

THE EU IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER: IN DEFENCE OF NORMATIVE POWER 2.0

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of the European Union (EU) as a normative power in a pluralising international society after the demise of the “liberal moment” in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. It suggests that the traditional understanding of normative power (NPE 1.0) was normatively problematic as it was infused with othering practices and led to the neglect of the EU’s own shortcomings. Thus, the demise of NPE 1.0 may be seen as an opportunity to re-articulate normative power rather than abandon it. The paper attempts such a re-articulation building on elements in the EU’s own official narrative, including Commission President von der Leyen’s “geopolitical Commission” and the concept of “principled pragmatism” in the EU Global Strategy. It is premised on the assumption that although the von der Leyen Commission seems to have taken a realist turn, such a turn continues to be contested and open to alternatives.

Keywords: European Union, foreign policy, normative power, international society.

DEĞİŞEN DÜNYA DÜZENİNDE AB: NORMATİF GÜÇ 2.0 SAVUNMASI

Öz

Bu makale, Soğuk Savaş’ın hemen ardından “liberal moment”in sona ermesinden sonra, çoğullaşan bir uluslararası toplumda Avrupa Birliği’nin (AB) normatif bir güç olarak rolünü tartışmaktadır. Makale, geleneksel normatif güç anlayışının (NPE 1.0), ötekileştirme uygulamalarıyla iç içe olması ve AB’nin kendi eksikliklerinin göz ardı edilmesine yol açması sebebiyle, normatif açıdan sorunlu olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Bu nedenle NPE 1.0’ın sona eriyor oluşu, normatif gücü terk etmek yerine yeniden ifade etmek için bir

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fırsat olarak görülebilir. Makale, Komisyon Başkanı von der Leyen'in "jeopolitik Komisyon" ve AB Küresel Stratejisi'nin "ilkeli pragmatizm" kavramı da dahil olmak üzere, AB'nin kendi resmi anlatısını üzerine kurduğu unsurları yeniden dile getirme girişiminde bulunmaktadır. Von der Leyen Komisyonu bir gerçekçiliğe dönüş gösterse de makalede, böyle bir eğilimin tartışmalı ve alternatiflere açık olmaya devam ettiği varsayımına dayanılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, dış politika, normatif güç, uluslararası toplum.

The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective

European Security Strategy, 2003: 10

The EU will promote a rules-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core. ... Through our combined weight, we can promote agreed rules to contain power politics and contribute to a peaceful, fair and prosperous world.

Global Strategy, 2016: 17

The End of Normative Power?

The early 2000s count among the great moments of European Union (EU) foreign policy. The Kyoto Protocol, which the EU had fought for and which had been signed in 1997, finally passed the ratification threshold in 2005. Likewise, the Rome Statute, signed in 1998, led to the institutionalisation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002, again with a lot of EU support, often in direct confrontation with the United States (US). 2004 saw the "big bang" enlargement to Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, in the course of which the new member states had to significantly change their legal orders. And in 2005/6, the EU deployed a monitoring mission in post-conflict Aceh, Indonesia, to make the Memorandum of Understanding to end the conflict work.¹

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All of these events are rightfully considered great policy successes. They stand for a change in international politics towards a more rule-bound, more just, more peaceful, or what English School theorists tend to call more “solidarist” international society (Shapcott, 2000; Weinert, 2011). The EU, no doubt, was among the core actors pushing such a “solidarisation” of international society (Ahrens and Diez, 2015). It seemed to be willing and able, in Ian Manners’ words, to “shape conceptions of the ‘normal’”, rather than primarily pursuing narrow economic or geopolitical interests. In a highly influential piece at the time, Manners thus called the EU a “normative power” (Manners, 2002).

Yet compare these success stories to some of the core events barely a decade later. The Eurozone crisis from 2009 onwards led to major internal rifts and undermined EU economic and financial reputation externally. The rise of populism since the early 2010s has not spared the EU, and the developments in some member states have challenged if not undermined the rule of law, one of the core norms of the Union. In climate change, while the United Nations (UN) member states eventually passed the Paris Agreement in 2015, the EU failed to extend the Kyoto Protocol, and the bottom-up approach of Paris runs counter to the EU’s preferred method of setting binding targets. The migration crisis of 2015 has highlighted internal conflicts as well as the limits of EU cosmopolitanism, and has added to re-bordering policies. In the immediate EU neighbourhood, confrontation with Russia increased, especially in Ukraine. And add to this the 2020 Brexit – little seems to be left of the jubilations of the early years of the millennium.

Thus, all indications seem to suggest that Normative Power Europe (NPE) has come to an end. Rather than the EU shaping conceptions of the normal, it seems that the *Realpolitik* “normal” has caught up with NPE. And given the timing, in retrospect, it also seems that it was not really the EU as such that caused the changes in the 2000s. Instead, NPE seems to have been part of a “liberal moment” in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, which made a solidarising foreign policy possible. That moment however turned out not to be the “end of history” that Francis Fukuyama (1989) had proclaimed, and the 2010s saw the rise of new forms of autocracy, populism and unilateralism.

This paper argues that the “old” NPE is indeed a thing of the past. Rather than deploring its demise, however, I suggest that this development opens up the possibility to rectify some of the problems of “NPE 1.0”, in particular, the Eurocentrism and Othering that it entailed, and which in effect undermined its own ethics. Thus, we may work towards an “NPE 2.0”, which is based much more on dialogue and mutual recognition (Sjursen, 2017) while still emphasising a particular normative standpoint. This NPE 2.0 is not a mere utopia, but may be built on elements already present in current EU foreign

policy, despite its realist tendencies. Such elements offer alternative policy visions that stand in contrast to the focus of the von der Leyen Commission on a Security Union and the defence of a “European Way of Life” (European Commission 2020).

In pursuing this argument, the next section recaps the NPE debate, starting with the conception of the EU as a civilian power in the 1970s and then summarising Manners’ original NPE concept and some of the discussions it provoked. I argue that these discussions have often failed to take account of the different epistemological levels that Manners’ concept worked on, and more specifically, that they did not take the ethics of NPE seriously. This leads to a reassessment of the end of NPE 1.0, before the concluding part outlines the contours of a reformulated NPE.

A Different Kind of Actor

When the anti-Fascist resistance movement in the 1930s and 1940s conceived of European integration as the path towards a post-World War II world order, its point of departure was that nationalism, and thus the organisation of politics in nation-states, was the root cause of the two world wars that had brought Europe to collapse (Diez, 1997). An alternative order, therefore, needed to overcome the nation-state model. Regional integration was to do this trick through a combination of David Mitrany’s functionalism and a sense of regional community (Mitrany, 1966 [1943]; see Diez, 2019). In relation to the discussion of the EU as a global actor, this meant that the underpinning idea of integration ran counter to the organisation of international politics in nation-states. However, this question initially did not play much of a role as the integration process was largely inward-looking and aimed at transforming relations between its participants. While some of these participants at the time were still colonial powers and integration at least in the minds of some of its proponents had a larger imperial dimension including access to raw materials and a colonial sense of “Eurafrica” (Hansen and Jonsson 2012), this aspect was not the main driving force of integration even if it does leave a bitter side-taste and still needs to be given its proper place in EU historiography (Nicolaïdis, 2015; Pace and Roccu, 2020).

This bias towards internal affairs has changed only slowly, and some would say it still exists today. After the failure of the European Defence Community and the Fouchet Plans to come to some coordinated European foreign and security policy in the 1950s and early 1960s, it was only around the year 1970 that the question of the then European Communities’ (EC) role in international politics rose to the forefront of public debate. It was a time of what looked like a global power shift, with the economic rise of Japan, the oil crisis, the Vietnam war, and (premature) debates about a declining US hegemony. In this context,

Europeans as well as non-Europeans argued for the EC to become more than an economic powerhouse. In the EC, a series of meetings of the Heads of Government or State led to a practice that would later become institutionalised as the European Council. In 1970, they approved a report written by an expert panel headed by the Belgian diplomat Étienne Davignon on a European foreign policy, and in 1974, they tasked the Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans to draft a report on European Union. Meanwhile, the US administration declared 1973 to be the “Year of Europe” (Diez, 1995). The US desire to deal with a more unified European policy became famous in Henry Kissinger’s alleged quibble of not knowing whom to call if he wanted to call Europe (Rachman, 2009).

It was in this context that François Duchêne proposed the concept of civilian power (Duchêne, 1972, 1973). In contrast to the demands that Europe needed more political clout and develop into a traditional great power, Duchêne argued that this would not suit the EC given its history and capabilities. Rather than venturing into areas that it was not made for, the EC should stick to its true strengths and offer an alternative to great power aspirations by promoting the civilisation of international politics through international law and multilateralism. This was not an altruistic proposal, as such a civilisation of international politics would also contribute to a stable order that would benefit the development of global trade, on which the EC’s prosperity relied. It was however a proposal that picked up the post-war impetus of integration not to replicate traditional *Realpolitik* structures but to overcome them. In that spirit, there was not much mileage in reproducing traditional great power politics and making the EC more like a traditional federal state. Indeed, this was something that Mitrany himself had been worried about, that European integration would in the end replicate the problems of the nation state on a higher level rather than transcending them (Mitrany, 1965; see Diez, 2019).

The question raised by Duchêne’s concept was whether such an alternative was actually feasible, or whether the structure of international politics would not dictate a development of the EC towards a traditional great power – or its demise. Hedley Bull (1982) famously found the idea of a civilian power to be a “contradiction in terms”. To Bull, who thought of international society as strictly state-focused and to whom “great power management” was one of the five main institutional pillars of such a society, it was simply not possible to be a real “power” in international relations and not develop at least a minimum of military capacities and unified decision-making.

Against this pessimistic view, Ian Manners in 2002 reformulated Duchêne’s concept of civilian power as normative power. He thus emphasised that EU power lay in the norms advanced by the EU themselves, and that therefore, the EU would be able to ‘shape conceptions of “normal”’ (Manners, 2002). In other

words, what Bull considered “normal” was in Manners’ view by no means given but historically contingent. Rather than having to conform to traditional great power rules, the EU would be able to change these rules and establish new standards in international politics built on cosmopolitan norms of human rights, the rule of law, peace or sustainable development. In pursuing these norms, the EU, argued Manners, was not primarily concerned with economic or geopolitical gains, but with standard-setting in the name of a better world. It would therefore pursue these norms even in the absence of obvious material gains, which of course did not exclude the possibility that such norms would nonetheless be to the economic benefit of the Union.

One of Manners’ core claims was that the EU exerted this normative power not only as an actor, but also through its sheer existence and its embedding in the structures of international society. He, therefore, took issue with the prevailing debate about the actorness of the EU and argued that the EU could be a power even without developing as a fully-fledged actor. Thus, the pathways through which the EU promoted norms that Manners identified included not only active norm promotion through information and pressure, but also ‘transference’ through the embedding of actors within EU institutional contexts or simply ‘contagion’ by setting an example of regional integration.

The norms promoted by the EU fit into a “solidarist” agenda in English School terms (Buzan, 2004; Shapcott, 2000; Wheeler, 1992). “Solidarism” in this sense opposes a “pluralist” conception of international politics in which states are primarily or even exclusively concerned with their own survival and cultural difference, and share few fundamental norms except those of sovereignty and non-intervention and their derivatives. The classic institutions of international society identified by Hedley Bull (1977), such as diplomacy or great power management, all served the purpose of maintaining the integrity and dominance of states over and against other actors. Yet in a solidarist international society, states bear a responsibility for “strangers” (Wheeler, 2000) – for the well-being of individuals of a broader world society other than their own citizens. They thus have to take human rights violations seriously, but also famines and malnutrition or environmental degradation, all of which run counter to the well-being of individuals. In such a solidarist international society, not only states but also individual human beings and non-state actors are the carriers of rights and responsibilities.

The EU’s endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the Rome Statute establishing the ICC and the Kyoto Protocol to combat climate change are all examples of its normative power and such a wider responsibility (Ahrens, 2018a; Ahrens and Diez, 2015). The transformation of international institutions within the EU (Diez *et al.*, 2011; Diez and Whitman, 2002) and its promotion of regional integration (Adler and Crawford, 2006; Diez and Tocci,

2017) demonstrate the ways in which the EU has worked to change the structure of international society.

The Epistemologies and the Ethics of Normative Power Europe

Manners' normative power article triggered a massive debate in the literature. It clearly hit a nerve. While for some, it provided the EU with its long-sought identity and captured its essence, others considered it an entire misrepresentation, denying the special nature of the EU and accusing NPE endorsers of whitewashing or, in environmental matters, greenwashing the EU.

As Tocci (2008) pointed out, one may assess normative power in terms of normative intentions, means and results. While very few in the normative power debate studied the effects of EU policy and whether they were in line with the solidarisation agenda, a lot more looked at the policy itself and the degree to which it could be justified on normative grounds or rather reflected, against Manners, economic interests or (less frequently) geopolitical aspirations, often pointing to inconsistencies in EU external relations. An easy target, for instance, was EU arms exports in the face of human rights violations in the receiving countries (Erickson, 2013; Hansen and Marsh, 2015). Yet even in environmental policy, EU engagement in favour of stricter global standards may have been spurred by the need to create a level playing field on the global market for EU products that had to conform to such stricter standards because of domestic pressures (Afionis and Stringer, 2012; Falkner, 2007). Others saw EU normative power as nothing else than the creation of a sphere of influence by a regional hegemonic power (Hyde-Price, 2006). From an outside perspective, normative power looked more like norm imposition and othering to let the EU appear as the shining light of a new civilisation (Diez, 2005; Fisher, Onar and Nicolaidis, 2013; Zielonka, 2013; Sepos, 2013; Cebeci, 2019). More positively, some contributions pointed to the fact that norms were not necessarily good but could be bad or at least contested, as in the promotion of free trade (Parker and Rosamond, 2013; Rosamond, 2014), while others interpreted this as the true EU power being a market power (Damro, 2015) or succumbing to economic interests (Mckenzie and Meissner, 2017). Yet others argued that the inconsistencies were not necessarily undermining, but possibly even made EU impact towards a solidarising international society possible (Ahrens, 2018a, 2018b).

In its strive to demonstrate that the EU is or is not a normative power, this debate largely focused on Manners' endorsement of the transformative capacity of European integration and the EU. Yet at least if read in conjunction with Manners' other work, the 2002 article may at least also be seen as a critical engagement with EU foreign policy (Manners, 2011), holding up a "Habermasian mirror" that sets out an ideal situation and grounds it in existing

policies and norms, thus serving as a reminder that the solidarising agenda is not a pipe dream but rather a concrete possibility that should serve as a yardstick for EU policy.

In that sense, Manners' argument operates on three epistemological levels, the combination of which does not exactly follow positivist understandings of social science. On a first level, Manners *describes* the EU in his analysis of EU core norms and the example of the EU's campaign against the death penalty. This is the level on which most of its subsequent supporters and opponents have read the piece. On a second level, Manners adds an *explanatory* layer by linking EU policy to its constitutionalised norms, and suggesting the pathways through which normative power may work. This part of the argument has been largely ignored, and is perhaps its weakest aspect. Yet read from a third perspective, the argument itself takes a *normative* turn in setting out that the EU *ought* to be a normative power (Manners, 2008). Such a reading points to the fact that elements of normative power are already in place, even though EU policy more often than not tends to ignore them. They show that "normative power" is not a contradiction in terms, that the "normal" in international society is not a given, and that the EU may and ought to contribute to the shaping of this "normal" (Manners, 2006a).

Thus, we can note a discrepancy between the political impact of the normative power argument and its critical-normative impetus. Politically, the concept served as a focal point for the EU's external identity construction as a "force for good". The academic debate was part of this broader discourse (Cebeci, 2012). Its focus on the descriptive level of Manners' argument reaffirmed the identity of the EU as a normative power even in its contestation. Yet the argument required the readiness to think in more ambivalent terms rather than the often simplistic either/or arguments of the debate: to think of the EU as a normative power and to reject many of its present policies.

This does not mean that the ethics of normative power are defensible in all respects. At least in some of the early work on the subject, there is a certain naïve cosmopolitanism in Manners' argumentation, which equates the EU with universal norms. To Manners (2006b: 171), one of the core questions to be asked is "does exercising normative power based on the universal claims of external reference points lead to the strengthening of the external at the expense of the power?". As part of the evidence for such an EU cosmopolitanism, he suggests that, unlike the US, the EU binds itself to international treaties and honours them even if this runs against its own interests (Manners, 2006b: 172-173). Yet such a position overlooks that the development of international society and thus of universal standards and international law is dominated by Eurocentrism so that one would expect them to broadly conform to EU norms. Furthermore, the link to universal values does not prevent the construction of

others as violating these norms while the self is represented in contrast as the good one, often ignoring its own shortcomings and inconsistencies (Diez, 2005).

Yet despite this caveat, the normative reading of normative power provides us with a better base to assess the development of EU foreign policy since the early 2000s. It reminds us of the need for reflexivity in EU normative power and that a missionary civilising drive is not what a normative power should engage in. Such a drive, however, characterised “Normative Power Europe 1.0” until the mid-2010s. The presumed demise of the EU as a normative power thus may rather be seen as the demise of this self-righteous “NPE 1.0”, and as an opening to reformulate and revitalise Normative Power Europe.

The End of Normative Power Europe 1.0

Towards the end of the first decade of the new millennium, the liberal truths of the immediate post-Cold War world, in which NPE 1.0 had thrived and which it fostered, came under increasing attack in the context of both material and broader discursive challenges. The financial shenanigans and investments into the sometimes vague promises of dot.com enterprises, on which some of the growth of the late 1990s and 2000s had been built, fell apart and created first a financial crisis, which was followed by a debt crisis that jeopardised the Euro. Together with the economic rise of China, this undermined the economic attractiveness of the EU and its liberal trade norms. Building on its economic successes, China, especially under the leadership of Xi Jinping, extended its political reach beyond its immediate neighbourhood through the Belt and Road Initiative, and has thus started to spread its own norms and values such as *tianxia* and *gianxi* (Kavalski, 2013; Kavalski and Cho, 2018; Wei, 2020).

Beyond the increasing influence of China, autocratic governance spread in many parts of the world, especially in Central Asia (Costa Buranelli, 2020), but also, through right-wing populism, in the former Western liberal heartland, including the US (Stengel *et al.*, 2019; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; Mudde, 2004). Whereas democracy seemed the only way to go in the 1990s and early 2000s, the pendulum seemed to have swung back by the mid-2010s, and so EU democracy promotion faced increasing competition. Likewise, extensions of international law, and especially the inclusion of world societal claims, were more openly seen as expressions of European or Western hegemony. To some, the intervention in Libya marked the end of R2P (Rieff, 2011), and African states questioned the neutrality of the ICC (Lugano, 2017) - both had been cornerstones of EU normative power. Even worse, supposedly core EU values such as the rule of law have even been openly challenged by some EU member state governments (Kelemen, 2019), and the EU’s wavering relationship with Turkey has further undermined its credibility in the fight for human rights.

The demise of NPE 1.0 is thus visible across a number of policy areas. In migration, for instance, EU member states moved from rescue missions to combatting terrorism and smuggling in the Mediterranean and undermined its human rights credentials (Ceccorulli *et al.*, 2021). The EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016, agreeing on containing the influx of migrants from Turkey into the EU and offering financial support for Turkey's harbouring of refugees, was another indication of a tightening of the outer borders of the EU, put into doubt the EU's cosmopolitan credentials, and smacked of self-interested transactionalism.

In climate change, the EU had to accept that it was not able to convince the other UN member states to agree on a top-down follow-up regime to the Kyoto Protocol (Lucke *et al.*, 2021). Instead, the Paris agreement was heavily influenced by the bargaining positions of China and the US (Eckersley, 2020), and enshrined a process of indirect governance through nationally determined contributions, coupled with best practices and discursive pressure. At the time of writing, the results seem to fall far short of the agreed target of keeping the rise in global temperatures "well below" two degrees Celsius (Art. 2.1a).

In the promotion of regional integration, the former EU model, although sometimes used more in form than substance (Fioramonti and Mattheis, 2016), lost appeal, whereas alternatives, such as the "ASEAN way" of a looser form of cooperation became more self-confident, although its relative success may rather be seen as an effect of lower expectations (Beeson and Diez, 2018). Meanwhile, agreements with other regional organisations such as the Free Trade Agreement with Mercosur remain problematic and meet resistances from within the EU in relation to environmental standards, among other things (Krämer, 2021).

Speeches and official documents also demonstrate a greater emphasis on interests and formulate geopolitical desires. The emphasis in the 2016 EU Global Strategy on "shared interests" (EU, 2016: 7, 9, 16 *et passim*) and its core concept of "principled pragmatism" (EU, 2016: 8, 16) have been interpreted as a sign of a turn to *Realpolitik* (Biscop 2016). Indeed, the Strategy does explicitly say that "the idea that Europe is an exclusively 'civilian power' does not do justice to an evolving reality" (EU, 2016: 4). And even the concept of "resilience" is not primarily used, as one would expect, for all societies within the EU, but mostly to strengthen the defence of borders and neighbouring regions (EU, 2016: 9, 23-24). All of this seems to imply a move from normative to geopolitical power.

At first glance, this is supported by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's announcement of a more "geopolitical Commission", claimed, for instance, in advance of her assuming office, in November 2019 at the Paris

Peace Forum (von der Leyen, 2019a), and often repeated, for instance in her mission letter to High Representative Josep Borrell (von der Leyen, 2019b). At the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, von der Leyen called on “Europe ... to be more assertive in the world”, and spoke of “hard power” and a “geopolitics of mutual interest” (von der Leyen, 2020). Likewise, the Commission’s Strategy for a Security Union (Commission 2020) focuses on threats to the “European way of life” and links various policies to internal and external security, which is seen as intertwined. Matching this, member state politicians, above all French President Macron, have called for a greater autonomy of the EU, also in military affairs (BBC, 2018).

All of these policies and articulations seem to suggest the end of normative power. They seem to corroborate Mitrany’s concern that European integration would eventually replicate the nation-state on a higher level, thus reproducing and possibly magnifying its problems (Mitrany, 1965). And they seem to suggest that Bull was right in his assessment that civilian power was an impossibility (Bull, 1982). Yet perhaps this conclusion needs another look.

In Defence of Normative Power Europe 2.0

In this last section, I will outline an alternative reading of a “geopolitical Commission” and “principled pragmatism” and relate this to an understanding of normative power that has the potential of being more in line with the ethics of Normative Power Europe as identified above and overcoming some of the problems of the normative power practices of the past. This is not to deny the realist tendencies in current EU policy, but instead to demonstrate that even some of the core concepts of this policy may well be construed in a different light and thus open up the space for alternatives in an ongoing struggle about the EU’s future role in global politics.

To start, let us have another look at the articulations of a “geopolitical Commission”. At closer inspection, while von der Leyen uses the term “geopolitical”, she seems to equate this with the old desire for a greater global presence of the EU rather than classical geopolitics. In particular, her call is infused with references to the promotion of common values. In her speech at the Peace Forum, the bulk of the text is about multilateralism and “strong institutions” in order to defend those values. Von der Leyen elaborated:

My vision is of a Europe which helps to reconcile those who are divided, [a] Europe that brings together those who are apart, but at the same time, that demands responsibility. From ourselves, from our friends and from our partners (von der Leyen, 2019a).

Her mission letter to Borrell has a slightly more strategic tone:

At the same time, the need for European leadership in the world is more pronounced than ever before. This is both a responsibility and an

opportunity for our Union. We must use our diplomatic and economic strength to support global stability and prosperity, as well as making ourselves more competitive and better able to export our values and standards. The respect for human rights and the rule of law should be the foundations for our international cooperation (von der Leyen, 2019b).

I read this as a text characterised by ambiguity: it is on the one hand a commitment to norm promotion for norms' sake, on the other hand, a pledge to fight for EU interests, and in particular economic interests. In that sense, it is similar to the ambiguity of "principled pragmatism". Rather than indicating a turn to realism, this concept may be interpreted as the recognition that we live in a pluralist world in which not everyone shares the EU's own values and interests, while at the same time reaffirming that it is important for the Union to stick to its principles. This is clearly how HR Advisor Nathalie Tocci, who coordinated the drafting of the Strategy, intended principled pragmatism to be understood. In her narration of events, the concept was developed to counter demands "of rather crude realpolitik", in which "[s]ome European officials insisted on a Union (literally) armed to take on the geopolitical game, fighting with, or in, opposition to other global players" (Tocci, 2020: 179). In contrast, to her, the Global Strategy and its principled pragmatism are an indication of a "self-questioning and in some respects more humble Union" (Tocci, 2017: 497).

Perhaps the quotations above do not sound so humble. Yet I think we ought to read the Global Strategy and the idea of a "geopolitical Commission" in conjunction with some of the problems of NPE 1.0. Among these, two stand out. One was that the EU usually did not refer to interests, which often meant that interests were hidden in a soup of nice-sounding words of a better future. It would have been good, for instance, if EU member states had been upfront about their interests in dealing with Turkey in the 2000s, about their hesitations and uncertainties, rather than pretending to negotiate according to the rules but in fact undermining them (Diez, 2007). This would not have made negotiations easier, but it would have provided for more honesty and, in retrospect, for less disappointment. The other problem was the already mentioned lack of self-reflection. EU politicians, in member states and on EU level, more often than not saw themselves as the ones who had overcome problems of bad governance, racism, or poverty and were at least on the way towards a greener way of life. Thus, they seemed to feel that they were able to tell others what to do, presenting them as the problem and constructing Europe as impeccable (Diez, 2005). But on many counts, the EU has not been impeccable. Recognising that there may be alternative pathways to regional integration, for instance, is a new step in the Global Strategy (EU, 2016: 32). Likewise, EU actors have only started to engage with a variety of actors and accept different knowledges in the fight against climate change after the devastating failure of

the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit (Lucke *et al.*, 2021), and even if this demonstrates a change of the EU position in the climate regime, it also indicates a new approach that is more in line with what one would expect from a normative power.

These may be small steps – but they are outlining what NPE 2.0 may look like, and they are an indication that the new role of the EU in a pluralist world after the end of the post-Cold War liberal moment does not have to be that of a realist great power. Instead, they open up the possibility of a normative power that makes clear where it stands; that introduces a new degree of honesty and transparency into diplomacy; that admits to its own failures and shortcomings; that respects its partners and their differences, while at the same time making clear its own interests and values; that recognises the inevitable ambiguities of a solidarising international society; and that works with its partners not to make them do what the EU wants it to do but to find common ground to build our future. This would be a normative power that takes up its Habermasian mirror more often to take a critical look not whether others, but whether itself lives up to the norms that it promotes.

Of course, this vision of the EU's global role will not be shared by everyone. And of course, many do work towards an EU that is stronger militarily rather than in setting its own example, and which is articulating its interests not for the sake of honesty in dialogue, but in order to push them through regardless. Plus, we have seen how in the migration crisis and elsewhere, the EU and its member states have shamefully undermined its values, and how member states themselves make shambles of the rule of law and human rights. So I am not claiming that my reading of a geopolitical Commission and principled pragmatism is the only one possible, or that it is an accurate forecast of the EU's future, just as Manners' portrayal of the EU as a normative power was not an accurate empirical description of the Union at the time. Yet, I do want to insist that likewise, the *Realpolitik* reading is also only one possible understanding and not the "truth" of EU policy.

By the same token, the understanding of European integration that underpins my argument has historically not been uncontested. Consider that some central figures even in an alternative vision of integration as integral federalism, which in many ways is closely linked to the idea of NPE 2.0 put forward here (see Diez, 1997), including Alexandre Marc and Denis de Rougemont, clearly had culturally conservative, white civilisationist tendencies (Hellman, 2002). Hans Kundnani (2021) is therefore right when he warns of a "synthesis of 'pro-Europeanism' and civilisationalism". Yet in his response to Kundnani, Mark Leonard (2021) is also right in insisting that "[t]he entire European project is an elaborate attempt to transcend a history of nationalism in Europe and imperialism in the wider world". The issue is that "Europe" is a contested

concept. This is exactly why it is necessary to prevent European foreign policy from the bards of NPE's missionary inclinations to the worse of realist defenses of a privileged European "way of life". Rather than throwing the possibilities of the European baby out with the bathwater of cultural and civilisational superiority, a better strategy is to look for those traits in the integrationist discourse that do open up the vista of an alternative global order.

Thus, we ought to understand the future of the EU in international society as an ongoing struggle, in which we have a responsibility to participate. Duchêne's and Manners' proposals of civilian and normative power have too often been understood as mere descriptions. Instead, they were critical appeals for a more humane and more responsible European Union – appeals that they thought had a grounding in present practices. In the same way, NPE 2.0 presents us with a vision, but one that builds on elements in existing EU policies, while eschewing others.

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