

Identifying with sinicized Human Rights?

EU-China Human Rights Diplomacy as a process of symmetrical socialization

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ABSTRACT

In the shadows of rising economic interdependence and obstinate conceptual gaps, this paper is interested in explaining the dynamics of another persistent item on the EU-China bilateral agenda: Human Rights Diplomacy (HRD).

Analysing references to human rights in EU-China summit-level Joint Communiqués since 1998, this paper makes an alternative attempt to establish, qualify and explain discursive changes:

My analysis finds that while the EU has moved to accommodate Chinese positions of cultural relativism (“equality and mutual respect”) and cooperation (“dialogue”) to the detriment of espousing the universality and binding quality of human rights, China increasingly discursively associates itself with a “human rights cause”.

Qualifying these changes as deep, bi-directional, gradually accelerating and costly to reverse, I argue that they are ill-conceived of as mere strategic adaptations. Instead, a model of “symmetrical socialization” is introduced to capture a process through which both sides activate and accept alternative scripts of ‘appropriate foreign policy’:

Therein, China activates the EU’s “Mediating Power” identity through relocating HRD into the field of “relational governance” transforming its prime objective to “non-confrontation”. The EU, on the other hand, succeeds in activating a Chinese “Responsible Power” identity by cultivating the practise of “speaking human rights” as a prerequisite to gaining international esteem.

While successfully shifting the red lines of acceptable HRD, these discursive ‘agents’ of socialization, are yet to cause internalized changes as HRD rhetoric is decoupled from a domestic role-conception as a Normative Power (EU) and attempts to act as discourse shaper on HRD as an Emerging Power (PRC).

Based on these findings, I conclude that in crediting both sides with socializing powers on HRD, research can gain a deeper understanding of on-going identity transformations - namely as discursive re-constructions of appropriate foreign policy.

Keywords: EU-China Human Rights Diplomacy; Socialization; Foreign Policy identities; Discourse analysis

1 INTRODUCTION

When the EU-China Human Rights Dialogues will mark their twentieth anniversary next year, the engagement is unlikely to garner euphoric stock-takings:

Habitually referred to as a “perennial nuisance” (Mattlin, 2010, p. 12), Human Rights Diplomacy (HRD) between the EU and China is often seen as a political attempt to ‘quarantine’ human rights from the more “constructive” economic engagement.

The prime functions customarily attributed to the engagement include enabling China to avoid the embarrassment of a multilateral ‘China resolution’ in the UN Human Rights Council (Sonya Sceats & Breslin, 2012, p. 24) and serving the EU as a “fig leaf” (Wissenbach, 2009, p. 9) for domestic consumption as a means to conceal an exclusively economic agenda. Officially, bilateral HRD is described as a constructive engagement of soft diplomacy which is expected to yield incremental results.

Yet over the past decades, the EU-China HRD engagement appears to be characterised more often by a peculiar mix of intangible progress, rising political significance and discursive changes.

First, disenchantments are voiced regarding the practical outcomes of the overall EU-China engagement on Human Right: Scholars observe a limited practical impact of both EU and international efforts aimed at capacity building in the rule of law field (European Commission, 2007; Kinzelbach, 2013, pp. 172-176; Wouters, Basu, Lemmens, Marx, & Schunz, 2007) or at changing China’s human rights performance on civil and political rights (See Freedom House, 1998, 2014). Equally scarce are EU human rights concessions attributable to

EU-China HRD as would be a reprioritization of economic, social and cultural rights (Kinzelbach, 2010, pp. 213-214)². The practical inertia is often seen as driven by structural impediments emanating from economic interdependence and an interest in political stability coexisting with conceptual gaps (Z. Pan, 2012), i.e. a lack of an actual degree of consensus (Ramcharan, 2008, pp. 42-43) on definitions of core human rights principles, such as “universality”, or “indivisibility”.³

Second, despite rather intangible practical progress, EU-China human rights diplomacy, i.e. the bilateral use of “diplomatic persuasion and negotiation for the specific purpose of promoting or protecting human rights” as well as the instrumentalisation of HRD to achieve ulterior foreign policy objectives (O’Flaherty, Kędzia, Müller, & Ulrich, 2011, p. 1) is set to gain rather than lose significance in the next decades.

This perseverance may follow a political realization that conflicts negotiated in the human rights framework reflect to an important extent deeper differences in values between the two sides. These cannot be quarantined while other aspects of the relationship flourish. Somewhat inadvertently, China’s second EU policy paper recently highlighted the intertwined nature of human rights with trade, declaring that the two sides have

“disagreements and frictions on issues of value such as human rights as well as economic and trade issues.” (MFA PRC, 2014).

This framing of bilateral conflicts showcases the high degree to which human rights are intertwined with economic and trade issues (such as Intellectual Property Rights, Market Access and investment protection (Grant, 2013)): A conflict of “values” on the former becomes one of commercial “value” in the later area. Neglecting human rights issues thus implies denying opportunities of upgrading bilateral relations –even in areas of mutual interest.

²This is although a discursive change on this front could be initiated in a rather non-controversial fashion: The EU could frame its development aid as human rights assistance catering to the Chinese insistence on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (See EU SR for Human Rights Lambrinidis, 2014).

³Li and Shaw refer to this as the “Same bed- different dream dilemma” (X. Li & Shaw, 2014).

In addition to understanding the practical inertia and political significance of human rights, this paper argues that a third, key under-researched dynamic in the EU-China engagement has been a shift in the bilateral discourse on human rights.

Despite the EU's Special Representative on Human Rights' affirmations to the contrary (2014), the EU is accused of being "silent" (Rhodes, 2013) while adopting cultural relativism (Shen, 2013, pp. 172-173) as a response to normative challenges. With a higher profile on human rights including in multilateral fora (Sonya Sceats & Breslin, 2012), China actively participates and even leads "informal coalitions of authoritarian states" in mounting these challenges.

As the discursive framing of human rights is a crucial component of the normative order (Kinzelbach, 2012), this paper attempts to complement the research around the question: 'Why does the EU-China HRD deliver changes?' with a question asking: 'Why does EU-China HRD discourse change?' As both sides delineate their preferences through discourse, this question seeks to make potential changes in preferences explicit with a view to providing a supporting explanation for why 'outcomes' are scarce.

In the forthcoming analysis, changing discourses will be linked to changing identities (Breslin, 2013), with the latter assumed to act as 'scripts' instructing the EU and China on the appropriate rhetorical course on HRD.

Arguing that a better understanding of whether and how the EU and China redefine their identities requires new theoretical models based on an assumption of mutual agency in discursive change, this paper develops a model termed "symmetrical socialization" to explain the processes shaping the observed changes. A first part will introduce its key assumptions and processes. A second part will then apply it an analysis of discursive changes of EU-China summit-level HRD since 1998. Based on the findings, I will argue that significant HRD discursive changes in both the EU and China have followed distinct mutual socializing processes

activating alternative identities. As a result, in their engagement, the EU and China have mutually activated new scripts of appropriate HRD cumulating in new HRD identities.

The following section will begin by situating the model of symmetrical socializing amidst prominent theories explaining human rights engagements.

2 A MODEL OF SYMMETRICAL SOCIALIZATION OF HRD DISCURSIVE CHANGE

Extant models explaining human rights policy change attempt to explain either the acceptance or compliance (See, the 'Spiral Model on Human Rights change' (T. Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 2013; Thomas Risse & Sikkink, 1999), the 'locking-in' approach (Moravcsik, 2000) and 'acculturation' (Hafner-Burton, 2005)) or non-compliance with human rights norms ('decoupling' (Cole, 2011)). Implicitly, all of these models assume a general asymmetry in the relationship between the promoter espousing (Western) human rights norms and the target of these efforts whose substantive changes are subjected to scrutiny and causal arguments.

To illustrate, the following graph outlines the causal chain advanced by the 'Spiral model of human rights change' - a prominent theoretical framework which seeks to explain the social mechanisms through which a non-compliant state ultimately conceives of internationally accepted human rights norms as "appropriate". In it, the EU acts as the emitter advancing human rights which are then increasingly adopted as China (the "target state") passes through various stages from "repression" to (EU-) rule-consistent behaviour. In this model, the EU is seen to be a member of a global human rights polity consisting of "Western Powers" and "Human Rights INGOs" which- united by "shared values and common discourse" - (Thomas Risse & Sikkink, 1999, pp. 18-19) exert "international pressure" (such as "outrage" (Fleay, 2006, p. 73), e.g.). As a target state and discourse-taker, China, on the lower end of the chart is passively subjected to socialization pressures. Within the Spiral model, the PRC is currently situated at stage 3 making "tactical concessions" to human rights pressure (Kinzelbach, 2013, p. 166).

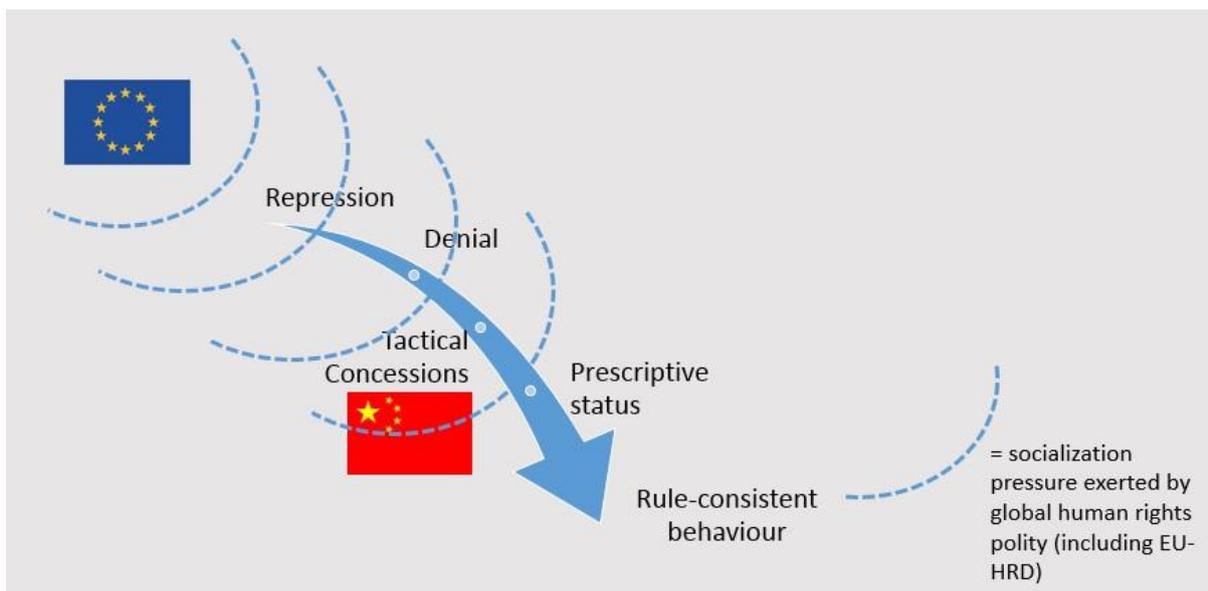


Figure 1 EU-China HRD according to the Spiral Model

While demonstrating considerable explanatory power regarding a number of states, scholars following the Spiral Model recognize inherent weakness to explain the human rights compliance by “powerful” states such as China (Thomas Risse & Ropp, 2013, p. 4).

To complement an understanding of discursive interactions between “powerful” actors on HRD, I propose a model of “symmetrical socialization” which posits a process during which both sides’ human rights diplomacy is assumed capable – under certain conditions – to exert socializing influences. As the following diagram illustrates, this model assumes human rights discourse to reverberate symmetrically to lead to processes of “strategic adaptation”, “socialization” or “internalization” of new scripts of appropriate HRD identities.

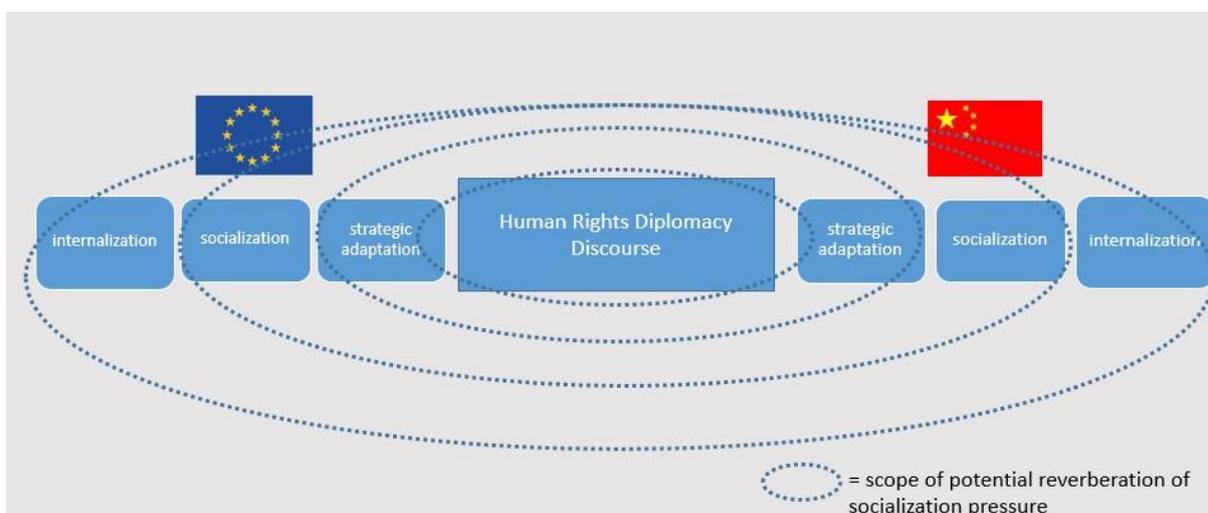


Figure 2 EU-China HRD as a process of symmetrical socialization

The following section will introduce this approach's key assumptions as well as a taxonomy of the results of socialization pressures.

2.1 Basic assumptions ⁴

1. Plurality of appropriate HRD identities

A key assumption of the constructivist school of IR (Aggestam, 1999 & Geeraerts, 2013) states that foreign policy identities “precede (...) interests” (Mushkat, 2013, p. 76) and are constructed through interactions.

Borrowing this assumption, the model of Symmetrical Socialization conceives of the EU-China Human Rights Diplomacy as an interactive process of identity construction during with both sides having a plurality of scripts of appropriate foreign policy identities at their disposal. Rather than merely responding to material incentives, actors are assumed to consider the appropriateness of their actions when opting for a certain (discursive) action. Once adopted, the identity script is drawn on as an indicator of the perception of the appropriate by both actors.

For the EU, an often cited HRD identity is that of a normative power (Manners, 2002), while – in HRD contexts - China is routinely referred to as a developing power (Breslin, 2013). Alternative identities are suggested to be that of a mediating power (EU) and an emerging or responsible power (China) (See also Stiegler, 2014, pp. 10-11).

The below table operationalizes these available scripts on HRD by indicating what they dictate as appropriate substantive stances (“substance”) and policy responses to opposition (“posture”) on principle issues of human rights. For example, as a mediating power, the EU views its appropriate role as a co-operator to achieve human rights with a willingness to accommodate diverging views while as a normative power, appropriate action is connoted with promoting human rights and competing with diverging views. China, on the other hand, should

⁴We may add a unitary actor assumption for the EU and China. This is not to suggest that identity construction processes are not also subject to internal restrictions (Kavalski, 2013, p. 263, accompanying note 1). Yet, the explanatory focus of this paper lies in explaining the discourse dynamics emanated at the agency level of the engagement. For this reason, the EU and China are assumed to act as the authors and protagonists of discursive evidence analysed here.

reject and compete with the existing human rights regime as a developing power, reframe and compete as an emerging power and finally promote and accommodate to existing human rights as a responsible power.

Analytical categories	Construction of External HRD identity	
	EU	China
Discourse analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Substantive positions Universality, Indivisibility, Interdependence, Binding quality, e.g. (Reject – Reframe - Promote) - Posture adopted to react to other actor’s opposition (accommodate – cooperate – compete) 	
Conventional identity representation Script of action (Substance / posture)	Normative Power Identity Promote / Compete	Developing country Reject / Compete
Alternative identity Script of action (Substance / posture)	Mediating Power Cooperate / Accommodate	Emerging Power / Responsible Power Reframe – Compete / Promote – Accommodate

2. Symmetrical socialization process

Given a multiplicity of “acceptable” identities, the model assumes that both sides are generally vulnerable to socializing influences by the other actor. Both actors thus continuously undergo an interactive process through which they “acquire [...] a social identity and learn [...] the norms, values and behaviour appropriate to [their] social position” (Xiaoyu, 2012, p.5).

In addition to maintaining discourse-sensitive identities, the model credits both sides with an ability to (de-)activate the other actor’s script of appropriate foreign policy. Hence, the model posits a socialization process at the level of HRD elites that is bi-directional (See also

Xiaoyu, 2012, pp. 16-19). The extent to which socialization processes reverberate to a lower level of HRD (i.e. the domestic level of parliamentary or intellectual leaders) is contingent upon factors outside the scope of this model.

3. Socialization effects manifest in discourse

As new identities reveal themselves in discourse, the model views discursive results as consequential: As Ebba Eban put it:

“What statesmen and diplomats say is often as vital as what they do. It would not be far-fetched to go further and declare that speech is an incisive form of action.” (Aggestam, 1999, citing Eban in Prestre, 1997, p.14)

The significance of discourse for actions is captured is often referred to as the “performativity of discourse” (See, for example Winance 2007). Manners similarly, distinguishes what the EU “is”, “says & does” and “successfully impacts” (2008, p. 67) suggesting that saying and doing are closely intertwined. Similarly, we can infer the importance of rhetoric from warnings towards the EU arguing that “[a]n alternative language to describe human rights goals is potentially detrimental” (Ochoa, 2003, p. 57). Discursive action is seen here as the key agent or “interaction” with which, actors reconstruct their identities (Aggestam, 1999, citing March & Olsen, 1998, p.12).

Having clarified the model’s key assumptions, the next challenge is to develop a fitting taxonomy to appraise the scope and quality of discursive changes.

2.2 Quality & Processes of discursive changes

Changes, whether rhetorical or substantive in the EU-China relationship are oftentimes explained as “strategic adaptations” (Dworkin, 2012; Zhu, 2011). While there is no doubt that certain foreign policy moves follow strategic calculations, conceiving of “strategy” as the “one-size-fits-all” explanation risks to be tautological and to “blind us from understanding the complex interactions between emerging powers and international norms” (Xiaoyu, 2012, p. 4). In order to distinguish socialization processes from mere strategic adaptations as well as from

processes of full-fledged internalization of a new identity, the following criteria are proposed to characterize a socialized HRD actor:

First, discursive changes on HRD should be deep, i.e. affecting both the substance of the HRD positions advanced and the posture with which they are advanced (defined as the position taken towards opposing views). The changes should furthermore be long-term., i.e. discursive patterns should be repetitive (rather than singular, disparate speech acts). Moreover, the new discursive position should be integrable or compatible with an alternative identity – i.e. it should fit with a different (existing) script of appropriate action, a script used in a different issue - or regional field raising the possibility of “believing one’s own rhetoric”. The actor should also be able to decouple an external identity from its internal position, i.e. be capable to maintain a different rhetorical identity than internally prescribed and legitimated.

Neither of these conditions are routinely implied when a strategic adaptation is assumed. To distinguish between a socialized HRD actor from an actor which has internalized a new HRD identity, the criteria of infection is introduced: To borrow a term by Moravcsik, an actor should (rhetorically) “lock in” a new, internalized HRD script in internal policy or strategy papers (2000, p. 220). In cases where bilateral rhetoric re-appears (“infects”) unilateral policy papers guiding action, the new HRD identity can be considered europeanized or sinicized following a process of internalization.

With these assumptions, I define symmetrical socialization as a process during which – subject to conditions – an engagement on human rights alters the other side’s perception of appropriate Human Rights Diplomacy. Socialization pressures are exerted symmetrically and its manifestations - expressed in HRD discourse - impact on both the substance and reaction to opposition of the other side’s HRD falling short of (but not excluding a future) full internalization of the new identity.

Based on these assumptions and categories, the next section examines a case studies of bilateral summit-level EU-China HRD discourse to appraise whether between 1998 until 2014 discursive changes can be attributed to a process of symmetrical socialization.

3 CASE STUDY

An “identification” with human rights as an important theme of foreign policy took place concurrently in both the EU and China in the early 1990s when the EU became a full-scale human rights through the Treaty of Maastricht while China engaged seriously with human rights following the 1989 Tiananmen incident. The following case study seeks to trace and explain discursive changes in bilateral HRD predominantly over the course of the formative years between the beginning of summit-level bilateral HRD in 1998 and 2014.

A first step will establish the change in discursive evidence. A second step will then seek to classify the change as a result of processes of socialization. A final third step is interested in understanding what drove the observed processes.

Changes in the acceptable discourse on human rights will be assessed as a function of mutually acceptable outcomes. In the following, references made to human rights in communiqués (Joint Press Releases / Joint Statements) published with bilateral consent⁵ after EU-China summits will indicate mutually acceptable discursive framing on human rights. The section will consider the case of the EU and China in turn.

3.1 EU: Activating a ‘mediating power’ script

3.1.1 Case Study: EU-China summit HRD 1998-2014

This section is interested in establishing the discursive changes in the EU’s summit-level HRD with China since the mid-1990s.

Following the outlined taxonomy, EU HRD discourse vis-à-vis can be rhetorically classified into three periods:

A beginning stage (first three summits 1998-2000) during which the EU sought to promote a “wide range of human rights” (PRC Embassy to the UK, 1998), “urging” China to

⁵ Apart from the second and third summit, 1999 and 2000 where the EU published individual press releases. For a compilation of summit-level references to Human Rights, see Annex 1.

abolish capital punishment and ratify key UN treaties (European Union, 1999), and “stress[ing] the need to achieve results and improvements” while defining the terms as a “frank and friendly atmosphere” (European Union, 2000).

The second stage begins in 2001 and spans from the 4th until the 10th summit in 2007. Here, the EU and China formulaically refer to the need to engage on human rights “on the basis of equality and mutual respect” – a passage promoted by China, while the EU insisted a reference to the need of “meaningful and positive results on the ground”(Council of the EU, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). This EU wording is followed by references to concrete steps, such as the cooperation with the International Criminal Court (Council of the EU, 2004, 2005, 2006), legal cooperation projects (Council of the EU, 2007), or the establishment of an EU-China “academic network”(Council of the EU, 2002).

While the Chinese phrase “on the basis of equality and mutual respect” persists until the latest summit, the EU has modified its insistence on “meaningful and positive results on the ground” to the term “constant progress” on the ground (Council of the EU, 2009, 2012b) after authorizing a Joint Press Communiqué lacking any reference to human rights (Council of the EU, 2010).

In the latest stage beginning in 2013, both sides changed the familiar phrases pledging to engage on human rights through “constructive discussion[s] on jointly agreed priority areas” (European Commission, 2013, 2014b).

Although “formulaic” in quality (C. Pan, 2012, p. 55), an analysis of all references to human rights in EU-China joint statements at the summit level since 1998 reveals a dwindling inclination to actively espouse unilaterally defined human rights. These substantive discursive concessions are accompanied by accommodating postures through which the EU allows China to define the pace of progress. Rather than dictating “demands”, the EU appears content to define a “jointly endorsed list of common objectives” on human rights, a stance it had rejected until recently (Kinzelbach, 2010, p. 209).

3.1.2 The quality of discursive change

Having established a discursive change in the EU position, the next step is to analyse whether the rhetorical changes meet the criteria of a socialized state defined above.

First, the changes in discourse are arguably deep. Respecting China's conception of human rights as "equally valid" and leaving it to China to decide on implementing universal notions advanced by the EU represents a deep deviation from "traditional" EU HRD. An insistence that "dialogue is an acceptable option only if progress is achieved on the ground" (See also benchmarks defined in Council of the EU, 2001a; European Commission, 1998, p. 11), is dropped to the benefit of "constructive discussions ***on jointly agreed*** key priority areas" (European Union, 2013a, p. 4) [Emphases added]. In rhetorically accepting "cultural relativism" as well as a co-determination of human rights in joint statements, the EU arguably trespasses the "red lines" – suggested by scholars (Dennison & Dworkin, 2010, p. 11) and – indeed – drawn by its internal HRD strategic framework (Council of the EU, 2012a, p. 2). Discursively, the EU has thus *decoupled* its internal from its external HRD.

While the latest rhetorical change ("jointly agreed priorities") dates only to 2013, the incremental softening of EU HRD throughout the three described stages allows us to qualify the rhetorical adaptations as *long-term*. A gradual discursive trace towards a more culturally relative position on human rights is evidenced by the communiqués since 1999.

Third, the EU position is *compatible* with an alternative script of appropriate foreign policy, that of a non-confrontational "mediating power". More precisely, the EU's identity as a non-confrontational, mediating power captures its acceptance of dialogue (versus an insistence on a binding quality of human rights) within a confidential (versus a public, high-level) setting.⁶

The inception of this alternative script can be traced to a European integration model based on the principle of avoiding confrontation among its founding member-states. A

⁶ This, however, does not mean that the dialogue themselves are carried out with a view to avoiding confrontation. Scant evidence from the dialogue proceedings paint a picture of a « frank atmosphere » (European Union, 2013b) during which critical remarks are exchanged on both sides, with China criticizing « racism and xenophobia » in the EU (Srinivas, 2014, p. 146)

precedence of this identity conflicting with notions of a normative power identity can be found in the trade realm: In the process of launching the “Doha Development agenda” in November 2001 the EU was reportedly torn between acting upon a principle of “development agency” in an attempt to mediate between the “North and the South” and backing its US ally to exert “Western hegemony” on ‘new [trade] issues’ (Meunier & Nicolaidis, 2006, pp. 918-919).

Moreover, at least some evidence can be found that EU leaders believe in the appropriateness of this new identity with Herman van Rompuy expressing to raise human rights issues with the Chinese leadership, “in the spirit of frankness, but also ***friendship and respect***, that characterises our relations” (European Council, 2013, p. 5) [emphasis added]. Other personal accounts from EU diplomats suggest an ongoing process of introspection to “stop ‘preaching’ from a self-assigned position of moral superiority” (Wissenbach, 2009, p. 9) questioning the appropriateness of a normative power and implicitly flagging the merits of a mediating power identity.

Fourth, in awkward consistence with the absence of a “genuine BRICS policy” (Keukeleire & Hooijmaaijers, 2014, p. 583) there is no coherent strategic explanation of the new HRD discourse, handing China an “opportunity to choose which EU position [identity] they prefer” (Leicht, 2014) suggesting *against a strategic* quality of discursive changes.

While the gradually, progressing acceptance of discursive concessions to China indicates a process of socialization to be at work which has activated a “mediating power” identity, the EU has arguably not internalized this script in its ulterior HRD.

Indeed the EU’s script of a normative actor promoting a universal notion of human rights that is explicitly opposed to “respecting” relativisation based on cultural difference surfaced in the UN Human Rights Council - only two months before the 16th EU – China summit. In this instance of multilateral HRD discourse, the EU declared: “The universal nature of human rights should not be questioned on the grounds of traditional and cultural differences and cultural diversity” (European Union, 2013c, p. 2).

Backing up this rhetorical commitment, the EU recently increased its Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) by 17% (Cîrlig, 2013, p. 2) thus increasing its spending on advancing human rights through civil society over the next six years.⁷

While future studies may fruitfully debate whether the EU's mediating power HRD vis-à-vis China has infected other bilateral relationships, a consolidated internal rhetorical and financial commitment to human rights promotion cautions against inferring an internalized identity of a mediating power on human rights at the present stage.

3.1.3 Agents of socialization

Against the background of an internally vivid normative power identity, how did the EU come to believe its discourse of a mediating power to be appropriate vis-à-vis China?

In the following, I will argue that the discussed socialization effects - insofar as agency is concerned - were mediated through processes of "conceptual dilution" and "relational governance" with the EU's successful reactivation of a normative identity in multilateral fora acting as a counter-current to socializing pressures.

3.1.4 Substantively eroding universality

There are indications that – substantively - China activates the EU's mediating power identity by using the language of human rights but diluting its contents (Pils, 2009, p. 148).

Consider the case of universality: In its internal assessments of bilateral HRD, China frames the EU-China conflicts over human rights as rooted in differences in "world-views" ("价值观" (...) 分歧和矛盾, Jiàzhíguān (...) Fēnqí hé máodùn) (J. L. Li, Zhao, Cao, & Zhang, 2014, p. 57). While signalling a general commitment to universality, China simultaneously promotes the notion of a "unique value system" justifying the pursuit of a "development path" that "suits its own reality" ("Speech By H.E. Xi Jinping at College of Europe," 2014, pp. 3-4).

⁷ As the EIDHR represents a tool through which the EU can support human rights defenders „without the consent of local governments“ (D'Hollander, Marx, & Wouters, 2014, pp. 7-8), the targets of this budget line's funding in China over the new financial period (2014-2020) will be an interesting test of the practical implications of its status as a mediating power.

By agreeing to dialogue on these terms, the EU thus inadvertently legitimizes the Chinese cultural relativist counter discourse on human rights defying existing principles of universality, as well as the binding quality of human rights (See also Kinzelbach, 2012, pp. 306-329).

3.1.5 Posture: Human rights as a “relationship issue”

In addition to changing the discourse on the substance of human rights, China's HRD activated the EU's alternative identity (i.e. that of a mediating power) by framing human rights as a “relationship conflict”.

The difference between Chinese “relational governance” as distinct from the EU's ‘rule-based governance’ is established in research as a core difference between the two actors (Keukeleire & Hooijmaaijers, 2014, p. 591, citing Qin, 2011, pp.138-139).

It is through successfully framing human rights as a field of conflict, that Chinese diplomats change the core of the engagement activating a new appropriate script. Rather than (bilaterally endorsed) universally binding “rights” whose validity applies independently from any bilateral relationship (script of a “normative power”), the EU agrees to elevate the fostering of the bilateral relationship to a prime concern (script of a “mediating power”).

In this framing, the substance of why China deviates from universal human rights reverts to the background while the creation of a “good atmosphere” looms large (MFA PRC, 2003). The core subject of bilateral preoccupation thus lies in devising ways to manage the conflict over human rights rather than the concern over the human rights situation on the ground. In this sense, human rights move from a status to being an end in itself to becoming the means towards another end: That ultimate objective is to build “trust “and to “avoid confrontation”. In the words of President Rompuy in an interview with the China Daily on the occasion of President Xi's visit to Brussels :

“ Our cooperation to expand people-to-people contacts and to promote dialogue on human rights are two more very important areas to improve our mutual understanding

and our capacity to contribute to the stability and prosperity of China and the EU and to strengthen the bilateral ties. “ (European Council, 2014, p. 2)

China thus succeeds in capitalizing on an EU identity conflict (see 3.2.3.3) to lift the bilateral conventions of courteous behaviour among elites above the idea of human rights as universal, moral absolutes.

3.1.6 Reactivating competing identity prohibits internalization

Despite succumbing to socialization pressures in the described ways, the EU's normative power identity appears rhetorically resilient in multilateral fora:

Here, the EU appears capable of re-activating its script of a normative power. When the above-cited move to question the basic principles of human rights came to the floor of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the EU forcefully reproached the initiative (European Union, 2004; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2004) prompting a scathing confrontation with China (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2004).

As this paper's discourse analysis focuses on the bilateral level of engagement, the task of explaining the process of re-activation of an original identity will be deferred to a future analysis. It suffices to underscore here once more, that while the EU is socialized by China, it has not (yet) internalized the identity of a mediating power in all its HRD contexts and levels of international engagement.⁸

Having analysed the case of the EU, the following section will examine socialization processes emanating from the EU-China bilateral engagement for the PRC.

⁸ Hahn-Fuhr offers an alternative explanation for the differences in EU-HRD towards non-Western states. In this framework, the objective of EU HRD towards China is the creation of a „partnership“ (Hahn-Fuhr 2014, 212-214).

3.2 PRC: Activating a ‘responsible power’ script

3.2.1 Case study: Creating a discursive “human rights cause”

Before considering its bilateral engagement with the EU over the past two decades, this section will briefly examine a key structural discursive change the People’s Republic of China underwent on HRD since its founding in 1949.⁹

According to Srinivas (2014, pp. 93-104) the PRC’s engagement with human rights has evolved in four stages. In the period leading up to the end of “Chinese Marxism” in 1976, human rights were a non-issue banned from official discourse as “a bourgeois slogan and a political weapon of imperial superpowers” which needed to be combated under the banner of class struggle (Srinivas, 2014, pp. 92; 94).

In the course of the second period towards the beginning of the opening up period in the late 1970s the idea of human rights was no longer categorically rejected but inexorably linked to the duties of citizens.

Exposed to international pressure following the Tiananmen incident in 1989, a third period saw China developing a counter human rights diplomacy aimed at defending China against domestic and international critics. Srinivas concludes that during “the 1990s the discourse of human rights has been successfully transplanted into domestic political discourse from the international realm” (Srinivas, 2014, p. 103). China’s publication of white papers, progress reports suggest we can speak of a “consolidation” (Srinivas, 2014, p. 98) of human rights in official discourse during this period.

In the fourth stage China ‘locked in’ this rhetorical commitment to human rights as a political goal leading up to its 2004 adoption of a third paragraph to Art.33 of its constitution stating “The State respects and preserves human rights.”(Second Session of the 10th National People’s Congress, 2004). Moreover, since 2009 China publishes its own “National Human Rights Action Plans” (See, for example Information Office of the State Council, 2012). Although

⁹ For an analysis of changes in discourse on human rights before the founding of the PRC, see Weatherley (1999, 37-83)

the extent to which the Chinese constitution is indeed guiding action is disputed while Action Plans are accused of merely repeating official policy, both actions can be seen as discursive moves by China signalling an enduring willingness to couch its policy in the language of human rights.

Bilaterally, this historical evolution has rhetorically translated into human rights references in two EU policy papers.

For 2003, the relevant passage reads:

5. Continue the human rights dialogue

There are both **consensus and disagreements** between China and the EU on the question of human rights. The Chinese side appreciates the EU's persistent position for dialogue and **against confrontation** and stands ready to continue dialogue, exchange and cooperation on human rights with the EU **on the basis of equality and mutual respect** so as to share information, enhance mutual understanding and deepen cooperation in protecting, inter alia, **citizens' social and cultural rights and the rights of the disadvantaged**. (MFA PRC, 2003) [Emphases added]

In 2014, China's EU policy paper addressed human rights as follows:

8. Continuing to Carry Out Human Rights Dialogue

The Chinese side is ready to continue human rights dialogue with the EU based on the principles of **mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs**, and conduct human rights cooperation **within the dialogue framework** so as to increase mutual understanding and contribute to the development of China-EU relations and **common progress** in the human rights cause of China and the EU.

The EU side **should** attach equal importance to **all forms of human rights**, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, view China's human rights situation in an **objective and fair manner**, **stop using individual cases to interfere in China's judicial sovereignty and internal affairs**, and to [sic!] create a **good atmosphere** for human rights dialogue and cooperation between the two sides. [Emphases added] (MFA PRC, 2014)

Although the EU has published twice as many China policy papers (1998, 2001, 2003, 2006), China's publication of its bilateral HRD positions vis-à-vis the EU is testament to a perceived need to pronounce a positive, public commitment to human rights. The second policy paper identifies a "human rights cause" (人权事业, *rénquán shìyè*) which are described to underpin China's engagement with the EU- a discursive far cry from its positions in the pre-1990s periods.

At the same time, the latest policy paper markedly draws discursive red lines defining acceptable EU-HRD vis-à-vis the PRC: These red lines are constituted by the conceptual erosion of traditional thinking of human rights as "binding" and as "universal" (deemed by implication as interference and disrespectful) while relationship objectives ("good atmosphere", "mutual understanding", "development of EU-China relations") outnumber substantive goals ("share information", "common progress").

The discursive change thus describes a move from rejecting human rights to *reframing* their substantive meaning.

3.2.2 The quality of change: Limited socialization

What type of transformation has China's HRD undergone?

Discursive changes can be seen as *deep*: Rather than conceiving of human rights as a form of "spiritual pollution" (X. Li & Shaw, 2014, p. 73), the fact that human rights are now enshrined in the Chinese constitution (See Third paragraph of Art. 33, Second Session of the 10th National People's Congress 2004) indicate that the entry of the semantics of human rights into official discourse is consolidated and difficult to reverse.

As discursive changes have been consistent since 1990s they can therefore also be considered *long-term*.

China's commitment of "speaking human rights" also mark a shift from a strategy based solely on defending against human rights diplomacy (script of a developing country) and are *compatible* with China's alternative identity as a responsible power – an identity it credited itself with during the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 (Gao, pp. 426-427). A move to embrace the substance (and not merely the semantics) of human rights is competing, however, with an interest in re-shaping international norms (script of an emerging power).

For the latter reason caution is due to confound the entry of „human rights“ as a term in official discourse and into the Chinese constitution with the „internalization“ of human rights norms as practical imperatives of official documents. The broad lack of implementing civil and political rights (Freedom House, 2014) outshines strategic concessions evident in “invitations to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to UN Special Rapporteurs, signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], as well as signing and ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESC]” (Wissenbach, 2009, p. 8). This juxtaposition indicates that China has successfully *decoupled* a rhetorical commitment to the language of human rights from its domestic record.

The discursive treatment of China's recent abolition of the “re-education through labour system” may serve to illustrate that official policy documents do not frame policy changes as human rights successes: In a 1991 human rights White Paper, China defended the system stating that “[b]oth the public and family members of the offenders speak highly of the program for its role in forestalling and reducing crime and

maintaining public order.” After its abolition in 2014, China again, praised the system saying that it had “(...) played a positive role in protecting public security, maintaining social order, ensuring social stability, and educating and rescuing lawbreakers in certain historical circumstances” (Information Office of the State Council Of the PRC, 1991).

Why then was it abolished? China resorts to a procedural explanation arguing that the system was “gradually replaced with the implementation of laws such as the Law on Penalties for Administration of Public Security and the Law on Narcotics Control, and also with the improvements in the Criminal Law.” (Information Office of the State Council Of the PRC, 2013)

Without the context of this passage appearing in a report entitled “Progress in China's Human Rights in 2013”, this depiction could have been part of a descriptive account rather than a substantive engagement with the traditional system's relevance to (or incompatibility with) human rights.

Similarly to the EU, China's HRD thus appears to have undergone a process of socialization. Rather than internalizing the meaning (rather than only the words) of its new script, the discursive changes highlight underlying conflicts between a responsible and an emerging power identity.

3.2.3 Agents of socialization

3.2.3.1 Practise of speaking human rights through dialogue

What were the processes and agents activating China's alternative script(s) of appropriate foreign policy?

A first mechanism led to China identifying with speaking the “language of human rights”. By the 1990s, Fleay argues that China had made tactical concessions to

human rights pressure following a realization that “support for international human rights norms” was an essential constituent factor of the “Great Power Identity” (2005, pp. 117-187; 315) linked to international prestige which it aspired to attain.

Throughout its HRD engagement, acting in conjunction with other Western states (such as the US, Canada and Australia) the EU has maintained international pressure (Delegation of the European Union to China, 2013) which led to cognitive processes at the leadership level to change HRD discourse (Chen, 2005). As far as the need to ‘speak human rights’ is concerned, the EU has maintained China in the position of a discourse taker.

Over time, this pressure and constant practise through dialogue has cultivated China’s use of the “grammar of human rights” (Tamaki, 2002, p. 121) as a defining element of its “Responsible Power” identity. In this sense, the lack of China’s ratification of the ICCPR may be even be interpreted as an implicit adherence to an identity as a responsible power: Treaty accession to signal adherence but violating its principles does not seem to be considered an “appropriate” foreign policy choice.

In insular cases, this language-induced pressure also worked from the bottom-up: The EU’s persistent public campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in the early period of the HRD engagement coupled with a subsequently low-key posture is seen to have “influenced the domestic scholarly debate” (Kinzelbach, 2013, p. 178) leading to the exposure of a number of wrongful verdicts in China in 2005.

3.2.3.2 A Civilizational partnership vs. power politics (US)?

An additional facilitator in the EU’s role in activating a new HRD script in China may lie less in its sponsored local human rights projects than in an ability to present

itself as a different type of HRD actor. In its most recent EU policy paper, China refers to the EU as a “civilization” (See also Brown, 2014).

“China stands ready to work with the EU to bring the two major civilizations in the East and West closer and set an example of different civilizations seeking harmony without uniformity, promoting diversity, learning from each other and enjoying common prosperity.” (MFA PRC, 2014) [Emphasis added]

This framing of the relationship is markedly different from the “new type of Great Power relationship (“新型大国关系”, See, for instance Chase, 2012) China seeks to advance towards the US and Russia (Mancinelli, 2014).

We can infer diverging anticipations of the motives of HRD for these two relationships: For the China-US relationship it is about managing “power”, whereas for the EU-China relationship it is about building a civilizational harmony (树立不同文明 (...) 互鉴互学、共同繁荣的典, Shùlì bùtóng wénmíng (...) Hù jiàn hù xué, gòngtóng fánróng de diǎnfàn).

When past EU HRD was viewed in China as an attempt to “meddl[e] in affairs which are not the legitimate concern of the EU (...)” (King, 2011, p. 81), we could interpret the Chinese recognition of Europe as a “civilization” as an acknowledgement of a degree of legitimacy underlying an “other-regarding interest” of EU-HRD (Keukeleire, 2002, p. 8; King, 2011, p. 80).

As China seeks to deepen its partnership with the EU (Zuokui, 2014), the attribution as a civilization may also hint at a stronger potential legitimation of future EU HRD.¹⁰

¹⁰ China has recently been pressured to prioritize among its 44 strategic partnerships. (Xie, 2014)

3.2.3.3 Competing identity: Discourse maker (Multilateral)

If China has thus been socialized by human rights language (activating a responsible power identity), the explanatory focus shifts to the “wide gap between the tall claims of the Chinese government vis-a-vis human rights and practice” (Srinivas, 2014, p. 132).

It appears that “[a] combination of repression and counter-discourse” at the domestic level (Kinzelbach, 2013, p. 172) may not be enough to explain the lack of internalization of human rights in China: Rather, there is evidence that as an emerging power, China identifies with a role of being entitled to question and reform the existing human rights order (Breslin, 2013, p. 617).

In addition to recently announcing a “sixteen-fold increase in voluntary contributions to the UN Office of the High Commissioner on human rights”, China increasingly builds multilateral coalitions to add authority to its views on human rights (Sonya Sceats, 2013). While these typically settle for challenging the implications of human rights (Kinzelbach, 2012), China’s initiative for a resolution on “Human Social Responsibilities” (ECOSOC, 2003) challenges the “prescriptive status” (Clark, 2013, p. 132) of the universality and unconditionally of human rights (UNFPA, 2005). In pursuing this strategy, China cultivates a desire to be a discourse power (话语权, *Huàyǔ quán*) (Xiaoyu, 2012, p. 17) on human rights thereby prohibiting the “Western” interpretation of human rights from *infecting* its HRD.¹¹

Taken together, both case studies provide tentative evidence to support an argument that - in activating a different script of appropriate foreign policy - the EU and

¹¹ While Kavalski argues that China’s ability to oppose Western cosmopolitan universalism enables it to act as a “normative power” in its own right (2013, p. 250), Shambaugh point to the country’s reluctance to assume the role of exporting a political system following a lesson of the Soviet Union’s downfall in 1989 (2008).

China have symmetrically socialized the other in their HRD. While the identities activated through discursive practise may not dominate bilateral discourse homogeneously (normative discourse persists in the EU's condemnations of Chinese treatments of human rights defenders, i.e. (See, for example European Union, 2014)), the depth, long time-periods and decoupling accompanying the new discourse suggests that the new HRD may likely permeate as the new "Normal" of the HRD relationship.

4 CONCLUSION

Contemporary analyses of EU-China human rights diplomacy oscillate between criticizing intangible practical results and highlighting its political significance. Correspondingly, discursive changes of both side's HRD are either interpreted as negligible strategic adaptations, or omens of a world in which - following China's normative rise - "the place of human rights [...] would change" (Forsythe, 2006, p. 8) and "the EU's claim to be a global force would be sadly diminished." (Gowan & Brantner, 2008, p. 69).

In an emerging multipolar world with increased interdependencies and an increasingly horizontal global discourse on values and human rights, this paper has argued that in between these extremes, bilateral HRD is best viewed as a process of "self-reflection and self-correction" (Kang, 2011, p. ix) whose effects can be captured by a process of symmetrical socialization.

During this process, the analysis assumed both partners to confront a choice between diverging scripts of appropriate foreign policy: The EU faces a conflict between an established (rhetorically constructed) identity as a normative power with an alternative script – that of a mediating power. Twenty-five years after the Tiananmen incident and freshly re-elected into the UN Human Rights Council, China faces a conflict between adopting the script of an emerging and that of a responsible power identity.

Faced with mutual vulnerabilities to be persuaded to assume their alternative identity, the presented analysis found tentative discursive evidence to make the case for an explanation based on a process of mutual socialization - visible in discursive action.

China's agreement to speaking the language of human rights and the EU's agreement to limit its HRD to "jointly agreed" priority areas acknowledging "equality" in validity of China's human rights principles were not the results of mere strategic adaptation. The analysis provides evidence that their substantive significance, long duration and propensity came to be accepted by the actor as it activated an alternative identity thus making actors believe they were acting following a new "appropriate foreign policy". The agents of this activation, it was suggested, were seen in processes of substantial dilution and relationship governance (by China) as well as an insistence on 'speaking human rights' and an ability to act as a civilizational rather than a power-politics HRD actor (by the EU). While these processes were significant they were curtailed by countervailing influences of a resilient internal HRD identity as a normative power (EU) expressed in increased funding on HRD and an aspiration to act upon an emerging power identity (China) expressed in the PRC's more pro-active stance in multilateral HRD fora. At the current stage these processes permit both sides to decouple their bilateral HRD from other domestic and foreign HRD positions.

We may illustrate the two human rights diplomatic strategies with an attempt to channel discursive "Trojan horses" into the other side's discursive domain. Once inside, however, they fail to act in the intended fashion: The entry of "equality and mutual respect" into accepted, official EU-China discourse has been able to activate a new script of appropriate EU foreign policy. However, it has, to-date failed to convince (or to be internalized) by important human rights actors such as the European Parliament. Similarly, the horse carrying the language of human rights in the Chinese discourse has arguably been tamed and sinicized through "conceptual dilution" (Pils, 2009) and is used against the EU in multilateral fora.

In order to substantiate these processes of socialization, future research should address challenges of incorporating conditions, devising useful indicators and testing generalizability of this model.

First, the type of discursive analysis based on agency conducted here only tells half the story – to be completed by an understanding of the structural conditions enabling “symmetrical socialization”. Future analyses should therefore investigate the connections between discursive change and the evolution of economic interdependence. For example, the costs of return to the original identity could be operationalized as rising considerably with economic interdependence as well as the degree to which sticking to the ‘new script’ becomes synonymous with a notion of “trust” governing relations. The use of quantitative indicators could also usefully complement and substantiate the method of discourse analysis.

Second, indicators are needed to trace the manifestations of discursive identities in practical policies: Such indicators could lie in the type of spending of EIDHR in China, the frequency and intensity of EU demarches in support of Chinese human rights defenders, and changes or lacks thereof of related negotiation positions, such as the EU’s insistence or China’s acceptance of a human rights clause in a new Partnership & Cooperation Agreement (Men, 2014, p. 35). In the absence of movements in these directions, one should caution against prematurely ringing the death nail of existing HRD identities.

Third, the test for generalizability of symmetrical socialization on HRD is whether the bilateral HRD infects other HRD engagements. For the EU, cases with similar frame conditions may be found in Russia or Iran – both of which displaying a “high degree of engagement” with the EU as well as a violation of human rights standards (Dennison &

Dworkin, 2010, p. 9; Kinzelbach, 2013, p. 180). Analyses could possibly also extend to the case of India which on human rights – albeit being a democracy – may be more closely aligned with China than with the West (Gilboy & Heginbotham, 2013, pp. 128-129). Similarly, for China, the task is not to devise a model that only suits one bilateral relationship (EU-China) but is applicable to explain a similar outcome (change in human rights identity) under possibly dissimilar conditions (degree of interdependence, domestic pressure groups, etc.), i.e. for HRD engagements with Canada or Australia.

These analyses could reveal the degree of both the capacity to enact - and the vulnerability to - socialization pressures. Explanations assuming a mutual vulnerability to processes of socialization may be seen as an attempt to penetrate to the roots of “incoherence” (Balducci, 2010) and distinguish long-term changes from “strategic adaptations” (Dworkin, 2012; Zhu, 2011) – ultimately also staking out the potentials for adequate policy responses (See for example Dennison & Dworkin, 2010).

The significance of understanding (unintended) dynamics and consequences of the EU-China HRD engagement and the formation of their new international identities transcends the bilateral engagement. Representing 1.8 billion people, an EU-China common framing of human rights could impact the global discourse on the status and framing of human rights.

Rather than a single power defining the ‘normal’, a “cacophony of normative languages” (Kavalski, 2013, p. 249) may likely characterize a future multipolar order: Conducting human rights diplomacy in this environment, both the EU and China are asked to “concentrate on credible and legitimate action and explain [their] contradictions to the outside world” (Wissenbach, 2009, p. 9).

In this sense, the task of explaining multiple HRD identities may be a necessary addition to the list of challenges contained in the “EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation”.

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Annex 1: EU-China Human Rights Diplomacy at the Summit level (1998-2014)

EU – China Summits 1998-2014: Framing of “Human Rights” Joint Statements / Press Communiqués / Passages on “Human Rights” [emphases added]		
Type	Year	Phrase
Joint Press Statement	02/04/1998	“The two sides welcomed progress made in the China-EU human rights dialogue since its resumption last year. The EU welcomed China's decision to ratify the UN Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights and its intention to sign the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Both sides agreed on the importance of achieving further progress through a continued EU-China dialogue covering all aspects of human rights, and supported by a wide range of cooperation projects. ”
Press statement of the EU	21/12/1999	“The EU expressed concern about the pace of China's evolution towards a more open and transparent society, based on the rule of law and internationally recognised human rights standards. It further urged China to ratify the two UN covenants already signed, and stands ready to share experience concerning their ratification and implementation. The EU also encouraged the Chinese authorities to abolish capital punishment.”
Press statement of the EU	23/10/2000	“Human rights were discussed at length and the Summit reviewed the EU-China human rights dialogue following the most recent round of talks on 29 September. President Prodi reiterated his wish to strengthen the dialogue and make it more results-oriented, thus contributing to tangible improvements in the human rights situation in China. President Prodi stressed particularly the importance of early Chinese ratification of the two UN Covenants. Prime-Minister Zhu expressed the hope that China will ratify the UN Covenant for social, economic and cultural rights before the end of the year.”
Joint Statement	05/09/2001	“The two sides agreed to continue their dialogue on human rights and reaffirmed their commitment to work towards meaningful and positive results. Both sides reaffirmed that the dialogue would continue on the basis of mutual respect and equality, and agreed that the dialogue should help promote their compliance with international human rights standards and co-operation with UN bodies and mechanisms in this field.”
Joint Press Statement	24/09/2002	“The two sides agreed to continue their dialogue on human rights on the basis of equality and mutual respect and reconfirmed their commitment to work towards achieving meaningful and positive results. Furthermore, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to respect international human rights standards and to co-operate fully with UN human rights mechanisms. They welcomed the recent developments in bilateral project co-operation, in particular with respect to the establishment of an EU-China academic network related to the ratification and implementation of the UN covenants on human rights They also welcomed the successful establishment of the Human Rights Small Project Facility, as well as steps towards closer co-operation between European and Chinese nongovernmental organisations and academic institutions .The two sides confirmed their ambition of further enhancing co-operation in the field of human rights.”

Joint Statement	30/10/2003	<p>“11. The two sides welcomed the achievements of their human rights dialogue and agreed to continue their ongoing dialogue on human rights <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u> and reconfirmed their commitment to work towards achieving <u>more meaningful and positive results on the ground</u>. They also underlined their respect for international human rights standards provided for in relevant international human rights instruments and to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms. They also noted the importance of the International Criminal Court in the global fight against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, leaders confirmed their commitment to further enhance cooperation in the field of human rights.”</p>
Joint Statement	8/12/2004	<p>“9. The Leaders believed that the EU-China human rights dialogue promoted mutual understanding and agreed to continue this dialogue, while making efforts to achieve <u>more meaningful and positive results on the ground</u>, as well as the related bilateral co-operation programme. They underlined their respect for international human rights standards provided for in relevant international human rights instruments, including on the rights of minorities, and their commitment to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms. In this respect, China is committed to the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as soon as possible. They also noted the importance of the International Criminal Court in the global fight against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Leaders underlined the importance of concrete steps in the field of human rights and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance co-operation and exchanges in this field <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u>.”</p>
Joint Statement	05/09/2005	<p>“10. The two sides underlined their commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and continued to place a high value on the EU-China human rights dialogue. They underlined the importance of <u>concrete steps</u> in the field of human rights and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance co-operation and exchanges in this field <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u>, while making efforts to achieving <u>more meaningful and positive results on the ground</u>. The EU welcomed China’s commitment to ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as soon as possible. Both sides confirmed their commitment to co-operate with UN human rights mechanisms and their respect for international human rights standards provided for in relevant international human rights instruments, including the rights of minorities. In respect of the global fight against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, they also noted the importance of the International Criminal Court.”</p>
Joint Statement	11/09/2006	<p>“9. The two sides underlined their commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and continued to place a high value on the EU-China human rights dialogue. They underlined the importance of concrete steps in the field of human rights and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance co-operation and exchanges in this field <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u>, while making efforts to <u>achieving more meaningful and positive results on the ground</u>. The EU welcomed China’s commitment to ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as soon as possible. Both sides confirmed their commitment to co-operate with UN human rights mechanism and their respect for international human rights standards provided for in relevant international human rights instruments including the rights of minorities. In respect of the global fight against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, they also noted the importance of the International Criminal Court. The two sides were committed to supporting the work of the UN Human Rights Council and undertook to strengthen their communication and coordination in this regard in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251.”</p>

Joint Statement	28/11/2007	"6. The two sides emphasised their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and continued to place a high value on the EU-China human rights dialogue, including the accompanying legal seminar. They underlined the importance of concrete steps in the field of human rights and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen dialogue and cooperation in this field <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u> , while making efforts to <u>achieve more meaningful and positive results on the ground</u> . The EU welcomed China's commitment to ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as soon as possible. In respect of the global fight against genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, they also noted the importance of the International Criminal Court. Both sides confirmed their commitment to cooperate with UN human rights mechanism and their respect for international human rights standards provided for in relevant international human rights instruments including the rights of minorities. The two sides were committed to supporting the UN Human Rights Council in performing its function to address human rights issues in a credible, objective and non-selective manner. Both sides undertook to strengthen their communication and coordination in this regard in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251."
Joint Statement	30/11/2009	"8. The two sides emphasized their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law, and the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u> . They placed a high value on the EU-China human rights dialogue, including the accompanying legal seminar, and expressed their readiness to work together for <u>constant progress on the ground</u> . The EU welcomed China's commitment to ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as soon as possible. Both sides confirmed their commitment to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms."
Joint Press Communiqué	06/10/2010	- - -
Joint Press Communiqué	14/02/2012	"Emphasized the importance of promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law. Both sides looked forward to the strengthening of the EU-China Dialogue and cooperation on human rights <u>based on equality and mutual respect</u> and announced their intention to hold the next round in China. They expressed their readiness to work together for <u>constant progress on the ground</u> . They agreed to hold the next legal seminar in Ireland in October. Both sides confirmed their commitment to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms."
EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation	25/11/2013	"8. Deepen exchanges on human rights at the bilateral and international level <u>on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u> . Strengthen the Human Rights Dialogue with constructive discussions <u>on jointly agreed key priority areas</u> ."
Joint Statement	31/03/2014	"8. The two sides reaffirmed the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights. Both sides agreed to deepen exchanges on human rights at the bilateral and international <u>level on the basis of equality and mutual respect</u> , and to strengthen their human rights dialogue with constructive discussions <u>on jointly agreed key priority areas</u> ."

Sources: Council of the European Union (2001b,2002,2003,2004,2005,2006,2007,2009,2010,2012), European Union (1999, 2000,2013), Embassy of the People's Republic of China to the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Island (1998), European Commission. (2014b)