

A Polyphonic Marketplace: Images of EU External Energy Relations in British, French and German Media Discourses

Abstract

The European Union (EU) has long sought to play a normative role in global energy governance, a role that requires a coherent, comprehensible and memorable image. Yet within its borders, there are divisions and discrepancies on energy, which may have an impact on the external reception of EU actions. France, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK), commonly referred to as ‘the EU’s big 3’, seem to have little in common on issues of energy policy. EU rhetoric on external energy matters places firm emphasis on three key ‘frames’ of understanding: sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply, yet the domestic rhetorics of France, Germany and the UK variously appear to place priority on one or more of these frames. This paper explores media representations of the EU’s external energy relations from within the ‘Big 3’ EU member states and asks whether the EU’s normative agenda on external energy drives these media representations, or whether domestic member state interests dominate.

Key words: BRICS; energy policy and governance; external relations; European Union (EU); framing; Normative Power Europe

1. Introduction

Known as ‘the EU’s big 3’, the threesome (or ‘troika’) of France, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK), seem to have little in common on issues of energy policy. While Germany has been focused on *Energiewende* – its energy transition away from nuclear power – and France, too, seeks a more diversified energy portfolio, the UK has chosen to shift its policy direction towards nuclear. The issue of fracking also sees more divisions between the three states than shared perspectives. Yet, despite these differences, and though they maintain extensive bilateral external energy agreements as European Union (EU) member states, all three are bound by a growing system of cooperation and increasingly shared competence when it comes to external energy relations.

According to Gjerstad (2007, p. 62), in politics, any actor is in a position to discursively create different images of itself by ‘permitting “internal discussions” to manifest themselves in the text’, which the author describes as the polyphonic nature of political discourse. We argue that the case of EU external energy policy offers a uniquely polyphonic political sphere; one characterised not just by multiple actors and voices with whom the EU is engaged, but also multiple internal voices that play a role in shaping an image of the EU as an external actor. While a multiplicity of voices is unsurprising in any field of external relations, in external energy policy the EU has long sought to play the role of normative power (Knodt *et al*, 2015) – a role that requires a coherent, comprehensible and memorable image. EU rhetoric on external energy matters places firm emphasis on three key ‘frames’ of understanding: sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply, yet the domestic rhetorics of Germany, France and the UK variously appear to place priority on one or more of these frames. This paper explores media representations of the EU’s external energy relations within the ‘Big 3’ EU member states of the UK, France and Germany, and in doing so, offers

an innovative two part critique of the ‘Normative Power Europe’ framework. The paper first presents a discussion of the ‘Normative Power Europe’ framework, outlining our main areas of contribution to the theoretical literature. It then contextualises this discussion within the context of the three member states’ own domestic energy policies, before outlining the methodology and presenting a discussion of the findings. In doing so, we explore the questions of partnerships and framing of external energy for three of the EU’s major energy ‘players’, and ask what such mediated and self-visions might mean for the reality and conduct of an effective EU External Energy Policy.

2. Theoretical Framework

As a concept, Normative Power Europe (NPE) introduced by Ian Manners (2002), presents the EU as a global actor that carries out its external policy through its ability to exert normative power. Within this approach, the EU’s identity and characteristics are considered a source of power, and it is argued that through these, the EU is able to influence and shape global norms (Whitman 2013). Normative power works through shaping discourses, framing issues and debates – convincing not coercing. Thus, the EU acts as a normative agent that is credited with an ability to transfer its own normative construct of ideas to foreign settings. It aims at successfully ‘selling’ its norms in interactions with foreign partners or in multilateral negotiations. NPE has been received and applied by many researchers (among others, see Diez, 2005; 2013; Lucarelli and Manners, 2006; Khasson *et al*, 2008; Gstöhl, 2009), while others have noted the potential danger of the concept in overlooking and underestimating the role of the ‘receiver’ in such interactions (Diez, 2005; Merlingen, 2007; also Björkdahl *et al*, 2015; Sicurelli and Scheipers, 2008).

In this contribution, we test the NPE concept in a specific policy field – external energy – thus offering a new angle in the use of the concept. Typically, researchers dedicated to EU foreign policy have used NPE (Manners, 2002; Diez, 2005 and others). Even Gstöhl (2009) and Khasson *et al* (2008), who touched on democracy promotion, limited the concept's use to the EU's neighbourhood policy and remained in more or less in the classical foreign policy field. Energy policy is a crosscutting area of policy, which intersects with EU multi-level policy making. Transferring the concept of NPE to the multi-level governance arena of energy policy will highlight two moments of revision within the thinking on EU as a normative actor. On the one hand, we reaffirm the argument that NPE has previously been conceptualized only from the EU point of view and thus has been easily criticized as Eurocentric. On the other hand, by locating NPE analyses within only the 'foreign' policy field, the character of the EU's multi-level system has not played a role. Our paper contends that these two arguments offer a means by which the NPE concept can be maximised so as to make it more useful for empirical analyses in other policy fields, thus moving beyond foreign policy in the narrow sense.

The first argument is that the NPE approach should elaborate more on the process by which European norms are transferred within interactions with third countries or in multilateral settings. This elaboration should include carefully examining processes of norm re-interpretation and norm changes by receivers. The embeddedness of interaction and discourse in different political and cultural contexts impacts on norm interpretation. Taking the translation process seriously means not conceptualising the process of translation as only a one way 'sender – receiver' process in which the EU is constructed as the only legitimate global norm driven actor (Merlingen, 2007; Sjursen, 2006) in an marketplace of ideas where third parties are perceived as less value-driven. If the EU does not listen to the reactions and views from the receiver either inside or outside the EU, then the power of the NPE message is

undermined as it becomes ‘preaching at’ receivers, not ‘talking with them’. Such an aggressive hard sell strategy also neglects the agency of major powers as able to perform as ‘normative foreign policy actors’ (Tocci, 2008). In order to use the normative power approach as a non-Eurocentric heuristic framework it is important to highlight the roles of major powers, which have the ability to set normative standards over others (Whitman, 2013). As such, in addition to exploring the EU, our paper also considers China, India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa as well as individual EU member states as normative foreign policy actors. This procedure follows March and Olsen’s ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March and Olsen, 1989) based on their identity in their respective (normative) foreign policy actions.

The second argument our paper presents is that the EU needs to be conceptualized as a multi-level system when analysing the external conduct of its various policies, including energy. This is an important contribution which has been notably absent in other studies of media representations of EU energy activities. The very nature of the European multi-level system implies specific forms of governance. Political problems and steering tasks are addressed on various levels, thereby becoming inextricably interlinked. Multi-level governance thus creates high demands of cooperation and coordination, involving all levels of political decision-making in formal and informal ways (among many, see Marks, 1993; 1996; Piattoni, 2010). One of the core characteristics of a European system of governance is its polycentricism. In this system various centres of decision-making exist that are formally independent of each other. The hierarchical centre of the system is replaced by functional networks (Kohler-Koch, 1999). Within the area of external energy governance, functional networks are split into multiple, overlapping arenas characterised by loose coupling (Benz, 2000; Hooghe and Marks, 2001). For decades, external energy relations were maintained only by member states, as external energy policy does not confer exclusive EU competence. Rather energy policy is treated as a shared competence. Shared competences have resulted in

energy becoming a truly multi-level policy issue. While consensus is the organising principle of political relations within the European system, this does not hinder member states from carrying out their own external energy policies towards the emerging powers without adjusting their priorities to the European strategies. Consensual policy-making relies heavily on interaction and communication between its entities (Knodt, 2000). Applied to energy policies, communication between the member states and the European level will emerge as a problematic case, which impacts on EU interaction with the emerging powers.

From the outset, the reference towards shared competences and the importance of member state energy policy indicates that the coordination of EU and member state energy activities should exhibit an important role in the EU's external energy governance. Indeed parallel research by members of the EXIE project team has found that agreements and partnerships of the EU and member states towards the BRICS in the energy sector have at times rivalled each other and there is considerable lack of information on member states' activities within Directorate-General (DG) Energy (Knodt *et al.*, 2015). Only recently has focus also been laid on an information exchange mechanism with EU member states (European Parliament and Council, 2012). Following this new mechanism member states are required to inform the European Commission of all their new and existing international agreements (IGAs) with third countries in the field of energy; otherwise they risk sanctions. In addition, the Commission should facilitate and encourage coordination among member states. With this measurement the EU aims for greater transparency which should in turn allow the Commission to take coordinated action for the EU and thus, promote a common voice on energy issues; yet, conversely this may lead to higher tensions between the member states, as the Commission could induce pressure on them (Knodt *et al.*, 2015). Most EU member states oppose this regulation, as they see the confidentiality and sovereignty in

establishing energy supply agreements to be endangered (EURactiv, 2012). Nevertheless they comply and inform the Commission about their IGAs.

The nature of relations between the member states and the EU on issues of external energy policy thus are complex. This complexity necessarily shapes the EU's normative role in world energy relations. Some scholars, such as Lucarelli and Fioramonti (2010, p. 1) suggest that 'self-rhetorical representation, public debate and mirror images are fundamental components of a political identity in the making like the EU/European one'. External perceptions of the EU can therefore provide insight and empirical findings in order to assess the EU as a Normative Power (Larsen, 2014). The existing literature indicates that the EU's 'self-rhetorical representation' as a normative actor is contested in the mirror of its external partners, in particular amongst the emerging powers of the Asia-Pacific where it is viewed primarily in economic terms (Chaban *et al*, 2009). Correspondingly, the EU has a particular image of the emerging powers (Bersick *et al*, 2012) and this guides its interactions with those partners. These perceptions are important, 'because they are a basis for understanding and a foundation upon which actors make choices and decisions. Understanding the perceptions of the "other" side can provide a basis for improved communication and give guidance on policy adjustments' (Chaban and Holland, 2010, p. 128).

This paper, then, explores perceptions of the EU as an external energy actor within the mainstream press in the EU member states of the UK, France and Germany. The research questions we seek to answer are:

- How is the EU, as a global energy actor, vis-à-vis the BRICS countries framed within the domestic newspapers of the UK, France and Germany?
- What drives media representations of external energy policies? And, does the EU's normative agenda in the field of energy appear in these representations?
-

- How does the externalisation of EU energy activities, as well as the multi-level context of the EU's governance structure, contribute to (or challenge) the EU's normative power in the field of energy?

In answering these questions, we explore not only media frames of the EU, but also images of how the EU is seen to act towards and with its BRICS counterparts. This internal/external dialectic will provide insights into the effectiveness, or not, of the EU's emerging normative actorness in the field of external energy policy.

3. Methodology

As outlined in the introduction to this special issue, newspapers were chosen for monitoring on the basis of national reach and prestige. The selected newspapers for this paper's analysis are presented in Table 1.

	Prestigious	Business	Weekly
The UK	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Financial Times</i>	<i>The Economist</i>
France	<i>Le Figaro</i>	<i>Les Echos</i>	<i>Liberation</i>
Germany	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	<i>Handelsblatt</i>	<i>Der Spiegel</i>

Table 1: Monitored Newspapers

All news items which mentioned energy, specific types of energyⁱ or EEP (external energy policy) along with any of our key actors (the EU and the BRICS) were included in the sample, and the gathered news items were then manually coded by a team of trained researchers. Further detail about these procedures can be found in the Introduction to this issue. An important category of the analysis for more fully exploring the ways in which the EU was framed within the context of energy issues, was the category of domesticity. This

category involved determining the focus of the story according to a four-fold framework, presented in Table 2.

Foci of domesticity			
Internal to the EU		External to the EU	
Domestic context	General EU context	Third country	Global
Story focuses on local context (either Britain, France or Germany)	Story focuses on events within the EU generally	Story focuses on events in a 3 rd country outside of the EU (eg. USA, China, Brazil etc)	Story relates to events with a world-wide focus (eg. UN Climate Change Convention meetings)

Table 2: Foci of Domesticity

In this paper, we utilise a specific subset of the data: news coded within the two ‘external’ categories; that is, news relating to the EU’s external energy policy, which was framed from either a global or third country perspective. By exploring this subset we are better able to explore how the EU as a global energy actor is seen by its member states when their local media looks to external events. Following from this special issue’s interest in determining the EU’s ‘capable’ frames, our analysis explores the visibility of the EU and its three normative energy frames (sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness) as well as its evaluation as a coherent actor.

4. ‘Domestic’ Energy Contexts: UK, France and Germany

After spending most of the last 30 years as a net energy exporter, since 2004, the UK has become dependent on energy imports. Traditional fossil fuels continue to dominate the British energy mix, accounting for 87.5% of supply, with low carbon sources including nuclear and renewables accounting for 12% (Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2012). The context of the recession has played a part in shaping British energy policy documents which depict a country preoccupied with competitiveness in the energy sector:

both as a means of ensuring a stable and affordable energy supply, and as a means of driving economic recovery. The 2012 Energy Bill featured a renewed investment in nuclear energy and while fracking has been a source of controversy (with a brief embargo in 2011), in 2013 fracking began again with UK government support.

Historically, France has relied heavily on nuclear energy as a means to reduce its dependence on fossil imports (Petit, 2013) and remains France's main source of energy (RTE, 2014). However, since the incident in Fukushima there has been a growing concern regarding this type of energy production. Before being elected in 2012, François Hollande vowed to reduce the proportion of nuclear in France's energy mix from 75% to 50% by 2025 (Schneider, 2013). France's second largest energy source is hydro power which represented 13.8% of France energy mix in 2013 (RTE 2014), but shares of other renewable energies tend to be modest while fossil fuel-wise, gas represents 3.5% of France's energy mix while coal and oil represent 3.6% and 1 % respectively (RTE 2014). Unlike the UK, France has banned the exploration and exploitation of shale oil and gas. This decision, made in July 2012, remains controversial.

Germany's energy policy has in the last years not only gained increasing attention within Germany (and hence also in the German press), but also from foreign actors who view Germany as a pioneer within the field of renewables and energy transition. The cause is the so-called *Energiewende* – an energy transition away from nuclear power towards renewable energies (decided in 2011). Yet, the rapid phase-out of nuclear (by 2022) also possesses great challenges to German energy policy concerning infrastructure, subsidies and rising prices for consumers. The EU has criticized high subsidies to energy-intensive industries, which are counter to EU competition policies (Pop, 2014). It remains to be seen whether the reform of the Renewable Energy Act from August 2014 will solve these issues. In addition, renewables only account for 12.3 percent of the total energy consumption (AGEE-Stat, 2014); hence

Germany remains largely dependent on import of oil and gas (over 50 percent of the energy supply). In this regard, Russia can be considered as the most important energy partner in Germany, which has a great influence on the overall relations between Russia and Germany.

The findings are now discussed using the framework of capable frames presented in the introduction to this special issue: that is, in terms of the EU's visibility, comprehensibility and emotional charge.

5. Findings: Visibility

Volume of Coverage

Coverage of energy issues in the three member states' press yielded a relatively high volume of stories across all monitored newspapers. A total of 879 articles were coded in the French sample, 772 articles were coded in the German sample and 753 articles were coded in the British sample across all five years' sampling periods. The dominance of coverage in 2009 relates in large part to the attention given to the Copenhagen Climate Change Convention (CCC), while later CCCs were awarded much less visibility, perhaps in part as a result of the failures of Copenhagen.

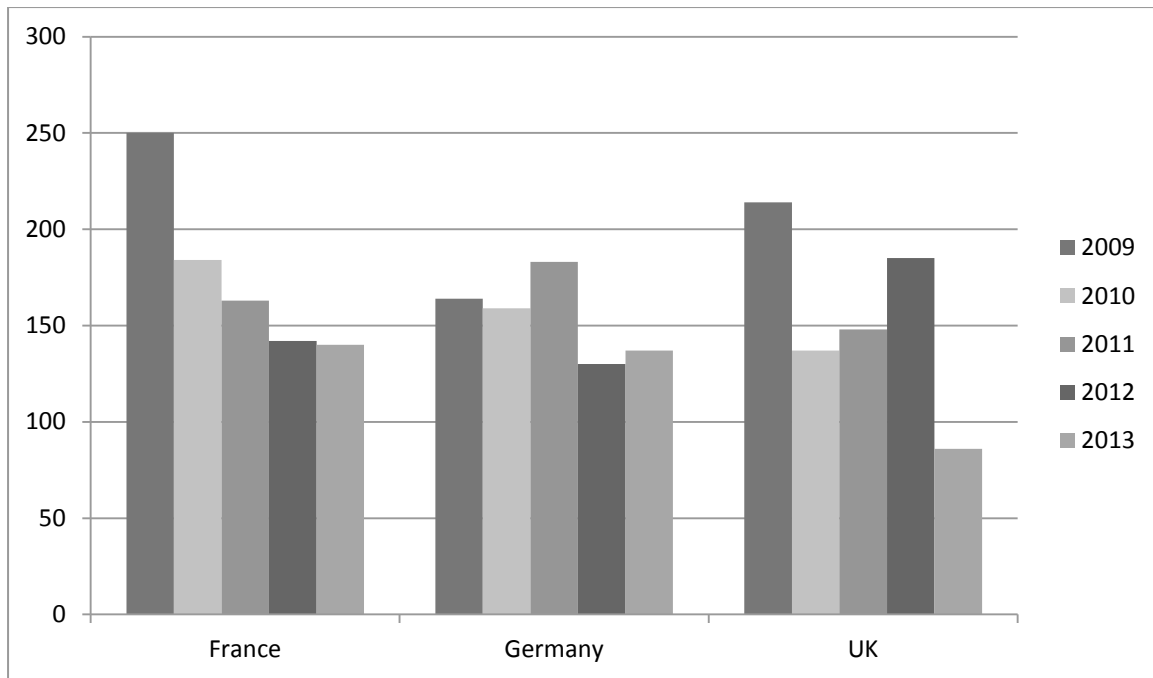


Figure 1. Total Volumes of Energy Coverage in France, Germany and the UK by Year

Figure 2, presents the results of the category of domesticity. As can be seen, energy news relating to events outside the EU dominated in the media coverage in all three member states.

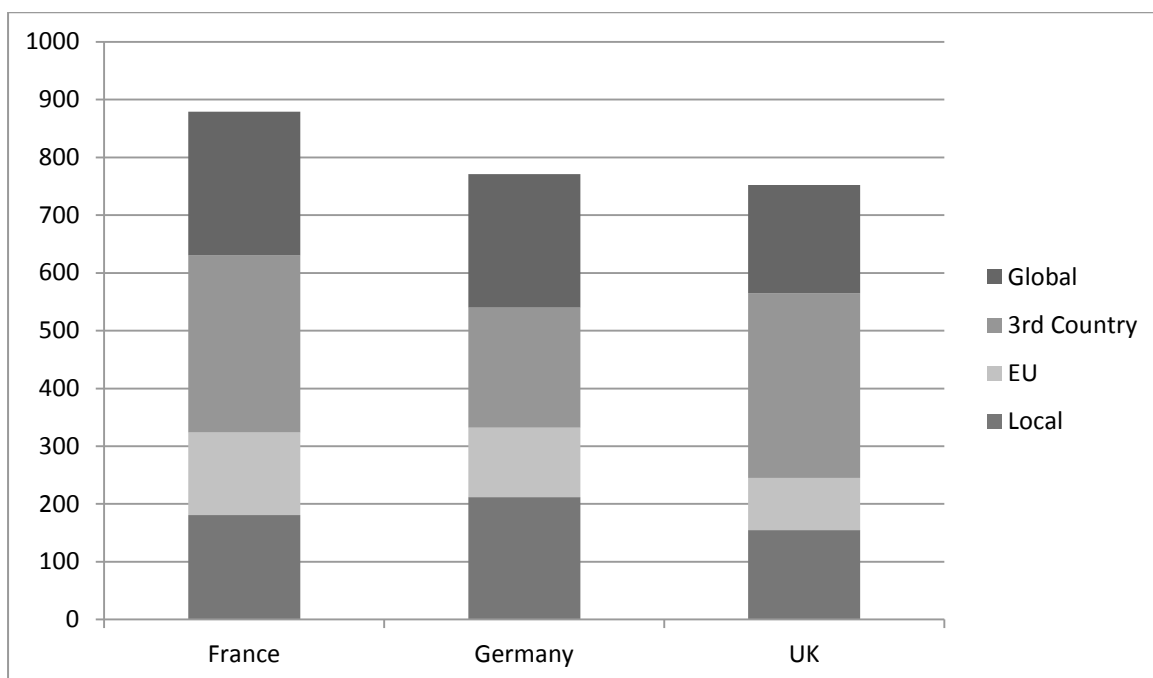


Figure 2: Foci of Domesticity

In the UK dataset, 67% reflected the ‘external’ energy dimension (meaning they were framed from either a global or third country perspective). Similarly, in France, 63% of the coverage was presented from the external perspective; while in Germany 57% were located externally. When taken together, the global and third country perspectives clearly dominate the framing of energy issues in all three countries. The data that falls within the latter two categories are the focus of the remainder of this paper. The total figures of this external ‘subset’ are: France, 555 articles; Germany, 439 articles; UK, 503 articles. By narrowing in on this subset, our paper explores in depth how the EU is framed as a global energy actor and whether these frames facilitate an image of the EU as a capable and normative energy ‘power’.

Degree of centrality

One of the first questions to ask of the data, then, relates to the visibility of the EU – how often is the EU visible when member states’ news media cover global and external energy issues? Figure 3 illustrates the visibility of the EU as compared to other energy actors.

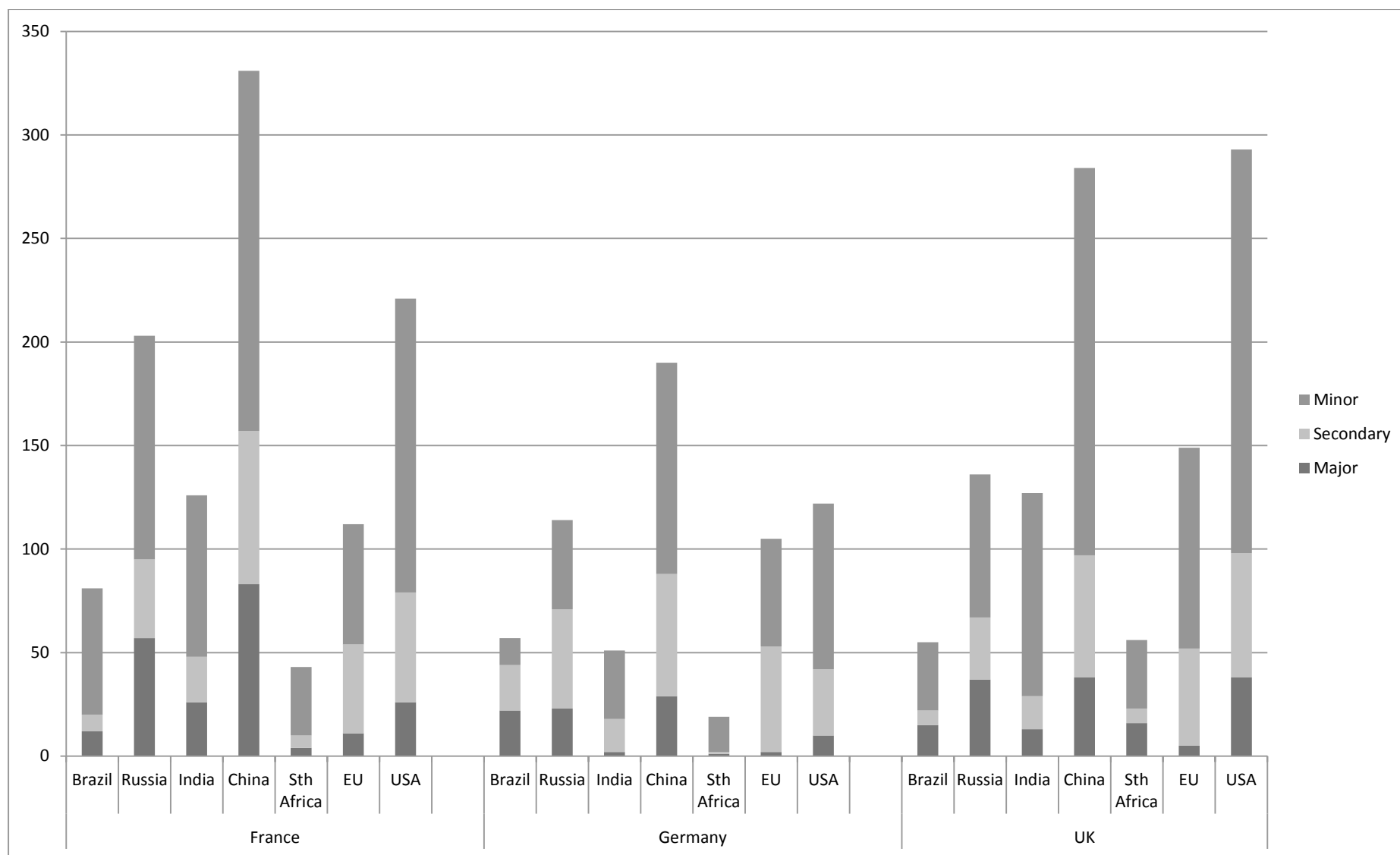


Figure 3: Visibility of Energy Actors in EU member states' Press in terms of degree of centrality

China is framed as a major actor in all three countries' coverage. It is the clear 'leader' in terms of volume of coverage and centrality in the French and German coverage, while in the UK it is balanced with coverage of the US. It is important to note here, however, that the data for this paper comes from a project concerned primarily with the EU-BRICS interactions. As such, no specific search was done on 'United States' or 'US' as a search term (i.e. energy stories relating to the US alone were not included in the dataset), but the US was coded where it appeared in a story, which referenced any of the BRICS or the EU in relation to an energy matter. It is likely, therefore, that if the US had been sampled individually, that its dominance would have been much higher, but as it is, the US remains an important reference point on energy issues.

In order for a frame to be 'capable' within the cascading activation model used in this project (see the Introduction of this Special Issue for more detail), it must be 'noticeable' and 'visible'. Sheer volume is not the only measure of visibility and our study employs a tripartite framework for a more detailed picture. All references to the above actors were noted in the analysis, whether the actor was mentioned only once or peripherally (minor), whether it was seen in a story with other actors where the coverage of each was balanced and neither dominated (secondary), or whether the actor was the leading actor of the story (major). Major degrees of visibility would be the most capable frame likely to resonate with concepts of actorness and influence. As Figure 3 highlights, while the overall volumes for some actors may not have been the highest, the intensity of their visibility offers a different picture. Russia, for example, in the French case may have been only the third most visible energy actor, yet it was seen as a major actor on many occasions, thus the intensity of its image is stronger. China also has a high number of 'major' references in the French dataset, but it is more often seen as a minor actor overall, as it is in the case of both the German and UK coverage.

For the EU, what Figure 3 highlights is perhaps a problematic picture for an actor that seeks to play a leading role in world energy relations. Even *within* the EU's 'big 3', there is limited visibility of the EU's external energy actions. The EU is typically outranked by both the US and China, and in the case of France's coverage, the EU is also 'beaten' in visibility terms by India. More revealingly, however, is the limited level of 'major' coverage for the EU. In the UK and Germany, there are only five and two stories respectively, in which the EU appears as a major external energy actor. In the French coverage the story is somewhat stronger with eleven stories featuring a major EU appearance, but overall this is not an image that denotes a strong level of EU leadership. Stated simply, the EU is not framed by its member states' press as a highly noticeable actor in world energy relations. However, what this picture does indicate is that the EU is a regular presence *alongside* other energy actors, arguably engaged in partnerships with other key global energy 'players'.

6. Comprehensibility

Thematic frames

One of the leading questions of this project is to what extent – if at all – there is evidence of an EU normative agenda on global energy matters depicted in the print news media of various countries. The EU's external energy policy hinges around three specific energy 'frames' and if it were to become a normative energy power, it would be expected that its specific energy framework would shape how three of its member states' press would present world energy issues and the actors associated with those. Figure 4, presents the results of this analysis.

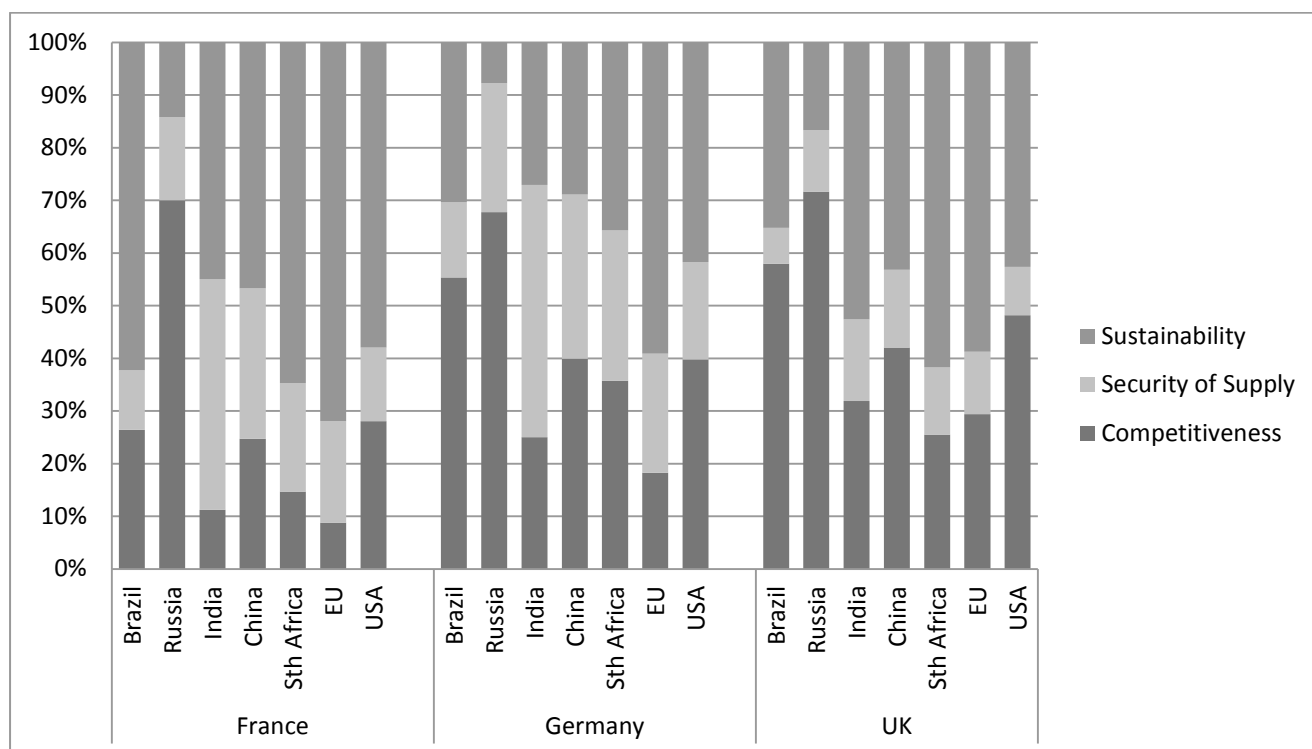


Figure 4: Frames of Energy Actors

As can be seen in Figure 4, the frame of sustainability is highly visible overall and for the EU in particular. In part, this can be explained by the sampling period, which targeted the month around the climate change conventions (CCCs). However, it is a more dominant frame for the US and EU than for their Russian, Indian and Chinese counterparts. South Africa, too, has a relatively high level of ‘sustainability’ evident in its framing in the French and UK coverage, however, it is important to note that the numbers overall for South Africa are very small. In addition, it hosted the CCC in 2011 (Durban). For the EU and the US, sustainability is a more consistent frame for their energy whereas competitiveness emerges as a more common framework for Brazil, Russia and China, at least in the UK and German press. For the cases of the EU and the US this may reflect a more highly perceived actorness at the CCCs and therefore may suggest portrayals of the EU taking on the norm of sustainability and promoting it externally. It may also be a reflection of Brazil, Russia and China’s drive for

economic growth, and thus their concern on matters of energy is typically shaped by competition. It is also notable that in the case of the US, sustainability is not always a positive frame, but can instead hold negative connotations (the US as an actor at times obstructing sustainable progress). For Russia, this often related to critiques of the Russian economy's over-reliance on oil and gas exports, which the European press appeared to view as a weakness. Collaborations or partnerships with the EU on oil and gas also shaped the Russian framing in all three member states' press. Brazil, with its strong use of more 'green' energy sources was presumed to emerge as a 'sustainability' actor, yet the above chart highlights that in fact it was framed more consistently through the angle of competitiveness (with the exception of the French coverage). In part, this relates to a framing of Brazil as a potential market for investment opportunities, especially since its recent discovery and exploitation of oil, which was seen as a potential opportunity for outside investors. In the French case, Brazil's involvement in the CCCs was highlighted, accounting for the higher volume of sustainability framing there.

India is the actor which appears to present some confusion for the European news media. There is no clear pattern across our three countries in terms of India's framing as an energy actor. Arguably this may be accounted for by India's unique case – a former colony with vast economic disparities, India only stopped receiving overseas development assistance from the UK in 2013. Yet, it is an actor that is beginning to 'flex its muscles', becoming an increasingly vocal member of the BRICS quintet on climate change negotiations as well as global political concerns. For the UK press, it was India's involvement in pushing against Western actors at the CCCs which shaped much of its framing, thus India was viewed overall as an actor shaped by sustainability concerns. While again India's sustainability framing reflects its appearance at the CCCs, a number of articles in the French case focused on India's turn towards nuclear energy, specifically on a deal that would allow Areva (a French energy

company) to build two nuclear reactors. For Germany, the focus was on issues around India's need to secure its energy future, especially at a time when its domestic energy demands are growing.

Issues

While the climate change conventions are not the primary focus of this project, the EU's normative role in climate politics and in attempting to establish a post-Kyoto agreement have been important parts of its global actions in energy, and it is clear that this is an area which resonates with the European news media, albeit negatively in the UK and German cases.

In fact, the inclusion of other dimensions when discussing global energy was a common practice across the media coverage in each of our three countries. Figure 6 presents the results of this category of analysis, in which it was determined whether a story was a 'pure' energy policy story, or whether the energy issue was contextualised within another policy area. The link to other issues helps us to determine how comprehensible the energy frames were within this coverage. As can be seen, the climate change dimension was an important one in the UK coverage. Again, this most likely reflects the sampling periods more than perhaps the agenda on global energy specifically, however, it is clear that climate change concerns and energy matters are conceptualised collectively to some degree in the press of all three countries. What is more surprising, given the frames discussed in Figure 4 and the dominance of sustainability over issues of competitiveness, is the strongly economic 'slant' given to coverage of energy matters. Over 30% (and as high as 40%) of all the news items in this analysis presented energy matters within the context of the economy. In part this can be attributed to our inclusion of a business newspaper in each of the three countries, and the emphasis of these papers on the markets (and particularly the commodity prices within those), but it very likely also reflects 'domestic' concerns with rebuilding damaged European

economies. Politics, too, is clearly an important frame from which to consider energy matters, and this is important for the EU. Many of its energy partnerships and negotiations are shaped by a political dimension. More generally, we suggest that this finding highlights the importance of energy as a global, crosscutting issue. Energy was consistently presented in our data within the context of another dimension: in only a very small percentage of stories was energy discussed as a pure energy story with no other angle.

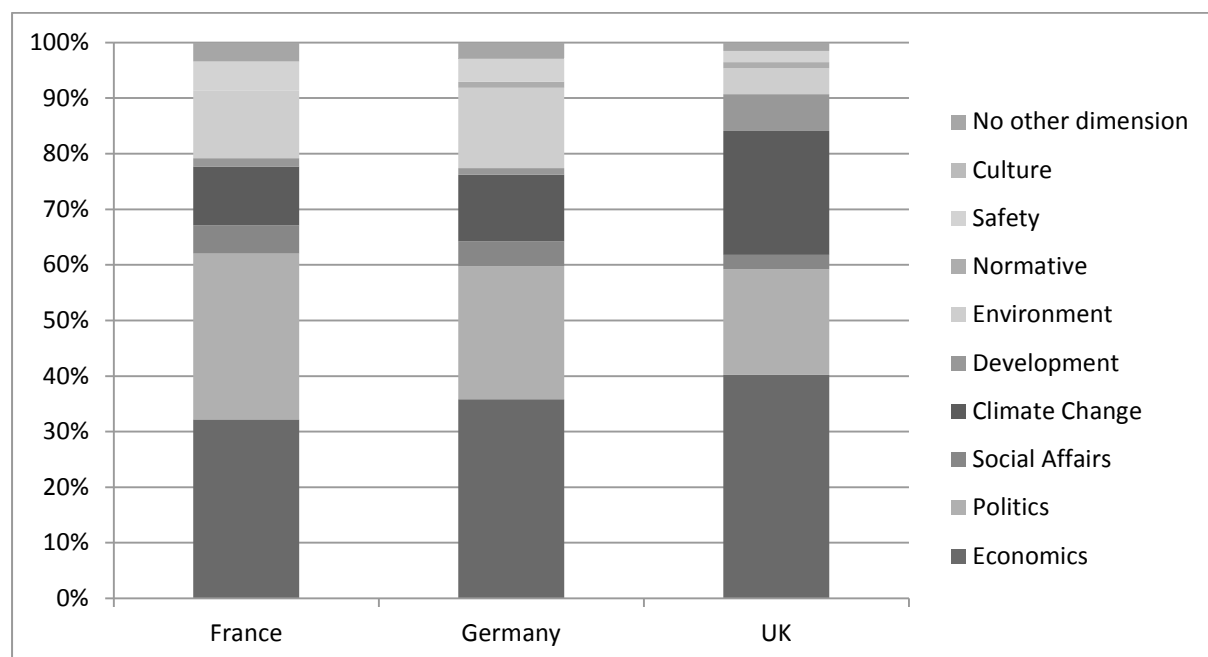


Figure 6: Other Dimensions in Energy News Coverage

7. Emotional charge

Generic Evaluation

In exploring the ‘capable frames’ of EU external energy activity, determining the emotional charge or evaluation of an actor’s role is important. Figure 7 presents the results of our evaluation analysis and highlights the comparison between the EU’s evaluation and that of other global energy actors.

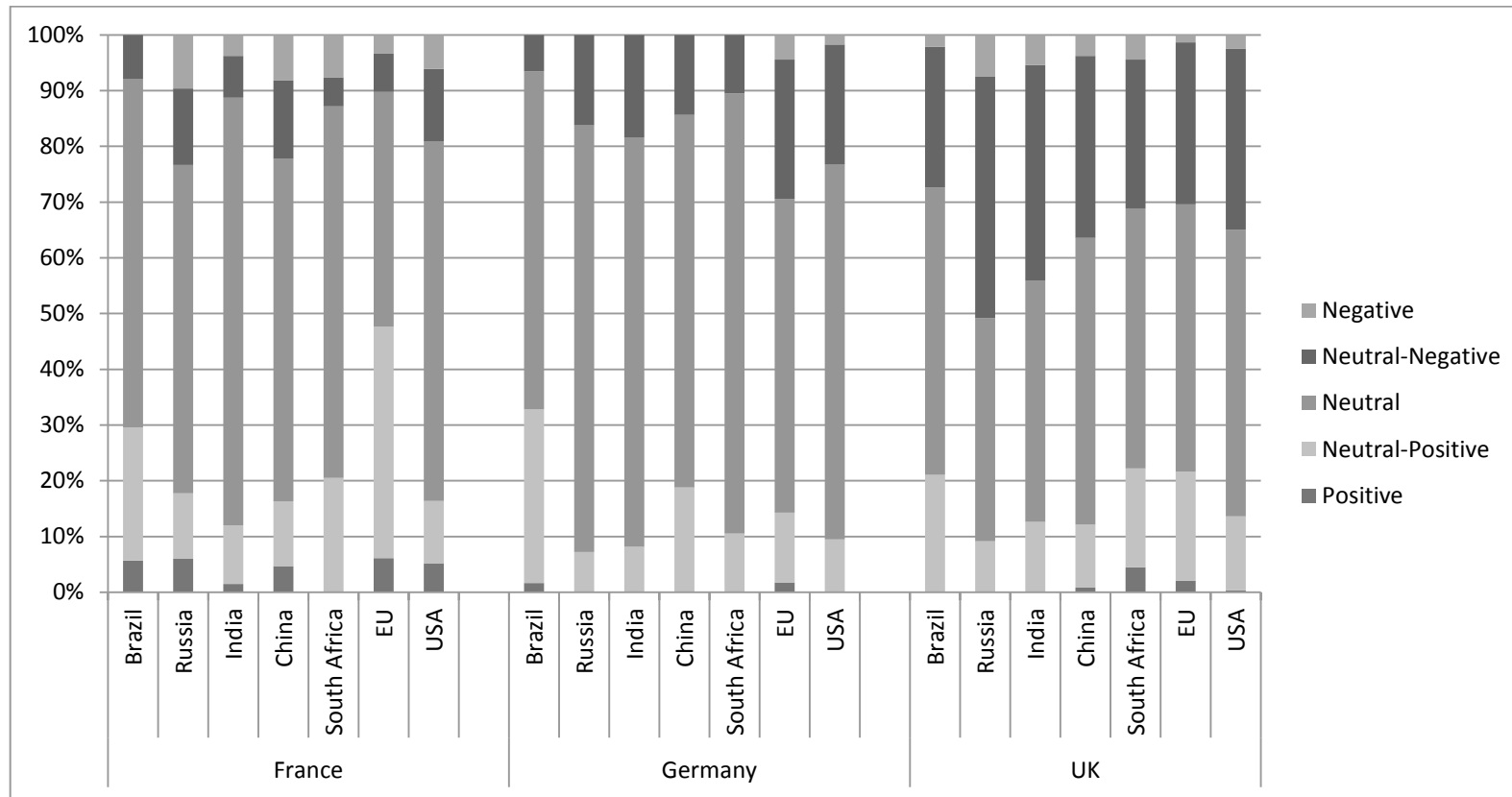


Figure 7: Energy Actors' Evaluations

As can be seen in Figure 7, the neutral category dominates in all three countries' media coverage, but this is not unexpected. The objectivity of the quality press necessarily means that a neutral approach to reporting any issue will always be prioritised. Thus, it is often in the less clear-cut

categories where we can see greater evidence of ‘evaluation’. The categories of ‘neutral-to-positive’ and ‘neutral-to-negative’ highlight that the EU is presented in a somewhat balanced manner in the UK and German press, although negativity is slightly more prominent with almost 30% of the total coverage in both countries. One of the main reasons for this negativity may be attributed to the EU’s poor performance at the Copenhagen CCC, where it was described as ‘failing’ to secure a follow-up agreement to Kyoto.

For the French press, however, the EU’s image overall is a more positive one, with neutral-to-positive and positive evaluations occupying just under 50% of the total EU evaluations. This is largely due to its involvement in the CCCs. In the French coverage, the EU, unlike its Chinese, Indian and American counterparts is seen as fighting climate change and trying to engage and cooperate with other actors. Some articles did highlight its involvement in the conferences in negative terms often arguing that the EU’s expectations were unrealistic. However, overall it is often portrayed as the only ‘driving force’ pushing for change and that is seen positively. The Nabucco pipeline project led by the EU was also viewed in a positive light as a way for Europe to tackle its energy dependence on Russia. While a large portion of France’s energy mix is provided by nuclear energy, and even though Russia is only France’s third provider of gas after Norway and the Netherlands (International Energy Agency, 2014), a number of articles still mention Europe’s need to diversify its gas sources and alleviate its reliance on Russia.

Comparing the EU’s evaluation by the news media of its member states to those of other energy actors, we can see that in fact the EU would appear to come out ‘on top’ in the UK and French cases in particular. Russia is the clear ‘bad guy’ for the UK press, with the highest number of explicitly negative evaluations and negative-neutral evaluations, while the confusing picture of India is also one for the UK that is tarnished with negativity. China and

Russia are the most ‘maligned’ actors for the French case, while in Germany the EU is viewed most negatively.

8. Conclusions

As can be seen from the above findings, the overall trajectory of EU external energy visibility appears to be decreasing. We have seen a high level of externalization when discussing energy coverage within the public discourses of our three member states, however, it appears that European energy questions are of much less interest for the press in the UK, France and Germany than global energy issues. Similarly, it was highlighted that the EU is not the most important actor connected to energy coverage in our three countries: the EU was instead routinely topped by coverage afforded to China and USA. These findings suggest that our EU member states are not looking directly towards the EU when matters of global energy policy are discussed in the mainstream press. More problematically for the EU, is that its own member states’ media do not construct it as a major actor. The EU is present and engaged in global partnerships and negotiations, but it is seldom framed as leading the way. Certainly, multilateral engagement is necessary in the contemporary environment, but for an actor with a self-image as a normative power, a stronger level of independent leadership would be needed for this image to resonate externally. Yet even its own member states appear to challenge this self-perception.

In terms of the comprehensibility of the EU energy ‘image’, the EU’s identity does appear to be closely connected to issues of sustainability, from the viewpoint of its member states’ media at least. While competitiveness was an important energy frame for presenting the energy concerns of other global actors, the EU was linked strongly with issues of sustainability and arguably it is in this area of external energy relations where the EU may be

seen to occupy a specifically normative position. However, our analysis revealed yet another point of disagreement amongst the three member states' media, and this was in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of the EU as an external energy actor. The findings from our evaluation analysis reveal that while neutrality dominates, France viewed the EU with greater positivity, while Germany and the UK were more explicitly negative. Taken together, the findings from this analysis provide the sense that the EU is increasingly viewed by the European news media with a sense of frustration, especially with regards to the EU's climate (in)action at the CCCs. After its earlier successes in negotiating Kyoto (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006), the EU's inability to successfully negotiate a follow-up agreement is arguably increasingly viewed by two of its big member states, as a failure. The EU may have the potential to be a normative leader, and might see itself in that regard however this image is not often reflected in the media coverage of even its own member states.

How then does the externalisation of an issue specific policy area like energy, as well as the multi-level context of the EU's governance structure, contribute to (or challenge) the EU's NPE in the field of energy? This project has highlighted the value that can be derived from exploring issue specific policy areas like energy through a NPE framework. As discussed above, the nature of multi-level governance is that cooperation and coordination between the various decision-making participants is paramount, and this is argued to be necessary in the case of a shared area of competence like external energy policy. Yet, it is clear that even in the area of energy issues, a lack of coherence within the EU is impacting on how the EU is presented externally. This arguably also impacts on the degree to which the EU is able to occupy a position as a normative power in this sphere.

Two key moments may have contributed to this portrayal of the EU as a relatively weak normative force on external energy. One such moment – an internal concern – is the Eurozone crisis. The events of the crisis have forced the member states to look internally

(both within their own economies as well as the Eurozone more widely), and arguably this has weakened the degree to which there is coherence and coordination amongst the actors involved (Verdun, 2013). The second moment is a predominantly external matter: the apparent failure of the EU to secure a post-Kyoto agreement (Lehmann, 2010) can be seen to have impacted on the normative weight of Europe. While the EU continues to be presented as a 'sustainability' actor – arguably the most value-laden of the three energy 'frames' – coverage of global energy matters has declined since 2009, and the EU is not seen as a 'major' energy force even by its own member states.

As discussed earlier in this paper, we argue that it is essential to discussions of the EU's normative power that we also consider a non-Eurocentric position. From our findings, the lack of coherence within the EU must necessarily impact on the efficacy of the EU as a normative 'leader'. Other actors dominate energy coverage even when this is discussed by the member states themselves. The global energy sphere is constructed by the EU member states' press as a polyphonic space – a marketplace of often competing actors and ideas in which different positions are visible within single news texts (Gjerstad 2007, p. 61). Further, energy itself as a global issue was seldom framed with any clarity; instead it is constructed as a topic linked to other political and economic dimensions. Gjerstad (2007, p. 62) notes that 'political discourse is particularly polyphonic in nature, an assumption which is justifiable by reference to the fact that this discourse normally relates to alternative points of view, both those of the opponents as well as those belonging to an often diversified public audience'. In the case of the EU's normative agenda on global energy, this polyphonic discourse is problematic; as it results in the EU being seen by its own member states as only 'one of many'. That is, it occupies an important role in an area within the challenging and multi-issue area of energy relations, but it does not lead within this space. Other actors – especially China and the US, although India and Russia and even Brazil are also increasingly visible – have their own

positions on energy and their own normative agendas, which are different from, and often more visible than, those of the EU (Tocci, 2008). Failure to be aware of its own relatively fractured image within this international context will likely present a major challenge for the EU in any global interactions. Within its own member states, the EU occupies a strong image as an energy actor concerned with sustainability. Yet this image does not appear to be the primary concern neither of its own member states (who are separately concerned with issues of security and competitiveness), nor of its global partners (who are similarly framed from predominantly competitiveness or security of supply perspectives). For normative influence to be exerted, an actor's voice needs to be coherent, visible, comprehensible and emotionally charged, and importantly, that voice needs to be heard. The results of this analysis could suggest that in the polyphonic marketplace of global energy relations, many actors are speaking. Yet it remains unclear whether they are listening to each other. Certainly it appears that even for its own member states, the EU's normative voice on external energy policy is being drowned out.

References

- Arbeitsgruppe Erneuerbare Energien-Statistik (AGEE-Stat) (2014) Rekord: Mehr als 25 Prozent erneuerbare Energien im deutschen Strommix, <http://www.bmwi.de/DE/Themen/Energie/Energiedaten-und-analysen/arbeitsgruppe-erneuerbare-energien-statistik,did=629806.html;%2031%20October%202014>, accessed 20 November 2014.
- Benz, A. (2000) Politische Steuerung in lose gekoppelten Mehrebenensystemen. In: Werle, R. and Schimank, U. (eds) *Gesellschaftliche Komplexität und kollektive Handlungsfähigkeit*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus, pp. 99-126.

- Bersick, S., Bruter, M., Chaban, N., Iglesias, S., and Lenihan, R. (2012) *Asia in the Eyes of Europe. Images of a Rising Giant*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag.
- Björkdahl, A., Chaban, N., Leslie, J. and Masselot, N. (eds), (2015) *Importing EU norms? Conceptual framework and Empirical findings*. Springer.
- Bretherton, C., and Vogler, J. (2006), *The European Union as a Global Actor*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Chaban, N., and Holland, M. (2010) The EU in the eyes of Asia: Motivation and methodology. *Asia Europe Journal* 8(2): 127–131.
- Department of Energy and Climate Change (2012) *UK energy in brief*, Retrieved November 4, 2012, from <http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/publications/brief/brief.aspx>
- Diez, T. (2005) Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering ‘Normative Power Europe’. *Journal of International Studies* 33(3), 613-636.
- Diez, T. (2013) Normative power as hegemony. *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, 194-210.
- EURactiv (2012), Large countries oppose EU Gazprom deals scrutiny, 12/09/2012, <http://www.euractiv.com/energy/largest-eu-countries-oppose-gazp-news-514739> Accessed 03 June 2014.
- European Parliament and Council (2012) Decision 2012/994/EP and Council of 25 October 2012 on establishing an information exchange mechanism with regard to intergovernmental agreements between Member States and third countries in the field of energy, Decision 994/2012/EU.
- Gjerstad, O. (2007), The Polyphony of Politics: Finding Voices in French Political Discourse. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines* 1(2): 61-78.

- Gstöhl, S. (2009) The Social Dimension of EU Neighbourhood Policies. In: Orbie, J. and Tortell, L. (eds) *The European Union and the Social Dimension of Globalization: How the EU Influences the World*. London: Routledge, pp. 62-80.
- Hooghe, L., and Marks G., (2001) *Multilevel Governance and European Integration*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- International Energy Agency (2014) *Energy Supply Security 2014*,
http://www.iea.org/media/freepublications/security/EnergySupplySecurity2014_France.pdf
- Khasson, V., Vasilyan, S., and Vos, H. (2008) Everybody needs good neighbours: the EU and its neighbourhood. In: Orbie, J. (ed.) *Europe's Global Role: External Policies of the European Union*. London: Ashgate, pp. 217-238.
- Knodt, M., F. Müller, and N. Piefer (eds). (2015) *Challenges of European External Energy Governance with emerging powers: Meeting Tiger, Dragon, Lion and Jaguar*, Ashgate.
- Kohler-Koch, B. (1999) Evolution and Transformation, in: Kohler-Koch, B., Eising, R., (eds.) *The Transformation of Governance in the European Union*. London: Routledge, pp. 14-35.
- Larsen, H. (2014) The EU as a Normative Power and the Research on External Perceptions: The Missing Link *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52(4): 896-910
- Lehmann, J. (2010) Fallout from Copenhagen: Has the EU Lost Its Global Relevance?, *YaleGlobal Online*, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/fallout-copenhagen-has-eu-lost-its-global-relevance>, accessed 20 November 2014.
- Lucarelli, S. and Fioramonti, L. (2010) *External Perceptions of the European Union as a Global Actor*. Routledge: London.

- Manners, I. (2002) Normative Power Europe: a contradiction in terms. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(2): 235-258.
- March, J., Olsen, J. (1989) *Rediscovering Institutions. The Organizational Basis of Politics*. New York: Free Press/Macmillan.
- Marks, G. (1993) Structural Policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC, In: Cafruny, A., Rosenthal, G. (Eds.) *The State of the European Community. Vol. 2: The Maastricht Debates and Beyond*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp. 391-410.
- Marks, G. (1996) An actor-centred approach to multi-level governance. *Regional and Federal Studies* 6(2): 20–40.
- Merlingen, M. (2007) Everything Is Dangerous: A Critique of ‘Normative Power Europe’. *Security Dialogue* 38(4): 435-453.
- Petit, P. (2013) France and Germany nuclear energy policies revisited: A Veblenian appraisal. *Panoeconomicus* 60(5): 687-698.
- Piattoni, S. (2010) *The Theory of Multi-Level Governance. Conceptual, Empirical, and Normative Challenges*. Abingdon: Oxford University Press.
- Pop, V. (2014) EU commissioner clashes with Germany on energy subsidies. EUobserver, [online] 18 February, <http://euobserver.com/environment/123172>, accessed 31 October 2014.
- Réseau de Transport de l’électricité (2014) *Bilan électrique France*, http://www.rte-france.com/sites/default/files/bilan_electrique_2013_3.pdf, accessed 22 November 2014.
- Schneider, M. (2013) France’s Great Energy Debate. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 69(1).
- Sjursen, H. (2006) The EU as ‘normative’ power: how can this be? *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(2): 235-251.

Tocci, N. (2008) *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor?* Brussels: Centre for European Studies.

Verdun, A. (2013) Small States and the Global Economic Crisis: An Assessment. *European Political Science* 12(1): 276-293.

Whitman, Richard G. (2013) The neo-normative turn in theorising the EU's international presence. *Cooperation and Conflict* 48(2): 171-193.

¹ Oil, gas, coal, fossil, nuclear, biofuel, solar, wind, hydro, tidal, renewable, thermal, biomass.