The Functioning of Normative Power in the Logic of the EU and China

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Abstract

Normative power has become a critical topic of discussion in International Relations and Political Science scholarship, particularly in the context of the normative power of the European Union (EU) and China. However, academic attention has been excessively directed toward investigating the normative power of the European Union rather than that of China. Given the EU's unique status as a supranational and multinational entity consisting of multiple member states, its process of diffusion of normative power differs significantly from that of China. In this context, this study aims to explore and compare the normative power dynamics maintained by the EU and China in the international arena, examine the approaches, strategies, and outcomes of both the EU and China by providing a detailed understanding of how each party implements normative power, and explore the inequalities in normative power acquisition strategies between these two actors.

1. Introduction

Normative power is the capacity of a state or an organization to influence international norms, values, and standards through their actions, policies, and diplomatic commitments. In recent years, both the European Union and China have been considered to be players with normative power. The European Union, with deliberate intent, is vigorously pursuing normative power on the international stage. In parallel, China is also increasingly acknowledged for seeking normative influence globally. While the European Union is celebrated for disseminating its values and behaviours among its member and candidate states, our research narrows its focus to delve into the complexities of the European Union's normative power. This entails a comprehensive examination of its historical development and institutional frameworks where it has actively shaped the norms of the union. Conversely, China is observed to diffuse its values and norms through the strategic deployment of political and economic concepts by emphasising cooperative relationships willingly. Our research endeavours to scrutinise the international initiatives and the evolving role of China in the formation of global norms, as well as China's normative influence in the international arena.

The primary objective of this study is to explore and draw comparisons between the normative power wielded by the EU and China on the global stage. This comparative analysis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how the EU and China exercise normative power,

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as well as to address distinct approaches, strategic manoeuvres, and the impact of their norm-setting endeavours. In this context, this study aims to analyse the complex dynamics of normative power in the modern international system in the framework of the EU and China as normative powers. We conceptualise normative power as a strategy through which an international actor influences other actors to follow or accept the values and norms of a normative actor, mostly in their foreign affairs. We argue that not only the EU, but also China is increasingly trying to persuade actors to willingly follow China's values and norms in their foreign affairs. Given that this topic has been relatively less studied, we hope to contribute substantially to the existing literature.

In this study, we aim to explore the relations of the EU and China with other international actors in the context of their normative power implementation. This study consists of seven parts. The first part of the study provides detailed information from the literature on normative power. The second part proceeds with a description of the normative power of the EU. It then proceeds with a description of the normative power of China, comparing it with that of the EU. Then, it follows with functioning and comparative analysis of the normative power of the EU and the normative power of China. The final part analyses the responses of both the EU and China during the period of crisis. We then conclude the study with a comprehensive summary assessing these two normative actors on the global stage

2. Debates on the normative power of the EU and China

Many scholars of IR and political science have extensively explored the normative power of the EU by examining how it influences and shapes international interactions through its promotion of values, norms, and standards. The EU is often portrayed as a key player in normative power dynamics, with its emphasis on principles such as the rule of law, human rights, democracy, and social justice. On the other hand, China's normative power has not received as much scholarly attention in comparison to that of the EU. However, both China and the EU actively present themselves as practitioners of normative power in the international arena. They seek to demonstrate their influence by portraying their respective norms, values, and principles as essential for shaping global governance and international relations.[1] They may have similar objectives for diffusing their norms and values to the targeted countries, regions, and even to the globe. However, they are quite different from each other in the context of their political missions, the global positions they have, and the political roles they play in global affairs.

Various scholars have contributed to defining normative power by offering different perspectives on its nature and effects. Carr, for instance, approached normative power by considering economic, military, and opinion-based influences to achieve a concrete outcome.[2] In contrast, Galtung introduced the concept of "ideological power," exploring its effects in conjunction with other powers such as punitive, remunerative, resource, and structural power.[3]

Some scholars argue that normative power can utilise a greater influence when contextualised within its historical origins. Following Manners' assessment, Duchêne

1 Emilian Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers: Normative Power Europe and Normative Power China in Context," *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 247–267.

2 Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations,* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 120-130.

3 Johan Galtung, J. *The European Community: a Superpower in the Making,* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973).

explored normative power within the framework of "idée-force." He suggested that the influential nature of normative power lies in its foundational ideas, tracing its origins back to the perspectives of the "founding fathers" and its subsequent impact on political dynamics.[4] This approach holds the potential to facilitate the diffusion of normative power by both China and the EU, considering their historical influence on civilisations and societies. In this regard, both actors may find success in disseminating their norms and values.

Normative power is commonly defined as the capacity of an actor to influence others through its actions.[5] Manners characterises normative power as the ability to shape behaviours within the considerations of what is considered acceptable or unacceptable, or what is deemed normal.[6] Diez emphasises that normative powers should be accompanied by the consent of others, while Jackson further asserts that the legitimacy of "normalcy" must be earned, with tolerance being a crucial component of normative power.[7] Thus, the process of establishing normative power is attained through the interaction of actors within the construction of what is perceived as normal, legitimate, and acceptable.

Normative power indeed operates through influencing the perceptions and behaviours of other actors by framing responses within the context of acceptability or normality. This contrasts with traditional power dynamics, which rely on coercion or material incentives. In this process, Manners argues that the legitimacy and moral authority behind actions have a significant role in the justification of normative power. He also emphasises that normative justification is more important than physical force and material incentives. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of normative power requires examining the influence, actions, and underlying principles of the normative power process.[8] In other words, the observation of normative power is crucial. Normative power usually operates gradually by requiring sustained engagements and analysis to grasp its impact completely. The effectiveness and scope of normative power strategies can be better understood by observing how norms develop and whether they lead to changes in the behaviours and attitudes of other actors. If normative norms consistently impress or influence other actors, it may provide further credibility to the effectiveness of normative power.

This explanation draws a clear distinction between normative power and other concepts like despotism, soft imperialism, and cosmopolitanism. Normative power, indeed, operates through the propagation of norms, seeking to influence world politics by promoting certain principles and values.[9] Furthermore, the comparison between normative power and the influence exerted by empires or hegemons highlights the role of norms in shaping international relations. Empires and hegemons utilise various tools for normative diffusion to advance their objectives, managing the dialogue process through a combination of incentives

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4 François Duche'ne, "The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence," in *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign Policy Problems before the European Community*, ed. Max K. and Wolfgang H. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), 1-21; Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: a Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235-258.

5 Brantly Womack, "China as a Normative Foreign Policy Actor," In *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners*, ed. Nathalie Tocci (Brussels: CEPS, 2008), 265-300.

6 Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 235–258.

7 Thomas Diez, "Normative Power as Hegemony," *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 194–210;
Thomas Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe' Millennium," *Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 613–636; Jay Jackson, "Normative Power and Conflict Potential," *Sociological Methods & Research* 4, no. 2 (1975): 237-239.

8 Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 235–258.

9 Emrah Yıldırımçakar, "Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi Bağlamında Çin'in Normatif Güç İnşası ve Türkiye-Çin İlişkileri," *Ulisa: Uluslararası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 3, no. 2 (2019): 145-169.

and pressure[10]The emphasis on legitimacy in normative power underscores the importance of consistency in promoting persuasive principles. Unlike illegitimate force, which relies on coercion, normative power maintains its presence through persuasion and discourse, as noted by Forsberg. This highlights the ideological nature of normative power and its reliance on the legitimacy of the principles it promotes.[11]

In Gramscian view, normative power is not directly equated with hegemony, but is closely associated with it.[12] Manners argues that processes such as socialisation and partnership work more effectively when normative reasons are compelling or persuasive.[13] In addition, in analysing the impact of normative power, it is necessary to take "self" and "others" into account. It is necessary to examine whether the normative power can meet its expectations or be practiced convincingly.[14] In this sense, normative power is complex and has different dimensions at the level of relationships. Generally, the arguments point to the complexity of normative power. In this context, when the ideological dimensions and interactions of hegemonic structures are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that this process may not always be easy-going. Normative power influences and potentially changes the norms and values maintained in international relations. In this regard, the states applying normative power aim to apply such power to promote their norms and values on the global stage to reshape the standards and practices of world affairs.[15] Accordingly, actors seeking normative power, such as the EU and China, will try to reshape international politics in line with their political and economic interests. Being a normative power does not only require adopting unique norms and values; it also requires actively working to influence the behaviour of other actors and reshape the global order.

The assessment outlined here tries to shed light on detailed approaches to the normative power of different actors, most notably the European Union and China. As Kavalski quoted, Thomas Diez's argument emphasises the importance of consent in the formation of normative power, highlighting that it is not solely reliant on military or economic means. Instead, tolerance plays a crucial role, with inclusive practices being key to exercising normative power.[16] The distinction between the EU's rule-based model and China's relationship-based model is particularly insightful. While the EU emphasises adherence to established rules and norms, China focuses on promoting relationships and emphasising respect for others as essential in its normative power strategy. By doing so, China aims to position itself as a distinct actor on the global stage, especially in countries that are unsatisfied or belittled by the actors of the current international order. Moreover, China's approach includes a range of policies to improve security, open new markets, promote interdependence, and reduce

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10 Holger Janusch, "Normative Power and the Logic of Arguing: Rationalization of Weakness or Relinquishment of Strength?" *Cooperation and Conflict* 51, no. 4 (2016): 504-521.

11 Tuomas Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 6 (2011): 1188-1196.

12 Thomas Diez, "Normative Power as Hegemony," *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 194–210.

13 Ian Manners, "The Concept of Normative Power in World Politics," Danish Institute for International Studies, (2009), 2-4, accessed May 11, 2024. https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/68745/B09_maj_Concept_Normative_Power_World_Politics.pdf.

14 Zeng, Xianghong (曾向红), "'Normative Power' Encounters 'New Great Game' the Triple Dilemma of the EU in Promoting Democracy in Central Asia", (规范性力量" 遭遇" 新大博弈"：欧盟在中亚推进民主的三重困境), *European Studies* 2 (2020): 34-60 (欧洲研究, 2020 年第 2 期 第34-60 页).

15 Richard G. Whitman, "Norms, Power and Europe: A New Agenda for Study of the EU and International Relations," in *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives,* ed. Richard G. Whitman*,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1-20.

16 Emilian Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers: Normative Power Europe and Normative Power China in Context," *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 247–267.

conflicts. These actions could potentially garner sympathy or tacit support from countries that feel they receive less respect than usual from established power(s).[17] As a result, these countries may tend to evaluate China's proposals or policies more favourably and respond positively to them, even if they warrant criticism. Therefore, this perspective underlines the multifaceted nature of normative power and the various strategies used by different actors to influence global affairs.

Forsberg describes normative power as the use of persuasion and charm rather than coercive power to influence global politics.[18] Following that, Bang argues that this concept is present in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by arguing that China seeks to establish connections with countries in the cooperation of the BRI by offering mutual benefits and common interests. He underlines that China is pursuing mutually beneficial and self-interested relationships to bind these countries to its vision and gain their support for the desired results.[19] Accordingly, unlike the European Union approach, which sometimes involves the imposition of norms and values, China's establishment of normative power through the BRI is largely based on mutual benefit. Instead of forcing other countries to accept or adopt its norms, China seeks to promote cooperation and mutual gain to earn the support of participating countries. This underscores a different approach to normative power, where China aims to build relationships and promote cooperation based on common interests rather than unilaterally imposing its norms. In this context, we can understand that China wants to shape global politics through persuasion and attraction rather than pressure and coercion.

3. The functioning of normative power EU

The normative power of the European Union is a significant force in international affairs. It draws strength from the collective rules and values upheld by its member states, forming a cohesive framework that guides its actions and policies. When the EU proposes new regulations or legal frameworks, it does so with the expectation that they will be recognised, accepted, or adhered to by its members. However, this process can be complex since the EU operates through a system of supranational governance, blending elements of intergovernmental negotiation with the authority of institutions like the European Commission and the European Parliament. This complexity can sometimes obscure the decision-making processes and rationale behind the EU's normative actions, making them less easily comprehensible to external observers.

An illustrative example of this normative power is the prerequisite of abolishing the death penalty, which serves as a precondition for EU accession negotiations. This condition operates as a form of normative diffusion, setting standards for potential members before their endorsement for access to the EU. In this context, a prominent manifestation of the EU's normative power is the implementation of a cohesive strategy, as evidenced by the consistent policy of abolishing the death penalty for countries aspiring to join the EU. This reflects the EU's determination to shape the behaviours of potential members according to its normative

17 Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers," 247–267.

18 Tuomas Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 6 (2011): 1188-1196.

19 Juin Bang, "Why So Many Layers? China's "State-Speak" and Its Classification of Partnerships," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 13, no. 2 (2017): 380-397. accessed March 10, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw063.

principles.[20] This example shows how effectively the EU uses its normative power to further increase its influence in the international arena by shaping its values and the behaviours of candidates and member states.

Ian Manners argues that six factors contribute to the normative power of the EU. These are Contagion, Informational Diffusion, Procedural Diffusion, Transfer, Open Diffusion, and Cultural Filter. He argues that these factors have a major impact on shaping global norms through various mechanisms, such as the diffusion of the European Union's values and practices, institutional frameworks, and cultural influence. It is also stated that fundamental principles such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, democracy, and social justice are of great importance in shaping the normative power of Europe.[21] However, it is important to note that academic debates exist regarding the effectiveness and limitations of the EU's normative power, and some critics question the EU's influence on global governance. Moreover, it is known that sovereignty within the EU itself also faces challenges in the framework of this governance.

As Kavalski (2013) stated: "The EU's normative power tends to prioritize compliance with rules through its 'logic of appropriateness,' while China asserts the practice of interaction through its 'logic of relationships." Due to the multidimensional type of the EU's normative power, there is an interplay of various factors and interests in the EU's policy framework. The EU's normative power has a more complex structure, intertwined with different dynamics. On the other hand, the EU should not be seen as the sole dominant normative power in global relations. We should not ignore the fact that different actors other than the EU may also pursue normative policies in the current international arena.[22] Therefore, the normative policies of the EU will be understood more clearly when different normative policies are examined or compared with the normative power of the EU.

According to some Chinese researchers, the EU maintains the normative power process both consciously and unconsciously. It does so unconsciously via participants imitating the EU through the EU integration process, and consciously via direct intervention in the external behaviour of states through information diffusion, procedural diffusion, transfer diffusion, open diffusion, and cultural penetration.[23] Fundamentally, the EU aims to promote common norms and values. However, it also must navigate the different interests and priorities of its member states. This sometimes leads the EU to put broader European objectives ahead of national interests. Therefore, EU policies often reflect compromises between member states, and these compromises may not always be fully in line with the EU's main goals and principles. The importance that the EU attaches to convergence and harmonisation within its values and norms can sometimes be outshined by the diversity and unique characteristics of its member states. This could potentially marginalise certain countries or regions, leading to feelings of neglect or resentment among the people of those countries.[24] In other words, the

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20 Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 235–258.

21 Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 235–258; Philip Alston and J.H.H. Weiler, "An 'Ever Closer Union' in Need of a Human Rights Policy: The European Union and Human Rights," in *The EU and Human Rights,* ed. Philips Alston, Mara Bustelo and James Heenan. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3–66. accessed October 31, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198298069.003.0001.

22 Mark A. Pollack, *Living in a Material World: A Critique of 'Normative Power Europe',* (Temple University, May 1, 2010), 1-14, accessed May 20, 2024. https://www.diis.dk/en/research/diis-brief-aims-to-help-clarify-the-concept-of-normative-power-in-world-politics

23 Li Xiufang (李秀芳), "EU intervenes in South China Sea issue with 'normative force'," (欧盟以'规范力量'加入南海问题及其影响)，*Peace and Prosperity*, no. 4 (2020): 76-97. (和平与发展，2020年第四期，第76-96 页).

24 Emine M. Cebeci, "Ideal Güç Avrupa: Avrupa Birliği-Türkiye İlişkileri Üzerinden Bir Çözümleme," *Marmara Journal of*

EU may face both internal and external reactions while establishing its values and norms in the international arena.

The EU has an important role in the functioning of global policies, especially in areas such as trade, climate change, human rights, and the promotion of democracy. This means that the EU has managed a successful process in its efforts to establish common norms and values among member states to promote stability, prosperity, and cooperation in Europe and beyond.[25] In this context, the EU seeks to influence global governance structures and encourage other countries to adopt similar standards. However, the concept of normative power as applied by the EU faces challenges. While the EU may effectively promote and implement norms within its territory and among its member states, spreading these norms globally encounters significant hurdles.[26]

Understanding the profile of a normative policy that the EU aims to pursue involves recognising its commitment to promoting its values and norms both within its member states and globally. The EU seeks to promote democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and sustainable development as its core principles. By paying attention to these aspects, one can gain a better understanding of the profile of the normative policy that the EU seeks to pursue and its implications for both member states and the international community.

4. The functioning of normative power China

China's normative power appears less distinct compared to that of the EU. Unlike the EU, China encounters challenges when attempting to disseminate its values and principles to other states. This difficulty arises from the absence of a unified union similar to the EU, with strict rules and criteria that member states are obligated to follow. While the EU can readily enforce its norms within its union, China is constrained to implementing them solely in its foreign affairs. Nevertheless, China possesses the potential to exert influence over countries with significant economic ties by encouraging the acceptance of its values for the sake of fostering enhanced relations with China. Despite the absence of a formal union structure, this strategy enables China to wield normative power selectively, leveraging economic partnerships to induce other nations to align with its principles.

Some scholars discuss the role of Chinese norms and values in the international arena, particularly concerning China's policy of peaceful development and non-interference. They argue that while there is no comprehensive study of Chinese norms in the literature, there is a growing recognition of the impact of Chinese norms globally. The idea of China's peaceful development policy is seen as a way to diffuse concerns about China's rise being perceived as a threat by other countries.[27] Instead of purely promoting Chinese norms and values, this policy is also seen as a means of protecting China from external interference or accusations of being a "China threat." This perspective suggests that China's actions in the international arena are not solely driven by a desire to spread its norms and values, but also by a need to safeguard its interests and security against potential challenges from third parties.

European Studies 23, no. 2 (2015): 41-57.
25 José Manuel Durão Barroso, "Leading by Example: The EU and Global Governance" (Conference on Global Governance, Brussels, May 12, 2009), accessed May 8, 2024. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-09-239_en.htm.
26 Fatmanur Kaçar and Kübra Öztürk, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Normatif Gücü: Kavramsal Bir İnceleme," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3, no. 8 (2017): 359-370.
27 Zhao Kejin, "China's Rise and Its Discursive Power Strategy," *Chinese Political Science Review* 1, no. 3 (2016): 539-564; Peng Zhongzhou, "A Comparative Analysis of the Normative Power of the EU and China" (PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2020).

Wang, quoted by Peng, argues that China has a unique set of norms and values that distinguish China from Western states. The Chinese model consists of unique historical and cultural values, and China must adhere to these values rather than adopting Western norms such as democracy and harmony. China's peaceful policy has become a fundamental aspect of its global behaviours and serves as a counterbalance to the power-based approaches, harmony, and democracy of the West. Therefore, there is a need for China to continue to prioritise its values and norms in its international relations.[28] On the other hand, China's normative power is majorly exemplified by its approach to mutual respect in its relations with other countries. This principle of mutual respect is a cornerstone of China's foreign policy, which emphasises peaceful co-existence and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.[29] China's peaceful co-existence and non-interference policies are not merely a strategic choice, but are deeply ingrained in China's tradition and history. Unlike Western powers with colonial histories, China has historically pursued non-aggressive foreign policies and has refrained from establishing colonies in other regions.

As Acharya reasons, the philosophy supporting China's current foreign policy is deeply rooted in Chinese ancient ideas such as *Tianxia*, as well as the teachings of philosophers like Confucius, Hanfeizi, and Xunzi. This suggests that the core principles guiding China's foreign policy cannot be separated from its rich cultural and philosophical heritage.[30] China's normative power emphasises the concept of the "logic of relationships." According to this perspective, China's normative power is not based on obligations imposed on other states, but rather on behavioural standards that are adopted voluntarily by the majority of participating states within the context of cooperation.[31] In this context, both Acharya and Yan highlight the importance of Chinese traditions, culture, and philosophical values in shaping China's approach to international relations. By drawing on ancient ideas and philosophical teachings, China seeks to establish a foreign policy framework that is consistent with its historical identity and cultural heritage. This emphasis on relational norms and voluntary cooperation underscores China's desire to promote mutual respect, harmony, and stability in its interactions with other nations.

As many Chinese scholars argue, peace and development strategies are not the only goals in diplomacy and international affairs that China strives toward, as China also aims to gain support and implement its win-win cooperation with other countries by establishing bilateral or multilateral cooperations. In other words, these scholars claim that China's rise at this stage is guiding countries to shift their goals of domestic governance and international cooperation to peace and development-based objectives. Peace is a prerequisite for development, and development can bring lasting peace. The rise of China, therefore, has a clear normative role. It is not only the rise of geopolitics and geoeconomics, but also the rise of the two values of peace and development.[32] President Hu Jintao conceptually explained China's commitment to peaceful foreign relations by emphasising the country's strategic position on the global stage. With this emphasis, he tried to express that China's historical and traditional

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28 Peng, "A Comparative Analysis of the Normative Power of the EU and China."

29 Peng, "A Comparative Analysis of the Normative Power of the EU and China."

30 Amitav Acharya, "From Heaven to Earth: 'Cultural Idealism' and 'Moral Realism' as Chinese Contributions to Global International Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 4 (2019): 467–494.

31 Yan Xuetong, "International Leadership and Norm Evolution," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 4, no. 2 (2011): 233–264.

32 Wang Zhengxu (王正绪), "The Normative Force of China's Rise," (中国崛起的规范性力量), Guancha, Ferbruary 7, 2015, accessed April 8, 2024. https://www.guancha.cn/Wang-Zhengxu/2015_02_07_308843.shtml?web.

cultural roots are not similar to those of Western actors. Different from them, China is a more responsible and reliable international actor. With this emphasis, it is also expressed that China is trying to create goodwill and increase its influence through diplomatic means rather than pressure.[33] Subsequently, it was determined that China avoids comprehensive commitment to international institutions and regimes and acts with a selective approach toward global governance.[34] Accordingly, with the visit of Chinese leadership to Myanmar in 2005, China expressed that in its relations with other countries, China would follow a consistent behavioural model applied to regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia by emphasising its policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.[35]

This policy of non-interference is perceived as both a demonstration of "strategic sovereignty" and an essential component of China's normative power.[36] By respecting the sovereignty of other nations and refraining from intervention, China positions itself as a respectful partner and alternative model to Western hegemony. Hence, China's approach to foreign affairs, characterised by peaceful development, non-interference, and strategic sovereignty, contributes significantly to its normative power and influence on the global stage.

Normative power can also be exercised in the framework of shaping perceptions and framing responses rather than exerting direct influence.[37] China's normative power, centred around its peaceful rise, non-interference policy, and preservation of national values, is perceived as a specific and concrete international relations policy by the Chinese government.[38] China actively promotes its norms and values through various means, such as establishing Confucius Institutes worldwide and offering scholarships to students from other countries.[39] The number of Confucius Institutes is constantly increasing in almost every country and region.[40] These efforts aim to enhance China's normative power and soft power, influencing how other countries perceive and respond to Chinese policies and initiatives. In this context, China also aims to persuade the people that it is a peaceful country, that it does not bear any intentions of colonisation, and that it does not offer one-sided political or economic cooperation. On the contrary, it offers mutually beneficial cooperation with the countries willing to cooperate with China both economically, culturally, and politically.

China has also established the BRI to consolidate South-South cooperation. This approach has highlighted China's role and position of responsibility as one of the largest economies among developing countries, and to date, nearly 150 countries and more than 30 international organisations have signed multilateral cooperation agreements within the context of the BRI cooperation framework.[41] On the other hand, the BRI is a crucial component of China's foreign policy aimed at enhancing its influence globally. The BRI represents a multifaceted strategy for China to increase its influence in world politics, encompassing economic, cultural,

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33 Ai Jiawen, "The Political Use of Tradition in Contemporary China" (PhD. diss., unpublished, the University of Melbourne, 2012).
34 Marc Lanteigne, *China and International Institutions*, (London: Routledge, 2005).
35 Mathew E. Chen, "Chinese National Oil Companies and Human Rights," *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (2007): 41–54.
36 Zhou Yihuang, *China's Diplomacy*, (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2004).
37 Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers," 247–267.
38 Brantly Womack, "China as a Normative Foreign Policy Actor," in *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners*, ed. Nathalie Tocci (Brussels: CEPS, 2008), 265-300.
39 Yıldırımçakar, "Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi Bağlamında Çin'in Normatif Güç İnşası," 145-169.
40 "Confucius Institutes Around the World – 2024," Dig Mandarin, accessed March 20, 2024, https://www.digmandarin.com/confucius-institutes-around-the-world.html.
41 Zhao Minghao, "The Belt & Road Initiative and U.S.-China Competition Over the Global South," *China Economic Journal* 17, no. 2 (2024): 166-181, accessed July 24, 2024. DOI: 10.1080/17538963.2024.2344270.

and diplomatic dimensions. Through infrastructure projects, economic investments, and cultural exchanges, China seeks to strengthen ties with numerous countries, particularly with developing countries. By doing so, China aims to expand its political, economic, and military influence on the global stage.[42] Moreover, China appears to be consciously integrating the concepts of normative and soft power into the BRI framework. By promoting cultural and academic exchanges as a part of this initiative, China aims not only to increase its economic interests, but also to shape norms and values in the participating countries.[43] This approach aligns with China's broader strategy of enhancing its soft power and projecting a positive image of China internationally.

China's approach to addressing shortcomings and vulnerabilities in the global economy enables China to gain greater support on the international stage and to build an international consensus by establishing itself as a constructive player in the context of finding solutions to important global issues. This constructivist strategy is proceeding relatively smoothly not only because of China's economic and diplomatic resources to tackle global challenges while seeking cooperation and support from the international community, but also because of the peaceful and win-win foreign policies China pursues. This approach enables China to be a responsible partner that pursues mutual interests in the global arena to create a common development atmosphere for countries that are willing to cooperate with China.[44] These policies are part of China's foreign policy to enhance its reputation as a responsible global actor and expand its influence through its soft and normative power strategies.

China's Peripheral Diplomacy under the administration of President Xi also demonstrates China's proactive approach to expanding its influence in the international arena. To this end, China initially aimed to strengthen its diplomatic ties and economic partnerships with ghghbouring countries and regions. China then aimed to assert its leadership and promote its norms and values, such as the non-interference policy in foreign affairs, which it has historically pursued.[45] This proactive stance suggests that China is actively seeking to shape global discourse and exert greater influence on international affairs.

China is also seeking to engage in greater regional and multilateral cooperation to make more international friends.[46] With the concept of the BRI, China indeed presents an opportunity for countries along its routes to engage in mutually beneficial relationships with China, under the concept of win-win cooperation. Through extensive economic and trade alternatives, China aims to promote interest-based relationships with these countries. While China does not explicitly impose its norms and values on participating countries, it is evident that China stands to gain a significant share in the economic ventures associated with the BRI. Many countries along the BRI routes may feel compelled to acquiesce to China's initiatives due to the fear of potential political and economic losses if they do not participate. This underscores China's growing influence in normative and soft power politics, as it effectively leverages economic opportunities to strengthen its relationships with other nations.[47] However, it is essential to note that while China may have considerable influence in promoting its interests

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42 Mohammad Siddiqui, "OBOR to Propel China to Global Leadership," *Financial Express* 24, no. 192 (2017): 1-3.

43 Yıldırımçakar, "Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi Bağlamında Çin'in Normatif Güç İnşası," 145-169.

44 Mustafa Yagci, "Rethinking Soft Power in Light of China's Belt and Road Initiative," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 15, no. 57 (2018): 67-83.

45 Peng, "A Comparative Analysis of the Normative Power of the EU and China."

46 Emilian Kavalski, *China and the Global Politics of Regionalization*, (London: Routledge 2010), 1-16.

47 Yıldırımçakar, "Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi Bağlamında Çin'in Normatif Güç İnşası," 145-169.

through the BRI, the extent to which participating countries benefit and the sustainability of these projects over the long term remain subject to various factors, including economic viability, political stability, and the alignment of interests between China and participating nations.

5. The disparities of normative power of the EU and China

The comparison between the normative power of the EU and China highlights some key differences in their approaches to influencing other states. The EU's normative power, as noted by Manners, is to some extent coercive, particularly in the context of membership accession. Member states are required to meet certain criteria and adhere to EU norms and standards before being allowed to join the union. This serves as a barrier to entry and reflects the EU's commitment to promoting its values and principles among its members.[48] On the other hand, one of the most important elements that ensures the recognition of normative power is treating others with respect. Both the EU and China aspire to be recognised as "normal" participants in global affairs, underlining the importance of recognition alongside other capabilities to achieve successful normative power outcomes.[49] China's approach to normative power differs in that it generally does not impose coercive conditions on other states. While China may seek to promote its norms and values through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, China typically does not require other countries to meet specific criteria or adhere to certain standards as a condition for participation. Instead, China often emphasises mutual benefit and cooperation in its relationships with other states, offering economic incentives rather than imposing normative conditions.

These differences in approach reflect broader differences in the political systems, values, and objectives of the EU and China. While the EU emphasises the importance of shared norms and standards as a means of promoting integration and cooperation among its members, China tends to prioritise pragmatic economic and diplomatic interests in its interactions with other states. China's approach to developed and developing countries differs significantly. This is another characteristic of Chinese foreign policy that makes it differ from the normative strategies of the EU.[50] The EU is indeed one of the unique entities consisting of multiple member states that share common norms and values but also retain their own national identities and characteristics.[51] Chinese normative power also diverges from that of the EU as it is predominantly rooted in non-political principles. The core tenets include non-interference, cultural norms derived from ancient Chinese scholars, the establishment of Confucius Institutes, and economic cooperation guided by win-win principles. The emphasis on non-interference and the incorporation of cultural elements signifies a distinct approach to normative power when compared with the EU's focus on political and democratic principles.

The differences between China and the European Union in their concepts of sovereignty, human rights, and transparency in international relations reflect their distinct political ideologies and approaches to global governance. For the EU, sovereignty is seen as something that can be shared or pooled among member states, especially in areas where collective action is deemed necessary, such as in matters of trade, security, or human rights. In contrast, China

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48 Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: a Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235-258.

49 Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers," 247–267.

50 Peng, "A Comparative Analysis of the Normative Power of the EU and China."

51 Zsuzsa A. Ferenczy, *Europe, China and the Limits of Normative Power*, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019)

perceives sovereignty as non-negotiable and indivisible. It emphasises the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and prioritises the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.[52] Within the scope of normative power, China makes suggestions to other states with the message, "Do as China does," while the EU gives orders to others with the approach of "Do as the EU says, not as it does."[53] In this context, it becomes clear that these two actors use different strategies in how they diffuse their influence. While China tries to operate its normative power by giving more examples and inviting other states to follow the same path, the EU attempts to implement its norms with directives and orders. In this context, it can be understood that China's normative approach is more nuanced and less coercive, emphasising cooperation with the win-win principle rather than enforcement. On the other hand, the EU's approach seems more authoritarian and prescriptive. In the long term, this may potentially lead to resistance or reaction from other states.

The "logic of appropriateness" characterises the EU's normative power, suggesting that its influence is grounded in shared norms, values, and institutions that shape actors' behaviours. In contrast, China's normative power is framed by the "logic of relationships," which emphasises the importance of advancing mutual and long-term cooperation with other states.[54] Accordingly, China's approach aims to promote mutual and long-term cooperation and to distinguish it from the EU's normative strategy grounded in the sense of appropriateness.

In the aspects of its relations with China, the EU is also willing to diffuse its norms to China in the context of the democracy and human rights perspectives of the EU. However, China is not in the same position as countries that want to accept the norms of the EU. It has its own values.[55] China even changes some core norms and values of socialism to reflect more Chinese characteristics. The norms and values promoted by the EU are not solely representative of any single nation or institution but are rather a collective expression of its member states' shared aspirations for cooperation, integration, and prosperity. In contrast, China is a single state with its own set of values and norms that reflect its history, culture, and political ideology. While China may promote its values internationally, they are inherently tied to the interests and perspectives of the Chinese state and the Chinese Communist Party. In this context, a pure comparison of normative power between China and the EU is far from the logic of reality.

6. Normative Power EU and China's response to crises

Many scholars agree that the EU and China are normative powers trying to successfully disseminate their norms around the world. However, neither the EU nor China has been successful enough in maintaining their influence over international actors during times of crisis. In other words, they have not been successful in managing crises in the context of imparting their general norms to maintain ties with ethnically and historically close members or neighbouring countries or actors.

Although the EU is a leading normative power, particularly in the context of attracting new members, it was unable to manage the Brexit process in a manner that favored EU integration. In other words, the normative power EU was ineffective in convincing the UK

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52 Peng, "A Comparative Analysis of the Normative Power of the EU and China."
53 Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers," 247–267.
54 Brantly Womack, "China as a Normative Foreign Policy Actor," 65-300.
55 Ferenczy, *Europe, China and the Limits of Normative Power*.

to remain in the EU. As is known, the reasons for Brexit largely emerged within the context of the UK's concern about national autonomy and immigration policies.[56] It appears that the UK was not willing to share its values with EU members. In this context, it is evident that nationalism proved to be more influential than the normative policies pursued by the normative power EU in the Brexit process by leading critical challenges.[57] Considering the reasons for Brexit were majorly rooted in the national concerns of the British people, it can be concluded that the EU failed to manage the Brexit process to protect the position of the Union.

Similarly, China, as an emerging global power and a critical normative actor, has not been successful enough in convincing the Taiwanese people to fully integrate with mainland China or to adopt China's political and economic policies. These cases demonstrate the limits of normative power when it comes to persuading an internal member of an institution or a part of the broader political, historical entity.

China has also sought to adopt a norm-taker role by promoting peaceful coexistence in global affairs.[58] China has pursued normative policies in the name of a "peaceful rise," "harmonious world," and "community of life" to establish better relations with the world and neighbouring countries.[59] Despite these efforts, China has neither been able to bring Taiwan closer to China, nor convince it to follow the political and economic strategies that China desires.

Thus, when examining crises such as Brexit and the Taiwan issue, it can be concluded that both the EU and China have struggled to resolve key issues in these crises and ultimately failed. Accordingly, these cases demonstrate the limits of the normative power EU and China in times of significant challenges and crises.

7. Conclusion

Normative power has increasingly become a subject of debate in International Relations and Political Science scholarship. Both the European Union and China are acknowledged for incorporating normative power in their interactions with other international actors. The application of normative power is observed to be more prevalent and relatively adhered to coercively in the case of the EU. However, in the Chinese context, this practice appears to be far from coercive. In this context, when China's normative power is compared with the European Union's normative power, it becomes clear that the European Union's normative power is more specific and abstract than China's. For the EU, recognition as a normative power is tied to its promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, while China's normative power is often associated with its emphasis on non-interference, peaceful development, and respect for sovereignty. Both the EU and China seek recognition for their respective normative frameworks and aspire to play a constructive role in shaping global governance and norms. However, neither the EU nor China has been successful enough in maintaining their influence over international actors in the context of adopting their general norms to maintain ties with their ethnically and historically close members or neighbouring

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56 Agust Arnorsson and Gylfi Zoega, "On the Causes of Brexit," *European Journal of Political Economy* 55, (2018): 301-303.
57 Martin Zoega Bang Kristensen, "Normative Power Europe: A Case Study on Poland" (master's thesis, Aalborg University, 2019).
58 Cameron G. Thies, "China's Rise and the Socialisation of Rising Powers," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 8, no. 3 (2015): 1–20.
59 Chih-yu Shih and Chiung-chiu Huang, "China's Quest for Grand Strategy: Power, National Interest, or Relational Security?" *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 8, no. 1 (2015): 1–26.

countries or actors during times of crisis.

Consequently, China's normative power concept largely progresses in parallel with its soft power concept. In this context, it differs from that of the EU, as the EU's normative concept is strictly organised to compel countries seeking accession to adopt EU norms and values. However, the Chinese concept of normative power is far from compulsive directives; it is based on cooperation with a suggestive rather than a directive approach. It emphasises cooperation as proposed within the win-win concept rather than a directive manner of cooperation.

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