

What is the nature of the EU? Views from the neighbourhood

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First Draft

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Introduction

While much of the analyses regarding the EU's identity as an international actor focus primarily on the inner dynamism of its institutions and/or shared European ideational background, I would like to explore the EU's identity in terms of the expectations of others. I start from the assumption that identity is relational in its nature. Even though I do not deny the merits of analyzing the EU's identity as the self-perception and self-definition of Europeans, as reflected in basic documents or speeches of European politicians; I would like to draw attention to the fact that, "the producer of the identity is not in control of what it ultimately means to others; the intersubjective structure is the final arbiter of meaning." (Hopf, 1998: 175). The presented paper explores the interpretation of "the nature of the EU" in the eyes (and minds) of others, particularly the EU neighbour states and the past, recent, and potential candidate countries. It also explores how the changing nature (identity) of the EU, as an actor, affects the rationale of third party countries' foreign policies towards the EU. The paper is part of a wider PhD project that explores how the interplay between neighbouring countries' interpretation of the nature of the EU (i.e., the role attributed to the EU) and the neighbouring countries' understanding of the nature of the international system (and their own role within the system) affects their policy towards the EU, including enlargement policy.

This paper does not present the result of full-fledged empirical inquiry. It is rather a collection of reflections on the importance of perceptions of others for the study of EU's identity. In particular, it argues that the students of European identity should pay more attention to the way Europe is represented from outside – by the EU neighbours or, more generally, by the actors interacting with the European Union.

I start from the observation that expectations and perceptions of non-members of the EU are usually neglected in the study of EU's identity and its international role. In particular, I focus on the literature about the (discursive) construction of Europe and about the conceptualisation and categorization of EU's international role and identity. The paper then proceeds with brief illustration of how Turkey and Russia understand the nature of the EU (i.e. its international role). I would like to present some preliminary theses regarding the way European Union is being represented by these two neighbours, what kind of role they assign to the EU. After introducing these two representations of the EU, I return to the question how they may affect the self-understanding of the EU – the European debate about EU's international role.

Theoretical background

In the recent years, many scholars inspired by constructivism explored the way European identity¹ is being constructed, and engaged in the search for European identity. If we look at the constructivist research program on the construction of new European polity and its identity, it is usually focused on the **construction of the EU** by the direct participants in European integration project (EC/EU member states). Of course, constructivist research on the constitution of new polity in Europe does take social and interactional dimension into account. Nevertheless, the society, among whose members these constitutive interactions occur, has been usually implicitly reduced to the participants in the project of European integration. The constructivist research program has been defined as “the systematic study of European integration as polity formation” (Christiansen et al., 1999: 539). In the similar vein, Checkel acknowledges a powerful role of interactions and communications and sets the following task for constructivists: “to broaden our understanding of how and under what conditions new European institutions – norms – are constructed through processes of non-strategic exchange.” (Checkel, 1999: 551) Again, the range of communication and exchange is limited to interactions between European states, usually in the form of joint participation in the decision-making process.

Certain tendency towards “eurocentric” perspective on the social construction of the EU can be also traced among post-modern constructivist inspired by the linguistic turn in IR. While contributions on the theme **discursive construction of Europe** abound, they rarely incorporate the expectations towards and interpretations of European Union by non-member countries. The analyses of discourse focus either on “European” discourses (Europe as a single arena where various discourses – representations of integration process compete) or on national (i.e. member states’) discourses on Europe (Jachtenfuchs et al., 1998) where the prominence is given to national discursive spaces (for the overview see Wæver, 2004). But if we accept the argument that “attempts to capture the EU’s nature both in the political and the academic debate themselves take part in the construction of the Euro-polity” (Diez, 1999: 598), than we should not in principle limit ourselves to the study of European discursive space or EU member states’ discursive spaces. The rapid evolution of EU’s external dimensions and its visibility on the global stage multiply the interactions vis-à-vis outer world and broaden the discursive space in which the meaning of Europe is being constituted. Thus

¹ In this paper, I use the terms „European identity“ and „EU’s identity“ interchangeably.

we may argue that Russia's interpretation of the nature of the EU and Russia's actions driven by this interpretation are part of the process of EU's-meaning-making.

The third type of analyses where the expectations of others are sometimes omitted are more conventional analyses of the **identity of the EU as an international actor**. Many of them claim inspiration by social constructivism (Manners and Whitman, 2003: 381-3, 94; Schimmelfennig, 2002: 599), but still they try to capture (at least momentarily) fixed nature of the EU, in contrast to post-modern constructivists. The nature of the EU has been captured with the help of several influential concepts: among others as normative power (Manners, 2002; for a more sceptical account see Manners, 2006), civilian power (White, 2001), representative of liberal community of states (Schimmelfennig, 2002) (for other conceptualizations of what the name 'EU' means see Diez, 1999: 598). Importantly, these studies (for example Manners, 2006; Schimmelfennig, 2003) usually understand the international role and identity of the EU in terms of self-perception and self-definition by European elites. These contributions build on the assumption that European identity is discernable by careful analysis of EU's founding treaties, official documents of the EU, emerging EU's foreign policy practices and/or intra-European political discourse about the role of the EU.

Within the role theory one can identify two extreme positions about the source of roles. The first one postulates that roles are agency based, the second one sees roles as structurally based. Researchers leaning towards the first end of the continuum tend to stress the subjective self-perceptions of decision-makers, the way they perceive and define the entity they represent. On the other side we can find, among others, realist point of view: the sources of roles are predominantly systemic and based on material factors (Aggestam, 2006). The aforementioned conceptualisations of EU's identity in terms of liberal community civilian power or normative power fall within the first category, they usually omit the importance of systemic source of roles and neglect the expectations of other members of international system.

In between the two extreme positions one can find "structuralist" conceptualisations of EU's role and identity, inspired by symbolic interactionism (Aggestam, 2006). This kind of literature acknowledges that the producer of the identity is not in control of what it ultimately means to others; the intersubjective structure is the final arbiter of meaning." (Hopf, 1998: 175). Thus, self-conception is just one side of the coin, while the other side can be captured by the term "norms", understood in a sociologically standard way as "...collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity." (Jepperson et al., 1996) Role, which is closely intertwined with identity, is "...determined by both an actor's own

conceptions about appropriate behaviour and by the expectations, or role prescriptions, of other actors.” (Elgström and Smith, 2006) By social role (or identity) I understand structural position of an actor which is not reducible to unit-level property, subjective “self-perception”. Identities are always relationally defined within a social structure. Nevertheless, “in order for actors to enact and reproduce subject positions they have to incorporate them into their identities and interests.” (Wendt, 1999: 258) This role identity exists only in relation to others and is sustained through the expectations of behaviour shared by other actors of wider (global) community. The normative structure (prescriptions defining normal, appropriate and rational behaviour) is continually being sustained through the ongoing process of interactions and communications, driven by interconnected and interdependent web of actors’ self-images and others’ role expectations.

I argue in favour of the conceptualisation of the EU’s identity, which acknowledges the following: 1) There is not a single EU’s identity. To paraphrase Foucault, the EU does not turn towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher. I do not deny that in practice some depictions of the EU are more “valuable” than others. But the meaning of the EU is settled through discursive practices, there is no extra-discursive objective reality against which we can evaluate academic attempts to categorize the EU. “They are attempts to fix the meaning of European governance [and EU’s actorness], so that we know what the latter ‘is’, but they are not just ‘objective’ analyses of a pre-given political system.” (Diez, 1999: 610) 2) The EU (European elites, national elites, or the population itself) is not a master of its own identity. The European Union is not being constructed just through the process of interaction and exchange between the “direct” participants in the process of European integration (those who formally participate in EU’s decision-making process). Expectations of others matter in the construction of social identity of the EU as an international actor. I will try to illustrate, that they also affect the discourse in which the self-understanding of the EU is being settled.

This paper is firmly embedded in constructivist understanding of identity. Thus, we treat identity as a construction of selfhood. In line with the basic tenets of symbolic interactionism, constructivists argue that identity is being formed through the process of social interaction, arguing that identity is neither an objective property (stemming from objective, material characteristics), nor subjective (deliberately chosen by the actor or the result of internal, psychological processes). On the contrary, constructivism understands identity in intersubjective terms, as a product of social interactions. Why are the expectations of others so important? From the point of view of symbolic interactionism, the answer is quite

straightforward: Collective meaning forms identities. “Actors acquire identities—relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self—by participating in such collective meanings. Identities are inherently relational: Identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world.” (Wendt, 1992: 397-8)

The argument has two possible ramifications in terms of research agenda. Firstly, the focus on the neighbouring countries expectations with regard the nature of the EU (“What does the EU represent?”) tries to contribute to our understanding of their policies towards the EU. Secondly, in the next step, the exploration of these expectations leads to the issue of the possible EU’s socialisation into these expectations of others, into non-European norms, i.e. “collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity,” (Jepperson et al., 1996) through the iterative process of EU’s responses to expectations-driven behaviour of others.

Turkey

What is the role assigned to the EU by Turkey? What does it represent? The literature on EU – Turkey relations and on the Turkish identity suggests that the EU is perceived as a club of modern countries. The modernisation discourse plays a crucial role both in Turkey’s self-perception and the interpretation of others – notably the European Union. As observed by Öniş, “full membership in the EU has been considered a natural and inevitable step, culminating the process of Westernization and modernisation” (1999: 107; see also Glyptis, 2005).

Turkey and the international system

This interpretation of current European Union has, of course, deeper sources dating back to Ottoman Empire’s engagement in European power system and to the emergence of Turkish Republic and the understanding of these two in Turkish history. In line with the principles of symbolic interactionism, one can not resolve the question of identity without the reference to the past interactions between the self and wider environment. At first, let us shortly assess Ottoman role in the European power system, which can also shed light on the interpretation of this system by the Turks.

Generally speaking, Ottoman interpretation of the European power system gradually shifted from disdain to admiration. As Kubicek (2004: 47) noted, even though the Sublime Porte

played an important role in European state system and involved in European affairs (coalition-building, warring, diplomacy and trade), for a long time it perceived Europe as an inferior and corrupted civilisation, as the “other” (indefel) (Göl, 2003b: 5-8). It was only during 1800s when the weakening of the Ottoman Empire vis-à-vis modern, industrialising Europe led to appreciation of European ideas. From that time onwards, various reforms were conducted in the name of modernisation. It can be said these reforms were conducted for the sake of securing Ottoman Empire’s (and later on Turkey’s) position among civilised nation. Ottoman Empire and later on Turkey gradually subsumed to the tacit rules of conduct governing European balance of power. On one hand, this race for power in classical realists’ terms not only entailed struggle for material resources, but also struggle for social resources: recognition as sovereign, modern and civilised nation. Gradually, modernity, civilisation and progress as understood by 19th century positivists was not only a mean but rather an end in itself. The key driving force of international system is the struggle for progress, understood in positivist terms “as a relentless, linear march into the future, which one could join in or be bypassed” (Glyptis, 2005: 403). The idea of “reaching the contemporary level of civilisation” was inseparable from the understanding of power and greatness. On the other hand, the 19th century European international society was a society of competing rivals² and therefore the acceptance of the rules of the game and the strive for recognition by no mean entailed amity towards European powers. Rather the consecutive implementation of military reforms, modernisation and nationalism (Göl, 2003a: 23) is an example of imitating more successful rivals and defeaters. “[A]lthough the Turkish modernising elite accepted Westernisation as a totality, they [...] developed the nationalistic ideology against the expansionist policies of European powers.” (Göl, 2003a: 27-9; see also Aydın and Keyman, 2004: 3).

EU as a representative of international society of the most advanced powers

Following Hedley Bull’s differentiation between international system and international society, Göl argues that Ottoman Empire never became a member of European international society (it strived for this status following its decline in 19th century), despite being a part of European international system (Göl, 2003a: 4-5, 2003b). Modern Turkey inherited the late Ottoman Empire’s interpretation of European international society (as a community of rival powers) and also the drive for recognition as a great Western power. It can be said that the movements of the Young Ottomans and Young Turks that led to the establishment of modern

² One can use Wendtian terminology (Wendt, 1999) to describe it as a society governed by Lockean culture of anarchy rather than by Hobbsian or Kantian culture of anarchy.

Turkey were attempts to solve this inherited identity crisis. By entering the EU Turkey hopes to accomplish the task laid down by Ottoman Empire and become an equal member of European international society (of modern and civilised powers) (Göl, 2003b: 3-8).

Kemalism shows strong belief in progress and in the project of modernity (Glyptis, 2005). In line with Enlightenment's progressivism, civilisation is understood not as an intrinsic quality and value of a particular culture (civilisation in Huntingtonian terms), but as a universal value (modernity) that can be invoked to evaluate between different cultures. In this sense, modernity and civilisation are not intrinsic qualities of the European international society embodied in today's EU. Thus, it would be more appropriate to speak about the EU as the club of for the time being most modern countries. Club of the most advanced countries, advanced on the way to modernity, progress and civilisation which was triggered by Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, many Turks deride today's EU as "Christian club" (Kubicek, 2004: 49; Göl, 2003b: 11). Such a depiction is not limited to popular masses, but even elites and academicians seem to perceive the EU this way or at least warn against EU's evolution in this direction.³ The notion that the EU is a cultural project has been strengthened by the interpretation of the "puzzle of eastern enlargement" (Schimmelfennig, 1999). Öniş agrees that the puzzling decision of the EU to expand eastward does not conform to cost-benefit calculation. But unlike Schimmelfennig, he argues that this puzzle can only be explicable with the reference to the cultural factors. Furthermore, Öniş uses the differential treatment of the CEE candidates and Turkey (mix of "sticks and carrots", the pace of approachment...) as an evidence confirming the "cultural (Christian) club" hypothesis (Öniş, 1999: 113; for Schimmelfennig's refusal of cultural explanation see 2003: 112-51; 2002). Schimmelfennig's liberal community hypothesis, which considers adherence to liberal values and norms (first of all democracy and multilateralism) the key factor explaining the outcome of accession negotiations, is challenged both by scholars studying Turkish case (Öniş, 1999) and Turkish public discourse.

How can one reconcile the images "EU as Christian club" (cultural discourse) and "EU as a community of most civilised countries" (modernity discourse)? The answer has already been outlined. Even though Europe can be seen as a pioneer of modernisation, modernity and civilisation are not particular, intrinsic qualities of Europe (Glyptis, 2005: 407). In contrast to cultural relativists, many core values of the Western modernity are understood as universal:

³ Even by warning against this kind of EU's identity, they reveal their expectations that the EU in principle may assume this undesirable identity.

rationalism, peace, prosperity, technological and civilisation progress. These are treated as universal standards allowing us to measure the advancement of individual countries (or their communities or even “the cultures/civilisations” in Huntingtonian terms) on the linear path to one Civilisation. Traditionally, since the decline of Ottoman Empire, European international society (and today the EU) is perceived as the club of *the most* advanced countries.

We may argue that this “cultural” discourse about the nature of the EU starts to question the modernity of Europe, but not the Turkey’s belief in modernity itself, expressed in the idea of progress towards Civilisation. Thus the derogative label “Christian club” does not signify Turkey’s retreat to cultural relativism, but (in line with Turkey’s progressivist time- and world-view) it foretells Europe’s deflection from the path to progress and modernity, its return back to pre-modern, religious Middle Ages.

To sum up, the EU is understood as an international society of the most advanced countries (the most civilised powers). In line with Turkey’s modernist and progressivist time- and world-view, Turkey wants to join in the progress and become part of the more advanced and civilised Western world. The status of “being advanced and civilised” can not be reduced to material qualities (prosperity, wellbeing, technical development), it has significant social dimension: recognition by other advanced and civilised countries. The membership in the EU – one of the most important clubs of the most advanced and civilised countries in the world – should provide this status (Glyptis, 2005).

Russia’s interpretation of the nature of the EU

Russia and the international system

While Turkey’s understanding of the EU is predominantly based in progressivist, modernising discourse, Russia’s representation draws heavily on realist discourse. So what is the role assigned to the European union? What is the “nature” of the EU in the eyes of Russia? Similarly to Turkey, I suppose that Russia’s interpretation of the EU has been formed by its past experience. The meaning assigned to “others” and their actions in past Russia’s encounters with the outside world can not be omitted.

The great (world) power status is a unifying factor in Russian foreign policy (Smith, 2005: 47). Struggle for great power status is the core principle of Russia’s elite and popular mentality and represent the most important self-image with regard to Russia’s role in the international system. The struggle for power is the main organising principle of world politics and Russia is denoted as an actor whose world-vision has been largely influenced by realist

school in international relations. To some extent the Russia's interpretation of the international system resembles that of Turkey. Especially during Primakov era, Russia's understanding of international system drew heavily on the classic model of balance of power of 17th – 18th century and 19th century's concert of powers (Fedorov, 2005; Smith, 2005). As Kratochvíl (forthcoming 2008) notes, Russia considers the reliance on military power as the key norm of contemporary international system.

In contrast to Turkey, Russia's discourse about international system and its organising principles lacks the modernising and progressivist flavour. Power status is not intrinsically linked to advancement on the linear march (progress) towards *the* Civilisation and modernity (this linearity also entails single standards of civilisation). Russia is not comfortable with the idea that there is one civilisation, one path to progress and power status. Modernisation and advancement do matter for Russia, but she is more inclined to sacrifice them for the sake of preserving its cultural heritage (Eurasian identity), she is more sceptical towards current "progress" in some areas (neoliberalism, good governance etc). Unlike Turkey, Russia is not willing to imitate all of the innovations of "advanced world" (for example pluralist democracy), because it does not regard them as necessary intermediate steps on some single path towards progress and power.

Rather than march (or race), power struggle is understood as a game. The basic rule of this game is the anxiety about relative power and relative gains. Therefore, the primary concern of Russian foreign policy is the polarity of the system. Following Waltzian argument (Waltz, 1979), unipolarity is regarded as the least stable and least desirable power setting (see also Kratochvíl, forthcoming 2008). The highest normative imperative of Russian foreign policy is the restoration of the balance of power. In practice this goal is being translated into the quest for multipolarity (Smith, 2005) and challenge towards current unipolar setting. Couched in universal terms (stability associated with multipolarity is beneficial for the world as such), restoration of the balance legitimises Russia's quest for power status.

As in the case of Turkey, Russia's desire for greatness and power status can not be saturated by simple accumulation of material (military) capabilities. The "social benefit" in the form of others' recognition of Russia's power status represents an important variable in its "utility function". Recognition is an integral part of Russia's pursuit of world power status. As noted by Neumann (2005: 23-6), the main theme running through Russian history is the recognition by other (European) powers. Even though the status of power has been historically ascribed by the European powers, today it is important to ask the question who's tacit or implicit recognition Russia seeks in its pursuit of world power status.

European union as a (super)power in the making

Russia's understanding of the European Union went through evolution. On one hand, for most of the history of European integration including the post-cold war evolution in the 90s, Russia perceived the EC/EU as a purely intergovernmental instrument in the hands of European powers, as an economic appendix of NATO. Consequently, the EU as such has been largely ignored and Russia preferred bilateral ties with European powers: Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain. In this regard, many observers of Russia-EU relations point out that Russia failed to understand the "nature" of the European integration and the development towards political union. It failed to recognise the emergence of supranational structures as an (at least partially) independent source of power.

But in these days, the EU is more often understood as a (super)power in the making, unitary actor, even comparable to Russia herself. This representation has been expressed in the idea that Europe is one of the poles (of power) in contemporary anarchical world. Both of these images are meaningful within realist world-view, in the same manner as "Christian club" and "club of most advanced powers" both fit into Turkey's modernist world-view. In the first (intergovernmental) image, the discontent leading to lack of coordination among EU members can be interpreted as natural result of anarchy in international system which hinders cooperation (Hyde-Price, 2006). In the second image, the very same situation can be interpreted as internal crisis of a sovereign in the making which hinders decision-making process.⁴

Many Russian observers and practitioners seem to interpret the EU as a political actor (superpower) in the making. The role assigned to the European Union has shifted from playground (chessboard) into player. The language being used to depict the European union suggests that the role assigned to it by Russian side does not essentially differ from the role of emerging (super)power. EU is not being portrayed as an instrument of European powers, which occasionally utilise the framework of CFSP to formulate an ad hoc *joint strategy*. On the contrary, the analysed academic discourse suggests that the EU itself is vested with *interests*. The interests of the EU are understood in traditional, territorial terms and they may potentially clash with Russia's. Especially, Russia fears that EU's activities in Russia's "near abroad" may diminish its own position in the region. The logic employed here is kind of

⁴ Of course, this does not imply that Russia strengthens ties with Brussels at the expense of bilateral relations with national capitals. In fact, driven by the interpretation of the EU as emerging superpower, Russia may adopt a strategy of prioritising bilateral ties for the sake of weakening the EU as an actor. Once Russia interprets the EU as an emerging superpower, the strategy of bilateral relations with the national capitals gains new rationale.

“zero-sum” game. If we accept Russia’s understanding of the international system, than who else than another superpower can push Russia out of certain region? EU’s influence is understood as a counterforce to Russia’s own influence. We may argue that this influence is essentially similar to Russia’s own influence: Russia fears that by engaging in the wider neighbourhood (for the sake of creating a secure environment around its borders), the EU builds its own sphere of influence just as any other territorial entity or (super)power.

Nevertheless, as Anderman et al. show, there are also moments when Russia appreciates EU’s external dimension (ESDP). “Russia recognises the EU’s ambition to be a global security actor and sees it as a pole that can compensate for US and NATO authority globally as well. The EU is perceived as an ally in certain international issues.” (Anderman et al., 2007: 47) Thus, in line with realist premises, EU as an (emerging) superpower is an actor one can ally with (for the sake of balancing against third party) or balance against. Certainly, the EU is not conceptualised as international organisation. According to conventional understanding of the role of the international organisations, sovereign states (like Russia) do not ally with international organisations (like NATO, OECD, G8), but within international organisations.

That Russia no longer perceives the EU as an international organisation but rather as a (super)power in the making is evident from the way Russia seeks recognition as a superpower. Who’s recognition Russia seeks? And how? No doubt, the United States occupies the primary position. Russian politicians and academia are pleased with any sign that the US treats Russia on equal footing.⁵ But Russia also seeks recognition in relation to the EU utilising similar instruments: by consistent demands for equality and parity. Russia strives for “equal status with the most powerful members of the international community [...and] the European Union does not constitute an exception to this rule” (Anderman et al., 2007: 31). We may argue that Russia seeks equality with the EU itself rather than with its individual members.

Secondly, Russia pursues its power status through “strategic partnership” with the EU, just as it does with other superpowers. Russia (being unhappy with the status assigned to it by the neighbourhood policy) seeks strategic partnership with the EU which de facto recognises the EU as an equal partner, as an entity essentially similar to Russia (i.e. single pole of power). By searching its own power status (through strategic partnership with the EU), Russia ascribes power status also to the EU. Russia’s “status seeking strategy” in relation to the EU is completely different from the “status seeking strategy” of Turkey. Since Turkey perceives the

⁵ For a narrative of how the mighty USA together with its privileged partner (Russia) co-manage the world see Karaganov (2005: 30-1).

EU as a club of powers (essentially similar to NATO, OECD etc.), it logically maximises its status by seeking *membership in* this club. On the other side, Russia tends to perceive the EU as a (super)power and the most appropriate “status seeking strategy” is not a *membership in a* (super)power, but a *strategic partnership with* the EU. For Russia, membership remains a reasonable “status seeking strategy” in relation to international institutions (clubs of powers like G8, WTO), but not in relation to the EU.

Expectations of others and EU’s self-understanding

In this part, I would like to illustrate how the expectations of others towards the EU and their understanding of the nature of the EU may affect the way Europe understands itself. Russian and to some extent also Turkish actions, informed by their respective understandings of the EU’s role in contemporary world, shape the environment in which the EU’s identity and interests are being formulated. It is not the task of this paper to analyse European reaction to Russian foreign policy towards the EU and to give the full picture of European social identity formation through interaction with its neighbours. But one can easily see how Russia’s foreign policy has been mirrored by calls for enhanced cohesiveness of its external policies in the name of intra-EU solidarity (for the depiction of one of these lessons to be drawn from Russia's FP see Schmidt-Felzmann, 2005). No doubt, Russia’s actions shape the discursive space in which the European identity is being formulated. This does not mean that Russia’s actions have some direct causal effect on EU’s identity. Russia’s actions are interpreted with the help of conceptual tools pre-existing on European side. As a result, certain themes already circulating in European discursive space gain salience: for example the recurring themes of “EU’s political dwarfishness” and “lack of intra-EU solidarity”. European Union’s identity (as self-understanding) is approaching the traditional form of bounded sovereign entity or even political (super)power.

Also Turkey’s foreign policy, informed by slightly different understanding of the EU, has an impact on the debate about EU’s identity. On the basic level, the very fact that Turkey bids for EU membership pushed EU’s internal debate about its self-definition in a certain direction, it highlighted certain dilemmas (and not others): notably what is the role of Christianity in the definition of the EU. Again, one can not say that Turkey’s understanding and expectations vis-à-vis the European Union are directly mirrored on the European side. Turkey’s foreign policy actions, including its rhetorical actions, are not necessarily interpreted by Europeans in the same way as Turkey itself understands them. As already mentioned, Turkey’s policy is driven by the understanding of the EU as a community of the most advanced (civilised)

powers. In the eyes of Turkish politicians and academia, EU's "identity dilemma" with respect to Turkey's accession may look like this: Does the EU honour its progressivist and modernist (=secular) identity or deteriorate into Christian club? Will it continue with the "medieval" identity policy based on religious "othering" vis-à-vis Islam? Using Schimmelfennig's terminology, one can say that Turkey performs rhetorical action (see for example Erdoğan, 2004). It is based on the dichotomy between modernity, secularism, progressivism on one side and religiosity and backwardness (Middle Ages) on the other. However, this rhetorical action does not yield success in convincing Europeans that excluding Turkey on religious grounds means undesirable regress to Middle Ages. Regardless of the successfulness of Turkey's rhetorical action (in the eyes of Turkey), its policies influenced the discussions about EU's identity.

The interpretation of the EU's role by Central and Eastern European countries was not analysed in this paper. But it can be argued that they also contributed to the (discursive) construction of European identity. To give an example, in the 1990s, CEE countries successfully pushed the EU towards enlargement by utilising "rhetorical action" (Schimmelfennig, 2003). Nevertheless, they not merely utilised certain pre-existing European identity, but actually co-shaped it simply by posing "the dilemma of European identity" one way⁶ and not another. As noted by Fierke and Wiener, CEE countries sought recognition through EU membership. But on the other hand, western identity was also dependent on recognition from the CEE countries (Fierke and Wiener, 1999: 731). Thus, the CEE countries' rhetorical action helped stabilise EU's identity.

Concluding remarks

Both Russia's and Turkey's interpretations of international system and the nature of European Union are to some extent inspired by classical European balance of power system. Nevertheless, these two neighbours differ not only in the understanding of the international system, but also in the meaning ascribed to the EU as an actor of international system.

My main argument was that constructivist analyses of the (discursive) construction of the EU and its international identity can not omit expectations and interpretations of other, non-European players. The theoretical arguments stress that identities are relational in their nature and the analysis of self-perception of the EU itself and its member states is insufficient for the understanding of the role played by the EU in the international system. If we move towards

⁶ "Is the EU a club of economically advanced but irresponsible countries or an inclusive community of democratic states?"

post-modern position and analyse the *discursive* construction of the EU, then we can not bypass the question how the EU is being constructed in the national discourses of third countries or within global discursive space.

The empirical part only illustrated how Russia and Turkey (their elite) diverge in their understanding of the nature of the European Union. It is largely based on secondary literature, genuine analysis (for example discourse analysis) of their interpretations still needs to be done.

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