

**The Strategic Use of Normative Power Capabilities in EU-Iranian Nuclear Energy  
Negotiations: A Realist Perspective**

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Many scholars have made the claim that the European Union is a new kind of actor on the world stage.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the EU has proclaimed itself a “normative power” that “seeks to work with others in an interdependent world to spread the advantages of open markets, economic growth and a political system based on social responsibility and democracy.”<sup>2</sup> This ethos is reflected in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which states that the union not only acts out of its own “enlightened self-interests,” but also in the interest of “global solidarity.” Much scholarship has been written on the merits of the EU as a “normative,” “ethical” or “civilian” power,<sup>3</sup> but little research has tested the overall efficacy of normative power in international relations<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I argue that the EU’s adoption of a “normative” or “civilian” power foreign and security policy is more the result of the supranational entity’s position within the international system than internal transformation of the European polity itself. In other words, the EU’s recourse to a normative power strategy results mainly from its lack of a robust military capability and the offshore presence of the United States and NATO as a guarantor of member security. From a realist standpoint, this is not necessarily a bad thing. EU normative power could be used to complement, and in many cases constrain, American militarism. Indeed, the strategic use of norms can be viewed as a powerful

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<sup>1</sup> See Craig Parsons, *A Certain Idea of Europe*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 2003) and <sup>1</sup> Ian Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union,” *International Affairs* 84, no. 1, (2008): 45-60.

<sup>2</sup> From *The EU in the World: The Foreign Policy of the European Union*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Publications, June 2007, 4.

<sup>3</sup> See Lisbeth Aggestam, “Introduction: Ethical Power Europe?” *International Affairs*, 84, no. 1, (2008): 1-11; Tim Dunne, “Good Citizen Europe,” *International Affairs*, 84, no. 1, (2008): 13-28.

<sup>4</sup> A few examples of the applicability of EU normative power to across issue areas include Adrian Treacher, “From Civilian Power to Military Actor: The EU’s Resistible Transformation,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* 9, no.1, (2004): 49-66 and Christian Freres, “The European Union as a Global “Civilian Power:’ Development Cooperation in EU-Latin American Relations,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 42, no. 2, (Summer 2000): 63-85.

capability in an international context. In fact, viewing a normative power strategy from a realist standpoint better explains EU behavior, could expand the role of norms as an asset of statecraft and demonstrate the efficacy of normative power as an alternative to the more aggressive unilateralism of the United States.

The objective this paper is not only to demonstrate the efficacy of normative power from a realist standpoint, but also to bridge theoretical gaps. I argue that realists can improve theory by adopting valuable insights from proponents of normative power Europe. To that end, this paper will be broken into five sections. The first provides an overview of the literature describing the EU as a normative power. The second section disputes the contention by many scholars that the European Union's emergence as a normative power is based *mainly* upon endogenous variables such as the construction of a shared identity and the intersubjective discourse of its constituent members. Rather, it maintains that exogenous considerations such as the security umbrella provided by American hard power provide a better explanation.<sup>5</sup> However, there is room for theoretical eclecticism and cross-fertilization of ideas; endogenous factors do play a role in reinforcing systemic pressures. The third section argues that normative power Europe is a legitimate concept, but that norms should be viewed as a distinct capability in a state's (or in this case, transnational entity's) strategic arsenal. From this standpoint, the EU pursues its interest like any other international actor, albeit through different means. The fourth section analyzes the EU/E3 negotiations with Iran over Tehran's nuclear

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Art has argued that NATO has created an environment conducive for European integration because Europeans feared "renationalization." Renationalization deals with fears of a newly reunited Germany; concern that the United States might leave Europe after the Cold War had ended; and, as a consequence of the first two, the nightmare that Europe would revert back to its destructive nationalistic past in "Why Western Europe Needs the United States and NATO," *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 1, (Spring 1996): 1-39.

program to determine whether the EU's approach follows the logic of "normative" power as described by its advocates or conforms more closely to *realpolitik*. I maintain that the EU's foreign policy in general, and its negotiations with Iran in particular, generally conform to realist logic, although this position does not undermine the concept of normative power. The paper concludes by urging scholars and analysts to rethink norms as capabilities and to expand the concept of other "soft power" assets rather than completely dismissing the concept of normative power *in toto*.

## I. THE EU AS AN ACTOR

Craig Parsons makes the case that the European Union has created a new political architecture that is radically different than that of its predecessors.<sup>6</sup> This might or might not be true, but the emergence of Europe, as a collective polity doesn't necessarily change much about the international system. States have pooled sovereignty in the past for collective security, in military alliances, to create free trade areas and to form larger federations. "They have also peacefully (and not so peacefully) submerged their political units into those of others or joined together to form larger units in the belief that doing so would better serve a variety of political, social, and ideological goals."<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the EU can be viewed as *sui generis* in that it is "less than a federation, more than a regime."<sup>8</sup> Somewhere along this continuum, however, the EU is an international actor, albeit neither a classical Westphalian state nor a non-state actor.

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<sup>6</sup> Parsons, *A Certain Idea of Europe*.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Jervis, "International Organization at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in World Politics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4, (Autumn 1998): p. 975.

<sup>8</sup> William Wallace, "Less Than a Federation, More Than a Regime," quoted in Roger Morgan, "A European 'society of states' – but only states of mind?" *International Affairs*. 76, no. 3, (2000): 563.

Following Weber's definition of a state, the EU retains several key ingredients of sovereignty, such as bounded territory and somewhat effective governance, but lacks one necessary element – the legitimate use of force. The lack of a military capability, however, is inconsequential for Europe's external defense because NATO provides for much of its collective security, although the EU is slowly developing its own security and defense arrangements.<sup>9</sup> Internal defense also is unproblematic because that is relegated to member states. In this regard, the EU is truly unique – a quasi-sovereign entity that currently lacks its own effective military force. The EU also is a supranational actor because its "bounded territory" is comprised of sovereign states. Yet, similar to traditional states, the EU's agency is shaped by the structure of the international system. Despite its exceptional arrangement, the EU still must "act" within the same anarchic framework as other politically bounded territories.<sup>10</sup> Even if the integration of Europe does create a new type of agent in international affairs, the EU continues to conform to realist logic by performing as any rational actor by pursuing its own goals and interests.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the European Union Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). The EDSP could lead to a common defense for Europe and the ESDI would give the EU more flexibility within the strictures of NATO.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Dunne, for example, makes a strong (constructivist) case that the EU is a unitary actor based on a shared moral identity: "Being a mere collective assembly of persons is different from being a group of people who have agency in a moral or political sense. The difference rests on the following criteria: a group that is moral possesses an identity that is more than an aggregate of identities of its parts; and the collective agent has a decision-making capacity" in "Good Citizen Europe," *International Affairs*, 84, no. 1, (2008): 19. Other scholars and analysts treat the EU as a *de facto* unitary actor. The EU makes deals, signs treaties, enters negotiations, etc. The EU "is" a normative power, not the EU members "are" normative powers.

<sup>11</sup> The EU declares in its foreign policy manifesto that it seeks its own "enlightened self interests," in "The EU and the World: The Foreign Policy of the European Union." For a broader treatment, see Birol Yesilada, Brian Eford and Peter Noordijk, "Competition among Giants: A Look at How Future Enlargement of the European Union Could Affect Global Power Transition," *International Studies Review* 8, no. 4, (2006): 607-622

There also has been much debate about how the EU exercises its agency internally and externally. Some scholars have advocated a functionalist approach to studying EU behavior, whereas others have endorsed intergovernmentalism – although both logics might apply depending on the issue area under discussion.<sup>12</sup> For example, the strongest pillar of the EU – the European Community – seems to correlate with functionalism. Integration in this area is deep and has spilled over from trade to monetary policy. The CFSP, the EU’s weakest pillar, corresponds to intergovernmentalism because national governments, particularly the largest European states, can veto policy, which has made it difficult for the EU to act as a single entity in this area.<sup>13</sup>

Comprehensive debate about EU integration and foreign policy has been waged elsewhere and is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the author sides with Matthew Burgess, who maintains that the EU is on trajectory to become a federation.<sup>15</sup> This does not preclude intergovernmentalism nor functionalism since both theories, as argued above, appear to be valid based upon the issue area. Furthermore, a federation is a *type* of organization, not the *process* by which something is organized.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, David L. Ellison, “Divide and Conquer: The European Union Enlargement’s Successful Conclusion?” *International Studies Review* 8, no. 1, (June 2006): 150-165.

<sup>13</sup> In the area of counterterrorism, for example, Daniel Keohane argues that the major EU states (Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain) balk at sharing intelligence with each other because national security goes to the core of state interests in “The Absent Friend: EU Foreign Policy and Counter-Terrorism,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46, no. 1, (Dec. 2007): 125-146. Also see Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, “Explaining Government Preferences for Institutional Change in EU Foreign and Security Policy,” *International Organization* 58, no. 1, (Winter 2004): 137-174.

<sup>14</sup> For comprehensive discussion on EU integration, see Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, eds., *European Integration Theory*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Burgess, “Federalism,” in *European Integration Theory*.

<sup>16</sup> There are a number of ways, including war, to establish a federation. As Burgess notes, “There is no historical precedent for the kind of union that Europe is busy constructing. The road to federal union along which EU seems to be traveling has no signposts or footprints to follow. Previous federations have emerged

As it stands now, the European Union does pursue interests on behalf of its members along a quasi-federal model and is generally treated as an autonomous actor in international relations as other federal states are. Therefore, it can be subjected to the same scrutiny as a traditional state (whether federal or otherwise), although such an approach does have its limitations and drawbacks.<sup>17</sup>

## II. WHAT IS NORMATIVE POWER?

What exactly makes a state a normative power has been difficult to ascertain. As Helene Sjursen writes, “an important aim is to be explicit about a possible standard that might be used to assess claims about the EU’s normative dimension. It is only if such standards and criteria are explicitly indicated that it is possible to criticize them” and to empirically validate them.<sup>18</sup> A major source of this ambiguity has been the inability to clearly delineate the parameters of normative power – at times the concept has been subsumed under or conflated with “soft power,” “ethical power” and “civilian power.” Some have even alluded to Europe as a “metrosexual” power. As metrosexuals have redefined masculinity, so has Europe redefined the use of power in geopolitics.<sup>19</sup> As Parag Khanna writes:

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as a result of conscious political actions that first created a written constitution as the foundation of the new state whereas the EU has evolved uniquely as the result of concrete economic steps based upon international treaties whose goals have been rooted, at best, in ambiguity,” “Federalism” p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> For example, in some issue areas, the EU requires the consent of its member states. In such cases, it might be difficult to argue that the EU acts independently or autonomously.

<sup>18</sup> Helene Sjursen, “The EU as a Normative Power: How Can This Be?” *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, no. 2, (2006): 236.

<sup>19</sup> Parag Khanna, “The Metrosexual Superpower,” *Foreign Policy* 143 (July-Aug. 2004): 66-68.

“The United States conceives of power primarily in military terms, thus confusing presence with influence. By contrast, Europeans understand power as overall leverage. As a result, the EU is the world’s largest bilateral aid donor, providing more than twice as much aid to poor countries than the United States, and it is also the largest importer of agricultural goods from the developing world, enhancing its influence in key regions of instability. Through massive deployments of soft power ... Europe has made hard power less necessary.”<sup>20</sup>

Reducing or limiting the threat or use of hard power appears to be a hallmark of normative power. But that doesn’t make normative power that much different than the concept of soft power.<sup>21</sup> Normative power is more than simply trying to persuade others to cooperate or emulate through “intangible assets” such as an attractive culture or ideology. Normative power is not what the EU does or what it says – it’s what the EU *is*. This is what Ian Manners means when he describes the EU as a power that “promotes a series of normative principles that are generally acknowledged, within the United Nations system, to be universally applicable.”<sup>22</sup> Manners, one of the most prominent proponents of normative power Europe, identifies nine principles, which constitute the EU as a normative power: sustainable peace, freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, equality, social solidarity, sustainable development and good governance.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to conceive how, based solely on these criteria, the EU is a “normative” power because the United States espouses similar values, but is not generally thought of as acting

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<sup>20</sup> Khanna, “The Metrosexual Superpower,” 67.

<sup>21</sup> Here, I use Joseph Nye’s concept of “soft power” – “the ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority... Soft power is attractive power” in “Soft Power and Leadership,” *Compass*, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard, Spring 2004, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union,” 46. Also see Ian Manners, “Normative power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 1, no. 2, (March 2006): 182-199.

<sup>23</sup> Manners, “The Normative Ethics of the European Union.”

normatively in the sense portrayed by Manners.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Manners recognizes this problem and argues that being a normative power should not be conflated with simply promoting an ethical foreign policy. In addition to pursuing normative values, he posits that a normative power must live by example, be reasonable and do the least harm.<sup>25</sup>

There are several problems with Manners' conception of normative power. First, because the definition of normative power he provides is not quantifiable, it is difficult to determine how it can be applied. And because normative power cannot be quantified, it is difficult to test its efficacy.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, there is no way to causally link the application of normative power as described by Manners to changes in a target state's behavior. Because Manners' conception of normative power is so diffuse, it is difficult to apply his framework empirically – there is no way to put his ideas to the test. Therefore, there is no way to demonstrate whether normative power actually has an affect on a target's behavior. Manners also fails to explain how simply upholding certain values, no matter how laudable, increases an actor's power capacity. Living by example, moral persuasion, the power of argument and the power of shaming seem ill-equipped capabilities in international politics, especially without the legitimate threat of force to back them up.

Furthermore, norms, like institutions, are the products of the great powers that created them. Such norms might be desirable and even laudable, but there is no tried and true way to determine whether they are universally applicable. Indeed, there is disagreement among EU members on the appropriate use of force, the Iraq war being a

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<sup>24</sup> The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy makes a similar commitment to rule of law, democracy and human rights, [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Manners, "The Normative Ethics of the European Union."

<sup>26</sup> Sjursen, "The EU as a Normative' Power."

case in point.<sup>27</sup> In fact, realists and non-realists agree about the contestability of the universal applicability of norms. Federica Bicchi, writing from a sociological-institutionalist approach, for one, argues that European Foreign Policy (EFP) can be viewed as a dominant cultural paradigm. “While EFP can be seen as an intentional attempt to promote universal norms, it can also be seen as unreflexive behavior mirroring the deeply engrained belief that Europe’s history is a lesson for everybody. Put shortly, EFP is informed, at least partially, by the idea that ‘our size fits all.’”<sup>28</sup> Sjurson similarly cautions about the universality of norms, asking “how do we know that ‘normative power’ Europe is not simply an expression of Eurocentric imperialism?”<sup>29</sup>

Manners’ assumption that the EU’s identity as an ethical power is based on the constitutive effects of discourse rather than material capabilities is challenge to realist logic. This point is echoed by Lisbeth Aggestam, who argues that a new ethical power Europe is stepping out of a postmodern paradise to bring peace and justice to the modern world through the strengthening of human rights and multilateral action.<sup>30</sup> Despite these ontological differences, there is room for collaboration between realists and proponents of normative power. Norms can be used effectively to change the behavior of an actor. Such a strategy can be difficult and unsuccessful, but the use of force also has proved difficult and ineffective in changing behavior. Additionally, the promotion of norms

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<sup>27</sup> Alberto Alesina and Roberto Perotti, “The European Union: A Politically Incorrect View,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 4, (Autumn 2004): 27-48.

<sup>28</sup> Federica Bicchi, “‘Our Size Fits All’: Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2, (March 2006): 287. This is not much different than E.H. Carr’s criticism of the “harmony of interest” state’s claim exist between their interest and those of everyone else. E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Sjurson, “The EU as a Normative Power,” 241.

<sup>30</sup> Aggestam, “Introduction: Ethical Power Europe?”

should not be viewed as antithetical to achieving state interests. Promotion of shared ideas can benefit interests because they create structures that actors must abide by.<sup>31</sup> The next section demonstrates how this viewpoint can be incorporated in the realist paradigm.

### III. A REALIST CONCEPTION OF NORMATIVE POWER

This paper argues that the normative power Europe can be best understood *if norms are viewed as a system-wide capability*.<sup>32</sup> Realists have been circumspect in their dealings with norms because of the potential ontological, epistemological and methodological problems such concepts pose for realist theory.<sup>33</sup> This need not be the case, however. Neoclassical realism, for example, has begun looking at the how internal factors to states, such as culture and domestic politics, interact with systemic structure and how ideas are utilized in statecraft.<sup>34</sup> From the perspective of realism, military, political/economic and normative power can be viewed as three distinct, yet related, capabilities or assets. States could project power across any of these dimensions.

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<sup>31</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> For an example of the integration of norms into security policy, see Cathal J. Nolan, "The OSCE: Nonmilitary Dimensions of Cooperative Security in Europe," in Carl C. Hodge, ed., *Redefining European Security*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2, (June 1991): 211-239; Robert Jervis, "Realism in the Study of World Politics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4, (Autumn 1998): 971-991.

<sup>34</sup> See Steve E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffery Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Andrew K. Hanami, ed., *Perspectives on Structural Realism*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism," *Security Studies* 17, no. 2, (April 2008): 294-321; and Randall L. Schweller and David Priess, "A Tale of Realisms: Expanding the Institutions Debate," *Merston International Studies Review* 41, no. 1, (May 1997): 1-32.

In terms of application, normative power could consist of utilizing diplomatic pressure or foreign aid to promote norms that help achieve an actor's interests. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), cultural institutions, media outlets, charities, religious and secular organizations all can be considered the *gendarmes* of normative power. Each of these assets, like their military counterparts, can be deployed strategically to help a state establish its normative vision without recourse to force. For example, Western- and American-funded NGOs and U.S. foreign aid played significant roles in the outcome of the 2005 Ukrainian elections.<sup>35</sup> American and Western support for other "Color Revolutions" demonstrates that norm promotion can lead to serious material consequences. In fact, other great powers have begun to develop their own normative agendas as an alternative to Western conceptions of democracy and human rights.<sup>36</sup>

Realists have long recognized that "states are not simply motivated by considerations of the balance of power or relative capabilities. They also pursue distinct normative or ideological agendas, usually in response to domestic political factors, which might include spreading religion, championing the rights of the oppressed or furthering a particular political cause. However, in practice, most states have proved 'rational' in the sense that they are keenly aware of structural distribution of power in the international

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<sup>35</sup> Michael McFaul, "Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution," *International Security* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 45–83.

<sup>36</sup> For the development of alternative normative agendas by Russia and China, see Daniel C. Lynch, "Envisioning China's Political Future: Elite Responses to Democracy as a Global Constitutive Norm," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no.3, (2007): 701-722; Andrew Monaghan, "Calmly critical': Evolving Russian views of US hegemony," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 6, (Dec. 2006): 987-1013; and Olga Oliker, Keith Crane, Lowell H. Schwartz, Catherine Yusupov, *Russian Foreign Policy: Sources and Implications*, (Arlington, Va.: Rand Corporation, 2009).

system, and do not pursue their normative agendas at the expense of their vital national interests.”<sup>37</sup> The difficulty for realists has been in explaining how norms distinctively operate in a world of material capabilities. This problematic can be overcome, however, by viewing the projection of norms as parallel to the projection of military force or economic might. States could project power in the normative sphere by establishing rules governing international (or regional) law and regimes; for example on human rights and democracy, but also through the globalization (or regionalization) and propagation of its culture, which can include consumerism, sports and entertainment.<sup>38</sup> The normative sphere also could be disseminated through NGOs, MNCs and prominent individuals.

Recent studies have demonstrated the role international NGOs, many of them based in Western capitals, have played in spreading democracy and other norms, with budgets for such operations running into the hundreds of millions.<sup>39</sup> Other norms can be codified in international law, regimes and through the United Nations. These norms can establish “the rules of the game” that other powers have to abide by. Violating these rules can lead to sanctions, boycotts and pressure from “shaming” to use Manners’ term.

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<sup>37</sup> Adrian Hyde-Price, “A ‘Tragic-Actor’? A Realist Perspective on ‘Ethical Power Europe,’” *International Affairs* 84, no. 1, (2008): 31.

<sup>38</sup> For an example of the role of law on international relations, see Judith Goldstein, Miles Kahler, Robert O. Keohane, Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Legalization and World Politics,” *International Organization* 54, no. 3, (Summer 2000): 385-399; and Anne-Marie Slaughter, Andrew S. Tulumello, Stepan Wood, “International Law and International Relations Theory: A New Generation of Interdisciplinary Scholarship,” *The American Journal of International Law* 92, no. 3, (July 1998): 367-397. For an example of cultural assets as a form of power, see Watanabe Yasushi and David L. McConnell, eds., *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, (M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, N.Y., 2008).

<sup>39</sup> William E. Demars, *NGOs and Transnational Networks*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005) and Abby Stoddard, *Humanitarian Alert: NGO Information and its Impact on US Foreign Policy*, (Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 2006). Democratization was a top foreign policy objective of the Bush administration and remains so under the current Obama administration

This section demonstrates that normative power, if viewed as a capability, has potential efficacy as a tool in a state or actor's strategic arsenal. These methods don't necessarily violate the concept of normative power because they are generally non-violent and don't necessarily require the use or threat of force. This conception of norms also can bridge different theoretical paradigms. Because norms emanate from domestic sources (cultures and societies), they link foreign policy to systemic outcomes. Each state is likely to have differing normative agendas which shape, or challenge, international order. Similar to other capabilities, some states might have greater normative power than others, and thusly, increasing or decreasing normative capabilities can lead to systemic conflict and challenge the balance of power. Iran's goal to be a regional hegemon that sets the status quo in the Middle East with its version of political Islam, for example, could be viewed as a normative challenge to Western liberalism.<sup>40</sup>

#### **IV. The Efficacy of Normative Power: Iran as Case Study**

Despite long-standing concerns by the United States and European Union that Iran harbors clandestine nuclear weapons ambitions, Tehran is a signatory of the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has repeatedly claimed that its nuclear energy program is solely for peaceful civilian purposes.<sup>41</sup> But the controversy over the Islamic

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<sup>40</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, "Challenging Hegemony: Political Islam and the North-South Divide," *International Studies Review* 9, no. 4, (2007): 629-643.

<sup>41</sup> The 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate appears to support Iran's contention that it does not possess a nuclear weapon. The NIE reports with "high confidence" that Iran has its nuclear weapons program since 2003 and with "moderate-to-high confidence" that Iran does not possess nuclear weapons. It assess with "high confidence" that Iran pursued a nuclear weapons program up until 2003. The NIE also judges with "high confidence" that the earliest time frame Iran could develop a nuclear weapon would be 2015. The current Obama administration has yet to release any revisions to the 2007 NIE.

Republic's nuclear program has intensified since the 11 Sept. 2001 terrorist attacks on Washington and New York. Regardless of these concerns, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has not found Iran in violation of the NPT, although it has reported irregularities in Tehran's description of its program and has required Iran to halt uranium enrichment. Iran's continued noncompliance with IAEA requirements prompted the U.S. and EU to seek a fourth round of tighter sanctions against Tehran in the UN Security Council on 9 June 2010.<sup>42</sup> U.S. President Obama signed into law even stricter U.S. sanctions against Iran on 1 July 2010.<sup>43</sup> **The EU is expected to sign similarly tough sanctions on July 26. (update this).**

Whereas U.S.-Iranian relations have been marked by hostility, the European Union initially approached Iran from a different perspective. Unlike the U.S., which has not ruled out military action against Iran, the European Union initially focused on persuasion and inducements.<sup>44</sup> A major part of that strategy has been the EU/E3 negotiations, which began shortly after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The remainder of this section will examine the 2005 "Framework for a Long-Term Agreement Between the Islamic Republic of Iran and France, Germany and the United Kingdom with Support of

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<sup>42</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, "U.N. Approves New Sanctions to Deter Iran," *New York Times*, 9 June 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/world/middleeast/10sanctions.html?hp> last accessed 14 July 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Baker, "Obama Signs Into Law Tighter Sanctions on Iran," *New York Times*, 1 July 2010,

<sup>44</sup> Wyn Q. Bowen And Joanna Kidd, "The Iranian Nuclear Challenge," *International Affairs* 80, no. 2 (2004): 257-276. According to Adm. Mike Mullen, the chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, the United States has a plan to attack Iran if Tehran were on the verge of obtaining a nuclear weapon, although he said such an attack would be fraught with risks. See Anne Gearan, "Mullen says U.S. has Iran Strike Plan, Just in Case," *Associated Press*, last accessed 01 Aug. 2010, [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100801/ap\\_on\\_go\\_ca\\_st\\_pe/us\\_us\\_iran](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100801/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/us_us_iran)

the High Representative of the European Union” to determine whether the policy meets the criteria of normative power.

The framework, which remains the basis of European negotiations with Iran, was submitted to the International Atom Energy Agency on 8 Aug. 2005.<sup>45</sup> The document was a joint effort between the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Britain in consultation with Javier Solana, the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Although talks between the EU/E3 and Iran had stalled in recent years because of intense negotiations, continued Iranian intransigence and rising hostility between Tehran and the West, European Union foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton revealed that she was ready to resume dialogue with Iran.<sup>46</sup> The deal offered to Tehran by the EU/E3 consists of a number of economic carrots that appear on their face to be traditional diplomatic inducements to get a state to behave. The framework, adopted in August 2005, rests on the following points:

- Building trust and cooperation between EU3/EU and Iran
- Making trade and political dialogue complementary to talks on nuclear issue.
- Support Iran’s membership to WTO and economic and development assistance.
- “Commit themselves to establishing a long-term relationship in the security and political field based upon shared principles and conditional on both sides’ adherence to those principles and commitments set out in the overall agreement.
- Welcome Iran’s commitment not to violate NPT and acquire WMD.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The full document can be retrieved from <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/2005/infcirc651.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Timothy Heritage, “EU Says Iran Talks Must Focus on Nuclear Programme,” Reuters, 14 July 2010, last accessed 18 July 2010, [http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20100714/wl\\_nm/us\\_nuclear\\_iran\\_eu\\_3](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20100714/wl_nm/us_nuclear_iran_eu_3)

<sup>47</sup> These goals were outlined in the “Framework For a Long-Term Agreement Between the Islamic Republic of Iran and France, Germany & The United Kingdom, With The Support Of The High Representative Of The European Union.” The framework was submitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 8 Aug. 2005 and briefly restated in the “2009 Annual Report on the European Community’s Development and External Assistance Policies and their Implementation in 2008.”

The broad outline of the framework described above focuses largely on confidence building measures to encourage Tehran to fully disclose the extent of its nuclear energy program. It emphasizes normative measures to convince Iran to be more forthcoming about its intentions and ambitions and eschews any mention of force or threat of force to bring Iran within compliance of the NPT. In fact, the framework explicitly rules out the threat or use of force inconsistent with the UN Charter. Specifically, the principles outlined in the framework are committed:

To fulfill in good faith obligations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, under the generally recognized principles and rules of international law, and under relevant international agreements; to the principle of the resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law; to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.<sup>48</sup>

The framework also supports expanding trade and investment agreements with Iran, which is consistent with the EU's promotion of liberal economic norms. The framework notes that trade and investment will "facilitate market access, promote commercial exchanges, and open up a wide range of further co-operation activities in the economic, commercial and other fields." Furthermore, the framework supports Iran's ascension to the WTO if Tehran forswears nuclear weapons and adheres to the agreement. Consistent with a normative agenda, the framework also promotes democratization and respect for human rights and non-discrimination of minorities based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, or national or social origin. Indeed, the framework goes beyond traditional inducements such as trade and investment agreements and

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<sup>48</sup> Framework for Long-Term Agreement, 4.

supports educational and cultural exchanges with Iran as well as environmental assistance to help protect Iranian natural habitats and promotion of Iranian tourist destinations.

Although the conception of normative power outlined in this paper differs on ontological grounds from those laid out by Manners, the EU/E3 negotiations with Iran do meet several of Manners' criteria for normative power. The European Union along with France, Germany and Britain, has pursued a multilateral approach to its negotiations with Tehran over its nuclear energy program. European powers have partnered not only with the U.S. in the negotiations, but also with the IAEA and UN Security Council members Russia and China. However, consistent with realism, the multilateral arrangement benefits the interests of great powers. France, Germany and Britain negotiate with Iran separately from the EU. The bifurcated approach indicates that the E3 views its national security interests and foreign policy separately from that of the EU as a whole. "Despite halting moves toward a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) centered in the Commission, the EU's chief foreign representative reports to the Council, suggesting that big countries such as Britain, France and German remain unwilling to cede their foreign policy powers to the technocratic and still relatively inward-looking Commission."<sup>49</sup>

Other aspects of the framework also fit within Manners' normative power schema. The EU has linked democratization and support for human rights to its negotiations with Iran, which is an important criterion in Manners conception of normative power. However, these norms appear to take a backseat to economic and geostrategic interests, which is consistent with realism. The five main points listed in the

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<sup>49</sup> Vinod K. Aggarwal and Edward A. Fogarty, "Between Regionalism and Globalism: European Union Interregional Trade Strategies," in Aggarwal and Fogarty, eds., *EU Trade Strategies*, (Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2004), 11.

framework do not mention democracy *per se* but they do refer to the UN Charter, which “holds to the principle of sovereign equality of all states, but also to protect human rights of all people.” Like the U.S., the European Union has made improving democracy and human rights part of its agenda in Iran. Despite talk of democratization, however, the EU appears willing to deal with Iran if it guarantees not to acquire a nuclear weapon, even if Tehran doesn’t improve its human rights record.<sup>50</sup>

In many ways, the EU/E3 framework manifests the concept of civilian power by its support of multilateralism, international institutions, the rule of law, commitment to democratic norms and values, supranational integration, and the restriction of the use of force as a means for international politics.<sup>51</sup> However, the pursuit of norms by non-military means does not mean that a given strategy is not realist. Realists from E.H. Carr on have invoked the axiom of “harmony of interests” when states claim that what s good for them is good for the rest of humanity. Writing specifically about the EU, Adrian Hyde-Price has similar concerns about EU norms: “The problem here is obvious: no actor can effectively pursue its own interests in a diverse and pluralist international system, and claim to be ‘doing good’ by others, at the same time – unless one uncritically accepts

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<sup>50</sup> In a reconsideration of Civil Power Europe, Manners argues that events since the 11 Sept. 2001 attacks, specifically the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have led to increased *realpolitik* and militarization in EU foreign policy. See Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 1, no. 2, (March 2006): 182-199. Also see Bastian Giegerich and William Wallace, “Not Such a Soft Power: the External Deployment of European Forces,” *Survival* 46, no. 2, (Summer 2004): 163-182.

<sup>51</sup> Veit Bachmann and James D Sidaway, “Zivilmacht Europa: A Critical Geopolitics of the European Union as a Global Power,” *Transactions* 34, no. 1, (2009): 94-109.

liberal-idealist claims that there are cosmopolitan or universal values and interests that transcend those of individual political communities.”<sup>52</sup>

If the strategic utilization of normative power were viewed as a capability, many of the contradictions that undergird the arguments made by proponents of Civil Power Europe would be alleviated. Because of structural considerations (unipolarity, American hegemony) and lack of military capabilities, European powers have had to rely on the asset that best suits their position within the international system – norms. Such norms can have a powerful affect and serve as a model of emulation, a position held by realists such as Kenneth Waltz.<sup>53</sup> In this way, norms can be simultaneously pursued to benefit an actors’ interests yet at the same time remain consistent with their values – the goal of non-proliferation is an example of this. Simply because a position serves the interests of one actor does not, *ipso facto*, mean the interests of another is thereby done a disservice.

In the case of Iran, the norm of non-proliferation is in the interest of the EU and other nuclear powers. States with nuclear weapons are keen to not to let others join the nuclear club. Despite that fact, the non-proliferation norm benefits others because the unchecked spread of nuclear weapons poses danger to the entire international system. Although the non-proliferation norm is generally accepted (nearly all states are signatories to the NPT), conflict can arise when norms are contested. As Hyde-Price points out, “The problem here is that when the object of study is seen as embodying the core values one believes in, it is difficult to achieve any critical distances.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Adrian Hyde-Price, “A ‘tragic-actor’? A realist perspective on ‘ethical power Europe,’” *International Affairs* 84, no. 1, (2008): 32.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: (McGraw-Hill, 1979).

From a realist standpoint, it is difficult to imagine how a state could routinely pursue principles over interests (although the reverse is not true). In the case of Iran, the EU might be acting on both, but proponents of normative power would have to explain the causal link between interests and principles and how a state can act solely on principles without benefiting its interests. Realists argue that a state would have an interest in diffusing its own self-defined principles (e.g., the principle of non-proliferation is good for those who already have nuclear weapons, even if a non-nuclear world is ultimately desirable). Whether principles can be pursued absent of interests doesn't undercut the practical application of normative power. However, the deeper ontological question – what *is* a normative power – is affected. From a realist perspective, states can utilize norms without being constitutively normative.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

In this cursory case study, I have attempted to demonstrate that the concept of normative power can explain EU foreign policy towards Iran. Utilizing a realist framework also helps to reduce some of fuzziness that clouds the concept of normative power. Viewing normative power as a capability provides a stronger empirical basis on which to test for instances of such a strategy. This approach also bypasses the problem of determining whether the EU/E3 are taking a truly principled stand or simply pursuing interests. From a realist perspective, pursuing interests doesn't necessarily undermine principles, although the former usually takes precedent over the latter. Finally, this approach can also distinguish between words and deeds. The normative principles

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<sup>54</sup> Adrian Hyde-Pierce, "‘Normative’ Power Europe: A Realist Critique," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2, (March 2006): 218.

promoted by the EU are advanced by the United States as well. These two polities have something in common: they are the most powerful political actors in the international system. As realists predict, great powers will likely push their norms because they have the material capabilities to do so. But systemic constraints and internal characteristics play a role as well. The EU lacks a robust military capacity and contains publics largely averse to the use of force, which is the opposite of the United States. Because of these structures, the EU is more likely to pursue normative means to solve international crises, whereas the United States does not have to remove force from the table.

Realists should look more closely at the potential applicability of normative power. Pursuing such strategies could benefit states by reducing violent conflict. Multilateral approaches can lead to burden sharing and confidence building measures among adversaries. Whether norms are universal is debatable, but many are laudable nonetheless. Promotion of democratization and human rights should be supported, although there are occasions where certain interests might trump these principles. Increasing normative power does not mean that war would be eliminated – indeed conflicts over norms could lead to warfare. However, normative power offers an alternative to traditional threats and use of force. Normative power might not completely replace force, but it at least provides actors with another option in international affairs.