

# The European Union's Normative Power in a Multipolar World

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*This paper reappraises Normative Power Europe theory in light of the possible changes that a future multipolar order may bring about. If – and “if” should still be stressed at present –the world is heading towards multipolarity between states such as the US, China, India and Brazil and entities such as the EU what consequences will this have for NPE theory? If the “rules” of this multipolar order are set to be cast in “Westphalian” terms, does this necessarily preclude the EU from participating in such an order? If the EU is not to play by these “rules”, is NPE robust enough to weather the storms that will potentially gather with the ascendancy of states with no automatic loyalty to traditional Western economic and political norms? If it is willing to play by these “rules”, will this pressure the EU into a serious rethink not just on its strategy but on the tools it will require to secure its position in a multipolar world?*

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‘That your virtue is your Self, and not an outward thing, a skin, or a cloak: that is the truth from the basis of your souls, ye virtuous ones!’

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

‘A state of affairs is thinkable’: what this means is that we can picture it to ourselves.’

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

## INTRODUCTION

It was 2002 when ideas on Europe's Normative Power were fleshed-out under Ian Manners's article *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?*. The paper made the argument that Europe's unique domestic political arrangements implied that it could not act in terms of traditional “Westphalian” rules and conventions in international politics.<sup>2</sup> That is, that the European Union (EU) should work as ‘a promoter of norms which displace the state as the central concern’.<sup>3</sup> By emphasising its own “post-Westphalian” innovativeness, runs the argument, the EU is able to turn its back on the willingness to use force in favour of ‘redefining international norms in its own image’.<sup>4</sup> The EU should therefore not seek to emulate some Galtungian superpower that repeats the past mistakes of the United States (US) and the empires which preceded it. Thus it is not about positioning one's Queen with a view of forcing checkmate; it is about abandoning the game of chess in favour of Scrabble instead. Disregarding the rules of the game and concentrating

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\*The author would like to thank Thomas Ramopoulos for comments on earlier drafts of this text. Needless to say, all faults remain with the author.

<sup>2</sup> Manners, 2002, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 242, p. 252.

on what the world should be like by redefining what is taken as normal, it is argued, is 'the greatest power of all' in international politics.<sup>5</sup> Or in other words, and to borrow Mahatma Ghandi's cliché maxim, "you must be the change you want to see in the world". Adapting the whole normative basis of the international system, rather than adapting one's self to the system, is the central tenet of the Normative Power Europe (NPE) concept.

Thus in a theoretical sense it is precisely because the EU is claimed to have unique ontological origins, that it is incomparable to all other actors in the international system. But Manners was extremely careful to not leave his thoughts up in the air as some lofty metaphysical proposition. He was adamant that the theory should have some empirical anchorage. This came in the form of the EU's activities towards the universal abolition of the death penalty, which has had measurable success as a norm in international politics on the back of the EU's efforts, even if Manners' original claim paid little attention to the work of pressure groups in offending countries also against the death penalty (e.g. the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (US)) and public opinion more generally. Going further, however, Manners also spelt-out the specific mechanisms – whether consciously employed or not - by which the EU forwards such normative preferences. These include: *contagion* – the unintentional export of the EU as a unique regional experiment; *informational* – the intentional export of strategic communications; *procedural* – inter-regional cooperation through institutional bodies; *transference* – aid and trade exchanges with conditionality; *overt diffusion* – the physical presence of delegations in third-countries; and, *cultural filter* – the admixture of knowledge creation and social and political identity.<sup>6</sup> Here in starkest form appeared the empirical bones to the normative flesh.

Of course the very notion of NPE aroused suspicion from the very beginning, even if Manners had insisted that the theory was not a *fait accompli* as such but rather a necessary work in progress. Nevertheless, in the same year as Manners' publication Rosamond was already asking us to enlarge our analysis of NPE by panning out and placing it within the larger processes of globalisation.<sup>7</sup> In 2005 Diez argued that 'the EU is not the first normative power' with others such as the US having a strong normative element to their historical evolution.<sup>8</sup> The US Constitution being a good example here of the attempt to embody different international norms that went beyond the "barbaric" rules and practices that had dominated European inter-state politics for centuries. From a more analytical perspective Sjursen argued that without any objective criteria with which to measure if NPE is as good as it says it is, not only does this put NPE on shaky theoretical ground but the mere attempt of its expounding reveals the real dearth in understanding the EU's approach to international politics.<sup>9</sup> Finally, taking a more neo-realist perspective on the matter Adrian Hyde-Price calls NPE a reductionist analysis refusing to take into consideration broader systemic explanations for its emergence: for Hyde-Price the Cold War's bipolarity was the overriding reason for European unity, for instance.<sup>10</sup>

What is noticeable about Manners' original text and the responses that followed are their respective years of publication. Each was conceived and published before the questions raised by the financial crisis of 2008, which has led to thinking not only on the US' relative decline in a "post-post-modern" world but also on the significance of China's rise. NPE has not been appraised in light of the possible consequences of multipolarity. If – and "if" should still be stressed at present – the world is heading towards multipolarity between states such as the US, China, India and Brazil, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Op.Cit.* Manners, p. 253.

<sup>6</sup> Manners, 2002, pp. 244-245.

<sup>7</sup> Rosamond, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Diez, 2005, p. 635.

<sup>9</sup> Sjursen, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Hyde-Price, 2006.

entities such as the EU what consequences will this have for NPE theory? If the “rules” of this multipolar order are set to be cast along “Westphalian” lines, does this necessarily preclude the EU from participating in such an order? If the EU is not to play by these “rules” is NPE robust enough to weather the storms that will potentially gather with the ascendancy of states with no automatic loyalty to traditional Western economic and political norms? If it is willing to play by these “rules”, will this pressure the EU into a serious rethink not just on its strategy but on the tools it will require to secure its position in a multipolar world?

This paper’s main concern is to begin, if only on a preliminary basis, and as the start of further thinking, to reappraise NPE theory in light of an assumed multipolar order. To undertake this task the paper will be careful not to step on already well-trodden ground, and it acknowledges the groundwork laid by Aggestam.<sup>11</sup> Thus it will not be overly concerned with normative comparisons between the EU and the US, for example. If one is allowed to slightly stretch Kant’s maxim, one could say that this paper seeks to self-consciously move away from theory to practice. In its over-arching aim, this work may be conceived of as an investigation of NPE theory in light of the age-old problem of ideas versus the material world. Nevertheless, while the analysis assumes that material forces will be important it is not necessary to exclude the normative or ethical realms. Part one of the essay focuses on sketching out the assumed future multipolar world. The paper then divides into two further parts each looking at the consequences a multipolar order holds in store for NPE theory: part two focuses on the material and economic considerations that might be heightened by multipolarity; and, part three looks at NPE theory from the dialectic of reality/utopia plus questions of the EU’s ontological status as a result of multipolarity.

### **A MUDDLED MULTIPOLARITY**

In a very technical sense multipolarity is the existence of three or more states with roughly the same degree of power. How this power is precisely measured, and what type of power one is talking about, is both a timeless question but also an extremely relevant one. According to Edward Hallett Carr (1892-1982) in *The Twenty Years’ Crisis* (1939), power is an admixture of military power, economic power and power over opinion and that all three are held in suspension never to be separated. Where power over opinion was concerned Carr believed that propaganda, rhetoric and ideals were essential components of any foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau (1904-1980) took this view a step further by proclaiming that foreign policy is the struggle for the minds of men, and that any conquest of these minds would be a more complete victory that could be provided for by any military conquest.<sup>13</sup> On this view, power in any future multipolar world would have to be conceived in these more complex terms and not simply in the language of military force.

Accordingly, while the US will remain the global superpower in military terms for the foreseeable future, it is worth bearing in mind the growing consensus in that country and the world – especially in light of the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan – that force is in many regards a blunt instrument. Unlike its 19<sup>th</sup> century antecedents, the Congress (1814-1856) and Concert (1890-1914) systems, if a multipolar order does come into fruition it will be defined not simply in terms of military force. This is not to say that force will not still be relevant - think of the expansion of China’s navy and disputes regarding spheres of influence in the China Seas -, but that it will exist side-by-side with economic and moral/psychological considerations. In this regard, if NPE theory and the whole constructivist school are

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<sup>11</sup> Aggestam, 2009, pp. 25-36.

<sup>12</sup> Carr, 1939, pp. 169-185.

<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau, 1978, p. 64, p. 341

to be credited with any sort of innovation in International Relations (IR), it must be in taking one away from limiting 'the idea of force to the superficial meaning which the word' traditionally received, namely 'the seizing of a man by the neck, bending him and forcing him to the ground'. Indeed, one now 'must think of force in the complete sense of all human and spiritual force, which includes the wisdom of the intellect no less than the strength of the arm, foresight and prudence no less than daring and boldness, gentleness no less than severity'.<sup>14</sup>

Seen in this light it is perhaps prudent to speak of a sort of "selective multipolarity": i) a *unipolarity of military power* – the US will remain the unipolar power for some time, although states such as China are in the ascendancy. Here one must acknowledge the continued stability proffered by nuclear weapons; ii) a *multipolarity of economic power* – the continued supremacy of Western-style capitalism (e.g. toxic assets, casino banking, financial hypertrophy) has been called into question, and at best it will be augmented to suit the present period or completely overhauled by other economic giants such as China. The full impact of China's economic development and its populous, well-educated, middle-class and outward looking society also remains to be seen. Additionally, here economic interdependence still exerts pressure on states to cooperate when conditions permit as do bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO); and, iii) a *multipolarity of moral prestige* – the continued moral leadership of the West in the international system will increasingly be called into question by states traditionally conceived of as the subjected. In line with this assumption it may be reasonably suggested that the future order will be characterised as a "tripod with a limp", as it were, but while military power will still rest with the hegemon it will be no less important in sustaining the other two forms of power as they continue their process of 'global devolution'.

Multipolarity is not necessarily seen in a negative light by all. For Deutsch and Singer, for example, multipolarity was seen as a means of forcing the major players into greater cooperation.<sup>15</sup> The argument here being that with the absence of large power discrepancies between states there would be more reason for these same states to define their respective interests in common. Others, such as Rosecrance, saw any future multipolar moment as opening a window of opportunity where states would finally give up the fight to accrue more power, be satisfied with their position and enter into more meaningful international governance.<sup>16</sup> Some European states, namely France and Russia, have also long called for a multipolar order on the assumption that such an order would be fairer, or at least be more accommodating of their interests. This view reflects the deep-seated dissatisfaction of such states with US hegemony, gaining forcefulness in light of the recent financial crisis. As President Sarkozy recently stated in light of the debate on monetary and financial governance, 'we must then consider the suitability of an international monetary system dominated by a single currency in a now multipolar world'.<sup>17</sup> Multipolarity is thus seen as a process of redress for perceived injustices as well as a mere process of global economic transition.

For others, mainly from the US itself, multipolarity could be seen as a means to positively humble US power. This is the conviction that the US' position and prestige in the world could paradoxically become strengthened with greater prudence in foreign affairs. These thoughts were encapsulated in the writings of George Kennan (1904-2005). Concerned that the US needed to focus on domestic problems under the mantra "we are strong internationally if we are strong domestically", Kennan believed that the US should take any opportunity after the

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<sup>14</sup> Croce, 1946, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Deutsch & Singer, 1964.

<sup>16</sup> Rosecrance, 1966.

<sup>17</sup> Sarkozy, 2010.

Cold War to remove itself from the limelight and to play a more meaningful role. This was not an argument for American isolationism, quite the contrary, for Kennan acknowledged that it was precisely because private interests so dominated US foreign policy considerations that autarkic arguments – those rejecting free trade, for example - would be highly unlikely. For Kennan, this humbling conversely implied that there would be a real means of ‘restraining [the US] from those flights into political and verbal posturing’ he believed many of his compatriots far too easily inclined to.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the argument that would follow might have implied that had there been a multipolar balance the US may have thought twice before a second military intervention in Iraq in 2003.

But there are two major reasons why many do not look forward to such an order emerging. The first group of those in opposition are afflicted by a sort of “nostalgia syndrome”, whereupon all they hold dear under unquestioned US global leadership is slowly being eroded to a standard pitch. In short, this opposition group do not want unfettered US dominance to end. It is argued that without US hegemony liberal democracy – free market capitalism, free trade, democracy, rule of law and human rights – will come under fire. ‘The world is changing. New powers are emerging’, Tony Blair recently wrote, ‘but this does not diminish the need for that American ideal’ enshrined in the values of freedom, democracy and rule of law. The US, he added, ‘reaffirms it, renews it, gives it added relevance’.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the fact that a former British Prime Minister can become so enamoured with ideals he never quite defines, points to the resoluteness with which this group believes that the whole edifice of Western norms and values are directly pegged to US power and how without it one is led to believe that the world would be a much darker place.

The second group in opposition view multipolarity with trepidation because they fear it signals a return to the Balance of Power politics of old. Harking back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the argument runs that greater equality between a number of powers will lead to disagreement over the terms of the *status quo*, which will then lead to these same states seeking either to maintain the balance between these powers for its own sake or to overcome the system by seeking to dominate it. Such a balance, it is argued, would be given to suspicion and sovereignty defined in absolute terms which tends to lead to the greater threat of economic protectionism. No rule of law or compromise here, just narrowly defined national interests. As Kupchan states, the ‘end of America’s unipolar moment and the return to multipolarity thus threaten to trigger structural sources of competition that may well override other sources of peace’.<sup>20</sup> The scarcity and prices of natural resources, the use of currency depreciation to boost competitiveness, and states having to revert to hostile trade measures in order to ease domestic pressures such as unemployment, are just a few of the potentially envisaged problems.

### IN MEMORY OF MATERIALISM

But what will be the hallmarks of any future multipolar order? Accurate prediction is of course out of reach but it may be worth elaborating on two reasonable assumptions, beginning here with the consequences of multipolarity on the EU’s material well-being. This is the argument that material considerations may, in certain circumstances, take preference over norms such as human rights or the rule of law. This is not to assume that where there is no economic prosperity there can be little room for such norms – the argument may reasonably be asserted that these two norms in particular are necessary to economic development -, but it is to assert that factors such as employment and the supply of resources will vie for the attention of the EU, member states, business and labour in important ways.

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<sup>18</sup> Kennan, 1993, p. 203.

<sup>19</sup> Time Magazine, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Kupchan, 1998, p. 42.

Numerous contemporary examples already attest to this assumption. Thus, for example, when the former British Prime Minister declared back in 2006 that he would 'not apologise for lobbying for the British defence industry' in countries such as Saudi Arabia he was clearly not thinking in moralist terms: the economic rationale trumped that of the EU's norms.<sup>21</sup> The British Ministry of Defence have in the past also claimed that they 'will not constrain UK companies from expanding into new markets, *except where national security clearly requires otherwise*' [author's italics] - *human rights* does not appear.<sup>22</sup>

However much such actions are to be expected, the financial crisis and its impact on employment imply that materialistic concerns will perhaps come to mean more for the EU. The example of Europe's overwhelming dependence on rare earth minerals such as lithium from states thought to play an important role in the coming multipolar order is insightful in this regard. According to the European Commission, the EU is 'completely dependent on imports, with China accounting for 97% of world production in 2009' in rare earths with applications such as mobile phones and hospital equipment.<sup>23</sup> Given the fact that 64.9% of the EU's exports in manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment – not to mention the jobs – are reliant on rare earth inputs, the EU is confronted with a serious economic and strategic concern.<sup>24</sup> China's recent decision to progressively lower exports of rare earths to global markets has thus raised important questions of the EU. Germany is of major importance in this regard given its position as one of the world's largest exporters of high-tech goods. Germany's economy depends on Chinese rare earths, and the economic strength of Germany is of great importance to the EU. Where China's own strategy is concerned, export tariffs on rare earth exports raise global prices but keep domestic levels at a favourable rate for Chinese firms to produce goods and to encourage foreign firms to relocate to China.

Such strategies are likely to become increasingly important in a multipolar world, especially with greater demand from emerging economies and increased hedging by international financial markets. But what possible strategy could the EU use to assuage the situation and protect its economic interests and those of its member states? While it is true that the EU could invest more in technology and research in order to boost recycling and efficient use of rare earths, this takes both time and money. Supplies may also be diversified and rare earths can be stockpiled, but these minerals are called "rare" for good reason and global competition for them – mainly from the US and Japan – also represents a constraint on the EU. Furthermore, the EU's regulatory powers are difficult when applied to rare earths given that such materials are not traded on stock markets but between firms and states in a fairly opaque manner. In practical terms, the EU has so far raised the issue with both the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and the WTO, but the latter's response has been that the answer lies in reigniting the Doha Round of global trade negotiations.

Does normative power help the EU here? The EU has insisted on developing a "raw materials diplomacy" which would be geared towards promoting 'human rights, good governance, conflict-resolution, non-proliferation and regional stability'.<sup>25</sup> This is visibly the normative approach but arguably only effective in the EU's relations with smaller states or where it has significant leverage. One needs to ask what currency such "diplomacy" would have with China, especially if the emphasis is placed on human rights issues. Furthermore, the strength of this normative approach is being questioned by firms and businesses in Europe (does the EU's

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<sup>21</sup> Financial Times, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> MoD UK, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, 2011, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Eurostat, 2010, p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, 2011, p. 11.

“normative engine” stretch to firms?). When the issue of China’s export restrictions on rare earths erupted in late 2010, for example, it was a representative of ThyssenKrupp Steel Europe who was quoted as saying ‘we do not have time to discuss endlessly what to do, we have to act now’.<sup>26</sup> A spokesman for a Brussels-based business federation agreed with this statement similarly stating ‘we cannot accept restrictions on exports, but two years down the line, the European Commission has still done nothing [...] we need to show we are serious [...] we need both carrot and stick’.<sup>27</sup>

The problem here, as Marx and Engels have pointed-out, is the uncomfortable relationship between the world of ideas and that of material. As they were keen to illustrate, ‘the phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process [...] morality, religion, metaphysics’, and of course for our purposes international politics, ‘no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking’.<sup>28</sup> On this view, the material element of political life and not ideas are central to understanding the world. Rejected in one fell swoop therefore is the very notion that ideas and norms are ‘the sole determining, active force, which controls and determines’ the practice of states.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, norms will here serve merely as a legitimising charade for economic and political interests with the strong seeking to ‘represent its interest in turn as the general interest’.<sup>30</sup> Now, even if Manners was quick to point-out that the EU does not promote its norms simply for material gain – sometimes even pursuing human rights knowing full well that it endangers economic gain – one must acknowledge the impact of social and economic conditions on ideas.

This is not to say that norms are intrinsically linked to material wealth, but economic prosperity is in some sense a precondition to them. The above example of rare earths shows not only the likely strategic considerations of the coming multipolar order, but also the pertinence of material well-being to the sustenance of whole societies. This of course raises the long-established criticism of the constructivist school of IR theory’s reluctance to engage in the material importance of the world. While the constructivist school has performed a valuable role in theoretical terms by challenging one to think about the origin and development of concepts and the importance of ideology, it has progressed little in building in material considerations in its analysis. This in turn raises the importance of analytically differentiating between the existence of norms and structural constraints: it is likely that NPE theory can assist in explaining changing international norms over the longer-term, but it does little to alter the fundamental economic requirements of any society. If NPE theory could go as far as to suggest credible alternatives to rare earth consumption on the strength of norms alone it would be a useful tool indeed.

The above analysis should not call for outright concern or pessimism. Indeed, if the EU’s Normative Power really lies in its means of governance rather than in its proclaimed ends then a more optimistic picture might emerge.<sup>31</sup> But the question is really about the policy “response time” of normative power, for it is geared towards longer-term change than short-term crises. However the economic and strategic considerations illustrated above, amplified by future multipolarity, will require a different response effected more in line with necessity than norms. Member state governments and firms, given their increased relevance in the architecture of the Union, are just as likely to respond to the employment needs of their societies and

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<sup>26</sup> Reuters, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> EUbusiness, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Marx & Engels, 1938, pp. 14-15.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Nicolaidis & Howse, 2002, p. 771.

business interests respectively than they are to the construction of a new post-Westphalian global order. Put another way, will every component part of the EU (EU institutions, governments, business and citizenry) be willing to make economic and strategic sacrifices in the current normative order in order to give life to a newer form? If in a multipolar world the component parts of the EU do not consistently adhere to strategies befitting the construction of such a new normative order then surely the concept itself folds?

### LOSING FACE WITH FORTUNA

The second other reasonable assumption to result from multipolarity, albeit from more lofty heights, even if of continued relevance to the field of IR, is the further schism between reality and utopia. This is the idea that theory does not always match reality and that historical progress in a sense can outpace the theoretical and explanatory tools IR scholars have at their disposal. This phenomenon is of course not just a contemporary problem. Thinkers such as Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) not only struggled with this dialectic, but they also lived in challenging times akin to those posed by multipolarity.

Machiavelli is perhaps the first thinker to develop thoughts on norms. His writings in *The Discourses* (1531), for example, show that he would have agreed with the NPE school of thought that as political communities – cities in his case – ‘have had diverse origins’ so they will inevitably have ‘diverse laws and institutions’ which condition *how* they act politically.<sup>32</sup> Machiavelli also notes without any irony that ‘good examples proceed from good education, good education from good laws, and good laws from those very tumults which many so inconsiderately condemn’.<sup>33</sup> In one neat sentence does Machiavelli therefore accurately depict the very *raison d’être* of the EU. Going further Machiavelli also informs us that an *authentic* ‘humane and kindly act sometimes makes a much greater impression than an act of ferocity or violence’.<sup>34</sup> For all the fanfare of Machiavelli’s later harshness in *The Prince* (1532) therefore one sees a moral space opening wherefore good acts and solid principles of governance (*virtu*) can make some impact on the *status quo*. Living in an age that saw Charles VIII of France put asunder the Italian city-state system (1494) and the cultural renaissance which had accompanied the economic prosperity of states such as Florence, a change to the *status quo* brought about by French – “barbarian” – occupation, was precisely Machiavelli’s chief objective.

The one obstacle that presented itself before Machiavelli however was *fortuna*. That is, the notion that events in the system at large pressured political communities into courses of action they hitherto would not contemplate: this is, as Skinner elucidates, the argument that ‘the times are more powerful than our brains’.<sup>35</sup> Machiavelli’s fear, one he realised at the hands of the French, was that *virtu* could so ‘easily be ruined before the new order has been brought to completion’.<sup>36</sup> This did not mean that Machiavelli thought *virtu* was automatically lost in such instances, on the contrary, he believed that ‘if fortune changes, sometimes raising them, sometimes casting them down, they do not change, but remain ever resolute, so resolute in mind and conduct through life that it is easy for anyone to see that fortune holds no sway over them’.<sup>37</sup> Machiavelli’s counsel in this situation was that one had to adapt oneself to the times, that one’s *virtu* could be reformed by the prevailing international changes and this was not necessarily such a negative course to follow. That said, he does confess to the difficulties of persuading societies that ‘having got on well by adopting a certain line of conduct, it is impossible to persuade men that

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<sup>32</sup> Machiavelli, 1970, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 461.

<sup>35</sup> Skinner, 1992, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> Machiavelli, 1970, p. 106.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 488.

they can get on well by acting otherwise'.<sup>38</sup> From Machiavelli's analysis, therefore, one takes the lesson that understanding the EU's *virtu* is not enough without an appreciation of *fortuna*, that *fortuna* may not necessarily damage a community's norms, and that, should one's normative basis need altering in light of *fortuna*, this need not signal defeat.

Beset by old age and illness and ruffled by the constant censorship of his philosophical works under Friedrich Wilhelm II's overzealous *Religionsedict* (1788), which he found exceedingly illiberal in contrast to the seeming progresses of the French Revolution (1789), Kant also spent his later years forging a new – enlightened – normative basis with which to surpass the universalist intentions of Bonaparte's empire. It is in Kant's motivation to create a workable alternative to Napoleon's schemes in his treatise *Perpetual Peace* (1795), without entirely dispensing with Hobbes' view of man and states, that one reads 'if a powerful and enlightened people should form a republic [...] this would serve as a centre of federal union for other states wishing to join, and thus secure conditions of freedom among the states [...] the federation would extend further and further'.<sup>39</sup> Of course, quite what Kant meant by "federation" is contested and how far he saw this envisaged paradise extending is beyond the scope of the present analysis, but Kant's use of the word "powerful" is significant here if anything because it implies that enlightenment is only one half of the ledger for peace.

Thus, while at the same time calling for perpetual peace Kant recognises that what is actually normal is for states 'to be so pitted against one another, that the one may check the destructive activity of the other or neutralise its effect'.<sup>40</sup> In this regard, Kant believes that "bad" states can also embody normative power to some degree as they 'serve as a warning by exemplifying the great evils which a nation draws down on itself through its own lawlessness'.<sup>41</sup> Not even the notion that Kant's Categorical Imperative should dictate the actions of states – based on the assumption that states and individuals are the same morally – is enough to draw Kant away from the constraints of reality. As Kant himself remarks, 'perhaps no recognised and respected duty has ever been carried out by anyone without some selfishness or interference from other motives; perhaps on-one will ever succeed in doing so, however hard he tries'.<sup>42</sup> Kant then turns the screw tighter by lamenting that 'historical experience has not proved the success of our ethical doctrines'.<sup>43</sup> Kant thus theorises of normative power but always within the rational confines of the present system, and he does not go completely beyond it as NPE theory augurs.

But the issue is not just simply of reality outpacing or outstripping NPE's theoretical basis, for the issue of *being* in a confused international landscape such as multipolarity is equally as important. Indeed, it can be reasonably claimed that NPE theory only emerged in the first place to deal not only with the EU's understanding of *self* but also *being* in the world more generally. As Knutsen usefully illustrates, NPE theory is part of a larger set of

'metaphors that help us make sense out of a period of postmodern turbulence. Territorial states are unlikely to wither away overnight. But their natures are bound to change. And their interactions will produce new institutions and structures [...] old visions and ideas may be turned and twisted until they produce new perspectives, unexpected visions, novel concepts, appropriate terms, innovative syntheses and other tools of theory-building which help us capture the rough outlines of post-modern international relations'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 431-431.

<sup>39</sup> Kant, 1915, pp. 134-135.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> Kant in Reiss, 1991, p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>44</sup> Knutsen, 1997, p. 286.

In other words, NPE theory assists with the EU's longstanding "existential crisis" not just in how it sees its own position in the world but indeed the nature of the world itself. Multipolarity may well entail that the task of re-defining *being* and *self* could occur as reality itself changes. Thus far the EU has proceeded along mainly Humean lines on the premise that simply because one can be *perceived* this constitutes the closest approximation to reality. But predicating *being* on abstract formulations of reality – or of *being* for *being's* sake – is not born in practice. *Being* is in a sense reactive and a process of constant questioning of the *self*. It is for this reason that Ringmar believes the world has always to some degree been 'characterised by intense rhetorical battles fought between different groups each advocating their own interpretation of the world', where 'traditional power-holders will try to reaffirm, or reinterpret, the old narratives which have kept them in power'.<sup>45</sup>

But *being* and *self* is to a degree linked to the practical world of action. Even Manners seems to suggest that NPE theory constitutes rather more than just a descriptive tool: indeed, NPE is supposed to serve some practical end. However, if multipolarity is set to bring about theoretical confusion, thus blurring the EU's understanding of reality and *self*, does this not amount to a continuation of the same "existential crisis" described above? According to Morgenthau those entities that are marked by an 'ideology of anti-power politics' are more likely to find themselves in such a crisis.<sup>46</sup> When a state or society 'are unable to protect themselves with their own strength against the power drives of others [...] normative systems try to supplement power politics with their own rules of conduct'.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, Morgenthau did believe that any state or society 'must prove that the status quo it seeks to overthrow deserves to be overthrown and the moral legitimacy which in the minds of many attaches to things as they are ought to yield to a higher principle of morality', but it is in defining this higher principle that has, and will increasingly, become unclear.<sup>48</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The consequences of a multipolar world on the EU's normative power will remain unclear for some time, but it may pay policymakers and academics alike to afford greater attention to the way changes in the international system impact on the EU. The EU can sometimes be likened to a Petri-dish in that it represents a unique experiment, but any prudent analysis will resist euro-centric analysis long enough to acknowledge that the international system as a whole can raise new and unforeseen pressures. In this sense the EU should be reduced to a mere culture for analytical purposes. Any likely changes to the EU's normative power must therefore always be seen as a response to and reaction against the international system. Just as conditions in the international system during and after the Second World War gave rise to an environment for innovative politics in Europe so too might multipolarity – NPE was in a sense born of the Westphalian world. One must equally recognise that the very concepts NPE theory is supposed to react against are also susceptible to change in a multipolar world. Notions such as "sovereignty" and "power" are complex enough at present, but how will the rise of non-Western states such as China alter these notions. And if conceptual changes are not brought about what signal does this send the EU? Would it perhaps entail becoming a "normal" rather than a "normative" power? Would it be such a bad thing if it did?

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<sup>45</sup> Ringmar, 1996, p. 456.

<sup>46</sup> Morgenthau, 1978, p. 99, ft 1.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97.

Perhaps the inherent fear of becoming too “Westphalian” reveals the EU’s lack of willingness and incapability of surviving in a world where US protection is not so readily extended. If the future multipolar order entails the more mercurial exercise of power, does this entail that the EU will become deeper involved in the power struggle even though it is unlikely to see it for what it really is.<sup>49</sup> Distribution of natural resources across the world - endowed to large continental states gaining in stature - forces the EU to take stock of NPE’s potential as a foreign policy tool. Norms on their own may never be enough in the face of a crisis. This is not even to speak of the fact that as other states rise in the world other normative systems and values may compete with NPE, but, given that such states would see less stock in overthrowing Westphalian “rules”, in more effective terms rooted to state power. In this sense, a multipolar world may force the EU to root its normative aspirations in the framework of a more traditional state-like milieu, where, as Manners indeed recognises, the EU’s civilian, normative and military spheres are brought into harmony.<sup>50</sup>

On this basis another important question of NPE arises in the wake of a multipolar order: who precisely is normative power for? Thus far, ‘one can never be quite certain whether the disguise is meant only for the eye of the external observer or whether, as may be usually the case, it deceives the self’.<sup>51</sup> It is true that the EU has generally seen the normative power project in global terms, and for good moral and theoretical reasons. One will also have to wait to see if the EU’s normative power, with its emphasis on rule of law and compromise, can even frame the mechanics of any future multipolar order. This would be a major success. However, if a regular threat of unemployment and a loss in competitiveness emerges as a consequence of multipolarity this may give clarity to the EU’s purpose in the world as equally as it may call its legitimacy into question. The EU’s *being* in a multipolar world is likely to be increasingly tempered with public and business interests as opposed to just elite or academic theorising: a reconfiguring of the “normative engine” as it were. Whether the EU will simply ‘tick, and want people to call ticking – virtue’, ‘sit in [its] swamp, and speak thus from among the bulrushes’ biting no one and going ‘out of the way of him who would bite’, or become a slave to hostage, crying how its playthings have been swept into the deep and passively waiting for some wave to ‘bring them new playthings, and spread before them new speckled shells’ remains to be seen.<sup>52</sup> Multipolarity may reveal the answer sooner rather than later.

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<sup>49</sup> *Op.Cit.*, Morgenthau, p. 92.

<sup>50</sup> Manners and Whitman, 2003, p. 392.

<sup>51</sup> Niebuhr, 2005, p. 63.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, 1997, pp. 92-93.

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