Understanding the EU’s Perspective on Human Rights
Infringements by China in Tibet

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1.1 Introduction part I: On the European Union, human rights and Foreign Affairs

“The European Union is founded on a shared determination to promote peace and stability and to build a world founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These principles underpin all aspects of the internal and external policies of the European Union” (Council, 2012).

On paper, the values that the European Union seeks to promote globally are unequivocal and clear. Per contra, reality proves to be rather refractory. A disparity between proclaimed values and actions of the European Union accounts for many questions in the debate of political scientists.\(^1\)

While its ambitions are high – “to promote and protect human rights, democracy and rule of law worldwide” (EEAS, 2016a) – the EU has only a limited range of instruments at its disposal to influence policies, such as political dialogues, the ‘more for more’ principle where the EU uses economic incentives to make political change more appealing (ENPI, 2012) and sanctions.

Whereas the EU has been widely criticized for not being efficient enough in imposing its foreign policy (Thomas, 2012) not well-organized enough to act fast (Niemann and Bretherton, 2013), not powerful enough (Ashton, 2009; Cameron, 2009) and not consentient enough (Smith, 2006; Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007), there has been relatively little criticism in the academic world on the Union’s narrative of its moral values (Youngs, 2004; Medrano, 2012).

Democracy, security and human rights have “been described as constitutive of the values that define the EU’s most fundamental essence, with external human rights policies, reflecting the EU’s historically derived ‘normative difference’ (Youngs, 2004: 216). The Union’s foreign policy seems to reflect these values in its neighbourhood, as they are the backbone of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – based on strengthening sixteen countries with “prosperity, stability and security of all (...) based on “the values of democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights”(EEAS, 2016b).

In the case of flagrant human rights infringements in parts of the world that the ENP does not cover, it is not surprising that the Union does not have a completely

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\(^1\) A longstanding debate exists in the academic world on policy coherence and its effects on effectiveness. The most common points of view are being discussed in Thomas (2012).
coherent one-size-fits-all approach on how to respond in these situations. With the increase of Member States, also the amount of different opinions within the Union increases, which naturally makes it more challenging and time-consuming to reach consensus. Therefore, even with clearly dictated values, the decision of the Union is not necessarily equal to what could be predicted based on these values.

For political scientists, the process of decision-making in the European Union holds a treasure of information still to be revealed. In a more specific framework, this is true for the process between the input of values of promoting and protecting democracy, rule of law and human rights, and the output – acting or non-acting towards the countries concerned. Input refers to the intentions and framework before policy decisions have been made, output refers to the actual policies.

An example – using the research of Freedom House - may illustrate best the issue at hand. Freedom House reports annually on the human rights situation in the world and they are considered an authority on this subject. This authority is demonstrated by the amount of citations their reports evoke, such as on their report on Freedom in the World in 2013 (Freedom House, 2013) which has over 2000 citations on Google Scholar (Google Scholar, 2015).

In January 2015, Freedom House presented their report on Freedom in the World 2015, encompassing 195 countries and 15 territories, including a section named ‘Worst of the worst’ (Freedom House, 2015a: 2, 20). There were 22 countries or regions worthy of this adverse qualification. Among them North-Korea, Saudi Arabia, China, Tibet, Russia and Crimea and South Ossetia. Iran is not considered ‘worst of the worst’ (Freedom House, 2015a: 20).

Interestingly, the relationship between the European Union and these countries and regions are very diverse. Admittedly, these countries and regions still differ much from each other when it comes to the degree of human rights infringements, the risk of these infringements for the EU’s values on a global scale, the diplomatic history and opportunities to address issues in a constructive way, but at the same time these differences do not seem to account for the complete variance. How can we explain that Russia is being sanctioned for their annexation of Crimea but China is not being sanctioned for their alarming human rights situation (Europa.eu, 2015). Whereas Iran and North Korea have received numerous sanctions, the EU and Saudi Arabia have a much more friendly relationship (EEAS, 2015). How can this be accounted for?
1.2 Introduction part II: Presentation of the case, scientific and societal relevance

About 2.6 billion people live under ‘Not Free conditions’ according to Freedom House (2015a: 8). Among them are several minorities that are oppressed in such a way that they are well on their way to extinction. Many of these minorities are not even known to us. How often do politicians or media discuss the oppression of the Dalit people in India (Minority rights, 2015), or the Murle in South Sudan (Peoplesunderthreat.org, 2015)?

Extensive sanctions have been given to Russia, mostly for the annexation of the Crimea and Sevastopol (Europa.eu, 2015). Russia, which is a big trading partner of the EU, a big global power and these sanctions impose a major pressure on both EU-Russian relations as on both economies (ECFR, 2015). It is imaginable that the European Union would try to refrain from sanctioning when this could lead to economic loss and large diplomatic pressures, but in the case of Russia it did not stop them.

Based on all of the above – the situation of Russia and the Freedom House data – there is one very likely case that raises a lot of questions. The people of Tibet are stripped down of many of their human rights and the Tibetan ‘inhabitants suffer (…) intense repression (Freedom House, 2011). Tibetans lack the right of self-determination both politically and religiously, even their education is strictly limited, protests are harshly punished and torture remains in practice (Freedom House, 2011). The Tibetan people have been robbed of their land, they cannot do anything about it, they cannot go anywhere (they are not allowed to have passports (Washington Post, 2013, Appendix A)) and the world stands idly by.

China, like Russia, is a big economic power, one of the biggest trading partners of the EU (bigger than Russia since 2003) and the human rights situation for average Chinese people, but also for their minorities, is much more alarming and pressing than in Russia. Why then are there no sanctions of the European Union on China, how can this be explained?
1.3 Thesis target and design
In this thesis, the case of China, more specifically Tibet, will be used to explore what causes the seeming contrast between the clearly stated values of the European Union and the apparent reluctance to act on them in the case of China.

After the introduction, a state of the art will follow, discussing the current discussions in political science regarding this issue, followed by the research question. After discussing the theoretical framework, the operationalization and the methodology, an answer to the research question will be provided which will lead up to the final conclusion.

1.4 Relevance
The societal relevance of this research has many dimensions. Firstly, for the 2.5 billion people living under ‘not free’ conditions (Freedom House, 2015a) it would be vital to learn more about what the considerations are of the European Union. By having more insight in what may or may not constitute powerful action towards their oppressors they may be able to influence and ameliorate their future. Of course, this would be beneficial for everyone that is interested in a free and safe world.

Secondly, for everyone who underwrites the values of the European Union, it would be interesting to learn to what extent the EU can make a change, how the process of decision-making develops and what could be done to increase their punching power.

Thirdly, there are many minorities that are – as it now seems – destined to disappear, taking with them cultural treasures, traditions, their language. Society as a whole is damaged by every cultural genocide, even when they do not realize it.

There are many more dimensions, but together with this last argument, societal relevance should be deemed sufficient: this thesis also seeks to create more awareness about the situation that many minorities are in. When there is massive commotion about something, politicians seem to be more inclined to make a move. In other words: political pressure matters (Blaisdell, 1958; Becker, 1983), but political pressure needs to be preceded by awareness.

The academic relevance comprises the notion that the world politics consists of “important empirical puzzles to which political scientists apply a set of theories and methods in order to provide meaningful explanation and understanding (Landman, 2000: XIX). Euroscepticism is widely discussed in the academic world, but there have
been relatively few critical assessments on the credibility of the values of the EU with regards to human rights. To explore this side of the argument could provide new interesting insights in long ongoing scientific debates that seek to understand how the European Union wants, which political theories best explain and predict the outcome of EU decision-making – in this case with regard to foreign policy – and what could bring about or obstruct a more efficient and powerful acting European Union in this respect.

Furthermore, one of the main objects of political scientists is to describe political phenomena, to do theory-building and to predict likely outcomes in the future based on these theories (Landman, 2000). As set out before, the case of the EU and China/Tibet has a lot of scientific flesh on the bones and so hopefully this thesis will add to the knowledge and understanding of the political world.
2. State of the art

2.1 Introduction: topics to be discussed

In this State of the Art, the topic of EU-China relations will be explored. In order to find the most useful information, several questions have been worded:

What is the history of the scientific debate on the relationship between the European Union and China regarding “human rights, democracy and rule of law” (Council, 2012) and what is the current status (1)? Additionally, do the political academics recognize the contradiction between the proclaimed values of the EU and its actions (2)? What are the prevailing theories and ideas, is there some kind of consensus or is there a perceived need for more answers regarding this issue and how is the seeming contradiction to be explained (3)? Equally important, does the academic world agree that the human rights situation in Tibet is abominable and that a situation like this would usually qualify for action (4)?

These four questions and considerations above capture the essence of what information is relevant in order to provide a steady framework to build further research on. Based on the state of the art collected and presented in this paragraph, the research design can be further developed.

In practice there is quite an overlap in the literature when discussing the questions above. Most scholars that discuss theories about the relations between the EU and China, also elaborate on the human rights situation and the different positions between member states. This is why in this state of the art, the questions will not be addressed one by one, but instead an overview will be provided of the topic as a whole. This will improve the general understanding of the political debate. After all, the questions raised are but a way to reach the purpose of exploring the academic knowledge on EU-China relations with regards to human rights.

2.2 Overview of the history on EU-China relations regarding human rights, discussing the main theories and arguments

First, one of the more recent books on the topic of EU-China relations will be discussed, because it provides a theoretical framework. It brings something forward that illustrates the complexity of the subject as well as provides a complementary approach as to how
foreign policy could be looked at. Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) state that we cannot fully understand the foreign policy of the EU, without recognizing that the EU is *multifaceted, multi-method* and *multi-level*. *Multifaceted* refers to the broad range of areas that foreign policy consists of, which is not just the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), but also for example external trade relations and enlargement. *Multi-method* makes reference to the variations in policy-making methods within the EU and *multi-level* entails the fact that decisions on foreign policy are not made only at the European Union level and in fact the member states have not transferred all of their foreign policy competences to the EU (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014: 1-14). In other words, to really be able to understand the foreign policy, a very complete view on all levels and aspects of the EU and its individual actors is necessary. This would imply that foreign policy is based on more than just these core values of the EU, but include economic and other national interests.

In reality, the issue of foreign policy based on human rights and foreign policy based on economic interests seem to have a certain overlap. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) is an important legal framework that the EU utilises to further ameliorate and deepen their relations with third countries. The Partnership between the EU and China has been deadlocked for several years now (Van Oene, 2011; Shaohua, 2015). Shaohua (2015) discusses the main reasons for this deadlock, including that the EU “seeks to link the trade agreement with political matters of human rights and democracy”, whereas the Chinese insist on “the principle of non-interference”. The issue of Tibet’s independence is also brought forward in the discussions (Dreyer and Erixon, 2008: 9). Furthermore, In the *EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy*, adopted by the Council in 2012, the Council committed itself to promote human rights “in all areas of its external action without exception” (Council, 2012). This shows that in the case of EU and China, human rights seem to be a significant principle in these other areas of foreign policy as well.

When it comes to the ‘multi-levelness’ of foreign policy, Shaohua (2015) shows that whereas Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) explain how there is a difference between the sum of foreign policy of European states and the foreign policy of the EU, this difference is less important for China in this case. This can be illustrated by the discussion regarding a possible boycott of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. In an official statement, the EU has opposed a boycott of the Olympics (dw.com, 2008), while
in practice many European leaders have clearly stated their discontent with the human rights situation in China and several of them have not attended (parts of the) Olympic Games (Time.com, 2008). This is line with the argument of Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) that in order to understand EU foreign policy, the national level should be included as well.

Van Oene (2011) states that political scientists commonly believe that the deadlock in the PCA negotiations between the EU and China has been caused by friction between the parties. Li (2009) believes the friction has arisen during the first decade of the twentieth century due to a change in the EU's approach to China with regards to human rights. The EU, unlike the United States, held dialogues with China, instead of openly criticizing them. This was very much appreciated by China. However, China signalizes how Europe is trying to become more of a “normative power” and that Europe is insisting more on their values in their dealings with third countries (Li, 2009). Van Oene (2011) quotes Pradeep Taneja, who claims that this is caused by a convergence between the EU and the US emanating from their cooperation in international politics, European Union that is trying to be more like the US. China is not just unhappy about this, but it sees the EU more as a threat, trying to westernise China (Li, 2009).

According to Scott (2007) the reason for this friction should be sought in the different opinions about the global world order. Whereas China believes very strongly in state sovereignty and beholds the world from a ‘realist’ perspective, whereas the EU believes more in an intergovernmentalist world order, an international order where international actors work together, with common values prevailing over sovereignty (Scott, 2007).

An additional reason for the failure to find agreement with China on the PCA lies in the differences between EU countries. Economic arguments are given as the main reason for their differences (Fox and Godement, 2009). Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland are countries mentioned by Fox and Godement that are critical of the human rights situation in China, but their industries could even benefit from keeping cheap Chinese products of the market. Other EU countries are interested in economic gains from trade with the Chinese, whereas another group of EU countries are afraid for China and its repercussions for being too critical on their policies. Because of the large differences between these countries, it is difficult to establish a collective foreign policy (Fox and Godement, 2009).
Even worse, the three big member states – Germany, France and the UK – are said not to believe in a common approach and are not afraid to show it. This leads to several EU member states having individual dialogues with China, which is not helping the overall EU-China relationship. (Fox and Godement, 2009), although Van Oene states that for this latter statement, the authors have provided insufficient proof (Van Oene, 2011).

The difficulties in reaching a common European policy are not limited to the foreign policy approach to China and fit within a bigger framework of why Europe often has difficulties to act powerful and efficient (for example: Thomas, 2012; Smith, 2006) However, it is clear by now – just from discussing a few authors – that there is a big risk of making the field of focus too big for this research, so only the relationship with China will be discussed, unless the bigger picture is absolutely necessary for understanding the current situation and the corresponding academic debate.

Van Oene (2011) recalls how the European Union was not able to bring a unanimous message to China after infringing human rights in 2008, nor were they able to come with a common solution after China ‘dumped’ cheap products on the European market (Van Oene, 2011: 10).

A more recent example of this difficult relationship with China, but also illustrating the challenges that the EU faces, can be found in June 2013, when a ‘solar trade war’ ensued between the EU and China. The EU imposed high import duties on Chinese solar panels, to protect its own market (The Telegraph, 2013a). Only one day later, it is reported that China responded by launching a trade probe against EU wine imports (The Telegraph, 2013b). It took six weeks to resolve this issue and for China and the EU to reach an agreement that lasts until the end of 2015 (Baker, 2013). This does not only illustrate the arduous relationship with China, but also that the operation rate of the EU is much slower than the Chinese operation rate and that China is not afraid to use its power when it is unhappy with how things unfold.

In short, Van Oene (2011) supports the theory that the European Union is punching below its weight. The main reason is that the EU member states disagree on the importance that human rights should have in the negotiations. Also several member states are afraid that China will punish them with economic repercussions for addressing China’s human rights policy. These are not necessarily the smaller states. After Merkel met with the Dalai Lama, China was furious and the trade relations
between Germany and China were impaired for a while. This led Merkel to be more cautious when several European leaders wanted to boycott China’s Olympic Games in 2008.

It should be added that there is in fact one sanction that the EU (and the US) still imposes on China, since 1989. Because of large-scale human rights infringements during the famous student protests in Beijing, the EU and the US have since then refused to sell arms to China. China is still unhappy that this EU ‘arms embargo’ has not yet been removed (Van Oene, 2011).

2.3 Other official diplomatic moves by the EU to influence China’s human rights policy

In addition to the previous paragraph, several official diplomatic attempts have been made by the EU to influence China’s human rights policy.

It is important to assess these official talks, summits, negotiations and dialogues to better understand to what extent the EU is trying to alter China’s policy and how successful this is. This may also show whether the EU is indeed “punching below its weight”, as Van Oene (2011) claims.

EU-China Strategic Partnership – mentioned briefly before – now includes foreign affairs and security matters, something that was not the case when the Partnership started in 1985 (EEAS, 2016c). Until 2002 this Partnership was the main framework for EU-China relations (Europensblog, 2016). About 60 dialogues have been established including high level and senior level representatives from both parties (Ibid. 2016), which can be seen as a step forward. One of these dialogues is a yearly EU-China Human Rights Dialogue – established in 1995 (EEAS, 2016d).

In the EU-China Summit in 2013, both parties agreed on the EU-China Strategic 2020 Agenda (EEAS, 2013) guiding the EU-China relationship and expressing the ambitions in many policy areas, including human rights. This as well can be seen a step forward.

If we look closer at the 16-page document, “human rights” appear only twice – Tibet does not appear in the document at all. Literally, the complete human rights agenda contains these two sentences:

“Deepen exchanges on human rights at the bilateral and international level on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Strengthen the Human Rights Dialogue with constructive discussions on jointly agreed key priority areas.” (EEAS, 2013: 4).
These are quite open-ended, non-committal statements that do not pressure China to change their ways.

At the most recent EU-China summit in June 2015, the EU “mentioned” that they value human rights (Europese Raad, 2015).

This seems to be a pattern. When the Dutch King paid a formal visit to China, word is that the King “briefly mentioned” the human rights situation. Both the EU and its Member States tend to be very cautious in their expressions towards China (NOS, 2015). The same holds true when looking at their communications with the Dalai Lama. China considers this as highly insulting and moralizing but for EU countries it is a way to show China that they care about human rights. However, some members states (like Italy) do not meet with the Dalai Lama. China always sanctions EU countries that do meet him, for example by cancelling important meetings. HR Ashton also kept quiet when the European Parliament stated through a resolution to speak up for Tibet (ECFR 2013).

What can we say about the success rate of these dialogues, ‘mentions’ and summits? Of course it is very difficult to measure direct effects of these talks. One could say that China has gone through major changes in a relatively short period (see f.i. paragraph 2.4), but this holds true for most European countries as well.

If however, all these attempts to improve human rights and freedom policies, we should be able to notice a difference in scientific assessments of China’s freedom. But if we look at the Freedom Score of China by Freedom House, since 1998 until 2016, there has been no change in China’s score, which shows no significant real change (Freedom House 2016). That doesn’t mean that the EU has no impact – it could well be that China’s freedom would have further decreased without it. On the other hand, considering that the EU, its members states, its leaders and the 2020 Agenda are so cautious no to say anything that may really offend China – it is not very surprising that we do not see a big difference. The EU may indeed be punching below its weight. This is partly due to conflicting positions of EU members, lack of leverage and even “loss of the moral high ground (Mattlin, 2012 and many other scholars that will be mentioned in this essay). As we will see in the next paragraph, this is partly due to a different idea about sovereignty. Among others, Kaya (2014) raises that China sees human rights more as a domestic matter. In the next paragraph the EU-China relationship will be assessed from China’s point of view.
2.4 The Chinese point of view

Since most academics in the Western world do not read Chinese, and not just because of that, there is a certain bias when it comes to the point of view from which the narrative is being told. Much of the research is Eurocentric, but how do the Chinese perceive the relationship?

Shi Zhiqin provides a view that gives more insight in the Chinese perspective. According to Zhiqin (2012), China sees both itself and Europe as force that balances the power of the United States. Whereas the US are perceived as behaving unilaterally, and China was happy to work more on an equal basis with the EU. Between 2003 and 2005 the relationship between the EU and China was very strong. Then, Europe started to change their behaviour and furthermore was perceived to changed their attitude towards China negatively (Zhiqin, 2012).

Since 2005, there was a shift of strategy. China was increasingly perceived by Europe as a competitor and acted in a more protectionist way. More assertive politicians were elected that pursued policies that were less beneficial to China and in fact more aggressive towards China. Both Sarkozy and Merkel met with the Dalai Lama, which China considered to be a blow to the relations. Tensions in Europe regarding boycotts for the Olympic Games were replied in China which led to China's late cancellation of the 2008 EU-China summit (Ibid, 2012).

Zhiqin also perceives a lack of unity within Europe. This forces China to deal with member states individually which costs time. China does not believe Europe can function well, as they need so many member states to agree and relatively few countries can create a block. However, China believes that cooperation is good for both China and the EU and would like to improve the relationship (Zhiqin, 2012).

What China wants is for the EU to show more appreciation for the dramatic changes that China has gone through over the last thirty years. The country is opening up, becoming more free and perhaps not as fast as Europe wants, but China needs the EU to “treat it as a truly strategic partner and consider it as an equal in every respect” (Ibid.).

China furthermore believes that Europe is imposing its values on China because Europe thinks their values are superior, which is “condescending to China”. China considers it a “major offence” when the EU intervenes in their internal affairs. Meeting
the Dalai Lama, or discussing Tibet is undermining their sovereignty. Last but not least, China is very unhappy about the embargo on weapon sales to China, established in 1989 by the US and the EU, the refusal for China to be called a ‘market economy’ at the World Trade Organisation and that Vietnam has been treated more wilful with regards to similar restrictions than China. China believes that the EU is stuck with the US on this issue (Ibid). Interestingly enough, the US and Europe disagree on what sovereignty should entail in practice. Even though they have both experienced a paradigm shift, they are still not on the same page (Keohane, 2012).

China’s stance can be summarized as follows: China does not believe that the EU is a completely independent party, it does not believe that it can act as one actor, and it does believe that the EU is slow, arrogant and patronizing. In the academic field, whenever the Chinese point of view is taken into account, the views from Zhiqin (2012) are not very much contested. Shaohua (2015) agrees that China and the EU are experiencing a clash in core values. As does Wiessala (2013), who adds that the EU should quickly learn more about Asian culture, so that they will be able to better understand their partners and to achieve more.

2.5 Debate on the human rights situation in Tibet

Not a lot of academic debates have been held regarding the Human rights situation in Tibet. At least in the English-written academic literature there is a quite clear consensus that Tibetans are being oppressed severely. Even though the EU member states find it difficult to agree on a common approach to China, Europe agrees that Tibetans are not free. This is also the stance of Freedom House who mentioned Tibet as “worst of the worst”, meaning they have the littlest freedom on the face of the earth (2013, 2015a). A more elaborate report is provided by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) stating that Tibetans are “a people under alien subjugation” (1997: 21). Their situation may well be described as ‘abominable’ as the human rights infringements are very severe and applying to all universal freedoms, according to the report (ICJ, 1997).

2.6.1 Conclusion State of the Art

At the introduction of this State of the Art four questions have been raised and based on the collected information an answer may be provided. So far, already one contribution
has been made to the academic debate about the EU. This will be elaborated on in discussing the answer to the question below.

1) What is the history of the scientific debate on the relationship between the European Union and China regarding “human rights, democracy and rule of law” (Council, 2012) and what is the current status?

The scientific debate on the relationship between the EU and China is not very elaborate. Among the few sources that discuss this issue in a more detailed way, most scholars hold that the European Union has a difficult time to make a fist, due to different interests among member states. Which is an issue that is not limited to human rights, but it is something that the EU struggles with on many topics.

In 1989, when the US and the EU instituted the arms embargo, the relationship between the EU and China was not very good and since then there have been some fluctuations, but for about a decade, perhaps the word that best describes both the political relationship and the academic debate is a ‘deadlock’. The EU does put some pressure on China with regards to human rights, although so far to no avail.

The Chinese point of view however claims that in fact China has come from far and has implemented major changes over the last decades, which in itself is true.

2.6.2 Contradiction between proclaimed EU values and EU action

Some scholars claim that within the European Union there are several member states that will not always choose human rights over economic advantages. Van Oene gives insight in a debate that does not get enough attention in the academic world. According to several scholars, there is a large amount of EU member states that do not really care so much about the human rights situation in China (Van Oene, 2011). This confirms the suspicions already made that there is in fact a large difference between what the EU says and what the EU does and that this difference is not caused by ‘lack of efficiency’, but because many member states are not committed to ‘promote peace and stability and to build a world founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law’ (Council 2012). Even though this is not yet ‘academic proof’, this should urge the academic world to assess the values of the EU more critically and this should affect the way the European Union is perceived.
2) Do the political academics recognize the contradiction between the proclaimed values of the EU and its actions?

Not many academics have been contesting the values of the EU. The debate usually concentrates more on the difficulty of the EU to reach its goals – on efficiency – than on critically assessing the values that the EU proclaims. On the one hand, it is clear that not all member states find the human rights equally important and hence are not always the strongest advocates of human rights in practice, on the other hand, the academic world is not very critical. The reasons for this could be potentially interesting for academics (ethnocentrism etc.), but lies beyond the goal of this thesis.

3) What are the prevailing theories and ideas, is there some kind of consensus or is there a perceived need for more answers regarding this issue and how is the seeming contradiction to be explained?

In the search for relevant literature on EU-China relations regarding human rights, not many theories for the ‘seeming’ contradiction have surfaced. In the overview of the debate, several explanations have been given for the contradiction, for example how several member states will not address China over the human rights situation because of economic consequences, or because they are less strong supporters of human rights. This is all quite difficult to test, they are good explanations, but not really theories. Some scholars (for example Van Oene, 2011) believe that Europe’s main problem is that it does not speak with one voice. Zhiqin (2012) and several others believe that Europe just does not understand China and that a solution lies in finding the common ground. Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) did offer a theory that attempts to understand European foreign policy in general, but they do not offer a hypothesis regarding this issue.

4) Does the academic world agree that the human rights situation in Tibet is abominable and that a situation like this would usually qualify for action?

The answer to this question is more clear. Even though the debate on this is not very elaborate, the academic world believes that the human rights situation in Tibet is one of the worst in the world. Whether or not it qualifies for action is not something that most scientists see as their job to decide. The literature mentioned so far does imply that many Western countries realise that something should be done about the situation in
Tibet, but they are not really willing to pay the price. However, they are willing to pay
the price when it comes to Russia, which makes this a more interesting case.

After examining the literature that is relevant in providing a preliminary answer to the
above questions – and considering the target of the thesis as briefly described above – it
becomes clear that the subject as a whole is quite broad for a master’s thesis with a
word limit of 20.000 as there are many different aspects of the EU-China relations to
focus on. On the other hand, putting together the ‘State of the Art’ has been instrumental
in finding out which parts of the discussion has been accounted for by academics and to
what extent more work has to be done.

The biggest challenge is to find a way in which this thesis can contribute to the
academic debate. With the goal of this thesis in mind – explaining the seeming contrast
between the values of the EU and their policy towards China – a paradigm has to be
found through which this political reality can be interpreted in a scientific and relevant
manner. This challenge will be faced in the next paragraphs, dealing with the phrasing of
the research question and the theoretical framework.
3. Research Question

This paragraph will discuss and present the research question to this thesis. The research question should reflect the essence of the matter that is being questioned. The previous paragraph can be considered to be a scientific exploration of the topic which is very useful to put a research question to the right words. What exactly will this research be about?

The core issue at stake originates from the observation that the European Union has not issued any sanctions against China, other than an arms embargo that has been running since 1989 (Van Oene, 2011). As illustrated earlier, the academic world acknowledges that China is severely infringing human rights, mostly but certainly not limited to Tibet.

The European Union is currently imposing restrictive measures against thirty-four states (EEAS, 2015). The EEAS describes these measures as “an essential EU foreign policy tool”, used to “bring about a change in policy or activity by the target country, part of a country, government, entities or individuals” and these sanctions should always be part of “an integrated and comprehensive policy approach (…) involving political dialogue, complementary efforts and other instruments” (EEAS, 2015).

Based on the research presented in this thesis so far, the case of China proves to be much more pressing and severe than many of the other thirty-four countries that the EU is targeting right now. Furthermore, sanctions against China could well be implemented within the aforementioned “integrated and comprehensive policy approach”.

That leaves us with a simple question. Why is Europe not sanctioning China? Even though this constitutes exactly what we want to find out, it is difficult to measure adequately. Besides, there are many answers to this question that may or not be part of the complete answer and it would be an impossible mission to determine the explained variance from the different answers. An additional challenge is that is difficult to find proof for something that did not happen, since it is easier to find a plausible causal relationship when a sanction occurred than when it did not occur.

The quest for the most appropriate wording of the research question may also be approached through the desired scientific objective. This could be – among others -
‘contextual description’, ‘classification’, hypotheses-testing’ (or developing) or ‘prediction’ (Landman, 2000).

The case of Tibet has not been given a lot of attention in recent years. This is true for the media, but even more so for the academic world. This may be caused by the difficulty to carry out research within the borders of Tibet, due to visit restrictions and also cultural and linguistic challenges. However, “systematic research begins with good description” (Landman, 2000) and there have hardly been any contributions to the contextual description of Tibet’s case. China stopped issuing entry permits for Tibet to tourists from 2012 (ABC News, 2012). Since 2013 a small number of tourists is allowed into the country every day. When I visited China in 2013, I was able to pay a visit to Tibet and to conduct some small scale research while I was there. I would like to add the information I have acquired to this thesis, because it could further research on Tibet and China’s human rights record.

Determining which states would be expedient for EU sanctions could be a form of classification, but it is not quintessential in answering our why-question.

Hypotheses-testing is the next step, but the state of the art does not offer any hypothesis that is relevant for this question. This compels to look for different paradigms. Testing an hypothesis leads to prediction. When we believe that we understand causal effects, we can make predictions about the future. There is clearly a certain order between these four research objectives. Considering the circumstances, the emphasis in this thesis should be on the one hand on describing the current situation aptly, on the other hand it should test or develop an hypothesis that will make us understand what is happening or not happening between the EU and China.

The state of the art was in a way a small essay in itself, in which several reasons for the EU’s reluctance to impose sanctions on China are reviewed. So to a certain extent, the simple answer to the main question has been given. The absence of a paradigm inspired me to take on a couple of different views which led me to a much bigger academic debate: the debate that attempts to explain international affairs through the main political perspectives such as realism, constructivism, neo-liberalism and institutionalism (Hay, 2002).

These political perspectives each offer different paradigms that help us understand the underlying principles of European behaviour on a global scale. There is an ongoing debate about which theory offers the best explanation for European
behaviour. Nugent states that different kinds of theories are applied for different purposes. These different approaches can be seen as complementary theories and this “is now a working assumption” (Nugent, 2010: 443).

Rationalist approaches emphasize self-interest and utility maximisation, institutionalism place emphasis on the role of institutions whereas constructivism offers more room for “social identities, norms and values” (Nugent, 2010: 442). In the case of China, the EU, together with many scholars consider values and norms as leading or at least as very influential. Others, like Maya Swisa states that a mix of realism and constructivism offers the best explanations which she refers to as neo-liberal institutionalism (Swisa, 2011). There are many other theories and combinations of theories that each offer their own advantages and disadvantages. In the next paragraph, I will further elaborate on the theoretical framework.

Europe’s behaviour towards China – based on the state of the art – seems to be quite rationalistic – depending more on power and economics than on social identities and values. After completing the state of the art, it is my conception that the case of China has been insufficiently included in the scientific debate. So that makes the next goal of this thesis to contribute to the debate on which political theory best explains Europe’s behaviour using the case of China, which leads to the next research question:

“Which political theory best explains the non-sanctioning of China since 1989 by the European Union?”

Several sub questions can be raised to reach a better answer to this research question: “What is the current human rights situation in Tibet?”, which adds to the contextual description for this thesis and it can be used for further research.

“What reasons have kept the European Union from sanctioning China?”, an investigation that seeks to go further than the state of the art, so that there is more information that can be used later to find the political theory that offers the best explanation.

“What are the most relevant political theories regarding this issue and what makes them more or less appropriate for explaining this political situation?” which will be the last step before being able to answer the research question.

My personal expectation – before having started the research - is that the EU will turn out to be more ‘realist’ and less ‘constructivist’ than often stated. Q.E.D.
4. Theoretical Framework and operationalization

In this paragraph, the theoretical framework will be further developed so that the research question can be answered in a scientific way. Fortunately, we are “standing on the shoulders of giants” (attributed to Sir Isaac Newton).

What should the theoretical framework entail? Gregory Herek states a relevant theory must be presented including the explanation of why it is relevant, theoretical assumptions must be articulated, to specify which variables influence the subject of interest (Herek, 1995).

To start off, the research question will be dissected into pieces to make sure they are scientifically covered, which will mean the research will be reproducible and verifiable.

"Which political theory" will refer to one of the main political theories that have been dominating the political debate of international political analysis for decades. There may be different opinions as to the exact definition of these theories, but academic debates that make use of these theories usually do not have problems to find each other in the ‘common ground’. Hence, for this thesis the very aptly written and useful description of these theories by Colin Hay will be used (Hay, 2002). Because the academic world relies on these theories and believes that they are proper paradigms to view the political world, it should be good enough for this thesis.

However, Hay points out that there are different theories in vogue depending on whether we are talking about political science in general or about international relations. The relationship between the European Union, its member states and China are under investigation, so we will consider the corresponding theories. At its core, Hay distinguishes between ‘classical realism’, ‘structural of neo-realism’ and ‘neo-liberalism’ which is according to Hay also referred to as ‘pluralism’ or ‘liberal institutionalism’ (Hay, 2002: 7-26). ‘Constructivism’ and ‘postmodernism’ are also mentioned, but they may not be considered part of the mainstream. We are not excluding them as these theories are also well-known and often used in scientific debates and we are not looking for the most popular theory, but for the theory that has the highest explanatory value concerning the behaviour of the European Union. The best explanation may also be given by a combination of theories.
The “non-sanctioning of China” refers to official restrictive measures as taken by the European Union towards China. Since 1989, when the arms embargo came into effect, no additional sanctions have been imposed on China by the EU. The exact time frame of the study will be further determined based on the literature, but since the EU foreign policy has changed since 1989 it would be more valuable to discuss the EU’s decisions since it started working in the current framework of the EEAS. Nevertheless, any information that could elucidate the behaviour of the EU since 1989 will be deemed useful.

Sanctions by the European Union as mentioned in the research question are explicitly not sanctions by any member states. As Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) remarks, due to the multi-levelness of decision-making in the EU, the level of the member states should be explored. In fact, according to some political theories the member states are the main units of analysis. For example, in realism one of the key assumptions is that “the state is sovereign and the natural unit of analysis in international relations since states recognize no authority above themselves and are autonomous of non-state actors and structures” (Hay, 2002: 18).

These are all the concepts from the main research question. The subquestions do not bring forward any contested concepts other than ‘human rights’. It seems that not all countries have the same idea of what human rights entail. As we are interpreting EU behaviour, the European view on human rights will prevail. An exact definition is not necessary, the question is whether according to European norms, the Tibetan case is abominable.

4.1 Variables

The dependent variable - the explanandum - in this thesis is the behaviour of the European Union towards China, specifically whether or not the European Union decides to impose a sanction on China.

The independent variable, the explanans – should consist of the reasons that lead to this behaviour. One of the key assumption is that a certain paradigm, a certain set of interests leads to different behaviour than other sets of interests. A state that cares very much about human rights will likely make other decisions than a state that cares mostly about its own power and has no interest in human rights. We could illustrate this with
an example: if we would want to know why a certain man cries, his crying will probably depend on a combination of his character and on relevant triggers. Apart from the independent and the dependent variable, one could say that there is an intervening variable as well. The type of interests, goals and values leads to a certain outcome, but for a certain behaviour to emerge, a trigger is often needed. Someone who cries easily may not cry for years because nothing bad happened to him or her for a long time. A 'realist' state may act in according to human rights, without caring intrinsically about human rights. We could say that a certain act is 'more likely', but there is something else that has an influence. In the case of the crying man, it's 'reality'. In a way, this is the same for our research. ‘Reality’ in this case consists of the collection of political information in the world, the history, the actuality and its interpretations by the main actors. Independently, so at first, there is a way that the EU looks at the world, then they interpret the political world around them and its changes, they perceive their relationship with China within the bigger perspective and then they respond to this information. We could say that ‘reality’ is in this sense an intervening variable, although it's quite difficult to grasp.

To decide which political theory explains the non-sanctioning of China by the EU best, another set of variables – originating from the definitions and descriptions of these theories – play a role. The details will become clear as the research progresses.

4.2 Validity

To make sure that we measure what we want to measure (internal validity) and to make sure that our results may be used for other studies (external validity) it is really important to define everything that is being measure in a way that is clear and customary according to academic practice. This must also hold true for the other concepts and assumptions that are part of this research. In this thesis great care has been taken to phrase everything carefully to guarantee this validity as much as possible.
4.3 Operationalization

The relevant concepts and variables have already been described or otherwise justified in this paragraph during the discussion of the theoretical framework. In the conducting of the actual research, further specifications may be needed, but since it will depend on the collected information, we cannot make predictions about this.

All packed with theories, concepts and variables it is now time to develop the best way to go about this research. The next paragraph will deal with the methodology and the data collection.
5. Methodology and Data Collection

The research method for this thesis will be a literature review. All relevant academic articles will be consulted to provide an answer to the question: “Which political theory best explains the non-sanctioning of China since 1989 by the European Union?”

Several political theories will be assessed in order to scientifically position the EU’s stance on China’s situation. What are the benefits of this approach? Landman (2000) sets out that contextual description and classification are amongst the gains of similar studies. The research is also clearly limited because generalizations are difficult to make based on this one case of China.

On the other hand, given the limited time and possibilities, this approach is seemingly the most effective. And in fact, contextual description and classification is what is necessary right now in the debate regarding this subject. After all, it seems that the classification of EU policy is not optimal and new arguments have to be developed in order to contest that classification. And for that argument to be developed, we need to learn more about the context.

This is why hopefully this study will contribute to the debate and if this research will provide new ammunition for the next round of truth testing, this research has done its job.

The data will be collected by means of several searches on scientific websites and libraries, like Web of Science, Picarta and Google Scholar. I will look for articles about Tibet, about China, about the foreign policy and working of the European Union and about the several political theories. There is a specialized library regarding the Tibet issue in Amsterdam where I will look for all sorts of relevant articles – and of course it is important to realize that some of that information may be skewed because of a certain agenda. It can still be a very helpful place to look for articles. Two years ago, I visited Tibet myself and I was able to interview some of the residents and I was able to see some aspects of the oppression myself.

Oppression is of course a social construct and it can be tricky to describe things as scientific if they are not visible. I am very much aware of this and so I will abstain from drawing conclusions in this matter that are not absolutely empirically proven.
6. Data Analysis

In this paragraph, the collected data will be presented and elaborated on. The main research question is: "Which political theory best explains the non-sanctioning of China since 1989 by the European Union?".

Several sub questions have been raised to reach a better answer to this research question: "What is the current human rights situation in Tibet?", which adds to the contextual description for this thesis and it can be used for further research.

"What reasons have kept the European Union from sanctioning China?", or how can this be explained from the perspective of political theories.

"What are the most relevant political theories regarding this issue and what makes them more or less appropriate for explaining this political situation?", which will lead us to the answer of the main question.

6.1.1 What is the current human rights situation in Tibet?

There is a short answer to this sub question and many elaborate answers. As we have seen in the introduction, Freedom House considers the Tibet region as ‘worst of the worst’ when it comes to human rights (2015a). It seems that there is a clear consensus on the fact that the Tibetan people are oppressed severely (although China may disagree) and that it is worse there than in most other places in the world – even though at this moment relatively few people are being killed compared to regions at war that are frequently on the news.

Despite the facts being available and known, most people seem to be completely unaware of what is happening in Tibet. Or perhaps they are just less interested. Even when Tibetan monks set themselves on fire to protest the occupation, there are hardly any protests around the world. And even when there are protests, if seems that the active support for Tibet falls in a deep sleep, long before politicians find it necessary to put the human rights situation in Tibet on the table again.

On a personal level, I think it is sad that relatively so few people are fighting for the rights of the Tibetans, especially compared to the amount of money, help and attention is spent on different people in different regions that are really not doing as bad as Tibet. My desire is to collect the information that is written in the reports of Amnesty
International, the International Commission of Jurists, Freedom House and many others and give an elaborate summary of the human rights infringement situation in Tibet. However, this will not add to the discussion, because it will be but a repetition of information that is available. But why does it stir so little turmoil?

A short summary of the most recent Freedom House report on Tibet: Tibetans are not autonomous; they have no decision-making power whatsoever; there are no other parties allowed besides the Chinese Communist Party; there is a lot of corruption in government; Tibetans are marginalized in every way, even physically by resettlement campaigns; there is no freedom of expression and belief; there are no associational and organizational rights; the rule of law is not being respected and many Tibetans are being tortured; there is little personal autonomy or individual rights; and many Tibetan women are being kidnapped to China for domestic services and forced marriage (Freedom House, 2015b). This information is free for grabs and there is a wide consensus on this – Amnesty International, International Commission of Jurists, The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy and others are all saying the same, year after year after year. We can expect from an EU that cares so much about human rights to at least acknowledge what is going on and firmly express its displeasure, but they are doing no such thing, while they are doing it in other instances, for other regions. How can this be explained?

Political pressure matters (Blaisdell, 1958; Becker, 1983) and unfortunately, the Tibetans are not able to express themselves in China. The organisations that are reporting on the situation in Tibet have a difficult time to raise awareness, partly because the situation is not ‘sexy’ in the Western world. In addition to that, there are not many scholars in the realm of political science that write articles on Tibet or doing research on it – partly because it is very difficult to go there and to collect the necessary information.

But now that some of these limitations have been lifted, students are again allowed into Tibet – although in small groups – and the present writer believes that more people should go into Tibet and make the situation there more visible and tangible. Perhaps these reports lose their function and efficacy when they publish the same conclusions. At the same time, it is difficult to make it more visible because one cannot just walk into Tibet with a camera and take pictures, videos and do interviews with the people there. In fact, France 24 TV has secretly filmed a short documentary in
Tibet in 2013. China has been harassing – even threatening - journalists, correspondents and the TV station to remove the documentary (RFI English, 2013).

A picture can say more than a thousand words and the documentary – which showed only a little bit of the daily life there and interviewed two people – made completely unrecognizable added another dimension to the information that is available. And so, in this paragraph, I would like to add the information that I have collected when I was in Tibet, so that this can add to the ‘contextual description’, what is actually going on and I hope that more scholars will collect pieces of information that China structurally tries to hide from the public eye.

6.1.2 Observances in Tibet – July 2013
The empirical observances that I made are not merely as shocking as the torture, the trafficking, the destruction of most of the monasteries during the cultural revolution, or people setting themselves on fire in desperation that we can read about in all the reports. However, it is a first-hand testimony to the lack of freedom in Tibet and how the Tibetan people is oppressed.

My observances can be categorized as follows: a description of visible daily limitations and restrictions for Tibetans on the street, I was able to – secretly – take some pictures that illustrate these restriction and I was able to interview a few Tibetans. One of the interviews I have on video. I have written out the largest part of this interview – and it is available for anyone who wants to see it – but of course the source has to remain anonymous. This Tibetan person told me that if China finds out that he gives information to others, he will be fired from his/her job and he will not ever be able to find another job. He/she claims this is what happened to the guide that guided the France 24 TV journalists. Others are put to jail. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), about 1200 people were political prisoners in Tibet, as early as in 1998 (TCHRD, 1998). The full transcript will be added to this thesis as Appendix A.

First of all, it is very clear that the Chinese government is keeping a very close eye on the Tibetans. There are many checkpoints – in the old city they are only a few hundred meters apart – there are cameras everywhere, even in taxis – armed soldiers walk around and there are snipers on several roofs, ready to shoot if necessary. Tibetan flags are nowhere to be seen and it is made clear to us by the guides that anyone who
will carry even a sticker of a Tibetan flag will be arrested. However, the Chinese flag has been planted everywhere, even on the holiest Tibetan places. I am told – this is supported by the international reports – that even some of the few monks that are allowed in the monasteries are not Tibetan, but Chinese.

Secondly, something that needs further research is the amount of Tibetans in the capital Lhasa. A new modern train station has been built in Lhasa and over the course of the last decades many Han-Chinese people have been sent to Lhasa. According to the most recent Chinese numbers 70% of the population is Tibetan (Yeh, 2009). If you walk around you don’t see many Tibetans and according to the Tibetan people I have spoken to, the Tibetan people make up only 10-30% of the capitals population, which is also supported by some of the reports. The Chinese policy seems to make the Tibetans a minority in their own country, this also supported by others, for instance the New York Times (2013).

Next are some of the restrictions that Tibetans were able to tell me anonymously. Most of this is supported by the reports, but obviously it is difficult to prove some of these things because the Chinese government is making that impossible.

According to Tibetans they are not able to leave the country or to get a passport (also: Telegraph, 2015). In every way they are being discriminated against by the government. Tibetans are never able to get a serious job with the government – or only as a puppet – and the bureaucracy is treating them differently than the Chinese. If they want a permit for something like starting a company, they need to wait for years and bribe many people before they are able to obtain what the Han-Chinese get easily. When a Tibetan and a Chinese are in a fight, the Tibetan will usually be the one that is punished. The Tibetans are not allowed to teach in their own language, to have images of their Dalai Lama or images of their flag, 99% of their monasteries have been destroyed by China and the few that are left are being taken by China, who is also limiting the amount of Tibetan monks in those few monasteries (Anonymous Tibetans). They are not allowed to demonstrate and some of their holy places have been destroyed recently to make place for shopping malls (France 24 TV, 2013). Other than that, according to Tibetans, the Chinese control every single e-mail that is being sent and received and every single money transfer.

Generally you can tell that Tibetans are very afraid of the government. They are afraid that someone will catch them just expressing their opinions or saying ‘bad’ things about
the government. They have no security that they have their possessions or job the following day. If one of their family members or friends is suspected of something it is likely to harm them as well. And as the reports show, they have reason to be afraid, with so many people taken as political prisoners and people that are being tortured or punished in a different way. Tibetans are also generally poorer than the Chinese, because they get lower wages, their quality of life and their purchasing power is much lower, partially because the Chinese government restricts their agricultural production, which has led to famine in the past (All of the above is supported in ICJ, 1997).

Many Tibetans live in poverty, Tibetans spend less than 5% than the average Chinese on Health (ICJ, 1997: 151). According to ICJ the Chinese are also profiting from Tibetan oil and deforesting, without sharing these profits with the Tibetans (ICJ, 1997: 158-162). The most striking statistic of poverty in 1996 was the total household spending was about 22 American dollar cents per day (ICJ, 156).

In short, Tibetans have no freedom of religion, no freedom of expression, no freedom of association, no money, all of their possessions have been taken, they are being monitored constantly and they are not allowed to say anything against it or to go elsewhere. It must be said that some of things mentioned above – even in official reports – cannot be proven given the current situation – but it is definitely possible to go there to do more research and make this misery more visible.

6.1.3 Insights that can be derived from pictures taken in Tibet

A picture says more than a thousand words. In this paragraph I would like to share and discuss several pictures that provide more insights to the situation in Tibet. Even though a picture in itself says nothing when there is no interpretation, there are a few advantages to using pictures in this case.

First of all, there is a limited number of pictures that have been taken recently in Tibet that have been published in the Western world. Secondly, in a way they are more insightful than words and thirdly, pictures do not have an intrinsic agenda. When Amnesty International writes in a report that the Tibetan flag cannot be used and the Chinese are posting their flags everywhere, people may think that the situation is not as bad as Amnesty says it is, because Amnesty has a certain agenda. However, if you see a picture of one of the few holy Tibetan places that are left and a Chinese flag is posted on top of it, it does two things: it shows everyone that this is real and furthermore it makes
a much more convincing argument (Berger, 1972). Of course, there are many examples of events that are reported in very different ways just by taking pictures from different perspectives or by leaving something out on purpose, but these issues are accounted for in pictures in this paragraph. Some pictures will be discussed in this paragraph, others will be affixed to Appendix B.

The pictures below will demonstrate two things mostly. Firstly, it shows that the Tibetans are unable to use their own flags – even on their own holy buildings – and how Chinese flags are planted everywhere. Secondly, it shows how the Chinese are keeping an eye on everything. There are checkpoints, cameras and even armed militants everywhere.

*Picture 1: Top of Potala palace. Picture taken by N. Rodrigues Pereira, on July 24th 2013.*

In the picture above we see the top of Potala Palace. This has been the winter palace of the Dalai Lama since the 7th century CE. It is one of the few holy Buddhistic buildings that are left, after thousands have been destroyed (Unesco, 2015). The Chinese flag on
top of this Buddhist holy building is clearly meant to intimidate and to remind the Tibetans every day who is the boss. As we have seen before, the Chinese claim that they are saving the Tibetans and bringing them education, health and wealth and although they may be doing some of those things in practice, it is nothing but an excuse to take over the country and ban everything that may lead people to question the Chinese rule. Some other pictures that show the overrepresented Chinese flag can be found in Appendix B.

*Picture 2: Roof of Jokhang Temple, picture taken July 24th 2013 by N. Rodrigues Pereira*

The Jokhang Temple, founded in 647CE, ruler of back then already unified Tibet, is the holiest Buddhist site. Note the Chinese flag planted on top of it. Also in Picture (B1) in Appendix B you can see how the main square in front of this Temple has many Chinese flags.
6.1.4 Checkpoints, soldiers and cameras

*Picture 3. Over a dozen of soldiers on the roof next to Jokhang Palace, close to where over a hundred self-immolations took place since 2012 (France 24 TV). Picture taken by Nachshon Rodrigues Pereira on July 24th 2013.*

As we can see on the picture, there are militants on the roof, ready to take action when they see Tibetans do anything that is considered anti-Chinese: protesting, wearing a Tibetan flag or general misbehaviour.

The two little buildings on each side, just above the middle of the picture are checkpoints. Everyone has to go through them, there is military inside (taking pictures there is prohibited) and they will also check all of the items you are carrying with you. There are also many other checkpoints in town that you don’t have to go through but are simply there to keep an eye on people. In addition to that, government cameras are mandatory in every taxi and rental car (left) en hotel (right).

6.1.5 Insights that can be derived from interviews with Tibetans

During my stay in Tibet I was able to conduct interviews with several Tibetans. Through these interviews we can obtain more qualitative information about the Tibetan situation. This falls within the realm of contextual description (Landman, 2000). Even though generalisations are often difficult based on the experiences of a few people, it can certainly draw a picture of what may be going on and it could be the starting point from a larger and more complete research.

It is obvious that the personal information of the people that were interviewed cannot be provided. However, I have video recordings with excerpts of these interviews and I have written these out completely, this can be found in Appendix A. Of course I am willing to share the sound bites with whomever is interested in these scientifically, after digitally altering the voices. In the next paragraph the recorded interviews will be discussed as well as the information that was shared off the record. The latter one has relatively little scientific value, but it can be a starting point for more research just as well.

Highlights from the recorded interview

In this paragraph the most important parts of the recorded interview will be discussed.

Use of Tibetan flags

The interviewee explains how everyone – even tourists – are not allowed to show any Tibetan flag sign, not even a sticker. Everywhere there are people that will call the police on them and they will be arrested.

Unequal treatment by police

The interviewee describes how the police treats Tibetan troublemakers different than Han Chinese. When a Tibetan and a Chinese get into a fight for whatever reason, the Chinese will tell the police that the Tibetan were being politically incorrect and the Tibetan will be in big trouble. We can see this in the light of the fact that there are many Tibetans detained (and tortured) due to political reasons (ICJ, 1997: 232-260).

Changes since 2008 – feeling less safe

There have been changes in policy over time. The cultural revolution was a difficult period for the Tibetans with many casualties but according to the interviewee the Chinese government has become stricter since 2008. Before 2008, there were no checkpoints, military walking on the streets looking to intimidate people. The
interviewee says that he does not feel comfortable when he is praying in a monastery or just shopping “because everywhere military with the machine gun (sic)”. “So it makes you feel really sad, and very angry, because this is your place”.

According to the interviewee, all the money transfers, e-mails and messages are scanned for ‘suspicious’ actions by the Chinese Big Brother.

*Chinese interest in Tibet partly economically motivated*

The interviewee mentions that the Chinese are developing mining activities in many places in Tibet. Copper, silver and gold. He believes this is an important reason for China to colonize this region.

*What does China tells its citizens about the situation in Tibet?*

According to the interviewee, China tells its citizens that in fact they are liberating Tibet from bad government and from poverty. China is investing in the region, but the truth is the opposite according to interviewee. He/she claims that the government is investing some money in the area indeed but they are taking away most of the profit so that in fact it is nothing but exploitation or old-school colonization economics.

When there are protests in China or in Tibet, the reports will never tell the real reason of the protests. They will always claim that these people are just terrorists. Some Chinese people do know what is going on and some of them do support the Tibetan case.

*Cultural revolution*

Everyone knows what really happened in those years, but everyone is silent about it. In fact, in the Chinese history museum in Beijing I found that these years are simply erased from their history. In Tibet 99% of the buildings were destroyed.

*Future*

The interviewee sees no hope for the future. In 10 to 20 years the cultural genocide should be complete and there will be nothing visible that can remind us to the incredible Tibetan history during many centuries.

**Highlights from off the record interviews**

Some of the things that this interviewee or the other one have said have not been recorded and hence cannot be reproduced. Nevertheless, I want to dedicate a few words to the information they shared.
**Freedom of religion**

The Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leader has escaped the country and will not be able to live freely in Tibet. The Tibetans are not allowed to choose their own leader. The Chinese have appointed a Chinese leader for them and is so corrupting their religion and culture. There is a limit to the amount of Tibetan monks allowed in the few monasteries that are left and most of them are actually also Chinese.

They have been robbed of most of their religious belongings an relics.

Tibetans are not allowed to demonstrate against it, they are not allowed to teach in their own language.

They are not allowed to obtain passports so they cannot escape the country. Several thousands of them try to escape by crossing the borders to India which is quite dangerous due to the terrain and high mountains.

Tibetans are not able to obtain high functions within the government. Even when they do obtain a higher function they will not have any actual decision power. They are structurally paid a lower salary than the Chinese.

All in all, the interviews provide us a more personal description of the Chinese oppression. Unfortunately, the Chinese policies make it impossible to research this matter in a structural way or even to just show what is going on. The Chinese realize that when the world will become aware of what is going on, the international pressure on China will become stronger. This thesis is a tiny contribution to bringing about international awareness about the aggressive oppression and cultural genocide of the Tibetan people by China.
6.2 What reasons have kept the European Union from sanctioning China?

The second sub question for this research deals with the reasons why the EU has not acted towards China. The reasons are manifold and the challenge is to find a paradigm through which we can understand the combination of reasons to increase the general understanding of this case in international relations.

In the state of the art we have already explored several reasons for the inaction of the European Union and we have touched upon some of the political theories that may provide the bigger picture. In this paragraph we will build on this information and look for alternative explanations in the literature. This will be a relatively short chapter as a large part of the literature has already been discussed and because this question is mostly a build-up to the next sub question: an assessment of the several relevant political theories that will eventually help us answer the main research question on which political theory best explains the non-sanctioning of the EU.

What were some of the main reasons for the non-sanctioning of China by the EU that we have found so far?

First of all, the reason for sanctions in this case are human rights infringements by China. As Van Oene (2011) has pointed out, human rights are really not that important for many European countries and especially not important enough to give up economic advantages.). The European countries have simply too many different interests to come to a common policy, even when individual countries speak up against China (also Fox and Godement, 2009).

In addition to that, Fox and Godement states that the three big EU member states – Germany, France and the UK - do not even believe in finding a common approach, even though the effect of a pan-European policy would be much bigger (2009).

Zhiqin (2012) believes that the non-sanctioning of China stems from a misunderstanding between Europe and China. Europe simply does not understand how China wants to be treated. Zhiqin seems to have a very China-centred idea of reality here. Even though it is probably true that Europe does not understand China, Zhiqin thinks that every country should be completely autonomous and that China should be able to do as they please. And furthermore, it is claimed that China in fact has taken great steps to further freedom and democracy in China over the last decades. This may
be true, but if this happens at the cost of the extermination of complete nations, the cost may not outweigh this progress. More importantly, by supporting the Chinese government and by trading with them, they are supporting and financially co-facilitating the oppression of the Tibetan and other minorities in the country with the largest population on Earth.

Fox and Godement also believe that there is some sort of misunderstanding. They claim that Europe is still treating China based on attitudes stemming from the past. Europe is treating China “as the emerging power it used to be, rather than the global force it has become” (2009, p.1). The EU does not sanction according to Fox and Godement, because the EU believes that by showing European commitment with “bilateral agreements, joint communiqués, memoranda of understanding, summits and ministerial visits” China will automatically start “wanting what we want”, even though the reality has proved very differently (Ibid.). Some would argue that Europe is being naïve on the global platform towards China, something that has been argued often about Europe with regard to their European Neighbourhood Policy (for example Melo, 2014).

Another explanation could be that there simply aren’t many incentives for Europe to take action, whereas there are incentives like this to take action with regard to other countries. For Europe, an important incentive to take action is pressure from the United States – as we can see for example with the war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Even though the European people often think different about foreign policy than the US politicians, European leaders do tend to follow the US when the US expresses a strong request to do so (Pew Research Centre, 2002).

High political pressure by the European people could force politicians to take action, but there is a lack of awareness and preparedness to make a difference.

Perhaps the situation in China is not as bad as in those other countries and simply does not ask for sanctions, but scientifically we can certainly state that the Tibetan situation is very alarming and certainly asks for EU action, measured by their own standards. Other possible explanations that have been provided earlier appealed to the ‘multi-levelness’ of foreign policy (Shaohua; 2015) and to the political deadlock that China and the EU are in supposedly (Van Oene, 2011; Shaohua, 2015).

In short, there are quite a lot of different reasons for not sanctioning China that can be derived from the – limited – literature that has been written about it. The main reasons
entail a lack of interest (both internal and external) and a lack of coherence for the EU to be able to act powerfully and a fairly sized EU-naivety. On the other hand, there is a reason why the literature has not produced many works explaining why the EU has not sanctioned China. Generally it is difficult to prove something that did not occur. However, we still want to understand what made the EU decide to sanction dozens of countries and regions but did not chose to sanction China.

To understand that, we can try to use political theory in order to understand within which framework we can explain the actions of the European Union. Unfortunately, political theory is not just a couple of ready-sized templates that we can compare to the current situation. Hay (2002) alone writes many pages on what sorts of political theory exist and the many different views on the world that may influence your results (p. 37-54). After all, we cannot look at the world completely objectively, there is always some sort of filter that decides what we are focussing on (Kuhn, 1962).

Please take note that earlier in this thesis, in the chapter dealing with the research question, the most important political theories have already been discussed before briefly. In the theoretical framework, this manner of going about has been described and legitimized.

And so, in the next paragraph we will look at the most common political templates to see if they will provide more understanding about the current EU policies towards China.
6.3 What are the most relevant political theories regarding this issue and what makes them more or less appropriate for explaining this political situation?

In this paragraph we will have a look at the most relevant political theories that may provide a framework to understand why the EU has not taken action against China, even if that may be expected since China can be seen as a 'most likely case' (Gerring, 2007).

As mentioned before, the main political perspectives dealing with international affairs are realism, constructivism and neo-liberalism, although he claims the constructivism still has a lot to prove (Hay, 2002). ‘Realism’ in itself can be divided into “'classical realism', structural or neo-realism” (Hay, 2002: 13). “Pluralism, liberalism, liberal institutionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, interdependence theory and (...) neo-liberalism” are various references to essentially a quite homogenous concept (Hay, 2002: 13).

However, many of these theories carry severe limitations, partly because they deal with states as the most important actors. Perhaps that is still the best way to explain the political reality, even though the European Union is not a state. However, usually the European Union is being explained in different terms for example by federalism or neofunctionalist theories (Hill and Smith 2005).

Each of these theories has its pros and cons and possible a combination of these theories provides the best answer. Several other theoretical streams have been created, partly evolved from these mainstream theories, which may also be relevant to our research. Swisa claims for example that a mix of realism and constructivism offers the best explanations, which she is referring to as neo-liberal institutionalism (Swisa, 2011).

Why is this scientifically relevant? One of the reasons why this question is very relevant for political scientists and possibly even much broader, is that this debate is very essential for the way we look at Europe. Many scientists, politicians and European citizens believe that ‘Europe’ is morally superior to most countries in the world, that Europe cares the most about human rights, that their politics should be interpreted and explained by looking at these ideological norms and perhaps by looking at its institutions.

However, at this point it seems like there may be a chance that we cannot explain the European silence with regards to human rights toward China by looking at Europe just as a strong supporter of peace, rule of law, democracy and freedom. And that
perhaps Europe should be understand more as for example a rationalist power. That would create a huge paradigm shift in the political world. And there is an ongoing debate on how Europe should be understood, but both the argument that Europe may not be so morally superior, as the exploration of the EU-Tibet case is quite rare in the literature, partly based on the limitations of conducting research in Tibet. If this essay contributes to this larger debate, the added value is clear.

The next paragraph will discuss the pros and cons of the most relevant political theories. As mentioned earlier, even though there is no absolute consensus about the exact definitions of the several political theories, in the core, the ideas are more or less the same. In addition to that, there are many ways to conduct research in a political way (for example: deductive/inductive and parsimony/complexity) and including these would add dozens of extra pages to this essay (Hay, 2002: 27-37). These smaller differences are not important for this research, but they may well be interesting when further research is being conducted. Nevertheless, it will suffice to explain these theories by using Colin Hay’s (2002) description and seeking for other scholars only when deemed necessary for further explanation. For the more EU-related theories Hill and Smith’s (2005) book will be the main source.

Discussion of political theories

Realism and neo-realism

The key assumptions or realism are that international relations can be traced back to objective human laws. Basically, the pursuit of power is always, unavoidably there, leading to conflict and competition. Survival and security are the most important national interests and states are exclusively motivated by these national interests. States are sovereign and recognize no authority above themselves which produces a ‘condition of anarchy’ (Hay, 2002: 18). Conflict is avoided not because countries are not aggressive, but because of a certain balance of power which makes it not profitable to attack. Realism is limited by a very narrow look at human nature, little attention to non-state actors (changes that can be brought about by individuals and charismatic leadership), little attention to economic motivations (Ibid.).

Neo-realism can be seen as an update of realism in a way. Neo-realists have a less narrow idea about human nature but they are still rationalists. States are still rational and thus their behaviour can be explained within the international system. However, in
neo-realism, states care more about maximising their expected utility, they look for “relative rather than absolute gains” (Ibid.). Some of the limitations or neo-realism are similar to the cons of realism. A narrow view on the desires and unity of the state and unclear on the conditions for cooperation or conflict (Ibid.).

To what extent can we apply these theories to what is happening in our EU-China case? As quickly mentioned earlier, the European Union is not a state, so it could be difficult to explain what is happening in the EU within these concepts. However, we have seen that the European Union in this case is actually barely acting as a whole. Three big member states have claimed that they don’t believe in a common policy, many countries have different opinions on whether to act against China and economic motivations have played a role as well. It does not immediately explain why the EU claims to care so much about human rights, but through neo-realism this can be explained simply as a way to gain utility maximisation, aiming for political gains through a positive ethical image. We can also see that a certain balance of power and the fear of economic consequences may be causing the parties not to engage in a large conflict. Even when there were some minor conflicts along the way, there is a large pressure on the countries to fix it, for example when China and the EU were fighting over solar panels and wine imports (The Telegraph, 2013a). And so, all in all, the neo-rationalist theory seems to fit the EU well, if we are willing to accept that the beautiful words on democracy, freedom and rule of law are mostly a sales pitch that people believe in when it’s feasible and convenient.

Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism shares much with realism and over the years it has become closer to neo-realism. It offers a view on the significance of human agents and in contrast to realism it can explain how states can achieve cooperation for mutual advantage (Hay, 2002: 17-23). A global capitalist economy “regulated by a series of interconnected institutions” proves for them that this is possible (Ibid.). They believe that international cooperation is in fact desirable and possible, states are multi-centric, military force is not the preferred way of foreign policy, interdependence plays an important role and “there is a complex relationship between domestic and international politics with no clear or consistent hierarchy (Hay, 2002:17-23). Some of the pitfalls are that neo-liberalism tends to “legitimate the status quo”, to exaggerate the role of interdependence and institutions and it is not clear when we should expect cooperation or when to expect
conflict. Realists would call the neo-liberalists conception of human nature and the possibility to cooperate naïve.

To what extent can we apply this theory to what is happening in our EU-China case? First of all, interdependence and international cooperation, multi-centric states and mutual advantage seem to grasp the idea of the European Union more than the realist theories. Some of the explanations for the EU-China policies refer to Europe’s belief that by working together constructively, this can lead to political and economic gains – it is not clear whether these are absolute or relative. The problem is that the EU as an actor seems to be less relevant in this aspect than it is in many other fields. As realism put it: within these areas of ‘hard politics’, member states are more attached to their sovereignty, and this is indeed a theme that was been touched upon by many authors (described by Hill and Smith, 2005). When many member states have different interests and ideas, sovereignty becomes more important and a lot of the neo-liberal assumptions are not explanatory anymore, even though it seems to be able to explain other areas of EU policy. On the other hand, perhaps the reasons for this cooperation can be found in a more rationalist basic mentality.

**Constructivism**

Constructivism believes that interests are not transparent or uncontested. It’s more about values, ideas and perceptions that decide and explain a state’s behaviour. We need to know more about the identity of the state, to know what the state stands for. Social constructs and intersubjectivity are the key. It assesses the impact of the EU and emphasises the role or norms on international politics. According to Hay, despite the promising ambitions, most political scholars believe that constructivism has not yet realised their goals.

Constructivism is interesting because it deals with something that has been discussed extensively at the introduction to this thesis, namely the expressed identity of the EU. If identity and ideas matter, this can explain why the EU is claiming in so many official documents and speeches that rule of law, democracy and freedom are they key values that shape all internal and external policies. One problem within the EU is that not every country seems to have the same identity and some of these identities are clashing. But is that enough to explain why Europe is not acting against China but they are acting towards other countries? Human rights, love for democracy and the rule of
law simply does not seem to be the most important factor for member states. Perhaps this is caused by the identity of the politicians and its citizens. It seems that economic interests and geo-political interests (for example, the EU-US relationship) on a state level are leading.

There appears to be a small connection between (democratic) political systems and its outcome (some systems are kinder and gentler - Lijphart, 1999) and political parties matter. Constructivism accounts for this and perhaps by understanding the world as it is perceived by the political leaders or a state, we can understand what they perceive as threats, gains and this will explain some of the differences. On the other hand, their desire to stay in power will stay play a role, like most political scientists will agree on (we can think about the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ of Mills for example (1956) but also many other theories on centralisation of power, path dependency etc.). In short, we could say that constructivism may account for a part of the explanatory value, but that the realistic and rationalistic approaches are still carrying the most weight, at least up till here.

We will continue with the theories that Hill and Smith (2005) describe as the main theories that tend to explain EU politics. They distinguish between policies that focus more on ‘high politics’ (“life and death issues of political order and violence”) and ‘low politics’, “which revolves around economic and social questions” (Hill and Smith, 2005: 20-21).

**Federalism and neofunctionalism**

The theory of federalism regarding the EU claims that countries may be interested in forming a federation to diminish the possibilities for internal conflicts. They believe that a strong European foreign policy will be so beneficial for Member States that it would be worth it to give up a large part of their sovereignty. In practice, especially when it comes to *hard politics*, we see that Europe finds it difficult to find each other, we have seen that already before in this thesis, discussing the difficulties within the EU to unite on foreign policy. What we can learn from federalism though is that countries may be interested in preventing conflicts, instead of just fighting whoever is a threat.

Neofunctionalism believes that countries have different reasons for working together, more socio-economic reasons. They believe that Member States can simply provide better services to their people, improve their economy, for example by means
of ‘economy of scale’ and this would give countries a strong incentive to work together. In turn this could lead to a certain spill-over, countries would be more and more interdependent and more interesting in working together even more. This theory can account for part of the European integration process, but when it comes to hard politics countries usually follow a different path. Liberalism and Realism are also mentioned by Hill and Smith (2005), they place realism and federalism in the realm of high politics and liberalism and neofunctionalism in the realm of low politics (2005: 20-24).

Last but not least, according to Hay (2002), institutionalism is not part of the main international relation theories but of general political science theories. However, it offers some interesting insights. This theory puts more emphasis on the role of institutions and the complexity of political systems. History and institutions matter and actors do not always do what they are supposed to do, due to self-interest. Routines, conventions and established interests from stakeholders make it more difficult to reform, which is known as ‘path-dependency’. Often, according to this theory, the ‘logic of appropriateness’ explains more than rationality (Hay, 2002: 10-15). The downside of this theory is that it believes politics is highly unpredictable – which is an important aspect of theory-testing and science – and that it has difficulties to explain quick institutional changes. Nevertheless is path-dependency and appropriateness something that we can imagine being relevant in the EU-China case.

In addition to these theoretical realms, there are alternative approaches that seek to fill the voids that the classical theories are carrying. For instance, instead of trying to explain politics from the ‘outside’, it would be worthwhile to research the policy-making process from the inside (Ibid: 31-33).

In response to realism, alternative approaches argue that for realism and rationalism to fully translate to reality one would have to assume that there are no cognitive constraints for policy-makers, that they have plenty of time to gather and process unbiased information and then make fully rational decisions. In practice, we can find many of these constraints. Whereas constructivism is being mentioned as a possible factor – values and norms that can be part of a state’s reality – also a more economic theory is being offered in neo-Marxism, which states that all institutions are governed by economic interest (Ibid.). The EU integration process is seen as a way to strengthen its economic power at the expense of the periphery – the Lomé Conventions and the establishment of the IMF and the World Bank are examples of policies that can be
explained by this policy (Ibid: 33.). On the other hand, this seems difficult to measure and we know that many other factors play a role, like what the people want, the political view of the government and politicians that have an incentive to take popular measures rather than unpopular ones, even if it’s not the most beneficial for the economy. When it comes to the welfare state for example, there is the shift credit claiming (for handing out money) from blame avoidance (for welfare state retrenchment policies) (Pierson, 1996; Giger and Wilson, 2011).

Taking all these theories into account we can see that all of these theories have their own strengths and weaknesses. Some of these theories make the distinction between hard and soft politics. Interestingly enough, it may well be that the decision of the EU not to sanction China can be traced back to different processes resulting from both hard and soft politics. It can be the dynamics of hard politics that explain why Member States punch below their weight when they have to give up sovereignty and come to a unanimous foreign policy and it can be the dynamics of soft politics that explain why the EU is working together in many other fields and there is a tendency to just avoid conflicts unless necessary. One could certainly say that ‘path-dependency’ and the ‘logic of appropriateness’ can explain part of what is going on. The status-quo is also pitched by neo-liberalism and functionalism and we can understand through these theories that Member States have a reason to stick together to obtain mostly economic gains and federalism may provide some nuance to our realism theory.

Making decisions based on money and power (realism) provides additional insights, whereas constructionism may fall a bit short in explaining the ideals and identity of Europe, since the EU does not seem to make its decisions based on these ideals. All in all, most of the discussed theories can contribute a little bit to our total understanding of this complex political reality. With all the sub questions examined, it is time to combine all the information that has been accumulated in this essay so far. In the next paragraph, which will be the concluding paragraph, the main research question will be assessed, in an attempt to provide a conclusion worthy to contribute to the future of the Tibetan case, but possibly for the way we interpret the EU’s foreign policy in general.
7. Concluding paragraph

7.1 Leading up to the Conclusion

In this last section of this thesis, the research question will be answered, the research will be evaluated and there will be suggestions for further research. Before commencing to answer the main question, a short summary of the sections that lead up to the answer of the research question will be presented. This will provide an easy and compact framework to understand how the answer to the research question has been reached and what the contribution may be of this thesis as a whole.

In the introduction, a seeming contrast had been detected between the powerful language of the EU that claims that all internal and external policies are founded on respect for “human rights, democracy and the rule of law” (Council, 2012) and the EU’s attitude towards several countries that are considered to be the “worst of the worst” when it comes to respecting human rights (Freedom House, 2015a: 2, 20). Looking further into the countries that are sanctioned by the EU, the Tibetan case has been revealed as a most likely case to have spurred EU sanctions, as the human rights situation in Tibet is abominable, a complete people is being wiped out over the course of several decades.

While delving further into the matter, there proved to be relatively little scholarly debates on explaining the EU-China relationship and that there are relatively few scholars that dare to challenge the widely accepted opinion that everything the EU does is vehemently inspired by human rights. Even scholars that notice that many Member States have quite different priorities do not alter their ideas about the EU. Furthermore, studying this specific case of Tibet is heavily obstructed by the absence of many freedoms in Tibet, which makes it hard to conduct good science and to involve empirical findings about Tibet in the debate. The societal and scientific relevance of the Tibetan case, the absence of a well-founded explanation for the non-sanctioning of China by the EU, together with the limited data available on Tibet provided the basis to investigate the following question: Which political theory best explains the non-sanctioning of China since 1989 by the European Union? The indication of the aforementioned contradictions and the building on this observation in the introduction and state of the art are in itself solid conclusions that have generated from this thesis.
After the necessary theoretical paragraphs, the several sub questions have been answered. The answers to the sub questions have taught us more about Tibet, it provided insights in why the EU may have decided to not sanction China and it discussed the most important political theories that are in use to understand EU foreign policy when it comes to *hard politics*. Before conducting this research, my expectation was that the EU is in fact less *constructivist* and more realist than many scholars (and the EU itself) claim.
7.2 Conclusion

Many political theories have been addressed and the previous paragraph has ended with a preliminary conclusion that several political frameworks combined offer a paradigm that may largely explain the behaviour of the EU in the Tibetan case.

To decide which theory is most apt to describe the non-sanctioning of China, let us recap which main reasons it has to account for. Most importantly, the EU shows that it does not have a lot of incentives to act against China. Three big Member States don’t believe in working together in this area, several countries do not want to give up their sovereignty, several countries indicate that their economic interests weighs more than human rights issues, there is little pressure from citizens and media to act. The role of the US and perhaps some naivety of the EU that they can change China for the better just by acting how they do may provide additional reasons for the EU not to sanction China. In fact, we discussed earlier that Europe’s decision to sanction Russia and not China could be largely attributed to US interests and influence in the EU.

Part of the puzzle is the multi-levelness of the decision-making (Keukeleire and Delreux; 2014). To understand what goes on at the EU-level, the national level also needs to be taken into account. However, when countries indicate that they do not want to work together for hard politics, or that they find economic motives more important than moral ones, it is clear that we are dealing with rationalist and realist perspectives. The fact that they are working together in the EU allows for political theories like functionalism, (neo-)liberalism, neo-Marxism and even constructivism to do some of the explaining, but if we consider everything in this thesis so far, we cannot uphold the image of the EU as an actor that intrinsically has the fibre of human rights running through its veins.

We have found that EU member states can give up some sovereignty, that they can work together to mutual benefit, that they share common values. Path-dependency, status-quo and the logic of appropriateness provide a reasonable explanation of why the EU doesn’t do anything radical against China at the global level. At the same time, human rights, democracy and the rule of law are simply hardly on the EU’s mind when it comes to China. In the few cases when the EU acts as a whole, it responds to economic threats and within an economic framework. Otherwise most countries are refraining to ignite China’s wrath, thereby facilitating a cruel extermination of a very old and very cultural people and its country. Power and money over identity and values. Perhaps we could
even state that the EU uses human rights more as a marketing tool than as guidance for their policies. This could even be true for all states that rave about human rights.

That leaves us with quite a sad conclusion. The EU is not really about human rights, democracy and rule of law. Of course they are often considered, as are many other values, but they do not “underpin all aspects of the internal and external policies of the European Union” (Council, 2012). How do we call the political theory that describes this best? Perhaps Swisa (2011) was right in her claim for that a mix of realism and constructivism offers the best explanations, which she is referring to as neo-liberal institutionalism (2011). It is clear however that there is not one theory or even two that gives us the complete picture.

Ironically, while the EU is proclaiming to propagate human rights, by not acting against China they are basically legitimizing and facilitating China’s occupation and destruction of the Tibetan people and culture. This makes Europe liable for human rights infringements. Just realizing the negative role that the EU (and the US) is playing on the global stage would be a good start to solve long-term conflicts, because right now the EU simply overestimates its positive influence on its neighbours (see earlier remarks on the European Neighbourhood Policy) and underestimates its negative influence in the world, which is something we see here, but also in directly or indirectly funding Arab terrorism, thereby destabilizing countries in regions nearby with even more negative consequences.

On a side note, we have found earlier in this thesis that China (and others) does not take the EU seriously as an actor, which means that the EU is less likely to change China and if they are aware of this, they will be less likely to try.

There is also a less sad conclusion. Europe may be more realist and less constructivist than it is considered. However, reality hasn’t changed, rather we have a better understanding of what is going on. We may use this knowledge to our benefit and realize that if we want things to change we have to make sure that it is beneficial for member states to act accordingly. If the EU can gain power, money or silence heavy criticism by sanctioning China for demolishing the Tibetan people and its culture, they will. Also, with a better understanding of the political reality, our debates – in science but also on the streets – can be better, more accurate and this will lead to more truth in society – as debates and science are meant to facilitate the finding of truth. Let’s hope that this little scrap of truth will benefit the old people of Tibet.
7.3 Evaluation of the research and proposals for further research

In general I believe that I have learned a lot during my research and that I have added both to the knowledge and awareness about the Tibetan cause but also to the debate on why the EU is doing so little against China. I think it was more than fair to expect action from the EU based on other sanctions and the severity of the Tibetan case. I also believe that everything mentioned before in the ‘relevance’ paragraph is indeed applicable.

The literature review has been thorough though not completely satisfactory simply because there are not a lot of works about Tibet that are relevant for this thesis. On the other hand, ideally I would have spent more time and more words on the theoretical chapters. For this thesis I deemed it more valuable to use the limited words available to me to find prove whether the EU should act here and whether the EU is less constructivist than it is being considered to be. All in all I think this research offers new information about Tibet and offers more insights in how we should interpret the EU’s foreign policy toward Tibet.

Nevertheless, this is still the beginning. There is a lot of work to be done to describe more accurately and more scientifically what is going on in Tibet and make it visible for the political scientists as well for the outside world. I also believe that this is part of our job as scientists, not just to understand the world better for ourselves, but to use this knowledge to explain it to others as well.

On the other hand, political theorists need to spend a lot of time in really understanding what is going on in Europe. There are many different powers influencing policies at the same time, at different levels. It can be a real challenge to capture all of this in a simple model, without having to resort to postmodernism, because it must be possible to understand, explain and predict political phenomena to a certain extent.

It would be to all of our benefit if we would stop considering Europe to be the ‘good guy’ and start seeing it as a more realist actor. That will surely increase our understanding of what is going on and it will heal us from a certain blindness that believes that even when Europe is infringing human rights – or just facilitating it – the EU is still doing so with the best intentions. That is just very naïve. This blindness keeps many of us from openly criticizing the EU and challenging what it does. Only when we open our eyes, we can be a healthy critical mass and continue to ameliorate the EU in a healthy way. Because, let’s be honest, most Europeans care about freedom, welfare and peace, so we may as well make the EU care about it.
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Appendix A: Interview with an anonymous Tibetan in Lhasa
(Remarks/questions by the interviewer are between brackets and after a hyphen)

Tourist in a group. Someone holds a suitcase with (you know, I don’t know how to say that, you know) like a small logo. Put in a suitcase. Like a stamp. (So, you know.) At first time at the airport or from somewhere (right?). We’re going to picking up them. So we must give (you know) attention, (or you know) we must tell that (- you have to say, remove the sticker). Yes, and we must pull it off. (- Ah shit.) Otherwise (you know), when we check in to the hotel (right), someone they will direct call to police station (- yea really, yea really), maybe the reception (you know) I mean the waiters from the hotel or (you know) anyone. If they have saw it, they direct call to the police station. Then one group coming to us and you know we get in trouble (- big problems). Yes.

But, nowadays, that is very dangerous things (you know), to get fight with Chinese, because (you know) if they call the police (right) and then they say you got political problem. So it’s complete different problems with (you know) two of Tibetan fighting or one Tibetan with one Chinese (-Yes). Complete difference. And so many things changed from that time. (- Can you tell me a couple of things that were changed?) Because you know, from the time, we really lost so many things from that time. At least, you know, much more control from that time. So before 2008, there was no security like this. The checkpoints. Or there is no more militaries walking and searching and now is (you know, really, you know) not really good feeling or not really (how do you say) comfortable feeling when you going to pray in a monastery or (you know) to going to shopping, because everywhere (with) military with the machine gun. So it makes you feel really sad, and very angry, because this is your (- place), right? And (you know) I like my job, right? Because you know, I’m a tour guide, and especially European and (you know) Western. Yea, it’s very good. So from that time, so many controls. (-Yes.) So, limit for the Western to come to Tibet. (- What do the Chinese people think is going on in Tibet? Do you know?) Yes of course, because not only the people and (you know) the culture. (Just because of you know, I don’t know how to say that). Because (you know) nowadays there is so many place in Tibet with Chinese mining (you know), so that is one of the big reason for Chinese. Because we have this such big land (- yes). And, we have that such (you know) much different kind of mine. (- Mine, like gold?) Gold, copper,
silver, all we have. (- That is why they want this region?) Yes, that is one of very important reasons.

(- Yes. My question is: the Chinese people outside Tibet. What do they hear about what’s going on here? What does the government of China tells them?)

All the time (you know) the government helping to the peoples life (and you know), that thing (you know?).

(- So they’re saying that you want the government to help you.)

No, I mean, the Chinese people, in all of Tibet, in midland China (right? –yes ) all the time thinking and because you know from the media, from television, all the time showing and saying kind of that thing you know, the government how much they have paid for Tibetan people’s life and for you know develop for Tibetan.

(- So the Chinese think that the Chinese government is doing good for you?)

Yes, Yes. The people in midland of China. All time thinking about that. But the truth in our country in complete opposite (Yes).

From government they have (you know just for example, they have) paid for one subject in Tibet for build something, 100 yen, then another 50 at least will miss, (eh, how do you say) will dis that. And, the 50 will pay for that project, right? And then another 20 will disappear again, so the final we can get only 30, right? And then from the mining side or from other side they will bring another 200 back to mainland China. So.

(-When you had protests in 2008, did Chinese hear about it or not, did they hear about it?)

Yea of course.

(- So, what were they told, why did you demonstrate? What did the Chinese government say why you were demonstrating?) (unclear)

Everyone they know very clear about this case (- they do?)

Yes, of course. Because you know, here in Lhasa right, everywhere (that, you know) (unclear) with the Chinese people, with big (unclear) and burning with Chinese stores all over Chinese, so of course everyone know very clear about this.

(- So they are just pretending that they don’t know?)

Yea. But the from news or from Chinese media they will (you know, they will) not accept that, and they will say the people in Lhasa going to (you know) to destroy the thing and to stole, or (you know) always complete different or opposite thing they will report (- yes). They will never say, this is kind of case to against the Olympic Games or government. They will not
say like that, they will never. Never say people, a group of people going to destroy and (you know) kill the people, Chinese and also Tibetan (you have), always like people.

(- Do you have friends that are from the Han people?)
The real good friends I don’t have. Because you know every company or (you know) in every department of (you know) the official organisation, because I mean the workers, the people, always mixed (you know), in your company maybe (you know) ten with Tibetan or another 4 or another 10 with Chinese, all like that nowadays. Maybe you know some of the you know Tibetan has with the very good Chinese friend, but I have never with the Chinese people.

(- Are there any Chinese people that in here that support the Tibetan case? Are there Chinese people that know what is going on and think that what China is doing is not right?)
Yes, but you know, I’ve really (you know) met with some of Chinese guy, who is thinking and you know more worse of (you know) from of us. Because not 100% Chinese love their country, right. Or especially, or at least with this love, right?

Special words, in your mail (right) you have wrote something with special words in, I think at least will gives warning for some of (you know) special department of government (?) police station.

(- What happened here in the 60’s, do you know?) during the cultural revolution. Yes, everyone know about that, not only in here. (- The official number is 300,000, according to the Chinese.) Yes, actually it’s most places of China, and especially with the religion things (right?), so like in Tibet like Lhasa, only this building was survived in that time, only the Potala palace. And then the other 99% was destroyed.

In a one of the missing pieces of the interview, I asked what if there was anything I could do to enhance the situation. He/she answered me to send my friends to Tibet and have more people learn about what’s going on.

(- How many years do you think it will take before your culture is disappeared here?) Hmm, that I’m not sure because now is still (...) but 10 or 20 years that is (..).

In another missing piece of the interview he/she estimated the amount of high school drop outs due to the costs of education to be about 30-40%.
Appendix B: Additional Images from Lhasa

Image B1: Main square with Chinese flags visible on top of most buildings on the side.

B2. Same square, seen from the other side.
B3. Chinese flags on main road in Lhasa. For hundreds of meters, these coupled flags are positioned every few meters.

B4. One of the few monasteries left in Tibet, also with a Chinese flag on top.
B5. Checkpoint in Lhasa, outside the Old City. Including a Chinese Flag.