Global Europa: Mythology of the European Union in World Politics

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Abstract

The mythology of the European Union (EU) in world politics can be told and untold in many different ways. This article focuses on the lore or stories of who did what to whom, the ideological projection of the past onto the present and the escapist pleasure of storytelling in looking at the mythology of ‘global Europa’ – the EU in the world. It concludes with a reflection on the way in which the many diverse myths of global Europa compete for daily attention, whether as lore, ideology or pleasure. In this respect the mythology of global Europa is part of our everyday existence, part of the EU in and of the world.

Introduction

The mythology of the European Union (EU) in world politics can be told and untold in many different ways. One way might be to look at how and why the mythology of the EU in world politics has been constructed over time – perhaps differentiating between foundational, cold war and post-cold war myths. Another way might be to focus on Helen Morales’ three dimensions of myth – the lore or stories of who did what to whom; the ideological projection of the past onto the present; and the escapist pleasure of storytelling (Morales, 2007, p. 2). The mythology of ‘global Europa’ – the EU in the world – presented here will follow the first path in looking at differing constructions over the last seven decades. But it will also conclude with a
reflection on the way in which the many diverse myths of global Europa compete for daily attention, whether as lore, ideology or pleasure. In this respect the mythology of global Europa is part of our everyday existence, part of the EU in and of the world.

The rest of the article looks at six different ages of myth through which global Europa has been told and can be untold. The first age is foundational – the bull myth – not so much telling a story of how global Europa came into being, but why. The second age is early cold war – the third force myth – about attempts to construct an independent Europe in the world. The third age is later cold war – the civilian power myth – regarding the importance of interdependence and détente for the EC in the world. The fourth age is immediate post-cold war – the normative power myth – concerning the nature of EU power in world politics. The fifth age is later post-cold war – the gender myth – constructing a masculine myth about the weakness of EU power in world politics. The final age is contemporary – the multipolar myth – projecting a story about the future of world politics and the EU’s position within it. As will be seen, the six myths provide differing accounts of how the internal dimension of European integration connects to EU external actions, as well as illustrating how such myths make up the EU’s past, current and future global role(s).

I. The Bull Myth

You could of course be forgiven for the myth analogy, after all, our very name is rooted in mythology – Europa being a beautiful maiden carried off by the God Zeus in the guise of a bull. But today’s Europe, beautiful though she may be, is no longer that kind of girl. (Ferrero-Waldner, 2007, p. 1)

It may seem strange to begin a consideration of the EU in world politics through reference to Greek mythology, but whether as analogy or metaphor the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, deploys the bull myth as a means of conveying the foreign policy change that the EU has undergone since its creation. However the myth of Europa is a valid place to begin because it conveys a sense of trauma and transition in European history, but also because it constructs subsequent European developments as sharing certain characteristics. There are at least three different ways of representing this myth in terms of global Europa – the ‘rape of Europa’, the ‘seduction of Europa’ and the ‘transition of Europa’ – all of which express the disjuncture of pre- and post-war European history.

In the myth of the ‘rape of Europa’ the bull represents the extreme forces of nationalism, violence and oppression embodied in Nazism. Luisa
Passerini’s study of ideas of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s illustrates how ‘Europa becomes Europe and the bull becomes Nazism’ with Europa increasingly portrayed as a victim of brutal force to which it reacts in vain (Passerini, 1999, pp. 7, 260–1). Michael Wintle argues that this interpretation of the myth of Europa signifies that ‘the continent is overwhelmed with bitterness and tragedy, rejecting any pretensions of European nobility or even civilization’ (Wintle, 2004, p. 29). The myth of the ‘rape of Europa’ suggests ‘that the bull is properly to be seen as an archetype of power and domination’ representing the role of nationalism in European history (Rice, 2003, p. 79). For global Europa, the myth of the ‘rape of Europa’ by the forces of extremism and nationalism provides a foundational story of how European integration helped overcome these forces and how these experiences are part of contemporary EU foreign policy.

The myth of the ‘seduction of Europa’ tells a slightly different story with the bull representing the liberator of Europe, the United States of America, and how it comes to seduce and ultimately marry Europa. Both Passerini and Morales suggest that the Europa myth be read as one of seduction by the bull, with Lila Leontidou presenting the bull as a liberator (Passerini, 2003, p. 30; Morales, 2007, p. 13; Leontidou, 2004, p. 596). In this sense, the US bull helps Europe escape its devastating past and escorts it towards a brighter future, albeit one involving closer relationships across the Atlantic. The role of the US bull as liberator, seducer and progenitor of European integration is undoubtedly part of the EU’s foundational mythology. Such symbolism is also assisted by the relative successes of US-inspired bullish capitalism which helped rebuild devastated Europe, and also provided the collateral for the post-war international order. The myth of the ‘seduction of Europa’ by the US liberator provides a slightly different foundational story of how Europe was helped to overcome and rebuild after World War II, and thus how EU foreign policy sustains a very particular relationship with the USA.

The myth of the ‘transition of Europa’ goes beyond rape, abduction and seduction to portray Europa’s journey as a metaphorical passage, a ‘critical life transition’ as Judith Barringer presents it (Barringer, 1991). For Barringer, the myth of Europa involves metaphorical passage both from maiden to woman and from life to death to rebirth (Barringer, 1991, pp. 662, 666). This understanding of the ‘transition of Europe’ suggests that the journey which Europe undergoes during the 1930s and 1940s should be read not as rape by nationalism or as seduction by a liberator, but as a metaphorical ‘critical life transition’ in which the Europe of nationalism dies and a post-national Europe is reborn. The post-national myth of the contemporary EU is to be found in both its form of ‘post-national democracy’ (Curtin, 1997), as well as its...
post-national foreign policy. The myth of the ‘transition of Europa’ from nationalism to post-nationalism builds on the two previous foundational stories to suggest how EU foreign policy is both a product and promoter of un-national world politics.

The bull myth, whether as rape, seduction or transition provides a foundational myth about the radical disjuncture that Europe and European foreign policy has undergone since the 1930s and 1940s. With or without the personifications of the bull and Europa, as well as Europa’s journey, the myths of creation of the EU provide lore, ideology and pleasure which are important in the construction and representation of contemporary EU foreign policy. In terms of lore, the bull myth tells a story of how the forces of nationalism raped Europe, while at the same time Europe was liberated and seduced by the USA, and assisted in a journey from nation-states to a more post-national constellation. In terms of ideology, the bull myth projects the rejection of nationalism and fascism from the past onto a present EU which promotes post-nationalism as idea and ideology. In terms of pleasure, the bull myth provides a story of how ‘old Europe’ of empires and nationalism was transformed into a new Europe more ready for the demands of a global 21st century. Whether or not we accept the need for such myths and storytelling, they do capture an acute sense of World War II as creating the EU, or as Helen Morales puts it, ‘without bulls there would be no Europa’ (Morales, 2007, pp. 5–8).

II. The Third Force Myth

This was a natural outcome of the idea of federating the whole of Europe as a ‘Third Force’ [...]. UEF leaders [...] saw it as the key to world peace and as an issue of no less importance than the necessity of federation as an answer to Europe’s internal problems. (Lipgens, 1983, pp. 20, 25–6)

Walter Lipgens’ account of the attempts by the Union Européenne des Fédéralistes (UEF) during 1947 to federate the whole of Europe into a ‘third force’ helps illustrate the second myth of global Europa – early cold war attempts to construct an independent Europe in the world. This second myth of a ‘third force’ is an important but sometimes overlooked part of the mythology of the EU in world politics. But it is a myth of particular relevance in the post-cold war world because of the questions of ideology, superpower relations and independent foreign policy that it raises. There are at least three different ‘third forces’ that make up this myth in terms of global Europa – the socialist third force, the federalist third force and the Gaullist third force – all of which sought a more independent Europe in world politics.
The socialist third force myth was the result of the ideas and activism of western European socialist groups during and immediately after World War II. For example, in Britain the Socialist Vanguard Group helped foster links with other European socialists during the war, advocating the promotion of ‘individual freedom with a planned economy; democracy with social justice as the foundation of the proposed third force around which non-Communist socialists in western Europe could combine’ (Minion, 2000, p. 244). Italian socialists were divided in the immediate post-war period between pro-Communist and pro-Soviet groups; pro-European socialists favouring an independent third force; and independent socialists such as Altiero Spinelli arguing for European federation to resist Soviet takeover (Gilbert, 2003, p. 28; Lipgens and Loth, 1988, pp. 179–81). French socialists were also supportive of the idea of a third force, not so much as a way of strengthening an independent Europe, but as a means of mediating between two rival ideological systems by combining ‘personal freedom and a collecting economy, democracy and social justice’ in order to find ‘room for social democracy and for socialism’ (Léon Blum, quoted in Loth, 1993, p. 28). For global Europa, the myth of a socialist third force in wartime and immediate post-war Europe is an important dimension of early cold war attempts to create an independent foreign policy actor in world politics.

The federalist third force myth had a much broader ideological base than that of the socialists, and was formulated more as a desire for a peaceful, united continent separating the two superpowers. For the post-war federalists, these three factors of peace, unity and independence provided the greatest motivation for European integration. With their roots in the wartime resistance, federalists were motivated by a desire to achieve lasting peace based on the principle of equality between European states (Lipgens, 1983, p. 32). But the ideas of a federalist third force placed equal emphasis on uniting the European continent as a whole, not just western Europe, in order to build ‘bridges between East and West’ (Lipgens, 1983, p. 32). Building on these aims for peaceful, inclusive equality and a united continent between east and west, the federalist third force was intended to be independent and ‘renounce all forms of power politics but would also refuse to be the tool of any foreign power’ (Lipgens, 1983, p. 32). The myth emerged of a federalist third force during the early period of the cold war, particularly as part of attempts to motivate a peaceful, united and independent Europe that would be neutral but determined to preserve this neutrality.

While the socialist third force myth was constructed during the early to late 1940s, and the federalist myth during the late 1940s to mid-1950s, the Gaullist third force myth is specifically bound to the role of French President Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle was important in attempting to create a more common and
independent European foreign policy, but also divisive in terms of his perceived role in both the European Community and Nato. De Gaulle’s third force strategy was three-fold based on enhancing Franco–German co-operation; replacing supranational integration with intergovernmental political union; and using such a European confederation to negotiate with the US and USSR from a position of equality (Giauque, 2000, p. 93). De Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, shared a vision that ‘the unification of Germany should lead to the unification of Europe and thereby end the bipolar order of the cold war’ (Dietl, 2006, p. 36). The myth of a Gaullist third force is perhaps the best known of all three third force variants, largely because of the 1950s cold war context of superpower conflict.

The third force myth, including socialist, federalist and Gaullist variants, sustains a long-standing myth about early cold war attempts to construct an independent Europe in the world. The myth captures various aspects of attempts to distance European integration ideologically and in terms of power relations from the US and USSR, as well as continuing the ‘seduction of Europa’ myth by emphasizing the US role (in particular President Kennedy’s) during the 1960s. As a story or a form of lore, the third force myth provides a narrative about how Europeans attempted to create an independent Europe in the world, but ultimately failed, usually implicitly blaming an aggressive Soviet expansionism during the late 1940s and early 1950s. As an ideological projection of the past onto the present, we can see how the third force myth embraces socialism, federalism and nationalism as all provide a motivation for a more independent European foreign policy. As a pleasing story the third force myth provides an account of how the cold war ultimately decided global Europa’s fate during the 1950s, but it also leaves unfinished how the story might end. Third force mythology performs a role as a sometimes forgotten reminder of aspirations for more common and independent foreign policy in world politics, both in the past and increasingly projected into the future.

III. The Civilian Power Myth

A primarily civilian power on the scale of a Western Europe, accounting for a fifth of world production and nearly a third of world trade, could play a very important and constructive role [. . .] endowed with resources and free of a load of military power which could give it great influence in a world where [. . .] interdependence seem[s] to be growing at a rapid rate (Duchêne, 1972, p. 43).

The most widely known portrayal of the EC in world politics is that of a ‘civilian power’ based on its economic resources, world production and world
trade, as François Duchêne suggested in 1972. As both the positive and negative effects of economic interdependence became clearer throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, contemporary experts on the EC such as Miriam Camps, Duchêne and Andrew Shonfield were all identifying the links between changing international economics and changing international relations. This third myth of ‘civilian power’ encapsulates these international changes and the way in which they transformed the portrayal of the EC in world politics during the 1970s and 1980s. There are at least three aspects of these changes in international economics and international relations which make up the myth of civilian power (as set out by Camps, 1971, pp. 672–5) – economic interdependence, superpower détente and the changing ‘European imperatives’ – all of which contributed to the institutionalization of European Political Co-operation (EPC).

The ‘economic interdependence’ myth was part of the shrinking ‘time-space dimensions of the globe’ as a result of scientific and technological progress and the growth in economic interdependence of the highly developed economies (Camps, 1971, p. 673). It was these ‘uncertainties of interdependence’ that Duchêne sought to address by advocating ‘Europe as a process’ as an alternative to nationalism or neutralism. He argued that the EC ‘is positively interdependent with the world economy: the more international production reshapes the world economy, the greater the need for common management of the consequences by the leading powers’ (Duchêne, 1973, p. 15). Thus, the growing economic interdependence during the 1960s and early 1970s, as was to be found in the shared economic fortunes of European economies during the later 1970s, led many to argue that the EC’s strengths in world politics were its economic production and international trade, its relations with the developing world and its means of managing the uncertainties of interdependence between highly developed economies. For global Europa, the myth of economic interdependence is an important aspect of understanding the transformation of the EC’s focus on post-war peace to a more global focus on managing prosperity as a ‘civilian power’.

The ‘superpower détente’ myth was a result of ‘outstanding changes in the political-security setting’ and ‘greater fluidity of the five main powers’ involving the recognition of strategic parity between the US and USSR, as well as the emergence of Japan and the EC as industrial powers (Camps, 1971, pp. 672–3). Duchêne raised the expectation of a ‘shift away from quasi-military confrontation of the cold war to civilian and political processes gradually increasing the interdependence of industrial societies with potentially complementary interests’ (Duchêne, 1971, p. 69). Shonfield argued that in this changing superpower context ‘conventional assumptions [. . .] about old-style power relations [. . .] need to be discarded’, and in which ‘the
Community – which is the purest expression of what François Duchêne has called ‘civilian power’, as opposed to traditional military/political power – is exceptionally well placed’ (Shonfield, 1973, p. 62). Although such expectations of a transformation of international relations away from superpower confrontation towards greater fluidity involving the US, USSR, China, Japan and the EC (Camps, 1971, p. 673) was to be obscured by renewed US–USSR conflict during the 1980s, the myth of ‘superpower détente’ is a crucial aspect in understanding the mythology of the ‘civilian power’ of the EC in world politics.

These changes in the landscape of international economics and international politics during the 1960s to 1980s were ultimately to provide the context for ‘a critical period of large and very basic decision-making [...] in what might be called the imperatives of the European situation’ (Camps, 1971, p. 674). The changing ‘European imperatives’ myth of the 1970s and 1980s reflected both international economics and international politics, ultimately leading to the Single European Act (SEA) and the institutionalization of EPC as part of the renewal of Europe’s ‘civilian power’. The economic and institutional challenges of the 1970s initially led to the creation of the European Council to provide greater political leadership, but ultimately provided the backdrop to the ‘relaunch’ of the EC and the SEA, and the formalization of EPC in the 1980s. What is interesting in the myth of ‘European imperatives’ is the hybrid nature of the institutional form of the evolving EC involving both supranational and intergovernmental elements of trade, development and foreign policy. As was suggested two decades earlier, by the end of the 1980s the EC as a civilian power involved a ‘living experiment’ as both a ‘world power and a “layer” or a “level” in the continuum of organized society’ (Camps, 1971, pp. 677–8); it was not a ‘full-fledged European super-state’ (Duchêne, 1973, p. 11); and the fact that ‘it is not a super-state, that it is not dominated by old-fashioned notions of sovereignty but manages a network of wide-ranging common activities which transcend the narrow political environment of the nation state, endows it with certain positive advantages in the conduct of some aspects of international relations’ (Shonfield, 1973, p. 61).

The civilian power myth, involving economic interdependence, superpower détente and European imperatives, is an important part of global Europa’s mythology. The myth provides a well-established image of Europe as a ‘civilian power, exercising influence by commerce and diplomacy, not traditional military strength’ (Twitchett, 1976, p. 2). Civilian power lore provides a story about how the EC’s emphasis on trade, development and economic management was represented as a strength during the international economic and political conditions of the 1970s and 1980s. Civilian power ideology presents a more liberal and progressive understanding of the merits
of economic interdependence over military power-based conflict. Civilian power pleases both scholars and practitioners alike with a common theme for the reinvention and relaunch of European foreign policy during the difficult periods of the 1970s and 1980s. But civilian power mythology also provides a constant source of renewal in European foreign policy as part of the story of global Europa’s distinctive contribution to world politics.

IV. The Normative Power Myth

Europe is an economic giant, a political dwarf and a military worm.

(Eyskens, quoted in Whitney, 1991)

The end of the cold war brought to an end many of the structuring notions of global Europe’s mythology, including aspects of the bull myth, the third force myth and the civilian power myth. But the post-cold war era appeared to have much in common with the European inter-war period, with concerns regarding the break-up of states and empires, renewed nationalism and future German and American roles in Europe. These concerns materialized in the early 1990s with the worst outbreak of ‘ethnic’ conflict and genocide seen in Europe since the 1940s with the break-up of Yugoslavia. Mark Eyskens’ (Belgian foreign minister) renowned quote on the European role in the Gulf conflict captures the trauma of this period – that military power mattered a lot in the post-cold war period. The fourth myth of ‘normative power’ evolved during the 1990s and captures immediate post-cold war concerns regarding the nature of recently institutionalized EU power in world politics. There are at least three elements to this myth – presence and capability, international identity and the concept of normative power – all of which make up part of the emerging understanding of the EU’s role in world politics.

The end of the cold war raised the question of the EC’s status and impact in the international arena, with Dave Allen and Mike Smith arguing for the need to analyse Europe’s ‘presence’ in world politics (Allen and Smith, 1990). Similar to the civilian power discussions of the EC’s hybrid institutional form, the notion of presence was an early attempt to see and analyse the EC through ‘the place it occupies in the perceptions and expectations of policy makers’ (Allen and Smith, 1990, p. 21) when ‘presence manifests itself through subtle forms of influence; but also produces tangible impacts’ (Bretherton and Vogler, 1999, p. 33). Looking from the perspective of 1993, Chris Hill argued in the other direction from Allen and Smith, that conceptualizing Europe’s international role involved understanding the gap between foreign policy expectations and rapidly evolving EU ‘capabilities’ (Hill, 1993). Hill’s conceptualization of the EC as a ‘system of external relations’
involved three strands of ‘capability’ – national foreign policies, EPC and EC external relations (Hill, 1993, pp. 322–3). The debates and myths surrounding the juxtaposition of ‘presence’ and ‘capabilities’ in the context of the invasion of Kuwait and Yugoslav conflicts of the early 1990s focused on the extent the Member States and the Treaty on European Union (TEU) addressed Eyskens’ call for greater EU power.

The ‘international identity’ myth went beyond the institutional reforms of the TEU to attempt to capture the EU’s ‘identity on the international scene’ reflecting both presence and capabilities, as well as both external relations and foreign policy (Whitman, 1998). Richard Whitman’s concept of international identity was ‘not a synonym for “foreign policy” or “external relations”, but […] a position from which to commence conceptualizing the global role of the European Union as being greater than the sum of its parts’ (Manners and Whitman, 1998, p. 246; 2003, p. 382). In this respect the myth of the EU’s international identity attempted to introduce a degree of reflexivity into thinking about how the EU is constituted, constructed and represented internationally. By thinking about the EU’s international identity, the institutional hybridity of the EU is taken as given, as are the fluid, ongoing contestations of complex, multiple, relational identities of the associated social hybridities (Manners and Whitman, 2003, p. 397). For global Europa, the myth of international identity portrayed the complexities and confusion surrounding the newly created EU in the immediate post-cold war period, while at the same time helped move the discussion beyond cold war dichotomies of civilian versus military power to include a further dimension of power – normative power.

The concept of ‘normative power’ reflected the infusion of critical social theory and normative international theory into discussions of the post-cold war world (Calhoun, 1995; Cochran, 1999). In contrast to previous focus on material incentives or physical force, the concept of normative power emphasizes normative justification in world politics (Manners, 2009a). Conceptualizing normative power involves a tripartite understanding of legitimizing principles, persuasive actions and socializing impact of actors in world politics (Manners, 2009b). In the immediate post-cold war world the concept of normative power appeared to capture one aspect of the EU’s increasing emphasis on principles such as democracy, human rights and rule of law, all of which were given prominence in EU external relations during the 1990s (Manners, 2002). Reflecting the centrality given to such principles in enlargement policy, development policy and their 1999 inclusion in the EU treaty base, the concept of normative power captured the idea that international principles, particularly those advocated by transnational civil society and originating from within the UN system such as sustainable peace,
development or good governance should be promoted in the post-cold war world (Manners, 2008a, b). Although just one facet of the EU’s post-cold war international identity, the concept of normative power became both important and increasingly challenged in the 2000s by those actors and critics seeking to undermine the small achievements of global society created under the umbrella of the UN system.

The normative power myth, concerning the importance of presence and capabilities, international identity and the concept of normative power, is still alive and relevant in the 21st century. While the myth suggests that size and potency are important, it also raises questions regarding whether actorness and identity are related to purely material or physical forms of power, or whether ideational principles, actions and impact are also important in world politics. As lore, the normative power myth functions as a narrative about the EU’s puny size and capabilities at the end of the cold war, and how these were gradually enlarged and strengthened throughout the 1990s. As ideology, the normative power myth tells a story about how liberal democracy succeeded in bringing about the end of the cold war, but failed to bring peace to the immediate post-cold war period. As pleasure, the normative power myth provides an account of how global Europa’s military impotency, market appeal and normative capabilities were all part of the 1990s ‘coming of age’ of the EU. Like Eyskens’ renowned quote, the normative power myth performs an important role in the make-up of the EU as a global actor seeking to transform itself in anticipation of the more complex, increasingly globalized, 21st century.

V. The Gender Myth

Europeans and Americans it seems no longer inhabit separate continents, but separate planets – divided by a fundamentally different world outlook. I am from Venus, which, according to its detractors, is faint-hearted, soft-headed and militarily and politically weak. You are from Mars, which I am told is powerful, virile, dynamic: a land of moral clarity and resolute action. (Solana, 2003a, p. 1)

If the immediate post-cold war period was characterized by a focus on ‘ethnic’ cleansing, globalization and the building of global governance, most of this was forgotten in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 heralding a different era of world politics. The differing American and European responses to the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 led to the popularization of a gendered myth of global Europa – that ‘Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus’ (Kagan, 2003, p. 3). As Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, was to
ironically remark just two weeks after the invasion of Iraq, Europeans and Americans seem no longer to inhabit the same planet, explicitly referring to the gendered construction of international identities in a post-11 September world. The fifth myth of ‘gender’ during the 2000s represents the construction of a masculine myth about the weakness of EU power in world politics. There are three perspectives on the gender myth – Martian masculinity, Venusian femininity and Minervan metrosexuality – all of which construct or deconstruct a gendered myth of global Europa in world politics.

As the previous discussions of third force and potency suggest, Kagan and the US ‘neo-cons’ construction of Europeans as un-masculine has a long history. The Martian masculinity myth is constructed on an apparent American neo-con world view of a Hobbesian state of nature where US military forces are virile, potent and ‘ready to use “power”’ in order to ‘man the walls of Europe’s postmodern order’ (Kagan, 2003, p. 76, quoted in Melossi, 2005, p. 20). The myth of the ‘seduction of Europa’ by the US bull, the emasculation of any European third force and the impotency of the EU in the immediate post-cold war world all contribute to this construction of Europeans as lacking Martian masculinity. Such constructions of European effeminacy and powerlessness were intended, and succeeded, in provoking a multitude of responses in Europe including arguments for an accelerated drive towards ‘martial potency’ in Europe (Manners, 2006a, pp. 189–219; Nehring and Pharo, 2008, p. 280; Kirsch, 2009, p. 13). One European advocate suggests that the EU needs the ‘power of war’ to encourage a ‘heroic European identity within a circumscribed EU space’ (Van Ham, 2008, p. 27). The Martian masculinity myth provides one perspective on the gendered construction of global Europa, a perspective suggesting the EU is impotent, emasculated and lacking in power in the post-11 September world.

In contrast, the previous discussions of the Europa myth and civilian power suggest that Kagan’s portrayal of Europeans as feminine free-riders on the back of the US bull also has a mythological ring to it. The Venusian femininity myth constructs a European world view of a ‘Kantian perpetual peace utopia’ where the Europeans are ‘turning away from power’ and ‘entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity’ (Melossi, 2005, p. 20; Kagan, in Kirsch, 2009, p. 13). The myth of Europa as a victim/seduced woman, together with the self-image of Europe as a civilian power exercising influence by commerce and diplomacy, also contribute to this construction of Europeans as possessing Venusian femininity. Such a Venusian myth portrays the EU as ‘faint-hearted, soft-headed and militarily and politically weak’, according to Solana’s ironic remark, relying on soft instruments of accession, trade and aid in its external relations. The Venusian femininity myth largely stands in contrast to the previous perspective, but also shares the notion that
gender is generally constructed in terms of binary opposites. Clearly the evolution of the EU, its security strategy and counter-terrorist activities since 11 September illustrate that the gender myth is more multi-perspectival and androgynous than such binaries suggest.

Transgressing the popular binary of Mars versus Venus, the myth of Minervan metrosexuality suggests that the EU may be better constructed as an androgynous mythical actor reflecting the EU’s hybrid polity. Rather than the exaggerated and essentialized gender constructions of Mars versus Venus, the myth of Minerva, drawing on Greek, Celtic and Roman mythology, suggests an intertwining of wisdom with war as symbolized by Minerva’s accompanying owl and spear (Manners, 2006b). Similarly, Parag Khanna proposed that rather than Mars versus Venus, ‘the metrosexual superpower – the stylish European Union struts past the bumbling United States on the catwalk of global diplomacy [combining] the coercive strengths of Mars and the seductive wiles of Venus’ (Khanna, 2004, p. 66). Van Ham observes that ‘the Union’s overall identity as a metrosexual power [. . .] [and its] embrace of the persuasion of power adds a masculine side to its increasingly androgynous persona’ (Van Ham, 2008, pp. 22, 28). As previously discussed in the civilian power and normative power myths, the EU’s hybrid polity as both a ‘power’ in, and ‘level’ of, global governance (according to Camps) makes any such gendered constructions gross simplifications of global Europa’s manifold roles in world politics.

In the post-11 September world, a heated debate erupted around the gender myth constructing a masculine myth about the weakness of EU power, particularly in light of the subsequent ‘war on terror’. In this respect the myth resonated with previous myths, with the three gender constructions having parallels to the normative power myth’s trichotomy of power – physical force, material incentives or normative justification. The gender myth acts as lore about how Europeans may be constructed as different to Americans in an age of global terror, regardless of whether terrorist atrocities take place in America, Europe or Asia. As an ideological projection, the gender myth constructs a political differentiation between more left-wing attempts to address the root causes that may motivate terrorist groups, and more right-wing attempts to wage war on terrorism itself. As a pleasing story, the gender myth reproduces a simplistic binary construction about Mars, masculinity and war versus Venus, femininity and peace, while at the same time suggesting that the EU transgresses such constructions through allusions to Minerva, metrosexuality and the security nexus. The gender myth also acts to weave together some elements of the previous myths regarding whether the EU’s hybrid institutional form is able to address some of the most demanding challenges of the global era.
VI. The Multipolar Myth

The elephant image was chosen for the European Union, as representing a huge beast, but one that is vegetarian, placid and readily domesticated, and one that moves only slowly but with great weight. (Emerson, 2006, p. 1)

The final myth of global Europa is that of the EU as one pole of power in a more multipolar world. As Michael Emerson’s representation of the EU as an elephant image suggests, in this contemporary imaginary the EU is one huge beast amongst others on the global scene. The global transformations that characterize the beginnings of the 21st century, including global terror, global economic crisis, global climate change and the crises of global governance, provide the setting for the contemporary multipolar myth where the US and EU increasingly share the international stage with (re-)emerging powers such as China, Russia and India. The final myth of contemporary multipolarity projects a story about the EU’s position, whether diminished or enhanced, in the future of world politics. The three parts of the multipolar myth are polarity, lateralism and governance – all of which provide just one part of the mythical beast that global Europa is becoming in contemporary world politics.

The representation of the EU as an elephant in the ‘lively debate about the nature of the beast’ is one of the most long-standing depictions in the mythology of the EU (Puchala, 1972, p. 267). The comparison with mythological representations of other poles of global power, such as the US Uncle Sam, the Russian bear, the Chinese dragon or the Indian god Shiva, invites the elephantine characterization. This myth undoubtedly feeds on the way in which cold war configurations of polarity are giving way to more multipolar attempts to negotiate responses to global economic crisis and global climate change. The ‘Group of Eight’ industrialized countries (USA, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Russia) increasingly seem less important than the ‘G20’ group which includes both the G8 and the ‘BRIC’ emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India and China). However, the mythological representation of the EU as a multipolar heavyweight may be misleading in terms of weight and appearance. While the collective EU economy competes in terms of size and weight with that of the US (and the emerging Chinese economy), in other respects the combined Chinese and Indian populations of approximately 2.5 billion dwarf the EU (approximately 0.5 billion) and the USA (approximately 0.3 billion). Given its hybrid polity it seems inappropriate to represent the EU as one single mythological beast; however a Tjeerd Royaards cartoon depicting an EU elephant embodied by 27 mice seems to capture this myth better (Royaards, 2009).
As important as the polarity myth is the lateralism myth, built on the way that increasing interdependence, globalization, vulnerabilities and polarity inevitably lead to heightened expectations of greater multilateral co-operation as a necessity rather than luxury. Central to this myth is the belief that multilateralism is built into the EU’s DNA as it is itself a multilateral forum, albeit a rather complicated one. The myth of EU lateralism in a multipolar world has been given repeated textual representation as ‘effective multilateralism’ through references to ‘multilateralism [as] a defining principle of its external policy’ (Commission, 2003, p. 3); ‘an international order based on effective multilateralism’ (Solana, 2003b, p. 9); and ‘partnerships for effective multilateralism’ (Solana, 2008, p. 11). At the same time the myth of lateralism also invokes the crises of multilateral institutions of global governance within the UN system, and the need to renew them in order to improve representation, legitimacy and effectiveness (Solana, 2008, p. 12). The myth of lateralism, constructed as a common commitment to ‘effective multilateralism’ in the aftermath of EU fallout over the invasion of Iraq, is an important counterpart to polarity in the contemporary multipolar myth.

The final part of the contemporary multipolarity myth is the myth of governance, whether in regional, multilateral or global form. The governance myth suggests that the EU experience of regional governance may well provide a ‘model’ for other regions to emulate, as is sometimes suggested in the cases of Mercosur, the African Union or the Gulf Co-operation Council. But the myth goes further in offering a model of governance between former warring states that may be informative, perhaps even a ‘laboratory’, for global governance (Jørgensen and Rosamond, 2002). However, it is the hybridity of EU governance bringing together both multilateral and multipolar dynamics in the form of intergovernmentalism, together with aspects of regional governance in the form of supranationalism that is most interesting in the governance myth. This continued relevance of the EU as a forum for European multilateralism, a pole in global multipolarity and an advocate of regional and global governance all contribute to the myth of governance.

As contemporary global problems mount on the shoulders of the multipolar world’s mythical actors, the questions of multilateral solutions and renewal of global governance are undoubtedly the pre-eminent narratives of the 21st century. The lore of the EU in the multipolar myth provides both a story of hope for regional, multilateral and global governance, but also a worrying tale of how Europe’s mice may be squashed by the coming beasts (such as dragons, tigers and bears) if the EU does not renew itself. The ideological element of the multipolar myth contains similar warnings if
European liberal or social democracy is unable to co-operate and/or compete with the emerging politics and economies of the BRICs. Finally, as a pleasing story the myth of multipolarity provides some welcome relief for Europeans worried about their mice-sized countries and how they might survive the many threats and beasts of a more multipolar world politics.

VII. Global Europa, Europa Global

The six differing mythologies of global Europa all appear, on first consideration, to construct very different myths of the EU in world politics. In many cases the myths are almost forgotten, buried in the mists of time. But it would be a mistake to simply dismiss the forgotten myths, and the mythology of global Europa in general, as unimportant to our scholarly and popular understandings of the EU in world politics. By using Helen Morales’ three dimensions of myth, a deeper understanding of the role of myth in the construction of the EU as a global actor may be achieved.

The six mythologies say something very interesting, firstly, about the lore or stories of who did what to whom. In this respect they tell stories about the ups and downs of global Europa’s struggles to ‘speak with one voice’ in world politics. Stories such as the rape of Europa, the third force or the lack of potency are all stories of failure which can be particularly traumatic in the memories of Europeans. In contrast, stories such as the transition of Europa, Europe’s civilian power or the EU as elephant are all stories of the EU overcoming failure which may be seen as comparatively glorious in the memories of Europeans. The role of myths as constructing or perpetuating collective memories, especially when these memories are held to be particularly traumatic or glorious, is important here. Drawing on Vamik Volkan’s psychoanalytical accounts, Kinnvall argues that ‘chosen traumas and chosen glories provide, in other words, the linking objects for later generations to be rediscovered, reinterpreted, and reused’ (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 58; see Volkan, 1997). Hence the lore of global Europa’s mythology provides a story containing both chosen traumas and chosen glories about the struggles to act on the world stage, to speak with one voice and not always to be a victim of power politics.

Secondly, the six mythologies also tell us something about the ideological projection of the past onto the present. The ideological narrative of global Europa is not about the singular belief in any one ideology, but about attempts to come to terms with an age of extreme ideological differences.
All of the stories involve European attempts to avoid the extremes of capitalism and communism, while at the same time shunning the populist temptations of nationalism as well as the traditional failings of power politics. This story about global Europa and EU foreign policy as striking a balance between social democracy and liberal democracy is particularly important, as aspects of the third force myth, the civilian power myth and the normative power myth suggest. The ideological projection of the past onto the present is most important in the idea of European integration as a peace project, as seen in almost all the different myths discussed here. The idea of Europe as peace project and its close association with achieving both social justice and liberal peace captures the way in which global Europa’s mythology constructs a constant ideological narrative across the past 70 years.

Thirdly, the six mythologies provide some insights into the escapist pleasure of storytelling. The myths contain some common elements which are constantly retold as much for pleasure and inspiration as for pain and trauma. The first element is the pleasure taken in presenting global Europa as a victim, as subjugated by the power politics of the superpowers, by its own Member States or by malevolent extremist ideologies. The second element is the notion of betweenness in the identity of global Europa – its hybrid institutional structure and international identity as both an actor or power in its own right, and a multilateral or intergovernmental level of governance, is a crucial element of its mythology. The third element is the way in which global Europa and its external policies are constructed in gendered ways as effeminate and weak rather than bullish and masculine on the world stage. The extent to which both advocates and detractors of EU foreign policy appear to take pleasure in constantly telling and retelling such stories of victimhood, betweenness and gender roles seems to suggest they play an important mythological role.

Finally, the mythology of global Europa – the EU in the world – reminds us that EU external actions, whether enlargement and neighbourhood policies, trade and development policies or foreign and security policies, are not primarily indigenous in origin. As the six mythologies attest, the EU in the world probably should be better understood as ‘Europa global’ because in each and every myth apparently European developments are also shaped by the international context, whether it is the rise of the superpowers, economic interdependence and globalization or the end of the cold war and the global transformations of the post-cold war era. Thus, the role of lore, ideology, pleasure and international context all illustrate the reality of the mythology of global Europa as part of our everyday existence, part of the EU in and of the world.
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