

# The EU in Central Asia: A Normative Partnership or Great Power Politics?

Panel Presentation

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Francesco Ortoleva

PhD Candidate

Department of Politics and International Relations

Florida International University

# The EU in Central Asia: A Normative Partnership or Great Power Politics?

- ❖ Part of a larger research agenda (dissertation).
  - EU “actorness”
  - Normative power?
  - Empirically looking at three case studies:
    1. EU –Russian relations
    2. EU-Iran relations
    3. EU policy on Central Asia
  
- ❖ Problem (paper): Does the constructed EU external identity hold up in its relations and policies with Central Asia?

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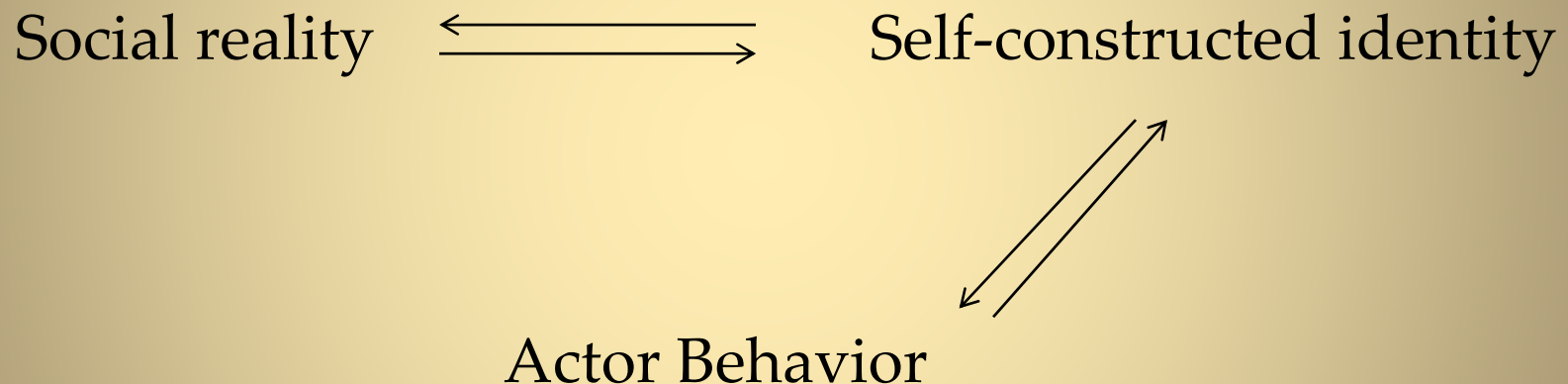
- **Research Question:** *What are the reasons for the EU's involvement in Central Asia?*
- **Hypotheses:**
  - H1:** Foster democratization and good governance; and promote human rights in one of the world's most authoritarian regions (Normative Power).
  - H2:** Energy security and geopolitical/strategic reasons (Great Game continued?)

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- **Main Argument:** Despite the rhetoric about promoting a normative agenda, the EU seems to be engaged in Central Asia for reasons more in line with traditional great power politics or realpolitik.
- **Reasons:**
  - Securing access to the region's energy resources.
  - Great power competition with Russia, China, Iran and others.

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- **Theoretical Approach: Critical Geopolitics**



- **Power Projection** – actors engage in cross-border activity to get resources beyond legal borders....connects domestic society and its institutions to the external world.

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- **Methods**

- Qualitative analysis of EU text and policies
- EU Strategy for Central Asia (2007)
  - Normative prospectus
  - Implementation? —————> Strategic/geopolitical



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## Background

- Immediately after independence (1992) PCAs were signed with all five republics in CA.
- Germany most active in CA.
- By late 1990s, EU not very interested.
- Changes by mid 2000's, Why?
  - Growing interest (and competition) in regions' energy resources (China & Russia)
  - The war in Afghanistan
- EU Special Rep. for CA established in 2005

# The EU in Central Asia: A Normative Partnership or Great Power Politics?

- *“The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership”*
  - Adopted in July 2007 by the Council
  - Represented a fundamental shift in its approach to the countries of CA.
    - General political goals
    - Concrete working prospectus
  - Key element of German Presidency’s external relations agenda (2007).



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- **Adoption of Strategy influenced by three factors:**
  - Ongoing war in Afghanistan (logistic supplies)
  - Andijian Uprising in Uzbekistan in May 2005
  - Concern for energy diversification following Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis in 2006.
- **Broad range of objectives:**
  - Stability and prosperity
  - Attention to common security challenges (migration, terrorism, organized crime, and human, arms and drug trafficking).

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- **Normative concerns also highlighted**
  - Political dialogue
  - “results-orientated” human rights dialogue
  - Rule of Law initiatives
- **Supported by 750 million Euros in assistance**

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- **Achievements after three years:**
  - Most emphasis has been put on security challenges and energy dialogue.
  - Little on the normative agenda: Human rights and good governance initiatives.
- **The Paris Ministerial Forum on Security Challenges (September 2008)**
  - Consolidation of security relations and establish lasting cooperation on security issues
  - “Narrowly drawn notions of security...with human rights and democracy promotion taking a back seat” .

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- EU Senior officials have added to the impression that the normative agenda is not a top priority in EU-Central Asia relations.
  - Amb. Pierre Morel, EUSRCA interview (2008)
    - Terrorism
    - Extremism
    - Energy
    - Human rights and good governance “pushed down”.

# The EU in Central Asia: A Normative Partnership or Great Power Politics?

- If not normative concerns, then why is the EU in Central Asia?
  - A modern “great game”? Russia, China, Iran, India, the U.S. all present in CA...why not the Europeans?!
  - Energy security – normative concerns not primary.
  - Terrorism - fear of Islamic radicalization in CA.
  - Organized crime and drug trafficking.



# The EU in Central Asia: A Normative Partnership or Great Power Politics?

- Evidence mounts towards great power strategy.
  - Is there agency here?
    - Critical geopolitics: feedback mechanism between social reality, constructed identity and behavior.
    - EU may be acting in a traditional, great power manner in Central Asia due to political and geo-strategic dynamics brought about by the other external actors and conditions in the region; this behavior may then, in turn, have an effect on the identity of the EU as global actor.