

ARENA
Working Papers
WP 04/08

Social Mechanisms and the Quality of Cooperation:

Are Europe and the EU Really All That Different?¹

By

Jeffrey T. Checkel²

ARENA – Centre for European Studies and Department of Political Science,
University of Oslo.

¹ Revised Draft. Originally prepared for a workshop on “Crafting Cooperation: The Design and Effect of Regional Institutions in Comparative Perspective,” Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 17-18 May 2004.

² Author’s Address: Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, PO Box 1097, Blindern, N-0317 Oslo, Norway. Tel: (47) (22) 85.51.73, Fax: (47) (22) 85.44.11, E-Mail: jeffrey.checkel@stv.uio.no
<http://www.arena.uio.no/presentation/Checkel.htm>

Abstract: Drawing upon a multi-faceted understanding of human rationality, this essay highlights the role of three generic social mechanisms - strategic calculation, cognitive role playing and normative suasion – in promoting differing degrees of cooperation within international institutions. I focus in particular on the last, persuasive, mechanism and its ability to bring about deep cooperation – that is, preference or identity shift – in contemporary Europe. A growing body of empirical work suggests that, while Europe *is* different when it comes to the workings of its regional institutions, it is not as different as some of the headline stories suggest. Indeed, at the elite level, we see little evidence of bureaucrats and policymakers ‘going native’ when working in EU institutions, while, more generally, the emergence of a distinctly European identity, spurred by regional institutions, is at best a distant prospect.

Introduction

Many analysts would characterize the European Union (EU) as a unique case among the panoply of regional organizations. The breadth and depth of cooperation is wider and deeper than elsewhere. Indeed, as I write, an intergovernmental conference is negotiating the final details of a quasi-federal constitution for the EU. In Acharya and Johnston's terms (2001, 3-4), the quality of cooperation would seem high in that actors have undertaken major adjustments in favor of group norms through the internalization of shared preferences and normative understandings.

The key word in that last sentence is "seem," for there is broad disagreement across the EU literature on this basic issue. In part, this is simply a function of analysts employing different social-theoretic toolkits (contractionalist-rationalist versus sociological) to structure their studies. However, equally important is a state of affairs where normative claim-making and abstract theorizing have outrun carefully designed and methodologically sound empirical studies (Checkel and Moravcsik 2001).

To be fair to EU scholars, their object of study is extraordinarily complex and is a 'moving target.' The quality of cooperation varies tremendously depending upon the institution (the supranational Commission versus the intergovernmental Council, say) or policy area studied. Moreover, EU institutions have evolved significantly over the past half century, in directions often at variance with the original desires of the member states (Pierson 1996). For example, the European Court of Justice has crafted for itself an extraordinarily important role as a supranational legal organ and quasi-supreme court - functions foreseen by virtually no one 50 years ago.

Analysts thus face a daunting task when seeking to establish clear causal connections between the design and effect of EU institutions. In this essay, I employ the language of social mechanisms to advance some conceptual nuts and bolts for thinking more systematically about the relation of institutional design to the quality of regional cooperation. These theoretical propositions are illustrated with materials drawn from two projects, which focus on the EU as well as other European institutions. A first - my own - examines regional

cooperation over questions of citizenship and membership in post-Cold War Europe. Its main focus is the Council of Europe, a pan-European human rights organization based in Strasbourg. A second – collaborative - project explores the relation between international institutions and socialization. While its central focus is socialization, several contributions examine how institutional design affects the quality of cooperation in European regional organizations.

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, I discuss three generic mechanisms - strategic calculation, cognitive role playing and normative suasion - promoting differing degrees of cooperation within international institutions. For each mechanism, particular conditions (so-called scope conditions) for its operation are highlighted.³ In this section, I focus on the last two parts - design elements and outcomes - in Acharya and Johnston's (2001) three-stage framework. In part, this is simply a matter of time constraints. However, a good bit of excellent work has already been done on the sources of European regional institutions, both from rationalist (Moravcsik 1998, 2000) and ideational perspectives (McNamara 1998). I thus thought it wise to focus on those elements of the puzzle where the greatest value added was likely.

Second, I provide several examples of these mechanisms at work. The illustrations highlight two important findings: (1) the difficulties of achieving high levels of cooperation (defined as agent preference change) even in a thickly institutionalized setting such as Europe; and (2) the key role of national institutions and traditions in affecting the quality of regional institutional cooperation. Third, I explore the *sui generis* question. What is it, if anything, about European institutional dynamics that makes them unique when seen in a broader, cross-regional perspective?

Social Mechanisms and the Nature of Cooperation

Both empirical observation and social theoretic common sense suggest three forms of rationality – instrumental, bounded and communicative - undergirding human behaviour or,

³ These scope conditions are inferred from a number of different empirical studies and, thus, need to be treated as preliminary subject to their extension and testing on new cases.

in our specific case, cooperation in regional institutions.⁴ From each of these, one can deduce a generic social mechanism affecting the nature of cooperation: strategic calculation, cognitive role playing and normative suasion.

What, though, is a mechanism? For my purposes, it is “a set of hypotheses that could be the explanation for some social phenomenon, the explanation being in terms of interactions between individuals and other individuals, or between individuals and some social aggregate.” This language of mechanisms is particularly helpful in reducing the lag between input and output, between cause and effect (Hedstroem and Swedberg 1998, 32-33 [for quote], 25).⁵

In operational terms, I seek to minimize the lag between international institutions and their design (the input or cause), and the nature of cooperation (strategic adaptation, role playing, preference change), and do so by theorizing three mechanisms connecting the former to the latter: incentives and cost/benefit calculations; cognitive role enactment; and communication and normative suasion.

Incentives and Cost/Benefit Calculations.⁶ This particular mechanism has deep roots in rationalist social theory. While incentives and rewards can be social (status, shaming) as well as material (financial assistance, trade opportunities), one would expect both to play some role in determining the nature of cooperation.⁷

With this mechanism, the pathway to cooperation is first and foremost via instrumentally rational agents who carefully calculate and seek to maximize given interests; behaviourally, they adapt strategically. Of course, the key question is one of scope and domain, that is, under what conditions would incentives and rewards be more likely to promote cooperation

⁴ Of course, the instrumental version is well known to US students of international institutions, while bounded or communicative understandings of rationality have received much greater attention elsewhere - in organizational/institutional work and continental social theory, respectively. See also Wendt 1999, 120-22.

⁵ This definition of mechanisms is one that is common in both the philosophy of science and IR literatures. See Hovi 2000, for an excellent discussion.

⁶ The following draws extensively on Checkel 2003a, where more detailed discussions, as well as full citations to the relevant theoretical literatures can be found.

⁷ On social incentives/rewards and the more general class of social-influence processes to which they belong, see Johnston 2001, 499-506.

of this sort? Work on European institutions suggests several possibilities, all of which emphasize the importance of domestic politics.

- *Low domestic opposition increases the likelihood that normative suasion will promote cooperation and subsequent strategic adaptation.*
- *As domestic opposition increases, the ability of normative suasion alone to promote cooperation decreases.*
- *More generally, the likelihood of strategic adaptation is significantly enhanced when a combination of conditionality/incentives and normative suasion is employed.*

These propositions highlight the role of political conditionality. Defined as the use of material incentives to bring about a desired change in the behavior of states, conditionality is the quintessential incentives-based policy. It has also long been a favored instrument of international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF (Checkel 2000, 2-9). More important for my purposes, conditionality has been utilized by European regional institutions extensively in recent years.

However, one can generalize its role by considering what Schimmelfennig (2003a) calls intergovernmental reinforcement. Specifically, intergovernmental reinforcement by reward refers to a situation where international institutions offer the governments of states positive incentives – rewards like aid or membership – on the condition that they adopt and comply with its norms. Transnational reinforcement by reward refers to the same process, but now directed at non-governmental actors in states. Given these definitions, two propositions follow.

- *Intergovernmental reinforcement by reward is more likely to promote cooperation via strategic adaptation when targeted governments expect the promised rewards to be greater than the costs of compliance.*
- *Transnational reinforcement by reward is more likely to promote cooperation via strategic adaptation when the targeted societal actors expect the costs of putting pressure on the government to be lower than the benefits of the conditional external rewards, and when they are strong enough to force the government to comply with the international norms.*

Like much research in the rational-choice tradition, these propositions are clear, more or less easy to operationalize and, for sure, capture an important part of the cooperation dynamics spurred by regional institutions. At the same time, their social-theoretic foundations limit the analysis. Most important, like all rational-choice scholarship, the ontology is individualist, where core properties of actors are taken as givens. While agreeing with others that the ontological differences separating rationalism and constructivism are often overstated (Fearon and Wendt 2002, 53-58), the former is nonetheless ill equipped to theorize those instances of cooperation where basic properties of agents *are* changing.

Cognitive Role Enactment. This mechanism of cooperation has roots in organization theory and cognitive/social psychology. Agents are viewed as boundedly rational, where it is not possible for them to attend to everything simultaneously or to calculate carefully the costs/benefits of alternative courses of action; attention is a scarce resource. Organizational or group environments provide simplifying shortcuts, cues and buffers that can lead to the enactment of particular role conceptions among individuals (March and Simon 1981) - including in regional institutions. The pathway to cooperation is now noncalculative behavioural adaptation - role enactment - without reflective internalization.⁸ In contrast to the previous mechanism, where cooperation can change quickly as agents recalculate, it now becomes more stable, with behaviour and roles persisting absent any change in organizational or group setting.

The cognitive mechanism comes in two variants, with one emphasizing time/contact in small groups and the other organizational environments. Scholars advancing the former thesis draw upon a rich laboratory-experimental research program in social psychology (Orbell, Dawes and Van de Kragt 1988, for example). This allows them to provide carefully argued support for the old neo-functionalist claim that prolonged exposure and communication can promote a greater sense of we-ness.

⁸ There is no assumption that the adoption of new role conceptions necessarily leads to better outcomes. Indeed, there are interesting parallels between work emphasizing this mechanism and earlier research in social psychology on groupthink, which focused on sub-optimal small-group dynamics. Checkel 2001, 563-64.

Disaggregating contact, these researchers have developed more specific claims on how its duration and intensity, and the multiple-embeddedness of the agents involved, can lead to the development of new role conceptions in international institutions.

- *The longer and more sustained the contact – that is, its duration – the more likely that agents will adopt new role conceptions in line with community/group norms.*
- *Beyond duration, one would expect that the more intense the interactions, the more likely the adoption of new role conceptions in line with community/group norms.*⁹

However, these arguments must control for the fact that individuals entering a new regional institutional arena are in no sense free agents; they are embedded in multiple domestic and international contexts.

- *Those agents with extensive previous professional experiences with regional or international policy-making settings are more likely to adopt supranational role conceptions. In contrast, agents with extensive domestic policy networks who are briefly 'parachuted' into regional/international settings, will be less likely to adopt new role conceptions.*

These propositions and their careful testing thus begin to control for the elements of self-selection and pre-socialization that bedeviled earlier work in this tradition (Beyers 2003; Hooghe 2004; see also Martin and Simmons 1998, 735-36).

A variation on the above conceptualizes embeddedness in specifically organizational terms. The starting point is that decisionmakers participating in a regional institution are situated in multiple organizational contexts, each of which has two basic properties: specialization and affiliation. The former distinguishes between units that have a purpose- and function-based structure versus those organized along territorial or geographical lines. One can hypothesize that functionally organized units evoke functional role conceptions, while territorially organized ones remind group participants of national origins, thus highlighting national role

⁹ These scholars operationalize intensity with some care – defining it as the number of committee meetings attended plus the number of informal contacts outside these formal sessions, for example. They also design their research to distinguish the independent causal effects of duration and intensity. Beyers 2003.

conceptions. Affiliation defines whether an agent's relation to an institution is of a primary or secondary character.

- *If national officials participating in a regional institution have an affiliation to the latter that is part-time and secondary, the likelihood of developing new role conceptions in line with community/group norms is smaller than in cases where their affiliation to the regional unit is primary.*
- *In cases where the organizing principle of the secondary system – some EU unit, say – is incompatible with the principle embedded in the primary – domestic – institution, the likelihood of national officials developing new role conceptions increases, even if they are part-timers in the regional institution.*
- *In cases where the organizing principle of the secondary system – again, some EU unit, say – is compatible with the principle embedded in the primary – domestic – institution, national role conceptions will be sustained and reinforced.*¹⁰

This last proposition, when extended to the macro-political level, goes some way in explaining an enduring feature of European political cooperation – Germany's pro-Europeanness. Especially regarding the EU, the match between the Federal Republic's cooperative federalist domestic organizational structure and the quasi-federal features of the Union has served to reinforce the pro-European attitudes that took hold in Germany after World War II (Katzenstein 1997; Anderson 1999). Indeed, in recent years, Germany has been one of the most forceful proponents of a more federal Europe - for example, in the current negotiations for a new EU constitutional treaty.

While the above insights mark an advance on earlier work, problems remain. Most important, agents are viewed too much as 'structural idiots.' An individual enters a new group or organizational environment and a different role is evoked, thus having possible effects on the nature of cooperation in regional institutions. Unfortunately, the mechanism producing such behavior is underspecified, and it often seems that something else beyond cognitive role enactment carries much of the causal weight in the story. Allusions to

¹⁰ Egeberg 2004 builds on these propositions to advance counter-intuitive insights on the EU, for example, that in some cases, far from adopting European values in Brussels, officials become more nationally oriented.

learning, arguing and persuasion as the motors driving cooperation are just that – suggestive hints and not empirically testable concepts.¹¹

Communication and Normative Suasion. Recent work by IR constructivists directly addresses the latter concepts and does so by adding a additional – communicative – understanding of rationality to the instrumental and bounded versions encountered above. Drawing upon Habermasian social theory as well as insights from social psychology, these researchers argue that communicatively rational social agents do not so much calculate costs and benefits, or seek cues from their environment when acting in international institutions. Rather, they present arguments and try to persuade and convince each other; their interests and preferences are open for possible redefinition (Lynch 1999, chapter 1; Risse 2000, 6-11). The nature of cooperation thus becomes thicker, deeper and more stable (Acharya and Johnston 2001).

Recent work on European institutions, however, goes a step beyond this work and advance specific propositions on the relation between social communication and preference change. In particular, it suggests that arguing and persuasion are more likely to change the interests of social agents when the following conditions hold.¹²

- *The target of persuasion is in a novel and uncertain environment and thus cognitively motivated to analyze new information.*¹³
- *The target has few prior, ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent with the persuader's message.*
- *The persuader is an authoritative member of the in-group to which the target belongs or wants to belong.*
- *The persuading individual does not lecture or demand, but, instead, acts out principles of serious deliberative argument.*
- *The persuader/persuadee interaction occurs in less politicized and more insulated, in-camera settings.*

¹¹ It is the individualist ontology underlying these cognitive/organizational approaches that makes it difficult for them to capture and theorize processes of social interaction. Trondal 2001.

¹² Lewis 2003a; Gheciu 2003; see also Johnston 2001. More generally, see Zimbardo and Leippe 1991; and Brody, Mutz and Sniderman 1996.

¹³ Put differently, agents are viewed as communicatively and not boundedly rational. With the latter, they would be much more likely to filter or ignore new information.

Cautions and Caveats. There are three. First, when highlighting the effects of these differing mechanisms of regional cooperation, I have followed common practice, arguing that cooperation becomes deeper and more stable as we move from incentive-based to normative ones. Indeed, social theorists have typically argued that change promoted by suasion and preference shifts should be more enduring than that promoted by incentives and strategic calculation. With the latter, newly adopted behaviours can be discarded once incentive structures change; with the former, they will show greater stickiness as actors have begun to internalise new values (Hurd 1999 for an excellent discussion).

Yet, on both analytic and empirical grounds, this hierarchy of effectiveness can be questioned. Theoretically, work in psychology on self persuasion and cognitive dissonance suggests that internalization can occur even in the absence of any attempts at persuasion. Consider an individual who, for purely strategic, incentive-based reasons, begins to act in a certain manner; at some point, he/she will likely need to justify these acts to his/herself and others. As a result, a cognitive dissonance may arise between what is justified and argued for and what is (secretly, privately) believed. Laboratory and experimental work suggests that human beings have a tendency to resolve such dissonance by adapting their preferences to the behavior; that is, they internalize the justification (Zuern 2003).¹⁴

Empirically, we have accumulating evidence that what starts as strategic, incentive-based cooperation within international institutions often leads at later points to preference shifts and, thus, to more enduring change. Kelley, for example, finds precisely this pattern at work in her research on the Baltic states, European institutions and minority rights (Kelley nd; see also Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999).

Second, a focus on social mechanisms inevitably poses a micro/macro problem. Simply put, my analytic categories, research methods and empirical illustrations are geared very much to the micro-level of specific agents operating in institutionalized environments in Europe. As a result, my stories largely end when agents leave a particular international institution. Yet, the efficacy/quality of regional cooperation will be judged not only by interactions in Brussels or

Strasbourg (or wherever). Rather, equally (more?) important will be what happens when these individuals return home. Do *state* policies and practices at the macro-level change as well and in ways consistent with newly learned behaviors, roles or preferences?

Third, the extensive and at times rapid enlargement of European institutions over the past 15 years has two analytic implications.¹⁵ For one, it makes conditionality an important mechanism of European cooperation (Grabbe 2001), especially when compared to regional settings where institutional memberships have been more stable. Relatedly, some of my arguments are likely not generalizable to other regions.

Regional Institutions and Cooperation in Contemporary Europe

The following analysis is divided into four parts, all of which focus on the ability of European institutions to promote deep cooperation and (possible) preference shifts. Obviously, this tells an incomplete story, in particular, slighting the strategic, incentives-based mechanism. However, much good work has already been done on the role of the latter in promoting European regional cooperation (Moravcsik 1995, 1998, 2000; Schimmelfennig 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b; Kelley nd). More important, there are ongoing, contentious and unresolved policy (*Economist* 2002, 2003) and academic debates (Laffan 1998; Wessels 1998) over the extent to which European integration promotes preference and identity shifts. Indeed, with its thickly institutionalized regional environment and a supranational, polity-in-the-making like the EU, Europe seems a most likely case for such dynamics to occur (Weber 1994).

Persuasion as a Mechanism of Regional Cooperation. Beyond my own interest in persuasion (Checkel 2001), there are two solid scholarly rationales for a focus on it. Empirically, there are numerous tantalizing hints in the memoir literature and journalistic accounts that it plays an important role – most recently, for example, in the EU’s Convention on the Future of Europe (Magnetite 2004). Beyond Europe, the Chayes remind us that persuasion is a key instrument for promoting cooperation within international institutions

¹⁴ This appears to be the implicit psychological dynamic behind Elster’s oft-cited argument regarding the “civilizing force of hypocrisy.” Elster 1998. See also Fearon 1998, 54.

¹⁵ For example, over a 12-year period starting in 1989, the Council of Europe grew from 23 to 45 members, while on a single day (1 May 2004), the EU expanded from 15 to 25 states.

more generally (Chayes and Chayes 1995, 25-26; see also Koh 1997). Theoretically, sociological studies of cooperation and international institutions often hint at a key role for persuasion - for example, when they talk of institutions fixing meanings or diffusing norms. Yet, for the most part, these scholars have left the concept underspecified (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; see, however, Johnson 2001).

The stage thus set, I define persuasion as a social process of interaction that involves changing attitudes about cause and effect in the absence of overt coercion. More formally, it is “an activity or process in which a communicator attempts to induce a change in the belief, attitude or behavior of another person ... through the transmission of a message in a context in which the persuadee has some degree of free choice.” Here, persuasion is a process of convincing someone through argument and principled debate (Perloff 1993, 14; see also Zimbardo and Leippe 1991; Brody, Mutz and Sniderman 1996; Keohane 2001, 2, 10). To employ my earlier language, it is a social mechanism where the ‘interactions between individuals’ may (potentially) lead to deeper levels of cooperation.

So defined, this is thick persuasion. For sure, there are different levels at which persuasion can occur (Gourevitch, Katzenstein and Keohane 2002). Indeed, there is a long tradition in rational-choice scholarship emphasizing a thin, strategic and manipulative understanding of persuasion - for example, Riker’s work on heresthetics (Riker 1986, 1996). Common to these thin definitions is that persuasion does not bring about preference or attitude change. Given that manipulative understandings have received a good bit of attention in recent work on European institutions (Schimmelfennig 2000, 2001, 2003a; Evangelista 2001; Kelley nd; see also Payne 2001), I focus on the thicker variant here.

Mandates and Actor Independence. As the earlier discussion of scope conditions suggests, persuasion as a social mechanism of regional cooperation is crucially hindered or facilitated by certain factors. Here, I develop these in more detail and provide empirical illustrations. Regarding design features, mandates and actor independence play a key role, with persuasion more likely in brainstorming and depoliticized institutional settings.¹⁶

¹⁶ The comments here and below build upon other recent discussions that link institutional design to the quality of international cooperation. See Acharya and Johnston 2001, 8-9; Johnston 2001, 509-10; and Keohane 2001, 8-9.

Let me give an example from my work on European cooperation over questions of citizenship and membership. Here, one concern has been to document how European institutions – and, specifically, the Council of Europe - came to new, shared understandings on such issues over the past decade. When the Council seeks to develop new policy and norms in a given area, it sets up committees of experts, which are composed of representatives from Council member states as well as academic and policy specialists. Their mandate is to think big and puzzle through issues in an open way. In the early 1990s, two such committees were established: a Committee of Experts on National Minorities and a Committee of Experts on Nationality. If new norms were these committees' outputs, then the issue for me was the process leading to such outcomes. In particular, what role was played by persuasion?

For the committee on national minorities, there were few attempts at persuasion - of any type - throughout its five-year life. Rather, committee members were content to horse-trade on the basis of fixed positions and preferences. Key in explaining this outcome was the politicization of its work at a very early stage. Events in the broader public arena (the Bosnian tragedy) and within the committee led to a quick hardening of positions.¹⁷ Put differently, these (political) facts greatly diminished the likelihood that the committee's formal brainstorming mandate might lead to an enhanced quality of cooperation.

The story was quite different in the committee on nationality. Through the mid-1990s, nationality was a rather hum-drum, boring issue - especially compared with the highly emotive one of minorities. Initially, much of the committee's proceedings were taken up with mundane discussions of how and whether to streamline immigration procedures and regulations. In this technical and largely depoliticized atmosphere, brainstorming and attempts at persuasion were evident, especially in a working group of the committee. In this smaller setting, individuals freely exchanged views on the meaning of nationality in a post-national Europe. They sought to persuade and change attitudes, using the force of example, logical argumentation and the personal self esteem in which one persuader was held. In at

¹⁷ On the latter, at one of its first sessions, both France and Turkey declared that they had no national minorities and would countenance no change in this view.

least two cases, individuals clearly did rethink their views on nationality in a fundamental way, that is, they were convinced to view the issue in a new light (Checkel 2003b).

That last sentence, however, raises an important methodological issue. How would I recognize persuasion if it were to walk through the door? In brief, the following can be said. I employed multiple data streams, consisting of interviews with committee members (five rounds spread over five years), confidential meeting summaries of nearly all the committee's meetings and various secondary sources - and triangulated across them. In the interviews, I asked two types of questions. A first touched upon an individual's own thought processes and (possibly) changing preferences. A second was more intersubjective, asking the interviewee to classify his/her interaction context. I gave them four possibilities - coercion, bargaining, persuasion/arguing, imitation - and asked for a rank ordering. Interviewees were also asked if their ranking changed over time and, if so, why.

In sum, non-distributive mandates and actor independence promoted persuasion and thus the quality of institutional cooperation. In somewhat different language, persuasion's causal role increased as the institutional context became thicker (Gourevitch, Katzenstein and Keohane 2002). These findings are consistent with insights drawn from social psychology. They are also probably not a fluke, as they are corroborated by results from two other empirical research programs that emphasize non-bargaining dynamics in apolitical, technical settings - work on epistemic communities in IR theory (Haas 1992) and on comitology in EU studies (Joerges and Neyer 1997a, b; Joerges and Everson 2000).

Membership and Agency. Beyond the above, there is evidence that persuasive appeals are also promoted by institutional membership rules stressing exclusivity and by agency-level variables. Regarding the former, persuasion aimed at convincing an individual to change his or her basic attitudes appears to work best in front of groups with exclusive membership, where the emphasis is on small, knowledgeable and private audiences.¹⁸ This was the case in the small working group of the committee of experts on nationality discussed above. There is also evidence of such dynamics at work in small-group settings in post-Soviet Ukraine (Checkel 2001) and post-communist East Europe (Gheciu 2003), as well as in a private

¹⁸ Hooghe 2004, however, presents suggestive evidence that even in such exclusive, private settings, persuasion often fails. See below.

monitoring procedure established by the Council of Europe to promote a higher quality of cooperation over human rights in its member states (Checkel 2000).

A final factor linking persuasion to regional cooperation has nothing to do with institutions or their design. Instead, one needs to consider properties of the agents who may be at work within institutions. In particular, an individual's cognitive priors - that is, his/her background and previous thinking on the subject at hand - strongly affect the persuasion/cooperation linkage. A robust finding from several different research projects is that novices are much more likely to be open to persuasion (Johnston 2001; Gheciu 2003).¹⁹

For example, in Ukraine, one reason the West was able to persuade and 'change minds' on questions of citizenship and nationality in the first part of the 1990s was the newness of the Ukrainian participants in such exchanges. Many of these individuals were truly novices, with few ingrained cognitive priors on matters of nationality and citizenship. The recruitment of these novice outsiders was a direct consequence of Soviet policies, which saw major policy decisions taken in Moscow. The USSR thus bequeathed Ukraine few qualified home grown personnel of its own.

Consider the role played by Dr. Petro Chaliy, head of the Citizenship Department in the Presidential Administration through the mid-1990s. Before assuming this position, he was a researcher at the Institute of State and Law of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences; his scholarly work examined constitutional law and local self-governance. Within the government, Chaliy therefore found himself in an unfamiliar position and uncertain environment, dealing with issues of first principle: the fundamental normative guidelines for Ukraine's conception of membership. He was a likely candidate for persuasion.

The evidence and research methodology behind such a claim are as follows. I interviewed Chaliy, his close collaborators and his Western interlocutors. I carried out a "before and after" comparison of Chaliy's writings on the subject (citizenship/nationality). I asked the counterfactual: Absent intervention and attempts at normative suasion by regional institutions, would Ukrainian policy have been any different? Finally, I compared word with

¹⁹ Material power asymmetries do not seem to be a relevant explanatory factor here as the finding holds for representatives from weaker states in East Europe, as well as from strong ones in Asia (China).

deed, examining how and to what degree new beliefs translated into new policy (Checkel 2001).

This claim about noviceness, which comes largely from work in social psychology, can be generalized. The issue is really one of embeddedness. Simply put, social actors, when entering a possible persuasive setting at the European regional level, are in no sense free agents; they arrive embedded in multiple contexts.

Consider the work of my EU collaborators in the project on international institutions and socialization in post-Cold War Europe. Their starting point is that individuals are embedded in multiple international *and* domestic institutions. However, as my earlier discussion of scope conditions makes clear, these analysts go an important step further, theorizing and documenting how particular features of domestic and European organizations can hinder/promote persuasion or role enactment within a variety of EU institutions – including the Commission, Council working groups or COREPER (Egeberg 1999, 2004; Beyers 2003; Lewis 2003a, b). The clear conclusion is that efforts to explain the roles of these mechanisms and their link to the quality of cooperation within the EU will fail unless one systematically controls for prior national embeddedness.

The validity of the latter insight is further bolstered by the degree to which it overlaps with those drawn from other research traditions. This is particularly true of symbolic interactionism, where scholars have theorized multiple embeddedness in terms of role conflict (Stryker 1980; Meyer and Strang 1993; and, for an important application to international institutions, Barnett 1993). Olsen makes a similar point in regards to the Europeanization literature, which explores the impact of the EU on nation states (Olsen 2002).

The foregoing examples prompt two observations. First, while the results are intriguing from a broader disciplinary perspective (given how little attention IR has paid to mechanisms like persuasion), in another, more important sense, they are disappointing. This is, after all, Europe, where a high quality of cooperation and subsequent preference shifts are thought to be likely. Yet, my collaborators and I found surprisingly few instances where persuasion played a role in changing basic attitudes.

Second, it is clear that domestic variables – the match between the structure of domestic and regional institutions, the embeddedness of agents in pre-existing national norms and values – play a central role in determining the quality of cooperation in European institutions. In one sense, this is not news. After all, in Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalist account, domestic *interests* are a driving force shaping the pattern of cooperation at the European level (Moravcsik1998). However, the findings reported here reconceptualize and enrich our understanding of the domestic-regional nexus by moving beyond his narrow (instrumental) understanding of rationality.

One response to such cautions and caveats might be: 'Good lord, you are looking in the wrong place!' Indeed, many of my examples come from the Council of Europe, which is a highly intergovernmental institution by purposeful design, or from EU units - COREPER and the Council – where intergovernmental dynamics are thought to dominate. For evidence of preference shifts and a high quality of cooperation, I should have instead looked elsewhere – to that 'engine of Europe,' the European Commission.

The European Commission. There have been many descriptive and policy studies of the Commission, and even more numerous claims about its power to alter the preferences of social actors ('going native,' in Brussels-speak). However, only recently, have such questions been subjected to sustained and rigorous social scientific analysis (Hooghe 2001, 2002, 2004).

From either a cross-regional or intra-regional (compared to other European institutions) perspective, the Commission of the European Union is unique. As Hooghe notes, the Commission:

is an extraordinarily autonomous and powerful institution in a world where national states, by and large, run the show. The European Commission is the steering body of the world's most encompassing, supranational regime: the Commission's manpower, resources, and autonomy, and thus its capacity to influence regime decisions, is [sic] greater than that of any other international body. It has a vocation to identify and defend the European interest over and

above, and if need be, against, particular national interests. It is the agenda-setter in the European Union, and it sets the agenda on behalf of Europe. If this powerful body cannot shape its employees' preferences, which international organization could? (Hooghe 2004, 1-2)

These features of the Commission are not simply a reflection of informal organizational norms, but, instead are anchored in EU treaties. For example, the Treaty on European Union instructs the Commission to serve the European interest and it requires Commissioners, who are appointed for five years by member states and the European Parliament, to be completely independent from any national government.

These norms also permeate the Commission's staff regulations, which apply to the 24,000 permanent career officials of the European Commission. The regulations emphasize that "an official shall carry out his duties and conduct himself *solely with the interests of the Communities in mind*; he shall neither seek nor take instructions from any government, authority, organization or person outside his institution. ... *He shall carry out the duties assigned to him objectively, impartially and in keeping with his duty of loyalty to the Communities.*" So formal norms prescribe the Commission and its employees to a) put the Union interest first (supranationalism), b) construe what this means pro-actively (agenda-setting), and c) promote it independently from national pressures (impartiality and autonomy). (Hooghe 2004, 3-4, emphasis in original).

As this description makes clear, if there were ever a most likely case for the nature of cooperation in international institutions to be defined by preference shifts, the Commission is it. Yet, in a striking finding, Hooghe finds little evidence of such dynamics at work.

Based on two surveys of senior Commission officials conducted in 1996 and 2002, and controlling for a host of possible confounding factors,²⁰ her central conclusion is unambiguous. While support for the European project is extraordinarily high in the Commission, this has little, if anything, to do with preference shifts or the internalization of

²⁰ Hooghe conducted in-depth interviews with all respondents in 1996, and shorter interviews with a subset in 2002. Of a total population of 210 or 230 officials at the respective time points, 105 responded in 1996 and 93 in 2002. For details on the data and methods, see <www.unc.edu/~hooghe>.

new values in it. Instead, top officials sustain Commission norms because national experiences motivate them to do so (see also Beyers 2003; Egeberg 2004). In her words, “these quintessentially *European* bureaucrats take their cues from their *national* environment” (Hooghe 2004, 2, emphasis in original).

For sure, Hooghe’s survey/statistical techniques need to be supplemented with qualitative, process-tracing case studies that can better document causality and explore the role of specific mechanisms. Still, her preliminary results are a sobering reminder that even in the thickly and deeply institutionalized setting of Europe and, specifically, of the EU Commission, our arguments will go astray if we fail to control for external/national variables.²¹

What Makes Europe Different – Or *Is* it Different?

In many ways, European institutions – their design, effectiveness, domestic impact – are different from their counterparts in other world regions. Consider, for example, the fate of security institutions in Europe and Asia (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002). While NATO has become both a military alliance *and* a community of values (Risse-Kappen 1995; Gheciu nd; see also Farrell and Flynn 1999), SEATO could not even make it as a weak security organization.

Beyond security, Europe is different in additional, important ways. Compared to other regions, it has a literal ‘alphabet soup’ of institutions (Weber 1994). Moreover, in no other world region have the main regional institutions grown so rapidly over the past decade and a half – with the EU, OSCE and Council of Europe alone nearly doubling their memberships. This rapid expansion has also made conditionality and its accompanying incentives-based approach to cooperation more evident in Europe than in other areas (Van Oudenaren 2001).²² So, when viewed cross-regionally, there is little doubt that Europe *is* different.

²¹ Read in isolation, Hooghe’s findings can lead to the (mistaken) impression that nothing happens when individuals are posted to the Commission. Indeed, while preference or basic value change are rare, we do have evidence that appointment to the Commission does promote the adoption of new *roles* among national bureaucrats. Egeberg 2004, 211-14.

²² I exclude here the global reach of the conditionality practiced by institutions such as the IMF or World Bank.

Yet, for three reasons, we should be skeptical of claims that Europe and its post-WWII experience with crafting regional institutions represent a fundamental break with the past. First, if we shift the baseline and view Europe *intra-regionally over time* and not across separate world regions, a more sobering picture emerges. For example, claims are often made that European institutions - and especially the EU – have wrought dramatic changes in the core properties of European states over the past 50 years. If we define a change in core properties as shifts in preferences, then the empirical work reviewed above indicates such changes are less dramatic than first assumed.

If, instead, we define changes to core properties as shifts in national identities and cultures, then, here, too, a growing body of empirical research shows that the identities, discourses and public spheres fostered by European institutions are still dominated by their national counterparts or, at best, co-exist uneasily side by side with them (Risse and Maier 2003, and the research summarized therein). Even in cases such as Germany, where there is strong evidence of a Europeanized national identity (Katzenstein 1997), there is a difficult methodological problem of multiple causality to sort out (impact of Allied occupation and denazification vs. that of EU).

Second, even if we accept that European institutions have had profound effects, a central argument of this essay – the importance of national contexts – needs to be kept in mind. As seen, national institutions and traditions have had a major influence in shaping the degree of cooperation at the European level. As European institutions and especially the EU begin to address policy areas (citizenship, immigration policy, fundamental rights) that are fundamentally and deeply constitutive of contemporary nation states, one might expect the importance of national contexts to increase – and to do so in a direction that likely weakens the depth of cooperation.

A direct test of this claim will come in the next several years. EU member states are presently completing negotiations on a constitutional treaty for the Union. While a disappointment to the most ardent Euro-federalists, this treaty will likely move the EU further in a federal direction, with new competencies in such areas as citizenship and fundamental

rights.²³ Yet, on the latter – to cite just one example - Eurobarometer polls consistently find concern for basic rights well down on the list of priorities of ordinary Europeans.²⁴ Thus, when the treaty is put to a referendum, current bets are that it will be rejected in at least two member states – Britain and Denmark.

Third, the enhanced degree of cooperation seen in Europe may, at least in part, be a methodological/data artifact. Compared to virtually every other world region, there is *lots* of high quality documentary, survey and interview data available on the EU and other European institutions. In many other settings, where democracy and norms of transparency are not as advanced, it is hard to imagine researchers having access to such data. If they did, perhaps Europe would look a bit less different.²⁵

Conclusions

The study of European regional institutions is in flux. Institutions like NATO and the Council of Europe have literally had to reinvent themselves to accommodate the realities of a post-Cold War setting where former dividing lines had vanished and earlier policies/strategies made no sense. For the European Union, its current constitutional debate suggests an institution poised on a precipice. To one side lie deeper integration, a constitutionalized future and the emergence of a quasi-federal polity. To the other lies a return to a more intergovernmental way of operating. This change and flux make Europe and its institutions fun to study, but hard to compare to other regions. That's the bad news.

The good news is how scholars are studying this institutional dynamism. (Mostly) Gone are the days when they drew upon EU-specific research traditions (neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, and their successors) to examine European institutions. Instead and as suggested throughout this essay, researchers are now more prone to embed their studies in broader social scientific debates and concepts. As the latter in principle travel easily across

²³ "Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe" (18 July 2003), downloadable at <http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/Treaty/cv00850.en03.pdf>.

²⁴ In July 1999, Europeans ranked "guaranteeing the rights of the individual and respect for the principles of democracy in Europe" sixth in a list of 12 priority EU actions. Eurobarometer 1999, 56.

²⁵ Johnston's forthcoming study of China and international institutions will be an important test of this argument. Johnston nd.

regions, the project of comparison is facilitated. If not yet completely gone, then the days of *sui generis* arguments about Europe are numbered, which is very good news indeed.

References

- Acharya, Amitav and Alastair Iain Johnston. 2001. "Crafting Cooperation: The Design and Effect of Regional Institutions in Comparative Perspective." Mimeo: Harvard and York Universities (August).
- Anderson, Jeffrey. 1999. German Unification and the Union of Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barnett, Michael. 1993. "Institutions, Roles and Disorder: The Case of the Arab States System." International Studies Quarterly 37 (September): 271-96.
- Barnett, Michael and Martha Finnemore. 1999. "The Politics, Power and Pathologies of International Organizations." International Organization 53 (Autumn).
- Beyers, Jan. 2003. "Multiple Embeddedness and Socialization in Europe: The Case of EU Council Officials." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.
- Brody, Richard, Diana Mutz and Paul Sniderman, Editors. 1996. Political Persuasion and Attitude Change. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Chayes, Abram and Antonia Handler Chayes. 1995. The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Checkel, Jeffrey T. 2000. "Compliance and Conditionality." Working Paper 00/18. Oslo: ARENA, University of Oslo (September).
- , 2001. "Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change." International Organization 55 (Summer).
- , 2003a. "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.

- , 2003b. "'Going Native' in Europe? Theorizing Social Interaction in European Institutions." Comparative Political Studies 36 (February/March).
- Checkel, Jeffrey T. and Andrew Moravcsik. 2001. "A Constructivist Research Program in EU Studies?" (*Forum Debate*) European Union Politics 2 (June).
- Economist. 2002. "The Brussels Consensus" (7 December).
- , 2003. "Cracks in the College" (13 September).
- Egeberg, Morten. 1999. "Transcending Intergovernmentalism? Identity and Role Perceptions of National Officials in EU Decision-Making." Journal of European Public Policy 6 (September): 456-74.
- , 2004. "An Organizational Approach to European Integration: Outline of a Complementary Perspective." European Journal of Political Research 43 (March): 199-219.
- Elster, Jon, Editor. 1998. Deliberative Democracy. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Eurobarometer. 1999. "Public Opinion in the European Union, Report Number 51." Brussels: European Commission (July).
- Evangelista, Matthew. 2001. "Norms, Heresthetics, and the End of the Cold War." Journal of Cold War Studies 3 (Winter).
- Farrell, Henry and Gregory Flynn. 1999. "Piecing Together the Democratic Peace: The CSCE and the 'Construction' of Security in Post-Cold War Europe." International Organization 53 (Summer): 505-36.
- Fearon, James. 1998. "Deliberation as Discussion." In Deliberative Democracy, edited by Jon Elster. NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Fearon, James and Alexander Wendt. 2002. "Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical View." In Handbook of International Relations, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons. London: Sage Publications.
- Gheciu, Alexandra. 2003. "Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization? NATO and Post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.
- , nd. NATO in the 'New Europe': International Socialization and the Politics of State Crafting After the End of the Cold War. Oxford: University of Oxford, Unpublished manuscript.
- Gourevitch, Peter, Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane. 2002. "Memo on Persuasion." Prepared for a workshop on "Arguing and Bargaining in European and International Affairs,@ European University Institute (April).
- Grabbe, Heather. 2001. "How Does Europeanization Affect CEE Governance? Conditionality, Diffusion and Diversity." Journal of European Public Policy 8 (December).
- Haas, Peter, Editor. 1992. "Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination." International Organization 46 (Winter).
- Hedstroem, Peter and Richard Swedberg, Editors. 1998. Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hemmer, Christopher and Peter Katzenstein. 2002. "Why is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism and the Origins of Multilateralism." International Organization 56 (Summer).
- Hooghe, Liesbet. 2001. "Top Commission Officials on Capitalism: An Institutionalist Understanding of Preferences." In The Rules of Integration: Institutionalist Approaches to the Study of Europe, edited by Mark Aspinwall and Gerald Schneider. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- , 2002. The European Commission and the Integration of Europe: Images of Governance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- , 2004. "Many Roads Lead to International Norms, but Few via International Socialization." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.
- Hovi, Jon. 2000. "Causal Mechanisms and the Study of International Environmental Regimes." Unpublished Paper. Oslo: Department of Political Science, University of Oslo.
- Hurd, Ian. 1999. "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics." International Organization 53 (Spring).
- Joerges, Christian and Juergen Neyer. 1997a. "From Intergovernmental Bargaining to Deliberative Political Processes: The Constitutionalisation of Comitology." European Law Journal 3 (September).
- , 1997b. "Transforming Strategic Interaction into Deliberative Problem-Solving: European Comitology in the Foodstuffs Sector." Journal of European Public Policy 4 (December).
- Joerges, Christian and Michelle Everson. 2000. "Challenging the Bureaucratic Challenge." In Democracy in the European Union: Integration through Deliberation?, edited by Erik Oddvar Eriksen and John Fossum. London: Routledge.
- Johnston, Alastair Iain. 2001. "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments." International Studies Quarterly 45 (December).
- , nd. Social States: China in International Institutions. Princeton: Princeton University Press (forthcoming).
- Katzenstein, Peter, Editor. 1997. Tamed Power: Germany in Europe. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kelley, Judith. nd. European Institutions and Ethnic Politics: Norms and Conditionality. Princeton: Princeton University Press (forthcoming).

- Keohane, Robert. 2001. "Governance in a Partially Globalized World." American Political Science Review 95 (March).
- Koh, Harold Hongju. 1997. "Review Essay: Why Do Nations Obey International Law?" The Yale Law Journal 106 (June).
- Laffan, Brigid. 1998. "The European Union: A Distinctive Model of Internationalization." Journal of European Public Policy 5: 235-53.
- Lewis, Jeff. 2003a. "Nesting Identities in Brussels: Socialization and Everyday Decision-Making in the European Union." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.
- , 2003b. "Institutional Environments and Everyday Decision Making: Rationalist or Constructivist?" Comparative Political Studies 36 (February/March).
- Lynch, Marc. 1999. State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Magnette, Paul. 2004. "Coping with Constitutional Incompatibilities: Bargains and Rhetoric in the Convention on the Future of Europe." Paper presented at the ARENA Research Seminar (2 March).
- March, James and Herbert Simon. 1981. "Decision-Making Theory." In The Sociology of Organizations. Basic Studies (Second Edition), edited by O. Grusky and G. A. Miller. New York: The Free Press.
- Martin, Lisa and Beth Simmons. 1998. "Theories and Empirical Studies of International Institutions." International Organization 52 (Autumn).
- McNamara, Kathleen. 1998. The Currency of Ideas: Monetary Politics in the European Union. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Meyer, John and David Strang. 1993. "Institutional Conditions for Diffusion." Theory and Society 22 (August).

- Moravcsik, Andrew. 1995. "Explaining International Human Rights Regimes: Liberal Theory and Western Europe." European Journal of International Relations 1 (June).
- , 1998. The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- , 2000. "The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe." International Organization 54 (Spring).
- Olsen, Johan P. 2002. "The Many Faces of Europeanization." Journal of Common Market Studies 40 (December).
- Orbell, John, Robyn Dawes and Alphons Van de Kragt. 1988. "Explaining Discussion-Induced Cooperation." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 34:811-19.
- Payne, Rodger. 2001. "Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction." European Journal of International Relations 7 (March).
- Perloff, Richard. 1993. The Dynamics of Persuasion. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.
- Pierson, Paul. 1996. "The Path to European Integration - A Historical Institutional Analysis." Comparative Political Studies 29 (April): 123-163.
- Riker, William. 1986. The Art of Political Manipulation. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- , 1996. The Strategy of Rhetoric. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Risse, Thomas. 2000. "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics." International Organization 54 (Winter).
- Risse, Thomas and Matthias Maier, Editors. 2003. Europeanization, Collective Identities and Public Discourses - Draft Final Report submitted to the European Commission. Florence: European University Institute and Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

- Risse, Thomas, Stephen Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink, Editors. 1999. The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Risse-Kappen, Thomas. 1995. Cooperation Among Democracies: The European Influence on US Foreign Policy. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2000. "International Socialization in the New Europe: Rational Action in an Institutional Environment." European Journal of International Relations 6 (March).
- , 2001. "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union." International Organization 55 (Winter).
- , 2003a. "International Rewards and Domestic Costs: The Uneven International Socialization of Central and Eastern Europe." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.
- , 2003b. The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe: Rules and Rhetoric. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stryker, Sheldon. 1980. Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Perspective. Reading, MA: Benjamin-Cummings.
- Trondal, Jarle. 2001. "Is There Any Social Constructivist - Institutionalist Divide? Unpacking Social Mechanisms Affecting Representational Roles Among EU Decisionmakers." Journal of European Public Policy 8 (February).
- Van Oudenaren, John. 2001. "The Limits of Conditionality: Nuclear Reactor Safety in Central and Eastern Europe, 1991-2001." International Politics 38 (December).
- Weber, Steven. 1994. "Origins of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development." International Organization 48 (Winter): 1-38.
- Wendt, Alexander. 1999. Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wessels, Wolfgang. 1998. "Comitology: Fusion in Action - Politico-Administrative Trends in the EU System." Journal of European Public Policy 5: 209-34.

Zimbardo, Philip and Michael Leippe. 1991. The Psychology of Attitude Change and Social Influence. NY: McGraw Hill.

Zuern, Michael. 2003. "Getting Socialized to Build Bridges: Socialization Research between Constructivism and Rationalism." In International Institutions and Socialization in Europe, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel. Oslo: University of Oslo, Unpublished manuscript.

