

## *How External Perceptions of the European Union Are Shaped: Endogenous and Exogenous Sources*

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### *Introduction*

Responding to the growing role of the European Union in international relations, academic interest in the external relations of the EU has increased considerably in recent years. Study on European Foreign Policy (EFP) as a new field now seems to have been well-established within the family of EU studies. In light of the burgeoning works in the field of EFP, there are two points to be made in this paper.

First, the large majority of EFP research so far is more or less EU-centred, meaning it discusses the EU's external relations as seen from inside the EU.<sup>1</sup> The existing literature examines how EU foreign policy is made focusing on policy-making at the EU level, what the EU is, what it is doing, and what role it wants to play in the world etc, all discussed from the EU's own point of view. While it is obvious that the EU cannot exist in a vacuum, examinations on how the EU is perceived in the world by countries and people outside the EU had largely been missing from EFP research.<sup>2</sup> Only very recently there has been a growing interest

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<sup>1</sup> See also Hartmut Mayer, 'Is It Still Called "Chinese Whispers?" The EU's Rhetoric and Action as a Responsible Global Institution', *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (January 2008).

<sup>2</sup> The lack of research in this regard is striking especially when compared with the huge amount of research on how the world views the United States.

and recognition that we have to pay more attention to how outsiders view the EU. One of the pioneers in this field is 'The EU through the Eyes of the Asia-Pacific' project (APPP) based at the National Centre for Research on Europe, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, led by Martin Holland.<sup>3</sup> A project on 'The External Image of the European Union' led by Sonia Lucarelli of the University of Bologna in the framework of the GARNET falls in this new category of EFP research.<sup>4</sup> A series of booklets on Chinese and Indian views of the EU have also been published recently by Chatham House.<sup>5</sup> I have discussed elsewhere how Japan sees Europe and the EU using a concept of 'expectations-deficit'.<sup>6</sup> This article will argue that there is a strong need in the field of EFP research to pay more attention to how the EU is perceived outside the EU and to analyse that aspect as a subject of academic research.<sup>7</sup>

Second, based on the above, this paper will explore ways in which to analyse how external perceptions of the EU are shaped outside the EU. While there is recently a growing number of works on external perceptions of the EU as mentioned above, most of them only describe the state of perceptions in each country and stop short of exploring how such perceptions are shaped. My goal is to fill this gap. As a first step toward it, the main purpose of this paper is to build a preliminary basis on

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<sup>3</sup> For research outcomes of this project, see, for example, Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland (eds.), *The EU through the Eyes of the Asia-Pacific: Public Perceptions and Media Representations*, NCRE Research Series, No. 4 (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, publication year not given); Natalia Chaban, Ole Elgström and Martin Holland, "The European Union As Others See It," *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2006). The project is now expanded under the funding from the ASEF (Asia-Europe Foundation) of Singapore. See Martin Holland, Peter Ryan, Alojzy Nowak and Natalia Chaban (eds.), *The EU through the Eyes of Asia: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand* (Singapore-Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> See Sonia Lucarelli, 'The European Union in the Eyes of Others: Towards Filling a Gap in the Literature', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2007) and other articles in the same special issue on the project.

<sup>5</sup> Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron, *Contemporary Indian Views of Europe* (London: Chatham House, 2006); idem, *Contemporary Chinese Views of Europe* (London: Chatham House, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Michito Tsuruoka, "'Expectations Deficit' in EU-Japan Relations: Why EU-Japan Partnership Cannot Flourish', *Current Politics and Economics of Asia*, a special issue on 'Lessons for Asia: The European Union in Comparative Perspective', Vol. 17, No. 1 (2008).

<sup>7</sup> Note that this paper is not arguing that EU policy-makers should take into account more what the third countries want and say. The argument is mainly about EFP as an academic discipline. For an example of the recognition in the mainstream EFP study regarding the need to pay more attention to 'how the EU looks beyond its borders', see Christopher Hill and Michael Smith, 'International Relations and the European Union: Themes and Issues', in Hill and Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 16. But it does not seem that they have succeeded in incorporating that aspect to their edited volume.

which to conduct extensive empirical research on how external perception of the EU are shaped hoping to help advance the research agenda into a next stage. Therefore, this paper will not examine individual cases in detail, while the cases of the United States and Japan will be discussed for the purpose of helping articulate the framework of analysis.

Here, what should be noted at the outset is the fact that external perceptions of the EU are not simply the reflection of the reality of the EU. It is simply wrong to regard EU policy and actions as independent variables and external perceptions as dependent variables. If it is that simple, it would not have been needed to embark this research in the first place. On the contrary, external perceptions are influenced not only by what happens in the EU and what the EU is and is actually doing in the real world, but also by factors unrelated to what the EU is doing in its own territory and in the world. This article will try to conceptualise two kinds of sources that determine perceptions of the EU in third countries: *exogenous* and *endogenous* sources.

One may wonder that these are of interest only to the outsiders. The underlying assumption of this article is just the opposite, which is that understanding how the EU is seen by the outsiders and how these perceptions are shaped are of huge concern to the EU itself in terms of both the conduct of EU foreign policy and the development of the discipline of EFP research. Since it does matter to the EU itself, research on the formation of external perceptions of the EU is needed even from the EU's point of view and is in its own interest. I will discuss this in the conclusion based on the argument made in the body of the paper.

The first section will discuss how the existing EFP literature has overlooked the importance of understanding external perceptions and why more attention needs to be paid to how the EU is seen outside. The second section will introduce a framework by which to examine how external perceptions of the EU are shaped in third countries, such as the United States and Japan.

## **THE LACK OF EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVES IN EFP RESEARCH: WHY THEY MATTER**

### *What Power to Whom?*

EFP is a research field that is diverse in many respects. Those who are working in the field have very different theoretical background one another and are interested in many different aspects of EU external relations. While some have been alarmed<sup>8</sup> or

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<sup>8</sup> A classic example in this regard is Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A*

fascinated<sup>9</sup> by the emergence of the EU as a new superpower, others have been busy discussing failures and the ineffectiveness of EU foreign policy.<sup>10</sup> Some base their arguments on realist assumptions, while others use liberal, constructivist, or post-modernist theories in analysing EFP.<sup>11</sup>

Amid the diverse nature of EFP research and regardless of their different theoretical inclinations, a question that many people have been asking and exploring in common is what sort of power/actor the European Union is (and has been) in the world. It is a question about how to characterise the EU as an actor in international relations. Scholars and politicians have put various labels on the EU: ‘civilian power’,<sup>12</sup> ‘normative power’,<sup>13</sup> ‘gentle power’<sup>14</sup> and ‘soft power’,<sup>15</sup> to name but a few.<sup>16</sup> Broadly speaking, it seems there are two reasons why this kind of debate has

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*Superpower in the Making* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973).

<sup>9</sup> Works in this regard include Mark Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005); Stephen Haseler, *Super-State: The New Europe and Its Challenge to America* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Philip Gordon, ‘Europe’s Uncommon Foreign Policy’, *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Winter 1997-98); Jan Zilonka, *Explaining Euro-Paralysis: Why Europe Is Unable to Act in International Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1998); Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred and Knopf, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> For various theoretical approaches in EFP, see Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the EU* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Walter Carlsnaes, Helene Sjursen and Brian White (eds.), *Contemporary European Foreign Policy* (London: Sage Publications, 2004); Thomas Christensen and Ben Tonra (eds.), *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); John Peterson and Helene Sjursen (eds.), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe? Competing Visions of the CFSP* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> François Duchêne, ‘Europe’s Role in World Peace’, in Richard Mayne (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead* (London: Fontana, 1972); Duchêne, ‘The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence’, in Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager (eds.), *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign Policy Problems Before the European Community* (London: Macmillan, 1973). For a recent reassessment of the concept, see Stelios Stavridis, ‘Why the “Militarising” of the European Union is Strengthening the Concept of a “Civilian Power Europe”’, *EUI Working Papers*, RSC No. 2001.17 (Florence: EUI, June 2001); Karen Smith, ‘The End of Civilian Power Europe’, *International Spectator*, 35-1 (January 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Ian Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40-2 (2002).

<sup>14</sup> Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, *Europe, A Civil Power* (London: Federal Trust, 2004). While the English translation is ‘civil power’, the original Italian title is ‘*Europe, forza gentile*’, which can be translated to ‘gentle force’.

<sup>15</sup> Not least in politicians’ speeches, the terms ‘civilian power’ and ‘soft power’ are used interchangeably. For an original meaning of the term ‘soft power’ in international studies, which is considerably different from what European politicians mean, see Joseph Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> An excellent compilation of articles in this field is Helene Sjursen (ed.), *Civilian or Military Power?: The European Union at Crossroads* (London: Routledge, 2005).

been particularly lively with respect to the EU.<sup>17</sup> First, the rise of any new powers, not least great powers, in the international system always causes people's attention to their behaviours, because the rise of powers often affects the state of the balance of powers in the region and in the whole world, which in turn inevitably influences behaviours and calculations of other powers. The EU is supposed to be a new rising power in the world, which naturally raises people's interest both in and outside the EU. Second, there is a fairly strong belief in Europe that the EU is or should be a unique power in the world, different from other (great) powers past and present. It is in a sense a significant way of claiming a distinctive international identity of the EU. The biggest object against which the EU constructs its international identity has obviously been the United States.<sup>18</sup>

Debates on what power the EU is, on the other hand, demonstrate the high degree of what might be called 'EU-centrism' of EFP research or the lack of external perspectives in EFP. It is totally free for the EU to regard itself as a 'civilian power' or 'normative power'. But whether the EU is seen by outsiders as such is quite another matter, in fact. If the EU's self-identification as a particular kind of power in the world is not shared by others in the international community, such identification loses most of its meaning in the real world and the usefulness as a tool in analysing the role of the EU in the world. The EU's own self-identification and external perceptions of the EU are two sides of the same coin: any discussions on the nature and characteristics of the EU as an international actor would not be complete without taking into account both aspects.

A thesis on a 'normative power Europe' is a case in point. Ian Manners first coined the term 'normative power Europe' in his seminal article appeared in the *Journal of Common Market Studies* in 2002.<sup>19</sup> He points out that a traditional distinction between 'civilian' and 'military' powers no longer serves as an effective tool to characterise the role of the EU and argues that the EU can best be conceived as a 'normative power'. Manners reaches his conclusion by examining the role of the EU in the abolition of death penalty and the promotion of human rights in the world. In these policy areas, the EU has been a champion that advances international norms on human rights. The biggest and the most obvious problem with this argument, from the standpoint of this article, is that there is a serious lack of examination on

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<sup>17</sup> On this point, see Tsuruoka Michito, 'Kokusaiseiji niokeru pawah toshiteno EU: Oushuu anzenhoshou senryaku to Beiou kankei [The EU as a Power in International Politics: The European Security Strategy and Transatlantic Relations]', *Kokusai Seiji*, No. 142 (2005), p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Garton Ash characterises the recent tendency of this to be 'Europe as Not-America'. See his *Free World: Why a Crisis of the West Reveals the Opportunity of Our Time* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), chap. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe'.

whether the EU is regarded to be a normative power outside the Union by third countries, or at least by the countries (or peoples) of concerned.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of examination does not necessarily mean that the EU is not seen as a normative power outside the EU. But there are grounds for scepticism in this regard. There are two main reasons why the EU cannot always be seen as a ‘normative power’ in the world, not least in a positive sense. First, the EU’s record in this regard has been uneven at best. The EU, not unlike the United States, lacks consistency in its position on normative issues such as human rights, and has often been criticised of employing double-standard: hard on small countries such as Myanmar and soft on large and important countries such as China and Russia. Second, while assuming that the EU is really a normative power—or at least that it has some characteristics of being such power—whether it is welcomed by third countries is another matter. The EU’s uncompromising stance on particular problems of human rights, for example, may not be popular among people who may regard the EU’s position to be an irritating intervention, intending to impose European values. It may be possible to argue that while authoritarian (undemocratic) governments do not like EU pressure or intervention, their peoples welcome the EU as a champion of freedom and human rights. Even in a situation where such distinction between government and people is plausible, it cannot be taken for granted that the EU’s normative position is welcomed on the ground.

These problems are not confined to the thesis of normative power. Other types of arguments on how to characterise the EU as an international actor suffer from the similar set of problems. The state of the EU’s role in the world depends not only on its own desires, willingness and capability, but also on how it is perceived outside the Union. If the degree of the gap between what the EU thinks of itself and what outsiders conceives of the EU becomes too wide, the EU would be criticised of being hypocritical or complacent. Cynics may conclude that what matters more to the Europeans is ‘how they want to believe by themselves who they are’ than ‘who they are actually’. This can be called ‘Euro-narcissism’.<sup>21</sup> It is a situation from which no one can benefit—bad for not only EFP research as an academic discipline, but also for the conduct of European foreign policy in the real world.

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Diez develops Manners’ argument further into an inward-looking direction, focusing on how the discourse of normative power Europe is constructed in the EU. See his ‘Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering “Normative Power Europe”’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (June 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Mayer, ‘Is It Still Called “Chinese Whispers”?’ , p. 78.

### *Capability-Expectations Gap or Expectations Deficit?*<sup>22</sup>

Compared with most debates on what kind of power the European Union is in the world discussed above, Christopher Hill's thesis on 'capability-expectations gap (CEG)'<sup>23</sup> can be seen as an early attempt to take into account what outsiders think of the EU. First introduced in 1993, the 'capability-expectations gap' denotes a gap between what the EU is able to deliver in the international arena through its foreign policy instruments—capability—and what people and governments both inside and outside the Union expect and demand the EU to achieve in this regard—expectations. The gap opens up because while improving the capability of the EU is always difficult, the expectations and demands to the EU are very easy to increase, often to the extent that they become unmanageable. The gap thus is an imbalance between low capability and high expectations, which is thought to be pervasive in a wide range of EU foreign relations. Hill argues that the 'capability-expectations gap' is dangerous because, first, 'it could lead to debates over false possibilities both within the EU and between the Union and external supplicants' and second, 'it would also be likely to produce a disproportionate degree of disillusion and resentment when hopes were inevitably dashed'.<sup>24</sup>

For those who have a strong belief regarding the virtue and the righteousness of the great project of European integration, it is just natural to assume that outsiders are always fascinated by the achievement of European integration and have high expectations. But it may not always be the case in reality. The 'capability-expectations gap' does not exist always or everywhere. On the contrary, it should be noted that a reverse gap that I call 'expectations deficit' can sometimes be observed in EU external relations, most notably in the EU's relations with major countries such as the United States, Russia and Japan.<sup>25</sup> Aside from the EU's traditional strength in international trade and development, these countries do not normally have high awareness of the EU in other areas, not least on foreign policy and security issues.

In light of this, one of the biggest limitations of the concept of capability-expectations gap is that it does not, at least explicitly, envisage the possibility that the gap could sometimes be reverse.<sup>26</sup> The CEG naturally assumes that expectations outweigh capabilities. That is because, argues Hill, 'structural

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<sup>22</sup> This section is partially drawn from Tsuruoka, "Expectations Deficit" in EU-Japan Relations' with some modifications.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Hill, 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (September 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Hill, 'Closing the Capabilities-Expectations Gap?' in Peterson and Sjursen (eds.), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe?* p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> For the case of Japan, see Tsuruoka, "Expectations Deficit" in EU-Japan Relations'.

<sup>26</sup> Hill acknowledges that 'some outsiders have always been aware of the limitations of European foreign policy'. Hill 'Closing the Capabilities-Expectations Gap?' p. 30.

forces exist which keep expectations up just as they limit the growth of capabilities'.<sup>27</sup> Though it may be generally the case, external expectations should not be taken for granted.

The biggest reason why the concept of capability-expectations gap rather than the reverse gap (i.e. expectations deficit) have been a dominant concern in EFP research seems to be that the main focus of European foreign policy in practice and in academic research as well have been the EU's relationship with ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries that have had naturally high expectations to the EU not least in the field of economic cooperation. At the same time, relations with the US have tended to be dealt with in a different context (not as European foreign policy, but transatlantic relations).

What should be recognised here is that if the EU fails to garner desired level of expectations from important partners around the world, it is harmful to the development of European foreign policy itself, not least the EU's desire to become a significant power in the world.

First, since external expectations and demands for EU action in the world are thought to be one of the most important stimuli for its external relations,<sup>28</sup> their absence or insufficient existence would mean decreased impetus for the Union to act in the world and to develop its foreign policy, which could result in a slow development in EU foreign policy. Indeed, from the outset, external relations of the EC/EU including successive rounds of enlargement have in large part developed in response to external demands and expectations and international events.

Second, if there are only an insufficient number of partners in the world who regard the EU to be worth counted as an important partner, its capability and the willingness to do something in the world (even if assuming that the EU has both) would have to be wasted. There may be something the Union can do by itself regardless there are partners with whom it can work together. But in many cases, the EU needs external partners to get things done in this globalised and interdependent world. No matter how the EU struggles hard to establish itself as an international actor, the result inevitably depends on whether third countries regard the EU as such. The cost of being underestimated should be taken seriously. Though I fully share the central concern of CEG that excessive and misplaced expectations are dangerous, I argue that the reverse aspect should not be discounted too easily: expectations deficit should be of equal concern. That is why external perceptions matter and need to be examined.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> See Karen Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 6-7; Roy Ginsberg, *The European Union in International Politics: Baptism by Fire* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), p. 10.

**A MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH PERCEPTIONS ARE SHAPED:  
EXOGENOUS AND ENDOGENOUS SOURCES**

Beyond describing the actual states of perceptions of the EU in third countries, the most important task is to examine the mechanism through which they are shaped. As a preliminary framework, this paper will divide factors that influence the formation of external perceptions of the EU into two categories: exogenous and endogenous sources. (See table below.)

Table 1. Endogenous and Exogenous Sources in the Cases of the US and Japan

		Endogenous Sources	Exogenous Sources
Low Recognition or Negative Views (Euro- scepticism)	US	US Military Supremacy (belief in military power) / US Economic Supremacy (contempt for EU Economy/ Support for US Unipolarity)	Failures of CFSP/ESDP / Economic underperformance of the EU
	Japan	US-first thinking / Indifference to Europe	
High Recognition or Positive Views (Euro- enthusiasm / Euro- optimism)	US	Anti-Bush, Anti-Republican Sentiment	Growing Role of the EU as an International Actor (development of CFSP/ESDP) / Birth of Euro / EU Enlargement
	Japan	Anti-American Sentiment / Support for Multipolarity / Support for European Social-Economic Model	

*How Exogenous and Endogenous Sources Work*

On the one hand, the state of the EU, or the successes and failures of the EU, influences how outsiders view the EU: these are *exogenous* factors emanating from the EU. As a rule, successes of the EU tend to generate more favourable views on it (and raise the EU's profile in the world) while failures are likely to strengthen more sceptical views (hurt the EU's profile). One caveat that has to be put is that if the

degree of the EU's success becomes too high and threatening others, it could result in less favourable alarming views on the EU. I will discuss this aspect later in the context of US debate.

As for exogenous sources, the establishment of the EU's foreign and security policy, the launching of the single currency Euro and the enlargement are factors that have contributed to the increased awareness and expectations to the EU in many countries. On the contrary, repeated failures to act in common and speak in a single voice in international relations and economic underperformance of the Euro-zone have led to negative views on and lower expectations of the EU. Though it would not be easy for the EU to control the third countries' expectations on it, external perspectives on the EU is to some extent a function of the state of the EU. But the difficult thing about this is that once a certain perception (stereotype) is established, it becomes resilient and not easy to change it. This is not a problem unique to outsiders. It is argued that even the Europeans themselves find it hard to recognise, for example, the recent development of European security and defence policy.<sup>29</sup>

The above is a straightforward part of the story. More tricky part in the formation of external perceptions of the EU is an *endogenous* aspect. Endogenous sources are those which operate in the third countries on which the EU has little influence. They evolve almost regardless of what the EU is actually doing and may end up in both positive and negative perceptions of the EU. In the case of Japan, a strong belief that the United States is Tokyo's first and foremost ally, and the relationship with it is of absolute nature—the EU can do nothing about this—tends to dampen expectations to Europe. In short, the EU's credibility and reliability in the areas of foreign policy and security cannot be high for the majority of Japanese.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, expectations to and favourable views on Europe are often stimulated by anti-American sentiment or more mild uneasiness toward the US (*kenbei*) and resultant sympathy with a European model of social-economy. There are actually not a small number of Japanese who prefer European social, economic, and political model to those of the US (or of Anglo-Saxon).<sup>31</sup>

In politics and economics alike, it is undeniable that Europe is often

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<sup>29</sup> William Wallace and Bastian Giegerich, 'Not Such a Soft Power: The External Deployments of European Forces', *Survival*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 2004).

<sup>30</sup> For more on Japan's perceptions (low expectations) of the EU, see Tsuruoka, "'Expectations Deficit" in EU-Japan Relations'.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Fukushima Kiyohiko, *Amerika-gata shihonshugi wo keno suru Yoroppa* [Europe that Detests the American Model of Capitalism] (Tokyo: Aki Shobo, 2006); Hiroi Yoshinori, *Datsu-A Nyuu-Ou: Amerika wa hontouni jiyuu no kunika?* [Out of America, Into Eurasia: Is America Really a Freedom Country?] (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2004). It should be noted that such Euro-jubilant books as Mark Leonard's and Jeremy Rifkin's have been translated in Japanese.

understood to be an alternative to the United States in Japan. This does not seem to be influenced by the actual state of European economy. Even if the jobless rate was much higher in Europe than Japan, people can easily find positive side such as generous unemployment benefits. In domestic political spectrum, centre-left parties are generally close to European idea of soft power and social-democracy. But this again is very much a result of the tendency of the dominant centre-right Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which has close ties with the United States, especially with successive Republican Administrations. In the run-up to the Iraq War in 2003, whereas many conservatives supported the US, centre-left liberals opposed it and praised France and Germany for their firm opposition to the war for the purpose of criticising the Japanese government (without mentioning the fact that Europe was bitterly divided internally). Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that how Japanese view Europe depends very much on how they view and where they stand vis-à-vis the United States. In this sense, views on the US are independent variable, while those on Europe are dependent variables. A famous Japanese scholar of French literature recalls those who were fascinated by France in the early post-war years belonged to a camp of ‘spiritual opposition’ to the dominant political and cultural influence of the United States in Japan.<sup>32</sup> Although the overall context has changed significantly over the past several decades, this kind of sentiment remains valid today and influences Japanese views on Europe.

While not explicitly mentioned in the Table 1 above, one more characteristic regarding exogenous sources is the fact that what aspect of the EU outsiders get interested in and how it is conceived of is very much influenced by each domestic context. European issues are often discussed in unexpected contexts, sometimes leading to false expectations. One example of this was Japan’s high level of interest in the EU debate on a European constitution. Some Japanese politicians showed strong interest in the process of making it in the early to mid 2000s. It was not because they were interested in the EU itself, but because they were engaged in debate in Japan on amending the Constitution. They were fascinated by the word ‘constitution’ in the context of the European debate and closely followed how it gets drafted, negotiated and ratified. They looked for something to learn from the European experience almost unaware of the character and the status of a European constitution which was quite different from the ones at the national level.<sup>33</sup> They

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<sup>32</sup> Nishinaga Yoshinari, *Henbou suru Furansu: Kojin, Shakai, Kokka* [A Changing France: Individual, Society, and the State] (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1998), p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> The Constitution Working Group of the House of Representatives (lower house) sent delegations to Europe a few times in the early 2000s to study constitutional issues in Europe including the debate on the European constitution. See, for example, Shuugiin EU kenpou oyobi Suwehden, Finlando kenpou chousa giin-dan houkokusho [Report by the House of Representatives Delegation to Study the Constitutions of the EU, Sweden and Finland]

were especially interested in national referenda. Taro Nakayama, former Foreign Minister and the head of the House of Representatives Study Group on Constitutional Matters (*Kenpou-chousakai*) led a group of Japanese politicians to see referenda on the Constitution for Europe in Luxembourg and France in 2005. That coincided with the Japanese parliamentary debate on how to make a new law on conducting national referenda in Japan, which is needed to amend the Constitution. In the end, the Constitutional Treaty was abandoned and majority of the content was resurrected in the Lisbon Treaty afterwards. But Japanese politicians are no longer interested in this process arguably because the Europeans stopped using the term constitution. This case shows a lot about the dynamic of interest in Europe outside the EU. In short, when, what and why outsiders get interested in the EU are determined by endogenous factors over which the EU has little influence.

In the United States, those who believe the supremacy of military power in international politics and advocate the virtues of unipolarity led by the US regard the EU to be unimportant and incompetent.<sup>34</sup> But those who are against the Bush Administration—mainly Democrats—tend to have much more favourable perceptions of the EU and argue for more cooperation with the EU recognising the weight of the EU as an international actor whom the US can count.<sup>35</sup> Some of them are genuinely impressed by the EU's policy and achievement, but many others use Europe just to criticise the current Administration. Given that the Bush Administration has had difficult relations with Europe and conflicts with European allies have been widely portrayed as a symbol of unilateralism, it was politically very easy for the Democrats to side with Europe on some issues for domestic purposes.

But the debates in the US are more complicated. It often happens that people have negative views on Europe not because it is weak, but because Europe is strong and threatening the primacy of the US.<sup>36</sup> They recognise the EU to be an influential actor in international relations, but think that it has negative impacts on US foreign

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(Tokyo: House of Representatives, National Diet of Japan, December 2004).

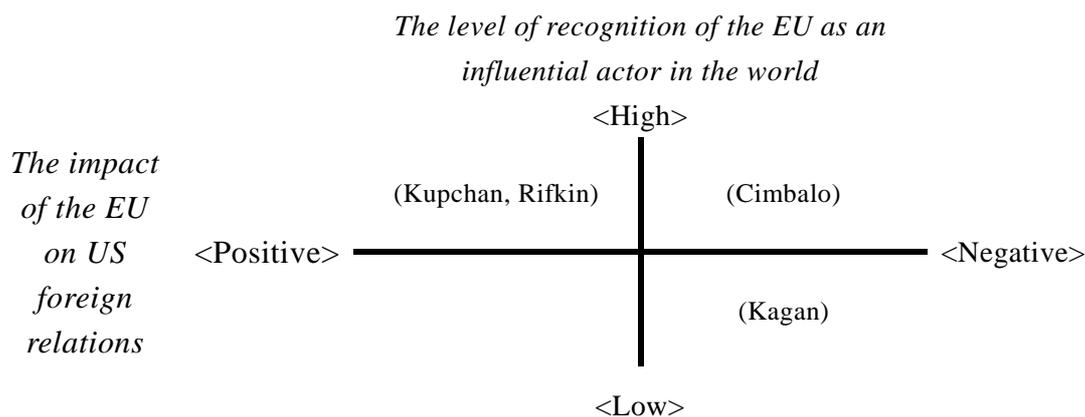
<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), esp. chap. 4; Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004); Ronald Asmus, 'Rethinking the EU: Why Washington Needs to Support European Integration', *Survival*, 47-3 (September 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Jeffrey Cimbalò, 'Saving NATO from Europe', *Foreign Affairs*, 83-6 (November/December 2004) is a notable example in this regard. Henry Kissinger also warns the direction of the EU, especially its security and defence policy (ESDP). See his *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), pp. 47-55.

relations: put simply, a strong EU is not in the interest of the US in these people’s view.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, ‘Euro-bashing’ or ‘Anti-Europeanism’ seems to have become a phenomenon in US debates on Europe, which was stimulated first in the run-up to the Iraq war and proved to be persistent.<sup>38</sup>

Table 2. US Debates on the EU



Both in Japan and the United States, and most likely in other countries as well, Europe and the EU are ‘used’ for domestic purposes. In other words, they are often politicised regardless of the EU’s intentions. This is actually a very common phenomenon in EU member countries, where the EU (or the Eurocrats) are often criticised or even demonised as a scapegoat. While the degree of politicisation of Europe in domestic debates vary from one country to another—in general, the degree tends to be high in the US than Japan—, the EU needs to be more aware of this endogenous dynamics regarding how the EU are used in third countries. Even if the outcome of such domestic debate was an excessive praise or expectations to the EU that it finds comfortable, it needs to be recognised that it is not always good for the EU in the longer term.

*The United States as a Reference Point*

Outside the EU, how to view and ‘use’ the EU is thus very much influenced by the context of domestic debate on foreign policy, economy and society. The most remarkable here is the fact that the United States—or an incumbent Administration in the case of the US—very often serves as a reference point against which to

<sup>37</sup> If they believed the EU to be incompetent, they would not have to worry about its impacts on the US. They could just ignore the EU.

<sup>38</sup> Peter van Ham, ‘America’s Rising Anti-Europeanism’, *Europe’s World*, 2 (Spring 2006).

conceive of the EU. In many cases, as Garton Ash argues, 'Europe' is identified as 'not-America', an alternative to the US,<sup>39</sup> not only by the Europeans themselves, but also by outsiders.

Here lies a potentially very awkward question to the EU. Many European politicians, officials, and experts hail the results of various opinion polls conducted around the world demonstrating that the EU is popular, or much more popular than the United States in many countries.<sup>40</sup> However, to a large extent, the increased popularity of the EU in the world in recent years can be seen as a result of the decreased popularity of the US during the same period. There is a strong correlation between the rise of the EU and the fall of the US in terms of expectations and desirability as superpowers in world opinion polls. If that is the case, the current situation must not be something that EU pundits and political leaders can rejoice at.

On the one hand, it is undeniable that differentiating itself from the United States is an indispensable part of the EU's effort to establish its identity to both domestic and international audiences. There are certainly strong and irresistible demands for the EU to pursue that path, not least in light of perceived decline of American moral authority. But the EU has to consider more seriously various consequences that its rhetoric of 'different from the US' might cause to itself and to the world. While it might be fashionable to posit the EU and the US as two poles in the world,<sup>41</sup> it is a rather parochial view. The world is much wider than just the Euro-Atlantic area. In a wider world, the difference between Europe and the US is small compared to that between the West broadly defined and the rest of the world.

In addition, EU pundits and leaders need to consider whether being popular in the world is always good for them. To be sure, being popular is not a bad thing. But, the reality might be more complicated. For example, there are many people in the world who hate the United States, but at least part of them is fascinated by the US simultaneously. It can be argued that being popular in international relations has another aspect, which is being harmless and powerless. People do not need to dislike anyone who is harmless. This is not to argue that the EU is popular because it is harmless and powerless. The point is that it is not advisable for the EU to cheer prematurely the results of various opinion polls showing the popularity of the EU in the world.

Given the power of endogenous factors that determine perceptions of the EU in

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<sup>39</sup> Garton Ash, *Free World*, chap. 2.

<sup>40</sup> The most recent example can be Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, 'New World Order: The Balance of Soft Power and the Rise of Herbivorous Powers', *Policy Brief* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, October 2007)

<sup>41</sup> See John McCormick, *The European Superpower* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007); Rifkin, *The European Dream*; Haseler, *Super-State*.

third countries, however, there are not actually many things the EU can do to control the way in which it is viewed in the world. But even given this, understanding the mechanism through which perceptions of the EU are shaped in third countries offers the EU the best possible starting point to try to redress any undesirable or unintended perceptions of the EU in the world.

### *Conclusion*

In the light of the lack of attention to external perceptions of the EU in EFP research, the incorporation of them in the field should be a new agenda for EFP. In terms of practical policy terms as well, understanding how outsiders see the EU should be a huge concern for the EU: because, first, the success of EU foreign policy is to a great extent dependent on how it is perceived by other countries (or object countries of EU policy), and second, a better understanding of the structure of external perspectives on the EU would help enable Brussels to conduct its foreign policy including public diplomacy efforts in a more effective way. To date, EU leaders, bureaucrats and EFP scholars have paid much of their attention to ‘product development’ while ignoring ‘market research’. Now it is time to analyse the market outside the Union in which EU foreign policy is consumed.

(Last modified on 17 April 2008)