', December 14, 2002, accessed at: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21202737~menuPK:51340323~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html

[33] See World Bank (2007), 'Aid for Trade Gains Momentum as Doha Round Talks Continue', November 19, accessed at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21554536~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html, and Strait Times, 'Doha round success key for East Asia', December 3 2005 accessed at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21202641~menuPK:51340323~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html. Also see the 2008 World Development Report, and the Press Briefing for World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development, October 19, 2007, accessed at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21519837~menuPK:64255981~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html. On the EPAs see the Global Monitoring Report 2007. On climate change see the GLOBE International COM+: Alliance of Communicators for Sustainable Development, Agreed Statement From The Globe G8+5 Legislators' Forum On Climate Change, Berlin, 3-4 June, 2007, accessed at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21359011~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html

2007). The main concerns, already emerged from early CGE analyses on the expected impact of different types of EPAs, regard the regressive impact that restrictive ROOs can have on African exports to the EU[34], the -not always justified- preferences requested for EU firms and their negative impact on the partners' tariff revenue, as well as the potentially disgregating effect that EU-structured EPA negotiation country groupings can have on the existing potential for intra-regional liberalization in Sub-Saharan partner countries. A number of Bank's publications in the different working paper series (produced either by functional or the regional units) offer analyses of the welfare impact of the adoption of different trade measures and regulation systems with respect to SSA countries. A case in point is the recent analysis on fiscal revenue implications of the prospective EPA between ECOWAS countries and the EU carried on by Zouhon-Bi and Nielsen (2007). Acknowledging the primary role of trade with the EU in ECOWAS countries, as well as the uneven status of horizontal integration among these African partners, the authors warn against the long explored possibility that a hub-and-spoke effect stems from such North-South agreement and suggest several measures to reduce trade diversion and negative effects on fiscal revenue. Here the tone is clearly analytical, and advice is provided mainly with respect to ECOWAS countries. However, references to the non-compliance of the Lomé Agreements with the WTO norms on non-discrimination and to the reciprocal nature that the EPAs under negotiation should possess, as well as to the exact interpretation of WTO clauses on phase-out timing and product coverage ("reasonable length of time" and "substantially all trade", GATT Article XXIV), suggest that the Bank is closely scrutinizing the development implications of the EU policies for integration in SSA.

An area where the Bank has also been critical with respect to the EU lies at the intersection of trade, poverty and aid policies. While the EU has put a renewed emphasis on its pro-poor approach to aid and development, the Bank has noted at several junctures how policies and projects of the Union do not always seem to be fully consistent with deep knowledge of the complexity of nexuses between the three areas. Take the trade-aid link, for example. While high tariff in farm products may benefit agricultural exporters in developing countries, these privileges may be passed through the importer as higher costs, thus depriving the trade mechanism of its efficiency in inducing development dynamics.[35]

Other Bank's works allow one to implicitly derive World Bank images on the EU on specific aspects such as product standards (Czubala, Sheperd and Wilson 2007) and rules of origin (Brenton 2006; Brenton and Manchin 2003). Most of these results point in the direction of advising the EU to adjust its systems (in the areas quoted above) either to existing de facto international standards[36], or to the least restrictive systems adopted by other major players (such as the US, in the case of AGOA in reference to ROOs).

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[34] 'To maintain pressure to come to agreement, the European Union has not put forward any alternative offers even though the Cotonou Agreement states that those countries opting against signing an EPA should end up no worse than under the current trade preferences'. See Hoppe (2007:1) where the issue of how the new EPAs under negotiation may hurt African-non LDC countries is discussed. In the eyes of the Bank, the ambiguities of the Union with respect to the treatment of sensitive imports (bananas, rice, sugar, cocoa are some in the agri-food cluster) towards the non LDCs African partners is coupled with its equally ambiguous stance on the restrictiveness of the ROOs issue.

[35] 'The World Bank reckons that every $1 that a country such as Mauritius gains from its trade privileges costs the EU and the United States $6. As an aid programme, it is not terribly efficient', quoted in 'Falling out of favour; Economics focus Punch-up over handouts', The Economist, US Edition May 28, 2005.

[36] "We have shown that there is empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that EU standards harmonized with international norms...exert a less negative impact on African export volumes and propensity than standards which are not harmonized". (Czubala, Sheperd and Wilson 2007: 23).

Highly positive Bank's views on the EU largely emerge in the wider area of aid financing. In the words of the former World Bank's President Wolfowitz 'At the World Bank group, we believe in expanding partnerships with a wide range of groups that share stakes in improving governance. Those partnerships of course include the incredibly valuable cooperation with the European Union'.[37] Scaling up of aid flows, with the top-notching example of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, as well as a recently released EU 'Code of Conduct' on division of labor in development policy are seen by the Bank as valuable inputs into the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.[38] The EU contribution in diplomatic mediation, in conflict-torn countries such as Congo or Palestine, as well as its support in disaster relief, both in Indonesia and Pakistan, appear to be recurrently praised in official Bank's statements.[39]

3.1.2 Views by Region

While technical jargon and issue-specific topics may not render these themes as highly palatable to the world public opinion as other calls on a better designed and more inclusive and carefully implemented strategy to help reduce poverty in Africa, these remarks on the EU's approach to trade relationships with SSA are at the core of the Bank's development agenda, as they imply both direct effects on the exports opportunities for SSA and indirect secondary effects on the own policymaking of African development via horizontal regional and global integration.

Recent Bank documents on the Limelette Process (see Section 2.2) express on the contrary an almost univocally positive view of the EU, which is seen less as an actor in development to which advice is offered on its aid and trade policies, and more as a partner in 'supporting institutions in Africa in terms of both a deep commitment to African development and the scale of resources committed to the Region' (WBG Brussels Office, April 2007). The 'choice' nature of such a partnership, purposively reaffirmed throughout that document, is described by the Bank with words ('frank and candid discussion', 'Participants agreed that the Limelette process has established effective partnership', 'more ambitious objectives', 'broadening the joint agenda and sharpening the focus on results') that leave no doubt that a 'positive partner in African

[37] See 'Finding Hope in Africa's Private Sector, European Development Days', Brussels, Belgium, November 15, 2006 accessed at :http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21164004~menuPK:64255981~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html
When asked whether the EU should be doing more in Africa and which problems he possibly saw in the EU overall development policy, Wolfowitz appeared firmly positive and praising of ongoing efforts, putting the two institutions in a synergic context of 'division of labor': 'And so, I think the challenge for all of us, EU -- I mean, they are already doing a lot, I would urge them to scale up. I think keeping these pledges to get the 0.7 percentage of GDP, doing that as fast as possible, and encouraging the other big donors to do it. And what's working very well, which is recognizing there are some things the EU is better at than the World Bank, there are some things the World Bank is better at than the EU, and we need to work together. And I am getting the hook.'

[38] The World Bank (2007b)

[39] 'Given the vast size and the vast needs, Congo will test the capabilities of donors but I know one thing that our partnership with European Union will greatly improve our chances of success in meeting that enormous challenge. Elsewhere, in the West Bank & Gaza, the European Union and the World Bank are working together to sustain health and social services for the poorest Palestinians despite the enormous political challenges we face. And in a very different part of the world, in Indonesia, I have seen how the European Union and World Bank are working together in the post-Tsunami reconstruction of Aceh in stimulating peaceful economic activity after the signing of Aceh Peace Agreement. And I must note that that remarkable agreement was a product of the leadership of the European Union and the great diplomatic skill of Finland's former President, Martti Ahtisaari.', Paul Wolfowitz, speech at the European Development Days, Brussels, November 2006, quoted in the previous footnote.

development' view does exist at the Bank on the EU. Both functional and geographical specificities may explain the difference between the image of the EU that emerges from this document, issued by the World Bank Brussels EXT Office and the somewhat more critical view on the Union's role in Africa expressed by PREM Trade or AFR Units located in HQ DC.[40] Follow ups on these points appear in a Joint Communiqué (EU Commission, DG Dev-World Bank, September 2007), where the two institutions highlight their common stakes in 'promoting aid effectiveness' and acknowledge the importance of incorporating views from civil society, summarizing the key results of a previous tri-partite meeting to discuss collaboration on Africa with Civil Society Organizations.

With respect to the Middle East and North Africa, the Bank has long acknowledged that the EU integration policies in the Region have responded mainly to political incentives (Nabli 2001a, 1), with dynamics that are probably tied more closely to political priorities than in other areas of the EU external economic intervention. While no value judgment is expressed in the Bank's official documents with respect to the advisability of these EU drives to integration with the MENA partners (the Bank's mission being, among other things, one of advising on the poverty reduction and development impact of countries' policies), a few critical aspects emerge relative to the welfare effects and development opportunities associated with the EuroMed process since it was launched in the mid-nineties. The unilateral determination of the scope of the EuroMed Association Agreeements is explicitly quoted in reference to agricultural provisions, that have either excluded the majority of products from the coverage, or postponed the discussion to the future (Nabli 2001a, 9). At the beginning of this decade, the mild approach that had been chosen by both the EU and Mediterranean partners to the inclusion of services in the Agreements was also criticized by the Bank, as the development potential that could be derived from trade liberalization in services had not yet been perceived as such by the parties (MENA countries not being competitive yet, and the EU not being interested in adding what was thought of as an additional burden in the agenda of its Mediterranean partners.). In 2001 the Bank noted that in 'no overall coherent strategy for studies and analysis of the implications of the FTA agreement' was in place for the first North African partner (Tunisia), and that 'the studies realized were not systematically used in the preparation and design of the negotiation strategies' (Nabli 2001a: 17). These remarks can be applied to a number of other cases of international economic negotiations, where the political economy aspects have dominated the scene and taken precedence over welfare and technical review and assessment. However, it is noteworthy that the lack of EU technical preparatory work is in this instance contrasted with the plethora of ex-ante technical analyses of the potential effects of the US-Canada-Mexico free trade area (NAFTA). The Bank mentions also how on the EU side there was a 'limited demand from EU' trade policy knowledge, and little was known, still in 2001, six years after the Barcelona declaration of 1995, on the potential effects of the new Association Agreements.[41]

Looking at the implementation side, and at the results achieved in partner economies of the Mediterranean area between 1995 and 2001, the Bank appears to note a few major weaknesses of the EuroMed Association approach, comparing it to the Accession approach and to the NAFTA

[40] Interviews with Officials from the World Bank EXT Office in Brussels however, also returned some criticism on the EU approach to trade integration in Africa. Currently this research does not cover views from resident missions in the field, which are however a key source of organizational perceptions.

[41] Nabli (2001a: 13). Budget pressures due to reduction of trade revenue and advised compensatory measures have been among the key thrusts of the debate on the expected impact of the Association Agreements on Mediterranean partners.

way to regional integration (Nabli 2001b). While these latter have included coverage for services and agricultural goods, the Association partners are not granted preferential treatment across the board in these two areas, for which the original Agreements provided for further negotiations. Free movement of inputs (capital and labor) is provided for in the Accession agreements, which also requires the new entrants to adopt complementary reforms as preconditions to accession (IPRs, Privatization, Competition Policy, Company Law, Financial sector reform Nabli 2001b). Empirical evidence on progress made in some Accession countries (Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland) and Mexico, for the case of NAFTA (increase in exports, in FDI, convergence in population growth rates, GDP per worker) is quoted to suggest that the slow progress in the Mediterranean partners may also be ascribed to the structure of the agreements itself.

In addition to deficits in the efforts to independently undertake accompanying reforms on the side of Mediterranean partners (caused by political inertia, availability of easy money from mineral exports) then, the responsibility of the low development gains is attributed to the choice of the EU to not provide in the Association Agreements any strong incentive to induce such undertaking by the Mediterranean partners. One possible weakness is that of granting 'frontloaded financial package[s] which can be used to support transition costs of reforms, but also may delay otherwise essential reforms' (Nabli 2001b, 18).

Second, unlike CEE accession countries, Mediterranean partners have not been given the incentive of political membership, and have not been required to consistently adopt the entire *acquis communautaire*, which appears of paramount importance insofar as it implies the adoption of complementary economic and political reforms (macroeconomic an stabilization reforms, democratic reforms, industrial restructuring, nuclear safety, IPRs, privatization, Competition Policy, Company Law, Financial sector reform) that have proven crucial to induce the expected trade and macroeconomic gains originally expected from the Agreements, as shown by the comparison with accession partners (Nabli 2001b: 20).

With respect to the area of Competition Policy and Competition Law, the Bank has undertaken joint studies with the EU Commission relative to the Southern Mediterranean Partners (Geradin 2004), where elements related to the need of a clearer EU strategy "on the scope and objective of a regulatory convergence" emerge unambiguously, suggesting that the New Neighborhood Policy, while useful in providing basic elements on future regulatory cooperation between the EC and its neighbors, currently suffers from uncertainty relative to "the degree of intensity of convergence being promoted, as well as the speed with which this process should take place" (Geradin 2004, 84).

While no explicit value judgment is advanced in these Bank's documents (Nabli 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Geradin 2004), the contrast with Mexico-NAFTA, where a positive credibility feedback loop was provided for, serves as a benchmark to indirectly prove that, short of full accession, there are other cases of regional North-South free trade agreements that the EU could have considered as templates to further improve the opportunities for development of its Mediterranean partners.

The MENA Region Unit in the Bank also expressed its worries about the impact that the customs union created in 2003 between the EU and the GCC countries (*Gulf Cooperation Council*) would have on the wider MENA Region, with particular attention to market access for agricultural exports and consideration of the response dynamics from the labour market, notably the increased risk of job losses. Temporary migration measures were called in 2003 by the

MENA Region on the EU, as well as a re-examination of own EU policies to strengthen its partnership with MENA countries 'to generate larger benefits for both parties'[42]

The previous remarks appear to mostly fall into a sort of 'watchlist', where the Bank observes the activity of the EU in the areas of its core business (cooperation to development, aid and trade), generally noting when things go off the desired development path, or else recording the positive achievement by client (i.e. developing) countries. Luckily, in several other instances, the Bank records the positive achievements of EU-led development efforts.

Relative to trade policies, and with particular respect to trade integration, recent studies undertaken by the Bank employing CGE methodologies appear to indicate that Southern Mediterranean neighbors are likely to reap much higher gains if they complete their long planned schemes of horizontal integration with full implementation of the free-trade area provided for in the EuroMed partnership scheme (Dennis 2006). Prospective GAFTA partners (Great Arab Free Trade Area) are indeed expected to collectively double their welfare gains upon full implementation of both horizontal and vertical schemes of trade integration, and to at least triple them if trade facilitation measures are also included (simplification of custom procedures and import requirements on standards and technical regulations, improvement of sea and land transport systems). Once again, however, the –not-so-hidden- remark for the EU is one of allowing its Southern Mediterranean Partners to fully benefiting from the existing scheme, by simplifying as much as possible its ROOs systems, and by positively inducing product standard compliance as in the case of prospective members. Similarly, a largely positive assessment has been expressed on the impulse to trade integration that the EU has given to the South-Eastern Mediterranean Region through supporting development in Stability Pact Countries.[43]

3.2 Survey. The EU in the Eyes of the World Bank: Images from top management and political staff[44]

A second source of information on the Bank's images of the EU have been the interviews conducted at both the headquarters of the World Bank in Washington and by phone, with DC and Brussels-based World Bank technical and political staff.[45] With respect to the main objective of this project, that of gathering and elaborating information on the image retained by the Bank on the EU, the methodology employed here is purely qualitative (interviews with semi-structured questionnaires on a non-statistically representative sample: 18 staff interviewed in an organization of around 10,000 employees overall, of which 2/3 are based in HQ DC), and the relevance of the Survey itself lies indeed in the type of information that has been provided on the Bank's perceptions on the EU, more than on its quantity. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the overall total of top political and technical management of the Bank is approximately twice the

[42] Dasgupta in World Bank Mena Development Report (2003). See the policy brief reported in the World Bank EXT website on News&Broadcast at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20117024~menuPK:34463~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html

[43] See the site of the World Bank-EC Joint Office for South East Europe Reconstruction at www.seerecon.org.

[44] Hereinafter, passages with quotation marks that do not have references, either in the notes or in the body text, are drawn from the interviews.

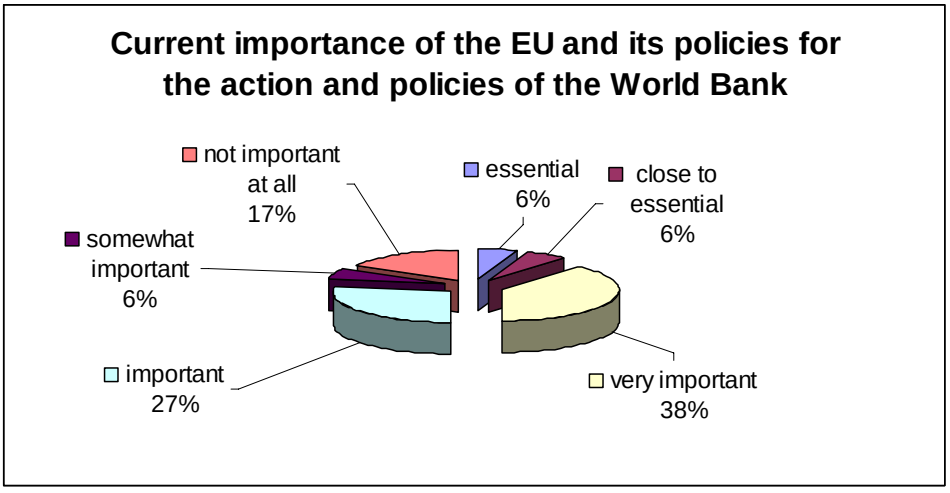
[45] In the context of this Report, the adjective 'technical' refers to both top and senior management staff levels (VPs, Sector Managers, Sector Directors, Senior Advisors, Special Representatives, Senior Economists, Senior Consultants), while the adjective 'political' applies to either EDs or Alternate EDs.

number of interviewees, which surely endows these results with a reasonably sound expectation of being statistically significant of the World Bank's top management views on the EU[46].

3.2.1. The EU in the eyes of the Bank: Present, past and future importance in the changing geometries of development

All the interviewed officials had an involvement with the EU, through nationality, responsibility in joint EU-WB projects, prior activity for the Bank in EU countries (mostly accession members at the time), or through contacts with EU representatives in Brussels and in Washington, as well as through representatives of EU Member States at the Board. Several themes emerged among 'the most relevant aspects of the relationship between the World Bank and the EU'.[47] On the one hand institutional and organizational aspects, such as the role of the EU Member States as donors to the Bank and in the wider development community, were quoted, to emphasize the importance of EU donors to the development mission pursued by the Bank. The size of aid contribution by both the EU Member States and the Commission to the Bank was also quoted repeatedly, indicating that institutional and organizational elements are perceived as key components of the relevance of the relation between the Union and the Bank. An additional element of significance that emerged in the interviews was the similarity (even defined 'symbiosis' in one case) between the EU and the Bank's 'aid philosophies', especially compared to the US' approach, often retained as too prone to the vagaries of different presidencies compared to the higher continuity in the EU practice, and described as at times neglecting development issues for the sake of foreign policy goals.

Figure 1. Importance of the EU in the World Bank: Looking at the present



Source: Elaboration from Author's interviews, January 2008.

[46] While the high organizational rank of the interviewees may somewhat bias answers on the neutral (e.g. non value-laden) side, the distortion appears compensated by the breadth in strategic visions entailed by their top positions. In other words, lower staff is closer to the client, and often closer to the technical aspects of the policies, but tends to be on average more distant from general perceptions based on higher and thicker information on wider organizational goals and views. Most technical and a number of political staff members have served in other lower technical positions in the Bank in the past, which also compensates for the quoted bias.

[47] Survey-2-GARNET 2007-08 The External Image of the EU in the World Bank. Hereinafter underlined text refers to quotes from the questionnaire.

Sample: n=18, top political and technical World Bank management staff. These results are displayed for purely descriptive purposes, and no statistical significance is attached to them as explained at the beginning of this section

When asked to give their opinion on the importance of the Union for the current action and policies of the Bank, a strong majority of respondents (almost 78%) rated it between important, very important or essential. 17% of the respondents judged the EU's importance as negligible for the Bank, on the premise that they would not consider the EU as a unified actor, either at the Board or in the wider arena of development policies. However, when asked to give an opinion on the weight of the EU countries collectively considered they stressed their crucial role for the Bank. Owing to the intergovernmental nature of the Bank, most respondents voiced their uneasiness with having to evaluate the importance of the Union based on a double meaning of 'EU' and 'EU Member states'.

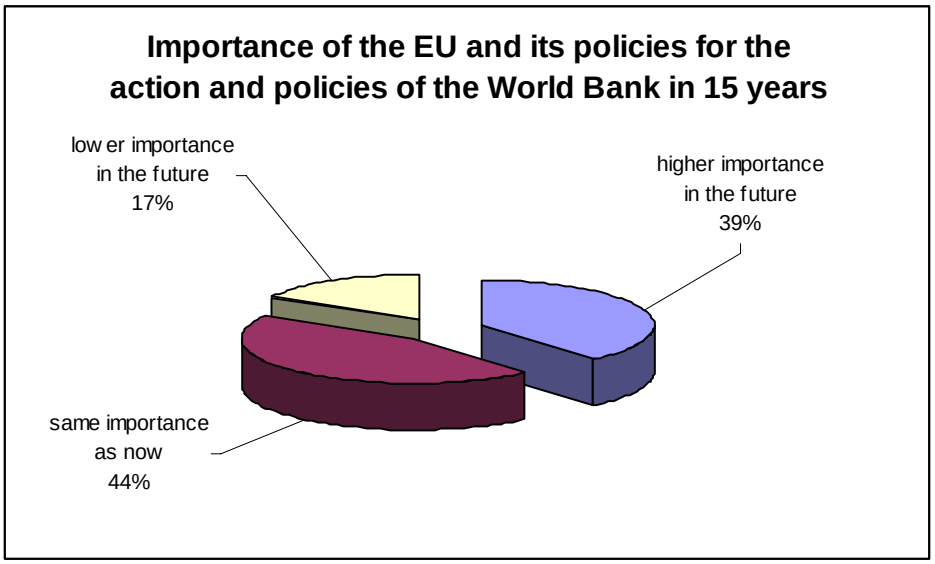
Relative to the evolution of the importance of the EU for the Bank compared to a recent past (15 years), all the answers unequivocally pointed to an increased relevance of the Union for the Bank, due both to the own EU enlargement, perceived as a pro-development choice, and augmented financial effort to sustain growth and poverty reduction in partner countries.[48]

When projecting the importance of the EU for the Bank into future scenarios, as shown in Figure 2 below, a majority of respondents (44%) sees the current relevance as enduring without further growth in relevance, as an effect of the exhaustion of the enlargement push. A plurality of answers however (39%), suggests that the EU may grow in its importance for the Bank in the future, due to both increased emphasis on providing support to aid and possible changes in the criteria for representation in the internal Bank governance. A reason given by some of those who foresee an increased relevance in the EU for the Bank also bears on their opinion on the future of the Bank itself, which is believed to see its role in lending greatly reduced. A minority (17%) believes that the EU will be less important, as a result of the growth in comparative terms of the efforts to support development by some of the emerging countries, notably China, Brazil, India and Russia.

All the respondents unequivocally rate the EU, or its major Member Countries, such as Germany, France and the UK, as key actors in the context of the overall geography of the Bank's partnerships for development. Along with the EU as a group, the Commission, the EIB, the European Parliaments (both national and EU), European NGOs and civil society are quoted as current important partners, though in different respects, for the Bank. Nordic countries and their agencies, such as SIDA for Sweden, are praised for their achievement of the 0.7 ODA/GNI target. Client countries (or partners, according to a more politically correct bankese that does not differentiate between borrowers and lenders) are also retained as main allies in the Bank's activity, with the importance of emerging markets such as China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and Russia meant to rise significantly in the next ten-fifteen years. While most respondents acknowledge that the large bilateral donors are still the main partners of the Bank (US and USAID and Japan coming along with EU bilaterals), private sector actors, such as foundations and private funds, appear to be gaining increased importance.

[48] It is worth noting that the only answer suggesting a decline in the EU relevance for the Bank's policies was relative to those ECA countries that are now Members to the EU, and have, as such, moved away from the Bank's development policies in that Region.

Figure 2. Importance of the EU in the World Bank: Looking ahead



Source: Elaboration from Author's interviews., January 2008.
Sample: n=18, top political and technical World Bank management staff . These results are displayed for purely descriptive purposes, and no statistical significance is attached to them as explained above in this section.

3.2.2 The EU in the eyes of the Bank: A complex relation

General descriptions of the relation between the World Bank and the EU focus on three main themes. First, polarized views that see the relation as either 'excellent', 'close', 'important', 'very good', 'broad and deep', 'essential', 'very trusted', or, on the contrary, just above the acceptable level, defined as 'uneven, not systematic', 'collaborative but kept to a minimum', 'limited but constructive', 'reasonable, decent', abound. Polarization of views is also evident on transparency issues: while some officials pointed to the contacts between the Bank and the EU as an exercise of 'intelligence gathering', others believe that the situation has greatly improved compared to the past and that today the two institutions 'have no secrets', with their interactions described as 'transparent and trusting'. More limited were middle-ground positions, that see the relation as 'generally good', with occasional 'frictions and competition', especially with respect to Africa and MENA, but on balance changing towards more constructive tracks (especially under the new President Robert Zoellick, who is working together with the EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel in the Limelette Process and, sources say, on a new scheme for cooperation on Climate Change issues).

Second, in a number of occasions the composite oppositional images of 'love-hate' and 'cooperation-competition' emerged clearly. Competition in Africa, where the EU has been shifting from direct project support towards budget support, or in MENA, where the EU is perceived at having been sometimes too partial in supporting the EIB over the World Bank. While different officials had their own interpretation of what the current and future 'division of labour' between the two institutions should be, some recurrent themes hinged upon the dualism between finance and knowledge/planning functions. The image of the EU as provider of funds, and of the Bank as supplier of technical expertise and often, leader in planning the overall

development strategies appear to be out of synch with the current state of affairs. On the contrary, the Bank seems to be willing to engage in a cooperative process of goal setting with the EU, in the respect of each respective mission. What is lacking, a number of Bank's officials pointed out, is a strategic vision and prioritizing approach by the EU, which does not seem ready, or even willing, to define its role in development policies and to shape its own approach in the world of multilateral institutions.

Third, the descriptions provided at times contained distinction between the World Bank-EU relation on the one hand, and the World Bank-EU Member States relation on the other. More often than not, the Bank's top management staff perceives it as being easier to work with Member States than with the EU (Commission), which is retained as slow and hyper-bureaucratic, as well as often unclear in its strategic vision, and therefore more difficult to approach in constructive terms at both the high political and implementation levels.

3.2.3 The EU in the eyes of the World Bank: Issues, policies and regions

Among the issues that currently exert most impact on the World Bank's policies, three have been quoted with repeated emphasis: aid effectiveness and donor coordination, trade, agricultural policies and their effect on developing countries, and, finally, climate change and the pursuit of the environmental agenda.

With respect to the first issue, a consensus on the need for both the Bank and the Union to 'improve coordination in client countries' and in better donor harmonization clearly emerged. As expected, efforts from the EU to sustain the Paris agenda is a most welcome development in the eyes of high level Bank staff, as it touches upon key aspects of the Bank's development mission, such as aid harmonization and alignment in donors' strategies. To a non negligible extent, these appear to have been often neglected in the practice of EU-WB interaction in the management of projects on the ground. The elaboration of joint strategies between the Bank and the EU is seen as a needed step forward in the improvement of the policymaking of development, as well as a much needed answer to the dissatisfaction expressed in the past by numerous client countries and NGOs. In addition to softening conditionality, a much contentious issue since the questionable results achieved in many instances at the end of the nineties, the drive to coordinate with the EU on 'how to distribute the aid that we each give', is seen by the Bank as a constructive course to 'find a middle ground' with the European partner, closing the gap that divided them 'fifteen years ago', when they appeared to be as 'night and day' with respect to aid policy styles. Tellingly, the Paris Process, and the Limelette Process within it, is perceived by most top officials as an unprecedented step, that brings the Bank and the Union 'under the same umbrella for the first time', the result of a learning process, much taught from recipient countries, for whom confusion, delays and poor implementation often meant piles of forms to fill and regulations to comply with, as well as demands from two –if not more- different bureaucracies to address before funds could be disbursed and projects completed. 'A road is a road', and it may not matter who builds it if you have to go to school or to work. A sense of urgency was conveyed through numerous answers on the need to devise a shared strategy between the Bank and the EU on the matter, since, still from the angle of recipient countries, 'Enough is enough'. In other words, 'real convergence' through the Paris process and the joint

effort in donors coordination is perceived as an inevitable step, if both actors want to keep pursuing their development goals in countries that have been largely disillusioned from 'past failures'. Indeed, the sense of urgency looms large as the entry of new actors with different goals and aid policy styles are already changing the dynamics of the market for development aid ('now China comes in and disrupts the convergence that has been achieved with so much difficulty').

While the 'China factor' is not always framed as a threat, its being quoted with reference to the issues that currently most impact on the EU-World Bank relations adds an important nuance to the rosy view described above. An 'after the storm comes the calm'-type of framing of EU-World Bank relations on aid harmonization and donors coordination would indeed be a misleading one. The debate on aid effectiveness, that is rightly gaining prominence as evidenced by the Accra Summit, witnesses differences and contentious issues between the EU and the Bank, both at the strategic, policy-design, and operational, disbursement and implementation, levels[49]. Some officers contrast the smooth nature of high level contacts, between DC and Brussels, with problematic and often unsatisfactory EU approach to implementation, describing it as 'pretentious', 'overly bureaucratic' and 'slow', and explaining it as inextricably linked to 'the nature of the beast: the EU is very bureaucratic, and foreign aid is not an exception'. Other opinions pointed to the lack of substance of the EU action, observing how 'The rhetoric is there in the EU but the policies on the ground are not'. While these effects are probably more severe at the implementation level, the data collected for this study show that, even after the initiation of the Paris process, a trickling up dynamic of negative feedbacks is already at work. The mere fact that the Paris declaration is perceived by the Bank as a powerful framework, but one which the EU is not always regarded as up to use to its full potential, calls for renewed attention from the Union on the definition of its role and strategies in development affairs.

On trade and trade policy issues, with one exception pointing to the fact that 'the Bank is trying to work with the Commission to help the EU' to adjust its not so pro-poor policies in trade and agriculture, the relation is on average described as 'critical', 'contentious', with 'frictions'. Technical remarks found in the documentary survey, namely issues of ROO restrictiveness, agricultural issues, trade diversion and negative impact on the future of horizontal integration in EPA prospective partners, have been also frequently mentioned in the interviews. Firm criticism on the CAP and on its negative impact on the role of the EU in trade policies has been a recurrent theme, along with remarks on the seemingly passive –at times regressive- stance of the Union in addressing the sensitive issue of trade-poverty and trade-aid links. Voices from the Latin America and South Asia Regions remarked how neither fair trade nor poverty alleviation are 'consistently pursued' so far by the EU, and how the Union should take a more pro-development stance in its market access policies in both agricultural trade and foreign investment sectors. The failure to address issues such as the removal of non-tariff barriers, whether or not linked to the debate on EPA negotiations, has also been quoted as a major obstacle to the EU policies to promote trade integration and development in partner countries. With these issues in mind, such images do not neglect that the role of the Bank is one of technical adviser, not a party to the trade negotiations, more in the area of facilitation, fund provision and implementation, and that, as such, the room for change, as well the taking up of a leading role, is much on the EU side.

[49] Notably, the shift that is currently being pursued by the EU in from direct project support to budget support-the finance method most often used by the Bank-, has caused Governments in borrowing partner countries to often receive contradictory advice form either Agency, prompting them to ask the two to come together and find joint solutions.

On inter-organizational dynamics and overall institutional aspects, when voicing their worries over the effects of the EU trade policy on developing countries, some Bank's Officials have suggested that a broader participation from the Commission, in addition to DG Trade, which has been the main counterpart of the Bank on trade matters in the past, would be advisable. DG Development, as some have remarked, seems so far to have had too limited a say in the definition of trade strategies of the Union, with the dominant position of DG Development often ending in missing the needed coordination links between the Union trade and aid-development policies. A more open dialogue with the EU as a whole was therefore recommended by a number of officers as a desirable step to ensure a positive future to the development side of trade policymaking.

Last, the third issue that emerged as key for the EU-World Bank relations was that of environmental policies and climate change. As in gender and social inclusion issues (relative to the domestic EU sphere), the general view from the Bank is that the EU is rightfully 'vocal', attracting the interest of the international community and surely 'having a crucial impact', if not 'leading' in environmental policies. The EU appears indeed to be more 'environmentally conscious' than other Members at the Bank and a majority of Officials perceive it as a natural goal-setter in these areas. Dissenting voices do exist, however, especially from some of the developing countries constituencies, which see the EU as 'increasingly less and less capable of engaging into productive discussion on climate change (biofuels), very poor in terms of basing its arguments on empirical evidence, and largely resorting to anecdotal elements to justify its position'.

Views from and on Europe and Central Asia (ECA Unit) pointed in general to an 'excellent and cooperative dialogue', supported by regular contacts with the Commission (most often quoted were DG ENL, ECFIN, RELEX, REGIO), with EU bilateral donors and with EU development banks such as the EIB and the EBRD. The existence of a common development agenda was quoted as the main reason behind such vigorously positive images, witnessing that the synergy in the transition support and accession preparation has generated positive results in terms of cooperation between the EU and the Bank, and that these elements are enduring through time. At times, these were even contrasted with the overall EU-World Bank relation, burdened by region- and country-specific fragmentation and 'lack of strategic vision'. When contentious issues appeared in the interviews, especially with respect to the role of the EIB, at times perceived as a competitor by the Bank, unduly sponsored and shielded from its responsibilities by the EU, they were always framed in ways that left no doubt about the positive resolution of what appeared to be instances of past divergences. As far as consistency issues were concerned, the interviewed officials remarked the high variability in the EU approach in the different parts of the Region. While the EU development policies were regarded as very effective in the Balkans, and, by and large, in all non-CIS countries, CIS and Central Asian partners appeared to be left out of the EU development effort, as well as approached by the Union with either a subservient tone (Russia) or a –largely counterproductive- lecturing attitude. This inconsistency was seen as reflected in the EU fluctuating approach to development, at times highly political, at times more prone to the economic side of the matter. Effectiveness in the non-CIS area was highly praised in the case of the Balkans, where the approach of the EU was described as 'innovative' and 'fast' in reacting to the multiple changes occurred in the Nineties. The launch of the Stabilization and Association Agreements, the support given to the creation of a commercial bloc in the area – attempted then for the first time in Eastern and Southern Europe -, as well as the reliance on non-governmental instruments to advance the governance agenda remain -in the

words of the Bank - instances of great past achievements by the EU in its effort at coordinating the political and the economic tracks of its complex mission.

Opinions from and on MENA appeared to be closer to a balanced view, in the acknowledgement of the high potential for current and future joint action, but with a clear perception of the existing differences in goals and interests between the two institutions. Awareness of the high political instability of the Region, and a lucid perception of the different roles that the EU and the Bank respectively perform there, surfaced in the interviews as being largely at the roots of many of the current inconsistencies of the EU action in the Region. The EU is indeed perceived as being 'generally effective' with its policies in the Region, even if a few issues were mentioned in reference to possible improvements. A somewhat sensitive topic was that of the inconsistency of the EU in enforcing the governance criteria that the Union itself had attached as a condition for some MENA countries to receive assistance in development policies. In addition, the internal differences between EU Member States and the Commission in keeping a coherent stance were quoted, relative to MENA partners where support to economic projects has not been accompanied by a sustained common effort to enforce the required compliance on governance criteria. While the interviewed officials recognized that the EU has a different mission compared to the Bank, and that shielding sensitive political equilibria might require different choices on the side of a political entity as the EU, they nonetheless suggested that the Union could greatly improve its foreign economic policymaking in the Region, by being more 'objective in assessing progress made in economic and political governance' and more transparent in communicating them consistently to its partner countries. They also remarked how the EU could be faster in matching economic effort with political and moral influence, as well as more careful to minimize the risk that goal attainment is subverted downstream in the policy process, either due to lack of consensus among Member States and with the Commission, or to excessive pressuring from partner countries once the objectives have been already set and funds disbursed.

Views from several units on the EU-World Bank relations in Sub Saharan Africa hinged around the issues of trade, donors' coordination and support to development in conflict-torn states. They convey a mixed picture about the quality and effectiveness of the EU-WB interaction, both at the high strategic level, through the Paris process, and in partner countries. As detailed above and in Sections 3.1.1-3.1.2, a key issue in the case of Sub Saharan Africa, 'the highest development challenge' for both the EU and the Bank, donor coordination issues and frictions over the EPA negotiations are at the center of the discourse. Views on the effectiveness of EU development policies in the Region are mixed. On the one side there is a positive assessment of the role played by the EU in the initiatives on development coordination and aid harmonization. On the other side, negative remarks refer to the cumbersome, slow approach of the EU to development finance, with both political and bureaucratic factors quoted as obstacles that delay the attainment of development objectives 'even if commitment is there'. All in all, however, the present situation is described as greatly improved, and the EU current efforts are being appreciated compared to situations in the past, when the EU sometimes behaved as if the Region was 'about to blow up' like a group of 'Governments in West Africa'.

3.2.4 Perceptions on power, foreign policy role and independency

Inputs for a 'more globally-minded Europe' started thriving in European Cabinets before and after the change occurred in world politics after the Al Qaeda attacks to the Twin Towers on

9/11, causing at times tension with the American ally, and surely unfolding a lively debate on the redefinition of the EU's external role in world affairs[50]. Mostly thought of in diplomatic and military terms, indeed the areas where common external practices had been least developed, the theme of the EU's role in global politics cannot be approached separately from its economic and political-economy components. As suggested in the previous sections, the matters of trade and cooperation to development, fall exclusively, the former, or partly, the latter, under the umbrella of common external policies. In the wider debate on the future of the role of the EU in global affairs, it seems then particularly important to open a window on how the Union itself is seen with respect to its role in the world by one a key global partner in the areas of economic cooperation for trade and development, such as the World Bank.

A large majority of World Bank officers (78%) sees the EU as an international power, albeit most respondents qualified this statement in several ways, suggesting that the 'yes/no' framing is probably too narrow to describe the nuances implied in the concept when referred to the EU. Clearcut answers pointed to the exceptional nature of the EU, 'A Union of the Third Millennium', the first and sole example, in the category of unions of rich countries, that aims at increasing both the internal and external wellbeing of peoples, a major power in economic relations 'by sheer size' and 'aid provision', a 'freedom producer' as well as a 'powerful counterbalance to the US and Russia'. Leaning on the 'yes' side, several respondents added 'increasingly so', 'could do better', 'boxing below its weight'. Those who do not see it as an international power quoted among other things the absence of a credible alternative to NATO in security and military policies (due to both absence of financial capacities and imperfectly overlapping memberships in EU and NATO), the multiplicity of foreign policy objectives and the weaker influence of the Commission in foreign affairs compared to the weight of leaders from EU single Member States.[51]

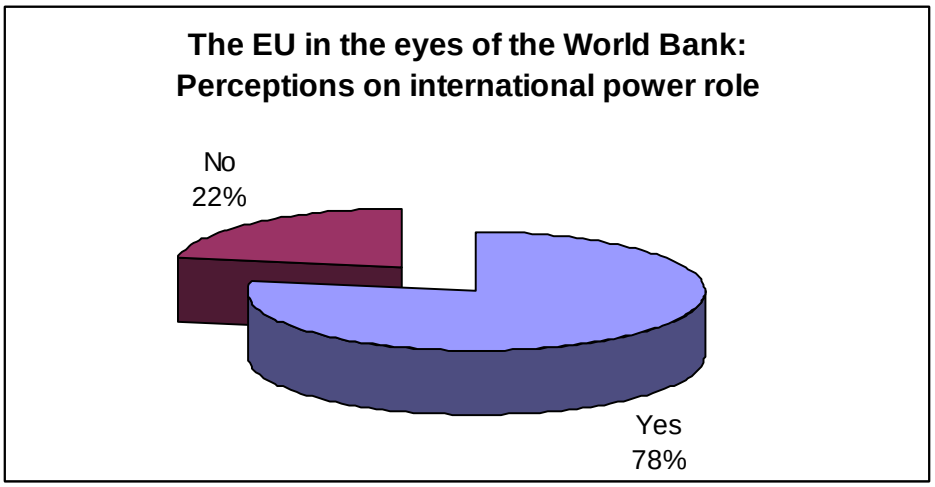
Relative to perceptions on the EU's role in specific policy areas (military, economic, diplomatic and normative), the Union is seen in all cases as an economic international power, often having a normative impact and a great regulatory potential, less so a specific and consistent role in diplomatic affairs and virtually no clout on military issues. Among its most quoted strengths are sheer size and weight in the world economy in general, and in aid and trade in particular. While the virtuosity of the Nordic group came up in several instances, the overall Union is singled out in the donor community for its generosity in providing aid and committing itself to reach the 0.7 ODA/GNI target. The EU is also praised for its success in preserving and promoting diversity, and in showing how different traditions, experiences and styles can coexist and lead to overall increase in internal and external wellbeing of peoples. Additionally, the EU is perceived as a sincere standard bearer of poverty reduction, open to the world and dedicated to promote core values, such as the respect of human rights, aspiration to a better life and cultural diversity in partner countries. Still on the side of pluses, World Bank officers clearly appreciate the political nature of the EU - a trait that differentiates it from the non-political and chiefly economic nature of the Bank - and appear to put a high value on its opportunity to rightfully advance the promotion of political values into its economic policies. On this point, most have commended the non-coercive approach of the EU to its foreign economic policymaking,

[50] See The Economist, 'Facing responsibility', Special Report on Europe in the world, November 23, 2002. U.S. Edition.

[51] 'If Merkel, Sarkozy and Brown come out and say something jointly they will have far more impact than the Commissioners or the Head of the Commission...'. Author's interview, January 2008.

contrasting it with the more coercive US approach, positively acknowledging its 'unselfish' methods in linking economic and security goals in the making of its foreign policy.

Figure 3. 'Do you see the EU as an international power?'



Source: Elaboration from Author's interviews, January 2008.
Sample: n=18, top political and technical World Bank management staff. These results are displayed for purely descriptive purposes, and no statistical significance is attached to them as explained at the beginning of Section 3.2.

Looking at the EU weaknesses, which are to a large extent also quoted as motivations for the negative opinions on its role as an international power, the answers point to the fact that the Union is often not perceived as one. To begin with, 'it is not a member of the Bank', it is 'often weakly coordinated in the Board' as either the Commission communicates separately with the World Bank President, or single EDs define strategies in other *fora* and then report them to other EU EDs in the Bank *post hoc*. In a similar vein, related to the area of security policies, the EU is 'not a member of the UN Security Council', and is perceived as not being 'interested in shaping its role and influence in multilateral institutions'. Other missed opportunities to act cohesively and purposively appear caused by the already quoted slowness and overly bureaucratic approach to policymaking in general, which gets reflected in poor implementation and poor coordination capacity in the field. Finally, on the side of lows, some officials have noted how the EU is not ready to make use of its potential to the fullest, to advance political values in economic and development programs, appearing at times unclear in setting its strategic objectives.

Consistent with the previous picture, on average the respondents see the EU as a very important player in shaping trade policies in the world, likely to grow in this role in the future, a relevant player in development policies, but consider it only a minor, in some cases virtually non-existent player in shaping security equilibria in the world. Exceptions to the opinion on a negligible role in security affairs do exist, however. Views from and on the Africa and MENA Regions see a potential in the EU's ability to help in negotiations and peacekeeping operations, subject to EU Member States' ability to overcome existing differences among divergent national policy goals and between economic and foreign affairs ministries in each respective country. Perspectives from the particular standpoint of social development note how the EU appears to be

taking a too narrow perspective on security, and suggest the possibility that by redefining the concept of human security in a way that incorporates the many diverse individual- and region-specific threats to human beings the EU could vastly expand its potential role in security affairs.[52]

On the one side the perception that in day-to-day organizational practices the Bank's staff deals with EU Member countries, either in client countries, or through the Board, points to some vagueness as to whether the EU is seen as internally independent (e.g. from the priorities of its different Member States). On the other side, when it comes to policy matters, there appears to be a widespread image of the EU as an externally independent actor (i.e. from the pressures from other actors in the development market), which can provide a crucial counterbalance to the US.

3.2.5 Images of the Union and its foreign economic policy

Different from the previous parts of Section 3.2, where replies from Officials were based on the communication of own rational assessments of past experiences, the answers discussed in this part to questions on images of the EU and on the EU's foreign economic policy rest on the immediacy of the mental representations that came to the mind of the interviewees. Their utility then is simply one of providing the readers with a series of systems of meaning and meaning attribution that can help to reveal the emotional, non-rational impact of the idea of the EU and of its economic policies on World Bank officials.

The Blue Flag and Berlaymont building, headquarter of the Commission in Brussels, are on top of the list in terms of frequency, at par with 'large bureaucracy' and 'huge and intricate buildings'. Words such as 'chaos' and 'confusion' follow suit, accompanied by images such as 'big success story', 'US of Europe', 'soft power', 'joy', 'Monnet', 'Waldner' and 'Lamy'. Large size (in either success or inefficiency) seem to dominate the group, while the positive concept of unity and success in promoting high ideals appears to be reflected in the reference to the United States, the reference to Jean Monnet, joyful feelings, a soft promotion of values and positive memories of 'EU colleagues in the field promoting strong values in development and cooperation'. On the not-so positive side, 'slowness', 'centralization', 'pretentiousness', 'preaching', 'collection of European countries' have also appeared in the answers, indicating how the EU is also associated with its poorer performances in either effectiveness and internal cohesion.

Images lean towards the gloomier side when it comes to 'EU foreign economic policy', a concept that appears to be often associated with 'protectionism' in the mind of World Bank officers, 'absurd agricultural policy', 'weak drive to explore new relations', open questions ('what is the EU foreign economic policy?'), 'lack of a proactive strategy', 'self-serving', 'wait-and-see attitude'. On the bright side, however, a minority of respondents has quoted 'generous development assistance', 'positive role in climate change', or neutral images referred to either policy fields or roles, such as 'trade', 'trade negotiator' or 'agriculture'.

[52]Examples made for the Africa Region emphasized dimension of security beyond the military aspects, such as gender discrimination, aids discrimination and climate change, quoting the British example as a template to integrate environmental security in its overall national security priorities.

3.2.6 Views from top political staff
Group Specificity and images of the EU: perceptions from Executive Directors

A major remark concerns the difference in answers provided by top technical, on the one side, and political management on the other. As expected, the role and function of these officials greatly orients their images of the EU. While top technical management is in charge of pursuing Bank goals, top political staff is by organizational design accountable to each specific member donor, and as such has a duty to advance the specific priorities of its constituency (all the member countries in the group). Secondly, as the difference in roles and functions between these two groups is reflected in their organizational practice, the interaction with different actors also influences their perceptions of the EU. In their capacity, VPs have a higher chance to interface with representatives in client countries, in addition to Board Members and Officials in Brussels, and appear often to point to how the EU is perceived in its policy action in client and partner countries, more than at the strategic and planning levels within the Bank in HQ DC. Differently, the EDs, while also having –for prior exposure or current briefing from their staff- contacts and experience on the EU-WB interaction in client countries, tend to focus more on the inter-organizational dynamics and on the interactions that take place either in HQ DC, Brussels and other EU capitals, or in world top-level meetings.

Common issues within the top political management are that of strategic coordination between the Bank and the EU in goal setting and that of coordination of EU Members within the Board, as well as on the ground in client countries. The first issue directly points to an image of the EU that 'is still grappling with what its strategic role is', which has been quoted by one top political official as to 'why a strategic partnership [between the Bank and the EU] is missing'.[53] In this respect, among the retained 'EU's greatest weaknesses' the same top political official went so far as quoting explicitly the 'unwillingness to discuss the shape of the EU influence in international institutions'. While the reasons behind such unwillingness, and its extent, appear to too complex to be analyzed in detail, suffice it to note here the potential reputational loss for the EU that is implied in its lack of clarity on future strategic visions.[54] The mere fact that the EU is seen as not having been fully able to define its goals so far, then, becomes a key motivation behind the difficulty of moving from the current ad hoc, point specific cooperation between the two institutions to a truly strategic partnership (a 'master plan' would be missing, as well as a clear vision on the future of aid architecture).

Relative to the second issue, several points have been raised. On the one side, the long lamented lack of internal EU cohesion appears to have detrimental effects on the assertiveness with which EU Member States in the Board are able to coordinate and support common EU positions consistently throughout a range of decision processes. The perspective from EU EDs in EU Member constituencies is one of fragmented action. The fact that the EU Member States are currently spread over eight different constituencies (out of which three are single-country constituencies, and the other five are mixed constituencies) is seen by top EU EDs at the Bank as if sometimes there were 'eight different Europeans'. A recurrent element in the interviews, common to both technical and political top staff as seen above, is that 'The EU is not a Member of the World Bank'. Given the majoritarian contribution to the overall Bank's budget provided by the EU Member countries and the EU common institutions (namely the Commission, among

[53] Author's interview, Washington DC, World Bank HQ, January 2008.
[54] See Baroncelli (2008b).

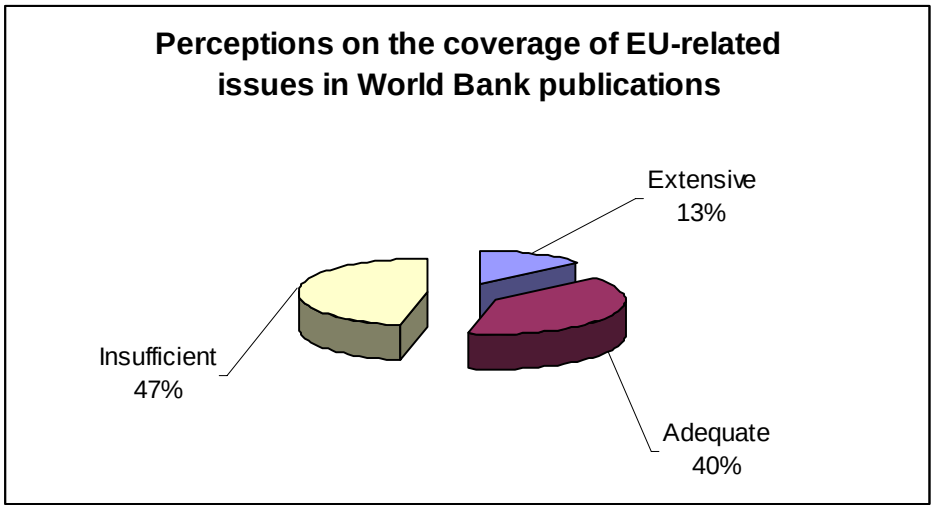
the quoted actors in the interviews), the net effect is often interpreted as one of 'under-representation'.[55]

3.2.7 Sources of information and degree of coverage

Most of the top officials draw their information on the EU from either professional contacts at the institutional levels (own Economic and Foreign Affairs Ministries in the case of the EDs, the World Bank External Relation Unit and its press review, as well as direct contacts with the Commission (DG RELEX, DG ECFIN and DG TRADE among the recurrent ones), contacts with EU MPs, contacts with the World Bank Office in Brussels, colleagues at the Board, in DC and in partner countries, or through the press and specialized websites. The FT was the most quoted press source, followed by the Economist, and by national newspapers (Washington Post, New York Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine, along with 'Danish', 'French', and 'British' Newspapers). The BBC tops the list of News Agencies, while some respondents have also quoted EU Research Networks (CEPS) and advocacy coalitions' websites.

When asked to rate the coverage of the EU and EU-related issues in the Bank's publications the majority of officers (47%) deemed it to be insufficient, closely followed by a 40% who rated it as 'adequate', with only a 13% evaluating it as 'extensive'. In general, however, respondents noted the high variability of coverage according to regional and functional specificities (with high visibility of trade and integration issues in PREM and DECRG-Trade, Africa and MENA, and high prominence of cooperation in private sector development and transition in ECA).

Figure 4. World Bank's Coverage of EU Issues



Source: Elaboration from Author's interviews, January 2008.
Sample: n=15, top political and technical World Bank management staff. These results are displayed for purely descriptive purposes, and no statistical significance is attached to them as explained at the beginning of Section 3.2.

[55] On the debate over the reform of internal governance at the World Bank see Eurodad (2006).

4. Conclusions and Policy Implications

4.1 The EU in the eyes of the World Bank: Highlights and lowlights

As discussed in the previous sections of this Report, the sheer economic size of the Union, its role in world trade and trade negotiations, its generous contribution and role in development policies has made it a key player in world affairs as well as a vital partner of the World Bank in the pursuit of common development goals.

Perceptions and images vary in kind and degree, according to products (Newsletters express less nuanced views than Report items, which in turn are less elaborated compared to Research papers), units and individuals. While no big difference in specificity has been observed between technical and political top management, views from political staff appear richer in information about the institutional aspects of the EU-World Bank relations, while opinions from top technical staff appear more informative on policy issues. Individual professional and cultural backgrounds also explain part of the variation in perceptions from the interviews, as many officials base their evaluations on past experiences with either EU Member States or EU institutions.

The 'highlight list' of the overall views on the EU comprises the quoted sheer size and weight in the world economy in general, supported by several images of positive 'bigness', in aid and trade in particular. The EU generosity in the provision of funds for the cooperation to development is reinforced, within the group of EU Member States, by the much praised performance of the Nordic group. Second, the 'amazing success story' of the EU, seen as the result of the transformation of a multiplicity of states and 'different economic systems' into a 'common economic and cultural reality' was a recurrent theme, associated with remarks about its uniqueness. A 'Union of the Third Millennium', as the EU was referred to by one top technical manager, is considered the first in its kind, among the unions of 'rich states' (a trait that bears a special recognition in an institution whose mission is to reduce poverty), which has among its goals the improvement of wellbeing of both its members and peoples in the world at large.

Third, the complex mission of the EU, both a political and economic reality, appeared on balance a received component of the different opinions gathered through the interview process. The Bank appreciates that one great potential of the Union is that, as a political entity, it can rightfully do what the Bank is not allowed to do, bound by its economic mission, i.e. advance the promotion of political values into its economic policies. While this is true of all the bilateral donors, who, as such, are all seen as important partners by the Bank, larger donors, with larger and deeper influence on world affairs are necessarily perceived as strategic in the Bank.

In this respect, the EU appears to enjoy particularly positive ratings. Perceived as sincere standard bearer of poverty reduction, open to the world, dedicated to promote strong values in partner countries, the Union is seen as 'less selfish' and 'non-coercive' in its foreign economic policy compared to the other major bilateral donor at the Bank, the United States. The comparison between the two partners suggests that the Bank favors in many instances the softness of EU-approach to the aid-security linkage, over the 'more strategic', 'not inclusive' and politically-driven US approach. The EU is perceived as more consistent, even if at times slower, than the US, whose policy goals appear to change more frequently according to the priorities of different Administrations. The Union is also appreciated for its inputs to the Bank's policies and operation in specific areas, such as social (cohesion and gender) and environmental agendas, where it is perceived to be a leader and to share the same 'aid philosophy', while the United States appeared either less keen or on different positions altogether. On governance and

performance evaluation issues both the EU and the US are seen as having goals largely overlapping with those of the Bank. On issues such as private sector development and poverty reduction strategies based on investment climate improvement, however, the interviews show that its goals and strategies are closer to those of the United States than to those of the EU.

Fourth, the EU is seen at the Bank as a remarkable example of how diversity can coexist and lead to peaceful progress, especially in views from Asia and the Pacific. The 'EU as a conscience of the world' is sometimes seen as a model in South Asia, favored ideologically in this specific respect (i.e. as a model for cooperation and integration in SAARC) over the US, who is nonetheless perceived as a key player in the Region and as an ally by India.

Diversity has its merits, but, as in most cases, looking at the other side of the coin reveals a more complex reality. On the side of lowlights, a recurrent theme was the perceived internal fragmentation of the Union, the contrasts between different interests of EU Member States and between them and the Commission, the poor coordination and ensuing confusion on the receiving end, be it partner countries or counterparts in the Bank. These perceptions were reinforced by the absence of joint membership, either at the Bank or in other key multilateral fora, such as the Security Council at the United Nations. Recounts of breaks in organization-specific routines also reported poor coordination in the Board, with either absence of appropriate transmission of top-level contacts between the Commission and the Bank's President to EU EDs in the Board, or single EU EDs separately elaborating strategies in other *fora (*such as the G7) and then reporting *post hoc* to other EU EDs in the Bank.

Second, still on the side of lowlights, such fragmentation at the high level was coupled with perceptions on overly bureaucratic nature to sometimes justify the EU slowness and its implementation deficits in specific projects in the field. While 'the nature of the beast'-type of motivation (large organization, large bureaucracy, higher risk of coordination gaps at both decision-making and implementation levels) was also applied to the Bank in several instances, a recurrent, EU-specific theme was the impression of 'lack of expertise' and 'lack of technical capacity'. Not surprising from an organization whose goal has been in the past sixty years that of providing, among other things, technical advice to client countries, a modicum of criticism on technical issues should be discounted for. However, the image seems a recurrent one, and, according to the words of the more experienced senior top technical staffs (profiles with more than 30 years of experience), an enduring trait in the EU's records. Opinions on EU's effectiveness in Africa and the Pacific top this list, while lack of competence and partiality in the EU self evaluation function seem cross-cutting perceptions.

While technical problems are likely to find technical solutions, hopefully sooner than later, the implications of these perceptions on images of the EU at the wider political level appear potentially more difficult to forecast. This leads directly to the third 'minus' in the list of perceptions recorded in the Survey, much quoted in the interviews, surely a theme in the specialized press, not an issue in Bank's products such as Reports and Research items. The quoted lack of coordination, and at traits low effectiveness, have made the 'EU difficult to work with', 'difficult to interpret', projecting the image of a body which 'does not make clear what it wants'. To sum up, lack of effectiveness on the ground impacts back on top staff and generates the perception of 'vagueness', and lack of clarity in the EU 'strategic goal setting'.

Aside from coordination issues, voices from different units, both political and technical, have remarked how the EU does not always appear capable to take full advantage of its economic weight to advance its preferred political values in development policies. This gap casts a somewhat somber shadow on the implications of the current EU attempts to gain visibility in

international affairs, as some have put it. Many of the top political and technical officials indeed appreciate that the Union is making a special effort in defining its role and image in world politics, to make its influence on world affairs more effective and purposive. However, increased visibility with lower effectiveness in key areas such as development aid and trade, to which we now turn, may not bring the Union the reputational effect that it wants to achieve.

Fourth, EU protectionism in trade and agriculture, has appeared with almost no exception in all interviews, also being the target of numerous items in the Bank's Newsletters and Policy research working papers. To this theme, a key issue in the future of the EU-World Bank relations, as well as for the overall future of the world economy, is dedicated the following section

4.2 Trade and development: one loud voice? EU protectionsim and the implications for its reputational capital

With respect to trade policy, both the documentary evidence and the interviews suggest that the image of the EU at the Bank is indeed one of a global player, playing a key role in the world trade system. Praising the exceptionally good results achieved with the completion of a common internal market, however, the opinions expressed by the respondents seemed more aligned with those recorded in several client countries on the EU (Fioramonti 2007; Poletti 2007), and pointed to the weakness in pro-poor effects of the Union's trade policies. A World Bank top technical official noted how in the area of social policies, with particular reference to inclusion and gender issues, EU internal achievements have not been so far matched by external results. While the inconsistency in the area of social policy can be somehow tracked back to the relatively recent developments in the construction of a truly European social space, also burdened by the new challenges of enlargement, the lack of consistency between internal and external strategies in the area of trade policy, the oldest and most highly regarded instance of common external action, appears to carry implications that could be potentially more serious for the future development of the EU's role in world affairs.

In a number of instances, the EU has been reported as 'perceived as being sincere' in its efforts to promote trade integration and growth, its action being backed by the fact that, like it or not, it is the biggest aid provider in the world ('if money is needed it is to the EU that it comes from'). The EU 'absurd agricultural policy', its restrictive and ambiguous stance on ROOs in the EPA negotiations, its emphasis on maintaining agricultural subsidies, risk 'destroying part of the role' that it has built throughout the years as a honest and committed standard bearer of the twin causes of development and poverty reduction. Fifteen, twenty years ago, against the background of a nascent multilateral development community, this would have had negative, but manageable implications. Today, with increased voice and role from all partners in the global political economy (both in trade and development areas) the negative repercussions on the future of the EU's external role risk being much more severe. Credibility losses in supporting the pro-poor effects of trade reforms induced in partner countries as by-products of EPA accession, for example, are dangerous for many a reason. Views from the World Bank nail down the regressive effect that they may have on development prospects for African partners. To these direct transmission effects (market disruption, incentives to adverse restructuring and consequent market losses, trade diversion), echoing in part the remarks in the specialized Anglo-Saxon press, this Report adds indirect, longer term implications stemming from the existing dynamics of aid policies in client countries. The opportunity cost of displeasing African partners, 'a beautiful

bride' (The Economist, December 6, 2007), is much higher now, as new aid providers have, rightfully, entered the market, carrying their own goals, styles and practices. While the Bank has warmly supported, and highly welcomes the 'graduation' of China to donor status and its increased contribution to IDA resources, if looked at from the standpoint of the EU, as of that of the other major OECD DAC partners, new entries accompanied by own reputational loss may not cast a benign shadow on the future of the EU in the overall process of development support.

4.3 A more mature Africa, conditionality and the changing geography of donors: Implications for the EU aid and trade policies in Africa

As briefly sketched above, the EU has emphasized the renewed importance that it attaches to supporting development in Sub-Saharan Africa and to further pursue the dialogue on coordination of strategic donors' action, initiated with the Bank through the Limelette Process in 2003. Along with the UNDP and the US, the EU –and its bilateral donors, namely the UK and France- are currently the main national donors that cooperate with the Bank in projects in Africa. However, the geography of donor partnerships in SSA is rapidly changing. While an increased variety of options should always be welcome from a global welfare standpoint, in the eyes of the donors increased competition also means that increased effort is needed to improve supply. The growing involvement of China in the market for aid to Africa is in itself a good thing. On the one side it provides poor African countries with additional sources to finance their growth. On the other side it further advances the integration of China, the fastest growing economy today, in the global economy, earning it a well deserved status of supporter to the cause of development in less developed countries. In terms of strategic analysis, this will probably spell more pressure on all donors to supply aid (financial and technical) in more efficient and effective ways (custom-made, at the extreme of this 'consumer sovereignty' scenario for the future of the aid market in Africa). What are the implications for the EU? A lot has been and is currently being done, but more should be done in the future. Better, according to the specific circumstances, the EU should probably reflect more carefully on how it does what it does. Take the EPAs, to quote the example of what has been found here to be perhaps the most contentious issue with respect to current cooperation in development for Africa between the Bank and the EU. What had been repeatedly conveyed on pure welfare grounds to the EU regarding the need to reform its agricultural policy and agricultural trade since the mid-eighties, has now become a decisive issue for both the future of African development and the future of the overall policymaking of development in the Africa Region (as long as the region will need aid, which will probably be the case in the next 20 years to come). 'Lecturing the Africans too much' on governance criteria as conditions to be eligible for support may indeed backfire at the EU. If by holding the plug too much, countries are excluded from EU programs, they can now turn to other (Chinese), less socially and politically onerous, options. On the other side, not pushing at all for the establishment of those institutional elements that appear to guarantee a viable road towards increased development (respect for human dignity, equal access of all citizens to public services, equal rights for women and men..to quote a few) is not a winning option either, not for the EU and not for the overall cause of African development. As a World Bank's official nicely put it, if it wants to successfully deal with this new African maturity, the EU, along with the Bank and all the 'wise donors', 'should have a nuanced conversation' with its African partners.

4.4 Conclusions and policy inputs: coordination or competition?

"I've often said development is a team sport, there are a lot of players on the field but we have to cover all the positions. We can't all be strikers; is that the term you use in Europe; we can't all be goalies, every position needs to be covered, that means we need to work together, work as a team and I very much appreciate the teamwork that I find between the World Bank at the country level and at the Headquarters level and the European Commission and thank you for that Louis."

Paul Wolfowitz, Former World Bank President, Brussels, November 2006[56]

In the majority of cases, both documentary sources and interviews welcome and praise the achievements in the EU-World Bank recent coordination efforts on aid and donor harmonization. In the views expressed by the Bank 'impressive' results have been reached compared to the past, when the two institutions appeared to act in a totally uncoordinated fashion, and are likely to be further improved under the effort currently pursued by the new President, Robert Zoellick, who appears to have established good high level direct contact with the EU Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel. As described in the previous sections, the heads of the two institutions, President of the Bank and Head of the Commission, appear on a firm cooperation track on these issues, determined to enhance the potential that the Bank and the Union can best develop in their respective areas.

However, when asked to elaborate on the effectiveness of the EU in specific policies and regions, some of the respondents have noted how 'politics can get in the way' and create 'substantial obstacles in client countries', and how, at the implementation level, the EU process of aid delivery is still 'cumbersome', 'bureaucratic' and 'slow'. In a number of occasions perceptions from top Bank officials suggest that the situation in the making of the policy processes at different levels is somewhat more complex.

As noted there, while these effects probably surface more seriously in the implementation phases, critical views from top level Bank officials suggest that both policy and role definitional issues may be at stake for the Union. While regarded as a key partner in development, the EU is sometimes seen as lacking expertise or prey of old fashioned politics, sometimes questionable in its recruiting policies of hiring 'young EU professionals instead of building capacity at the local level'. To quote recurrent examples that have emerged in the interviews, non-synergic overlap between the Bank Action Plan and the EU Strategy for Africa, or World Bank-EIB competition in project financing for ECA and MENA countries are cases in point. It appears therefore important for the Union to carefully reflect on these aspects and possibly sharpen its current effort. While scaling-up is already underway, a re-consideration of methods and approaches may improve the effort to coordinate with the Bank.

First, less weight on immediate 'general visibility' targets, and a renewed emphasis on redefinition of goals and methods could be fruitful during this phase. Complex political and economic priorities should be better harmonized in own EU strategies, to ensure consistency both in the eyes of partner countries and at the Bank. If aid is linked to the attainment of governance standards, the EU should be clearer in the definition of these benchmarks, as well as more consistent in evaluating the countries' achievements and the allocation of funds. Ex-ante

[56] Press call -Paul Wolfowitz and EU Commissioner Louis Michel, Brussels, Nov. 15, 2006, accessed at: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21131393~menuPK:64255981~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html

disbursements do not appear to go in this direction, while objectiveness in ex-post assessments can do a lot on both the policy effectiveness and reputational fronts.

Second, the EU should capitalize on the trusting relation that it enjoys with the Bank. A widened dialogue should be pursued by all the DGs involved in development policies, and DG Development (EuropeAid) could positively entertain more regular exchanges of information with relevant counterparts at the Bank. Disturbing perceptions over competition between the EIB and the World Bank, or the EBRD and the IFC should be eliminated altogether, as voices from both ECA and MENA speak of largely positive interactions with the Commission and wish for increased cooperation within the respective areas of competences. Trust could also be enhanced by the EU on the commitment that the Bank appears to have with respect to a generally neutral pursuit of development goals. Closeness to the EU approach, especially in social issues such as cohesion and gender, as well as on environmental themes, proves that a substantial overlap exists between the two institutions also in these policy areas, in addition to the shared commitment to foster development and reduce poverty. Fears of undue influence of the US, and of the Bank's reliance on past strict conditionality approaches in privatization programs do not appear reflected in the current Bank's approach to investment climate improvement and private sector development strategies.

Third, closely linked to the two previous points, the Union should define more clearly its goals according to its mission and role, focusing on its comparative advantages and relying on the Bank to complement its efforts. This would provide a means to tackle the perceived lack of expertise, and the ensuing reputational effect, while allowing some time for the EU to improve its expertise where it deems it to be necessary. Alternatively, the EU could focus on prioritizing its strategic goals and coordinating them with those of the Bank in areas of mutual interest, sharing their pursuit in the respect of each other institutional and policy specificities. The political nature of the Union, its ideological drive and the 'emulation capital' that it enjoys in the eyes of the Bank and of partner countries provide an exceptional basis to develop more ambitious foreign policy goals. As shown in the previous sections, the EU in the eyes of the World Bank has both the honors and responsibility of a major trade power, and a key actor in development. While it appears often as a negligible presence in security and military affairs in the world, remarkably less assertive than the US, and often unable to get attention as the American partner invariably –even if not always positively- does- some say that it may have a high potential in these fields as well. Extending the EU concept to the Balkans, for example, incorporating the coordination of police forces in addition to the military, or carrying further on the development of a new overall concept of security, including gender and environmental issues, especially with respect to its development policies in Africa, could potentially improve the chances of a wider and more coherent foreign policy role for the EU worldwide.

Finally, to develop synergies building on existing comparative advantages, the EU could positively rely on the extensive knowledge that the Bank has not just of technical issues in aid management but also of institutions in partner countries, which are key actors in the making, and the success, of development policies. Past failures and low effectiveness of development strategies have been found to be largely due to the lack of participation of partner actors in developing countries to the overall process of aid policymaking.

Strong commonality of objectives and close cooperation normally brings along more occasions to dissent, potentially opening the way to tensions. Wherever there is close contact, opportunities to cooperate emerge, as well as chances to conflict. It is therefore on the side of these two players, the EU and the World Bank, that largely share similar objectives in the area of

development, to reinforce cooperation where this already exists, and to turn differences into challenges to build cooperation where collaboration is still in the making.

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FORUM PER I PROBLEMI DELLA PACE E DELLA GUERRA

GARNET - Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

RESEARCH PROJECT
THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (PHASE TWO)

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Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Lorenzo Fioramonti & Sonia Lucarelli

The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the Framework of the Jointly integrated research project 5.2.1. (*Normative issues)* of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - GARNET (EU 6th Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3; Contract n. 513330). We are grateful to **Garnet** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** for their financial contribution to the project.

THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- Drawing general conclusions on the 2006-2008 research project -

This concluding report tries to sum up the most relevant findings of both phases of the Research Project 'The External Image of the European Union'.

The various reports have confirmed that the EU is not a particularly relevant topic for public debate in most countries around the world. The EU's cultural and social image is still fragmented, while the European project remains vastly unknown to citizens of non-European countries.

Moreover, there seems to be a significant 'gap' between how the EU perceives itself and how it is perceived by citizens, governmental elites, civil society groups and the media in other countries outside Europe. It also appears as if the 'distinctiveness' of the EU as a global actor upholding values such as solidarity, human rights and sustainable development does not necessarily reverberate in the set of most common external perceptions. In this regard, it must be emphasized that we did indeed find some evidence that the EU is beginning to be perceived as a progressive environmental actor, which is likely to grow in the future provided that the EU will be able to take the lead on finding a credible global strategy against climate change.

Some of the data presented in this policy brief points to a potentially inverse relation between 'positive image' and 'policy effectiveness.' The policy areas in which the EU's self-representation is closer to its external image – such as multilateralism, diplomacy, promotion of democracy and the like – are also those in which the EU's unitary decision-making is less developed and its effectiveness deemed quite low. By contrast, the policies in which the EU could make a real difference due to its 'common voice' and economic leverage – such as international trade – are those for which the EU is often criticized.

Fragmentation, poor communication and lack of a symbolic message are all crucial factors accounting for the skewed image of the EU as shown by the results of this multi-country survey. In order to overcome such weaknesses, European institutions and policymakers should improve not only the coherence of various EU policies, but also their consistency with the fundamental values the EU affirms to promote. At a more general level, it is paramount to develop a socio-

cultural message able to explain to the citizens of the world—and also to European citizens—what the EU's global ambition is and how it can be accomplished. Therefore, we have identified several recommendations to help EU institutions achieve such a result.

Policy Recommendations

The external images of the EU that we analyzed are the result of complex dynamics stemming from long-term structural factors (e.g. political identity, historical memories, socially-shaped conceptions of world order) and more short-term variables (e.g. role and interests of the country, the specific political interaction with the EU or with other major powers, specific interaction with EU's Member states, EU's communication practices). For all these reasons, an EU strategy aimed at avoiding misperceptions and improving positive images should go beyond reforming public diplomacy (which is just one element of what needs to be reformed) so as to tackle crucial political and institutional weaknesses.

The areas to be reformed/improved can be summarized as follows:

Recommendation 1 : Improve policies

It would be a great mistake to believe that all the problems associated with the various EU's images derive from misperceptions. Some 'misperceptions' are common to many countries and cannot be reduced to a simple matter of communication. Coherence and effectiveness in EU's foreign policy are not easy targets and there is still a long way to go, as recognized by analysts and policymakers during and after the Constitutional process. Whereas the Lisbon Treaty can be regarded as a good step towards creating an institutional framework able to foster coordination among EU's institutions and the Member States, there are still many sources of incoherence that can only be addressed as a result of **political choices.** For instance, it was found that the **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) attracts the greatest criticism and threatens EU's credibility as an actor concerned with fairness and injustices. In light of the current food emergency, which also risks triggering social conflicts and political instability, the EU should commit itself to drastic reforms regarding not only the CAP but also its overall approach to international trade. As a matter of fact, the EU, a recognized global economic power, cannot avoid taking a clear stance on what type of **global economic governance** it supports. In particular, it should state clearly how it intends to reform the multilateral trade regime. Another

area likely to have a dramatic impact on EU's international credibility is **climate change**, which has seen governments failing to find a common and credible agreement. The EU has presented itself as a leading progressive actor in so far as climate change is concerned; therefore, disappointing expectations could have disastrous consequences on the EU's credibility. Finally, though the list could be much longer, the EU must clarify what **intercultural dialogue** actually means in today's Europe. European states are gradually reinterpreting their **migration** policies in light of security concerns and the EU is increasingly accused of islamophobia and anti-Semitism. The simple statement that the EU is the land of tolerance is no longer sufficient: more coordination and mutual control among Member States is necessary in order to avoid adopting double-standards and regressive policies.

Recommendation 2: Better communication

Improve information – EU's communication strategies have been long criticized for failing to promote a better understanding and appreciation of the EU both inside and outside Europe. It must be acknowledged, however, that EU institutions have started addressing this issue through the **"Plan D"** initiatives, which came into effect after the failure of the Constitutional referenda in France and the Netherlands. At the same time, though, innovative tools should be encouraged on a large scale. For instance, new generation web-designers can be commissioned to overhaul the EU portal in order to make it more easily accessible to the common public (e.g. by adopting a 'google' approach). An interesting initiative is constituted by the new audiovisual policy launched in April 2008, which could contribute to enhancing the EU's visibility both inside and outside Europe, also among the young public (this is particularly the case of audiovisuals distributed through EUTube).

Improve clarity of aims and reformulate symbolic message – Informing citizens about 'what the EU does' is not sufficient. The overall goals underlying all EU policies should be stated clearly. The objectives of each policy should be outlined in detail and aligned with the overall goals of the European project. At the same time, an overall message on the EU's global role and aspirations is paramount. However, the EU should refrain from presenting itself as an 'ethical power.' Nobody likes empires, not even of a 'normative' type. As any power, the EU has values and interests and should not be afraid of **'normalizing'** its power. Its overall message should describe the EU as a **complex actor** characterized by **interests** and values as well as **global responsibilities** that are line with an increasingly complex world. There is no simple solution to

the problems that this combination creates, but there is equally no other option for a quasi-post-westphalian entity like the EU, which aims at endorsing a different stance in world affairs but is still hampered by many inconsistencies.

Recommendation 3: Improve visibility

Due to the EU's multi-centre and multi-level institutional setup, it is almost impossible to identify a 'single face' for Europe. In the Lisbon treaty, the reforms concerning the High Representative (HR) for EU's foreign policy was aimed at creating one single institution able to work across pillars in order to enhance coherence within the system of external relations. However, the creation of a permanent Presidency in the same Treaty might vanish the effort as both the HR and the President would work as external representatives of the Union, with the risk of perpetuating the image of an institutionally-fragmented Union. Given this complex institutional architecture and the overburden that will characterize the HR's office, the latter will actually be able to rise EU's visibility and coherence only insofar as:

- it will be guaranteed that the HR will have political legitimacy to function as 'the face of the EU';
- the new European External Action Service (EEAS) will work as a real support-office for the HR with a set of **deputies to the HR,** who will assist this institution overcome the many challenges associated with its task;
- the system of **EU delegations** – which should develop as an integral part of the EEAS – will constitute a real *saut qualitatif*, compared to the current unsatisfactory network of Commission's delegations. The EU delegations will need to perform the double role of 'representatives' of the EU abroad but also 'channels' of local expectations, misperceptions and criticism.
- the HR will keep a close **coordination** not only with the Member States, but also with relevant Directorates General at the Commission, which will most probably not be moved to the EEAS (particularly DG Communication, Trade and Development).

Recommendation 4: Listen more

Good communication rests on the ability to know one's interlocutors, their expectations and preferences. The EU is often accused of not listening to its counterparts. Its communication

strategies and policies have suffered from a limited understanding of what the non-European world wants and expects from Europe. Such listening 'skills' should be improved and new channels should be made available to those actors who want to communicate with the EU. The new system of **EU delegations** designed by the Lisbon treaty—which might include also personnel from the Member States' diplomacies—might play a key role in getting the EU closer to the ground, an ability which the EU has lacked for a long time, both inside and outside its borders. It is a positive sign that the EU has become increasingly concerned with external perceptions as evidenced by the recent inclusion of a research area concerned with the EU 'external image' in the 7th Framework programme for **research**. In order to broaden the analysis of popular attitudes towards the EU, the Commission should support the inclusion of a set of two or three key questions regarding the EU in each of the existing **regional barometers** (Asiabarometer, Latinobarometer; Afrobarometer etc.) and support the creation of **Neighbourhood barometers** covering all countries included in the European Neighbourhood Policy.