

Chapter 8

Is the EU a "Better" Global Player? An Analysis of Emerging Powers' Perceptions

Lorenzo Fioramonti

Introduction

The European Union represents itself as a *qualitatively* distinctive actor in world politics. The underlying assumption of this self-representation is that the EU's global policy follows values, strategies and approaches that are inherently incommensurable to those of nation states, more squarely focused on their own national interests. The 2001 Laeken Declaration offers an illustrative depiction of such a self-perception:

Does Europe not [...] have a *leading* role to play in a new world order, that of a power able both to play a *stabilising* role worldwide and to *point the way ahead* for many countries and peoples? Europe as the continent of *humane values*, [...] the continent of liberty, solidarity and above all diversity [...]. The European Union's one boundary is *democracy and human rights*. [...] Now that the Cold War is over and we are living in a globalised, yet also highly fragmented world, Europe needs to *shoulder its responsibilities* in the governance of globalisation. The role it has to play is that of a power resolutely doing battle against all violence, all terror and all fanaticism, but which also does not turn a blind eye to the world's heartrending injustices. In short, a power *wanting to change the course of world affairs* in such a way as to benefit not just the rich countries but also the poorest. A power seeking to set globalisation within a *moral framework*, in other words to anchor it in solidarity and sustainable development. (European Council 2001, emphasis added)

Such a self-representation identifies some of the key values guiding the EU's international conduct and places them within the cultural tradition of Europe (the continent of "liberty", "solidarity" and "diversity"). Moreover, it sets out the EU's global responsibilities, which include not only a new leadership role ("pointing the way ahead") but also the ambition to change the course of world affairs by setting globalization within a moral framework. Along the same lines, the 2003 European Security Strategy retrieves some of the contributions of the Laeken Declaration, while adding a new emphasis on the development of multilateralism and a rule-

based international order as opposed to traditional power politics, *realpolitik* and other narrow national interests:

Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world. [O]ur security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system. The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective. (ESS 2003, emphasis added)

Within the ever-growing sector of European studies, a number of scholars have built on this self-representation by describing the EU as a progressive international player animated by norms and values and pursuing a structural foreign policy, rather than short-term interests (Kenkelre 2003). Taking the cue from Duchêne's original concept of "civilian power" Europe (1972, 1973), a number of scholars have updated and enriched the concept (Whitman 1998, Teib 2006) or replaced it with new ideas such as "normative power" (Manners 2002), "normative area" (Therborn 2001), "gentle force" (Padoa-Schioppa 2001) and "norm-maker" (Björkdahl 2005). The overarching goal of this strand of the literature has been to capture the qualitative peculiarity of a post-Westphalian global player such as the EU in a world still dominated by national Leviathans. As expected, most comparative analysis has focused on the different foreign policy "philosophies" of the EU (champion of multilateralism) versus the US (champion of unilateralism) by highlighting issues such as trade-based foreign policy, political dialogue, multilateralism, active engagement and soft-power as evidence of the EU's uniqueness (Rifkin 2004, Lucarelli and Manners 2006).

Yet, in spite of this prominent interest to analyze the EU's global identity vis-à-vis traditional superpowers, both European officials and academics have largely neglected the importance of listening to what the rest of the world has to say about the EU. Indeed, if we intend to test whether the EU is actually playing a distinctive role in global affairs, then it is not enough to ask Europeans (including European policy-makers) what they think about themselves. Nor is it enough to look at selected policy areas, especially when the observer is a European analyst, fully embedded in the European culture.

In an effort to counter the overwhelming "eurocentrism" of European foreign policy analysis, in 2005 we launched a research project on the *External Image of the European Union* involving researchers from a number of non-European countries (Lucarelli 2007, Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2009).¹ The present chapter is broadly based on the findings of this project, although some additional information has been gathered over the past year (2009–2010) so as to provide a more up-to-date analysis. Although the *External Image* research project covered over 20 countries

¹ This research project was made possible by a grant from the Italian ministry of Foreign Affairs and the support of the Network of Excellence GARNET (*Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: The Role of the EU*).

across the globe, this chapter focuses exclusively on the so-called emerging powers. These countries have been covering significant ground in terms of economic and political development and they have become key players in the main forums of global governance, from the WTO to the recently upgraded G20 (which is likely, in the long run, to replace the G8 as the main forum for international economic cooperation).² Moreover, their populations are directly affected by EU policies, especially in the field of trade, development and multilateral negotiations, which makes them a valuable source of information to gauge the credibility of the EU's allegedly "different" approach to global processes.

Perceptions have a fundamental impact in international politics (Jervis 1976) and can easily affect the results of policy processes and the credibility of global actors. Nevertheless, the EU has thus far paid little attention to external perceptions, thereby attracting the criticism of being a short-sighted global player "that focuses on telling the world what it should think about it, but quite deaf to what the world actually thinks" (Lynch 2005: 31). From a policy perspective, limited recognition of what emerging powers "think" of the EU might have a negative impact on the Union's external policies and, ultimately, on Europe's stance in the international arena.

This chapter aims to fill this gap by focusing on how political leaders, civil society groups and other opinion makers view the EU in a selection of emerging powers, including China, Brazil, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa. The analysis looks at several policy domains, from democracy-building and multilateralism to economic policies, and devotes particular attention to the perceptions of the EU in the field of bilateral/international trade and climate change negotiations. Indeed, in spite of its benevolent self-representation as a progressive international player, the EU's performance in key sectors of international political economy, such as trade, investment and, more recently, climate change has been quite controversial and often is at odds with its purportedly "virtuous" goals in other fields, from democracy support to the promotion of multilateral governance. Yet, due to the sheer size of the EU economy, it is fair to argue that its policies in the economic field are those exerting the most significant impact on other countries, especially on the emerging powers.

² During the Pittsburgh summit of the G20 in 2009, the US host declared that the new group of established and emerging economies will gradually replace the G8, which will continue to meet on major security issues but will carry much less influence. See, for instance, the CNN report available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/US/09/24/us.g.twenty.summit/index.html> [accessed: 31 July 2010].

Perceptions of the EU as a Global Actor: Insights from Emerging Powers

Have You Heard of the EU?

Despite the fact that the EU flag is regularly displayed in all EU delegations and is printed in thousands of brochures, very few people have an idea of what the EU is and, even less, what its policies and objectives are. Opinion surveys largely substantiate this claim highlighting how citizens in emerging powers (albeit not same applies to citizens in traditional powers and developing countries outside of the European continent) have no knowledge or hold a very vague opinion about the EU and its policies. By the early 2000s, only a small minority of citizens in China, South Africa and Brazil admitted having ever heard of the EU (Peruzzi et al. 2007a, Fioramonti and Olivier 2007). In 2003, over 55 per cent of South Africans had never heard about the EU or had no opinion about it, although this percentage went down to 45 per cent in 2008 (Afrobarometer). Still in 2007, over 75 per cent of Chinese had no clear opinion about the EU in spite of the significant economic ties between the Asian giant and Brussels (WVS 2005–2008). In Mexico, instead, knowledge of the EU seems to have grown in the past few years; in 2007, only about a fourth of citizens admitted not having any idea about the EU and what it stands for (Charona 2009). In Russia, in spite of the geographical proximity, citizens appear to pay little attention to the EU and its policies, except during critical situations, such as the Kosovo conflict, the Georgian crisis and NATO's eastward expansion, which have created a significant rift between Europe and its powerful neighbour (Morini 2009). Qualitative information points to a rather low level of knowledge of the EU also in India. As Malcolm Subham, Vice-Chair of the European Institute for Asian Studies, asked rhetorically in the Indian Express in May 2005, "Why is it that India so seldom makes it to the front pages of newspapers in the 25-nation EU? And why is it that the EU is seldom reported in the pages of Indian newspapers?" (Subham 2005). In 2008, Prof. Rajendra K. Jain, former chair of the Centre for European Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, noted that "there is an enormous information deficit about the European Union in India" and for too long "Indian perceptions of Europe have been viewed through the prism of the Anglo-Saxon media" (Jain 2008). Europe does not seem to appeal to India's leading students either, in spite of the EU's attempt to facilitate EU–India connections through the Erasmus programme as part of its strategic partnership with the Asian country (Lisbonne de-Vergeron 2006).

Not only do most people in emerging economies know nothing or very little about the EU, but most of those who can boast a sufficient degree of knowledge are dubious about the Union's effectiveness and good intentions. In 1990, only 30 per cent of the Chinese who had heard about the EU admitted having some or much confidence in the Union as a major global player, although the overall reputation of the EU seems to be on a growing trend: in 2001 the same opinion was held by 40 per cent of respondents and, in 2007, 55 per cent had great or quite a lot of confidence in the EU (WVS 2005–2008). In 2003, only 15 per cent of South

African citizens with a sufficient knowledge of the EU believed it was an effective actor in the world. Interestingly enough, South Africans attributed a higher rate of effectiveness to international economic agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (Fioramonti and Olivier 2007). Perhaps astonishingly for many EU officials who are proud of the development work the EU has carried out in the African continent, about 35 per cent of South African citizens believe that the EU has been doing nothing to help their country fight poverty and inequality (Afrobarometer). An opinion poll presented at the 2004 EU–Latin America and Caribbean summit showed that only 32 per cent of Mexicans expressed a positive appreciation for the EU (vis-à-vis a 51 per cent approval rate enjoyed by the US). Similarly, when asked to assess the contribution of global actors towards democracy and development in 2005, only a small minority of Brazilian citizens considered the EU to be the most effective actor (12 per cent for democracy and 22 per cent for development), whereas the US was seen as leading the global agenda (Fioramonti and Poletti 2008).

Not even prospectively the EU fares much better. According to the *World Powers in the 21st Century* sponsored by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2006, a small minority of citizens in emerging powers believe the EU to be a significant world power: 7 per cent in India, 15 per cent in Brazil, 17 per cent in China, and 25 per cent in Russia. Quite surprisingly, these already low percentages plummet even further when speculating whether the EU will become a leading global power in the next 20 years. India confirms its rather low confidence in prospective European leadership (7 per cent), followed by Brazil (14 per cent), China (14 per cent) and Russia (17 per cent). The US is steadily at the top as the only superpower, although most respondents believe that China will manage to catch up in the near future (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006).

Perceptions of the EU in the Field of Democracy-Building, Multilateralism and Peacekeeping

In most emerging powers, perceptions of the EU are associated with its economic role, as the biggest market in the world and a trade giant. Nonetheless, some of the EU's more "political" initiatives, especially around peacekeeping processes and democracy-promotion, have also made some inroads in the emerging powers' public debate. For instance, the EU is often mentioned by the Indian press with regard to the peace processes in Jammu-Kashmir and Sri Lanka and various newspapers deal with the EU's diplomatic initiatives to avoid direct confrontation in Iran and North Korea (Fioramonti 2007). Similarly, Indian political elites have described the EU as a key ally in the fight against terrorism, especially after the Mumbai attacks of 2008 (Fioramonti and Poletti 2008). In the past few years, a significant amount of EU media coverage in South Africa has related to the developments of the political and economic crisis in neighbouring Zimbabwe, highlighting the personal sanctions Brussels imposed on the representatives of the country's ruling party (Fioramonti and Olivier 2007). According to the

Latinobarometro survey, the EU is widely regarded by Brazilian citizens as one of the global actors contributing most to international peace, right after the UN, but before the US (Fioramonti and Poletti 2008).

Political elites in emerging powers generally approve of the EU's approach to democracy issues and peace processes. They appear to praise the EU's overall emphasis on "multilateralism" as a guiding principle to deal with global challenges and steer international governance. At a closer look, though, it becomes clear that the meaning of multilateralism has come to acquire in the EU's integration experience (which involves a fundamental rethinking of sovereignty and how it is exercised) is fundamentally contested by emerging powers, whose political discourse is firmly centred on the idea of national sovereignty. Thus, the EU's multilateral discourse appears to be mainly filtered through the idea of international multipolar governance led by strong regional actors: while some emerging powers' leaders understand "multilateralism" as tantamount to preserving state sovereignty against unilateral policies (e.g. through a stronger role for the UN), for others it means access to the small "club" of those powers that have a say in world politics (e.g. through an expansion of the permanent seats in the UN Security Council).

As acknowledged by the former Indian Foreign Secretary, the "EU represents a very important pole in a multipolar world" (Fioramonti 2007: 355). A similar reference to "multipolarism" is also recurrent among Brazilian political elites, who see the EU as a contributing force towards a world order in which Brazil could gain its place among the great powers (Fioramonti and Poletti 2008). It must be underlined that the multipolarism/multilateralism often permeates the common critique these countries raise against the current global governance system, which is controlled by a few traditional powers and excludes the majority of countries. Surprisingly, though, the EU does not seem to share the blame for the lack of accountability in contemporary governance systems, although some European countries have not only contributed to build it but continue to play a leading role in it.

These public statements almost invariably refer to the "common values" rhetoric permeating the speeches of those governments that have signed strategic partnerships with the EU (e.g. Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa). As a consequence, it is rather difficult to identify a genuine appreciation for the EU's multilateral role devoid of often-empty diplomatic rhetoric. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that the EU's multilateral agenda is most ardently appreciated by the Chinese government. As argued by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (2004), "China and the EU are important forces for world peace and stability and both are committed to multilateralism and actively promoting democracy and the rule of law in international relations".

Finally, there is no doubt that the EU is also praised for its successful model of regional integration and considered an example by many emerging powers. In countries such as Brazil and South Africa, which have initiated important processes of regional integration such as the Mercosur and the African Union, the reference to the European integration process is inevitably integrated into a long-

term commitment to being the "engines" of regional integration processes within their own geographic spheres of influence. Also in Mexico the EU is viewed as a key model of regional integration for Central America, placing significant emphasis on uniting the forces of those nations that have already reached a certain level of democratic stability and economic development (Chanona 2009).

Stronger ties with the EU have been largely invoked by all emerging powers, also as a strategy to counter the US traditional preference for unilateral policies, exacerbated by the Bush's presidencies. The 2005 PIPA/Globescan survey found that citizens in 20 states out of 23 would see it as "mainly positive" if Europe were to become more influential than the US in world affairs (PIPA 2005). Similarly, the 2006 survey *World Powers in the 21st Century* reveals that the majority of citizens in Brazil (67 per cent), China (96 per cent), India (83 per cent) and Russia (89 per cent) believe that greater cooperation with the EU would benefit global politics as well as their own country (Bertelsmann 2006).

Shifts in International Political Economy: Perceptions of the EU in Trade and Climate Change Disputes

Although appreciation of the EU's role in global political affairs is not uncommon among emerging powers, by far the most recurrent images of the EU have to do with its economic might rather than its political role, especially when looking at the speeches of political leaders and the media coverage. For Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the EU is "not only India's largest trading partner, but also our largest source of foreign direct investment" (quoted in Fioramonti 2007: 355). Former President Lula of Brazil has often admitted that the EU is "Mercosur's only trade interlocutor which, when putting on the table offers in all the relevant areas, signals a positive disposition towards negotiations" (quoted in Fioramonti and Poletti 2008: 173). For most Chinese officials, the relationship between their country and the EU (and its Member States) must be viewed as a form of economic "complementarity", whereby the European market provides the demand and the Chinese production system constitutes the supply (Peruzzi et al. 2007b: 325). Mexican political elites as well as certain sectors within the media attribute a significant importance to economic relations with the EU, echoed by the South African government that officially recognizes the sheer size of the European market and its relevance for the development of the whole African continent (Chanona 2009, Fioramonti and Olivier 2007).

At the same time, such a generic recognition of Europe's unquestionable weight in international trade lives side-by-side with a harsh criticism of its commercial policies and negotiating stance in the main international forums. The image of the EU as a "protectionist" power has thus become very common among politicians, trade unionists, business organizations and civil society in most emerging powers. The main targets of this generalized attack include: the EU's regime of agricultural subsidies, which is described as having a distorting effect on the sustainability of most fledgling economies; non-tariff trade barriers (e.g. quotas, export subsidies,

anti-dumping regulations and packaging standards, etc.), which are perceived to penalize exports from emerging markets; and, finally, the EU's stance on the so-called Doha Round, which has animated a long series of clashes, especially with India, Brazil and China.

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki has repeatedly accused the EU of double standards in the economic field. Echoing a rather widespread feeling among African leaders, Mbeki argued that while the EU promotes social welfare and protectionist policies at home, it forces developing countries to open up their markets and rely exclusively on free trade (Mbeki 2004). Such a critique of the profound inconsistency of the EU's stance in international trade is best exemplified by Mbeki's analysis of the Economic Partnership Agreements, the new free market framework governing EU trade relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries replacing the traditional preferential relations of the past:

The developed North, represented by the EU, has tied the developing South to a development model based on ... free trade and private foreign direct investment ... to oblige the ACP countries to conform to a "free market" model of development that was never imposed on both Western Europe and the Asian Far East after the Second World War. (Mbeki 2004)

In the early 2000s, issues regarding trade negotiations, tariffs and agriculture made up the bulk of EU-related news in South Africa. The EU was often described as a "protectionist bloc" with little sensitivity for the developmental needs of post-apartheid South Africa (Fioramonti and Olivier 2007). Policy-makers (especially those leaning towards the left) and civil society activists have since become particularly wary of the EU's real intentions in Africa (Fioramonti and Kok 2009). More recently, the disputes surrounding the EPAs have taken centre stage, with South Africa leading the group of southern African countries rejecting the EU deal. Initially designed to replace traditional asymmetric trade relations between Europe and its former colonies with new WTO-compatible free trade arrangements, the EPAs have provided the terrain for a general clash of objectives between developing countries and the EU, which ushered in an era characterized by financial uncertainty and widespread opposition to the free trade agenda. According to Rob Davies, the South African Minister of Trade and Industry, the European Commission has adopted a "threatening" strategy characterized by a "take-it-or-leave-it" and "this-is-all-I-can-offer-you" approach in order to force its EPAs onto developing countries: "This led to a situation where a country that was unwilling to sign on did so under huge duress and with little enthusiasm" (Cronin 2007). In April 2010, the new South African President, Jacob Zuma, hinted at the divisive impact that the EPA negotiation was having on Southern Africa, underlining that the future of the local customs union was "undoubtedly in question" if African countries were not given a chance to "pursue the unfinished business of the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations as a united group" (van der Merwe 2010).

Most trade unions and local associations as well as NGOs echo these sentiments and perceive the EU's trade policy as another component of the longstanding unfair practices imposed on Africa, Asia and Latin America by the former colonizers (Fioramonti and Lucarelli 2008). Indian political elites too share a number of concerns about the EU's strategy in bilateral and multilateral trade. At the sixth EU-India summit held in 2005, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh remarked that "as tariff barriers disintegrate, non-tariff barriers suddenly come up" to hamper exports by developing economies (Kumar 2005). During the Hong Kong summit of the Doha Round in 2005, former Indian trade minister Kamal Math described the EU's export subsidies as the most distorting measure in international trade and argued that the success of the WTO negotiations would depend on the eradication of subsidies in order not to "perpetuate the inequalities" that have long affected developing economies.³ In Mexico, civil society and business groups have been vociferous critics of the Free Trade Agreement between their country and the EU. According to some reports, the agreement "has fundamentally benefited the subsidiaries of European companies that do intra-firm trade and has only marginally benefited national industry" (Chanona 2009: 34). For this reason, the Mexican business community has warned that the free trade system has invariably generated sharper asymmetries with European countries, increasing Mexico's trade deficit rather than supporting its sustainable development (Chanona 2009).

Often, these countries' common criticism of the EU's trade policies turns into a general critique of the unbalanced distribution of power in the international political economy, thereby attributing a leading role to emerging powers as representatives of the entire developing world. Once again, the EU (more often than the US) is the target of criticism in global economic forums: "When we go to the WTO and fight to bring our sugar or our cotton into the European market", says former Brazilian President Lula, "we're fighting not only for our own interests but because this helps many other countries" (Lula 2006). Speaking at the WTO Geneva summit in 2008, Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, a key broker in the Doha talks defined by the media "a frank spokesman for the developing world", argued that the collapse of the negotiations with the EU was a clear evidence of the significant shifts occurring within the international political economy: "We all had wished to finalise (a deal), but one thing that we can celebrate is that deals here are no longer made just by the rich countries. [...] They have to take us into account and that will continue to be so" (Parry 2008).

Chinese political elites are by and large supportive of a stronger role of Europe in global economic and political affairs. As remarked by some scholars, "many Chinese observations about Europe's role in the world derive from broader Chinese hopes for developing an international order based on non-hegemony, dispersion of power and regional multipolarity, political equanimity, cultural diversity, and economic interdependence" (Shambaugh et al. 2007: 4).

3 The speech is available at www.twinside.org.sg/title2/twinside323.htm [accessed: 31 July 2010].

"Common interests", "strategic partnership" and "similar views" are but a few of the most recurrent expressions used to describe the EU-China relationship in the international political economy (Peruzzi et al. 2007b). As early as 2000, former president Jiang Zemin described the emergence of the EU as "conductive to [...] the establishment of a new international political and economic order" (quoted in Peruzzi et al. 2007b: 320). Yet, when moving from the general level of official political rhetoric to the nitty-gritty of economic relations, the Chinese views of the EU change quite considerably. Indeed, "there are several developments which make China-EU trade and economic disputes more frequent and fierce than ever" (Zhang 2007). These issues include, among others, the EU's increasing willingness to apply anti-dumping measures on Chinese labour-intensive exports. Chinese government officials and political elites also believe that the EU's opposition to the full market economy status of Beijing within the WTO has driven a wedge between the two economic partners, as it makes it easier for Europe to apply anti-dumping measures against Chinese exports. In addition, the issue has become a question of political prestige for Chinese officials, which strive to be treated as an equal economic partner by Europe (Peruzzi et al. 2007b). Recently, the Chinese government has also adopted a social justice framework in its accusation of the EU's "protectionism" by arguing that European barriers (see, for instance, the recent dispute at the WTO over Chinese manufactured shoes imported in the EU) have been threatening the development of Beijing's economy and its poverty eradication strategy (Lynn 2010).

Quite similarly, Russia's political elites insist on portraying the EU as a "natural ally" and a preferential partner in political and economic matters. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin made this point quite clear: "We 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" (Morini 2009: 235). Notwithstanding this generic appreciation, Russian leaders and opinion makers tend to describe Europe according to a "West vs. East" discourse. Unlike other emerging powers, though, Russia's discourse on the EU is less influenced by issues such as social justice and neo-colonialism, while more prominence is given to the disputes around human rights and energy policy (Morini 2009).

In China, Brazil, India, Mexico and South Africa, the media overwhelmingly represent the EU in terms of its economic might (Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2009). The EU's engagement in international trade, in particular its trade negotiations with local regional institutions (e.g. Mercosur, SADC or ASEAN) and its positions within the WTO, were the most visible economic themes covered by the media (mainly the press) between 2004 and 2006. Financial newspapers were those reporting most news items on the EU, while in-depth reporting often focused on the distorting effects that EU agricultural policies were having on local economies. Overall, though, mass media tend to portray the EU as a source of restrictions rather than assistance. Its conservative stance on trade issues and the Doha round

largely overshadows its contribution to international diplomacy, peacekeeping and multilateralism, which are seldom covered by media outlets throughout the world (Fioramonti and Lucarelli 2008).

In recent years, the overall critique of the EU's stance in bilateral and international trade has gradually spilled over to the global debate on a common framework to curb climate change. Indeed, the 2009 Copenhagen global summit on climate change was not just an international conference concerning the world's ecological degradation. It was also a catalyst of tensions, rivalries and reciprocal accusations, accumulated over a long series of unsuccessful multilateral negotiations, from the Doha Round of international trade to the reform of global governance.

Once again, Europe found itself (perhaps unwittingly) in the eye of the storm. The leak of a preparatory document sponsored by the Danish host on the eve of the Copenhagen summit was probably the best example of the distance between the EU and most emerging powers (Watts 2010). Not only was the document immediately rejected, but European countries were accused of attempting to "kill" the Kyoto Protocol and its special provision for developing countries (Vidal 2009). A bunch of emerging powers, namely Brazil, China, India and South Africa (which united under the banner of BASIC) harshly criticized the EU's approach and reclaimed their role as spokespersons of the entire developing world, a strategy already adopted during the Doha Round negotiations. Retrieving the social justice discourse adopted during the international trade negotiations, the BASIC countries heavily reprimanded the EU and its attempt to impose restrictions on the developmental trajectory of emerging powers. The Indian government remarked that "the EU drafts are clearly unacceptable to us", while other representatives added that any attempt to force such "unrealistic proposals" on the rest of the world would be thwarted (Schall-Emden 2009). South Africa's Environment Minister, Buyelwa Sonjic, underlined that no binding requests could be made on countries still facing significant "socioeconomic issues", with a "sizeable amount of our population without electricity" (Mooki 2009). Similarly, the Indian government has reiterated that "it is morally wrong for us to agree to reduce when 40 percent of Indians do not have access to electricity" (Lakshmi 2009). Finally, then President Lula of Brazil championed the social justice critique of the EU's policy by arguing that European countries:

should not only cover initiatives to reduce their emissions, but all the other harm they have already inflicted on the planet. We have to draw a line between rich countries, which have had an industrial policy in place for more than 150 years, and the poor ones which only now are beginning to develop. With respect to global warming, the responsibility of the rich countries is much greater than that of emerging economies. (Schall-Emden 2009)

As some European observers have argued, the Copenhagen conference "was a preview of the new world order. The more Europeans spoke, the less they were listened to" (Renard 2010).

Conclusion: Overcoming the Gap between Self-Representation and External Perceptions?

As recent research has demonstrated, from Asia to Latin America, the EU is a marginal issue in public debates and is unknown to most citizens (Chaban and Holland 2008, Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2009). Although the European Commission has vowed to promote the EU's image in the rest of the world, the results are quite disappointing, especially in emerging powers. This analysis has shown that the EU is more generally appreciated in the more "political" domains, especially in the field of peacekeeping, democracy-building and regionalization. The EU's emphasis on multilateralism is also widely acknowledged and welcomed by leaders of emerging powers. Yet, perceptions tend to become more negative when moving from the realm of high politics to international political economy issues, which are by far the most prominent ingredients of the overall opinion that emerging powers hold of the EU. Undoubtedly, the EU has gradually acquired a significant weight in global economic matters. In all emerging powers, the EU is often described as a trading partner and an example of economic stability. Trade with the EU is seen as an "opportunity" to promote social and economic development in emerging economies. Business elites and the press also emphasize the importance of the EU's economy, particularly with regard to the fight against poverty and the support for economic growth in developing countries. Nonetheless, the reputation of the EU in the international political economy has been tainted by its attitude in the main global forums, from the WTO to the recent conventions on climate change. Agricultural subsidies, non-tariff barriers and other protectionist measures against emerging economies have contributed to reinforcing the perception of the EU as a "neo-colonial" power. It also appears as if the enthusiasm declared by the EU for the adoption of strategic partnerships with all these emerging powers has not really affected the latter's negative assessment of the EU's stance in economic affairs. After the Copenhagen Summit, the EU has also been the target of fierce criticism by emerging economies and was inevitably sidelined by the alliance of the BASIC countries with the US. In this regard, recent developments bear the risk of a growing marginalization of Europe in the main global forums, especially if the G8 (where Europe boasts a dominant representation) is gradually superseded by the G20. The impact that the global economic crisis has been exerting on the EU and some of its Member States (e.g. Greece, Ireland and Portugal) might further erode its international status, particularly vis-à-vis emerging powers, which by contrast have largely overcome the financial downturn and strengthened their voice in global affairs. As revealed by a qualitative research of Indian views of the EU, for instance, "Europe is seen as 'in economic decline' and 'too small, divided,

and backward-looking' to be more than a 'niche player providing luxury goods and services' in the future — 'the world's boutique' and 'perhaps not even that'" (Lisbonne de-Vergeron 2006: 24).

This chapter has highlighted a significant "gap" between how the EU perceives itself and how it is perceived by emerging powers. It seems that the "uniqueness" of the EU as a global actor permeated by values such as solidarity, sustainability and justice, which are rather common in the EU official rhetoric, is defied by the overall assessment made by emerging economies. Obviously, most of the speeches and documents cited in this chapter are loaded with political rhetoric and, in part, the real "behind-the-scenes" interaction between emerging powers and the EU is likely to be characterized by less animosity than might appear from surveying official declarations. Nonetheless, such a high degree of criticism concerning economic issues reveals the political importance that international trade and climate change negotiations have for emerging powers. Global economic processes are major factors in shaping the external image of the EU, much as they have been instrumental in defining the notion of a "Global South", which some emerging economies have swiftly embraced to demand a significant shift in global governance.

This research confirms not only that how the EU is viewed by the rising powers of Asia, Africa and Latin America can be radically different from how it is perceived within the European borders, but also that the credibility of the Union as an international actor is very much dependent upon its decisions and strategies in global governance. This analysis also points to an 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, regionalism and democracy-promotion — are also those in which the EU's unitary policy-making and overall effectiveness are less developed; 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 and climate change — are those for which the EU is often criticized.

Fragmentation, poor communication, lack of a symbolic message and, above all, inconsistencies between words and deeds are crucial factors accounting for the skewed image the EU enjoys among emerging powers. To overcome these weaknesses, European institutions and policy-makers should improve not only the coherence of various EU policies, but also their consistency with the fundamental values the Union affirms to promote. Following the adagio of public diplomacy that "God gave us two ears and one mouth", the EU should learn to listen more and speak less: good communication rests on the ability to understand the expectations and preferences of Europe's partners, which could be enormously improved by an external service capable of getting the EU closer to the ground, an ability which the Union has lacked for a long time, both inside and outside its borders. The EU should also refrain from playing the "moral high ground" card in international politics, as this stifles a frank debate and risks exacerbating the evident inconsistencies of European policies. On the contrary, the EU should be

more willing to recognize its mistakes and the deep responsibilities of European countries for the enduring injustices the world is still suffering from. Just like any other global actor, the EU has specific interests and goals, which other powers might find legitimate but not particularly "ethical". Against this backdrop, the EU's message should be profoundly revised in order to bring the Union down to earth: how it intends to make up for previous mistakes and how it plans to contribute to the effective management of global complexities should become the cornerstones of its future global narrative.

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