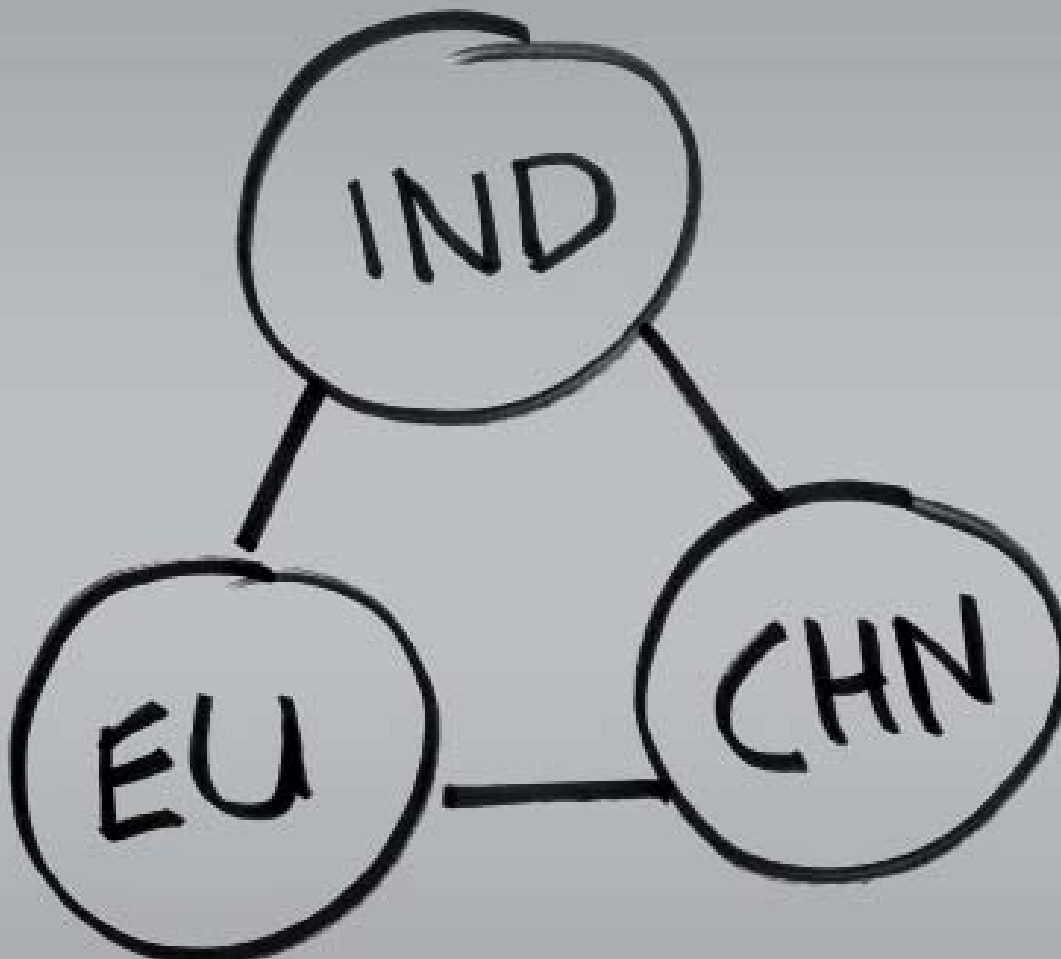


HOW DOES ASIA VIEW THE EU?

Security in an interpolar world

May-Britt U. Stumbaum

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Abstract

Effective multilateralism has always been a goal the EU has pursued by promoting its norms and paradigms in international relations. As the world becomes more interdependent and multipolar- what is often characterized as ‘inter polar’- Asian powers are increasingly gaining significance. The EU has worked with China and India, two emerging key players, with growing intensity. However, has the EU’s approach worked? Have these and other Asian countries adopted EU norms, adapted to them, or possibly even rejected them? What are the reasons behind their responses? What shapes Asian perceptions of the EU? In an attempt to explore these questions, the following NFG Working Paper outlines the research agenda of the NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU”.

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Introduction¹

Concurrent with the global shift of power towards Asia and the (re-)emergence of China and India as global actors with huge populations, rapid economic and military growth, an ever closer engagement with the United States, the European Union has been rediscovering Asia since the early 1990s (Mahbubani 2008; Gaens et al 2009). Simultaneously, the European Union has been on track to develop and foster its own identity as a global actor since the Treaty of Maastricht, consolidated by subsequent treaties and the introduction of new foreign policy instruments such as Strategic Partnerships and the first European peacekeeping mission “EUFOR Concordia” in Macedonia in 2003. At the core of the EU’s foreign policy goals lies the promotion of “effective multilateralism” and the rule of law in international relations (ESS 2003: 1, 9-10) in an ever more interdependent and multipolar world, what Grevi (2009) calls an interpolar world. The Report of the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (ESS Report 2008) states the efforts of the EU are “to build human security, by reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity”. It points to the ‘unique set of instruments’ (ESS Report 2008: 2) the EU can draw upon, which include working closely with the EU’s strategic partners in particular the rising powers in Asia, China and India (Rettman 2010; ESS Report 2008:12). Acknowledging that the EU’s foreign and security policy is work in progress, the Report states that “the EU has made substantial progress over the last five years. We are recognised as an important contributor to a better world.” (ESS Report 2008:2). External assessments of the EU’s strategic partners of its ability as a global power differ, however. Many Indian and Chinese articles, while acknowledging the economic might of the EU, see it as a weak and inefficient actor particularly in the fields the ESS refers to as the EU’s security policy (see section II).

Outside of Western academic circles, a vivid debate on the EU as a foreign policy actor has evolved, spurred on by the EU’s support for EU Study Centres promoting EU studies in countries such as China and India². Beyond these national communities, those debates however, are still hardly known. Debates on the EU as a global power have been focusing on ‘identity’ (the EU as an actor) as well as on ‘ability’ (effectiveness of EU foreign and security policy). After an initial emphasis in Western debates on the ‘identity’ of the EU (‘civilian power’, normative power, see section I b.), there is a growing literature on the ‘ability’ of the EU in influencing foreign policy, its ‘actorness’ in international relations

¹ May-Britt U. Stumbaum is Head of the NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU”, an Associated Project of the KFG “Transformative Power of Europe” based at the Free University of Berlin. Special thanks for support goes to Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse and to the KFG, particularly Diarmuid Torney, as well as to the NFG Research Group, namely Olivia Gippner, Garima Mohan, Jizhou Zhao, Florian Britsch, Dominique Marr, Julia Teebken and Katharina Arseven. Thanks also to Garima Mohan and Dominique Marr for editing the final version of the paper.

² The European Union supports EU Study Centres in India by the India-EU Study Centres Programme (<http://www.iescp.org/>), for a selection of EU Study Centres in China see http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/more_info/eu_information_centres/index_en.html

with the focus remaining on the EU's neighbourhood such as studies on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (among others, see Bretherton and Vogler 2006; Jupille and Caporaso 1998)³. Debates in China and India seem to focus on the ability question and even debates on the 'civilian power' concept assess it in terms of ability (Jain 2005; Bava 2005; Xiong 2004; Chen 2004). This leads to a very different picture on both sides of the strategic partnerships: Western scholars see the EU predominantly positively in its emerging identity as a global actor, while Asian scholars, particularly from China and India are turning increasingly critical in their assessment of the EU's power and hence its ability to achieve results. The concept of 'civilian power' is often equated with weakness, the EU's normative approach even viewed as soft imperialism (See Hettne and Söderbaum 2005; Sjursen 2006).

Why does the perception of Chinese and Indian foreign policy elites of the EU as a global actor, differ from the primarily European discourse? Are these perceptions based on a real lack of effectiveness of the EU in security policy fields, or are there other factors that filter this perception? And do they differ between China, a one-party system, and India, a parliamentary democracy?

The NFG Research Group "Asian Perceptions of the EU" aims to answer these questions. The NFG strives to map the perceptions of Indian and Chinese foreign policy elites regarding the EU as a global actor, to examine actual norm transfer and diffusion processes, and to compare these perceptions to the related debates in Western, primarily European, foreign policy circles. Focusing on two prime examples of the EU's security policy to promote effective multilateralism, stability and the rule of law – peacekeeping operations and the advocacy for export control regimes – the NFG seeks to identify, analyse and assess the factors that impact the focus countries' perception of the EU's foreign policy. These could be factors of socialisation; of a lack of exchange; of historical memories in the post-colonial states; of cultural aspects? Or do messages get 'lost in translation'? The NFG's methodology for its qualitative analysis will encompass documents and literature study, interviews particularly from and in the region, with the researchers spending an extended period at partner universities in the focus countries. The NFG's own 'Networked Think Tank' (www.asianperceptions.eu), consisting of a Visiting Fellows Programme, Associated Fellows, online publications and a web-based knowledge and cooperation portal, provides an interdisciplinary platform for continuous debates and research on these questions.

³ In the literature focusing on the EU as an international actor, the works of Sjosted, Hill, Jupille and Caporaso have been devoted to outlining and to defining such 'actorness' (Sjostedt 1977; Hill 1994; Jupille and Caporaso 1998). According to Hill, for instance, the 'actorness' of the EU touches upon the distinctiveness of the EU from other political entities, the autonomy it enjoys in making its own laws and possessing a variety of actor capabilities. This leads to 'presence', the impact the EU has on the global system (Hill 1994:104). Smith (2003) discusses the EU as a distinctive actor in International Relations, evaluating the success and failures of EU foreign policy and the distinct political identity of 'Europe' from the United States.

The following paper aims to provide an overview of the background and research focus of the NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU”. After summarizing relevant EU policies and debates in European/Western academic circles, perspectives on the EU as a security actor debated by scholars in India and China will be summarised and analysed. Drawing on this background, the research questions and possible theoretical explanations will be introduced, followed by a summary of the proposed operationalization of the research agenda.

I. The EU Perspective

With the official introduction of a ‘Common Foreign and Security Policy’ with the EU Treaty of Maastricht in 1993, academics and practitioners alike have intensified their debate on what kind of foreign policy actor the European Union is, will and should become. In 2003, the EU’s first ever security strategy prompted by the divide over the invasion of Iraq, outlined that the primary goals of securing the interests and security of the EU Member States can be pursued by promoting effective multilateralism and a ruled-based international order (ESS 2003:9). The following section gives an overview of the resulting EU policy fields, the related academic debates and the ‘strategic partner’ concept: aims to give special status to countries like India and China in order to build reliable partnerships to jointly address global challenges on the one hand, and to account for these countries’ growing influence in an increasingly interpolar world on the other.

a) In Practice: EU Policy Fields

At the core of EU foreign and security policy lays the paradigm of “effective multilateralism” and “a rule-based international order” (ESS 2003:9).

“Our own experience in Europe demonstrates that security can be increased through confidence building and arms control regimes. Such instruments can also make an important contribution to security and stability in our neighbourhood and beyond. The quality of international society depends on the quality of the governments that are its foundation. The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order” (ESS 2003:10).

In accordance with the idea that the EU’s security interests are served best in a world with similar systems of governance, the European Union pursues its goals by striving to export normative regimes ranging from trade policy to development aid, non-proliferation and peacekeeping operations through assistance programmes, conditionality, targeted trade measures and cooperation on the ground and within international fora. EU interests are pursued by measures of convincing, assistance, negotiation and socialisation and, only as a last resort, by military means.

This policy approach coincides with the identity debate in academia about the European Union, particularly with the contested concept of ‘civilian power’. Today, this debate has abated and is overshadowed by the perceived decline in EU’s influence on global affairs as exemplified by the Euro crisis. In principle however, the approach of the European Union to head for non-military means first and to succeed by convincing, socialisation, negotiation – by transferring its norms and values – has remained.

b) In Academia: Identity debates on the EU as a global actor

With the introduction of Foreign and Security Policy into the EU realm by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993, the debate about the nature of the European Union as a global actor intensified. Concepts have ranged from ‘superpower in the making’ (Galtung 1973; Buchan 1993), an ‘international presence’ and an ‘international identity’ (Allen and Smith 1990; Whitman 1998), ‘Venus’ (as opposed to the more hard-power approach exemplified by the god Mars; (Kagan 2003)) to ‘normative power Europe’ (Manners 2002)⁴, ‘postmodern state’ (Cooper 2000) and ‘civilian power’. Heatedly debated, the discussion about this last concept – ‘civilian power Europe’ - escalated further with the EU acquiring military capabilities (Duchêne 1972; Bull 1983; Hill 1990; Smith 1998; Maull 1990). Börzel and Risse argue that Hedley Bull misinterpreted Duchêne’s original formula for a ‘civilian power’ as a renunciation of the use of force under almost all circumstances rather than defining it as a power that emphasises political and economic over military means to promote one’s interests (Bull 1982; Duchêne 1972; Börzel and Risse 2007). This led to characterising civilian powers not only as “states which actively promote ‘civilising’ of international relations” (Harnisch and Maull 2001b: 3), but portrayed a civilian power as the opposite of ‘military power’, almost coinciding with the notion of pacifism (Börzel and Risse 2007: 4). Börzel and Risse further argue that the EU has only recently emerged as a civilian world power particularly because it now can command the entire spectrum of policy instruments – even if at different levels of capacity - to effectively promote a ‘civilising’ approach to international relations (Börzel and Risse 2007; Sjørnsen 2006a: 249). The core of a civilian power is hence not to refrain from the use of force at all times, but to focus on promoting cooperative and collective security arrangements, non-violent forms of conflict management and conflict resolution hence strengthening the rule of law, interdependence, division of labour, and an associated partial transfer of sovereignty in an effort to further multilateralism, support democracy and human rights and, in the long run, social equity and sustainable development (Harnisch and Maull 2001:4; Kirste and Maull 1996; Maull 2001: 124-126; Maull 2002; Börzel and Risse 2007: 5).⁵

⁴ Related to the discussion on civilian power, the concept of normative power has been particularly contested, but also triggered off some debates among Chinese EU scholars, for instance (see II.). The concept of “normative power Europe” is based on three core claims: that it’s a novel kind of power in IR, spreads norms emphasising non-military instruments in foreign policy and that as a type of organization, it is a post Westphalian polity (Manners, 2002; 2006; Sjørnsen, 2006). The argument in this literature is that the EU is an ethical power within the international system.

⁵ Criticism on the normative approach has also been voiced in the European debate (for example,

With its focus on the debate in Asian countries that concentrates on the ability of the EU's 'actorness', the NFG Research Group does not aim to address the identity debate, but uses the discussion as an informed description of the modus operandi for EU foreign and security policy. The point of departure for this research is hence the assumption that the European Union pursues in its policies and speeches, an approach to establish effective multilateralism and the rule of law as key principles in international relations, which is a constitutional approach to IR and global governance⁶. To this end, the EU promotes norms, paradigms and modes of governance that the European Union itself is based on ('effective multilateralism', 'rule of law') to 'shape events' and 'contribute to a more effective multilateral order around the world' (ESS Report 2008: 11-12; ESS 2003: 1-5).

c) In Operation: EU Strategic Partnerships

Faced with a perceived decline in influence in global politics and shaped by internal multilateralism, the EU strives to pursue its goals in an 'interpolar world' (Grevi 2009). As new actors emerge, developing countries such as China and India turn into global powers. Knowledge and power have shifted from state actors to a multiplicity of non-state, sub-state, and supra-state entities. The challenges in this new global polity range from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to pandemics and regional conflicts which call for joint action: "There are few if any problems we can deal with on our own. The threats described above [in the ESS] are common threats, shared with all our closest partners. International cooperation is a necessity. We need to pursue our objectives both through multilateral cooperation in international organisations and through partnerships with key actors" (ESS 2003: 13). Besides the 'irreplaceable' traditional strategic partnership with the United States, the European Union has also taken into account changing power-poles and has been aiming to foster relatively new strategic partnerships with emerging 'BRIC-States' and "all those who share our goals and values, and are prepared to act in their support" (ESS 2003: 14)⁷. The NFG Research Group focuses on the two new powers in Asia that are seen as having the greatest potential for playing an influential role in global affairs, China and India⁸. Both countries epitomise the changing global order,

Hettne and Söderbaum 2005). Sjursen argues that "Existing conceptions of the EU as a 'civilian'/'normative'/'civilizing' power lack precision and are normatively biased." "... it is problematic to imply [...] that the EU is a 'force for good' without identifying criteria and assessment standards that make it possible to qualify, substantiate or reject such a claim." (Sjursen 2006:235-6). As an example of the substantial number of critiques on the civilian power concept, see Smith, 2000.

6 Zhao Chen argues that the EU is pursuing a constitutional approach to global governance, the United States follows an approach of international liberalism while China is still in the process of defining its approach towards global governance (NFG Working Paper, forthcoming 2012).

7 On September 16th, 2010, EU High Representative on Foreign and Security Policy Catherine Ashton named Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa and the US as existing partners and listed 6 other countries as potential candidates (EU Observer, 2010).

8 For an overview of the debate about the concept of the EU Strategic Partnership, see Stumbaum, forthcoming

they represent potential partners for the EU's approach of transforming international relations as well as targets for EU policy.

d) EU Policies and Partners' Perception – a Terminology-Connotation Gap?

However, as one EU official put it, the terms of and qualifications for 'strategic partnership' have been thought up a few years ago disregarding "whether, indeed, the others regard us as their strategic partners" (Rettman 2010). How do the EU's strategic partners view the EU as a global actor? How have the policies of the European Union, the efforts to promote its norms, values and regimes, its paradigm of governance, been received by countries such as India and China, which are approached as cooperation partners and policy targets alike? How do these countries perceive the global security situation? In the case of China and the European Union, it seems that both entities use the same terminology, but assign different connotations to terms, depending on the underlying paradigm and the aspired end goal – leading to common declarations, but not to common deeds. The 'high times for EU-China relations', the mid-2000s for instance, showed that although both sides agreed on the preference for multilateralism – on the Chinese side, it was equated with multipolarity, i.e. levelling the playing field with the United States by having more poles of power; on the European side, it was seen as 'civilising international relations' by preferring multilateral agreements over bilateral or unilateral actions. With a view to the United Nations role, it seemed that the Chinese side viewed the UN as a tool for further democratisation of international relations by limiting the overarching power of the United States; the European side seemed to envision a global governance system of democratic states (Stumbaum 2007a, b; also see Hyde-Price 2006; Walton 2007; Clegg 2009; Pan, forthcoming).

In addressing those global challenges, India and China, the two countries in focus of EU's efforts towards the 'new global gravity centre in Asia'⁹, have deviated from their original core principles of foreign policy, such as non-interference and the primacy of sovereignty, by participating in peacekeeping operations. They have also started setting up and implementing arms export controls in the fight against proliferation. Can this be seen as a success of the EU's policy of engagement, of its programmes on assistance in these fields (for example, EU-Outreach¹⁰) and its promotion of international peacekeeping operations? Examining documents and contributions by practitioners and EU scholars in India and China, it appears that the EU is not only facing a terminology-connotation gap when striving for closer cooperation with its strategic partners. It also seems that foreign policy elites in these countries assess the EU's policies and approaches quite differently as compared to the (Eurocentric) debates in European circles of politics and academia

⁹ US President Obama's remarks to the Australian Parliament in Canberra, Australia, November 17, 2011 (Obama, 2011)

¹⁰ EU-Outreach is an EU initiative, lead by the German Export Control Authority BAFA, to introduce partner countries in export control regimes. China is a partner country in this effort.

(Chaban and Holland 2008; Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2006, 2007, 2011).

II. Perceptions in China / India of the EU

Following the intense debate about the EU's external policy, there is a growing research interest in the reverse perspective of those who are addressed by the European Union as policy targets or as potential strategic partner countries (Gaens et al 2009; Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2006, 2007; Men 2006). How do these emerging actors, particularly the new powers in Asia, perceive the European Union as a global actor?

On the Indian side, the relationship has rhetorically warmed up since the signing of the strategic partnership in 2005. The debate has shifted from an emphasis on 'shared values and beliefs'¹¹ - including common values such as democracy and the promotion of human rights, and differences- such as India's foreign policy preference of non-interference and the primacy of state sovereignty, to a more pragmatic debate on the utility of closer cooperation with the EU (Bava 2008a, b; Jain 2009a). On the Chinese side, the relationship has hit some rocky roads since the publishing of the acclaimed 2003 Chinese foreign policy paper on the European Union that emphasised complementary economies and common interests such as advocacy of a democratisation of international relations, counterterrorism, eradication of poverty, protection of the environment and sustainable development. Arguments over trade disputes and the trade deficit that the EU runs with China, human rights, climate change, China's non-market economy status and the EU's arms embargo on China have aggravated friction while the EU's call for Chinese assistance in the Euro crisis also showed the engagement of both sides and a perceptible change within the Sino-European power balance.

Most of the debates have been single-issue focused and bilateral, such as between EU and China over energy issues, and EU and India on climate change. Only in recent years, systematic research has been undertaken on how foreign-policy relevant elites in these countries – academics in universities and think tanks, influential journalists as well as practitioners – see the European Union as a foreign policy actor (Wang 2011; Holland and Chaban 2008; Jain 2004). What happens when we try to match the European debate about the EU as a global actor with the perception of those being targeted? If the EU is 'sending' its foreign policy messages, how are they 'received' on the other end, by the foreign policy elites in target countries and strategic partners, China and India? How is the intense debate within Europe and partly the United States, on the EU's foreign policy as normative, the EU as a civilian power, being discussed in those countries? The following part of this paper aims to provide an overview of these discussions and perceptions in India and China of the EU as a global power, in particular on the EU as a norm purveyor,

¹¹ India and the EU, as the largest democracies in the world, share common values and beliefs that make them natural partners [...] We share a common commitment to democracy, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law, to an independent judiciary and media." The India-EU Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan, 2005; also see Wagner, 2008.

a civilian power that aims to civilise international relations by transferring and diffusing norms.

a. General Views of the EU

China and India, both with populations of more than one billion people each, call the European Union their major trading partner and an interesting model for regional integration. Within the past five years (2006-2010), trade between India and the EU rose by 44 percent (the EU's 8th biggest trading partner in 2010), and by 52% between the EU and China (the EU is the second biggest, just after the United States; for both, the EU is the biggest external trading partner; COM 2011a,b). India's and China's attitudes towards the EU also matter in security policy areas: both countries are emerging regional and (de-facto) nuclear powers; China has been playing an increasingly decisive role as a veto-power at the United Nations Security Council, for example by preventing a UNSC resolution against Syria in January of 2012.

i. India

The general view of the European Union is dominated by the perception of the EU as a 'trading superpower', a trade bloc with a unified and cohesive economic policy. The dichotomous and ambivalent 'repertoire of images' (Verma 2000) that has been assembled in varying contexts of trade, cultural exchange, colonialism and the Cold War therefore presents a multifaceted view of the EU, from the "extreme of exaggerated praise and admiration, to the other extreme of contempt and rejection" (Verma 2000: 31). The "strange creature that defies easy and simple classification", however, is not seen as a "major power or serious geopolitical player" (Bava 2005: 180). On the contrary, it is perceived as politically weak, leading in some 'softer' areas of global level such as trade and climate negotiations. Present writings focus on the shared common values, but the different logics that supposedly underpin Indian foreign policy (Wülbers 2008; Jain 2005; Narlikar 2006; Novotny 2011). There is, however, a perception of the EU as a major actor in agenda and norm setting in international relations such as regulating norms of international behaviour, social engineering and democratisation (Jain and Panday 2010; elite interviews in Foramonti 2007)

ii. China

Chinese media and elites link the EU's image first and foremost with the Euro, followed by Enlargement, Union/Integration and fourthly with trade (Chaban 2011: 23)¹². Over the course of the past decade, China's general view of the European Union has changed significantly: the perception of the EU – a 'new, unique, emerging, important and post

¹² Interestingly, in the comprehensive overview that Chaban provides, the notion of military does not even appear in the data relating to external views of the EU.

modern entity' (Zhang 2002: 2) and a model for economic development, regional co-operation and integration (Zhu 2006: 9) – as a central pole of the desired vision of the emerging multipolar world, has given way to a more critical, sober view of the EU and its disunity in foreign policy issues, its perceived decline in centrality in world affairs and its financial Euro troubles. Despite acknowledging the high economic importance of the EU market some scholars even see the EU's significance for China trailing behind the United States, Russia, and Japan. (Feng 2007; for an overview, see Hackenesch 2008; Godement and Fox 2009; Fewsmith 2001; Li-Hua Zheng 2003; Li 2007; Lisbonne-de-Vergeron 2007; Men 2006; Shambaugh 2007; Wacker 2007). With rising nationalism coinciding with China's increasing power, some scholars assess the EU as "weak, politically divided and militarily non-influential. Economically, it's a giant, but we no longer fear it because we know that the EU needs China more than China needs the EU" (Godement and Fox 2009: 3).

b. Views on the EU's Approach to Foreign and Security Policy

In its ambition to promote its paradigm of effective multilateralism, the European Union aims to purvey its norms to the near neighbourhood (enlargement policy, neighbourhood policy) and beyond (agreements with strategic partners). Going from the identity level to the ability level of the EU, the question arises if Indian and Chinese foreign policy elites perceive the European Union as an able global actor. A first pilot study into Indian and Chinese debates among EU scholars paints an image of the EU that deviates from Western debates.

i. India

Most Indian scholars view concepts such as the 'civilian power' critically, however many acknowledge and stress normative elements in the EU's foreign and security policy in general, the EU's policy in development aid, institution building, democracy and human rights promotion in particular. The EU's insistence on issues ranging from human rights abuses in Kashmir to joining multilateral agreements¹³ and particularly the EU's preference for applying diplomatic and commercial instruments instead of military power have shaped the overall image of the European Union in India. Policy fields such as environmental protection, food security and other comparably 'soft' issues are seen as the areas where the EU wields a major influence and civil society organisations often emphasise the positive role of the EU in propagating social and development related policies (Foramonti 2007; Chaban 2011). Features of European Integration that appeal most to an Indian audience encompass the economic significance applied to the EU single market, the efforts to manage dissimilar populations across the EU and to cope with the

¹³ India has not yet signed the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and is under considerable pressure from the EU to abide by the NPT and give unconditional support. For a detailed discussion, see Wülbbers, 2010

complexity of large bureaucracies (Novotny 2011; Foramonti 2007; Kurian 2001). This praise for the EU as an inspirational model falls in line with Indian debates of an idealist, ‘moralpolitik’ foreign policy and Nehru’s vision of India’s central role in a resurgent Asia, leading integration efforts in the region. With the perceived emphasis on pluralism and cooperation, the European vision for the international order is seen in line with the correlated Indian ideas (Jain 2005; Novotny 2011; Wülbers 2008; Foramonti 2007; Jayapalan 2001).

Nevertheless, the EU’s preference for norms is often perceived as in contrast with the Indian position, when it comes to security policy related issues because contrary to the EU’s normative power logic, India seems to be informed by its neighbourhood, shaped by a realist world view, with regional hegemony, power dynamics and a “degree of chauvinism for its realpolitik” (Narlikar 2006:59; Wülbers 2008). Rapprochement with the United States is propagated as the key to achieving great power status in the “triangular”, “multi-cornered” power relations in South Asia where military and nuclear issues as well as geopolitics still play a major role. Hence, although the collective military power of all EU Member States in terms of budgets and troops is taken into account, the EU itself is not seen as a serious global, independent geopolitical player. Rather it is portrayed as a follower of US positions on global issues with a military and security relevance and largely non-important in international power politics, particularly as most diplomatic energies seem to be focused on EU internal issues such as enlargement and preventing old fault lines from reappearing (Sikri 2009; Jain and Pandey 2010; Wülbers 2008). Even more, the EU’s emphasis on norms promotion in international relations and the ‘civilian power’ debate are perceived as a cover for the EU’s lack of effective military capabilities: “Europe’s self-perception of its postmodern orientation is in essence a convenient escape from the confronting emerging challenges” (Mohan 2004:76; Kavalski 2008: 75).

ii. China

A recent study on “Chinese views of the European Union”, undertaken by a Chinese-European consortium lead by the University of Nottingham shows that a majority in China views the EU’s global role positively, with 70% positively acknowledging the EU’s role in working for world peace, 63% its role in fighting international terrorism and still 55% appreciating the EU spreading ideas like democracy (Wang 2011). However, among Chinese EU scholars definitions of the European Union as a power vary, with an inclination to point out the EU’s shortcomings: The EU is seen as a soft power, rather a “regional organisation than a great power” (Ye 2007:63), yet still acting as an important pole in the international system in terms of economic and institutional power (Cui 2007); some scholars conceptualise the EU even as EUtopia (Zhang 2008) or a post-national identity (Li 2009). Albeit much later than in the European context and with lesser contributions, the concept of the European Union being a civilian power was debated among Chinese

EU scholars in the mid-2000s.¹⁴ The concept of ‘civilian power’ was interpreted primarily as the nature of the actor and the final goal of policies: as long as the nature of the actor’s ultimate goals is civilian (e.g. protecting civilian values, defending Human Rights), the nature of the actor itself will not be transformed from a civilian power to a military power despite ongoing militarisation. The increasing militarisation of EU policy is hereby seen as a way to fix previous weaknesses and not as an attempt to abandon the actor’s civilian philosophy (Zhu 2006; Chen 2004; Xiong 2004; Chen and Gaeerts 2003; Feng 2007). Furthermore, as Chen and Xiong both argue, it depends on how military power is used, for instance as a last resort and/or with an international mandate. In relation to the EU’s self-identity and world view, the ‘civilian power’ concept is almost seen as historically inevitable due to its unique sense of values and history in the EU (and German) public discourse, driven by the interplay of military weakness and the desire to break with the past or military weakness and the implications of collective decision-making (Xiong 2004; Zhu 2006). It is interesting to note that there has been, albeit limited, a debate on Ian Manner’s concept of Europe as a ‘normative power’. Starting from a discussion of a general concept of ‘normative power’, that is, to run world politics and economy according to norms and notions, the main debate focused on the argument that ‘normative power Europe’ reflected the effort to solve the EU’s identity crisis internally and externally by developing a *sui generis* concept for the EU’s pursuit of its foreign policy interest (Cui 2007: 54 – 61; Song 2008a: 29-34, 2008b: 68-73). In general, however, the concept was deemed as too idealistic, utopian even, in real world politics (Ji 2010; Zhang 2008). Only recently, the concept of the EU as a normative power was analysed (and dismissed) in the EU’s policy towards China (Hong 2010).

Linked to the principle discussion of the concept of ‘civilian power’ Europe, Chinese scholars also underline the weaknesses they see in the applicability of the concept to real politics: Xiong points out that the civilian power concept would be more of an ideal to strive for than an achievable reality, with limits as to how far the concept can be taken. Likewise Chen and Zhu underline that civilian powers can only become strong if other powers provide for their security with actual military means (e.g. as the US has been providing a nuclear umbrella for Europe through NATO). Chen even adds that the nature of an actor – civilian or military – depends largely on the size of the military (Zhu 2006; Chen 2004; Xiong 2004). Throughout the Chinese assessments of the civilian power Europe concept, “military weakness” is identified as one of the driving forces for the development of the concept; the ability of the EU as a global actor in security policy is highly doubtful.

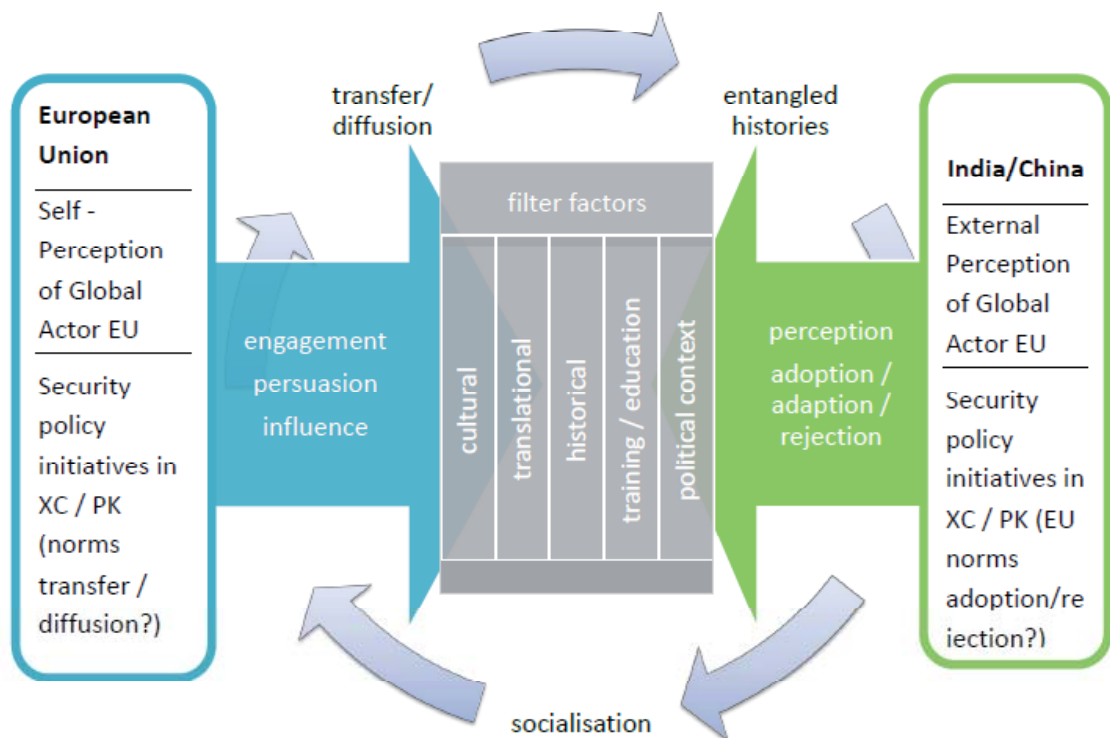
III. The Puzzle

Starting from this short overview of current Indian and Chinese scholars’ discussion on

¹⁴ However, analyses of the concept remained confined to the EU context; it was not transferred e.g. to discuss Japan’s foreign policy posture as Maull did in 2004 (Maull, 2004).

the EU as a global actor, the European Union does not seem to be perceived as a global actor in the same way as discussed in European and Western contexts. The NFG aims to assess to what extent our case studies confirm this more general perception, and subsequently seek to explain what factors have influenced these perceptions. If the EU has been pursuing its policy goals by promoting the norms, paradigms and modes of governance that the EU is based on, and is using instruments that further these aims, and has come quite a way as the Report on the Implementation of the ESS stated in 2008, then why does the perception of the foreign policy elites in the EU's strategic partner countries, differ from this EU perception? Why does the perception, that Chinese and Indian foreign policy elites seem to have of the EU as a global actor, seem to differ from the primarily European discourse? Are these perceptions based on a real lack of effectiveness of the EU in security policy fields, or are there other factors that filter the perception? And do they differ between the China, a One-party system, and India, a parliamentary democracy?

Graph 1: The NFG Research Agenda



Stumbaum, 2012

In its research project “Asian Perceptions of the EU”, the NFG Research Group aims to answer these questions. The research project will therefore start with mapping external approaches following three leading questions a.) Do external perceptions differ from the actual extent of norms transfer and diffusion? b.) Do these external perceptions differ between China and India? Do external perceptions differ from EU-internal discourses?

After mapping the different accounts, the NFG strives to analyse and assess the different factors that have influenced the external perceptions.

IV. Possible Theoretical Approaches

Recent research on diffusion and transfer, drawing on disciplines ranging from political science to history, sociology, linguistics and others, but also the flourishing research on external perceptions of the European Union offer an inspiring choice of approaches to analyse the factors that have influenced Asian, particularly Chinese and Indian elites' perception of the EU as a security actor. Research on the relationship between the European Union and Asian countries used to be rare and focused on the EU's side of the relationship (e.g. Smith M. 1998, 2007; Youngs 2001; Wiessala 2006; Stumbaum 2009). In the second half of the 2000s, however, research on external perceptions of the EU as a global actor, in particular from Asian perspectives, has been growing (Carta 2008; 2010; Chaban and Holland 2010; Chaban, Elgstrom and Holland 2006; Chan 2010; Elgstrom 2007a,b; Fioramonti 2007; Geeraerts 2007; Jain and Pandey 2010; Kilian 2010; Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2006a,b; Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010; Men 2006; Morini, Peruzzi and Poletti 2010; Olivier and Fioramonti 2010; Peruzzi et al 2007). Also in the field of transfer and diffusion, research on EU-Asian topics has been flourishing (e.g. Jetschke 2011, 2010, 2009; Jetschke and Lenz 2011; Telo 2007). Moreover, scholarly work from Asian researchers is increasingly available and debated in academic discussions (e.g. Jain 2005, 2006, 2007a,b,c, 2009a,b; Men 2006; Wei 2004; Feng 2007; Bava 2006a,b, 2008 a,b; Acharya and Buzan, 2007). Particularly the interdisciplinary approach in current diffusion and transfer studies, as practiced by the KFG Research College "The Transformative Power of Europe" offers interesting approaches to attempt solve the puzzle above.

The mapping of perceptions through literature and document study as well as interviews will carve out if perceptions diverge or converge in the chosen case studies. The following section outlines three different approaches that could provide possible explanations for convergence respectively divergence of perceptions.

a) A Matter of Socialisation?

According to Youngs, the EU's policies to spread its paradigm and to promote democratisation are implemented by institutionalised processes of negotiation and persuasion, for instance via political dialogues and cooperation (2001). Continuous social interaction between policymakers of different states (in the constructivist paradigm) can endogenously influence norms and identities of the participating actors (Wendt 1994: 384). Testing his approach on Chinese's behaviour in international organisation, Johnston identified three processes of socialisation within the causal mechanisms of social learning: mimicking, persuasion and social influence (Johnston, 2008). Further research on the external diffusion of European norms has focused on the social mechanism of socialisation (e.g.

March and Olsen 1989, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Checkel 2005; Johnston 2007), persuasion (e.g. Finnemore 1996; Checkel 2001; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Haas 1992) and emulation (among others, Rose 1991; Tews 2002; Jakobi and Martens 2007; Börzel 2007). If we look at China and India's policy changes in the past few years, we can observe an ever more active China in multilateralism, ranging from active participation in international organisations, climate change negotiations, non-proliferation regimes to providing troops for peacekeeping missions despite its principle of non-interference. Comparable observations can also be made for India (Yadav and Dhanda 2009; Shirk 2007; Gill 2007; Johnston 2008; Sutter 2010; Jha 2010). Nevertheless, the European Union's approach to international affairs, of effective multilateralism and binding regimes, is seen as weak. Using this strand of research might therefore help to solve the puzzle by explaining whether diffusion has taken place and which basic mechanisms have been at play - policy emulation, harmonization, lesson drawing, localisation and others (Archarya 2004; Rose 1991, 1993; Bennett 1991; Wolman 1992; Stone 1994; Dobbin et al. 2007; Johnston 2007, 2008). As large-n studies will not be possible due to the inadequate data, research of the second wave of diffusion might give the NFG some leads with its empirical focus.

b) A Matter of Traditions and the State of Development of IR Scholarship in Focus Countries?

Another interesting claim would be that socialisation happened before the EU became active that has shaped the recipients' receptiveness to European norms, that is, which "school of thinking" has been dominant in the education of the policy elites? Have they been educated in their own country or abroad? Has the way Asian policy elites think – primarily those in India and China – been influenced by e.g. a training in 'realist schools'? Do they just perceive the international system through a very different lens from the start on? As Narlikar puts it for India, while the EU asserts global relevance of its normative power, India's foreign policy is informed by a degree of chauvinism for its *realpolitik* (2006: 59). In the words of Bava "India aims to enhance its soft power with hard power, thereby borrowing certain aspects of the US approach. In contrast, the EU as a post-modern actor, seeks to construct a new collective identity based on soft power" (2008: 113). On the other hand, Feng points out that a lot of Chinese EU scholars stem from the increasing number of EU-financed EU Centres (Feng 2007); so do their articles illustrate only a short-lived mimicking or persuasion? In 2007, Archarya and Buzan opened the debate on 'is there an Non-Western IR theory in Asia?', shedding light on the academic traditions in the focus countries of (EU) foreign policy, that is, the "sound box" for European values and norms. As for China, Qin argues that there has so far not been an independent Chinese IR theory due to the distinctiveness of the traditional Chinese worldview and its ideational and practical development, the dominance of Western IR discourses in the academic community and the absence of a consistent theoretical core in Chinese IR research so far (Qin 2007). Hence, which influences have shaped different academic traditions in the policy communities in the sending and the receiving countries? For example, does the rather descriptive focus of many Chinese and Indian academic texts as the "local

norm” in academic writing also signal that there are different connotations to concepts that are not apparent due to the differences in writing styles? Do policy-makers in these countries use the same terms as their Western, in our case European counterparts, but assign different meanings to them? An indicator for this might be debates like the ‘Asian Values Debate’ in the 1990s (Mauzy 1997; Engle 2001) and more recently, work on “conceptual gaps” between European policy elites and their counterparts in Asian countries such as China and India (Pan, forthcoming; Stumbaum 2007; see section I of this paper). Approaches to further understanding how these filters work to influence and shape perceptions are offered by contemporary research in history and translational studies that also belong to the interdisciplinary field of diffusion and research and will be outlined in the next section. Approaches that focus more on the influence of historical, cultural and translational factors are being pursued in the disciplines of history, linguistics and others, and might provide informative new perspectives to address the puzzle.

c) A matter of Historical, Translational and Cultural Factors?

With the different turns in humanities and a growing emphasis on culture and space, processes of transfer and diffusion have also been actively debated in historical, linguistic, post-colonial studies and other disciplines. The focus of contemporary historical research on historical, spatial and cultural contexts offers interesting avenues for the research interest of the NFG: Do the historical experiences of colonialism inhibit the acceptance of norms from the EU? And is there a difference between India, which has been actively debating the colonial past, and China, where this issue has been debated quite differently? Ideas are not only diffused through time and space (or are actively being sent by EU policies), but they also meet specific historical, cultural and social contexts that adapt and transform those ideas (Westney 1987; Djelic 2007; Paulmann 2004; Grazia 2005; Werner and Zimmermann 2002; Frevert 2005; Frevert and Haupt 2005; Gienow-Hecht and Schumacher 2004; Hogan and Peterson 2004). Cultural transfer hence takes place in a “third space” between the territorial boundaries of nation states and impacts the recipient’s as well as the sender’s culture (Bhabha 2004; Cook 2000; Erfurt 2005; Espange 2000). Werner and Zimmermann’s concept of a “histoire croisée” hence integrates the entanglement of the position of the researcher, the perspective and the object of research as part of the analytical framework. Following the concept of a “double reflexivity”, this framework and its criteria have to be constantly adjusted according to continuous (self-)reflection and research findings, taking into account for the research not only the object, but also the process of knowledge generation itself (Werner and Zimmermann 2002, 2006). Espange’s claim to focus more on intercultural processes of transfer (transfers culturels; Espange 1994) has been extended by Osterhammel’s demand to also target political, social and economic transfer processes. He outlined potential of research on transfer for the analysis of non-European, distant societies such as China (Osterhammel 2003). Responding to this is the post-colonial studies’ concept of “entangled history” focusing on reciprocity of transfer processes and entanglements between distant regions

and countries due to direct and indirect transfers, such as between colonial powers and colonies, that demand a change of perspectives away from Europe (Conrad and Randeria 2002). Also in cultural studies, the mutual impact on sender/recipient of the translocation, the transplanting of concepts, paradigms and ideas from one location to another, has been increasingly the focus of analysis (Evans and Chilton 2009). Hence the contextualisation of ideas, values and norms, their individual “translation” at a given point in and through time and space has an impact on the processes of adaptation, rejection and interpretation (Randeria 1999; Randeria and Conrad 2002; Werner and Zimmermann 2002). In linguistics, the translation of text and language has evolved into a translation of culture and concepts (See, Bahmann-Medick 1997, 2004, 2006, 2007; Burke and Hsia 2007; Cutter 2005; Hermans 2003).

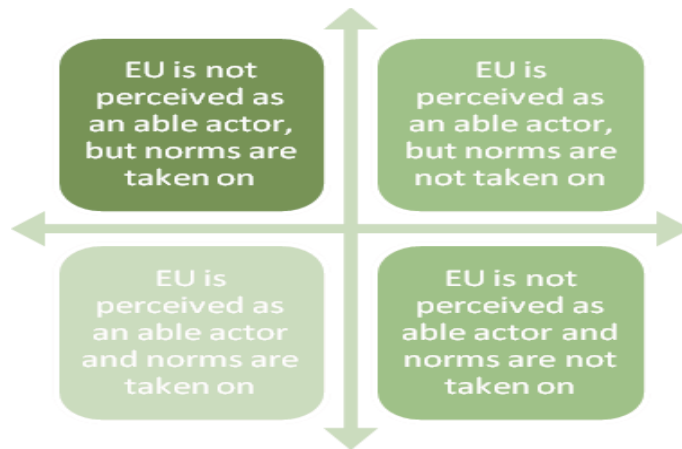
For the puzzle of the NFG Research Group, the factors that have influenced the perception of foreign policy elites in the ‘recipient’ countries, these approaches offer an interesting set of new analytical tools.

V. Operationalization

The NFG strives to map the perceptions of Indian and Chinese foreign policy elites of the EU as a global actor, to examine actual norm transfer and diffusion processes and to compare these perceptions to the results as well as to the related debates in Western, primarily European foreign policy circles. Focusing on two prime examples of the EU’s security policy approach to promote effective multilateralism, stability and the rule of law – peacekeeping operations and the advocacy for export control regimes – the NFG seeks to identify, analyse and assess the factors that impact the focus countries’ perception of the EU’s foreign policy.

a. Two Levels of Analysis – Four Possible Outcomes

In order to analyse which factors have influenced the perceptions of Indian and Chinese foreign policy elites, the first step will be to explore to what extent this perception matches actual adoption of EU norms. The EU and its member states have actively cooperated with China and India in the fields of export controls and peacekeeping. At the same time, a change in Indian and Chinese policy can be observed, moving from the principles of non-interference and the primacy of state sovereignty to increasing participation in peacekeeping operations and the establishing of export control regimes. However, in internal debates the EU is not seen as a capable actor. There are four different outcomes for the first step that links the perception (How is the EU perceived?) with the transfer level (What kind of norms / paradigms / regimes have actually been transferred?):

Graph 2: Perception / De-facto level:

Stumbaum, 2012

The outcome of this first question will tell us something about the gap between the EU's perception of its ability and that of partner countries' and hence influence the analysis to what extent the factors mentioned above (among others socialisation, history, culture, politics) have influenced the perception of foreign policy elites in India and China.

b. Focus Countries: India and China

Sometimes even been dubbed "Chindia", both Asian countries are seen as emerging powers economically and militarily, with a rapidly growing influence on world politics (Rogers 2009; Mohan 2008; Engardio 2007; Sheth 2008; Holslag 2009). Similar in population size (more than one billion people each (India: 1, 19 billion, China: 1.34 billion, July 2011), they both share past colonial ties with Europe: While India was de-colonised from British rule in 1947, China marked the end of colonial ties the so-called "hundred years of humiliation", and later when the British crown colony Hong Kong and the formerly Portuguese-governed Macao were returned to China in 1997 and 1999 respectively. Both countries have featured continuing rapid economic growth, with China having become the second largest world economy. As nuclear powers, the two great powers in Asia share a common border and have fought against each other in the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Both countries are engaged in extending their spheres of influence in Asia with the access to energy and natural resources being in the centre of attention (Rogers 2009; Mohan 2008). Both are becoming ever more active in international peacekeeping operations such as their respective participation in the international efforts to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden, with India being the third biggest troop supplier to International Peacekeeping operations in general, and China – a member of the Five Permanent (Veto) Powers of the UN Security Council - the 15th (November 2011). They are located in a region that is shaped by traditional and non-traditional security risks, a low level of regional integration, the primacy of state sovereignty and non-interference as well as differing political systems throughout the states of the region. Several potential conflicts are lingering: Tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, potentially unstable states (e.g.

North Korea, Afghanistan, Myanmar). Both countries have been named as “strategic partners” for the European Union. In 2007, the United States underlined the importance it placed on its relationship with India by signing the US-India nuclear deal, the relationship between the United States and China was labelled as a potential “G2” in 2009 by former policy advisor Brzezinski. However, both countries are dissimilar in a core aspect: their political systems. India’s democratic system has seen peaceful change in power during the last elections. The People’s Republic of China is a one-party system under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It will have a decisive impact on the world order which of the two countries will finally gather the greatest influence in Asia, the region that is becoming central to international affairs due to its natural resources and growing economic and military might. Given that India as the world’s largest democracy seems to share the basic values of the European Union, it will be interesting to see if this assumingly greater normative fit leads indeed to a better resonance of European ideas with Indian elites, or if other factors influencing the perception of the EU as a civilian power supersede this difference.

c. Case Studies: Peacekeeping and Export Controls

The case studies have been selected as they present epitomes of the EU’s modus operandi which prefers arguing and persuasion leading to multilateral agreements to the use of force.

In their external relations with third countries, the EU and its member states do not merely promote democracy, effective multilateralism and human rights as normative standards¹⁵. These ideas also constitute causal beliefs within the EU since they are considered as the best way to ensure (regional) security, stability and prosperity at the EU’s borders and beyond (see, Magen 2006). The conviction that an export of its own norm system leads to best global solutions is well illustrated in the area of environmental protection: The Kyoto Protocol is a telling example of how the EU sought to persuade other states that legally binding emission standards are a more effective instrument to reduce greenhouse gas emissions than economic and voluntary measures (Schreurs 2004; Scheipers and Sicurelli 2007). As discussed before, the export of ideas derived from the very foundations of the EU has served to construct a distinct foreign policy identity (Manners 2002; Manners and Whitman 2003; Diez 2005) including a modus operandi in which the EU and Member States strive to preferably persuade third states’ actors to adopt its model through processes of arguing and persuasion in institutionalized patterns of political

¹⁵ It remains arguable to what extent the EU diffuses distinctively European ideas. Human rights, democracy, open market or multilateralism can be seen as part of the global diffusion of a wider international order promoted by “Western” countries and international organizations (Gleditsch, K. S. and M. D. Ward (2006). „Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization.“ *International Organization* 60(4): 911-933. Epstein, R. (2008). In *Pursuit of Liberalism: The Power and Limits of International Institutions in Postcommunist Europe*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press. The KFG Research College “The Transformative Power of Europe” has been building up research on this topic at www.transformeurope.eu.

dialogue and cooperation than to use force (cf. Youngs 2001).

The promotion and spreading of the EU's paradigm of how to cope with global challenges by promoting multilateral efforts can be analysed by looking at two areas typical for the EU's approach of norm promotion: a) the spreading of the EU's norm (and paradigm) of how to address the danger of proliferating weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by promoting multilateral agreements and mechanisms on export controls; b) the spreading of norms by cooperating (and diffusing 'know-how') in multilateral peacekeeping operations, the 'ultimate means' to effectively promote the EU's goals.

i) Case Study 1: Export Controls

"Proliferation by both states and terrorists was identified in the ESS as 'potentially the greatest threat to EU security'. That risk has increased [...], bringing the multilateral framework under pressure" (ESS Report 2008: 3). The EU has addressed the challenge by operating through the UN and multilateral agreements, acting as a key donor and "by working with third countries and regional organisations to enhance their capabilities to prevent proliferation" (ESS Report 2008: 3). A particular challenge is posed by dual-use high technology as used in aerospace and information technology, because they can be used both militarily (providing the key to military superiority) and in a civilian way (crucial to economic growth and development). With European countries having their cutting edge in developing and exporting high technology (for example, the EU is the biggest exporter of high technology to China), interests are high to promote non-proliferation efforts while preventing obstacles to export. Success of EU ambitions in this field rests on the cooperation and conviction of the new global powers. Both India and China started to introduce export control schemes in the mid-2000s and have been the target of EU as well as of US (training) initiatives in this field.

ii) Case Study II: Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping operations are the centrepiece of the EU's normatively justified military policy. They are troop-intensive and require international cooperation. China has increasingly been active in UN peacekeeping operations and is today the sixteenth largest troop supplier to UN peacekeeping missions with 2,150 troops. India comes third and has been contributing peacekeepers to UN missions since the Korea mission in 1953; India today contributes more than 8,600 troops to international missions¹⁶. For China, the European Union has been striving to get its strategic partner ever more involved in international activities. Cooperation provides a chance for burden sharing, but also an opportunity to diffuse norms of 'know how' including rules of engagement and code of conducts. Taking peacekeeping operations as a case study can help analyse how the

¹⁶ United Nations, Ranking of Military and Police Contributions, 31 October 2011, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2011/oct11_2.pdf.

EU's strategic partners perceive this instrument of the EU's foreign policy approach and hopefully also give indication if collaboration (socialisation) also led to an adoption of EU norms .

In sum, both fields require international collaboration and promote 'effective multilateralism'. With ongoing engagements in Afghanistan, the Indian Ocean and other places and the high volume of dual-use technology trade (which affects export control regimes) with Asian countries, they prove test cases for the European Union's foreign policy approach and its perception by Asian policy elites, particularly in India and China. Hence, the NFG Research Group "Asian Perceptions of the EU" aims to analyse the factors influencing the perception of Indian and Chinese foreign policy-elites of the EU as a security actor by focusing – pars pro toto – on these two exemplifying case studies in the field of EU foreign and security policy and its interaction with the EU's Strategic Partners China and India – the promotion of non-proliferation efforts by propagating EU export control systems and the transfer of know-how in common peacekeeping operations.

d. The Networked Think Tank - Information Gathering and Knowledge Sharing

The NFG Research Group will target its research project by conducting individual and collaborative, qualitative studies based on literature reviews and semi-structured interviews with foreign policy relevant elites. For a better understanding and access to interviewees (snowballing), the NFG Researchers will be based for long term field studies in their respective focus country, affiliated with one of the partner universities of the Free University of Berlin. The NFG Research Group is supported in its work by an international NFG Academic Council consisting of five established professors from Germany, India, China and the United States, an NFG Visiting Fellow programme for eminent scholars from the region, NFG Associated Fellows in the partner countries that also provide different disciplinary insights (e.g. one historian / sinologist in China). Collaboration onsite and offsite is supported by a web-based knowledge portal, the "Networked Think Tank" (NTT) which mirrors the NFG's work virtually, enables an insight into debates on the EU in India and China as well as online collaboration between the different NFG members and fellows. With the awareness that each scholar is shaped by his/her unique environment and disciplinary background, this constant exchange and debate with representatives of other disciplines and countries shall help to be more aware of filters and pre-judgements of each researcher when approaching the topic.

Identifying interview partners, the NFG follows the chosen definition for elites as also used by the consortium lead by the University of Canterbury, NZ ("EU in the Eyes of Asia") and the consortium around the University of Nottingham ("Chinese elite perceptions of the EU").

Conclusion

This paper aimed to sketch out the research outline for the NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU”: What are the factors that have been influencing Asian, in this case Indian and Chinese, foreign policy elites’ perception of the European Union as a global actor? The idea that the European Union is striving to ‘civilize’ international relations by promoting cooperative and collective security arrangements and non-violent forms of conflict prevention, management and resolution, has been widely discussed in European/Western academia and is reflected in official policy speeches. A major part of the debate has been focusing on the ‘foreign policy power’ EU in terms of its identity and is only slowly debating ‘power’ in terms of ability. Among EU scholars and practitioners in the EU’s strategic partner countries China and India, however, the ‘global power Europe’ is rather assessed according to its (perceived) ability and concepts like ‘civilian power’ are seen as a sign of weakness. In a two-pronged-approach and focusing on selected case studies in the fields of non-proliferation and export control policies as well as participation in peacekeeping operations, the researchers aim to examine if diffusion and transfer of EU norms (and vice versa) has actually taken place (as that would de-facto underline the EU’s ability) and if the perception in these two countries differs from the actual transfer, from each other and from the European debate. Drawing on this overview, the NFG aims to identify, analyse and assess the factors that have influenced Indian and Chinese perceptions. Within a constructivist framework, the NFG Research Group will use qualitative methods and draw on current research in the field of transfer and diffusion and will also look at complementary or other approaches stemming from history, post-colonial studies, linguistics and others. Being aware of the limitations in terms of individual, national and disciplinary shaping and human resources, the core of the NFG Research Group “Asian Perceptions of the EU” will be constant exchange and debate, pursued in regular workshops, extensive field trips, with Associated and Visiting Fellows from the region and other disciplines on site and on the web via the NFG’s “Networked Think Tank” (<https://www.asianperceptions.eu>).

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