Session 12:

How the rest of the world perceives Europe...

Zaki Laïdi
Initial methodological points

1) The role of an actor on the global scene is determined by its own actions but also by the perceptions of external actors... The EU exists in the eyes of its partners...

2) However, the notion of perception is quite difficult to define:
   - coherence of perceptions
   - social levels of perceptions (i.e. : elite versus middle classes / economic versus political elites).
   - intensity of perception
   - temporality of perception

3) Possible confusion concerning Europe between EU and EMS:
   “Where are you from? An Indian said to a Frenchman
   “I am from France”
   “France? Where is it in England?”
Global perceptions are generally in line with European behavior:

- In Libya, there was a strong support for France and NATO because they were very active whereas the EU was rarely mentioned because it was almost absent.

- The Eurozone crisis is regarded as systematic crisis involving all European states independently from European MS.
• All surveys express a limited degree of knowledge on the EU among non-European citizens.

• The EU is in most of the cases regarded as an economic ensemble, rather than a relevant political actor.

• In some cases, there is a discrepancy between the perception of the EU and its effectiveness (i.e: in the Middle East, the EU is regarded as a marginal political actor, even though its economic aid is substantial)
European self-perceptions...
What are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic situation</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The state of Member States public finances</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising prices\inflation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU's influence in the world</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy supply</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The environment</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (SPONTANEOUS)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In general, which image does the EU conjure up for you?
Tell whether you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, or totally disagree with the following statements.

- As a consequence of the crisis, EU countries will have to work more closely together. 84% agree, 11% disagree, 5% don't know.
- The EU has sufficient power and tools to defend the economic interests of Europe in the global economy. 63% agree, 25% disagree, 12% don't know.
- As a consequence of the crisis, you think the EU will be stronger in the long run. 53% agree, 34% disagree, 13% don't know.
- As a consequence of the crisis, you feel closer to the citizens in other European countries. 42% agree, 51% disagree, 7% don't know.

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Which of the following is best able to take effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis?

- The European Union: 21% (EB77 Sp.2012), 23% (EU27)
- The (NATIONALITY) Government: 21% (EB77 Sp.2012), 20% (EU27)
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF): 15% (EB77 Sp.2012), 14% (EU27)
- The G20: 14% (EB77 Sp.2012), 16% (EU27)
- The United States: 7% (EB77 Sp.2012), 5% (EU27)
- None (SPONTANEOUS): 8% (EB77 Sp.2012), 8% (EU27)
- Other (SPONTANEOUS): 1% (EB77 Sp.2012), 1% (EU27)
- Don't know: 13% (EB77 Sp.2012), 13% (EU27)

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QB3. Having heard about the priorities of the EU, do you think that the EU is going in the right direction or in the wrong direction to exit the crisis and face the world new challenges?

- In the right direction: 40% (40%)
- In the wrong direction: 31% (31%)
- Neither the one or the other: 20% (20%)
- Don't know: 9% (11%)
Views of Countries’ Positive Influence: China vs US vs EU
Average of 21 Tracking Countries, 2011–2012
Perceptions of the EU by the BRICS

- No homogeneous views on the EU but some common perceptions:
  - the vulnerability of Europe since the economic crisis coincides with their own economic rise.
  - Europe is regarded as part of a declining Western world.
  - the balance of power between the West and the rest is shifting.
  - the European tendency to lecture the BRICS on democracy and human rights is perceived as eroded by its economic weakening.
Chinese perceptions

• China takes Europe seriously because it is its main economic partner.
• Chinese perceptions are related to China’s interests and expectations vis-à-vis Europe.
• China looks at European reforms through neoliberal lenses: greater productivity and competitiveness.
• China believes that the euro revival as an international currency is in China’s interest.
• There is no alternative to the EU market outside the US when it comes to diversify Chinese assets (particularly in a context of tension with Japan).
• The EU crisis gives China an opportunity to go global in investing in Europe.
• For China the absence of the scale and depth of the US Treasury Market is the biggest disincentive to undertake reserve diversification in Europe.
• China strongly supports the creation of an integrated European bond market.
• On the strategic front, Europe is regarded as irrelevant, except through the veto power of two of its MS (France and Great Britain).
Indian perceptions

• India shares with China the view that balance of power is shifting toward the East, but India differs from China on many instances:
  a) its economic relation with Europe is much more limited even though the EU remains India’s main trading partner...
  b) ... but India can’t diversify its market because India is less globalized.
  c) India’s priority is to gain American support (India is a status-seeker) in order to be recognized as a big player.
• India has two main grievances vis-à-vis Europe:

1- Its preference for high standards in labor and environment, regarded as protectionist devices.

2- Europe is limiting India’s comparative advantage in financial services, by curbing Indian immigration.
• At the strategic level, India – like China – does not take Europe seriously.

• A report on Indian security policy (Non-Alignment 2.0 / http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf ) barely mentions Europe as a political ensemble. MS are not regarded as crucial to India’s security.

• India reads the world through power politics and interstate relations.

• India remains preoccupied by Asian issues.

• On all strategic issues in which Europe is involved (Afghanistan; Iran), Europe is regarded as a junior partner of the US.

• India does not believe in the political structure of the EU because it does not consider sharing of sovereignty as a viable option.
Brazilian perceptions

• Among the BRICS, Brazil is the most familiar actor with the EU.
• Strong historical links with Europe.
• Real interest in Europe as a political construction because of Brazilian interest in regional integration.
• Brazil is also interested in soft power and global normativity.
• Inter-regionalism (EU-Mercosur) was seriously considered by the EU and Brazil. This is a quite unique experiment.
• The EU is by far the largest economic partner of Brazil (20.7% of its foreign trade). In comparison, the EU’s share of India’s foreign trade is 14.8%.

• For a long period of time, EU-Brazil dialogue was dominated by European agricultural subsidies, hindering Brazilian exports.

• It entails the perception of Europe as a protectionist power.
• Like other BRICS, Brazil tends to see the Eurozone crisis as an opportunity to enhance its leverage on global affairs, an inauguration of a new era where “poor countries are called to help richer ones”.

• Brazil is assisting Europe in its Eurozone crisis through bilateral aid or multilateral channels.

• Amorim: “The trend of developing countries having power in world affairs could already be observed before the crisis. Insofar, the crisis appeared in the center of capitalism; big developing countries became the guarantors of world stability. In this crisis, they are part of the solution, not the problem.”
Russian perceptions

• Russia shares the view that the gravity center of the world is shifting toward the East.
• Russia tends to identify itself with this shifting pattern.
• However, Russia’s calculations are largely political ones:
  a) Russia is not an emerging country but a rentier state
  b) Its political leverage depends on its oil and gas resources.
  c) The economic weakness of Europe is seen as a political weakening which will limit European pressure on Russia’s political system.

“Mr. Peskov said this year there were few questions about democracy and human rights — because those questions are no longer of interest. “World experts nowadays are losing their interest in the traditional set of burning points,” he said. “Everyone is sick and tired of this issue of human rights.” He added, “It’s boringly traditional, boringly traditional, and it’s not on the agenda.”
d) Russia wants to import European technology but put European influence at bay.

e) Russia is relieved by the inability of the EU to emerge as a political power.

• Europe is losing its global significance and is turning into a secondary player tiered down by its own internal problems.

• Russia relies on its bilateral relations with its privileged partners in Europe (Germany, France)

• Russia remains concerned by the EU offensive aiming at investigating Gazprom practices in Europe.
American perceptions

• American public knowledge about the EU is relatively low.
  Gallup poll 2004: 77% of respondents admitted they know little or nothing about the EU. Very few Americans believe that the EU is larger than the US in terms of population.

• A majority of the US public expresses a positive view about the US in general: strong support for an enhanced relationship with Europe through trade.

• The rise of China revives the sense of a Western alliance.

• Americans are equally divided on the idea of the EU as a global contender for world power status.
Elites are concerned by:

a) regulatory imperialism:

“Microsoft waved the white flag this week by dropping all appeals of the European Union's 2004 ruling against the software giant. Such defeats are a familiar sight, and not only in antitrust. Europe writes the rules for global business today across the board -- unapologetically to the benefit of its own industry. American companies are learning they have little choice but to obey.” WSJ, October 2007.
b) Inability to behave collectively.

c) European aversion to risk (use of force)