

KRISTIAN LAU NIELSEN

Soft power Europe:
the lesser contradiction
in terms and practices



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- III. Nielsen, Kristian L., Eiki Berg & Gulnara Roll, 'Undiscovered avenues? Estonian civil society organisations as agents of Europeanisation', *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13, no 3 (2009): 248–264.
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Author's Contribution

- I. The author of the current dissertation was the sole author of the article, and was solely responsible for all aspects of it.
- II. The author of the current dissertation was the lead author of the article. His contribution was the theoretical framing, as well as contributing to the part on the step change from the ENP to the EaP. He wrote the parts on Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova and most of the concluding discussion. Maili Vilson wrote most of the 'step change' part, the parts on Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and contributed to the concluding discussion.
- III. The author of the current dissertation was the lead author of the article. His contribution to the article was in developing and structuring the arguments, contributing evenly to both the theoretical and empirical parts. Eiki Berg contributed to both the theoretical and empirical part, while Gulnara Roll contributed to the empirical part.
- IV. The author of the current dissertation was the lead author of the article. His contribution was in the theoretical framing, in structuring and developing the arguments and contributing to the empirical part. Heiko Pääbo contributed extensively to the empirical parts of the article.

INTRODUCTION

Master Sun said:

Ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle, but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting...

The skilful strategist defeats the enemy without doing battle, captures the city without laying siege, overthrows the enemy state without protracted war.

He strives for supremacy under heaven intact, his men and weapons still keen, his gain complete. This is the method of strategic attack.¹

Ever since the European Union (EU) first emerged as an international actor, much academic writing has been devoted to defining the nature of the beast and sticking labels on it, especially with a view to somehow mark it out as different from other actors. Most prominent have been the notions of the EU being a ‘civilian power’ or, since the early 2000s, being a ‘normative power’. Both concepts were crafted specifically with the EU in mind, and the latter in particular, has become one of the dominant discourses on the EU’s external relations. However both concepts are, in the view of many, too uncritically tied to official EU rhetoric of being a ‘force for good’ in the world.² Moreover, in spite of the copious amounts of scholarly literature generated, both concepts have been severely criticised for their theoretical and empirical shortcomings. Indeed, much literature on EU foreign policy reproduces increasingly stale debates as to whether or not the EU conforms to these ideal types of foreign policy actorness, and have, to some extent, turned significant parts of the study of EU foreign policy away mainstream IR – as none of these approaches have found widespread usage outside of EU studies.

In contrast, more mainstream concepts like hard and soft power, have been somewhat neglected. Until recently, the latter has mainly been analysed for its discursive (and often muddled) use by EU officials. In its original formulation, however, it is sadly underused for understanding the roles and impacts of norms and values in EU foreign policy, and is too often dismissed as an ideological and – even worse, in the eyes of some – American concept. Yet this mid-range theoretical concept – developed over the past 25 years by Joseph Nye – has generated far more interest outside the EU studies circles, capturing the role of norms and values as power assets alongside, and in an interplay with, the more traditional diplomatic, economic and military resources of statecraft, i.e. hard power. Soft power has become the modern byword for winning wars without

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. and ed. John Minford (London: Penguin Books, 2003): 14, 16.

² European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: The European Security Strategy* (Brussels, 2003): 13.

doing battle, for winning hearts and minds, for gaining influence and effecting change without expending blood and treasure. The concept is certainly not uncontested (as I will soon elaborate), but it has become a major feature of both scholarly and policy-oriented debate. Not so, however, in the EU studies community, where other concepts and abstract debates over ideal types of ‘actor-ness’ have dominated.

As the title of the dissertation suggests, I still consider it mistaken to speak of the EU as ‘being a soft power’. Yet as the dissertation will demonstrate, discussing the EU’s soft power presents lesser ontological problems than employing either of the above-mentioned ideal types. In this dissertation, I therefore examine the role of soft power in certain aspects of the European Union’s foreign policy, and the extent to which the EU seeks to incorporate it in its foreign policy strategies. In doing so, I am demonstrating its relevance and validity as part of EU studies, as a tool for analysing what kinds of intangible power of attraction the EU actually possesses. For the EU is of course a major force in the world, and the study of what kind of power and influence the EU possesses is important. Yet only by engaging with the issue of what the EU does, why it does it, by what means, and with what level of success it does it, can one gain greater understanding. The four peer-reviewed articles submitted as part of the dissertation all hold to the core understandings and assumptions of soft power research – that it is something you have (or do not have), not something you are; something that can be acquired and harnessed – or lost – yet can be frustratingly difficult to use strategically. Together the four articles show that the soft power concept provides a more theoretically and empirically sound, although not entirely unproblematic, conceptual lens than either civilian or normative power. At the same time, I also address the interplay between hard and soft power in the EU’s foreign policy, and how an imbalance between these holds the EU back from realising its full potential.

In this introductory chapter, I begin with a few general observations on EU actor-ness and the means and ends of its foreign policy. I then discuss the two major conceptualisations of the EU as a foreign policy actor – civilian power and normative power – with which the soft power concept is most often conflated, as well as the main theoretical and empirical shortcomings of both concepts. Then I elaborate the soft power concept and make clear the differences with the civilian power and normative power concepts. Following from this, I present why the soft power concept provides a better basis for understanding the role of norms, values and reputation in shaping perceptions of the EU and in making it a more effective actor, as well as outline the many avenues for further research the concept opens up. I will then briefly introduce the four articles that make up the bulk of this dissertation, outline their contribution and discuss subsequent developments with reference to their conclusions. This dissertation concludes that abandoning the futile debates in the self-referencing ghettos of normative and civilian power, and instead engaging with mainstream IR concepts, open up far more interesting avenues for research on EU foreign policy.

The EU in foreign policy

In 1982, Hedley Bull famously declared that, ““Europe” is not an actor in international affairs, and does not seem likely to become one”.³ As time has gone by, that has become a minority view, as the EU has increasingly established itself as “an entity that plays an identifiable role in international relations”.⁴ To those obsessed with state-centrism, the EU will always be a ‘hard case’, and structural realism in particular – being reductionist and narrowly concerned with hard security and competition in the ‘high politics’ fields – has difficulties accounting for the ever-closer cooperation between the member states, where anarchy and security competition ought to make it impossible.⁵ Having been sceptical of integration through the entire history of the EU, some structural realists even suggested that it would disintegrate, along with NATO, at the end of the Cold War.⁶ Structural realist accounts of EU foreign policy describe it as a vehicle for collective regional hegemony – the “repository for shared second-order concerns” – used to steer the transition processes of the Central and Eastern European states after the collapse of communism, thus securing the EU’s own security.⁷

Yet, much as the EU defies easy categorisation, not least because of its institutional dissimilarity with states, few can deny the emergence of the EU as an important entity. Broaden the perspective to the various international economic areas, the ‘low politics’, in which the EU has some degree of authority, and one sees a different picture. One might even argue that structural realists confuse actorhood with effectiveness. Even at its worst – especially in crisis management – the problem with the EU is rarely that it *does not act* at all, but that it is almost invariably *reacting* to events, and that it almost always comes up with too little too late. Ultimately, the fact that others recognise the EU as an interlocutor that wields influence is a more significant aspect than its precise nature.⁸ Thus, if others are willing to treat the EU like an actor, it is one. Bretherton and Vogler offer a more flexible model of actorness; partly by side-stepping the question of what *precisely* the EU is, instead focusing on the three variables of opportunity, presence and capability.⁹ On this basis, they argue, one can proceed to examining what the EU does, how it seeks to shape its external

³ Hedley Bull, ‘Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 21, no.2 (1982): 151.

⁴ Graham Evans & Jeffrey Newnham, *Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin Books, 1998): 5.

⁵ Adrian Hyde-Price, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Realist Critique’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, no 2 (2006): 219.

⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War’, *International Security*, 15, no 1 (1990): 5–56.

⁷ Hyde-Price, ‘Realist critique of NPE’, 226–227.

⁸ Sabine Saurugger, *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 217.

⁹ Charlotte Bretherton & John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006): 24.

environment, the sources of its influence and with what level of success it operates.¹⁰

Christopher Hill sought to move beyond the abstract debates of actorness, and instead defined the issue as a gap between the EU's capabilities and the expectations of what roles it could perform internationally.¹¹ Hill discussed the impediments to the EU living up expectations, considering institutions and resources the primary obstacles – although arguably, he considered foreign policy effectiveness in terms of how state-like the EU can become. Karen E. Smith has also taken up this approach, of examining what the EU does rather than seeking to categorise it as an actor, by simply noting that the EU is capable of formulating foreign policy objectives and implementing them.¹² Similarly, the EU has demonstrated the ability to think strategically about the ends and means of foreign policy¹³ and to rank its various priorities in order of importance as well as conduct opportunistic trade-offs between them.¹⁴

However, it would be wrong to suggest that the EU acts as a great power and likes throwing its way around in a traditional sense. Asle Toje has put forward the counter-intuitive thesis that the EU is essentially misunderstood in this respect. Instead of looking for the traits of great power behaviour – as many are wont to do, to then subsequently throw doubt on its actorness when not finding such traits – one should recognise that the EU displays most of the characteristics of a small power.¹⁵ Thus, its preference for international law and multilateralism is typical of an actor with limited power at its disposal, as is its reluctance to engage in geopolitical power struggles.

What Hill called the capability-expectations gap, was primarily a question of actively wielding power. For the EU's economy is the largest in the world in absolute terms – its nominal GDP standing at \$18,5 trillion (app. 23% of the world total) in 2014¹⁶ – and in spite of the shrinking defence budgets and low level of force readiness, the combined military might of the members is still

¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹¹ Christopher Hill, 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31, no 3 (1993): 305–328.

¹² Karen E. Smith, *European Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008): 2–3.

¹³ Michael E. Smith, 'A Liberal Grand Strategy in a Realist World? Power, Purpose and the EU's Changing Global Role', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 18, no 2 (2011): 144–163.

¹⁴ Hubert Zimmermann, 'Realist Power Europe? The EU in the Negotiations about China's and Russia's WTO Accession', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 45, no 4 (2007): 813–832.

¹⁵ Asle Toje, 'The European Union as a Small Power, or Conceptualizing Europe's Strategic Actorness', *European Integration*, 30, no 2 (2008): 199–215; Idem, *The European Union as a Small Power: After the Post-Cold War*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Idem, 'The European Union as a Small Power', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49, no 1 (2011): 43–60.

¹⁶ International Monetary Fund, 'World Economic Outlook Database', October 2015, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2015/02/weodata/index.aspx> (last accessed 10 December 2015).

significant. The main problem has been adequate power conversion strategies – turning resources into outcomes; the usage of carrots and sticks¹⁷ – to further the EU’s will, whether by persuasion or coercion. The institutional set-up, with its many veto-players and myriad delaying mechanisms makes the EU less than nimble in most foreign policy decisions requiring swift and/or coercive action.¹⁸ As coercive action, whether by economic or military means, usually generates greater amounts of blowback, it is often difficult to arrive at a consensus on taking such decisions. Therefore, “EU foreign policies are generally less defined by what tools are most likely to meet a specific objective, and more by what means can be agreed upon”.¹⁹

Instead, the EU has tended to promote ‘milieu goals’ – that is objectives of a more general nature – where consensus is often easier to arrive at. Milieu goals can be many things – free trade, democracy, human rights, good governance, environmental protection and many more – where the direct cost-benefit calculation for the EU itself is not necessarily obvious.²⁰ Although the gains from promoting such objectives can as easily accrue to the ‘recipient’ of EU policy as to the EU itself, milieu goals must not be confused with mere altruism. In general, it is in the interest of the EU to exist in a world where democracies thrive and where the rules of international trade are observed. Similarly, the EU will become more secure, if its neighbours are stable, well-governed countries.²¹ Milieu goals may with time gradually become ‘possession goals’ – that is objectives of a specific nature, where the purpose is control or incorporation, or where the gain is quantifiable – such as has been seen in the EU’s enlargement processes – yet this is not a given.²²

Beyond the greater ease of getting to a consensus, milieu goals have the added attraction that they play to the EU’s strengths. Milieu goals are achieved over the long term, and typically require lengthy bureaucratic processes on technical issues pertinent to the broader goals; that is a style of interaction in which the EU excels. After all, Ernst Haas once compared the EU to a “...bureaucratic appendage to an intergovernmental conference in permanent session”.²³ Moreover, milieu goals are also a useful way for the EU to operationalize the ESS’s stated preference for ‘preventive engagement’, mainly by means of dialogue, support, reforms and development. “Preventive engagement can help avoid more serious problems in the future”, states the ESS,²⁴ and

¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011): 10.

¹⁸ Asle, Toje, ‘The Consensus-Expectations Gap: Explaining Europe’s Ineffective Foreign Policy’, *Security Dialogue*, 39, no 1 (2008): 121–141.

¹⁹ Ibid., 132.

²⁰ Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962): 73–6.

²¹ ESS, 8.

²² Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, 74.

²³ Quoted in Carsten Strøby Jensen, ‘Neo-functionalism’, in Michelle Cini Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (eds.), *European Union Politics*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 66.

²⁴ ESS, 11.

the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)²⁵ and Eastern Partnership (EaP)²⁶ policy frameworks have both sought to build on these notions. Generally, the EU has sought to encourage other countries to adopt its norms and values, and approximate their legislation to that of the EU. The overt means for making countries do so can be divided in ‘carrots’ – in the form of economic incentives such as development assistance, increased access to the Single Market, or financial aid to support reform processes – and, mildly, ‘sticks’, in the form of conditionality, whether positive or negative. In hard power-soft power terms, all the tools just mentioned are hard power, in that they are tangible and have clear-cut effects.

However, it is by the EU’s very adherence to such milieu goals and to the described modes of behaviour that scholars have been led to look at the EU as a unique kind of entity – most prominently the civilian and normative power ideas – and it is to those concepts we will now turn.

Civilian Power Europe

The first major concept constructed with the aim of establishing that the EU was a new form of actor was that of ‘civilian power’. François Duchêne coined the term in a slightly opaque fashion, in two much-cited articles discussing the international role of the EC during the early 1970s, a period marked both by détente in the Cold War and by the onset of the globalisation processes. Arguing that the EC was unlikely to become an integrated military actor – and questioning whether such a development was even desirable – Duchêne suggested instead that the EC should embrace its role as a civilian power, “long on economics and relatively short on armed force”, favouring rule-based economic interdependence over power politics.²⁷ By thus employing only civilian instruments, the EC could fundamentally recast international relations, ‘domesticate’ them, in much the same way as it had already done between the members of the Community. The European Community would be neatly placed, through its differentness, to act as a neutral arbiter between the superpowers, and thus help overcome the old-fashioned power competition between them. Duchêne’s original formulation of the civilian power idea was, in fact, strikingly vague, yet, as

²⁵ European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper, Brussels, 2004.

²⁶ European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership, com (2008) 823 final, Brussels, 2008.

²⁷ François Duchêne, ‘Europe’s Role in World Peace’, in Richard Mayne (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: 16 Europeans Look Ahead* (London: Chatham House, 1972), 32–47; Idem, ‘The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence’, in Max Kohnstam & Wolfgang Hager (eds.), *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign Policy Problems before the European Community* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 1–21.

some observers have argued, this was also part of the reason for its ability to inspire debate in both academic and policymaking circles.²⁸

Attractive as it was from an idealist perspective, the civilian power Europe thesis always rested on a flawed reading of history. The absence of a military dimension during the first several decades of integration was more by accident than design. The Founding Fathers did not set out to create a civilian power, or to break new ground in international politics; the Community was a functional arrangement for specific economic sectors. Nor was military power anathema in the context of European integration, or considered against 'the European spirit'. The member states, after all, did negotiate the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1952, proposing supranational control of German armed forces. The reason the EDC did not come into being was not that the idea of military power was abhorrent, but that France could not, ultimately, accept the implied loss of sovereign control of its armed forces and the loss of autonomy.²⁹ Intergovernmentalism and the states' kneejerk resistance to shared sovereignty in the high politics fields, always provided a stronger explanation than simple idealism. In subsequent decades, the Cold War provided a set of circumstances where Europe-only defence integration was hardly necessary, as NATO was the essential organisation, and the winding down of the European empires also gradually reduced the military adventurism of the member states. Once that context changed in the early 1990's, defence cooperation came back on the agenda, although it has not been much easier to make rapid integrative progress than it was in the 1950's. At most, those experiences taught lessons of modesty and incrementalism, and the ambitions since the 1990's have been for more and better cooperation. Yet, the 'militarisation' of the EU began as soon as the international context required it.

Hedley Bull in turn forcefully attacked Civilian Power Europe (CPE) as being "a contradiction in terms".³⁰ Bull located the CPE debate in the period during which Duchêne had first coined the term. From Bull's own perspective ten years later, the Cold War now deep in the refreeze, such ideas seemed misplaced at best. Clearly, interdependence had not replaced strategic concerns, nor was military power giving way to economic power. The utility of military force was not in question, the way many at the time (and today) found it fashionable to claim: "The wars [Vietnam] lost by the United Stateswere wars won by their adversaries and in no way demonstrated the impotence of military power"³¹ – a point no less relevant today as the War on Terror refuses to come to a happy conclusion. Moreover, "...the power and influence exerted by the European Community and other such civilian actors was conditional upon a

²⁸ Jan Orbie, 'Civilian Power Europe: Review of the Original and Current Debate', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 41, no 1 (2006): 123–24.

²⁹ Desmond Dinan, *Europe Recast: A History of European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2004): 57–61.

³⁰ Bull, 'Civilian Power Europe'.

³¹ *Ibid.* 150.

strategic environment provided by the military power of states, which they did not control”.³²

By this, Bull pointed out that the EC could act in its civilian capacity only because the member states were not civilian themselves, and their military power provided the setting in which the EC could be a ‘civilian power’. This point is as worthwhile today as it was then. One cannot detach EU foreign policy from overall European politics. That the EU became a ‘civilian power’ was, as noted, mainly a fluke of history. NATO became the main military organisation in the context of the Cold War, and has remained so since due to the structured cooperation it enables with Europe’s security provider, the United States. Certainly, the EU derives its capabilities from economics, and only to a lesser extent from military means. However, when have these two organisations ever worked at cross-purposes or promoted radically different solutions in competition with each other? In fact, the current crisis in Ukraine shows the interplay between the two organisations. NATO has stepped up its efforts to ensure the military and physical security of its members, while the EU has worked with civilian means to apply pressure on Russia. The division of labour is the point, not the fact that different capabilities are organised in different settings. Thus, one cannot properly evaluate the EU’s civilian actions without any regard at all to the military considerations also made elsewhere in different institutional settings.

Civilian Power Europe laboured on, however, and Hanns Maull has been one of its leading proponents. Although his early works dealt explicitly with Germany and Japan, his attempt to bring greater rigour to the concept than Duchêne did, has become the standard definition of civilian powers. Maull defined the main traits of the ideal type civilian powers to be: “...a) the acceptance of the necessity of cooperation with others in the pursuit of international objectives; b) the concentration on non-military, primarily economic, means to secure national goals, with military power left as a residual instrument serving essentially to safeguard other means of international interaction; c) a willingness to develop supranational structures to address critical issues of international management.”³³ At issue for Maull was therefore also that civilian powers would further cooperation and international law as international norms, something to which the EU made a unique contribution.³⁴ In other words, clear-cut cases of milieu goals.

As Karen Smith has pointed out, however, these traits do not necessarily preclude purposeful, interest-driven action from such civilian powers, although it implies that the preference is rather for negotiations and persuasion than for coercion. However, civilian means are one thing, *being* a civilian power quite

³² Ibid. 151.

³³ Hanns W. Maull, 1990. ‘Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers’, *Foreign Affairs*, 69(5): 91–106. Maull was examining the foreign policies of Germany and Japan, but his definition has gained favour for the EU as well.

³⁴ Hanns W. Maull, ‘Europe and the new balance of global order’, *International Affairs*, 81, no 4 (2005): 775–799.

another. It is usually difficult in international affairs to pinpoint precisely the point where positive inducement ends and coercion begins, even when staying within so-called civilian means.³⁵ Moreover, it is difficult to use the ideal type of actorhood, in as much as virtually all states conduct themselves mostly by civilian means, and the ideal type lacks a real opposite. For what state or actor can truly be said to consistently prefer military or militarised means to diplomacy in all its dealings with the world?³⁶ All states, whether tending towards the more or less hawkish, are to be found somewhere along a continuum, as all engage in diplomacy and none are entirely free of military power.³⁷

As the EU has gradually enhanced its military capacity, the natural question is therefore whether it is still to be considered a civilian power at all. As Whitman argues, the development since the launch of the ESDP in 1999 has on the one hand made the concept threadbare. However, the European Security Strategy also reads as an at least partial affirmation of some of the civilian objectives and traits that CPE scholars have previously highlighted.³⁸ Ian Manns, however, have posited that the very militarization of the EU, however limited, will necessarily lead to “a Brussels-based military-industrial simplex” (sic) gradually abandoning civilian means for military ones, and thus also to change its objectives.³⁹ Others argue that as long the military component remains only for self-defence, or for ends considered civilian in nature – such as peacekeeping, state-building, humanitarian interventions or “civilizing international relations” – the CPE concept still holds.⁴⁰ Such definitions stretch the concepts to breaking point. Are the anti-piracy operations off Somalia’s coast, in themselves military, thus to be considered ‘civilian’ because they safeguard EU economic activity and provide a global public good? Whatever else may fall under that category then? As Smith, with deliberate facetiousness suggests, NATO, based as it is on collective defence, has as much claim to the civilian power mantle as the EU does, not least since the latter’s military capabilities are explicitly developed for out-of-area operations.⁴¹ The more the concept is stretched for the sake of accommodating the EU, the less sense it makes as an analytical tool. Moreover, it does not sit well with the relatively frequent utterances by EU leaders that the union must in time go all the way, and develop its

³⁵ Karen E. Smith, ‘Beyond the Civilian Power Europe Debate’, *Politique Européenne*, 17, no 1 (2005), 68.

³⁶ For the ‘military powers’ as opposed to the civilian kind, Smith suggests North Korea or Hitler’s Germany.

³⁷ Smith, ‘Beyond Civilian Power Europe’, 69.

³⁸ Richard Whitman, ‘Road Map for a Route March? (De-)civilianizing through the EU’s Security Strategy’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11, no 1 (2006): 1–15.

³⁹ Manns, Ian, ‘Normative power Europe reconsidered: Beyond the crossroads’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, no 2 (2006): 182–199.

⁴⁰ Stelios Stavridis, ‘Why the ‘Militarising’ of the European Union is Strengthening the Concept of a ‘Civilian Power Europe’’, Robert Schuman Centre Working Paper no. 2001/17. Florence, European University Institute. 2001; Maull, ‘Europe and global order’, 781.

⁴¹ Smith, ‘Beyond Civilian Power Europe’, 73.

own armed forces. Thus, Jean-Claude Juncker stated in early 2015, that an EU army is essential for EU credibility.⁴² Smith concluded – with regret, and certainly in vain – that the old Civilian Power Europe concept/ideal type was dead. Instead of continuing to pore over what kind of power the EU *is*, the academic community should move on to analysing what the EU *does* and should be doing as an international actor.⁴³

Normative Power Europe

Ian Manners unleashed Normative Power Europe (NPE) on the world in 2002.⁴⁴ Instead of discussing the EU as being either a civilian or a military power, Manners invited scholars to think beyond such traditional categories. The new understanding was of the EU as being a shaper of norms and of conceptions of ‘normal’ in international politics. The EU derived this power by its hybrid political form, its history, and its ‘constitution’. These have combined to make the Union an exponent of a number of core norms, the most important of which are peace, democracy and human rights. Moreover, the EU’s attachment to these norms and its very difference from pre-existing political forms, predisposes it to act in a normative way that is in keeping with and for the furtherance of its norms.⁴⁵ The example he provides is the EU’s pursuit of the global abolition of capital punishment. Manners lists a number of diffusion mechanisms by which the EU spreads these norms to other actors with which it comes into contact, such as conditionality clauses, financial inducements and persuasion. However, “...the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says but what it is”.⁴⁶

Since Manners’ original formulation of the concept, it has been further refined by both him and others, and has been the subject of significant criticism. It has been argued that NPE is first and foremost a question of Ian Manners seeking to create an identity for the EU, and that the concept implies normative superiority.⁴⁷ Identities can, naturally, be positively defined, and at first sight so is Manners’s. Moreover, Manners insists that his concept is not merely Western, since in its pursuit of the abolition of capital punishment, the EU rubs against *both* the US and China.⁴⁸ What Diez points to is that if an identity is crafted around being ‘normative’, i.e. ‘good’, then ‘othering’ processes can quickly

⁴² Beat Balzli, Christoph B. Schiltz & André Tauber, ‘Halten Sie Sich an Frau Merkel. Ich mache das!’, *Die Welt*, 8 March 2015.

⁴³ Smith, ‘Beyond Civilian Power Europe’, 81.

⁴⁴ Ian Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40, no 2 (2002): 235–258.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁴⁷ Thomas Diez, ‘Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering ‘Normative Power Europe’’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33, no 3 (2005): 613–636.

⁴⁸ Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe’, 253.

lead to negative judgements regarding others' normativity.⁴⁹ Manners has countered that the EU promotes universal values, draws its normative basis from the ideas of cosmopolitanism, and that the concept is indeed ideational, prescribing what the EU should strive towards being.⁵⁰ Yet to argue that the EU's goals are cosmopolitan virtually amounts to claiming that EU norms themselves are universal. As Tocci warns, one must beware of "...[sliding] into an imperialistic imposition of what is subjectively considered 'good' on the grounds of its presumed universality. Doing so is not only problematic in and of itself, but would also lead us back to a definition of normativity which is inextricably tied to power and power-based relations."⁵¹

What Manners and Diez both agree on, is that normative power only applies to the EU, and not to other major powers/actors, especially not the United States. Normative power may co-exist with other forms, but it will inevitably diminish the more in contact it comes with other forms of power, especially military.⁵² Manners, already in his original 2002 piece, rejected the view that normative power required military power behind it, or implied a willingness to use military force for normative purposes.⁵³ He has since further expressed his concern that the 'militarisation' of the EU in the wake of the ESS has been entirely negative, will undermine the EU's unique normative being, lead it towards colonial-style behaviour and lead it away from the pursuit of 'sustainable peace'. "...the militarization of the EU risks making it more like bigger and better great powers, whilst leaving the problems of interstate politics precisely where they were", "...like Arendt's 'lost treasures', the normative power of the EU will be lost".⁵⁴ Effectively, the EU, as it were, would be committing the terrible mistake of abandoning the very identity Ian Manners had tried to create for it.

In one sense, the claims behind Normative Power Europe are of course quite true. The EU wields significant normative power, in that it defines 'normal' in much of its extended neighbourhood. The Copenhagen Criteria lays down benchmarks for potential candidates; the treaty base and the *acquis communautaire* also provides legal templates that states cannot deviate far from when seeking closer relationships with the EU; and members commit themselves to sets of norms and values that they cannot disregard without facing either legal action at the ECJ or ostracism among other member states. It is in the further

⁴⁹ Diez, 'Constructing the Self', 628.

⁵⁰ Manners, Ian, 'The European Union as a Normative Power: A Response to Thomas Diez', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 35, no 1 (2006): 167–180.

⁵¹ Tocci, Nathalie, 'Profiling Normative Foreign Policy: The European Union and its Global Partners', in Tocci, Nathalie (ed.), *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners*, Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2008: 4–5.

⁵² Thomas Diez & Ian Manners, 'Reflecting on normative power Europe, in Berenskoetter, Felix & Williams, M. J. (Eds.) *Power in World Politics*, New York: Routledge, 2007: 173–188.

⁵³ Manners, 'Normative Power Europe', 242.

⁵⁴ Manners, 'NPE reconsidered', 194–195.

claim that the EU *is* a normative power that the problems start piling up; for can an actor truly be pre-disposed to act normatively? Most of the evidence for the NPE thesis comes from pointing out Europe's rhetorical commitment to various human rights regimes,⁵⁵ or to the way it imposes its norms on weaker states through conditionality clauses. However, the normative power proponents have two big blind spot. One is that norm imposition through conditionality, however right and justified the imposer thinks it, remains coercive and thus hardly in keeping with the EU's normative being. Another is in situations where the EU's normative agenda is not so easy to implement or where the EU has to compromise between priorities. This is where most critics have levelled their charges and the evidence gets sketchy.

Helene Sjursen complains that the entire concept is too closely tied to the EU self-perception and to official rhetoric, and that only by distancing itself from that will it gain analytical value.⁵⁶ Moreover, she argues, the idea of the EU being a 'force for good' lacks criteria by which to measure it, and seems to run into empirical problems when looking at the EU's actual foreign policy performance. Adrian Hyde-Price argues that the concept is reductionist and evidence of the authors' positive disposition towards the EU. The EU's international actorhood is better understood as an attempt at collective regional hegemony, of milieu shaping around a set of shared second-order concerns (such as democracy promotion and opposition to capital punishment).⁵⁷

The same question as with Civilian Power arises in this context too: Can one make a complete distinction between what the EU is and stands for and what the member states are on their own? Few would claim that the European states are all normatively predisposed, and only act in accordance with deeply held norms and values. Indeed, it often seems more like the member states deliberately deposit their normative concerns in the EU's foreign policy, and then feel liberated to act in a purely interest-oriented fashion each on their own, occasionally to the detriment of the collective EU interest. Energy relationships with Russia,⁵⁸ or most countries' trade relations with China, and simultaneous silence on human rights,⁵⁹ are cases in point.⁶⁰ The complete distinction between the EU and its member states, which the NPE idea implies, makes little sense; one

⁵⁵ E.g. Manners, Ian, 'The normative ethics of the European Union', *International Affairs*, 84, no 1 (2008): 65–80.; Martijn Moos, 'Conflicted Normative Power Europe: The European Union and Sexual Minority Rights', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 9, no 1 (2013): 78–93.

⁵⁶ Helene Sjursen, 'What kind of power?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, no 2 (2006): 169–181; Idem, 'The EU as a 'normative' power: How can this be?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, no 2 (2006): 235–251.

⁵⁷ Hyde-Price, 'Realist critique of NPE'.

⁵⁸ Steve Wood, 'The European Union: A Normative of Normal Power?', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 14, no 2 (2009): 113–128.

⁵⁹ Giuseppe Balducci, 'The Limits of Normative Power Europe in Asia: The Case of Human Rights in China', *East Asia*, 27 (2010): 35–55.

⁶⁰ These were, of course, also the two examples brought up by Hyde-Price in his seminal critique of the NPE concept. Hyde-Price, 'Realist critique of NPE', 223.

must almost imagine a perp hauled before the court on charges of GBH, only to argue that he is a uniquely peaceful man, but for his body and brain.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, much debate focuses on whether the EU has indeed acted as a normative power. How can a foreign policy identity that does not only have a normative element, but which is defined first and foremost by the normative element, be operationalized? Manners and Diez argue that a true normative power will not just act in pursuit of normative goals, but will do so only by normative means, that is the means must themselves conform to the core norms.⁶¹ Tocci further adds that a policy must also have a normative impact if an actor is to be understood as 'normative'. Therefore, being a normative power depends on "...what an actor wants (its goals), how it acts (the deployment of its policy means) and what it achieves (its impact)."⁶² As Forsberg comments, when the bar is set as high as Manners, Diez and Tocci do, Normative Power Europe is more an ideal type than a descriptive concept of the EU.⁶³

Kristi Raik highlighted the tension between normative goals and normative means, and the difficulty of employing the ideal types for actual analysis of events. Her study of EU responses to peaceful mass protests in neighbouring countries – seemingly an ideal case for a normative power – showed that the EU most often favoured political stability rather than normative change. Either that or it abandoned normative means in order to pursue normative aims. Alternatively, it simply failed to act altogether.⁶⁴ It is also remarkable, that in the Middle East and North Africa the EU was, prior to the Arab Spring in 2011, largely content to do deals with whoever was in charge and could guarantee stability (and control illegal migration). Thus, rather than being a force for democratic change, the EU was supporting repressive regimes with the most awful human rights records.⁶⁵ One might further question whether the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, with its negative effect on Third World economic development, is evidence of an actor committed to a universal norm of social solidarity. The list goes on, but as Woods concludes, the main determining factor in whether the EU did or did not pursue normative-oriented policies was whether it was the stronger party to a negotiation, and that the issue threatened no vital interests, i.e. was of the second-order sort.⁶⁶ Alternatively, one could argue that the EU has been at its most normative when kicking down open doors, or when it has exercised hegemonic power, e.g. in the accession negotiations. Ultimately, as Jolyon Howorth has argued,

⁶¹ Diez & Manners, 'Reflecting on NPE': 177.

⁶² Tocci, 'Profiling Normative Foreign Policy', 4–5.

⁶³ Tuomas Forsberg, 'Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49, no 6 (2011): 1183–1204.

⁶⁴ Kristi Raik, 'The EU and Mass Protests in the Neighbourhood: Models of Normative (In)action', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 17, no 4 (2012): 553–576.

⁶⁵ Rosemary Hollis, 'No friend of democratization: Europe's role in the genesis of the 'Arab Spring'', *International Affairs*, 88, no 1 (2012), 81–94.

⁶⁶ Wood, 'Normative or Normal Power', 128.

“The debate over ‘Normative Power Europe’ is largely an irrelevance. *Of course* the EU will continue to pursue norms-based effective multilateralism; *of course* it will continue to promote a world in which human rights, human security, international institutions and international law will replace the laws of the jungle. But if those objectives are actually to be achieved, the EU must have the entire range of policy instruments, including a significant measure of hard power.”⁶⁷

That does not mean, however, that the role of norms and values as sources of power are to be lightly dismissed. But whereas both civilian and normative power are ideational concepts, ideal types, the soft power concept, to which we shall now turn, theorises and describes a specific form of power states or actors may or may not enjoy and how.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Jolyon Howorth, ‘The EU as a Global Actor: Grand Strategy for a Global Grand Bargain’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48, no 3 (2010), 465–466.

⁶⁸ Diez & Manners, ‘Reflecting on NPE’ try to dismiss soft power on this basis, contrasting it with normative power which is ‘theoretical’.

SOFT POWER

What is soft power?

The whole debate on soft power centres heavily on Joseph Nye, who originally coined the term, defining it as “the ability to get others to want the same as you want, without coercion or payment,” and doing so based on such commodities as cultural appeal, political values and legitimate policies.⁶⁹ Moreover, through Nye’s engagement with the arguments of his critics, he has continued defining, and refining, the concept over the past 25 years. Nye’s basic idea when talking soft power was not new as such – nor has Nye claimed that it is very original – but simply tries to elaborate on the notion that ‘image’, reputation, culture can in themselves be important power assets. Less kindly, some have argued that it is merely to package foreign policy in business school ideas of branding and marketing.⁷⁰

Nye first used the term in his 1990 book, *Bound to Lead*, in which he argued that contrary to the then-widespread notions of America’s relative decline in the world after the Cold War, its abundance of cultural and ideological appeal – what Nye then termed ‘soft power’ – through its, would go a long way towards offsetting such decline.⁷¹ It was not until 2002 that Nye returned to the topic of soft power. By then the US had enjoyed a decade as the world’s only superpower, and Nye’s message was now one of caution, lest America acted arrogantly and unilaterally in the wake of the 9–11 terrorist attacks.⁷² That same warning was delivered with even greater urgency in 2004, when Nye fully developed the soft power concept in an eponymous book, and elaborated on its interplay with more traditional ‘hard power’ (i.e. military, economic and other coercive/inducing means).⁷³ The definitions and arguments presented in that book formed the basis for much subsequent debate and critique, which Nye answered in several articles. In 2011, he then elaborated on the concept once more, this time as part of a broader discussion of the changing nature of power in contemporary international relations.⁷⁴

Power, to Nye, “...is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants”,⁷⁵ which obviously follows closely from Robert Dahl’s classic definition of relational power as: “A has power over B to the

⁶⁹ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x.

⁷⁰ Christopher Layne, ‘The unbearable lightness of soft power’, in Parmar, Inderjeet & Michael Cox (eds.) *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy: Theoretical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 53.

⁷¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

⁷² Nye, Joseph S. Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower can’t go it Alone*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁷³ Nye, *Soft Power*.

⁷⁴ Nye, *The Future of Power*.

⁷⁵ Nye, *Soft Power*, 2.

extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.”⁷⁶ Yet, he develops this point further, by discussing both the means for framing agendas, thereby restricting the choices of one’s interlocutors and removing the need for actively pushing them, and, most significantly, the ways in which A can change B’s underlying preferences.⁷⁷ For the latter point, Nye relies partly on Steven Lukes’ ‘third dimension of power’, which holds that influencing the preferences and choices of others does not necessarily entail conflictual relations, as the ‘first’ and ‘second’ dimensions of power seem to suggest.⁷⁸

Nye divides power into ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power. The former encompasses all the traditional, tangible elements of power – military might, economic wealth etc. – and the myriad policies associated with their usage. These are, in other words, the ‘carrots and sticks’ by which international politics is conducted. Soft power consists of the rather more elusive concept, attractiveness. Sources of soft power are cultural appeal, insofar as a culture conveys a positive image of a country and a society; political norms and values, when seen as desirable and applied without hypocrisy; and policies, if they are seen as embodying a society’s values, and if the larger goals pursued are seen as legitimate and desirable.⁷⁹ If harnessed properly, such intangibles as the power of attraction, and the ability to exert influence on the preferences of others can become a distinct form of power. If “hard power is push, soft power is pull”.⁸⁰ The desirability of getting one’s way without having to resort to coercions or material inducements is self-evident, and if an interlocutor shares one’s basic objectives, the cost of getting them to act in accordance with your wishes will be much less than otherwise. Thus, having soft power can significantly reduce an actor’s costs in both carrots and sticks.⁸¹

Given Joseph Nye’s stature as one of the preeminent ‘liberal’ scholars of international relations, the temptation has been for many to dismiss soft power as mere idealism, or to take issue with its intangibility. As Christopher Layne has argued,

“Soft power as a concept is beguiling, but as a theoretical construct it is not robust. Indeed, on close examination, soft power is just a pithy term for multilateralism, institutionalism, the democratic peace theory and the role of norms in international politics.”⁸²

Structural realists, in their quest for theoretical parsimony, tend towards strictly metric definitions of power and capabilities, and thence its systemic distribu-

⁷⁶ Robert A. Dahl, ‘The Concept of Power’, *Behavioral Science*, 2, no 3 (1957), 202–203

⁷⁷ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 12–13.

⁷⁸ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, (London: Macmillan, 1974), 23–24. Nye, however, does take a more actor-centered approach than Lukes. Nye, *The Future of Power*, n27, 241.

⁷⁹ Nye, *Soft Power*, 11.

⁸⁰ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 20.

⁸¹ Nye, *Soft Power*, 11.

⁸² Layne, ‘The unbearable lightness’, 71.

tion. Kenneth Waltz stated that “[States’] rank depends on how they score on *all* of the following items: size of the population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence”.⁸³ John Mearsheimer divides power even more simplistically into military power and latent power, which is the ability to generate military power.⁸⁴ Such a ‘lump concept of power’ has largely remained *de rigueur* among contemporary structural realists.⁸⁵ The classical realists, in contrast, did not have such a limited view of the world. In addition to military and economic power, E.H. Carr wrote at length about the ‘power over opinion’, outlining the way modern communication technologies had added new dimensions to international politics.⁸⁶ Hans Morgenthau stressed the importance of national morale in the face of others, and of the importance of a state’s values and reputation in the eyes of the world:

“...the struggle for power on the international scene is today ...in a specific sense a struggle for the minds of men. The power of a nation, then, depends not only upon the skill of its diplomacy and the strength of its armed forces but also upon the attractiveness for other nations of its political philosophy, political institutions, and political policies.”⁸⁷

What Joseph Nye has done with the soft power concept, is essentially to theorise and expand on such dynamics as the great realist Morgenthau described. The soft power concept is not idealism; it is not about altruism either, but outlines that there are intangible ways of furthering interests. It merely demonstrates an additional facet of power, which one ignores at one’s own peril. Nye does not deny the importance of the metric calculation, or of the quantifiable elements of power, but argues that it is overly simplistic and may lead to wrong results when applied uncritically and without consideration of specifics of a situation.⁸⁸ The more accurate measure of power is not the simple counting of tanks, missiles and GDP, but the assessment of what actually influences behaviour in a given context.⁸⁹

⁸³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 131.

⁸⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2001), 55–83.

⁸⁵ Brian C. Schmidt, ‘Realist conceptions of power’, in Parmar & Cox, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*, 61.

⁸⁶ Edward Hallet Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, (New York: Perennial, 1939/2001), 132–145. Ian Manners also references Carr, but in order to argue that normative is a different form than what Carr described. Manners, ‘NPE’, 239–240.

⁸⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, (with Kenneth W. Thompson & W. David Clinton), *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7th ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948/2005), 162.

⁸⁸ Joseph S. Nye Jr., ‘Responding to my critics and concluding thoughts’, in Parmar & Cox, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*, 218.

⁸⁹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 10.

In spite of how hard and soft power are often spoken of in public discourse, the two are not, in fact, alternatives to, or in opposition to one another.⁹⁰ Power resources are not fungible the way money is.⁹¹ Instead of either-or, hard or soft, power resources and behaviours are better viewed as a spectrum, ranging from the unambiguously hard military means to the soft co-opting.⁹² It is therefore not accurate to say, as some do, that Nye argues against any utility of military force.⁹³ In fact, he has explicitly rejected that particular notion several times.⁹⁴ At most, Nye questions the *relative* utility of military power for imposing one's own preferences, as military force has become very costly in the 21st century – and particularly difficult to sustain for democracies. It remains essential, however, for maintaining security, for defensive purposes, and as a last resort for maintaining the credibility of one's policies. Rather, his criticism is of an exclusive focus on military power, to the neglect of other forms.⁹⁵ Strategies that effectively combine hard and soft power – *smart power* – will always be the most likely to secure national interests. Relying only on hard power will eventually become too expensive for any actor, especially if their values and policies repel, as they will face strong opposition. Lyndon B. Johnson is supposed to have said that “when you’ve got them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow”.⁹⁶ Yet, this assumes that one can keep one's grip and keep squeezing, in other words maintain coercion. History is full of examples of states who failed to permanently impose their will by brute force alone, or whose empires collapsed the moment their coercive power dissipated. Actors with only soft power, on the other hand, may win hearts but hardly minds, as unbalanced power resources will most likely leave an actor weak and ineffective, and potential partners and allies exposed to threats with little hope of support. Effective usage of resources depends on developing appropriate power conversion strategies.⁹⁷ The key to that, in turn, is “...the intuitive diagnostic skills that helps policymakers align tactics with objectives to creative smart strategies”.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ The subtitle of Nye's 2004 book, “the means to success in world politics”, may have contributed to this particular misunderstanding among those who did not read beyond the book's cover.

⁹¹ Nye, *Soft Power*, 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹³ E.g. Schmidt, ‘Realist conceptions’, 61–62.

⁹⁴ As Nye himself points out: “As a former assistant secretary of defense, I would be the last to deny the continuing importance of military power”, Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, xv. In *Soft Power* Nye makes the same point in rather similar terms.

⁹⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 31–32.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Robert Cooper, ‘The Goals of Diplomacy, Hard Power and Soft Power’, in David Held & Mathias Koenig-Archibugi (eds.), *American Power in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 168.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁸ Joseph S. Nye, ‘Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power’, *Foreign Affairs*, 88, no 4 (2009), 161.

The accrument and wielding of soft power

Soft power works through the "... cooptive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes".⁹⁹ Attraction, which is the basis for soft power, can work in two ways: The passive/indirect form, in which A attracts B without actively having done much. This is what is meant by being 'the city on the hill'. It is also what happens when others simply observe what an actor is doing, and decide to align. The active approach is when A actively seeks to create the attraction.¹⁰⁰ The key point is creating an enabling environment, in which A's actions will be positively received; nothing tangible changes for A, but the context in B can be changed.

Changing enabling environments is part of the pursuit of milieu goals. When promoting democracy, human rights, free market economics etc., "...target of soft power *is* broad public opinion and cultural attitudes".¹⁰¹ Soft power, of course, is not culturally neutral. What is attractive in one place may not be in another. Yet, culture need not necessarily present an insurmountable obstacle either.¹⁰² It is the kind of resource that can over time, if properly harnessed, help change the underlying perceptions among an actor's interlocutors of their own preferences. One means for building soft power, the enabling environment, the attraction in the eyes of others, is through public diplomacy. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which targets governments, public diplomacy targets foreign societies and organisations directly.¹⁰³ Public diplomacy is the spread of information. It also serves as an outlet for broadcasting one's values to the world, for explaining one's policies and actions and for creating positive narratives.¹⁰⁴ Yet, as with most soft power assets, public and informational has to be developed and sustained over time.¹⁰⁵

An essential feature of public diplomacy is therefore the credibility of the narrative and the trustworthiness of the sender. As E.H. Carr notes, before discussing the increasing importance of the varied uses of propaganda in the modern world, "the art of persuasion has always been a necessary part of the equipment of a political leader".¹⁰⁶ Yet Carr also acknowledged that the tools of blatant propaganda could easily become self-defeating, that power over opinion could never be absolute, and that to be successful it would always be "... lim-

⁹⁹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 20–21.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 94–95.

¹⁰¹ Nye, 'Responding to my critics', 219.

¹⁰² Nye, *The Future of Power*, 107.

¹⁰³ Jan Melissen, 'The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice', in Jan Melissen (ed.) *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (London: Palgrave, 2005), 3–27.

¹⁰⁴ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 104–106.

¹⁰⁵ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power', *The Annals of the American Academy*, 616 (2008), 105.

¹⁰⁶ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 132.

ited by the necessity of some measure of conformity with fact.”¹⁰⁷ Nye also stresses, that propaganda in its crudest forms rarely translates into soft power, precisely because it is a packaged glimpse of an actor’s culture, and often transparently so. In such cases, the underlying values on display do not inspire or attract others in the same way that values freely expressed may do.¹⁰⁸

The problem of soft power, as opposed to hard power, is that it is more dependent on the recipient than on the sender.¹⁰⁹ The messages and narratives transmitted through public diplomacy cannot always be accurately targeted. The concept of soft power does not assume that recipients, or targets, of soft power are merely passive. It is, after all, an actor-centred theory. Rather, their choices and actions may be influenced by their changing perceptions of preferences. However, perceptions of attraction are not necessarily always accurate; “the sender knows what she says, but not always what the target hears”.¹¹⁰ Moreover, it is not always easy to know who precisely is listening and being influenced by what they hear.¹¹¹

Partly this is because many of the instruments and resources of public diplomacy and soft power do not actually reside with governments, but with the multiple non-state actors that make up societies. In the modern age, where the number of information outlets are virtually infinite, governments cannot control information. Moreover, governments are far from always the most trusted entities around. NGOs and civil society organisations can have greater credibility and be less controversial in some cases than governments, for instance in democracy and human rights promotion.¹¹² Although these organisations will often pursue their own agendas, they can nevertheless be useful partners in public diplomacy. They also have access to the kinds of communication networks that governments sometimes find it difficult to establish. NGOs can thus help create the enabling environment, yet at the same time, they also depend on it. The role of governments is then to help facilitate cross-border contacts.¹¹³

In a critical assessment of the interplay between hard and soft power, the eminent strategy scholar Colin Gray complains that soft power not only defies metric quantification, but that – partly for the same reason – it “...does not lend itself to careful...calibration”, nor strategic deployment.¹¹⁴ He is basically right on both counts. Soft power cannot be ‘wielded’ or ‘exercised’ the way most hard power can; it is essentially a passive form of power. For that reason it is somewhat misleading when in public debate, the recommendation is made to

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 144.

¹⁰⁸ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 89, 104.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 83.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 107.

¹¹¹ This point is also made in the first two articles of this dissertation with specific reference to the EU’s external policies and the unintended impact of its soft power.

¹¹² Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy’, 105. The third article of this dissertation explores this dynamic.

¹¹³ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 107–8.

¹¹⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 30.

‘use’ soft power. While public diplomacy and information strategies, as well as clear engagement with those one seeks to influence, are clearly essential elements, the basis for applying soft power as a tool is fairly limited and dependent on several contextual preconditions being met.¹¹⁵ Thus, a number of qualifications are needed, in order to understand the mechanisms of soft power, and the role of values and policies in building it.

Soft power as a concept does not presuppose any specific way of being; it is something you have, not something you are. It is not a prescription for an ideal type of actorhood; attraction, after all, is in the eyes of the beholder. On a superficial reading, one may find several overlaps with Ian Manners’ normative power, discussed above, in that both concepts are about norms, values and oozing and diffusing. But soft power is not about ‘being’, it is one end of a spectrum, whereas normative power is completely aside from all other kinds of power. Moreover, the soft power concept does not hold the same kind of value judgement, nor the claim to universality, that is inherent in normative power. Whereas the latter is perceived by its proponents as always being positive, soft power is far from always ‘good’ in any objective, absolute or normative sense. After all, as Nye notes, “Hitler, Stalin and Mao all possessed a great deal of soft power in the eyes of their acolytes, but that did not make it good.”¹¹⁶ Soft power is not harnessed for the good of the world, nor is it meant to deliver universal goods. It is for the sake of furthering one’s interests that one will be mindful of maintaining one’s soft power. It is a descriptive concept, not a normative one.

As noted above, the policies a state or actor pursues can be one source of soft power, if others see these as legitimate and free of hypocrisy. Such policies are not derived from being, as opposed to saying and doing (to quote Manners).¹¹⁷ Quite the contrary, benevolent policies are willed actions; they are a function of saying and doing, and may incidentally help build soft power as far as they shape others’ perceptions of one’s being. However, to accrue soft power through one’s policies requires a certain consistency, both between rhetoric and action, and over time. As already noted, soft power defies strategic deployment. It is important for long-term milieu goals, but offers little for securing short-term goals.¹¹⁸ It is excellent to possess soft power when having to ask for favours from others, but only hard power can be actively used to secure tangible outcomes when cooperation is not easily forthcoming. Hence, the warning against the frequent mistake in public discourse on soft power, of drawing the inference that it replaces hard power.¹¹⁹ The bigger question is how such hard power resources are used. Or, indeed, if one can speak of a ‘soft power usage of hard power’?

¹¹⁵ Matthew Kroenig, Melissa McAdam & Steven Weber, ‘Taking Soft Power Seriously’, *Comparative Strategy*, 29, no 5 (2010), 417.

¹¹⁶ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 81.

¹¹⁷ Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe’, 252.

¹¹⁸ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 99.

¹¹⁹ Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power*, 29.

If the usage of hard power is in a responsible manner, which others see as legitimate, it can enhance an actor's reputation. Therefore, even full-scale application of military force can, in some circumstances – e.g. collective defence or humanitarian interventions – become a significant source of soft power. So while Manners argues that military power detracts from normative power if the two exist alongside one another,¹²⁰ there is no inherent contradiction between using all forms of hard power while building soft power. As Robert Cooper puts it: “Soft power is the velvet glove, but behind it there is always the iron fist”.¹²¹ In most cases, multilateralism would seem the preferred approach when using hard power, as it can bestow legitimacy and build one's reputation for openness to others' views. However, as Nye argues, “[many critics] confuse the actions of a state seeking to achieve desired outcomes with the resources used to produce those outcomes... this means that many different types of resources can contribute to soft power, not that the term ‘soft power’ can mean any type of behavior.”¹²² Even so, the occasional departure from such a *modus operandi* will typically be more easily forgiven, if one generally behaves according to the pattern.¹²³

Having the hard power resources needed to pursue one's goals still remains essential, however. Soft power may change underlying preferences, but in itself does not lead to many results. No matter how much soft power a state possesses, it can still find itself without either power or influence if others fear that the short-term cost of aligning with it are too high. Conversely, no state can in the long run operate its foreign policy on hard power alone, as the cost of such strategies will eventually become prohibitive. Therefore, the balance between different hard power capabilities is crucial for maintaining credibility – and indirectly for building soft power.¹²⁴ For it is dependent on an actor being seen as standing up for its values and doing so fairly consistently. As Nye comments, soft power is “...hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to re-establish”.¹²⁵

Studying soft power

The soft power concept has been criticised in numerous ways. Some say it is not theoretically robust.¹²⁶ Others that its utility is limited due to the unclear premise of ‘attraction’ on which it is based.¹²⁷ Others criticise the fluidity of the concept. In the words of Leslie Gelb: “Soft power now seems to mean almost

¹²⁰ Manners, ‘NPE reconsidered’.

¹²¹ Cooper, ‘Goals of Diplomacy’, 179.

¹²² Nye, ‘Responding to my critics’, 219.

¹²³ Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy’, 102.

¹²⁴ Gray, 38.

¹²⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 83.

¹²⁶ Layne, ‘The unbearable lightness’.

¹²⁷ Todd Hall, ‘An Unclear Attraction: A Critical Examination of Soft Power as an Analytical Category’, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3 (2010): 189–211.

everything”.¹²⁸ These criticisms do hit a sore spot in that soft power research is inherently difficult, and does tend to be a bit, well, ‘soft’. As it is contextual, and difficult to quantify, it falls foul of structural realism’s parsimony. As stated above, soft power rarely has direct causal effect on behaviours in the short term. It is difficult to ever properly produce ‘the smoking gun’, the unambiguous proof that soft power alone created an outcome or was decisive among several variables in a complex situation. In fact, it is most often easier to identify the situations where soft power has not influenced decisions or been trumped by other considerations.¹²⁹ Soft power’s impact can only be inferred over the medium to long term and must take context into account.¹³⁰

Kearns argues that the very context-dependence of the soft power concept is a major weakness:

“Soft power seems highly dependent on a context of interdependent, rule-governed interactions between states that share fundamental goals and values. Soft power is most likely to be relevant in the presence of a hegemonic power, as it provides the ideational basis for the hegemon’s perceived legitimacy as the leader of a given system”.¹³¹

Soft power certainly has the most obvious impact in such situations, as the European Union’s regional role (to which we shall shortly turn) attests. However, the critique implicitly assumes that states are the only actors, and that they are entirely unitary and free of influence from below. Yet, the values held by governments may not always be in accord with public opinion or popular aspirations, as many an overthrown autocrat can attest to. Soft power may also have an impact in situations of power competition between great powers, as seen during the Cold War. Thus, Colin Gray may be going a bit too far when arguing that “...the contexts wherein [soft power] would be most useful are precisely those where it is least likely to work its magic successfully”.¹³² The soft power of small states, however, and the ways it can be effective, is an underexplored topic, though Israel’s appeal and success in influencing American foreign policy shows it can work.

However, if inference is the main way of showing soft power at work, how can one go about it? One parameter can be the penetration of one country’s culture into the markets of another. One measurement, proposed by Nye, is the number of foreign students seeking to study in a country. Another is the amount of tourism a country attracts. A third measure is the consumption of a country’s cultural products. Culture, whether high or popular, is, after all, one of the core elements of soft power, which transmits an image of country and its society.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Nye, ‘Get Smart’, 160.

¹²⁹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 97,

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³¹ David W. Kearns, Jr., ‘The hard truth about soft power’, *Journal of Political Power*, 4, no 1 (2011), 81.

¹³² Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power*, 53.

The precise impact of cultural attraction, though, is sometimes presented through anecdotal evidence.

Although the evidence is mostly qualitative, one attempt at quantifying soft power is the IfG-*Monocle Soft Power Index*, which was published annually between 2011 and 2013.¹³³ The indexes take Nye's three categories as starting points, but then subdivides them further. Under five main headings – government, culture, diplomacy, education, and business/innovation – scores are given on fifty separate parameters, so as to get a measure the appeal and effectiveness of the states in question. The indexes therefore do not just try measure the potential for soft power, but also for channeling it. The acknowledged weakness of the indexes is the subjective element; somebody chooses categories and defines what will elicit a 'high grade'. Interestingly, Japan was the only non-Western country to ever make the top10 in this index, suggesting a certain Western bias. None of the non-democratic great powers like Russia or China made the top20. Moreover, the index applies a lumping method, where different sources and channels of soft power are simply added together. It leaves context out of the equation, namely that various aspects of what makes up soft power may be perceived differently in various places.

Public opinion research can be another indicator of soft power at play, although exact causation can be difficult to discern until after the event.¹³⁴ Critics counter that public opinion can be brittle: "The effects of soft power can be observed through polling one day but vanish the next".¹³⁵ Firstly, this assumes that states and governments are completely unconstrained by public opinion. Secondly, it ignores that soft power is mainly observable in retrospect. Polling data over extended periods, moreover, can reveal significant trends. Pew Research Center has collected a sizeable series of data in its 'Global Attitudes and Trends' database on the relative perception of different powers in the eyes of others, and of their relative standing in the world.¹³⁶ Thirdly, it reflects a tendency to view international affairs through specific instances of conflict, while ignoring broader patterns of cooperation. In this case, it is interesting to note how the US's reputation took a knock in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq invasion, especially in European eyes. Much of that, however, was bound up with the person of the then-president. A few years later and with a new president in place, the country's reputation was once more soaring.¹³⁷ That the US accomplished this turnaround in its international standing with only minor changes in actual policy surely testifies to a deeper attraction and soft power at play.

¹³³ Jonathan McClory, *The New Persuaders III*, (2013), available at: <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/our-work/better-policy-making/foreign-policy-soft-power-and-national-security> (last accessed 10 December 2015).

¹³⁴ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 95.

¹³⁵ Layne, 'The unbearable lightness', 57.

¹³⁶ Pew Global research, <http://www.pewglobal.org/> (last accessed 10 December 2015).

¹³⁷ Kristian L. Nielsen, 'Continued drift, but without the acrimony: US-European relations under Barack Obama', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11, no 1 (2013): 83–108.

Another way of discerning soft power at play is, naturally, through observed behaviour, which cannot be explained through the most parsimonious models reducing states' interests to mere calculations of the systemic distribution of material power. It can involve studying societal preference formation rather than black boxing the state. This is in tune with the so-called *Innenpolitik*, or liberal approaches to studying foreign policy.¹³⁸ In that sense soft power becomes a supporting hypothesis – as befits a mid-range theory – for the emergence of the preferences states act upon – which historical evidence can confirm or disconfirm as it becomes available. Since states' foreign policies are determined by the attitudes of individuals or of social groups as well as the perceptions of the configuration of other states' preferences, soft power can be a contributing factor in the shaping of policy.¹³⁹ How others react to a country, be it decision-makers or the general public, is a way of discerning soft power. This even more so in circumstances where the preferences of individuals or societal groups matter and can be decisive.¹⁴⁰ Neoclassical realism also seeks to escape the black-boxing of the state by adding intervening variables to the analysis of foreign policy, placing particular emphasis on historical evidence (process tracing) and intra-state politics, including perceptions and ideologies.¹⁴¹ In this approach soft power can be an intervening variable. States may be influenced by the soft power of others, but may also seek to incorporate it into their own grand strategies in accordance with their perceptions of what means are appropriate in a given context.¹⁴²

Evaluation of the effectiveness of soft power must therefore always be viewed in the context of a state's overall policy strategy. Yet, the line between self-interest and the influence of soft power can be a fine one; states may expect future gains from a certain policy orientation and let that guide their decisions. However, states do not always act with clear material motives. Choices of who one aligns with will also be a matter of identity and of deeply held values. Soft power helps such decisions along, although, as noted, isolating its impact from other variables is not always easy.

A lesser contradiction in terms?

Unlike the civilian and normative power concepts discussed above, the concept of soft power was not created specifically with the EU in mind, leading to a certain hesitancy in the academic community about using it to examine EU

¹³⁸ For a famous statement of this approach, see Andrew Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organization*, 51, no 4 (1997): 513–553

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 518, 520–521.

¹⁴⁰ Kroenig et.al., 416.

¹⁴¹ Nicholas Kitchen, 'Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation', *Review of International Studies*, 36, no 1 (2010), 130–131.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 135.

foreign policy. Manners and Diez have tried dismissing the concept as “...located in American politics of Democrats’ soft power versus Republicans’ hard power.”¹⁴³ This is both bizarre and downright wrong, although they did get Nye’s party affiliation right. Nye himself makes very clear that one cannot just replace one kind of power with the other, which makes the dichotomy Diez and Manners set up a strawman. In fact, it is a question of ‘horses for courses’; thus, military force is indispensable in certain contexts. It was therefore always wrong to claim, as some have, that through its soft power, “...Europe has made hard power less necessary”¹⁴⁴ Nye’s real argument, that building soft power lessens costs in both ‘carrots and sticks’ surely transcends both partisan politics and the transatlantic gap. Moreover, although it is true that Nye draws most of his examples from the US’ role in the world, he devotes considerable space in his books to comparisons with other countries and their soft power potential, amply demonstrating the concept’s universal applicability, as do the IfG-Monocle soft power indexes. Yet soft power remains an underused conceptual lens in EU studies.

A few constructivists took EU officials’ discursive use of the term during Benita Ferrero-Waldner’s tenure as RELEX Commissioner (2004–2009) under examination, seeking to tease out the Commissioner’s underlying world-view.¹⁴⁵ Ferrero-Waldner tended to refer to the EU, in as much as it preferred persuasion to confrontation, as not just having, but also as being a soft power. In this Ferrero-Waldner’s understanding of the term was in fact closer to Duchêne’s and Maull’s CPE concept than to Joseph Nye’s original definition.¹⁴⁶ In articles, the Commissioner wrote of “leveraging the EU’s soft power”, while alluding to positive conditionality and economic incentives under the European Neighbourhood Policy.¹⁴⁷ Less kindly, one might conclude that to Ferrero-Waldner, EU soft power was pretty much whatever the EU did with civilian means that worked out well. Being a civilian power – if that is indeed what the EU is – can in itself be a source of soft power, and also provide s avenues for the EU to channel its soft power.¹⁴⁸ Yet the two are not the same kind of power at all, civilian power describing a way of being. Ferrero-Waldner is not alone, though, with this basic misunderstanding. During one of the televised *Spitzenkandidat* debates ahead of the 2014 European Parliament elections, Jean-Claude Juncker declared, while fielding a question on European foreign and

¹⁴³ Diez & Manners, ‘Reflecting on NPE’, 179.

¹⁴⁴ Parag Khanna, ‘The Metrosexual Superpower’, *Foreign Policy*, 143: 4 (2004): 67.

¹⁴⁵ Clara Portella, ‘Community Policies with a Security Agenda: The Worldview of Benita Ferrero-Waldner’, EU Working Paper, 2007.

¹⁴⁶ Portella even wondered out loud if Ferrero-Waldner’s rhetorical neglect of both the CPE and NPE concepts was in fact due to ignorance of these important academic debate – surely to the Commissioner’s loss. Portella, ‘Community Policies’, 7.

¹⁴⁷ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, ‘The European Neighbourhood Policy: The EU’s Newest Foreign Policy Instrument’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11, no 2 (2006), 139

¹⁴⁸ Kristian L. Nielsen, ‘EU Soft Power and the Capability-Expectations Gap’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 9, no 5 (2013):728.

security policy, that “here in Europe, we are a soft power...we have to use the tools of a soft power”.¹⁴⁹

Other scholars have discussed whether the EU’s self-presentation as reliant on soft power and persuasion was in itself enough to bridge the capability-expectations gap (the conclusion was no).¹⁵⁰ As part of his realist critique of normative power Europe, Hyde-Price mentioned soft power as one of the EU’s tools, alongside economic incentives and conditionality clauses, for exercising collective regional hegemony, but did not elaborate on the dynamics of its use or impact.¹⁵¹ The first thorough discussion of what makes EU soft power was by Christopher Hill, who concluded that the elements of soft power was generally sought integrated in EU foreign policies.¹⁵² He did also argue, however, that further investment in traditional capabilities was necessary if the EU should derive the most benefit from its soft power. That particular viewpoint is not often shared by the civilian and normative power scholars, and certainly not by Ian Manners. In fact, as Biscop and Coelmont observe, among many scholars of the Civilian and normative power debates, there is almost an assumption that traditional power exertion is simply wrong for the EU.¹⁵³

Yet EU power, hard and soft, can be studied the same way as any other state’s, and by the same tools as for states. It has interests it pursues and it marshals the resources for doing so. All of the same dynamics Nye outlined in his work on the soft power concept can be observed in the case of the EU and its external relations. The EU has various sources of soft power that it more or less consciously seeks to convert into influence. Its various strategies show it at least trying to think of how to make its soft power count in its favour. In international comparison, it is interesting to note, that four EU members ranked in the top 10 of the 2013 edition of the IfG-Monocle soft power index.¹⁵⁴ This suggests that European societies and their values seem appealing in the eyes of the outside world, although the cultural sources of soft power may mainly be located at the national levels. What the EU has created – in the shape of the well-regulated single market and the prosperity which integration has brought to the participating states – may also strengthen the EU’s image in the world. Alternatively, the near-constant crisis mode since 2010 also has the potential to diminish the EU’s reputation.

¹⁴⁹ Euronews, ‘The first debate between the Spitzenkandidaten’, Maastricht, 28 April 2014, available at, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhafcPeXes>, at 1.20.20. (last accessed 30 December 2015).

¹⁵⁰ Elsa Tulmets, ‘Can the discourse on soft power help bridge the EU’s capability-expectations gap’, *European Political Economy Review*, 2007.

¹⁵¹ Hyde-Price, ‘Realist critique of NPE’, 227.

¹⁵² Christopher Hill, ‘Cheques and Balances: The European Union’s Soft Power Strategy’, in Parmar & Cox, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*, 182–198.

¹⁵³ Sven Biscop & Jo Coelmont, *Europe, Strategy and Armed Forces: The Making of a Distinctive Power*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 6.

¹⁵⁴ McClory, *The New Persuaders III*. France, the UK and Germany were in the top 5 all three years the index was published. Sweden made the top 10 all three years, Denmark and the Netherlands did it twice and Finland once.

The official historical narrative of peaceful integration among previously warring states has also been used to paint a positive picture of the EU.¹⁵⁵ So have the successive enlargement processes, which have expanded the union to 28 members. Kearn's view that soft power is most effective in situations where a hegemonic power seeks legitimacy can of course be invoked in this context;¹⁵⁶ the EU can be considered the regional hegemon, with only Russia and Turkey competing (and the US supporting EU hegemony). Yet that does not change that EU is enormously attractive to many non-members, and that these freely choose to apply for membership. In fact, nothing could be a clearer example of EU soft power than the number of states literally queuing up to join it, willing to jump through the myriad hoops of the accession process in order to do so. Intuitively, EU openness to new applications, and willingness to embrace new members, will strengthen its soft power. Conversely, when the EU has acted in a closed or dismissive fashion, or has indulged in discourses about 'enlargement fatigue', it can damage the EU's image and soft power.

EU soft power is also present in its pursuit of milieu goals through the ENP and EaP.¹⁵⁷ The agenda for cooperation under these frameworks is very much defined by the EU – economic reform, good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc. Obviously, as with all milieu goals, these objectives combine enlightened EU self-interest with positive long-term impact for the partner states, yet they can also, at the same time, both benefit from and boost EU soft power. The soft power derived through EU single market governance has already been demonstrated in an interesting case study of energy market regulations, which has been transferred to non-EU countries.¹⁵⁸ The EU's attempts to embrace civil society in the ENP countries – especially prominent in the 2012 upgrade¹⁵⁹ – shows awareness of the same logics as Joseph Nye outlined.

Although one cannot simply take all EU rhetoric about its positive global role at face value, the EU evidently places great rhetorical emphasis on values in its foreign policies. However, rather than debate whether the EU's policies live up to a specific standard of 'normative actorness', the bigger question is what values are actually conveyed and how these are received abroad. The likelihood of these being sources of soft power must be determined through the EU's consistency in their promotion. This approach opens the question *why* the EU is often inconsistent and *how* such inconsistency affects its soft power. The

¹⁵⁵ The much-vaunted (and ridiculed) *New Narrative for Europe* (2014) was partly an expression of this approach.

¹⁵⁶ Kearn, 'The hard truth', 81.

¹⁵⁷ Kristian L. Nielsen & Maili Vilson, 'The EU's Eastern Partnership: Soft Power Strategy or Policy Failure?', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 19, no 2 (2014): 243–262. This article forms the second part of the dissertation.

¹⁵⁸ Andreas Goldthau & Nick Sitter, 'Soft Power with a Hard Edge: EU Policy Tools and Energy Security', *European Political Economy Review* (2015): 1–25.

¹⁵⁹ European Commission, Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy, JOIN(2012) 14 final, Brussels, 2012, 5

related question is whether the EU shows sufficient cultural sensitivity in its value promotion, or whether it is perceived as preachy and off-putting. The answer is in the eye of the beholder, and can be analysed as such. The emphasis on social tolerance and promotion human rights inside the EU is, to some external actors at least, a source soft power. The EU's insistence on Ukrainian gay rights legislation as a precondition for visa free travel is one small example of principled behaviour.¹⁶⁰ That Islamic extremists bemoan Europe's 'degenerate lack of morality', or Vladimir Putin's Russia has labelled the EU 'Gayropa', only proves the general point that what constitutes attraction in one cultural context may not do so in others. How the EU's relative silence on much greater human rights violations elsewhere, not least in China or the Middle East, affects its reputation and effectiveness are the kinds of questions that can better be analysed once embracing the soft power concept and moving beyond the stale debates over what kind of (normative or not) power the EU is.

¹⁶⁰ Andrew Rettman, 'Gay rights vote undermines EU-Ukraine visa deal', *EUObserver.com*, 6 November 2015; The law eventually passed the Rada Verkhovna just over a week later, paving the way for visa-free travel. *The Guardian*, 'Ukraine moves closer to visa-free EU travel as gay rights bill passes', 15 November 2015.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The present collection of articles

The four articles presented here each show different aspects of these several themes. Between them the articles analyse soft power in the EU's external relations from several perspectives: the broad argument about the role of soft power vis-à-vis traditional capabilities; the incorporation of soft power in a regional policy framework; the attempt to work through NGOs and civil society organisations; showing how a competitor (Russia) fails to utilise its soft power, partly by the presence of the EU's. The articles also offer varying perspectives, in that the first elaborates on the theoretical concepts and their application, while the other three test the theoretical framework through different cases. The strength of using case studies is that it allows delving into the specific contexts in which EU soft power has been a factor. These articles do suggest avenues for further research, by showing that the concept can be applied to several aspects of the EU's foreign policy at different levels. Other case studies can be developed in several other contexts

A certain case selection bias has been clear: All the cases are some where EU soft power, or the attempt to utilise it, has been most in evidence. Moreover, the cases are all some, where the chances of soft power having an impact was higher due to the target countries' relationship with the EU or their expected shared interests. That does not, however, invalidate the investigation into how effective the EU was in making its soft power felt, nor that into the mechanisms by which soft power had (or failed to have) an observable impact. It does mean, however, that it is difficult to generalise from these cases to some in which the EU enjoys less intense relationships with the target country and engages less directly. In the following, I will briefly outline the arguments and conclusions of the articles, as well as offer a few additional comments on their conclusions with the benefit of hindsight.

The first article, 'EU soft power and the capability-expectations gap', from 2013¹⁶¹, presents the broad argument that soft power, although very useful in and of itself, is not a panacea for the EU's difficulties of conducting a successful foreign policy. In the article, I took a first stab at delineating soft power from other forms – something done more extensively in this introductory chapter – and discussed the sources of EU soft power. I framed the topic of EU soft power through the capability-expectations gap,¹⁶² in order to examine the utility the EU derived from its soft power when performing its various roles, and whether soft power contributed to EU capability. What I found through this approach, largely confirmed the warnings about wrong ideas about soft power replacing hard. Soft power certainly has an impact – the EU does have significant amounts – but lack of hard power, or conspicuous successes in some roles,

¹⁶¹ Nielsen, 'EU Soft Power and the C-E Gap'.

¹⁶² Hill, 'Capability-expectations', 310–315.

meant that it could not be converted to influence as effectively as one would have imagined.

I further argued that the evidence seemed to suggest another, not altogether desirable dynamic at play. The more EU soft power was in evidence, the more it influenced the choices of others, the more it also drove up the expectations held toward the EU, and the more of a demand it placed on its limited hard power resources. Soft power could not be strategically deployed in a targeted way, and could therefore not replace hard power. It needed to be underpinned by it – and if that did not happen, soft power could be damaged. In that sense, the article did challenge the EU’s official self-perception of being a *sui generis* actor capable of living without hard power. Most importantly, the article showed that the concept of soft power can be used for analysis of EU power resources and power conversion. It provided a useful dimension to the analysis of the EU’s successes and failures as an actor, and underscored the importance of maintaining a balanced set of tools for exercising power. Lastly, the article sketched out several themes that future research on EU soft power can develop further.

The broad argument remains valid, recent years having provided no shortage of examples to make the point. To name one, the migration crisis at the Southern border since 2011 – which dramatically peaked in 2015 – has several of the same elements. Europe arguable holds great attraction as the ‘city on the Hill’, as a place of peace and prosperity. Yet, when faced with millions of people wanting a part of this peace and prosperity, the EU’s capability for acting has been disappointing to virtually all. It has not strengthened its reputation, neither for humanitarianism, nor for decisiveness in crisis management. The few proposals that have been on the table, such as sinking the human traffickers’ boats, may even undermine EU soft power.¹⁶³ Nor, for that matter, has it gained much respect for its inability to even uphold its own laws and internal agreements. Moreover, its lack of pro-active policies towards the root causes of the refugee problems – such as the ongoing wars in Libya and Syria – has not done much for its soft power.

The war in Ukraine since the beginning of 2014 has been another textbook example of the same dynamics. EU soft power was having a noticeable, if not quite the intended effect during the early stages of the Euromaidan uprising. That hundreds of thousands of people braved the freezing cold to protest the cancellation of the Association Agreement was surely an indicator of people wanting what Europe offered.¹⁶⁴ The revolution over, Ukrainians expected the EU to throw its weight behind their aspirations, not least once Russia invaded the country. Whether the EU ever intended to give that impression is beside the point. The problem of soft power is that one cannot “...always [control] what

¹⁶³ Andrew Rettman, ‘Boat-sinking operation poses ‘risk’ to EU image’, *EUObserver*, 26 May 2015.

¹⁶⁴ The protests then took a more radical turn, and gradually morphed into a revolution against Viktor Yanukovich’s authoritarian kleptocracy. For a full-length treatment of the background to the Ukraine conflict and of the EU’s role, see Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What it means for the West*, (London: Yale University Press, 2014).

the target hears”.¹⁶⁵ The rapid developments, however, laid bare the gap between the expectations held towards the EU by outside actors (and some internal ones too) and the EU’s capability for meeting such expectations. The EU was unable to impose more than signalling sanctions on the Russian aggressor – and even on that consensus remains fragile – nor to check its actions effectively by other means. Soft power did its initial job, but the hard power to match it was not there, and the EU’s reputation in Ukraine has suffered as a result.¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Ukraine has paid a heavy price for acting on the attraction of ‘Europe’.

The second article, ‘The EU’s Eastern Partnership: Soft Power or Policy Failure’, written with Maili Vilson in 2014, ties soft power specifically to the EU’s efforts in the Eastern Neighbourhood, and the way the EU sought to make its Eastern Partnership a channel for its soft power.¹⁶⁷ The article took as its starting point the stated ambition of EU officials to place soft power at the heart of the policy. We placed this soft power emphasis in the context of the EU’s milieu goals, as these are expressed in the various strategy documents. We then critically discussed to what extent the EU has succeeded in converting its soft power into a successful strategy. The article is therefore an example of concrete research into the incorporation of soft power into EU policy towards a specific region.

We concluded that the Eastern Partnership ultimately fails in its soft power purpose, as too little thought has been given to the mechanisms for accomplishing the milieu goals. However, it is important to note that we considered the policy itself the problem, not the EU’s soft power. The ambiguous nature of the policy itself was part of the problem, as it was a disappointment to those wanting a membership perspective. It moreover offered rather little assurance for those potentially wanting to strengthen relations with the EU but fearing cost of doing so. For those not really interested, there was nothing to make them change their minds. The policy has failed with most of the partners, because it tried to cover too many internal contradictions, and as a result, the EU failed to fully develop an actually considerable reservoir of soft power.

The article’s section on Ukraine ended on an awkward note – the outcome of the Euromaidan uprising was still very much in doubt when we submitted the final version at the end of December 2013.¹⁶⁸ Whether willingness by the EU to sign the agreement with Ukraine sooner – which the article argued for – would have made any difference to the subsequent events is a question that has divided opinion. Would Russia have reacted differently if the EU had been more determined to engage Ukraine? Was Viktor Yanukovich ever sincere in his desire to move closer to the EU? Could the EU have resolved the dilemma between lev-

¹⁶⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 107.

¹⁶⁶ Kristian L. Nielsen, ‘Fatal Attraction: EU Soft Power and Ukraine’, paper presented at the biannual ECSA-C conference, Halifax, NS, Canada, 10 May 2016.

¹⁶⁷ Kristian L. Nielsen & Maili Vilson, ‘The EU’s Eastern Partnership: Soft Power Strategy or Policy Failure?’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 19, no 2 (2014): 243–262.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.

eraging soft power by engaging, and being seen as rewarding bad behaviour? We will obviously never know, and very possibly the outcome would have been the same. Yet, the fact remains that the EU did stall for almost 18 months, and was passive while Ukraine was facing severe Russian bullying.¹⁶⁹ The overall message of the article remains valid and is supported by subsequent developments. The verdict of failure on the EaP can seem harsh; Ukraine, after all, braved Russia's onslaught to begin implementation of its Association Agreement, and Georgia and Moldova both signed their agreements too. All three countries have made clear, however, that they consider these agreements as stepping-stones to even closer relations and eventual membership. EU soft power may play a role, and some milieu goals may be secured through the policy, but the EaP is only a stopgap solution to a larger question that will not go away.

The third article, 'Undiscovered Avenues: Estonian Civil Society Organisations as Agents of Europeanisation', written with Eiki Berg and Gulnara Roll in 2009, shows the EU's attempts at engaging civil society organisations in order to promote its Europeanising agenda.¹⁷⁰ Europeanization is best understood as the way the EU effects domestic change in third countries, helping these to 'download' policies and norms.¹⁷¹ It is therefore a process that helps achieve the very milieu goals the EU seeks to promote through policies like the ENP.¹⁷² The article shows the EU trying to channel its soft power in a bottom-up manner, supporting low-level initiatives to effect change. By setting up framework programmes and making funding available, the EU both sought to strengthen civil society in the then-new member states, and encouraged civil society organisations to forge links with likeminded organisations in neighbouring countries.

We found that such organisations were generally perceived as less 'political' than government initiatives, and hence more acceptable as partners. Cooperation was particularly active in the field of environmental policy, but also in furthering cultural and business links. The Estonian civil society organisations also took on roles in furthering democracy and human rights awareness in other former Soviet states, such as Ukraine. The organisations contributed to an enabling environment for EU influence.¹⁷³ The soft power and Europeanising potential of this approach therefore seemed evident. We did also point out, however, that this approach entailed certain difficulties. One such is that the EU itself is not very nimble and flexible in its dealings with NGOs, much energy being wasted on form filling and administration. As could be expected, the

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 64.

¹⁷⁰ Kristian L. Nielsen, Eiki Berg & Gulnara Roll, 'Undiscovered avenues? Estonian civil society organisations as agents of Europeanisation', *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13, no 3 (2009): 248–264.

¹⁷¹ Tanja A. Börzel & Diana Panke, 'Europeanization', in Cini & Borragán (eds.) *European Union Politics*, 119.

¹⁷² On this point, see p. 9, 12, 23, 32.

¹⁷³ As discussed on p. 24.

organisations that received EU support also had their own agenda, and whether they strengthened the EU brand or their own is not clear. We also pointed to the possibility of the governments in the target states putting obstacles in the way of civil society cooperation, and putting various forms of pressure on the non-state sectors.

Perhaps this last point was underestimated at the time, making the article sound, perhaps, too optimistic from today's perspective in its confidence in what could be achieved through engagement with civil society. The determination of the Kremlin to stamp out all foreign influence – not least by labelling and prosecuting many NGOs as being 'foreign agents' – and the extent to which such repression can work was not fully foreseen. The enabling environment which civil society can create can also be disrupted quite effectively by determined governments. The kinds of ripple effects from civil society cooperation that we expected are perhaps unlikely to be as automatic as we imagined. On the other hand, although the exact influence of the EU in strengthening civil society through encouraging cooperation between NGOs is not easy to establish, in more welcoming environments such cooperation flourished. While civil society withered in Russia it flourished in Ukraine, creating bottom-up pressures for societal reform. As with soft power influence in most cases, exact causation can rarely be conclusively proven, but it can certainly be inferred.

The fourth article, written with Heiko Pääbo in 2015, provides a counterpoint by showing the limitations of Russian soft power vis-à-vis Estonia.¹⁷⁴ Intuitively, one would think Russia had tremendous soft power resources at its disposal, not least through the presence of the large Russophone minority. In public discourse, this situation has often been discussed in securitising terms. In the article, we examined these sources, focusing especially on the role of education, culture, and mass media. Estonian minority and language policies were also considered in terms of their influence on the political orientation of the minority population. The article also discusses the difference between soft power and Russian hybrid war tactics, like those seen in Ukraine since 2014, arguing that while the former can provide a good starting point for the latter, the latter is not an expression of the former. The two really are quite distinct, hybrid war being a clear question of hard power behaviour.

Our conclusion was quite clear; Russia does not have the kind of soft power often imagined. Values can both attract and repel, that is one important lesson of soft power. Although the Russophone minorities may not be entirely content in the country, and while the sense of cultural community may be stronger with Russia, Putin's venal and authoritarian, not to say fascist kleptocracy holds little attraction. For all its flaws, in the eyes of the minorities, Estonia is preferable. Arguably, this can also be explained by economic factors,¹⁷⁵ and may simply

¹⁷⁴ Kristian L. Nielsen & Heiko Pääbo, 'Why Russian Soft Power Fails in Estonia, and why the EU's Works', *Journal on Baltic Security*, 1, no 2 (2015): 125–157.

¹⁷⁵ See, for instance, Andres Kasekamp, 'Why Narva is not Next', *Estonian World*, 16 June 2015, <http://estonianworld.com/security/andres-kasekamp-why-narva-is-not-next/> (last accessed 5 April 2016).

show that hard power trumps soft.¹⁷⁶ Yet, the EU has helped Estonia shore up its ability to secure the loyalty of its population. The union was instrumental in softening some Estonian minority policies in the 1990s, and the minority populations consider it positively. Those norms and values that form a big part of the EU's soft power externally also has an impact in negating the possible soft power advantages of Russia. In other cases, states not yet members of the EU (e.g. Moldova or Armenia), the context may be different and Putin's regime associated with order and stability as opposed to chaos. The soft power may play differently there. Yet in the specific case, we concluded that Russian soft power in Estonia, and by extension in other EU members, is only a limited threat.

Concluding remarks

This dissertation in no way aims to be the definitive word on EU soft power, quite the contrary. The hope is rather that it has shown just how many possibilities the soft power concept offers for understanding aspects of EU attractiveness and EU foreign policy. Some areas have already seen some research conducted, others are still waiting to be explored. Likewise, EU policies towards other parts of the world than Eastern Europe present different contexts in which EU soft power may or may not be in evidence. The exact mixing of power resources for effective power conversion strategies in different context also opens interesting avenues for further research.

The time is long past to continue probing whether and how the EU as an international actor conforms to more or less otherworldly ideal types. European power, or at least the potential for it, is real, and both the EU and its member states exercise what power they can in the world for their own interests. In spite of its difficulties in crafting successful power conversion strategies, the EU is slowly but steadily becoming a 'normal' actor, with all that that implies. Therefore, it makes increasingly little sense to continue using exclusive conceptual niches for studying EU foreign policy. The best way to study the EU is by analysing what it does, by what means and by what measure of success. Nothing else really tells us a lot. By engaging with mainstream IR concepts, EU scholars can make better comparisons with other powers. It was one thing to argue that the US is not a normative power, but the label was also questionable for the EU. Both, however, enjoy significant soft power; but how do their soft power and power convergence strategies measure up? And how does EU soft power fare in competition with that of the BRICs and others? Does Europe still look as attractive in Africa as before, now that the Chinese are entering? How does European soft power weather the changing global balance of power in both the political and economic sphere? Will it be true for the EU – as it was for the US

¹⁷⁶ The difficulty of isolating soft power as the single decisive variable was also noted on p. 27.

in the late 1980's, when Joseph Nye first coined the term – that soft power will offset many other aspects of *relative* slipping in traditional power relations?

The soft concept offers a way for researchers to study the intangible elements of EU power, while using the tools and concepts of traditional IR scholarship. All without falling into the trap of ideological value judgement and normative prescriptiveness that the normative power framework in particular suffers from. The EU makes for an interesting research object in this, as it certainly possesses much soft power, and a wide-ranging research agenda can be mapped out. Thus, although 'soft power Europe' is still something of a misnomer, among the several 'contradiction in terms'-models of power discussed in this introductory chapter, it is the lesser one. The following articles show various aspects of the soft power concept's usefulness for understanding EU power and EU foreign policy.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Pehme jõu Euroopa: Väiksem vastuolu terminoloogias ja praktikas

Käesolev väitekirj arutleb Euroopa Liidu pehme jõu avalduste üle teoorias ja praktikas. Autor distantseerub teadlikult dominantsetest paradigmadest EL-i välispoliitika uurimisel. Nii „tsiviiljõu Euroopa“ kui „normatiivse jõu Euroopa“ seletuslikud mudelid olid enamjaolt elujõulistena kasutusel 1970. aastate algusest kuni 2000. aastate esimese pooleni. Need mõlemad käsitlused sündisid tagasivaatelisena Euroopa integratsiooni ja on seetõttu läbi aegade olnud teaduslikus mõttes inspiratsiooniallikaks paljudele. Samas ei saa mööda minna kitsaskohtadest ja kriitikast eeltoodud käsitluste aadressil. Nimelt, mitte kummagil neist pole ette näidata tõsist teoreetilist ja empiirilist alusmaterjali. Samuti ei ole need käsitlused jõudnud juurduda väljapoole Euroopa integratsiooni-alaseid uuringuid. Seevastu on pehme jõu käsitlus jäänud teenimatult varju selles uurimisvaldkonnas.

Selle väitekirja keskse teesi kohaselt muutuvad EL-i välispoliitika üksikasjad märksa arusaadavamaks siis, kui loobutakse varasematest eksklusiivsetest, ainult EL-i integratsiooni puudutavatest seletusviisidest laiemalt tunnustust leidnud rahvusvaheliste suhete alaste teoreetiliste käsitluste kasuks. Sellisest vaatenurgast lähtuvalt on EL-l olemas pehme jõu omadused ja võimekus neid omadusi praktikas realiseerida. Pehme jõu omadused avalduvad toimija kultuuris, väärtushinnangutes ja poliitikates. Et neid mittematerjaalseid omadusi „võimendada“ ja praktikas maksma panna, peavad need muutuma atraktiivseteks neile, kellele soovitakse mõju avaldada. Iga toimija rahvusvahelisel areenil omab erinevas koguses ja kombinatsioonis teiste mõjutamiseks vajalikke mõjuvahendeid. Nii saab EL-i välispoliitilist võimekust käsitleda läbi materjaalsete (loe: sõjaliste) ja mittematerjaalsete (loe: kultuur ja väärtushinnangud) mõjuvahendite avaldumiste ja atraktiivsuse prisma. Autor kaitseb seisukohta, et pehme jõu käsitlus sobib paremini EL-i välispoliitika mõtestamiseks võrreldes konkureerivate alternatiividega, milleks on „tsiviiljõu Euroopa“ ja „normatiivse jõu Euroopa“ käsitlused, sest erinevalt ideaalist (milline peaks olema EL toimijana rahvusvahelistes suhetes) on põhjust vaadata tegelikkusele otsa (mis laadi jõuga on EL-i puhul tegemist ja mis on EL-i võimekus ennast rahvusvahelistes suhetes teostada).

Väitekirj tugineb neljale eelretsenseeritud artiklile, mis avaldatud ajavahe-
mikul 2009–2016 rahvusvahelise levikuga teadusajakirjades. Sissejuhatav peatükk tutvustab teoreetilisi ja metodoloogilisi aspekte EL-i olemuse mõistmisel rahvusvaheliste suhete toimijana. Väitekirja koondatud artiklitest esimene arutleb EL-i pehme jõu olemuse seostest võimekuse-ootuste lõhega. Teises artiklis uuritakse EL-i Idapartnerluse programmi eduväljavaateid pehme jõu funktsioneerimisel. Kolmandas artiklis analüüsitakse valitsusväliste organisatsioonide agentsust EL-i välispoliitika toimijatena. Neljas artikkel vastandab Venemaa pehme jõu avaldumised EL-i omale ja demonstreerib selle vähest atraktiivsust Eestis.

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