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What is This?
The neo-normative turn in theorising the EU’s international presence

Richard G Whitman

Abstract
Introduced by Ian Manners in an article published in 2002, the idea of ‘normative power Europe’ has been very widely debated by scholars in the fields of European studies and international relations. This article marks the first decade of scholarship on normative power Europe through a critical engagement with the concept, its influence and the wider normative turn within the literature on the European Union’s role beyond its borders. The article reviews the strands of literature that have drawn on the concept of normative power and outlines the contours of the international debate on the concept. It provides an assessment of the impact of normative power and its application through the variety of ways it has been used via engagement, reaction and counter-reaction.

Keywords
European Union, foreign policy, normative power

Introduction
Since it was first introduced by Ian Manners in an article published in 2002, the idea of ‘normative power Europe’ has been very widely debated by scholars in the fields of European studies and international relations (Manners, 2002). The article marks the first decade of scholarship on normative power Europe through a critical engagement with the concept, its influence and the wider normative turn within the literature on the European Union (EU)’s role beyond its borders.

Manners’s article and subsequent work has stimulated a neo-normative turn in theorising the EU’s international presence. The key contribution of Manners has been to stimulate a prolific set of debates over the visions, ideations, values and principles of the Union. For over a decade there has been a preoccupation with the patterns and the extent of the implementation of various norms within EU policies. Manners introduced the
concept of normative power Europe as the ‘ability to shape conceptions of “normal” in international relations’ (Manners, 2002: 239). Manners’s assertion was that previous conceptualisations of the EU’s international role had been narrowly confined to the consideration of military power as opposed to that of civilian power. For Manners, the EU should be considered as a normative power. Therefore, the EU should be studied according to ‘what it is’ rather than ‘what it does or says’ (2002: 252). In other words, the basics of the normative power Europe argument can be traced back to the questions regarding the object being studied and what and how we know about the nature of the ontological foundations of the EU (Manners, 2002: 253). By distinguishing the concept of normative power from the previous discussions on military power (Bull, 1982) and civilian power (Duchêne, 1972), Manners placed the identity and nature of the Union into a different framework in which he aimed at replacing ‘the state as the centre of concern’ (Manners, 2002: 236) and refocusing on the ideations and power of norms as the substantive basics of the EU studies.

In the early 2000s, Manners was not alone in having a scholarly interest in the normative and value-driven features of the EU as, for example, the work of Nicolaïdis and Howse (2002) indicates. Furthermore, a focus on normative theory within the discipline of international relations had been a vibrant field of scholarship in the preceding two decades (Cochrane, 1999). A key component of Manners’s approach was to bridge an emergent debate on Europe with an on-going debate within the discipline of international relations which, in turn, was drawing upon pre-existing currents in political theory – and a point acknowledged by Manners in his subsequent work (2011).

The idea of normative power Europe also has roots in a long tradition in theorising the EU. Most notably, it builds upon the work of Duchêne in his notion of ‘idée force’ (Duchêne, 1973) and Galtung’s ‘ideological power’ (Galtung, 1973). Manners himself attributed the reason behind the concept of normative power Europe to the need to frame post-Cold War world politics into a more principle-oriented analysis, since the EU had come to the forefront with an emphasis on the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law.

In doing so, Manners sought a departure from traditional approaches to the study of Europe, developed throughout the Cold War years, by turning towards cross-disciplinary approaches. In particular, he utilised Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory as a focal point for an approach to the study of Europe. In Manners’s words

> critical scholars therefore seek to escape the intellectual straight jacket of traditional political science by questioning assumptions about political systems and institutions, economistic rationalities and methodologies … more than anything, critical scholars share a commitment to uncovering preconceptions about historical reality and the contextual nature of knowledge, and they seek to change politics.

(Manners, 2007a: 77)

Central to the normative power argument is the rejection of a totalistic and state-centred view of traditional approaches. Defining the EU’s foreign policy in normative terms means that the EU’s power cannot be reduced to either military or purely
economic means; rather, it ‘works through ideas, opinions and conscience’ (Diez and Manners, 2007: 175). Consequently, the concept of normative power Europe attracted much interest within the study of the EU and many authors continue to describe the EU in some ‘adjectival prefixes’ (Bickerton, 2011). Commentators have affixed various concepts to ‘power’ that the EU possesses in order to define its characteristics. These include civilising or civilizational power (Duchêne, 1972; Sjursen, 2006a, 2006b), quiet superpower (Moravcsik, 2002, 2004), ethical power (Aggestam, 2008), postmodern superpower (McCormick, 2006), responsible power (Mayer and Vogt, 2006), pragmatic power (Wood, 2010), vanishing mediator (Nicolaïdis, 2004) and gentle power (Merlini, 2001; Padoa-Schioppa, 2001).

The concept of normative power Europe has become the most resonant of these adjectival prefixes and, if the scholarship of Duchêne and Galtung could be said to have established normative scholarship on the EU’s international role, then Manners’s work can be considered to have been integral to a neo-normative turn in EU theorising. This is on the basis that it has facilitated an alternative conceptualisation of Europe and Europe’s role through questioning the EU institutions and policies in terms of essence, actions and impacts rather than taking them for granted (Manners, 2006a: 180).

In the decade since the original article (Manners, 2002), scholars have used the concept to inform empirical work, to stimulate critical theoretical interrogation of the normative basis of European integration and to generate a considerable body of new empirical work. Further, as this special issue demonstrates, it has stimulated theoretical work on the qualities, virtues and pathologies of European power as counter-points to the notion of normative power Europe. Discussions of normative power and normative theorisations of the EU have become a mainstream approach to the study of the EU and might be expected to offer insight for the future research agenda on European integration. This special issue is an attempt to demonstrate that normative power Europe has now developed a research agenda which has taken the concept beyond its original ambitions. This special issue is not an extensive recital of ‘applied’ normative power along various cases and policy areas, but rather highlights a ‘third wave’ in normative theorising on the EU which takes a critical approach to Manners’s concept as the starting point, rather than attempting to operationalise the notion of normative power Europe which has occupied many scholars over the last decade. In this sense, the special issue does not aim at bringing theoretically au courant reflection on normative power Europe, but rather aims to map new theoretical work on the qualities, virtues and pathologies of European power to act as critical counter-points to the notion of normative power Europe.

This first article of the special issue provides a review of the extensive theoretical and empirical studies within the normative approach. It maps the components of the ‘neo-normative turn’ within the study of the international role of the EU. Given the oversupply of conceptual definitions affiliated with normative power Europe – which now resemble dissonant ‘a capella singing’ of a chorus lacking operationalisation of the actual role that the EU plays through actions and impact – the first aim of the article is to clarify the essence of the normative power concept and also differentiate it from similar conceptualisations. The literature on normative power Europe is extensively analysed and classified in order to provide a ‘state of the art’ in normative power Europe.
and to indicate the extent of the neo-normative turn in theorising. The article then turns to the agenda of a third wave of normative theorising on the EU. It provides an indication of where the current state of the art is taking normative power Europe after a first decade of scholarship.

The neo-normative turn

Aligning the EU with different concepts, reflecting the non-state-like features of it as an actor of international politics, is not a new phenomenon. In 1972, Duchêne defined the EU as civilian, by which he means a ‘special international actor whose strength lies in its ability to promote and encourage stability through economic and political means’ (Duchêne, 1972; Sjursen, 2004), rather than physical coercive force. However, the normative power argument has been raised to go beyond the discussions of whether the EU is an actor in international politics. Normative power theorising is interested in the EU’s aim of setting standards for others through the means of spreading norms rather than being powerful with either military or economic sources (Diez and Manners, 2007: 175). In other words, normative power Europe is independent of the discussions between soft versus hard power or civilian versus military power. The concept has been developed as a response to the absence of normative theorising and with an aim to go beyond dichotomies of civil versus military power, which was a product of Cold War politics.

Nevertheless, normative power Europe is sometimes easily commingled with Duchêne’s civilian power, which focuses on devaluation of military power by the European states and the importance of the economic and other non-military power the EU possesses. According to Manners, civilian power can be characterised by three central dimensions – ‘diplomatic cooperation to solve international problems’ (multilateralism), ‘centrality of economic power’ (non-military) and ‘legally-binding supranational institutions’ (international law) (Manners, 2000: 26, 2002: 236–237). In this sense, the civil or civilising power concept is related to Eurocentric (neo-)colonial perceptions of the rest of the world and the importance of state and physical power (Manners, 2006c: 184). The nature of civilian power arguments reflects an acceptance of an international society based on the relations between states or what Manners calls ‘Westphalian culture’ (2006: 176). Normative power Europe conceptualises international society composed of various actors and rejects the tendency to limit the activities of the international community to the relations between states. Although the civilian power thesis is based on the relative absence of physical force and military capabilities, it still inherently acknowledges the importance of material power, whereas normative power focuses on ‘non-material exemplification found in the contagion of norms’ through imitation and representation of the EU which has become a pole of attraction. Moreover, normative power Europe rejects any affiliation with colonial or neo-colonial practice, that is, the role of mission civilisatrice for the less developed parts of the world. Normative power Europe emphasises the cosmopolitan nature of the EU’s principles, particularly by ‘a commitment to placing universal norms and principles at the centre of its relations with its Member States and the world’ (Manners, 2006: 176). In its totality, rather than emphasising merely civilian (economic and legal relations) or material power, normative power Europe emphasises the overall structural power the
EU possesses as a result of its relative ambiguity. Thus, it is an inclusive approach about what is or ought to be normative about the EU, in contrast to the essentialism of civilising Europe (Manners, 2003: 73–74).

Normative power is also distinguished from ethical power. According to Manners, in ethical (foreign) policy, a cosmopolitan view is prioritised. Although the principles and norms on which the EU is based are cosmopolitan, its foreign policy is set between three dimensions: Member States, the supranational EU and the cosmo-political world society. The way the EU internalises these cosmo-political values into its policies (conversion of values into principles, as discussed in Lucarelli and Manners, 2006b, see below, are unique to the Union). Distinguishing normative from ethical and/or civilian power, Manners states that normative is about how policy should be – how the EU should reconstruct current practices – while ethical is related to genuineness of foreign policy, – much more in line with ‘totality’ or ‘rescuer mentality’ (Manners, 2007b: 118, emphasis added).

**Debating normative power Europe: the substance of the neo-normative turn**

If the EU is neither civilian only nor military only, then what is the nature or essence of the ‘normative’ beast? According to Manners, the EU’s normative power derives from three sources: historical context (legacy of two destructive world wars), hybrid polity (the features of the Union as a post-Westphalian order with supranational and international institutions) and political–legal constitutionalism (elite-driven, treaty-based legal nature of the EU) (2002: 240–241). These three features of the Union helped bring the common principles of the Member States under the same framework and facilitated commitment to principles and norms at the supranational and national levels. These common principles and values constitute the EU as a political entity in various ways and in many different policy areas (Lucarelli and Manners, 2006a), where the EU places the norms of peace, idea of liberty, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights at the centre of its relations with the rest of the world. The EU builds its power and ‘greater legitimacy’ upon these ‘fundamental norms’ (Manners, 2002: 244).

In this sense, normative power is a power that is able ‘to shape conceptions of the “normal”’ (Manners, 2000: 32; also Manners, 2002: 239) for others. This statement has many implications. First of all, the role of pure, instrumental logic in the use of norms is not possible. In Manners’s words, ‘in my formulation the central component of normative power Europe is that it [the EU] exists as being different to pre-existing political forms, and that this particular difference pre-disposes it to act in a normative way’ (2002: 242). The pursuit of democracy, the rule of law, social justice and human rights in EU foreign policy, the EU’s preference for diplomacy and multilateralism all consist of a substantial dimension of the EU normative foundations (Maull, 2000). Particular channels initiate diffusion of norms in the Union’s international relations depending on the relations between the EU and third parties.

Second, these normative principles are not exclusively European, but rather reflect universal and especially post-Cold War practices of the international community.
Lucarelli and Manners suggest that the universal principles are actually internalised and converted into guiding principles by the EU. Therefore, each broad principle is given a European reading (Lucarelli and Manners, 2006a: 202) before being channelled into relations with third parties. As Manners contends in his recent article, the principles are not exclusively indigenous and they are acknowledged by the United Nations (UN) long before the EU has internalised and included them in its treaties and begun applying them in its external relations (Manners, 2010). This feature of normative power Europe is in line with what Eriksen discusses in assessing the argument on normative power Europe. According to Eriksen, absence of coercive means or statements over honourable aims cannot be the defining criteria; rather the cosmopolitan criteria of higher-ranking law such as human rights and international law and justice explain the nature of an actor (Eriksen, 2006: 252–253). Similar arguments have been developed that claim that the EU is normative because it binds itself through cosmopolitan law, a deliberative or communicative nature and discourse on being normative (Diez, 2005; Sjursen, 2006b). Therefore, normative power would seek ‘to overcome power politics through a strengthening of not only international but cosmopolitan law, emphasising the rights of individuals and not only the rights of states to sovereign equality’ (Sjursen, 2006b: 249).

Last but not least, the normative power argument also strongly relates to the presence or actoriness and capability of the EU in world politics. The ability to alter normality in world politics has not only ideational implications, but also undeniable practical implications. Therefore, in the first instance, being normative means changing norms, standards and prescriptions of world politics, which are bound by state centricity (Manners, 2008a: 45). In this sense, Manners distinguishes the two aspects of normative power: being normative and acting in a normative way. The former is a result of the nature of the EU or of its hybrid polity embracing intergovernmental and transnational governance, whereas the latter involves behaving in an ethically good manner.

Despite her criticisms of normative power Europe, Aggestam acknowledges that, with its increasing role, the EU’s impact also becomes important, and she proposes a shift from focusing on what the EU ‘is’ to what it ‘does’ (Aggestam, 2008). In suggesting to use the term ‘ethical’ instead of ‘normative’, Aggestam (2008: 4) claims that the former concept captures ‘how the context of normative globalization after the end of the Cold War enabled the EU to assume a more proactive international role by drawing on an international ethics largely, but not exclusively, institutionalized within the UN system’. Ethical policy also defends the interdependent nature of ethics and interests and thus rejects altruism and moral absoluteness (Aggestam, 2008: 6). Regarding the field of foreign policy, similarly Keukeleire’s concept of ‘structural foreign policy’ is closely related to the active international role undertaken by the EU. By emphasising the difference between traditional and structural foreign policy, Keukeleire and MacNaughtan (2008) state that a structural foreign policy ‘aims at influencing in an enduring and sustainable way’. Similarly, Telò writes that the EU’s foreign policy aims at altering the economic and social structures of third parties ‘through pacific and original means (diplomatic means, agreements, sanctions, and so on)’ in the middle and long run (Telò, 2001: 264).
Indeed, in Manners’s original conceptualisation, normative power Europe does not rely on ideational aspects, it ‘rejects such temptations to unreflective and uncritical analysis. Instead it aims to contribute to a better understanding of what principles the EU promotes, How the EU acts, and what impact the EU has by attempting both to analyse and to judge the EU’s normative power in world politics’ (Manners, 2008b: 46, emphasis added). Thereupon, studying normative power Europe requires a deep analysis of its various impacts at different levels (individual level, legal level and non-Europeans’ level), since it is developed as a reaction to understand the growing strategic aspirations of the EU embodying civilian and military power.

Unsurprisingly, normative power has attracted much criticism, especially from structural-realist and rationalist scholars. The structural-realistic viewpoint rejects that the EU has a separate actorhood to its Member States. Rather than being an actor on its own with a continuous support for universal values, ‘the EU was used by its most influential Member States as an instrument for collectively exercising hegemonic power, shaping its “near abroad” in ways amenable to the long-term strategic and economic interests of its Member States’ (Hyde-Price, 2006: 226–227). Furthermore, Hyde-Price questions the normative and ethical foundations of the EU. According to him, the only ethical behaviour could be found in the Weberian ‘ethic of ultimate ends’, namely prudence, scepticism and reciprocity (Hyde-Price, 2008). In defining the EU’s relations and worldwide support for norms and values, he states that ‘[i]t is ironic that many Europeans have seen through the Bush administration’s claims that what is good for America is also good for the world, but fail to question EU claims that what is good for ‘Europe’ is good for the world’ (Hyde-Price, 2008: 32). Although from a different point of view, Laïdi’s (2006, 2008) claim against normative power stems from its close affiliation with ideals and abstraction from a notion of interest. Such a conceptualisation would equate the EU with ideal power, and, according to Laïdi, bind the EU by an ‘idealist trap’ (Bickerton, 2011).

Jørgensen notes that different theoretical perspectives adopt different stands towards the role and importance of values and principles (Jørgensen, 2006: 56). As a response to the misconceptualisation of the presence of values and principles in foreign policy, Jørgensen contends that ‘values, images and principles are completely agnostic along the dichotomies of benign/malign and soft/hard’ (2006: 57), contrary to the structural-realist scholars’ tendency to equate norms with ideals and good. According to Jørgensen, direct causal relationships between norms and policy cannot be established; given the contesting principles, actors have to make a choice among principles and the way to convert them into policy. This calls for a closer examination of literature on the application of normative power into policy areas.

The neo-normative research agenda

Eriksen states that ‘[t]he propensity to act on honourable motives cannot itself represent the criteria for judging the polity’s normative quality because they may very well be arbitrary. A policy based on good intentions may very well neglect others’ interest or values or fail to give them due consideration’ (2006: 252). This reflection represents the warning against ambiguous articulation of norms into policies. Realising the on-going
ambiguity, Sjursen (2006a) states the need for a theory, for definite criteria, for a clear definition of normative power and for critical standards in assessing military and non-military foreign policy. Similarly, M. Smith (2006: 325) calls attention to the ‘gap between questions about what kind of vehicle’ the EU’s foreign policy is and ‘who or what drives and steers it’, pointing to the need for further reflection on the policy implications of being normative in devising policy, and the relations between internal developments and broader international issues and structures (Smith, 2006: 327). It is also supported by Diez and Manners in their warning against unreflective theorising on normative power which would create ‘pure self interested hegemony’ (2006e: 174).

This brings in the argument that principles, actions and impact are equally important for normative power Europe. Manners draws upon procedural normative ethics in order to discuss the normative basis of the EU’s traits in its external action (Manners, 2008b: 55–56). Procedural normative ethics require, first, the EU to turn itself into a virtuous example by applying the same principles at home. Consistency between home and abroad would ensure that the EU is not hypocritical in promoting norms (Manners, 2008a: 56). Second, taking the argument one step further in his discussion on procedural normative ethics, Manners relies on deontological ethics, that is, the extent of formalisation of rules and duties which guides the EU’s external actions and states that rule-bounded governed behaviour, continuous public debate and deliberation are the basis for reasonable action in the international arena. The last dimension of normative ethics takes the impact of actions into consideration. Assessing the impact of outcomes would certainly require analysis from the point of view of consequentialist ethics. In this sense, the most important aspect of the EU’s relations with the rest of the world can be assessed by the outcomes and according to Manners, this should be governed by doing the least harm (Manners, 2008b: 58–59). Thus, the way substantive normative principles are promoted in a normative and procedural way makes the EU a lively example in its principles, be reasonable in its actions and do least harm in its impact (Manners, 2008b). Through framing the EU’s foreign policy within procedural normative ethics, Manners has increased the versatility of normative power Europe and his theoretical toolbox thus suggests that universally accepted values cannot be merely pushed forward on third parties but must be acceptable to Europeans and non-Europeans alike in terms of principles, actions and impact (2008b: 80).

Extending normative power representations of the EU in the literature has been accelerated by the various external policies of the EU, but mostly has been shaped by the dilemma between current militarisation of the Union and maintaining norms at the centre of foreign policy, as well as the implications of further militarisation on world politics (Diez and Manners, 2007). The difference of the EU as a polity is more or less commonly established in the literature (Diez and Manners, 2007), but the discussion regarding the ways and the extent to which the EU relies on normative principles has led to the rise of a crystallised literature on normative power Europe. While some have conceptualised this difference in liberal western values (Cooper, 2003), others mention cosmopolitan characters of the values committed by the EU (Eriksen, 2006) or the difference the EU displays compared with the other actors (Lucarelli and Menotti, 2006). However, others focus on the relative lack of military capabilities due to the normative or civilian nature of the EU (Kagan, 2003).
It can surely be claimed that defining the EU within normative theorising fulfils various scholarly appetites in terms of discussing the EU’s nature and its role in world politics from different points of views, namely whether normative Europe is ‘instrumental or ideological, whether it acts as an actor or consist of a structure, is it a union of states or people’ (Manners, 2007b: 128–129). As Wiener (2008: 38) states, ‘norms matter for politics is a widely shared observation. [However,] there is less agreement on how they matter’. Thus, the normative power conceptualisation has been subjected to various litmus tests by applying it to many cases and different policy areas.

A part of the literature emphasises the differences of the EU from other actors, mainly the United States. For instance, Smith (2011) compares and contrasts the EU and US self-understandings of their international roles; Baker (2006) contends the attitude towards environmental protection; Van Den Hoven (2006) discusses the framework of multilateral trade negotiations; and Welsh (2006) argues that, in science and technology, the EU displays certain normative characteristics compared with the USA. Pető and Manners (2006) discuss that enlargement and development policy is used to upgrade gender equality. Scheipers and Sicurelli (2007) treat both the International Criminal Court and the agreement on the Kyoto Protocol as case studies and find evidence that the EU’s identity as a normative power is first and foremost shaped in sharp demarcation against the USA as the ‘other’. The extensive implementation of normative theorising into EU policies extends far beyond the initial application of Manners into the case of the death penalty (Manners, 2002), for instance environmental policy (Lightfoot and Burchell, 2004); the EU and global governance (Laidi, 2005); EU actorness (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006); EU foreign policy (Sjursen, 2006a, 2006b); Europe and ‘others’ (Diez, 2005); and EU values and principles (Lucarelli and Manners, 2006a). These are indicative references to what is now vast literature, but it can be broadly concluded that the EU’s normative power and its actual implications in a globalised era are closely interlinked. In line with the main policy documents, the EU has been defining its relations with the rest of the world through normative commitments to norms and multilateral frameworks.

The analysis of normative power represented in the academic literature is still ongoing and, indeed, this special issue demonstrates the continuing salience of the concept. Looking back across the preceding decade, it is possible to classify the literature in order to comprehend the contours of the debate, around which there has been much contestation.

**International identity**

Manners and Whitman (2003) applied the normative conceptualisation in order to explain one dimension of the multifaceted EU identity. Conventional studies tend to see the EU’s identity construction as an attempt to create ‘a single, essential, categorical identity’ through emphasis on the difference between the EU and the rest of the world. Drawing upon an earlier work on the EU’s international identity which discussed the ‘active identity’ of the Union (Manners and Whitman, 1998), the authors point to a reflexive dimension of EU identity. According to Manners and Whitman (2003: 381), together with the active identity, the reflexive analysis brings another element to Europeans’ ‘complex and
multifaceted identities’, which is normative identity. The authors’ emphasis on the normative aspects of the EU polity, besides civilian and military roles, aims at showing the absence of a shared identity, given the ‘ambiguity’ and ‘incompleteness’ of the EU. In his recent article, Manners (2010: 76) states that

[...]for global Europe, the myth of international identity portrayed the complexities and confusion surrounding the newly created EU in the immediate post-Cold War period, while at the same time helped move the discussion beyond Cold War dichotomies of civilian versus military power to include a further dimension of power-normative power.

Multiple identities imply that the international identity of the EU is shaped within a multiple texture, which is fluid and even complex and contested (Manners, 2006e: 178; Manners and Whitman, 2003). The idea of nationalism has caused disasters for Europeans, thus the development of a more post-national constellation and a tendency to reject the absolutism of nationalism and fascism are responses to the historical disasters. The contestation of the international identities of the EU does not aim at the creation of a single identity as an end result (Manners, 2006e: 178; Manners and Whitman, 2003). Quite contrarily, the multiple identities of the Union are an attempt to look beyond ‘the [historical] evil of European nationalisms’ (Manners, 2007a: 85) with an aim to unify people under one type of identity. Therefore, ‘the EU cannot be considered a difference engine in the multiplication of a separate, single, essential, categorical, supranational EU self’. In this sense, ‘it is the fluid, complex, multiple and relational aspects of the self-other contestations which define the EU as a normative power’ (Manners, 2006e: 178) and the normative nature of the EU identity does not allow crystallisation of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in world politics. In discussing the normative presence and identity, Diez discusses that normative power Europe is inherently a discursive construct of the EU as a model and force for good for the rest of the world. This is not a bad thing per se, as, according to Diez, discursive constructs can be sources of power as long as the normative frameworks of the actors overlaps (Diez, 2005; Diez and Pace, 2011). In this sense, military and civilian power do not counter the normative identity of the EU. Diez and Manners even state that ‘normative justification of use of military force is possible’, for instance in humanitarian intervention (Diez and Manners, 2011: 178). Still, the ‘unreflexive projection of norms and construction of European identity risks being undermined by military power’ (Diez and Manners, 2007: 186, also see below).

**Militarisation**

The issue of the creation of military capabilities of the EU together with the increasing autonomous military operations have attracted different reactions from scholars. K. E. Smith (2005: 12) argues that military capabilities would definitely threaten the civilian identity as the EU would ‘fold to the supposedly superior hand of military force’, and possibly eventually turn out to be ‘a larger version of a sovereign state’, an ‘armed superpower of sorts’. According to Manners (2006c), militarisation of the EU, that is acquiring crisis management capabilities under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) framework, does not damage normative power Europe per se as
long as the EU avoids developing a great power mentality. Militarisation of the EU is not a threat in itself, but what is threatening for normative power Europe is prioritisation of military power over long-term goals of local capacity development or placing conflict resolution within the strategic framework or second pillarisation (Manners, 2006c: 191) of the EU policies in the conflict regions. Nevertheless, normative power Europe eulogises the role of EU foreign policy integration, played in the sense that the elite and technocratic nature of EU integration and the greater sensitivity of European publics towards the military use of force, has acted as pacifying or desecuritising the Member States’ traditional foreign policy (Manners, 2006b: 407). Therefore, there is a tendency to remain within peaceful, non-coercive confines of constructive instruments rather than military force.

Contrarily, Stavridis (2001: 49–50) argues that military means might be essential in order to ensure that the EU possesses effective civilian power. Dunne (2008: 15) shares the idea that military stance and normative power can be compatible when the EU is becoming a good citizen of the international society: ‘Europe does not need to accept a choice: either becoming a proto-superpower or retreating to Eutopia. There is a moral middle way to be found.’ Similarly, Whitman (2002: 24) writes that, even if the EU acquired military capabilities, civilian power is still relevant; military power does not replace civilian nature but will be a ‘residual instrument serving essentially to safeguard other means of international interaction’ (see also Larsen, 2002). In discussing the development of the ESDP, Howorth (2004: 213) states that the ESDP points to ‘a radically new discourse on European security’ and ‘a common acceptance of integrated European interventionism, based not solely on the classical stakes of national interest, but also on far more idealistic motivations such as humanitarianism and ethics, thereby introducing a new normative paradigm into international relations’. With the militarising EU, Lucarelli and Menotti (2006: 159) expound that, in line with the normative character of the EU, the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are drawn for third parties, namely that the actions that would be tolerated do not trigger military use of force and that the actions that would require reaction reveal a tendency to constrain military policy. Mitzen (2006: 272) brings in a new insight by discussing the EU foreign and security policy under the concept of ontological security. According to her, the EU – as with other actors in international politics – learns to become an agent ‘through routinisation of the relationship with the “significant others”’. In this sense, the EU not only seeks to secure a territory or governance but also seeks identity. That is why a military Europe does not undermine its civilising nature, because its identity is anchored deeply in multilateral security cooperation.

Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 2000s, Manners contended that the ambitious aim to develop autonomous military capabilities for the EU, as well as attempts to facilitate a common strategic culture with the European Security Strategy (ESS), has marked ‘a sharp turn away from the normative path of sustainable peace towards a full spectrum of instruments for robust intervention’ (Manners, 2006c: 189). According to Manners (2006c: 192), the events after 9/11 and the Iraq war have shifted the EU debates to a more security-oriented framework, which is marked by ‘martial potency’ and the growth of the Brussels-based military industry. ‘The interplay between institutional prioritization, military missions, and a transnational policy network have all contributed to the misdirection
of the normative concerns of the human security agenda away from sustainable peace’ (Manners, 2006c). The more the EU resembles big states and great powers, the more it risks normative power nature. ‘Unreflexive militarisation’ is harmful for two important reasons: the balance is lost between short- and long-term solutions to the conflict and it risks the EU’s peaceful normative and conciliatory character in the eyes of local populations (Manners, 2006c: 194); this means a great power-type policy including ‘attacking the symptoms rather than addressing the causes of conflict and insecurity’ (Manners, 2006c: 192).

**Sustainable peace and conflict management**

The above argument raised by Manners has been subject to in-depth analysis by various scholars. In Manners’s (2006b: 407) words, the EU as a security actor means being a ‘provider of “human security” in the shape of “a concern with human life and dignity” with an equal emphasis on “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”’. In other words, the most stunning side of normative power actorness lies in its emphasis on non-military, economic, social and humanitarian instruments applied within and outside of the EU (Manners, 2006b: 407–408). When the EU faces and responds to the protracted conflicts by addressing structural causes and violent symptoms (Manners, 2008a: 130), it is able to combine short- and long-term goals and instruments, and develop indigenous capacity ownership (Manners, 2006c: 185–186).

In various discussions of normative power within a conflict transformation or resolution, framework authors have confirmed the role that norms and human security play in EU policies. Lucarelli and Menotti (2006: 162–163) claim that since normative power rejects coercion such as pre-emptive strategies, it consists of an intervention into conflicts by far more acceptable terms by the parties, namely political and economic construction and legal framework. Similarly, Diez et al. (2006) argue that, in terms of border conflicts by addressing structural causes and violent symptoms (Manners, 2008a: 130), it is able to combine short- and long-term goals and instruments, and develop indigenous capacity ownership (Manners, 2006c: 185–186).

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**‘Inconsistent’ normative power: a real ‘contradiction in terms’**

Manners initially asked whether normative and power concepts are in contradiction, concluding that the ability to shape ‘the normal’ in world politics has become a new source of power after the Second World War (see Barnett and Duvall, 2005 for a detailed discussion on a new vision on ‘power’) and that normative ground provides the real source of power for the EU in world politics. Scholars have increasingly been interested in various policy areas regarding the EU action in order to test the normative power argument
thoroughly. For instance, Mayer (2008) calls for a more realistic translation of ethics into action. As Alston and Weiler (1999: 4–5) acknowledged long ago, ‘the Union can only achieve the leadership role to which it aspires through the example it sets’. Then, if the EU is normative power, hypocrisy and window dressing (Eriksen, 2006: 266) would be a real contradiction with the normative power Europe.

The current literature shows that the EU’s record is mixed on this issue. Bailes (2008: 119) discusses that, although the EU supports non-coercive means and coercion is the last resort, the motives behind ESDP developments were ‘self-regarding in institutional and European political terms, rather than driven by an urge to help the suffering’. The strategic weight of the ESDP development is about not only militarisation but ‘securitisation of its entire identity’ (Bailes, 2008: 119). The normative practical ambiguities linger around the EU actions in terms of whether the EU has chosen ESDP missions in a purely principled manner so far. Doubts are revealed regarding prevalence of material concerns, given the EU preference to act in the neighbourhood, especially where Russians approve, in ex-colonial territories (Bailes, 2008).

In terms of democracy and human rights, although we can speak of a common commitment to the normative principles, albeit at different levels for various norms, when the actual practices of the EU are analysed, inconsistencies remain quite stunning. Balfour (2006: 128) states that the eastern enlargement was marked by ‘flexible adherence to principles’ in Central and Eastern Europe and south-east Europe. On the same issue, the EU’s economic and strategic interests seem to be playing an important role as well. Especially towards Russia and China, security and economic concerns quite often seem prioritised (Panebianco, 2006). Wood (2009) also mentions doubts regarding the limits of the EU’s normative power in energy security. While the EU’s modus operandi constantly supports actions through international institutions, international law, dialogue and positive incentives, the EU contracts when it comes to taking certain types of actions in support of its normative preferences against some actors. According to Wood (2009: 114), this shows the limits of the EU’s commitment to its norms and values and, under some circumstances ‘support for them loses vigour’. Lerch and Schwellnus (2006) explicate that consistency in applying and supporting norms externally would depend on the path the EU follows in justifying its claims. In the case of support for abolishment of the death penalty, the EU has been consistent in supporting its argument according to argumentative coherence, but in minority protection it shifted from utility-to value-based argumentation where the EU’s normative power has been diminished. It seems that double standards and inconsistency provide some doubts in terms of foreign policy. Manners applied normative principles of social solidarity, equality and sustainable peace in empirical study in order to analyse to what extent the normative preferences stated by the EU are consistently and widely applied in practice. Manners himself joins the discussion regarding whether there are variations in terms of the degree of preferences for these normative principles within the polycentric EU, which is ‘a committed yet troubled normative power in the globalised world’ (Manners, 2006d: 37). As a response to these inconsistent support of norms, Matlary (2008: 132) looks for a ‘reality check’ behind the stated logic when discussing the praised emphasis on human security by stating that ‘the EU may benefit from calling all its security policy “human security”’, but if rhetoric promises more than policy can deliver, the
ethical implications are grave’ (2008: 142). Pure concerns of human security do not make the EU an altruistic and realistic actor. In discussing the nature of political and military realities, Matlary admonishes that the EU employs pure humanitarian concerns raised by the EU.

In its institutional relations with neighbouring states, regardless of the region, however, the EU usually utters the importance of the core norms when conducting various relations. Bicchi (2006), in applying the normative power argument empirically to the case of Mediterranean partnership, reflects upon two important dimensions of normative power in order to trace consistency empirics and the normative power argument. In this sense, inclusiveness, that is ‘the extent to which EU policy-makers permit a role (in theory and practice) in European Foreign Policy (EFP)-making for external actors affected by EFP’ (Bicchi, 2006), is unavoidably vital for normative power Europe. The author also emphasises reflexivity, which comes to mean the capacity of the EU to adapt the policy by thinking critically according to the specific needs of the area targeted by the policy (Bicchi, 2006: 288). Through studying the EU policy in the Mediterranean, she concludes that sociological institutionalist reading of EU foreign policy is more suitable than normative power since the EU lacks both reflexive behaviour and an inclusive approach. In its policy design, the EU remains Eurocentric with logic such as ‘our size fits all’ marked by institutional isomorphism created between the EU and Mediterranean partners. Similarly, in discussing the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Barbé and Johansson-Nogués (2008) state that when the ethics attached to the policies are analysed, motivation and legal or formal framework of the relations must be taken into account. Specifically, as long as the EU is able to represent the balance between utility, values, rights and fairness, the EU would act within the label of ethical policy. However, in striking a delicate balance between material gains and moral impulses, the EU remains ambivalent.

Diez and Pace (2007) also support the viewpoint that, while the EU has a potential to transform the conflicts, there is also a potential that the normative power concept may turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. ‘EU normative power is not simply able to shape conceptions of what is seen as normal; its effectiveness rather relies on the extent to which other actors accept the role that EU actors themselves project for themselves into international politics’ (Diez and Pace, 2007: 13). In terms of conflict transformation, Noutcheva (2009) discusses the EU’s selfish attitude of ignoring the reactions of non-EU countries to the EU’s policies or their lack of assessing the EU’s impact ‘on the ground’. Discussing the role of the EU in the Western Balkans, the EU lacks normative justification in terms of state-building in the region. The EU is more inclined to act according to the rational motives of the EU Member States rather than the EU’s norms and rules of governance or universal principles of fairness and justice (Noutcheva, 2009: 1081). The failure to take the evaluations of the receiving parties risks the credibility of the EU (Noutcheva, 2009: 1066) and risks triggered non-compliance, or partial compliance on the side of recipient parties.

Overall, the literature closely examined the ambivalence regarding the actual support of principles through actions. Incoherence diminishes the persuasion power of the EU argument; the EU is not necessarily ‘normative by nature’ – its normative power depends heavily on the interaction between its policy goals, means and justifications, and
therefore varies between different issue areas (Lerch and Schwellnus, 2006: 318). However, the inconsistent application and the rhetoric between support for norms and action have brought many concerns about Eurocentrism and even ‘soft imperialism’ to the forefront (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005). When Mayer states that there is ‘sustained Eurocentrism’ in the EU rhetoric (Mayer, 2008; see also Salmon, 2005), he reiterates Nicolaïdis’ and Howse’s (2002) argument that the EU must avoid the utopian normativity through demands for absolute principles of substantive justice, regardless of context. They claim that ‘[t]he notion of the EU as a model usually refers to the propensity of the EU to seek to reproduce itself by encouraging regional integration around the world’ (Nicolaïdis and Howse, 2002: 768). Nevertheless, representing the EU as the micro-cosmos ‘often lack[s] the kind of self-awareness that would lead us to recognize how “what” is being projected is not the EU as is but an “EU-topia”’ (Nicolaïdis and Howse, 2002: 769).

The EU also runs the risk of inconsistent behaviour in terms of supporting tolerance and accommodation of multiculturalism. Aggestam and Hill (2008: 97) claim that ‘multiculturalism rapidly becomes not only politicized in terms of a contestation over values, but also internationalized’. These values, however, are not actually backed by internal debates, namely domestic politics does not support multiculturalism (Aggestam and Hill, 2008). Europeans might not share ‘the same worldview and the same ideas about the shape of foreign policy’ and this constant interplay between European internal social composition and relations with the rest (Aggestam and Hill, 2008: 114) would determine the future of support for these norms. In terms of coherence between internal and external arenas of EU policy-making, Puetter and Wiener (2007: 1085) also question the normative divergences among the Member States. They contend that when there are big divergences between the Member States, such as in the Iraq case, failure to create a common and coherent response risks consistent normative interpretation in the foreign policy.

In terms of reflecting the unresolved question of the EU in between normatively and strategically motivated action, perhaps Youngs (2004) provides the most comprehensive reading. In his discussion over the EU approach in support of human rights, he suggests that ‘constructivist and rationalist explanations might be combined to account for the way in which instrumental choices are made within a range of common normative understandings’, which denotes the fact that ‘security-driven choices’ co-exist with normative logics (Youngs, 2004: 431). Therefore, instrumental and normative logics might not be in strict dichotomy but ‘can be seen to set parameters for each other’ (Youngs, 2004: 431).

A third wave of theorising the normative power of Europe

As indicated above, normative power Europe has stimulated a significant body of critical reflection upon the capacity of the EU to direct and seek change within international relations alongside the engagement with the capacity of Manners’s notion of normative power as the best means to capture this.

The current ‘third wave’ in normative theorising, which this special issue captures, tends to take a critical approach to Manners’s concept as the starting point rather than an
attempt to operationalise the notion of normative power Europe, which has occupied many scholars over the last decade. There are three distinct strands to this current wave of normative theorising and which are exemplified by the scholarship within this issue of Cooperation and Conflict: structural changes in international relations problematising Europe’s capacity for normative power; ontological and epistemological contestation of normative power Europe; and a contestation of Eurocentricity seen to be intrinsic to normative power Europe.

These strands have emerged from the previous decade of scholarship as outlined above and are often intertwined in the contributions to this volume.

**Problematising Europe’s capacity for normative power**

The significant body of scholarship that has sought to operationalise normative power Europe empirically via case studies has been the largest body of work within the normative power genre. A strand of the work from case studies has involved the struggle to identify the impact of Europe’s power on third parties and which Manners addresses in his contribution to this issue. An additional problematising aspect of Europe’s capacity for normative power is the shifts within the structure of international relations which have become acutely apparent within the last decade. This special issue demonstrates two sets of responses to this change, which can be identified in the third wave of theorising on Europe’s normative power. The first is that the normative agenda set by Manners is modifiable, rather than redundant. These positions are represented by Kavalski, Keene and Lenz in this special issue. The second is that it renders the concept of normative power Europe, and the argument made by Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, largely redundant, as outlined below.

Kavalski’s contribution compares the EU and China in the struggle for recognition of normative powers. He sees that the focus on normative power is enriched by focusing on the issue of recognition of normative powers and suggests that normative powers are those actors that are recognised as such by others. This qualifies Ian Manners’s oft-quoted proposition that normative powers are only those actors that have the ability to ‘shape what can be “normal” in international life’. The proposition is that defining the ‘normal’ is not a task merely undertaken unilaterally by normative power, but that such definitions emerge in the context of interaction with others. Recognition, in this setting, is indicated by the specific reactions of target states. Hence, the issue is not merely about being and becoming a normative power, but also about being recognised as one by others. Kavalski details this proposition through a parallel assessment of normative power Europe and normative power China. The intention of such comparison is to elicit the key elements of normative power in global life.

Keene sees one future for theorising, seeing discussions of normative power as having an analogy to past practices in international relations. His approach is historically comparative in looking at the historical discourse of powers and ‘great powers’ over time. In this sense, the naming of Europe as a normative power can be rendered within a wider landscape of international relations theorising and practices within the international system, by examining the historical development of the practice of representing international actors as certain kinds of ‘powers’. Keene explores the origins of this
vocabulary, identifies it as especially congenial to certain kinds of authors on international affairs and looks at how classification works through the distinction between different types of power. To make this argument, he draws upon a body of literature that predates the normative power Europe thesis and demonstrates the importance of the attachment (or reattachment) of the study of Europe to wider debates within the discipline of international relations.

According to Lenz, the ideational impact captured by Manners’s notion of normative power Europe appears most distinct and potentially most consequential in the realm of regionalism. In his view, and in contrast to materially based forms of influence, Europe’s ideational impact on regionalism works in a largely indirect and often diffuse fashion, with important second- and higher-order effects. However, this rarely leads to similar practices or even comparable outcomes, as structural barriers and local appropriation logics limit the impact of such diffusion. Lenz seeks to recast the idea of normative power in a way that he sees as opening out interesting analytical and normative promise. Further, for him, empirical research on the topic has been hampered by the overwhelming focus on EU actorness and methodological difficulties. Drawing on diffusion theory, Lenz develops conceptual, theoretical and methodological foundations for conceiving normative power Europe as a form of ideational diffusion. The article illustrates these arguments with examples drawn from three prominent regional organisations in the global South: the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Mercosur and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Ontological and epistemological contestation of normative power Europe

To varying degrees, each of the contributions in the special issue demonstrates a key strand of debate about Europe’s normative power, which links the work of the last decade with the ‘third wave’ of theorising on Europe. The emphasis here is on one of two options. On the one hand, the emphasis could be on engaging in acts of interrogation and restatement of ontological and epistemological premises to strengthen the case for normative theorising, which is the argument of Parker and Rosamond, and Diez. On the other hand, the emphasis might be to offer more critical standpoints, which can be read in Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, and, to a lesser extent, in Keene.

Parker and Rosamond interrogate the use of normative power Europe and suggest that the concept has been used for two distinct purposes: as a distinctive ontological characterisation of the EU on the one hand and as a critical approach to the study of the EU and its external projection on the other. They set out to show how these two purposes might work together in practice, even if they are incommensurable in theory. They argue that there is an ethico-political value to normative power Europe that resides in the extent that it embodies an ontologically plural reality that is never entirely defined. Parker and Rosamond draw attention to a blind-spot in the normative power Europe position: the constitutive importance of economic liberalism (‘market cosmopolitanism’) to the EU’s post-Westphalian character. In doing so, they caution that the ontological characterisation is also rooted in a market cosmo-politics.
Diez’s article continues an on-going debate around the concept of power that is central to debates about normative power and that has been pursued by others, albeit in different ways (Forsberg, 2011). Diez advocates a focus on ‘hegemonic struggles’ as a critical theory that problematises the present in order to place the politics of normative power at centre stage. Diez has been Manners’s most fruitful critical companion in that their on-going conversation over the last decade has yielded considerable insight, as noted above. In this piece, Diez identifies four key problems in the debate about normative power Europe that may be fruitfully tackled when linking it to the concept of hegemony. These four problems include the debate about whether EU foreign and external policy is driven by norms or interests; the problem of inconsistent behaviour due to competing and contested norms; the question of the role of state and non-state actors in EU foreign and external policy and the problematic standing of normative power as an academic engagement, in particular in regard to whether the theory is of primarily explanatory, descriptive or normative value.

A contestation of Eurocentricity seen to be intrinsic to normative power Europe

This is an area of intense contestation between Manners and his critics. For Fisher-Onar’s and Nicolaïdis’s contribution in this special issue, it involves a fundamental re-engineering of normative power theorising of the EU. Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis provide the most critical perspective on normative power Europe in this issue. Their perspective is that there is a need to strip out from normative power Europe what they see as a Eurocentric connotation and set of prescriptions. For Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, the structural shifts within international relations, which are a key component of the ‘problematising’ strand of the third wave of theorising, are more than just a challenge to Europe’s capacity for influence but they make up a need to reconstitute European agency. This calls for a rather different term in theorising on the EU and a more fundamental paradigm shift in the study of Europe and beyond than the original research agenda mapped by Manners. Onar and Nicolaïdis propose a ‘decentring agenda’ with three dimensions: provincialising, engagement and reconstruction(s). This is somewhat at odds with the future agenda that Manners details in his own contribution to this special issue. Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis argue for a decentring logic to the EU’s own foundational narrative and acknowledging the inflections of colonialism in the EU project itself so that the Union can reinvent its normative power as ‘post-colonial’ in the 21st century.

Manners engages with the arguments of each of the contributors in the final piece in this special issue. Whilst reflecting on the uses (and abuses) to which the concept of normative power Europe has been utilised, Manners’s shift of perspective across time is indicated by his use of the descriptor normative power approach. This is not so much a concession to the arguments of his critics, but more of a reflection of his changed standpoint in which normative power perspectives have become multiple but also, importantly, that whilst the initial impetus was to (re)inject normative theorising back into EU studies, it is now an important bridgehead to wider debates within international relations theorising. Manners does, however, seek to remain at the centre of debates on the EU and normative power via his positioning of three ways of
developing scholarship in its second decade: macro-approach, meso-characterisation and micro-analysis.

This special issue demonstrates that the debate around Europe and its normative power remains vibrant and enriching. There has been a decade of scholarship stimulated by both *au courant* reflection on Europe’s capacity for global influence and also ongoing theoretical work on the qualities, virtues and pathologies of European power. Welcome to the second decennial of debate.

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**References**


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