Normative Power Europe and the Globalization of the International Society

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Abstract:

While becoming central to the study of European Foreign Policy, the Normative Power Europe (NPE) debate has largely been shaped by the idea that Europe’s normative power depends on its particular post-Westphalian sui generis internal nature. On the contrary, this article offers to decentre and re-contextualize the ahistoricist (or selectively historicist) foundations of the ‘Normative Power Europe’ debate by investigating how the remains of the previously ‘Western-colonial international society’ still influence our current global order, its embedded hierarchies, and the EU position in them.

Using concepts such as ‘Standard(s) of Civilization’, ‘social closure’ and ‘moral ordering tools’, this analysis demonstrates that: (i) logically champion at its own game, the EU to maintain a high international status and extract normative power from developing and conforming itself to international normative structures originally created by Europeans; (ii) in coalition with other like-minded actors, the EU tries to maintain and exports, by both economic rewards and more coercive means, those international normative structures; (iii) facing an increasing competition from the raise of non-Western powers, the normative structures of the international society might be renegotiated and therefore significantly alter the reach of Europe’s normative power.
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Introduction

In his seminal article of 1977, An American Social Science: International Relations, Stanley Hoffman famously warned academics of the implications of American dominance in the field of International Relations. Anticipating Cox’s argument that “[t]heory is always for someone, and for some purpose” (1981, p.128), Hoffman argued that the particular history of the discipline, notably the disproportionate influence of the American scholars, explained both the scientism and presentism of the discipline as well as its notorious blind spots such as the study of international hierarchies (Hoffman 1977, 56-9).

After a glance at the state of the art on the research on European foreign policy (EFP), one cannot but feel that Hoffman’s warnings might also apply to the EFP subfield. Academic works on the subject of European Union’s interactions with the rest of the world have generally been both inward-looking and ignorant of Europe’s particular history. Two explanations might explain these lacunas: the sui generis nature of the European Union and the influence of European studies on the subfield. Together they favoured agent-oriented approaches at the expense of structure-oriented ones investigating the EU’s interaction with the rest of the world. In Jørgenssen’s words, “[s]tudies on ‘the EU as an international actor’ are hot, whereas studies on ‘the structure of the international system and European foreign policy’ are not” (2015a, 24). In addition, the subfield has favoured descriptive, empirically-focused researches, leaving the task of theorizing the big picture mainly to two main schools of thoughts: constructivism and various nuances of liberalism. Problematically, both approaches tend not only to be agent-oriented, constructivism by focusing on identity formation and subjective perceptions while liberalism emphasizes domestic structures, but in addition they tend to share similar normative starting points, at least in the case of European foreign policy studies. Jørgenssen’s EFP literature review observes that “constructivism and several other post-positivist

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1 Following a wide spread convention, this article will refer to the academic discipline of International Relations (IR) with capital letters while international relations will refer to the object of the study in itself.

2 In this paper, I will not distinguish between the different stages (and therefore names) of the European construction, and therefore will refer to both the present EU and its earlier stages as the European Union.
perspectives might be distinct in their metatheoretical commitments, but in terms of substance they are often mixed with liberal substantive assumptions, meaning the outcome is liberal studies by another methodological name and equipped with different methodological underpinnings.” (2015b, 79).

This liberal hegemony resonates with Hoffman’s caution about academic uniformity and the influences of latent normative values embedded in particular knowledge production sites. As we will discuss those biases have also been present in the debate around the question of its status of ‘power’ and the sort of capabilities the EU might have. On this specific question, Hyde-Price argues that those “liberal-idealistic views” have led to a dominant conception of the “EU as a novel and uniquely benign entity in international politics which serves as the harbinger of a Kantian foedus pacificum” and warned about the difficulty to maintain a critical perspective when “the object of study is seen as embodying the core values one believes in” (2006, 217). Helene Sjursen stresses that this narrative is used not only in academic circles but also by EU officials, leaving researchers “vulnerable to the charge of being unable to distinguish between their own sympathy for the European project and their academic role as critical analysts” (2007, 2).

Both the theoretical homogeneity and potential ideological proximity held by researchers on their subject should exhort us to look for blind spots potentially overlooked in the ongoing debate on the potential ‘power status’ of the EU. A purely inward-looking debate on the European power status risks to fall in what Chakrabary described as asymmetric ignorance (2000, 28-29): an inability to grasp not only non-European perspectives on the EU, but also an amnesia of its own history. As I will discuss at length in the next section, the debate about ‘Normative Power Europe’ emphasizes the unique history of the formation of a sui generis polity since the end of WWI, but ignores the elephant in the room: the previous violent domination of the European continent on the rest of the world for more than 200 years. Hartmut Behr stresses that such a past shall not be lightly overlooked, as the study of the EU “is ontologically linked to the study of colonialism and post-colonialism” and that the failure to acknowledge that reality “may enable to study internal policy process, but would remain within self-centric and solipsistic foci on the European ‘Self’ and would thus block systematically all attempts to interrelate the EU to the world” (2012, 7).
This observation has driven a number of scholars to call for paradigmatic shift able to decenter EFP studies from its Euro-centric bias by provincializing European accounts of world history and politics (Onar et Nicolaïdis 2013). This paper argues that using the English School findings and theoretical developments might overcome some of EFP traditional limitations.

I measure the irony of proposing to use a school of thought which has also been regularly criticized for its Euro-centric perspective, and rightly so, as a critical tool to confront the “Normative Power Europe” (NPE) debate to its own self-centric shortcomings. Yet, I argue that the English School (ES) has particular features that permit its use to shed lights on some of the blind spots overlooked by NPE proponents. As NPE scholars, the English School takes norms seriously by looking at the structure and genesis of the international society, but from a radically different perspective able to challenge the ahistoricist (or selectively historicist) foundations of the “Normative Power Europe” concept. Finally, the ES has been generally more responsive to the ‘post-colonial turn’ than other Western IR theories, and partially integrated some of its critics, even if it remains driven by fundamentally different normative and methodological objectives.

In that sense, I argue that the English School is able to help decentring the NPE debate by tackling four out of Keukeleire and Lecocq’s (2018, 279) six “categories for decentring”: time, space, normative and disciplinary decentrings. On the one hand, because of its attention of social hierarchies and its interest for historical inquiries, an English School perspective on NPE debate is able investigate the specific history of our international order and the role of Europe in shaping it, and therefore can inform us on the origin of EU’s normative power. On the other hand, through its understanding of international relations as a social space and its scepticism for IR’s traditional post-positivist methodology, an English School of the NPE concept is able to escape the dominant ontologies and epistemology of the traditionally ‘liberal-ideal’ approaches to EFP, to denaturalized norms too often taken for granted in EFP studies, and trace back some of EFP normative biases to European imperial history.
Accordingly, this essay will propose to understand how an English School perspective can reframe the Normative Power Europe debate. The first part of this paper will offer a critical review of the main contribution of the Normative Power Europe debate and its shortcomings. In the second part, I will explain how the English School attention to the normative structures of the international order and their origins compensate for some of the blind spots of the ENP debate. Finally, this article will propose an attempt to further the Normative Power Europe debate by using insights from the English School literature to reconceptualise the sources of EU’s willingness and capabilities to export norms.

Part I: The Normative Power Europe Debate

Mark Eyskens, former prime minister of Belgium, famously stated that Europe was an “economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm” (Eyskens, quoted in Whitney, 1991). As this disparity of capacities does not match with traditional IR understanding of ‘greatpowerness’, the interrogation remains towards the status of what Zaki Laïdi has labelled the Enigma of European Power (2008a).

From a realist point of view, Waltz and others have stated that unless Europe mutes into a centralized state, the EU was unlikely to become anything like a great power (Waltz 2000 31-32, Kagan 2003). Other scholars have argued that, due to the size of its internal market, the EU should be at least envisaged as a market power (Damro 2012) or a trade power (Meunier and Nicolaïdis 2006). From scholars interested in material capabilities, the question remains unanswered as some see a very bright future for European power (McCormick 2007) while some others are less optimistic (Toje 2011).

Alongside this rationalist discussion linking EU’s power to its material capabilities, a more prolific and intriguing discussion took place around the concept of ‘normative power’ to the point of becoming a “reference point in the academic debate on the actorness of the EU in international politics” (Aydin-Düzgit 2015). The roots of this Normative Power Europe (NPE) concept can be traced back to Duchêne’s seminal contribution of 1972 in which he labelled Europe a ‘civilian power’. His argument was twofold: first, he stressed that even if it lacked military
capabilities, the EU had the economic and political means to insure the stability and security of its environment. Secondly, he went further in arguing that by spreading civil and democratic standards around the world, the EU could alter the structural nature of international relations, and potentially ‘domesticate’ and ‘civilize’ the relations among states both inside and outside the Union (Duchêne 1972).

Building on Duchêne’s work Manners proposed the notion of Normative Power Europe (NPE) (Manners 2002). He argued that the distinctive characteristic of the EU is its inclination to export a certain set of norms—such as peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, human rights but also good governance and sustainable development—through a certain number of instruments and channels—contagions, communications, financial rewards or economic sanctions among others—thereby the ability “to shape conceptions of ‘normal’ in international relations” (2002, 239). The added value of Manners’ contribution resides more on the ontological factors that push the EU to act as a normative power, rather than on the mechanism of diffusion of its own normative preferences. In Manners own words:

“It is built on the crucial, and usually overlooked observation that the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is.” (Manners 2002, 252, emphasize added).

While Manners offers a clear justification on why the EU would be a specifically norm-driven actor (its sui generis nature), the focalisation on ‘what it is’ rather than on ‘what it does’ fails to explain why one should consider the EU as having a particular ability to export its norms. Helen Sjursen analyse the NPE argument as generally resting on three explicative factors: (i) the EU is a different and novel kind of actor in international politics, (ii) its foreign policy is dictated by its multilevel post-Westphalian organization, and (iii) it has a preference for non-military instruments of foreign policy (Sjursen 2007, 4). The first point might be best capture in Manners’ concept of ‘hybrid polity’ (2002, 240), stressing the role of the EU’s particular politico-legal structures and the embedment of particular norms at the core of its project. The second refers to a “habit of deliberation” that “tames anarchy ‘inside’” and by doing so provoke a spill over effect in which “EU foreign policy is not only in ‘inter-action’ with outsiders but also always in ‘intra-action’”) which supposedly affects the approach that member states have towards international cooperation (Mitzen 2006,
Both can be characterized as “normative by nature” (Lerch and Schwellnus 2006), leaving only the third one concerned about the actual foreign policy of the EU, what it does and not only what it is.

This argument of the EU’s preferences for non-military instruments became problematic with the development of a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) at European level. It raised new interrogations: can the EU still be considered as a normative power if using military instruments, and if so, what would then differentiate its foreign policy from the one of any other power eager to export its norms (Sjursen 2006, 238).

Facing the growing importance of CSDP, Manners warned that this trend could prompt the loss of European normative power (2006, 94-95) and admitted that “the more normative power builds on military force, the less it becomes distinguishable from traditional forms of power” (Diez and Manners 2007). By doing so, he appears to abide by Kagan’s realist argument that the only fundamental difference between ‘Venus’ Europe and ‘Mars’ America is the one of military capabilities (Kagan 2003).

As several authors have noted, deprived of its Kantian veil, the EU loses its uniqueness and European’s normative power appears quite similar to American exceptionalism (Diez 2005; Hyde-Price 2006; Diez and Manners 2007), or even the Soviet one (Sjursen 2006, 240).

Beyond the argument on the specificity of the EU, the channels of norm diffusion listed by Manners (2002, 244), ranging from cultural diplomacy to ‘carrots and stickism’, are rather banal and shall not explain the fundamentally different character of European normative power nor why the EU would be more successful than others in exporting its norms. Accordingly, the NPE debate largely failed to give a compelling explanation for the ability of the EU to export its norms and how that differs from other international actors.

I argue this theoretical gap arose from an inward-looking and ahistoricist bias in the study of European foreign policy. It fails to understand how EU’s normative diplomacy inserts itself into an existing normative order. In Postel-Vinay’s words “[u]ltimately, the shape of the EU’s normative power, as much as other forms of
norm-conferring power, depend on the spatiotemporal configuration of the world order” (2008:39). By enlarging the scope of inquiry, beyond the sui generis nature of the EU and beyond the post-Cold War or even post-1945 period, she asks the question of whether the EU’s international power has anything to do with Europe’s hegemonic and often violent past (2008, 42). Postel-Vinay already suggested that in order to analyse the potential role of Europe’s pre-1945 power, the English School and its historical perspective might offer some answers (2008, 45).

The next sections will carry out such a project by arguing that the English School permits three analytical moves able to recast our understanding of NPE: (i) it contextualizes its norms diffusion by underlining its interconnectedness with an existing normative framework embedded in the institutions of the international society, (ii) it historicizes our existing international order and underlined how it is rooted in European imperialism, (iii) it stresses that European normative power shall not be studied on its own, but in relations with other actors defending similar norms at the international stage, albeit sometimes with different means.

Part II: The International Society, contextualizing and historicizing European Normative Power

2.1 The context of Europe’s normative power: The Global International Society
Whereas NPE scholars have been largely been agent-oriented, analysing the particular nature of the EU to understand its proportion to export norms, the English school offers a ‘grand theory’ like model of interactions among international actors which is able to rectify the inward-looking bias of the ENP debate. For the English
School, norms diffusion does not take place in a vacuum but one the contrary in a discrete social realm, the international society.

The English School project\(^3\) is based on the assumptions that world politics are shaped by ideational structures embedded in international institutions\(^4\). Central to that conceptualization is the idea that the interactions between polities often take place in the form of an international society. In Bull’s word:

“A society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions”.

(Bull 2012, 13)

Accordingly, world politics rest on a set of shared rules of conduct which constitutes the cohesive factor that turns the waltzian international system into an international society (Bull 2012, 13; see also Navari 2009, 40)\(^5\). In that sense, ES international actors are homaeo sociologicae, units socialized with beliefs and cultural practices, embedded in international social structures (Navari 2009, 45). At this point, the ES conceptualization of the international society asks the questions of the deviation between the norms exported by the EU and the ones embedded in the institutions of the international society, and how such deviation might explain Europe’s ability to export norms.

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\(^3\) In this paper, I will focus on the English School literature related to the understanding the material and social structures that define international orders, in contrast to other studies focused on the representations of the international by political theorists and statesmen (see Buzan 2014, 18-19)

\(^4\) In the ES literature, the term institution refers to primary institutions, the underlining institutions on which an international society is based such as: war, diplomacy, international law, and balance of power and great powers.

\(^5\) In reality, the English School envisages three possible organizations of world politics (international system, international society, and world society), but most ES scholars are of the opinion that the international society ideal-type still defines best our current global with the exception is Barry Buzan’s work the world society (see Buzan 2004)
A new wave of ES scholars⁶, inspired by the post-colonial turn in IR, have challenged, or at least complexified, the ‘classical account’ the international society as presented by Bull and Watson (Bull 2012; Bull and Watson 1984), by pointing out its eurocentrism, and its lack of attention to the underpinning violence which characterized the expansion of the European international society and the resulting hierarchies embedded in the very institutions of our current international society. In that sense, the traditional account as exposed by Bull and Watson, is both ‘indispensable’ and ‘inadequate’ to describe the international society we live in (Chakrabarty 2008, 6).

Far from the initial description of the international society as a ‘fair playing field’, a new wave of ES scholars proposed to reconceptualize the nature of the international society by unveiling the existence of a hierarchical international order deeply embedded in its institutions and normative structures. This ‘social’ international order is twofold as it acts simultaneously, and inextricably, as a social ranking mechanism and as an “institutionalised set of norms, ideas, values, beliefs, and practices” (Naylor 2018, 1).

If we accept Mattern’s and Zarakol’s premises that “hierarchies and the position of the actors in those hierarchies shape the actors’ “identity, role, interests and/or expectations” (Mattern and Zarakol 2016, 638), the question of Europe’s willingness and ability to export its norms must be analysed in function of its position in the international order’s social hierarchies, and not only through the lenses of its sui generis institutional nature. Through its numerous inquiries the genesis and development of our current international order, the English School permits to underline the specific role of the European continent in its upbringing, and how its past history relates to its present normative power.

2.2 Historicizing the international order and Europe’s role in its genesis

When Manners referred to pre-1945 European history, it was only to underline the role played by the “barbarous war and genocide” (2002, 140) in launching the

⁶ Among the work of those “ES revisionist scholars” I will discuss the findings of ES scholars but also from others that do not necessarily label themselves as part of the English School, but they have been largely inspired by it.
institutionalization of a peace-inclined Europe, which completely eludes the European norm diffusion through colonisation and domination that took place before the start of the European integration. Yet as Postel-Vinay recall:

“Pre-1945 Europe, as an aggregation of individual powers, was clearly a global norm-setter that created the first worldwide international organizations and promoted and/or imposed norms through those institutions as well as through the processes that established them” (2008, 39).

In the ES understanding of the genesis of our current international order, European polities have been central in the emergence of a global international society. ES scholars trace it back to European Renaissance, during which the medieval Christian society started to mute, through a double movement of transformation of its institutions and progressive expansion, into a global international society. In that perspective, the genesis of the existing society of independent states, the so-called Westphalian model, started in Europe, and so did the institutions necessary to regulate the inter-state relations such as the concept of balancing power, a common set of regulatory laws, and modern diplomacy (Watson 1984, 23-24).

These originally European rules of conduct embedded the ideas of absolute sovereignty, non-interference and juridical equality. But this juridical equality among independent states was only part of the story. While institutions of the international society were developed, they were applied only to certain political entities, states of Western culture (Watson 1984, 25). Non-European civilizations were seen as inferior and were at first formally excluded from a society of white states (Bull 1984b, 221).

The international society worked as a club, with access restricted by the Standard(s) of Civilization that even independent non-Europeans had to reach before being considered as equal and admissible to the club. Gong explained in his seminal work *The Standard of Civilization in International Society* (1984) that in order to aspire to achieve equal sovereignty, non-Western polities had to conform to certain characteristics such as the formation of a bureaucratic state, the instauration of a Western-like rule of law, and compliance to international law.
(Gong 1984, 14-23). Scholars like Zarakol (2011), Okagaki (2013), Neumann (2011), Adler-Nissen (2014) or Stivachtis (1998) furthered Gong’s work by showing that far from only restricting the access to a specific club, the Standard(s) had a performatve power which produced an in-depth transformation of non-European societies. Western modernity became a ‘totalizing kind of socialization’ which affected all aspects of life including social and cultural ones, leading to stigmas and a state of ‘ontological insecurity’ still has a persistent influence on their foreign policy and internal affairs (Zarakol 2011, 29-56). Those Standard(s), through their transcription in the institutions of the international society, still acts as a “moral ordering tool” (Adler-Nissen, 2017, 202), which defines as “a set of laws, norms, values and customs” (Mozaffari 2001, 247-255) that members should follow. In that sense it acts as an ‘evaluative-descriptive’ concept of civilization (Bowden 2014) which not unlike Manner’s normative power reshaped societal institutions in non-European polities, but also stratifies the international order by creating long-lasting hierarchies.

Only after the waves of independences, the international society became a truly universal one, a planet-wide society of sovereign states for all continents. But those new members had to face an international order which was created by and for European powers safeguarding their privileges (Bull 1984b, 217-8). The struggle for sovereign equality was a struggle to obtain a similar status to the one enjoyed by western members of the club. Therefore, by doing so, they legitimated by very institutions they were excluded from and adopted the basic rules and practices of the European international society (Bull and Watson 1984, 433).

2.3 The place of Europe in international hierarchies

As achievement goes, Bull, Watson and other ES scholars of that generation, offered a fairly in-depth and coherent story of how our current international order was formed. Contrary to various ‘grand theories’ conceived on the other side of the Atlantic, it permits to understand the actors of international relations not as interchangeable ‘black boxed’ units, nor as actors with preference shaped by their domestic institutions, but rather as polities that exist in a specific space and time, in a social order shaped through the historical evolution shared practices.

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In their recent reassessment of Bull and Watson’s original book, the collective work lead by Dunne and Reus-Smit (2017) proposed as in-depth re-evaluation of this narrative stressing but the continuous presence of social hierarchies at the core of our global order. The persistent of a ‘legalized hegemony’, giving special rights to great power in regimes such as the UNSC or the TNP (Clark 2017), of a specific moral order based on the (European) concept of civilization (O’Hagan 2017), and an unequal spread of sovereignty (Welsh 2017), have led Buzan to argue that “the practical political operation of universal sovereign equality is quite far from pure, and significantly mediate by hierarchical factors” (Buzan 2017, 242). Far from becoming a society of equal states, Simpson argued that “the globalization of international society reinforced or maintained a hierarchy between an elite of hegemonic powers and the rest of international society” (2017, 277).

Keene (2002) went a step further by refuting the idea that the European imperial domination was merely a transitional moment leading to a universal society of equal states. On the contrary, he explains how the dualistic nature of the world order of the colonial era, based on the coexistence of on the one side a European order based on equal sovereignty and tolerance, and simultaneously an Extra-European order design to justify colonialism and impose a particular (European) idea of civilization, rooting a fundamental inequality in the world order(s) institutions and law (Keene 2002, 97-8). After the Second World War, far from vanishing, this Extra-European order based on the idea of civilization merged with the European one based on sovereign equality, leading to a new order, truly global this time but torn apparat between contradicting injunctions, the principle of civilization of the old colonial order with the one of tolerance inherited from the Westphalian one (Keene 2002, 134-144). Such a schizophrenic international society therefore exists in a fundamental tension: states are simultaneously sovereign and independent but also obliged to respect legally binding injunction, such as human rights, in their own internal affairs.

This new wave of ES scholars has investigated the formation of a global international society composed of former colonizers and colonized, and remaining influence of the former global “Western-colonial international society” (Buzan 2017,
243) on world politics today. In that sense, it offers a radical departure from both US mainstream ‘grand theories’ but also from the classical understanding of Normative Power Europe, and European Foreign Policy studies in general, which tend to understand the EU as creation ex nihilo after a traumatic war and conditioned chiefly by its recent institutional design (Nicolaïdis et al. 2014).

The ES understanding of the international society, and the international order emanating from it, put in doubts the NPE model, in which the EU’s normative influence arises from its internal specificities. Looking to EU’s role in world politics, an ES perspective would agree with Onar and Nicolaïdis by saying that “[T]he legacies of a Eurocentric international order remain palpable, even though Europe is no longer at its centre” (Onar et Nicolaïdis 2013, 285). As Behr noticed, eight of the EU’s more ancient members carry “a history and political legacy as the world’s fiercest and as most violent colonizers and imperial powers” (Behr 2012, 10). Yet, a loud absence in the NPE debate has been Europe’s colonial past and the often-violent imposition of European norms and institutions on others. While NPE scholars have mainly presented the EU as a ‘benevolent’ activist for change, anti-status quo, ‘progressive’ and ‘post-Westphalian’, an English School perspective underlines the fact that the EU’s normative power must be understood by looking at how it relates to existing international societal hierarchies embedded in an originally European international society.

Part III: re-conceptualization of European normative power

Until now, this article aimed at unveiling the shortcomings of the ENP debates by contrasting them with ES findings, the next section intends to understand how ES insights might help to further the NPE debate and conceptualization.

3.1 The English School and the European Union

I should start this section by acknowledging that proposing an English School perspective on the European Union is not new per se. Diez and Whitman (2002) for example argued that the European construction can be understood as concentric societies themselves embedded in a global international society (see also Riemer
and Stivachtis 2002; Czaputowicz 2003; and Stivachtis and Weber 2011 for a similar argument). In that sense, their argument is similar to Manners’: the European ‘civilian’ or ‘normative’ power consists in the export of those elements of post-Westphalian ‘world society’, and therefore rests on its own *sui generis* constitution (Diez and Whitman 2002, 61). Unfortunately, those approaches tend to reproduce the flaws present in the NPE literature: an inward focus on the nature of the Union rather than its actual foreign policies as well as a disregard for the pre-1945 European history.

Focusing on the concept of Standard(s) of civilization, Behr (2007, see also Stivachtis 2008) argued that the EU’s membership conditionality, including the Copenhagen criteria, the reprise of the *aquis communautaire*, and the imposition of Human Rights clauses can be understood as new standards of civilization. He points out that those conditionalities reproduce the core/periphery binary, discrimination between members and non-members, and an essentialist definition of European ‘Self’ that has some similarities with the 19th-century Standard. While promising, this approach keeps a narrow focus on the relations between the EU and its immediate neighbourhood and does not seek to use the ES historical perspective to assess Europe’s global position in international relations. In comparison, Edward Keene offered a probably more interesting ES approach on Normative Power Europe by focusing on the question of the means of European normative power and linking it to the EU’s social status. He opens the NPE debate both to European colonial past and its peculiar place in current international relations (Keene 2013, 944).

### 3.2 A European International order still?

Keene’s analysis of European normative power very much builds on his account of the formation of our international society (see section 2.3). His understanding of the post 1945 global order derives from his hypothesis of a merger between the Westphalian European order and a colonial extra-European order based on a civilizing mission. More importantly, he argues that, since 1945, the previous normative injunctions of civilization, previously confined to the colonial extra-European order, have been generalized to all actors of a now truly global
international society. The *mission civilisatrice* is now embedded in nondiscriminatory international institutions and organizations and constrain both European and non-European polities, what Keene refers to as an ‘individualist’ form of social closure-based knowledge, competence and good practice (Keene 2013, 953). In that society, prestige and high-status, based on individualistic, merit-based credentials, are at least in theory accessible to all. Nevertheless, it doesn’t mean that a stratified society based on individualist credentials is fair: in this competitive game, some have set the rules while others are still trying to adapt. In the case of the EU, as Keene explains:

“What really gives it its high prestige, and hence its normative power, is the fact that this international identity draws upon a set of principles that had already been established as a central part of the structure of international society. The EU is drawing on the cultural capital that was gradually accumulated over the two centuries before its foundation.” (Keene 2013, 952).

By using English School’s insights, Keene’s gives a convincing answer to a question largely overlooked by other NPE scholars: the origin of European power of persuasion. The EU draws its normative power from a superior standing in an international society stratified by social hierarchies, themselves based on the legacy of the order created by Europeans in the 19th century, stripped from its discriminatory aspects after 1945 and embodied in various international organizations and regimes in the post-war era. In a sense, the EU is only logically champion at its own game, by respecting and developing Enlightenment-inspired Human Rights and successfully applying of economic models created during the European industrial revolution.

Nevertheless, the logical conclusion of Keene’s argument is that the EU might still be beaten at its own game in the long run: individualistic credentials are in theory open to all, and the EU might be surpassed by other actors, who might one day master the European concepts of liberal good governance better than the original rule-makers. One could for example point out that Japan has become a recognized member of the ‘liberal’ inner circle and might enjoy a normative status if not equivalent to the EU, at least superior to some of its members and former colonizers such as Italy or Spain.
His assessment is based on a relatively static and legalistic conception of the global order which downplays the constant feature of political struggle and contestations, and how these latter affects the institutions of the international society as much as top-down reframing of its nature (Reus-Smit and Dunne 2017b, 36).

If contestation and political struggle are major drivers of the international society and the constitution of its institutions, how could the EU managed not only to retain its high-status and normative power but also to keep the set of rules underpinning the international society unchanged? In other words, how could NPE survive what Bull and Watson labelled the ‘Revolt against the West’? (Bull 1984b).

Therefore, his assessment remains incomplete for two reasons: (i) he failed to explain the persistence of European particular status years after the ‘individualistic’ turn of international social hierarchies; and (ii) he downplays the role of material power in the maintenance of that specific normative order. In that regard, a more holistic assessment of Europe’s normative power should be constructed both in the continuity of and against Keene’s NPE theorization.

3.3 Normative Power Europe, the West and the Rest

First of all, the sole focus on the European Union as an isolated actor might be misleading. In that regard, both Keene and classical NPE scholars did not specify what counts as “European foreign policy”. Surely it cannot refer only to what EU scholars refer to as the ‘community method’ in which the Commission, the only truly supranational body of the Union, has the lead. Matters concerning the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) fall under the ‘intergovernmental method’ in which the member states still play the major role (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014, 60-61). Moreover, through both ‘methods’ the EU foreign policy remains heavily conditioned by the Council and therefore the member states’ will, and hence cannot structurally run contrary to member states’ own foreign policies (Ibid., 66). This article will use Hill’s definition of European foreign policy as the sum of what the EU and its member states do in international relations’ (Hill 1998, 18). Such a definition, encompassing also the
foreign policies of the member states, has in addition the advantage of stressing the continuity between the EU and European past, as if the Union might enjoy a blank slate foreign policy-wise, while the European states do not. In a similar demarche Behr (2012) proposed the concept of ‘EUrope’ which ought to symbolize the “significant overlap between the idea of Europe and the EU being symbolized as EUrope” (Behr 2012, 7) and to stress the continuities in European foreign policies from its colonial period to the Union.

In addition, the sole focus on the legacy of pre-decolonization can very well explain how the EU enjoyed that position after the post-War period, but it fails to capture how such a biased order has been managed and maintained since then. Once explanation can be the profound performative impact of non-European polities, notably through their internalization of the Standard(s) (Bowden 2009, Zarakol 2011, Adler-Nissen 2014). As Pouliot argued those social hierarchies have their own internal mechanisms of reproduction, as the subordinates are forced to play the game of their own exploitation (2017, 124). But I argue this can only offer part of the answer. In The ‘Revolt against the West’ Revisited, Ian Hall (2017) argues that while many observers, including Bull, predicted that the political struggle of the ‘Third World’ would end up threatening Western leadership and institutions, and despite significant early victories, the Revolt fell short in the 80s with the rise of the Consensus of Washington and of a new wave of liberal democratization (Hall 2017, 345-355). I argue that the persistence of the originally European set of rules and institutions can be explained by a balance of material capabilities in favour of the conservative powers, which became even more substantial after the demise of the Eastern Bloc, forcing the ‘Third world’ to settle for small gains instead of altering the fundamental normative underpinning of the international society.

Far from being absent of the English School, material capabilities and an increasingly widening power gap between some Europeans powers and the rest were the very factor that permitted the imposition of an international society based on western institutions all over the globe during the 19th century (Buzan and Lawson 2013). In reality, the English School offers a holistic understanding of our order in which “the process of push and pull between material and cultural factors cause international society” (Navari 2009, 52). The ES society of states and its set
of rules (*international society*) do not exist in a vacuum, but in constant interaction with transnational dynamics (*world society*) and based on a certain distribution of material power (*international system*) (for an in-depth discussion of this point, see Little 2009, 81-86). Therefore, one should envisage the possibility that the persistence of a normative imbalance is sustained by the persistence of any imbalance of material capabilities at the ‘systemic’ level and investigate the material conditions that underpins the lasting European normative power.

Both Manners (2002), because of his focus on the EU’s *sui generis* nature, and Keene (2013, 222-224), as he consciously chose to ignore the role of material capabilities, fail to take into considerations the full extent of the role played by “carrots and sticks” strategies in the active enforcement of new Standards such as Human Rights (Donnelly 1998, 1), market economy (Stivachtis 2010), international law (Fidler 2001, 147), and liberal democracy (Morphet 2005). I argue at the success of those strategies resides in the fact that they were enforced not only by the EU *per se* but also its member states and other like-minded international actors.

In order to understand how a loose union of member states, with limited foreign policy instruments and almost inexistent military forces, is able to maintain a western-centric order one must take a step back and switch from an actor-specific analysis to a wider context. Suzuki’s sub-grouping model (2017) permits to do that.

Suzuki has argued against the misleading vision of aggregation of anarchically ordered states in a unique community. On the contrary, she highlights the existence of “a more complex hierarchy of multiple social groups within the international community” (2017, 222). On the one side, the conservative group of mainly Western states is able to maintain its rules and norms, whereas on the other side, ‘delinquent gangs’ of states denounce the ‘mainstream’ social hierarchies and try to foster a deviant subculture (Suzuki 2017, 222-224). Building on that, I argue that we must consider ‘EUrope’ (both the EU and its members) are part of a larger collation of like-minded actors, mainly European or originally of European culture, which favours of the persistence of an originally European set of rules and norms and act as what Adler-Nissen refers to as an ‘audience of normals’, a group of
states which attempts to define ‘normality’ by stigmatizing to ‘deviant’ members of the society (2014, 147).

In that perspective, the continuous relevance of European normative power indicates the relative failure of such revisionist projects and *a contrario* the success of the EU and like-minded powers, the ‘audience of normals’ in maintaining the historically biased norms inherited from the pre-decolonization era.

3.3.1 Carrots as order management tool.

Ironically, it's Adam Watson, criticized for his lack of attention to social hierarchies in *The Expansion*, who proposed in his later and less famous writings (2007) a valuable description of a range of management tools used by the ‘audience of normals’ in order to sustain the ordering principles of the international society through the concept of collective hegemony.

He describes hegemony as

“*the material condition of technological, economic and strategic superiority which enables a single great power or group of powers, or the great powers acting collectively, to bring such great inducements and pressures to bear that most other states lose some of their external and internal independence*” (Watson 2007:80)

According to Watson, the main tools used by the hegemonic group in order to discipline others are different forms of rewards: economic aid, medical infrastructures, access to market and even arm sales in exchange of which states have to comply to the demands of their donor governments and (mainly western) NGOs (Watson 2007, 88-89, 93).

The EU trade and humanitarian aid policies follow that pattern. Conditionality and Human Rights clauses are almost systematically joined to trade agreements such as the ‘Cotonou Agreement’ signed between the EU and 78 states from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (Hurt 2003), but also in its Neighbourhood policies (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011). In addition, various authors have noticed that
Europeans’ development and aid policy is often perceived as ‘neo-colonial’ or ‘imperialist’ (Carbone 2013; Elgström 2011). But the EU’s use of economic power mustn’t be understood as a solitary effort in order to enhance its own normative power: it’s part of a group effort in which members of the ‘audience of normals’ collectively uphold a number of similar conditions in exchange for financial rewards notably. Watson also stressed the role of ‘international’ organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund largely influenced by their principal donors: ‘liberal’ states (Watson 2007, 109). In that sense, the economic and technological hegemony of the liberal community permits the enforcement of Standard(s) of civilization and therefore ensure the persistence of a certain normative order. Singularly, Diez (2013) recently arrived too similar conclusions by arguing that the EU’s normative power might be better understood as a Gramscian form of hegemony which combines material and discursive elements (2013: 200) and is supported not only by the Union’s institutions but also by the member states and element of the civil society (2013, 204).

3.3.2 Sticks as order management tool.
The distinctive set of rules which constitute the normative structures of our international society arguably might not only have been safeguarded by economic rewards but had also by reliance on more coercive means. Throughout the first part of this essay I discussed the particular challenge faced by NPE theories vis-à-vis the development of the European military instruments. Howorth (2014, 151-153) has listed 33 missions undertook under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) framework including 5 with a ‘military mandate’. In addition, he cited intervention on behalf of the ‘international community’ in “order to safeguard human rights and right humanitarian wrongs” as one of its “fundamental driver” (2014, 22-23). Nevertheless, CSDP missions constitute only the tip of the iceberg of Europeans military intervention if as stated we consider members states policies as part of the European foreign policy. Despite the arguments of some of the pacifist nature of the EU and its member states (see Diez and Manners 2007, 182), one must recognize the rather frequent use of military interventions by Europeans
states since the end of the Cold War, notably under the NATO framework.\textsuperscript{7} Interventions like the first Gulf War or the intervention in the Libyan civil war, in which a larger number of European states have participated, were explicitly undertaken in order to safeguard and/or enforce certain international norms (Rostov 1991; Davidson 2013). While discussing the motivations of the numerous military interventions of other members of the liberal community, including the US, is beyond the purpose of this essay, numerous scholars have linked it to the preservation and/or exportation of certain international norms (see for example Von Kippen 2000; Bachmann 2014).

In additions, military capabilities are not the only means of coercive foreign policy instruments: Alexander George has referred to tools of coercive diplomacy such as economic sanctions as “forceful persuasion” (George 1997). Portela (2016) calculates that the EU accounts for 36\% of non-UN sanctions around the world (more than 72\% for the US and the EU), with predominantly with objectives related to Human Rights and democratic norms (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014, 219). In certain cases, the ‘audience of normals’ explicitly coordinate themselves: the sanctions undertaken since 2014 by both the EU, the US, and a number of other states, against Russia, the explicit objective of punishing specific behaviour, the annexation of Crimea, which was perceived by members of the western-liberal community as non-conform to a set of international norms (Dreyer and Popescu 2014).

My argument here is not that the EU foreign policy is indistinguishable from the foreign policy of any other ‘liberal’ state, or even from the one of its member states. States among the liberal community have obviously very different identities, interests, and grand strategies. Nonetheless, in Suzuki’s framework (2017) of an international society divided in subgroups, one has to place the EU and its member states among protectors of the mainstream norms. In that sense, more than representing a post-Westphalian vanguard, if we decentralize the focus both

\textsuperscript{7} During the first Gulf War (1991) 8 out 12 EU members were parties to the conflict, 3 out of 15 during the second Gulf War (2003-11), 10 out of 27 during the Libyan Civil War (2011), while 9 out of 27 are members of the anti-ISIS coalition. More than half of the EU’s current members were involved in a way or another in the ongoing Afghan War.
through time and space, ‘Normative Power Europe’ might be better seen as a rather conservative power which, as Keene argued, extracts its normative power from a high-status based on normative structures it created and imposed all over the world.

**Conclusion**

Through this essay, I tried to show both the limitations of the NPE debate and how the English School by its large and historical perspective was able to problematize the question of the legacy of history in the current Normative Power of Europe. Its attention to global norms embedded in the institutions of the international society and their history permits to overcome the usual blind spots of the NPE debate. While Manners’ ahistoricist and inward-looking focus of the *sui generis* nature of the EU draws the picture of a ‘progressive’ Europe transforming international relations through its post-Westphalian project, an ES perspective is able to recast this superficial Euro-centric account.

Suzuki warned against the danger for a researcher to assume that norms one conceives as necessarily positive would find a similar approval all over the planet. In Suzuki’s word: “This has the effect of ignoring the potential existence of non-Western social groupings within the international community and reproducing Eurocentric narratives” (Suzuki 2017, 223). The English School, especially since its ‘critical turn’ permits to decenter the ENP debate and asks the question: is the EU a revolutionary normative power promoting a post-Westphalian order or a member of the ‘audience of normals’ largely defending an order inherited from its colonial era? In that sense, it is able to lay the foundations for an inquiry of Sjusen’s insights: “EU’s ‘normative’ power might simply be an expression of Eurocentric cultural imperialism” (Sjusen 2006, 248).
Bibliography:


