Profiling Normative Foreign Policy:
The European Union and its Global Partners

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Abstract

This paper is the first in a series that will investigate "Who is a normative foreign policy actor?" It forms part of a new project intended to explore fundamental aspects of foreign policy at the global level, against the backdrop of a proliferation of global actors in the 21st century, following half a century with only one undisputed global hegemon: the US. The European Union is itself a new or emerging foreign policy actor, driven by self-declared normative principles. But Russia, China and India are also increasingly assertive actors on the global stage and similarly claim to be driven by a normative agenda. The question is how will these various global actors define their foreign policy priorities, and how they will interact, especially if their ideas of normative behaviour differ? This first paper sets out a conceptual framework for exploring these issues and defines 'normative' as being strongly based on international law and institutions, and thus the most 'universalisable' basis upon which to assess foreign policy. The foreign policy actor nevertheless has to be assessed not only on its declared goals, but also on the means it employs and the results it obtains. The truly normative foreign policy actor should score consistently on all three counts and in many different contexts, which will condition the extent to which normative policies are chosen, viable and effective. Subsequent papers in the series will apply this conceptual framework to five case studies on China, the EU, India, Russia and the US.

Contents

PROFILING NORMATIVE FOREIGN POLICY: THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS GLOBAL PARTNERS

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1. Introduction

In both academic debate and policy discourse, the European Union has traditionally been considered as a distinctly 'different' type of international actor. Over the years the EU has been described as a civilian power, a soft power and more recently as a normative power in international relations. These three concepts have been closely interlinked. Dûchene's 'civilian power' included the idea of pursuing the domestication or 'normalisation' of international relations by tackling international problems within the sphere of contractual politics (Dûchene, 1973, p. 19). Nye's 'soft power' was related to forms of foreign policy influence which relied on cooptation, multilateral cooperation, institution-building, integration and the power of attraction (Nye, 2004, p. 5); an idea which Hill considered as describing most accurately the EU's fledging foreign policy (Hill, 1990). Introducing the idea of the EU as a normative power, Manners (2002, 2006) described the EU as a foreign policy actor intent on shaping, instilling, diffusing – and thus 'normalising' – rules and values in international affairs through non-coercive means. The EU's official texts make similar claims about the Union's role in world politics. Most recently, the Lisbon Treaty states that in international affairs the EU would be guided by and would seek to promote the values on which the Union is founded, including democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law (Article III-193(1), Article I-2 and I-3).[1]

The principal explanations for this allegedly 'normative' role in foreign policy have focussed on the EU's *sui generis* nature. What the EU *is* has been considered as the principal explanation for what it *does* beyond its borders (Manners, 2002; Whitman, 1998). Different reasons for this have been brought to the fore. Some have focussed on the EU's institutional set-up, arguing that the multiple layers of EU authority (member state governments, parliaments, courts, EU institutions and public opinion) create a set of constraints that make the EU's pursuit of hard-nosed realpolitik less likely (H. Smith, 2002, p. 271). Others have focussed on how the Union's institutional setting filters and channels member state interests, shaping the output of EU external policies in normative terms. The EU's internal governance is thus transposed externally (Lavenex, 2004), moulding the nature of its foreign policies. More specifically, the EU's internal system of rules and laws is transposed externally through the contractual relations the Union establishes and develops with third parties (Tocci, 2007).

Others still have argued that the EU's normative foreign policy is the result of the fundamentally different way in which the Union views the world. To some (Leonard, 2005; Cooper, 2000), this is the result of EU strength. After centuries of warfare, members of the European family appreciate that cooperation and integration are the only route to shared security, peace and prosperity. This internal Kantian logic is then extended to the realm of foreign policy, engendering a normative European foreign policy. Hence, the EU is conceived as a 'post-modern' actor, which unlike the modern state, does not base its foreign policy on balance of power and zero-sum logic. It rather acts on the belief that cooperating with and strengthening third countries is the best means to pursue EU interests. A greater sense and

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[1] As numbered in the Draft Constitutional Treaty.

changed understanding of security on the inside has induced the Union to promote a developed and well-governed environment on the outside. By contrast, others have argued that the normative lens through which the Union views the world are predicated upon its weakness (Kagan, 2003). The Union wishes to promote a Kantian world because of the weakness of its foreign policy instruments and its incoherent foreign policy apparatus, unable to confront decisively the real threats and challenges it faces. The 'dirty work' is left to its ally the US, which has the military clout and the strategic resolve to act in world affairs, allowing the EU to free-ride on the US and NATO's achievements.

Common to all these arguments, which stem from a rich diversity of theoretical approaches and empirical analyses, is the understanding that EU foreign policy is 'normative' and that the reason for this lies in what the EU is. The aim of this paper is to set a frame of reference in order to test the validity of these claims. What or who is a normative foreign policy actor, how does it act, what does it achieve and what are the conditioning factors determining or guiding its actions? Is the EU a normative foreign policy actor and if so is this the result of its hybrid nature? Or is it the product of its status within the international system? In other words, does the Union categorically differ from other foreign policy actors such as the US, Russia, China and India? Historically, all states and empires have been based on specific normative underpinnings, reflecting these in their foreign policies. The values of liberty, equality and fraternity that underpinned the French revolution; American republican and liberal norms that aim to transcend the power politics of the old continent, or the Panslavist values of the Tsarist Empire are but a few examples. More generally, the study of norms, ideas and values has long been an accepted domain in foreign policy analysis (Smith & Light, 2005). Hence, in so far as states also claim to pursue normative aims, what makes the EU 'different'? Do arguments about the normative nature of EU foreign policy overplay the Union's ontological differences with state actors, covering-up EU weakness and presenting it as virtue? While the EU is undeniably a novice actor in the international system in so far as it lacks the typical attributes of sovereignty, does this necessarily make it a more normative actor in world affairs? This paper aims to present a conceptual framework to help answer these questions, a framework that can be applied equally to the EU and to its global partners in order to be able to discern what, if anything, distinguishes the Union from other international actors.

2. The Dimensions of a Normative Foreign Policy

In order to ascertain what characterises a normative foreign policy actor, we must first define what we mean by 'normative'. 'Normative' can be interpreted in a neutral or non-neutral manner. First, 'normative' can be taken to simply mean what is considered 'normal' in international affairs (Manners, 2002, p. 32). It can thus convey a sense of standardisation and the expectation of non-deviance, rather than a moral imperative. Under such an interpretation, norms become closely associated with power, in so far as only major international actors have the power to shape or determine what is considered 'normal'. In other words, all major international actors would have 'normative' foreign policies by definition, in that they all contribute to determining and shaping the 'norm' in international affairs (Sjursen, 2007). Hence, the EU – just like the US, Russia, China, India, and perhaps even Japan, Brazil or South Africa – would be a normative foreign policy actor, at least in those regions and in those policy areas in which it has an active interest and presence (e.g. in its neighbourhood). For this reason, we can discard an ethically 'neutral' interpretation of what a normative foreign policy consists of.

This leads to a second 'non-neutral' interpretation. This is the interpretation most commonly found in the literature on EU foreign policy and which will be explored here. In opting for this second non-neutral interpretation of normativity, however, we have to avoid the serious pitfall that has bedevilled much of the literature on EU foreign policy: subjectivity and presumed

universality. If we associate a normative foreign policy with a 'good' or an 'ethical' foreign policy, then we have to take great care not to slide into an imperialistic imposition of what is subjectively considered 'good' on the grounds of its presumed universality. Doing so is not only problematic in and of itself, but would also lead us back to a definition of normativity which is inextricably tied to power and power-based relations. It is indeed critical to strike a balance between claims to the 'objective' and universal nature of particular norms and the 'subjectivity' from which these derive (Luccarelli & Manners, 2006, pp. 203-205). Projecting or coercively imposing specific norms with a claim to their universality amounts to little more than an imperialist export of one's chosen form of political organisation. Examples of this include Napoleon's export of the tenets of the French revolution or *la mission civilizatrice* of European colonial powers (also known as the white man's burden), which proclaimed the virtues of free trade, Christianity and science that would bring peace, order, and civilisation to the rest of the world.

By contrast, particularly if we intend to analyse and compare different international actors and the normative (or otherwise) nature of their foreign policies, it is necessary to avoid, as far as possible, claims of presumed objectivity, recognising the role played by time, place and power in shaping these claims. At the same time, simply asserting the subjectivity and relativity of specific norms leaves us without a solid basis for a clear definition to guide subsequent comparative analysis. In other words, our definition of a normative foreign policy, while being non-neutral in ethical terms, must be based on set standards that are as universally accepted and legitimate as possible. These standards require an 'external reference point' (Manners, 2006a, pp. 170-22) and cannot be simply defined and interpreted by the international actor in question at will. Related to this, our definition of what is normative, rather than being a pure expression of power, must undertake the function of 'taming' and regulating power. In the search for these standards, we will consider three dimensions of a normative foreign policy: what an actor wants (its goals), how it acts (the deployment of its policy means) and what it achieves (its impact).

a. Normative Goals

What constitutes normative versus non-normative foreign policy goals? Several distinctions can be considered. One is the distinction between values (normative) and interests (non-normative). Yet this distinction has been eloquently criticised from different theoretical perspectives. Hans Morgenthau claimed that 'the choice is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of principles divorced from political reality and another set of principles derived from political reality' (Morgenthau, 1982, p. 34). Chris Brown, on the other hand, argued that pursuing the interests of one's people is no less of a value than respecting and promoting the norms of international society, as both set of priorities involve interests and ethics (Brown, 2005, p. 26). Constructivists have focused on the subjective and self-constituting nature of interests and values. On the one hand, the interpretation of a value is conditioned by the underlying interest-based incentive structure shaping an actor's choices. On the other hand, values represent the conceptual prism through which interests are constructed, interpreted, prioritised and operationalised, that is, the 'bounded rationality' within which they operate.

The difficulty this entails is exacerbated when we apply these observations to specific cases. All-encompassing values such as 'democracy', 'peace', 'justice' or 'order' can be interpreted in a myriad different ways by different actors at different points in time. In addition, the pursuit of different values may be viewed as contradicting one another in specific circumstances. In some instances, pursuing the prosecution of war criminals may be considered to harm the goals of promoting a peace agreement between warring parties. In other instances respecting the independence of peoples or fighting organised crime may contradict the protection of individual

human rights. In other instances the promotion of democracy might contradict the value of maintaining order and stability. Specific interpretations of values and the chosen hierarchy between them are largely shaped by underlying interest configurations. Moreover, new norms (i.e. what is considered 'normal') result from the assertion of changing interests and the ability to impose particular interests over others. The idea of the 'pre-emptive war' in the run-up to the attack on Iraq in 2002-03 is a clear example of when a norm begins to take root due to powerful interests pushing in that direction.

Another problematic distinction juxtaposes normative goals and strategic ones. Hence, whereas normative goals would include the promotion of peace, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, international law and sustainable development; strategic goals would include the protection of commercial interests, migration management or energy security. Yet also in this case a clear distinction proves elusive. The pursuit of strategic objectives is not necessarily 'un-normative'. According to Lieven and Hulsman, goals such as stability, prudence, the search for compromise and accommodation have real normative content (Lieven & Hulsman, 2006). Moreover, the pursuit of allegedly normative goals may underlie strategic objectives. Waging war in the name of democracy can cover strategic aims such as advancing energy security or pursuing hegemonic control. Likewise, the promotion of the normative goal of multilateralism may conceal a mid-level power's strategic objective of asserting its power and promoting multipolarity within the international system (e.g. China).

Following on from this, our definition of normative goals refers back to Wolfers' definition of 'milieu' goals, in contrast to possession goals. Milieu goals are those which, while indirectly related to a particular actor's specific interests, are essentially concerned with the wider environment within which international relations unfold. Furthering milieu goals may contribute to the advancement of possession goals. However, unlike possession goals, milieu goals are pursued consistently over time, and not only at the time when they also represent immediate possession goals. As put by Wolfers:

> One can distinguish goals pertaining, respectively, to national possessions and to the shape of the environment in which the nation operates. I call the former 'possession goals', the latter 'milieu goals'. In directing its foreign policy toward the attainment of its possession goals, a nation is aiming at the enhancement or the preservation of one or more of the things to which it attaches value. The aim may apply to such values as a stretch of territory, membership in the Security Council of the United Nations, or tariff preferences. Here a nation finds itself competing with others for a share in values of limited supply'… 'Milieu goals are of a different character. Nations pursuing them are out not to defend or increase possessions they hold to the exclusion of others, but aim instead at shaping conditions beyond their national boundaries. If it were not for the existence of such goals, peace could never become an objective of national policy'… 'Similarly, efforts to promote international law or to establish international organizations, undertaken consistently by many nations, are addressed to the milieu in which nations operate and indeed such efforts make sense only if nations have reason to concern themselves with things other than their own possessions. (Wolfers, 1962, p. 73)

In order to provide as sound a definition as possible, we could add that normative foreign policy goals are those which aim to shape the milieu by regulating it through international regimes, organisations and law. As put by Risse, a high degree of international institutionalisation and regularisation allows for and induces a 'common lifeworld'. International institutions, regimes and law provide a 'normative framework' structuring relations – including the pursuit of possession goals – in different policy areas (Risse, 2000, p. 15). This relates to Dûchene's idea of a civilian power, which aims to domesticate relations between states by drawing international problems within the sphere of contractual structures and relations (1973, p. 19). It is however fundamental to add that a normative goal is one that

pursues international regularisation in a manner that binds the behaviour of all parties, including that of the actor in question. It is particularly important to add this proviso because international law is also the product of international power relations and not a magic formula that perfectly objectivises and universalises norms. Notwithstanding this, a focus on law diminishes the risks of imposing one's chosen definition of norms on others through the sheer exercise of power, as well as of acting inconsistently and selectively in world affairs. In other words, law can provide a normative boundary within which several codified norms can be interpreted and pursued.[2]

b.   Normative Means

In principle, the promotion of normative goals such as the institutionalisation and legalisation of human rights and democratic standards could be pursued through a variety of means. Yet pursuing the entrenchment of democratic standards through war unauthorised by international law can hardly be viewed as normative. To be normative, foreign policy must pursue normative goals through normative means. But what is meant by normative foreign policy means?

When normative foreign policy is equated or associated with the notions of 'civilian' power, the normative character of foreign policy means emphasises economic, social, diplomatic and cultural instruments as opposed to military ones. In relation to the European Community, Dûchene (1973) argued that the lack of common military means, far from being a source of weakness, represented a virtue of the Community's role in the world. Transposing this claim to present circumstances, Whitman (1998) argued that even if the Union develops a military capability, its civilian character remains intact in view of the secondary nature of its military means as opposed to the prime emphasis placed on economics and diplomacy. There is in fact a stark 'normative' difference between the protection of human rights and democracy through military means as opposed to the pursuit of these same goals through aid, diplomacy or technical assistance. Yet attributing normative value solely to the type of instrument deployed is problematic. In some instances, the deployment of economic sanctions can be as or more harmful and coercive to affected populations than the conduct of war.

As such, more relevant to our definition of normative foreign policy means is *how* rather than *which* policy instruments are used. Here we relate back to Nye's definition of soft power, as power that relies on cooptation rather than coercion (Nye, 2004, p. 5). Using Holsti's classification, we can refine this distinction further by introducing a continuum of foreign policy means, ranging from soft methods of persuasion, moving to the granting or promising of rewards, to the threat or infliction of punishments, ending with the hard methods of the use of force (Holsti, 1995, pp. 125-126). Related to this continuum, some authors have classified soft methods based on joint ownership, engagement, persuasion and cooperation as more 'normative' than coercive methods such as conditionality, sanctions or military action. Methods based on joint ownership, cooperation and dialogue in principle hedge against the dangers of imposing allegedly 'universal' norms through sheer power and against the needs and desires of local populations in third countries. These methods allow for and are driven by motivations which are 'other-empowering' rather than 'self-empowering' (Manners, 2006b).

Yet serious doubts can be raised about the rationale of these presumably more normative means. First, it is awkward to argue that cooperation with an authoritarian regime is more 'normative' than punishment-based incentives towards it. Second, the use of persuasion when exercised by the strong towards the weak is devoid of concrete meaning. The voluntarism inherent in these theoretically 'soft' methods falls victim to the power-political context in which they are exerted,

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[2] The substantive and detailed mapping of the bodies of law (and strong quasi-legal policy rules) that are relevant to the foreign policy field will be the subject of another paper in this series.

rendering the distinction between persuasion and coercion meaningless in practice. In so far as persuasion is premised on the recognition of parity between actors, the strong does not in practice exert influence on the weak through sheer persuasion and is certainly not perceived as such by the latter. On the other side of the coin, relying on persuasion may be the mere result of weakness rather than of virtue. When lacking coercive means, a weak international actor may have no alternative to the use of persuasion.

Related to these arguments, others have considered positive forms of conditionality such as political engagement (political rewards), recognition (symbolic awards), or market access, technical assistance and aid (economic rewards) as preferable to negative ones such as sanctions or war (Cortright, 1997 and Dorussen, 2001). From a normative perspective, positive incentives are viewed as being less intrusive into a third country's sovereignty and thus less likely to generate psychological retrenchment and rigidity (K. Smith, 2004). Unlike negative forms of leverage, they are also less likely to harm local populations. Furthermore, positive conditionality allows for the retention and development of open political channels with third parties, which in turn provide additional avenues to exert influence. In this respect, the lack of official contact with certain authoritarian regimes such as Belarus or Libya has been criticised for failing to influence domestic political dynamics in these countries. Others have rebuked that while being more 'normative' at face value, in practice positive and negative incentives hinge upon similar coercive logics intended to alter the cost-benefit calculus within third parties. In different contexts they can equally represent forms of hard power exerted and delivered with the velvet glove of diplomacy. In addition, when applied to specific cases, the withdrawal of benefits such as aid can be as coercive and harmful as the imposition of sanctions. The context in which these incentives or disincentives are applied is thus critical in determining the extent to which they can be viewed as normative or otherwise.

Hence, while a focus on 'normative foreign policy means' calls for greater attention to *how* rather than *which* policy instruments are deployed, there is no clear consensus as to what constitutes 'normativity' in the deployment of these means. A way forward may be to adopt the distinction made in sociology between normative as opposed to cognitive approaches. Whereas normative approaches delimit the sphere of permissible acts, cognitive approaches permit, through trial and error, all means and methods to pursue specific ends. **Picking up on the discussion on normative foreign policy goals, we define normative foreign policy means as instruments (regardless of their nature) that are deployed within the confines of the law.** Legality in the deployment of foreign policy instruments relates first to the legal commitments of a foreign policy actor towards itself, i.e., the deployment of foreign policies in respect of internal legal standards of democracy, transparency and accountability (Stavridis, 2001, p. 9). It also relates to external legal commitments, that is, acting multilaterally where possible and with UN authorisation and more generally respecting international law.

Legal foreign policy means can be considered as normative in different ways. First, it asserts the primacy of right over might, taming the power of the strong while protecting that of the weak, and thus preserving a minimal level of equity within the international society. Second, it sets the rules governing choices when different normative/non-normative goals compete (e.g. peace versus human rights or democracy in certain situations). While far from a perfect guide to normative action, in such situations the law ensures that choices are not crude reflections of political contingency, but rather are made within the boundaries of legally permissible acts.

c. Normative Impact

A third and final variable of a normative foreign policy focuses on its results. Most studies on civilian, soft or normative foreign policy tend to place primary emphasis on declared intent rather than on actual results. Yet highlighting what a foreign policy actor actually does or does

not do – its external impact – seems to be as important as an analysis of its internal aims and instruments. First, a focus on results would act as a double check on what a foreign policy actor's objectives actually are. Put simply, when declared objectives point towards the desirability of strengthening the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, yet ensuing policy action prioritises possession goals such as the containment of migration flows, declared objectives cannot simply be taken at face value. Second, the analysis of results derives from an understanding of normative foreign policy grounded upon consequentialist ethics (Manners, 2006b). By consequentialism here we do not mean a mere utilitarian approach, permitting any action in order to achieve a particular result (which as argued above would violate normative foreign policy means). A normative foreign policy would thus pursue normative goals through normatively deployed means *and* it would be effective in fulfilling its normative intent. Here equal focus would be placed on discerning foreign policy actions as well as inactions.

A normative impact is one where a traceable path can be drawn between an international player's direct or indirect actions and inactions (or series of actions) on the one hand and the effective building and entrenchment of an international rule-bound environment on the other. The task would be that of delineating when, how and to what extent specific foreign policies engender specific institutional, policy or legal changes within a third country. Doing so is no simple feat. Rarely is a particular change within a third country the simple result of a specific foreign policy at a precise moment in time. With the (partial) exception of highly coercive military measures whose impact is highly visible, impact assessment of most foreign policies requires a detailed analysis of the interaction between policy on the one hand and the political opportunity structure underpinning the situation within a receiving party on the other.

3.   The Interplay between the Three Dimensions of Normative Foreign Policy

Taking our three variables, which collectively constitute a normative foreign policy and exploring different combinations between them, we arrive at a set of stylised alternatives. These stylisations reflect and describe different foreign policy actors. Beginning with the first two 'internal' variables in foreign policy (goals and means) and exploring different combinations between them, we reach a 2x2 matrix of stylised alternatives (see Figure 1).[3] These stylisations represent different foreign policy types, which can be labelled as normative, realpolitik, imperial and status quo.

Figure 1. Foreign policy types

		Legitimisation of foreign policy goals	
		Normative	Non-Normative
Foreign policy means	Normative	**Normative**	**Status Quo**
	Non-normative	**Imperial**	**Realpolitik**

A **normative** foreign policy type is one which satisfies both conditions (goals and means). It thus justifies its foreign policy actions by making reference to its milieu goals that aim to strengthen international law and institutions and promote the rights and duties enshrined and specified in international law. It does so by respecting its internal and international legal obligations. On the opposite end of the spectrum we find the **realpolitik** foreign policy type.

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[3] I would like to thank Thomas Diez for suggesting this matrix.

Here an international actor pursues possession goals by deploying all policy instruments at its disposal (coercive and non-coercive) regardless of its internal and international legal obligations. Beyond these two extremes, two further stylised alternatives can be depicted as follows. The **imperial** foreign policy type claims to pursue normative foreign policy goals, yet not in a manner that binds itself. Rather than conforming to international law and multilateral frameworks, it uses all means at its disposal to impose new norms, even if this entails the breach of international law. The imperial type does not view itself as bound by existing law. Like a Gramscian hegemon, it shapes the normative milieu by abrogating existing rules, promoting or preventing the adoption of others, and playing a dominant role in creating others still in order to regulate its subjects in a manner that best serves its interests. A final stylised foreign policy type is the **status quo** foreign policy type. In this case, an international actor operates in the international system and pursues its policies in respect of its domestic and international legal obligations and, where relevant, it operates within the context of international organisations (Diez & Manners, 2007). Yet it is not driven by and does not attempt to pursue normative foreign policy goals; that is the entrenchment and development of international law and institutions. It operates as a status quo actor, respecting existing laws and rules without wishing to pursue their further development in different regions and issue areas.

Depending on whether the achieved impact reflects original goals or not, the foreign policies of the four stylised types can be 'intended' or 'unintended' (see Figures 2 and 3). An intended outcome is one in which the goal reflects the impact regardless of whether they were normative or otherwise. An unintended impact is where the goals are normative but the impact is not, or vice versa. Adding this dimension to the classification of impacts, we have eight logical possibilities.

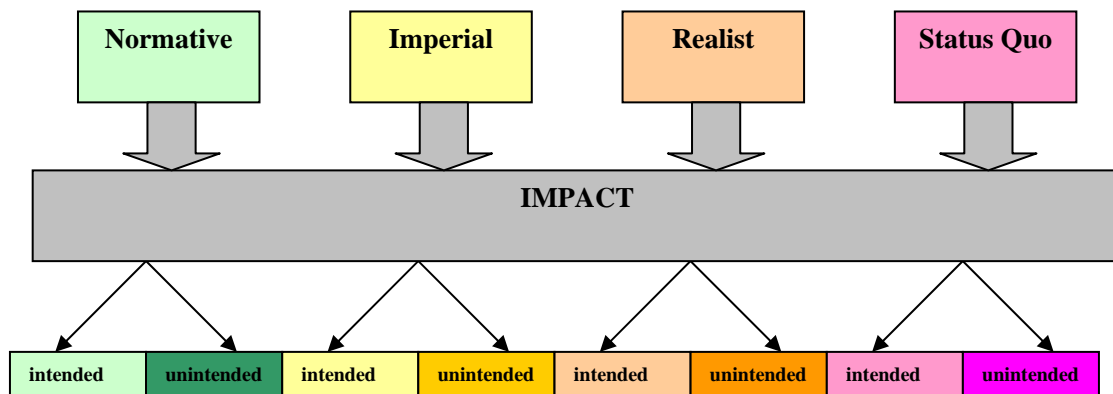*Figure 2. Foreign Policy Types and Nature of Impact*

Figure 3. Foreign Policy Outcomes

Type of actor	Normative		Realpolitik		Imperial		Status Quo	
	Intended	Unintended	Intended	Unintended	Intended	Unintended	Intended	Unintended
Goals	Normative	Normative	Non-normative	Non-normative	Normative	Normative	Non-normative	Non-normative
Means	Normative	Normative	Non-normative	Non-normative	Non-normative	Non-normative	Normative	Normative
Impact	Normative	Non-normative	Non-normative	Normative	Normative	Non-normative	Non-normative	Normative

Non-normative (grey)   Normative (white)

In order to have an effective or 'powerful' normative foreign policy, an international actor not only needs to pursue normative goals through normative means, it also needs to achieve a discernible normative impact. The impact of its policies must be **'intended'**. Empirically, meeting all three conditions fully is arduous and may only rarely be achieved. The relevant question would thus be to determine whether in a particular instance, an actor's foreign policy 'essentially' fulfils these three conditions. An a priori determination of what 'essential' entails is hard to achieve and requires a case-by-case qualitative analysis. Alternatively, an international actor could pursue normative goals through normatively deployed means, yet it may fail to achieve a normative impact: its results will then be **'unintended'**. While its foreign policies may achieve particular political, economic or social impacts, these are not related to the development/entrenchment of international law and institutionalisation and to the promotion of rights and duties enshrined in international law. This international player could pursue normative goals through normative means because of the weakness of its internal capabilities and its lack of internal resolve. Its weakness generates an overlap between its milieu and possession goals. The weak actor protects itself by trying to strengthen international law and institutions. International regularisation protects the weak actor from the encroaching power of the strong and hedges against threats it has no weapons to confront. Lacking the means and resolve to pursue its possession goals, this actor conforms to internal and international legality, but its normative action is the result of a lack of choice. Alternatively and more benignly, this

international player may full-heartedly pursue normative goals through the deployment of normative means. Yet it may fail to achieve normative results because of an unfavourable external environment, which it, alone, cannot shape.

The other foreign policy types may also have intended or unintended impacts. As in the case of the normative foreign policy type, the extent to which impacts are 'intended' or 'unintended' are a question of degree, which calls for careful qualitative assessments. The realpolitik type may 'succeed' in its non-normative intent, fulfilling its possession goals by exploring and deploying all policy instruments at its disposal as it sees fit regardless of its domestic laws and international legal obligations. Unsurprisingly, its foreign policy impact is not normative nor is it intended to be. Alternatively, the realpolitik actor may perversely achieve an entrenchment and development of international law. Precisely as a reaction to its encroaching power, other international players may pursue the development of international law and institutions more actively as a means to contain and constrain the realpolitik player's foreign policies. In other words, the flouting of international law in the exclusive pursuit of possession goals may generate the unintended result of a further development of international law and multilateral frameworks – as a boomerang effect of the realpolitik actor's policies.

Similarly, the imperial type may achieve its normative goals, despite its flouting international law and institutions. More precisely, in this case the imperial actor would succeed in creating new norms, subsequently codified and enshrined in new international law. Alternatively, the imperial actor may fail to achieve a normative impact given that, while having the capability and resolve to pursue normative goals, its breaking of the law sets a strong a model and precedent for other international players, which impedes the achievement of an overall normative impact.

Finally, the status quo type may both achieve impacts exclusively confined to the pursuit of its possession goals; or alternatively, by acting within the confines of the law, it may unintentionally trigger further international legalisation and institutionalisation. In the former case for example, the pursuit of commercial interests can encourage the growth of 'crony capitalism' or rising socio-economic inequalities in third countries. In the latter case, the status quo player, pursuing its commercial interests within the framework of the WTO and its international trade agreements, may unintentionally trigger the regularisation of market economies in third countries even though results fall beyond the scope of its original intent.

4.   Conditioning Factors

Rarely if ever does a foreign policy actor fall squarely into one of the typologies described above. In different regions and in different policy areas the same international actor can display a normative, realpolitik, imperial or status quo foreign policy at different points in time. Moreover, when analysing a particular foreign policy and examining how it evolves over time, different traits are likely to come to the fore. Hence, merely describing different foreign policies according to their normative or non-normative features may be of little interest and explanatory power in and of itself. The choice of which foreign policies to focus on, in which regions and at which points in time inevitably leads to different empirical results, rendering the exercise highly subjective in nature. The challenge is thus to identify under which conditions and circumstances an international player is normative (as opposed to realpolitik, imperial or status quo). **And returning to the original question spelled-out at the outset, under which conditions do different international actors opt for similar or different foreign policy approaches? Under similar conditions, does the EU act in similar or dissimilar ways to the US, Russia, China or India? When it pursues a normative foreign policy is this the result of its sui generis nature, or do state actors adopt similar foreign policy approaches under similar conditions?**

In order to tackle these questions, we have identified three principal conditioning factors that shape and influence the likelihood that an international actor will pursue a normative (or non-normative) foreign policy. The first two conditioning factors relate to the internal nature of the foreign policy actor in question and more precisely to the features influencing its chosen foreign policy goals and means. The third conditioning factor relates to the external environment in which foreign policy unfolds.

a.   The internal political context: What interests are at stake?

A first conditioning factor is the internal political context in which a foreign policy actor conceptualises, interprets, prioritises and operationalises its foreign policy goals. It takes into account the different constituencies (e.g. political parties, interest groups, civil society, the media, public opinion, business, etc) pushing for the adoption of particular foreign policy goals as well as the role played by official institutions developing, articulating, channelling, interpreting and operationalising those goals.

Are there, for example, internal constituencies pushing for the adoption of particular milieu goals? Is there an internal 'demand' for them? On issues such as Burma/Myanmar for example, Western public opinion and media attention on the widespread human rights violations have been sparse, ad hoc and confined to specific incidents. This has reduced the incentives of European or American foreign policy-makers to adopt and pursue strong milieu goals on the question.

Do internal political and institutional forces push for the adoption of milieu and/or possession goals? Actors such as the EU and the US have paid limited attention to human rights and international law violations in Chechnya and Tibet respectively. In some instances (e.g. in the early period of the first Chechen war), Western countries took a strong stance against ongoing violations, while in later years (i.e. during the second Chechen war), despite ongoing violations, the pursuit of strategic trade or energy related goals appear to have trumped the pursuit of milieu goals.

Is the articulation of milieu goals presented as competing or complementary to the fulfilment of possession goals? In the context of the WTO for example, business lobbies can conceptualise and pursue their commercial interests in a manner that is either competitive or complementary to the pursuit of milieu goals in the fields of development, environment, labour rights or health.

When milieu goals are conceptualised as competing with possession goals, do internal stakeholders push for the prioritisation of the former or the latter? In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, a highly securitised environment often led to the clear prioritisation by official institutions, the media and public opinion of security concerns over the need to respect civil and political rights. Moreover, the respect for human rights, such as the right against torture, has at times been viewed as hindering an effective fight against terrorism.

b.   Internal capability: What are the foreign policy means available?

A second conditioning factor is the internal capability of a foreign policy actor, shaping above all its chosen foreign policy means, although also the scope of its foreign policy goals. The extent to which a foreign policy actor deploys its foreign policy instruments in a normative or non-normative way depends crucially on its internal capability and resolve and the different foreign policy instruments at its disposal.

Does a foreign policy actor have the capability to pursue non-normative means? Does it have the foreign policy instruments to pursue particular objectives by breaking international law and

operating outside international organisations? This relates back to the question of strength and weakness as discussed above. Enjoying strong military means or economic leverage, major powers such as the US, Russia, China or India have more possibilities to pursue their foreign policy goals by breaching international law through the use of force of unauthorised sanctions than a small neutral state such as Switzerland or a small under-developed country in sub-Saharan Africa.

What is the relational context in which a foreign policy actor deploys its means? As Hannah Arendt argued, power is never an attribute of an individual, but exists when a group allows and empowers an individual to act in a particular way (Arendt, 1969, p. 44). The ability to act is determined first by the material configuration of relations between parties, i.e., by the levels of dependence and interdependence between them. This, for example, determines the extent to which an actor may rationally consider the deployment of economic sanctions, even when these are unauthorised by international law. If the targeted third party's economic dependence is low instead, it is less likely that a foreign policy actor will choose to bear the costs of violating international law, given that the prospects of its sanctions achieving their desired foreign policy results are low. The opposite situation may arise instead, whereby a foreign policy actor does not have the sufficient relational power vis-à-vis a third country to deploy its foreign policies within the confines of contractual relations. In the case of migration for example, the EU has tended to conclude and make use of readmission agreements with its Eastern neighbours. However, the weakened relational power of the EU vis-à-vis its North African neighbours, due to heightened European concern over border security, has hindered the conclusion of such agreements. Lacking an appropriate legal framework to deal with the question of readmission, the Union has thus tended to reach ad hoc and informal arrangements with countries such as Morocco (Cassarino, 2007).

c. The external environment: How does a foreign policy unfold in the international system?

The third conditioning factor shaping when, to what extent and why a foreign policy actor may fall into one or another stylised category relates to the external context in which the foreign policy actor operates. When analysing the role played by the external environment in shaping the results of a particular foreign policy – at times reinforcing and at other times hindering the pursuit of an actor's foreign policy goals – three principal levels of analysis and accompanying questions could be borne in mind.

First, how does a foreign policy interact with the domestic dynamics within the targeted third state? In the case of Kosovo for example, the unauthorised NATO bombing in 1999 seriously weakened but did not lead to the direct overthrow of the Milosevic regime in Belgrade. The overthrow of the regime occurred one year later, when a critical mass of domestic political opposition organised and counter-mobilised, triggered by the results of the September 2000 presidential elections. In the case of EU-Turkey relations, while EU conditionality spurring democracy and human rights reforms led to few and superficial reforms between 1999 and 2002, it was only after the 2002 watershed elections in Turkey that a strong government, backed by large swathes of civil society, passed a set of fundamental constitutional and legal reforms in the country, in compliance with EU demands.

Second, how does a foreign policy interact with the policies of other international actors within a third state or in a specific issue area? In the case of the Ukraine or Georgia for example, the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia or the 2004-05 Orange Revolution in Ukraine were declaredly aimed at redirecting these two countries towards the US and the EU, and promoting democratic, good governance and market economy reforms. Yet equally, if not more important than the normative foreign policies of the EU or the US towards these two post-Soviet states, Russia's

realpolitik approach towards Tbilisi and Kiev reactively mobilised change within these two post-Soviet states.

Third, how does a foreign policy interact with the wider international context shaping the developments within a third state or issue area? Here several issues could be considered. What international pressures bear upon a foreign policy actor and how do these influence foreign policy choices and their ensuing results? In the case of the EU vis-à-vis the Palestinian government, following the signature of the Mecca agreement between Fateh and Hamas in February 2007, internal forces within the EU were inclined to recognise the Palestinian government and consider the resumption of financial aid to it. However the US and Israel's strong opposition to this and the EU's priority to maintain cooperation with both, and unity within the Quartet, militated against lifting the boycott on the PA. Alternatively, what is the role played by a foreign policy actor within international organisations and how do these organisations affect the foreign policy impact of an international player? A key determinant of normative foreign policy is the extent to which normative goals are promoted, monitored and enforced by international organisations, as well as the degree to which a foreign policy actor successfully makes use of these organisations to promote its goals. For example in pursuing EU policies of conditionality on democratic standards and human rights in Central and Eastern Europe, the norms promoted by the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe or NATO played a key role in determining the extent to which the Union succeeded in achieving normative foreign policy results.

5.   Concluding remarks

There has been a growing body of literature and debate in the last decade describing and analysing European foreign policy in normative terms. Yet in academic literature, in policy research and in official discourse, this representation of the EU has tended to be rather self-referential, being conducted largely by Europeans and for a European audience. Unsurprisingly, it has had limited resonance and support in wider academic and policy circles.

Strongly believing that a normative understanding of foreign policy in general and of European foreign policy in particular is not only long overdue but also highly desirable, this paper offers an analytical framework to broaden the existing debate. It does so by providing a definition of what is 'normative' that is strongly based on international law and institutions, claiming that law, while man-made and far from immune to international power politics, represents the most universal and universalisable 'normative boundary' within which to assess foreign policy.

This paper has also provided three primary variables: goals, means, and impact, whose normative qualities need to be ascertained in order for a foreign policy to be considered overall as being normative. Fulfilling all three conditions may be viewed by some as setting the bar at an unrealistically high level. To this one could nonetheless respond that having or claiming to have a normative foreign policy is no mean feat in itself. Finally, and based on the premise that any international actor is likely to pursue normative, as well as realist, imperial and status quo policies depending on time and place, this paper has set out three 'conditioning factors', which could help understand when and why a particular international actor may or may not pursue a normative foreign policy. It has done so by presenting more questions than answers. Yet hopefully these are questions that may prove useful in conducting subsequent empirical research applied to different international actors and to the nature of their foreign policies.

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