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4 The symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role in world politics

Ian Manners

The unfreezing of both the international order and the intellectual order in the post-Cold War era has encouraged fundamentally different ways of conceiving and understanding the roles of the European Union (EU) in world politics. In particular, the influences of social theory developed during the 1960s and 1970s were turned to by scholars eager to overcome the ‘failure of international relations as an intellectual project’ (Buzan and Little 2001). In this chapter, in line with the analytical framework developed in the book’s introductory chapter, I will engage in a five-part consideration of the symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role in world politics. By drawing on social theory I first suggest how understanding symbolism can help us to explain the EU’s normative role through the use of role theory, negotiated order and symbolic manifestation. I then proceed to use this understanding in a discussion of common EU role conceptions, including a normative role. Third, I look at the origins of the EU’s normative role by discussing its constitutive norms, together with some examples of their symbolic manifestation. Next, I examine how the EU’s normative role is institutionalized through a consideration of the EU’s symbolic manifestation in three distinct forms – totems, rituals and taboos. Finally, I conclude by discussing six examples of the EU’s normative role performance and role impact. In this chapter I argue that a fuller understanding of the EU’s roles in world politics, and in particular its normative role, requires us to engage in the study of the symbolic manifestation of these roles. In this respect the chapter will both develop a theoretical aspect of EU roles considered in the earlier part of the book and complement the more empirical contributions of the chapters in the later part of the book.

Role theory, negotiated order and symbolic manifestation

As Kal Holsti recognized in 1970, ‘the notion that individual behaviour may be patterned to fit the expectations of others goes back to the beginning of this century’ and he identified the work of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead as laying the foundations of understanding the
social psychology of role theory (Holsti 1970: 236–7). Mead’s development of symbolic interaction theory to help explain the importance of significant symbols and role-playing in the emergence of self and other is central to understanding the interaction between role theory, negotiated order and symbolic transactions (see Mead 1934). Drawing on the work of the pragmatists and symbolic interactionists of the 1930s, scholars in the 1950s and 1960s began to develop the co-constitutive relationship between role theory (with its emphasis on ontological independence) and negotiated order (with its emphasis on structural conditions). In particular Erving Goffman (1959), together with Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s (1966) work on role theory, raised questions about the relationship between self and institutional order in social life (see Berger and Luckmann 1967: 89–96, and Calhoun 1995: 197–8). The symbolic interactionist work of Anselm Strauss marked the next stage in these developments by introducing the notion of ‘negotiated order’:

The negotiated order on any given day could be conceived as the sum total of the organisation’s rules and policies, along with whatever agreements, understandings, pacts, contracts, and other working arrangements currently obtained.

(Strauss 1978: 5–6, in Thomas 1984: 214)

Strauss’s argument that ‘all social order has a negotiated element’, and that negotiations always occur ‘under specific structural conditions’, has proved to be influential in anthropology, sociology and organizational management (see Strauss et al. 1963, Munch 1986 and Benjamin 2003). Of particular interest here is the argument that the interactions between actors and negotiated order are heavily influenced by symbolic power – ‘the power to determine the situation in which interactions take place’ (Hallett 2003: 130).

The study of the EU’s role in world politics has been influenced in important ways by this work on role theory and negotiated order. In particular, the application of role theory to the foreign policies of EU member states (see Aggestam 1999, 2004) and the EU itself (see Lerch 2001, 2003a, b) has proved of value. In parallel the application of negotiated order to the EU (see M. Smith 1996, 2000) has also made a valuable contribution. In line with the aim of this volume, my focus in the rest of the chapter will be on understanding how the symbolic manifestation of the EU influences its role in shaping the negotiated order of world politics. Before doing so, I shall briefly return to the discussion of international role conceptions of the EU as developed by Richard Whitman and myself in order to clarify the normative role of the EU in world politics.
Role conceptions: the EU’s normative role

In recent years I have argued that the debate over the international role of the EU has been dominated by a dichotomy between the ideal types of ‘civilian power Europe’ and ‘military power Europe’ (see Manners 2000a, 2002). As Richard Whitman and myself have discussed elsewhere, whereas discussions regarding the civilian and military roles of the EU tend to focus on the question of capabilities, my argument in favour of the EU’s normative role requires a discussion of culturation and conciliation (Manners and Whitman 2003: 390–1).

Understanding culturation demands that we consider the extent to which the EU’s civilian role provides continuity (albeit on a larger scale) of many, if not all, the norms of Westphalian international relations – in particular the inside/outside distinction between those within and without Europe (Manners 2002: 238; Manners and Whitman 2003: 390). Similarly, although discussions of the EU’s civilian role clearly emphasize the strengthening of international society and international law, they rarely go as far as arguing for the transformation of the international system into one normatively cultured by, for example, Kantian cosmopolitan ethics and Habermasian discourse ethics. Finally, proponents of a greater civilian role for the EU are generally in favour of economies of scale when enlarging and deepening the EU – that somehow a federal union of 25 and more member states would be able to resist the seduction of looking and behaving like a great power. My argument behind the EU’s normative role is that only constant reflexive monitoring by us all of the EU’s particular historical evolution, hybrid polity and constitutional configuration will ensure that the processes of European integration result in a more normative Union for the good of all, rather than simply a bigger EU state for the good of some.

Understanding conciliation demands that we consider the extent to which the EU’s military role ensures the continuity (albeit in a different form) of many, if not all, the norms of Westphalian international relations that favour intervention in the symptoms of conflict over conciliation in the causes of conflict (Manners 2002: 238; Manners and Whitman 2003: 390). Empirically, these two approaches can be differentiated in terms of whether conflict is resolved through shorter-term intervention in the conflict (i.e. changing the conflict itself) or through longer-term conciliation of the parties (i.e. changing the norm of conflict). My argument behind the EU’s normative role is that understanding and resolving conflict involves addressing the structural causes of conflict and the associated extreme constructions of difference. Richard Whitman and I have illustrated these three relationships between the EU’s primary roles in world politics as shown in Figure 4.1.
Role origins – the EU’s normative constitution

Article I-2. The Union’s values
The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minority groups. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and the principle of equality between women and men prevail.

Article I-3. The Union’s objectives
4 In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and protection of human rights and in particular children’s rights, as well as to strict observance and development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.

As articles I-2 and I-3 of the Constitution for Europe illustrate, over the past 50 years the EU has developed a series of founding values and wider objectives that contribute to its constituting the normative elements of its international identity (Manners and Whitman 1998, 2003). These values and objectives (Figure 4.2) are reflected in nine norms that I have
previously argued are constitutive of the EU’s normative role in world politics (Manners 2000a: 32–4; 2002: 242–3). In the context of my discussion of the EU’s normative role in world politics, I shall briefly revisit these norms and reflect on how they are symbolically manifested.

The first EU norm is peace – Robert Schuman’s opening words on 9 May 1950 provided the historical raison d’être for European integration; ‘world peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it’. Reiterated again in the preambles of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the Treaty establishing the European Community (TEC), and the Treaty on European Union, Article I-3 of the Constitution for Europe establishes peace as the EU’s primary objective: ‘1. The Union’s aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.’ As the Nobel Peace Prize laureate John Hume has observed, the EU norm of peace is crucially symbolized in world politics by the existence of the EU itself:

> it is now clear that European Union is the best example in the history of the world of conflict resolution and it is the duty of everyone, particularly those who live in areas of conflict, to study how it was done and to apply its principles to their own conflict resolution.
> (John Hume 1998)

The second EU norm is liberty – freedom within a social context. Liberty, similar to the norms of democracy, rule of law and human rights, was cod-
ified as founding norms by the revised Article 6 of the consolidated Treaty on European Union after the Amsterdam summit in 1997. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union adopted at the Nice European Council in December 2000, and incorporated into the Constitution for Europe, develops the EU understanding of liberty. Title II of the Charter sets out 14 rights and freedoms, starting with Article II-66: 'Everyone has the right to liberty and security of the person.' The EU norm of liberty is symbolized in world politics by the rights, freedoms and responsibilities held and exercised by EU citizens and institutions, for example the rights of EU citizenship and the four freedoms of the single market.

The third EU norm is democracy – the promotion of a particular form, organization and philosophy of political life. The participation and requirements of democracy have been a constitutive norm of the EU since its birth, with Schuman arguing in the French National Assembly in 1948 that ‘we intend to prepare for its [Germany’s] admission to a peaceful, democratic organisation of European nations’. Thus, from the inception of the ECSC and ECs until 1970, democracy was the membership norm of the EC. This norm was first codified in the 1970 Luxembourg Report which stated that membership of the EC was open only to democratic states with freely elected parliaments. During the 1990s, the EU was far more explicit in the promotion and requirements of democracy for membership (Copenhagen Criteria, 1993), for development aid (conditionality clauses, 1995), and in its foreign-policy provisions. The EU norm of democracy is symbolized in world politics by its promotion and conditionality in relations with its closest partners, for example as part of the transition and accession processes with Central and Eastern Europe.

The fourth EU norm is human rights – one of the most visible and promoted norms of the post-Cold War era. Alongside democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights was made explicit in the December 1973 Copenhagen document on ‘European identity’ (Manners and Whitman 1998: 236). Within Europe, human rights law had been progressively developed through the ECHR, and the interpretations of the European Court of Justice. By the 1990s, similar to democracy, human rights were given prominence in the Treaty on European Union and are now promoted through a variety of means, including conditionality clauses in enlargement and development aid. The EU norm of human rights is symbolized in world politics by the high-profile positions taken by the EU at, among others, the UN Commission on Human Rights and visible presence of the EC’s observer status to the Commission.

The fifth EU norm is the rule of law – the political foundations provided by just legal systems and equal protection for all. The rule of law is seen as essential for ensuring the stability and success of the other norms of liberty, democracy and human rights. Hence, these four norms are to be found promoted together through development aid, CFSP and the
Copenhagen membership criteria. The Constitution for Europe ensures that the rule of law continues to be promoted in external action and international relations, but with additional references to ‘respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law’ (Article III-292). The EU norm of the rule of law is symbolized in world politics by the EU’s threefold commitment to the communitarian law of the *acquis communautaire*, international law developed through the principles of the UN charter, and cosmopolitan law involving a ‘commitment to individual rights and principles in accordance with the ECHR [European Convention on Human Rights] and the UN’ (Manners 2002: 241).

The sixth EU norm is *equality* – the legal prohibition of discrimination together with proactive policies to promote equality. The norm of equality has become one of the most promoted norms discussed here, moving from a relatively narrow focus on preventing discrimination based on nationality to the far broader and prominent principles of equality in Article I-2 of the Constitution for Europe. In the 1990s, equality norms expanded beyond nationality to include equality between men and women (TEC, Article 2), the protection of minorities (Copenhagen Criteria), and ‘action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation’ (TEC, Article 13). The EU norm of equality is symbolized in world politics by the mainstreaming of Article 13 actions through the creation of institutions such as the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and the Gender Equality Institute, as well as the promotion of equality at conferences such as the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban.

The seventh EU norm is *social solidarity* – the promotion of the social economy, the social partnership and social justice within the EU, and in relations with the developing world. Alongside the norms of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, social solidarity has been emphasized as a norm in the 1973 Copenhagen Declaration, the 1986 Foreign Ministers’ Declaration, the 1991 Council Resolution, the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union, and the Constitution for Europe. The Charter of Fundamental Rights makes these norms explicit with its Title IV on solidarity, including workers, the family, health and social security rights. The EU norm of social solidarity is symbolized in world politics by the fairly recent and relatively unique EU commitment to ‘free and fair trade’ as found in policy developments and the Constitution for Europe since it was placed on the agenda of the Doha Development Agenda of the WTO by a combination of anti-globalization activists and developing countries.

The eighth EU norm is *sustainable development* – a commitment to ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Brundtland

The ninth EU norm is *good governance* – the provision of open, participatory and democratic governance without creating hierarchical, exclusionary and centralized government. The norm of good governance is the most recent norm to develop within the EU, reflecting its external promotion through enlargement and development policies, and the concerns of internal accountability and democracy within the EU. The norm has its origins in the dual concerns to encourage stable institutions through the accession process (Copenhagen Criteria, June 1993) and the international spread of human rights, democracy and development through good governance (Council Resolution, November 1991). The EU norm of good governance is symbolized in world politics by the post-Iraq commitment to ‘a rule-based international order’ involving ‘spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order’ (Council of the European Union 2003: 10).

The EU’s normative role in world politics is symbolically constituted by the complex interaction of these nine norms. This pyramid of the EU norms motivating and mediating the Union’s normative role in external action can be illustrated as in Figure 4.2.

**Role institutionalization: the EU’s symbolic manifestation**

Having briefly revisited the nine norms that I argue constitute the EU’s normative role, I will now turn to how this role is institutionalized through its symbolic manifestations in world politics. Most of the work analysing the EU’s roles in world politics has tended to focus on policies rather than its symbolic manifestation. I am not suggesting that an emphasis on EU policies towards the rest of the world is misplaced, simply that the symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role reveals much more about the political reality and social institutionalization of the EU’s international identity – ‘symbols do not simply reflect our political reality: they actively constitute it’ (Shore 2000: 89). It is possible to identify three differing
manifestations of this symbolic constitution of reality through icons ('totems'), actions ('rituals') and beliefs ('taboos'). The choice of sacred discourse to describe this trichotomy of manifestations is a reflection of the symbolic power I am trying to explain, rather than a commitment to anything other than humanity as an organizing belief.

**Symbolic totems**

- Article I-8. The symbols of the Union
  - The flag of the Union shall be a circle of twelve golden stars on a blue background.
  - The anthem of the Union shall be based on the ‘Ode to Joy’ from the Ninth Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven.
  - The motto of the Union shall be: ‘United in diversity.’
  - The currency of the Union shall be the euro.
  - 9 May shall be celebrated throughout the Union as Europe Day.

Symbolic totems are the tangible iconic manifestations of EU symbols in the world. They are the most obvious, and most discussed, manifestation of the EU’s physical presence in world politics. As Article I-8 from the Constitution for Europe illustrates, the most apparent ‘symbols of the Union’ are to be found as a result of the Adonnino committee’s work in 1984 – a flag, anthem and day of celebration (the motto and currency are more recent developments). Although the anthem, motto and day are very much unrecognizable totems for most EU citizens and non-citizens, the flag and the currency have now achieved a much wider resonance. Although not venerated in quite the same way, the EU border sign, passport and driving licence/identity card all perform similar roles in making tangible the EU as a physical presence with psychological consequences. Of particular importance to the discussion of the EU in world politics are the totems of the standard EU map and the Commission Representations. The standard EU map serves as a multi-linguistic totem of who is in and who is out, together with comparisons between the EU, the US and Japan of area, population and gross domestic product. The Commission Representations serve as the second most important totem (behind the flag) of the EU’s physical presence in approximately 130 cities around the world.

**Symbolic rituals**

Symbolic rituals are observable, although often intangible, symbolic manifestations of the EU in the world. They are also potentially equally obvious, although in reality less discussed, manifestations of the EU’s practices in world politics. EU symbolic rituals are more deeply embedded than the symbolic totems of the 1980s and 1990s discussed above. In
particular, the ritualistic practices surrounding the ‘birth’ of the Community located in Franco-German ‘rapprochement’ and involving the ‘founding fathers’. Thus the rituals of France and Germany since the Elysée Treaty (1963) include the explicitly visual practices of joint acts of remembrance and hand-holding at war memorials, the joint positions/declarations generally agreed prior to IGCs (Nice excepted) and the ultimate act of solidarity – President Chirac of France representing Germany at an EU summit in October 2003. In more explicitly EU rituals, the observation and veneration of the ‘founding fathers’ serve as a symbolic manifestation of the ‘birth’ of the Community in Messianiac acts. The clear identification of Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi and Paul-Henri Spaak, together with the possible inclusion of Altiero Spinelli and Walter Hallstein, as the ‘founding fathers’ renders more solid the symbolic rituals of post-war reconciliation. In addition to the ritualistic veneration of these ‘fathers’ (through institutions, societies and literature), the homes of Monnet and Schuman have become museums and places of worship to European integration. Other European rituals place emphasis on European years and cities through the joint programmes with the Council of Europe which celebrate the annual ‘European Year of . . .’, including languages, people with disabilities, education or citizenship (in the 2000s), and the ‘European City of Culture’. Undoubtedly the most important ritual for understanding the EU in world politics is the physical performances by the variety of ‘representatives’ of the Union, ranging from the Presidents of the Commission, Council and Parliament, to the High and Special Representatives. These performances may merely be verbal, as in declarations in front of the press in Brussels, or they may be more physical, as in the High Representatives’ ‘missions’ on foreign-policy tasks around the world.

**Symbolic taboos**

Symbolic taboos are found in usually unobservable and intangible discourses, which reflect the manifestations of meanings and beliefs about the EU. These are the least well studied and understood manifestations of the EU’s meanings in world politics. Important as totems and rituals are, it is EU symbolic taboos that shape and explain much of the EU’s social institutions, and more importantly the way in which these manifest in world politics. Symbolic taboos are very different from simple discourses within and without the EU – they undoubtedly reinforce ‘the importance of symbols as repositories of meaning and agents of consciousness’ (Shore 2000: 77). However, symbolic taboos go further in providing a series of inviolable and sacrosanct understandings about what the EU is and what the EU does. In this respect symbolic taboos are constitutive of what the EU is and what it is not, and thus what the EU could and could not do. In this respect symbolic taboos pre-determine what might eventually turn into policy possibilities.
Symbolic taboos include those phrases and sayings that are instantly recognizable as the central discourse around which EU politics and policies revolve – from the treaties and declarations to the practical realities of the policies. Examples of these taboos include the discourses of the integration process itself and those of the EU in the world. Within the former, the mere utterance of phrases such as ‘Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan’, ‘not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible’, ‘common high authority’, ‘pooling of sovereignty’, and ‘acquis communautaire’ provide both the rationale and the means through which integration is to be achieved. In each case, it is very difficult to imagine the breaking of the spirit, if not the letter, of these taboos in the integration process. More recent taboos are not as firmly sanctified but still provide the means through which the EU now exists. These include the ‘four freedoms’, ‘single currency’, ‘ending of the division of the European continent’, ‘Copenhagen criteria’, ‘environmental imperative’, ‘unity through diversity’ and ‘progressive framing of a common defence policy’. In its relations with the rest of the world, taboo discourse includes phrases such as ‘partnership and co-operation’, ‘near neighbourhood’, ‘network of agreements’, ‘rules-based system’, ‘Petersburg tasks’ and even ‘battlegroups’.

Role performance and impact: signs of the EU’s normative role

To conclude, I will try to provide just a few examples of what I consider to be signs, both indicative and symbolic, of the EU’s normative role in world politics. To do this I will revisit the factors that shape EU norm diffusion in world politics, using some of the symbolic manifestations to illustrate.

As I have suggested previously, the six factors shaping norm diffusion are contagion, information, procedure, transference, overt presence and cultural filter (Manners 2000a: 35–6; 2002: 244–5).

The contagion diffusion of norms takes place almost entirely through the role of symbolic manifestations in diffusing ideas from the EU to other political actors. An example of the contagion of symbolic manifestations of the EU’s normative role can be found in the ways in which symbolic taboos within the EU regarding the idea and means of regional integration have diffused to other continents. Hence symbolic discourses such as the creation of a ‘common high authority’, ‘four freedoms’ and even a ‘single currency’ are seen in other regions of the world as being so strong that they are worthy of imitation. Thus in both South America (Mercosur, created in 1991) and Africa (the move from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union in 2002) we see regional organizations being created in order to imitate the perceived worth of the EU’s symbolic taboos. The African Union (AU) is particularly interesting in the way it sought to imitate the EU model –
‘during the Lusaka Summit several references were made to the African Union being loosely based on the European Union model, in which respect it was said that Africa “should not re-invent the wheel” (South African DFA 2002). Institutionally the AU mimics the EU, with its administrative Commission, Executive Council of member states’ foreign ministers, Permanent Representatives Committee, Pan-African Parliament and Court of Justice.

The informational diffusion of norms occurs through references to totems, rituals and taboos in the messages and readings regarding the EU’s normative role. The role of the EU in the immediate aftermath of European or global tragedies serves as a good example of such informational diffusion. For example, take these four public statements as symbolic manifestations of the EU’s normative role:

President Romano Prodi is visiting Enschede today to express European solidarity with the families stricken by the terrible accident that occurred on Saturday 13 May…. The Commission has therefore studied the possibility of providing financial support for the devastated areas from the Structural Funds to assist the Dutch authorities with the reconstruction and restoration.

(Commission 2000)

Dr Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, expresses his sadness at the death of EUMM monitors…. Dr Solana said ‘I deeply regret the death yesterday of the two ELTNM monitors and their interpreter. The men and women of the EUMM are carrying out a difficult but essential task with exemplary courage and dedication in the interest of peace and stability in the whole region. The men that died yesterday have paid the highest price for this ideal.’

(Council 2001a)

This barbaric attack was directed against the free world and our common values. It is a watershed event and life will never be quite the same again. European institutions and Governments will work closely together with our American friends and partners in the defence of freedom.

(Prodi 2001)

The General Affairs Council decided yesterday that Friday 14th September 2001 would be a European day of mourning for the victims of the terrorist attacks in the USA…. Staff of the EU Institutions as well as citizens of Brussels are invited to make the silence a collective act …. on Rond Point Schuman shortly before 12:00 noon tomorrow so that the silence can be observed.

(Council 2001b)
These statements illustrate a number of extremely important symbolic manifestations at work. In particular, they suggest that EU leaders are able to demonstrate many of the symbolic rituals closely associated with the exercise of domestic and foreign policy. Equally interesting is the way in which the rituals communicate solidarity, collectivity and distinctive norms, such as social solidarity and sustainable peace in the ‘free world’ (see Manners 2005a on ‘sustainable peace’).

The procedural diffusion of norms takes place through the institutionalization of relationships between the EU and third parties, also involving the range of symbolic manifestations. The relationship between the EU and the ACP countries, as renewed and reinterpreted at Cotonou, Benin, in 2000 serves as an interesting example of the symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role. The Cotonou Agreement was accompanied by an image of many hands holding a ‘solidarity jar’ (a large jar with many holes) aloft. Sat on the lip of the solidarity jar is a globe with Europe and Africa to the fore, and the inscription ‘ACP–UE, XXV years’ across the Mediterranean Sea on the globe. The accompanying declaration read thus:

**The symbolism of the solidarity jar**

The symbol chosen by the host country to illustrate the Cotonou Agreement simultaneously embodies the power of union and the importance of solidarity – the pierced jar will hold water only if the people come together to plug its holes with their fingers. This symbolic image, borrowed from Ghezo, former king of Dahomey (as Benin used to be known), fits perfectly with the values which have always underpinned relations between the European Union and the ACP countries – values which are now more than ever crucial to the successes of the future partnership.

*(The ACP–EU Courier 2000).*

The symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role in this image and declaration should be apparent, but what is more interesting is that the symbol was chosen by Benin using indigenous art. Thus, the procedural diffusion between the EU and the ACP is institutionalized, for good or ill, by the idea and image of the ‘power of union’, the ‘importance of solidarity’ and the need for ‘partnership’.

Transference diffusion concerns the transmission of norms when the EU is involved in the transfer of material and immaterial assets such as humanitarian aid and technical assistance. An interesting example of the symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role was to be seen in Ramalla, Palestine, in 2002. During most of 2002 Yasser Arafat, the former premier of the Palestine Authority (PA), had been holed up in his Authority headquarters in Ramalla. During that time, the Israeli government systematically demolished all of the buildings in the Ramalla compound,
except Arafat’s, in an attempt to force Arafat to bring a halt to the second intifada. In parallel the US and EU negotiators worked hard to resolve the conflict and ensure that both Arafat and the PA were not destroyed. At the end of the siege, in late 2002, as Arafat finally walked away from the compound, the images were transmitted live to the rest of the world. In the background of these scenes, the last image of Ramallah was two flags flying over the demolished compound and peace process – the Palestinian Authority and the European Union. Like the role of all of these symbolic manifestations of the EU’s normative role, the important thing to note is not the success of the EU but the extent to which it is psycho-sociologically associated with the process. (See Deutch and Kinnvall 2001; and Hansson and Kinnvall 2004 for considerations of the social psychology of political symbolism.)

The overt diffusion involving EU norms occurs as a result of the physical presence of the EU in third states and international organizations. An example of interest here is the symbolic manifestations of the EU in the United Nations. Since the end of the Cold War the members of the EU have become increasingly cohesive in their support of common EU positions both within the General Assembly and in the other UN organs. Of particular interest symbolically is not the extent to which EU member states’ representatives hold regular meetings to co-ordinate their positions, or the role of the EU Council presidency in speaking for the EU, but the few symbolic examples of when EC representatives have the opportunity to act as physical manifestations of the EC when they are given the opportunity to speak in special sessions and specialist organs such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Although relatively rare, this symbolic ritual also performs the act of diffusing other symbolic taboos, in particular ‘speaking with one voice’.

The cultural filter does not facilitate so much as shape and transform the diffusion of EU norms. Kinnvall argues that the cultural filter is based on the interplay between the construction of knowledge and the creation of social and political identity by the subjects of norm diffusion (Kinnvall 1995: 61–71). The cultural filter becomes crucial in understanding how and by what means EU symbolic manifestations are interpreted during representation and reception. Equally important, as illustrated below, the cultural filter is reflexive in that the EU itself adapts both its symbols and its methods to its normative self-understanding. As I have discussed elsewhere (Manners 2000a, 2002), since 1998 the EU has played an important, if not leading, role in pursuit of the international abolition of the death penalty. It is important also to note the way in which the cultural filter in the third countries, such as the US, has remained robust against EU norm diffusion in this case. Because of the litigious–individualistic nature of US society, the EU has focused its norms at the legal and individual level, as the brief of amicus curiae (‘friend of the court’) helps illustrate. Amicus curiae briefs are submitted by amici (‘friends’ who are not
party to the case), and with the consent of both parties, with the intention of informing the court of information not available from the parties or other amici (see Wilson 2004: 1–2, esp. n. 1). To give just one example of the EU use of an amicus curiae in the case of Donald Roper v. Christopher Simmons:

The European Union considers the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, to be of vital importance both nationally and in the international community. . . . The EU and its Member States share the widespread opinion of the international community of states that the execution of persons below 18 years of age at the time of their offences violates widely accepted human rights norms and the minimum standards of human rights set forth by the United Nations. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States are opposed to the death penalty in all cases and accordingly aim at its universal abolition.

(Wilson 2004: 1–2)

Justice Kennedy. Let – let’s focus on the word ‘unusual’. Forget ‘cruel’ for the moment, although they’re both obviously involved. We’ve seen very substantial demonstration that world opinion is – is against this, at least as interpreted by the leaders of the European Union. Does that have a bearing on what’s unusual? Suppose it were shown that the United States were one of the very, very few countries that executed juveniles, and that’s true. Does that have a bearing on whether or not it’s unusual?

(Supreme Court 2004: 14)

Our determination that the death penalty is disproportionate punishment for offenders under 18 finds confirmation in the stark reality that the United States is the only country in the world that continues to give official sanction to the juvenile death penalty. As respondent and a number of amici emphasize, Article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which every country in the world has ratified save for the United States and Somalia, contains an express prohibition on capital punishment for crimes committed by juveniles under 18. . . . Brief for European Union et al. as Amici Curiae 12–13. . . . It is proper that we acknowledge the overwhelming weight of international opinion against the juvenile death penalty. . . . The opinion of the world community, while not controlling our outcome, does provide respected and significant confirmation for our own conclusions.

(Kennedy 2005: 21–4)

As these three extracts illustrate, the amicus curiae submitted by Richard Wilson on behalf of the EU was used as a demonstration of ‘world
opinion’ during the US Supreme Court’s oral arguments in order to
determine whether the US was being ‘cruel and unusual’ in executing
juveniles. As Supreme Court Justice Kennedy acknowledged in writing the
majority opinion in favour of abolishing the execution of juveniles under
18 at the time of the crime, world opinion provides a ‘respected and
significant confirmation for our own conclusions’. This final example
helps illustrate the way in which the symbolical manifestation of the EU’s
normative role is mediated in the context of the cultural filter. More
specifically, it demonstrates an interesting case of the EU disregarding
‘national sovereignty’ and acting directly in a domestic legal setting. Thus
while the norm is human rights, the symbol is the transgression of state
sovereignty.

Conclusion

Although these six brief examples of the symbolic manifestation of the
EU’s normative role in world politics are only fleeting, I hope I have been
able to illustrate this chapter’s central argument. My argument has been
that a fuller understanding and analysis of the EU’s roles in international
politics, in particular its normative role, requires us to engage in the study
of the symbolic manifestation of the EU’s international identity. The
search for, and interpretation of, symbolic manifestations such as informa-
tional public statements, overt physical presence at the UN, and the cul-
tural filter of the US legal system, are important in allowing us to
understand the processes through which the EU’s normative role is sym-
bolically manifested. In contrast, the extent to which symbolic manifesta-
tions of the contagion of the EU regional integration model, procedural
institutionalization of the Cotonou Agreement, and transference to the
PA, are more important in helping us to analyse and judge the impact of
the EU’s normative role.

Returning to the interplay between role theory, negotiated order and
symbolic manifestations, it appears that a fuller awareness of the EU’s
normative role has to account for the co-constitutive relationship between
self-understanding and structural conditions. First, EU self-understanding
involves the way in which the symbolic manifestations discussed in this
chapter contribute to the social and psychological construction of self-
identity, and thus role. However, as Richard Whitman and I have dis-
cussed elsewhere, the EU must be understood as in terms of its ‘complex
and multifaceted international identity’ involving ‘a complex and fluid
negotiation of multiple relational identities’ (Manners and Whitman
1998: 238; 2003: 400). This complexity and multiplicity of identities is
clearly reflected in the plurality of roles which the EU plays at any one
time, in any one place. In this respect bounded distinctions of self–other,
and by implication role, must be problematized by the realities of the
late/postmodern era and the hybrid polity perspectives which the EU
represents almost a century after the pragmatists and interactionists first began to develop role theory. Second, the structural conditions in which the EU sits and shapes are also constituted and understood through the symbolic manifestations of the negotiated order of social life. In order to understand the normative role of the EU, an appreciation of both the less tangible social institutionalization of power relations and the more tangible network of global relations is desirable. Finally, it is the interplay between the symbolic power to determine role-playing situations and the structural conditions shaping the negotiation of order that ultimately leads us to the greatest symbolic manifestation of the EU’s normative role in world politics – ‘the power of constituting the given’ (Bourdieu 1991: 170).

Note
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