Revisiting European Foreign policymaking: integrating rationalist and ideational logics in the conceptualization of influence

This paper proposes a way of conceptualizing influence, a crucial notion in foreign policy making, in order to shed light on the (lack of) success of European foreign policy (EFP) in the neighborhood. While the word influence is widely used in both everyday conversations as well as in the bulk of International Relations (IR) literature, it is rarely conceptualized. Contrastingly, attempts to conceptualize power have been manifold. In these studies, influence tends to be amalgamated with power (Dahl 1957; Polsby 1960; Bachrach & Baratz 1963; Holsti 1964; Kuypers 1973; Lukes 2005; Morgenthau 1985). The under-conceptualization of what underpins influence is problematic for our analysis of foreign policy, because by omitting a thorough description of the concept and its constitutive dimensions from the analysis of foreign policy, the causal mechanisms that lay at the core of exerting influence are equally ignored. This while at the root of any foreign policy proposition of one actor vis-à-vis one or more others resides an aspiration to accomplish something, to instigate change.

To conceptualize influence, this research proposes a methodological framework that draws on insights of both rationalist and constructivist approaches. The existing scholarship on explaining political action tends to contrast social causal mechanisms ("the logic of appropriateness") with rationalist causal mechanisms ("the logic of consequences") (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2004, 2005; Schimmelfennig 2009; March & Olsen, 1989). By creating a strict dichotomy between foreign policy based on politics of conditionality or material incentives with foreign policy through socialization, the relationship between the two, between the material and ideational dimensions, is understudied. This research aims to establish that ideational and material logics are complementary rather than competing, and need to be integrated in an analysis of European foreign policy.

The goal of this paper is to understand European influence in the neighborhood in a framework that incorporates cost-benefit analysis and ideational analysis. A crucial question herein is: How can we conceptualize the term influence through embedding the rationality of the concerned actors in their social context? Part I of this paper will discuss the inextricably intertwined concepts of influence and power. Part II will set out the basic methodological tenets of a rationalist-constructivist approach. In part III, EU influence will be approached through this theoretical framework. In the final part I will discuss certain parameters for future research applying such an integrative approach.

I.   **Influence and power**

Despite extensive use of the concept throughout the study of political science and international relations, definitions of influence are frequently avoided; leading to an absent terminology of what it is and under which conditions it occurs (Dahl & Stinebrickner 2003). The amalgamation of influence and power features as early as in these earliest debates on the nature, exercise and distribution of power. Robert Dahl (1957, 202), progenitor of the Anglosaxon power debates argues that there is a 'primitive notion that seems to lie behind all of these concepts', requesting the reader to 'be permitted to use these terms interchangeably when it is convenient to do so,

without denying or seeming to deny that for many other purposes distinctions are necessary and useful'. Polsby (cited in Lukes 2005, 17-18) argues:

> one can conceive of power' 'influence' and 'control' are serviceable synonyms - as the capacity of one actor to do something affecting another actor, which changes the probable pattern of specified future events.

Holsti (1964, 181) argued that influence is 'an aspect of power', and while he describes how influence is exercised, he does not define what he means by it. Many scholars perceive power as a capability that involves influence. To French and Raven (1968, 152), 'power is potential influence' and for Kuypers (1973, 87) the 'capacity to exert influence'. Michalowitz (2007, 134) bases her conceptualization of influence on Max Weber's definition of power[1], understanding influence as 'a weaker form of power'.

In his widely used three-dimensional conceptualization of power (2005, 35-36), Lukes talks of an overlap between influence and power: 'power may or may not be a form of influence - depending on whether sanctions are involved; while influence and authority may or may not be a form of power - depending on whether a conflict of interests is involved'. To Bachrach and Baratz (1963, 30) the source of influence differs from power and authority because the source of it is not fear or sanctions. Influence exists where A, 'without resorting to either a tacit or an overt threat of severe deprivation, causes [B] to change his course of action'. B may thus comply with A out of a sense of self-interest, or out of esteem for A.

Most scholars see power as a capability that exists in a relation between two or more agents. Influence is subsequently seen a realization of this power: where power does not necessarily entail an activity, influence presupposes one. Schunz (2010, 25) defines influence as 'the modification of one or several actor's behavior, beliefs or preferences by acts of another actor exerted for the purpose of reaching the latter actor's aims'. Influence almost becomes a verb, something that only exists when it is exerted. Not everyone agrees with this notion, among them Cox and Jacobson (1973, 3) who where one of the first who provided a differentiation of the concepts of power and influence:

> 'influence is to be distinguished from power. Power means capability; it is the aggregate of political resources that are available to an actor. Power may be converted into influence, but it is not necessarily so converted all or to its full extent.'

Influence, they continue, refers to the modification of one actor's behavior by another actor. They underline that influence is a unique property of a relationship between two actors. The difference between the conceptualization of Cox and Jacobson compared to other appreciations of influence is their notion that influence does not necessarily flow from power. Lebow and Reich (2014) equally argue that indeed influence does not flow from power automatically. In their new book '*Good-Bye Hegemony! Power and Influence in the Global System*', the authors propose an approach to the position of the United States in the global system which disaggregates power and influence, and draw attention to the fact that influence has a social as well as material basis. They identify three roles of the United States in the international system (agenda setting, custodianship and sponsorship) and argue that in each role, it is the combination of material and social power that determines its success. It is here that the contours of an integrative conceptualization of

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[1] '*Macht bedeutet jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel worauf diese Chance beruht.*' Own translation: Power means any opportunity within a social relationship to carry out one's own will, even despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests. Max Weber: Economics & Society, 1978, 53.

influence emerge. Their approach to power underlines that material capabilities are important but that 'critical choices must be made about which capabilities to develop and how to use them' (2014, 179). Influence may benefit from material capabilities, but is not a function of them, since the translation of power into influence depends on how which kind of capabilities is used.

Rationalist approaches often define influence as a concept dependent on a successful end-result. Arts & Verschuren (1999, 413) for example argue that political influence does not just refer to any modification by B in its decision-making, but to a modification that is of actual value to A. This sense of 'goal-achievement' also resonates in the work on power by Bachrach and Baratz (1963). To them, power has three fundamental characteristics. Firstly, it involves a conflict of interest or values between two or more agents. Secondly they suppose that A exercises power over B to the extent that B complies with A's wishes; and thirdly B's compliance with A's demands is due to B's fear of effective sanctions from A. Power relations exist only when all three conditions are met (1963). Especially the first two conditions, which Arts and Verschuren (1999) equally apply to the notion of influence, are problematic, because the modification by A of B's behavior does not to have negative implications for B, or go against B's interests. The core is that (a part of) A's goals are achieved through the activities of A, or through B's anticipation of A's activities. Exerting influence should not be equated with it going against another actor's will. Rather it is a process of adapting and modifying the other actor's behavior and reasoning. The causal mechanisms that operate when influence is exerted are not just material, but to a large extent also ideational. But such a view departs from traditional rationalist approaches to IR.

II.   A rationalist-constructivist framework

Rationalist approaches that look at foreign policy, how it is made and what its effects are often focus on rationalist bargaining and utility maximization between different actors. Utility maximization implies that agents show no loyalty to their existing norms and preferences when these no longer serve their interest (Hooghe 2001). An actor can thus exert influence through modifying the incentives and the opportunity structure. From a rationalist perspective, the EU (or alternative major powers) thus tries to enforce the adoption of EU rules through following a strategy of reinforcement by reward, or through the use of threats and sanctions. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier call this the 'external incentives model'. Rationalist compliance mechanisms follow the logic that actors aim to maximize utility according to the logic: 'when faced with several courses of action, people usually do what they believe is likely to have the best overall outcome' (Elster 1989, 22). It is characterized by methodological individualism wherein actions and outcomes can be explained through unit-level properties. These properties are based on exogenous preferences and beliefs about causal connections in the world (Jupille et. al. 2003, 12). This means that compliance with the policy agenda of an external actor is assumed to depend on how the states in question calculate the costs and benefits of the putative regime (Checkel 2001, 556).

Since constructivism as a strand in IR is not so much a theory but, as Stefano Guzzini puts it, a 'meta-theoretical commitment' (2005, 507), there is no such thing as a fixed constructivist definition of influence. However, because of its unified stance to overcome methodological individualism and in the tendency to stress the importance of intersubjectivity, one can delineate how constructivists would understand power and influence. Intersubjectivity is a crucial concept in understanding the constructivist stances. Adler (1997, 327) defines intersubjective meanings as 'knowledge embedded in social routines and practices as they are being reproduced by interpreters who participate in their production and workings'. Shared knowledge, practices and material resources together form a structure that is thus co-constituted and co-determined by its agents. Or, as Onuf (1989, 41) puts it, people and societies are the product of the other's

construction'. For international relations this means that while material forces do exist and can have independent causal effects on the behavior of states, global politics is primarily guided by intersubjectively shared norms and ideas (Onuf 1989; Barkin 2010). Intersubjectivity also plays an important role in the concept of influence. Constructivists pay attention to what power means and what it does, stressing the reflexive relationship between knowledge and social reality and underlining that both material and discursive power are necessary for understanding international politics (Hopf 1998, 177; Guzzini 2005, 496).

Despite the diversity in constructivist perspectives it is thus possible to outline a plausible constructivist pathway to influence and foreign policy. Such an approach perceives the mechanism of choice for the target states as non-instrumental, in an environment of social interaction between different agents. Actions are perceived as 'a result of people interpreting their world through certain ideational elements' (Parsons 2007, 96). In this environment, mutual learning, socialization persuasion and the development of new preferences complements unilateral calculation (Checkel 2001, 560). The EU, from such a perspective, tries to create learning situations through which it can socialize non-members, convincing the socializees of these preferences as 'correct' interpretations of the world (Warkotsch 2008; Kavalski 2013). On the receiving states' side, a deliberation of the legitimacy and the appropriateness of rules is an important factor in their possible acceptance. This notion of a non-material base of preference formation is crucial for a rationalist-constructivist framework. In such a perspective, social learning and socialization are important causal mechanisms that exist in parallel to material factors, and can lead to influence.

From a theoretical point of view, calls for a synthesizing approach to rationalist and constructivist strands in IR have surfaced around a decade ago, which acknowledge that even our best theories are not able to grasp the entire complexity of the reality. Fearon and Wendt (2002, 52) argue that 'the most interesting research is likely to be work that ignores zero-sum interpretations of [the relationship between constructivism and rationalism] and instead directly engages questions that cut cross the rationalist/constructivist boundary as it is commonly understood'. They continue that 'rationalism and constructivism are most fruitfully viewed *pragmatically* as analytical tools, rather than as metaphysical positions or empirical descriptions of the world' (emphasis in original). In the research that followed, various theoretical arguments have elaborated on the interrelationship between material and ideational factors (Chong 2000; Fearon & Wendt 2002; Meyer & Strickmann 2006; Parsons 2007). This integrative approach serves both pragmatic and theoretical purposes. Acknowledging the limits of rationalism and integrating it with a constructivist agenda that takes into account the constitutive nature of ideas is important because the countries in the neighborhood often fall both geographically and politically in multiple regional systems and sub-systems[2], to which they may have greater social or historical ties in some issue areas than to the EU (Grevi 2014). As Max Weber (1946, 277-8) argued, 'very frequently the "world images" that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamics of interest'. To put it differently, in reality socially constructed ideas and identities often interact with material realities and factors. And the other way around – 'the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction' (Adler 1997, 322). Contrasting rationalist and ideational motivation neglects the complex relation between the two.

Increasingly, scholars have studied the co-existence of ideational dynamics and realist strategic calculations (Chong 2000; Hooghe 2001; Checkel & Moravcsik 2001; Jupille, Checkel &

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[2] Examples are the so-called Eurasian Union or the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Caporaso 2003; Youngs 2004; Barkin 2010; Meyer & Strickmann 2011). The fact that the two approaches are based on a fundamentally different ontology complicates such a combination. The notion of learning, which occurs through interaction, is difficult to combine with the individualist ontology or rationalist approaches. Moreover, as Checkel (2001) noticed, concepts like social learning and socialization are often micro-processes that are hard to operationalize and to capture. It is, however, possible to use both approaches in a theoretical framework wherein the two are seen as complementary, rather than opposing dogmas. Craig Parsons presents a way of doing so in his book '*How to Map Arguments in Political Science*' (2007) that is comprised of four types of analysis: material, institutional, ideational and psychological explanations. He argues that the first two follow a "logic of position" that can be used to explain 'how the landscape around someone to show how an obstacle course of material or man-made constraints and incentives channels her to certain actions. Such claims require micro-foundations in objective rationality' (Parsons 2007, 13). This is what accounts for the rationalist causal mechanisms. Ideational and psychological explanations according to Parsons follow the "logic of interpretation", explaining 'by showing that someone arrives at an action only through one interpretation of what is possible and/or desirable. Ideational claims do so by asserting that particular people have historically situated ways of interpreting things around them' (2007, 13). Parsons then combines the logic of position and the logic of interpretation in a single framework, wherein dependencies are identified among paradigms that were considered incompatible, much like Youngs, (2004) Chong (2000) and Jupille et. al. (2003) propose.

III.   A rationalist-constructivist pathway to EU influence in the neighborhood

When the European influence in the neighborhood is discussed the argument often goes that without the membership perspective as a carrot, it is very limited (Hakkaula in: Whitman 2011; Wolczuk 2004). The EU's actions in the neighborhood are sometimes perceived as an extension of internal EU policies or of Enlargement, and its potential influence is implicitly tied to the EU's capacity to extend its *acquis* beyond its borders without the membership perspective. (Sedelmeier & Schimmelfennig 2004; Lavenex & Schimmelfennig 2009, Börzel and Risse 2003; Bretherton and Vogler 2006). In recent years, more research is done on assessing the potential of and impediments to EU influence in the neighborhood (Pardo Sierra 2011; Bennett 2012). A pathway to compliance and influence that is shaped by persuasion and socialization, while also allowing room for rationalist bargaining and utility maximization, such as Jeffrey Checkel (2001) proposed, could provide more insight in in what ways and through which mechanisms the EU's influence in the neighborhood can be affected by the policies of alternative major players in the region.

Based on a rationalist-constructivist reading, exerting influence is defined as a process of A attempting to shape or alter B's behavior and interpretations of appropriate behavior through rewards, threats, presence, social learning and persuasion. B can be influenced by A but also by other actors through the same processes. Influence is not an intrinsic property an actor, but something that depends on specific interaction in specific contexts. Table 1 shows how both the influencer and the 'influencee' rely on both ideational and rational logic. There are also decisions wherein ideational reasoning invests rational logic. Actors can choose to 'strategically use' normative and ideational considerations, for example when a country uses identity, or a 'sense of belonging' to justify or legitimize domestically or internationally an action based on strategic calculation. Youngs (2004, 421) elaborates on the use of instrumental reasoning behind the use of human rights, wherein he suggests that human rights provide 'a normative cloak increasing the effectiveness and legitimacy of external polices'.

Influencer		
Rational		**Ideational**
- conditionality (threats, rewards) - sanctions - use of force		- social learning - socialization - argumentative persuasion
Cross-cutting - manipulative persuasion - using norms to pursue strategic agenda		
- utility maximization - cost-benefit analysis		- sense of belonging - internalization of norms - interpretation/deliberation
Cross-cutting - strategic or opportunistic use of ideational arguments		
'Influencee'		

(Left vertical label: Causal mechanisms)

Table 1. causal mechanisms of influence

With regard the EFP in its neighborhood, it is assumed that a dynamic of threats, rewards, persuasion and social learning between the EU and a third state affect the extent to which the target state engages in redefining its policies, its identity and its interest. This dynamic is, however, not limited to only the EU. Recent years have shown that other regional powers such as Russia and Turkey are increasingly stepping up their game in the neighborhood. These other actors draw on the same 'influence toolbox' of threats, perceptions and socialization as the EU does. Neighborhood countries have increasingly shown their awareness hereof: there is a distinct trend towards multi-vector foreign policies in the neighborhood countries, wherein the countries 'play up and on the division between Russia, the EU and the United States in order to extract concessions from all interested parties' (Gnedina & Popescu 2012, 4). The influence of the EU is, according to the framework this paper proposes, affected by the effect these other regional powers have on the opportunity structure (referring to the policy options available to target states) and to what extent these countries are prone to internalize the values, norms and identities of these alternative powers rather than those of the EU. It concerns the extent to which these other actors offer opportunities that are more rewarding and/or less upsetting for the domestic status quo than the EU. But it also refers to to what extent the third countries perceive the alternative courses of action these other players offer more appropriate or legitimate (Checkel 2001; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2004, Kobaladze and Tangiashvili 2006; Sedelmeier and Schimmelfennig 2005).

Socialization is conceptualized by most research as a gradual process that takes time. Hooghe (2001, 22) states that socialization requires 'sustained exposure to consistently transmitted norms and values'. In this research, socialization of a target state by a major regional power is defined as defined a process of inducting states or state agents into the norms of the major power. Its outcome is sustained compliance based on the internalization of these new norms (Checkel et. al. 2007, 5; Hooghe 2001). The target state thus follows the logic of appropriateness. Checkel et. al (2007) have explored the ability of international actors to socialize state and state agents and identify the process of socialization through a variety of mechanisms. They argue that there are two ways in which agents can follow such a logic of appropriateness. Firstly through learning and

internalizing what is socially accepted by the regional power, and by 'playing this role'. They call this Type I internalization or socialization. Secondly, Type II socialization can go one step beyond roleplaying, namely towards accepting the norms and values of the major power by perceiving these as legitimate or right courses of action (Checkel et. al.; 2007, 5-6).

According to Lebow and Reich (2014, 179), the most effective form of influence is persuasion. Persuasion is an act of convincing the representatives of other political unit 'that they will have meaningful input and that the initiatives in question will not go beyond commonly agreed upon goals' (2014, 35). Effective persuasion depends on amongst others shared values, a shared or common identity past successes between the actors involved, the advocacy of policies that involve accepted practices, and political skills and leadership.

IV.   Conclusion

Studying the making of European foreign policy is challenging in the current day and age. On the one hand, European member-states aim to retain virtually full control over the EU's foreign policies. The somewhat uneasy term 'European external action' is a direct and semantically less-harmful consequence of this dislike of using state-like terms such as foreign policy when it comes to the EU. On the other hand, the urgency of adequate EFP is increasing due to the shifting currents in international politics after the crisis, wherein the EU is struggling to punch its weight.

This paper has shown the importance of complementing the 'logic of the consequences' with the 'logic of appropriateness', and how stepping beyond the usual dichotomy between the two may provide new and useful insights on actor behavior. Assuming that states arbitrate between rationalist bargaining and utility maximization versus the EU and alternative powers on the one hand, and social learning and socialization with the European identity and values on the other, this research makes the case for integrating rationalist and sociological approaches to European foreign policy. Influence has been conceptualized in a way that incorporates both rational causal mechanisms such as conditionality and utility maximization, and ideational causal mechanisms, such as persuasion, socialization and social learning. Through embedding actors and their material preferences in their social context, this method goes beyond rational causal explanations without discarding their importance. For studying EFP this means analyzing how these causal mechanisms function, or dysfunction, in EU policies such as the European Neighborhood Policy.

An important question is whether an integrative approach to rationalism and constructivism should be limited to being a 'theoretical division of labor' as Jupille, Caporaso and Checkel (2003) proposed, both applying to different domains, or whether it should be truly integrative. Richard Youngs (2004) made the case for an assessment of how power politics and normative dynamics co-exist. 'Greater emphasis and precision are needed to understand the factors that suggest strategic calculation within the broader parameters of value-informed policies' (Youngs 2004. 421). This research has attempted to establish the groundwork for such an integrative approach, showing how actors can use 'strategically informed ideational arguments' or vice versa. More research must be done, however, on further developing such a truly integrative approach, in order to move one step beyond combining the two approaches, towards a fully integrated conceptualization of foreign policy.

V.   Bibliography

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