

THE IMPACT OF CHINA'S RISE ON EU FOREIGN POLICY COHESION

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Abstract

China's rise and the consequences resulting from it have an effect on countries around the world. Its increasingly close cooperation with countries in Central and Eastern Europe (as well as Greece) has led to numerous EU member states (EUMS) pursuing foreign policies that are oftentimes more aligned with the interests of the Chinese leadership than the overall EU's interests and values. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU is susceptible to such interference as its decisions are based on unanimity. Building up on this, this thesis argues that even though previous literature suggests that normative socialisation processes within CFSP policymaking and the consequent primacy of consensus seeking during negotiations have made the use of vetoes virtually insignificant, due to the increasing political and economic influence of China on some EUMS the importance of vetoes is rising again. Benefits of maintaining amicable relations to China might appear so attractive to some EUMS that in the light of China's rise they are once again more prone to vetoing certain EU-level decisions critical of Beijing. The benefits held out in prospect vary and can be mostly economic, but also of political or ideological use. Costs of vetoing (besides from the reputational loss) seem to be virtually non-existent. Overall, while individual EUMS might benefit economically or politically, there is a risk that this development diminishes the overall role of the EU as normative power. This analysis looks into four concrete China-policy related issues that were negotiated in the CFSP framework and – applying a method developed by Schimmelfennig & Thomas – tests whether preconditions for normative socialisation processes were met (which makes vetoes highly unlikely). Since this holds true for all cases, the second part of the analysis focuses on the relations between the three vetoing countries Hungary, Greece and Croatia with China and it seeks to find explanations for why these states decided to use their veto power instead of demonstrating an ability to compromise during negotiations.

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1. Introduction: The EU in the context of a rising China

The economic, political and cultural influence of China is growing around the world. Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs)¹ are no exception: China's cooperation with the region has been increasing especially over the past decade. The 17+1 (formerly 16+1)² Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), both including all CEECs, represent just a few examples of how the rising world power is becoming more involved in the region. The organizational structure of this Cooperation, which makes China the “hub” and the 17 different CEECs the “spokes” shows that while doing so, China prefers not to cooperate with the European Union (EU) as a whole, but rather either bilaterally with individual EU member states (EUMS) or with sub-regional groupings. This approach has been labelled as *divide and rule*³ by critics, since it is a strategy that has the potential to disrupt the cohesion between EUMS and at the same time diminish the role of the EU.⁴

In some EUMS political elites make use of this window of opportunity caused by the rise of China, the diminished US role in global governance and the resulting shift in power dynamics by altering their foreign policies in a way that curries favour with the Chinese leadership (while simultaneously being integrated into the Western political and security system through the EU and NATO). This rapprochement with China has been described as “pre-emptive obedience”⁵ on behalf of EUMS. On the one hand, a number of incentives such as economic benefits in the form of investments are held out in prospect for those countries that offer political favours to Beijing.⁶ On the other hand, China disincentivizes countries to

¹ Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria

² Greece has joined the 16+1 Cooperation in 2019, that has until then merely connected CEECs with China

³ Grieger, 2018; Karásková 2020

⁴ For instance, in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, when Chinese President Xi Jinping phoned French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as Spain's King Felipe personally but left it to Premier Li Keqiang to call European Commission President von der Leyen (Lau, 2020)

⁵ Benner et al., 2018, p. 7

⁶ Stanzel et al. 2016

cross the red line of its non-negotiable issues, for instance when they criticise China's domestic affairs such as the state of human rights or the One China policy. This disincentivization can be achieved by the threat of "freezing" political relations if necessary.⁷

EUMS that adjust their foreign policy through positions more aligned to the goals of the Chinese leadership can go as far as to deviate from or even contradict the overall EU strategic agenda on China. If the respective EUMS integrates these preferences not only in its national foreign policy but is advocating for them during the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) policy-making process, it can go as far as to veto a joint EU decision in case of a disagreement (even if all other 26 or a vast majority of EUMS agree). Consequently, the intergovernmental structure of CFSP that requires decisions to be adopted by unanimity makes a scenario possible in which one EUMS undermines the overall EU ability to take action.⁸ This makes it especially easy for outside actors to influence negotiations, since they theoretically only need to target one EUMS that they can persuade, which then can act as "Trojan Horse".⁹

Nevertheless, recurring China-related vetoes appear to be a relatively new phenomenon (the analysed cases all take place between 2016 and 2018). This is consistent with the literature on socialisation within the EU which argues that despite the officially intergovernmental policymaking process prescribed by the Treaties, socialisation of European heads of state or government, foreign ministers as well as permanently Brussels-based diplomats and the consequent consensus-seeking attitude during negotiations have almost led vetoes to sink into insignificance for a long time.¹⁰ To learn more about the impact of China's rise on EU foreign policy cohesion, this thesis will answer the central research question **"Why have normative socialization processes failed to prevent the EU from disagreeing on different China-**

⁷ Sverdrup-Thygeson 2015

⁸ As last resort, EUMS could decide to pursue their own policies or make their own statements on a unilateral basis, but not as EU as a whole (this has been done previously)

⁹ Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017, p. 87

¹⁰ Puetter, 2003; Sjursen, 2011; Howorth, 2010; Duke, 2004; Pomorska & Juncos, 2006

related policies?”. As intermediate steps, first, the sub-questions “How significant are vetoes in CFSP policymaking?” and “How are the bilateral relations between China and individual EUMS affecting the latter’s willingness to use a veto?” will be answered. This thesis argues that the importance of vetoes is growing again and is increasing hand in hand with China’s more active involvement on the continent. It further argues that despite the socialisation processes and expectations to being ready to compromise in the spirit of working towards finding a common EU position, for EUMS with very amicable bilateral relations to China, benefits held out in prospect by Beijing outweigh the costs of disrupting CFSP.

While only very few EUMS have actively blocked EU-level action related to China, this thesis further argues that even a few vetoes have a negative impact on the normative power of the continent – the EU was hampered in defending the very human rights and liberal values that it is based on. The thesis will adhere to the definition of “normative power” coined by Manners, as it includes the concept of EU norms being “diffused” across the globe which gives the EU the ability to define what passes for “normal” in world politics (for instance the abolition of the death penalty).¹¹ The European Commission (Commission) has already taken notice of this development and has addressed it most recently in the 2016 EU Global Strategy by calling for an EU that stands united rather than EUMS “acting alone or in an uncoordinated manner”.¹² In its *Strategic Outlook* on China,¹³ the Commission states that “neither the EU nor any of its Member States can effectively achieve their aims with China without full unity”, explicitly also stressing that sub-regional cooperation frameworks such as the 16+1 format have to ensure consistency with the *acquis communautaire*.¹⁴ Thus, there is a gap between aspiration and reality: while the EU is a self-proclaimed normative power that strives for speaking with one voice and promoting its values within and outside its territory, its very own institutional

¹¹ Manners, 2002, p. 253

¹² European External Action Service, 2016

¹³ European Commission and HR/VP, 2019

¹⁴ European Commission and HR/VP, 2019

structure allows EUMS to easily opt-out from this goal.¹⁵ By choosing to not protect and project norms such as multilateralism, international law and human rights, some EUMS (despite being in a minority position) can paralyze the overall EU action in these fields. Consequently, these EUMS diminish the normative power of the EU and the continent's overall role in global politics (especially since the EU derives its power mostly from its normative and economic power and less so from military strength as the US, China or Russia).

Considering that the previous literature on CFSP¹⁶ has argued that socialization into the policy-making process is bringing a rather “supranational culture” into the intergovernmental process and can therefore have enormous potential to prevent vetoes, it comes as a surprise that decisions are blocked on a regular basis.

By contributing to the literature on the effectiveness of CFSP policymaking and its link to the rise of China, this thesis can help to expand the knowledge on known weaknesses of the CFSP policymaking process and its causes and consequently can shed light on possible alternatives. One concrete alternative could be the introduction of qualified majority voting (QMV) voting instead of unanimity-based decision making, as previously proposed by former Commission President Juncker and most recently by current Commission President von der Leyen in the 2017 and 2020 State of the European Union speeches. Ultimately, this gained knowledge can contribute to a more efficient and cohesive policy-making process in CFSP. Whereas the focus of this work will be on China-related vetoes, there are also a number of cases in which EU-level cooperation on China-related issues has been successful, for instance the adoption of a new foreign investment screening mechanism¹⁷ or 5G recommendations.¹⁸ Assessing their realization, however, is beyond the scope of this project's research design. Addressing scenarios where only one country vetoes a decision, but several countries are

¹⁵ Manners, 2002, p. 236

¹⁶ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009; Puetter, 2003; Sjursen, 2011

¹⁷ European Commission, 2019

¹⁸ Poggetti, 2019

“hiding” behind that veto, without formally raising concerns about a particular issue, would also overstretch this research design.¹⁹

The thesis is structured as follows: First, the literature review outlines the main theories related to CFSP policymaking (especially with regards to the literature on institutional socialisation processes) as well as related to China’s influence through so-called “Trojan Horses”. Following this, I will explain the research design and methodology, illustrate recent China-related vetoes supported by Greece and/or Hungary and/or Croatia and investigate which domestic factors (such as their bilateral relations with China) might have led to the vetoes. Finally, I present my results and discuss them in the light of international affairs in general and CFSP policymaking specifically.

¹⁹ According to a phone call with an EEAS diplomat under the condition of anonymity, this is a relatively common scenario

2. Literature Review: In search of cohesion in CFSP

The status of the EU as self-proclaimed normative power²⁰ plays several roles in the cohesion of CFSP. Firstly, it creates an expectation coming from the EU institutions towards its EUMS²¹ to defend the norms and values inherent to the Union and to promote them within but also outside of its territory, for instance by condemning or sanctioning human rights abuses. Secondly, constant socialisation between EUMS creates an incentive for the each of them to focus on reaching a consensus rather than purely focusing on national interests, even in an intergovernmental policy area. Thirdly, it has been argued that the status as normative power can lead to an inability to properly assess the goals of external powers such as Russia and China.²² The literature review below will look for different explanations on how CFSP policymaking is shaped in practice. It therefore introduces the reader to two theories interpreting policymaking in different ways: on the one hand, starting out from the legal basis in the Treaties (that assumes a purely intergovernmental policymaking) and on the other hand, focusing on the aforementioned normativity and its effect of encouraging an increased readiness to compromise instead of purely pursuing national interests (which can be explained by normative institutionalism rather than intergovernmentalism). Furthermore, literature on the outside influence on EUMS' foreign policy will be consulted to detect possible explications of the decreasing importance of socialisation.

2.1. CFSP Policymaking: Europeanizing intergovernmentalism?

As opposed to most policy areas on the European level, decisions with regards to CFSP are not taken by the community method using the ordinary legislative procedure but rather the

²⁰ Manners, 2002; Sjursen, 2006

²¹ as mentioned for instance in the *2016 EU Global Strategy* and the *2019 Strategic Outlook on China*

²² Michalski & Nilsson, 2018, p. 6

intergovernmental method (as defined by Art. 24 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU)). The Treaties state that CFSP “shall be defined and implemented by the European Council and the Council [of the European Union] acting unanimously”²³, while the European Parliament has a purely consultative role and the right of initiative of the Commission is shared with EUMS or is limited in scope.²⁴ Within the Council, it is the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) configuration that makes decisions in CFSP. The reason for an intergovernmental (and therefore consensus-based) approach is that CFSP includes important elements of national sovereignty and goes beyond the scope of what was once pursued under the “classical Community framework”, namely market integration and liberalisation.²⁵ Following the logic of intergovernmental theorists and taking into account the legal framework in which the CFSP is embedded, decision-making in foreign policy would be mainly dominated by the hard pursuit of national interests by EUMS.

While *de jure* CFSP is a purely intergovernmental matter, previous research provides a more multifaceted picture; it has been argued that there is a move beyond intergovernmentalism²⁶, the main reason being that intergovernmentalism overlooks the socialisation processes in place. This mismatch between the provisions in the Treaties and the professional practice raises the question of how much cohesion in CFSP can be actually expected. Even though there has been a general reluctance to transfer further competencies from the national to the European level, there is still a willingness on the part of the EUMS to “be close without rendering formal decision-making competences to the EU level”.²⁷ Concepts such as “supranational intergovernmentalism”²⁸, “Brussels-based intergovernmentalism” or

²³ EUR-Lex, 2012

²⁴ EUR-Lex, 2020

²⁵ Puetter, 2003, p. 110

²⁶ Sjursen, 2011, p. 1079

²⁷ Puetter, 2003, p. 111

²⁸ Howorth, 2010, p. 2

“deliberative intergovernmentalism”²⁹ have been used to describe the relatively strong role that informal elements play in EU decision-making with increased integration. The strength of this dimension can be illustrated by previous research questioning whether intergovernmentalism actually stops being intergovernmental at some point because of influence from socialisation processes.³⁰ Firstly, these socialisation processes can be found both within the high-level meetings of the European Council and the FAC (whose members are not permanently based in Brussels); before formal sessions and summits take place, informal discussions also take place on this level of foreign ministers and heads of state or government. Secondly and most importantly, socialisation processes take place in the Brussels-based “permanent intergovernmental” institutions, including the Political and Security Committee (PSC) composed of national ambassadorial-level representatives³¹ as well as the various working groups such as the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM).³² The PSC meets twice a week (if necessary, more often) in a formal setting and is chaired by the EEAS.³³ While it might not be the formal decision-making body according to the Treaties, that describe its mandate according to Art. 38.1 TEU as “monitor[ing] the international situation and contribut[ing] to the definition of policies”³⁴, it has been described as “linchpin” of CFSP.³⁵ Its importance in the policy-making process can be explained by the phenomenon of *committee governance*.³⁶ The PSC contributing to a supranational culture in CFSP has been explained by the suggestion that “normative socialisation processes which inform the work of the PSC have succeeded to an appreciable extent in allowing a trans-European strategic culture to begin to stamp its imprint on one of the

²⁹ Puetter, 2003, p. 122

³⁰ Sjursen, 2011, p. 1081

³¹ Duke, 2004

³² Pomorska & Juncos, 2006

³³ European Council/Council of the EU, 2017

³⁴ Sjursen, 2011

³⁵ Duke, 2004, p. 17

³⁶ Kirchner & Christiansen, 2000

EU's principal foreign policy projects".³⁷ This "supranational culture" would suggest that EUMS are encouraged to better coordinate and harmonize their interests which would consequently lead to a more cohesive CFSP.³⁸ In practice, this means that if there is a "wave of consensus" and only one EUMS is the obstacle, that EUMS needs to have "exceptionally good arguments to turn the tide".³⁹ "Very, very often", after consultation with its capital city in the vast majority of cases that particular EUMS comes back to the negotiating table and makes concessions to join the consensus.⁴⁰

The idea of a "supranational intergovernmentalism"⁴¹ and the aforementioned concepts that this entails are consistent with normative institutionalism, which describes that while EUMS might exhibit differences in their initial policy preferences, they find unanimity through cooperative bargaining. This stands in contrast to competitive bargaining, in which a gain by one party equals the loss of another party (as intergovernmentalism would suggest). According to normative institutionalism, EUMS can also find unanimity through "entrapment", a concept that predicts that EUMS will find it difficult to escape dictates of substantive EU norms and thus, reluctantly accept norm-consistent policies.⁴² Cooperative bargaining explains that veto threats are side-lined by the EU's procedural norms in favour of consultation and consensus, leading EUMS to adopt common policies based on mutual compromise.⁴³ An analysis of 14 case studies from a broad range of policy areas reveals that only four of them follow the logic of cooperative bargaining while 9 cases found "significant evidence of entrapment" (some exhibit both cooperative bargaining as well as entrapment at the same time).⁴⁴ These results let Schimmelfennig and Thomas conclude that normative institutionalism is generally the most

³⁷ Howorth, 2010, p. 4

³⁸ Howorth, 2010, p. 2

³⁹ Howorth, 2010, p. 17

⁴⁰ Howorth, 2010, p. 17

⁴¹ Howorth, 2010, p. 2

⁴² Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009, p. 491

⁴³ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 492

⁴⁴ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 499

robust theory to explain the CFSP policy-making process.⁴⁵ Daniel C. Thomas lists five different conditions under which entrapment and cooperative bargaining are most likely to occur:⁴⁶ determinacy (the existence of an uncontroversial norm with clear behavioural expectations), relevance (the situation in question being consistent with the normative conditions for agreement), publicity (attention of the general public on the issue), precedent (prior policy commitments) and forum (a site of negotiation and deliberation in which EU norms are salient). The analysis will later test which of these five conditions are or are not fulfilled and consequently will be able to say whether normative socialisation processes could have been expected or not. The methodology chapter will explain in more detail how this hypothesis will be transferred onto the analysis of China-related votes.

While a further move from away from unanimity-voting towards QMV⁴⁷ would make vetoing by a minority of EUMS impossible, there is a debate around whether this would create a legitimacy deficit within the EU. Proponents of this reasoning assume that a move away from unanimity represents a less democratic decision-making (taking away sovereignty and power from individual EUMS and their citizens) and consequently creates a democratic deficit in CFSP.⁴⁸ After all, QMV would put especially smaller states into disadvantage, since they could simply be outvoted, which is more difficult with states with a larger population, such as France or Germany. An EEAS diplomat⁴⁹ highlighted that being outvoted is a widespread fear among representatives of smaller EUMS in a QMV scenario. From a different perspective, it could be argued that a democratic deficit is created when an action is not passed that is supported by 24 out of 27 EUMS representing 94,51% of the population.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 492

⁴⁶ Thomas, 2009

⁴⁷ QMV is applied in most EU policy areas; a majority is reached when 55% of the EU countries representing 65% of the EU population vote in favour

⁴⁸ Sjursen, 2011

⁴⁹ Informal phone call under the condition of anonymity

⁵⁰ Sample calculation with Hungary, Greece and Croatia blocking an EU declaration on the South China Sea territorial dispute using the European Council online voting calculator for QMV votes (while in reality the declaration was blocked, with QMV the measure would have been adopted)

The EU's status as normative power does not only have implications to how EU perceives its own role in global politics and how EUMS negotiate with each other, but it has also been argued that it shapes the way in which the EU sees the outside world.⁵¹ The belief that its own normative foreign policy was not be fundamentally challenged by outside actors “clouded its assessment”⁵² with regards to China's changing expectations, aims and ambitions; it has been argued that initially China fully accepted the EU's normative ambition and later did an about-face by openly abandoning its “(strategic) ambition to comply with the principles and values of the liberal world order”.⁵³ While the EU's normative power has started to be challenged from the outside by actors such as China or Russia,⁵⁴ simultaneously within Europe, a more general debate around the future of the EU gained momentum. A rather intergovernmental approach that is less favourable to further EU integration is advocated by some EUMS (such as Hungary⁵⁵ or Poland⁵⁶) and challenges the more supranational approach towards an “ever closer Union” as advocated by France⁵⁷ or Germany.⁵⁸

China is offering an ideological alternative to the norms and governance standards that Western partners and organizations promote. While China's own economic success is legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian style of governing domestically (which could be regarded as China's social contract⁵⁹), those politicians who are already benefitting from a spreading authoritarian sentiment⁶⁰ across Europe can point at China as possibly alternative successful ideology to the liberal democratic model. Policymakers in EUMS with amicable relations to China can also use these ties to their advantage: namely as

⁵¹ Michalski & Nilsson

⁵² Michalski & Nilsson, 2018, p. 14

⁵³ Michalski & Nilsson, 2018, p. 2

⁵⁴ Michalski & Nilsson, 2018, p. 2

⁵⁵ Hopkins, 2019

⁵⁶ Morawiecki, 2019

⁵⁷ Wintour, 2020

⁵⁸ Rankin & Oltermann, 2020

⁵⁹ The editorial board (FT), 2020

⁶⁰ To name an example, Hungarian PM Orbán in June 2020 in Belarus “The two peoples and the two countries are much closer to one another than we usually think”

bargaining chip during negotiations with other EUMS, pointing to the fact that they have alternative political partners to cooperate with.⁶¹ To exemplify this different ideological stance: while China is expecting others not to interfere in its internal affairs, it is also promoting this principle abroad. As opposed to the EU and Western development banks, China offers its economic cooperation “without any element of political conditionality like principles of good governance or liberal economic reforms”,⁶² thereby allowing leaders around the world (including in EUMS) to free themselves from accountability when it comes to deteriorating conditions in their countries when it comes to good governance, the rule of law or transparency standards.

2.2. Unanimity: The weak spot of CFSP Policymaking?

This section will consult previous literature to answer the question of to what extent vetoes play a role in negotiations during the CFSP policymaking process. The wide difference between how the Treaties predefine CFSP policymaking, namely intergovernmentally, and how practically it has mostly changed into a policy field in which the objective of finding common positions has become the *modus operandi*, a characteristic that could be attributed to normative institutionalism. The section is also going to review whether or not national interests might once again take on greater significance, in particular also because third countries (such as China) can offer incentives and disincentives to EUMS, depending on the respective EUMS’ foreign policy positions.

The fact that European intergovernmentalism is Brussels-based and thus, supranational behavioural patterns might find its way into CFSP policymaking, does not prevent EUMS from simultaneously pursuing individual foreign policies that are different from the position of the EU. By definition, the EU at this point in time can never achieve a fully cohesive foreign policy,

⁶¹ Benner et al. 2018, p. 16

⁶² Benner et al. 2018, p. 16

as it lacks the competency to prohibit EUMS from establishing their own foreign policies.⁶³ Unlike in the US, where the constitution establishes that foreign and defence policy are exclusively under the authority of the federal government and at the same time prohibits state governments from exercising these functions, the EU as merely quasi-federal entity is missing the latter.⁶⁴

This institutional architecture allows China to target one or just a few EUMS to implant its ideology and foreign policy principles into the EU by the respective EUMS acting as “Trojan Horse(s)”.⁶⁵ Consequently, that EUMS does not merely pursue a China-friendly national foreign policy (which would have fewer effects on other EUMS) but uploads⁶⁶ its diverging position onto the EU level and waters down or blocks actions and statements contradicting its national position. This does not necessarily have to be an active process initiated on behalf of China but could also work through “pre-emptive obedience” on behalf of EUMS combined with encouragements and discouragements by Beijing. Whenever EUMS have been overly critical with China, the latter has regularly retaliated against them, for instance through political freezing as happened after several countries after they invited the Dalai Lama or what happened with Norway after Liu Xiaobo received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. A reduction in trade for around two years with China after a state officially receives the Dalai Lama has already been observed and described as the Dalai Lama effect.⁶⁷ Therefore, EUMS do not only have an incentive to support China’s policies in order to maintain healthy relations, but they are also discouraged by China from nonconformity with China’s key interests and positions, such as the One China policy, which refers to the acknowledgement that there is only one Chinese

⁶³ Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017, p. 88

⁶⁴ Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017, p. 88

⁶⁵ Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017, p. 87

⁶⁶ Kaminska & Holloway, 2007, p. 5 (uploading is referring to a bottom-up process of Europeanization in which EUMS shape CFSP by gaining support and acceptance from other EU partners)

⁶⁷ Fuchs & Klann, 2013

government, the government of the PRC in Beijing.⁶⁸ In general, three main influencing tools used by the Chinese leadership have been identified in the CEE region, namely 1) through political elites⁶⁹, 2) through media and public opinion⁷⁰ and 3) through civil society and academia.⁷¹

To conclude, previous literature suggests that the vetoes in CFSP have become virtually insignificant due to normative socialisation processes in place that turn an officially intergovernmental policy area into one with strong supranational characteristics and add a strong consensus-seeking willingness to the negotiations instead of negotiations purely based on the pursuit of national interests. Further literature on the influence of external powers on some EUMS however suggest, that cohesion in EU foreign policy is likely to be disrupted by the bilateral relations of some EUMS to outside powers. Consequently, this leads to the following central research question: Why have normative socialization processes failed to prevent the EU from disagreeing on different China-related policies?

⁶⁸ BBC News, 2017; As recently demonstrated by Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi who stated that the Czech Senate President Vystreil “crossed a red line” by addressing the parliament in Taipei and that he would “pay a heavy price”

⁶⁹ Benner et al. 2018, p. 14

⁷⁰ Benner et al. 2018, p. 22

⁷¹ Benner et al. 2018, p. 26

3. Conceptual frame, Research Design and Methods

3.1. Conceptual frame

In the following parts of the thesis, I outline China-related decisions that have been blocked or significantly watered down on an EU level by different EUMS. My analysis tests whether all necessary criteria that would predict entrapment or cooperative bargaining (outlined above) were fulfilled. If all necessary criteria were fulfilled, this would suggest a very high probability of reaching a consensus and consequently it would raise the question why that did not happen. If criteria for entrapment or cooperative bargaining were not fulfilled in these specific circumstances, this would suggest that while decisions were vetoed, those EUMS vetoing did also not find themselves under pressure to reach a consensus. Consequently, the first outcome would suggest that the scope of the influence of normative socialisation processes should be limited while the second outcome would reinforce previous literature on normative socialisation.

These different possible outcomes can be a useful indicator for the EU on the effectiveness of its CFSP; if the first outcome holds true, this could be interpreted as a warning sign for the EU, namely because it would suggest that socialisation plays a less important role as expected. If the second outcome holds true, this would confirm the previous literature on the effects of normative socialisation in EU policymaking.

To answer the research question, the thesis will first establish whether normative socialisation processes were in place or not during the negotiations. If it finds that they were in place, this would mean that certain EUMS perceive the costs of disrupting CFSP as smaller compared to the benefits of aligning their position with China's point of view (with the objective to curry favour with the Chinese leadership). This would mean that strong outside actors or third countries are able to limit the power of EU decisionmakers' normative

socialisation processes. The main theory that will be used to answer these questions will be normative institutionalism. The reason for using this theory is that it helps to examine processes that can be easily overlooked (especially socialisation is virtually ignored if one only takes into account the provisions in the Treaties). To be precise, normative institutionalism describes that while EUMS might exhibit differences in their initial policy preferences, they find unanimity through “cooperative bargaining” (as opposed to competitive bargaining, in which a gain by one party equals the loss of another party) or through “entrapment”.⁷² Both concepts are therefore enabling factors for reaching a consensus. Entrapment predicts that EUMS will find it difficult to escape dictates of substantive EU norms and thus reluctantly accept norm-consistent policies; cooperative bargaining explains that veto threats are side-lined by the EU’s procedural norms in favour of consultation and consensus, leading EUMS to adopt common policies based on mutual compromise.⁷³

A previous analysis of 14 cases from a broad range of policy areas conducted by Schimmelfennig and Thomas in 2009 revealed that whenever the necessary criteria (determinacy, relevance, publicity, precedent and forum) were fulfilled, four cases followed the logic of cooperative bargaining while nine cases found “significant evidence of entrapment” (some exhibit both cooperative bargaining as well as entrapment at the same time).⁷⁴ Different combinations of these five criteria can lead to either cooperative bargaining or to entrapment. Daniel C. Thomas⁷⁵ explains that entrapment is most likely to occur when all five different criteria are fulfilled. Cooperative bargaining can also occur when conditions for entrapment are “weak or absent”.⁷⁶ Publicity is expected to promote entrapment but to undermine cooperative bargaining.⁷⁷ Schimmelfennig & Thomas conclude that relevance

⁷² Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009, p. 491

⁷³ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 492

⁷⁴ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 499

⁷⁵ Thomas, 2009

⁷⁶ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009, p. 494

⁷⁷ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009, p. 495

combined with determinacy as well as relevance combined with a precedent should be sufficient to cause an agreement through entrapment.⁷⁸

3.2. Research Design

This thesis will use the research design previously applied by Schimmelfennig and Thomas⁷⁹ as introduced above and therefore test whether the theory of the authors is applicable to a number of China-related cases in CFSP. Since these analysed cases all conclude with vetoes, it can be argued that neither entrapment nor cooperative bargaining were present during the negotiations. My first step in Chapter three will therefore be to find out whether socialisation processes should have actually been expected to play a role or not during the negotiations. This will be done by testing the negotiations for the pre-existence of the five criteria for entrapment and cooperative bargaining. In case the analysis comes to the conclusion that criteria for either entrapment or cooperative bargaining were fulfilled, this leads to the question of why they were not present. To begin with, the five different criteria have to be operationalized in order to make them measurable during the analysis of the cases.

The five criteria outlined in the conceptual frame have been defined precisely as follows: **Determinacy** refers to a situation in which there is a “clear and uncontested norm in favour of the policy proposal”⁸⁰ and “actors, regardless of their preferences, have little doubt about which norm applies to the issue at hand, which policy behaviour it condones and which it condemns”.⁸¹ Examples for uncontested, institutionalized norms are “support for democracy”. I will include the values mentioned in the TEU as uncontested, institutionalized norms, namely “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and

⁷⁸ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 499

⁷⁹ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009

⁸⁰ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009

⁸¹ Thomas, 2009, p. 364; Franck, 1990

respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”.⁸² Any values mentioned in the TFEU or the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights will also be considered to be an uncontested norm. The Treaty furthermore states that only those may apply to become a member of the EU who are committed to promote these values.⁸³ If the case in question is voting upon an issue that refers to one of these “clear and uncontested” norms, determinacy will be coded positive; otherwise negative.

Precedent is referring to previous policy commitments made by the EU on the respective issue, having “invested resources and reputation on behalf of one principle or party involved”.⁸⁴ A positive value will be attached to this if the EU has previously been able to reach consensus on the same, or a very similar situation.

Relevance is present when “the situation meets the conditions under which the norm prescribes agreement on the proposal”.⁸⁵ Adopting the coding method from Schimmelfennig & Thomas, relevance is automatically coded as “not applicable” if both determinacy and precedent are coded negative. Following Schimmelfennig & Thomas, the criterion is coded positively when the at-that-time situation – independently from whether or not there has been a precedent – is calling for an adoption of the proposal that is supporting one of the norms (that are described under the determinacy criterion).⁸⁶

Forum refers to the fact that the decision-making process takes place “within the institutionalized channels of negotiation and deliberation”⁸⁷ of the EU. Everything decided within the framework of CFSP (on the level of the European Council or the (Foreign Affairs Council/COREPER II) or within the European Institutions in general (such as in the Political and Security Committee) will code forum as positive. Decisions within frameworks of the

⁸² Article 2, Treaty on the European Union

⁸³ Article 49, Treaty on the European Union

⁸⁴ Thomas, 2009, p. 364

⁸⁵ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 495

⁸⁶ Schimmelfennig & Thomas 2009, p. 495

⁸⁷ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009, p. 495

United Nations or other frameworks for instance will lead to a negative coding of the “forum” criterion.

Publicity refers to a high public attention to the issue and/or a decision-making process in a public setting.⁸⁸ High public attention will be measured by using Google Trends; keywords will be allocated to a certain issue and the attention during the CFSP action in question will be compared to the overall attention in the time period 5 years before and 5 years after the decision. If the attention in the time period of the vote is exceptionally high, publicity will be coded positively. If the difference does not deviate too much from the average attention or is below that, publicity will be coded negatively.

After the coding, I will determine the cases, in which entrapment and/or cooperative bargaining should have been expected. In those cases where either entrapment or cooperative bargaining could have been expected, this is leading to a puzzle due to the actual inability to reach a consensus. Therefore, a brief qualitative analysis of the background of those particular votes that should have resulted in either entrapment or cooperative bargaining will aim to find out what has led to the missing entrapment or cooperative bargaining. Since all votes are in some way related to China, particular attention will be paid to the relations between the vetoing country and China.

Numerous times EU-level decisions critical of China have already been blocked or watered down by one or just very few EUMS. Even though it is difficult to argue that Chinese influence or even pressure has led to these vetoes, concepts such as “influence-courting” or “pre-emptive obedience” have already been used as explanation for these occurrences.⁸⁹ EUMS have therefore been accused of seeing “trade and investment benefits from China as more important than the political cohesion of Europe”.⁹⁰ Political elites who aim to “attract

⁸⁸ Schimmelfennig & Thomas, 2009, p. 495

⁸⁹ Benner et al., 2018, p. 7

⁹⁰ Matura, 2019, p. 388

Chinese money or attain greater recognition on the global plane” are consequently more likely to pursue actions and political ideas that are different from the European mainstream.⁹¹ The following negotiation procedures will be analysed in the next chapter in detail:

Table 1: Selection of blocked CFSP actions with regards to the EU's China policy

Date	Case	Blocking/opposing EUMS	Type of action	Vetoed issue
2016	South China Sea	HU ⁹² , EL ⁹³ , HR ⁹⁴	EU unable to adopt a strong declaration telling China to abide by ruling on South China Sea territorial dispute	welcoming of a Hague international court ruling
2017	Torture of detained lawyers	HU	EU unable to add its name to a joint letter	protesting the torture of detained lawyers in China ⁹⁵
2017	Human Rights Record	EL	EU unable to deliver Statement in UN Human Rights Council	criticising human rights record of China ⁹⁶

⁹¹ Benner et al., 2018, p. 7

⁹² Hungary

⁹³ Greece

⁹⁴ Croatia

⁹⁵ Denyer 2017; Benner & Weidenfeld, 2018

⁹⁶ Emmont & Koutantou, 2017

2018	Human Rights and International Law	HU	EEAS unable to adopt joint statement	asking China to adhere to human rights and international law
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The case selection on the one hand was based on the presence of a connection to China and on the other hand on the accessibility of reliable sources reporting on the cases (since the negotiations themselves are not published by the EU institutions). The cases were also selected because they represented policy areas in which the EU and China have opposing beliefs and generally EUMS would be expected to support the position that is in line with the EU's fundamental values.

On 12 July 2016, three EUMS prevented the EU to adopt a strong declaration requesting China to follow the arbitration award of the **South China Sea** arbitral tribunal and to abandon its claim to resources and territory within the so-called nine-dash line. The statement was watered down and did no longer include a direct reference to Beijing. Previously, the ruling of an international court in The Hague favoured the Philippines against China⁹⁷ and determined that China acted unlawfully in claiming territory within the nine-dash line.

After Hungary prevented the EU from adding its name to a letter addressed to China's police chief Guo Shengkun in March 2017 and protesting the **torture of detained lawyers**, the letter was signed by diplomats of seven individual states (including EUMS such as Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany and Sweden).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Gotev, 2016; Emmott, 2016

⁹⁸ Radio Free Asia, 2017

On June 15, 2017, the EU did not deliver a statement in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) under agenda item 4, marking the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4 and criticising the **human rights record** of China.⁹⁹ Previously, sending a “message of solidarity to activists” and “denouncing the Chinese government’s crackdown on critical voices and persistent violations of basic freedoms” had been a regular practice by the EU in this forum for over a decade.¹⁰⁰

In April 2018, Hungary first threatened to veto and then refused to sign an EEAS joint statement asking China to adhere to **human rights and international law**. The draft statement also required member states to leave out propagandistic expressions pressed by China from any kind of future bilateral agreements with the Communist country.¹⁰¹ Chinese terminology and the usage of propagandistic expressions has been also identified as problematic in several UN for a, including multiple Committees of the UN General Assembly.¹⁰²

3.3. Methods

To find out whether normative socialisation processes were in place during the different negotiated cases or not, in Chapter three, I will look into each case in detail and analyse whether the criteria for entrapment and/or cooperative bargaining were fulfilled (this analysis can yield different results for every voting procedure). In those cases where the mentioned criteria were not fulfilled, from a normative institutionalist perspective, this carries to its logical conclusion that vetoes were possible since there were no normative socialisation processes present that would have pressured EUMS into consensus. China-related voting procedures in CFSP thus would be consistent with the theory of Schimmelfennig and Thomas in that case.

⁹⁹ Under item 4 countries can add an issue about a human rights situation that require the UNHRC’s attention to the agenda

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2017

¹⁰¹ Panyi, 2019

¹⁰² Phone call with EEAS diplomat under the condition of anonymity

If the criteria for entrapment and/or cooperative bargaining were fulfilled, however, this would suggest that vetoes should not have been possible (even though, in fact, they took place). In this case, there would be a mismatch between the tested theory and the actual voting behaviour of EUMS. In order to find out what could have led to this mismatch, Chapter four will consult the bilateral relations between the vetoing EUMS and China. If the economic and political bilateral relations between the vetoing EUMS and China turn out to be especially amicable, this could indicate that the benefits of a close partnership of China can outweigh the costs of vetoing a decision critical of China within the CFSP decision-making procedure. That would lead to the conclusion that China-related decisions are more prone to vetoes despite possible normative socialisation processes in place. The next chapter will apply the five criteria as defined by Schimmelfennig and Thomas and test whether they were present during the four cases described in the table above.

4. Analysis – Part One

4.1. South China Sea

The **determinacy** criterion can be regarded as fulfilled: Since the territorial dispute in the South China Sea mainly concerns maritime claims and the specific arbitration case that the EU was planning to address in its declaration was tried at an arbitral tribunal constituted under the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, the uncontested institutionalised norm in question is the maintenance and preservation of international law. Article 3 (5) TEU states that “in its relations with the wider world, the Union shall [...] contribute to [...] the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter”.

The **precedent** criterion is also fulfilled: While there has been no previous statement on behalf of the EU made about another territorial dispute concerning China, precedents have been set with regards to other regions and cases, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The EU has made a statement condemning the undermining of territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Crimea (on 17 June 2015).¹⁰³ While the EU has not issued any statements with regards to other territorial disputes that involve China, it should be pointed out that the reason for this might be the “dormant” nature of these disputes makes new statements relatively unnecessary. Examples are, firstly, enclaves in Tibet as well as mountainous areas claimed by both Bhutan and China; secondly, disputed areas claimed by both India and China between Aksai Chin and Nepal; thirdly, the Senkaku Islands that are claimed by both Japan and China and fourthly, certain areas including Ladakh and the Trans-Karakoram Tracts claimed by India

¹⁰³ HR/VP on behalf of the EU, 2015

and China.¹⁰⁴ Since the European Union adheres to the “One China policy”,¹⁰⁵ there have also not been any statements arising from the political status of Taiwan. The statements with regards to Ukraine can be considered a precedent.

Following the coding of Schimmelfennig and Thomas, since both determinacy and precedent are coded positively, **relevance** is automatically deemed to be fulfilled.

Since this statement was adopted by all 28 EU governments and negotiated within the EU Institutions, the **forum** criterion is fulfilled.

The **publicity** criterion is fulfilled: The following search terms are used in order to determine publicity of the issue: “South China Sea”, “South China Sea arbitration”. The analysed time period lasts from January 1, 2011 until today. July 2016 was the month in which interest has peaked by far the most for the search term “South China Sea”, reaching an all-time high in worldwide search interest. Publicity therefore was clearly given exactly at the time of the statement published by the EU. The same can be observed for the search query “South China Sea arbitration”, also reaching its 100% peak in July 2016 (the second highest “peaks” only reached 9% of that in the months before and after July 2016).

Since all five criteria are fulfilled, this would suggest that entrapment should have been possible.

4.2. Torture of detained lawyers

The **determinacy** criterion is fulfilled: The EU has been regularly expressing its opposition to torture, for instance annually on 25 June, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture,¹⁰⁶ as well as on 10 October, the European and World Day against the Death

¹⁰⁴ The status of the Special Administrative Region Hong Kong (HKSAR) and the related conflict with mainland China can be regarded as dispute about political rights in HKSAR rather than a territorial dispute

¹⁰⁵ European Commission and HR/VP, 2019, p. 1

¹⁰⁶ HR/VP on behalf of the EU, 2019

Penalty.¹⁰⁷ While the European Convention on Human Rights bans torture, inhuman and degrading treatment within the European Union, the Council has also adopted guidelines to EU policy towards third countries on torture in 2001 (and revised them later in 2008, 2012 and 2019).¹⁰⁸ Within these guidelines it “calls on all States to fully comply with their human rights obligations” and continues to “strongly oppose and condemn the use of torture and other ill-treatment by state and non-state actors”.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the condemnation of and opposition against torture can be regarded as an uncontested norm.

The **precedent** criterion is fulfilled: As outlined in the “determinacy” criterion already, there is a regularity in the EU’s statements against torture and the death penalty. The EU has adopted statements on the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture in 2017, in 2018 as well as in 2019¹¹⁰ as well as on the occasion of the European and World Day against the death penalty in 2017, 2018 and 2019.¹¹¹

Since both determinacy and precedent are fulfilled, the criterion **relevance** is coded positive automatically.

The **forum** criterion is fulfilled and positive: The final statement with regards to the mistreatment of the human rights lawyers Li Heping, Wang Quanzhang and Xie Yang has been adopted by the Spokesperson¹¹² (for this, no prior consultation with the EUMS is required, albeit the statement is conferred less political clout).¹¹³ Before the adoption of this statement however, the issue has been consulted among all EUMS within the EU Institutions. During this process, Hungary was the only EUMS preventing the EU from adding its name to a letter that would have expressed concern about the situation of detained and tortured human rights

¹⁰⁷ HR/VP & Secretary General of the Council of Europe, 2019

¹⁰⁸ Council of the European Union, 2019

¹⁰⁹ Council of the European Union, 2019

¹¹⁰ European Council/Council of the EU, 2020

¹¹¹ European Council/Council of the EU, 2020

¹¹² European External Action Service, 2017

¹¹³ Generally, there are three types of statements the EEAS adopts: Statements by the Spokesperson, HR/VP Statements as well as HR/VP Statements on behalf of the EU27

lawyers in China.¹¹⁴

The **publicity** criterion is not fulfilled: The search terms analysed in the time period between 01 January 2012 and now are the names of the tortured lawyers “Xie Yang”, “Li Heping” and “Wang Quanzhang”¹¹⁵ as well as China’s police chief “Guo Shengkun”, to whom the letter of complaint was addressed as well as the terms “torture China” and “torture lawyers China” and “detained lawyers China”, “human rights lawyers China”. Interest for “Xie Yang” varied widely in the analysed period but was very limited overall. Compared to the search interest in the popular Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei, interest in the search term “Xie Yang” has reached maximum 2% of the search interest for Ai Weiwei at its peak. The same holds true for “Li Heping” and “Wang Quanzhang”. Also, none of the lawyers’ names have developed an extraordinarily high interest in February or March 2017 compared to the average interest. Interest in the term torture China has not peaked either in these two months, but rather stayed at an average level of interest in the topic. Interest in the search terms “torture lawyers China”, “detained lawyers China” and “human rights lawyers China” was so low in the overall time period that Google Trends does not disclose any data at all. Interest in “Guo Shengkun” was equally low in the analysed two months.

All criteria except for publicity are fulfilled in the “torture of detained lawyers” case. Since publicity is expected to promote entrapment but to undermine cooperative bargaining, and the criterion publicity is not fulfilled due to the lack of public attention, this would suggest that there was a relatively higher possibility for cooperative bargaining during the negotiation of this issue and a relatively lower possibility for entrapment.

¹¹⁴ Denyer, 2017

¹¹⁵ Under the assumption that the European institutions prioritize the importance of publicity in Europe rather than publicity within China itself, this analysis uses the romanized versions of the lawyers’ names instead of the Mandarin Chinese versions 谢阳 (Xie Yang), 李和平 (Li Heping), 王全璋 (Wang Quanzhang), 郭声琨 (Guo Shengkun)

4.3. Human Rights Record

The **determinacy** criterion is fulfilled: Ever since its foundation, the commitment to promote and protect human rights has been determined in the EU Treaties as well as binding legislation. Article 2 TEU states that the “Union is founded on the values of [...] respect for human rights” while Article 21 TEU explains that in its action on the international scene the EU “shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advice in the wider world”, including “the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. This commitment is reiterated in the TFEU (to which the Charter of Fundamental Rights is annexed), as well as in further secondary EU legislation.

Precedent is coded positively: The EU has raised awareness about the situation of human rights in China for several consecutive years before for over a decade.¹¹⁶ For instance, during the 39th session of the UNHRC, the EU has addressed issues in China such as “political re-education camps in Xinjiang”, “detentions and trials of human rights defenders”, “mistreatment and torture while in detention” and also calls for respecting “freedom of religion or belief or expression”.¹¹⁷

Since both determinacy and precedent are fulfilled, the criterion **relevance** is coded positive automatically.

The **forum** criterion is coded positive. All statements that the EU does within the UNHRC are previously agreed upon among all 27 EUMS through coordination in Brussels and Geneva. Consequently, while the platform in which the statement is published might be a UN body; the negotiations leading to the statement take place within the institutions of the EU.

The criterion **publicity** is not fulfilled: In order to find out how much publicity the UN

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2017

¹¹⁷ United Nations, 2018

Human Rights Council in June 2017 had, “United Nations Human Rights Council”, “Human Rights Council” as well as “UNHRC” will be the analysed search terms will be for the time period 01 January 2012 until 30 June 2020. “China human rights” will be used as further search term to find out how high the general interest in the issue was at the time of the UNHRC Summit in June 2017. Global interest in “United Nations Human Rights Council” has peaked in June 2018, but there has been only an average interest in June 2017. There also has not been any increased interest in the search terms “Human Rights Council” and “UNHRC” or “China human rights” in June 2017.¹¹⁸

Similar to the second case, all criteria except for publicity are fulfilled in the “Human Rights Record” case. Following the same logic, this would suggest that there was a higher possibility for cooperative bargaining and a lower possibility for entrapment.

4.4. Human Rights, International Law and Belt and Road Initiative

The **determinacy** criterion is fulfilled: The statement that was prepared by the EEAS would have called upon China to respect both human rights as well as international law and the principle of sovereign equality of states.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the draft would have prevented EUMS from including “propagandistic expressions pressed by China”¹²⁰ from any future bilateral agreement between an EUMS and China. Examples for this can be “community of common destiny” or “community of shared future for mankind”.¹²¹ These terms have not been included specifically in the draft, but a diplomat from the EEAS has confirmed that the EU is worried about “Chinese language” included in bilateral or multilateral agreements, such as UN

¹¹⁸ While the lack of an annual EU statement commemorating the Tiananmen Square massacre might not attract wider attention in national and international news and consequently the broader public, it will be noted by diplomats, politicians and officials familiar with the matter. This makes it relatively easy for EUMS to veto certain issues without having to justify this decision to the wider public and raises the question whether the “publicity” criterion plays an even more important role than in the framework applied here.

¹¹⁹ Magyari, 2018

¹²⁰ Panyi, 2019

¹²¹ Magyari, 2018

resolutions.¹²² These expressions are part of the so-called *Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era* and also have been incorporated into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China.¹²³ Including them into bilateral agreements would imply that the country signing the bilateral agreement with China conforms with the Chinese foreign policy doctrine derived from the so-called *Xi Jinping Thought*. The determinacy in the area of human rights and international law has been discussed in the previous cases already. Considering the fact that the use of propagandistic expressions by third countries to an extent that it would directly impact agreements of foreign policies made by EUMS or the EU as a whole is a relatively new development, it is difficult to find legislation proving the determinacy of the EU. However, the use of propagandistic expressions contradicts the principles of multilateralism and a rules-based international order, two values inherent to the EU.

The **precedent** criterion is fulfilled: Precedents with regards to human rights and international law have been discussed and found in the previous cases above already. While the circumstance that Chinese propaganda finds its way into bilateral treaties or into legislation adopted by international organisation is relatively new, the EU has taken a stance against propaganda and disinformation more in general. A resolution adopted in 2016 decided that the EU should use “strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties”.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the EEAS has introduced the project EUvsDisinfo in order to address disinformation by Russian pro-Kremlin media outlets.¹²⁵ The criterion precedent will therefore be coded positively.

Since both determinacy and precedent are fulfilled, the criterion **relevance** is coded positive automatically.

The draft has been debated within the institutional channels of the EEAS and therefore

¹²² Interview with an EEAS diplomat under the condition of anonymity

¹²³ Not to be confused with the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China

¹²⁴ European Parliament, 2016

¹²⁵ EU vs Disinfo, 2020

within the EU Institutions. **Forum** will consequently be coded positive.

Publicity is not fulfilled: In order to find out whether there has been high public awareness with regards to human rights or the international law in the context of China between 01 January 2013 and 30 June 2020, the search terms “China human rights”, “China international law”, “Belt and Road Initiative”¹²⁶, “One Belt One Road”, “OBOR”, “New Silk Road” will be analysed. While there has been a peak in search interest in May 2017, interest has quickly declined again and has reached an average level (this holds true for all six search terms analysed). Publicity has not reached any above-average levels.

Similar to the previous two cases, all criteria except from publicity are fulfilled. Therefore, this would again suggest that there was a higher possibility for cooperative bargaining and a (relatively) lower possibility for entrapment during the negotiations.

4.5. Summary

The first half of the analysis has shown that all four cases of negotiations would have fulfilled all the necessary criteria for normative socialisation processes such as entrapment or cooperative bargaining (and consequently a consensus) to be in place. Despite this – as outlined in Chapter 3.3. - all of the decisions have been either vetoed or watered down significantly. In one case it was a combination of both, where a decision has been vetoed on the (European) Council level and consequently have been adopted on the ambassadorial level later, depriving the statement of important political clout. As a consequence, this means that the logic of emerging social pressure to find European solutions that in all probability would convince critical EUMS of a more conciliatory stance instead of a disruptive stance, did not hold true for these four negotiations.

¹²⁶ The abbreviation “BRI” for the Belt and Road Initiative will not be used since related Google queries were primarily used in the context of an Indonesian Bank (having the same name). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that users interested in “BRI” would automatically search for the Belt and Road Initiative

Table 2: Schimmelfennig's and Thomas's criteria applied to China-related CFSP cases

Criterion⇒		Determinacy	Precedent	Relevance	Forum	Publicity	Predicts
Case⇓							
South China Sea	China	√	√	√	√	√	ENT ¹²⁷
							and COP ¹²⁸
Torture of detained lawyers	of	√	√	√	√	X	CBG
							more likely; ENT possible
Human Rights Record	Rights	√	√	√	√	X	CBG
							more likely; ENT possible
Human Rights, International Law and Belt and Road Initiative	Rights, International Law and Belt and Road Initiative	√	√	√	√	X	CBG
							more likely; ENT possible

¹²⁷ ENT = entrapment

¹²⁸ CBG = cooperative bargaining

5. Analysis – Part Two

This second half of the analysis will look into the bilateral relations of the vetoing countries Hungary, Greece and Croatia with China as well as other possible issue-specific reasons that could explain the vetoes. Ultimately, due to these vetoes, the normative power of the EU has suffered from not being able to speak with one voice on the aforementioned issues. The following subchapters will examine the bilateral relations of all three respective vetoing EUMS with China in order to test whether there is a causal link between the countries' bilateral relations with China and their vetoes during CFSP negotiations. In case such a link cannot be found, possible alternative explanations will be investigated. The analysis will not be limited to political relations but will also take into account trade and investments as well as aspects of cultural diplomacy such as the number of Confucius Institutes.

5.1. Sino-Hungarian relations

A previous analysis of all countries in the CEE region ranks Hungary second-best out of 16 countries when it comes to the quality of bilateral relations with China, after Poland.¹²⁹ Having recognized China first in 1949¹³⁰ (making Hungary one of the earliest countries to recognize the PRC only five days after its foundation),¹³¹ it is the one with the longest bilateral diplomatic relations out of the three analysed countries. While the latest stage of cooperation between the two countries has started to accelerate mainly in the decade following 2010 with introduction of the so called Hungarian “Eastern opening” policy in 2012 on the one hand as well as its overlap with the Chinese 17+1¹³² Cooperation that was founded and kicked off in Budapest in 2011,¹³³ Hungary has already opened up to China before that. This started right

¹²⁹ Liu, 2014, p. 29

¹³⁰ Chaffee, 1967, p. 335

¹³¹ Back then the socialist Hungarian People's Republic

¹³² Formerly 16+1, before Greece joined in 2019

¹³³ Kong, 2015, p. 171

after Hungary's EU accession in 2004 under the socialist Medgyessy government (2002-2004) during a time that coincided with the "large-scale expansion of Chinese companies abroad".¹³⁴ The Gyurcsány (2004-2009) and Orbán (2010-today) governments have continued with this policy.

The decade following 2010 brought about an increased cooperation between China and the CEE region in general. The rapprochement initiated by both sides aimed at fostering economic cooperation between China and countries in the CEE region. This was especially important after the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 to diversify geographic exports and trade patterns in favour of the emerging Asian markets.¹³⁵ The 17+1 Cooperation mainly serves an economic purpose and offers the Chinese leadership as well as 17 minor regional players to have access to each other on a regular basis.¹³⁶ EU institutions and Western European member states¹³⁷ however have criticised the forum as a "divide and rule"¹³⁸ strategy by China. This means that CEE countries are singled out and not regarded as common entity together with Western Europe. By dividing the EU into smaller groups, China's negotiating power is growing in relation to those smaller groups and individual countries that it cooperates with. In 2015, China and Hungary signed a "Memorandum of Understanding on Jointly Promoting the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road"¹³⁹ that commits to further integrating the Eurasian land mass and linking China's opening to the West with Hungary's opening to the East. Hungary is the first EUMS to sign such a Memorandum of Understanding with China on the Belt and Road Initiative.¹⁴⁰

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has warned the Hungarian Foreign Minister during

¹³⁴ Panyi, 2019

¹³⁵ Bernek, 2018, p. 122

¹³⁶ Matura, 2019, p. 391

¹³⁷ Matura, 2019

¹³⁸ Turcsányi, 2014

¹³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2015

¹⁴⁰ Chung, 2015

a 2019 state visit about China “gaining a bridgehead” in Hungary and that “Beijing’s handshake sometimes comes with strings, strings that will leave Hungary indebted both economically and politically”.¹⁴¹ A former Hungarian government official explained that the main problem from a security perspective is that “Budapest has opened the gates to Russian and Chinese influence to such a large extent that it has neither the ability nor the willingness to at some level keep under control the activities of Russian and Chinese state-owned companies in Hungary”.¹⁴²

While Chinese FDI transactions in the CEE region remain low (in absolute numbers) compared to Western Europe, Hungary is the country with the highest number of transactions in the group of the three analysed countries. In relative terms however, adjusted to population and economic power, these investments to Hungary can nevertheless have the potential to create dependencies. While EU and Chinese statistics claim that Chinese FDI amounts to around 600 million USD,¹⁴³ according to estimates the number is closer to 2,4 billion EUR¹⁴⁴ in the same 2000-2018 period. The reason for this discrepancy is that it is difficult to estimate an exact number of FDI inflows, since most of them flow through third countries such as tax havens¹⁴⁵ and are therefore not documented as Chinese investment.¹⁴⁶ 2,4 billion EUR in Hungary equals a per capita value of around 240 EUR, much lower than that of the UK (700 EUR), almost comparable to that of Germany (270 EUR), higher than that of France (210 EUR) and Greece (190 EUR) and much higher than the per capita values of the other Visegrád countries Poland (30 EUR), the Czech Republic (90 EUR) and Slovakia (20 EUR).¹⁴⁷ A newly planned high speed rail line project plays an important geostrategic role within the Belt and Road Initiative, as the railway line that is part of the so-called China-Europe Land-Sea Express

¹⁴¹ Lippman et al., 2019

¹⁴² Lippman et al., 2019

¹⁴³ Matura 2019, p. 392

¹⁴⁴ Hanemann et al., 2019

¹⁴⁵ Much of China’s investment inflows/outflows are transacted in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

¹⁴⁶ Matura, 2019, p. 392

¹⁴⁷ Own calculations using numbers from Hanemann et al., 2019 and current population numbers

Route connects Budapest with the Port of Piraeus in Greece.¹⁴⁸ The project has been criticised for its economic and practical infeasibility as well as its non-transparency as the government files on the project including a feasibility study have been classified by the Hungarian government for 10 years.¹⁴⁹ Despite the only recently accelerating new investments, the presence of China in Hungary on a socio-cultural level is not an extremely new phenomenon. The Chinese diaspora has a relatively strong presence in Hungary; 19,600 Chinese citizens living in Hungary represent the third-biggest foreign nationality in the country (after 30,850 Ukrainians and 22,150 Romanians) and consequently constitute the largest foreign nationality group of non-Europeans.¹⁵⁰ In 2019, Hungarian and Chinese delegations met in Budapest and agreed upon the opening of a new overseas campus in Budapest by the Shanghai-based Fudan University.¹⁵¹ There are five Confucius Institutes in Hungary, more than in any other country in the CEE region.¹⁵²

To sum up, Hungary is one of the EUMS within the CEE region that is taking the lead when it comes to an intensification of bilateral relations with China on a political, economic as well as societal level and its support for China on political issues has been described as “exception rather than the rule”¹⁵³ in the region. Out of all the vetoes that have become publicly known, numerous examples show that Hungary regularly avoids direct criticism of China and therefore prevents the EU from speaking on behalf of all of its member states. The close bond between the two countries is coinciding with a European Union that is critical of the deteriorating situation of the rule of law and voices calling for conditioning EU funds to the adherence of democracy and rule of law principles. Pro-China rhetoric and positions can also

¹⁴⁸ Li, 2019, p. 453

¹⁴⁹ Reuters, 2020

¹⁵⁰ Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2020

¹⁵¹ Fudan University, 2019

¹⁵² Karásková et al., 2020, p. 59

¹⁵³ Karásková et al., 2020, p. 33

help the Hungarian government to gain more leverage while negotiating with other EUMS¹⁵⁴ and allow the Orbán government to demonstrate that it has found a way to attract foreign investments from third countries (that are not at risk of being thoroughly scrutinized or of being withheld by China when criteria of good governance or the adherence to the rule of law are not sufficiently fulfilled anymore). All in all, Hungary's amicable relations to and its potentially looming dependence on China can offer a reasonable explanation and motivation for the Hungarian vetoes.

5.2. Sino-Greek relations

On the initiative of the former Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (2015-2019), Greece has joined¹⁵⁵ the 16+1 Cooperation in 2019.¹⁵⁶ The current Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis¹⁵⁷ has commented China's rise by announcing that "Greece recognises China not only as a great power but also as a country that has won for itself, not without difficulty, a leading geostrategic economic and political role".¹⁵⁸ Having invested nearly half a billion EUR,¹⁵⁹ the Chinese state-owned shipping and logistics services supplier company COSCO (China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company) now owns 51% of the Port of Piraeus, Europe's sixth-busiest container port¹⁶⁰ and the Mediterranean's biggest container port, a signature investment in Greece that Xi Jinping refers to as "the head of the dragon",¹⁶¹ indicating that it represents China's gateway to Europe. Saving around 7-11 days¹⁶² of sailing and "almost \$2m per trip", the location of the port has a geostrategic advantage, estimates showing that around 10% of shipments from China

¹⁵⁴ Šimalčík, 2018

¹⁵⁵ Greece has been an observer (along with Austria) since 2015 already

¹⁵⁶ Hu, 2019; Zhen, 2019

¹⁵⁷ In office since 2019

¹⁵⁸ Psaropoulos, 2019

¹⁵⁹ Horowitz & Alderman, 2017

¹⁶⁰ Eurostat, 2020

¹⁶¹ Syam, 2019

¹⁶² Li, 2019, p. 454

to Europe are handled there.¹⁶³ Blocking this privatisation was one of Alexis Tsipras's campaign promises and has been initially fulfilled by his Syriza government (2015-2019),¹⁶⁴ indicating that the policies favourable to Chinese investment are a relatively recent phenomenon. The about-face with regards to Chinese investment however occurred soon and was likely caused by both pressure and lobbying on behalf of the Chinese ambassador to Greece as well as Tsipras' visit to the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing and the signing of new investment memorandums.¹⁶⁵ Highest-level state visits between the countries are a regularity and have already taken place before already before the current Mitsotakis government, for instance when Xi Jinping met Alexis Tsipras in China both in 2017 and 2019.¹⁶⁶

China's special attention to Greece has coincided with a period of austerity measures imposed by the EU Institutions and the International Monetary Fund. Chinese investment was regarded as an attractive alternative model to the policy of retrenchment advocated by Western institutions; the former head of the Greek Parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee and Syriza member Costas Douzinas stated that "while the Europeans are acting towards Greece like medieval leeches, the Chinese keep bringing money".¹⁶⁷ Former Greek Finance Minister Varoufakis has also recommended to "stop demonising China" with regards to Europe's unease towards Chinese investments coming to Europe, further arguing that these investments take place because of the monetary and fiscal policies that have previously "depressed the European economy".¹⁶⁸ Chinese FDI transactions with Greece amount to 1,9 billion EUR in the 2000-2018 period.¹⁶⁹

The Greek reluctance to condemn China's actions that are in violation of international

¹⁶³ Psaropoulos, 2019

¹⁶⁴ Smith, 2015

¹⁶⁵ Horowitz & Alderman, 2017

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2020b

¹⁶⁷ Horowitz & Alderman, 2017

¹⁶⁸ Valero, 2019

¹⁶⁹ Hanemann et al., 2019

law is especially puzzling¹⁷⁰ in view of the fact that Greece regularly calls upon its neighbour Turkey to “respect international maritime law and human rights”,¹⁷¹ for instance together with the other EU Foreign Ministers¹⁷² or as part of the group of Southern European Union countries (the so-called EuroMed 7). While China has “never explicitly asked Greece for support on the human rights vote or on other sensitive issues”,¹⁷³ some Greek politicians and officials subscribe to the view that this is not necessary and their allegiance with regards to such sensitive votes has shifted towards Chinese positions, since China’s actions in the form of investments were more favourable to Greece than the EU’s actions in the form of austerity measures. Other Greek officials, however, insist that their loyalty to the EU is not affected by these investments and certain deviating positions of Greece merely reflect changing geopolitical realities that the rise of China carries with it.¹⁷⁴ When Chinese conglomerate Fosun International lost the bid to take over a major Greek insurance company against a Dutch partner of the Greek-American consortium Calamos Investments after the intervention of US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, this was held up as an example of China only having very limited influence on Greece.¹⁷⁵ There are three Confucius Institutes in Greece.¹⁷⁶

In summary, it can be stated that while the role of China in Greece is not as influential as in Hungary, it is currently increasing (and is stronger than in Croatia). With its geographic location as maritime gateway to Europe, the willingness of Greece to adopt political positions favourable to China on the European level as well as a high unemployment rate of around 15%¹⁷⁷ that makes the country receptive to investments from abroad, have elevated the bilateral relations to a relatively high level. Overall, the reasoning of Greece to be receptive to Chinese

¹⁷⁰ From a Greek point of view, the geographic proximity to Turkey and hence the different risk perception might however explain this course of action, as demonstrated by the recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean

¹⁷¹ Psaropoulos, 2019

¹⁷² European Council/Council of the EU, 2020b

¹⁷³ Horowitz & Alderman, 2017

¹⁷⁴ Horowitz & Alderman, 2017

¹⁷⁵ Horowitz & Alderman, 2017

¹⁷⁶ Karásková et al., 2020, p. 59

¹⁷⁷ Reuters, 2020b

investments appears to be motivated by economic reasons (and facilitated by the country's geographic location that allows the country to be a gateway between the European market and maritime trade from and to the Indo-Pacific region) rather than mostly political ones as in the case of Hungary.

5.3. Sino-Croatian relations

As opposed to Hungary and Greece, due to its late independence in 1991, the official establishment of diplomatic relations¹⁷⁸ between China and Croatia took place in 1992. It is the only one of the three countries where Xi Jinping has not yet been to a state visit so far; when it comes to diplomatic relations, most of the time Premier Li Keqiang has been representing the Chinese side.¹⁷⁹ Li's 2019 visit to Zagreb was the first time a Chinese Premier visited Croatia. During his meeting with Prime Minister Andrej Plenković¹⁸⁰, Li announced to open a “diamond period” in the relations between the two countries.¹⁸¹ In general, an initially rather passive stance with regards to foreign policy beyond Europe, the intensity of Sino-Croatian relations has been limited for a long time, up until the most recent increasing involvement of China (through the BRI since 2013 and the 17+1 since 2012) in the CEE region.¹⁸² These cooperation projects have been described as “hub and spokes” models comparable to US alliances in East Asia; in this case, China is “taking the lead in ‘multilateral bilateralism’”.¹⁸³ This is also reflected in Liu's 2014 analysis that ranks Croatia tenth out of 16 analysed countries in the CEE region when it comes to the overall investment environment, placing it only in the

¹⁷⁸ While Yugoslavia has established diplomatic relations in 1949 already, Croatia had to develop their new diplomatic relations after their independence in 1991 and recognition by the UN in 1992

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2020a

¹⁸⁰ In office since 2016

¹⁸¹ EURACTIV Network, 2019; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019

¹⁸² Bakota, 2020, p. 157; Karásková et al., 2020, p. 14

¹⁸³ Karásková et al., 2020, p. 32

mediocre category.^{184 185}

A possible explanation for Croatia opposing the criticism directed at China when it comes to its maritime claims can be its own border dispute with Slovenia over Piran Bay in the Adriatic Sea.¹⁸⁶ Countries seemingly tend to transfer domestic action patterns onto their foreign policies under the assumption that they will be expected to act consistently in both their domestic and foreign policies¹⁸⁷. In this case, the Permanent Court of Arbitration has ruled that Slovenia should be able to directly access international waters in the north Adriatic Sea by using a designated corridor crossing waters that belong to Croatia. Croatia, however, announced that it would not implement the ruling.

Chinese FDI transactions with Croatia amount to 0,3 billion EUR in the 2000-2018 period.¹⁸⁸ With an annual GDP of around 52 billion EUR (2018 data),¹⁸⁹ the overall share of FDI from China is extremely slight. It appears that while Sino-Croatian cooperation is slowly increasing, the bilateral relations between the two countries do not play as a decisive role in the country's foreign policymaking as in the case of Greece and Hungary. The prestige project of Sino-Croatian cooperation is the Pelješac bridge project in the South Dalmatia region, which is implemented by a Chinese construction company and of which 85% is financed by EU funds.¹⁹⁰ Once constructed, it will ensure territorial continuity with the majority of Dubrovnik-Neretva County, which is, as of now, an exclave separated from the Croatian "mainland" by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides from this project, Chinese investors have expressed interest in "modernizing and building railways, buying a hotel complex and a concession for a freight

¹⁸⁴ Liu, 2014, p. 29

¹⁸⁵ Since the study was conducted in 2014, this might have significantly changed already, because closer Sino-Croatian relations only started very recently

¹⁸⁶ Gotev, 2016

¹⁸⁷ Lezová 2013; For instance, countries home to minorities could be expected to give their own minorities a significant amount of autonomy or minority rights if the government of the country recognizes Kosovo

¹⁸⁸ Hanemann et al., 2019

¹⁸⁹ The World Bank, 2020

¹⁹⁰ European Commission, 2017; Xinhuanet, 2019

terminal [...] [in] Rijeka”.¹⁹¹

Croatia has established cooperation on a sub-national level on the level of cities or regions.¹⁹² There is one Confucius Institute in Croatia.¹⁹³ Overall, the deepening bilateral relations between China and Croatia are still evolving and it might be too early to say what impact they will have on Croatia’s willingness to find consensus during the CFSP policymaking process. Since the veto on the South China Sea is the only publicly known occasion of Croatia representing a Chinese political position on the European level and this decision might as well be explained by its domestic Piran Bay maritime dispute with Slovenia, based on this one vetoed case alone it cannot be clearly stated that bilateral relations with China have induced Croatia to deliberately alter its foreign policy positions.

¹⁹¹ Prtoric, 2020; Žabec, 2018

¹⁹² Karásková et al., 2020, p. 30

¹⁹³ Karásková et al., 2020, p. 59

6. Conclusions

Summarizing, it can be said that the major global geopolitical shift that is caused by the rise of China and the relative decline of the United States has not failed to leave its mark on the foreign policies of the EU and her member states. While this is an ongoing process, policies in some EUMS already clearly show what it can mean for the EU if countries take decisions at the expense of European cohesion with the aim to flatter the Chinese leadership in the hope of getting investments and a favourable treatment from China in return. This building of amicable relations with China can also derive from purely self-interest-based motives (for example if an EUMS wants to be equipped with bargaining power during negotiations with its EU partners). Ultimately, the normative power of the EU is suffering from not always being able to speak with one voice on China-related policies.

At the micro-level, the aim of this thesis was to show whether vetoes of certain EUMS on China-related foreign policy issues could be explained with those member states' deepening relations to China. There is no universal answer to this question for all EUMS; while Hungary and Greece show a regularity in aligning their political stances with China's positions, the analysis of Croatia might indicate that the veto could have been also a coincidence, mainly motivated by domestic factors. Investigating such other causes for a diminished impact of normative socialisation processes on CFSP policymaking can be a way to generate more knowledge in this field through further research in order to contribute to a more efficient EU foreign policy making.

The reasons of EUMS to streamline their foreign policies more in favour of the Chinese leadership are multifaceted: Most importantly, this development reflects the current changing geopolitical circumstances described above and the increasing role that China plays in global governance. In the CEE region (as well as in Greece), this is exemplified by the Belt and Road

Initiative and the 17+1 Cooperation. By attempting a balancing act between their cooperation with their traditional partners such as EU or NATO countries on the one hand, and the rising power China (and sometimes Russia) on the other hand, some EUMS in the CEE region attempt to get “the best of both worlds” (for instance comparable values of per-capita FDI from China to those of Germany and France). A second factor are investments by China in the EUMS, while in some countries they are urgently needed for economic reasons, in other countries they are used to demonstrate a close cooperation that can be an additional or possibly even alternative source of investment to investments from EU Institutions, such as from the European Regional Development Fund. By refraining from the use of (currently negotiated) conditionality criteria that would require factors such as good governance, complying with the rule of law or with standards for democracy to be fulfilled, the influence of China on the region indirectly supports styles of governing that have departed from these standards and experience democratic backsliding. Thirdly, oftentimes the issues on which the EU would announce its position and the fora in which these statements are made lack the scrutiny of a broader general public. Virtually all analysed cases, except from the South China Sea case, were unknown to or not actively monitored by the public (at least when it comes to online searches). This makes it relatively easy for EUMS to veto certain issues without having to justify this decision to the wider public. It also raises the question whether the criterion “publicity” plays an even more important role than in the framework applied to this analysis, since most of the cases were characterized by a lack of it. In the long run, the vetoes diminish the role of the EU as a normative power, as it is not fully able to project and protect the very values that it is built on abroad anymore.

While *de jure* the use of vetoes clearly is an option, previous literature on normative institutionalism would have predicted that socialization among European leaders is so strong, that *de facto* it is unthinkable that EUMS use vetoes instead of constructively working towards

a common solution and display an ability to compromise in the spirit of a consensus-seeking attitude. In fact, all criteria that are believed to increase the probability for such socialization processes to be in place, were in place in all four analysed cases. The fact that despite this, vetoes occurred, shows that the role of socialization in these specific circumstances is not as important as thought. Consequently, the benefits of cooperating with China have to be bigger than the drawbacks arising from such vetoes (if there are any). Even though there are exceptions to this and in some occasions all EUMS were able to find a consensus and a unified stance, the current legal basis in the Treaties (Art. 24 TEU) that requires unanimity for all decisions in CFSP policymaking will nevertheless have the potential to diminish the EU's capacity to act cohesively in the long run. Consequently, it might be helpful to reconsider the extension of QMV voting to CFSP, an idea that was already introduced within the framework of the broader debate on the future of the European Union and its institutional structure. A qualified-majority based decision-making could also eliminate pressure from EUMS that at the moment might have incentives on the one hand to individuate by the means of "pre-emptive obedience" with regards to China and on the other hand to use their potential veto as a bargaining chip against a majority of other EUMS by demonstrating their alternative political and investment partners.

Ultimately, the question boils down to whether Europeans would like to live in a rather intergovernmental EU with strong EUMS or whether they are willing to exchange a bit more of their national sovereignty (especially of the sensitive policy area foreign policy) for a stronger unified voice and a more influential EU abroad that can stand up for its values.

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