

Assignment Summary of Articles Contribution

By: Benny Hochster

2 Pages

02 NOV 2025

Task #1) Select one academic article from a journal on European Studies that you find it interesting

For this assignment I have chosen the article "*External perceptions of the European Union in Israel—the role of norms and culture*" by Hila Zahavi and Gal Ariely. Published in the journal "*European Union Politics*" vol.24 issue 4. It can be found online here:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14651165231181062>

I chose this article as I find the subject of EU-Israel relations both intriguing and important.

Task #2) Identify the "research puzzle": What it wants to understand/explain? Why is it important? Why it matters?

The article looks at the perception Israelis have of the EU politically, culturally, and normatively, and compares it to their perception of "Europe".

The main research **puzzle** is what appears to be a glaring dissonance. Namely, despite the fact that Israel and the EU share democratic and liberal values, and the fact that Israelis often admire European culture, they tend to completely distrust the EU's political stance toward Israel, considering it to be extremely biased against Israel.

The article sets out to answer **Why Israel, a Western democracy, have a positive cultural image of Europe but a negative political perception of the EU?**

In the authors' words: "Our findings reveal that Israelis distinguish between the image of the European Union as an entity with positive features and their attitudes toward Israel's connections with the European Union."

Solving this puzzle is important because it exposes a structural blind spot in the EU's foreign relations. It shows how their normative intentions (e.g. human rights, diplomacy) are filtered through local culture and identity.

It matters because understanding this divergence is crucial for explaining persistent EU–Israel tensions despite shared values and strong economic and scientific ties.

Task #3) Check if the 8 characteristics of the scientific method presented in class are present. Argue why they are/are not?

Last week we learned about the 8 characteristics of the scientific method. I found all of them in the article (in varying degrees of strength)

Verification –

The authors verify the hypotheses empirically, basing it on a nationwide survey of 1,050 Israelis, conducted shortly after the 2019 Eurovision that took place in Tel Aviv that year.

The survey tests measurable variables, such as attitudes toward the EU, cultural exposure, religiosity and ideology, allowing verification through reproducible data.

Falsifiability –

The claim that cultural and normative filters explain perceptions of the EU can be disproven if more/alternative data shows that other issues (e.g., trade or security) fully account for attitudes surveyed.

Facts-Based

All the conclusions rely on observation and descriptive analysis of facts. Most importantly, the study's analysis relies primarily on the authors' original survey of 1,050 Israelis conducted after the 2019 Eurovision in Tel Aviv.

Transmissible

The design of this research is described clearly, and the survey questionnaire can easily be replicated. Together they are enough for replication in other (non-EU democratic) countries.

Cumulative

The study positions itself within the well-established framework of "Normative Power Europe", merely extending the subject to non-EU democracies. ("While the EU's self-image as a normative actor has been widely discussed in the literature, much less is known about how these claims are perceived by external audiences, particularly in non-member democracies such as Israel.").

Time and again it defers to previous works done on the subject such as Lucarelli & Fioramonti (2010), "External Perceptions of the European Union as a Global Actor" or Ian Manners (2002), "Normative Power Europe".

Generalization

While the article focuses on Israel, the logic applies broadly to other states where the EU's liberal self-image encounters cultural filters. In fact the study's topic is "External Perception of the EU" with Israel being just one case (The Case of Israel)

The authors explicitly note that their framework could help explain differing EU perceptions in other non-EU countries.

Explanatory

The study does much more than describe perception gaps by explaining **why** they exist.

It claims that while cultural affinity and identity alignment shape the image of Europe, political ideology and religiosity shape attitudes toward the EU. Hence, cause and effect are explained.

Parsimony

The theory, while not simplistic, is as simple as can be. Two variables (culture + identity) explaining 2 dependent outcomes (image + attitude). This simplicity, avoiding over-complicated variables and outcomes, is the essence of scientific parsimony.