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Making sense of the EU's security policy towards China: a liberal-relational approach to hard security issues

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Abstract

Many scholars would reject the notion of an “EU security policy towards China”, many others would agree that there is something that might deserve this name, but that such a policy is highly incoherent and ineffective. I argue that these verdicts are based on the application of the traditional and narrow concept of security or – worse – on a neglect of the concept ‘security’ and its different meanings altogether.

Contrary to these authors, I argue that the EU does pursue a constant and coherent security policy towards China. As I have made this argument elsewhere (Renner 2012), the focus of this paper will be to further elaborate the most controversial part, which is the re-conceptualization of the concept ‘security’ and the development of four ideal-types of security. Two of them – the liberal type and the relational type – are crucial for understanding EU security policy towards China.

I’ll briefly illustrate the argument by undertaking a short discourse analysis of the main policy papers of the EU.

1. Introduction

The basic argument of this paper is that there is a constant and coherent security policy of the European Union towards China which I call a 'liberal-relational' approach to security.

As I have already made this argument elsewhere (Renner 2012– *in case anyone is interested, I'm happy to send you a copy of the article if you lack online access to the journal, just drop me a line*), the focus of this paper will be to further elaborate the most controversial part: the re-conceptualization of the concept 'security'.

There has been a growing interest in security related aspects of EU-China relations (cf. Casarini 2009: 4f.; van der Putten, Chu Shulong 2011), however, the literature greatly neglects the concept of security and does not utilize insights from the field International Security Studies; instead, the traditional neorealist/neoliberal institutionalist, military-focused concept of security is applied – which, as I will argue, is not able to properly capture the EU's approach to security towards China.

In the first part of the paper, I will very briefly present the literature on this issue and proceed quickly to the second and lengthy part on the discussion of the *logic* and the *locus* of security, on the basis of which I will develop four ideal-type understandings of security. In the third and last part, I will briefly undertake a short discourse analysis of the EU's security policy towards China and show that this policy basically follows a liberal-relational understanding of security.

2. Shortcomings of the scholarly literature: Conceptual and theoretical vagueness

The literature on EU security policy towards China, which consists to a large extent of policy-oriented contributions, does not adequately address the basic concept of *security*.¹ This conceptual neglect of the central notion is accompanied by only implicit references to the theoretical basis on which the main arguments are grounded. Roughly speaking, most authors implicitly draw either on assumptions derived from the neorealist tradition (Waltz 1979, Walt 1997) or from the neoliberal institutionalist tradition (Keohane 1984) of International Relations (IR) Theory. Authors adhering to the former approach hence assume that as the EU does not have defense commitments or military capacities in the East Asian region, the EU cannot be a security actor in that region (Bailes, Wetter 2007, Berkofsky 2006, Möller 2004, Bersick 2009a, Bersick 2009b, van der Putten/Chu Shulong 2011). Alyson Bailes and Anna Wetter pointedly sum up this position: the EU's security approach towards China is an "immature mishmash of selective blindness, wishful thinking, the profit motive, and the sheer lack of resources and will to stand up to Beijing (Bailes/Wetter 2007: 158). Contrarily, other authors point to the EU's contributions in the *soft security* areas (Gill 2008, Algieri 2005, Soerensen 2007, Jokela 2009, Bersick 2007). Sebastian Bersick even sees the EU's "comparative advantage in dealing with the 'rise' of China and East Asia that the USA's approach [...] cannot produce" (Bersick 2007: 230). However, using the terms *hard* and *soft security* implicitly grants the status of 'real' security issues only to the *hard* security issues, which is in line with the narrow concepts of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism (cf. Jervis 1999). The basic puzzle that emanates when applying a narrow concept of security is best formulated by Sebastian Bersick (2009b): "It is the weakness of the EU strategy towards East Asia that it furthers the economic rise of China, which, however, in turn also leads to the military rise of China. Thus, these policies raise questions which the EU cannot answer in the framework of its security-political approach in East Asia." (Bersick 2009b: 2).

This brief overview of the literature suggests two conclusions: either the EU is incapable of

¹ To a certain extent, Oedgaard and Biscop (2007) constitute an exception in so far as they conceptualize the EU's security approach as laid down in the European Security Strategy within the framework of "global public goods".

conducting a proper security policy, or our scholarly concepts of security are incapable of grasping the particular version of EU security policies (and experience-fuelled scholarly wisdom would suggest: probably both). We thus seem to be confronted with the inescapable requirement for any social scientist: “confronting one’s own language of explanation with that of one’s subject’s self-understanding” (Taylor 1988: 226).

Therefore, I will proceed to a conceptual discussion of the concept of security in the next section.

3. The logic and locus of security: Developing four idea-types of security

In this chapter I will discuss different understandings of security and propose four ideal-types of the concept. I will argue that there is one understanding of security – which I label ‘relational security’ – which hasn’t made it to the forefront of security discussions systematically and sustainably, which is – together with the ‘liberal’ ideal-type – essential when discussing and analyzing EU security policies towards China.

I will discuss the concept of security along the lines of its *locus*, i.e. whether security is seen as an attribute of an actor or as an attribute of a relationship, and along the lines of its *logic*, i.e. whether security is only about hostile self-other relations in a anarchic international system or whether security is also about managing relations between non-hostile actors.

The basic argument is that the concept of security also makes sense in non-self-help, non-competitive and non-hostile environments as threats can also emerge from non-hostile actions of other actors or from the dynamics of non-hostile relationships. In order to ‘widen’ the logic of security in this way, I argue that the Waltzean assumption of anarchy as a defining feature of the international system has been misunderstood in a twofold way.

3.1. The *locus* of security

Arnold Wolfers (1952) points to a crucial feature of security, which is actually well known but which has not gained a prominent role in devising strategies to achieving security: he highlighted the inherently relational character of security. He states that “it should always be kept in mind that the ideal security policy is one which would lead to a distribution of values

so satisfactory to all nations that the intention to attack and with it the problem of security would be minimized. While this is a utopian goal policy makers and particularly peacemakers would do well to remember that there are occasions when greater approximation to such a goal can be effected” (Wolfers 1952: 498). Wolfers’s discussion underlines the essential relational character of security as being inextricably tied to a relationship of actors. He continues: This “implies that national security policy, except when directed against a country unalterably committed to attack, is the more rational the more it succeeds in taking the interests, including the security interests, of the other side into consideration. [...] Rather than to insist, then, that under all conditions security be sought by reliance on nothing but defensive power and be pushed in a spirit of national selfishness toward the highest targets, it should be stressed that in most instances efforts to satisfy legitimate demands of others are likely to promise better results in terms of security” (ibid. 497).

In fact, the relational character of security is an inherent feature of the concept, be it in terms of the ‘security dilemma’ (Herz 1950) or in the conceptualization of ‘deterrence’ (Freedman 2004), which is – as Egon Bahr once pointedly put it – already a form of ‘common security’ in that the adversaries are inextricably tied to one another by their common goal of war-prevention (Bahr 1982, quoted in Böge, Wilke 1984: 140).

Bill Mc Sweeney observes that with the traditional neorealist approach to security “one view of security dominates the academic discipline and is presented, not as an option, a choice, but as the only one which is valid and relevant” (McSweeney 1999: 16). He contrasts and complements this traditional approach with an alternative understanding of security which he conceptualizes as a “property of the relationship, a quality making each secure in the other” (ibid.: 15). He locates, however, this alternative, relational understanding of security on the level of the individual and not on the level of states.²

Barry Buzan (1991) locates the relational character of security somewhere inbetween the national and the international level. He states that “the dynamics of national security are highly relational and interdependent between states. [...] The idea of ‘international security’ is therefore best used to refer to the systematic conditions that influence the ways in which

² Quite similarly, one finds this argument already in Thomas Hobbes’ work, who states that “*Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe* [...] if we compare Cities” (i.e. states); however, simultaneously, “*Man to Man is a kind of God* [...] if we compare Citizens amongst themselves” (Hobbes 1983 (1642): 24; italics in the original).

states make each other more or less secure. Individual national securities can only be fully understood when considered in relation both to each other and to larger patterns of relations in the system as a whole.” (Buzan 1991: 22). “*National security*” therefore, Buzan states, “might well be so inherently self-defeating as almost to amount to a contradiction in terms” (Buzan 1991: 7). However, instead of further investigating the consequences of this insight for the concept of security, he investigates the consequences of the interrelatedness of national and international security for the structure of the international system (in terms of different forms of anarchy) and the establishment of regional security complexes.

Paul D. Williams differentiates between two “philosophies” of security on state level: One that conceives of security as a commodity of an actor in terms of accumulation of power. The other conceives of security as consisting in a relationship between actors: “Understood in a relational sense, security involves gaining a degree of confidence about our relationships that comes through sharing certain commitments, which, in turn, provides a degree of reassurance and predictability.” (Williams 2008: 6).

In line with Paul Williams and Arnold Wolfers I contend that making the difference between security as an attribute of a state and security as an attribute of a relationship between states is a crucial differentiation for a fuller understanding of the concept of security: Understandings of security may thus be distinguished by the criterion whether they conceive of security as an attribute of an actor (as do the traditional neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist approaches) or as an attribute of a relationship. Conceptualizing it as an attribute of a relationship means to locate security within a relationship; this means: to identify the relationship or all actors involved as the referent objects, to identify the values of all actors or their common values as those values that need to be secured, to identify all actors involved as potential security providers, to identify the relationships themselves as sources of threats and consequently to address the relationships in order to tackle these threats.³ To give an example of a relational understanding and make these propositions more tangible: “We can contrast the pre-1945 situation in which [...] France and Germany were mutually threatened by the structure of their relationship with one in which a benign structure conditions their actions. [...] Security policy within a malign and structured

³ For a similar discussion of the different ‘dimensions’ of security (referent object, values to be protected, security provider, threats, policies to achieve security) compare Baldwin 1997, Buzan et al. 1998, Krahnemann 2008, Daase 2010.

relationship must be directed towards changing the relationship.” (McSweeney 1999: 91).

Adherents to the neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist perspectives would reject this relational concept of security as irrelevant, because the relationship between actors in the international system is by necessity determined by the self-help pressures of the anarchic structure and therefore actor-centered strategies are pursued. At the utmost, the notion of common security in the face of nuclear arms and the threat of mutual destruction and some tentative forms of disarmament programs would be accepted. Given the anarchic international system, the prime concern for states is survival in the face of other states’ potentially hostile intentions.

In the following, I will show that the relational understanding of security is relevant and ‘realistic’ – *even if* one is inclined to assume anarchy as the crucial structural feature of the international system.

I will start my argument by outlining the narrow logic of security of the traditional neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist approaches to security as well as of the Copenhagen School’s concept of security. Referring to Arnold Wolfers, I will argue that security is about much more than just *survival* and *urgency* and I will show that the assumption of anarchy and the ensuing consequences for state behavior have been misunderstood in two ways. Finally, and thus coming back to the *locus* of security, I will show that literature on Self-Other relationships provides a variety of ways how states related to one another – apart from self-help, mistrust and hostility.

3.2. The *logic* of security

Commonly, within the narrow frameworks of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, security is understood as related to “threat, use, and control of military force” (Walt 1991: 212). Neoliberal institutionalist perspectives largely follow this neorealist definition of security; the two perspectives differ only in their assessments of the possibilities and probabilities of cooperative behavior of states: “The disagreements between realism and neoliberalism have not only been exaggerated, but they have also been misunderstood. Neoliberalism does not see more cooperation than does realism; rather, neoliberalism

believes that there is much more *unrealized* or *potential* cooperation than does realism, and the schools of thought disagree about how much conflict in world politics is *unnecessary* or *avoidable* in the sense of actors failing to agree even though their preferences overlap.” (Jervis 1999: 47). One of the reasons for the alleged misunderstanding of the perspectives of neorealism and neoliberalism is the fact that the two approaches “study different worlds”: “Neoliberal institutionalists concentrate on issues of international political economy (IPE) and the environment; realists are more prone to study international security and the causes, conduct, and consequences of wars.” (Jervis 1999: 45). This observation finds its expression in the notions of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ security and ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ forms of power (cf. Nye 2004). Taken in combination, the two approaches suggest a hierarchy that consists of ‘real’ security that is concerned with military- and defense-related issues and some ‘secondary’ form of security, which is concerned with the possibilities and probabilities of cooperation given common gains and mutual benefit in the – broadly speaking – economic realm.

This “excessively narrow” and “militarized interpretation of security” (Buzan 1991: 5) was being challenged since the beginning of the 1980ies (Buzan 1983). The so-called Copenhagen School has later re-conceptualized security and made it applicable to a wide range of issues and sectors, such as – besides the military sector – the economic, the political, the environmental and the societal sector (Buzan et al. 1998). Buzan et al. took a discursive approach to security, stating that “[a]s a first step, the designation of what constitutes a security issue comes from political actors, not analysts, but analysts interpret political actors’ actions and sort out when these actions fulfill the security criteria” (Buzan et al. 1998: 33f.). These criteria – the core logic of security – were defined as the presentation of an issue as an existential threat to the survival of the referent object as well as the claim to the right to handle this issue through extraordinary means, i.e. “to break the normal political rules of the game” (Buzan et al 1998: 24). The problem with the Copenhagen School’s concept of the *logic* of security, however, lies in the fact that with its focus on existential threats to the survival of the referent object and extraordinary measures to counter these threats beyond the ‘normal’ political sphere, it is essentially the same as the neorealist and neoliberal logic of security. As Michael Williams put it: “the specificity of ‘security’ as a particular *kind* of speech-act in the work of the Copenhagen School is underpinned by an understanding of the politics of enmity, decision, and emergency which has deep roots in Schmitt’s understanding of political order” (Williams 2003: 515). Accordingly, Matt McDonald states that “the

securitization framework is parasitic upon traditionalist (Realist) discourses of security that are taken as indicative of a universal and timeless logic of security” (McDonald 2008: 579). Thus, this narrow logic of security can’t serve as a basis for (discursively) analyzing EU security policy, because, as Felix Ciuta puts it, “European actors still stubbornly speak security, even in the absence of existential threats” (Ciuta 2009: 313). Felix Berenskoetter characterizes the EU’s approach to security – in contrast to the approach of the United States who locates threat in the ‘evil’ intentions of other actors – as “more concerned about the breakdown of political processes in an interdependent world.” (Berenskoetter 2005: 89). These two quotations point to the fact that ‘survival’ not necessarily plays a crucial role in conceptualizing security and to the fact that if security is about the prevention of a breakdown of political processes in an interdependent world, there may be a wide variety of means to achieve security.

In his seminal article on national security, Arnold Wolfers (1952) has rejected the notion of survival – and thus emergency and existential threats – as a defining characteristic of security. He writes that “a glance at history will suffice to show that survival has only exceptionally been at stake, particularly for the major Powers. If nations were not concerned with the protection of values other than their survival as independent states, most of them, most of the time, would not have had to be seriously worried about their security, despite what manipulators of public opinion engaged in mustering greater security efforts may have said to the contrary. What ‘compulsion’ there is, then, is a function not merely of the will of others, real or imagined, to destroy the nation’s independence but of national desires and ambitions to retain a wealth of other values such as rank, respect, material possessions and special privileges” (Wolfers 1952: 488f.). Security, Wolfers puts this quite clearly, can thus serve “as a cloak for other more enticing demands” (ibid. 488). Naturally, if there’s a whole range of different values (from survival to the preservation of wealth, status or privileges) to be secured, the means to achieve security for these values under different circumstances may differ tremendously: “means which in one instance may be totally ineffective or utopian [...] may [in other instances] have considerable protective value” (ibid. 490). Therefore: “the term ‘security’ covers a range of goals so wide that highly divergent policies can be interpreted as policies of security” (Wolfers 1952: 484).

Therefore, if security is conceptualized to be about survival only – an assumption which is

closely linked to the assumption of anarchy and the resulting self-help behavior of states – a lot of the meaning of the concept is lost.

I argue, however, that this assumption of anarchy and the resulting self-help behavior of states in Waltz' theory has been misunderstood in two ways: First, in Waltz' theory, anarchy entails self-help behavior only in a purely structural model in which the attributes of the actors are not seen as relevant for explanation. As soon as one takes attributes of the actors into consideration, the effects of anarchy on behavior are at least modified if not mitigated by those attributes. Second, and more importantly, for Waltz, anarchy and its behavioral consequence of self-help are *analytical assumptions* and *not empirical facts*. According to Waltz own understanding of theory, if those analytical assumptions have no explanatory value in a certain realm or for a certain research question, then there is no reason to stick to them.

To clarify the first point: Anarchy is commonly associated with Thomas Hobbes' depiction of the state of nature characterized by mistrust, self-help, competition and hostility (cf. Waltz 1979: 102f.). However, taking a closer look, things are not as clear cut as they seem. Tracing Hobbes' famous quote of *homo homini lupus* to its origins, one finds that the original quote of the ancient Roman play writer Titus Maccius Plautus is slightly longer but much richer in its meaning. Plautus writes that: "lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit" (*A man is a wolf, and not a man, to another man, for as long as he doesn't know what he is like*) (Plautus 1956: 176). That is to say, already in the original writing of Plautus, the competitive and potentially hostile relationship between actors is balanced by the quality of the relationship, i.e. by the question of whether actors have knowledge about each other or not. Now, knowledge (of each other) is not an explanatory factor in the Waltzean structural model of the international system in which the states are blackboxed and treated as functionally uniform units. However, as soon as the purely structural Waltzean perspective is given up and attributes of actors taken into account as having explanatory power, the extended original quote of Plautus impacts heavily on the concept of anarchy: It does not lead to self-help behavior automatically, but is mediated by attributes of the actors.

This argument runs roughly parallel to Alexander Wendt's argument in his thought experiment about 'first contact' between two actors. By the processes of "signaling, interpreting, and responding" intersubjective meanings are created. "Based on this tentative knowledge, ego makes a new gesture, again signifying the basis on which it will respond to

alter, and again alter responds, adding to the pool of knowledge each has about the other, and so on over time. [...] If repeated long enough, these 'reciprocal typifications' will create relatively stable concepts of self and other regarding the issue at stake in the interaction (Wendt 1992: 405).

The second and more important point reflects on Kenneth Waltz's understanding of theory. Waltz states: "[...] theory is not an edifice of truth and not a reproduction of reality, [...] a theory is a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity", i.e. it is an ideal-type in the Weberian sense (Waltz 1979: 8; cf. Jackson 2011: 112f.). He goes on: "The question, as ever with theories, is not whether the isolation of a realm is realistic, but whether it is useful. And usefulness is judged by the explanatory and predictive powers of the theory that may be fashioned" (ibid.: 8). He repeats this crucial point later on in his book: "A theory contains at least one theoretical assumption. Such assumptions are not factual. One therefore cannot legitimately ask if they are true, but only if they are useful." (Waltz 1979: 117f.). If, therefore, the assumption of anarchy and its connection with self-help behavior of and competition and hostile relations between states are not useful, i.e. have no explanatory or predictive power – as I argue is the case in the EU's policies towards China – there is no reason to use them.

Scholars who argue that self-help and anarchy can't be separated because of empirical findings therefore totally mistake the core concept of the Waltzian structural realism (such as Goddard, Nexon 2005: 44f, Snyder 2002). Precisely for this reason, approaches that do not use the assumption of anarchy and self-help behavior can't be accused of being 'unrealistic' because of the *analytical* and not *empirical* nature of these assumptions.

Thus, as soon as one gives up a purely structural perspective on anarchy and its effects and considers the attributes (identity) of the actors – or if one gives up anarchy all together – self-help behavior is not the only game in town anymore. Relationships between states suddenly may vary on a broad range from self-help, competition and hostility to neutrality and neglect to cooperative, friendly and co-constitutive relations.

The literature on the identity of states has conceptualized many forms of how states relate to one another, i.e. many forms of Self-Other relationships from "dialogical" to "dialectical" (Neumann 2008; cf. Campbell 1992, Wendt 1994, Diez 2005, Hansen 2006, Berenskoetter 2007). In this regard, the literature suggests that the EU is a special case. Ole Wæver has

argued that in the case of the EU, “the enemy image is today to no very large extent ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, ‘the Russians’ or anything similar – rather Europe’s Other is Europe’s own past which should not be allowed to become its future” (Wæver 1996: 122). He goes on: “Europe’s past of wars and divisions is held up as the other to be negated, and on this basis it is argued that ‘Europe’ can only be if we avoid renewed fragmentation. And *if* first fragmentation sets in, it will be a self-reinforcing force that rules out for a long time any possibility of ‘Europe’. Integration is thus the referent point for a security rhetoric of ‘Europe’, and it takes on the existential quality characteristic of security, because integration/fragmentation is not a question of how Europe will be, but whether Europe will be. At this very point security, politics, identity and Europe meet in something which is even self-declared as a project of constructing a ‘security identity’.” (ibid.: 128).

Bahar Rumelili assesses the Self-Other relationships of Europe with its external environment and states that the “case of the EU points to the need to rethink and re-conceptualize the relationship between self and other in the IR literature.” (Rumelili 2004: 29). She concludes that in many instances there is no ‘othering’ by the EU in terms of a representation of the other as a threat to the EU and its identity but rather – a positive identification with the other (Rumelili 2004: 45ff).

Concepts of security can thus be distinguished – besides the above mentioned criterion of actor-specific and relational – by the criterion whether they conceive of the relationship between Self and Other as principally hostile and antagonistic or as non-hostile and potentially cooperative. That is to say, understandings of security depend on the relative importance which scholars place on the effects of anarchy or on the mitigating role of state identities – or whether scholars use the analytic assumption of anarchy at all.

Security threats can thus emanate from diverging legitimate interests of other (non-hostile) actors, from other actors that face the danger of collapse, which would in turn threaten its highly (inter)dependent partners, or from relational dynamics such as negative externalities of state action or vulnerabilities in terms of the interdependence approach (Keohane/Nye 1977).

Before we turn to mapping the different understandings of security in a two-times-two table, there is the need to clarify a crucial question that automatically comes up every time a

broader understanding of security is proposed: if security is not about existential threat and survival, how do we then know a security issue when we meet one? Isn't then just anything a security issue if the scholar so wishes?

There might be little disagreement that security is always about referent objects and their values which are threatened and which devise means to address these threats. I propose to replace survival and existential threat (as proposed by the Copenhagen School) with the notions of the *identification of threats* (to a variety of referent objects and values – such as status, wealth, influence, ‘more enticing demands’ etc. – as well as emanating from hostile and non-hostile actors as well as from relationships) and the *formulation of responses to these threats* (in terms of policies to achieve security, directed towards actors or towards relationships). This way, security is broad enough to encompass actor-specific as well as relational understandings of security in competitive as well as in cooperative Self-Other relations. A minimum of *drama* of the Copenhagen School’s basic logic is still inherited in terms of the need to formulate a policy to address the threats. Therefore not *anything* can be a security issue, only those issues that require a well-defined and relatively prompt response.

3.3. Four ideal-types of security

Now, mapping the different understandings of security along the dimensions of actor-specific/relational and hostile/non-hostile self-other relations, one gets a two times two table with four different understandings of security:

Locus of security

		Actor-specific	Relational
<i>Logic of security</i>	Self-help/hostile Self-Other relations	Actor-specific/hostile understanding of security	Restricted-relational/hostile understanding of security
	Non-self help/cooperative Self-Other relations	Actor(s)-specific/non hostile understanding of security	Relational/non-hostile understanding of security

The upper left cell is occupied by an understanding of security which conceives of security as an attribute of an actor and sees Self-Other relations always determined by the consequences of anarchy. In the upper right cell, the relational character of security is acknowledged, however, due to hostile Self-Other relations, the character of security is only a restricted relational one. The lower left cell is occupied by an understanding of security as an attribute of an actor and assumes non-hostile relations between actors. Finally, the lower right cell is occupied by a relational understanding of security and non-hostile, potentially cooperative Self-Other relations. As the designation of the cells admittedly is still a bit stodgy, I will link them to theoretical traditions of security studies.

The first, actor-specific/hostile understanding of security comes closest to the neorealist/neoliberal understanding of security: the referent object is the state in question and its values. Threats emanate from other states in the anarchic system as each state is striving to increase its security, thereby increasing also the feeling of insecurity of other states. The state in question is therefore the only actor who can provide security to itself; the policies to achieve security are thus actor-centered and consist in accumulation of (material) power as well as policies directed at other states in order to deter them and keep them from attacking. Security regimes also belong here, as they are conceptualized in a anarchic world of hostile states and are primarily a vehicle for states to achieve security for themselves by overcoming the security dilemma (Jervis 1983)

The second, restricted-relational/hostile understanding comes close to the notion of 'common security' and was developed by the Palme Commission (Palme 1982, Böge, Wilke 1984, Pahr et al. 1987). The basic assumption of 'common security' was that not the antagonists US and USSR were the most dangerous threats to each other, but the possible outcome of their relationship which was total nuclear war and mutual destruction (Palme 1982: 12). The notion of the enemy is still present, however, it is postulated that due to the technological development of weapons systems, security cannot be achieved against the adversary, but only together with him (ibid.). The referent object of common security therefore is the relationship between the actors concerned, or even – in the face of full-scale nuclear war – mankind. The value to be secured is thus their *common* security and survival, therefore the security providers are all actors concerned. The threats emanate from the

detrimental dynamics of interstate relationships and thus security policy must be directed towards the management of this relationship – in the case of common security in terms of arms control, disarmament or measures of non-offensive defense (cf. Agrell 1987, Saperstein 1987).

The concept was modified later on by the concepts of *empathy*, *tolerance* (which are meant to be components of non-violent management of interaction, *gewaltfreie Interaktionssteuerung*) and the assumption of the *openness of historical processes*, which together may lead to the possibility of changes in the sources of conflicts, thereby enabling the degradation of their importance and – possibly – disappearance of their sources (Rittberger, Werbik 1987: 17). This further advancement might also be grouped into the lower right cell of relational security. However, as a child of the Cold War and hostile superpower confrontation, the concept of common security as developed by the Palme Commission is characterized by the assumption of hostile Self-Other relations and thus is the rightful inhabitant of the upper right cell.

The third, actor(s)-specific/non-hostile understanding comes close to classical liberal assumptions about the international system and security (Zacher, Matthew 1995). Liberals believe in the possibility of a cumulative progress of international relations in terms of increases in physical security, material welfare and human rights (ibid.: 117). This is partly the case due to the assumption that “liberals regard states’ policies as other-regarding to some extent since they believe that the growth of liberal democracy increases people’s concern for other humans. [...] Certainly over the long run, liberals see states as increasingly supportive of peace, welfare and justice, but exploitative interests (including power over others as an end in itself) are unlikely to disappear.” (ibid.: 118). Although liberals acknowledge the possibility of coercive and hostile relations, the focus lies clearly on the possibility and probability of progress towards cooperative and peaceful relations among states: “[...] as liberal democracies, interdependencies, knowledge, international social ties, and international institutions grow, noncoercive bargaining and international patterns of interests have an increasing impact.” (ibid.: 119). The referent objects therefore are states and their values. As they are conceived of as being partly other-regarding, the security provider may also be another state than the referent object. Threats may emanate from different or contradictory interests of other states. However, the means to tackle with these threats are negotiations, noncoercive bargaining and confidence-building measures between non-hostile

states.

For the fourth relational/non-hostile understanding of security has no real permanent inhabitant. There are two candidates who might fit partially and bits and pieces of other approaches to security (such as the advancement of the common security approach by Rittberger and Werbik (1987)), but no real approach that has taken up residence permanently or undisputedly. Therefore, I propose to label the fourth cell as *relational security*.

The first of the two candidates is the security community approach as introduced by Karl (Deutsch et al. 1957) and further developed by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998). The concept does see the possibility – and does investigate the preconditions and probabilities – of overcoming hostile Self-Other relations in the international realm by mutual trust, shared identity and social learning. One core assumption of security communities is, however, the difference between inside and outside the community, i.e. the common definition of threats which come from the ‘others’ outside of the community. Therefore, security communities are best understood as enlarged Selves in a hostile world with outside threats and thus don’t fit easily into the non-hostile Self-Other category (Adler, Barnett 1998: 56; cf. McSweeney 1999: 49).

The second candidate is neofunctionalism. Ernst Haas stated that the “main reason for studying regional integration is [...] normative: The units and actions studies provide a living laboratory for observing the peaceful creation of possible new types of human communities at a very high level of organization and of the processes which may lead to such conditions.” (Haas 1970: 608). Bill McSweeney sees neofunctionalism as an “example of early attempts to capture the problem of security. The idea that cooperation in technical, economic areas must eventually spill over into the higher-political areas of foreign and defence policy is the cornerstone of neofunctionalism and the basis of its theory of security.” (Mc Sweeney 1999: 50). However, neofunctionalism may well be considered as an approach to *asecurity* much more than an approach to *security*: “It has been a much-criticized part of integration theory – functionalist as well as neo-functionalist – that it wanted to direct attention away from security issues.” (Wæver 1998: 77). Neofunctionalism can therefore to be considered as proposing integration as a general means to overcome conflict in general, it was, however, not designed as an approach to formulate responses to concrete threats to the security of concrete referent objects. It is more about ‘asecuritization’ than about identifying and

responding to threats. I therefore propose to put neofunctionalism in the lower right cell into brackets and put *relational security* as the inhabitant of this quadrant.

Security in this understanding is purely relational, i.e. the referent object is the relationship between actors, thus the values of all actors - or the relationship – are concerned and security providers are all states involved. Threats emanate from ‘normal’ relationships in terms of negative externalities or vulnerabilities or from ‘conflictual’ relationships in terms of unresolved conflicts; threats are therefore not assigned to other actors. Security policies are thus directed towards relationships in order to manage them, to keep them free of frictions or overcoming the sources of conflict (cf. *gewaltfreie Interaktionssteuerung*, compare Rittberger and Werbik (Rittberger/Werbik 1987) and are not directed towards actors as such. Joint actions resulting from joint responsibility are policies to tackle the threats.

To sum up: understandings of security can be categorized along the lines of whether they consider security to be an attribute of an actor or a relationship (*locus of security*) and whether the relations between Self and Other are hostile or non-hostile (*logic of security*). The second row of the table with the liberal and the relational understanding of security will be of special importance for the analysis of the EU’s security understanding and security policies towards China as I will show below.

Locus of security

	Actor-specific	Relational
<i>Logic of security</i> Self-help/hostile Self- Other relations	Neorealism/Neoliberal Institutionalism (/Security Regimes)	Common Security
Non-self help/cooperative Self- Other relations	Classical Liberalism	(Neofunctionalism/ relational security

4. The EU security policy towards China: a liberal-relational approach to “hard” security issues

On these last pages to come, I will show on the basis of Ole Wæver’s discourse-based foreign policy theory and a discourse analysis of the EU’s policy papers and statements of representatives that the EU pursues a mixture of the liberal and the relational understanding of security, i.e. a liberal-relational approach, towards China and does so in the traditionally so-called ‘hard’ security realms, too.

4.1. *Discourse and foreign policy*

Poststructuralist discourse analysis holds that the “structures of meaning” that are embedded in discourses “can explain and elucidate foreign policies” (Wæver 2002: 26). The relationship between discourse, identity and policy is generally conceived of as a complex and mutually constitutive one and quasi-causal links between representations (of identity) and policy are oversimplifying this relationship (Hansen 2006: 26ff.). However, for the purposes of this paper, it should suffice to follow Ole Wæver and to assume that discourses have “constraining effects on political options” (Wæver 2004: 199). “Structures within discourse condition possible policies. *Overall* policy in particular must hold a definite relationship to discursive structures, because it is always necessary for policy makers to be able to argue where ‘this takes us’ [...] and how it resonates with the state’s ‘vision of itself’” (Wæver 2002: 27). Therefore; I will assume in this paper that the security discourse of the EU regarding China by and large determines the security policy of the EU towards China.

The central methodological problem now is how to identify “a discourse when you meet one?” (Wæver 2004: 206). Kunz suggests delineating different discourses along the lines of issues, disciplines or actors (Kunz 2005: 69). For the present case this would mean to specify the discourse according to the issue area of EU security policy as represented by the relevant EU policy papers and the statements, speeches and texts of EU policy makers. The question then is whether certain patterns of meaning can be identified concerning the concepts *security* and *security policy*.

4.2. The EU security policy towards China: A liberal-relational approach

Analyzing the discourse of the EU's security policy towards China, one finds that the approach to security combines characteristics of the liberal and the relational ideal-type of security.

The *referent object* is, of course, the EU itself. However, a precondition for the EU's security is a stable China and also a stable East Asian region as a whole. Thus, the security of China as well as the East Asian states is inseparably connected to the security of the EU. That is to say that the EU becomes – or at least it discursively aspires to do so – a security provider for China and the East Asian states while these should be themselves associated in managing the security relations in the region, thus becoming security providers for the EU: The EU should “associate Asian countries in the management of international affairs and in particular [...] encourage them to play a more active role in multilateral actions with a view to maintaining international peace and security” (European Commission 1994: 2; cf. European Commission 2001b; European Commission 2006; Council of the European Union 2007, Council of the European Union 2012b). This conceptualization of the referent objects which includes ‘other-regarding’ actors may well be considered as fitting into the liberal understanding of security. The core *value* of the EU that needs to be secured is its leading role in the world economy: The “Union needs as a matter of urgency to strengthen its economic presence in Asia in order to maintain its leading role in the world economy” (European Commission 1994: 1). This value remains the underlying central concern of the EU's security engagement in East Asia. In the Council's *Guidelines on EU foreign and security policy in East Asia* this is explicitly taken up, stating that East Asia accounted for one quarter of the EU's global trade in 2006 and is thus key to its global competitiveness (Council of the European Union 2007: 2; Council of the European Union 2012b: 3).

The main other values that appear, namely the political, military, economic, social and environmental stability in China and East Asia, are subordinate to – but still indispensably connected with – the primary value of maintaining the EU's leading position in the global economy: “Progress in these areas⁴ will contribute greatly to *stability and prosperity both at*

⁴ These areas are: preserving peace and strengthening international security; promote a rule-based international system; promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights; non-proliferation of WMD; regional integration; promotion of cooperative policies to meet global challenges such as climate change, energy security, environmental protection, poverty, economic imbalances and health issues (Council of the European Union 2012b.: 2).

home and in the region."⁵ (Council of the European Union 2012b: 3; cf. European Commission 1994: 2; European Commission 1995: 19; European Commission 2006: 4-6). The conceptualization of the values are actor-centered and closely tied to the referent object, thus also fitting into the liberal understanding of security.

The direct *threats* to the EU's leading role are conceived of as protectionist trends in the world economy. Protectionism and regionalism "loom as potential threats" to the global economy and thus to Europe's leading role within it (European Commission 2003: 3). "If the Union loses out on the economic miracle taking place in Asia, this will have political costs, and at the very least it will exacerbate the calls for more defensive policies from those who view Asia as a threat rather than as a valuable partner, which in turn will further reduce the benefits to be gained from Asia, and so on, in a spiral of decline" (European Commission 1994: 11). In addition, the "unparalleled political fluidity" that followed the end of the Cold War has the potential to create unpredictable challenges and risks to which the EU, China and the East Asian states have to adapt in order to address them adequately and to maintain regional stability (European Commission 1994: 1; cf. European Commission 2003; Council of the European Union 2007). This fluidity may result in regional conflicts caused by "rapid economic growth, territorial disputes, increasingly ambitious armament programmes, the potential for distrust in such a large region and the weakness of the multilateral organizations for political consultation" (European Commission 1994: 7; cf. Council of the European Union 2007: 2; Council of the European Union 2012b: 5). Within this context, the internal stability of China is a prevalent theme of the security considerations of the EU. The continuing economic and societal transformation process of China has been a central concern for the EU (European Commission 1995). These concerns had become especially strong in the years around the turn of the century, in context with China's accession to the WTO and the leadership changes in 2002/2003. Regarding the Chinese reform process, "nothing can be taken for granted": "Increasing disparities in regional development" as well as a rise in urban and rural unemployment which may further strain China's social security system; "increased internal and external migration" as well as the "upcoming leadership changes [...] are key concerns" for the EU (European Commission 2001a: 6; European Commission 2003). Since 2006, however, these concerns have been amended by a new element: since then, Chinese competition is seen as a challenge to the global

⁵ Emphasis by the author.

competitiveness of the European economy (European Commission 2006; Council of the European Union 2006). However, the answer to this new challenge remains within the logic of the prevailing discourse: “The answer to growing competition with China cannot be to protect the EU from fair competition. Instead the EU should continue to pursue an active policy of openness at home while demanding a similar effort from China” (Council of the European Union 2006: 11).

The threats to security are conceived of as processes potentially leading to vulnerabilities or conflicting relations (‘protectionist trends’, ‘unparalleled political fluidity’) and thus fit into the relational understanding of security. The focus on the internal stability of China, however, points to a liberal understanding, too.

The *policies* to be pursued are largely concerned with preventing conflicts as well as with establishing institutions in which conflicting interests can be reconciled, i.e. fora enabling policies of confidence-building. The core theme of EU security policy towards China are measures focused on integrating China into a rule-based international system (European Commission 1995: 4; European Commission 1998: 5f.; European Commission 2001a: 7; Council of the European Union 2003: II; European Commission 2006: 10-12; Council of the European Union 2006: 6; Council of the European Union 2007: 1; Council of the European Union 2012b: 12f.), promoting regional integration and cooperation on regional security-political issues (European Commission 1995: 5; European Commission 1998: 7; European Commission 2001a: 15; European Commission 2003: 8; European Commission 2006: 11; Council of the European Union 2007: 7; Council of the European Union 2012b: 8-11) and supporting China’s transition into an open, democratic, market-economy based system respecting human rights⁶ (European Commission 1998: 9f.; European Commission 2001a: 10-12; European Commission 2003: 7; European Commission 2006: 4; Council of the European Union 2006: 8; Council of the European Union 2007: 1; Council of the European Union 2012b: 13).

The ‘management’ of relationships which is inherent to establishing a rule-based international system as well as the promotion of regional integration point to a relational understanding of security. Supporting China’s transition, however, is a liberal policy again.

Addressing the so-called *hard security* issues which are listed in the *Guidelines* (2007, Council

⁶ In its 1995 Communication on China, the European Commission directly links the respect for human rights with the long-term social and political stability (European Commission 1995: 6).

of the European Union 2012a), such as the nuclear program of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the dispute across the Taiwan Strait and in the South China Sea as well as the shifting strategic balance in the East Asian region due to China's economic, political and military rise, the EU sticks with its liberal-relational approach and policies of *détente*: Deepening the dialogues with all actors concerned, calling on all actors to refrain from actions that could be misperceived and promoting confidence building measures remain the principal means for fostering security and stability in East Asia. Most significant, however, is what is actually missing in the discourse: the notion of hostile actors, the notion of alliances and the support for the US's military-based approach⁷. Instead, the statement that the US is a vital security provider in the region is amended by temporal limitations such as "for the time being", "for the foreseeable future" and "at present" (Council of the European Union 2007: 7; Council of the European Union 2012b: 15). Core to the EU's approach is to build a regional security architecture based on a liberal-relational understanding of security: "The EU's long term aim should be increasing regional integration and the emergence of strong regional institutions based on clear recognition of shared interests" (Council of the European Union 2007: 7; cf. European Commission 2006: 11; Council of the European Union 2012b: 15).

In a speech delivered in Beijing in 2011, the president of the European Council concisely summarized this liberal-relational approach: Each side has to "understand the other's choices and constraints, its hopes and fears, its past experiences and its view of the world", to manage the interdependence of the 21st century by shared responsibility, cooperation and openness. Thus, "we are becoming part of the solution of the other side's challenges" (van Rompoy 2011; cf. Council of the European Union 2012a: 1).

5. Conclusion

It has been argued that the traditional understandings of security do not capture the EU's security-political approach towards China. Discussing the *logic* and the *locus* of security, I proposed four ideal-types of security, two of which I have tried to show are vital for an

⁷ For the US approach to China and East Asia see Bersick 2009b and Rudolf 2006.

adequate understanding of the EU's security policy towards China. A brief discourse analysis of the EU's central policy papers and speeches to illustrate the argument concluded the paper.

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