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Social Interaction in EU-East Asia relations: How the EU (re)invents itself as an international security actor

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This paper takes its interest in understanding the evolution of the European Union as an international security actor. The paper departs from the assumption that the EU's conduct and profile as an international security actor has become increasingly shaped by its intensifying economic and political interaction with other world regions. In particular, East Asia¹ is suggested to have emerged as a crucial referent for the EU's development of international security practices and a central arena for the EU to develop its international security profile. The paper seeks to illuminate how EU-East Asia relations mediate the evolution of the EU as an international security actor by emphasizing the internalization effects of inter-regional social interaction. Internalization is understood as the process by which EU foreign policy agents routinize and institutionalize ideas and actions in their daily work, whereby certain EU security practices become normalized and manifested as the 'right way of acting' for the European Union in international affairs. The paper suggests that it is through this process that the EU develops a particular conduct of 'doing foreign and security policy' in its interaction with East Asia, which shapes the EU's image and self-reflection – its identity – as an international actor. In particular, the paper highlights how East Asia's social context and security environment facilitate the EU's image as an impartial mediator in regional conflicts, a promoter of regional integration and a cooperative security actor who emphasizes global and non-traditional security threats.

I. East Asia and the EU's evolution as an international security actor: An introduction

Driven by China's economic rise, the past decade of EU-East Asia relations has been characterized by the increasingly intensifying trade relationship between both regions. Between 2006 and 2014 the EU's overall trade volume with the region has grown by 25% from 644 billion € to 872 billion €². In the same period, East Asia has replaced the US as the EU's most important export market and has become an increasingly important source and market for foreign direct investments³. This already high level of economic interdependence between the EU and East Asia is likely to further grow in the future, in particular given East Asia's growing export markets. Moreover, bilateral trade and investment agreements have become an important motor for growing trade relations

¹ 'East Asia' is here understood in accordance with the 'European Council guidelines on the EU's foreign and security policy towards East Asia' as the geographical region which comprises Mainland China, the Chinese Special Administrative Regions (Hong Kong and Macau), Taiwan,

² European Commission, 2015; European Commission, 2012

³ Ibid; Council of the European Union 2012

between the EU and East Asia⁴, which the European Union initiates and negotiates on behalf of its Member States. Bilateral FTA negotiations have so far been concluded between the EU and South Korea, Singapore and Vietnam, while negotiations between the EU and China⁵, Japan, India, Malaysia and Thailand are currently ongoing.

Importantly, while the EU and East Asia have strengthened their trade and investment relations, their economies have become ever more dependent on each other's prosperity and stability. In particular, the EU's growing dependence on East Asia's security has become increasingly problematic as unresolved historical disputes and a rising China with inscrutable intentions have led to the recent intensification of the region's territorial disputes and nationalistic sentiments. Especially, the territorial disputes in the East- and South China Sea, the DPRK's continuing nuclear programme and underlying tensions in cross-strait and inner-Chinese relations continue to threaten the stability of the region⁶. Given the growing inter-regional interdependence, a further escalation of any of these conflicts has the potential to disrupt inter-regional trade and directly affect the EU's social and economic prosperity. Moreover, inter-regional trade has become increasingly affected by so-called non-traditional security threats (NTST), such as international terrorism, piracy and natural disasters⁷.

Over the past few years, the EU has increasingly come to recognize the growing interconnectedness between its own prosperity and regional security in East Asia. However, its scope for playing an effective role as security provider in the region is compromised by its lacking institutional authority and limited military capabilities. As European institutions mainly take on a coordinating role in foreign and security policy, they have found it difficult in the past to unite national Member State interests in joint EU positions on Asian security matters. This has been especially visible in the EU's failure to lift the arms embargo it continues to impose on China⁸ as well as in the EU's ambivalent attitude towards the recently established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)⁹. Both instances have subsequently given rise to skeptical views among scholars and politicians regarding the EU's ability and reliability as a serious international security actor in East Asia¹⁰. Moreover, the relevance and value of the EU and its Member States as security actors in East Asia has been questioned in the absence of European military assets in region. With the exception of France and Britain¹¹, neither the EU nor its Member States currently station troops in the region or

⁴ Since the EU-South Korea FTA has entered into force in 2011, EU exports to South Korea have increased by 23% from 33 billion € to 43 billion €

⁵ While the EU negotiates a comprehensive free trade agreement with Japan, India, Malaysia and Thailand, negotiations between the EU and China aim for a bilateral investment agreement

⁶ For a good overview of East Asia's regional strategic complex see Beeson, 2014

⁷ On the role of non-traditional security threats in East Asia see Caballero-Anthony & Cook, 2013; Hamilton, 2009

⁸ see Brown 2011, Casarini 2007

⁹ Renard, 2015

¹⁰ *ibid*, see also Holslag 2011, 310

¹¹ France has an operational military presence in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific, Britain is a member of the Five-Power Defence Arrangements (FDPA) – a military consultation agreement with Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore.

take part in regional military exercises¹². Further, the limited scope of the CSDP framework restricts the EU's authority and capabilities for engaging in regional military operations and contributes to the EU's low profile and recognition as an international security actor in East Asia.

However, in spite of its limitations, the EU has taken recent steps to strengthen its profile as an international security actor. Notably, the establishment of the 'High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy' and the institutional body of the European External Action Service (EEAS) by the Lisbon Treaty have started a process of centralizing the EU's international diplomacy¹³. Since their establishment, these institutions have become a driving force in developing the EU's international profile and have been keen on positioning the EU as an actor in East Asia's security affairs¹⁴. Thereby they profit from the increase in bilateral free trade negotiations with partners in East Asia. In particular, the procedure of negotiating comprehensive partnership agreements in parallel with bilateral FTAs allows the EU to use its economic weight for advancing bilateral relations in the social and security domain. Moreover, as the EU's institutions evolve in the area of foreign and security policy, they have become more determined in strengthening and defining the EU's role as an international security actor in East Asia. This ambition is particularly reflected in the 2012 Council guidelines on the EU's foreign and security policy in East Asia as well as Federica Mogherini's speech at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2015¹⁵.

The EU's increasing engagement in East Asia's regional security has received extensive coverage in academic journals and think tank publications, which have offered rich accounts of the EU's evolution as an actor in East Asia and provide a comprehensive overview of the EU's developing relations with bilateral partners and multilateral organizations in the region¹⁶. However, while the literature has extensively investigated whether and how the EU's international action has affected East Asia's security environment¹⁷, relatively little attention¹⁸ has been paid to the ways in which the EU's engagement in East Asia has in return shaped the EU's own profile and recognition – its identity - in international affairs.

The paper aims to address this research gap by investigating in how far EU-East Asia relations have mediated the evolution of the EU as an international security actor and led it to adopt a particular conduct of 'doing foreign and security policy' in international affairs. Concretely, the paper aims to understand in how far the EU has developed and internalized particular strategies and preferences of doing international security politics in its relations with East Asia.

¹² Casarini 2013, 189

¹³ Austermann 2014

¹⁴ *ibid*, 51-69.

¹⁵ EEAS 2015 'Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue'; Council of the European Union 2012, 'Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia'

¹⁶ see for example Anderson & Wiessala 2007; Christiansen, Kirchner & Murray 2013

¹⁷ see for example Berkovsky 2014, Balducci 2010; Hettne & Söderbaum 2005; Chan 2010

¹⁸ for a notable exception see Callahan 2007 on the effects of social interaction between the EU and China on the EU's recognition as an international actor; also see Holland 2009 for a quantitative analysis of the developments in Asian perceptions of the EU

In the following, the next section will outline the theoretical framework, which guides this paper and will link the research puzzle to the literature on the EU's international actorness as well as the role of regions in international relations.

II. The rise of regions and the EU as an international actor: A constructivist framework

Driven by an accelerating economic globalization and the end of the bipolar Cold War-system, the international order is in the process of undergoing profound structural changes that result from the effects of material redistribution and growing interdependence between international actors¹⁹. One development, which has been attributed to these changes in the international environment, is the rise of regions²⁰. In particular, as the prosperity and security of nation states have become increasingly intertwined at the regional level, regions have evolved into central frameworks for interaction between states and have developed into increasingly complex structures of conflict and cooperation. Indeed, it has been argued that regions have emerged as the central entities and organizing structures of an increasingly multipolar system²¹.

The emergence of regions has further been accompanied by a process of regional integration, which has led to increasing social interaction between nation states and the establishment of various regional institutions, organisations and dialogues. These structures not only govern multilateral interaction within regions but have also given rise to the development of shared principles for regional cooperation as well as to the manifestation of regional identity narratives²². In response to this growing regional connectedness, international actors increasingly articulate their worldviews in the form of regional approaches and strategies and develop their economic and security policies accordingly by addressing regions as a whole rather than - or at least in parallel to - its individual units. As a consequence of this process, this paper suggests that regions have evolved as major referents for the foreign and security policies of international actors.

This process is further driven by the growing economic and political interdependencies between regions. As a response to the growing dependence on other world regions, international actors have come to acknowledge their interest in the economic development and stability of regions. They have become engaged in developing regional foreign policy frameworks, participating in regional dialogues and investing in regional security and development. In doing so, international actors not only become increasingly engaged in regional affairs, but also need to adapt their foreign policy strategies to the need for developing regional responses.

¹⁹ Grevi 2009, 9-11

²⁰ Hettne & Söderbaum 2000, p.3-8; see also Katzenstein 2005; Buzan & Waeber 2003

²¹ *ibid*, see also Dent 2008

²² Hettne & Söderbaum 2000, 18-26

Consequently, this paper suggests that, as the interdependence and interaction between an international actor and a region intensifies, the role and behavior of the international actor becomes increasingly shaped by its social interaction with that region on which its own prosperity and security depends. This suggestion is built on the constructivist assumption that international actors develop their strategies and preferences at least partly in social interaction²³. The approach highlights reciprocity in the interaction between an international actor and a region, whereby an international actor does not only shape the region by engaging with it but at the same time becomes shaped by the region. This echoes Peter Katzenstein's observation, who noted that 'just as the U.S. can and does shape regional orders around the world, that world has the capacity to react, often with a complex mixture of admiration and resentment and occasionally with violent fury – thus remaking America'²⁴.

By emphasizing the social process through which the foreign and security policy of an international actor like the EU evolves, the paper goes beyond the instrumental view of rational choice theories, according to which the EU's international action is little more than the extension of (at least its most powerful) Member States' interests. Moreover, it is skeptical of deterministic views, which have described the EU as a *sui generis* actor that transcends traditional Member State interests and takes on a particular 'civilian'²⁵ or 'normative'²⁶ profile in international affairs. Consequently, the EU is viewed as neither *per se* a utility-maximizing tool of its Member States nor *per se* a *sui generis* actor in its foreign affairs. Rather, the EU's international actorness is viewed as continuously evolving in a process of social interaction, which is shaped by the social environment within which the EU develops and cultivates its profile as an international security actor.

At the same time, the paper acknowledges that the EU's international actorness is not merely established as the result of social interaction but also heavily influenced by material and structural developments. In fact, the institutional and material power (or the lack thereof) is viewed as heavily shaping the social process outlined above. In particular, the EU's institutional constraints and its lack of 'hard' power capabilities delimit the pool of ideas and material resources, from which foreign policy agents deduce and develop meaningful practices. The EU's material and institutional capabilities are therefore viewed as mediating the social process outlined above. However, despite the crucial role of material capabilities and institutional power, the paper sees the analysis of social interaction a worthy inquiry, as it is through this process that ideas and actions become manifested in stable narratives and practices, which guide the EU's foreign and security policy in the application of partly taken-for-granted norms. It is important that these norms, once internalized by foreign policy agents as simply the 'right thing to do', provide a certain level of stability and endurance that have the potential to resist structural and material changes. International actors are therefore suggested to not simply adapt their strategies and

²³ Wendt 199, 316

²⁴ Katzenstein 2005, 206

²⁵ on the concept of 'civilian power Europe' see Duchene, 1973

²⁶ on the concept of 'normative power Europe' see Manners, 2002

preferences to structural changes along a rationalist cost-benefit logic, but rather in relation to their established norms and principles of acting.

Crucially, this constructivist view requires the analysis to go beyond understanding the behavior of an international actor as merely following a 'logic of expected consequences'. According to this logic, which has guided rationalist theories in international relations, international actors behave according to a strategic cost-benefit calculation, which is based on their pre-defined interest of utility-maximization²⁷. In this logic, actions are viewed as purely rational instruments and the means to a further end, which organize international relations in predictable behavioral patterns. As demonstrated above, this study does not share the ontological presumption of structurally pre-defined interests, which however does not rule out the possibility that actors behave according to a cost-benefit logic to some extent. Importantly, the study emphasizes a second logic of action, the 'logic of appropriateness', in which international action is driven by ideational tools such as norms or values.

In following a 'logic of appropriateness', an international actor legitimizes a particular rule or norm by presenting the compliance with it as the morally appropriate behavior in a particular social setting²⁸. Following this logic, international actors use norms, rules or narratives deliberately in order to convince other actors to change their behavior²⁹. Accordingly, international actors not only adapt their behavior to the material realities but also the social setting of the environment towards which their policy is directed. This normative rationality implies the constitutive effects of social norms, which not only regulate behavior but also define social roles (good people do X)³⁰. This way, the 'logic of appropriateness' explains why actors choose to strategically legitimize and promote their action as the morally appropriate behavior. This does however not imply that actors necessarily change their preferences through this process.

However, as pragmatists and social constructivists have argued, actors, who adopt certain practices and ideas in role-playing often routinize and institutionalize these to the point of unreflectively considering them the 'right thing to do'³¹. This process is critical as it takes the 'logic of appropriateness' beyond strategic role-playing and stresses the process by which strategic roles turn into 'taken-for-granted' norms. The process of internalization thus changes strategic practices into habitual guiding principles, which might upstage rational calculation in the behavior of international actors. In other words, an internalized norm changes from a strategic means to an end in itself. In line with this logic, the routinization and institutionalization of EU practices like its

²⁷ On the 'logic of expected consequences' see March & Olsen 1998, 949-951

²⁸ on the 'logic of appropriateness' see March & Olsen 1998, 951-52, for further discussion of the concept see also Sending 2002 and Checkel 2005

²⁹ on strategic narratives see for example Antoniades, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin 2010; see also Risse 200 on argumentative rationality

³⁰ Risse 2000, 5

³¹ see for example Schmidt 2014, Checkel 2005, 804

leadership in tackling NTSTs will for example strengthen particular narratives of how the EU is 'meant to act' in international affairs.

In IR theory, the internalization of norms has in particular resonated in social constructivist research, which has emphasized the role of norm entrepreneurs and institutional socialization through which international actors acquire new preferences³². This constructivist research program has been complemented by scholars following a pragmatist approach, which foregrounds the impulse of reflective foreign policy agents in routinizing and institutionalizing practices which are seen as legitimate and appropriate³³. In order to understand the internalization of security policy practices in the EU's interaction with East Asia, the latter approach appears particularly promising as regional or international institutions play little role in the framework of EU-East Asia relations and social mobilization by norm entrepreneurs may not be sufficiently significant.

Pragmatism and constructivism both share the social ontology outlined above, stand in common opposition to rationalist-utilitarian approaches and foreground the role of practices³⁴ as organizing elements of social interaction. However, unlike constructivism, pragmatism emphasizes reflexivity - the potential of actors to reflect on their practices - and deliberation in the reconstitution of action that establishes new modes of appropriate behavior³⁵. Consequently, pragmatism highlights the process by which individual policy agents deliberately institutionalize practices, thereby turning them into new foundations for action (new habits)³⁶. This deliberative model of norm change fits in well with the constructivist model of internalization and has the potential to provide new insights into the process by which an international actor adopts a new conduct of 'doing foreign and security policy' in its social interaction with another actor (in this case East Asia).

Problematically, pragmatist accounts of norm change in international relations are rare and methodized inquiries have yet to be developed. Nevertheless, a pragmatist approach and its analytical focus on individual foreign policy agents promises to provide an improved understanding of how reflective individuals alter and manifest the norms of 'doing security policy' of international actors by routinizing and institutionalizing particular practices. In adopting a pragmatist framework, this study builds on the suggestion that foreign policy agents acting on behalf of the European Union in its relations with East Asia (e.g. policy agents working in European delegations, the EEAS) establish a particular profile of the EU's international actorness in its relations with East Asia, which becomes established in a series of practices, such as the publication of official statements on events in the region, summit meetings, political agreements or joint security exercises with strategic partners.

³² Checkel 2005, Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, Hurd 2008, For empirical examples see Zacher 2001 on norm entrepreneurship and Lewis 2005 on the effects of socialization

³³ Schmidt 2014

³⁴ practices are generally understood as 'incorporated and material patterns of action that are organized around the common, implicit understanding of the actors', see Neumann 2002, 629

³⁵ Schmidt 2014, 821

³⁶ *ibid*, 818-19

Subsequently, it is through the routinization and institutionalization of security practices, that EU foreign policy agents internalize particular norms of 'doing foreign policy' - thereby moving these practices outside of strategic calculation. This process is critical as, by internalizing them as taken-for-granted, these practices might not only increasingly guide the EU's action in East Asia but may become increasingly influential in the EU's overall evolution as an international foreign and security actor.

Against this background, the following section will assess in how far the EU's evolving role as an international security actor has been mediated by its social interaction with East Asia's regional security environment. It investigates, in how far the ambition of the EU to play a greater role in East Asia's regional security domain has led to the internalization of particular security practices and narratives, which may shape the EU's identity in international security affairs. In particular, the section emphasizes the EU's practices of promoting regional integration, securitizing non-traditional security threats and establishing its role as a mediator in territorial conflicts in its relations with East Asia.

III. The Internalization of Role Conceptions: How EU-East Asia relations shape the EU's evolution as an international security actor

This section looks at the EU's evolving role as an international security actor in East Asia and highlights three ways in which the East Asian security environment may increasingly shape the EU's image and behaviour in international affairs. First, the section examines the EU's cautious approach in responding to regional territorial disputes and its evolving role as a mediator of international conflicts. Second, it emphasizes the EU's leading role in coordinating international efforts to tackle non-traditional security threats. Finally, the section looks at how the EU advances its promotion of regional integration in the context of East Asia. In the following, the section will analyze each of these three aspects and discuss them in the context of recent developments in EU-East Asia relations.

1. Regional territorial disputes – The EU as an international mediator

Over the past few years, the regional stability of East Asia has been challenged by territorial disputes in the East and South China Sea, which led to increasing tensions between China and its neighbours in the region. Unlike the United States, the EU has decided to stay away from siding with either party on territorial claims. In fact, the European Union has made clear in its communications that it will 'not in any sense take positions'³⁷ or 'get into the legitimacy of specific claims'³⁸. Instead, the EU has become an outspoken advocate for the need to maintain an international maritime order based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It has further expressed its

³⁷ Council of the European Union 2012, 'Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia', 19; see also EEAS 2015 'Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue'; Council of the European Union 2015, 'Joint press statement following the Japan-EU summit

³⁸ EEAS 2015 'Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue'

support for negotiations between China and ASEAN to develop a Code of Conduct for maritime affairs and offered its assistance and expertise for enhancing regional maritime security cooperation³⁹. Moreover, while emphasizing the need for diplomatic solutions, the EU organized a training session on preventive diplomacy and mediation in the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 2014⁴⁰. Altogether, its approach of not taking positions in territorial disputes and instead emphasizing diplomacy and multilateral solutions has partly led to the manifestation of the EU's image as a 'neutral' or 'impartial' regional security actor in East Asia⁴¹.

The EU's position in East Asia's territorial disputes is generally viewed as inherently linked to EU concerns about burdening its economic partnership with China⁴². In particular, its cautious approach is seen as affected by Germany's position, whose export-oriented economy strongly depends on the Chinese market⁴³. Furthermore, the EU's impartiality has been interpreted as closely connected to its limited military capabilities in the region as well as the strong role played by the United States as a regional security provider⁴⁴. In this regard, the EU is often seen as free-riding on the security provision of the United States, which has been seen as providing the EU with the opportunity to maintain its trade relations with China without having to alienate this strategic partner⁴⁵.

Critically, while all these factors may contribute towards explaining why the EU has taken on the role of an 'impartial' or 'neutral' actor in regional territorial disputes, the paper suggests that the EU's routinization and institutionalization of its position in its official publications and other practices (e.g. the organization of preventive diplomacy workshops) increasingly shape the EU's (self-)image as an impartial actor in regional conflicts. This process of internalization may have far-reaching consequences. For example, its self-image as an impartial actor leads the EU to increasingly contrast its approach with that of the United States, which may further complicate EU-US security cooperation in the region⁴⁶. On the other hand, the increasing recognition of the EU as a 'neutral' actor in the region strengthens the EU's position as a potential mediator in regional and international conflicts. In this regard, the EU may further profit from its recent success in negotiating a nuclear agreement with Iran, which has underscored its international profile as a capable international mediator. East Asia's unresolved territorial disputes and the number of involved powerful actors might therefore provide a context in which the EU can provide added value by making use of its experience and expertise in diplomacy and conflict mediation. Overall, the East Asian security environment is therefore suggested to shape the evolution of the EU as an international security actor insofar as it manifests the EU's profile as an

³⁹ Council of the European Union 2012, 'Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia', 19-20; EEAS 2015 'Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue'

⁴⁰ Reiterer 2014, 18

⁴¹ see for example Pejsova 2014; Ueta 2013; Kundnani & Tsuruoka 2014, Youngs 2015

⁴² Youngs 2015, 11-12

⁴³ *ibid*, 20; see also Kundnani & Parello-Plesner 2012

⁴⁴ Berkofsky 2014, 64-68

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ see for example Norman, 2012

impartial mediator and advocate for diplomacy, international cooperation and multilateral solutions.

II. Tackling non-traditional security threats – The EU as a cooperative security actor

As trade relations between the EU and East Asia intensify, maritime security and regional stability increasingly affect the EU's social and economic prosperity. In this regard, the EU has emphasized non-traditional security threats (NTSTs) as challenges to the security of international shipping lanes and the domestic stability of its East Asian partner countries⁴⁷. In particular, the EU has highlighted the global challenges of piracy, international terrorism, climate change, cyber crime and natural disasters in recent publications addressing East Asia's regional security⁴⁸. In recent years, fighting NTSTs has developed into a priority of the EU's international security policy, whereby it has in fact taken on a lead role in coordinating international responses. This role of the EU has increasingly resonated among its regional partners in East Asia. In particular, the EU-led ATALANTA mission to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia has resulted in an increasing inter-regional cooperation between the EU and its Asian partners Japan, South Korea and China⁴⁹. Furthermore, the EU has recently stepped up its cooperation with ASEAN in the area of maritime surveillance, port security and disaster relief and increased its engagement in strengthening regional capacity building⁵⁰. Moreover, the EU has signed a so-called framework participation agreement (FPA) with South Korea, which lays down the legal framework for closer bilateral cooperation in these missions⁵¹. Similar agreements with other regional partners may soon follow⁵².

This 'soft' security approach towards the region and the EU's focus on NTSTs have been viewed as closely linked to the material and institutional constraints of the EU's CSDP framework⁵³. In particular, the EU's emphasis on NTSTs is seen as a way to compensate for lacking capabilities in other security domains and the result of the EU's ambition to position itself nonetheless as a capable international security actor⁵⁴. While such strategic considerations may partly account for the EU's focus on fighting NTSTs and the development of its cooperative security approach, this paper further suggests that the internalization of this role in the EU's social interaction with East Asia increasingly shapes the EU's self-conception as an international security provider.

⁴⁷ Council of the European Union 2012, 'Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia'; EEAS 2015 'Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue', EEAS 2012 'EU-Asia Security Factsheet'

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Reiterer 2014

⁵⁰ Council of the European Union 2015 'Council conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations'; EEAS 2015 'Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue'

⁵¹ Reiterer 2014

⁵² Minard & Pejsova, 2014

⁵³ see discussion in Berkofsky, 10-12

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Critically, EU foreign policy agents routinely securitize NTSTs as part of establishing their regional security profile in speeches and policy documents. EU policy makers thereby routinely highlight that ‘today’s threats have no borders’ and are ‘global by nature, by definition’, which make ‘strong global partnerships necessary’ to face them⁵⁵. This narrative has become an important way for the EU to legitimate its *raison d’être* in East Asia’s regional security talks and is further complemented by the development and maintenance of practices to tackle NTSTs (joint counter-piracy exercises). Importantly, by routinizing and institutionalizing these practices, the EU’s social interaction with East Asia increasingly manifests the EU’s international security profile and its own self-conception as a cooperative international security actor. As demonstrated above, the East Asian security environment has proven particularly receptive for an EU role as a cooperative and non-traditional security actor. Consequently, its intensifying relations with East Asia may lead the EU to increasingly internalize its self-conception and identity as such a distinct international security actor.

III. Regional Integration – the EU as a role model

Over the past decades, ASEAN has evolved as a key actor in the development of East Asia’s regional security architecture. Beyond its core function of managing and advancing regional integration in South-East Asia, ASEAN has played a pivotal role in connecting the wider East Asian region through the setup of a number of organisations including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Defense Minister Meeting Plus (ADMM+). For the EU, ASEAN has always been a natural partner in East Asia, given their status as flagships of regional integration. However, it has only been recently that the EU has become re-engaged in strengthening ties between both actors, which it now views as one of its core strategic interests in the region⁵⁶. Most notably, in May 2015, the EU proposed to scale up its relations with ASEAN to the level of a strategic partnership and further announced to double its financial assistance to the organization⁵⁷. In this regard, the EU has become particularly outspoken about its support for East Asian regional integration as a process towards prosperity and stability⁵⁸.

The EU’s reengagement with ASEAN is closely connected with the EU’s ambition to be included in the East Asia Summit and the ADMM+⁵⁹. Consequently, the EU’s turn towards ASEAN must be linked to the EU’s increasing recognition of ASEAN as a key partner in stepping up its security profile in the region. However, while the EU’s move to enhance relations with ASEAN may be part of a charm offensive for winning the support of ASEAN members, the process further strengthens the EU’s (self-)image as a role model in regional integration. In this regard, the EU has reinforced its narrative, in which integration leads to regional stability and security. Subsequently, the supposed stabilization effect of regional integration

⁵⁵ quoted from EEAS 2015 ‘Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue’

⁵⁶ Youngs 2015, 13

⁵⁷ Council of the European Union 2015 ‘Council conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations

⁵⁸ EEAS 2015 ‘Mogherini Statement at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue’

⁵⁹ The EU has repeatedly expressed its interest to be included in these regional organisations, both of which have Russia and the US for a member, see also Council of the European Union 2015 ‘Council conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations

has developed into a key narrative in the EU's effort to position itself as an international security actor in East Asia. While this narrative may partly be used deliberately to strengthen relations with ASEAN and to legitimize the EU's inclusion in regional dialogues, this paper suggest that the EU's promotion of regional integration will further shape the way the EU recognizes itself as an international security actor. Consequently, its special relationship with ASEAN is suggested to shape the EU's self-conception as a particular international security actor who advocates regional integration as a way of establishing security and stability in international affairs.

IV. Conclusion

As the prosperity and security of the EU and East Asia become increasingly intertwined and as EU institutions have become more ambitious to position the EU as an international security actor, EU foreign policy agents have increasingly engaged in developing and defining the EU's security profile in East Asia. In its efforts to establish the EU as a valuable, reliable and active security actor in regional and international affairs, the EU has developed and cultivated particular security narratives and other practices in a process of social interaction with its East Asian partners.

Critically, its desire for international recognition as a security actor and its growing interest in ensuring East Asia's regional stability have led the EU to develop particular roles, which it has taken on as a security actor in the region. The process of developing these roles is mediated by the EU's institutional and material capabilities, its normative principles as well as the social context and security environment of East Asia. As shown by this paper, in its relations with East Asia the EU has in particular advanced its role as a global promoter of regional integration, diplomacy and multilateral solutions and positioned itself as an impartial mediator in territorial conflicts. Furthermore, it has developed its role as a key player in tackling non-traditional security threats and highlighted a cooperative approach towards regional and international security.

As shown by this paper, the evolution of these roles may have been in part driven by the deliberate action and strategic calculation of foreign policy actors. However, the paper further suggests that, as foreign policy actors continuously routinize and institutionalize practices in their daily management of EU-East Asia relations that are attached to these roles, the roles become increasingly internalized and viewed as 'taken-for-granted'. This process is critical, as the internalization of role-conceptions by EU foreign policy agents is suggested to increasingly shape the EU's (self-)perception as an international security actor and therefore its identity in international affairs. Consequently, as security relations between the EU and East Asia intensify and gain more attention by media and academics, the role-conceptions outlined above may increasingly affect the (self-)image of the EU as an international security actor. Subsequently, social interaction and security cooperation between the EU and other world regions like East Asia are suggested to increasingly shape the EU's evolution in international affairs.

That said, the above-presented framework and analysis certainly can only provide for an indication of the internalization effects in the evolving security relations between East Asia and the European Union. In particular, actor-centered research, which focuses on EU foreign policy agents and their social interaction with their East Asian counterparts as well as a closer analysis of evolving EU narratives in its East Asian security policy may provide valuable insights on this process and the ways it affects the EU's (self-)image as an international actor. Therefore, while the outline presented in this paper may provide for a first step in analyzing the effects of social interaction between the EU and East Asia in the field of security relation on the EU's evolving international security profile, further analytical material is still needed to provide a substantiated account of the internalization effect in international relations.

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