

‘Our Size Fits All’: Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean

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ABSTRACT:

The article focuses on the normative connotation of European foreign policy and makes three points. First, through the criteria of inclusiveness and reflexivity, it draws a distinction between ‘normative power Europe’ and Europe as a ‘civilising power’. Second, the article puts forward a sociological institutionalist interpretation of the EU as a ‘civilising power’. It suggests that much of the EU’s action can be characterised as an unreflexive attempt to promote its own model because institutions tend to export institutional isomorphism as a default option. Third, the article shows the utility of a sociological institutionalist analysis by examining the case of the EU’s promotion of regionalism in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

KEY WORDS: Civilising power; Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; European foreign policy; normative power; regionalism; sociological institutionalism.

INTRODUCTION¹

These are interesting times for analysts of the EU's foreign policy. As the days of 'is there such a thing as a European foreign policy?' finally recede into the past, a lot of attention is being poured into the issue of what exactly such a thing is and what it does. The debate has acquired substantial momentum thanks to the argument put forward by Manners, according to which the EU can be conceptualised as a 'normative power'. In his view, the EU is normatively different and promotes 'universal norms and principles' in its relations with non-members (Manners 2002: 241). This argument has also taken to a new level the already thriving debate about the variety of principles and norms exported by the EU (e.g. Youngs 2001; Knodt and Princen 2003).

Less noticed but equally interesting, another argument has recently been voiced. It refers to the tendency of the EU to 'reproduce itself' (Bretherton and Vogler 1999: 249) in its relations with non-members. The argument goes that the EU addresses patterns of interdependence 'through the external projection of internal solutions' (Lavenex 2004: 695). The projection might reflect an embellished or selective model of governance, but it is 'an operational one' (Nicolaidis and Howse 2002: 768), which does contribute to promoting a European understanding of principles of substantive justice.

Where do we stand, then? Is the EU a 'normative power', promoting universal norms, or is it a 'civilising power', projecting its own understanding of norms onto the rest of the world? Where do the principles enshrined in European foreign policy (EFP) come from? Are they the product of 'normative globalization' or are they linked to 'the internal dynamics of the Union itself' (Smith 2003: 17)? What is the role of third parties towards which the EU's action is directed? Why do member states, together with the Commission and at times the European Parliament, 'select' certain norms to be exported? To put it more specifically: How can we explain the normative connotation of EFP?

In addressing these questions, this article will make two points. First, it will suggest limiting the category ‘normative power Europe’ to cases in which the EU’s stance has been shown to be intentionally inclusive.² The two broad criteria of inclusiveness and reflexivity, which will be explored below, will be used to classify theoretical approaches and arguments about the EU and the promotion of norms. As I am going to argue, cases where EFP is neither inclusive nor reflexive comprise a distinct category, better captured by the label ‘civilising power Europe’.³ The second point I will put forward in this article is a sociological institutionalist interpretation of the EU as a ‘civilising power’. I will suggest that EFP making often is unreflexively eurocentric. My understanding is that much of the EU’s action can be characterised as an unreflexive attempt to promote its own model *because institutions tend to export institutional isomorphism as a default option* (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Finnemore 1996; Jepperson 2002). While EFP can be seen as an intentional action aimed at changing the external environment in the EU’s favour, or as an intentional attempt to promote universal norms, it can also be seen as unreflexive behaviour mirroring the deeply engrained belief that Europe’s history is a lesson for everybody. Put shortly, EFP is informed, at least partially, by the idea that ‘our size fits all’.

I will illustrate the utility of a sociological institutionalist approach by analysing the promotion of regionalism in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). The EU aims at promoting regionalism as the ‘normal way’ for neighbouring countries to address issues of common interests. Regionalism thus is a policy, given that the EU promotes a sense of regional awareness and community, as well as interstate arrangements and organisations (cf. Fawcett 2004: 433). It is also a norm in the sense that the EU aims at establishing a standard of proper behavior around which actors’ expectations would converge (cf. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 54). The EU ‘does it regional’ towards the four corners of the globe to an

unparalleled extent (Smith 2003: 69), as particularly evident in relations with developing countries (Grilli 1993: 65 ff). Successive waves of multilateral agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries have enshrined the regionalist norm, which the current Cotonou agreement watered down only in part (Forwood 2001). The contrast between EU and US attitudes towards Latin America is revealing. While the US re-engaged with its Southern neighbours in the 1990s by developing a regionalist approach to economic governance, the EU has built on its longer history of involvement to develop a thicker notion of partnership within regionalism (Grugel 2004). Similarly, the EU approach towards Eastern European countries after the end of the Cold War quickly developed a strong regional dimension, shown for instance in programmes like PHARE. The main exception to the regionalist rule is EU's bilateral relations with the US, which remain outside any multilateral framework despite their 'Transatlantic' format.

The Mediterranean is a particularly hard case for region building. The EU has pursued the regionalist project by formalising a series of institutional links between the EU and its Southern partners. But it is difficult to justify the idea of a 'Mediterranean region' on 'objective' grounds. Leaving aside the thorny issue of the Northern border of such a region, the Southern Mediterranean has been polarised between Arab countries and Israel. Moreover, Israel's unsettled identity has made it an unlikely partner in region building even if the peace process was placed on a better footing (Del Sarto 2003). Arab regimes have consolidated national sovereignty at the expenses of regional cooperation (Barnett 1995). Paradoxically, the Middle East, stretching from Morocco to Iran, is unified by its 'perennially conflictual character' (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 217). As a consequence, there has never been a request to the EU on the part of Mediterranean non-members to participate in or orchestrate a regional environment. On the contrary, Mediterranean countries have tried to play against their neighbours in order to develop tighter

relations with the EU, as in the case for instance of Morocco and Turkey. Shortly before the EMP was launched, the Mediterranean was defined as ‘un mythe, un paradoxe’ (Henry 1991). Why then did the EU embark upon region building?

The article proceeds as follows. I will first address the main arguments that aim at explaining the EU’s promotion of norms. I will distinguish them according to how inclusive and how reflexive they describe the EU to be. I will then present a few indicators supporting a sociological institutionalist analysis of region building in the Mediterranean. I will conclude by returning to the discussion of ‘normative power’ and ‘civilising power’.

EU, HOW REFLEXIVE AND INCLUSIVE ARE YOU?

Two criteria are particularly useful in distinguishing among the various arguments about the nature of EFP and the normative connotations read into EFP. The first is the inclusiveness of the foreign policy making process. By this is meant the extent to which EU foreign policy-makers permit a role (in theory or in practice) in EFP making for external actors affected by EFP. The second is institutional reflexivity, meaning the capacity of EU foreign policy makers to critically analyse the EU’s policy and adapt it according to the effects the policy is expected to have on the targeted area. While inclusiveness is about involving non-members, institutional reflexivity is about anticipating effects on non-members and pre-emptively adapting to them. I will analyse the two criteria, before focusing on the arguments made on their basis.

The issue of inclusiveness is crucial in order to evaluate the normative connotation of EFP. According to Manners (2002) and, from a different perspective, Sjursen (2006), the normative value of Europe’s power rests on the universal character of the principles it promotes. More specifically, the EU behaves normatively when it promotes values that *empower* actors affected by EFP. Normative power is, as any form of power, relational, and in order to be

normatively justifiable, it must give a voice to people outside of the EU. There is however a thin line between 'giving voice to' and 'speaking for'. Given the EU's tendency to be eurocentric, the normative meaning of Europe's action is therefore to be assessed against its capacity to give non-members a role in EFP. This has two aspects. Normatively, it entails scrutinising the norms promoted by the EU, to assess whether they are hypothetically inclusive and potentially shared by everybody. Empirically, it calls for the analysis of how inclusive the process of EFP making is, in order to determine its outcome. While it goes beyond the scope of this article to analyse the impact of EFP, the issue of the normative value of EU's action thus entails asking questions such as: To whom do exported norms apply or are intended to apply? Does discussion within the EU take into account the views expressed by actors whose 'normality' is going to be affected (Manners 2002)?

The issue of reflexivity helps to distinguish between teleological and intentional behaviour, on the one hand, and routine-based behaviour, on the other. In the definition by Giddens, institutional reflexivity refers to the 'regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation' (Giddens 1991: 20). Reflexive behaviour thus springs from an ongoing reflection about the action, its context, its effects on such a context and the feedback of those expected effects on the action.⁴ Therefore, reflexivity is based on a broad definition of rationality, which not only includes bounded rationality, but also encompasses a logic of justification. In the latter perspective, rationality 'means the ability to adopt a reflective attitude, the ability to redeem presuppositions of knowledge, the possibility to learn, to alter behaviour and to change preferences when faced with better arguments' (Eriksen 1999: 233). Reflexivity is thus expressed by the possibility of redemption through context specific knowledge and action based thereon. Routine-based behaviour is, on the contrary, founded on practices that have lost their original meaning (if they

ever had one) to become ritualised and symbolic. While behaviour can still be seen as intentional, it is ‘not willful’ (March and Olsen 1989: 160). The fundamental logic of political action is appropriateness, within a concept of identity, and order is created thanks to the capacity of institutions to give meaning and to attribute appropriateness to behaviour, rather than agents setting tasks for institutions (March and Olsen 1989: 38; cf. Müller 2004). For analysing EFP, reflexivity entails asking questions such as: To what extent is the action of the EU based on a ‘conscious’ effort on the part of the EU foreign policy makers to critically analyse the expected consequences of norm promotion for all parties involved and adapt EFP accordingly?

The issue of reflexivity too is linked to the concept of power. Here too, the different relationship posited in the case of reflexive or unreflexive behaviour between the agent and individuals on the ‘receiving end’ establishes a different type of power between the two. If we use the typology suggested by Barnett and Duvall (2005), we see that reflexivity (or lack of it) cuts across several types of power. Reflexive behaviour can thus stem from and support the ‘power over’ somebody, as well as a more constitutive understanding of power, based on the ‘power to’ call agents and their interests into being. Unreflexive behaviour belongs more squarely to the constitutive type, by which the agential leeway is significantly constrained by the structure in which it takes place (and which explains the unreflexive behaviour on the part of the agent). Still, such a structure can establish a clear and direct hierarchy, between social roles, as in Marxist interpretations of capital and labour, or a more diffuse understanding based on discourse and knowledge. Therefore, the issue of power remains at the centre of the picture in the various theoretical arguments we are going to examine, something hardly surprising when examining normative *power* and civilising *power*.

Inclusiveness and reflexivity can be used to classify the arguments that have been put forward to explain the nature of EFP and ‘normative power Europe’ in particular. If we cast them

in a 2x2 table, we come up with the following (Fig. 1). On the left hand side of the table, rationalist and sociological institutionalist accounts portray the EU's action as eurocentric, leaving little room to outsiders. On the right hand side, constructivism has tended to depict instead an inclusive picture.⁵ Reflexivity, however, divides sharply between rationalist accounts and sociological institutionalism, according to their different emphasis on reflexive and unreflexive processes, respectively. Constructivist arguments have straddled the demarcation line between reflexive and unreflexive behaviour. It should be noted that this table is not a proper typology, as types are not mutually exclusive and positions reflect more the state of the debate than ontological or epistemological actuality. It is useful, though, to summarise the relative emphasis of the various arguments.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

According to a rationalist interpretation of norms promotion, the answer is relatively straightforward: The EU intentionally exports norms from which it benefits, with only enough attention to the receiving end for the beneficial effect to occur. This explanation rests on a logic of consequentialism and the expected outcome of rational choices. This is the direction indicated for instance by Youngs (2004), in his account of the EU's promotion of democracy and human rights, as well as Hyde-Price (2006) and Haddadi (forthcoming). According to Youngs, the EU knows what it does when it promotes human rights as part of a more general strategy, where the goals are to consolidate regimes and encourage third party support for the EU. Similarly, Haddadi has suggested that the EU has been promoting democracy in the Maghreb countries as a security strategy for the stabilisation of the area. Hyde-Price depicts the EU as a regional hegemon, seeking to shape its external milieu through a mix of hard and soft power. From an economic

perspective, the EU's normative action would stress the value of economic gains. Region building would become the means to deliver benefits such as improvements in terms of trade, access to new markets and the creation of a stronger regional economic bloc. This in turn would have positive, general effects, in terms of development and, at the end of the day, security for Europe. Several authors, though criticising the limits of the EMP, have expressed interpretations of current Euro-Mediterranean relations along these lines (e.g. Hoekman 1999) and a large part of the EU's official rhetoric also mirrors this argument.

In the variegated world of constructivism, issues of inclusiveness and reflexivity receive a more nuanced answer. Constructivism sits on the fence separating reflexive and unreflexive behaviour, as one of its main tenets is that the border between reflexivity and unreflexivity is subordinate to time. What starts off as intentional behaviour tends to be routinised over time, as the early rationale for action is subsumed by the repetitive pattern of routine-based behaviour. This habit forming pattern follows quite closely the path dependency argument elaborated by historical institutionalism.⁶ This hypothesis has been used to explain how and why human rights spread (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999), as well as the potential of the EMP in Euro-Mediterranean relations (Adler and Crawford forthcoming). By 'talking the talk' and 'practising the practices', the repetition of social communication leads to change in actors' reciprocal disposition. Authoritarian regimes, under the pressure of transnational networks, put up a semblance of care for human rights, but over time their conformative discourse increasingly constrains their actions and then moulds their way of thinking so that despite their original intentions they fall into a pattern defined by human rights principles. Therefore, standardisation of practices, regardless of their inclusiveness, is justified by the attempt to change 'nasty' regimes, such as those existing in the majority of Mediterranean non-members.

Moreover, from this perspective, 'normative power Europe' is much more based on inclusiveness than evident in rationalist or sociological explanations, as inclusiveness is defined as a condition of normative power. This perspective puts the emphasis on the universal character of the norms promoted by the EU. According to Manners (2002), the key principles that constitute the normative core of 'normative power Europe' are democracy, rule of law, social justice and human rights. They are specific norms because they have a historical context. At the same time, they are universal because 'the EU, in its external action, refers to reasons that can be expected to gain approval in a free and open debate in which all those affected are heard' (Sjursen 2006: xx). The normative part of this argument thus suggests that inclusiveness is guaranteed if the norms at stake have universal character, i.e. by the fact that if individuals were to have the possibility to speak out, they would agree. Normative power is, therefore, defined on the basis of the universality of values, which in turn guarantees the (indirect) protagonism of third parties.

'Indirect protagonism' however does not travel well beyond an uncontested, narrow set of universal principles, and then we are stuck with the practical, rather than normative, question of how to involve third parties. The issue is complicated by the absence of democracy at the international level (Eriksen 2006) and at the domestic level too. How then can EFP be inclusive in addressing non democratic states in a still anarchical international environment? The empirical way out of this apparent stalemate, according to the cosmopolitan perspective, can be found in the attitude of the EU. So long as the EU aims for a strengthening of the international legal system, then its behaviour can be labelled as normative. Such an attitude seems to mark the distinction between the action of 'normative power Europe', on the one hand, and historical empires and other international actors, on the other. As internationally binding cosmopolitan

citizenship would give international subject status to external actors, formalisation of international law is a guarantee of the inclusiveness of EFP.

Sociological institutionalism starts from the premise that institutional isomorphism tends to be the rule, rather than the exception (DiMaggio and Powell 1991).⁷ Unreflexive transfer of knowledge and of patterned practices is ‘normal’, as exemplified by the number of similarities among institutions across the world. Culture, and its thick layer of institutionalised norms, routines, and practices, tends to define ‘what has meaning and what actions are possible’ (Zucker 1983: 2). Organisations are thus embedded in a broader context of institutionalised meaning, and that context infuses them with a form and a mission, largely irrespective of the specific function they are meant to perform.

In this perspective, norms are exported not because they are efficient or have universal value, but because they are legitimated by the spread of Western culture and as such they are (unreflexively) embraced by third parties. Norms, in a sociological perspective, are equal to scripts, entailing constitutive and regulative effects (cf. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996: 54). Their diffusion is linked to interorganisational influence, the persuasiveness of cultural frames and to a logic of appropriateness. Sets of norms can be transferred from one organisational practice to another because ‘institutionalized elements can “infect” other elements in a contagion of legitimacy’ (Zucker 1987: 446). The process can flow from the state level to the international level, but also from the international level to the state (Klotz 1995; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). In the case of EFP, the EU can be said to apply to non-member states the same norms it applies to members on the basis of an unspecified general legitimacy it commands as the EU, rather than because of any defined rationale attached to these norms, or the specific context in which they are applied. According to sociological institutionalism, the direction of norms diffusion tends to show the spread and the increasing dominance of a Western cultural model

(Jepperson 2002: 239-45). The claim of Western culture to universalism and rationality contributes to its expansive potential (Finnemore 1996: 331). Differently from the rationalist perspective, the hegemonic reach of Western institutions is a manifestation not of strategic or compulsory power, but rather of power on the border between structural power, as in direct hegemonic power, and productive power, aiming to produce subjects through knowledge, social discourse and social relations (Barnett and Duvall 2005).

The sociological argument thus suggests that 'normative power Europe' exports its own norms unreflexively, with a single model promoted to all its partners regardless of their context. The account by Börzel and Risse (2004) of EU policies for the promotion of human rights, democracy and rule of law goes in this direction. The EU is described as projecting 'its own identity of a democratic polity into its relations with third countries'. Börzel and Risse (2004: 26, 28) remark on the similarity of the various policies, to the point that the EU seems to follow 'one single cultural script' and exhibits a 'one size fits all' attitude. Following the tenets of sociological institutionalism, I suggest refining this interpretation, by making the link between domestic and international norms more explicit and labeling the attitude of European foreign policy makers as '*our* size fits all'. In the Mediterranean case, an '*our* size fits all' argument explains norm promotion not by the expected benefits in terms of economics and/or security for the EU, nor by the intrinsic value of regionalism as a universal norm but by the EC/EU's specific and internal experience as a regional organization, parlayed as a required form of behaviour for external actors.

To summarise, therefore, there are three different arguments about the normative connotation of EFP. First, the rationalist approach suggests that the EU promotes its norms because it expects to benefit from their adoption, and as such EU behaviour is both reflexive and eurocentric. Second, according to the constructivist perspective, the EU promotes norms of

universal value, thus by definition inclusive, and the process by which it does so starts reflexively but drifts into unreflexivity through path dependency. Third, a hypothesis based on sociological institutionalism argues that the EU promotes its own norms because institutions promote institutional isomorphism, and this is particularly the case from the West towards the rest of the world. Therefore, there is only a small recognised possibility that Europe behaves both inclusively and reflexively – and only in that case, which falls in the upper-right hand corner of Figure 1, it is appropriate in my view to characterise the EU as ‘normative power Europe’. As this brief review of the literature has shown, however, there is a vast variety of cases in which EFP, while normatively connotated, is neither reflexive nor inclusive and is better captured as an instance of ‘civilising power’. Sociological institutionalism in fact argues that this is often the case. What I am going to focus on next is how this argument can be linked to empirical evidence.

DOWNLOADING A MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL MODEL

What I will present here is a series of indicators that go in the direction of supporting a sociological institutionalist interpretation of the region building policy of the EU towards the Mediterranean, as enshrined in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. A quick glance at indicators for rationalist and constructivist hypotheses reveals that these two approaches do leave a number of issues pending. The case for a rationalist argument, from an economic perspective, looks *prima facie* very strong. Since the launching of the EMP, there has been a flurry of free trade agreements signed not only between Mediterranean non-members and the EU, but also among Mediterranean countries (Handoussa and Reiffers 2002). The trend, however, has been more symbolic than substantial. While bilateral agreements between the EU and single Mediterranean countries have a substantial transformative potential, South-South agreements, which would cement the regional Mediterranean dimension, are riddled with exceptions and rarely

implemented (Radwan and Reiffers 2005). At the end of the day, the replication of free trade agreements among Mediterranean non-members seems to symbolically mimic the institutionalised pattern of relations with the EU, a point going in the direction of sociological institutionalism more than of a rationalist explanation.

Constructivist explanations also leave the door open to sociological institutionalism, as they tend to be more convincing on the unreflexive side, rather than on inclusive aspects. Path dependency is certainly a strong factor in contemporary Euro-Mediterranean relations. The process by which the EU has conceptualised its Southern neighbours as a region unfolded at the beginning of the 1970s (Bicchi forthcoming) and despite the Southern enlargement, the end of the Cold War and lack of visible progress, the regional dimension has remained a characteristic of EFP towards the Mediterranean up to nowadays. The case for the universal value of regionalism is still to be made, though. In spite of noble intentions of bringing peace and prosperity to the area, the EU has tended to justify its region building efforts mainly by referring to its own history.⁸ Moreover, it rates badly in term of inclusion of third parties in the definition of regionalism for the Mediterranean. The EU is in fact remarkable for its incapacity to empower citizens of Mediterranean countries and to engage with the very civil society that it allegedly wishes to encourage.⁹ Therefore, constructivist explanations too are so far stronger on the issue of unreflexivity, which they share with sociological institutionalism, than on inclusiveness.

There is thus reason to look at a sociological institutionalist interpretation of the EU's action as a promoter of regionalism in the Mediterranean. Given the emphasis given to isomorphism between institutions, this perspective highlights how practices, norms and organisational arrangements travel from a Western centre to the periphery with little adaptation. To check the utility of this approach, I will analyse two main indicators of institutional isomorphism between the EU and the EMP, namely the similarities between their institutional

frameworks and between their agendas. I will complement them by tracing how a specific issue, Justice and Home Affairs, has migrated from the EU agenda to the EMP.

The multilateral institutional framework is at the heart of the EMP.¹⁰ It displays a remarkable predictability for people familiar with the EU institutional format. Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all the 27 participant countries meet in the so-called Euro-Mediterranean conferences, including the Palestinian Authority in representation of the future state of Palestine, and the European Commission. Originally expected to take place once every two years, alternatively in a European and in a non-European venue, Euro-Mediterranean conferences are now organised on the EU territory every semester. Among the reasons for this accelerated tempo is the agency behind these conferences, which lies predominantly with EU presidencies. At the beginning of a presidency semester, the habit has developed for that country to state its programme for the EMP and to organise a ‘mid-term’ meeting. Other ministerial meetings have also been organised, with a remarkable similarity between the topics they address and the topics around which sectorial EU Councils are organised (see below). Despite attempts, there is no equivalent of the European Council in the EMP, because of the conditions of the Arab-Israeli relations. This however is the only type of meeting that tensions in the Middle East have made impossible. In fact, bringing all Mediterranean countries around the same table and having them talk business despite unresolved grievances is probably one of the main successes of the EU in its attempt to create a region in the Mediterranean.¹¹

Below the ministerial level, similarities develop further. The Euro-Mediterranean Committee, made up of one ambassador from each country, has the task of arranging and deciding EMP activities between Euro-Mediterranean conferences. It meets once per month. Originally, this committee was, according to the Work Programme annexed to the Barcelona Conference, to consist only of the EU troika, flanked by the Commission and the Council

Secretariat, and one representative from each Mediterranean partner country. What has prevailed instead is the practice of admitting ‘as observers’ all EU member states, *de facto* re-creating a Euro-Mediterranean conference at a lower hierarchical level, as well as mirroring the composition of the EU’s Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER). A new (i.e. not originally conceived in Barcelona) layer in the multilateral structure extends the parallel with the EU Council structure further. A ‘gap’ was perceived to exist between the Euro-Mediterranean Conferences and the Euro-Mediterranean Committee, in the sense of limited opportunities for high-level dialogue not involving the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, in 2002 it was decided to hold *ad hoc* meetings among General Directors of Ministries of Foreign Affairs responsible for setting topics on the agenda, with the participation of the Commission. The pattern resembles the composition of the Political Committee, under European Political Cooperation and the pre-military times of Common Foreign and Security Policy. The institutional practice of the EMP has also seen the creation of a broad set of working groups and meetings of senior officials, which contribute to the work of the EMP. Again, these gatherings mirror the ones within the EU Council structure at lower levels.¹²

This could be a case of ‘rational’ institutional design, if it was not for two reasons that point instead in the direction of institutional isomorphism. The first is the shift in the institutional setting from the original conception agreed in Barcelona to the current framework: All the changes point to a close resemblance to the EU model. The pace, the venue, and the participants to the meetings mirror now more than in 1995 the EU institutional structure. Second, while it could be argued that meetings among representatives of participant countries are hardly specific to the EU, the number of layers is a peculiarly EU characteristic, as only the EU displays such a rich variety of venues at all levels of the hierarchy. There is thus room to argue that the EU has exported its own institutional model to the EMP.

What is the agenda fostered by this array of multilateral institutions? If we look at the frequency of meetings at the ministerial level (meetings devoted to general affairs as well as sectorial meetings), in comparison to EU Council meetings, the parallel develops further. Since the launching of the EMP in late 1995, ministers within the EU have met much more frequently than ministers within the EMP, the total being respectively 36 and over 700 meetings.¹³ This raises several methodological questions about comparing the two sets. Moreover, the small number of Euro-Mediterranean sectorial conferences represents another limitation to any generalisation. However, if we use the comparison for heuristic reasons only and we express these numbers as a percentage of the total, as in Figure 2, an intriguing pattern emerges. There is a strong similarity in the attention devoted to trade and economic affairs, infrastructure and social and environmental issues. In other words, the agenda of the EMP is largely similar to the agenda of the EU, which is based on economic matters but with a social flavour.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The issues that stand out are foreign affairs, agriculture and fisheries, and justice and home affairs.¹⁴ The first two could also be explained by a rationalist account. The predominance of meetings devoted to foreign affairs in the EMP framework is an indicator that the core of the EMP remains grounded in international cooperation, more so than in the EU. Agriculture is a topic that the Mediterranean partners would be more than happy to discuss with European countries, but there is a staunch resistance on the part of the latter. Discussions are taking place, but the pace is determined by the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. As reforms speed up, it is likely that more ministerial meetings will be organised.

The story of justice and home affairs is a micro case that shows how the agenda can travel from the EU to the EMP, along the lines of sociological institutionalism. At the time of the Barcelona Conference, in 1995, the reluctance to address this type of topic at a multilateral level was mutual. Resistance, however, has shrunk in proportion to the momentum acquired by the Justice and Home Affairs chapter within the EU. Rather than by its formalisation within the Maastricht Treaty, the issue of cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs within the EU was put at the top of the EU agenda in October 1999, at the Tampere European Council. Since then, not only has the EU agenda increasingly allowed room for it, but there has been a clear transfer to the EMP agenda.

The first relevant mention of a development in this direction came in the Common Strategy for the Mediterranean, in June 2000. While largely reflecting the Barcelona Declaration, the Strategy also 'caught up' with areas in which the EU had developed common competences not enshrined in the Barcelona document. It thus mentioned Justice and Home Affairs, listing as specific initiatives the promotion of transparency and correspondences of legal systems, the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking, migration and the fight against terrorism. Shortly afterwards, in November 2000, at the Barcelona Conference in Marseilles Conference, the 27 EMP participants officially recommended the concerted preparation of a regional programme in the field of justice and Home Affairs. This input led to the creation of a group of Senior Officials on Justice and Home Affairs, which begun its meetings in 2001. The programme they elaborated was then approved at the Euro-Med Conference in Valencia in April 2002, under the complicated name of 'regional cooperation programme in the field of Justice, in combating drugs, organised crime and terrorism as well as cooperation in the treatment of issues relating to the social integration of migrants, migration and movements of persons'.¹⁵ While reference to 'home

affairs' has been skipped to accommodate the sensitivities of Mediterranean partners, the content of the rapidly evolving programme closely mirrors the EU agenda.

Whereas this case could be interpreted as an example of strategic behaviour, in which the EU progressively involves Mediterranean countries in managing migration and terrorism, its significance is more complex. The EU's interest in recruiting its Southern neighbours as allies in the fight against migration and terrorism predates the EMP and actually was among the reasons that prompted its formulation.¹⁶ After 1995, the subject was dealt with primarily in bilateral relations, both at the national level and between the EU and single Mediterranean countries (Lavenex 2004: 690). The interesting shift is thus represented by the upgrading of the issue to the multilateral level, which has occurred in parallel with the development of the EU agenda and of its institutional capacities, as marked by the Tampere Council and expected by sociological institutionalism.

The similarities in the institutional settings of the EU and of the EMP, as well as in the content of their agendas, support the sociological institutionalist perspective that highlights a close, unreflexive link from the EU to the EMP and a eurocentric transfer of norms from the EU to the Mediterranean. This brief sketch of regionalism is obviously not sufficient to close the debate. But my aim here is to show how this could be done, as well as to point up the utility of such an endeavour.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have made three points. First, I have followed the advice of, among others, Diez (2005) and Sjursen (2006) to specify the argument about 'normative power Europe'. I have suggested that the normative connotation of EFP varies according to the degree of inclusiveness and reflexivity that is granted to it. Whenever we encounter a case of EFP which is both inclusive

(in theory or in practice) and reflexive, the category ‘normative power Europe’ is well justified, along the lines of that demonstrated by Sjørusen (2006). The category thus depicts the upper-right hand corner of Figure 1. There are several cases, however, which fall outside this scope, and should be distinguished in order to clarify the different types of EU actions. I have suggested bringing these cases under the category of ‘civilising power Europe’, which expresses the fact that the EU’s action is either eurocentric, or unreflexively inclusive, or both. While the label ‘normative power Europe’ is probably too enticing for the future debate on EFP to resist a widespread usage of the term, it should be carefully defined, especially in opposition to what it is not, in order to capture the connotation of EFP and the type of power relationship it establishes by doing so.

The second point I have made is that there are several ways to analyse the EU’s capacity to spread norms, and a sociological institutionalist approach offers an original contribution in this direction. While rationalist accounts suggest that the EU knows what it does, and is inclusive only in as much as it suits its goals, constructivist analyses tend to vary in emphasis. Historical institutionalists focus on the way the frontier between reflexive and unreflexive is watered down by time, whereas cosmopolitan scholars argue that third parties are central protagonists in the *a priori* EU approach to legalisation of norms. The originality of sociological institutionalism consists of its emphasis on unreflexive behaviour and institutional isomorphism, by which the EU promotes its own highly successful model of Western integration. It highlights cases of ‘our size fits all’ attitudes. The third point of this article has shown the utility of this approach by analysing how regionalism is promoted in Euro-Mediterranean relations. It has highlighted evidence of unreflexive behaviour, not only in the form of path dependency, but also and especially in similarities between the EU and the EMP institutional frameworks and working agendas.

Does evidence of unreflexive behaviour undermine the argument in favour of ‘normative power Europe’? There is a flavour to ‘normative power Europe’ by which the EU is ‘a force for good’, standing on a higher moral ground than other international actors, not only because of its history and successes (as a ‘laboratory’, to use Nicolaïdis and Howses’ expression (2002: 771)), but also because of the foreign policy it conducts.¹⁷ Sociological institutionalism offers a different interpretation of the EU’s stance in foreign policy, more rooted in power and in a dominant cultural paradigm. It underlines the ‘dark side’ of EU’s action in international politics (although the ‘darkness’ refers more to absence of analysis in scholarly literature than to the ‘Darth Vader’ nature of the EU). While starting from the same premises of ‘normative power Europe’, namely that the EU projects its internal characteristics into its foreign policy, sociological institutionalism interprets this projection not as an intrinsically progressive endeavour, but rather as a conservative attitude. Accordingly, the EU does not promote (neutral) norms, but promotes ‘Europe’ (in the form of European norms). How far to bring this argument and how to turn it into a political evaluation is a matter of empirical evidence and personal judgement. To me, it reads principally as a call for closer scrutiny of what ‘normative power Europe’ actually does.

The cosmopolitan approach has a good point, but its utility can not be determined *a priori* given the limitations of democracy at the domestic and international level. The cosmopolitan interpretation of ‘normative power Europe’ does offer a way out of the cultural and power conundrum of distinguishing among norms, as it equates universally recognised norms with ‘good’ norms, a move which can be easily agreed upon. It also avoids scrutiny of who represents whom, a question which is particularly difficult in cases of authoritarian regimes. But by doing so, it also limits the analysis to a very small and specific set of universal norms. How are we to

interpret the normative action of the EU beyond these limits? Regionalism, for one, represents a norm that is promoted by the EU, but is, almost by definition, not universal.

The main argument of this article is thus that while the normative connotation of the EU's action embraces a set of universal values that distinguishes 'normative power Europe' from other international actors, EFP also encompasses a broader set of principles requiring closer examination in order to evaluate the nature of the EU in international affairs. Two questions thus need to be tackled. The first refers to the theoretical and normative underpinnings of EFP, which constitute the yardsticks against which to evaluate the EU's action. The second is related to the empirical dimension of EFP, in order to locate the scope of 'normative power Europe' and, at the same time, to identify the magnitude and scope of the EU's 'civilising power'. The good moment for analysts of EFP has just begun.

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank for comments Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, Mary Martin, Michelle Pace, Helene Sjursen, an anonymous referee and all the participants at the CIDEL workshop in Oslo in October 2004.

² On this, see also Sjursen (2006) and Diez (2005).

³ The 'civilising' attribute has an ambiguous meaning, partly negative (as in France's 'civilising mission'), partly positive, (as in 'civilising influence'). The meaning depends on the interpretation of 'power', on which, more below.

⁴ Giddens (2001) further distinguishes between different types of reflexivity. On this, see Mitzen (2006).

⁵ There is no necessity for constructivism to focus on inclusive behaviour, though, as it is by definition neutral about the content of norms.

⁶ Path dependency has also been analysed by rational institutionalism, which links it to the sunken costs of changing institutionalised agreements. This perspective falls into the rationalist type.

⁷ Key texts focusing on sociological institutionalism include March and Olsen 1989; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Scott and Meyer 1994. For a review, Zucker 1987; Jepperson 2002; Mueller 2004.

⁸ See for instance European Commission, 'Communication on European Community support for regional economic integration efforts among developing countries,' COM (95) 219 final, Brussels, 16.VI.95.

⁹ For an analysis of this point in relation to human rights, see Stetter (2003).

¹⁰ On the institutional framework and its multilateral dimension, see Edwards and Philippart (1997).

¹¹ It is worth mentioning that Syria and Lebanon abstained from ministerial meetings at the height of the second Intifada.

¹² Other institutions that should be mentioned (and that continue the parallel with the EU) include the cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament and the periodic meetings of the Civil Forum.

¹³ I have included Euro-Mediterranean Conferences held between January 1996 and June 2005, and EU Council meetings held between January 1996 and May 2005. The exact number of EU Council meetings for this period is 720. In the EU framework, General Affairs Council meetings and External Relations Council meetings have been put in the same category of 'General Affairs'. Moreover, meetings of the EU Council lasting two days have been counted as one.

¹⁴ There is also no equivalent for meetings devoted to water, though coal would represent a good, if early, term of comparison.

¹⁵ Presidency Conclusions, Valencia, April 2002.

¹⁶ See for instance an early Commission's Communication 'From the Single Act to Maastricht and Beyond', COM(1992)2000: 15.

¹⁷ On this issue, see the critique by Jørgensen and Laatikainen (2004).

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Figure 1 – Arguments explaining the nature of European foreign policy

	Eurocentric	Inclusive
Reflexive	Rationalist accounts	Constructivism (Cosmopolitan; Historical Institutionalism)
Unreflexive	Sociological Institutionalism	

Figure 2 – Ministerial meetings, per cent of the total, EMP and EU, 1996-2005

