HAL
open science

Are European Preferences Shared by Others ?

Zaki Laïdi

To cite this version:

Zaki Laïdi. Are European Preferences Shared by Others ?. 2006. hal-01065621

HAL Id: hal-01065621

https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-01065621

Preprint submitted on 18 Sep 2014

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

CERI

ARE EUROPEAN PREFERENCES SHARED BY OTHERS[1]?

Zaki Laïdi

Chercheur au CNRS / CERI

This conference aims at confronting analyses of European preferences with analyses of the preferences of other actors in the international system. It is an attempt to understand and, above all, analytically interpret the behavior and the meaning of the European Union presence in the world.

This question is crucial at a time when Europe is not highly regarded by Europeans themselves and at a time of a massive shifting in world power .Of course there are numerous and fascinating accounts of European foreign policy, but they contain a certain number of recurring weaknesses. They are heavily dominated by a focus on institutional concerns at the clear expense of a focus on the content of European policies (Michael Smith). Those who have tried to escape from this prism seem to be trapped in another way: they tend to idealize European policy or overestimate its performances (Hazel Smith).

SCIENCES PO

CNRS CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

[1] This paper is the keynote speech given at the Conference « Are European preferences shared by others ? » sponsored by CERI, Centre d'Etudes Européennes de Sciences Po and held in Paris on 23-24th of June 2006

Normative power, in the European case, is very often identified with the idea of a quite power (Manners). The normative approach is therefore, largely uncritical and insensitive to the concerns of those who oppose, in a way or another, these preferences. The non avowed concern of opposing a nice Europe to bad America has led to another problem: the extrapolation from of the European trajectory with the American one: like the U.S., Europe is sailing at its own pace towards a supranational structure, a kind of Superstate our British friends abhor . This mistake is often made by some American European specialists who would like to see Europe balancing America (Kupchan)

These different problems are quite understandable. Those who study Europe from an internal perspective have a natural inclination to insist on procedures and decision-making processes. And it is obviously an important issue when you have to deal with 25 nations-states. And those who adamantly reject the classifying of Europe as a weak actor may overestimate its seeming by wonderful but unknown achievements on the international scene (Leonard). Thanks to them, we have learned that genius – like the devil - is also in the details.

This conference is not aiming at contesting the serious scholarship on the subject. But it may help us to understand the normative power of the European Union in the light of its social preferences. We will then, perhaps, be able to inject a small dose of "realism" into our interpretation of Europe.

The introduction of the notion of "social preferences" in the debate on Europe and the world may help us in a number of ways: firstly by interpret European norms not in the light of some idealistic principles (niceties) but with in relation to the social interests and preferences of its inhabitants; secondly to cross the divide between social preferences embedded locally and global preferences promoted globally.

That is, in my view, the main effect of globalization in our understanding of Europe. Why is this so? Because all European public policies have now to be legitimized at the global level. In a sense, they are becoming part of the European foreign policy. Globalization, in other words, externalizes European policies and internalizes global issues. The best example are the CAP and what we call in rather fuzzy terms the European social model. Both European preferences on these two issues are confronted to a process of globalization which obliges Europe to legitimize its own preferences. For example, the CAP can be maintained provided it does not hurt the liberalization of trade in agricultural products at the international level ; furthermore, if Europe was basically the only actor to push for the introduction of a social clause at the WTO, it is precisely because its high social standards are vulnerable to open worldwide competition. Therefore, when people wonder what kind of model Europe is proposing to the rest of the world, my answer is in a sense much more defensive. In a more

and more diverse world, Europe is concerned less by the export (and promotion) of its values than the mere recognition of its preferences. That is through the confrontation of our preferences to these or the other actors that we will be able to understand what European really stands for. And that also through the analysis of European preferences that we can expect to reach a global interpretation of "Global Europe" beyond the traditional divisions between procedures and outcomes, between European public policies and European foreign policy. From a conceptual perspective, the challenge is the following: what common hypothesis can we make on Europe to understand at the same time its environmental policy, its trade policy and its nuclear stance towards Iran.

This leads me to a central point: the two issues are, of course, intertwined**.** European preferences are not naturally compatible with the preferences of others actors. And the fact that Europe is merely a soft power does not alter this reality. The equation between soft power and "nice power", hard power and bad guy power is partly misleading**.** And that is why the confrontation between European preferences and non-European preferences is invaluable in order to move beyond niceties and engage in meaningful analyses.

Having said that, I would like to propose five major assumptions of a different nature and at different levels, which are five proposals or guidelines for the debate.

I. The first assumption concerns the theoretical framework of the conference. Coming from an I.R. background, I have to find a way among realists, institutionalists, liberals, liberal-institutionalists and constructivists. But the choice may be easier than could be expected.

When you decide to invest on norms, you explicitly choose the constructivist approach. I use the term "constructivist" in its simplest acception which is the following: social reality is primarily constructed by shared ideas rather than material forces, and those ideas which shape identities and interests are not given by nature (Wendt). The constructivist bias is indisputable further our research, but it has to be tempered. I would therefore plead for a tempered constructivism, which refers to other sources of scholarship and prevents us from falling into the trap of idealism I mentioned earlier.

Liberal constructivism seems to me more adapted to understanding the issues and the European vision of the world, because the notion of preferences is well embedded in the liberal theory of international relations (Moravsik). It assumes that social preferences are defined by rational individuals who are aware of the risks of their choices. Those preferences are fluid and reversible in their consequences. It seems to me that, for example, the environmental policy of the European Union fits perfectly with this definition. I will argue that

linking normative power to social preferences may help us to get out of the idealistic trap and to cross the bridge between material power and social power. Constructivism and liberalism are not necessarily at odds. And taking seriously social preferences does not seem incompatible with the reference to ideals and values. Social preferences reflect both choices (partly rational) and values. The European preference for high environmental standards is both a product of a rational choice following a certain number of crises and the heritage of environmental values cherished by at least a certain number of countries (Germany, Scandinavia).

II. Europe expresses, defends and promotes its social preferences through international or global norms. By "norms", I mean standards of behavior for world actors based on three principles: negotiation of standards, legitimizing of those standards through international institutions and, finally, the constraining nature of those norms for all actors. That is the translation at the global level of European governance which tends to devitalize the natural basic instinct of states through norms. Normativity, at the global level proposed by Europe, is the product of European governance (Rosamond, Schmidt). The history of normative Europe draws us into another question: because Europe is deprived of power politics, is for it the global normativity remains then a smoking gun. However, the ethnocentric origin of "governance through norms" does not disqualify it automatically for the rest of the world including Asia. As far as European normative power is concerned, we need to discard a useless debate. Europe is obviously not the only power which promotes global norms; the United States is, for example, a massive norms setter in the world system. That is why the normative issue has to be regarded in a historical perspective (Postel-Vinay). It has also to be analysed outside the realism of interstate politics. The normative power of private actors is, for instance, on the rise and, in some cases, very disturbing. The issue is then not to oppose "norms addicts" to "norms hatters", but rather the central question is that Europe can act in the world system only through the promotion of norms to defend its preferences. It is a sustainable option. That is the question. From a theoretical perspective the answer is probably no, because political theory does not believe in governance through norms (Leca). On empirical grounds, the question is open to debate. But in any case, it is in my view one of the most important question of this conference. And I see in it a wonderful opportunity to melt what theories say and what evidence suggests. And therefore, the big question is to know whether the world system is amicable to such an approach. In fact, the balance between favorable and unfavorable factors may have changed. Europe made and still makes the assumption that globalization leads to interdependence and that interdependence requires governance through norms. World time is then supposed to be on its side, but the wheel may

have turned, at least since September 11. And realism that was disqualified by the end of the Cold War, may regain legitimacy and potency with the rise of countries such as China or India. Moreover, the performances of global governance are fort the time being quite limited. Since the end of the cold war the international community was able to secure three important arrangements: the WTO, the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court. Those arrangements are of different nature and received a mixed support. WTO was largely supported by Europeans and non Europeans including the US, whereas the Kyoto Protocol and the ICC entered into action without the consent of the US. But the three symbolical "institutions" are extremely fragile. The WTO has gained more legitimacy around the world, but is confronted to the difficulty of selling "open markets" to public opinion. The Kyoto Protocol is in vigor, but the inclusion of China and India is a by challenge ahead. The ICC is still weak and the US took the necessary steps to make it useless in the case of the pursuit of American soldiers. In other words, the gap between the "need of global governance" and the effectivity of it is enormous. That is a potential source of concern for Europeans and Japanese who are not "defenders of the last resort" and who are terribly worried by confrontational policies (Tamamoto). They believe in global governance because they look at it like a shelter against power politics.

In the aftermath of the Iraq crisis, the French leadership talked about the necessity of promoting a multipolar world. But multipolarity will not solve the European problem and its preference for "governance through norms", because multipolarity may be based on pure realist principles. We cannot exclude the fact that China, India and Brazil may be interested in multipolarity, as long it helps them to reach the top of the ladder in order to be recognized by the U.S. as a legitimate interlocutor. Multipolarity does not mean or imply governance through norms.

III. The potential creation of military capabilities in Europe will not, in my view, affect the structural nature of European power. The reason is quite simple: these capacities are not aiming at engaging Europe in power politics. European military power is a resource of soft power, not hard power. And I see no sea change in this as long as Europeans do not deeply feel themselves responsible for their own security. This assumption is, in my view, related to two issues: the first one is that European mentalities are still dominated by a pattern of "psychological avoidance" on security issues, and this collective attitude is paradoxically favored by the absence of a European *demos* (Weiler, Dehousse). Europeans refuse to think of themselves in terms of survival. And that is because they are not constituted as a demos that they may not be attracted by the possibility of becoming a hard power. Europeans by and large remain Kantian in their inspiration. But what stands against Kant is not Hobbes, as

Kagan has argued, but Schmitt, for whom the friend-foe pattern is at the heart of politics. You will never find a reference to an enemy in the European discourse, whereas official U.S. documents refer constantly to the enemy in an explicit way. But between Kant and Schmitt, we may find a lot of other political configurations, which reflect the diversity of the world –and the incommensurability of European realities to non European ones (Liu Ming). Moreover, we need to keep in mind the fact that the absence of military capabilities for hard power purposes does not mean that Europe is deprived from hard power resources (competition, policy and adhesion to Europe). Europe has the capacity to deny the right to a European country to be part of it.

IV. I have suggested to interpret the normative power of Europe through four major social preferences. We can obviously dispute their validity, or propose other preferences. But the real issue is to understand how they interact with those of other actors.

1. The rejection of power politics
2. The Kantian belief in interdependence through trade
3. The defense of non market values
4. The constitutionalisation of world order

I have developed in *La Norme sans la Force* (Presses de Sciences Po) the content of these preferences. I will simply make a few comments on these preferences in regard to the preferences of other actors.

1) *The rejection of power politics*: Power politics is identified with a realist vision of I.R. But this analogy is misleading. The Bush Administration is driven by power politics, but not by realist assumptions. Imperial liberalism or "schmittian politics" is much more adapted to understand the American foreign policy than the traditional realist paradigm. This point may sound theoretical. But it has strong empirical consequences on Europe. Normative power is often devaluated because it seems at odds with the structure of the international system. This point is made not only by Americans, but also by a lot of "new comers" in Europe who seem to dismiss normative power. But there is no compelling evidence of a pure realist interpretation of the world (Keohane and Martin). The collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of non state conflicts, the management of global public goods and bad are typical non realist events. However the rise of China, India and Russia and the anxiety of the U.S. to contain new powers at the time when it is performance against terrorism seem ambiguous, may stimulate again <u>power politics</u> at the global level at the expense of the global governance. If so, the purpose of Europe will be more limited: containing power politics in keeping Europeans together. That is a minor task in regard to the potential of free-ride among European states.

2) The socializing power of trade. The economic interdependence reduces the risks of direct war. But there is no mechanical relationship between increased trade and common beliefs. Trade is regarded by rising powers as a tool of development and power. So the increasing integration of rising powers (India, China, Brazil) may reduce the risk of direct confrontation but increase the risk of a return to power politics far away from normative politics. Europe fears that power politics applies also to trade relations. And that is why it is trying to enhance the normativity of the world trade system in domains where its social preferences are at stake (environment, core labor standards, etc.).

3) The defense of non market values. It is for Europe a strong source of political identity, a source of distinction because those non market values are embedded in European societies. But they carry a source of potential conflicts with other actors, not because these actors refuse non market values, but because the nature of the non market values is different and not compatible with those of the European (social clause, agricultural protection, regulation issues, and so on).

4) The constitutionalization of world order. In the hierarchy of European preferences, it has probably the highest importance, even if the stalemate on the European constitution may give an indication on the "constitutional fatigue" within Europe. I cannot develop the different meanings of a potential constitutionalization of world politics. But by and large it means: intensifying the nets of interdependence in order to constitute a strong continuum between internal and global order, setting a hierarchy of global norms, inventing devices aiming at arbitrating conflicts or norms, prescribing norms of conducts, enhancing the rights of citizens vis-à-vis this respective states. But beyond these principles, the idea of a constitutional world order means something much more fundamental: replacing the principle of equal sovereign states by constitutional world order where sovereignty will be submitted to a process of global certification. Certification would then replace sovereignty. Who is ready for that?