Countering the Dragon

A Theoretical Approach to the European Union's Strategy for China

Jolien Iris de Jong
550151

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Haverland

Second reader: Dr. Onderco

International Public Management and Policy Thesis

Erasmus University Rotterdam

10 July 2020

Word count: 20000

Acknowledgements

I intended to write this thesis on a topic that combined my bachelor in International Studies and my masters in International Public Management. A combination of what I knew about China, with what I learned about, among other things, the European Union. China became more of a passive topic in this thesis. Instead, I got to write about the European Union in depth. The experience was enlightening, but also challenging, laborious and demanding. It would be foolish to assume it would be any different. I learned a lot about what to do (and what not to do), knowledge that I will take with my to the next essay or thesis.

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Dr. Haverland. His method of asking questions to which he knew the answer, but I did not, never failed to get me to new realisations. I would also like to thank Dr. Onderco for his comments as a second reader. The comments of these two professors were not only perfectly complementary, but also pushed me to improve my thesis beyond what I thought I could do. A final thanks goes to my dear parents, for always having a cup of tea ready for a break, and being a listening ear for complaints.

Executive Summary

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the European Union (EU) and China in 1975, EU-China relations have grown to encompass annual summits, regular ministerial meetings and more than 60 sectoral dialogues. In 2016, the EU adopted the Joint Communication *Elements for a New EU Strategy on China* and the *Council Conclusions*. These documents constitute the EU's strategy for China. However, the EU's strategy documents leave some questions unanswered, most important of which concerns: what is the EU's position on China? This thesis analyses the preference formation of actors, and the content of the EU's strategy for China from a theoretical perspective.

The research design applied to study this case is congruence analysis. Congruence analysis is an explanatory small-N research design which aims to find empirical evidence for the theoretical relevance or explanatory leverage of a particular theory, in comparison to other theories. The research design employs three theories: realism, liberalism and constructivism, to find out which theory provides the best framework to understand the EU's strategy. These three theories are selected because they each possess a robust set of core assumptions for foreign policy most likely to provide explanations for this case. The three theories provide expectations regarding the preference formation and the final product of the strategy. Whereas the interests-related propositions concern themselves with the preference formation of relevant actors, content-related propositions are about the textual content of the *Council Conclusions*.

The empirical section of this thesis looks at the formation of the preferences of the member states first. Realism's expectation that member states are protective of their sovereignty is somewhat matched by the empirical observations. Liberalism's explanation of domestic preferences, especially those of business and industry, provides a better explanation of the preference formation of member states. A focus on human rights and rule of law issues seems to lack from the EU's interests, unlike constructivism expected.

The second section of the empirical analysis looks at the content of the EU's strategy for China, the *Council Conclusions* document. Against the expectations of constructivism, the *Council Conclusions* focus little to the improvement of China's human rights and rule of law. Furthermore, the document devotes less attention to normative issues, in favour of trade and investment issues. Realism and liberalism prove equally capable to provide explanations for phenomena in EU-China relations, such as the EU response to the Belt and Road Initiative. However, liberalism's focus on domestic preferences and economic interdependence explains why the EU's strategy focuses on economic issues. Furthermore, liberalism predicts that speaking with a unified voice, rather than as 28 member states, is a challenge in EU-China relations that the EU seeks to overcome. This thesis argues that liberalism provides the best framework for understanding the case.

List of Abbreviations

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BDI	Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAI	Comprehensive Agreement on Investment
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCC	Committee on Climate Change
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Countries
CFC	Comité France-Chine
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
FIDM	Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRVP	High Representative/Vice President
IGFM	Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte
MEDEF	Mouvement des Entreprises de France
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MES	Market Economy Status
NPE	Normative Power Europe
P2P	People-to-People
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAC-F	Réseau Action Climat France
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

List of Tables

Contents

1. Introduction

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the European Union (EU) and China in 1975, EU-China relations have grown to encompass annual summits, regular ministerial meetings and more than 60 sectoral dialogues (EEAS, 2019). In 2003, the EU and China elevated their ties to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership', to broaden and deepen cooperation (Maher, 2016). The most recent high-level joint document guiding this partnership is called the *EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*, signed by both the EU and China in 2013 (EEAS, 2013). The 2020 Strategic Agenda can be called a 'bilateral' strategy; produced and signed jointly, and implemented through the comprehensive strategic partnership itself.

On the other hand, the EU and China both have 'unilateral' strategies for each other, which state strategic goals for interaction. Two documents constitute the EU's current strategy for China. First, the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP) and the European Commission published the Joint Communication *Elements for a New EU Strategy on China* (European Commission, 2016). This document contains the most information on the EU's strategy. The *Council Conclusions EU Strategy on China* officially adopts the *Elements for a New EU Strategy*, with the addition of some conclusions made by the Council (Council of the European Union, 2016a). This document is the most official piece of documentation. The EU's strategy builds on the following areas of cooperation: peace and security, trade and investment, sustainable growth and development and people-to-people exchanges (European Commission, 2016).

Yet, the EU's strategy for China is puzzling. EU-China relations do not compare to, for example, US-China relations. The US-China relationship consists of conflict, concerns over the distribution of economic and military capabilities and security against the backdrop of possible though not inevitable war (Allison, 2017). The EU's official strategy documents leave several questions unanswered. How did the strategy come into place, and what was the influence of the EU member states? What does the EU want from the EU-China partnership, and why? How does the EU envision achieving these goals? How does the EU respond to the challenges it faces in cooperation with China? In short, what is the EU's position on China?

1.1 Research Question

Three theories are most likely to shed light on the EU's puzzling relations with China. These theories are realism, liberalism and constructivism. The core elements of each of these theories match empirical observations from the EU's relationship with China. For example, realism focuses on security and survival. Although the EU is not a military power, it considers its security in relations with third countries (Seeberg, 2009). Liberalism focuses on economic gains and takes the preferences of the

domestic level as central to state behaviour. In relations with China, economic gains are certainly central to cooperation (Aggarwal and Newland, 2015). Lastly, constructivism takes ideas and identities as central to states in international relations. The EU may be called a normative power. One way of exercising this power is by including human rights clauses in trade agreements (Sjursen, 2006). The research question of this thesis applies each of the three theories to the case of the EU's strategy for China. From the abstraction of these theories, propositions can be formulated and tested against empirical observations. The research question of this thesis is the following:

Which theory provides a better framework for explaining the European Union's China strategy, realism, liberalism or constructivism?

This question employs theories of international relations as theories of foreign policy to understand the 2016 strategy for China. Expectations provided by theories are helpful tools to make sense of the complicated policy processes of the European Union. In the following section, the scientific and social relevance of such an approach is discussed.

1.2 Relevance

1.2.1 Scientific Relevance

The scientific relevance of this approach lies both in its research design, and its case study. Whereas many articles have been written about various aspects of the EU-China strategic partnership (Maher, 2016; Michalski and Pan, 2017), much less has been written on the EU's development of a unilateral strategy for China. Previous research on this topic is also predominantly normative. An empirical approach using one or more case studies may produce results that can be generalised across other applications of the three theories, and a format for research that can be used in other EU external relations issues as well. Connecting the EU's strategy for China to international relations theory can also shed light on EU external action in general. This thesis uses congruence analysis, an approach that uses the theoretical expectations of two or more theories and tests these in the empirical world to find out which theory has the strongest explanatory leverage in comparison to the other theory or theories. The use of this research design contributes to the understanding of the case, but more importantly, to the development of the theories. Such an approach, using realism, liberalism and constructivism has yet to be applied to EU-China relations.

1.2.2 Societal Relevance

Aside from contributions to the academic field of research on EU external action, looking into the EU's relations with China is particularly relevant to European policymakers and European citizens alike. The EU is increasingly affected by what goes on in China. Good economic relations with, and a peaceful rise

to great power by China is therefore in the interest of the EU. However, the EU faces challenges in its relationship with China, such as normative differences regarding human rights, economic non-reciprocity and Chinese projects in the EU such as the 16+1 Initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative. For these reasons, the position of the EU towards China, and the strategies used by the EU to steer EU-China relations in a positive direction are therefore important for the entirety of the Union. European citizens are not just passively affected by the relationship with China. China is a 'hot topic' for policymakers and in the media. China appears often as a negative, dangerous or unpredictable power. The human rights abuses in Tibet and the Xinjiang province of China, the potential dangers of the 5G network and the overall control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over press freedom and free speech are some examples. China's growing economic and political influence along the Silk Route and in Africa has also caused suspicion. In short, European policymakers and European citizens may be interested and potentially affected by what the EU does, wants and gets from relations with China. The research question of this thesis contributes to the societal understanding of EU-China relations. Finally, the research question allows for the submitting policy recommendations based on the theoretical findings.

2. Literature Review

To understand the EU's China strategy, it is vital to understand the relationship between the EU and China. The following literature review explores academic literature on EU-China relations, their partnerships in various policy areas and the problems in EU-China relations that have arisen in the past years.

2.1 Introduction to EU-China Partnership

Richard Maher (2016) paints a troubling picture of the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership. In his article, *The Elusive EU-China Strategic Partnership*, Maher argues that the partnership, which was announced in 2003, has lost most of its original raisons d'être. Back in 2003, the EU hoped that deepening the cooperation with China would be a catalyst for political and economic liberalisation, an effective counterweight against Bush's United States, and a way to show the EU's relevance on the world stage. Instead, China became more powerful on its own terms and the EU failed to build a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). On top of that, the EU's and China's interests were no longer compatible in various areas, creating discord in the strategic partnership. Maher names three impediments to the current strategic partnership: clashing political values, clashing geopolitical interests and clashing visions of world order. These impediments are more problematic for the EU than for China. China no longer views the EU as a political heavyweight and knows that economically the EU needs China more than vice-versa. As a result, China prefers to deal with individual member states (Maher, 2016).

Despite difficulties, the EU and China have made strides in their ever-closer cooperation. In their article, Michalski and Pan (2017) aim to explain the relationship between the EU and China in terms of social interaction using role theory. This theory argues that interaction between states in the international system is a game of socialisation in which states negotiate and form their roles in the international system (Michalski and Pan, 2017). The role of China in this situation is mainly that of a rising power, while the EU's role is mainly that of a normative power. Michalski and Pan argue that after some turbulence between 2006 and 2009, the EU and China have come a role equilibrium, albeit an unstable one. Each side continues to project their norms onto the other to strengthen its role, in exchange for the respect of the other's fundamental identity. Even if this means that projecting norms contradicts respecting the identity of the other. For example, the EU as a normative power projects the protection of human rights as part of its role, but must respect China's sovereignty which often includes human rights violations during internal conflicts in the People's Republic. As a result, the EU cannot fully enact its role (Michalski and Pan, 2017). This corroborates with Maher's statement that clashing political values continue to impede deeper cooperation in the EU-China strategic partnership.

It must be acknowledged that the Michalski and Pan article lacks room for other explanations or other theories. As a result, their analysis may miss observations that are better explained by another theory. The research design of this thesis includes multiple theories, which provides opportunities for comparison.

2.2 EU-China Policy Cooperation

The EU-China strategic partnership comprises many policy areas in which cooperation between the EU and China takes place, for example within the format of a policy dialogue, working group or task force. In this section, I discuss some areas of cooperation in the EU-China strategic partnership.

In *The Politics of EU-China Economic Relations* (2016), Farnell and Crookes assess the political factors that played a role in the stalling of the EU-China strategic partnership in economic policy areas such as trade, investment, innovation and research and common economic challenges such as climate change and energy security. Like Maher (2016), they argue that the strategic partnership has not resulted in the broadening and deepening of cooperation beyond dialogues and mutual understanding (Farnell and Crookes, 2016). The EU and China face similar economic challenges such as ageing workforces, and have similar policy goals, such as the promotion of innovation. However, political differences, between the EU and China and within the EU and China, hamper economic cooperation. Political obstacles in China are the absence of rule of law in the economic sector, the nationalistic view of economic management, the political control of the CCP over key sectors through state-owned enterprises, and the uncertainty of economic reform. On the other hand, the political obstacles in the EU are the absence of a clear strategy towards China and other priorities than China such as post-2008 economic policy.

Holzer and Zhang (2008) discuss EU-China climate change and energy security cooperation and aim to answer the question of why, despite potential mutual gains, cooperation has been fairly limited in this area. Holzer and Zhang mention that EU-China cooperation on climate and energy tends to limit itself to common policy initiatives, conferences and workshops. The transfer of clean energy technologies does not seem to take place. The prisoner's dilemma sheds light on the dilemma, as the lack of trust between China and the EU causes uncooperative behaviour. China wants cheap access to European clean energy technology. The EU wants an economic compensation for its technology without having its markets flooded by Chinese competitors who have reverse engineered European technology and are now selling it cheaper. However, China can default the EU by reverse-engineering the technology and become a competitive exporter. Therefore, the EU remains too hesitant to transfer technology to China. Although on paper, the EU-China strategic partnership aims to further its climate change and energy security cooperation, the transfer of technology has yet to come forth (Holzer and Zhang, 2008).

Political cooperation mainly takes place within the EU-China Political Dialogue. In this area of cooperation, normative differences are especially prominent (Men, 2011). Jing Men argues that differences in the understanding of human rights and sovereignty cause difficulties in the EU-China political and human rights dialogues. The EU's approach to human rights is that they are universal and indivisible, and their protection is an important part of EU internal and external policy. The EU's interventionism for the sake of promoting human rights or improving a grave human rights situation in a third country implies a less strict notion of sovereignty. In China, human rights are seen as group rights that can only be enjoyed under national independence and sovereignty. Human rights violations that occur in China are therefore an internal matter. Thus, the EU's approach of a normative power often clashes with the Chinese principles of non-interference in political and human rights dialogues, yielding very little results. Men notes that the human rights dialogue only continues to exist because China can use its existence to deflect criticism, and the EU holds onto it because the dialogue is the only human rights policy instrument it has (Men, 2011).

Lastly, Dorussen et al. (2018) analyse what factors explain the level of security cooperation between the EU and China. Dorussen et al. include both interest-driven explanations and experience-driven explanations. In EU-China cooperation, interest-driven cooperation refers to the security areas in which both the EU and China have interests, for example non-proliferation. Experience-driven cooperation refers to areas of security cooperation in which experience with cooperation encouraged the deepening cooperation in that domain. An example of experience-based cooperation is the deepening of EU-China civil protection cooperation after the initial experience of cooperation following the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008. Realism and liberalism provide competing explanations of the interest-driven cooperation. Constructivism and institutionalism compete in the area of experience-based cooperation. Dorussen et al. argue that cooperation based on the alignment of interests is better explained by liberalism. Liberalism predicted that cooperation based on shared interests presents opportunities of cooperation across many domains. Cooperation based on experience is best explained by institutionalism, which predicted that this type of cooperation is constrained to specific domains (Dorussen et al., 2018).

2.3 Complications in Recent EU-China Relations

The previous two sections already mention various problems in EU-China relations. As Maher (2016) mentions, these impediments are more problematic for the EU than for China. In this section, I discuss the most prominent challenges to EU-China relations, which are popular topics in academic literature.

Chang and Pieke (2017) describe the shifting Chinese views of Europe and China's partnership with the EU. Chang and Pieke used interviews with researchers, academics, policymakers and diplomats to find out how Chinese official perception of Europe had changed in recent years. Chinese

interviewees saw the EU as increasingly less capable to deal with the problems it is facing, starting with the Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis, terrorist attacks, growing nationalist sentiments and the Brexit. The problems plaguing the EU have exposed serious political and economic issues. Without the political and economic strength, it is becoming more difficult for the EU to exercise its power as a normative actor as well. Moreover, new types of cooperation with Europe emerged. For example, sub-regional cooperation partnerships which target some individual EU member states. China is bypassing the EU to deal with individual member states, which increases the concern that China is attempting to undermine the EU's unity and 'divide-and-rule' (Chang and Pieke, 2017, pg. 324). In short, the relationship between the EU and China is increasingly out of balance, which makes it more difficult for the EU to enact its China policy (Chang and Pieke, 2017).

The EU is also confronted by China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is an initiative based on Chinese investment and leadership, aimed at creating economic corridors from China across the Eurasian continent. Zhao Minghao argues that on the one hand, the BRI presents opportunities for EU-China relations, for deepening trade and investment ties and advancing joint economic growth and structural reforms. On the other hand, the BRI faces significant challenges due to a trust deficit in EU-China relations. EU officials fear a 'Chinese Marshall Plan' and geopolitical intentions behind the BRI. The EU also suspects 'divide-and-rule' tactics that may harm the European unity. There are also normative differences, laws and lack of coordination mechanisms that complicate cooperation (Zhao, 2016).

The same worry prevails in discussions about the 16+1 Initiative. The 16+1 Initiative refers to a multilateral framework for cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) (Song and Pavlićević, 2019). Song and Pavlićević discuss how the 16+1 framework fits into the wider Chinese method to multilateralism. On first glance, the 16+1 framework for cooperation is a success, and provides investment into infrastructure in the CEEC region. However, the 16+1 Initiative runs into some obstacles. There is a gap in strategic objectives between China and the CEEC. Heterogeneity within the CEE region makes a singular 16+1 approach impossible. Lastly, the EU's response to the 16+1 format is concerned and suspicious about its motives. Although China asserts the 16+1 Initiative is sub-regional cooperation under China-EU regional cooperation, the EU is still apprehensive and worries that some EU 16+1 members may put their bilateral relation with China in front of EU-China relations, resulting in a fractured EU policy towards China (Song and Pavlićević, 2019).

In short, various challenges make EU-China relations increasingly problematic. The EU's strategy will likely anticipate and address some of these challenges.

This literature review examined the field of research on EU-China relations, their strategic partnership, some of the policy areas in which cooperation takes place and some challenges to EU-China relations.

It has become apparent in this literature review that empirical research in this field are scarce. This thesis aims to contribute to the discussion about EU-China relations through a theoretical approach. The following chapter reviews the core assumptions of realism, liberalism and constructivism, their application to EU external action, and some theoretical expectations.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the theoretical framework, the three theories that are part of the congruence analysis are discussed. For each theory, I review its core assumptions, as well as applications of these theories to EU external action by scholars. Finally, this chapter specifies some expectations for each theory regarding the case study of the EU's China strategy.

3.1 Realism

3.1.1 Core Assumptions

The core ideas of realism about power, the critique of idealism and the concept of anarchy can be traced back to thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes. With these older concepts are the base, twentieth-century political thinkers such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau contributed to a realist theory of international relations which we may now call 'classical realism' (Keohane, 1986). The premise of classical realism is that the structure of the system results from behaviours inherent to human nature (Morgenthau, 1978). Interests, in this theory, are defined in terms of power. International relations, as a result of human nature, are a constant struggle in which power is the "immediate aim" (Morgenthau, 1978, pg. 29). Morgenthau makes two notes, the first is that power is not intrinsic and absolute but measured relative to the power of others. The second is that the struggle for power happens both domestically and internationally, the difference being the structures of these two realms. Lack of hierarchy in the international realm makes the struggle for power more unstable and violent than in the domestic realm (Morgenthau, 1978, pg. 42). States' ambitions to gain more power cause conflict with other states, especially if one state gains more power than all the others. For that reason, states engage in balance-of-power policies to ensure stability, albeit precarious, and prevention from being dominated by a larger power (Morgenthau, 1978).

Classical realism has several sub-schools and derivations, from which neorealism is the most prominent in the study of international relations and foreign policy. Whereas human nature is the core of behaviour according to classical realism, neorealism rather focuses on behaviour caused by the structure of the international system (Waltz, 1979). The following five assumptions about the structure of the international system result in patterns of behaviour between states.

First, realism assumes that the international system is anarchic. In the international system, there is no such government or central authority above the state level (Mearsheimer, 1995). Second, states inherently possess some offensive military capacity, considering they have the monopoly on violence. The army, weaponry but also the population itself can be used to harm another state. This means that states see other states as potentially dangerous (Mearsheimer, 1995). Third, there is no certainty that another state will not use its offensive military capability against them. Although states

can have good relations, intentions can change quickly which means the ally of today can be the enemy of tomorrow (Mearsheimer, 1995). Fourth, the primary goal of the state is the preservation of sovereignty and thus the survival of the state as a state (Mearsheimer, 1995). States may pursue economic growth or diplomatic relations with another state as intermediate goals, but realists argue that states will always place their survival above any other goal. Fifth and last, states are rational actors that operate in an environment in which they have imperfect information. This means that they may miscalculate or misread the intentions of other states, or wrongly evaluate the power and capabilities of another state (Mearsheimer, 1995).

Three patterns of behaviour follow from the combination of these five assumptions. First, states fear each other. This behaviour follows from the lack of trust and the potential danger other states pose, but also from the anarchic feature of the international system which means that there is no higher authority to prevent a state from being attacked, dominated or destroyed (Mearsheimer, 1995). Second, states operate in a 'self-help' system, which means they are egoistical and primarily provide for own survival. In that sense, states are similar in terms of needs, but the distribution of capabilities across states creates different outcomes. Those who do not help themselves, or do so worse than the other states, are vulnerable and open for attack (Waltz, 1979). To avoid vulnerability, states aim to gain capabilities. Third, states concern themselves with the division of power and relative gains. This means that states aim to gain power not only in absolute terms, but also in comparison to other states. Ideally, states want to gain more power and capabilities than any other state, but absolutely no less than any other state. Therefore, even if cooperation between states would generate gains in absolute terms, the state that gains the least is more dependent and thus more vulnerable. This pattern of behaviour may cause states to make sub-optimal choices (Waltz, 1979). However, gains in cooperation are not necessarily fixed; they depend on the bargaining power of each side. Thus, merged states, like in the EU, can get better bargains when negotiating with bigger states, like the US. Concerns about relative gains can, in some situations, be satisfied through merging power (Mosher, 2003).

The core assumptions of realism described contribute especially to explanations of some broad tendencies the international system. However, this thesis aims to apply realism as a theory of foreign policy, in other words, as a theory to explain the behaviour of individual states. Realism has been called unsuitable as a theory of foreign policy. The theory is critiqued for being unable to predict a singular foreign policy, for the generality of its dependent variables and the impreciseness of its predictions (Elman, 1996). However, Elman argues that none of these criticisms can withhold realism from being used as a theory of foreign policy (Elman, 1996). He does not address whether realism is also successful as a theory of foreign policy. Congruence analysis contributes to the development of theories within a

field, and may prove the success of one theory over another. This thesis focuses on the elements of realism that concern foreign policy analysis.

The materialist drivers of foreign policy present in realist foreign policy analysis have been described above. These are the elements given by the structure of the system: anarchy, self-help, military and economic capabilities, power maximisation and relative gains (Wivel, 2005). A realist theory of foreign policy must recognise that foreign policy is made by humans. Thus, the motivations of foreign policymakers are also drivers of foreign policy. Wivel suggests that to include motivational arguments without losing generalisability, one can look at the implicit motivational assumptions already present in realism (Wivel, 2005). Although realists state that the will to survive is the primary motivation of states, Jack Donnelly argues that survival translates into additional motivations as well; maintaining independence, autonomy, sovereignty. Other motivations are "safety, gain and reputation" (Donnelly, 2000, pg. 44). The common denominator in all motivations is self-interest (Donnelly, 2000). A theoretical mechanism that predicts which motivation is prioritised by which state is lacking. The foreign policy predictions made in this thesis base themselves on the materialist drivers of foreign policy, and the idealist motivations given by Donnelly.

3.1.2 Realism and the EU

Realist theory can be used as a framework for reviewing the European Union in external action. In international relations, the EU has been described as a 'normative' or 'civilian' power, whose strength is not in military power, but in 'soft power' (Hyde-Price, 2006). Hyde-Price argues that the 'normative power Europe' characterisation does not provide a sufficient explanation for the EU's conduct in foreign policy. As a counter to the literature on 'normative power Europe', Hyde-Price applies realism to the EU's CFSP and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Hyde-Price applies neorealist theory, and considers the ways the structure of the international system has affected the EU and EU member states, causing them to act in a certain way. Realism would predict that member states are reluctant to give up too much of their sovereignty for foreign policy, security and defence cooperation. As a result, cooperation in these areas remained primarily inter-governmental.

A more specific application of realism can be found in Peter Seeberg's 2009 article on the EU's Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, specifically Lebanon. Seeberg argues that while the EU claims its main objective in the MENA region is the promotion of democracy, it has been fairly unsuccessful in doing so. For many countries in the MENA region, the EU's lack of success could be explained by obstruction by the target regime. Seeberg argues that in Lebanon, which is less autocratic than many of its neighbours, the EU is still ineffective in its democracy-promoting neighbourhood policy. Analysing the EU-Lebanon ENP Action Plan, Seeberg notes that the Action Plan includes little democratic conditionality and instead is a pragmatic,

defensive and realist plan covering issues linked to the EU's security, such as preventing radicalisation and terrorism. In dealing with its neighbourhood, the EU's norm-based strategies can hide a pragmatic and (defensively) realist European Union (Seeberg, 2009).

3.2 Liberalism

3.2.1 Core Assumptions

Like realism, the roots of liberalism can be found in older works. Central elements of liberalism such as individual freedom and democracy can be found in the ideas of John Locke (Jahn, 2013) and Woodrow Wilson (Moravcsik, 1997). For example, the ideas of democracy and democratic peace. The latter concept states that liberal democracies do not wage war against each other. In liberal theory, individuals and states are self-interested actors who are interested in survival and material well-being. The harmony of interests between these actors incentivises cooperation (Owen, 1994). Rather than fight costly wars, liberals state that free trade and economic cooperation promote peace through interdependence and absolute gains for all involved (Burchill, 2005). The difficulties that cooperation between states under anarchy present, such as the problem of compliance and prisoner's dilemmas, can be overcome by international institutions that formalise cooperation. Lastly, liberals contest the realist assumption that international relations are a zero-sum game. Rather than concerning themselves with relative gains, liberal states are concerned with maximising their total welfare regardless of other states. As a result, cooperation under liberal theory is easier than under realism and generates mutual benefits (Burchill, 2005).

However, liberalism has been criticised for its idealism and lack of paradigmatic status, something Moravcsik (1997) sought to change. Although liberalism has multiple variants, three general assumptions can be made.

First, the fundamental actors in international relations according to liberalism are rational individuals and private groups. For this assumption, liberalism can be called a 'bottom-up' theory, in which individuals form their preferences based on material and immaterial interests which in turn become relevant to domestic and international politics through representation and collective action. Conflict between societal actors over preferences may occur, for example, due to "divergent fundamental beliefs, conflict over scarce material goods, and inequalities in political power" (Moravcsik, 1997, pg. 517).

Second, states in the international system represent a subset of society, whose preferences constitute the state preferences which state officials act upon. This makes states in liberalism representative institutions rather than actors. The characteristics of representation differ in each state.

Authoritarian states may act upon the preferences of one party or even one person only, whereas democracies may represent their societies more equally (Moravcsik, 1997).

Third, the configuration of state preferences shapes the behaviour of states in the international system. This means that the configuration of domestic preferences that constitute state preferences forms a state's 'purpose'. The state needs a purpose to have a goal to pursue through policy. However, in pursuing their policy, states are limited by the policies and preferences of other states. In liberalism, state preferences and the behaviour of states in the international system are linked by policy interdependence. The pattern of state preferences in the international system poses a binding constraint on states seeking to realise their preferences. State preferences can be harmonious. This means that state A and state B have preferences that do not interfere with each other. For example, using the natural resources of their respective territories. When state preferences are harmonious, states do not need each other. State preferences can also be conflictual. If state A wants something that necessarily imposes costs on state B, conflict may arise. For example, if state A wants to territorially expand into the territory of state B. Lastly, there is a middle ground. If state preferences are neither harmonious nor zero-sum, states tend to cooperate. In such situations where preferences are compatible, states can exchange policy concessions or make package deals to make sure both can gain from cooperation (Moravcsik, 1997). State behaviour, therefore, constitutes a state seeking to realise its preferences in the context of, and constrained by, the preferences of the other states in the international system (Moravcsik, 2002).

3.2.2 Liberalism and the EU

The concept of interdependence, and the accompanying predictions for state behaviour, fit snugly with foreign policy analysis. For the EU specifically, Moravcsik provides a framework for further analysing state motivations. This framework, called liberal intergovernmentalism, is particularly relevant to this thesis.

Andrew Moravcsik (1993) applies central concepts of liberalism, such as interdependence, to develop liberal intergovernmentalism, a theory to explain how the configuration of preferences influences decision-making at the European level. This approach combines the assumption of rationalism in state behaviour, the liberal idea of national preference formation and an intergovernmentalist view of negotiation. Decision-making at the European level occurs in two levels. First, EU member states have dynamic preferences which are based in the domestic societies of states. Pressure from domestic social actors increases depending on the expected costs and benefits from international cooperation. If domestic preferences are stronger, governments enjoy less autonomy vis-à-vis these preferences. The sources of societal pressures differ depending on the issue or policy area. For example, on commercial issues, the preferences of domestic producers and employers'

organisations weigh heavy. In the provision of public goods such as environmental policy, preferences tend to be two-sided; industrial preferences on the one hand, public interests on the other. Political issues face domestic pressure from narrow interest groups, but governments generally enjoy autonomy to pursue political issues on the European level. Second, intergovernmental negotiations range in success depending on the bargaining power and position of member state governments. This thesis adopts the liberal intergovernmentalist view of national preferences and intergovernmental bargaining which influence decision-making at the European level (Moravcsik, 1993).

However, the ability of the European Union to coordinate and configure member state preferences into a singular EU policy has been questioned. In external action, this problem can lead to disagreement between member states on foreign policy preferences and member states circumventing the EU's central strategy in favour of a foreign policy that suits their preferences better (Novotná, 2017). Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier (2014) argue that low internal cohesiveness harms the EU's effectiveness in international negotiations, especially in bilateral negotiations and situations in which the other party is a powerful actor. In negotiations with China, for example on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), low internal cohesiveness can be a problem for the EU. The lack of internal cohesiveness is a distinctly liberalist worry. Whereas realism may expect similar behaviour from China, which is to seek direct cooperation with member states, realists would focus on relative gains. Following Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism, liberalism would consider the implications for EU-level coordination of this challenge. Thus, liberalism expects internal cohesiveness to be a problem that must be overcome.

3.3 Constructivism

3.3.1 Core Assumptions

The theory of constructivism arose out of philosophical and sociological debates on identity, language and meaning, and the perception of the self and others (Palan, 2000). Applied to the field of international relations for the first time by Nicholas Onuf (Onuf, 1989), constructivism focuses on the importance of "ideas, norms, knowledge, culture, and argument in politics, stressing in particular the role of collectively held or 'intersubjective' ideas and understandings on social life" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001, pg. 392). The core of constructivism can be summarised into two assumptions. Firstly, the structures of human interaction are mainly shaped by shared ideas rather than material factors. Secondly, it is these shared ideas that construct the identities and interests of actors; they are not given by, as other theories might claim, human nature, the structure of the system or domestic politics (Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1999). Structure and actor are therefore interdependent.

For realism, states act based on the balance of power and capabilities. In liberalism, states act upon their preferences which are rooted in domestic politics and representation. Constructivists argue that "people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them" (Wendt, 1992, pg. 396-397), which means that states act towards other states based on the meanings they have for each other. Based on collective meanings, actors can acquire identities. Based on these identities, actors formulate their interests. Concretely, two states may participate in the collective meaning of 'alliance', they can acquire the identity of 'ally' and develop interests based on this identity.

If actors act upon meanings, constructivism must explain how these meanings come into existence. Wendt states that "that the meanings in terms of which action is organised arise out of interaction" (1992, pg. 403). In the process of identity-formation through interaction, the self and the other mirror each other over time. The process of interaction between actor 'ego' and actor 'alter' must start at their first meeting, when these two actors have no other interests than survival. Depending on the nature of the first social act, the other will interpret and respond, starting a cycle of signalling, interpreting and responding which, with every new social act, creates expectations of the nature of future behaviour. If a gesture by ego is threatening, or is perceived as such by alter, alter will likely mirror threatening behaviour. In this ongoing process, identities and interests are developed, such as the identity 'enemy' or the interest 'security maximisation', which may be called a 'self-help' system. (Wendt, 1992).

The international system we now inhabit may be socially constructed according to constructivists, this does not mean it is a fickle system, malleable or constantly changing. Firstly, once a system is in place, for example a self-help system, this system will encourage behaviour befitting the self-help system and punish dissenting behaviour, such as trust or altruism. Secondly, actors themselves may oppose changes or threats to their identity depending on how important that identity is to an actor, keeping in mind actors may have multiple identities affixed to them (Wendt, 1992). Yet, transforming identities and changing perceptions of the self and the other is possible. For example, using the method of 'altercasting', a technique of identity change which uses the mirror-effect of identity-formation. If actors in the international system want to change the relationship they have with other actors, they may do so by projecting the identity that they want the other to assume. For example, if ego wishes alter to be an ally rather than an enemy, ego will project the allyship that is to be assumed by alter. In turn, alter may mirror ego's more friendly behaviour and, through repeated interaction, internalise this identity (Wendt, 1992).

The combination of constructivism and foreign policy analysis is somewhat new, considering foreign policy analysis is usually placed within the rationalist realms of realism or liberalism (Houghton, 2007). However, constructivism offers conceptual tools for understanding and explaining foreign policy

that realism and liberalism do not offer (Flockhart, 2012). Wendt's constructivism described above stresses the importance of structure. In foreign policy analysis, additional attention to the agent's behaviour is crucial, because humans make foreign policy after all. Flockhart emphasises the importance of conceptions of the self and the other, defining norms of appropriate behaviour and socialisation as central to constructivist foreign policy. Flockhart uses the post-Cold War NATO as a case study, arguing NATO has established a culture of anarchy based on cooperation and alliance rather than self-help. The internal socialisation process caused new members of NATO, which did not necessarily have a democratic tradition, to acquire NATO's norms as well (Flockhart, 2012). This thesis does not focus on peace and cooperation among NATO members, but rather looks at human rights and rule of law norms set by the EU as a core part of its identity.

3.3.2 Constructivism and the EU

When applied to the European Union, constructivism can offer insights regarding the actorness of the EU in external relations. Wunderlich (2012) employs constructivism to conceptualise the EU's actorness in international relations. Wunderlich argues that the socio-historical background in which the EU was created influences the self-image of the political system that developed over the years. The EU's self-image, which is one of a provider of peace and stability on the European continent, allowed for the institutionalisation of formal and informal rules and norms that member states are expected to abide by. The institutionalisation process established a set of decision-making structures, such as unanimity and qualified majority voting. Depending on the policy area, decision-making structures hamper the EU's ability to act purposively. CFSP is a policy area dominated by unanimity procedures. As a result, it has occurred that the EU was unable to formulate a clear and unified foreign policy position during a crisis. This phenomenon, which is referred to as the capabilities-expectations gap, shows that the EU's recognition as an actor occasionally exceeds its actual capabilities (Wunderlich, 2012). The EU's developments tend to be centred around improving its capabilities to act purposively in the international sphere. The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, created the European External Action Service and the position of HRVP. This is one example of the developing institutionalisation of foreign policy at the EU level (Wunderlich, 2012). In the constructivist propositions formulated in this thesis, Wunderlich's conceptualisation of the EU as a developing actor is used.

Applications of constructivism to the European Union as an international actor often contrast normative constructivist views with material interest-based liberalist or realist views of European external actorness. John O'Brennan analyses the EU's Eastern enlargement of 2004 using realism and constructivism to provide interpretations and explain the geopolitical issues of European enlargement (O'Brennan, 2006). Realism predicted that the post-Cold War order would entail a return to self-help

on the European continent. Constructivism highlights the importance of community-building practices of the EU and the norm-generating qualities of international institutions for post-Cold War Europe. States in communities share norms and security interests and therefore do not tend to fight each other. For the EU, enlargement of this security community eastwards was an instrument to consolidate peace on the European continent. The frame of the constructivist security community provides a better explanation for the geopolitical issues, such as instability in Eastern Europe, that were mitigated by enlargement (O'Brennan, 2006).

3.4 Theory Propositions

The research design selected for this research is congruence analysis. This research design aims to find empirical evidence for the theoretical relevance or explanatory leverage of a particular theory, in comparison to other theories. The first step in the congruence analysis, after having delved into the selected theories, is to formulate propositions. Blatter and Haverland define propositions as concepts which "specify the constitutive concepts and formulate the causal connections to define and characterise a paradigm or theory" (2012, pg. 160). The structure of the congruence analysis takes after a similar research design is used in Dorussen et al. (2018), which applies four theories to EU-China security cooperation. Dorussen et al. develop theoretical expectations for security cooperation based on the core assumptions of four theories. The expectations are empirically analysed through the evaluation of surveys of European and Chinese scholars. However, Dorussen et al. develop one hypothesis per theory. The propositions formulated in this thesis contain multiple constitutive and causal propositions based on the expectations the three theories have for the empirical observations. I choose to formulate multiple expectations to capture various aspects of the EU's strategy for China. The formulation of the propositions happens prior to the comparison with empirical observations. The propositions measure the explanatory power of the theories by answering the following question:

What does [realism, liberalism or constructivism] expect the preference formation of actors and the final product of the EU's strategy for China to look like?

First, the propositions formulated in this thesis pay close attention to the preferences of actors for an EU strategy for China. Which actors are central in foreign policy-making, how are preferences and interests formulated? Second, the three theories have distinct expectations regarding the content of the EU's strategy for China. Two groups of propositions follow for each theory: the preference-related propositions, and the content-related propositions.

3.4.1 Realist Propositions

According to realism, there is no state above states. This means that states are the primary actors in international relations. The primary aim of states in the self-help system is to survive. States maximise their security because the more secure a state is, the more likely it survives. Following Hyde-Price (2006), EU member states are expected to be reluctant about EU-level foreign policy. Powerful member states, who have more to lose in relations with China, are expected to be even more reluctant.

The self-help system does not fully hamper cooperation between states. Even with great powers that are possibly threatening to the EU, states can organise cooperation on a range of topics. However, member states are unlikely to defer cooperation on issues that affect their security. In cooperation, states are concerned with relative gains. Through the EU, member states hope to get a better bargain in international agreements with China (Mosher, 2003). This thesis does not claim that the EU is a realist actor. Instead, realism expects that the cooperation of member states on a strategy for China produces an inherently weak document due to the individual pursuit of member states. The realist propositions for the process of development and the contents of the EU's strategy for China are the following:

Preferences:

[R1] In relations with China, member states will be most interested in maximising their security.

[R2] Member states are reluctant to defer their China policy to the European Union, especially powerful member states.

Content:

[R3] The strategy will seek EU-level cooperation in policy areas that do not affect national or economic security, whilst coordinating issues that do affect national or economic security at the level of member states.

[R5] Member states will attempt to satisfy concerns about relative gains through the EU.

3.4.2 Liberalist propositions

According to liberalism, states do not only have the goal to survive, but they also aim to maximise their welfare. Liberalism also stresses that war is costly, and trade can promote peace and present welfare gains for all involved. States are concerned with absolute gains rather than relative gains, because liberals do not see international relations as a zero-sum game. Liberalism takes individuals and organised groups as the basic actor in international relations. States are simply representative institutions acting based on the preferences of the subset of society they represent.

State behaviour in the international realm is informed by state preferences, which in turn originate from a configuration of domestic interests. States are, however, not free to pursue their preferences internationally. Because states are interdependent, states must pursue their preferences under the constraints of the preferences of the other states in the international system. If states' preferences are compatible, which is the middle ground between harmonious and conflictual, there is an incentive to cooperate. States can use such situations to exchange policy concessions. Following Da Conceição-Heldt and Meunier (2014), the EU's internal cohesiveness is anticipated as a challenge to EU-China relations. These assumptions inform the following propositions:

Preferences:

[L1] In relations with China, the bottom-up domestic preferences of member states influence policy-making at the European level.

[L2] Member states aim to maximise welfare and securing absolute gains in cooperation with China.

Content:

[L3] The strategy is more likely to push for cooperation between the EU and China in policy areas in which the preferences of member states and China are compatible.

[L4] The strategy will seek to exchange reciprocal policy concessions with China.

[L5] If China seeks direct cooperation with member states, the strategy will aim to strengthen its cohesiveness as an external actor.

3.4.3 Constructivist propositions

According to constructivism, the interaction between actors shapes collective meanings, identities and expectations of the other. This means interactions between actors at the EU level matter as well. Constructivists argue that actors act towards other actors depending on the meaning they have for them. This meaning arises out of interaction. Over time, actors can gain steady identities, which in turn inform actors' interests.

Although identities are relatively stable, actors can attempt to change another's identity through altercasting. This means the EU projects the behaviour it wants China to adopt. This technique is more successful in policy areas where norms are somewhat convergent. The EU is likely to include areas that belong to its core identity in the strategy. Moreover, the EU is likely to push for more multilateral cooperation to overcome normative differences. Membership to an international institution often includes a set of values associated with, or even codified by, this institution. States who share such norms are more likely to solve issues through international institutions or diplomatic means, and less likely to fight wars or make unilateral provocations (O'Brennan, 2006). The core assumptions of constructivism can be channelled into these propositions:

Preferences:

[C1] In relations with China, the EU will seek to transfer its norms to China through cooperation.

[C2] The norms and values the EU aims to transfer stem from the EU's core identity.

Content:

[C3] The strategy is more likely to push for cooperation in policy areas where Chinese and European norms are more convergent.

[C4] The strategy is more likely to push for cooperation in policy areas that belong to its core identity.

[C5] The EU will urge China's further participation in global governance.

4. Research Design

This chapter selects the research design of this thesis, and justifies the selection of theories, the selection of the case and looks at the validity and reliability of the design chosen.

4.1 Selection of Research Design

The research question of this thesis looks into the China strategy in the European Union. Whereas foreign policy behaviour may be difficult to capture in quantitative variables, a qualitative approach allows for in-depth research into a case. In general terms, case studies are non-experimental research designs that differ from large-N designs in that they encompass a large and diverse number of observations for a small number of cases. This thesis uses a case study design, looking specifically into the case of EU strategy for China. A myriad of variables influences the development of strategy in a complex situation, which is why a broad and diverse set of observations is required. Furthermore, theory is used as the abstract concepts that give meaning to empirical observations.

Blatter and Haverland (2012) highlight three explanatory small-N research designs. First, co-variational approach aims to find out whether there is co-variation between independent variable x and dependent variable y. This research design is appropriate when the researcher wants to find out whether a particular factor affects a phenomenon. Second, causal-process tracing is an approach that aims to identify the one or multiple factors that influence a particular phenomenon. A research design that includes causal-process tracing is appropriate when the researcher is interested in how, attributed to which causal factors, a particular outcome was achieved. Third, congruence analysis aims to provide empirical evidence for the relevance or explanatory strength of a theory compared to other theories. Congruence analysis is appropriate to use when the researcher aims to find the theoretical relevance of a theory or strengthen a theory in comparison to other theories within a particular field. Congruence analysis may also be used as a theoretical approach to explaining a socially relevant case (Blatter and Haverland, 2012).

This thesis seeks to explain a socially important case, which is the EU's strategy for China. Congruence analysis is the most appropriate small-N design to shed light on important yet puzzling situations. More importantly, congruence analysis contributes to the development of theories within their field. In this thesis, the case was chosen prior to the selection of theories. The theories selected are realism, liberalism and constructivism. The following section further explains the case and theory selection, as well as the validity of such an approach and the method of data collection chosen for this thesis.

4.2 Congruence Analysis

As explained above, congruence analysis is an explanatory small-N research design which aims to find empirical evidence for the theoretical relevance or explanatory leverage of a particular theory, in comparison to other theories. The following section fills in the general descriptions of congruence analysis provided by Blatter and Haverland (2012) with the specific research design of this thesis.

4.2.1 Case and Theory Selection

Contrary to standard practice in congruence analysis, case selection came prior to theory selection in this research design. The selected case is the development of the EU's strategy for China, a unique document which guides the EU's foreign policies towards China and sets out the EU's ambitions in cooperation with the People's Republic.

The selection of theories follows from the selection of this case. As Blatter and Haverland put forward, theories used in a congruence analysis design should follow from the selected field of study (2012). The field of international relations includes several dominant paradigms. In *Key Concepts in International Relations*, Diez et al. (2011) name six central (clusters of) theories of international relations: Marxism and critical theory, realism and neorealism, liberalism and neoliberalism, postmodernism and poststructuralism, social constructivism and feminism. These six theories can be seen as the major theories in the field. The major theories within a field are more likely to be well-developed, making the deduction of propositions or expectations from such theories more feasible. This thesis has selected the following three: realism, liberalism and social constructivism (in this thesis referred to as simply "constructivism").

Marxism and critical theory, postmodernism and poststructuralism and feminism were not selected for the congruence analysis, as they were less appropriate for the case at hand. First, Marxism and critical theory are excluded because Marxist theory and critical theory (also called post-Marxism) in the field of IR lacks a common view of world politics. Instead, what unites scholars from this theoretical background is the aim to critically question conventional IR theory (Diez et al., 2011). Whereas Marxist theory and critical theory provide various concepts to apply empirically, for example historical materialism, such a perspective is less appropriate for the formulation of propositions as part of congruence analysis, because the theory lacks the common assumptions that can be aggregated into specific foreign policy predictions.

Second, postmodernism is a theory that argues language and discourse constitute practices. Poststructuralism is a prominent subset of postmodernism, stating that the meaning that we have for things come from the structure of language and signs. Postmodernists and poststructuralists focus on representations of reality and the analysis of discourse. Power, according to this theory, is not a material capability held by individuals or states, but something that causes one meaning or narrative

to prevail over alternatives (Diez et al., 2011). Although such an approach can be applied to, for example, the concept of polarity in world order or great power politics, postmodernism and poststructuralism are less applicable in predicting the preferences of states.

Third, feminism is less applicable due to its focus on the underrepresentation or absence of women and femininity in international relations scholarship, world politics and the concept of power and security. Feminist scholarship in the field of IR has developed in similar waves to the feminist movement itself. Whereas second-wave feminist IR is more closely connected to constructivism and Marxism, third-wave feminist IR is more connected to postmodernism and poststructuralism (Diez et al., 2011). For that reason, feminist theory is broader and has a less steady set of core assumptions than for example realism.

That leaves three theories. Realism, liberalism and constructivism are selected because compared to the three other theories described above, they have a more stable set of core assumptions that can be translated into propositions later. These assumptions are further elaborated in the theoretical framework chapter of this thesis. Moreover, the concepts and topics associated with these theories can be easily linked to the contents of the case, as is done in the introduction of this thesis. For feasibility reasons, the number of theories included in this congruence analysis is limited to three.

The propositions for these three theories have been developed in the previous chapter. In the next chapter, this thesis presents empirical observations regarding the EU's strategy for China. From the comparison of the propositions to the empirical observations, one can draw conclusions. The theory that presents a higher level of congruence with empirical observations can be seen as the theory that is better equipped to explain the EU's strategy for China.

4.2.2 Validity and Reliability

This research design takes into account the internal and external validity, as well as the reliability in the application of congruence analysis.

Internal validity refers to the validity of the steps taken to prove a relationship. In the case of congruence analysis, it refers to the congruence between theoretical expectations and empirical observations. Because theoretical propositions are relatively abstract, the researcher must make inferential leaps from the empirical observation to the abstract theoretical propositions. Interpretation by the researcher plays an important role here (Blatter and Haverland, 2012). To ensure internal validity, the process of making inferential leaps between different levels of abstraction must be transparent and accompanied with justification. Still, congruence analysis faces the criticism of epistemological relativism. Epistemological relativism refers to the idea that the theoretical framework used by the researcher determines what the researcher observes in her empirical reality. This means

that the researcher may be biased towards verification. Congruence analysis mitigates this problem by two dimensions of control. First, a vertical element of control explicitly separates the formulation of propositions and their comparison to empirical observations. This element ensures that the proposition predicts the empirical observation, excluding the possibility of an inverse relationship. Second, a horizontal element of control is facilitated by including multiple theories into the congruence analysis. This element structures the research design as a 'three cornered fight' (Hall, 2006 in Blatter and Haverland, 2012, pg. 146), which is a design that involves empirical observations and information from at least two different theories.

External validity refers to the ability to generalise the results of the research across other cases. Unlike in other approaches, results following from congruence analysis cannot be generalised across other cases. Instead, generalisation takes place within the theoretical discourse used in the congruence analysis. The approach this thesis takes is based on the competition between theories in the congruence analysis. Depending on the results of the congruence analysis proper, generalisable conclusions can be made based on which theory provides the best explanation for the selected case. This proof can be used as munitions in the struggle for theoretical hegemony in the field of international relations (Blatter and Haverland, 2012).

Lastly, the reliability of the small-N research design depends on whether the results of the congruence analysis can be reproduced if the same measurements and the same cases are used (Johnson and Reynolds, 2005). This thesis looks at documentation, which means that the evidence used in this research design can be retrieved and reviewed at any time. By comparing empirical observations to the propositions formulated, the results of the congruence analysis can be reproduced.

4.3 Data Collection

To test the propositions formulated earlier, one needs empirical observations of the preference formation for, and content of the 2016 EU strategy for China. The method employed to gather empirical observations is document analysis. Documentation includes administrative documents, formal studies or evaluations and newspaper articles (Yin, 2003). Documentation is stable, precise and covers situations broadly. Documentation is also unobtrusive, in that documentation is not created as a result for the case study, unlike interviews or experiments (Yin, 2003). However, documentation may be difficult to retrieve or access or the researcher may be biased in the retrieval. The documentation could also report biased or incomplete truths.

The limitations of using documentation as evidence can be mitigated by using multiple data sources and variating between primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are first-hand evidence of empirical phenomena, whereas secondary sources are accounts, descriptions or interpretations of primary sources. For example, an EU policy document is a primary source if the topic

concerns EU interests in a particular field. A newspaper article summarising the policy document or an oral statement by an EU official, is a secondary source.

The empirical analysis of this thesis requires the analysis of data on the EU's position on China. The *Council Conclusions* (2016a) is the central high-level EU document on China. Data on the respective positions of EU member states is retrieved directly, using official statements by governments of member states. Such data can be supplemented with indirect information, from newspaper articles reporting on EU affairs such as EUobserver, Politico.eu and EURACTIV, and academic articles or reports by think-tanks. For data on the preferences of domestic societal groups, I look at the positions and public statements of national industrial or employers' organisations, environmental and climate action groups and human rights organisations.

5. Empirical Analysis

The following empirical analysis tests the propositions formulated in the previous chapter in the empirical world. This chapter follows the chronology of the propositions of each theory, starting with the preference-related proposition first, followed by the content-related proposition. With 'the content of the strategy', this thesis refers to the *Council Conclusions* (Council of the European Union, 2016a). This is the document that officially represents the EU's preferences. The document is nine pages long, and includes 23 conclusions.

5.1 The Formation of Preferences; Actors and Interests

This empirical analysis first looks at the preference formation of actors regarding the EU's strategy for China. The preference-related propositions were developed in the theoretical framework chapter of this thesis. Realism expects that states want to survive, and aim to maximise their security to do so. The state preferences are therefore static. Liberalism, on the other hand, assumes that state preferences are dynamic. Liberalism expects that states' preferences arise bottom-up from the domestic societies of states. Liberalism also expects that state preferences revolve around increasing welfare. Constructivism expects that the EU wants to transfer its norms to China. These norms are developed through interaction and identity-formation at the European level.

5.1.1 Member State Preferences

Realism and liberalism both expect the preferences of EU member states to take a central position in the formation of preferences for an EU strategy for China. What are the preferences of the EU member states for China policy?

As the 'Big Three' of the European Union, Germany, the United Kingdom and France have distinct preferences for China policy. Both realism and liberalism value the preferences of the Big Three highly. Realism looks at these countries because they are powerful in military and economic terms (Eurostat, 2020a; Eurostat, 2020b). Liberalism emphasises the importance of these countries, due to their voting power in the Council (Council of the European Union, 2020) which makes them pivotal actors in intergovernmental bargaining. These countries also have large economies, and by extension significant commercial interests.

First, the German government prioritises the interests of German industries and businesses in official statements by the government, and emphasises the importance of economic win-win cooperation and reciprocity. Furthermore, Germany urges improvement of the rule of law in China (Federal Government of Germany, 2015; 2016). However, Heiduk (2014) points out that under Chancellor Merkel, Germany may have moved towards a more critical political stance on China, but

this stance has never been an obstacle for trade and investment. In general terms, Germany wants to be China's key economic partner in Europe, as long as China offers reciprocal profits. Germany does not see China's increasing influence as a threat, but rather as an opportunity for German businesses.

Second, the government of the UK aims to be China's prime partner in Europe. At the start of his term in 2010, former Prime Minister David Cameron stated that the UK would prioritise openness, free trade and fighting protectionism. The logic used by the UK is: if Europe is open to China, China shall be open to Europe as well (Government of the United Kingdom, 2010). Five years later, following Cameron's re-election, the government of the UK assures China that there is no country in Europe more open to China than the UK (Government of the United Kingdom, 2015a).

Third, France states in official documentation that rebalancing the trade imbalance between China and France is important (France Diplomatie, 2013). Other than that, France sees opportunities for win-win cooperation between China and France on peace, climate and growth (France Diplomatie, 2014). Finally, France emphasises the possibility of working towards an "organised multipolar world" alongside China (France Diplomatie, 2014, pg. 3), with France, the EU as a whole, and China among the primary balancing powers.

Whereas realism expects that the preferences of states originate from the goal to survive, liberalism expects that pressure from domestic interests informs the preferences states pursue internationally. The following sections look at foreign policy and security as part of the realist proposition, and bottom-up preferences for the liberalist proposition.

Foreign policy and security

Realism expects that states aim to maximise their security. The more secure a state is, in military and economic terms, the higher its chances of survival. States' considerations of their relative security includes economic power as well. A state can use economic gains to fund its military. Economic issues and military/security issues can therefore not be separated, states Mearsheimer (1995, pg. 20).

Pooling sovereignty and foreign policy instruments with other states is therefore counter-intuitive to a realist, because less sovereignty means less security. Realism would expect any European member state to be reluctant to pool sovereignty, but the more powerful states even more so. States' reluctance to defer foreign policy to the EU can be empirically tested by looking at the roles these countries envision for the European Commission and the HRVP in relations with China. How states conduct their relations with China is also telling of their stance on a common China policy at the European level.

CFSP is, in general, an intergovernmental affair. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 transformed European Political Cooperation into CFSP, gathering foreign policy issues under the Council and the External Affairs Directorate General of the Commission. The European Parliament had virtually no role

in foreign policy. Decision-making in CFSP is almost exclusively based on unanimity, with qualified majority voting used in only a couple of instances (Hix and Høyland, 2011). The standpoints of member states during the intergovernmental conferences for the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 exposes the roles they envisioned for the European Commission and the HRVP in EU foreign policy.

During the reform process of EU foreign policy leading up to the Lisbon Treaty, Germany was far less reluctant to offer foreign policy instruments to the European Union compared to the UK or France. One of the innovations established in the Lisbon Treaty was the creation of the position of the HRVP (Lehne, 2012). Germany's open-minded position towards CFSP shines through in its organisation of China policy as well. Germany explicitly links its bilateral relationship to the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership (Federal Government of Germany, 2014).

During negotiations for the Lisbon Treaty, the UK made certain that intergovernmentalism and unanimity procedures continued to dominate EU foreign policy. The UK did not see a stronger role for the European Commission or Parliament. Furthermore, the UK vetoed the proposal to name the new HRVP position the 'EU foreign minister' (Lehne, 2012). On China policy specifically, the UK is keen to conduct relations with China bilaterally, through UK-China dialogues and summits. The UK and China host yearly Economic and Financial Dialogues (Government of the United Kingdom, 2015b), High-Level People-To-People Dialogues (Government of the United Kingdom, 2016) and Strategic Dialogue on international foreign policy issues such as Ukraine and Syria (Government of the United Kingdom, 2014).

France had a large role in shaping the Lisbon Treaty. France aligned itself with the UK to ensure foreign policy would remain largely the hands of member state governments. France also saw no bigger role for the Commission or the Parliament, and even insisted on the establishment of a permanent president of the European Council, to function as a counterweight to the Commission president (Lehne, 2012). France is similarly reluctant to defer China policy to the European level. Like the UK, France holds yearly Economic and Financial Dialogues. However, France puts more emphasis on China-France Dialogues being complementary to EU-China Dialogues than the UK does (Économie Gouvernement France, 2015).

In short, EU member states are generally reluctant to let go of the right to act independently on foreign policy. The Big Three EU member states, Germany, the UK and France have shaped the reform process of EU foreign affairs during the Lisbon Treaty negotiations, the UK and France being the most reluctant to surrender foreign policy instruments to the EU. In relations with China, the UK and France treat their bilateral relationship as prior to EU level China policy. Germany's China policy is more complementary to the EU's China policy. This is partly in line with realism. However, Germany's support of CFSP is an exception.

Bottom-up preferences

Liberalism expects that the domestic preferences of people, interest groups and political representations influence the state preferences for China policy. Unlike realism, these interests constantly change, rather than the static preference for survival. Liberalism explains member states' reluctance to defer foreign policy instruments to the EU by the pressure of domestic political representation not to lose sovereignty to the EU. The sources of pressure may differ depending on the policy area (Moravcsik, 1993). The following section looks at three different patterns of domestic interests: commercial issues, the provision of public goods and political issues, in the three biggest EU member states. These interests are compared to the preferences of the Big Three governments described above, and the issues in the EU's strategy.

First, in Germany, the central representation of commercial interests is the Federation of German Industries (BDI). In general, BDI wants to guarantee investment protection measures and improved market access for German companies in China (BDI, 2019). In 2016, leading up to the publication of the EU's strategy, the BDI's main concern with China was connected to anti-dumping. At the end of 2016, the EU was set to decide whether to give China Market Economy Status (MES) as a member of the WTO. If China is awarded MES, anti-dumping measures become more difficult to apply. Especially the steel sector suffered from Chinese industrial overcapacity. BDI admits, that the preferences of German industry and businesses are two-sided on this topic. On the one hand, Germany is a location for production and would suffer from unfair competition with China. On the other hand, many German industries import cheaper primary products from China and would suffer from protectionism (BDI, 2016a). The BDI also plays a role in shaping German business interests in Germany-China relations through the Asia Pacific Committee of the German Business (Huotari, 2015). Regarding the socio-economic provision of public goods, environmental policy is the most prominent issue in EU-China relations. Two sources of domestic environmental preferences concerning China matter. First, German industries may oppose policies that directly regulate goods or production processes. In relations with China, however, the EU pursues broad goals with less calculable implications. Holzer and Zhang state that EU-China cooperation on environment and climate is limited to dialogues, conferences and workshops. The BDI actively supports the Paris climate agreement (BDI, 2017), especially market-based mechanisms that provide economic incentives for cutting carbon emissions (BDI, 2016b). Second, the German public has preferences in favour of the provision of public goods. They are represented through environmental interest groups such as the umbrella organisation Klima Allianz Deutschland, who are pushing Germany and the EU to strengthen their commitment to climate protection and the development of clean energy technologies (Klima Allianz Deutschland, n.d.). They also call on the EU to seek partnerships with emerging economies such as China to take the lead on global climate action (Klima Allianz Deutschland, 2019). Political cooperation between the EU and

China concerns issues like human rights and the rule of law. On the German domestic level, there is narrow pressure from groups such as the International Society for Human Rights (IGFM) and Amnesty Germany. They call on the German government to take urgent action on an incident basis, for example, to free a human rights activist or journalist (Amnesty Germany, 2015), but also on broad issues such as the prosecution of Falun Gong practitioners and the harvesting of their organs (IGFM, 2014).

Second, British commercial interests, led by employer's associations such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), focus on the UK's position in Europe vis-à-vis China (Groom and O'Connor, 2014). CBI states that ensuring a level-playing field for business between the UK and China, and openness are priorities. However, they state the lack of reciprocity from China should not stop the UK from accepting Chinese investments (Parker and Anderlini, 2013). CBI criticised the British government for its strict immigration policy, which undermines the British economy and turns away Chinese luxury brand shoppers in favour of other shopping destinations such as Paris and Milan (Adler, 2014). The CBI also lobbied at the British government for the expansion of Heathrow airport, which is partly owned by China's sovereign wealth fund. The expansion of Heathrow is not only supposed to support more aviation links to China, but also compete with other, better-connected airports in Europe (Parker, Parker and Odell, 2012). Both times, UK commercial interests translate into preferences for trade with China, but also concern the UK's competitive position in Europe. In environmental issues, the CBI takes a position similar to the BDI. The CBI was in favour of a strong Paris climate agreement, as this improves businesses' cost calculations for low carbon emission policies (Clark, 2015). In environmental cooperation with China, British business interests are generally supportive, which may be explained by the broad set of goals without direct implications for businesses. The British public, represented through groups such as the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) urges the British government to commit to the low greenhouse gas emission goals set for 2050 and invest in renewable energy technologies (Clark, 2013). The CCC cooperated with Chinese counterpart on research and risk assessments which inform climate policies in their respective countries (CCC, 2015). British human rights organisations address human rights issues in China frequently, such as the crackdown on human rights lawyers and activists in China, unlawful arrests and detention, and torture. Amnesty UK calls on the British government "not to trade away human rights" with China (Amnesty UK, n.d.; Amnesty UK, 2015).

Third, The Movement of the Enterprises of France (Medef) represent business interests in France. Especially the France-China Committee (CFC) of Medef is active in opening the Chinese market for French companies, and rebalancing trade relations between France and China (Grésillon, 2012). Moreover, the CFC works on France-China-Africa cooperation (Le Belzic, 2016a). The tripartite partnership aims to increase investment into Africa in infrastructure, energy, health and education, facilitated by French and Chinese companies (Le Belzic, 2016b). On environmental issues, Medef is

more active than the BDI or CBI. Medef actively supported the Paris agreement and the role of businesses in sustainable growth, innovation and investment in green energy (Medef, 2015). Similar to the German and British employers' associations, Medef emphasises the role of business, long-term strategies and finance. Public organisations such as Friends of the Earth France focus on bottom-up change, short-term policy changes and government action (Friends of the Earth France, 2016). The Climate Action Network France (RAC-F) recognises that since 2015, China's commitments to lowering its emissions and investing in renewable energy are more ambitious than commitments by the US, Europe and other large polluters (RAC-F, 2015a). The RAC-F also criticises France for postponing its commitments made regarding the public support for coal in 2014 (RAC-F, 2015b). Political issues such as human rights are met with narrow pressure from human rights organisations in France such as the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). The FIDH urges the French government to place human rights at the centre of discussion whenever an official meeting between the French and Chinese heads of state occur. The human rights organisation emphasises shortcomings regarding freedom of expression and association, arrests and detention of human rights activists and the human rights situation in Tibet and Xinjiang (FIDH, 2014).

To conclude, the domestic preferences of commercial issues are in each of the three countries the strongest and most effective interests, which is why their respective governments tend to put these interests first. The CBI pushing for openness to Chinese investment in the UK is a position taken by the Cameron government as well (Government of the United Kingdom, 2015a). On environmental issues, domestic interests are two-sided, although in climate cooperation with China both sides are generally supportive. Finally, governments receive pressure on human rights issues from domestic organisations and through public opinion. In all three member states, pressure on political issues is issue-based rather than constant. As a result, the British government enjoys more autonomy over preferences regarding political issues with China. In such situations, Moravcsik argues elite interests tend to prevail, for example, those of a prime minister (Moravcsik, 1993). This explains why a European prime minister may or may not decide to speak out on human rights in China, or visit the Dalai Lama. Alternatively, commercial interests may prevail here, as criticism of China could result in economic retaliation from China.

The three sources of domestic interests can be seen in the EU's strategy for China as well. Commercial interests prevail in trade and investment and throughout the strategy, whereas environmental cooperation and political issues appear, but EU-China cooperation on these issues takes place at the surface-level. Table 1 below summarises these results and shows a link between domestic preferences and state preferences. The expectations of realism were somewhat met in the empirical analysis, but Germany is an exception. Moravcsik's theory that domestic (business) preferences shape state interests is a better explanation for the preference formation of member states.

Table 1 State preferences and results regarding the expectations of realism and liberalism

Preference	EU Member State		
	Germany	**UK**	**France**
State preference for China policy	Reciprocity from China, attention to human rights violations in China	Openness to investment from China, in return for the opening Chinese markets for UK investors	Rebalancing the trade imbalance
State preference for EU foreign policy (realism)	Open-minded about CFSP, supportive of EU-level China policy	Very reluctant about CFSP, prefers direct relations with China	Very reluctant about CFSP, prefers direct relations with China
Domestic preferences (liberalism)	Strong business lobby focused on anti-dumping but takes no position regarding MES	Strong business lobby focused on securing Chinese investments into British projects	Strong business lobby focused on rebalancing the trade imbalance between France and China, and France-China- Africa cooperation

5.1.2 European Norms and Identity

Unlike realism and liberalism, constructivism conceptualises the EU as an external actor in its own right. The preferences of the EU, to transfer norms to China, originate from interactions at the European level, and the socialisation process of member states. The preference of norm transfer is based on the underlying mechanism of constructivism which is the reproduction of one's identity through interaction. The next section first explores what the European identity is, what European norms and values are and how they relate to China's identity, norms and values.

The European identity, which describes the role of the EU and its self-image, can be found in the treaties. The treaties establish the EU institutions and their operation, rules and procedures as well as the role of the EU in Europe and the world. The Treaty of Rome established the basis of an ever-closer union, aimed at pooling resources to preserve peace and liberty in Europe after World War II (Napolitano, 2019). The Rome Treaty establishes a functional Community, based on economic development and integration. The importance of fundamental values and the normative framework of the EU came later. In 1977, the Parliament, Council and Commission adopted the Joint Declaration concerning the protection of fundamental rights, and in 1978 the Council adopted the Declaration on democracy (Amato and Verola, 2019). The fundamental values established in these documents are absorbed into the treaties for the first time in the Single European Act and later in the Maastricht Treaty, in the form of "the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law" (Maastricht Treaty, 1992, in Amato and Verola 2019, pg.

59). The codification of the fundamental values of the EU in the treaties is an official statement by the EU, on the identity of the EU. This thesis takes this set of values and their attached norms to constitute the EU's identity, recognising that these norms are symbolic to an extent. In international interactions, it is especially human rights protection, and the improvement of the rule of law which the EU aims to replicate.

The Chinese official identity underwent a transformation in the 1990s, when the socialist ideology became irreconcilable with the economic reforms, the opening of markets and the patterns of production and consumption in the People's Republic. A conscious political identity shift followed, away from socialist ideology based in Marxism, towards a nationalist ideology with a revival of traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism (Cheung, 2012). The reintroduction of Confucian political values created a new source of legitimacy for the CCP, and an alternative for both the outdated socialism and liberalism, which is dreaded by the Party (Cheung, 2012). Confucian values of hierarchy, propriety and benevolence are invoked for both the political legitimacy of authoritarianism and for the moral guidelines for Party officials and local governments. The EU's conception of fundamental human rights is based on universality and indivisibility. For China, human rights are collective rights which are granted by the sovereign state (Men, 2011).

The fundamental values and norms of the EU and China oppose one another, as the previous section establishes. In cooperation with China, the two sides can therefore expect to clash on normative understandings. Whereas realism and liberalism focus on the security and economic consequences of China's rise, constructivism expects that the normative differences between the EU and China to be central to the EU's interests. If normative differences can be overcome, cooperation is more successful which is why norm transfer is preferred by the EU according to constructivism. The next sections explore an issue in which norms are expected to play a role; the South China Sea conflict. Constructivism expects that the EU's preferences in this issue revolve around the diffusion of norms, such as rule of law, peace and stability. Is this indeed the case in the South China Sea conflict, or do other preferences override normative considerations?

For decades, the South China Sea has been subject to island and maritime claims by its littoral countries, including China. Following a stalemate in multilateral diplomatic negotiations over the South China Sea through ASEAN, the Philippines submitted its dispute over the interpretation and application of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the South China Sea to arbitration in 2013 (Oxman, 2017). In 2016, The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) found that China's claims over islands in, and the maritime territory of the South China Sea was inconsistent with international law. One of the points made by the Court, in favour of the Philippines, was that China's historical claim over the South China Sea has no legal basis (Zhao, 2018). China refused to participate throughout the proceedings, and neither accepted nor recognised the Tribunal's ruling (Zhao, 2018).

In March 2016, prior to the ruling by the PCA, the HRVP released a statement on behalf of the EU urging all states involved in the conflict to resolve the territorial disputes through peaceful means, within the framework of international law. The EU also expresses concern over the deployment of missiles on islands in the South China Sea, and calls on all involved to refrain from militarisation (Council of the European Union, 2016b). Following the PCA's ruling, the EU was unable to formulate a statement urging China to abide by the ruling, as several EU member states opposed such a statement, resulting in a statement that only acknowledges the ruling (Gotev, 2016). China also pressured the EU to remain neutral on the matter (Vincenti, 2016). Cottey (2019) explains that the EU's policy towards territorial disputes in the South China Sea were initially based on normative politics. Its approach was three-tiered. First, the EU remains strictly neutral on the territorial dispute itself. Second, the EU introduces the normative aspect of its approach, which is to call for settling the issues through international law. Third, the EU offers to provide expertise or best practices or confidence-building (Cottey, 2019). The 2016 statement by the HRVP follows exactly this structure.

However, the EU's South China Sea policy started to change around 2015, in two opposing directions. On the one hand, policy moved in the direction of soft balancing. Soft balancing intends to rebalance the EU's Asia policy, which had been increasingly dominated by China. Soft balancing does not involve military power, but instead the soft power instruments of the EU; Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, multilateralism and diplomacy, among others. The EU enhanced its cooperation with ASEAN, and concluded Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. On the other hand, the policy moved in the direction of acquiescence. This approach accommodates China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, to the point of avoiding any confrontation with China on the matter of the South China Sea. The inability of the EU to form a statement supporting or welcoming the PCA's ruling is a testament of acquiescence. China is an important trading partner for the EU, which causes states to be careful not to annoy China, to the detriment of economic ties (Cottey, 2019).

In conclusion, normative policy is the preference of the EU, but the preferences and actions of member states occasionally cause the EU to act differently. In the South China Sea dispute, the EU's policy is superficially normative. Balancing, albeit through soft power, and acquiescence for the sake of protecting economic interests point towards realism and liberalism, respectively.

5.1.3 Preference Formation Conclusions

The previous sections discussed the preference formation of member states and the EU regarding the 2016 EU strategy for China. The theories each have distinct expectations regarding whose interests weigh heaviest at the EU, and how these interests are formed. Whereas realism and liberalism attach importance to the member states, constructivism looks at the identity of the EU. The latter theory

explains how EU external policy operates on the superficial level, but fails to explain actions by the EU and its member states. For example, why did the EU discontinue its normative policy in the South China Sea dispute? The domestic interests of member states provide a better explanation for the structure of EU-China policy. Whereas realism expects member states to have a static preference for security, liberalism expects that domestic interests constantly change state preferences. Although realism is correct in that EU member states prefer not to give the EU significant foreign policy instruments, its explanation falls short compared to liberalism. Liberalism proves that state preferences follow bottom-up societal interests carefully.

5.2 The Content of the Strategy; Actions and Challenges

The second section of this empirical analysis analyses how the preferences of actors, as described in the previous section, have influenced the final product of the strategy. Realism expects that the member states, wanting to maximise their security, will keep a firm grasp on their foreign policy instruments. They will only allow the EU to take on cooperation with China on matters that do not affect national security or economy. States will also use the power of the EU to satisfy concerns about the distribution of gains between EU member states and China. Liberalism expects that the EU's strategy for China is a product of policy interdependency. The strategy will look for cooperation on compatible issues and seek reciprocal concessions from China in return for access to the European market. The strategy will concern itself with issues arising from the intergovernmental nature of European foreign policy-making, such as the ability to speak with a unified voice, and the possibility of China taking advantage of a disunified Europe. Constructivism expects that the EU's strategy uses altercasting to project the change the EU wants to see from China. The strategy will seek cooperation with China on issues where norms are convergent, and issues central to the EU's identity. Constructivism also expects the EU to push China to participate and become a stakeholder in international organisations, as the socialisation process within these institutions can help to transfer some European norms.

The next section analyses the text of the *Council Conclusions*, in two steps. First, the analysis covers the cooperative strategy elements. These are the goals the EU sets for starting or enhancing cooperation with China in a particular policy area. Second, the analysis examines the problem-solving elements of the strategy. These elements do not constitute cooperation, but instead address challenges that must be solved by the EU for EU-China cooperation to be successful.

5.2.1 Cooperation with China

Realism

Realism expects that the EU takes care of cooperation with China on issues that member states deem less important. These are in policy areas that do not heavily affect national or economic security. The *Council Conclusions* indeed seek cooperation on research and innovation, connectivity, people-to-people exchanges and sustainable development. However, contrary to realism's expectations, many calls for cooperation between the EU and China do affect security or economy in some way. The strategy takes the lead on the investment agreement (CAI) between the EU and China. The EU's strategy further seeks to cooperate on foreign policy and international security, ensuring rules-based Chinese involvement in Central and Eastern Europe, finding common ground on disarmament, cyber-security and non-proliferation and counterpiracy initiatives and peacekeeping in Africa. This is not in line with realism's expectations regarding the content of the EU's strategy for China. Yet, for realism,

what is not in the strategy is more important than what is in. For that reason, the next section looks at member states' cooperation with China outside of the European Union.

Germany and China host strategic dialogue on regional and global affairs, which gained pace especially in 2014 and 2015. However, exchanges within the perimeter of this dialogue have been complementary to, not separate from, EU-China strategic cooperation. For example, cooperation on the nuclear deal framework with Iran. Germany and China also host high-level financial dialogue and cyber dialogue (Huotari, 2015).

Even prior to the Brexit vote, the UK's cooperation with China was characterised as a withdrawal from the European Union. Leading up to the 2016 strategy, the UK made a series of unilateral policy decisions regarding China that were ahead of the EU, and not in line with the US. In 2015, the UK joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, without consulting with EU member states or the US (Summers, 2015). On the other hand, as UK prime minister, David Cameron took the lead calling for an EU-China free-trade agreement (Watt and Mason, 2013).

France's cooperation with China focuses on trade and investment, especially in key French industries such as aeronautics, transportation and the automotive sector. France's engagement with China is also characterised by the desire to remain relevant as a global power. Through cooperation with China, France aims to demonstrate its global importance, for example through heavy engagement on global affairs, international security and climate change. China and France share global security concerns, as both countries have high levels of involvement in Africa (Ekman and Seaman, 2015).

Exclusive cooperation on any issue is rare, which means that EU-China cooperation, and member state-China cooperation is mostly overlapping. In many policy areas, the member states have been able to organise deeper cooperation directly with China, with more tangible results.

Liberalism

Liberalism expects that the EU's strategy for China aims to cooperate with China in policy areas where preferences are compatible. In these areas, the trading of policy concessions is the most effective. Thus, liberalism also expects the strategy to demand reciprocal concessions from China.

The *Council Conclusions* mentions "creating jobs and growth in the European Union" among the major opportunities for the EU in cooperation with China, as well as "a level playing field, and genuine mutual benefits" (2016a, pg. 2). Furthermore, the Council states that concluding the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between the EU and China is the EU's main priority (Council of the European Union, 2016a).

The CAI, if concluded and implemented, is the most tangible result from cooperation between the EU and China. It is in the EU's interests to gain better access to the Chinese market and create equal opportunities for European companies and investors in China. Similarly, China wants access for

investment in the European market. In the *Council Conclusions,* the Council welcomes "productive Chinese investment, provided it is in line with EU policies and legislation", and expects in return improved access for European businesses and investment in the Chinese market (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pg. 4). The EU urges cooperation on other issues, including research and innovation, digital economy and the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. However, the EU can only urge China liberalise, create a level playing field for business and investment and adhere to international market rules and regulations. The interdependence between the EU's and China's preferences makes the EU focus on the investment and market access, as policy concessions can be exchanged in this area.

The strategy emphasises the need for reciprocity from China throughout. First, the Council states that it "expects the EU's relationship with China to be one of reciprocal benefit in all respects" and "[t]he EU also expects China to assume responsibilities in line with its global impact and to support the rules-based international order from which it, too, benefits" (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pg. 2). Reciprocity is mentioned explicitly two more times, in relation to investment, and research and innovation. Reciprocity is treated as a precondition to cooperation in the strategy, which means that the EU attached a high priority to rebalancing the relationship with China.

Constructivism

Constructivism expects that cooperation is sought in areas where norms are convergent, or in areas that belong to the core identity of the EU.

As one of the primary opportunities for cooperation with China, the Council emphasises "engaging China in its reform process in a way which ensures openness", and "underlines that the promotion of human rights and the rule of law will continue to be a core part of the EU's engagement with China" (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pg. 2-3). The Council stresses that the EU's strategy for China represents the EU's interests, as well as universal values. In relations with China, the Council focuses on the rules-based international order, human rights including freedom of speech, and the rule of law (Council of the European Union, 2016a). The South China Sea dispute mentioned earlier is also present in the strategy.

The many policy areas included in the strategy present opportunities for norm transfer. One of them is people-to-people relations. People-to-people exchanges are a form of 'soft diplomacy' that is focused on creating mutual understanding and fostering trust between partners. The EU-China People-to-People Dialogue (P2P) covers sectors such as education, culture and mobility, but also serves goals beyond these issues. In general, P2P dialogue functions as a tool to overcome obstacles in diplomacy by creating mutual understanding and trust on issues where preferences are close. Following successes on these issues, cooperation can move organically onto more contentious issues.

For example, the 'soft issues' discussed in the EU-China P2P Dialogue, such as mobility, can be extended to so-called 'hard-issues', such as visa regulation. The EU hopes to open China's civil society and space for NGOs through P2P dialogue as well, but for now the dialogue remains top-down (Burnay et al., 2014). Despite difficulties in promoting a bottom-up approach to P2P relations in China, the EU pushes for deepening cooperation through the P2P platform, especially on mobility (Council of the European Union, 2016a). P2P dialogue is an excellent example of seeking cooperation on issues where norms are convergent and linkages are easily made.

Constructivism expects that the transfer of norms to China is more likely to be successful when the identities, norms and values of two actors are somewhat convergent. When norms are highly dissimilar or even opposing, alter is very unlikely to adopt ego's behaviour because they see that behaviour as inherently bad. The difference between the conceptions of the EU and China on human rights described earlier (Men, 2011) is an example of such a dissimilarity. Another gap between the EU and China exists in trade and investment. Whereas the EU promotes free trade in accordance to the rules of the WTO, China is a socialist market economy which values public ownership and state-owned enterprises (Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2004).

The EU's strategy for China still touches upon these issues. The strategy stresses the importance of improvements on human rights and rule of law in China, and repeatedly calls on China to become more open and to improve the protection of intellectual property rights (Council of the European Union, 2016a). Constructivism expects that despite divergent norms, the EU chooses to push these topics because they belong to the core identity of the EU. Michalski and Pan describe the relationship between the EU and China around 2016 as an equilibrium, in which each side projects its norms, but only to the extent of maintaining respect for the other's fundamental identity (Michalski and Pan, 2017). For that reason, the EU does not try to deviate from the One China policy, and only promotes human rights and rule of law to an extent that is acceptable to China.

Constructivism predicts an inherent contradiction in EU-China relations. On the one hand, the EU seeks out cooperation on issues where linkages are easily made. On the other hand, the EU must seek out contentious issues such as human rights and the South China Sea dispute to enact its identity of a normative power.

The Belt and Road Initiative
An exceptional issue in EU-China relations is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As a recent development, coined by the Chinese government in 2013, the BRI was faced with support and criticism. The BRI is an initiative based on Chinese investment and leadership aimed at creating economic corridors from China across the Eurasian continent. The project involves investments in transportation, pipelines, airports and markets, as well as investment into maritime routes from China to Southeast-Asia, India,

Europe and Africa. The project is clouded with uncertainty and ambiguity about what China's priorities are, which specific routes shall be taken and how China will balance its foreign policy non-intervention principle and instability in countries along the Road (Pantucci, 2016).

The preferences of the member states and the EU are expected to congregate around narrow and contentious issues such as the BRI, which makes it an interesting test for the explanatory power of the three theories. The following section examines the BRI from the perspective of the three theories. Realism expects the EU member states to be concerned about their security facing this new project, coordinating their involvement in the BRI outside of the EU. Liberalism expects the EU to be concerned about the possible threat to internal cohesiveness that the BRI poses, although individual member states are interested in the investment accompanying the BRI. Constructivism expects the EU to seek opportunities for norm diffusion through the BRI platform, especially promoting democracy and rule of law.

The EU's statements on the BRI in the *Council Conclusions* are limited to ensuring economic concerns about fairness and transparency are met. Furthermore, the EU's wants absolute gains for all parties involved (Council of the European Union, 2016a). Unlike constructivism expects, the EU does not offer expertise or best practices regarding the rule of law in international development projects. Nor does the EU stress democratic practices in the countries along the Silk Road economic belt. Instead, emphasising economic practices conforming to market rules and absolute gains for all parties involved corresponds with liberalism. Additionally, individual member states reactions to, and involvement in the BRI is important for both realism and liberalism.

Germany sees business opportunities in the Belt and Road Initiative. For example, Hamburg and Duisburg ports have shown interest in becoming BRI hubs as part of the maritime Silk Road. Before 2016, five BRI projects involving the connection of railroads between China and Germany have taken place, although some were initiated pre-BRI and simply rebranded as a BRI project in 2013 (Gaspers, 2016). Although these projects have boosted the demand for cargo transport between these two countries, public opinion about the BRI is negative, rather than positive. China's image accompanying this project is one of a geopolitical actor becoming increasingly aggressive in foreign policy. Furthermore, worries about undermining the EU, and surpassing investment regulations persist. The German government seeks to coordinate Europe's response to the BRI through the EU, particularly through the EU-China Connectivity Platform (Gaspers, 2016). However, as mentioned, the Council Conclusions constitutes no pan-European response to the BRI, it only urges China to adhere to the rules.

The UK was the first to join Chinese-led initiatives, when it joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a China-led investment bank designed as a response to the World Bank. Other EU member states followed quickly after the UK; France, Germany and Italy were among the states to

join (Anderlini, 2015). On the BRI, which is in part funded by the AIIB, Britain was slower to act. In 2015, UK Prime Minister David Cameron states in a joint press conference with Chinese President Xi Jinping that the UK and China will seek to cooperate on infrastructure projects, through the UK-China Infrastructure Alliance. BRI projects could be among the joint infrastructure projects (Government of the United Kingdom, 2015c). Leading up to the publication of the EU's strategy in 2016, no such project had been finished. In 2017, the freight rail service that departs from the Chinese city of Yiwu was extended to London (BBC News, 2017).

France's response to the BRI was even more reluctant than that of the UK. Leading up to 2016, the only connection between France and the BRI was France's membership to the AIIB (Chin and He, 2016). In 2019, the port of Marseille became a hub for BRI links between China, Europe and Africa, a maritime Silk Road project that was accompanied with Chinese investments into the wider Marseille province (Yuan, 2019). Again, these developments took place after the 2016 strategy for China was published. On the national level, France has pushed back against China on the BRI, stating that the BRI must work in both directions: Chinese investments into Europe must be partnered with improved access to Chinese markets (Pennetier and Irish, 2019). The latter statements were made by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2019. It can be reasonably assumed that the French preferences regarding the BRI remained stable between 2016 and 2019. Leading up to the adoption of the EU's strategy for China in 2016, France was either indifferent on the BRI, or reluctant to get involved due to the reciprocity concerns stated above.

To conclude, the Council Conclusions aim to cooperate with China on a myriad of issues. To analyse cooperation deeper, the Belt and Road Initiative is used as a contentious issue in EU-China cooperation, which allows the theories' expectations to become more explicit. The EU's engagement with the BRI in the strategy is scarce, addressing solely on economic concerns. The engagement of member states with the BRI is reluctant as well; none of the Big Three has officially joined the BRI, and especially France is critical of the one-sidedness of the project. Realism expects the powerful EU member states to be wary about the BRI for security reasons. However, the statements made by the French government allude to economic considerations rather than security concerns. So, both realism and liberalism provide explanation for this phenomenon.

5.2.2 Solving Challenges

Where the EU's strategy does not seek cooperation between the EU and China, it addresses challenges that obstruct EU-China relations. Seven of the twenty-three conclusions by the Council are dedicated to addressing a particular challenge. In order, they deal with reciprocity, human rights violations in China, the One China policy, concerns about industrial overcapacity, rebalancing the EU-Asia relationship, global governance and EU internal cohesiveness. Whereas reciprocity and rebalancing

the EU-Asia relationship matches realism, concerns about industrial overcapacity and internal cohesiveness point towards liberalism. Global governance, on the other hand, corroborates the constructivist proposition. The next section explores each theory further.

Realism expects that concerns about the distribution of gains imposes a constraint on cooperation with China. The EU's strategy emphasises reciprocity throughout the strategy, which implies that China is gaining more from cooperation than the EU. For example, cooperation on research and innovation is welcomed by the EU in the *Council Conclusions*. However, in the same conclusion, the EU stresses the reciprocal access to research programmes and financial resources is a prerequisite, as is appropriate measures to counter cyber-theft of trade secrets and intellectual property. Furthermore, realism expects that member states may seek to solve their concerns about relative gains through the EU. As a more powerful collective of countries, the EU can get a better bargain from China than individual countries (Mosher, 2003). The EU's strategy for China sets the negotiation and conclusion of the CAI as a priority. The negotiations for the investment agreement are led by the Directorate-General for Trade of the European Commission (European Commission, 2020). The EU's main leverage in negotiations is market access. However, compared to China, as well as alternatives for the EU such as the US and Canada, the EU market is significantly more open. Furthermore, China can always exit negotiations with the EU and choose for a bilateral approach with member states, or the 16+1 forum. The EU does not have such an exit option (Godement and Stanzel, 2015). In short, the competition between member states undercuts the EU's leverage, unlike realism expects. The problem of internal cohesiveness is better explained by the liberalist proposition.

Liberalism expects that the ability to speak with one voice on international matters is a problem for the EU, and an opportunity that China may seek to take advantage of. The strategy emphasises the importance of speaking with a unified voice, which is not an unexpected priority of the EU. The previous section established that competition between member states for investment from China diminishes the EU's leverage in CAI negotiations. Another instance is the 16+1 framework of cooperation between China and the CEEC. The 16+1 framework is a platform for dialogue and cooperation between China and 16 CEEC, of which 11 are EU member states. The cooperation and dialogue is paired with BRI infrastructure projects and broader investments from China into the CEE region. China asserts that China-CEEC cooperation is a part of, and deepening, China-EU cooperation (Zheng, 2015). The EU, on the other hand, perceives 16+1 cooperation as circumventing the EU and attempts to 'divide and rule' Europe. The instance of Hungary and Greece's opposition to a common European statement urging China to accept the PCA's ruling in favour of the Philippines is an example of member states being unwilling to criticise China (Stanzel, 2016). Whilst this evidence is only anecdotal, it does not take away from the fact that the EU perceives 16+1 cooperation as a threat to EU-China relations. In response to China seeking direct cooperation with the EU's member states, the

EU indeed aims to strengthen its internal cohesiveness as an external actor (Council of the European Union, 2016a). To improve the EU's internal cohesiveness is a liberalist response to the problem of China seeking direct cooperation with member states. Realists would not give up sovereignty to improve the common position of the EU. Before concluding, the following section looks at the constructivist proposition.

Constructivism expects that the different normative paradigms of the EU and China will obstruct EU-China relations from moving past shallow dialogue and cooperation. Getting China to become more involved in international institutions can altercast the values of these institutions to China. In the strategy, the EU calls on China to implement G20 growth strategies and be a more engaged and active member of the WTO (Council of the European Union, 2016a). In less explicit terms, the EU calls on China to become a responsible member of the rules-based international order throughout the strategy. However, the EU does not go beyond calling on China to become a more responsible stakeholder in global governance. The strategy also focuses on the economic rules and regulations aspect of global governance, with the goal of fairer competition between the EU and China, rather than the altercasting of norms being the goal itself.

In short, the *Council Conclusions* address economic concerns, China's illiberal market practices and worries about undermining the single market. Reciprocity and diluting the EU's internal cohesiveness, the central element of the liberalist proposition, are the most prominent criticisms in the strategy.

5.2.3 Content Conclusions

This section about the content of the strategy focused on a close-reading analysis of the *Council Conclusions*. Trade and investment and reciprocity from China is central to the EU's strategy document, accompanied by criticism of Chinese market practices and lack of openness to European investment. Liberalism is the theory that is best equipped to explain the content of the strategy based on the domestic interests of actors within the member states. Using Moravcsik (1993), this thesis examined patterns of domestic interests in Germany, the UK and France. In the *Council Conclusions*, each domestic issue is represented; commercial issues such as investment, environmental policy, and political issues like human rights. The positive relationship between the empirical observations of domestic preferences, the member state preferences and the *Council Conclusions* contribute to the explanatory leverage of liberalism to this case study. The mini-case study on the BRI shows overlap between realism and liberalism. The aloofness of the member states to the BRI in Europe can be explained by security concerns, as well as economic considerations. In the discussion, the application of the theories and overlapping explanations, are discussed.

6. Discussion of Findings

The empirical analysis in the previous chapter tested theoretical propositions in the empirical world. Table 2 below shows that the liberalist propositions and the empirical observations made in the empirical analysis form the strongest matches. For constructivism goes the opposite; the propositions of this theory were the least confirmed by the empirical observations. Interestingly, realism shows relevance in both the preference formation and the strategy content, but falls short compared to liberalism. In this discussion, I review these results and return to the core assumptions of the theories.

The empirical analysis exposes some points were both realism and liberalism can explain an empirical phenomenon in the congruence approach. Because the congruence analysis relies on the interpretation of empirical observations from the perspective of multiple theories, these points are theoretically significant. Such points can expose a limitation in a theory, or show a theory's complementarity to another theory.

Table 2 Congruence analysis results

Theory	Empirical observations	
	Preferences	**Strategy content**
Realism	*Proposition*: member states preserve sovereignty over foreign policy. *Observation*: partly confirmed, Germany is an exception. Somewhat match*	*Proposition*: content only covers non-security, non-economic issues. *Observation*: partly confirmed, content covers important trade issues that affect relative gains between the EU and China. Somewhat match
Liberalism	*Proposition*: domestic preferences influence member state preferences. *Observation*: confirms a link between business interests and member state preferences. Match	*Proposition*: content aimed at exchanging policy concessions, and focuses on internal cohesiveness. *Observation*: confirms policy concessions on trade and investment, and concern over internal cohesiveness. Match
Constructivism	*Proposition*: EU's preferences are to replicate core norms; human rights protection and rule of law improvement *Observation*: normative policy is only surface-level EU-policy. No match	*Proposition*: content seeks cooperation on convergent issues, human rights, and focuses on international institutional norms. *Observation*: attention to human rights and institutional norms is surface-level, economic motives undercut the final strategy. No match

*'match' refers to the congruence between the theory's proposition and the empirical observations

Two occasions of overlap between realism and liberalism occur in the empirical analysis. First, in the configuration of member state preferences. Whereas realism expects EU member states to want survival, liberalism expects that state preferences rise bottom-up from their domestic societies. According to realism, states increase their chances of survival by maximising their power and security, through military and economic build-up. One way realism expects member states to maintain their security is by keeping their foreign policy instruments at the national level, as opposed to giving up sovereignty to the Commission or the HRVP. Foreign policy organised at the EU level, is mainly intergovernmental. Especially large member states such as the UK and France opposed a larger role for the Commission and the HRVP in foreign policymaking. However, Germany is an exception. Compared to the UK and France, Germany is more in favour of EU-level foreign and security policy.

Second, in the levels of engagement of the EU and member states in the BRI. Realism expects that member states are wary of Chinese investments into their territory, especially when part of a larger geopolitical strategy. Again, Germany is an exception. Compared to the UK and France, Germany is more involved, and more supportive of the BRI. Each time, liberalist explanations have more explanatory leverage. For example, liberalism can explain both why member states are reluctant to defer foreign policy to the EU, and why state preferences are mainly geared towards trade and investment; the configuration of domestic preferences informs such behaviour by states. In short, realism has explanatory potential, but loses to liberalism in this case. The next section explores why.

In applications to the EU, realism has some limitations. Great-power politics, balancing and offensive military capacity is generally absent in modern EU politics. This means that liberalism is at an advantage in this research. The core elements of liberalism align more naturally with the characteristics of the EU than realism does. Realism must look more at the implicit actions of the EU rather than the explicit. Yet, it is not impossible to apply realism to the EU. Peter Seeberg, mentioned before in the theoretical framework of this thesis, applies realism to explain why the EU's engagement with Lebanon is based on a defensive strategy, rather than the promotion of democracy (Seeberg, 2009). He argues that the EU's agenda in Lebanon is implicitly realist, in that democracy promotion at the surface level, through ambiguous and non-binding passages, hides a defensive plan underneath (Seeberg, 2009). Besides the implicitness of realism in the EU, realism is more applicable to the EU's interactions with weaker actors, rather than stronger actors such as China. These limitations of the theory may have obstructed its explanatory leverage in EU-China relations.

Constructivism failed to deliver throughout the empirical analysis, despite the EU's image of a normative power. The limitation of constructivism in the empirical analysis is the lack of depth of its expectations. Although norms always play a role in EU-China interactions, they tend to be at the surface level of cooperation or policy. Alternatively, the EU begins with normative policy, but changes to different approaches when normative policy fails to deliver. This is the case in the South China Sea

dispute. EU-China relations in the 2000s was based on a 'myth of convergence', argue Godement and Vasselier, the idea that China's engagement with the EU would automatically democratise and liberalise the country. In 2016, the EU was already firmly aware that this approach failed, whilst the imbalance between the EU and China only grew (Godement and Vasselier, 2017). Despite not being the best framework to explain this case, constructivism provides interesting perspectives. Most notably, constructivism predicts the inherent contradiction in EU-China relations. On the one hand, the EU seeks out cooperation on issues where linkages are easily made. On the other hand, the EU must seek out contentious issues despite Chinese resistance, to perform its identity of a normative power.

Liberalism comes out as the best framework to explain the development of the EU's strategy for China. The liberalist propositions are not only confirmed by empirical observations, but liberalism can also explain empirical phenomena that realism and constructivism could not account for. The theory is not without its limitations. For example, Moravcsik argues that national preferences inform state preferences. Depending on the issue, national preference formation occurs according to different patterns. Political issues, argues Moravcsik, do not attract commercial interests at the domestic level (Moravcsik, 1993, pg. 494). However, in EU-China relations, I argue that commercial interests tend to oppose addressing political issues with China because of China's particular sensitivity to criticism of its human rights track record. Taunting China may result in missing out on business deals or investment which directly harms commercial interests. Other than this limitation, liberalism's focus on the formation of preferences at the member state level is confirmed by the empirical analysis. So is the inherent problem of undermining intergovernmentalism through direct cooperation with China.

In short, this discussion reviewed the empirical results of the congruence analysis, linking them back to the core assumptions of the three theories. The realist and constructivist propositions are less confirmed in the empirical analysis due to their limitations. Liberalism, on the other hand, proved to be a better framework for explaining the development of the EU's strategy for China.

7. Conclusions

This thesis sought to answer the research question: "*Which theory provides a better framework for explaining the development of the European Union's China strategy, realism, liberalism or constructivism?*" The three theories formulated propositions based on their expectations for the preference formation of actors for, and the final product of the EU's strategy for China. The empirical analysis, which tested these propositions in the empirical world, confirms liberalism as the framework that can explain the development of this strategy the best. Firstly, the liberalist propositions are confirmed by the empirical observations. Liberalism can link domestic preferences to state preferences to the issues that are included in the *Council Conclusions*. Secondly, liberalism can explain empirical phenomena that realism and constructivism could not account for, for example why European leaders choose to visit the Dalai Lama, and the EU's worries about the BRI and 16+1 cooperation.

Some limitations of the research design, the data collection and the empirical analysis must be acknowledged. First, the congruence analysis relies on the interpretation of empirical information. To avoid theoretical relativism, I have based my judgement of congruence or non-congruence on comparisons between theories, as well as comparisons between expectation and empirical observation. Yet, theoretical relativism cannot be fully overcome which means that observations can be made to 'fit' an expectation by the researcher. Second, the data collection method employed in this thesis relies fully on documentation. With feasibility and the societal context in which this thesis was written in mind, I have not included other sources of data, such as interviews. Finally, the structure of the empirical analysis is limited by its rigidity. I have chosen to write about the preference formation before writing about the content of the strategy; a chronological approach. However, this obstructed me from laying down more links between interests, and issues in the strategy. I sought to balance clarity and readability with quality in the analysis.

Further research can be pursued in both EU-China relations research, and the application of realism, liberalism and constructivism to EU external action. The results of this thesis can inform further work on the EU's strategy for China, for example regarding the actual implementation of the strategy. EU-China relations can be researched from the Chinese perspective. Finally, knowing that domestic interests play a large role in the EU's strategy-making process, what is the impact of the increasingly negative public opinion of China in European countries on China policy? The theories employed in the congruence analysis may also invite further research. As mentioned in the discussion, applying realism to the EU can be challenging. This combination could be developed further, for example by comparing EU interactions with relatively weaker, and relatively stronger countries. Constructivism, in this thesis, focused on the mechanism of altercasting and normative policy. However,

constructivism has more to offer as a theory applied to the EU. Constructivism may work better in smaller cases, such as sectoral dialogues between the EU and China.

Finally, this thesis closes off with some recommendations, relating to the EU's policy for China. This thesis exposed some problems and contradictions in EU-China relations that obstruct fruitful cooperation, and undermine the EU's power compared to China. The strategy reflects these problems. In short, the strategy is critical, but unambitious. Critical of the human rights situation in China and especially illiberal trade practices such as dumping. Unambitious in the sense that the strategy addresses these problems through dialogue, building mutual understanding and simply urging China to do X or Y. Instead, the EU should focus on rebalancing the relationship. Complementary to its demands for reciprocity, something China is yet unwilling to give, the EU should strengthen anti-dumping and investment screening regulations and enforcement. Furthermore, the EU must work on its exit options, for example by strengthening its relations with other Asian partners. As Godement and Vasselier (2017) rightfully state, an attitude shift is needed from China. But only a unified Europe, with stronger leverage, can counter the dragon.

Bibliography

Adler, C. (2014, 19 January). UK visa rules deter Chinese shoppers. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/46b06df0-5908-11e3-9798-00144feabdc0

Aggarwal V.K., Newland S.A. (2015). Introduction. In: Aggarwal V., Newland S. (Eds). *Responding to China's Rise,* 3-25. Cham: Springer.

Allison, G. (2017). *Destined For War – Can American and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Amato, G. and Verola, N. (2018). Freedom, Democracy, Rule of Law. In G. Amato, E. Moavero-Milanesi, G. Pasquino & L. Reichlin (Eds.). *The History of the European Union: Constructing Utopia*, 57–88. Oxford: Hart Publishing. doi: 10.5040/9781509917440

Amnesty Germany. (2015). "Meinungsfreiheit in China [Freedom of expression in China]". Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.de/2015/8/6/medizinische-versorgung-fuer-gao-yu

Amnesty UK. (2015). "Hundreds of human rights lawyers targeted in China". Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org.uk/china-hundreds-human-rights-lawyers-targeted

Amnesty UK. (n.d.). "China". Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/china

Anderlini, J. (2015, 26 March). UK move to join China-led bank a surprise even to Beijing. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/d33fed8a-d3a1-11e4-a9d3-00144feab7de

BBC News. (2017, 18 January). 'Silk Road' freight train from China arrives in Barking. *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-38666854

BDI. (2016a). "China's market economy status". Retrieved from https://bdi.eu/media/themenfelder/internationale_maerkte/downloads/BDI_MES_Final_Englisch.pdf

BDI. (2016b). "After COP: One Step Forward, Many More Needed". Retrieved from https://english.bdi.eu/article/news/after-cop-one-step-forward-many-more-needed/

BDI. (2017). "Effective Climate Protection Requires International Cooperation". Retrieved from https://english.bdi.eu/topics/global-issues/sustainability-and-trade/#/article/news/effective-climate-protection-requires-international-cooperation/

BDI. (2019). "China – a partner and competitor". Retrieved from https://english.bdi.eu/topics/global-issues/china/#/article/news/china-a-partner-and-competitor/

Blatter, J. and Haverland, M. (2012). *Designing Case-Studies – Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burchill, S. (2005). Liberalism. In Burchill, S., Linklater A., Devetak, R., Donnelly, J., Paterson, M., Reus-Smit, C. and True, J. (Eds.). *Theories of International Relations, Fifth Edition,* 55-83. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burnay, Matthieu, Hivonnet, Joëlle and Raube, Kolja. (2014). '"Soft Diplomacy" and People-to-People Dialogue between the EU and the PRC'. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19(Special Issue), 35–56.

CCC. (2015). "Committee on Climate Change to collaborate with Chinese counterpart to assess climate risk". Retrieved from https://www.theccc.org.uk/2015/12/09/committee-on-climate-change-to-collaborate-with-chinese-counterpart-to-assess-climate-risk/

Chang, V. K. L., & Pieke, F. N. (2018). Europe's engagement with China: Shifting Chinese views of the EU and the EU-china relationship. *Asia Europe Journal: Studies on Common Policy Challenges, 16*(4), 317-331. doi:10.1007/s10308-017-0499-9

Cheung, K. C.-K. (2012). Away from socialism, towards Chinese characteristics: Confucianism and the futures of Chinese nationalism. *China Information*, *26*(2), 205–218. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X12440548

Chin, H and He, W. (2016). The Belt and Road Initiative: 65 Countries and Beyond. *Fung Business Intelligence Centre*. Retrieved from

https://www.fbicgroup.com/sites/default/files/B&R_Initiative_65_Countries_and_Beyond.pdf

Clark, P. (2013, 24 May). Climate committee urges UK commitment to green power until 2030. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/fffde278-c2fa-11e2-9bcb-00144feab7de

Clark, P. (2015, 22 September). UK policy hitting credibility on climate change, says CBI. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/ff648bd2-6073-11e5-9846-de406ccb37f2

Cottey, A. (2019). Europe and China's sea disputes: between normative politics, power balancing and acquiescence. *European Security*, 28(4), 473-492. doi: 10.1080/09662839.2019.1636784

Council of the European Union. (2016a). "Council Conclusions EU Strategy on China". Retrieved from http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11252-2016-INIT/en/pdf

Council of the European Union. (2016b, 11 March). "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Recent Developments in the South China Sea [Press release]". Retrieved from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/11/hr-declaration-on-bealf-of-eu-recent-developments-south-china-sea/

Council of the European Union. (2020). "Qualified majority". Retrieved from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/voting-system/qualified-majority/

Da Conceição-Heldt, E., & Meunier, S. (2014). Speaking with a single voice: Internal cohesiveness and external effectiveness of the EU in global governance. Journal of European Public Policy, 21(7), 961-979.

Diez, T., Bode, I. & Da Costa, A. F. (2011). *SAGE Key Concepts: Key Concepts in International Relations.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781446288344

Donnelly, J. (2000). *Realism and international relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dorussen, H., Kirchner, E. J., & Christiansen, T. (2018). Security cooperation in EU-china relations: Towards convergence? *European Foreign Affairs Review, 23*(3), 287-304.

Économie Gouvernement France. (2015, 29 September). "Déclaration conjointe dans le cadre du troisième Dialogue économique et financier de haut niveau entre la France et la Chine [Joint Declaration within the Framework of the Third Economic and Financial High Level Dialogue between France and China]" Retrieved from https://www.economie.gouv.fr/files/files/PDF/declaration_conjointe_3_dialogue_economique_financier.pdf

EEAS. (2013). "EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation". Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20131123.pdf

EEAS. (2019). "EU-China Relations factsheet". Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/external-investment-plan/34728/eu-china-relations-factsheet_en

Ekman, A. and Seaman, J. (2015). France and China: A not so 'special' relationship. In Huotari, M., Otero-Iglesias, M., Seaman, J. and Ekman, A. (Eds), *Mapping Europe-China Relations A Bottom-Up Approach,* 25-29. Retrieved from https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etnc_web_final_1-1.pdf

Elman, C. (1996). Horses for courses: Why nor neorealist theories of foreign policy? *Security Studies,* 6(1), 7-53, DOI: 10.1080/09636419608429297

European Commission. (2016). "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council – Elements for a new EU strategy on China". Retrieved from http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/china/docs/joint_communication_to_the_european_parliament_and_the_council_-_elements_for_a_new_eu_strategy_on_china.pdf

European Commission. (2020). "EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment". Retrieved from https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2115

Eurostat. (2020a). "GDP and main components (output, expenditure and income)". Retrieved from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?query=BOOKMARK_DS-406763_QID_-1FAD35E9_UID_-

3F171EB0&layout=UNIT,L,X,0;TIME,C,X,1;GEO,L,Y,0;NA_ITEM,L,Z,0;INDICATORS,C,Z,1;&zSelection=DS-406763INDICATORS,OBS_FLAG;DS-406763NA_ITEM,B1GQ;&rankName1=INDICATORS_1_2_-1_2&rankName2=NA-ITEM_1_2_-1_2&rankName3=UNIT_1_2_0_0&rankName4=TIME_1_0_1_0&rankName5=GEO_1_2_0_1&rStp=&cStp=&rDCh=&cDCh=&rDM=true&cDM=true&footnes=false&empty=false&wai=false&time_mode=ROLLING&time_most_recent=true&lang=EN&cfo=%23%23%23%2C%23%23%23.%23%23%23

Eurostat. (2020b). "General government expenditure by function (COFOG)". Retrieved from https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do

Farnell, J. and Crookes, P.I. (2016). *The Politics of EU-China Economic Relations – An Uneasy Partnership.* London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-48874-9.

Federal Government of Germany. (2014, 28 March). "Joint Declaration between Germany and China". Retrieved from https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/search/joint-declaration-between-germany-and-china-460244

Federal Government of Germany. (2015, 30 October). "China is an important player in the world, says Chancellor [Press Release]". Retrieved from https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/search/china-is-an-important-player-in-the-world-says-chancellor-602958

Federal Government of Germany. (2016, 14 June). "Rule of law strengthens trust [Press Release]". Retrieved from https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/search/rule-of-law-strengthens-trust-436356

FIDH. (2014). "Open letter to the French authorities on the eve of the Chinese president's visit to France". Retrieved from https://www.fidh.org/fr/regions/asie/chine/15028-lettre-ouverte-aux-autorites-francaises-a-la-veille-de-la-visite-en-france

Finnemore, M and Sikkink, K. (2001). Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4, 391-416. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.4.1.391

Flockhart, T. (2012). Constructivism and Foreign Policy. In Smith, S., Hadfield, A. and Dunne, T. (Eds), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* [Second Edition]. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

France Diplomatie. (2013, 15 June). "Chine - Discours du président de la République, M. François Hollande, devant les membres du China Entrepreneur Club et les participants à l'International Capital Conférence [China - Speech by the President of the Republic, Mr. François Hollande, to the members of the China Entrepreneur Club and the participants in the International Capital Conference]". Retrieved from https://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/util/documents/accede_document.php?1590256345478

France Diplomatie. (2014, 27 March). "Chine - Ouverture du symposium sur les relations franco-chinoises Discours de M. Laurent Fabius, ministre des affaires étrangères [China - Opening of the symposium on Franco-Chinese relations Speech by Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister for Foreign Affairs]". Retrieved from https://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/util/documents/accede_document.php?1590256819479

Friends of the Earth France. (2016). "Les US et la Chine ratifient l'Accord de Paris : le climat est sauvé? [The US and China ratify the Paris Agreement: the climate is saved?]. Retrieved from https://www.amisdelaterre.org/les-us-et-la-chine-ratifient-l-accord-de-paris-le-climat-est-sauve/

Gaspers, J. (2016, 17 December). Germany Wants Europe to Help Shape China's Belt and Road Initiative. *The Diplomat*. https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/germany-wants-europe-to-help-shape-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative/

Godement, F. and Stanzel, A. (2015). The European interest in an investment treaty with China. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR127-_The_European_interest_in_an_investment_treaty_with_China_(both_graphics).pdf

Godement, F. and Vasselier, A. (2017). China at the Gates: a New Power Audit of EU-China Relations. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/China_Power_Audit.pdf

Gotev, G. (2016, 14 July). "EU unable to adopt statement upholding South China Sea ruling". *EURACTIV*. Retrieved from https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-unable-to-adopt-statement-upholding-south-china-sea-ruling/

Government of the United Kingdom. (2010, 10 November). "PM's speech at Beida University, China [Speech]". Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-beida-university-china

Government of the United Kingdom. (2014, 28 February). "UK and China talks on foreign policy and security [Press release]". Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-china-talks-on-foreign-policy-and-security

Government of the United Kingdom. (2015a, 12 August). "UK-China: a Global Partnership for the 21st Century [Speech]". Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-china-a-global-partnership-for-the-21st-century

Government of the United Kingdom. (2015b, 21 September). "UK-China 7th Economic and Financial Dialogue: factsheet". Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-china-seventh-economic-and-financial-dialogue-factsheet

Government of the United Kingdom. (2015c, 21 October). "Joint press conference: David Cameron and President Xi Jinping [Speech]". Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/joint-press-conference-david-cameron-and-president-xi-jinping

Government of the United Kingdom. (2016, 5 December). "UK-China High-Level People to People Dialogue". Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-china-high-level-people-to-people-dialogue

Grésillon, G. (2012, 29 March). "Les patrons français s'efforcent de s'ouvrir le marché chinois [French bosses strive to open the Chinese market]". *Les Echos*. Retrieved from https://www.lesechos.fr/2012/03/les-patrons-francais-sefforcent-de-souvrir-le-marche-chinois-354188

Groom, B. and O'Connor, S. (2014, 18 June). UK trade with China still lags behind competitors. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/fe5d673e-f631-11e3-a038-00144feabdc0

Heiduk, F. (2014). Conflicting Images? Germany and the Rise of China. *German Politics* 23 (1-2), 118-133, doi: 10.1080/09644008.2014.916693

Hix, S. and Høyland, B. (2011). *The Political System of the European Union* [Third Edition]. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holzer, C., & Zhang, H. (2008). The potentials and limits of China-EU cooperation on climate change and energy security. *Asia Europe Journal: Intercultural Studies in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(2), 217-227. doi:10.1007/s10308-008-0183-1

Houghton, D. (2007). Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Toward a Constructivist Approach. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 3(1), 24-45.

Huotari, M. (2015). Germany's China policy: No honeymoon forever. In Huotari, M., Otero-Iglesias, M., Seaman, J. and Ekman, A. (Eds), *Mapping Europe-China Relations A Bottom-Up Approach,* 30-34. Retrieved from https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etnc_web_final_1-1.pdf

Hyde-Price, A. (2006). 'Normative' power Europe: a realist critique. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 217-234, doi: 10.1080/13501760500451634

IGFM. (2014). "IGFM- Resolution gegen die Verfolgung von Falun Gong-Praktizierenden in der VR China und die damit verbundenen Organentnahmen in Form des Organraubes [IGFM - resolution against the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the PRC and the related organ harvesting in the form of organ harvesting]". Retrieved from https://www.igfm.de/china-falun-gong-resolution/

Jahn, B. (2013). Liberalism – In Theory and History. In Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *After Liberalism? The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (pg. 15-32). New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Johnson, J. B., & Reynolds, H. T. (2005). *Political science research methods* [5th Edition]. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Keohane, R. (1986). Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond. In Keohane, R. (Ed.), *Neorealism and its critics* (pg. 158-203). New York: Columbia University Press.

Klima Allianz Deutschland. (2019). "Stillstand in den Verhandlungen, Bewegung auf der Straße [Stillstand at the negotiations, movement on the street]". Retrieved from https://www.klima-allianz.de/veranstaltungen/detail/stillstand-in-den-verhandlungen-bewegung-auf-der-strasse/

Klima Allianz Deutschland. (n.d.). "Argumente für die Energie der Zukunft [Arguments for the energy of the future]". Retrieved from https://www.klima-allianz.de/news/detail/argumente-fuer-die-energie-der-zukunft/

Le Belzic, S. (2016a, 7 March). "La France veut monter dans le train de la Chinafrique [France wants to get on the Chinafrique train]". *Le Monde*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/03/07/la-france-veut-monter-dans-le-train-de-la-chinafrique_4877903_3212.html

Le Belzic, S. (2016b, 18 April). "La Chine, la France et l'Afrique cherchent à bâtir une relation de confiance [China, France and Africa seek to build a relationship of trust]". *Le Monde*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/04/18/la-chine-la-france-et-l-afrique-cherchent-a-batir-une-relation-de-confiance_4904042_3212.html

Lehne, S. (2012). The Big Three in Europe Foreign Policy. *Carnagie Endowment for International Peace*. Retrieved from https://www-jstor-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/stable/pdf/resrep12823.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad8b88c5c42a987cb9249097571cb422b

Maher, R. (2016). The elusive EU-china strategic partnership. *International Affairs, 92*(4), 959-976. doi:10.1111/1468-2346.12659

Mearsheimer, J. (1995). The False Promise of International Institutions. *International Security*, 19(3), 5-49.

Medef. (2015). "COP21 : Le Medef félicite la communauté internationale d'avoir conclu un accord historique et poursuit sa mobilization [COP21: Medef congratulates the international community for having concluded a historic agreement and continues its mobilization]". Retrieved from https://www.medef.com/fr/communique-de-presse/article/cop21-le-medef-felicite-la-communaute-internationale-d-avoir-conclu-un-accord-historique-et-poursuit-sa-mobilisation

Men, J. (2011). Between human rights and sovereignty – an examination of EU-china political relations. *European Law Journal, 17*(4), 534-550. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0386.2011.00564.x

Michalski, A., & Pan, Z. (2017). Role dynamics in a structured relationship: The EU-china strategic partnership. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 55*(3), 611-627. doi:10.1111/jcms.12505

Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. (2004). "Socialist Market Economic System". Retrieved from http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/topic/bizchina/economicsystem/200406/20040600239133.shtml

Moravcsik, A. (1993). Preferences and Power in the European Community: Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(4), 473-524.

Moravcsik, A. (1997). Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics. *International Organization*, 51(4), 513-553. doi:10.1162/002081897550447

Moravcsik, A. (2002). Liberal International Relations Theory: A Scientific Assessment (draft). In C. Elman, & M. F. Elman, *Progress in International Relations Theory* (pg. 159-204). Cambridge: MIT Press

Morgenthau, H. (1978). Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace (5th ed., revised ed.). New York: Knopf.

Mosher, J. S. (2003). Relative Gains Concerns when the Number of States in the International System Increases. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *47*(5), 642–668. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002703254296

Napolitano, G. (2018). The Fundamental Goal of the European Project. In G. Amato, E. Moavero-Milanesi, G. Pasquino & L. Reichlin (Eds.). *The History of the European Union: Constructing Utopia* (pg. 41–56). Oxford: Hart Publishing. doi: 10.5040/9781509917440

Novotná, T. (2017). The EU as a Global Actor: United We Stand, Divided We Fall. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, 177– 191. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12601.

O'Brennan, J. (2006). 'Bringing Geopolitics Back In': Exploring the Security Dimension of the 2004 Eastern Enlargement of the European Union. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19(1), 155-169, doi: 10.1080/09557570500501911

Onuf, N. (1989). *World of Our Making – Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press

Owen, J.M. (1994). How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace. *International Security*, 19(2), 87-125.

Oxman, B. H. (2017). The South China Sea Arbitration Award. *University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review*, 24(2), 235-284.

Palan, R. (2000). A world of their making: An evaluation of the constructivist critique in International Relations. *Review of International Studies*, 26(4), 575-598. doi:10.1017/S0260210500005751

Pantucci, R. (2016). Building Support for the Belt and Road. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_building_support_for_the_belt_and_road6023

Parker, A., Parker, G. and Odell, M. (2012, March 26). Osborne weighs airport capacity options. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/7b4de336-7736-11e1-baf3-00144feab49a

Parker, G. and Anderlini, J. (2013, 24 October). Britain trumpets welcome to Chinese. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www-ft-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/content/9c97a940-3cc0-11e3-a8c4-00144feab7de

Pennetier, M and Irish, J. (2019, 25 March). France seals multi-billion dollar deals with China, but questions Belt and Road project. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-china/france-seals-multi-billion-dollar-deals-with-china-but-questions-belt-and-road-project-idUSKCN1R61NF

RAC-F. (2015a). "L'engagement de la Chine pour la COP21: un pas en avant [China's commitment to COP21: a step forward]. Retrieved from https://reseauactionclimat.org/engagement-chine-cop21/

RAC-F. (2015b). "Climat: François Hollande va-t-il reculer sur sa promesse de supprimer les soutiens publics au charbon? [Climate: will Francois Hollande back down on his promise to cut public support for coal?]. Retrieved from https://reseauactionclimat.org/francois-hollande-promesse-soutiens-charbon/

Ruggie, J. (1998). What makes the world hang together? Neo-utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge. *International Organization, 52*(4), 855-885.

Seeberg, P. (2009). The EU as a realist actor in normative clothes: EU democracy promotion in Lebanon and the European Neighbourhood Policy. *Democratization*, 16(1), 81-99, doi: 10.1080/13510340802575858

Sjursen, H. (2006). The EU as a 'normative' power: how can this be? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 235-251, doi: 10.1080/13501760500451667

Song, L., & Pavlićević, D. (2019). China's multilayered multilateralism: A case study of China and Central and Eastern Europe cooperation framework. *Chinese Political Science Review,* 4(3), 277-302. doi:10.1007/s41111-019-00127-z

Stanzel, A. (2016). China's investment in influence: the future of 16+1 cooperation. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/China_Analysis_Sixteen_Plus_One.pdf

Summers, T. (2015). UK-China relations: Navigating a changing world. In Huotari, M., Otero-Iglesias, M., Seaman, J. and Ekman, A. (Eds), *Mapping Europe-China Relations A Bottom-Up Approach,* 84-88. Retrieved from https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etnc_web_final_1-1.pdf

Vincenti, D. (2016, 3 February). "EU straining to grant China MES". *EURACTIV.* Retrieved from https://www.euractiv.com/section/trade-society/news/eu-straining-to-grant-china-mes/

Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Berkeley: Addison-Wesley.

Watt, N. and Mason, R. (2013, 2 December). David Cameron calls for new EU-China free trade agreement. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/dec/02/david-cameron-china-advocate-western-world

Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), 391-425.

Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wivel, A. (2005). Explaining why state x made a certain move last tuesday: the promise and limitations of realist foreign policy analysis. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 8(4), 355–380. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800064

Wunderlich, J. (2012). "The EU as an Actor Sui Generis? A Comparison of EU and ASEAN Actorness". Journal of Common Market Studies 50(4), 653-669. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02237.x

Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Yuan, S. (2019, 11 June). Chinese investment boosts French BRI hub. *China Daily*. Retrieved from https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2019-11/06/content_37520975.htm

Zhao, M. (2016). The Belt and Road Initiative and its implications for China-Europe relations. *The International Spectator,* 51(4), 109-118. doi:10.1080/03932729.2016.1235819

Zhao, S. (2018). China and the South China Sea Arbitration: Geopolitics Versus International Law. *Journal of Contemporary China* 27(109), 1-15, doi: 10.1080/10670564.2017.1363012.

Zheng, L. (2015, 25 November). "The "sixteen plus one" cooperation will take China-EU relations to a new level". *EUObserver*. Retrieved from https://euobserver.com/stakeholders/131270