Faculty of Law

Department of Public Law and Historical-Juridical Sciences

PhD Programme in Politics, Policies and International Relations

The (mis-) recognition of the identity of the European Union as an international actor: the discourse-historical analysis of the Russian political narrative

Doctoral thesis presented by

Irina Khayrizamanova Khayrizamanova

Thesis supervisors:

Dr. Michał Natorski   Prof. Esther Barbé Izuel

September, 2016

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ABSTRACT

The principle object of this thesis is the analysis of the EU and Russian discursive construction of four EU foreign policy roles. The main empirical question of the study is: How can the interplay of the EU-Russian perceptions contribute to the explanation of the strained EU-Russian relations at the ideational level and how did these dynamics contribute to the climax of the conflict as presented by the Ukrainian events? In order to answer this question this thesis proceeds with the analysis of how the European Union constructs itself as a foreign policy actor, how these self-representations reverberate in the Russian counter-discourse and what repercussions these mirror images have on the interactions between both actors at the ideational level and foreign policy outcomes.

These empirical steps are based on the analytical and theoretical framework which is closely linked with the core assumptions of the constructivist and poststructuralist research agenda, namely the constitutive force of political utterances and the view that identity is the result of the interaction between Self and Other. The analytical framework accepts the all-embracing understanding of identity as 'a feeling of Selfhood' that consists of the following criteria: autonomy, unity, capability and ideational representations that are subject to external judgment.

The empirical part of the thesis revealed that Russian counter-discourse exhibited a wide gamut of discursive reactions that go beyond the conventional recognition/misrecognition dichotomy. However, Russia manifested a conspicuous tendency towards challenging and contesting the EU's self-ingratiating images as an established actor characterized by distinctive identity. These misrecognition patterns prevalent in Russian political narrative created conflictual predilections intensified by the EU's reciprocal resistance to these mirror images, which in turn cast into doubt Russia's status as a 'Significant Other' and 'strategic partner'. Therefore, in their 'struggle for recognition of the status' both actors found themselves caught in the vicious and self-reinforcing cycle of mutual mis- and non-recognition. The difficulty to avoid it originates from its framing in the terms of hierarchy and securitization leading to extraordinary measures like the Russian involvement in crisis in Ukraine.

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Association Agreement
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COHOM	EU Council Working Party on Human Rights
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
DROI	Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Human Rights
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EaPIC	Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation Programme
EC	European Communities
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EIDHR	European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy

ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EP	European Parliament
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUAM	EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
EUSR	EU Special Representative for Human Rights
HRD	Human Rights and Democracy
IR	International Relations
Mercosur	Southern Common Market
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIS	Newly Independent States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PDT	Poststructuralist Discourse Theory
SADS	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The PhD experience has been a difficult one for me and I would never have been able to bring this project to an end without my family who became my fundamental source of love, support and motivation. I am particularly grateful to my parents and sister who laid the foundation for my academic trajectory and were always supportive of my aspirations. Similarly, this thesis has been finished in great part due to the support and encouragement of my Spanish family; in particular, I am greatly indebted to the generosity and dedication of Juan and Ana whose role in this academic enterprise is impossible to overestimate. I also wish to thank Irene for technical advice provided at the final stage of the elaboration of this thesis that saved me hours of work. I want to express my immense gratitude and love to my son, Raül, who was born during this academic undertaking and was kind enough to share my time with the PhD thesis and to my daughter, whose arrival into this world is expected any day as I write these lines.

Last, but by no means least, I am forever indebted to my husband Toni, my soul mate and companion through the years, whose enduring love, generosity and confidence in me have been second to none. Without his emotional and financial support, boundless encouragement and sacrifice I would never have been able to commence and complete this thesis.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The question of the European Union being an actor possessing a distinctive identity has been the object of unceasing academic attention for decades. Although actorness of the European Union in terms of its political clout has been widely challenged, there seems to be an academic consensus that it has succeeded in becoming an uncontested actor in the economic dimension, as well as has made palpable progress in establishing its presence in such issues as promotion of regional integration, democracy and human rights, climate change, humanitarian aid and conflict resolution.

The EU itself endorses its self-representation as an international power that is not only able to project its influence on international affairs but also has a moral obligation to take on responsibilities towards other countries in spreading a better world order based on norms and values. As the European Security Strategy puts it: "the European Union is inevitably a global actor" that "should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world" (European Council, 2003: 1). The Treaty of Lisbon reaffirms the EU's responsibility for building "an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation" (European Union, 2007). This role of the EU as an important regional and global actor characterized by a distinctive active international identity which builds on "the values enshrined in the Treaties" and "many strengths and historic achievements" as well as guided by the logic of responsibility in the promotion of "the rules-based order" is reiterated in the new European Union Global Strategy (European Union, 2016: 7-8).

These self-referential representations of the EU as a novel and a qualitatively 'new' type of actor that abound in the official rhetoric have generated prolific academic debates on the EU's international actorness and identity. However, the scholarly inquiry focusing on

these aspects has tended to be EU-centered and there have been disturbingly few attempts to juxtapose the images that the EU has shaped of itself within the Union with perceptions of the external actors (Lucarelli, 2007a and 2007 b). The insufficient academic coverage of this topic is surprising taking into account the apparent and potential repercussions of external perceptions on European self-awareness and their value in practical terms for the EU that is in the process of consolidating itself as a fully-fledged international actor.

This thesis endeavours to contribute to the scholarly debate by introducing into the analysis perceptions of the EU that prevail in Russian political discourse, therefore, trying to breach the above-mentioned gaps in the literature on the European actorness and identity. Russian perspective could not only function as an empirical test to the copious research on EU identity and actorness but shed light on the conflictual predilections that plague its relations with the European Union. To achieve this aim this thesis intends to develop a theoretical and analytical framework for the study of the discursive 'encounter'[1] between the EU's self-portrayals and its external images and to set forth its methodological application in a number of case studies of EU-Russian interactions.

This introductory chapter provides a brief overview of two strands of scholarly literature: the recent field of enquiry devoted to the EU and its external perceptions and the extensive corpus of literature on EU-Russian relations to conceptualize the academic contribution of the thesis. Afterwards, the introduction recaps case-specific scholarly debates to explain why each case study was chosen and sets forth the research design that guides the investigation.

2. The role of external images for the EU actorness and identity: state-of-the-art

While researches on the EU's actorness, roles and identity have been growing apace, little attention has been paid to external images of the European Union, despite the fact that such knowledge is of utmost importance for an actor 'under construction'. Marsh and Mackenstein (2005) contend that the EU is an evolving entity that is bereft of the traditional advantages of states and, consequently, is more vulnerable to vagaries of perceptions and misperceptions. For the EU, whose actorness is often questioned, the

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[1] The concept of the 'discursive encounter' is borrowed from Hansen (2006).

term 'presence' that is partially defined by external perceptions and expectations (Allen and Smith, 1990) acquires greater ontological significance as, according to (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006), the outsiders' perceptions and actions constitute an important component of the intersubjective structure that enables or constrains the EU's action, thereby helping to shape the EU's policies. Manners and Whitman (2003: 382) summarize the EU's greater dependency on outsiders' recognition by defining the European identity as clearly "intersubjective" which implies that "its visibility to other actors is a part of co-constituting itself".

The first reason to study external perceptions is that knowledge, generated by empirically-driven research, is undoubtedly useful for an actor in the making. External images contribute to the way in which Europeans see themselves as a political group and perceptions of the others are one of the three components[2] of the EU's development as a fully-fledged actor, as they undertake the role of "the second mirror" (Lucarelli, 2007a and 2007b; Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2009). In fact, external perceptions function as one of the variables that contribute to the definition of the EU's identity and roles that are created through the interaction between "own role conceptions and structurally based expectations, often chiselled out in processes of negotiations" (Chaban, Elgström and Holland, 2006: 247). So the roles and consequently identity are shaped not only by self-understandings but are partially dependent on the expectations of the EU's various 'audiences'.

The outsiders' perspective could function as a crucial binary test to the European international identity by highlighting first if the EU is seen as having achieved an autonomous existence based on its own identity that is more than the sum of identities of its member states and, second, if this identity is deemed as distinctive. In this manner, analysis focused on external perceptions can rectify the problem of the "sterility" of the "normative", "civilian", "ethical", "soft"[3] power debate (Lucarelli, 2007b). Following the argument of the insufficiency of self-reflexive focus of the 'distinctiveness thesis' Sjursen (2006: 171) points out that the "normative/civilian power" concept seems to take for

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[2] Lucarelli (2009: 4) speaks about three constitutive elements of the EU's development as a fully-fledged actor: "the gradual definition of a process of self-identification by the Europeans with the EU as their political referent (political identity), the EU's actual political performance at "home" and abroad, and the Others' views of the EU as a political actor".

[3] The very nature of soft power makes it utterly dependent on the acceptation or rejection of this constructed identity by the target state (Feklyunina, 2015).

granted the belief that "the EU is doing good". In this manner, the perceptions of the target actors can serve as an empirical test for the validity of these claims.

All international actors face incoherencies between self-images and their actual external perceptions around the world. However, in the case of the EU the problem is even more acute given its peculiar, work-in-progress nature and high-flown rhetoric that constructs itself as a qualitatively different actor; thereby bringing to the fore the question of the EU's ability to effectively communicate its distinctiveness to the external world and of its receptiveness to other actors' reactions. In this way the European Union does not only expose its identity to (mis-)recognition of external audiences, but, according to Hill (1993), also gets a chance to avoid the pitfalls of the famous capability-expectation gap when other actors expect too much from the EU. Chaban and Holland (2008: 4) argue that an opposite situation when the world has low expectations about the EU despite its growing abilities can also exert a negative impact on the European Union. In turn, positive perceptions and high-expectations of other actors influence positively the EU's self-perceptions as they satisfy its aspiration for recognition and indicate that it is seen by its counterparts as a consolidated and distinctive actor worth cooperating with.

Thus, research based on external representations is tightly linked to the literature on status, identity recognition, honour and prestige (Forsberg, 2014; Ringmar, 2002 and 2014; Wood, 2013; Taylor, 1994; Tsygankov, 2012) which include perceptions as an essential component of the analysis. The high status awarded to the EU possesses a binary function. Apart from positively influencing the actor's self-esteem, it enhances its standing in international negotiations and endows greater legitimacy to its interests (Forsberg, 2014) thereby making it easier for the EU to 'get what it wants'.

This angle brings us to the second reason to incorporate external perceptions which hinges on the pragmatic potential of such a perspective as it can provide valuable hints on the EU's foreign policy formulation and implementation. The external perspective does not only help "a better conceptualization of the EU as an international actor" but contributes to "a better understanding of partners' attitudes currently and in the future" (Fernández Sola, 2009: 77). Lucarelli and Fioramonti (2009: 2) state that what the world thinks is a crucial factor to predicting if the EU-sponsored policies will be accepted or opposed and the perceptions can function " as 'an early warning system' to the EU, which

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is still in the process of establishing itself as a credible international focal point"[4]. The EU in its aspiration towards leadership will find it easier to obtain the support of other international players if its actions are considered legitimate and 'altruistic' and if its values and principles are shared by its partners. In this sense perceptions are important since they are one of the factors that condition the EU's influence as an effective foreign policy actor, which in turn reinforces the EU's identity.

Notwithstanding, there are still very few systematic researches on external images of the European Union. There are laudable attempts to compile empirical knowledge about perceptions of the EU in selected countries at both elite, the media and broad public level as well as international organizations and NGOs (Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2009; Lucarelli, 2007a and 2007b; Chaban and Holland, 2006 and 2008), in various multilateral settings (Elgström, 2006, 2007 and 2008), in situations of power asymmetry (Van Criekinge, 2009) and in transatlantic relations (Eliasson, 2010; Fernández Sola and Smith, 2009).

However, despite the growing academic acknowledgement of the significance of this type of analysis followed by various meritorious efforts to breach the gaps, external images still remain a theoretically and empirically underexplored area which offers a fructiferous avenue for further research. Such an academic exercise apart from being interesting in itself can be a valuable complement to the IR literature on the EU's actorness, identity and foreign policy analysis.

3. Studies on EU-Russia relations

The analytical angle focusing on external perceptions is distinctive in the context of the literature on EU-Russian relations as it offers an alternative explanation of the conflictual predispositions between both actors. In order to highlight the potential added value of the research, this chapter proceeds with a cursory recollection of the state-of-the-art

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[4] The analysis based on the way decision-makers frame and justify their policies and their latter reception on the international scene gives insights into an actor's policies as well as chances of success or failure (Tsygankov, 2014a). Human interaction cannot be explained exclusively in terms of rational behaviour and calculated decisions. Rather, decision makers are subject to beliefs and emotions, perceptions and misperceptions and these intangible variables may form the context and background for the formulation and execution of policy and action.

concerning the general description of EU-Russia interactions and the actors' interdependency at the ideational level.

3.1. EU-Russian relations: state of affairs and causes of conflict

EU-Russian relations can be characterized as strange at best. On the one hand, the 'strategic partnership' became a routine concept in the official political narratives of both actors before the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis. The academic discourse echoes this logic by emphasizing the notion of political, economic and institutional interdependency that is felt in a gamut of ambits ranging from energy dependency and economic factors, to the internal consolidation and ideational co-constitution (Serra i Massansalvador, 2003a, 2004 and 2005) and the cooperation in solving such transnational problems as migration, energy security, terrorism, environment and other external security issues (Kanet and Freire, 2012). The mutual attribution of status as 'strategic partners' is buttressed by thick institutialization of relations, biannual summits, ministerial meetings, and regular contacts at the level of civil servants and experts, working groups and committees followed by a host of agreements, documents and strategies that formalize these relations.

However, the rhetorical commitment to the promotion of friendly and strategic relations based on shared values and backed up by dense institutialization seemed to have disguised the hollowness of the relationship as the EU-Russia relations lacked strategic visions, coherent strategies and genuine implementation mechanisms (Barysch, 2004; Karaganov 2015a; Freire, 2009). Although there was a wide array of documents and agreements[5], they rather represented a "declaration of intent" than a genuine means to guide relations (Medvedev, 2008) as they failed to create an adequate institutional framework that would be comfortable for the EU and Russia (Claudín and de Pedro, 2015; Fernández Sola, 2015).

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[5] The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that constitutes the legal basis for the cooperation between the EU and Russia exhibits insufficient implementation and control mechanisms (Shevtsova, 2010). The very failure to agree on the new PCA that entered into force in 1997 and expired ten years later is indicative of the superficiality of the EU-Russia legal basis. The other founding documents such as the four 'roadmap' documents on the Common Economic Space, the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, the Common Space of External Security and the Common Space on Research, Education and Culture signed in 2005 did not substantiate the relations being nominated as "the proliferation of the fuzzy" (Emerson, 2005), "a paper bridge" (Trenin, 2009), a slendid illustration of the bureaucratic art to create an illusion of movement to camouflage stagnation (Shevtsova, 2010). The partnership for modernization embarked on by Dmitry Medvedev also failed to go beyond multilateral and bilateral declarations (Moshes, 2012).

The superficial nature of the EU-Russian institutional framework was one of the indicators of the progressive deterioration of relations between both actors since the late 1990s that have been clouded by a string of unfortunate factors[6] before culminating in an open antagonism during the Ukrainian crisis. The academic characterization of relations varies in gradation of antagonism from bureaucratic bickering over technical issues to stalemate (Medvedev, 2008), stagnation (Timofeev, 2015), "insufficiently cooperative" relations (Prozorov, 2006), "pragmatic competition" (Casier, 2016), "cold peace" (Sakwa, 2012) and finally, open crisis and direct confrontation (Morales, 2014; Casier, 2016; Haukkala, 2015).

This state of affairs generated voluminous literature endeavouring to find the sources of the conflict underlying the EU-Russian relations. Manifold studies indicate as one of the origins of conflict the incompatibility of identities and various stages of development of a realist traditionalist Russia and a normative post-modern European Union (Barbé and Kienzle, 2007; Nygren, 2009; Trenin 2006; Freire, 2009). Taking the concept of the Westphalian state as a reference, analysts indicate that both actors are moving in opposite directions: the EU is on the way to postmodernity, while Russia in the process of establishing itself as a modern state, found itself entrapped in what Kononenko (2008) calls "modernity syndrome", which makes it particularly sensitive to the EU's postmodern encroachment on its borders and alleged zone of influence in the near abroad.

These divergent vectors of ideational development generate clashing views on constitutive values and divergent strategies that both actors resort to in order to establish themselves as actors. In terms of ideational values, the secularized Europe based on individualism and trying to shed off nationalism and some traditional values to construct supranational identity is contrasted by Russia striving for restoration of its statehood and sovereignty based on Christianity, patriotism, tradition of sobornost (conciliarity) and the emphasis of collective interests (Karaganov, 2015a; Prozorov, 2006). Similarly, there are differences between the EU as "the integration machine" relying on its "bureaucratic imperialism" (Medvedev, 2008) and semi-authoritarian Russia that, believing that greatpowerness is an inalienable part of its identity (Clunan, 2009; Trenin, 2006 and

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[6] There are several turning points in the EU-Russia relations: the potential risks and opportunities of the fifth EU enlargement (Antonenko and Pinnick, 2005; Serra i Massansalvador, 2003b), the US intentions to deploy its defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic, disputes over gas supplies, recriminations over violation of human rights, the conflict in Georgia in 2008 to name just a few.

2009a; Morales, 2012 and 2015), predominantly resorts to 'hard power' [7]. Thus, summarizing the argument based on clashing identities, Prozorov (2006: 2) points out "the opposition between sovereign and integrationist paradigms of international relations is a primary source of conflictual dispositions in EU-Russian relations".

Other scholars instead of focusing on the incompatible modes of development and clashing identities, place greater emphasis on the cognitive reasons as the main source of the conflictual proclivities between Russia and the EU. One of the principal reasons of collisions between both actors is believed to be found in the ambit of misperceptions and miscommunications that spawned the atmosphere of mutual mistrust, disillusionment and gradual estrangement (Hernández i Sagrera and Potemkina, 2013; Timofeev, 2015; Khudolei, 2003; Zubok, 2016; Casier, 2016).

One of the sources of the conflict based on misperceptions could be traced back to the failed expectations on both sides. After the end of the Cold War Russia hoped to be treated as an equal partner, while the West expected it to take more seriously the task of shedding the Soviet past and incorporating the Western system of values into its domestic domain. In this way, the EU that focused on the internal transformation in Russia overlooked the Russian leaders' demands to pursue cooperation on equal terms (Bordachev, 2005). Thus, the EU's attempts to apply to Russia its usual strategies of integration and association tailored for conditions of power asymmetry contributed partially to the failure to develop a satisfactory strategy on Russia (Karaganov, 2015b; Kortunov, 2009; Fernández Sola, 2015). Russia's irritation with the role of the junior partner became ever more vibrant as it emerged at the turn of the 21st century as a semi-authoritarian[8], illiberal, revanchist and (neo-) revisionist[9] state whose assertiveness had been boosted by hydrocarbons revenues, stable economic growth as well as internal

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[7] Russia's attempts to rectify its image by developing its soft power (Hudson, 2015; Fekluynina, 2015) by to a certain extent mimicking the EU are not deemed very affective as they are still seen by the target 'audience' as "a propagandist's velvet glove around the iron fist of Moscow's neo-imperial machinations" (Hudson, 2015: 331).

[8] Shevtsova (2010) singles out the following important dates that mark the autocratic development in Russia: 1991 as the year that marked the lost opportunity to create a democratic state, 1993 as the year when the adopted constitution created the basis of personal power, 1996 which marked the victory of Yeltsin in the controlled elections, 2003 that oversaw the Yukos affair and 2004 as the year of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. The wars in Chechnya also constitute important turning points in the deterioration of the EU-Russian relations (Serra i Massansalvador, 2004 and 2012).

[9] Sakwa (2012) defines Russia as a neo-revisionist state, since it does not challenge the existing world order, but its place in it.

stabilization (Prozorov, 2006; Kanet, 2009; Trenin, 2009a). These developments conditioned the growing Russian need and persistence in its demands for the recognition of its greatpowerness status (Morales, 2012 and 2015).

Therefore, the strained relationship between the EU (and the West in general) and Russia can be defined as a status conflict, which is reflected in the vicious cycle of misperceptions, that is, when Russian perceptions of its status are seen as not recognized by the Western counterparts (Forsberg, 2014; Lukyanov, 2016; Tsygankov, 2014b) while the West perceives that it treats Russia with all due respect[10] by attributing to it the status of a 'strategic partner'. This situation of status conflict framed in terms of hierarchy is utterly flammable and conflict-prone and involves the emotionally laden mutual perceptions (Forsberg, 2014). This is where the incorporation of perceptions and beliefs seems to be a meritorious addendum to the literature on EU-Russian relations. Incompatible identities are correlatively linked to the emergence of the misperceptions; however, they do not necessarily have to lead to conflict. Therefore, the research should not only concentrate on the conflict as such between both actors as holders of 'incompatible' identities but on the "*understandings* of the incompatibility" (Kononenko, 2008; emphasis added).

3.2. Studies on the EU-Russia ideational interactions

Another strand of literature that is useful to contextualize the thesis is the theoretical framing of the EU-Russia ideational dichotomy approached along the constructivist and poststructuralist lines of research on identity formation. In the ideational dimension Europe (and later the EC and the EU) and Russia (the Soviet Union in its past incarnation) are represented as mutually constitutive Others in the way that Russian discourse about Europe has involved simultaneous construction of its own and European identities and vice versa.

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[10] EU leaders did not aim to antagonize Russia (Haukkala and Forsberg, 2016; Fernández Sola, 2015) and were convinced that they treated Russia on equal terms and intended to assist the progressive integration of Russia into the Western structures. However, Russian discourse operated with such terms as "humiliation", "deception", "exclusion", "reestablishment of dividing lines" etc, (Claudín and de Pedro, 2015; Morales, 2012; Haukkala and Forsberg, 2016). From the Russian point of view events in the last decade testify to the EU and Western expansion to the detriment of Russia's status and power. In particular, the EU's inability to facilitate more inclusion of Russia into NATO arose a feeling in Russia of being seen as a potential enemy in terms of security (Morales, 2010).

It is remarkable that there is a certain asymmetry in the literature that concentrates on the EU (Europe) - Russian identity interactions. The invaluable role of Europe/ the EU for the Russian identity formation is appreciated in the enormous stock of scholarly literature (Trenin, 2006; Prozorov, 2006; Gomart, 2010; Lomagin, 2009; Moulioukova-Fernandez, 2012; Hopf, 2008; Neumann, 1996a; Tsygankov, 2014a; Trenin, 2006; Serra i Massansavador, 2003a and 2005).

Russia is defined as a bizarre Other that simultaneously exhibits integration and disassociation with the EU and it is described as a voluntary or involuntary outsider, "permanent semi-outsider" (Haukkala, 2008a), "Europe's pangoline" (Neumann, 1999), "uncomfortable Other" (Sakwa, 2015) whose position "may be *in* Europe, but not *of* Europe"[11] (Gerrits, 2008: 8, emphasis original).

Despite the ambivalent trajectory of Russian interaction with the EU, which combines the alleged Russian 'Europeanness' based on its geographical position, cultural heritage and historical legacy (Kortunov, 2009) and endeavours to indicate the limits of integration by emphasizing the primacy of the sovereign statehood, Europe has always served for Russia as an important reference. As Lilia Shevtsova (2005) argues Russia's history with Europe is the history of Europeanization which, according to Stent (2007) hinges around three dimensions: Europe as an idea, Europe as a model and Europe as a geopolitical reality. Europe as an idea involves the identity-related Westernizers –Slavophiles debate and its later versions[12]. Europe as a model sustains the European image as an economic power and source of modernization that is able to spur Russian economic development[13] while Europe as a geopolitical reality entails representations of a neighbour that carries out an

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[11] Trenin (2006) argues that Russia is simultaneously Europe (in cultural and historical sense) and "non-Europe" (not a member of the EU).

[12] Russian civilizational debates concerning its European versus Eastern vectors of development occupy a significant part of the literature on Europe-Russia identity formation (Tsygankov, 2006 and 2008; Lomagin, 2009). The Westernizers –Slavophiles debate evolved into polemic between Liberal Westernizers, Pragmatic Nationalists and Fundamentalist Nationalists (Allison et al., 2006), or in Tsygankov's (2006) classification: between Westernist, Statist and Civilizationist strands. These movements vary in their vision of the place of Russia in Europe and the West. The current Russian political rhetoric is placed within the Pragmatic Nationalist/Statist discourse that advocates cooperation with the West based on the protection of its own sovereign interests (Clunan, 2009).

[13] The EU as a model was taken as a reference for Gorbachev's 'new thinking' that implied Russia's transformation from a military superpower to "a more reasonable power" through "convergence with the West in general and Europe in particular" (Gomart, 2010: 7). More recently, the European Union was seen as a source of financial and technological resources to boost Medvedev's plan of modernizing Russia (Moshes, 2012).

ambivalent role of a competitor and a partner. In any case, it has been noted that relations have predominantly been asymmetrical and it was Europe that designated Russia's place in Europe and gave Russia "a pass" to the expanding web of European institutions (Haukkala, 2008a). In turn, for Russia Europe's recognition of its actorness and identity remained as vital as it used to be during their centuries-long history (Neumann, 2008; Forsberg, 2014).

What is changing is the attitude and the 'bargaining power' of Russian political elite; variables that influence the degree of Russia's aspirations towards its inclusion in European structures. During Perestroika Russia intended to become more an insider by creating a narrative of the "Common European Home" thereby expressing its endeavour to "rejoin civilisation" (Neumann, 2008) that implied approximation and gradual convergence on the imitative basis with the EU and Western values. In the early 1990s Russian liberal political elite stood up for pro-Western ideas and advocated the European vector of development that converted Russia into a norm-taker (on some occasions hesitant/superficial) rather than being an active agent in reconstitution of European international society (Haukkala, 2008a). However, already in the mid-1990s EU-Russian relations started to deteriorate from "naïve optimism towards grudging cooperation" (Barysch, 2004: 1).

In the 2000s Russia endeavoured to posit itself as an assertive Other by diminishing its receptiveness to Western influence and taking a course on re-establishing its autonomy and statehood, thereby intensifying the Self/Other dichotomy and its ambivalence in ideational terms. Although the EU was seen as an indispensable partner for Russia, the European proclivity to impose its norms was seen as a constant irritant in the relations (Karaganov, 2005) incrementing Russia's willingness to reject the role of the norm-taker in favour of a more proactive role by opting for basing its relations with the EU on bilateral or international norms (Barbé and Herranz Surralés, 2010; Natorski, 2010). With the Ukrainian crisis Russia further distanced itself from the EU by regaining the status of the 'Significant Other' that makes the West rethink its existence through the antagonism with Russia; the process actively mirrored in Russia (Timofeev, 2015; Shevtsova, 2015).

The importance of Russia as a constitutive Other is reciprocated in the literature on Europe's identity formation although to a somewhat lesser extent as the European identity has been theorized as constructed in terms of inclusion and exclusion with Russia taking

an active role in construction of European self-awareness for centuries (Neumann, 1999; Neumann and Welsh, 1991; Morozov and Rumelili, 2012). In particular, the Soviet Union was one of the main impetuses behind the consolidation of the EC by presenting a political, ideological and military challenge (Trenin, 2006; Laffan, 2004; Sakwa, 2012); this mutually constitutive tendency continued with newly emerged post-Communist Russia (Serra i Massansalvador, 2003a, 2004 and 2015; Morozov and Rumelili, 2012).

However, the revision of the state-of-the-art indicates a certain asymmetry that characterizes European-Russian ideational interactions. Thus, the European identity was consolidated through the Russian exclusion as non-European in geopolitical, ideological and cultural terms (Prozorov, 2006) in comparison with Russia that included a certain element of integration in its ideational narratives[14]. While Russia strove for European recognition, for Europe it was neither a referent point nor a model to follow but was frequently described in inferior terms as barbaric and backward (Moulioukova-Fernandez, 2012) and as an antithesis or counter-model (Gerrits, 2008). It might be said that this historical asymmetry in mutual Othering still persists in actual EU-Russian relations[15]. As Prozorov (2006: 10, emphasis original) states: while for Russia its relations and its place in Europe have been central in the post-communist discourse, the EU's politics to Russia were rather reactive by being either "in *response* to Russian initiatives or as a *reaction* to significant events in Russia".

However, irrespective of Europe's (EU's) tendency to treat Russia as a 'significant' but somewhat subaltern Other, Russia functions as an important litmus test for the EU's identity as an actor. Few countries are able to expose the EU's divisiveness and imperfections as does Russia, the European Union's difficult partner, which more often than not succeeds in exhibiting the EU as a disorganized and haphazard entity unable to conduct a genuine value-informed policy (Hughes, 2007). That again brings us to the necessity to empirically approach the images held by Russian decision-makers. As Lomagin (2009: 55) puts it "politics is about perceptions" and "Russia's historical perceptions of Europe effect contemporary Russia-EU relations".

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[14] It is argued that "partial integration" with the EU has been the optimal choice for Russia (Serra i Massansalvador, 2005: 269).

[15] The empirical research shows that the EU's perceptions of Russia are negative (Feklyunina, 2012).

While the theoretical premises of the EU(rope)-Russia Self-Other dichotomy have been sufficiently covered by constructivist and poststructuralist strands of literature, there are still glaring gaps when it comes to bringing the research into the empirical plane by more explicit incorporation of the analytical narrative based on perceptions. If there are few analyses on perceptions of external images of the EU in general, even fewer studies scrutinize the Russian perspective. The increasing recognition of the necessity to provide this type of research has generated various empirical explorations of perceptions of the EU held by Russia in various contexts and at various levels (Morini et al., 2010; Secrieru, 2010; Fernández Sola, 2015; Larivé, 2008; Lomagin, 2009; Rontoyanni, 2002; Kaveshnikov, 2007; Kratochvil, 2008). However, international relations is a fluid and changeable field and new issues are constantly being added to the multidimensional EU-Russia relations, which leaves the research agenda in constant need of further exploration. Besides, studying the perceptions rooted in the historical centuries long ideational interactions between both partners still retain their relevance in the new context as crucial insights to understand the limits of the European identity and policies.

4. Research design

The following section sets forth the research design. First, it defines the empirical questions that structure the analysis, then proceeds with a brief recollection of the fields of inquiry-related literature to justify why each case has been chosen, afterwards it moves on to the descriptions of the research strategy and sources and spells out the expected difficulties of the analysis.

4.1. Research questions

The structure of the thesis is built around the concept of perceptions. The analysis of the empirical samples intends to concentrate on the 'encounter' between the EU's self-representations and their mirror images in Russian political discourse. Thus, the inquiry not only highlights if the European ideational narrative is reverberated in the Russian counter-discourse but intends to foreground the effects of the perceptional interactions on the relations of the EU with its strategic and biggest neighbour. In this manner, the main empirical question is: *How can the interplay of the EU-Russian perceptions contribute to the explanation of the strained EU-Russian relations at the ideational level and how did*

these dynamics contribute to the climax of the conflict as presented by the Ukrainian events?

Following the theoretically-underpinned reflectivist concept of the ideational cycle of identities, which posits that identity is the 'feeling of selfhood' chiseled in the process of interaction with the constitutive Other, the answer to the main research question involves several preliminary empirical questions. The first empirical question to be asked in the chapter is: *What are the EU's self-images related to a specific international role?* Thereby, the empirical inquiry reconstructs the discursive representations that the EU transmits and subjects them to external judgment. In compliance with the postpositivist premise of the binary nature of identity and the assumption of the constitutive agency of Russia indicated in the literature review, the second stepping-stone question is posited as: *How are the EU's self-understandings mirrored in the Russian political discourse?* Russian counter narrative can potentially turn out to be a delightful or uncomfortable 'mirror' depending on Russia's acceptance or rejection of the EU's self-images.

The theoretically-informed expectation is that the effects of both probable reactions are bound to be twofold: Russian (mis-)recognition is expected to influence EU self-conceptions in one way or another due to the constitutive liaisons of the Self/Other ideational dichotomy and it is correlatively linked to the dynamics of the relations between both actors. Therefore, the final empirical question is: *What are the implications of Russian (mis-)recognition as the EU's 'Significant Other' for the EU's identity as an actor?* In specific terms, the investigation intends to trace if the 'mirror' provided by Russia feedbacks on EU's self-identification as a political entity and an international actor and makes it either modify its roles or persist in reiterating its self-images. In this sense the thesis is engaged with revealing the points of contiguity between the EU and Russian narratives and finding out if the discursive 'encounter' between both actors can be conceptualized as a dialogue or its antithesis. In any case, the discursive interactions pitched at the ideational level have a potentially significant explanatory value that can contribute not only to understanding of the sources of the conflictual predilections that plagued the relations between both actors but also to reveal the mechanisms that triggered the disruption of the *status quo* sustained during the previous decade preceding the Ukrainian conflict.

4.2. Case studies

The search for the answers to the empirical questions is carried out in four case studies: the perceptions of the EU as a model of regional integration, as an actor in the common neighbourhood, as a promoter of human rights and democracy and as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis. The first three case studies are chosen because of their visibility and high ranking in the list of the EU's foreign policy priorities[16]. Besides, in the scholarly opinion and in European official discourse it seems to be taken for granted that the EU has established its actorness in these ambits, so it might be especially interesting to subject them to an empirical test. The fourth case study looms relevant in the light of recent events in Ukraine and their fateful importance for the EU-Russian relations by becoming a climax in the already strained relationship between both actors. And last but not least, all case studies are of vital importance on the EU-Russia agenda and belong to a list of the problematic issues and as such serve as an evidence of the conflicting policy environment.

4.2.1. The images of the European Union as a model of regional integration in Russian political discourse

The images of the European Union as a model of regional integration have been selected as a case study mainly due to three reasons: the salience of the role in the European political discourse, the ontological importance of its reproduction in other integration models and the potential to contribute to the explanation of the escalation of the conflict between the EU and Russia against the Ukrainian context.

The European Union ranks first among omnifarious integration projects[17] around the world by exhibiting a unique mixture of integration spilling over from the economic issues to more sensitive ambits that encompass cooperation in foreign policy and security fields. It is generally acknowledged that the European supranationalism exemplifies a success story, a certain kind of "gold standard" of regional integration (Börzel and Risse,

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[16] Smith (2008b) singles out five key foreign policy objectives: the encouragement of regional cooperation and integration, the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance, the prevention of violent conflicts and the fight against international crime.

[17] The burgeoning of regional integration projects has given birth to a new strand of academic thought dubbed as "comparative regionalism" (Börzel, 2011)

2009b) characterized by an unparalleled legal and institutional design, the ever widening array of policies and instruments and identity that spurred the recognition that that the EU has already trespassed the point when it ceased to be a mere international organization. These developments have led to the deeply sedimented self-portrayal of the EU as a model to be intentionally promoted and willingly emulated. The peculiarity of the EU as a model of development lies in the fact that its economic evolution is complemented by the ever deepening political integration accompanied by deeply-ingrained ideational dimension and as such this model in Yvars' (2010: 275) words is "a priori more institutional and political than economic".

The visibility and proliferation of this role in European political and academic discourses have made it an inseparable part of the formation, legitimization and reproduction of the EU's identity. As Farrell (2009: 1179) argues for the EU the replication of its model is "a way to validate its internal coherence on the international stage". Besides, the external promotion of the EU model of governance is a relatively secure way of consolidation of the EU's actorness as it does not trespass on national interests (Farrell, 2007 and 2009) and as such does not generate resistance of its member states thereby allowing the EU "to reproduce itself" freely (Bretherton and Voglers, 2006: 249).

This brings us to the second reason that underlies the choice of the case study. As Ferreira-Pereira (2010: 300) perspicaciously observes the concept of the "model power Europe" will change from being a rhetorical concept to a real one only if the EU is able to "promote and reinforce modelling stimuli for their inherent reward value to other actors". Hence, the EU being a regional organization sees its existence 'sanctified' if other regional projects emulate its experience. In this sense, the newly-fangled Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), promoted by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus has become an unexpected mirror for the EU. The perspective of Russia, which is called by Bordachev (2005) the "odd insider" that grudgingly but gradually accepts European economic standards and rules, might provide interesting reflections of the EU's self-images as a model of regional organization and its unintentional influence.

The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union itself represents a curious case study due to its underlying rationale. The development of the EEU [18], the brand-new project, initiated

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[18] There are various ways of referring to the new entity: the Eurasian Customs Union, the Eurasian Union, Eurasian Economic Union, and the Customs Union of the Eurasian Economic Union (Dragneva and

by the Russian Federation, Belarus and Kazakhstan[19] proceeded at a vertiginous speed evolving from the Customs Union and the codification of rules and standards in the Customs Union Code to the establishment in January 2012 of the Common Economic Space and the supranational Eurasian Economic Commission based on the European templates to the final stage that saw the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union which became fully operational in 2015. The qualitative and quantitative change inherent in the Eurasian Union when compared to its predecessors[20] triggered suspicions of geopolitical rationale (Blockmans et al., 2012; Kanet and Freire, 2012) disguised under the shield "economic pragmatism"[21] (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2013). The Eurasian Union is seen as an attempt to counterbalance the EU's policies in the common neighbourhood, in particular, the Eastern Partnership and to strengthen Russian bargaining power vis-à-vis the EU by joining forces with other states. However, according to Dragneva and Wolczuk (2013: 9), in its endeavour Russia changed its strategy by competing "in a domain where the EU has exercised a monopoly until now" resorting to what Börzel and Risse (2009b) define as normative "mimicry"[22]. Thus, the Russia-led Eurasian Union, being simultaneously an attempt to capitalize on the EU's achievements as a regional integration and to present an alternative to the European normative project is an interesting framework in which Russian contradictory attitudes as an 'odd insider' are brought to the fore.

Wolczuk, 2013). The thesis makes use of the nomination "the Eurasian (Economic) Union" as prevalent in Russian official discourse.

[19] The idea of the Eurasian Union belongs to the Kazakhstani president who proposed it in 1994. The suggestion appealed neither to the newly-independent post-Soviet countries nor to Russia as they opted for a loose cooperation within the CIS and gained momentum only in 2011 at the instigation of the then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin as a part of his presidential campaign.

[20] The CIS is the area of multiple regional and subregional integration structures with overlapping membership, different objectives and varying degrees of integration launched in order to achieve some level of unification among the post-Soviet countries: the CIS, the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc), the Union State, the Customs Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization to name just a few. However, these projects despite frequent meetings of the high-level decision makers even at the presidential levels and an incalculable number of signed agreements have largely failed to gain momentum and remained declaratory projects due to the lack of political will.

[21] However, despite the discursively proclaimed economic essence of the future organization, the project is rather political as it has dubious economic benefits for Russia (Blockmans et al., 2012).

[22] The normative mimicry is reflected in the fact that Russia in Secrieru's (2010) words tries to "simulate" European "technologies" in the post-Soviet space to mould its image of a benign power in the 'near abroad'

And last but not least, analysing the perceptions of the European Union in this context is an academically useful exercise as potentially it can reveal how the already strained EU-Russian relations evolved to achieve the apogee during the Ukrainian conflict taking into account that the Eurasian Union can be interpreted as an effort undertaken by Russian leadership to squeeze the EU out of the zone of its 'privileged interests' and to pull the post-Soviet countries, first and foremost Ukraine[23] into the Russian ambit.

4.2.2. Perceptions of the EU's identity as an actor in the common neighbourhood in the EU and Russian political discourses

As regards the images of the European identity as an actor in the so called common neighbourhood, the role has been chosen because of its visibility in the European and Russian discursive ambits, its immediate effect on the EU's actorness and identity, the conflictual underpinning and, therefore, the explanatory potential of the evolution of an antagonistic relationship between the EU and Russia that can particularly be useful against the Ukrainian background.

First, the EU's self-appointed role as an actor in the common neighbourhood substantiated by the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and later the Eastern Partneship (EaP) is characterized by a high degree of visibility in the EU's official discourse being frequently defined as one of the top priorities of EU high-ranking officials. As for Russian political discourse the salience of this European role is growing apace due to a mixture of factors such as the progressive recognition of the EU's activities in the region coupled with Russia's increasing assertiveness on the regional and global stage.

Second, the EU-Russia shared neighbourhood is an interesting testing ground for the actorness and identity of both actors. The EU's performance in the CIS area is inextricably linked by both academic observers and EU leaders to the European identity as an actor able to pursue coherent policies given that the neighbourhood is auto-defined as an immediate test for the EU's intentional influence. After the enlargement, the ENP

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[23] In fact, Ukraine seems to have been the prime target around which the newly-fangled project was built. Russia even made an unprecedented decision to tolerate the certain loss of sovereignty by consenting to the planned equity of votes in the Eurasian Economic Commission to mitigate the fears of prospective members, notably Ukraine.

based on what Vysotskaya (2013) nominates as "the philosophy of the EU's enlargement method" [24] is another important *modus operandi* of reifying the EU's identity by transferring the European model to the post-Soviet states and is, therefore, ontologically significant for the EU's political self-awareness. On the other hand, the neighbourhood represents a frontal challenge for its actorness both internally and externally. Internally, the European Union must rise to the challenge of harmonizing various policies as well as diverse positions of the member states to create a more unified and consistent policy towards the post-Soviet states (Bosse, 2007). Externally, Russia steps forward as a crucial litmus test for the EU's identity as an actor taking into consideration that the European Eastern neighbourhood is simultaneously a zone of what Russia defines as 'privileged interests'[25]. Apart from the importance of the post-Soviet space in practical terms given the economic, geopolitical and security factors, both Russia and the EU perceive the region as a stepping stone towards the global power status as international clout rests first of all on the regional actorness. Therefore, this case study can shed light not only on the influence of the EU-Russia interactions on the political self-awareness of both actors but presents a perfect ground for looking for the sources of the conflict at the ideational Self-Other level.

In reference to the third reason, the EU's actorness in the common neighbourhood is one of the most debated in literature given that the post-Soviet space is one of the main battlefields between the EU and Russia as both sides assign to each other "illegitimate interventionist designs" and attributing to "colour revolutions" geopolitical significance (Prozorov 2006: 7). Bearing in mind that the common neighbourhood is the principal object of contestation for the normative agendas and alternative visions of the regional order this case study can potentially contribute to the explanation of the evolution of the stand-off of EU-Russian relations during the Ukrainian crisis. The chapter, in clear contrast with the case study on the EU as a model of regional integration, in search for the answers to the empirical questions considers intended and deliberately projected

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[24] Similarly, Lavenex (2004: 694) defines the EU-led neighbourhood policies as "a form of external governance which consists in the (selective) extension of the EU's norms, rules and policies, i.e. its legal boundary, while precluding the opening of its institutional boundary, i.e. membership".

[25] The intensity of the competitive element is evident even in the terminological skirmishes as Russians are unwilling to accept the EU-coined term "common/shared neighbourhood" (Secrieru, 2010: 17) preferring to call it "regions adjacent to the EU and Russian borders" Adomeit (2011), 'near abroad', post-Soviet states, 'a sphere of privileged interests', thereby unmistakeably pointing to some kind of indissoluble link that binds Russia and the countries.

European influence in the Eastern neighbourhood through the ENP and the EaP which embody the competitive component in the relations between both actors[26].

4.2.3. Images of the European Union as a promoter of human rights and democracy in European and Russian political narratives

The EU as a promoter of human rights and democracy is another example of salient European self-images that form an inalienable and discernible part of the EU identity as a foreign policy actor. Besides, this role exposes a high degree of conflictual predilections as the EU's self-reflexive ideational representations as a promoter belong to the category of one of the most contested and resisted to in Russian political discourse. Therefore, the EU-Russian discursive 'encounter' related to the EU narrative on the advancement of the values can be treated as another precursor to the ripening of the conflict which manifested itself in the Ukrainian crisis.

Hence, this role has been chosen as the acceptance or rejection of European values can be a crucial component of the EU's consolidation as a global and regional actor as the EU frequently links its policies with the promotion of such values as democracy and human rights among others. Sedelmeier (2006) argues that the EU's self-assumed role conception and performance can intrepidly be characterized as robust[27] as these values are firmly embedded in the EU's discursive structures and are institutionalized as an inalienable part of the EU's collective identity in the EU founding treaties, strategic documents and speeches. However, the construction of the EU identity based on values is

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[26]Russian reaction both to the ENP and EaP was rather a negative one, although to a varying degree. Russia was quite uneasy with the ENP launch by perceiving it as a threat to its economic interests, its European identity and its influence on the CIS (Antonenko and Pinnick, 2005; Bordachev, 2005; Racz, 2010). However, its worries have been mitigated by the perceived meagre impact of the ENP (Barysh, 2010; Racz, 2010) and a lack of substantial challenge to the *status quo* in the CIS area (Zagorski, 2005). The Eastern Partnership (EaP) caused more irritability among Russian politicians (Haukkala, 2009; Steward, 2009). Russia's touchiness was caused not by the perceptions that the EaP was bound to be more effective than the ENP, rather, by the timing and context. The EaP was launched just after the Russian conflict with Georgia which highlighted Russia's perceived weakness in the neighbourhood as none of the former post-Soviet states recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the other hand, it contributed to the perceptions of the project as anti-Russian. Although, the EaP is seen as beset with numerous deficiencies, it is regarded as potentially dangerous in the field of 'low politics' challenging the Russian soft power that rests on Russian culture, language and media as well as to some extent 'high politics' that would make the CIS countries adopt the EU foreign and security policies (Secrieru, 2010: 16).

[27] The 'robustness' of the role contains two components: specificity and commonality. Specificity lies in articulating and then prescribing the 'appropriate' behaviour for the EU in this role. Role commonality refers to the degree of collective acceptance and commitment rules and prescriptions by the actors (Sedelmeier, 2006).

not limited to the reflexive soul-searching exercise, rather, the European Union posits its identity as active, that is, tries to externalize the values inscribed in its *telos* abroad (Manners, 2002 and 2006a; Lavenex, 2004).

Therefore, by undertaking a proactive value-informed stance in international affairs, the European Union makes its role as a promoter of human rights and democracy more vulnerable and more dependent on external judgement. In this manner, the Other's narrative could be an essential mirror for the EU's nascent identity and make a valuable contribution to the literature in light of fiery debates on the EU distinctiveness versus its 'normality'[28]. Besides, external perspective is useful for practical reasons. Currently, the EU has to act in a different environment as the structural circumstances and the global intersubjective understandings have changed to a considerable extent since the end of the Cold War that was marked by the optimism in the spirit of Francis Fukuyama's book 'The End of History'. Youngs (2008) points to a number of changes such as discreditation of legitimacy of democracy promotion, growing assertiveness and resistance of autocratic regimes, consolidation of 'hybrid' regimes, economic rise of non-democratic powers and the return of competitive geopolitics. Those factors are to be taken into account by the EU in its attempts to revisit its agenda as a promoter of human rights and democracy.

Another reason for studying the EU in light of its commitment to promotion of human rights and democracy (HRD) is the fact that they constitute a frequent stumbling block and a source of friction between the EU and Russia. Indeed, the enactment of this European role is highly inflammable as identities of both sides are involved. For the EU the role of the advocate of values is an inalienable part of its identity, the fact that makes it susceptible to external (mis-) recognition. In turn, for Russia human rights and democracy are far more than abstract concepts but rather are elements of its identity as constructed against the European Other. Actually, in this case study Russia also acts as an 'odd insider' that with its immanent ambivalence, is torn between integration and disassociation. On the one hand, Russia has partially incorporated itself into the European

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[28] It was observed that the EU frequently opted for pragmatism at the expense of idealistic objectives of promotion of values (Panebianco, 2006a and 2006b; Tocci, 2007; Farrell, 2005). Given that the EU's normative motivations have now and then been cast doubt on, more and more voices emerge that the EU should be classified not as a distinctive normative but rather as a "normal" power (Wood, 2009; Johannson-Nogués, 2007).

normative order[29] and, by discursively expressing its commitment to the shared values, claims belonging to the same European civilization. On the other hand, Russia takes the issue superficially either by pretending that it treats human rights and democracy seriously or by trying to reinterpret the values and provide its own normative alternative[30]. Thus, its resistance to the values and norms has to be seen in the following structural framework: a neo-revisionist power Russia, in Sakwa's (2012) understanding, is willing to enter the international community of democratic states[31] and the European Union as an inseparable part of that society and consequently, an indispensable partner, however, Russia is neither able to completely reject Western norms, nor embed them into its legal order without endangering the integrity of its identity.

Against this background, relations between the EU as a self-proclaimed promoter of HRD following Western individualistic culture and Russia, which has developed into a hybrid fusion that mixes contradictory dimensions: "of traditions and postmodernist; of autocracy and democracy; of the market and state control; of partnership with the West and a rejection of Western values" (Shevtsova 2006: 307) are bound to be conflict-prone. And therefore this case study can be used as a front, in which the battle of perceptions and ideational disagreements took place before escalating into an open confrontation in the Ukrainian crisis.

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[29] For instance, the preconditions of incorporation into the European normative architecture were settled in the last months of the existence of the Soviet Union, as it, on a par with the United States and a number of European governments signed the Charter of Paris for a new Europe in November, 1990, which advocated human rights, democracy, rule of law and economic values. The Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted in 1993 continued the spirit of the Charter of Paris by expressing its firm commitment to the establishment of human rights and democratic principles. Although the optimism and pro-European way of development started by Gorbachev and by inertia continued by Yeltsin backslided already in the second half of the 1990s, the EU attempted to institutionalize human rights and democracy into its dialogue with Russia as reflected in the following documents: the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1997), the Common Strategy of the European Union (1999), the Road Map for Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice (2005), the Joint Statement on the Partnership for Modernization (2010).

[30] The concept of 'sovereign democracy' is the key example of the Russian attempt to reinterpret the norms promoted by the EU and the West. It seems to be based on two assumptions: respect for sovereignty which implies Western non-interference in internal affairs and the development of Russia's unique set of values distinct from Western ones (Popescu, 2006; Herd, 2009). The concept of 'sovereign democracy' combines contradictory aspects: traditions and postmodernity, autocracy and democracy, free market and state control, cooperation with the West and distance from western values (Mouliukova-Fernandez, 2012: 110).

[31] The statist discourse, which is a hegemonic discourse in the timeframe embraced by the thesis, defines belonging to the West, according to Clunan (2009), as instrumental to achieving Russia's desired status as an equal member of the great power group.

4.2.4. Perceptions of the European Union as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis in the EU and Russian political discourses

This case study was chosen due to its transcendental repercussions not only on the EU-Russian relations, but on the geopolitical configuration of the European continent and the system of international relations as a whole (Korosteleva, 2016; Natorski, 2015b; Barbé, 2015; Morales, 2014). The thesis includes this chapter as the Ukrainian developments are not so much about Ukraine, but are more about the EU-Russian relations being, in Korosteleva's (2016: 2) definition, the battle between "the self-centred 'clash of titans' and their governance ambitions over the region". The EU-Russian standoff characterized by a concentrated level of clashing perceptions of each other and of Ukrainian events (Serra i Massansavador, 2015; Fernández Sola, 2015) can be interpreted as a culmination of the conflictual predispositions and mutual disappointment of the preceding decade. In this respect, this case study is closely linked with previous case studies as it represents a logical continuation of the pre-2013 narrative and is a battlefield in which these contesting practices became sedimented and securitized in the intersubjective structure. In this manner, this case study is appealing to academic curiosity in a number of ways apart from its novelty and enormous repercussions for international affairs.

First, the Ukrainian-related events put the EU's and Russian identities as actors to trial as never before. As it has been perspicaciously observed, in the eyes of the EU, Ukraine has been upgraded from a mere foreign policy concern to a certain kind of a test for "self-assertion and inner coherence of its own values" (Claudín and de Pedro, 2015: 13). However, in the academic opinion, the results of this crucial test for the European postmodern world turned out to be, to a certain extent, contradictory ones. For instance, the European Union is found lacking a genuine, strategically and geopolitically underpinned CFSP backed by sufficient capabilities and coherence in dealings with the Kremlin in the Ukrainian context (Shevtsova, 2015; Sakwa, 2015; Krastev and Leonard, 2015). Another aspect that undermines the EU actorness is that it is allegedly losing its external autonomy from the USA and becomes "little more than civilian dimension of the Atlantic security alliance" (Sakwa, 2015: 553). When it comes to the normative dimension, the EU is seen as having betrayed its normative commitments based on the post-Westphalian telos (Sakwa, 2015) by emerging as a geopolitical actor that competes for the spheres of influence in classic geopolitical traditions (Sakwa, 2015; Trenin, 2014). On the other hand, Natorski and Pomorska (2017) argue that the Ukrainian crisis

contributed to consolidation of the EU as an actor by enhancing trust between EU member states and EU institutions.

Besides, the Ukrainian developments exerted a profound influence not only on the EU's understanding of its role in the common neighbourhood, but made it rethink its relations with Russia. The Ukrainian conflict springs up as an exceptional ordeal for the EU given that Russia, the EU's eternal difficult partner, by its destabilizing actions in Ukraine posed a challenge for the EU's actorness and the European security order of a greater magnitude than during the previous clashes in the common neighbourhood. In this vein, the unprecedented escalation of the conflict during the Ukrainian events being partially a consequence and a culmination of the previous bickering[32], upgrades the EU-Russian relations to a new level, where the preservation of the *status quo* is not only highly undesirable but is impossible. In this manner, the Ukrainian crisis functions as 'the moment of truth' which reveals the true state of affairs in the relations between both actors.

Academic literature on the Ukrainian crisis and the involvement of the EU and Russia in these events is still scarce due to the recency of the events, however, somewhat prophetic glimpses into the roots of the conflict can be found in the earlier discussions. Thus, it was pointed out that the end of the Cold War inflicted a serious blow on Russian national pride making it very sensitive to the moves of Western powers and prone to an exaggerated response on the part of Russia (Sakwa, 2012). This is especially true for the post Soviet space, "a contested zone of the 'in-between' countries" that acts as "a permanent structural irritant" in EU-Russian relations, consequently, any violation of what Russia considers as its legitimate interests is magnified and is perceived as an existential threat (Sakwa, 2012: 32). In the ranks of the post-Soviet states Ukraine stands out as the most significant for Russia's national interests, security and identity. For Russia it is "not only the 'jewel' in any sort of contest over territories and peoples between Russia and Europe, but a virtual dismemberment of the Russian idea, the Russian self" (Nygren, 2009: 129).

Hence, it is not surprising that it is Ukraine that became the weakest link and the tipping point in the already strained EU-Russian interaction. It is not a mere coincidence, that the

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[32] Several authors provided a longitudinal analysis to illustrate the pendulum swings in the EU-Russian relations as precursors of the upcoming 2014 Ukrainian crisis (Haukkala, 2015)

Orange Revolution in Ukraine can be called a turning point when EU-Russian relations started to deteriorate drastically. In a bizarre and disconcerted manner the 2004 events that unfolded in the Maidan Square, serve as a gloomy augury of the ongoing Ukrainian conflict which had far-reaching and profound consequences on Russian relations with the EU and the West in general.

Thus, studying Russian perceptions is vital in understanding Russian motives and serves as a practical indication for further EU foreign policy. The Ukrainian conflict revealed that status concerns and external recognition are of utmost importance for the Russian Federation as well. This is evident in the extended set of 'technologies' applied by Russia in its struggle for the 'hearts and minds' of Ukraine and the actions that are contrary to any rational logic both economic and political. Importantly though, in relation to Ukraine Russia employs not only conventional means based on military power, which by itself may render the distinctive power of EU as irrelevant on the continent where the hard power seems to continue being important, but engages in the partial emulation of the EU's soft power to win over the contending European set of values.

Besides, studying perceptions can not only incorporate the Russian perspective but serve as a platform for exiting from the current impasse and constructing a new framework of relations. For the EU the renewed approach is vital as the augured new era (Haukkala, 2015; Natorski, 2015b) presaged as the "death of Europe" (Sakwa, 2015) and characterized by the return of geopolitics and the Great Power rivalry (Trenin, 2014), the divided and weakened Europe (Karaganov, 2015a) might have a difficult time establishing itself as a credible and powerful actor. Therefore, Russian perceptions of the European Union as an actor in the Ukrainian events will not only function as a second 'mirror' for the EU which is actively involved in the mediation and reforms, but can also give valuable hints on avoiding mistakes when constructing its relations with Russia, Ukraine and a wider post-Soviet Space at the new stage of international relations.

4.3. Research strategy

The aim is to develop such an analytical and theoretical framework that will allow us to study the discursive interplay of the EU and Russian perceptions along the reflectivist line of thought. As figure 1 suggests, the first set of questions which requires being resolved is the number of Selves and Others brought under analysis. The thesis is based on the

discursive 'encounter' model which means that the analysis "contrasts the discourse of the Self with the Other's 'counter-construction' of Self and Other" (Hansen, 2006: 76). Although, taking into account the way the empirical research questions have been formulated, the methodological remark is needed that we are more interested in the Russian response to the EU's self-images than in the Russian construction of the Self that occurs parallel to the Russian depictions of the EU as the Other.

Figure 1. Research design of the discourse analysis

Number of Selves   **Intertextual models**

Discursive encounter   Official discourse

Interplay of the EU-Russian perceptions

2003-2013, 2013-2015   Multiple – related by issue

Temporal perspective   **Number of events**
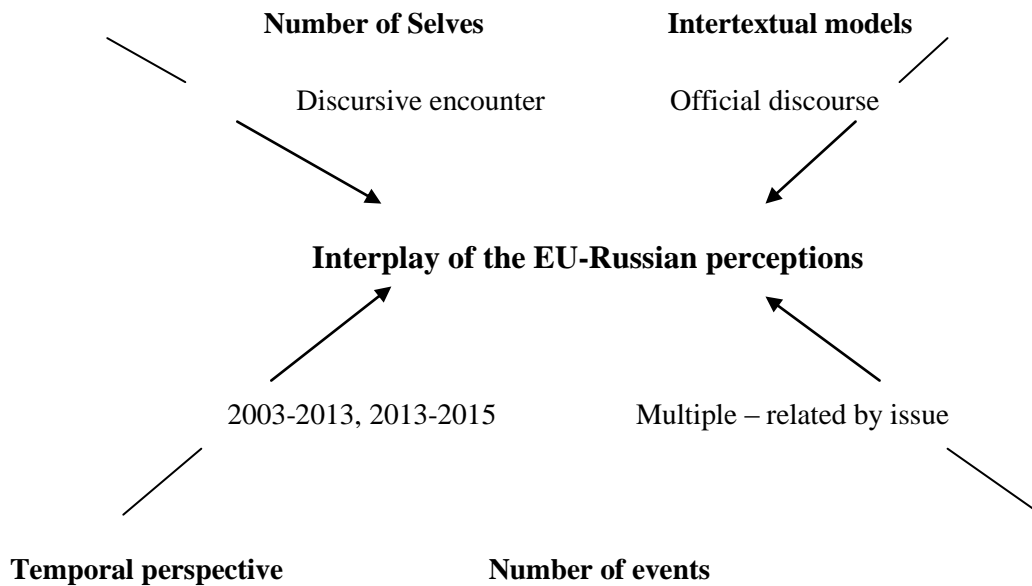
Source: Author's elaboration on the basis of Hansen (2006)

Another compelling question to be answered when approaching the discourse analysis is deciding whose perceptions[33] make up an object for analysis, or to use Hansen's (2006) terminology, what intertextual model constitutes the methodological basis. Following the premise that the European project is an elite-driven process and Russia exhibits the tendencies towards the centralization of power and hegemonizing the foreign policy

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[33] Do we have to focus on the images held by major international players or smaller states? Certainly, recognition of global actors is crucial as it can be seen as admission to 'the international leaders club'. However, the rejection of the EU as a leader by weaker countries in conditions of asymmetry of power can exert more resonance on the EU actorness and identity (Van Criekinge, 2009). In this sense both perspectives have a potential of adding theoretical and empirical value to the literature on European identity. Russia is an interesting case as it is a global actor re-negotiating with the EU its place in the arguably asymmetric relations. The next question to be answered is the level at which the analysis is to be carried out. Although numerous analyses of Self/Other nexus are pitched at the systemic level and see states as participants in interactions, the thesis combines several premises of the systemic level explanations with the principles of Foreign Policy Analysis. After all, states consist of people, and it is their perceptions that should be studied. That forces a researcher to make another choice: should we concentrate on decision makers or to take a broader perspective to embrace a wider public's perceptions?

discourse[34], it seems logical to decide on the official discourse as the underlying intertextual model[35] that focuses on official statements that possess the power of granting status issued by political leaders authorized to formulate and implement foreign policy.

The temporal dimension of our research design, as indicated in Figure 1, is divided into two periods according to the following logic. The first three case studies cover the period of time from 2003 until 2013[36] to trace the patterns of interaction between the EU's self-understandings and Russian images in foreign policy discourses during these ten years. Such a long period seems justified as it would permit to ascertain the existence of the continuity or the changes in discourse, as during this decade both actors have undergone significant shifts in ideational self-representations, foreign policy priorities and international standing. The only understandable exception to the temporal dimension is the case study of the perceptions of the EU's identity as an actor in the Ukrainian conflict which encompasses the period from 2013 until 2015.

The last aspect of the research design is the number of events. The research represents a temporal multi-moments study, which scrutinizes the samples of European and Russian discourses produced on multiple occasions and in various circumstances not related to each other, for example, EU-Russia summits, various treaties and agreements, official policy declarations, interviews, etc.

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[34] The political debates on foreign policy in Russia tend to be limited to the restricted circle of political leaders and senior diplomats that form "the interpretative community" that moulds the intersubjective understandings (Allison, 2013). Moreover, Russian government is often accused of stifling the independent media (Reminton, 2004). When it comes to public opinion it is believed that it does not influence the official discourse visibly, quite the opposite is true, it is manipulated by the absence of information or "filtered and skillfully packaged ideological messages" transmitted by the media. (Morini et al, 2008: 239). Besides, as Feklyunina (2008) notes, the expectation of the foreign policy experts and business elites is that it is the Kremlin's responsibility to define and shape Russian identity.

[35] Other intertextual models singled out by Hansen (2006:64) are: Model 2: Wider foreign policy debate (political opposition, the media, corporate institutions), Model 3 A: Cultural representations (popular culture and high culture), Model 3 B: Marginal political discourses (social movements, illegal associations, academics, NGOs).

[36] In exceptional cases the first three case studies accept samples from 2014 if they offer a direct and vivid illustration of the pre-2013 discursive logic.

4.4. Sources and the main difficulties of the analysis

During the elaboration of the thesis an extensive and comprehensive revision of the existing stock of literature has been carried out for various purposes. First, the secondary sources were used to define the gaps in the literature and find a niche for the thesis, namely the emergent literature on external perceptions and the extensive stock of knowledge on EU-Russian relations and ideational interactions. Second, relatively recent poststructuralist and constructivist literature on the constitutive role of the language and identity formation through the Self/Other dichotomy, the methodological guidance provided by the Discourse-Historical Approach, as well as academic works on various aspects of the EU's identity, identity and roles have been used to create a theory-laden and methodologically informed analytical approach. Besides, all empirical case studies are based on the deep analysis of the relevant secondary sources to illustrate how the issues have been approached in the literature and to provide a profound knowledge of the genealogy of the official discourse, as well as historical and political background.

Due to the specificity of this research and particular features of the discourse analysis, the main focus and effort of the investigation concentrated on the compilation and painstaking perusal of the primary sources. At the outset, the creation of a manageable empiric database required the establishment of the rigorous criteria for the eligibility of the discourse samples.

First of all, neither the EU nor Russia can be treated as monolithic actors, both actors, the EU to a greater extent, are characterized by a multiplicity of actors and institutions responsible for discourse articulation at governmental, regional and local levels. In order to avoid trying to embrace the unembraceable, it is crucial to specify Russian and EU actors whose discourses are taken into consideration within the official discourse intertextual model. In the case of Russia the research is pitched at the federal level of decision-making, precisely on the executive branch of authority that includes discourses of the President and his administration, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his deputies, Russian Permanent Representative to the EU) as the most relevant actors in the articulation of foreign policy discourse. Very occasionally, the thesis also includes exemplary discursive samples issued by high-ranking representatives of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (the State Duma and the Council of Federation). In the case study of the images of the

European Union as a model of regional integration, the chapter also deals with discourses of the Eurasian Union officials appointed by Moscow. The investigation also includes the fundamental documents and laws such as the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.

In the case of the EU the database includes the official documents, communications, declarations, speeches, interviews and press releases of the EU actors, namely the European Commission, Commissioners, the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and since 2010 the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EU Ambassador to the Russian Federation and occasionally the discourses of the President of the European Council. The thesis also includes on a very infrequent basis the documents adopted by the Council of the European Union due to their fundamentality and clear narrative structures concerning the case in study.

Apart from the above mentioned criterion, the empirical material was to meet the following two requirements. First, both the EU and Russian discursive samples belong, according to the typology offered by Reisigle and Wodak (2009) to the following fields of action: organization of international/interstate relations and formation of public attitudes opinion and will. That is, the focus of the analysis is on the official policy articulation of public speeches, interviews, declarations and articles of political leaders as well as other publicly accessible documents that seek to externalize the actors' narrative and project it to the outside world. Second, the selected discourse samples must contain clear references to the perceptions in the form of the direct descriptions or in the form of the signs that indicate the sameness or difference of the Self/ Other conceptual pair.

Following these criteria the database was created that included more than 600 discursive samples produced by Russian and European political narratives. However, the final bibliography contains only references to the documents that were quoted in the thesis. Some of the analysed discourses were present only in Russian; in this case, the translation into English was carried out by the author both for quotations within the text of the thesis and in the bibliography.

During the analysis several difficulties have been encountered. First, the discourse theory is a new line of research that is still in the process of consolidation of theoretical and methodological premises. It has been an object of severe critical attacks for its numerous presumed deficiencies, the lack of developed methodology being the most frequently

indicated [37]. As Howarth (2005: 321-322) suggests, the common problem is that frequently discourse theorists succumb to temptation "to separate a theoretical approach from its object of study, which results in works that are either empiric or theoretic". So the challenge was to make a series of theoretical and methodological choices to have an opportunity to combine the advantages of both perspectives, and to be able to apply them to political reality issues without having to discard theory and methodology as outmoded and positivist forms of science.

Second, the adoption of discursive epistemology cannot verify if political leaders always say what they really think, neither can it guarantee that they will follow publicly declared policies. Moreover, not all policies and opinions are publicly declared; a substantial part is agreed behind closed doors and reflected in documents that are not publicly accessible. However, this can be seen as a methodological strength when applied to the study of foreign policy "where everything *is hidden*" exactly because discourse analysis does not intend to decipher "hidden intentions and secret plans" (Waever, 2005: 35, emphasis in the original).

5. Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters, including the introduction and conclusion.

The second chapter sets forth the theoretical assumptions of the thesis brought about by the rise of the post-positivist academic line of reasoning that foregrounds such sociological concepts as identity and self/other nexus. Further, this chapter defines the conceptual setup and the theoretical premises of the thesis, as well as details analytical steps to study the discursive interplay of the EU and Russian perceptions.

The first part of the third chapter is dedicated to the revision of the academic literature on the EU identity and its roles and points to the fact that the debates on the EU identity and actorness have tended to lapse into Eurocentrism and this solipsism has to be overcome by incorporating the perceptions that third parties hold of the EU. Furthermore, drawing on the literature of recognition, the chapter sets forth probable outcomes resulting from

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[37] To put it simply, the discourse theory on identity formation suffers from methodological deficiency. It is necessary to mention several laudable attempts to lay the methodological bases to the application of the reflectivist line of thought, see for example Hansen (2006), Howarth (2000 and 2005), Glynos and Howarth (2005).

discursive recognition or resistance and hypothetically indicates a gamut of discursive reactions that go beyond the simplistic recognition/misrecognition dichotomy. The second part of the chapter lays out the criteria for the EU's identity as an actor through the prism of the Russian (mis-) recognition by merging the traditional conceptualizations of the EU's actorness with the more recent theoretical and analytical angles informed by constructivist and poststructuralist discourse theories.

Chapters four, five, six and seven present empirical investigation to illustrate the interaction of the EU's self-perceptions and Russian images in the following case studies: the images of the EU as a model of regional integration, as an actor in the common neighbourhood, as a promoter of human rights and democracy and as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis.

The concluding chapter sums up the empirical findings of the four case studies concerning the influence of the interaction of images through the prism of (mis-) recognition on the EU's identity and EU-Russian relations, indicated the contribution of the thesis to the scholarly literature and inentifies future avenues of research.

CHAPTER II

SELF AND OTHER MUTUAL CONSTITUTION THROUGH DISCURSIVE INTERACTIONS: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

1. Introduction

The analytical angle on perceptions as hypothetical contributors to the formation of European identity and putative explanatory factors of the conflictual predispositions that plague EU-Russian relations makes the premises offered by recent sociological and linguistically-informed literature a theoretically justified choice. This chapter discusses how the rise of the post-positivist academic line of reasoning brought to the fore sociological concepts such as identity and Self/Other nexus, thereby providing a theoretical framework for the thesis. Further, the thesis scrutinizes the concepts of identity, foreign policy roles and perceptions and highlights their interlinked relations in the cyclic model of interaction. Finally, the chapter presents a method that combines the methodological rigour and compatibility with the theoretical basis of the thesis.

2. Post-positivist turn in International Relations

The rise of the post-positivist thought in the late 1980s and early 1990s generated a host of academic literature that addressed questions of identity and identity formation from the sociologically-oriented and language-informed points of view. This line of scholarly thought can be subdivided into two broad directions of academic thought.

First, there is the so called moderate, conventional or 'thin' constructivism[38] that does not have an objective to burn bridges with the mainstream positivist thought in social sciences. This academic thought is utterly heterogeneous; some scholars within this

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[38] Constructivism is a broad church to succumb to easy classification and there is no strict delineation between several strands of constructivism. Under constructivism we mean the conventional/moderate branch of this academic thought represented by Wendt (1994, 1999), Adler (1997a), Hopf (1998) to name just a few distinguished authors.

tradition aim at cautious enrichment of realist and liberal premises with an ideational dimension, others in a more daring manner introduce new ontological horizons in their work. More conventional scholars belonging to this tradition don't discard the importance of material military or economic power but add ideational meanings that actors attach to this power and highlight the importance of discursive power as a source of international standing (Katzenstein, 1996; Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 1996; Herman, 1996). Other academics venture audaciously into exploring other dimensions of social life through the constructivist lenses by relying heavily on such concepts as identity, norms and discourse (Adler, 1997b; Hopf, 1998; Hopf, 2002; Cederman and Daase, 2003; Wendt, 1994, 1995 and 1999; Reus-Smith, 2005; Checkel, 1999).

The constructivist perspective, while challenging fundamental ontological premises of the positivist approaches by introducing such sociological notions as norms, culture and identity in the research agenda, nevertheless, shuns epistemological relativism and aims to retain a certain degree of loyalty to the causal epistemology. In this sense, constructivism tries to "seize the middle ground" between rational and interpretive approaches (Adler, 1997a).

Another branch of literature that sets as an objective "to denaturalize the social world" (Hopf, 1998), poststructuralism[39], self-reflexively describes itself as "dissident thought in International Studies" which "speaks the language of exile" (Ashley and Walker, 1990). Philosophical underpinnings of this thought embrace Marxism (Marx and Engles, 1985; Gramsci, 1977; Althusser, 1969), structuralism (Saussure, 1974; Levi-Strauss, 1968; Foucault, 1979 and 1972; Derrida, 1978), psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1978), phenomenology (Husserl, 1965; Heidegger, 1962), and analytical tradition (Wittgenstein, 1971; Quine, 1980)[40]. The main premise of the poststructuralist discourse theory is the rejection of the essentialist view of identity, that is, social objectivity does not have a fixed essence, but rather, it is malleable and contested. In this view all subjects and practices are discursively constructed, identities and meanings are relational, contingent and dependent on the discursive exteriors that partially constitute and thus potentially subvert them[41].

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[39] Poststructuralist scholars are often known under different labels: critical/radical constructivists, postmodernists, reflectivists, interpretivists, etc.

[40] Seminars in poststructuralist discourse theory by Glynos, Jason and Howarth, David (2011).

[41] Glynos, Jason and Howarth, David (2011).

The poststructuralist approach ostentatiously aims to distance itself from the positivist line of scientific thinking by casting aside mainstream ontological and epistemological assumptions. On the one hand, poststructuralists view the reality as discursively constructed; on the other hand, they challenge traditional methodological approaches by endeavouring "to think beyond the *causal law* paradigm" (Glynos and Howarth, 2008: 7, emphasis in the original). Such a radical stance could not but trigger an avalanche of critical remarks accusing the discipline of the reality deficit, that is, reduction of social reality to language, the epistemological deficit and the resulting explanatory deficiency.

Despite their differences[42], constructivists and poststructuralists are united in their efforts to destabilize the rationalist hegemony in social sciences and the prevalent essentialist perspective on identity and interests. Most importantly, this theoretical angle also exerts far-reaching implications for European Studies as, according to Adler (1997b), the new perspective has shaken the "rationalist" state-centric approach that tended to think of the state as a unitary actor that possesses only corporate identity[43]. Therefore, the introduction of the concept of identity as a means to "reread the state (system)" (Berenskoetter, 2010) can be seen as a move that opens up a fruitful avenue of research on the European Union as a novel type of actor.

3. Theoretical and conceptual framework: a brief overview

The post-positivist line of reasoning offers a new and invaluable perspective on studying social relations by significantly widening the conceptual portfolio of analytical categories at the disposal of a researcher. In particular, the concept of identity linked to the Self/Other interactions became a catchword in the new sociologically-oriented strand of literature. Another analytical category that was taken cognizance of within the

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[42] Differences between traditions are numerous. One of the most visible is the difference in conceptualizing the relationship between identity, interests and foreign policy. In constructivist line of thought identity serves as a basis for defining interests and consequently as a road map for formulation and implementation of foreign policy. Thus, identity functions as a variable. Poststructuralists view identity and foreign policy as interlinked. According to their point of view foreign policies are formulated depending on the identity, while at the same time foreign policy produces and reproduces identities (Hansen: 2006).

[43] Positivist approaches tended to view actors as self-interested utility maximizers with pregiven interests, that is, possessing presocial and fixed corporate identities that include in Adler's definition (1997b: 252) such interests as physical security, recognition by other actors, and economic development defined by the state's constitutive individuals, material resources and institutions.

constructivist landscape is the concept of the role that, while promising to rectify the alleged deficiencies and limitations of the concept of identity, retains the linkages of the self-awareness as a political actor with the constitutive outside.

Another central concept in this thesis is the image which also incorporates internal and external dimensions. Although images were used in the political psychology and the cognitive strand of the Foreign Policy Analysis already in the 1960s-70s, the interest towards the role of the perceptions as important factors in identity formation and foreign policy behaviour increased in the second half of the 2000s. Taking into account this explanatory potential of images the chapter endeavours to interweave the concept in the post-positivist theoretical presuppositions.

3.1. The concept of identity

Identity is the key concept brought into the research agenda within International Relations and European Studies at the behest of the post-positivist line of thinking. The ubiquity of the concept is justified given that the research of social relations without inclusion of ideational elements would render senseless[44] and the ontological importance of identity is perfectly captured by David Campbell's (1992: 8) concise definition that "identity is an inescapable dimension of being. Nobody could be without it".

Despite the ever-growing recognition of significance of identity and extensive theoretical reflection on its conceptualization, identity still remains an analytically loose, elusive and disreputably imprecise concept (Abdelal et al., 2006; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Berenskoetter, 2010). Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 1 and 8) argue that one of the reasons of such ambiguity is the overextension of the term, as the notion of identity "tends to mean either too much or two little" and is frequently used to explain antithetical phenomena[45], namely, to embrace and reject sameness in a seemingly contradictory theoretical move.

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[44] The concept of identity can unfathomably widen and deepen the analysis of international affairs as it is inextricably linked to the constructivist vision of the world as a "never-ending construction project" Kubálkova (2001b: 57).

[45] Brubaker and Cooper (2000) single out several key uses of the term: identity as a basis for political action, identity as a unifying force on the basis of sameness, identity as a feeling of 'selfhood', identity as a product of social and political action and identity as a result of competing discourses.

Kowert's (2010) approach to systematizing the usages of identity in international relations stipulates in a more explicit manner that the concept combines both the sameness and difference, however, he does not see in this fact any theoretical incongruity as both aspects are the flipsides of the same coin. Thus, in a seamless manner his typology combines both the internal dimension that defines identity as a consolidating force that integrates members of a group according to the principle of similarity, and the external aspect that views identity in relation to others. He singles out the following usages of identity: identity as a meaning or purpose, identity as an image or category, identity as cohesion and identity as a behavioral pattern or role.

Table 1. Alternative conceptions of identity

	Constitution	**Regulation**
Integration (internal aspect)	Identity as meaning or purpose	Identity as cohesion
Differentiation (external aspect)	Identity as image or social category	Identity as behavioural pattern or role

Source: Kowert (2010: 4)

The typology indicates that identity fulfils two functions: constitutive and regulative, the former tells us who we are (identity as meaning) and also tells the others who we are (identity as image) while the latter prescribes who can belong to identity (identity as cohesion) and implies appropriate behaviour towards other states (identity as a behavioural pattern). Therefore, identity "accounts both for *is* and *ought,* and it performs these functions both internally and externally" (Kowert, 2010: 4 emphasis in the original).

This explicit delineation and significance of both internal and external dimensions carried out by identity are fundamental for the theoretical narrative that underpins this thesis. On the one hand, identity as a meaning or purpose acts as a unifying force based on a We-feeling and shared self-conceptions and, as Abdelal et al. (2006) point out, defines the constitutive norms and social purposes that define and bind members of the group. Logically, the concept also implies certain cohesion; therefore identity regulates the internal composition and the relative homogeneity of the community by defining who can be awarded with the membership status.

On the other hand, it makes little sense to talk about identity without incorporating the relational component that highlights how the identity of one actor differs from identity of the other. This constitutive-differentiating perspective on identity as an image is broadly

consonant with Hopf's (1998: 190) definition of identities as "congealed reputations" which, as he defines elsewhere, serve as a "cognitive economizing device" that helps us to make judgments both of ourselves, as well as of others (Hopf, 2002: 4). In this sense identity draws boundaries between the Self and the Other (Risse-Kappen, 1996) and functions like a prism through which a state sees other states. As Hopf (1998: 175) argues "a state understands others according to the identity it attributes to them" but at the same time it judges others through the prism of its own identity. In comparison with the neorealist approaches, sociologically sensitive perspectives argue that it is not anarchy that endows the status of allies or threats on the others, but identity (Barnett, 1996).

This aptitude of identity to function as a prism is closely related to its task to prescribe a behavioural pattern or role, a premise that is echoed in the numerous constructivist-labelled works which view identity as a road map for interests[46]. From this analytical angle identity provides "prescriptive representations" (Kowert and Legro, 1996: 453) that "specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognize a particular identity" (Katzenstein, 1996: 5) and define interests and appropriate actions and as such presents an alternative to the rationalist materialistically-informed views of fixed identity of the states as utility maximizers. In this sense, norms that constitute identity possess "regulative" effects and "specify standards of proper behaviour" (Katzenstein, 1996: 5) not only towards "us" and but also towards those defined as "others" (Risse-Kappen, 1996). Thus, identities operate as "frames of reference" (Cronin, 1999: 18) that guide the decision makers in their relations with other states and are used instrumentally to justify certain policies towards others.

Thence, the perceived weakness of the concept of identity as highlighted by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) broadens the avenue of research due to the fact that such multiple usages of the concept enrich the analysis of social relations by adding multiple angles and different research designs. Moreover, the review of literature on identity suggests that the concept does not necessarily have to denote either difference or sameness as most scholarly work effectively combines both perspectives in their analytical narrative.

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[46] Wendt, for example, points out that identities define interests as it is impossible to know what you want if you don't know what you represent (Wendt, 1999). Also see Wendt (1992), Hopf (2002), Katzenstein (1996).

3.2. The role of the Other in identity formation

The theoretical connotation of the concept of identity as comprising sameness and difference is inseparably linked with the reflectivist antiessentialist view of identity as a discursive creation that is continuously being constructed and is subject to social contestation. These premises promoted by moderate and radical versions of constructivism bring into focus the Self/Other nexus as a basis for exploring identity as not fixed but constructed through its differentiation from the Other.

The Self/Other problematique is at the heart of poststructuralist analysis. Distinguished theorists belonging to this scholarship such as Der Derian (1987), Derrida (1987), Connolly (1991) and Foucault (1979) construct their argument taking Self/ Other dichotomy as a starting point; a line of reasoning followed by other scholars. According to the poststructuralist tradition, identity is discursive, social, political and relational. The relational component is reflected in the fact that identity is not fixed but constructed in the antagonistic relations with the Other. Scholars belonging to this line of thinking assume the ontological importance of the Other that is based on the premise that the constitutive oppositional outside is not secondary, but is of equal importance as the Self itself. Thus, the Self/Other conceptual pair is not a mere opposition, but a more complex relationship, which, contradictory as it might sound, contains both constitutive as well as threatening and disruptive elements. Thus, poststructuralists[47] view the Other as an antagonistic force against which the identity is mobilized[48]. As Torfing (2005: 15, emphasis in the original) argues "identity is intrinsically linked to the construction of *social antagonism* which involves the exclusion of a threatening Otherness".

However, there has been a turn from the categorical depiction of the Other as radical and threatening (Campbell, 1992) to the Other that can possess various degrees of Otherness, such as complementary identities, contending identities, negative identities and non-identities (Connolly, 1991: 8). Furthermore, poststructuralist analysts argue that the

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[47] The poststructuralist perspective of the Other exhibits striking affinity with the 'enemy image' that dominated the neorealist and cognitive strand of the FPA (Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995; Waever 2002)

[48] Poststructuralist view of the radical Self and Other is rooted in positivist dichotomic premise of the 'secure inside'/'dangerous outside'. (Messari, 2001). This perspective leads to the depictions of the positive Self and threatening outside.

assumptions about national identity juxtaposed to the Other are the results of a discursive and political practice, rather than as a direct representation of an objectively threatening reality (Hansen, 1997). In this way identities and images of the Other are constructed via political discourse and are dependent on political will of decision-makers[49] and therefore, should be discovered empirically rather than assumed beforehand.

This adapted perspective that shoves the research off its usual track of analysing the Other as possessing the enemy image, has exerted its impact not only on poststructuralist literature but also on works labelled as constructivist thought and cognitive strand of Foreign Policy Analysis. There is a growing recognition of the need for more nuanced representations of the Self/Other relationship and the definition of identities that are based on difference but do not have to be founded on mutual exclusion (Rumelili, 2004). Thus, the enemy image of the Radical Other has been frequently discarded as simplistic and lacking sufficient analytical and explanatory power to embrace a heterogeneous landscape of social relations[50]. Copeland (1997) offers a more elaborated categorization of the Other, which can be constructed as a strong ally and in-group, ally but out-group, neutral but situationally driven and an adversary with innately aggressive motives. Thereby he demonstrates that the outsider's reputation can be upgraded or downgraded along the positive-negative evaluation scale, though the process is slow and meticulous research is needed to study the conditions under which the change of perceptions occurs. Moreover, the boundary between insiders and outsiders is quite flexible (Lebow, 2008), which not only theoretically permits the outsider to acquire a less negatively tinged Otherness but also provides a chance of becoming 'the insider'. Constructivists indicate that rapprochement between two actors may happen through the "internalization" of collective norms as they can become closer and develop collective identities (Wendt, 1999). Wendt goes even further arguing that the former enemy state can not only be seen in a more positive light (Wendt, 1999), but become a more "a positive Other" (Neumann and

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[49] A similar logic can be found in Said (1995) who sees the Orient as a cultural and ideological part of the West. He indicates that identities are constructed negatively, and the boundary setting happens not only in reality, but also in the mind and as such it is subject to reinterpretations.

[50] Waever (2002) advocates for a "differentiated systems of difference" to capture the nuances of the Self/Other dichotomy.

Welsh, 1991) and even "an extension of the Self"[51] (Wendt, 1994: 386). And the final argument against the categorical and inflexible attachment to the radical and threatening Otherness is the fact that the Other does not necessarily have to be another state or an external actor, this role can be assumed by a domestic Other or even such an intangible thing as its own past (Waever, 2004; Diez, 2004).

Moderate constructivists are generally less prone to label the Other in antagonistic terms. Rather, they concentrate their attention on external environments which influence behaviour, properties and even the existence of actors (Jepperson, Wendt, Katzenstein, 1996). This theoretical angle views social and relational identity as malleable under the influence of the constitutive outside. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996: 59) perceptively define identity as "the images of individuality and distinctiveness ('selfhood') held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant 'others'", thus the concept comprises "mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other". In this manner, the more conventional strand of the postpositivist literature takes sides with poststructuralism about the malleability[52] of identity and ontological significance of the Others, the premises that make the Self/Other theorizing a justifiable starting point for the analysis of the interaction between states in the international affairs.

To sum up, it is very important to keep in mind that when exploring identity from the Self/Other theoretical perspective, radical difference, significant otherness or any other grade of otherness cannot be assumed beforehand. As Hopf (2002) puts it, identities are indeed relational, however, they are not always oppositional, and we cannot pre-theorize

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[51] The EU serves as an example of an entity that managed to achieve "a collective identity formation" that makes its constituent states perceive each other as "an extension of the self" in Wendt's (1994) terminology.

[52] However, in comparison with poststructuralists, conventional constructivists admit that there are cases when identities as exogenous to interactions, that is, do not require constitutive Others to form their identity. Lebow (2008: emphasis in the original) for example, claims that identities "generally form *prior* to construction of 'others'". Wendt (1994) drawing on the symbolic interactionism distinguishes the concepts of corporate and social identities. While social identities indeed are developed through interaction with other states, corporate identity, being an intrinsic quality of a state, does not need the Other. According to him (Wendt 1994) the corporate identity includes such basic interests as physical security, ontological security, and recognition as an actor by others. Another way to exclude the role of the Others in identity formation is to differentiate between relational and categorical ways of identification (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). As they point out, while relational mode of differentiation demands the positioning of a person in relation to the other, categorical way of differentiation includes belonging to a definite category such as race, gender, language etc.

them, but we should discover them empirically. Also, the role of Others may sometimes be overestimated[53]. Thus, the type of Otherness, or its absence is to be discovered inductively and is revealed in perceptions that both actors hold of each other.

3.3. The concept of foreign policy roles in International Relations literature

The foreign policy role is another analytical concept to be inscribed in the conceptual glossary of the thesis. Its relevance is conditioned by the fact that while focusing on the ideational interaction of the Self and Other, the shift of analytical attention to the role allows to pitch the analysis at a more concrete and specific level. The sociological concept of the role that takes root in the theatrical analogy in which a stage actor 'performs' in front of the audience according to the pre-established rules was introduced into the FPA by Kalevi Holsti in 1970 (Aggestam, 2006). In his seminal article Holsti (1970: 234) defined the role as "a crude summation of the general orientation of a government toward the external environment", thereby offering a new perspective on the Self/Other encounter that was developed further in the role theory.

The role theory underlines that the role is defined in the process of interaction between national role conceptions and the role prescriptions emanating from the external environment[54], thus a complete analysis should contain both the perceptions of the alter and ego (Holsti, 1970). Nevertheless, an important observation must be kept in mind as Holsti warns that although external perceptions might be attributed a significant role in the role conception and implementation, domestic influence always ranks first. Thus, when the external behaviour is perceived as interference in the sovereignty of the state, and when national self-conceptions are incompatible with external expectations, the national images take precedence.

Taking into account that that the notions of identity and roles are oftentimes used synonymically, a rigorous differentiation of the terms is deemed indispensable for the

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[53] Waever (2004) notes that when it comes to identity formation of the EU (Europe), the investigations render contradictory findings as sometimes the role of the traditional significant others such as Turkey, Russia and the US varies from expressively important to strikingly limited.

[54] While the national self-conceptions are dependent on such factors as geography, economical and military capabilities (domestic factors) the external expectations include not only opinion of other states but also according to Holsti (1970: 245) "system structure, system-wide values, general legal principles, informal understandings and treaty commitments".

sake of the analytical and conceptual precision. Despite the fact that the notions of identity and roles are oftentimes used synonymically, the thesis adopts a rigorous differentiation of the terms for the sake of the analytical and conceptual precision. Identity as a much wider and all-encompassing concept of a 'feeling of selfhood' embraces multiple facets and various roles. Identities and roles are closely interlinked; however, they are not equivalent. Role is a behavioral consequence of identity (Lucarelli, 2007b) or a behavioural position (Hopf, 2002). Thus, identity enables an actor to accept a certain role compatible with the 'feeling of selfhood'. This linkage is perfectly captured by constructivist reading of identity as a variable in determining the foreign policy behaviour. Taking the EU as an example, according to Bretherton and Vogler (2006), the European identity is split in two facets: exclusive and inclusive which are associated with certain roles: the former aspect conditions the assumption of the EU's role as a protector of its citizens from some kind of external threat, while the latter identity suggests three roles – as a model, as a promoter of its founding values; and as a counterweight to the USA[55].

Hence, the agent's self-conceptions might trigger the emergence of a sweeping gamut of behavioural stances that make identity an analytically unwieldy concept. To avoid the precariousness of asserting that outsiders judge identity it would be much safer to subject to scrutiny certain roles as inseparable components of identity and more manageable and practical analytical tools. That point is consonant with Boulding's (1961: 103-104) assertion that "the political image is essentially an image of roles … the whole society is permeated with these images of the roles".

Echoing the premises of the Self/Other identity formation, the role theory assumes that the roles are not automatic but are the result of interaction with other actors (Aggestam, 2004). The interplay between the internal and external aspects is captured in Elgström and Smith's (2006: 5) definition of roles as "patterns of expected or appropriate behaviour that is determined by both an actor's own conceptions about appropriate behaviour and by the expectations of other actors". Likewise, Wendt (1999: 227-228) reiterates this point of view by asserting that "the role-constructing side of the equation is ultimately shaped by

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[55] Another example to illustrate the range of the possible roles that the European Union assumes in world politics is suggested by Hill's (1998) categorization of the EU as a balancer of power, a bridge between rich and poor countries, a joint supervisor of the world economy, a regional pacifier, a global intervener, a mediator of conflicts.

an actor's identity and the others' expectations". For that reasons, the Other's perceptions are expected to play a constitutive role in the role-taking.

3.4. The concept of images in International Relations literature

The central concept of the thesis is the image[56]. The understanding of perceptions incorporated in the conceptual design of the thesis is based on the Boulding's (1961: 6-7) definition of the images as "personal beliefs" that something is true, a kind of "subjective knowledge" that is built up as a result of the past experience and that is subject to changes in the process of interaction with the external world. The image does not belong to the group of the most debatable concepts of the international relations and it has largely been excluded from the dominant 'realist' literature. This concept was largely ignored by the scholars belonging to the systemic point of view of the world that treated states as black boxes and was left in the domain of the sub-discipline of the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) (Kubálková, 2001a). Consequently, images were studied mainly within the FPA that concentrated on the agents and their beliefs, perceptions and misperceptions and personal characteristics as domestic explanations of foreign policy.

As the FPA draws its inspiration from psychology and sociology, the origins of the image as a concept can be found in these disciplines. Weber, for instance, recognized that although "not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct" sometimes there are situations when "the 'world images' that have been created by ideas have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest" (Weber, 1958: 280). Simmel concentrated more on the importance of perceptions held by human mind but in a sense that "all personal communication is subject to cognitive distortions and….that prevents us from fully assuming the role of others" resulting in incompleteness that forces us to rely on generalizations (cited by Cederman and Daase, 2003). Thus, while Weber recognizes that sometimes images intervene into action, Simmel affirms that the images are not always reliable and that because of uncertainty and complexity, actors have to resort to generalizations, which

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[56] The terms "images" and "perceptions" are used interchangeably.

have a tendency to simplify the perceptions. Both of these premises will be taken up later by scholars of cognitive branch of foreign policy analysis.

Among the pioneers in the images theorizing it is possible to name Boulding (1959) whose assertion that states/agents hold different perceptions of each other and that is frequently not the reality that matters, but the decision-makers' perceptions of it, was clearly a deviation from the dominant materialistic point of view on international relations. Boulding (1961) also pointed out that images are not only expectations of a certain role that exist in people's mind but also can exist as personalized symbols[57]. These images, reiterated in cartoons[58] and political speeches are laden with value and emotional connotations and serve as an energy serving device[59].

Despite the merits of Boulding's assumptions that indicated that the image has a fundamental role for social life as it largely governs foreign policy behaviour, his work is limited as he developed a rather general view of the role of the image in various sciences without developing a theory of perceptions or explaining how the research was to be conducted. This task was undertaken by scholars who endeavoured to embrace cognitive aspects of social relations. Robert Jervis was one of the first academics, whose works sparkled interest in perceptions and misperceptions and challenged the indifference of the "realist" tradition to this concept. In his earlier work Jervis (1970) highlighted the importance of images for international relations recognizing that external perceptions contribute to the effectiveness of the state's foreign policies. In his book he aims to set foundations of the theory of deception that engages with how the states can change their behaviour "on the cheap" to project desired images[60] to reach their goals with less effort.

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[57] For instance, the USA is perceived as Uncle Sam and Russia as a bear.

[58] In fact Boulding was ahead of his time by highlighting the importance of symbolic images. Political cartoons have only recently generated the scholarly interest (Hansen, 2011).

[59] Within the cognitive FPA literature it has been mentioned that human mind is unable to deal with the whole complexity of the social world, and as such always strives for simplification (Tetlock and McGuire, 1986). A wish for the simplification can lead to perceiving the world in stereotypes. As Herrmann (1988) argues in situations of extreme opportunity or extreme threat decision makers tend to resort to balanced stereotypes. A similar function performs, according to Hopf (1998) identity, which serves to simplify the reality around us.

[60] Jervis (1070: 14) points out that there are certain limits of the manipulation of external images. For example, a state cannot change its image radically if the previous image has been reiterated repeatedly or when its actions contradict the conveyed image. A second limitation is that a state has to interact with various actors and it will find problematic to project various images for multiple audiences.

Jervis (1976) develops further his theory on perceptions and misperceptions in his next book. In his argument that perceptions or misperceptions can contribute to the explanation of conflict he draws on two models: the deterrence model (defensive realism) and the spiral model (offensive realism). In the former model, the aggressor's perceptions of the other state as possessing less capabilities will lead to conflict, whereas in the spiral model war is triggered by interpretation of others as hostile agents, sometimes more inimical than in reality.

Further refinement of the perceptions-based approaches was carried out by the so called cognitive revolution that concentrated on cognitive and information-processing perspectives in Foreign Policy Analysis. Scholars working within this tradition elaborated such a wide array of theoretical and methodological presuppositions that defies easy description. Nevertheless, Tetlock and McGuire (1986: 150) sum up the key assumptions that unite those different approaches as follows: decision-makers never have complete information about the intentions and capabilities of other states and they have "limited capacity information processors", the facts that force them to "resort to simplifying strategies to deal with complexity, uncertainty and painful trade-offs with the world confronts them". The research on declarative knowledge, or as Tetlock and McGuire (1986) call it, a representational research is one of the main contributions to the elaboration of the images-informed approaches as this line of literature turns to operational codes and cognitive maps to reveal the perceptions held by politicians of their own state and of others (Axelrod, 1976; Holsti, 1977). Another perspective that contributes to understanding of the role of perceptions in international affairs was offered by Herrmann (1988), who treats perceptions as self-serving images that are found in public and private statements of the politicians and act as independent variables that function to evaluate a situation, guide and justify a foreign policy action[61] depending if perceptions fall into one of the four categories: perceptions of threat, perceptions of opportunity, perceptions of capability relationships and perceptions of cultural differences.

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[61] Herrmann (1988: 183, 185) states that perceptions are used to define a situation in such a way that "releases the subject from moral inhibitions and allows the subject to deal with the threat or opportunity without restraint. The threat will be killed with pride and the opportunities taken without embarrassment".

The influence of conceptual frameworks based on perceptions within the cognitive strand of FPA spilled into the mainstream approaches as 'rational' scholars started to recognize that images play a role in foreign policy decision-making, however marginal it can be. For instance, Stephen Walt (1987: 5, emphasis added) observes that although the material power cannot be downplayed, states do not balance against a power, but against threats and "the level of threat is also affected by geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and *perceived intentions*". Neoliberal institutionalists also acknowledge the potential effects of the images in the international interactions by admitting that "*beliefs* held by individual" can affect the policy outcomes (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993, emphasis added).

3.5. Images and identities: the missing link

However, the greatest impact of cognitive inquiries is felt in the post-positivist theoretical perspectives and to a certain extent, the FPA and related images-based approaches can be considered as precursors of constructivist and poststructuralist lines of thinking. In the historical context in which the FPA developed, the research on perceptions in international relations predominantly concentrated on the image of an enemy (Jervis, 1976; Herrmann, 1988; Holsti, 1962) the role of which was explicitly or implicitly assigned to the Soviet Union. However, in spite of this Self/Other opposition, the usage of perceptions and images was not conceptually linked to such notions as 'identity', 'Self' and 'Other' that were mainstreamed by the reflectivist thought.

In turn, the constructivist research partially incorporated the FPA's assumptions, namely the interest in human agency (Kubálková, 2001a and b) and the role of the intangible components of social relations such as images and beliefs. Nonetheless, one of the theoretical points that this thesis endeavours to make is that postpositivist insights on the Self/Other dichotomy would only win by a more explicit incorporation of mutual perceptions and images. Currently, various versions of sociologically-sensitive approaches, in particular poststructuralist theorizing, tend to imply that it is through perceptions that the Self and the Other are differentiated and mutually constituted but do not approach this issue theoretically and empirically in a more outspoken manner. Besides, such a perspective could reveal more about the type of Otherness and if the

Other is considered to be constitutive at all, the premises frequently taken for granted in the literature.

The constructivist notion of intersubjectivity is more explicit about the role of both self-representations as well as external images as it involves shared interpretations and beliefs. As Adler (1997a: 324) claims constructivists "believe that the identities, interests and behaviour of political agents are socially constructed by collective meanings, interpretations and assumptions about the world". Wendt (1987: 359) echoes this point of view by pointing out the "inherently discursive dimension of social structures" underlines the importance of the agents' understandings and conceptions of their actions. Therefore, the role of the perceptions in the process of the 'social construction of the world' cannot be denied as the interaction that produces and reproduces social structures includes at least two actors whose perceptions undoubtedly contribute to whether this relationship is cooperative or conflictual.

However, the constructivist theoretical research agenda manifests certain predilection towards the structural view on the actors' interaction while the images of the individual policy-makers at the lower level of analysis could provide a more nuanced picture of the political landscape. In this sense the Kubálková's (2001a and 2001b) proposition to marry constructivism with foreign policy analysis is utterly justified.

3.6. Perceptions and behavior

Most literature one way or another related to perceptions admits that there is some correlation between perceptions, held by the politicians and the foreign policy outcomes. According to Jervis (1970: 5) "a decision-maker's image of another actor can be defined as those of his beliefs about the other that affect his predictions of how the other will behave under various circumstances". His argument asserts that sometimes the image matters more than material or economic capabilities in how easy an agent can reach its goals, for example, a state can coax another state into cooperation quicker and easier if it convinces its perspective partner of its good intentions. In this case a state will need less efforts and resources to achieve the cooperation more "cheaply". In this sense mutual perceptions can provide valuable insights in the cooperative or inimical state of affairs between both actors.

Identity has an important role to play in the perceptions-foreign policy equation as it is the identity that acts as a certain kind of a mediator by defining our images of the others and thereby conditioning appropriate foreign policy performance. As Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 17) suggest one of the key understandings of identity as a basis for interests and consequently external action implies that "individual and collective action can be governed by particularistic understandings of Self and social location rather than by putatively universal, structurally determined interests". Wendt's (1999: 231) simplistic but perspicacious observation states that we don't know what we want unless we know who we are. In this manner, the foreign policy behaviour directed at other players differs depending on the identity attributed to them and it is the actor's identity that defines if others are perceived as friends, enemies, partners[62] etc. Wendt (1992: 397) summarizes this point by arguing that "states act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not". Therefore, the perceptions of threat or amity conditioned by identity theoretically may lead to a conflict or spur cooperation.

However, it is observed that perceptions and foreign policy outcomes cannot be viewed as independent and dependent variables in a rigid sense due to impossibility to establish direct causality between them. Only correlative relation is possible as perceptions are only one of the factors that contribute to formulation of a certain policy, and as such do not have a predictive value, but can only offer a hint[63] and one of the plausible explanations of the nature of relationship between the actors.

3.7. Analytical framework

The concept of perceptions is central to the interaction between players in international affairs. For the EU external images are arguably of even greater importance than for traditional actors as they are an essential component of EU's identity formation and one of the factors conditioning its foreign policy behaviour. The process is highly interactive

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[62] Constructivist literature explores these linkages by showing how "political elites/governments use a certain reading of national Selfhood, including the stereotypical images of the 'Other' to justify certain policies" (Berenskoetter, 2010: 11).

[63] Tetlock and McGuire (1986: 152) put it "beliefs, perceptions and values that people express may merely be justifications for policies they have already adopted as a result of other processes".

and complex and can only be graphically visualized in an utterly simplified form, as illustrated by the figure 2.

Figure 2. Perceptions, identity, foreign policy roles and foreign policy outcomes
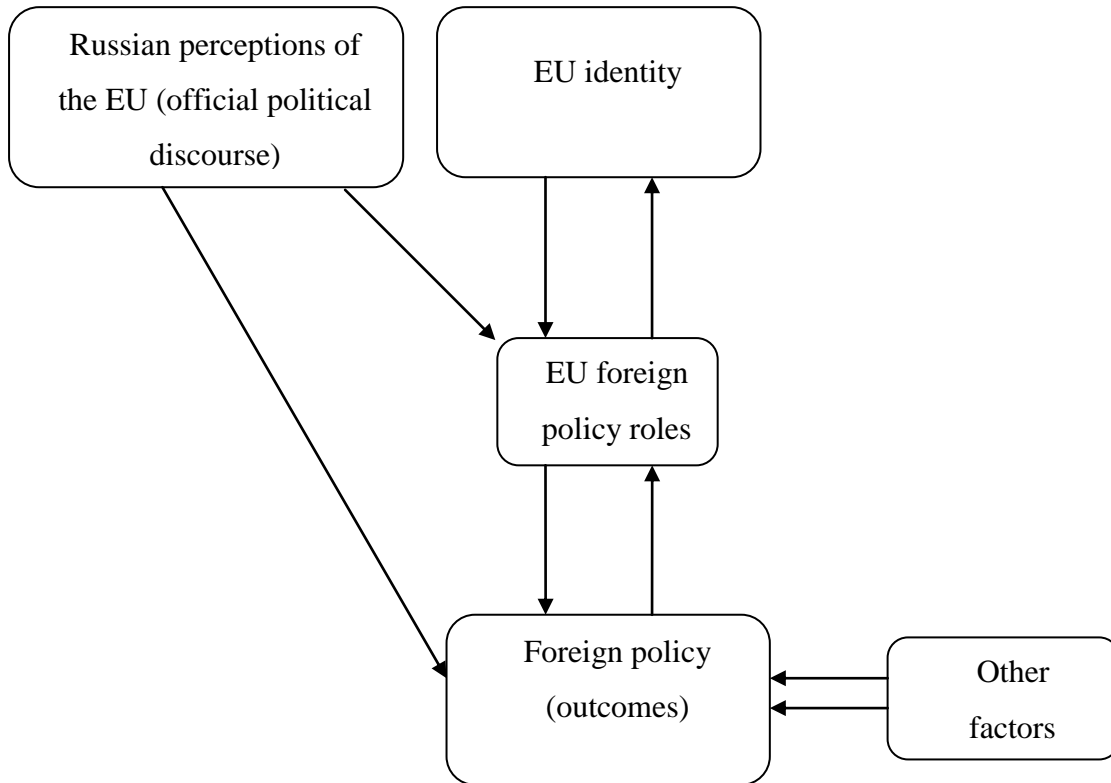
Source: Author's elaboration

The content of identity, as the simplified scheme captured by figure 2, suggests, comprises self-identification images that are subject to external scrutiny. Images that other actors hold of the EU function as a "second mirror" (Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2009) as they help to shape the European identity. However, outsiders do not judge the European identity directly as identity is elusive, intangible and often invisible and people are not always aware of its presence. Rather, as the figure 2 captures this causal link, third parties evaluate concrete foreign policy roles that the EU adopts and which are more perceptible and observable identity's behavioral consequences. In this sense, the role functions as an indispensable link for an analysis of the influence of external images on identity and foreign policies. As Lucarelli (2007b: 257) suggests the concept of role that refers to the "EU's international stance" better fits into the analysis of the relationship between identity, EU foreign policy and interaction with Others than the concept identity. It should be kept in mind that the role the EU accepts is also the result of social

interaction with other actors (Aggestam, 2006; Elgström and Smith, 2006) as the institutionalization of identity generates expectations both of the role-holder as well as of outsiders, which restrain the range of possible roles. Following that logic, the roles the European Union assumes are not only the behavioural derivatives of the European self-understandings but are influenced by perceptions of the EU that prevail in Russian political discourse, which by confirming or rejecting the EU's self-perceptions make explicit Russian expectations that the EU might feel compelled to meet.

Following the graphic illustration provided by figure 2, the EU's adoption of certain foreign policy roles conditions foreign policy outcomes by assigning what actions are deemed appropriate within the framework of the assumed role. From this analytical perspective external images can be one of the variables in foreign policy formulation and implementation. So the degree of the EU's success in promoting its policies has to be seen partially in the light of its legitimacy in the eyes of other actors (Barbé and Herranz Surralés, 2010). In turn, the outcomes of these policies and their reception or rejection and evaluation of the EU's performance by other actors will influence EU self-conceptions. Lucarelli (2006: 13) explains this process as "the way we conceive our international role is functional to the way in which we conceive ourselves; at the same time the way we 'perform' our role feeds back into our political identity". And the 'performance' depends to some extent on if the EU policies are accepted or rejected by its counterparts. The perceptions that Russia has of the EU can be one of the factors why it opposes or facilitates the EU's policy. This Russian rejection or acceptance of the enactment of concrete EU foreign policy roles is bound to feedback on the EU's self-awareness as an actor thereby having correlative influence on whether the relations between both actors are to be framed in terms of cooperation or conflict.

3.8. Recognition as an essential component in the ideational Self-Other interactions

These linkages between perceptions generated in the Self-Other interaction, identity formation and foreign policy behaviour invariably highlight the importance of inclusion of recognition, which is one of the key concepts in social sciences as it permeates human relations. In fact, it is seen as the main motive behind human action (Ringmar, 2002, 2008 and 2014; Greenhill, 2008). Ringmar (2008) argues that conventional explanations that

people act rationally in order to achieve gain maximization and losses minimization are oftentimes insufficient to explain human behaviour. Instead, he puts forward an alternative explanation that people "act not only in order to win things, but also in order to defend a certain conception of who they are" (Ringmar, 2008: 3). This perspective invariably involves identities which presumably matter no less to the agent than national interests defined in rationalist terms, thereby making the "recognition game" the best description of world politics (Ringmar, 2002).

Thus, recognition has existential meaning; it not only confers the right to existence, but the right to exist in a certain way. External acceptance is essential for identity given its relational nature. By obtaining recognition the entity gets the status of an actor, it enhances and confirms its identity, obtains the satisfaction of its fundamental need to be recognized (Greenhill, 2008) and ensures the continuity of identity in spatial and temporal dimensions (Ringmar, 2014). The very participation in international politics makes actors assume a specific role accompanied by rules and principles and expected behaviour, that is, to present themselves as a specific type of an actor and to be recognized externally under this description. Therefore, external legitimization is an inalienable component of enactment of the role identity and its institutionalization in social structures (Wendt, 1999: 227).

Recognition or frequently misrecognition is conferred through interaction as they have beneficial or detrimental influence on the identity of the actor. As Taylor (1994: 25) puts it: "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others, and so a person or group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if people of society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves". Positive perceptions and high-expectations of the EU as a capable actor exert positive influence on its self-perceptions as they satisfy its striving for recognition and augment its international influence. In this sense, recognition is a social act through which the actor in Wendt's words (2003: 511) "is constituted as a subject with a legitimate social standing in relation to the Self". This standing implies an acceptance by the Self of normative constraints on how the Other may be treated, and an obligation to give reasons if they must be violated". Thus, the actor's recognition not only awards the right of existence, but also defines other actor's behaviour. In turn, misrecognition can have detrimental consequences for the actor, being, according to

Ringmar (2014: 7) "a traumatic experience" of losing "face and status". Talking in abstract terms Wendt (2003) argues that actors that are not recognized, like a slave or an enemy in the state of nature, do not count and so may be killed or violated as one sees fit.

Importantly, world politics is not only the battlefield scene to be recognized, but is also the struggle as Ringmar (2002: 120) frames it, for "who should have the rights to impose what descriptions on whom". This observance, though of ultimate importance, seems to be undeservingly ignored in scholarly literature. Recognition is not a one way street, but taking into account the premise of the constitutive outside, invariably involves the Self's "reaction to reaction" (Rumelili, 2004), that is, the Self's acceptation or rejection of its mirror images.

Therefore, based on the assumptions of the binary nature of identity and the importance of external recognition both for identity and actorness, the following analytical steps to approach studying perceptions are singled out. Consistently with the premises of the Self/Other identity construction the first step is to delve into the exploration of the EU's own ideational self-representation which isdefined by Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 18) as "a subjective and autoreferential term" that "designates one's own understanding of who one is"[64]. Given the internal and external dimensions of identity it is logical first to turn to the Self's definitions of the content of identity or, to use Abdelal's et al. words (2006: 697), "constitutive roles- the practices that define that identity and lead other actors to recognize it". Thus, analysis of the patterns of discursive self-representations used to describe the particular role adopted by the EU and projected to the external audiences constitutes the initial state of the investigation[65].

The second step is based on the premise that identities and roles are social and their normative content is contested and exposed to external judgment in search of recognition. The Other's reactions to the Self's auto-perceptions, according to Messari (2001: 234) are expected to be threefold: "to like or dislike it, to acknowledge or ignore it" and to impose

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[64] Likewise, Glynos and Howarth (2008: 7) cite as an example of a hermeneutical research design which places self-interpretations as an intrinsic point of departure for social science inquiry.

[65] In this step a researcher might want to include the domestic construction of identity that will widen the research agenda as it has to include the articulation of identity and hegemonic struggles among various domestic actors. This thesis, however, focuses on the ideational self-representations as they are articulated in the official discourse and transmitted to the world.

its images on the Self or to accept the imposition of the self-conceptualizations. Thus, the reactions of the others basically exhibit two patterns: recognition and resistance. In the case of recognition as Rumelili (2004: 37-38) states "the identity discourses and performances of the Other reproduce the Self's identity" and "there is no longer the need to reassert the Self's identity in relation to the Other". In this situation the Other's recognition enables the actor "to exist in the way it currently presents itself" (Greenhill 2008: 363) and the Self-Other relation is exempt from conflicts. Even more, through the processes of socialization and recognition the Others can become closer to the Selves, change the status of enemies/outsiders to friends or even become an extension of the Self (Wendt, 1992). In the case of misrecognition or rejection of self-images, the situation is fraught with conflict and insecurity, as the Self might feel vulnerable and try to "secure its identity" (Rumelili, 2004). These relations are bound to be ripped with conflict and contradiction thereby impeding the emergence of what Mercer (1995) calls the Other-Help relations[66] based on mutual recognition of the Self and Other's identities.

However, the dialogical nature of social interactions hypothetically represents a much more complex mosaic that can be captured by the simple recognition-misrecognition dichotomy. Thus, on one the hand, academic literature points out that external recognition implies a positive affirmation of the Self's identity. However, the Self does not always espouse exclusively positive self-depictions, alternatively, in a soul-searching manner; it might include self-critical images of itself referring to its deficiencies. These derogatory descriptions can be endowed with the Other's recognition. However, in this case recognition possesses negative valence and, therefore, exerts a contrary effect on the Self's identity than positive recognition as it reiterates and sediments negative depictions in the intersubjective structure. This thesis refers to this hypothetical outcome of the discursive 'encounter' as 'negative' recognition, to distinguish it from 'positive' recognition that reflects positive external attitudes towards the Self's identity.

Scholarly thought indicates that discursive resistance to the Self's identity representations which can be differentiated between non-recognition and misrecognition. While both indicate the lack of adequate recognition implying detrimental consequences on the Self's

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[66] Mercer (1995) drawing on the constructivist accounts of identity points to existence of the "other-help" international system as an alternative to the neorealist concept of anarchy based on self-help. This is a cooperative security system that is based on joint responsibility, empathy and altruism and emerged as a result of the Self and Other approximation as deemed possible by Wendt (1992).

identity, there is some difference in the degree of psychological and normative damage inflicted. According to Seglow (2012: 133, emphasis added) non-recognition arises as a result of the failure to acknowledge the ideational representations of the Self because "we stigmatize, degrade, or humiliate them or simply because *we do not engage with them at all*". In this manner, the absence of external feedback to certain European self-representations is indicative of the tendency to ignore or dismiss them as inexistent. In turn, misrecognition involves rejection and contestation of the Self's images and mirroring back contrasting and antithetical images. Seglow (2012) assumes that there is a substantial difference between sending distorted messages with a negative colouring, and just not sending them at all. While both non- and misrecognition exert an unpropitious impact on the EU identity, the latter has more profound negative repercussions, as according to Seglow (2012: 133) it may be "less worse to fail to recognize than to misrecognize a person, even if the former too might provoke negative interior feelings".

Besides, the thesis assumes that there might be intermediate reactions of the Other to the Self's representations. In particular, self-images can be only partially recognized as only some aspects of the Self's identity discourse are acknowledged by the Other. Besides, the paradigm of the Other's reactions to the Self's images envisages the possibility of the coexistence of dual and diametrically opposed images that express simultaneous parallel recognition and misrecognition of the same discursive self-representation transmitted by the EU.

Thus, the thesis sets forth a hypothetical assumption that the recognition/misrecognition dichotomy includes a much wider set of Russia's reactions that vary in their degree of discursive resistance and consequently in their impact on EU identity. While recognition exerts positive influence, misrecognition and non-recognition refer to Russia's outright and categorical resistance to EU self-categorizations. Negative recognition reifies the putative self-critical line of European discourse. Partial recognition and parallel recognition and misrecognition (dual images) occupy an intermediary position by simultaneously acknowledging and contesting the EU's self-descriptions.

The third possible and potentially revealing stage when it comes to identity formation is the focus on 'the reaction to the reaction', that is, the Self's acceptance or rejection of its images as mirrored in the political discourse of the Other. In this case the Self may either

accept or resist the misrecognition of the Other[67]. In the first case the Self may modify its role in accordance with external expectations while in the second case conflict and antagonism could be exacerbated and brought to a higher degree of intensity at the ideational level that is bound to spill into foreign policy outcomes.

Thus, table 2 graphically visualizes several anticipated outcomes of EU-Russian ideational interactions depending on the prevalent discursive patterns.

Table 2. Potential outcomes of recognition and mis-/non-recognition in the EU/Russia interactions

	Russian recognition of the EU's self-images	**Russian mis-/non-recognition of the EU's self-images**
EU's acceptance of Russian counter-discourse	peace (interaction of equals)	conflict
EU's resistance to Russian counter-discourse	-	intensified conflict

Source: Author's elaboration

This table suggests that the interaction between both actors is expected to be exempt from conflict if Russia accepts the EU's self-images and the EU is satisfied with this recognition as it considers its identity as reaffirmed and sedimented in the intersubjective structure. However, Ringmar (2002) makes a cursory remark that on closer examination may have colossal repercussions for the Self/Other interactions. Following Hegel (1977), he observes that the recognition endowed by someone the Self considers as inferior is not satisfying in the long term, rather, what the Self needs is "the respect given by someone he in turn respects" thereby, also prompting the inferior Other to transform itself to be recognized as equal (Ringmar, 2002: 120). Thus, viewing the "reaction to reaction" as an *ad infinitum* chain, even the situation of mutual recognition can potentially harbour the conflict between the Self and the Other unless it is the interaction of equals. Only in this case, the mutual recognition brings the Self and Other closer to the creation of a "World State" and the formation of the all-inclusive collective identity (Wendt, 2003).

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[67] Boulding (1961:8-9) points out the psychological tendency revealed in the fact that the self-image is resistant to change as when it "receives messages which conflict with it, its first impulse is to reject them as in some sense untrue". However, he argues that the change is possible if the message is repetitive.

In turn, Russian mis- or non-recognition of the European narrative is bound to exhibit conflictual predispositions. Misrecognition is always a traumatic and conflict-prone experience which puts Self-Other relations to trial even if the Self accepts the misrecognition of its self-images and tries to change its role self-conceptions through the processes called by (Natorski, 2009: 70) as "induced recognition" thereby accepting the constitutive role of the Other in its identity formation and thus easing the conflict. In the second possible scenario the Self may opt to resist[68] and not to recognize the Other's non- and misrecognition. In this case the conflict is expected to escalate further as the EU does not accept Russia as a 'Significant Other' endowed with the rights to impose its descriptions on the EU and thereby undermining Russia's self-esteem by treating it as inferior or irrelevant. This situation is utterly inflammable as the Self will persist in having its identity accepted while the Other will see its identity as threatened and feel compelled to restore it. Ringmar (2014) warns that an actor whose ideational narrative is not recognized may resort to force or even embark on a war to prove its importance.

In this manner, the empirical analysis of the patterns of Russian discursive (mis-) recognition of the EU and the EU's 'reciprocal (mis) recognition of Russia's reaction is essential not only for European identity, but is also one of the variables of the foreign policy outcomes.

4. Methodological notes

Having set forth the theoretical framework of the thesis based on the premise of binary nature of identity and having unpacked the conceptual setup used to approach the Self/Other dichotomic interaction through the interactive cycle of identity, roles, perceptions and foreign policy, the compelling task to be confronted is outlining the methodological premises, that is, to deciding where and how the perceptions are to be found and how the empirical material is to be processed to answer the research questions in lines with the theoretical underpinnings. In order to answer these questions the thesis turns to the strand of literature that developed in parallel with and in symbiosis with the

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[68] Natorski (2009: 70) singles out passive resistance when the Self does not accept its mirror representations but does not attempt to change the Other's understandings and active resistance when the Self intends to change the images that the Other holds of the Self.

post-positivist line of thought and that offers an invaluable toolbox to approach the analysis pitched at the ideational level.

4.1. Role of the language in the emergence of discursive approaches

The linguistic turn initiated in the linguistics and literary theory has gone beyond those disciplines by acquiring a tight grip of social sciences and bridging social and human traditions of thought, by opening up the possibility of what Fairclough (2003: 1 emphasis original) aptly described as "*social* analysis of spoken and written language". In International Relations this new strand of theorizing emerged at the instigation of hermeneutics, critical theory and phenomenology[69]. It brought to the fore the role of the language in social and political realities and endowed it with ontological importance in blatant contrast with the positivist tradition[70] that assigned it a Cinderella role under the pretext that the language was a deviation from the actual research (Fierke, 2002). The wide range of linguistically-informed approaches reversed such conception of the language by emphasizing its socially constitutive and socially constituting nature and indissoluble interconnectedness between language and politics[71]. The "potential political effect" of the language as Cameron and Gibson (2005: 318) put it, lies in the fact, that political action bases itself on the language, which is a material part of human and social life (Larsen, 1997). Therefore, the language can be viewed as a valuable analytical tool, a kind of a mirror that provides an explanation to a complex social, economic and political reality, which cannot be captured by rigid causal laws[72].

Although the assumption that language was an inseparable component of the social life became readily embraced by the post-positivist branches of scholarly thought, the attitude

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[69] Glynos (2001) singles out the following sources of inspiration: Wittgensteinian language games (1971), Heideggerian post-phenomenological hermeneutics (1962), Lacanian psychoanalysis (1978), Foucaultian archaeology and genealogy (1972), Derridean deconstruction (1978).

[70] In fact, scholars working within this paradigm viewed language in essentialist terms as an objective and transparent means that possesses a purely referential function of just naming and describing the social phenomena.

[71] Neumann (2002) points out that the linguistic turn does not only pay attention to the narrative and rhetoric patterns, but also to the way politics is influenced by language.

[72] The strengths of the discourse analysis are highlighted as follows: its capacity to reveal the role of language in politics, capacity to reveal the embeddedness of language in practices and capacity to answer "how" questions to illuminate mechanisms of identity creation(Hajer and Versteeg, 2005).

and allegiance turned out somewhat uneven. The conventional constructivists, while recognizing the indispensability of linguistic dimension, in their desire to keep links with mainstream traditions, took up a safer and somewhat cautious stance when it comes to the language (Fierke, 2002). The theoretical conceptualization of language was predominantly developed in the domain of poststructuralist approaches which conceived it as an all-pervasive social phenomenon following the Wittgenstein's (1971) fundamental premise that there is no meaning outside the language. This analytical perspective endowed the language with the ability of shaping identity, thereby challenging the notion of the pre-existing fixed identity[73]. As Cameron an Gibson (2005: 317) succinctly describe it: "there are no depths to plumb for the subject's true essence or identity; rather the subject is understood as always in the process of becoming, of being shaped in a multitude of ways by various discourses and practices". Therefore, the language-informed approaches have made their contribution to rethinking and rearticulating the keystone concepts such as identity, structure and agency and have gone beyond the causal explanations of social reality.

The linguistic turn enriched the scholarly landscape by bringing in a colossal number of textual-oriented approaches that include interpretative approaches which draw on hermeneutical and analytical authors such as Martin Heidegger (1962), Paul Ricoeur (1974), Peter Winch (1990), metaphor analysis (Cienki and Yanow, 2013), narrative and storytelling analysis (Stenhav, 2006), framing analysis (Rein and Schön, 1996), rhetoric (Gottweis, 2007), political cartoons (Hansen, 2011) and discourse analysis to name just a few methods.

The discourse analysis is gaining ground in International Relations and European Studies and is an extensive and heterogeneous field of study that includes various methodological and theoretical positions that differ in scope, from those that do not reject the positivist ontological premises to others willing to break with conventional traditions. Roughly speaking, it is possible to subdivide the discourse-oriented tradition into the following approaches that vary in ontology, focus and purpose: poststructuralist discourse theory (PDT), rhetorical political analysis, discourse-historical approach in critical discourse analysis (CDA), interpretive policy analysis, discursive psychology and Q methodology (Glynos et al., 2009). Those approaches take on a different definition of discourse which

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[73] Language is seen as social and political that produces meaning through the simultaneous construction of identity and meaning (Hansen, 2006).

varies from a rather technical conception of discourse as a speech act, texts, and writing, to broader meaning encompassing non-linguistic practices. However, several assumptions bring the discourse approaches together. First and foremost, being the reaction to the positivist ontological and epistemological domination, various strands of discourse analysis are united by criticizing the positivist approaches for their obsession with law causality in social sciences (Carta and Morin, 2014). They share the interest for linguistically mediated meanings and the role of the subjects in its construction. Furthermore, discourse approaches are problem-driven (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Torfing, 2005; Torfing, 1999) and as such constitute an answer to Shapiro's (2004: 19) criticisms that contemporary sciences tend to be method-driven and suffering from "self-serving construction of problems and misuse of data in various ways".

A researcher engaged in the discourse-guided investigation might find it hard not to be led astray by a multitude of discursive theoretical and methodological approaches given that discourse is a complex phenomenon that crosscuts various traditions of thought such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminist studies and more conventional strands of constructivism. Taking the liberty provided by the eclectic conception of the discourse as a multitheoretical and multimethodical approach (Wodak, 2005 and 2004), this thesis intends to combine the theoretical premises of the poststructuralist discourse theory, constructivist insights and methodological tools provided by the discourse-historical approach (DHA). The proponents of poststructuralist scholarship agree that discourse analysis as a product of interdisciplinary mixture exposes a high degree of combinability with various theoretical and methodological premises[74] in particular with the CDA and its variant DHA (Aydin-Düzgit, 2014). As Howarth (2000: 134) puts it: there is no single method for proceeding with investigation, rather, a number of "different styles of research compatible with its social ontology". Similarly, it is pointed out that the critical discourse analysis (CDA) is not a theory neither a method, rather, it is "a perspective on doing scholarship", that is, "discourse analysis 'with an attitude'" (Van Dijk, 2005: 96). Consequently, as the discourse is of a transdisciplinary nature it can engage in a dialogical relationship with other perspectives across and within the disciplines.

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[74] Torfing (1999), Glynos, Jason and Howarth, David (2011).

4.2. Poststructuralist Discourse Theory: theoretical premises and methodological deficiency

The concept of discourse has undergone an evolution, from a narrow meaning of discourse as a speech act or a conversation, to an all-encompassing interpretation that every social practice or a regime is a discourse based on the famous Derridean (1978) premise that there is no meaning outside the text. Howarth (2000: 8) singles out three momentous steps in the metamorphosis: from discourse as a speech act and linguistic communication to Foucault's assumption of discursive practices that form subjects and objects, to the latest stage that discourse includes non-discursive practices, a move, that makes the discourse "synonymous with system of social relations".

The final stage of development of the discourse-oriented approaches is theorized by proponents of poststructuralist discourse theory (PDT) which defines the discourse as "a theoretical horizon within which the being of objects is constituted" whose meaning "depends upon a socially constructed system of rules and significant differences" (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 3). Laclau and Mouffe's work which is the keystone within this tradition, conceptualizes this relation as follows:

> "The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exist, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God' depends on the structuring of a discursive field" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 108).

Thus, the poststructuralist discourse is based on the following ontological assumptions: the meanings attached to the objects through discursive interactions are contextual, relational, social and political[75]. The relational component of discourse is consonant with internal/external dimensions of the identity theorizing as discourse is defined as "concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically political, as their formation is an act of radical institution which involves the construction of antagonism and the drawing of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'" (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000). This definition clearly points out the ontological role that the

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[75] Even the poststructuralist view on "the national interest" as a constructed meaning is radically different from the rationalist argument that foreign policy of the states is driven by utility considerations (Hansen 2002).

language is endowed with within the poststructuralist discursive ontology. The language also is seen as "a social and political, an inherently unstable system of signs that generate meaning through a simultaneous construction of identity and difference" (Hansen, 2006: 17) and therefore is delegated to interpret and give meaning to objects through the processes of "linking" and "differentiation"[76]. The social aspect of discourse is rooted in the conception of the language as a social rather than individual act (Larsen, 2004). Discourse is not individual; rather it belongs to society and is shaped, hegemonized and contested through the social interaction. The political dimension of discourse is based on the presupposition that foreign policy as a discursive act which is engaged in the construction of identities and subjectivities through the power of inclusion and exclusion. In turn, identity influences the conceptions of legitimacy, political and economic interests and policy choices.

Therefore, the PDT offers an invaluable contribution to the academic thought by posing research questions from other theoretical and analytical angles and endeavouring in Diez' (2014) words "to contest that which is uncontested; to interrogate the familiar". It allows us to "produce new *interpretations* either by rendering visible phenomena previously undetected by dominant theoretical approaches, or by problematizing existing accounts and articulating alternative interpretations" (Howarth, 2005: 320, emphasis in the original). Another added value of the poststructuralist discourse theory (PDA) that is of use for the thesis is that it does not set an objective aim of producing theories; rather it is problem driven and seeks to address "specific empirical, analytical and social puzzles" (Torfing, 2005:22).

However, there have been some accusations levelled against discourse-informed approaches; the most frequently reiterated one is the methodological deficiency. The poststructuralist ontological standpoint has been diligently elaborated to explain the emergence and transformation of social structures, the role of human subjectivity, the emergence of hegemonic and counter-discourses, however the discursive concepts are said to be pitched at the abstract level and there is an urgent need to translate broad poststructuralist notions into manageable analytical and explanatory framework[77]. Thus,

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[76] For a detailed explanation of processes of linking and differentiation see Hansen (2006: 19-21).

[77] Torfing (2005) indicates that the application of the discourse theory is prevented by the lack of the manageable instruments as most studies suffer either from 'self-indulgent' theoreticism or from empiricism.

the necessity to develop rigorous methods and research strategies becomes the most pressing imperative within the PDA landscape (Torfing, 1999 and 2005; Howarth 2005, Hansen 2006, Waever, 2005). However, it is compelling to do justice to several breakthrough attempts to operationalize the poststructuralist assumptions and make them applicable to concrete empirical studies. Some of the recent and most serviceable endeavours to develop a postpositivist paradigm of explanation based on the poststructuralist ontology are carried out by Hansen (2006), Glynos and Howarth (2008)[78], Glynos and Howarth (2007), Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis (2000) to name jusy a few.

4.3. Discourse Historical Approach: analytical steps and methodological tools

Taking advantage of the high-level of compatibility exhibited by discourse approaches, the methodological tools used in this thesis were borrowed from the discourse-historical approach (DHA). It is believed that the premises of the DHA as well as its linguistic orientation which is frequently found as lacking in the poststructuralist discourse theory portfolio, will form a basis for the achievement of a theoretical and methodological commensurability of the research.

Discourse historical-approach is rooted firmly within the critical discourse analysis (CDA) tradition which contemplates "language as social practice" and which looks into "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 2005:1-2). Discourses are not simply seen as expressions of social practices, rather, they supervize and govern action and therefore, wield power. So the CDA-informed linguistic analysis is oftentimes directed at the examination of relations between language and power, to be more precise, it is interested in the production and reproduction of power structures and domination and in this sense, discourses according to Carta and Morin (2014: 9) act "vehicles that reproduce the social domination of one group over another".

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[78] Their approach is based on the logics approach to explain how a practice becomes politicized and how it is sedimented. Logics are applied to "capture the purposes, rules and ontological presuppositions that render a practice or regime possible, intelligible, and vulnerable" (Glynos and Howarth 2008:11), that is, they endeavour to provide an explanation of the emergence, transformation and perpetuation of practices by recurring to logics of equivalence and difference to construct new structures.

Discourse-historical analysis arose as a response to criticisms levelled at the CDA rebuking its determinism linked to power and structure and the absence of the subject (Glynos et al., 2009). The DHA aims to rectify these deficiencies by highlighting the role of an agent in the construction of meaning, the premise consonant with the research design of the thesis that following the phenomenological approach focuses on the official rhetoric of the decision-makers thus avoiding the charges of anthropomorphist treatment of states as agents. Furthermore, the DHA is interested in discursive identity construction by delineating 'us' from 'them' and as such is apt for identity-based investigations (Aydin-Düzgit, 2014; Wodak, 2001) [79]. And what makes the DHA epistemology especially serviceable for the theoretical premises of the thesis is its linguistic perspective which offers not only pure linguistic methods per se, but their application for broader social phenomena. As Carta and Morin (2014) put it, linguistics is not used as isolated phenomena, but serves to explain social events in the broader context.

The social and linguistic symbiosis is evident in the definition of the discourse as "socially constituted and socially constitutive" clusters of "context dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of action related to a macro-topic and linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view" (Reisigle and Wodak, 2009: 89). It flows from the definition that social practices are constituted by the meanings that reside in discourses expressed in semiotic practices. In line with this reasoning, the units of analysis are texts, which function as depositories of meanings and discursive formations. Reisigle and Wodak (2009: 90) define 'texts' as parts of discourses which "make speech acts durable over time and thus bridge the dilated speech situations, i.e. the situation of speech production and the situation of speech reception". Thus, texts[80] function as "elements in social processes" (Fairclough, 2003: 6) as they capture discourses and linguistic acts which are to be disclosed by linguistic means. Speaking technically, the texts 'translate' the representations, processes and beliefs of the mental world into tangible and material terms.

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[79] Of special interest is the application of the DHA approach to analyse the construction of EU identity (see for e.g. Krzyzanowki, 2010; Wodak, 2009; Barbé, Herranz-Surralés and Natorski, 2015).

[80] The concept of "texts" can include not only printed texts, but also television programmes, visual images and sound effects (Fairclough, 2003).

The DHA offers the concomitant set of tools to recover discursive formations as they emerge from the texts. However, using discourse as a method for the qualitative and interpretative analysis of meaning from the language, it is essential to keep in mind that it includes innumerable methodological dimensions, levels and foci of analysis[81]. Hence, a researcher must reconcile himself to the fact, that the realization of complete discourse analysis is impossible. Therefore, the analysis should be driven first and foremost by the principle of pragmatism (Wodak, 2005) that underpins the whole entirety of methodological moves undertaken in this thesis. Each empirical chapter of this thesis opens up with problematization and contextualization of a respective case study[82], that is, the cursory revision of the state-of-the art to situate the analysis in line with the requirements of problem-driven approaches. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds with the analysis of the texts, or to borrow Howarth's words (2000: 141) an "application of constructed theoretical frameworks to the problematized object of investigation" using "various techniques of discourse analysis". The recovery and interpretation of the discursive meanings is carried out following the DHA method developed by Reisigle and Wodak (2009). However, in conformity with the principle of methodological pragmatism and the empirical research questions of the study, the thesis focuses on two discursive strategies[83] nomination/referential strategy and predication which involve semantic analysis[84].

Nomination defines social actors, objects, phenomena, events and actions that are constructed by discourse. In order to delimit identities and inclusive/exusive practices of creation of in-groups and out-groups it resorts to such nominative and referential strategies as the usage of personal pronouns 'we' and they', membership characterization devises, tropes: metaphors, metonymies, synecdoche, and substitutions. As the thesis is interested in the dialogical interplay of European and Russian perceptions, this discursive

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[81] Even within a pure linguistic dimension the analysis contains semantic, lexical, stylistic, metaphorical, rhetorical, pragmatic, phonetic levels just to mention a few.

[82] Such necessity is dictated by Meyer's (2005) observation that discourses are historical and as such are understood within a particular context.

[83] Full scheme suggested by Reisigle and Wodak (2009) suggests five discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization and intensification.

[84] Such a choice is justified by two reasons. First, the investigation is interested in ideational representations and evaluative attributes of the EU. Second, the complete application of the methodology offered by Reisigle and Wodak (2009) is apt only for a small number of texts, while this thesis is based on the longitudinal analysis of the discourses emerged in the period of 10 years.

strategy commonly distinguishes nominations as 'the EU', 'Russia', 'we' and they' as well as other relevant processes as the objects of discourse, that is, the nomination/referential strategy names the social actors that function as some kind of nodal points around which attributive meanings are organized.

The second relevant strategy is predication which deals with the attributive connotations of the social actors specified by the nomination. Predication is explicitly engaged into the description of traits, characteristics, qualities and abilities. Social actors are depicted in a positive or negative light with the help of the following devices: stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive colouring (adjectives, prepositional phrases, various types of clauses (relative, conjunctional, infinitive etc), explicit predicates, collocations, explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors, allusions and etcetera. If the nomination defines and delimits a social actor or a particular phenomenon as an object of study, predication answers the question what kind of actor/phenomenon it is. Therefore, the analysis should look for linguistic signs/ discursive articulations that explicitly construct the meaning attributed to the social actor or phenomena under scrutiny. Similarly, Milliken defines discourses as systems of signification that order the practices and "operate as background capacities for persons to differentiate and identify things, giving them taken-for-granted qualities and attributes and relating them to other objects" (1999:231). This identification and differentiation is revealed through the predicate analysis of verbs, adverbs and adjectives attached to a noun. These predications function as a means of constructing objects as a particular kind of thing which is characterized with attributes, abilities and modes of acting (Milliken, 1999).

5. Conclusion

The theoretical and empirical merit of this thesis lies in its aspiration to contribute to the existing stock of literature on identity formation[85] by incorporating into the analysis both 'alter' and 'ego'. The profound analysis of the state-of-the-art exhibits two pronounced tendencies in the identity-related researches. The first and by far predominant literature focuses on the discourse of the Self. However, taking into account the limits of self-

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[85] There are various approaches to studying the Self/Other conceptual pair: symbolic interactionism, social identity theory, cognitive approaches and reflectivist strands of thinking that are united by the assumptions that identities are relational, and not fixed and as such are subject to contestation both by insiders and outsiders.

understanding as being subjective and self-ingratiating terms and urgent calls to overcome these self-referential and solipsistic predispositions, scholarly attention started to refer to the Other's narrative as well. Hence, the thesis seeks not only to make a contribution by turning to the still underexplored Other, in this case, Russia, but also ventures into combining both perspectives by contrasting the Self's (EU) self-understandings with its mirror images in the process defined by Hansen (2006) as the discursive 'encounter'. In order to approach EU/Russia ideational interactions in a manageable way and pitch the research at a more concrete level the thesis resorts to the concept of the role as the behavioural manifestations of the EU's identity.

To recap the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, the aim is to explore and to elaborate the analytical value of perceptions, showing how they can enrich constructivist and poststructuralist approaches to identity formation as well as the literature on status and recognition and demonstrating how they can contribute to the explanation of the (un)conflictual relations by comparing dialectically the narratives of the Self and the Other through the extended prism of (mis-) recognition.

CHAPTER III

THE EU: ACTORNESS AND IDENTITY

1. Introduction

It would be trivial to say that identity, which belongs to the interdisciplinarily 'contested' concepts, acquires additional complexity when applied to the European Union. This chapter, while auditing the prolific literature on European identity and roles, endeavours to clarify its stance concerning several fundamental questions: 1) Does the EU identity exist at all? 2) Where is it to be found? 3) What characterizes this identity? Furthermore, it points out that debates on the EU identity broaching these questions tended to lapse into Eurocentrism while the incorporation of the external dimension could rectify this self-restraining solipsism and enrich the perspective.

The second part discusses the EU actorness which defies an easy conceptualization due to its, as the academic jargon defines it, hybrid nature. The painstaking literature review reveals a gamut of attitudes towards the EU, which depending on the analytical and theoretical perspective, range from Euroscepticism to much more optimistic visions of the EU actorness informed by constructivist and poststructuralist theories. These new conceptualizations aim to explain the particularity of the EU actorness by shifting the focus to perceptions and identities in order to breach blind spots left by state-as-actor approaches. The thesis makes use both of the new horizons offered by the post-positivist perspective and the more traditional state-centric approaches to design four criteria of the EU's identity as an actor to define the content of what precisely is being exposed to the external judgment and develops analytical steps to proceed with the investigation through the prism of external recognition.

2. Identity of the European Union: fundamental questions

The discursive turn in the fields of International Relations and European Studies shifted the focus of scholarly attention from the institutional structure, foreign policies and

capabilities of the EU as an actor to the ideational dimension by making the notions "identity" and "role" academic catchwords. Discussions generated by the new analytical perspective hinged around the question "what characterizes the European foreign policy" (Sjursen 2006: 169) which, with the exception of some dissenting voices, was answered that the European Union definitely can be branded as a distinctive polity.

The analytical focus on the EU identity and role brought to the academic debate more questions than answers. First of all, identity as a notoriously elusive concept that defies easy conceptualization, poses a double challenge when it comes to the EU. The long list of controversial issues includes questions such as whether we can talk about the emergence of the EU identity, where it is to be found, what values constitute this identity and if the EU identity is genuinely a distinctive one? The attempts to find answers to these questions were conducive to creation of a new branch of European studies and International Relations that makes a laudable contribution to the scholarly knowledge of various aspects of the EU's identity.

However, this literature has tended to be somewhat introspective and introverted as it concentrated only on the internal dimension of identity. Taking into account the binary nature of identity that implies its formation as a result of interaction with the constitutive outside, the inclusion of external perceptions in the debate on the EU's identity could steer the scholarly literature towards a more comprehensive understanding of the concept and serve as a reality check for academic debates and the EU's self-assumed representations as an actor of a certain kind. In particular, the inclusion of the Other as a relevant element in the ideational interaction has serious explanatory potential that, drawing on the existing literature on the European identity, can offer an interesting interpretation of the studied phenomena as specified in the empirical questions of the thesis.

2.1. Does the European identity exist?

The difficulty of giving a univocal answer to the question about the existence of the EU's identity as a foreign policy actor is conditioned by its hybrid polity. In comparison with a nation-state, which is consensually considered to be the legitimate bearer of identity, academic literature is somewhat ambivalent about endowing the EU with a common

identity given the ambiguity about the level of supranational integration, unity among the EU members and the penetration of a communal We-feeling into the society. Broadly speaking, there are two approaches towards the (in-) existence of the EU identity.

First, the Eurosceptically tinged approaches assume that common EU identity is inexistent because as Guehenno (1998: 31) argues there are still no European "fellow feelings" as their emergence is impeded by strong national interests. By the same token, Hill and Wallace (1996: 8) argue that the European identity is weak because "of the diverse historical experiences of its members…because its institutions have lacked the influence over the education or the ability to create and manipulate symbols…because the forging of identity takes time". These views on identity are closely linked to the state-centric approaches and have visibly abated under the pressure of adherents of postpositivist traditions.

The second strand of literature is represented by the new generation of scholars that Wong and Hill (2011: 5) call the "Europeanist school" who assume that the cooperation of the member states' political leaders with the supranational organisations does result in the emergence of the common EU identity. The conjecture that the EU identity which transcends national identities might exist, generates a further string of questions about the coexistence of both identities. In general, the European Studies scholarship solves this dilemma by assuming, following Herrmann and Brewer' (2004: 8), metaphorical description of identities as "nested, conceived of as concentric circles of Russian Matruska dolls, one inside the next". From this perspective national and European identities do not have to be engaged in a zero-sum game, rather, they can coexist and supplement each other[86]. Positive evaluation and association with the EU identity does not necessarily mean the rejection of national identities (Castano, 2004; Cerutti, 2008) as both identities carry out distinctive functions.

Therefore, there is a growing consensus in the academic community that the EU identity has emerged, however embryonic and unstable it might be (Laffan, 2004; Herrmann and Brewer, 2004; Bjorkdahl, 2005; Carta and Morin, 2014). This recognition is underpinned by the rising role and influence of the EU as a regional and global actor which has boosted the identity of the EU and embedded it into the national discourse of its members.

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[86] For instance, Manners and Whitman (1998: 236) single out various but interrelated identities: Europe, Western Europe, the European Union and national identities of the member states.

As the emergence and diffusion of the EU identity are not so easy to explain from the rationalist platform, scholars resort to the constructivist approaches that focus on the processes of socialization that affect not only EU officials, but also national elites working in the EU and member states institutions (Wong and Hill, 2011; Bjorkdahl, 2005; White, 2004,; Ilonszki, 2009). It is observed that member states have come to share "a sense of common Europeanness" achieved through the years of adherence to norms and common practices (Bjorkdahl, 2005: 257), the state of affairs vividly exemplified by the obligatory acceptation of acquis communautaire by the newly-arrived members. Farrell (2010: 16) describes this process as follows: "as integration processes continue, the recognition of common interests and values can promote a sense of identity, and a regional political community acts as a subject with its own identity"[87]. Moreover, this 'we-feeling' emerged as a product of interaction is quite stable and binding because, as Sedelmeier (2004: 132) explains, once the norms that constitute the EU identity have been institutionalized at the EU level, it makes it difficult to pursue the opposite behaviour.

This thesis assumes the view that the European Union has an identity based on core values and principles that transcends the national identities of its member states. Moreover, the EU not only possesses a recognizable international identity, but this identity is "active" in the sense that the EU links self-definitions with its actions towards other countries (Manners and Whitman, 1998: 238). The EU identity is active in two ways. First, the EU tries to communicate to the world its identity, based on such values as democracy, human rights, state of law, market economy and second, the EU goes beyond the mere projection of its identity by promoting it or even imposing its identity, by making the acceptance of its values as a condition for cooperation with other states.

2.2. Whose identity?

The question of who can be defined as the holder of the European identity underpins the branch of literature on the EU identity that focuses on the political elites or wider public in order to establish what Herrmann and Brewer (2004: 5) call "depth of European

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[87] Laffan (2004) points out that by making the incorporation of the acquis communautaire a prerequisite, the EU enlargement has transcended market integration and it has gone much further to creation of common identity.

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identities". Some authors concentrate on the elite's views (Laffan, 2004; Wodak, 2004) while others try to investigate if the citizens identify themselves with the supranational EU identity (Castano, 2004; Ilonszki, 2009). In relation to the various levels on which the EU identity can be found, it is possible, following Antje Herrberg (1998), to distinguish between two types of identities: "a European identity" which is shared by its citizens and a "European international identity" as the EU is perceived by others as an actor in the international system.

Current scholarly investigations tend to place analytical primacy on the political elites that are deemed to be producers and bearers of the EU international identity. This perspective is dictated by the fact that in comparison with the nation states, where the "ordinary people" are immediate carriers of identity, in a "post national, compound quasi-polity…the citizens are only partly direct members of the polity" (Cerutti, 2008: 9). That view is in concordance with the almost ubiquitous standpoint that the EU is first and foremost an elite-driven project (Manners, 2002; Majone, 2009). This state of affairs engenders fault-finding attitudes towards the EU. For instance, Majone (2009: 23) criticizes the idea that "a politically integrated Europe, a continent finally united in spite of its diversity and the internecine wars of the past, was and continues to be an elitist project", which resulted in the "failed Europeanization of the masses". Hence, while doubts remain about the allegiance of the common public to the European self-conceptions, numerous studies confirm that the European identity has acquired a real psychological existence in the European political elites' minds. EU officials are conceptualized as agents involved in "the conscious identity construction of a liberal and civic community" (Risse, 2004: 262) through their daily practice while the EU institutions are endowed with the role of providing a platform for creation of the supranational identities and socializing the EU elites as well as the national decision-makers.

Logically and quite predictably, permanent EU officials exposed a greater attachment to the EU identity than seconded Member states executives[88] (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 39). Similarly, in her analyses of the ideational discursive structures, Wodak (2004) found

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[88] Wong and Hill (2011: 10) indicate that it is not only EU officials that have developed a significant degree of 'we-feeling' through socialization but national representatives also manifest a degree of "Europeanness" and are susceptible to "coordination reflex". Similarly, Aggestam (2004) in her research demonstrated that British, German and French political elites associate themselves with the EU.

out that the Commission's officials exhibit more Europeanness than representatives of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Thus, the search for samples of the European international identity in the purest form possible should focus first and foremost on the EU political discourse emanating from supranational institutions and its permanent EU officials, in particular the European Commission. These ideational structures are transmitted through the communicative processes in declarations, statements and founding treaties and official documents that are explicit "expressions of *collective* commitments and understandings" (Sedelmeier, 2006: 125, emphasis original) which not only construct the European identity[89], but simultaneously expose it to the external "audiences".

Another argument in favour of the emergence of the EU identity, that is sedimented in the discourses of the EU elite in the form of values and norms, is Cerutti's (2008) and Lucarelli's (2006) claim that the EU identity is political[90] and as such is different from national and cultural identities (Cerutti, 2003). Similarly, Risse (2004: 264) argues that Europeanness, which he defines as "EU-ness", is first of all a civic identity that, in comparison with the cultural component of identity that embraces such aspects as history, ethnicity, heritage etc., refers to the political structure of the actor and incorporates such values as democracy, human rights, a market economy and the welfare state. In a similar vein Lucarelli (2006) distinguishes between the "Neo-nationalist", "European culturalist" and "Civilisationalist" approaches that define identity as based on cultural identity and the "Communicative" and "Functionalist" perspectives that hold that political identity is "constructed" and as such does not require "the recognition of common cultural roots". In this manner the conceptualization of the European identity as political and civic rejects the Europessimistic accounts that the EU identity cannot emerge due to the absence of common historical roots (Hill and Wallace, 1996: 8). As Castano (2004: 43) points out that "cultural homogeneity is not necessary to establish a sense of belonging to a political community". This thesis follows the "communicative" path of enquiry that views the EU identity as a result of "mental elaboration of political and social experience" (Cerutti, 2003: 28) that is discursively constructed and communicated both to the European public

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[89] It is assumed that the EU, its institutions and representatives construct themselves and are constructed discursively (Wodak, 2004: 98).

[90] That approach is different from the view of identity as based on culture and history (see Huntington, 2004)

and to its external audiences. Thereby, this perspective leaves out of account the alleged lack of common cultural and historical basis as a potential impediment to the emergence of political awareness as a foreign policy actor.

2.3. What kind of identity?

The EU's ever growing assertiveness on the international scene accompanied by the ideational self-representations that emanate from the EU discourse called attention to the identity and the role of the EU in the world (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006; Aggestam, 2006; Cerutti, 2003; Herrmann and Brewer, 2004; Lucarelli, 2006; Smith, 2003). Although, there were some dissenting voices, this strand of scholarly thought on the EU identity manifested a discernible tendency to draw on the *sui generis* premise that views the EU as constructed differently from traditional states and international organizations. According to Manners and Whitman (2003: 384) the idiosyncratic nature of the EU lies in the combination of its hybrid polity and its international roles; and it is those role representations as a "normative" power (Manners, 2002), "civilian" power (Duchêne, 1972; Orbie, 2008), "norm-maker" (Björkdahl, 2005), "ethical" power (Aggestam, 2008) that are seen as an integral part of the European distinctive identity[91] and that steered the academic debates around the "distinctiveness thesis".

2.3.1. The EU as a civilian power

The Duchêne's term of "civilian power" can probably be considered as the first attempt to foreground the distinctive nature of the EU. The concept of civilian power is tied to the essence of the EU as the largest trading block, the major donor of aid and an economic powerhouse. Thus, Duchêne argued the EU's strength in this world depends on its usage of "civilian ends and means" (1972: 20) of exerting influence on the international arena which explicitly excludes military instruments. Smith (2008b) extends this argument by assuming that the civilian nature of the EU lies not only in the range of instruments, but in the manner the EU uses them, which is reflected in the EU's preference to use carrots over sticks and its reliance on persuasion rather than coercion.

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[91] There are more concepts within this line of research that aim at capturing the distinctiveness of the EU identity: "magnetic force" (Rosecrance, 1998), a "gentle power" (Padoa-Schioppa, 2001), a "European Superpower" (McCormick, 2007), a "quite superpower (Moravscik, 2002) just to name a few.

The academic attitudes towards the EU as a civilian power have been twofold. On the one hand, the EU has been labelled as a "partial superpower" and "political dwarf" precisely because of the lack of military capabilities, that could ensure the "hard power" which was gauged as a sign of weakness (Kagan, 2003; Bull, 1982). Other scholars assumed that the EU's strength lies precisely in its particularity and its dissimilarity from other great powers (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008) and that military potency will arguably deprive the EU of its influence as a generator of change in international relations by making it resemble traditional nineteenth century powers (Manners, 2006b; Moravscik, 2002).

From the late 1990s the dominant discourse on the EU as a civilian power has been challenged by the "full instrumental power discourse" (Larsen, 2004: 72) that promoted the development of military capabilities to enhance the EU's position. The subsequent development of the European military capabilities and institutions within the framework of European Security and Defence Policy has urged the academic community to ponder if the EU can still be considered as a civilian power. While a few scholars assert that the military dimension is unnecessary and even detrimental (Smith, 2000), the prevalent point of view is that the military dimension does not exclude, but on the contrary, can bolster and protect the EU civilian identity if the civilian instruments do not have any effect (Orbie, 2008; Stavridis, 2001; Börzel and Risse, 2009a; Manners 2006b). Börzel and Risse (2009a: 32) argue the addition of military dimension to the instruments portfolio enhances the EU as a civilian power as they indicate "that the EU is actually taking 'effective multilateralism' seriously and that EU puts its money where its 'civilizing' mouth is".

The term of the EU as a civilian power, although modified and complemented by the military dimension still has currency in the European studies[92] and abounds in academic and EU political discourses thereby creating an interesting portrayal of the EU as a mixture of a civilian power and "power bloc" (Smith, 2008b: 23).

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[92] More recent contribution of Orbie (2008) argues that the EU is an actor first of all in "low politics" or "civilian domains" where the EU has gained influence and its policies matter.

2.3.2. Normative power EU

Manners' (2002) concept of "normative power Europe" has arguably become one of the most influential contributions that gave renewed impetus to the distinctiveness-related academic debates. In his conceptualization Manners (2002: 238, 239) aspires to go beyond the benchmark of "how much like a state the EU looks" which implies the importance of the concept of power be it of economic (Duchêne, 1972) or military dimension (Bull, 1982). In this manner he endeavours to bypass the civilian/military power dichotomy[93] by suggesting to shift the focus away from the "EU's institutions and politics, and towards including cognitive processes" and pointing out that the historical background, the hybrid polity and the constitutive norms as they are defined in treaties, declarations, strategies and policies, enable and urge the EU "to act in a normative way" that is, "to extend its norms into the international system" (Manners, 2002: 239, 252). This view on the EU identity is consonant with the exigency to go beyond the state-as-actor approach that, while concentrating on the capabilities, institutions and national interests, is unable to fully capture the distinctive nature of the EU. Manners' concept of the normative power EU gives prominence to the intangible components of the European actorness by highlighting that "the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is" (Manners and Whitman, 2003: 389).

The representation of the EU as a normative power has generated a stock of literature that aims either to elaborate on the theoretical conceptualization of the normative dimension (Diez, 2005; Manners 2006b) or to test the notion of the "normative power" empirically (Bjorkdahl, 2005; Johansson-Nogués, 2007; Panebianco, 2006b). The mushrooming usage of the concept in the academic debate found its reflection in the political discourse as EU leaders oftentimes resort to the image of normative power and its derivatives, thereby, institutionalizing the concept as an inalienable and conspicuous part of the European international identity.

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[93] Similar to the debate on the EU as a civilian power, the alleged military dimension has divided the EU scholars into two camps: those who follow Manners (2006b) arguing that military dimension is weakening the EU influence as a "post-national normative power" and those who like Therborn (1997: 380) claim that "without the backing of force and a willingness to use it, Europe is unlikely to become a normative power, telling the other parts of the world what political, economic and social institutions they should have".

2.3.3. Ethical power Europe

The ethical power Europe and the related concept "force for good" are more recent conceptualizations based on the EU's logic of responsibility towards other actors. As Aggestam (2008: 1) argues, "the notion of 'ethical power Europe' is a conceptual shift in the EU's role and aspirations from what it 'is' to what it 'does': from simply representing a 'power of attraction' and a positive role model to proactively working to change the world in the direction of its vision of the 'global common good'". This perspective shifts the analytical attention from the identity as a set of constitutive elements or what Manners and Whitman (2003) call "reflexive identity" to the more active behavioural dimension of European external activities.

The concept of the ethical power is inspired by the European Union's endeavour to project the image of a consolidated actor and a regional and global power with increasing influence, which has to assume responsibility towards other countries. The European Security Strategy (European Council, 2003: 1) defines the EU as "inevitably a global actor" which "should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world", the commitment reaffirmed by the Treaty of Lisbon that aims at promoting peace and its values by developing "a special relationship with neighbouring countries, in order to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union" (European Union, 2007: 20) The discourse on responsibility is further reiterated in EU leaders' speeches and declarations as they frequently refer to the EU as a 'force for good in the neighbourhood and beyond' and related notions. Therefore, this concept is the newest and one of the most vibrant ones when defining the content of the European international identity both at the academic and at the EU political elite level.

2.4. Incorporating the Other's perspective into the distinctiveness debate

The EU's ideational representations based on the distinctiveness thesis have not avoided being challenged by the critically-spirited segments of the academic scholarship. The most common target of the criticism is perhaps the portrayal of the EU as a normative power. For instance, Majone (2009) argues that the EU is not entitled to act as a self-appointed promoter of norms and values as the very existence of the European "value-based" community is achieved through the violation of these norms, namely, the EU is a

purely elitist project plagued by the democratic deficit which is evidenced by the disproportioned empowerment of the non-elected European Commission in comparison with the insufficient influence of the European Parliament. Besides, in its attempts to promote its values in the world the EU is oftentimes accused of soft imperialism (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005), imposition of its values in violation of the principle of cultural sensitivity and using the normative rhetoric as a shield for promotion of its interests (Farrell, 2005), over exaggeration of the normative component at the expense of other dimensions such as commercial and geopolitical interests (Johansson-Nogués, 2007), incoherence and the lack of the member states' agreement on the substantive content of values (Bosse, 2007).

Similar to the concept of normative power, the ethical aspect of the European identity is a potential target of criticism. The ethical power Europe is supposedly 'acting good' and in a self-reflexive manner posits itself as a superior actor in relation to the 'beneficiaries' of the EU-sponsored policies. In this sense, the concept of the EU that seeks to transform the world by infusing its norms can be perceived as "ideological power in the quest for control over the actions of others" (Aggestam, 2008: 9).

The main fault which is endemic in the impressive stock of literature on the EU's distinctive identity is seen by Lucarelli (2007b) in the sterility of the debate. Most inquiries on the European identity concentrate on "what kind of power the EU *is*" while it would be more fruitful to "analyse what kind of power the EU wields and with what effect" (Smith, 2008a: 23, emphasis in the original). The analysis of the 'effects' of the EU's power inescapably involves incorporation in the analysis of other parties towards which this power is directed. Further charge against the existing literature is levelled by Sjursen (2006: 171) who points out that the "normative/civilian power" concept seems to be based on the belief that "the EU is doing good". She further claims that the EU is considered as 'doing good' due to its novelty which differentiates it from traditional powers and due to its commitment to spread the norms and values through soft power; however, the "goodness" of the EU should be empirically investigated. Last but not least, the fact that the academic discourse on the EU role resembles the discourse of the EU leaders arouses a suspicion that the categorizations of the EU as a certain type of power "are simply co-optations of the agenda of those in power" (Sjursen, 2006: 170). A similar point is made by Majone (2009: 2) that the majority of academics are not "detached observers, but convinced supporters of European integration".

Therefore, to rectify the deficiencies of the understandings of the EU as a civilian, normative and ethical power which is allegedly 'doing good' it might be deemed as an analytical necessity to externalize the debate on the EU identity as these concepts invite the external assessments as an important litmus test to European distinctiveness and an arbiter in the academic debates.

When it comes to the normative power Sjursen (2006: 174) suggests that the EU be called a "communicative" power, which promotes and justifies its values and norms through discourse that should be able to "endure critical public scrutiny". This change of focus from the norm-maker to the norm-taker is absolutely defensible taking into account that the normative power is intended to affect the others, who serve as a reality check. Besides, the success of the EU as a normative power depends to a great extent on the willingness of the others to accept these norms while the rejection of the EU's norm-informed policies can testify to the fact that the EU is seen as an intrusive entity that imposes its norms and values by using its political and economic leverage in the neighbourhood and beyond.

Likewise, the ethical aspect of the European identity calls on external scrutiny as in its effort to 'do good' the EU should take into account the others' views given that the external receptiveness is an important variable in the success of its self-assumed role. Aggestam (2008: 9) explains this necessity:

> "Ethics is a relational concept with a social dimension. It assumes that ethical action in foreign policy is considered through the lens of how other actors perceive the EU, and that the EU in turn is able to learn from and reflect upon this experience. Without this self-reflexivity the EU would indeed become a power imposing its conception of the 'good life' on others in the international system".

Therefore, after having answered the fundamental questions related to the EU's identity, it might be a practical and potentially revealing academic exercise to subject them to the external scrutiny. In particular, the introduction of external perceptions consonantly with the premises of the constructivist and poststructuralist literature on the Self/Other ideational interactions is useful not only to broaden the avenue of research but also as a reality check for academic debates on the EU's representations as an actor of a certain kind.

3. EU actorness: taking one step back

The EU's self-awareness based on such concepts as civilian/normative/ethical and related distinctive representations is only one facet of the European political identity exposed to international 'audiences'. To get a more complete picture of the images projected to other players it is crucial to introduce the actorness as an analytical category as closely interlinked with but clearly distinguishable from identity.

The omnipresent usage of the concepts of actorness and identity in the academic discourse inevitably caused conceptual overstretch and confusion as in some instances they were used interchangeably. Sedelmeier (2004: 125) points out the fact that identity has been used as a synonym for EU actorness, to describe capabilities of the EU, gauge the effectiveness of the CFSP, its ability to promote goals and establish itself as a global actor. In this manner, identity has frequently come to embrace aspects of the EU normally associated with actorness such as the institutional set up, decision-making procedures and an array of instruments.

Given the definitional disarray in the notions of identity and actorness, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the concepts as the interchangeable usage of the terms identity and actorness is misleading and analytically imprecise. The academic usage of the term identity is tightly linked to the ideational setup that the EU exhibits in its foreign policy behaviour. When it comes to identity, scholarly analyses have tended to concentrate on the EU in light of its distinctiveness which generated such terms as transformative, normative, ethical etc. powers placing an analytical focus on a set of values, norms and principles. On the other hand, actorness is defined as the "ability to act" and is closely tied to the institutional structure, policies and a set of instruments.

Identity and actorness are tightly linked and interdependent. Identity as a feeling of selfhood is defined as a "shared commitment to a set of overarching shared values and principles" (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 30). The presence of the common values and principles enhance actorness, that is, in the absence of these values the member states would not be capable of formulating and executing common policies. In this light, the nonexistence of identity is seen as an impediment to the emergence of the foreign policy of the European Union (Smith, 2008b; Hill and Wallace, 1996). In this manner identity serves as "road maps" (Aggestam, 2004: 82) to indicate the expected foreign policy

action. Thus, identity does not only have the constitutive and regulative functions of binding the EU states and enabling common foreign policy, but also is able to undermine or reinforce the EU's standing as a global and regional actor. In this respect "the coherence and effectiveness of the EU in international politics are largely contingent on how widely shared and stable EU foreign policy norms and rules are" (Aggestam, 2006: 11). Consequently, third parties' recognition or rejection of the values-imbued EU foreign policy will have a direct bearing on the EU's efficiency as a global and regional actor.

In its turn, EU actorness fosters the EU identity. The stronger the EU is as an actor, the more possibilities it has to promote its identity. Ultimately, these are the EU institutions that help to stabilize and reproduce identities (Cerutti, 2003). The indissoluble link between actorness and identity is traced by Cerutti (2008) who claims that the European 'feeling of belonging' would have strengthened if the member states hadn't failed to speak with one voice in Iraqi intervention because the ability to take common decisions in "high political issues" has a direct bearing on enhancing the political identity. On the other hand, inconsistencies stemming from the EU's disunity undermine European public diplomacy and its ability to communicate its identity to the world (Lynch, 2005).

After having disentangled the conceptual disarray it becomes clear that in the scholarly literature the EU identity has predominantly been understood as a set of values, norms and principles that constitute the distinctive nature of the EU. However, this definition is quite a narrow understanding of the term. This thesis adopts an all-encompassing definition of identity as a 'feeling of selfhood' that views the identity as possessing manifold aspects that go beyond the normative dimension. As such, identity includes both the ideational component[94] and the EU's political self-awareness as a credible regional and global actor possessing a range of necessary instruments to assist it in its venture of formulating and implementing policies. The fully-fledged discussion of the EU identity should incorporate both components, that is to say, not only to analyse the EU as a specific type of actor that promotes certain values and tries to transmit a specific message to the world but also as an actor capable of formulating and implementing its policies.

This analytical decision also permits the 'reintroduction' of the concept of actorness into academic debates. While the European identity and roles have been the focus of academic

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[94] The term 'ideational' is used in this thesis instead of the commonly used concept of 'identity' to avoid conceptual confusion.

contemplation, the concept of actorness, despite its frequent usage in the scholarly discourse, has lately received scarce conceptual and empirical attention (for notable exceptions see Groenleer and van Shaik, 2007; Huigens and Nieman, 2009; Groen and Nieman, 2011; Bretherton and Vogler, 2008). Such scholarly nonchalance can be explained by the fact that actorness is frequently taken for granted (Groen and Nieman, 2011). However, Groen and Nieman (2011) warn against the prematurity of the EU identity debate and urge taking one step back to discuss actorness. Such necessity is justified by the interdependency between identity and actorness given that the EU's distinctive agenda should rest on the established actorness; otherwise, a weak actor lacks capability to enforce its 'normative' agenda.

4. The EU as an actor: theoretical debates

The decision to recast the investigation to include actorness implies the necessity to broach several fundamental questions as the concept is not only valuable for its explicative potential, but is certainly subject to certain limitations. This subchapter follows the trajectory of the academic thought that first argues that the traditional state-centric approach fits poorly in incorporating such a peculiar actor as the EU and then suggests alternative conceptualizations that intend to involve the external perceptions to better capture the multidimensional nature of the European Union.

4.1. EU actorness through the rationalist prism

Although outspoken Eurosceptical sentiments have definitely waned in the decade preceding the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, they still have a visible impact on scholarly opinion. The rather critical attitudes are a built-in characteristic of mainstream international relations approaches which perceive a rational and utility maximizing state as the only fully-fledged actor. These state-centric approaches are unswervingly linked to the realist ontology which is based on the premises about the rationality of states, anarchic nature of the system and indispensability of military capabilities (White, 2004: 48). Unsurprisingly, the inquiries into the EU actorness carried out within this tradition find it as lacking several crucial properties of actorness (Rosamond, 2005: 465).

The most frequently used arguments against the conceptualization of the EU as a fully-fledged foreign policy actor levelled by the rationalist-minded scholars is that it is not a unitary actor in the strict sense. Bull's (1982: 163) remark that "there is no supranational community in Western Europe but only a group of nation-states" can serve as the main underlying thought of this strand of thought. The European Union is viewed as merely a group of rational nation states which exploit their collective weight and take advantage of the politics of scale to advance their interests (Moravscik, 1998; Ginsberg, 1999). The vision of the EU as a group of states that are driven by their own interests inextricably entails the EU's inability to develop a viable and coherent foreign policy and create an authentic political and economic union thereby belittling an unprecedented level of integration achieved by the EU.

Another weakness in the EU actorness is based on the understanding of the indispensability of power in the traditional sense which implies the possession of political muscle and military capabilities. The alleged absence of these dimensions in the EU foreign policy has resulted in the unfortunate depiction of the EU as a "partial superpower" (Hill and Smith, 2011a: 4). As Cameron (1998: 42) points out despite the fact that the EU has become an important "provider of 'soft' security", it is unable "to punch its weight on the world stage" to the full extent as it lacks the 'hard' security component. These somewhat contemptuous representations denigrate the EU's multifaceted clout and the ever widening scope of its activities and influence and thus fail to capture the EU's unique might and influence.

However, the situation has changed dramatically since Hill's (1993) warning against expecting too much from the European community as an international actor. Although the European Union is still an evolving entity that far from being completed, it is necessary to recognize that during the last two decades the EU has made staggering progress in its institutional developments. The changes that the EU has undergone reveal certain limitations of the conventional IR approaches and prompt the elaboration of other theoretical and analytical angles that would capture the multidimensional nature of the EU. The main accusation levelled against mainstream (rationalist) approaches is that although they are able to explain various aspects of the EU external actorness in terms of the delegation of powers to the supranational institutions, they fail to account for such developments as the emergence of military capabilities (ESDP), the EU's dedication to norm promotion (Rosamond, 2005) and they exclude all distinctive activities that the EU

pursues on the international arena. Besides, the growing recognition of the importance of soft politics and intangible aspects of power (Barbé, 2007) has urged the use of different conceptual lenses when scrutinizing such an actor as the EU.

4.2. Beyond the traditional approaches: looking for an alternative conceptualization.

The mainstream state-as-an-actor approaches render obsolete when applied to the EU which dwells on an uneasy ground between nation state and international organization. Its distinctiveness and uniqueness has spurred laudable scholarly attempts to rectify this deficiency by developing a different analytical perspective [95] that would go beyond traditional approaches. This line of academic thought, while not denying that the nation-states are still the principal actors in the international arena, follow the premise that the "the first ever post-national polity" (Lucarelli, 2006: 9) should not be labelled as a deficient actor due to the lack of state-like characteristics.

The first step in developing a proper conceptualization of such a peculiar actor as the EU is to go beyond the understanding of the foreign policy in its conventional sense. That question has generated a vast corpus of academic literature on the nature of the EU foreign policy[96] (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008; Hill and Smith, 2011a,b; White 1999 and 2004; Tonra and Christiansen, 2004; Wong and Hill, 2011; Cameron 2007). Keukeleire and MacNaughtan (2008) suggest conceptualizing the European foreign policy as "multipillar and multilevel", that is, to go beyond the focus on the CFSP[97] and include all dimensions of the European Union's external activities: economic, political and military to get a more complete picture of the EU's actorness thereby avoiding the charge pointed out by Tonra and Christiansen (2004) that the CFSP-oriented investigations carry explicit or implicit rationalist and interest-based colouring .

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[95]However, White (2004) proposes that we should not dismiss light-heartedly the FPA which despite its state-orientedness can still do us a service after certain adaptations.

[96] There were various ways of conceptualizing the EU foreign policy. The EU foreign policy could be understood as either the European external activities pursued within the first pillar, the CFSP/ ESDP or as a sum of the foreign policies of the member states (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008).

[97] A great number of studies on European foreign policy that proliferated during 1990s and early 2000s tended to concentrate precisely on the CSFP (Holland, 1997; Winn and Lord, 2001; Hoffman, 2000).

Thus, as the result of the broadening of the agenda, the EU is increasingly seen as an actor although unique in its nature. A peculiar feature of the EU is that its actorness is not homogeneous and varies in degree and depending on the issue (Jupille and Caporaso, 1998). It has become commonplace to characterize the EU as undoubtedly an economic power whose economic policies are highly visible and exert the major impact on other actors [98] which has also achieved certain successes in the promotion of regional integration and has become a model that various regional organizations try to emulate to a varying extent[99]. Other areas, where the EU endeavours to establish itself as an actor are environmental issues (Groenleer and van Shaik, 2007), promotion of multilateralism (Huigens and Niemann, 2009; Groenleer and van Shaik, 2007), humanitarian aid and development (Chaban, Elgström, and Holland, 2006), promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance (Börzel and Risse, 2009a) Having enhanced its positions in "civilian matters", the EU has also tried to establish itself as an actor in "high politics" by enhancing the ever increasing portfolio of foreign policy instruments to include diplomatic and military aspects to promote European interests all over the globe.

This breakthrough is tied to successive institutional developments introduced by the founding treaties culminating in the Treaty of Lisbon, which have gradually lessened the EU's deficiencies as an actor by increasing its visibility and enhancing its ability to pursue autonomous foreign policies. About two decades ago Hill (1993: 316) predicted that European foreign policy worthy of its name will come into existence with "an executive capable of taking clear decisions on high policy matters, and of commanding the resources and instruments to back them up" and the creation of "a single Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic service with common missions abroad". The efforts to establish this post have borne fruit with the creation of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy which evolved into the post of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy assisted by the EEAS. Among other quantum leaps towards streamlining decision making are the elimination of the pillar structure by the Lisbon Treaty and the development of military capabilities to back up the EU's 'autonomous action'.

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[98] As an example of European actions of major resonance it is possible to cite the Common Agricultural Policy, the establishment of the Single Market and the introduction of the Euro.

[99] See Farrell (2009 and 2010), Lucarelli (2007a and b). More recently, Russian political leaders have started to refer to the EU's experience, both positive and negative for the creation of the Eurasian Union (See chapter 4 in this thesis).

Those ground-breaking changes have induced the academic community to acknowledge that the EU has enhanced its actorness in international affairs, even though, it has not acquired in Hill and Smith's words (2011b: 467) "all the necessary attributes of statehood". Thus, the ever-expanding European influence challenged the explanatory capacity of the conventional state-as-anactor approaches and demanded the restructuring of the conceptualization of the EU. Such reconceptualizations have been inspired by the revolutionary concept of multi-dimensional presence, introduced by Allen and Smith in 1990 which endeavours to sidestep the rigid state-centric requirements of actorness by claiming that sometimes presence matters more than actor itself. In their argument the presence consists of various factors: "credentials and legitimacy, capacity to act and mobilize resources, the place it occupies in the perceptions and expectations of policy makers" (Allen and Smith, 1990: 21). The value of this approach lies in the emphasis that the state-centric approaches can and should be complemented by intangible components such as expectations and perceptions. That approach will further spill into constructivist conjecture that when we analyse the EU we should deal with intersubjectivity, that is, the common understandings of the EU's actorness and identity.

A more recent approach that incorporates presence and intangible components such as self- and external perceptions is Bretherton and Vogler's (2006) analytical model that suggests that the concepts of presence, opportunity and capability provide better understandings of the EU actorness. Bretherton and Vogler (2006: 27) define the presence as "the ability to exert influence externally; to shape the perceptions, expectations and behaviour of others" and as such is not a "purposive external action, rather it is a consequence of being". Their concept of presence includes the material dimension, that is, political systems of the member states and the institutions of the EU, as well as the intangible aspect that encompasses the EU's reputation and external reactions to the EU's policies. Bretherton and Vogler further elaborate on Allen and Smith's understanding of presence by adding the notions of opportunity and capabilities. According to them opportunity "provides the context that frames and shapes the EU action or inaction" (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 24) and is conditioned by the intersubjective structure that reflects the ideas and perceptions, both of the EU as well as of third parties. The focus on capabilities on the one hand, links their analytical framework to more conventional approaches to actorness, while on the other hand, they amplify the traditional concept of capabilities by adding the intangible components. The EU's capacity to formulate policies

and utilize the instruments depends, according to Bretherton and Vogler (2006: 30) on four conditions: the commitment of the member states to the shared values, domestic legitimation of the EU external policies, the ability to define priorities and formulate policies (coherence and consistency) and the availability of the policy instruments. Thus, although material capabilities play a significant role, we also have to take into account the meaning attached to them in terms of efficiency and appropriateness.

Thus, the term presence coined by Allen and Smith (1990) and elaborated by Bretherton and Vogler (2006) brings to the fore the importance of intangible dimensions in the study of the EU actorness. They rightfully assume that the EU-as-an-actor approach could be enriched by exploring both self-perceptions and external perceptions that constitute the intersubjective structure which in turn, enables or limits EU actorness. Allen and Smith's (1990) approach inspired a number of other inquiries that added EU self-conceptions, as well as external perceptions as a part of their analysis (Hill, 1993; Rhodes, 1998; Jupille and Caporaso, 1998, Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005; Manners and Whitman, 1998; Elgström, 2007; Elgström and Smith 2006; Lucarelli, 2007a and 2007b; Chaban, Elgström, and Holland, 2006). Some of those studies are invaluable in the sense that they do not only concentrate on the presence as the instrument to overcome limits of the state-centric attributes, but also try to answer the question if the EU has succeeded in translating its enormous presence into actorness (Smith, 2003).

4.3. The EU actorness revisited: external recognition as an essential prerequisite for the EU's identity as an actor

The discussion on the need of incorporation of the external dimension brings to the fore the notion of recognition, which is one of the cornerstone concepts in political science, international relations, international law and other branches of social science. International law treats recognition as essential for the emergence of the new states or organizations as it bestows a legal personality on the new actor and enables its functioning and as an imperative marker that an actor becomes a subject of international law that enjoys certain rights and duties and is formally acknowledged as a counterpart by other actors[100]. The European Union is even more sensitive to the effects of (non-)

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[100] Fernández Sola (2002) refers to the subjective dimension of the EU's personality that is manifest in recognition granted by third parties.

recognition than the conventional states as it permits the EU, which is devoid of automatic international personality endowed as a result of "an inherent attribute of statehood" (Wallace, 2005) to function in the state-dominated system.

The academic acknowledgement of the necessity to incorporate the concept of recognition in their accounts on the European Union is growing apace (Jørgensen, 2004, 2009a and 2009b; Hill and Smith 2011a; Rhodes, 1998; Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2009; Rumelili, 2004). For the EU the 'struggle for recognition' is a double challenge as the European Union's actorness has to be bolstered both by domestic legitimacy, which is not conferred on the EU automatically and by external recognition which is of equal importance. In this manner recognition functions, according to Jørgensen (2004: 43), as an internal and external social structure that constitutes the actorness of the EU by endowing it with identities and corresponding interests. This perspective is consonant with the post-positivist views on identity which posit that although the convergence of understandings and interests of the member states is essential for the EU to gain 'authority'[101] to act, they are definitely not sufficient for the peremptory establishment of EU actorness, which is not only the result of internal development but is also dependent on external factors.

For the EU the aspiration for international status and legitimacy is deemed as one of the variables that contribute to its impact as "particular structures or groupings" (Hill and Smith, 2011a: 14). In their endeavour to incorporate external recognition in their narratives on the EU, scholars turned to external perceptions (Van Criekinge, 2009; Lucarelli, 2007a and 2007b; Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2009; Fioramonti and Lucarelli, 2009; Elgström, 2006 and 2007; Chaban and Holland, 2008; Jupille and Caporaso, 1998). The subjacent premise of this strand of literature is that the external perceptions function as a "mirror" (Lucarelli, 2007a and 2007b) as they can help us evaluate if the EU is seen as an international actor able to perform the functions associated with its role as a regional and global power and if the transformations and changes that the EU undergoes towards its enhancement as an actor have been successful. On the other hand, these are

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[101] The concept of "authority" is defined by Jupille and Caporaso (1998) as the EU's ability to act depending on the powers that the member states have agreed to delegate to the EU.

the outsiders who help to shape the EU's actorness[102] by functioning as a driving or inhibiting force for the EU as an actor. As Hill and Wong (2011: 222) point out "the demands of outsiders…represent an independent variable which in some respects promotes Europeanization and in others impedes it, or is neutral".

In this manner, although the remarks about the significance of external recognition have frequently appeared in scholarly literature which prompted meritorious attempts to incorporate it into the empirical narratives on the EU, the explanatory potential of the concept has not been taken advantage of to the full. Further theoretical substantiation and empirical application of the concept has been undertaken mainly by identity-informed theorists such as Ringmar (2002 and 2014), Wendt (1992, 1999 and 2003), and Greenhill (2008) that drawing on the Hegelian concept of "struggle for recognition" brought the debate on the EU's actorness to the next level. However, an important point to be kept in mind is that the introduction of external perceptions into the analytical identity-oriented framework in no way authorizes an offhand dismissal of the traditional conceptualizations of the EU actorness. The revision of the literature on external perceptions of the European Union by various international players reveals certain paradox which is reflected in the fact that the EU, despite its arguably distinctive and post-Westphalian nature, is still judged through the state-centric prism and as Manners and Whitman (1998: 237) suggest other actors still tend to assess the EU "as if it possesses qualities similar to those of a state". That should come as no surprise, because the states are still the main actors that view other actors through the lens of their own identity. Thus, the conceptualizations of the actorness, based on the actor's capability can still render a service while the perspective based on external recognition can shed additional light on the EU's actorness by serving as "important indicators of how well intentions have been translated into observable actions" (Rhodes, 1998: 7).

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[102] Smith (2008b: 12-16) argues that there are internal and external pressures that spur EU actorness. Among the external pressures is the interdependence stimulated by globalization, which creates the conditions in which the EU member states benefit from acting together and which enhances the value of the civilian means as compared with the traditional power. The Others can also function as an external pressure, thus, the USA is normally positioned as demanding the EU to speak with one voice and Russia is acting as a negative promoter of EU unity.

5. Conceptualizing the EU identity as an international actor through the prism of external recognition

Taking into account the ultimate relevance of recognition for EU identity formation along the Self/Other theoretical thinking, it is indispensable to specify the content of what precisely is exposed to recognition. The revision of the state-of-the art carried out in the previous subchapters suggests that both the state-centric and the identity-based approaches are insufficient to capture the unique character of the EU and its actions. Parting from the Manners and Whitman's (2003) premise that the distinctiveness of the EU as "a difference engine" lies both in its hybrid polity and role representations, this thesis endeavours to recast the investigation by including both perspectives in order to embrace both 'is' and 'does' when talking about the EU's identity as an actor without having to exclude either actorness or the ideational aspects. This stance can be justified by the fact that although recognition implies the non-rationalist interpretation of international dynamics, it is too precipitated to discard the state-centric approaches given the fact that "the expectation within the system is that actors be statelike" and consequently, if the EU wants to become an actor, it has to "conform to the system norms" (Rosamond, 2005: 466). Other empirical works on the EU's external perceptions as well as our own empirical database revealed close affinity with theoretical studies on the EU actorness by highlighting that the EU is assessed against the state-like benchmarks.

Therefore, this thesis ventures into combining both aspects and undertakes an empirical analysis of the following criteria of the EU's identity as an actor[103] subject to external recognition or misrecognition: autonomy, unity, capability and ideational content. It is necessary to highlight that rigid delineation between criteria is unattainable but is also impracticable given the tight correlation and interdependency between them as all criteria condition and depend on each other[104]. However, in order to carry out a clearly structured

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[103] Thus, this thesis makes use of the classifications developed by Barbé (2007) and Jupille and Caporaso (1998). Barbé (2007: 153) singles out the following criteria of actorness: autonomy, ability to mobilize resources and the capacity to influence other actors while Jupille and Caporaso (1998) base their concept of actorness on such components as recognition, authority, autonomy and cohesion.

[104] For instance, the EU's autonomous action is dependent on unity and an existing portfolio of instruments.

and manageable empirical investigation, an attempt is made to organize the perceptions into the abovementioned categories.

5.1. Perceptions of the EU as an autonomous entity

Ability to act as an autonomous entity has been singled out by various researches as a necessary component of the EU actorness (Barbé, 2007; Jupille and Caporaso, 1998). For the European Union as a non-state actor autonomy is a cornerstone criterion against which its actorness is measured and it hinges on two dimensions: the first aspect highlights the relationship between the EU and its member-states, while the second contemplates the European autonomy from other international actors (Jupille and Caporaso, 1998; Natorski, 2009). This thesis is concerned with perceptions of the EU's autonomy from its member states, that is, questions if the EU succeeded in gaining a certain degree of independence and developing an actorness that can be distinguished from that of its members. However, the last empirical chapter also included representations of the EU's dependency on the USA[105], that are so clamant and insistent that they could not be easily discarded without distorting the integrity of the discursive formation.

The empirical research of this criterion scrutinizes if the EU has acquired a certain degree of salience and noticeability both in its own eyes and in the eyes of the Other. According to Manners and Whitman (2003: 382) as the EU's identity is clearly intersubjective, visibility to others is an essential part the EU's co-constituting itself. However, the analytical criterion for capturing the EU's autonomy is far from being clear as the EU's independence is a relative concept and cannot be attained to the full. In order to avoid the conceptual confusion the thesis follows Jupille and Caporaso's typology (1998: 218) that points out two main indicators of autonomy: the institutional distinctiveness and independence in pursuing EU-associated policies (discretionary goal formation, decision-making and implementation).

Hence, the thesis views autonomy as consisting of two symbiotically interlinked components: institutions and policies. The important benchmark against which EU

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[105] External views of the EU frequently highlight the EU's dependency on the USA in security and defence matters to the extent that according to Fioramonti and Lucarelli (2009) the EU is seen as "a hostage to the US-made strategies".

autonomy is assessed is the existence of the distinctive institutional design which includes the institutional apparatus and actors[106] acting on behalf of the EU. In turn, existence of the common institutions enables the EU to formulate and implement policies associated with the EU[107].

The EU's policies generated one of the most debated inquiries within European foreign policy studies. On the one hand, the Euro-sceptics see the EU foreign policy as the lowest common denominator position that the most reluctant state could accept (Van Schaik, 2013: 48; Hoffmann, 2000) leaning on the fact that the member states act as autonomous actors in the international scene and are reluctant to cede their sovereignty to the EU. The other strand of literature provides ample evidence that EU foreign policy exists and it is clearly discernible from the policies of its member states (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 329). While national polices still exist and thrive, the ongoing institutionalization of the EU since the mid-1990s and the successive empowerment of supranational structures widened the authority granted to the EU as an autonomous actor[108]. The authority bestowed on the EU cannot be compared to that of the conventional states, but is certainly greater than the one granted to international organizations and is characterized by specific influence given its power to "Europeanize" the foreign policies of its member states[109].

While scholarly attention has been dedicated to the capacity of the EU to act autonomously, its institutional design and the existence of policies that can be distinguished from those of its member states, investigations tended to be focused on the EU and its developments. The external dimension has the potential to add analytical value

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[106] Here we can talk about the relative autonomy as in practice the decision-making process is practically never fully detached from the member states (Jupille and Caporaso, 1998).

[107] Similarly, the EU policies are contingent on the degree of authority granted to the EU by its member states. The EU is only relatively independent as the EU policy and the national policies are closely interwoven and frequently there is no clear delineation between the areas of exclusive and shared competencies.

[108] In this respect the EU's ability to carry out its policies is consonant with Jupille and Caporaso's (1998) concept of authority as reflecting the EU's legal competence awarded to it by its member states. This EU's competence in a given area can be subjected to the external assessment as a component of autonomy.

[109] There is a vast corpus of literature on Europeanization (Wong and Hill, 2011).

to the research given that the EU's attempts to project its image as a 'distinctive' actor capable of autonomous action are directed first and foremost at its 'audience'[110].

This criterion of the EU's capacity to act is expected to provide answers to the following analytical question: has the European Union gained visibility in its own eyes and in the external perspective as a distinctive, self-sufficient and autonomously existing unity that possesses a distinctive institutional architecture and is able to implement policies that add value to those of its member states?

5.2. Assessing the European Union's unity[111] through the prism of external recognition

Unity is another salient yardstick against which actorness can be gauged as, according to Jupille and Caporaso (1998: 219), being an actor "implies a minimal level of coherence". This criterion is arguably of more importance for the EU which occupies an uncomfortable place between the traditional state and an international organization. Being aware of the implications of (dis-) unity on its capability to act, the EU aspires to project to the world an image of a consolidated actor characterized by a substantial degree of consensus and formulate common interests and move in one direction. To achieve this aim the European Union has continuously embarked on subsequent reforms to create a common EU policy, improve intrainstitutional and intrastate coordination and expand the instruments portfolio.

However, the EU's disunity and the sedimented image of a group of states with varying levels of socio-economic and political developments, as well as dissimilar historical and cultural heritage remain the weak point and one of the main impediments to the consolidation of European actorness. The EU's chances of becoming something more

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[110] The incipient strand of literature on external perceptions highlights that in some issues the EU has managed to establish itself as an autonomous actor in the eyes of others, predominantly in 'civilian ambits' (Holland, 2007; Elgström, 2007). However, certain asymmetry persists as the majority of other international actors prefer to maintain bilateral relations as they find it difficult to grant the EU the autonomy for a number of reasons or conspicuously prefer not to see the EU as an autonomous actor, but rather as a group of individual states (Fioramonti and Lucarelli, 2009).

[111] The unity and autonomy as criteria of the EU's actorness are closely interrelated from the point of view of external perceptions. For example, the EU is more likely to be seen as able to act as a unitary actor if it has succeeded in establishing itself as an autonomous actor that can be distinguished from its member states. In turn, the EU's image as an autonomous actor depends on its ability to 'speak with one voice'.

than what Bull (1982) calls a "concert of Europe" have become even more diluted by subsequent enlargements. Majone (2009: 19) claims that if the European states had a chance of creating a unified bloc at the earlier stages of integration when the member states were a relatively homogeneous group of states, they lost it with the ever increasing number of members[112] which are bound to contribute to the EU's incoherence by uploading their divergent sometimes oppositional views to the EU level.

The EU's notorious ineptitude when it comes to 'speaking with one voice' and its perplexing composition "single by name, dual by regime, multiple by nature" Keukeleire and MacNaughtan (2008: 66) is a source of ongoing confusion for external actors and is evident in inconsistencies and incoherencies of various kinds that plague the EU. Smith (2008b) uses a term consistency that includes internal and external dimensions. The external dimension involves the relations with other actors, while the internal dimension deals with internal developments of the EU.

The external inconsistency points out that the EU treats other states dissimilarly (Smith, 2008b) thereby triggering accusations of being a biased actor that resorts to double standards in its reactions and policies towards third countries depending on their significance and political and economic clout. The ambit of human rights is the most cited example of this type of inconsistency, as the EU's reaction concerning this issue is frequently described as a perfect illustration of triumph of pragmatism and self-interest over the promotion of such values as democracy and human rights (Farrell, 2005; Hughes, 2007; Smith 2008b).

Internal dimension according to Smith's (2008b) classification includes horizontal inconsistency[113] that might emerge between the policies within the EU, the so called "intrapillar inconsistency" (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 121) and "institutional inconsistency" that affects coherence between institutions (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 121). Although the Lisbon Treaty made unprecedented progress in rectifying both

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[112] Thus, according Majone (2009: 20) we can't expect an "evolution along a single developmental path, but evolution with several side branches", the state of affairs which potentially precludes the emergence of the images of the EU's integrity.

[113] Jupille and Caporaso's (1998) concept of cohesion rests on four dimensions: value (goal) cohesion, tactical cohesion, procedural and output cohesion. While value, tactical and procedural cohesions refer to the process of policy formulation, output cohesion deals with the way policies are presented to the public and implemented.

inconsistencies by streamlining EU policy-making and striving towards a "single representation" (Cameron, 2007: 207) in external relations, it is still to be seen if the effects of the redesign are reflected in the external mirror. Vertical inconsistencies refer to the discrepancies between the EU institutions and member states and are caused by a lack of coordination between them leading to the situation when the EU sponsored policies coexist and frequently clash with bilateral policies pursued by member states[114]. For instance, Russia is frequently cited in this context as a negative promoter of the EU's unity by using the "divide and conquer" strategy, exposing the poor coordination within the EU and displaying the failure of the EU members to stick to the consolidated and uniform strategy (Hughes, 2007: 76).

Therefore, the lack of a common voice due to what Panebianco (2006b) defines as "institutional schizophrenia" is frequently pointed out by scholars as an obstacle towards the enhancement of the EU presence and actorness in the international arena (Farrell, 2010: 15) and a source of confusion among third parties (Ginsberg and Smith, 2007; Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008). However, despite the gloomy account pictured by academics on the basis of the EU's inconsistencies, the EU's disunity cannot be taken for granted given the unprecedented level of integration achieved by its member states. In this respect, external perceptions can provide invaluable insights. Therefore, this subchapter is guided by the question: what are the EU's self-descriptions and Russian perceptions of EU (dis-)unity and what does the interplay of these images suggest about the processes of (mis-) recognition at the ideational level?

5.3. External images of the EU's capabilities

Capability as a manifestation of power is another keystone criterion against which actorness of the EU in the state-centric system is measured. Here it is imperative to clarify what is meant by the concept of power. Broadly speaking, in international relations power

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[114] Keukeleire and MacNaughtan (2008) also single out an interstate inconsistency which is revealed in the different stances that the EU members adopt inter alia within the international organizations. Although recent research indicates that there has been more progress towards developing common positions in the UN General Assembly (Laatikainen, 2004), the analysis of the voting patterns in the OSCE indicate the situation still leaves much to be desired (Luif and Radeva, 2007: 38). The EU member states also act differently in the UN Security Council thereby undermining the image of the EU as a unitary actor (Laatikainen, 2004).

can be roughly classified as "power-as-resources" and "power as influence" (Barbé, 2007; Baldwin, 2013). This thesis is interested in the aspect of power consonant with capabilities that implies in Nye's definition (cited in Baldwin, 2013: 287) "possession of resources" that "makes power appear more concrete, measurable, and predictable". Barbé (2007: 153) indicates the ability to mobilize resources to achieve objectives as pivotal for the establishment of actorness. For the EU, as any other actor in the international affairs, it is crucial not only to be able to articulate its interests but also defend them and have capabilities to convert them into practice, which requires the availability of relevant resources and instruments (White, 2004: 56).

The widely accepted classification singles out economic, diplomatic and military instruments (Smith, 2008b). The EU to a varying extent possesses a full portfolio of the instruments. The economic means represent the widest range of mechanisms available to the EU as being the economic power it frequently resorts to and is associated with such instruments as the capacity to conclude agreements with third parties and provide aid assistance. The launch of the CFSP enabled the EU to recur to diplomatic instruments such as joint actions and common positions while the recognition that the European capacity for autonomous action should be backed by credible military forces as voiced during the European Council in 1999 led to the emergence of the military dimension represented by the ESDP and the Rapid Reaction Force.

Another important fact to be taken into consideration is the link between the instruments and the EU's uniqueness as an international actor. While the EU wields many of the traditional instruments it may still lack others, a fact that does not make its portfolio deficient by default as, following Smith's (2008b) suggestion the EU can compensate for the incomplete range of instruments by the existence of unique instruments, such as political dialogue with regions, prospects of EU membership, human rights clauses in agreements that are not wielded by the member states nor by international organizations and as such contribute to the *sui generis* identity of the EU. Furthermore, the choice of the EU to rely predominantly on persuasion and incentives rather than coercion distinguishes it from other actors.

If we move beyond the EU solipsism and switch to external perceptions, we could find out if the progress made by the European Union towards developing a complete range of instruments contributes to the establishment of its actorness and if according to Marsh

and Mackenstein (2005: 62), the EU succeeded in its endeavour to "transpose its enormous international presence into operational power". On the other hand, the intersubjective value of power implies the importance of external recognition for consolidation and efficiency of capabilities[115]. Besides, as Smith (2008b) suggests, some of the instruments at the EU's disposal are distinctive in a sense that they are not wielded by the member states or by international organizations and as such contribute to the *sui generis* identity of the EU.

From this perspective, the subchapter tries to offer answers to the following analytical questions: What are the perceptions of the EU regarding the range of instruments at its disposal? How are they reflected in Russian discourse through the prism of (mis-) recognition?

5.4. Perceptions of the EU's ideational content as an international actor

Ideational component[116] is what is usually referred to as identity in academic literature, that is, the normative setup and constitutive values that make the EU a distinctive actor and that underlie its foreign policy and message to the world. This criterion embraces the representations of the EU as civilian, normative, ethical, transformative, soft and related descriptions concerning the peculiarity of the EU's identity.

The reference to norms and values is justifiable and inevitable given the image of the EU as a "norm community" (Bjorkdahl, 2005: 260) based, according to Manners (2006a), on nine EU values and principles (constitutive self-images): sustainable peace, social liberty, consensual democracy, human rights, supranational rule of law, equality, solidarity, sustainable development and good governance. These values and norms acquire ontological importance for the European identity as they not only constitute the identity but are also actively involved in the projection of the European international identity beyond its borders. The references to the ethical and transformative influence of the EU built upon the logic of responsibility and proliferation of the zone of stability, welfare and

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[115] As Van Criekinge's (2010) empirical analysis reveals the EU's leverage differs depending how its capabilities are perceived in its partner countries.

[116] This subchapter sets forth the content of this criterion very briefly, given that the distinctiveness of the EU's identity has already been discussed in this chapter.

common good also abound in various public declarations of the EU leaders, documents and treaties and the scholarly discourse. The empirical analysis also scrutinizes other ideational representations of the EU as a distinctive and *sui generis* entity as revealed by the predicative strategies.

Testing the EU's ideational set up as a criterion of the EU actorness through the external perceptions might prove to be a more compelling task taking into account the fact that the distinctiveness of the EU's power depends first and foremost on the perceived legitimacy. The third parties may also provide a 'distorted reflection' of the EU's self-understanding as a unique power imbued with 'altruism' by sending back the images that can be grouped under what Smith (2008b) labels as "power bloc" that aspires to protect its own geopolitical and economic interests.

The research undertaken under this criterion hinges on the following analytical questions: What are the ideational qualifications found in the predicative strategies employed by the EU? Do they reverberate in the Russian political discourse?

6. Conclusion

Following the revision of the extensive stock of literature, this chapter assumed the following premises fundamental for the theoretical and methodological framing of the thesis: namely, that the EU identity can be considered as existing if cast in political and civic terms, it is sedimented at the elite-level and is predominantly conceptualized in the *sui generis* terms. In addition, the chapter argues that subjecting these ideational aspects to external scrutiny consonantly with the premises of the constructivist and poststructuralist literature on the Self/Other ideational interactions is useful not only to broaden the avenue of research but also as a reality check for academic debates on the EU's representations as an actor of a certain kind.

Next, the chapter 'reintroduces' the concept of actorness and suggests that symbiotic combination of the state-centric and more sociologically informed approaches on actorness can be better suited to capture the unique and multidimensional nature of the European Union. Besides, to rectify the unfortunate omission of the Other in European foreign policy studies, the thesis incorporates the notion of recognition, which has an existential meaning for the reaffirmation of the European identity as an actor. Finally, the

chapter endeavours to integrate the concepts of identity and actorness into the all-embracing notion of identity as 'a feeling of Selfhood' that consists of the following criteria of the EU's identity as a foreign policy actor subject to the external recognition or misrecognition: autonomy, unity, capability and ideational content.

CHAPTER IV

IMAGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A MODEL OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN RUSSIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

1. Introduction

This chapter carries out the empirical analysis of the interplay of the EU-Russian perceptions of the EU as a model of regional integration through the prism of the Eurasian Economic Union proposed by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in 2011, which became an unexpected mirror for the European Union and, as the Ukrainian events later showed, an essential component in the conflictual dynamics of EU-Russia relations. In this manner, Russian perceptions of the EU's institutional design and set of policies backed up by capabilities and a certain normative underpinning which are considered as possible (anti-) templates for the Eurasian Union constitute an interesting and ontologically important exercise for the European Union, an acknowledged example of successful regional integration, for which the expansion of its model is linked with the validation and reification of its identity.

While academic literature has been predominantly focused on the intentional diffusion of EU values and principles, unintentional and unconscious promotion of the European model of development through the emulative mechanisms may be more indicative of the EU's identity as an actor. The case is all the more interesting, given that it is based on the narrative that combines two types of logic inherent in the Russian attitudes to the EU: cooperative, which regards the EU as a model of useful experience, and conflictual, that intends to create an alternative regional project in the post-Soviet space. Therefore, this chapter intends to breach the literature gap by examining the EU-Russian 'perceptions encounter' that emerged as a result of the unacknowledged EU's influence as a model of regional integration and, thereby give a different perspective on the development of the EU-Russian relations in the common neighbourhood.

2. The EU as a model of regional integration in literature: intentional and unintentional influence

The success of the EU as a vivid example of the unparalleled level of integration worthy of being disseminated and emulated beyond its borders is deeply ingrained in the political discourse as the EU elite oftentimes perceive its model as instrumental for drawing countries together, achieving peace, good governance and prosperity. Börzel and Risse (2009b) indicate that the European Union possesses active and passive forms of diffusion of its model depending on the level of its involvement as "the ideas sender".

The main focus in academic literature has been on the active diffusion of the European model that is based on the intended and premeditated externalization of the EU's internal component (Delcour, 2008; Ferreira Pereira, 2010; Grugel, 2004; Yvars, 2010) and that, according to Börzel and Risse (2009b), includes the following mechanisms: coercion (legal and physical imposition), manipulation of utility calculations (positive and negative incentives), socialization (normative rationality) and persuasion (communicative rationality).

The EU's intentional efforts to promote its model took the form of concentric circles with the most immediate zones of influence to which the governance package is directed being the candidate countries[117] and the immediate neighbourhood[118]. Although in the case of the Eastern neighbours the EU accepted the passive role of the "region supporter"[119] (Delcour, 2008) it undertook the active diffusion of its norms, principles and standards to third parties in the framework of the ENP and later the EaP. Besides, the European Union intends to widen the scope of the externalization of its model by stimulating regional processes around the world based on economic and political cooperation and related institution-building[120]. The EU's intentional promotion of the regionalism with the

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[117] Enlargements are considered as the most successful example of the incorporation of the EU economic and political *acquis* into the domestic systems of the applicants.

[118] For analysis of the EU's regional vision within the framework of the ENP towards its Eastern neighbours see Delcour (2008) and the Mediterranean countries Bicchi (2006).

[119] In this light, according to Delcour (2008), the Black Sea Synergy is the first real involvement of the EU as a region builder in the Eastern neighbourhood.

[120] The EU has concluded 6 interregional agreements and 19 political dialogues with regional players since 1990s (Smith, 2008b).

elements of the EU governance addressed its relations with Mercosur (Vasconselos, 2007; Grugel 2004; Lenz, 2012; Yvars, 2010), ASEAN (Acharaya, 1997; Morada, 2012; Murray, 2009), Black Sea Synergy (Delcour, 2008), ECOWAS (Koitsch, 2012), SADS (Lenz, 2012), the Gulf Cooperation Council (Antkiewicz and Momani, 2009).

The reasons for the EU's encouragement of regional integration based on its own experience are various. Fundamentally, the intentional attempts at diffusing components of its governance and economic and political values are informed by "the deeply engrained belief that Europe's history is a lesson for everybody" (Bicchi, 2006: 287). This idea, altruistic on the one hand, is burdened with imperialistic and intrusive connotations as it is pointed out that the underlying mechanism behind the EU's actions is self-interest, be it the economic and geopolitical imperative or the reification and enhancement of the EU's identity as "model power Europe" (Farrell, 2009; Bretherton and Vogler, 2006; Ferreira-Pereira, 2010). Exactly for this reason, it might be empirically revealing to concentrate on the other side of the 'ideas-sender'-'ideas-taker' equation as the reproduction of the EU model and its evaluative judgement depend to a great extent not only on the intentional diffusion, but rather its unintentional influence on third parties.

Börzel and Risse (2009b and 2012) argue that apart from active diffusion the EU promotes its model in an unintentional, inadvertent and passive way by spurring voluntarily emulation of the EU integration experience by outsiders which rests on two components: lesson-drawing (instrumental rationality) and mimicry (normative rationality). In their argument the lesson-drawing involves "active borrowing" of positive templates from a more successful counterpart in order to improve some aspects of the foreign policy outcomes. Börzel and Risse (2009b) assume that "the borrower" can also resort to mimicry for normative reasons in order to legitimize its behaviour, foster its reputation or to imitate the behaviour which is considered appropriate.

The unintentional European influence that generates the imitative learning is being largely ignored in literature[121] despite its ultimate importance for the EU, given that the academic and European official discourse routinely predicates it as a 'model'. As Ferreira-Pereira (2010: 293) observes the EU cannot be considered as an authentic model if it does not generate "imitative behaviour" involving social learning and observation of the model's principles and behaviour. Therefore, studying "a horizontal path" of diffusion

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[121] For the exceptions see Jetschke (2010) and Jetschke and Murray (2012)

(Jetschke and Murray, 2012) of the European templates through the emulative mechanisms is an interesting academic exercise, in particular, when it comes to the newly-founded Eurasian Economic Union [122] whose 'founding fathers' at least discursively resort to lesson drawing and normative mimicry to justify the rationale of the new regional organization.

This chapter further analyses fortuitous and involuntary perceptions generated by the unintentional emulation that potentially might reveal more about the EU as a model than the ones that emerged through deliberate diffusion. Taking into account that the research places the focus on the unacknowledged European influence, the chapter scrutinizes the images of the EU in general, the way it exists, focusing on its achievements as a model of regional integration in terms of its autonomy, unity, capability and normative ideational representations rather than on the aspects externalized by the EU through the intentional mechanisms of promotion of its regional model. Thus, the research focuses rather on the internal dimension of the EU as a regional organization whose inner developments are being subjected to processes of external (mis-)recognition.

3. Recognition of images of EU autonomy in Russian political discourse

The empirical enquiry in this and subsequent subchapters across the case studies proceeds as follows: first it discusses the EU's self-understandings revealed by the analysis of nominations and predications and then compares them with the mirror images found in Russian political discourse.

The analysis of the predicative strategies referring to the images of the EU's autonomy is structured around the following nominations: "the EU" (as regional integration), "EU institutions" (the European Commission and the European Parliament in this case study) and "European (added-value) policies" depending on the aspect of autonomy under analysis.

The empirical scrutiny of the EU discourse grouped around the nomination "the EU" suggests that European regional organization definitely acquired certain autonomous

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[122] Literature on the Eurasian Economic Union is very scarce due to the novelty of this integration project and its development at a vertiginous speed (See Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2013). Literature on the perceptions of the EU as a potential model and antimodel for the Eurasian Union is virtually inexistent.

existence from its member states as an actor which is fully incorporated in the international system and whose visibility has been enhanced by its ever strengthened legal personality through successive treaties, membership in international organizations and external recognition palpable in the increasing web of interactions with other actors. In Barroso's (2011a: 2) words: "the European Union is as deep and real as its Member States.".

Table 3 indicates that Russian political utterances echo this representation by explicitly recognizing the European regional grouping as an entity that was endowed with a certain degree of autonomy. Thus, the then President of the Russian Federation Medvedev (2009b) acknowledged the breakthrough reforms brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon by observing that "from a legal point of view the EU has now become a legally distinct international entity". The member of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission goes even as far as describing the EU as "the only regional union that went beyond a free trade area and a customs union and that created an economic and currency union and supranational mechanisms that have significantly restricted national sovereignty" (Valovaya, 2012b). Thereby, she clearly reverses the autonomy-granting linkages between the EU and its constituting states. Besides, apart from the recognition of the EU's legal personality boosted by biannual EU-Russia summits and frequent meetings with the EU's officials accompanied by a host of joint declarations and documents, the very decision to recur to the European experience of regional integration testifies to the fact that the EU has acquired a certain degree of autonomous existence in the eyes of Russia.

The EU's autonomous action is conditioned by the presence of the distinctive institutional apparatus. Table 3 indicates that the analysis of the empirical data hinges on predications attached to the following nominations: "the EU (common) institutions" and other similar derivatives denoting the EU's legal and institutional design and then considers perceptions related to the most frequently referred to EU institutions, namely the European Commission, the European Parliament as essential institutional 'bricks' of the European regional integration.

Table 3. Perceptions of EU autonomy through the prism of Russian recognition

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self- perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU	as deep and real as its member states	a legally distinct international entity; restricts national sovereignty	recognition
EU (common) institutions	a unique legal and institutional design created as a result of pooling member states' sovereignty	a strong supranational structure and regulation created by the delegation of a part of the national competencies	recognition
	combine national and supranational powers, are limited by the intergovernmental institutions	mixture of national and supranational powers with dominance of the intergovernmental approaches	recognition
The European Commission	represents the European interest, indispensable source of expertise and creative legislative technique, brings together the horizontal view - with the vertical insight	spurs European integration, has unprecedented supervisory powers in the microeconomic ambit, equality in decision making at the supranational level	recognition
The European Parliament	the only transnational and directly elected Parliament in the world	directly elected	recognition
The EU (added value) policies	internal benefit maximizer (world's largest single market), external benefit maximizer (externalizes and protects interests of the member states)	internal benefit maximizer (single internal market, Schengen visa-free area) gives its member states a competitive advantage in the world politics	recognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The EU discourse highlights the fact that the European Union can boast a unique legal and institutional design which has been created as a result of pooling member states' sovereignty to ensure influence which none of them could achieve on their own. The out-of-the-ordinary and euphonious combination of "the legitimacy of democratic States with the legitimacy of supranational institutions" (Rompuy and Barroso, 2012: 6) constitutes the distinctiveness of the institutional apparatus on which the European integration is based. Hence, EU common bodies are of ultimate significance as they enable the EU's

autonomy as an actor as, in Rompuy and Barroso's (2012: 6) words, they "protect the general European interest, defend the European common good and embody the community of destiny". However, there is also an important stipulation in the discourse that EU institutions are far from possessing all-encompassing powers. Rather, the institutions act as checks and balances on each other and the competencies of the supranational bodies are limited by the intergovernmental institutions.

The EU-Russian discursive 'encounter' related to the EU-style model of governance can be basically characterized as a non-conflictual one given that Russian discourse mirrors the EU's self-images without significant distortions. Regarding this component of the EU's autonomy as an actor, in the eyes of Russia the EU has succeeded in developing "a strong supranational structure" (Lavrov, 2011) that is clearly distinguishable and created as a result of the member states' agreement to voluntarily delegate a part of their competencies to ensure the evolution of integration (Valovaya, 2012a).

Such institutional design is seen as a breakthrough and revolutionary venture, which offers attractive samples for emulation for the evolving Eurasian Economic Union in clear contrast with the unimpressive institutional achievements of previous integration projects within the CIS area based on adherence to the principles of equality, non-interference and state sovereignty. Therefore, taking the supranational experience of the European Union as a kind of a warrant for bonding together the members of the Eurasian Union, the leaders of Russia Belarus and Kazakhstan have come to an agreement that successful regional integration requires delegation of a part of national competencies to common institutions[123]. In this light the EU is seen as possessing "a strong supranational structure and bureaucracy, which ensures the unity of the European Union" (Lavrov, 2011).

Apart from functioning as an integration trigger, EU supranational institutions generate an unprecedented economic growth, sustainability and competitiveness of its economy on the global stage and, according to Shuvalov (2010), administer regulation to serve its common market and united economic space; the experience, which is aptly transferrable to the CIS integration. Therefore, although the Russian discourse places the main focus

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[123] As the Russian diplomat puts it: the Eurasian Economic Union is expected to be created "if not on the model of the European Union, but still largely based on its best practices with regard to its institutional and legal development" (Chizhov, 2012b)

on the EU institutional apparatus as a leitmotif for the integration, its other functions are also recognized in general lines.

Nevertheless, although there is recognition that the EU structure combines supranational and national competencies, there are clearly certain imbalances. Thus, Russian Permanent Representative to the EU notices that although the post-Lisbon system endeavours to rectify the lopsidedness in the distribution of the powers between the EU and its constituents, the intergovernmental approaches to integration are still clearly gaining dominance[124] (Chizhov, 2012b). Following this logic EU institutions and representatives are seen as awarded with limited competencies and mandates, the nuisance that is not rectified due to the lack of political will. Therefore, Russian images that "EU's supranational institutions are limited by the national say" (Chizhov, 2012b) roughly coincide with the EU's recognition that its institutions are checked by intergovernmental approach with the difference that Russian rhetoric places greater emphasis on the member state's power.

Returning to the EU's political discourse, the European Commission definitely tops on the list of EU institutions that raise the EU's profile as an autonomous actor. Barroso (2006: 2) succinctly describes the European Commission as "the institution par excellence to represent the European interest". It is the Commission that contributes its vision and its proposals to spur the European integration and is seen as an "indispensable and reinforced focal point", "an indispensable source of expertise and creative legislative technique" which always "followed a truly European approach in the exercise of its right to initiative" and which "brings together the horizontal view - awareness of the plurality of Member State situations - with the vertical insight - the expertise of European policies" (Barroso, 2014d, 9).

Quite predictably, Russian discourse is concentrated on the European Commission as the leading common institution, a leitmotif of the European integration endowed with "unprecedented supervisory powers" in the ambit of the microeconomic governance and the Stability and Growth Pact (Chizhov, 2012b) among other economic and trade functions. The discourse on the European Commission in the eyes of Russian political elite is fleeting and occasional and is tied closely to the discourse on the applicability of

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[124] However, this supremacy of the authority of the member states is not seen as a major disadvantage for the Eurasian Union which is planned to function predominantly along the intergovernmental line.

its experience[125] to the Eurasian Economic Commission, which has become the first body in the post-Soviet space to which the member states have delegated a part of their sovereignty by appointing ministers to act as supranational actors representing common interest. Equality is another parallel between both commissions as Dmitry Medvedev (2011b) described the Eurasian Economic Commission as a body in which everybody is equal as its "decision-making mechanisms completely exclude the possibility of any one country dominating over another".

Thus, it cannot be said that there is a genuine discursive 'dialogue' as the images generated on both sides and found in the selection of the discourse samples under analysis are disparate and in the Russian case, scarce, so that it is problematic to establish direct parallelism between discursive strands. On the whole, it might be concluded that the Russian discourse in broad terms recognizes the existence of the European Commission as an autonomous institution that carries out distinctive functions; in particular, it provides the impetus for integration, stands for the common European interest and performs supervisory and regulative functions in the ambit of microeconomic governance and common market.

Another European institution that plays a visible role in reinforcing of the EU's autonomy is the European Parliament. According to the European official rhetoric the peculiarity of the European Parliament rests on the fact, that it is "the only transnational Parliament in the world" (Barroso, 2010b: 30) which is directly elected and which jointly with the European Commission is tasked to "articulate and give reality to the European interest" as well as "to ensure that the EU is more than the sum of its parts" (Barroso, 2010a: 5). It is the European Parliament that has seen a spectacular transformation of its competence as its role has been enhanced from "a consultative assembly to the indispensable co-legislator" which allows the Parliament to engage in a constructive contribution from "the adoption of the European Union's budget to the conclusion of the Banking Union" (Barroso, 2014d: 8).

The European Parliament is another body considered by Russian 'architects' as a putative paradigm for the anticipated common architecture of the Eurasian integration, as

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[125] On the practical level, the lesson-drawing from the EU's experience is mirrored in bilateral and cluster meetings between Russian Representatives and their counterparts in the European Commission.

according to the Russian Chairman of the State Duma, the prospective Eurasian Parliament might be endowed with legislative powers and formed through direct democratic elections similar to those of the European Parliament (Naryshkin, 2012a). The necessity of such an institution is conditioned by the fact, that up to this moment the Eurasian Union is the elite driven process, and as the Chairman of the State Duma explains, genuine economic integration is impossible without consent of the wider public and the democratically elected Parliament could play the role in the legitimizing of the Eurasian Union (Naryshkin, 2012a).

An interesting observation is that the newly created posts of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs assisted by the European External Action Service and the President of the European Council do not receive a lot of discursive attention in Russian rhetoric in general according to the selection of the texts brought under analysis. In relation to the EU as a model for regional integration, the Russian official discourse is conspicuously silent, the fact that is perfectly consonant with the endeavours of the founding fathers of the Eurasian Union to focus on economic pragmatism while outspokenly excluding, at least for the time being, the political dimension of the integration.

Another argument in favour of distinctive and independent existence from its member states is linked tightly to the second element of autonomy, as the EU's actorness in its own right is judged best against outcomes of its activity and its ability to leave 'a footprint' by contributing an added value to individual foreign policies of its members. The analysis of the subsequent paragraphs is centred on the predicative descriptions attached to the nomination of the EU's (added value) policies/ activities to refer to the benefits that arise as a result of the EU's existence and that make the European model attractive for the Eurasian Union's leaders.

The European official discourse is very explicit as regards the added value of policies facilitated by the EU's way of integration that hinges on the predicative description of the EU as a benefit maximizer. First and foremost, the EU's contribution lies in the economic realm and is reflected in its ability to act as a benefit maximizer promoting peace, stability and well-being of its people both internally and externally. Internally this objective is brought to life by creating conditions for an outstanding economic performance facilitated by the single market, the Customs and Monetary Union, common currency, the visa-free

Schengen zone and the freedom of movement. All in all, the EU's added value is predicated as its capacity to act as the biggest trading bloc. However, the EU is not a purely economic project. The European discourse points to the fact, that European integration has gone far beyond economical dimension and permeates the very foundations of European society going beyond a mere common market (Barroso, 2013d) by incorporating not only economic and social but also political standards, which are frequently deeply interwoven. The Union is seen as having made impressive progress towards "deeper political and economic integration" that combines the benefits of the economic and monetary union and "a significant reinforcement of European foreign, security and defence policies" (Rehn, 2005: 2).

Secondly, the EU is not only seen as an instrument to achieve internal benefits, but as a means to externalize further and protect its interests beyond its borders. The EU enables its member states to go beyond the national level by giving them "the critical mass" to make a difference in the multilateral fora (Barroso, 2012a). In this light, the EU functions as a platform and means for the member states to be stronger by pooling their resources and is perceived as "a giant conflict resolution machine" and as "the vehicle to act in a fast changing world and to influence its direction with our ideas" Ashton (2010: 3). Thus, the EU's role as an external benefit maximizer consists in enabling the member states to function collectively as a 'reshaper' of the world politics by influencing the geopolitical and geoeconomical tectonic shifts and by allowing them to better protect their interests, be it in the multilateral negotiations, energy policy or globalized finance and economy by offering 'integrated solutions' and a wide range of tools and instruments.

Having analysed the discursive samples found in the Russian rhetoric concerning the 'added value' of the EU's policies that resulted from its inner development as regional integration, it can be concluded that the EU's self-images as an internal and external benefit maximiser are recognized by Russian political elite. First and foremost, the EU's contribution and utility extend to the economic realm as the Russian political leaders perceive the European integration as a model which provides valuable experience for providing economic gains.

The European Union is recognized as a benefit maximizer both internally and externally. Regarding the internal dimension, the EU's achievements to be emulated include the common market and Monetary and Customs Union that spur economic performance and

as a consequence, the quality of life and well-being of its citizens. A high-ranking Russian diplomat assumes that the Europeans are well aware of all the benefits achieved through the integration such as a single internal market, Schengen visa-free area, single currency and common foreign trade (Chizhov, 2012b). Economic advantages are also emphasized by Medvedev (2011b) who points out that membership in the EU raised several member states "that were only very middling in their development to a decent development through integration and mutual help and support". Therefore, the experience of EU integration, in particular its economic achievements will be broadly applied in designing the new integration project in the CIS space. In this manner, the Customs Union between Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia which became operational in 2012 was seen as a stepping stone to the common economic space and later the fully-fledged Eurasian Economic Union based, in the words of the former Prime Minister, on "the common market, with harmonised legislation, free movement of capital, products, services and people" and greater economic policy coordination on major issues (Putin, 2011a).

Hence, in this vein Russian political discourse portrays the EU as a kind of superior Other whose experience merits lesson-drawing. Vladimir Putin outspokenly acknowledges that the EU is an example for the economies of the former Soviet countries which are "dysfunctional and uncompetitive because they had developed as part of the Soviet central planning system, in isolation from the global economy" (Putin 2011c). Consequently, what is expected from the integration of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan built on the EU's experience is "further rapprochement between the countries, the strengthening of their economic potential and improved living standards for their citizens" Putin (2011b). Those objectives are feasible through integration and that is why Russian politicians are willing to learn from the European experience and to transfer its best practices.

Nonetheless, it may be observed that there is a parallel line of somewhat negatively coloured discourse linked to the crisis and Eurozone-related problems. Thus, Russian Permanent Representative to the EU remarked that "the model of a 'European welfare state for all' that emerged in the post-war period was put at risk" (Chizhov, 2012b). However, simultaneously, it is hoped that the Eurasian integration built on the European experience will spur the economic growth and create the oases of stability in the current

complex and contradictory conditions. In this context the integrated economies are seen as possessing more potential for solving socio-economic problems, thus, making the EU model as a generator of benefits a more stable image in Russian political narrative.

On the other hand, although the focus is placed on the economic achievements of the EU, the political success of the EU is also acknowledged by the Russian discourse as the EU is described as currently the only regional union that in its integration went beyond a free trade area and a customs union by letting supranationalism encroach on the member states' sovereignty (Valovaya, 2012b). Anyway, the references and allusions to the political dimension are made in a somewhat tangential way due to the fact that Russian leaders in their aspirations towards the creation of the new integration project explicitly exclude the political issue and draw predominantly on the economic experience of the EU.

The vision of the EU as an external benefits maximizer correlates with the EU's self-understandings and constitutes another rationale Russian statesmen recur to when justifying the processes of the lesson-drawing implicated in the creation of the Eurasian Union. Beyond its borders the European regional organization is depicted as able to strengthen collective positions on the international stage. That is, the EU as "the most advanced integration union on the planet" gives its member states a competitive advantage in world politics. as "they [the EU] realise that only as a single player in the global economy that they can ensure their survival in the globalised world" (Chizhov, 2011c). This narrative is reflected in the discursive logic that the polycentric world requires the structure based on 'building blocks' (Chizhov, 2011c; Valovaya, 2012b) and the Eurasian Union, based on European experience, could help its member countries increase their competitiveness and weight. In this sense, EU-inspired integration is discursively presented as 'a pass' and a gateway to benefits provided by the globalized world.

Thus, comparing both narratives concerning the autonomy as a criterion of the EU's identity as an actor it can be concluded that the discourse is exempt from inherent conflictual connotations as EU self-descriptions as an actor have been recognized. Russian political discourse largely mirrors European self-representations concerning EU's autonomous and relatively independent existence confirmed by discursive commitment of the Eurasian Union architects to copy such aspects of the EU's inner development as

institutional design and a set of policies directed at generation of benefits both for internal consumption and on the international stage.

4. Russian (mis-) recognition of unity of the European Union

The issue of the (dis-)unity occupies a central place in EU narrative and permeates a great part of analysed discursive samples structured around the references "the EU (and its member states)" and to a smaller extent "the EU policies"

The predominant and frequently reiterated discourse pivots around the idea that although the EU is not and will not be a super-state, it is much more than an inter-governmental forum (Barroso, 2011b). The acknowledgement of the unprecedented level of integration generated a string of predicative references christening the EU as "a Union of states", "the ever closer union", "by far the most advanced process of integration", "a postmodern entity", "a new legal order based on the free consent of states to share sovereignty" referring to the community of states bound by such an unrivalled degree of integration that, according to (Rompuy and Barroso, 2012), fosters the erosion of mental and physical borders for peoples and nations, which allow them to "overcome the differences between 'them' and 'us'" and thereby enabling the EU to re-emerge more united after the economic crisis despite negative predictions.

The common legacy that consolidates European countries finds its expression in the discursive formations that metaphorically compare the EU with "common/shared home" "a family", "homeland of homelands", "fraternity" that intensify the EU's narrative on unity. Barroso (2006: 4) cites as an example an image of "a shared home", that is "a large house that has been inhabited by a variety of different populations since time immemorial" which found "a special inner affinity of spirit that permeates all of them and transcends their national differences".

Therefore, probably the most precise and profound EU self-understanding is transmitted in the European slogan "united in diversity" to describe the countries that share a common past based on common cultural and religious patrimony[126], which legitimizes to some extent the integration, and yet still retain their identity which manifests itself in

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[126] The Treaty of Lisbon refers to "the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe" (European Union, 2007).

linguistic, historical and cultural diversity. From this perspective the EU remains a group of nation states linked by fraternal ties into the most advanced regional integration, they are still "27 countries proud of their identity" (Barroso, 2010b). Both these facets coexist in a non-conflictual and mutually enriching manner and constitute the originality and success of the European project (European Commission, 2007).

However, European leaders are perfectly aware of the inevitable political constraints that the ever expanding number of members involves. As Barroso (2010b) asserts that "we are 27 countries. We are not 1 country... It is only natural to have different points of view". This discursive path is perfectly exemplified by van Rompuy's (2012: 6) metaphoric comparison of the EU:

> "not to either one ship or 27 autonomous boats, but to a convoy. A convoy of 27 ships finding its way across the geopolitical waves. Picture them: 27 ships, each flying their own flag and that of the European Union too. The wind makes them drift apart some of the time, gets them to sail in the same direction at other times."

The ineluctable discordances generated by its complex constitution are manifested in various types of inconsistencies and incoherencies that affect interactions within the EU. The first kind of inconsistency reinforced in the context of the economic crisis refers to the frictions between North and South, rich and poor, debtor and creditor countries, the centre and the periphery coupled with the intensification of the nationalist and populist discourses within the member states that cling to purely national issues and parochial interests.

The vertical inconsistency that involves disagreements among the constituent states and EU institutions is another factor that mars the images of the EU's unity. The European discourse habitually boils down to the "controversies about the division of labour between the national and European levels" (Barroso, 2013d) which create the images of "cognitive dissonance", "schizophrenic political behaviour" and "lack of ownership" inherent in the EU-member states interactions (Barroso, 2014.04.08). The member states themselves contribute to the creation of negative images as they tend to attribute failures to Brussels and positive outcomes to the national government, or as Barroso (2013a) puts it "nationalise success and Europeanise failure". The EU leaders point out that these unfortunate tendencies are exacerbated by the rise of Europhobic and Eurosceptical attitudes within a number of member states. The European official discourse is

characterized by a focus on the ways to rectify the vertical inconsistencies by endeavouring to move from the competitive postures to what Barroso (2014.04.08d) calls as a 'Kooperationsverhältnis', that is, the maximization of coherence and the avoidance of the behaviour when EU institutions try to do more than prescribed by the treaties, and the member states endeavour to limit them[127].

Finally, the EU narratives refer to horizontal institutional inconsistencies that involve the multitude of institutions and actors involved in foreign policy and external representation by causing that "trying to work your way through the different bits of the European Union can sometimes be a bit of a challenge" (Ashton, 2013b: 3). As Šefčovič (2014a) critically observes, apart from having squabbles with the member states, the institutions themselves oftentimes give an impression of being unable to reach an agreement with each other on many issues. However, as is typical of the EU's self-critical descriptions of its inconsistencies, the greater part of discursive attention falls on the solutions to rectify these deficiencies. In this context the Lisbon Treaty is frequently cited as an endeavour to attenuate the institutional inconsistency by creation of the offices of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy assisted by of the External Action Service and EU delegations to serve as "a single platform" and "a one-stop shop" for the EU partners (Ashton, 2011b: 1). Such steps are expected to make the EU institutional representation more comprehensible to the outside world, to ensure consistency across the spectrum of EU relations and contribute to converging positions of the EU member states, thereby enhancing the Union's credibility and visibility as a united actor on the ground.

Although European inconsistencies and incoherencies are acknowledged, the picture presented by European discourse is not so dire. Šefčovič (2014b: 2) describes the European policy making as: "probably the most consensual in the world" taking into account that the agreement is to be found between the numerous European actors and then between and within the 28 member states.

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[127] The solution is for the EU "to be *big on big things and smaller on smaller things*" by focusing on the policies where it brings the added value and following closely the principle of subsidiarity (Barroso, 2013d, emphasis original). Also, clear mandates should be awarded to the different actors at all levels from the local to the European sphere to achieve the "cooperative division of labour" (Barroso, 2014d: 9).

In Russian political discourse the images of the EU (dis-)unity constitute the predominant part of the Russian discursive descriptions of EU actorness being an easy and most frequent target for criticism. However, when it comes to the case of the EU as a model of regional integration, Russian perceptions of European integrity acquire a specific sounding fraught with contextual ambiguity and duality as is reflected in table 4. Therefore, the unusually frequent cases of the recognition of the EU's self-images of unity should be read through the prism of understanding that Russian leadership is torn between the necessity to justify its own integration project and the aspiration to disqualify the EU.

The first discursive clusters of EU's self-understandings concerning the degree of unity are recognized by Russia. It is acknowledged that although the European Union is "not a superstate and not even a federation" (Chizhov, 2014g) the degree of integration achieved is impressive and unprecedented and the EU has become an inseparable part of the identification of its member states. Nonetheless, oftentimes the EU's alleged unity is not a simple neutral matter-of-fact description, but the result of a subtle political discursive manipulation as Russian leadership makes an attempt to reject the accusation of the possibility of the reestablishing of the Soviet Union under the disguise of the new integration project. The then Prime Minister's words perfectly exemplify this attitude:

> "European integration has reached levels unheard of even in the Soviet Union…the number of mandatory decisions adopted by the European Parliament is greater than the number of binding decisions that were ever adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet for the Soviet republics. Now they've started talking about a single government in the true sense of the word, and a single inter-currency regulator. These plans generate no objections, and no one talks about imperial ambitions" (Putin, 2011d)

This observed scope of integrity between the European states has generated a row of predications listed in table 4 such as "a union of 28 states", "the community bringing together a large number of Europe's countries", "a modern union", "an integrated organization", "united Europe" which in broad lines resonate with the EU's recurrent self-image of the "union of states".

Table 4. Summary of Russian discursive reactions to the images of EU unity

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU (and its member states)	is not a super-state but much more than an inter-governmental forum, by far the most advanced process of integration	is not a super-state but degree of integration is impressive	recognition
	the ever closer union, union of states, postmodern entity, a new legal order	a union of 28 states, an integrated organization, on a way towards 'more Europe', a community of different states	partial recognition
	home, family, shared home, kinship, fraternal ties, united in diversity, retain their identity which manifests itself in different languages and historical narratives but share a common cultural heritage	a group of heterogeneous countries each possessing their own identity and language, not united by a common cultural code and history, united by the 'European idea', common spiritual and cultural values	parallel recognition and misrecognition
	suffer from inevitable disagreements, "a convoy of 27 ships"	member states fighting each other	negative recognition
The EU (inconsistency among members)	divisions among the members (North/South, rich/ poor, debtor/ creditor countries, the centre/ the periphery	divisions among the members (North/South, "safety harbours"/"weaker partners", old/new member states, core countries	negative recognition
The EU (vertical inconsistency)	controversies about the division of labour between the national and European levels	controversies about the division of labour between the national and European levels	negative recognition
The EU (horizontal institutional inconsistency)	disagreement among institutions, rectified partially by the Lisbon Treaty	absent discourse	non-recognition
The EU policy	the most consensual in the world	Consensus is difficult but possible	partial

Source: Author's elaboration

Besides, the EU's perceptions of the unifying effects of the economic crisis chime with the optimistic line of Russian discourse that concludes that even the ongoing crises gives the EU the opportunity come out of the economic tumult as more united and more integrated given a number of measures taken to enhance the microeconomic governance and the delegation of ground-breaking supervisory powers to the Commission to confront the microeconomic imbalances to "continue their course towards 'more Europe'" Chizhov (2012b). Metaphorically comparing the European integration to the crocodile that can't walk backwards, a Russian high-ranking diplomat means that process cannot be reversed despite the Euroscepticism (Chizhov, 2012f), thereby characterizing it as having passed "a point of no return" (Chizhov, 2012b). Nonetheless, although the EU's representations as a union of states are recognized, there is generally certain scepticism when it comes to other predicative structures such as "the ever closer union" in the sense of "postmodern entity" as these descriptions are counterbalanced to a certain extent by Russian views of the EU as a community of states with strong national affiliations.

Thus, the EU's slogan "united in diversity" reflected in heterogeneity of national identities underlined by common historical heritage and bound by "fraternal ties" is echoed in Russian political discourse with certain duality. More frequently the discourse is interwoven in a wider strand of the descriptions of the EU as a group of heterogeneous countries which reached enormous success in its integration despite the fact that European countries lacked any basis that could be propitious for integration such as common culture, language or any previous integration experience. Russian political discourse does not echo the EU's self-images related to the metaphorical predicates related to "home" and "family". However, Russian narrative invokes the same family, home and common cultural basis related rhetoric to validate the Eurasian integration. Thereby, the discourse situates the European Union in an antithetical position in relation to the Eurasian Union emphasizing the fact Eurasian integration is facilitated not only by the common cultural code and values, shared past and language, but by economic factors such as common transport, energy and other infrastructures inherited from the Soviet era[128].

On the other hand, statements that EU members are bound by some previous experience also occasionally appear in Russian political discourse as they seem to be designed to

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[128] Russian discourse draws comparisons between more than 1000 years of integration combined with common currency and customs at the later stages and one common language and 60 years of European integration and more than twenty official languages of the EU (Klimov, 2012)

offset the accusations that Russia aims at restoring the Soviet Union. Vladimir Putin in his article refers to such ideas as the European civilization, namely Humanism, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment that underpin the European integration (Putin 2007). The Minister of the Eurasian Commission Valovaya (2012b) asserts the founding EU six were inspired with "the 'European idea', – the idea of common spiritual and cultural values of the European civilisation" which include various historical periods, be it the Roman Empire, Charlemagne's empire, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, or the Habsburg or Napoleon's empires[129].

In general, apart from the attempts to legitimize the Eurasian integration using the EU as a shield, Russian discourse tends to acknowledge that despite the meritorious depth of the European unification, national interests of heterogeneous "sovereign" countries still prevail over the supranational identity, thereby recognizing and to a certain extent magnifying the European assumptions about the inevitability of various types of inconsistencies and discrepancies. The discourse varies from the more neutral mater-of-fact descriptions of the EU as "a collection of disparate countries" or "an entity composed of 'sovereign' countries driven first and foremost by their national interests" to more drastic characterizations of the EU as an entity that failed to absorb all the other countries included in it (Medvedev, 2009b) consisting of countries that are fighting each other and that have not adapted to the European life (Medvedev, 2011a).

The economic problems that beset the EU made various dividing lines among members more palpable, which, as expressed in predications, do not demonstrate word-for-word convergence but exhibit a great degree of semblance with the European discourse. Russian narrative spotlights such divisions as "North-South faultlines", "safety harbours" and "weaker partners", "a group of economically most advanced core European countries", big and small countries, 'old' and 'new' members. Thus, when speaking about discrepancies that plague EU member states, Russia emphasizes two types of divisions:

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[129] In an interesting way she draws parallels between the European successive enlargements and diverse historical epochs of Europe. Thus, the founding states of the EU were within the borders of Charlemagne's empire, which was gradually extended to embrace "the ghosts of other former empires", namely the empire of the Caesars when it enlarged to the Mediterranean and Great Britain, then the Habsburg heritage when it included Central Europe, the conquests of the Normans when the Scandinavians joined the EU. (Valovaya, 2012b)

the economy-related fault lines and, in comparison with the European discourse, a greater focus is placed on the difference between old and new member states.

This may be the main discordance in the EU-Russian discursive 'encounter', as Russian politicians view discrepancies between the old and new EU members not only in terms of divergent socio-economic development but with reference to their divergent attitudes towards Russia. The then Russian president categorizes the EU countries into three groups, the countries that are eager to undertake positive changes immediately in relations with Russia, the ones that want to move carefully, and the third group is characterized by unwillingness to cooperate because of their mistrust of Russia (Medvedev, 2011c). This heterogeneity is conditioned and aggravated by the EU's geopolitical decision to absorb the states of the former communist bloc in violation of the principle of economic pragmatism; the mistake that Russian political leaders promise to avoid when expanding the Eurasian Economic Union.

As for vertical inconsistencies that refer to discordances between EU institutions and the member states, Russian political discourse recognizes, and even places a greater emphasis on the EU's images of its own imperfections. Russian rhetoric acknowledges the existence of certain discrepancies between European and national levels, which inevitably arise in "a complex multiheaded organism" where there is a complicated distribution of exclusive competencies between the member states and the European Union combined with a wide range of joint competencies (Chizhov, 2014d). Besides, the EU member states and institutions are beheld as embroiled in constant power battles and blame shifting, thereby reproducing Barroso's (2013a) adefinition of the "nationalization" of success and "Europeanization" of failure. Thus, the European commission oftentimes justifies its inaction by lack of competencies, while the member states blame the European Commission for certain types of policy failures (Chizhov, 2014g).

The confusion about the distribution of powers between Brussels and the national capitals constitute the main accusation that undermines the EU's standing as a unitary actor, the deficiency which, according to Russian political elites, has not been completely rectified by the Lisbon Treaty. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs assumes that "the Lisbon Treaty has catalogued different categories of powers within the EU, but has not provided explicit answers for all the questions" (Lavrov, 2013). Even more, the pre-Lisbon and post-Lisbon processes by themselves rather testify to the disunity among members driven

by their national interests. The quotation of the Russian Representative to the EU would seem idoneous to picture the situation: "The EU institutional system upgraded by the Lisbon Treaty is facing certain difficulties with intergovernmental approaches to integration clearly gaining dominance" (Chizhov 2012b).

This process is also true in a reciprocal direction, when the EU stance is seen as imposing. For example, in the dealings with other actors including Russia, Brussels is seen as exhibiting proclivities to interpret the rules and norms adopted by the member states as having prevalence over international obligations of these same member states, in particular with respect to intergovernmental agreements signed third countries before the common EU regulations came into force (Chizhov, 2012b). Thus, Lavrov (2013) points out that instead of sticking to the commitment stipulated by the Treaty on European Union to interfere only if Member States cannot achieve their objectives at the national level, the EU intends to restrain its members in the ambits outside its exclusive competence thereby hampering the strategic interactions.

Russian political leadership also focuses attention on the emergence and intensification of the Eurosceptical movements as well as the support for the "fringe parties, which at times parade dangerous ultranationalist and even racist slogans" (Chizhov, 2012b). These processes intensify disunity and cleavages between the European institutions and member states and hamper, even threaten the integration process as it has come to a standstill or even is reversed in some national capitals.

As regards the horizontal inconsistencies that involve the intrainstitutional frictions in the context of the EU's role as a model of regional integration, mirror images of the EU's understandings are practically inexistent.

And, regarding the final nomination "the EU policies" it can be said that the EU's vision of its structure as the most consensual in the world given the multitude of actors and constituents is partially reflected in Russian rhetoric as the infrequent discourse samples point out that the compromise is possible but not so easy as it has to be found not only between the big and smaller EU states, but also new and old members and even within the core constituted by Paris and Berlin.

This section deals with the assessment of the EU self-representations of its unity through the lens of Russian (mis-)recognition. The analysis of the Russian mirror images provides

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a curious picture. On the one hand, the predicative attributes attached to this criterion of actorness have been recognized or have been endowed with partial recognition, therefore, the EU identity has been partially reiterated in the external mirror and the ideational interaction is exempt from palpable conflictual underpinnings that could have a negative spillover into EU-Russian relations. On the other hand, the Russian narrative exhibits certain ambivalence manifest in the string of self-contradictory and dual depictions, namely in the cases of misrecognition and negative recognition of the EU which are indicative of the inherent tension generated by the Russian need to selectively draw on the EU model through the processes of lesson-drawing and normative mimicry and the impetus to disqualify it in the battle 'for the hearts and minds' in the post-Soviet space.

5. Analysis of Russian discursive reactions to the images of capabilities of European integration

The analysis carried out in this subchapter revolves around the nomination "the EU instruments" used as an umbrella reference to speak about the capabilities of the European Union. However, as regards this criterion of actorness, it is hardly possible to talk about a fully-featured discursive 'encounter' between the EU and Russia as table 5 clearly indicates the noticeable silence of the Russian discourse on the issue.

Table 5. Discursive 'encounter' of EU-Russian perceptions of the EU's capabilities

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	Russian perceptions	
Instruments at the EU disposal	wide, unique, impressive range of instruments, ensures integrated solutions	absent discourse	nonrecognition
	economic, legal, diplomatic, and military	economic, diplomatic and military	recognition
	insufficient capacities, suffers from the governance and expectations gaps	absent discourse	nonrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

As follows from the summary presented by the table, the analysis of the empirical samples found from the European sources in a soul-searching manner displays a fully-featured discourse on the EU's instrumental capacities which can roughly be subdivided into two broad discursive strands, the first and the most predominant line is optimistically-tinged discourse which is counterbalanced by more sporadic self-critical rhetoric.

The EU self-reflexively describes itself as equipped with a "wide", "unique" "impressive" range of instruments that go beyond the national reach and are able "to forge the kind of integrated solutions, bringing together the expertise and the instruments from diplomacy to development, to defence – and much else besides" (Ashton, 2010: 3). Economic instruments definitely outstand in the gamut of the European instrumental capabilities given the unanimous acknowledgement that the EU is first and foremost an economic power. However, there is a growing recognition that the EU's arsenal of instruments is expanding to include "the comprehensive array of instruments - economic, legal, diplomatic, and military[130]" (Solana, 2005) which was further enhanced by the creation of the European External Action Service which is expected to bring together all the tools at the EU's disposition (Ashton, 2011b).

In a self-critical vein it is acknowledged now and then that the EUs' range of capabilities still needs improvement as, according to Barroso (2014d), there are two gaps: the governance gap reflected in the fact that "Member States on their own no longer have what it takes to deliver what citizens need while the European institutions still lack part of the equipment to do so", and the second gap is when the political system cannot satisfy peoples' expectations. As he states elsewhere "sometimes we have the same people saying that Europe is not doing enough and at the same time that's not giving more means to Europe to do what Europe has to do" (Barroso, 2013d). This stance is closely related to the discourse on the 'cognitive' dissonance and vertical disagreements between the EU and its members with the latter frequently unwilling to concede much sovereignty to the EU institutions and resistant to the initiatives at the EU level.

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[130] The allegation that the EU is a weak military actor is continuously being contested by European officials. Ashton (2013a) cites as an example that about €200 billion are being spent on defence between the 27 nations, the effort that has resulted in the perceived success of ESDP accompanied by the growing number of important operational missions as well as creation of Battle groups within the framework of the EU.

The discursive samples of Russian narrative that were brought into analysis did not contain any references that could mirror the EU's self-descriptions as possessing a wide, unique range of instruments that add value to the capabilities of the individual member states and ensure the kind of 'integrated solutions' to the complex problems. If any discursive attention was devoted to this aspect of the EU's actorness, it was focused on the economic instruments. This logic can be justified on the grounds that the Eurasian Economic Union, which is partially modelled on the templates of the European Union, is of economic nature, therefore references relate predominantly to the economic instruments.

The references to the EU economic instruments are found in very general contexts and are referred to in a very fleeting manner. For example, regarding the crises in the Eurozone the Russian Permanent Representative to the EU remarks that the European Union embarked on "supranational centralization of key economic governance tools… to cope with accumulating macroeconomic imbalances and gaps in the level of competitiveness undermining the basis of the monetary union" through a number of far-reaching reforms such as adoption of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (the so-called fiscal pact) and strengthening the Stability and Growth Pact of 1997 which includes "introducing mechanisms for financial assistance, financial supervision, coordination of budgetary and economic policies as well as prevention and adjustment of macroeconomic imbalances" (Chizhov, 2012b). Also there are some references to existence of sanctions in the EU instrumental portfolio. Apart from the references to the economic instruments, Russian political elite fleetingly mention the diplomatic and military dimensions, however, as they clearly emphasize that the Eurasian Union is of economic nature, these tools are excluded from investigation in this case study.

The scarcity of Russian 'responses' to the EU's self-reflexive descriptions of its instrumental portfolio renders impossible the implementation of a fully-fledged analysis of the interplay of perceptions. Russian discourse is limited to the tacit acknowledgement of the economic instruments and, in a more fleeting manner, diplomatic and military, without attributing any evaluative judgments to them. The scarcity of Russian political discourse samples on EU capabilities, paradoxical at first sight, succumbs to an explanation, that the Eurasian Economic Union is designed as an organization based on the economic rationale, leaving the political dimension beyond consideration.

6. EU ideational self-images through the prism of Russian (mis-) recognition

This section is dedicated to the analysis of predications linguistically attached to "the EU" and "the European integration" as nominations to impel the analysis of the ideational dimensions of the EU as a model of regional integration. These predications bifurcate into those denoting the EU's reflexive identity revolving around the question of what the EU is and those touching upon the active aspect of the EU's ideational depth and describing how the EU acts.

The European representations of the ideational aspect of its actorness seem to be the most idyllic in comparison with other more conventional facets. The EU's role is described as distinctive (Ashton, 2010) with the effects of this predication reflected in other ideational self-representations. *Inter alia,* the distinctiveness of European identity is mirrored in its ability to "offer something special", namely, "post-imperial partnerships for a post-imperial age" (Ashton, 2011a). Thus, the European political discourse is replete with references to the fundamentally new stage of development brought about by the EU's existence. In particular, the EU is described as "a community of law" (Rehn, 2005), "a project of peace" that "healed history's deep scars" (Barroso, 2013d), "a beacon of freedom and prosperity, whose light shines far beyond our borders" (Barroso 2012a). "a successful example of peaceful reconciliation based on economic integration" that deleted "the differences between 'them' and 'us'" and a "state of mind" in Spinoza's sense, based on "disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice" (Rompuy and Barroso, 2012: 5). According to Rehn (2005: 1) the distinctiveness of the EU lies in the fact that it managed to reverse "the governing principle 'might is right'" and "moved from the modern world based on balance of power to a postmodern world based on the rule of law".

The EU's distinctiveness is also closely related to the notion of the EU as 'the value community' based according to the Treaty of Lisbon (European Union, 2007), on the following "universal" constituent values: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights with the emphasis on the individual and human rights and fundamental freedoms. Besides, norms and values do not just constitute the façade for the European project but are ontologically important for the European integration which is posited as a union of the democratic states.

The closely interrelated images of the EU as a soft power, 'force for good' and a transformative power are inalienable components of the active external dimension of the EU's identity. These self-representations are seen both as a normative content underpinning the EU project and as a justification for the promotion of its model through intentional and unintentional mechanisms of diffusion.

The notion of the "force for good" permeates the European discursive field picturing the EU as a benevolent power, "a force for a fairer, safer and more united world" (Council of the European Union, 2008) which, having ensured stability and prosperity within its borders, assumes a challenge to work for "the global common good" (Solana, 2005). The concept of the force for good is closely interlinked with the idea of the transformative power that runs as a silver thread through the European discourse. The transformative influence of the EU was first felt domestically, as it transformed the relations between the member states by teaching them "to deal peacefully with disputes and to co-operate through common institutions" (European Council, 2003) and then spilled beyond the European borders embracing both political and economical dimension by generating the descriptions of the EU integration as "the most successful example of peaceful political change mankind has ever witnessed", "a catalyst for modernisation, for the transition to market economies, promoting the prosperity and well-being of the citizens" (Hübner, 2007: 2).

Another image associated with the EU integration is the soft power based on power of attraction that delivers concrete results as it promotes stability, prosperity, sustainable development and well-being (Solana, 2005). The EU's reading of its soft power inalienably includes the vision that it promotes its norms, standards and patterns not through imposition but by setting a compelling and motivating example. Ashton (2011a: 4) describes it as follows: "the EU has soft power with a hard edge – more than the power to set a good example and promote our values. But less than the power to impose its will".

When it comes to the qualitative descriptions of the rationale underlying the EU behaviour, the discourse reflects certain duality. The EU is depicted as "the helping hand", "spreading the benefits" (European Commission, 2007), that is, an altruistic and "disinterested" (Ashton, 2011a) force which acts out of the principles of "global solidarity and global responsibility" (Rompuy and Barroso, 2012). Simultaneously, the EU

confesses to self-interest in a non-contradictory manner. Thus, these two justifications concordantly interweave into the hybrid evaluation of the EU's motives as "enlightened self interest" (European Commission, 2007).

The predicates "attractive" and "model" crown the chain of attributes with the distinctive connotations attached to the nomination "the European integration" and serve as umbrella predications for such self-images as "a source of inspiration", "a catalyst and reference point" for other regional integration projects, "a model for cooperation and integration between countries in other regions". The European Community model is described as unique (Barroso, 2010c) based on "an amazing economic and political success story"[131] (Solana, 2005) thereby providing valuable templates. The EU is not only engaged in intentional endeavours 'to extend Europe' but by its mere existence triggers the imitative behaviour.

To cite Solana's (2005: 2) words at length:

> "The African Union, Mercosur, … are explicitly taking their inspiration from the EU experience. There can be no simple export of whatever we think the European model is, but the EU is seen as a source of inspiration. And of course, imitation and adaptation are easier than invention… Sometimes, non-Europeans have a better appreciation of what we have achieved in the last 50 years… from the outside it looks like a loose 'European model' exists, both as a way of organising our societies and in approaching international affairs".

The European economic and social model has acquired salience not only in the eyes its immediate neighbours who seek closer ties with the EU, but is also admired and emulated by other international actors, sometimes unexpected ones as exemplified by Russian rhetoric in relation to the newly-created Eurasian Economic Union. It is also pointed out that attractiveness of the European model did not fade even as a result of the crises, which, instead of being an allegedly heavy blow to the EU integration, spurred a deepening of integration and completion of the Economic and Monetary Union (Barroso, 2013a). From this perspective the EU as a model has an ontological significance for the globalized world as it acts as a vehicle to construct a truly multilateral and "better" world, based on the rule of law and the respect for human rights by its own existence setting an example of governance structures in the conditions of the globalized and interlinked international economy. Thus, Rehn (2014: 3) cites the political scientist Ralph Miliband

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[131] The uniqueness of the EU lies in the fact that its model extends far beyond its economic clout and steadfastly wins over the foreign policy and security domains that traditionally belonged to the national competency.

who saw the then EEC as "a bridge between a compartmentalised political system of nation-states and an interdependent and integrating world economy".

As regards the mirror perspective, the ideational evaluations along with the perceptions of (dis-)unity occupy the lion's share of the Russian discursive ambit, so that the few pages cannot embrace all the profundity, ramifications, tinges and contradictions of the political narrative. However, the encapsulated and the most recurrent discursive patterns still remain conspicuously ambivalent and dual. The close study of the Russian discourse samples revealed that the EU is seen as having succeeded in developing a distinctive role based on the *sui generis* combination of soft power, attractiveness, unique and a successful example of the governance structures in the increasingly globalized world. This recognition is customarily manifest in an implicit and indirect manner and can be inferred in the practices of the normative mimicry and lesson-drawing that Russian political elites apparently embark on while launching the Eurasian Economic Union. On the other hand, as table 6 indicates the perceived distinctive role of the European Union is not exempt from recurrent deficiencies and reservations which are also put to the service of the creators of the Eurasian Union to present this regional integration in a more auspicious light vis-à-vis the EU.

Following the predicative structures as summarized in the table, the EU-coined self-descriptions such as "the community of law", "the post imperial partnership", "a project of peace" and a "beacon of freedom and prosperity" and the like can be considered as partially recognized by the Russian political discourse. Russian discursive descriptions indicate the European members have managed to create an entity with a distinctive profile that ensured well-being, peace and stability on the continent based on economic integration. Thus, the Head of the Russian Representation to the EU recognizes the outstanding achievements of the EU which after the bloody conflicts of the 20th century managed to create "literally from scratch, a supranational integration project designed to guarantee 'eternal peace' on the continent" and which still remains "a beacon", "a pillar of political stability on the continent" (Chizhov, 2012b). Besides, it is acknowledged that EU member states have created a project that went far beyond "the Westphalian system of European nation-states always balancing on the brink of war" (Chizhov 2012b).

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Table 6. Patterns of Russian discursive reactions to EU ideational self-representations

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU/ European integration	distinctive	distinctive	recognition
	community of law, postimperial partnership, a successful example of peaceful reconciliation based on economic integration, project of peace, a beacon of freedom and prosperity, whose light shines far beyond our borders	a supranational project to guarantee 'eternal peace', a pillar of political stability on the continent, post-Westphalian a shining temple on the top of the hill which has faded, double standards and disunity	parallel recognition and misrecognition
	value community	based on common values but suffers from flaws	partial recognition
	a force for good, transformative power	generates prosperity and security mainly for own consumption	partial recognition
	soft power based on power of attraction and not imposition	soft power based on power of attraction and not imposition	parallel recognition and misrecognition
	acts out of enlightened self-interest	spreads the benefits for own consumption self-interested	partial recognition
	attractive, model, source of inspiration based on the successful story of economic and political integration	a model of regional cooperation successful in economic and political terms antimodel, an area of economic turbulence	parallel recognition and misrecognition
	an example of governance structures in the conditions of the globalized and interlinked international economy	a brick in the international architecture, a pioneer integration, should join forces with the EEU (Russia)	recognition

Source: Author's elaboration

On the other hand, Russian perceptions of the distinctiveness of the European model of

integration are counterbalanced by the parallel misrecognition as indicated in table 6. For

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instance, the EU's self-image of "a beacon of freedom and prosperity, whose light shines far beyond our borders" (Barroso, 2012a) found its somewhat derogatively coloured mirror image in the face of the Russian metaphorical description of the EU as "a shining temple on the top of the hill" which has visibly faded (Chizhov, 2004b). The other two predicates of the EU as the community of law", "the post imperial partnership" definitely suffer from the Russian perceptions of the EU as trespassing its own values and as an entity plagued by various internal and external discrepancies with national sovereignty and jealousies ranking first.

The discursive characterization that sketches the EU as a value-based community is only partially echoed in Russian discourse. While there are occasional direct descriptions that the EU is an association "based not on force or coercion but on common aspirations and values" (Putin, 2007), doubts are raised concerning the applicability of the values that underpin the European model. In an interesting way, the Russian discourse simultaneously engages in the processes of association and dissociation. At one point, it is underlined that the European and Eurasian cultures share such values as democracy and human rights, supremacy of law, the concept of separation of powers and market economy. On the other hand, differences in the ethical dimension are underlined with the parallels being drawn between the Western focus on individualism and the failed politics of multiculturalism and the Eurasian allegiance to collectivism, respect for the role of the states in the conditions of a severe continental climate, and the centuries-long coexistence and cooperation of the nations (Naryshkin, 2012b).

The tendency to cast in doubt the EU's allegiance to norms and values due to the evident flaws of the European normative stance and practice is an inalienable part of duality of the Russian mirror images. The EU's moral right to promote these values as a part and parcel of its model is undermined by the EU's tendency to impose these norms upon the sovereign countries in violation of the cultural sensitivity as well as the EU's proclivity to resort to a selective approach based on double standard. Therefore, the EUs images as a model of regional integration based on the commitment to the founding values is impaired by its inherent flaws[132].

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[132] Respect for human rights and democracy have been the main stumbling points between the EU and Russia, as well as Belarus and Kazakhstan. Consequently, it is not surprising that the states that constitute the original nucleus of the Eurasian Union recur to economic reasoning and avoid commenting on the normative dimension of the EU in a positive light. In fact, the discourse on such values as democracy and

Correspondingly, the EU's self-portrayals of "the force for good" and transformative power which are tightly linked to the notions of the soft power based on attractiveness are being only partially recognized by Russia. Actually, Russian political discourse contains no direct references to the predications 'force for good' or 'transformative power' that are abundant in the European rhetoric. These concepts appear in an implicit manner in the context linked to the rationale of creation of the Eurasian Union based of the EU templates and reveal contradictory attitudes of Russian elite. In some cases the Eurasian Union rhetoric bears a glaring resemblance with the EU's neighbourhood policy justifications, namely, it is stated that one of the paramount priorities of the newly-founded Eurasian Union is "to develop good relations with our immediate neighbours and making those neighbours prosperous and stable" (Karasin, 2012.03.19) and the EU integration experience is seen as the best source of templates to achieve this aim. However, recognition revolves around the fact that if the EU is 'doing good', it is doing it not out of the feelings of special responsibility for its neighbours but it generates security, prosperity and well-being first and foremost for its own consumption; a belief, that fully coincides with the perceptions of the EU as a rational, self-interested actor.

Thus, the European Union's ability to function as "a helping hand" that spreads benefits out of a mixed motivation based on global solidarity and self-interest can be considered only as partially mirrored. From the Russian point of view the EU is 'a normal actor', whose acts are motivated by self-interest directed at the generation of the benefits for its own consumption and are characterized by the EU's imposing and dictating predilections.

By the same token, Russian attitudes towards the so-called soft power of the EU are twofold. The European success and its power of attraction make Russia realize the utility and intend to capitalize on the soft power dimension as illustrated by the EU's integration project. However, synchronously, the EU's self-descriptive images of its soft power with a 'gravitational pull' based on economic benefits is belittled in Russian political discourse by predications depicting the European Union as a self-interested actor that not only relies on its force of attraction but shuns no means to impose its will and vision. Russian rhetoric inconspicuously points to the EU's proclivity to adopt a mentoring and objections-intolerant tone not only towards the neighbouring countries but also towards

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the protection of human rights is very rare and appears in very general statements and as such, does not form the constitutive part of the nascent identity of the Eurasian Union.

its own members [133]. These imposing tendencies are most palpable in the EU's provocative attempts to confront the in-between countries to align either with the EU or Russia-led regional organizations[134].

Nonetheless, despite the bizarre mixture of Russian perceptions and motivations, the European Union is chosen as 'a reference point' for the new integration project in the Eurasian space. However, Russian discursive reaction to European self-conceptualizations as an attractive model and a paradigm for regional integration splits into dual images revealing both recognition and misrecognition. On the one hand, Russian political elite more often than not points out the willingness to draw on the integration experience of the EU which provides "an inspiring example" (Medvedev, 2011a), "a beacon for other integration projects" and "a source of useful experience" (Khristenko, 2012), the source of "best practices with regard to institutional and legal development" (Chizhov, 2012b). However, the trajectory of Russian political utterances simultaneously shifts the focus by returning a somewhat reversed reflection of the EU as not an infallible model but also as an 'antimodel' and a source of negative experience. Thus, in a dual manner, Russian discourse portrays the EU as a putative paradigm for the Eurasian Economic Union and at the same time as an illustration of mistakes that should be avoided.

Similarly, the images of the EU integration as an economic and political success story are mirrored in the Russian discursive sphere with ambivalence due to their subjection to the political manipulation caused by Russia's balancing between the need to counter the EU's influence in the post-Soviet space and to justify its integration project using the EU's experience both positive and negative as a shield. Hence, on the one hand, the EU is positively evaluated as an economic and political success story. In Russian discourse the European integration is frequently attributed with the predication "successful" in consonance with the EU's self-images. The EU is described as the regional integration

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[133] The Eurasian Union on the contrary is positioned as a fully egalitarian project, where coercion is inexistent and sovereignty and national interests are safeguarded (Chizhov, 2014g). Besides, the Eurasian Union itself is presented as a Russian attempt to enhance its bargaining power to counterbalance the EU's perceived tendency to act as a superior to the others and dictate its rules.

[134] To contrast the EU's exclusive identity prone to draw rigid dividing lines following the 'either-or' approach, Russia is posed as advocating a symbiosis between the EU and the Eurasian Union that should emerge as "two interdependent and synergetic world integration poles" (Chizhov, 2012b) functioning as "communicating vessels (and not competing companies as often follows from statements of EU representatives" (Chizhov, 2012c).

that went beyond the economic dimension (Valovaya, 2012b) and which despite the crisis still "remains the most advanced integration union on the planet, a pillar of political stability on the European continent" [135] (Chizhov, 2012b). On the other hand, the discourse on the influence of the economic crisis on the EU serves as an exemplary sample of the duality that rends Russian discursive sphere. In this light the European integration is perceived as "having seen better days, to put it mildly" taking into account that "now it is increasingly being viewed by outsiders – at least temporarily – as an area of economic turbulence". In this way, it is emphasized that "the EU model of well-being for all" has faded (Chizhov 2012b). These portrayals of the protracted sovereign debts and economic recession that afflicted Europe on par with other alleged weaknesses could do the Eurasian Union a service by lessening the attraction and gravitational pull of the European Union.

And last but not least, as the Eurasian Union related rhetoric shows, the EU is perceived as a template that is capable of unifying the prospective members, spurring their well-being and enabling them to compete in the globalized and interlinked global economy and politics. In the words of the Russian representative to the EU: "in a polycentric world an effective international architecture can only be created if it rests on solid regional 'building blocks'" (Chizhov, 2011c). The metaphor 'brick' to describe regional integrations which ensure the stability of the global economy is a repetitive one and the European Union is recognized as the pioneer in this field (Valovaja, 2012a) and is currently one of the key players and regional structures that contribute to the sustainable global development. Thus, the integration of the post Soviet states into the Eurasian Union is believed to facilitate their integration into the world economy, the domain, where the EU definitely ranks first. However, in the Russian strategic vision the EU will only win and enhance its position in the globalized world if it joins forces with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union in general. The concept of the Greater Europe that will stretch from Vladivostok to Lisbon is a very repetitive one and is based on the idea of the synergy between the EU investment and the technological knowhow and the Eurasian resource supplies that will potentially enable both actors to "preserve and enhance the position of our continent in a developing and increasingly globalizing world" (Chizhov, 2012c).

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[135] Although, it is necessary to mention that Russian 'idea-takers' explicitly focus on the economic aspects of the European organization and reject the political dimension in an outspoken and well-calculated manner.

This subchapter engages in a detailed but encapsulated as much as possible analysis of the EU ideational representations through the lens of Russian recognition. Similar to the previous parts of the thesis, Russian discourse exhibits a visible degree of duality and ambivalence reflected in the patterns of partial recognition and parallel recognition and misrecognition. Besides, Russian rhetoric also manifests greater resistance to the EU's normative depictions than to other criteria of the EU's actorness. Thus, the EU's identity is only partially reified in the 'mirror' of the Russian political discourse as Russian recognition is oftentimes synchronously undermined by the conflicting and opposite depictions of the EU as a model of regional integration. Nonetheless, the discursive encounter does not exhibit vivid conflictual tendencies as the Russian politicians do not engage in open and adamant misrecognition of the EU's self perceptions.

7. Conclusion

Drawing from the analysis of the samples of European discourse, the chapter confirms the salience of the EU's self-assumed role as a model of regional integration focusing on the passive and unintentional diffusion of the EU templates in the context of the emergent Eurasian Economic Union.

Quite expectedly, the EU's images regarding its model of integration are imbued with positive connotations as the EU; however, the discourse is not free from moderate self-criticism in particular when it comes to the conventional criteria of its identity such as unity and capabilities.

When it comes to the 'mirror' provided by Russia it can be said that it is quite a comfortable one as Russian counter-perceptions recognize or endow partial recognition to all aspects of the EU's self-conceptualizations. The EU integration is seen as having achieved a relatively autonomous existence manifest in the distinctive institutional and legal design that enables the value-added policies and even manages to trespass on the member states' sovereignty. Besides, it is characterized by an unprecedented level of integration, existence of instruments and certain distinctive ideational attributes. As such the EU is seen as a model that provides valuable samples for regional integration. However, the EU's images as a reference are undermined by the parallel image of the EU

as an 'antimodel' that brings to the fore EU's deficiencies manifest in its disunity, as well as contradictions between its declared ideational stances and actual deeds.

And finally, the chapter sheds light on the potential repercussions of the interplay of the EU-Russian perceptions on relations between both actors. In the case of recognition, Russian political discourse either mirrors back the EU's positive self-images or provides a certain kind of 'negative recognition', that is, agrees with the EU's self-critical observations of its own imperfections and magnifies them. In the first case Russian perceptions do not exert any negative influence on the EU's self-identification, on the contrary, boost the European identity by recognizing it and even reifying it by reproducing certain elements in the Eurasian Economic Union. However, according to the putative outcomes of the ideational interactions, even the cases of recognition may harbour certain potential conflict if the 'recognizing' counterpart is not seen or believes not to be seen as an equal partner. That could be the case of Russia, as the Eurasian Union is explicitly or implicitly seen by Moscow as a means of enhancing its powers vis-à-vis the EU.

In the second case that involves instances of negative recognition the conflictual potential is more conspicuous as Russia tends to magnify the EU's images of shortcomings and weak points thereby denigrating the EU's self-esteem. Besides, there are cases of partial recognition when Russia acknowledges only part of discursive EU's self-representations by modifying it, stipulating reservations, or providing self-conflicting perceptions of the same aspect of the EU's identity, thereby leaving some margin for the discords at the level of Self-Other interactions as the EU is confronted with the choice either to accept the changes or resist the Russian mirror images. Somewhat unexpectedly, Russian perceptions do not reveal any cases of the outright misrecognition of the EU's self-descriptions, thereby exempting the overall discursive encounter from the peremptory antagonistic notes.

Even though the discursive interaction is relatively nonconfrontational it offers invaluable hints on the explanation of the evolution of the EU-Russian tensions that achieved its apogee during the Ukrainian conflict. First of all, Russian ambivalence and dual perceptions of the EU as a model of regional formation must be placed within the broader discourse on the Russian vacillation between the association and disassociation with Europe, and Russian attitude to the idea 'Europe as a model', the eternal question that still

impacts Russian foreign policy choices. The discursive commitment to base the Eurasian Union on European patterns demonstrates the simultaneous recognition of the EU as a superior Other and the desire to delimit itself as an independent, sovereign and significant actor with an established clout in the neighbourhood. It is indicative that Russian ambivalent recognition is directed primarily at the ideational component of the EU self-perceptions, the fact that confirms the Russian attempt to profit from economic success and legitimacy of the European integration through the lesson-drawing and normative mimicry while offering its own ideological alternative in the neighbourhood. Besides, the Eurasian Union represents a very interesting object for analysis as it serves not only as a direct warning of the seriousness of the Russian claims in the region, but offers Russia an opportunity to bridge its European and Eurasian vectors and satisfy its regional ambitions, as the newly-formed entity based on European templates and common values, according to the Russian proposal, could join forces with the EU to create a Greater Europe from Vladivostok to Lisbon.

What is of significance is the Russian endeavour to go beyond words to deeds to capitalize on certain EU performance outputs and legitimacy for the launch of the Eurasian Union. Its creation testifies to the fact that Russia not only stakes a claim for the common neighbourhood and intends to lock Ukraine in the new regional project but makes an effort to increase its bargaining position by joining forces with other states and to establish itself as a Significant Other and 'the second pillar' on the continent whose voice is to be taken into account by the EU. Therewith, Russia asks for its inclusion into the European architecture on conditions that are comfortable for Russia.

CHAPTER V

PERCEPTIONS OF EU IDENTITY AS AN ACTOR IN THE COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD IN EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSES

1. Introduction

The 2004 EU enlargement that moved the European borders further eastward converted the post-Soviet space into the battlefield of different policies, clashing rationalities, interests, visions and perceptions and therefore, into one of the main stumbling blocks in EU-Russian relations. This chapter scrutinizes the EU's self-understandings as an actor in the post-Soviet space and compares them with the images that prevail in Russian political discourse. Analysing mutual perceptions of the European actorness in the common neighbourhood is an interesting and meritorious academic exercise taking into account that this role constitutes one the most salient facets of the EU's actorness and identity and is of a perennial relevance taking into account the overt and disguised rivalry between the two powers for winning 'hearts and minds' of the newly independent states. In this manner, this case study is not only a useful 'mirror' for the EU but is indicative of the evolution of the conflictual predispositions in EU-Russian relations before the Ukrainian crisis.

This chapter, in contrast with the previous case study that considered the unintended and unacknowledged power of the EU that rests on the power of attraction beyond its borders, engages with EU policies as intended and deliberate attempts to project its influence in the Eastern neighbourhood. To be more precise, the empirical attention focuses on the images of the EU as an actor whose undertakings in the post-Soviet space are implemented through the ENP and the EaP[136], which in Casier's words (2010: 100) can

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[136] The post-Soviet states embraced by the ENP included the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Belarus remained outside the ENP but was included in the EaP. The empirical material dictated the greater focus on the EaP which, although seen as a continuation of the ENP,

be viewed as specific types of foreign policy that tried to manage the EU's unintended impact in its immediate vicinity.

This chapter sets forth a brief overview of the state-of-the-art to recap the premises from which the issue has been addressed and thereby to define the added value of the analytical perspective presented in this study. The investigation proceeds with the empirical scrutiny to trace the trajectory of EU and Russian discourses related to identity as an actor of the European Union in the common neighbourhood and finally outlines the empirical findings in the conclusion.

2. EU-Russian policies in the post-Soviet Space: background and state-of-the-art

The EU Eastern enlargement prompted further institutionalization of European relations with the former USSR republics that found its embodiment in the ENP and later the Eastern Partnership[137]. In comparison with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements concluded with countries of Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus states in the late 1990s that focused largely on trade and economic issues by leaving out the normative component (Bosse, 2007), the ENP and EaP heralded a more encompassing and upgraded approach which could not but attract significant scholarly attention. Therefore, the careful perusal of the prolific literature on the topic indicated three strands of academic writings on the topic.

First, a large portion of academic work approaches the issue from the European perspective on EU policies towards the shared neighbourhood in a somewhat introspective manner. Authors belonging to this strand of the EU foreign policy studies tend to delve into the exploration of identities, rationales and reasons underlying the EU's policies, be it the self-interest based on the need to diminish the risks of creating new dividing lines and ensuring safe environment in terms of security, energy, trade or interaction in the multilateral fora (Casier, 2010; Amaro Dias, 2013; Dura, 2008; Gänzle,

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contributed more to the tensions of EU-Russian relations and generated more acute and vivid Self-Other narrative constructions.

[137] Relations with the post-Soviet States with the exception of Russia did not rank high on the EU policy agenda until the 2004 enlargement (Smith, 2005).

2009; Smith, 2005) or the mixed motives involving the discourse on the EU's responsibility and commitment to conduct a value-informed policy with a certain altruistic connotative tinge (Khasson et al., 2008; Bjorkdahl, 2005; Aggestam, 2008). Generally speaking, the EU's policies, in particular the ENP, towards the CIS countries are seen as driven by a somewhat self-contradictory aim: to advance their economic integration and political association through the instrument that would function as "a substitute to enlargement"[138] (Haukkala, 2008b) simultaneously disheartening the aspirations for EU membership.

Another relevant branch of literature explores Russian motives and policies as likely variables in the EU-Russian tensions in the common neighbourhood. This line of scholarship points out the sources of Russian sensitivity to the EU's actions in the region such as the beliefs that the area belongs to a legitimate and historically-determined sphere of influence where Russia is endowed with "rights and responsibilities in quasi-dependent CIS neighbouring states" (Allison, 2013: 122), its Great Power ambitions[139] (Moshes, 2012; Judah et al., 2011) the imperial past (Trenin, 2009), security considerations and the necessity to possess a buffer zone shielding Russia from encroachment of other powers (Trenin, 2009b; Kanet and Freire, 2012). In any case the unbreakable bonds with the NIS are reflected in the fact, that according to Adomeit (2011: 7, emphasis original), Russia views it policies in the area as "an *extension* of Russian domestic ordering principles" and consequently "developments in that area are perceived to affect the Russian domestic domain".

The third approach combines the EU and Russian perspectives by focusing on the rivalry in the region, the perennial relevance of which generated a voluminous stock of literature (Amaro Dias, 2013; Makarychev, 2012; Korosteleva, 2016; Averre, 2009; Haukkala, 2009). This line of academic thought tends to look for the sources of conflict in incompatible identities of both actors, normative clashes between their policies and agendas reflected in the applied methods and objectives. The EU is frequently portrayed as *a priori* better actor that in its endeavours to extend its post-modern order relies

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[138] Popescu and Wilson (2009: 1) coined the term the "enlargement-lite" to refer to the EU's attempts to offer "the prospects of political and economic alignment with the EU while dampening down any hopes of actual accession".

[139] Russian authority seems to have established inextricable linkages between the powers it wields in the post-Soviet region and its status as a global actor with international might.

predominantly on its soft power (Racz, 2010; Ehin and Avery, 2007; Popescu and Wilson, 2009). In contrast, Russia's approach is frequently framed in the state-centric security-driven categories as it makes use of the discourse of responsibility conditioned by historical links and, while increasingly resorting to soft power methods, in its action towards its neighbourhood still relies mainly on Realpolitik (Tolstrup, 2009; Ehin and Avery, 2007; Adomeit 2011; Judah et al., 2011; Moshes, 2012). However, some scholars call to avoid the simplistic contraposition of the EU and Russian influence in benign-malign terms (Averre, 2009) arguing that despite their diverging visions and approaches, the EU and Russia are not as dissimilar from each other as both tend to take advantage of the asymmetry of power in relation to the common neighbourhood (Makarychev, 2012; Haukkala, 2008b; Haukkala, 2010; Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005; Vysotskaya, 2013; Korosteleva, 2016).

These conflicting approaches and identities as well as the EU and Russia's mutual perceptions of each other as actors with incompatible agenda and rationalities in the area cause zero-sum attitude that not only sustained tensions in their relations, but can be seen as a potential mechanism triggering the aggravation of conflict as manifested against the Ukrainian background. However, the line of inquiry related to the interplay of the European and Russian policies towards their common neighbourhood has yet to develop a plausible explanation of the factors that disrupted the uncomfortable but relatively peaceful coexistence of both actors and determined the antagonistic standoff during the Ukrainian crisis[140].

This chapter, in accordance with the analytical framework and research questions, turns to external perceptions, thereby taking the discussion beyond the 'sterility' of the debate on the EU's non/distinctiveness in the neighbourhood. In this manner, the case study amalgamates both the European and Russian perspectives and simultaneously endeavours to become a valuable addendum to the prolific stock of literature on the rivalry in the shared neighbourhood by trying to provide an alternative understanding of the nature of the aloof and strained behavioural patterns between both actors in the decade preceding the Ukrainian crisis. In this sense, the chapter serves as a background and possesses an enormous explanatory potential regarding the dynamics that led to the unprecedented and open confrontation between both actors.

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[140] For interesting analyses of the evolution of the conflict see Korosteleva (2016), Wilson (2014).

3. Comparative analysis of European and Russian images of EU autonomy as an actor in the common neighbourhood

The analysis in this section is framed around the nominations "the EU", which is the dominant discursive construction of the social actor under empirical scrutiny. Besides, in accordance with the analytical categorization of the EU's autonomy as based on two components, the subchapter includes the nominations "common institutions" and "the ENP/EaP" as denoting the phenomena and processes under the empirical scrutiny.

The analysis of predications grouped around the abovementioned nominations confirmed empirically the assumption of the salience of the role that served as one of the reasons for the selection of this case study. European official discourse stresses that the European Union achieved a certain degree of autonomous existence as an actor in the region. The EU's claims for acting in autonomous capacity that can be distinguished from that of its member states is evident in the fact that the EU is described as a visible[141] actor and an important regional player. Importantly, the EU's representations as a self-sufficient actor in the common neighbourhood are present in the discourse not only in a self-reflexive manner as a self-assumed image, but also appear in the EU's references to its visibility as an independent entity that acts in its own capacity in the eyes of its target countries.

In accordance with the analytical definition of the criteria of actorness, one of the indicators of the EU's autonomy is the presence of a distinctive set of institutions; however, the political discourse of both sides concerning this aspect is strikingly scarce. Even the selected set of European discourses confines itself to the referential strategies that name the agents involved into the formulation and implementation of policies in the Eastern neighbouring countries. The analysis of the EU's discursive samples revealed such active nominations as: "the Commission", "the Commissioners", in particular "the Commissioner for enlargement and European neighbourhood", "the Commissioner for external relations", the "EU's Special Representatives" (to a smaller extent) and after the reforms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty "the High Representative for Foreign Affairs".

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[141] However, the European discourse very infrequently acknowledges that the EU still suffers from the insufficient visibility and communication which results "that many people do not feel they are well informed about what the EU does in their countries" (European Commission, 2013:1). There were no mirror references to this discourse in the samples of Russian empirical materials.

Yet, the predications attached to these nominations are conspicuously infrequent, taciturn and routinely refer to the involvement of the actors and institutions in the interactions with the NIS rather than to the detailed description of their functions.

The Commission definitely outstands as the EU institution which takes the lead in designing, pushing forward and implementing the ENP and its Eastern dimension. Therefore, the Commission functions as a driving force for the policies targeted at the neighbouring countries. As the Communication to the Commission (Commission of the European Communities, 2005: 1) puts it: "successful implementation of the ENP on the EU side depends, first and foremost, on effective action by the European Commission – which requires the full and active commitment of all Commissioners and their services". Besides, within the Commissions apparatus special roles are assigned to the Commissioners for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, for Trade and for External Relations and to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs who is also involved in the ENP by, for instance, contributing to the elaboration of the Action Plans on issues belonging to political cooperation and the CFSP and by participating in the Eastern Partnership Informal Dialogues with the Foreign Ministers of the six partners.

Furthermore, the EU also has at its disposal a number of Special Representatives sent to several neighbouring countries. Currently, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus is in charge of addressing the conflicts in Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh. In particular, the Special Representative, in collaboration with the UN and the OSCE, co-chaired the Geneva International Discussion on the crisis in Georgia, which is the only forum for dialogue between Georgia and the representatives of the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (European Commission and High Representative, 2013). Besides, the EU appointed Special Representatives for Central Asia and Moldova to promote good relations and cooperation with the recipient countries in the ambit of security, trade and democracy and respect for human rights.

Hence, generally speaking, the EU boasts a distinctive set of institutions that play an active role in pursuing EU policies in the Eastern neighbourhood. Taking into account that the discourse on individual key actors is predominantly limited to referencing them as actively involved in the Eastern neighbourhood, table 7 cites them under the umbrella term "common institution".

Table 7. Images of EU autonomy through the prism of Russian (mis-) recognition

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU	a visible actor	a visible actor	recognition
	an important regional player	an important regional power (along with Russia)	recognition
Common institutions	actively involved	secondary, after the member states	partial recognition
The ENP/ EaP	a key external relations priority	not a fateful priority topic	misrecognition
	inclusive: spurs integration	exclusive: towards the neighbouring states and Russia	misrecognition
	mutually beneficial: means for spreading benefits to the partner countries	assymetrical, Pax Romana	misrecognition
	tailored following the principle of differentiation,	one-size-fits-all	misrecognition
	visible results	invisible and ineffective	misrecognition
	increase the EU's collective weight, streamline and bring some order to the separate members' policies	driven by a commonsensical desire to establish a common strategy but not fulfilled in practice	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The presence of the distinctive institutional apparatus allows the EU to pursue its policies, which are associated with the EU as a corporate player acting in its own capacity. The ENP and the EaP constitute the essence of the European engagement in the CIS territory and they serve as a clear indicator that the EU has succeeded in creation of distinctive external policies associated with the EU that contribute to its autonomy as an actor. Predicative clusters attached to the nominations "the ENP" and "the EaP" characterize the ENP as "a key EU external relations priority" which "has established a novel, comprehensive and forward-looking framework by which to promote political and economic reform, development and modernisation" (Commission of the European Communities, 2005a: 1). Similarly, the EaP retained its pre-eminent place in the agenda

of the EU's top leaders within the framework of developing closer links with the post-Soviet states. The EU's official discourse is exuberant when it comes to the added value of the ENP by describing it succinctly as having already proven its worth (Commission of the European Communities: 2006). In this manner, The ENP and EaP are discursively constructed as distinctive European policies belonging to the EU's field of action going beyond the member state's competencies and whose added value hinges on three pillars summarized in table 7.

First, the European rhetoric focuses attention on the inclusive nature of its policies by accentuating the integration component at the heart of the ENP which aims to draw the neighbours closer to the EU by organizing and deepening relations. The Eastern Partnership is seen as a continuation of the ENP with the specific focus on furthering cooperative interaction between the EU and its Eastern European neighbours. Ferrero-Waldner (2006: 140) describes the ENP as "a pragmatic response to our citizens' demands and questions about the EU's added value, and to our neighbours' demands for closer ties" that, according to the Commission's Communication (Commission of the European Communities, 2004: 8), moves "beyond cooperation to a significant degree of integration". This logic is reiterated in the narrative on the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy which embraced the idea of integration based on cooperation as its underling rationale. For instance, the EU's policies in Eastern European and Caucasus countries are characterized as an inclusive process which suggests real involvement of the partners.

Second, discursive nodal points revolve around the concept of the mutual advantageousness offered by European policies. The EU's discursive self-descriptions of its policy in the neighbourhood as "mutually beneficial" and "as a catalyst for the wider international community to support democratic change and economic and social development in the region" (European Commission and High Representative: 1-2) encourage the understandings of the ENP and EaP in the 'force-for-good' terms as a means for spreading benefits to the partner countries. In particular, the measures advanced by the Association Agreement and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas aimed to provide support to the mobility of citizens, enhance sector cooperation, further democratization are expected to spur the economic and social and regional development of the partner countries (Council of the European Union, 2009).

In furthering benefits to the target countries the EU denies that its policies are of a one-size-fits-all nature. From the very inception the ENP aspired to tailor relations with partners by applying the principle of differentiation depending on needs, interests and the current state of economy and political structure of each country (Commission of the European Communities, 2004; European Commission and High Representative 2012a and 2012b) and by introducing "a more for more principle" by offering a deeper integration for those states which are ready to embark on more ambitious reforms.

The image of the 'mutual advantageousness' is reinforced by the European images of the distinctiveness of its policies that succeeded in rendering visible results tangible first and foremost in the economic sphere. Barroso (2013b: 2) quotes the following figures: "over the ten years from 2002 to 2012 EU exports of goods and imports from the six Eastern Partnership countries have more than tripled… trade in goods with our eastern partners, as a percentage of our total trade, has almost doubled". In a similar vein, there is explicit acknowledgement that the EaP enhanced the achievements of the ENP by offering "the maximum possible" and bringing about "visible benefits for the citizens of each country" (Commission of the European Communities: 3). These visible results are tangible not only in economic terms but also in terms of security and stability that positively feedback on the EU and its partners.

And the third discursive pillar around which the descriptions are organized brings to the fore the added worth of European policies that is believed to reside in complementing the member states' bilateral policies towards the neighbourhood by giving them more weight when acting in a union. Thus, the ENP and EaP pool the resources of the EU and of the member states, increase the portfolio of instruments, streamline and bring order to the separate members' policies and enable the EU to perform coherently and efficiently in the region thereby giving it more leverage over its neighbours and allowing it to solve the issues that cannot be unravelled at a bilateral level.

When it comes to Russian counter-discursive qualifications of the EU's autonomous actorness in the region built around the same nominations, it can be assumed, that EU self-images are, to a large extent, positively mirrored in Russian discourse, although not without certain stipulations. To start with, the references across Russian political discourse suggest that the EU attained a certain degree of autonomous actorness that is visible to external observers and that the EU is seen as an important player in the

neighbourhood. In particular, the EU is described as "a centre of power" on the continent (Chizhov, 2012b and 2012e) alluding to its political and economic clout in the post-Soviet space. However, an important nuance in the discourse that is virtually always present in relation of the EU's involvement in the region is that the status of the regional power is to be shared with Russia. The description of Russia and the EU as "major geopolitical formations on the European continent in terms of their political, economic and socio-cultural capacities" Lavrov (2009b) implies that both are under obligation to assume responsibility for maintaining regional security and ensuring stability and prosperity for what Russian Permanent Representative to the EU defines as "a zone of common neighbourhood" or "adjacent countries"[142] (Chizhov, 2005b).

References to EU institutions and actors are infrequent in Russian political discourse. In comparison with European rhetoric, the empirical samples selected from Russian political space mention European institutional structures in general as a token of recognition of the EU's "post-modernist stage of development" which involves commissioning a fraction of sovereignty to "the supranational institutions" in external affairs, including the matters related to the neighbourhood (Lavrov, 2008a). However, when it comes to particular actors associated with policies, there are only very infrequent remarks related to the President of the European Commission[143], the European Commissioners and the High Representative which are routinely of a very general nature eschewing the detailed specification of their roles within the ENP and EaP frameworks. Russian political discourse also recognizes the presence of EU Special Representatives mandated to develop links with the post-Soviet states. Moreover, there have been contacts between Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and EU Special Representatives for Moldova, Central Asia and Southern Caucasus (Karasin2011a, 2013a and 2013b).

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[142] This logic on prospects and modalities of the engagement of two powers in the region is institutionalized in various official documents, inter alia in the most frequently cited by Russian politicians the Russia-EU Roadmap towards a Common Space of External Security approved during EU-Russia summit in Moscow in May 2005 that stipulates the symbiotic cooperation between both actors in the common neighbourhood.

[143] One of the few remarks belongs to Chizhov (2004a) referring to the Commission of European Communities as the initiator of the "Broad Europe-New Neighbourhood" concept which came to be known as the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The scarcity of discursive attention devoted to the EU's institutional setting is profoundly suggestive and can be easily explained by the prevalent Russian beliefs that despite the presence of the European common institutions, the foreign policy of the EU is still decided by the member states (Chizhov, 2014i). This discursive logic is reflected in Russian aspirations "to combine the dialogue with the European Union as a powerful supranational institution and the bilateral links with the EU member states" (Chizhov, 2009).

As table 7 suggests, while the EU's self-referential depictions of its autonomous existence based on the presence of the distinctive institutional architecture that allows it to leave a visible 'footprint' as an actor in the common neighbourhood are endowed with almost full or partial recognition, Russian political leaders misrecognize the images existent in Europea official discourse concerning the ENP and the EaP, by providing antithetical depictions of the European self-portrayals.

Although, the EU's ample network of activities to streamline and organize its policies towards the post-Soviet countries [144] have found their reflection in Russian political discourse already at the moment when the concept of the Wider Europe was proposed, according to the set of empirical discourse samples the ENP and the EaP are perceived as lacking political impetus and will. A Russian diplomat remarks that the ENP and the EaP beset with various difficulties have failed to become a fateful priority topic in the European Union (Chizhov, 2013e), thereby rejecting vehemently the European acknowledgement that these policies rank high on the EU agenda.

Russian perceptions also diverge radically from the European understandings of the basic components of the added value of the EU-sponsored policies: integration, mutual advantageousness and capacity to increase the collective weight and streamline the member states' bilateral policies.

Referring to the first component, Russian political utterances challenge the EU's focus on the integration and inclusiveness as an intrinsic value of its policies. Instead, Russia highlights the exclusive facets of the EU's identity as an actor in the shared

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[144] The EU's involvement in the region is multifarious. Russian political discourse is abundant with references to the European Union's role in the mediation processes and negotiations in various formats to settle the 'frozen conflicts' in the adjacent regions. However, this chapter focuses exclusively on the ENP and the EaP.

neighbourhood which manifest themselves in two ways. On the one hand, the ENP and the EaP are seen as policies that intend to involve several Newly Independent States into the European sphere of influence without offering them a membership and even excluding the necessity to promise it in the future (Lavrov, 2014a). On the other hand, EU-sponsored policies, in particular the EaP, have come to be seen as exclusive in relation to Russia itself being seen as endeavours to carve out the EU's zone of influence and fence it off from Russia.

These grievances and admonitory comments satiate Russian discursive space and the analysis of the trajectory of the pre-2013-2014 narrative shows how they have evolved from rather neutral warnings against positing the ENP in competitive terms and hopes for mutually reinforcing symbiosis between Russian and EU policies to statements about the deficiency and lack of tangible results of the EU ventures to finally escalating into openly antagonistic discourses. When the Wider Europe-Neighbourhood concept was proposed, it was believed that, if not deliberately opposed to each other, Russian and EU policies towards the neighbourhood have a potential of supplementing each other and functioning as a valuable addition to the current mechanisms of the EU-Russia cooperation (Chizhov, 2003). After Russian refusal to form a part of the project, the ENP's value was perceived as bringing the 'added value' for the development of inter-regional and cross-border cooperation (Chizhov, 2004a). After the period of reticent irritation with the ENP and EaP that ushered in the accounts of their allegedly tangible flaws and lack of visible results, Russian discourse gained momentum and acquired egregiously discordant notes. By 2013 Russian decision-makers became explicit about their perceptions of being 'squeezed out' and of the EU actions as directed at confronting the in-between countries with the rigorous and inflexible 'either-or' choice.

The next striking contrast in the EU-Russian descriptions concerns the gain equation. While the EU discourse is based on the concept of mutual advantageousness both for itself and the target countries, Russia insists that the relations are utterly asymmetric. The disparity in perceptions is manifest even at the level of vocabulary usage as Russian political elites shun the word 'partnership' that abounds in the European discourse to describe the actions of the European Union towards its Eastern neighbours and substitutes the European 'partner country'bfor the term focus state. A belief lingers in Russian perceptions that the EU acts as a superior Other that intends to include the adjacent states

into its sphere of influence through the unilateral adoption of the rules dictated by Brussels, including the full removal of barriers for the EU's trade expansion. From this standpoint the post-Soviet space is not infrequently compared to a colony. Already in 2004 Chizhov (2004a) warned against some sort of new Pax Romana, that is, the emergence of a peculiar structure for relations between the parent territory (Western Europe) and the provinces (Eastern Europe).

In a similar vein, Russia rejects the EU's depictions of the ENP and EaP as approaches tailored to the needs of the Eastern partners. Quite the opposite is true as Russian politicians describe the ENP as an eclectic and therefore unstable structure used as a vehicle to impose the EU's standards and legislations without considering particularities of the target countries. In this context the EU is perceived as taking on "the civilising mission" to impose "one size fits all" western standards on the enormous post-Soviet territory (Chizhov, 2004b).

In concordance with the critical line of discourse adopted by Moscow, the EU's allegedly tangible results and visibility brought about by the ENP and EaP are also cast doubt on. In Russia's eyes the ENP's efficiency and impact were undermined, to a certain extent, by its eclectic nature. It was pointed out that the orientation of the ENP towards a wide range of countries characterized by a varying degree of political, economic and socio-cultural development and diverse visions of cooperation and integration with the EU was a conceptual defect that was bound to backfire (Chizhov, 2003). In effect, the European Union's endeavour to 'embrace the unembraceable' was instrumental in the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean advocated by France, which was later counterbalanced by the proposal to launch the Eastern Partnership. Similarly, the EaP was perceived by Moscow with some scepticism as devitalized by insufficient visibility, political will and funding. All those patterns of discursive resistance can be traced in the statement of the Russian Permanent Representative to the EU who, when talking about the fateful 2013 EaP Vilnus Summit noticed that:

> the first two [EaP summits] were barely noticed by the wide circles of public opinion since they didn't produce much. There is a lot more attention now regarding the upcoming summit in Vilnius, for a simple reason: not that Eastern Partnership has suddenly become a very successful policy of the EU, or it has acquired a separate budget line in the EU budget, which is still not the case. But for a different reason: the EU is planning to sign one and perhaps initial two other association agreements (AA) with focus countries (Chizhov, 2013b)

The abovementioned deficiencies could not but echo negatively on the effectiveness of the EaP. The lack of the breakthrough advances at the multilateral track forced the EU to focus on the bilateral track, in particular, through the promotion of the Association Agreements (Chizhov, 2013e). Another frequently cited testimony of the ineffectiveness of the European initiative is the fact that out of the six countries initially embraced by the EaP there are only three left[145]. Briefly speaking, the gist of the Russian attitudes are precisely but concisely captured by Medvedev's (2009c) words: "I see nothing miraculous about this Eastern Partnership and, frankly speaking, I do not see any advantage of it at all, and this is confirmed by all the participants of this project that I have spoken to".

And finally, the added value of the EU-sponsored policies in terms of their potential to contribute to the collective weight and streamline European policies towards the common neighbourhood is also challenged and these contending dynamics should be interpreted in the framework of the Russian narratives on the EU's (dis-)unity[146]. At the very inception, the concept of "Wider Europe - New Neighbourhood" was described as "a foreign policy doctrine of the European Union at the final state of the actual enlargement and institutional consolidation" driven by a commonsensical desire to establish a common strategy towards the EU's new neighbours (Chizhov, 2003). However, in the faultfinding tradition, Russian rhetoric points to the fact that the original idea implemented in the ENP and the EaP has not been fulfilled in practice.

4. Images of EU unity through the prism of EU-Russian discursive 'encounter'

This subchapter delves into exploring the images of the EU's ability to act as a unified actor characterized by a high level of consensus in the context of the ENP and the EaP. Therefore, the analysis concentrates on the predicative descriptions attached to "the EU" and "the EU and its member states" to establish links indicating the degree of unity

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[145] Armenia opted for joining the Customs Union founded by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. Azerbaijan apparently showed no interest in concluding the Association Agreement with the European Union, while Belarus was not offered any Association Agreement.

[146] For a detailed discussion see section 4 in this chapter.

between them and "the ENP"/ "EaP" as concrete fields of actions in which the EU's unity/disunity is manifested.

European discourse on its unity as an actor in the shared neighbourhood is far from being exuberant. Such scarcity can probably be attributed to the fact that the ENP and the EaP are perceived as EU-associated policies and as such do not generate extensive self-reflexive contemplations on the relationship between the EU and its members.

In the samples of discourse related to the European action in the neighbourhood, the most commonplace narrative depicts the EU as a consolidated political entity, which is composed of "27 different nation states and, therefore, 27 different ways of organising our societies" and as such "far from being homogeneous" (Barroso, 2007: 3). Thus, European discourse is characterized by a non-conflictual combination of both aspects: integrity and perceptions of the EU as an aggregate entity of member states. The EU official rhetoric places the emphasis on the fact that despite its complex composition and heterogeneous background, in its exterior action towards the neighbourhood the EU has succeeded in achieving a notable degree of integration, which is constantly being deepened. In this manner, European discourse on the unity is normally placed within the general line of discourse on the EU's ever consolidating coherence in which the innovations brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon are seen as breakthrough steps. In this respect, Barroso (2013b: 2) nominates the EU as a "convergence machine" referring to the fact that it managed to become the world's largest single market by value, which in turn, exerts a beneficial influence on the EU's neighbours. The European Union Ambassador to Russia echoes this logic by arguing that the EU has acquired an image of the essential and friendly partner of the countries from the common neighbourhood, the image of 28 member countries of the EU, which are able to speak with one voice and to express clearly their economic and political values (Ušackas, 2014).

Although European discourse is not exempt from self-critical remarks that its images of unity are hampered by various types of inconsistencies and incoherencies that negatively affect EU foreign policy formulation and implementation, the narrative tends to be focused on the improvement of these flaws rather than on the deficiencies as such. While the discourse on the EUs external inconsistencies is virtually absent in the analysed selection of texts, the attention is self-reflexively concentrated on the internal (institutional/intrapillar) imbalances that seem to be an inevitable consequence of "the

multi-faceted, multi-actor nature of the ENP and its sometimes technical nature" (European Commission and High Representative, 2013: 21).

Nonetheless, precisely the ENP is seen rather as a solution to the institutional and intrapillar inconsistencies than a problem itself. It is described as a single and clear framework which guarantees the coherence of policies and a comprehensive approach to the external policy by drawing on "all instruments and policies at the EU's disposal" and combining "long-term political association, trade policy, sector policies and financial cooperation with shorter-term policies and measures of CFSP/CSDP instruments" (EC, 2013: 19). Besides, the ENP also allegedly mitigates the EU's discrepancies at the institutional levels by serving as an example of "how a comprehensive approach can be used to generate coherent action involving all relevant EU actors" (EC, 2013: 19).

Certainly, the role of the Lisbon Treaty was not left unnoticed in the EU's official discourse as it contributed to the vision of the EU as a unitary actor capable of delivering coherent and consistent policies by bringing order to the policies and institutions involved in the ENP. For instance, the launch of the European External Action Service as well as other innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty are seen as having been fundamental to forging a more coherent and unified ENP by pooling together policies that were previously run by different institutions thereby enhancing the image of the EU as a unified actor dealing with regional problems.

As for the vertical inconsistency there are no direct indications of the discrepancies between the EU institutions and member states that constitute an impediment to the implementation of the European policies in the neighbourhood. However, the discourse is replete with remarks about the importance of ensuring and improving coordination of the EU and Member States policies in order to deliver a common message and increase the impact of the ENP and EaP in the neighbourhood. For instance, the Commission's communications routinely point out the uttermost necessity of aligning the bilateral policies of the European Union and its member states in order to achieve the all-embracing coherence essential to maximize the ENP's added value (European Commission and High Representative, 2011; European Commission and High Representative, 2013). Here again, the Lisbon Treaty stands out as an essential component in rectifying vertical inconsistencies by facilitating the reciprocal coordination between the EU and its member states to overcome the challenge and become more

closely aligned than in the past[147] (European Commission and High Representative, 2011; European Commission and High Representative, 2013) to achieve the synergy deemed necessary to complement and reinforce each other in the neighbourhood.

Table 8 suggests that Russian official discourse exhibits few touch points with the European self-portrayals and it oftentimes tends to shift the focus by accentuating different aspects of the EU's disunity.

Table 8. Russian discursive reactions to the images of EU unity

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reactions
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU (and its member states)	a consolidated political union composed of different nation states	union of countries having their own European identity with undiminished sovereign rights	partial recognition
	on a way towards deeper integration	suffers from various dividing lines (in particular their attitude towards Russia)	misrecognition
	horizontal inconsistencies (frequent discourse)	horizontal inconsistencies (infrequent discourse)	negative recognition
	vertical inconsistencies (infrequent discourse)	vertical inconsistencies (frequent discourse)	negative recognition
ENP/EaP	guarantees the coherence of policies and coherent action of all EU actors	provides an evidence of the EU's discrepancies	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

For instance, in concordance with European discourse, Russian politicians recognize that there is parallel existence of the European Union as a supranational entity that has become "a legally distinct international entity" and its member states, with both of these faces being exhibited in EU relations with the Eastern neighbours. However, in contrast with EU narrative, which gives prominence to the ever deepening integration and innovative reforms designed to mitigate various types of discrepancies, Russian rhetoric foregrounds the fact that the European Union, despite having achieved an unparalleled

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[147] In particular, the Communication underlines the role of EU delegations in ensuring the coordination among all the actors thus, guaranteeing coherences on the ground. (European Commission and High Representative, 2013)

level of integration is first and foremost, according to the former Russian President (Medvedev, 2009b) "is a union of countries, each one having their own European identity, with undiminished sovereign rights and opportunities for its constituents".

Russian attitude is grounded basically on perceptions of the EU's penetrability and various dividing lines that run contrary to the EU's narrative on the ever deepening integration. At the foreign policy level such a perspective accredits the strategy, to which Russian political elites pledge adherence to, which involves developing relations on both European and national levels. In practice, however, there is certain preference towards bilateral relations[148] as Russian politicians seemingly intend to exploit the aforementioned "undiminished sovereign rights and opportunities". Therefore, it can be said that the EU's self-representations are only granted a partial recognition as Russia visibly favours the bilateral track of dealing with the EU members on the issues related to common neighbourhood, thereby manifesting its perceptions of the intergovernmental aspect of the EU as outweighing the supranationalism.

This lopsidedness is also felt in Russia's images of the EU as a primarily non-consolidated actor suffering first of all from vertical incoherencies. This discursive tendency is in clear contrast with the European narrative that in a soul-searching manner delves into the internal horizontal inconsistencies and the ways of overcoming them, while touching upon the EU-member states disagreements only very cursorily. In fact, Russian critical rhetoric almost exclusively targets vertical discrepancies existent between the EU and its presumably self-seeking constituent states. Already in 2006, when talking about 'frozen conflicts' in the neighbourhood, Russian President mentioned "the difficult relations between the European Commission and the national governments" (Putin, 2006b). The references to the discordances between the EU and national dimensions haunt the Russian political discourse over a span of the whole period under investigation.

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[148] One of the vivid examples of this dual approach to partnership is provided by the EU-France-Russia interactions following the Georgia-South Ossetia crises in August 2008. In conformity with Russian discourse, it was "a sheer luck" that the EU presidency was headed by French President Nicolas Sarkozy who took the initiative in settling the conflict and later was backed by the EU as in the September negotiations he was accompanied by the President of the EU Commission and High Representative (Solana) (Lavrov, 2008b). The Russian political discourse is jam-packed with the references to the outstanding role of the French President while the EU "slept through the crisis" (Lavrov, 2008a).

The most vivid dividing line which is frequently referred to in the Russian discursive space refers to the so called subdivision into the old and new member states from Central Europe characterized by possessing diverging attitudes towards Russia. In this way, Russian Foreign Minister explicitly describes the EU as "made up of different states… the Cold War inertia, along with various phobias, is still strong in some of them" (Lavrov, 2010). In a similar manner Russian Permanent Representative to the EU talks about the violation of "the principle of eurosolidarity" referring to a situation where a number of the EU members took advantage of EU-Russian relationship to advance their self-seeking national interests in the domains related to relations with the Eastern neighbours (Chizhov, 2009). The EaP constitutes a frequent illustration of the frictions existent between the European and national levels of governance. These images definitely undermine the EU's endeavours towards 'an ever closer union' in the eyes of Russia.

As for the horizontal inconsistencies that are manifest across the EU's policies and institutions, Russian discourse is characterized by little eloquence on the issue taking into consideration that remarks are utterly infrequent and cursory and rather hint at those types of imperfections than directly describe them. For instance, one of the few comments allude to the institutional and policy inconsistency that is brought about by the change of the chairman every six months (Putin, 2006b), another refers to the institutional polyphony by stating that the EU hasn't achieved "one telephone" yet (Lavrov, 2008a). Another divergence found in the EU-Russian discursive interaction is that Russian perspective does not mirror back the European commitments to diminish its inconsistencies or the transformational reforms brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon that spill over into the EU's actorness in the region.

Following this line of reasoning, the ENP and the EaP, the former being most frequently cited by the EU as an illustration of the intrapillar and interinstitutional coordinative potential, are seen by Russia as vivid manifestations of the disunity between the EU and its members, thereby exhibiting the categorical degree of Russian resistance to the EU's images. For instance, the eclectic structure of the ENP started to crumble away demonstrating disunity among members and the policy inconsistency and giving way to the Union for Mediterranean under French leadership counterbalanced by the Eastern Partnership initiated by Sweden and Poland (Chizhov, 2013e). Similarly, the approval of the final declaration of the EaP Vilnius Summit was impeded by the lack of consensus

between the EU and its member states (Chizhov, 2013b). Apart from the political obstacles, technical difficulties (for example the necessity to translate thousands of pages of the Ukrainian Association Agreement as well as other documents into 23 European languages constitute another frequently cited stumbling block and an evidence of the internal complexity of the European composition.

Thus the summary of the discursive patterns provided by table 8 indicates that Russia returns negative mirror images of the EU. The partial recognition of the EU unity is counterbalanced by negative recognition that refers to the acknowledgement of the self-critical images of the EU's weaknesses as an actor in the common neighbourhood and contestation of the EU's attempts towards achievement of greater unity and deeper integration. In Russian eyes the EU is generally seen as a non-consolidated, penetrable and faulty actor that exhibits clear vertical, horizontal and interstate inconsistencies.

5. Paradigm of Russian discursive resistance to the representations of EU instrumental capabilities in the common neighbourhood

Capabilities constitute an important aspect of international actorness as, taking the EU as an example, it should be able to capitalize on the assets, provided by the ENP and the EaP to achieve tangible impact on the ground and translate the declared objectives and possibilities into mutual benefits. In order to explore how well the EU's intentions and potentialities are translated into practice according to both European and Russian perspectives, the analysis focuses on the predications grouped around the loose nomination "instruments at the EU disposal".

The European discursive panorama is characterized by the eloquence and predominantly optimistic notes concerning the gamut of instruments which is considered as full and all-embracive ranging from economic to political ones that allow the EU to engage in a meaningful dialogue and fruitful support of the partner countries. In fact, the ENP is portrayed as an excellent illustration of "the European Union's comprehensive approach to foreign policy - using all instruments in a coherent way under the umbrella of the ENP – from Common Foreign and Security Policy, to political cooperation, trade policy, and also sector policies such as transport and energy" (Füle, 2013b: 2). The situation was further improved with the creation of the European External Action Service that enabled

the EU to pool together all the tools the EU possesses: "diplomacy, political engagement, development assistance, humanitarian aid, economic cooperation, and civil and military crisis management" (Ashton, 2011b: 1).

Besides, the attributive description of EU instruments as "tailored" frequently arises in European discourse and defines the EU as fully equipped with instruments to act as a meaningful actor in the neighbourhood and adapt its policies according to the individual needs and ambitions of the target country. Such an impressive set of instruments and their adaptability to unique relations with each target country generates the self-perception of the EU as a reliable and credible partner that fulfils its obligations (Füle, 2012).

Expectedly, the most comprehensive set of instruments is of an economic nature which includes first and foremost, the Association Agreements most of which incorporate Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) in order to respond to more ambitious aspirations of the Eastern partners. This instrument inaugurates the pervasive political and economic bond between the EU and its partner countries and illustrates the commitment of both parties to bring the target countries closer to the EU by promoting convergence with EU regulation and standards and promoting cooperation on the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy.

The allocation of funding for social and economic development, support for institution building, and other technical assistance constitutes another economic instrument on which the EU relies heavily. From 2007 the European policies towards its neighbours have been funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) which later was transformed into the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). Moreover, the EU discursively commits itself to additional funding under the 'more for more principle'. For example, the newly created Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation programme (EaPIC) allocated €130 million for 2012-13 in addition to the 2010-13 funding designated to the Eastern European partners worth €1.9 billion (European Commission and High Representative, 2012).

The EU also makes use of the growing set of diplomatic instruments. First of all the EU actively pursues political dialogue with the Eastern neighbours in order to find a solution to regional conflict issues and promote political, economic and legal reforms. Furthermore, the EU has appointed the Special Representative for South Caucasus to deal

with crises that beset the region. It also assists actions by international organizations directed at the region, for example the EU participates in the mediation of the Transnistrian conflict as an observer in the 5+2 format under the auspices of the OSCE and supports the mediation process of the OSCE Minsk Group for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As such the EU collaborates with the relevant international organisations to develop "post-conflict reconstruction scenarios" and acts as "a further incentive in the resolution of conflicts by showing the tangible benefits of peaceful settlements" (European Commission and High Representative, 2011: 6). The EU also launched the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the EU Border Assistance Mission in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The less frequent strand of European discourse blames the EU's instruments and mechanisms for the unsatisfactory progress achieved through European policies in the ENP countries. As the communication (European Commission and High Representative, 2013) puts it that the EU may need to look critically at its instruments to introduce necessary adaptations to address demands and needs of the target countries in a more efficient way.

Russian counter-discourse on EU instruments used in the ENP and EaP is scarce, sporadic and negatively coloured so it can be said that, using the metaphoric expression, it sends back distorted mirror images by focusing on flaws and defects of the set of tools at the EU's disposal. As table 9 indicates Russian discourse resists the positive attributions of the EU's instrumental portfolio by depicting it as inherently flawed. Thus, when it comes to EU capabilities in its discursive strategies Russia tends to recur to misrecognition of the EU's self-conceptualizations. Besides, Russian narrative not only rejects the EU's images imbued with positive affinity by challenging and reinterpreting them but accepts and intensifies the sporadic European discourse on its deficiencies thereby embedding it further in the intersubjective structure of meaning.

Table 9. Paradigm of Russian discursive resistance to the representations of EU instruments

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
Instruments at the EU's disposal	a full range of instruments used all in a coherent way under the umbrella of the ENP	deficient	misrecognition
	tailored	absent discourse	non-recognition
	need improvement (infrequent)	deficient (frequent)	negative recognition
Economic instruments: AA and DCFTAs	promote political and economic bond between the EU and its partner countries	ineffective and asymmetric	misrecognition
Funding	extensive	insufficient	misrecognition
Diplomatic instruments	positively predicated,	negatively predicated	misrecognition
		only part of instruments are mentioned	

Source: Author's elaboration

For instance, the range of EU economic instruments is negatively predicated. Russia recognizes the existence of these instruments in the EU's arsenal, however, routinely depicts them as deficient. Taking as an example the Association Agreements, Russian discourse contests the essence of this instrument as presented by the EU. For instance, a small number of target countries ready to sign the Association Agreements which include DCFTAs testifies to the inherent flaws of the agreements as an economic instrument. Russian diplomats have mentioned on numerous occasions that the number of the countries willing to sign the AA has decreased from six to three, that is, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Besides, these Agreements serve as a perfect illustration of the EU's proclivity towards establishing asymmetric relations as thetexts are not transparent and basically nonnegotiable and are handed in to the allegedly 'partner' countries on the 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis.

Another main target for criticism in Russian discourse is the financial support of EU-led policies, in particular, of the EaP, which is seen as insufficient. Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU cites €600 million that are to be divided between 6

countries for a period of 5 years as constituting an unsubstantial financial base (Chizhov, 2009) which undermines the effectiveness and potency of the European venture. For many years the situation did not change for the better and the project was bound to have "a difficult fate" due to the fact that there was no reference to the EaP neither in the 2014 budget nor in the financial planning for 7 years (Chizhov, 2013d).

There are also a few references to the diplomatic instruments at the disposal of the EU in Russian narrative, which are mostly of a very general and sporadic nature. However, Russian discursive resistance to the descriptions of the EU's diplomatic capabilities is less categorical comparison with its persistent and emphatic criticism of EU economic instruments. First, the selected range of analysed texts mentions only a part of the EU diplomatic instruments, namely, resolutions and the Monitoring Mission in Georgia. The resolutions are frequently mentioned in the context of their politically biased nature. Before the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis Russia accused of bias and partiality resolutions passed by the European Parliament to warn Russia against the alleged exerted pressure on Ukraine in the matter of the Association Agreement with the EU (Chizhov, 2013a). These incriminations became more pronounced and vibrant with the developments of the Ukrainian events.

In turn, the Monitoring Missions sponsored by the EU, aroused a certain degree of scepticism in Moscow as the doubts were explicitly voiced that the EU would not be able to independently maintain a peace keeping operation in Transnistria, South Caucasus or Central Asia without Russian assistance (Chizhov, 2005c). More specifically, EU observers who undertook a role of a guarantor of security in the territories adjacent to Abkhasia and South Osettia[149] and restrain "possible aggressive proclivities and power fantasies on the part of Tbilisi" (Karasin, 2009) were not seen as coping successfully with their obligations as Georgian police and military forces allegedly concentrated in the territory and caused provocations, as well as the emergence of criminal groupings (Grushko, 2008).

The EU is also seen as stripped of its most powerful diplomatic instrument that could make a difference in its policies in the neighbourhood: the prospect of membership, as the EaP "focus countries" did not get any promise of membership and are not going to

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[149] The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia was deployed in September 2008 in compliance with the EU-mediated Six Point Agreement.

receive any in foreseeable future [150] (Chizhov, 2013a), the fact, that underlines the exclusive nature of the EU and contributes to the vision of the EU's capabilities as insufficient.

To conclude, Russian discursive panorama on European portfolio of instruments offers a peculiar picture. It can be said that Russia reverses the trajectory of discursive depictions by mirroring the EU's positive predications in antithetical terms. Russia is meaningfully silent on the general positive characteristics of the EU's gamut of instruments, such as their completeness and tailor-made qualities by replacing them with negatively-coloured characteristics and magnifying the EU's sporadic remarks about the imperfections of the EU's instruments and mechanisms.

6. Patterns of Russian discursive resistance to the ideational representations of EU actorness in the common neighbourhood

EU-Russian discursive 'encounter' on the EU's ideational aspects can serve as a perfect illustration of the presumption about the axiological gap between self- and external images that is revealed in the tendency of the former to be more positive and self-serving and the latter to be more negative. This section exemplifies this perceptual disequilibrium as the EU's positive self-descriptions of its ideational components are reflected the other way around in the Russian 'mirror'.

To study the ideational dimension of the EU's actorness in the common neighbourhood the analysis proceeds with two types of nominations: "the EU" and "Eastern European countries"[151] which function as nodal points around which the predicative descriptions are structured. While the first referential strategy that sets forth the European Union as a social actor under scrutiny does not require any justification, the second nomination is chosen as the role and the treatment of the post-Soviet states is fundamental to obtain a fuller picture of the EU's evaluative qualification as a player in the region.

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[150] This fact is frequently contrasted with the prospects of the immediate membership in the Eurasian Economic Union.

[151] The "Eastern European countries" is a somewhat loose nomination which serves as an umbrella term that includes all references to the NIS, such as "post-Soviet states" embraced by the ENP and/or the EaP, "the partners" as well as individual countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The EU discourses on its activities in the neighbourhood predominantly hinge on the conception of the European identity as an inclusive one. The inclusive dimension is explicit in its official discourse as the EU is committed to share the benefits of the EU's 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries by expanding a zone of stability, security and prosperity for all concerned and in this way preventing the emergence of new dividing lines. The post-Soviet states are given a chance to be included into the European practices by participating in various EU activities in political, security, economic and cultural dimensions (Commission of the European Communities, 2004).

The self-images of the inclusive identity serve as a kind of a discursive nodal point around which a number of evaluative depictions laden with positive attributes is grouped. One of the most recurrent self-depictions of the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood is that of an established and unquestionable 'model' to follow by the target countries in the economic, social and political dimensions. The self-portrayal as a model is followed by a list of related metaphors such as 'an anchor of stability', 'a pole of attraction', 'a source of inspiration', 'a positive reference' and 'a force of attraction'. These representations depict the EU in superior terms as a model to be emulated by the neighbouring states both in terms of standards of living (Barroso, 2014d), common markets and well as "the values that are the basis for the ENP — human rights, democracy, fundamental freedoms and prosperity and solidarity" (European Commission and High Representative, 2013: 2).

These superior self-descriptions enable and to a certain extent prescribe the EU to take the lead in the transformation of the immediate vicinity. These beliefs generate other frequently evoked metaphorical descriptions of the EU as 'a transformative power', 'force for good' and a 'catalyst for reforms'. The EU discourse is replete with references to the "extraordinary transformational power" (Barroso, 2011b), "a catalyst for reforms" (Commission of the European Communities, 2009; Füle, 2013b) and "a force for good" in the neighbourhood and beyond (Ashton, 2011b) that acts for common good, and building on its experience, aims to project well-being and stability to 'a ring of friends' at the EU's borders. The extension of the zone of stability and prosperity, as well as respect for democracy and good governance is carried out through the EU-assisted reforms of the political, social and economic spheres of the target countries. In this manner, the EaP is seen as "a transformational project of highest importance" (Barroso, 2013c: 3) which

tackles not only abstract concepts but brings about concrete benefits such as eliminating barriers and spurring mobility.

The EU, while positing itself as a transformational power, customarily emphasizes that it does not act as a dominant player; rather, the relationship with the neighbouring countries is based on equality and partnership. Therefore, the EU is not simply a force for good characterized by profound transformative power, but a perfect illustration of a soft power in action that extends its influence drawing on its force of attraction.

This aspect is being accentuated in European discourse as the EU, while taking the lead in assisting the transformation of the NIS and Caucasus countries, draws on the ENP and EaP as "a partnership of equals sharing common values" (European Commission and High Representative, 2012a: 2). This discourse is further exemplified by the usage of such referential and predication strategies as naming the ENP countries as 'partners', 'a ring of friends' which share 'mutual commitment to common values' and 'responsibility'. 'Joint ownership', 'mutual accountability' and 'mutual responsibility' are other key concepts in European discourse on equality and partnership. Besides, European discourse contains such predicates as 'help', 'support', 'assist' that further reify the character of the EU's involvement in the region based on equality. Indeed, it is repeatedly reiterated that the EU does not seek to impose its model or a ready-made recipe and it is "not a strait jacket" (Füle, 2013a: 3).

The EU's role in supporting the transformational developments is limited to assisting the neighbours "to anchor the essential values and principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, a market economy and inclusive, sustainable development in their political and economic fabric" (European Commission and High Representative, 2011: 21). The NIS and Caucasus countries are also deemed responsible for the transitions, and it is their free choice and political will if they accept the EU's assistance or not. The EU only "offers incentives" in the form of funding, political and sector cooperation, increased mobility of people and an access into the EU internal market (Füle, 2013b: 2)[152].

The representations of the European Union based on the 'distinctiveness thesis' invariably imply the indispensable role of values and norms. Thus, the EU's attempts to

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[152] Elsewhere Füle (2013d: 3) describes the Association Agreements as "sovereign decisions" which are "not about passing sovereignty to Brussels…but about strengthening their sovereignty by empowering these countries".

extend the zone of stability and prosperity are linked to "the sustained promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the neighbourhood" (Commission of the European Communities: 7). Similarly, the EaP is based on the promotion of values such as the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights, protection of minorities, the market economy and sustainable development (Commission of the European Communities, 2008). However, consonantly with the conceptualization of the EU as a soft power, in its aspirations to extend "the advantages of open markets, economic growth and a political system based on social responsibility and democracy", the EU "does not try to impose its system on others, but is not shy about its values" (European Commission, 2007: 4).

All these descriptions characterize the European Union as a completely novel type of actor that in its actions is driven by the hybridized logics of 'historical' responsibility towards its neighbours and self-interest, conducts value-informed policies based on the logics of mutual responsibility and directed at the mutually beneficial diffusion of the wellbeing beyond its borders.

When it comes to the reflections of the ideational representations of the European Union as an actor in the Eastern region and the ENP and the EaP as concrete manifestations of its actorness, Russia emerges as a thoroughly uncomfortable 'mirror', as it resists all aspects of the EU's self-representations with the exception of the images of the EU as a model and a source of attraction which are only partially recognized.

Russian political discourse echoes the EU's self-representations as a model and a source of attraction for the Eastern neighbours, although relatively infrequently and not without certain stipulations and negatively-coloured connotations. From Russian perspective the European Union is perceived as retaining a certain degree of attractiveness and gravitational pull in the post-Soviet Space. The EU despite its hardships and misfortunes still remains "the most advanced integration union on the planet, a pillar of political stability on the European continent and one of the key elements of the increasingly globalised polycentric system of international relations" (Chizhov, 2012b). Its achievements on the path of integration, economic performance and the attainment of 'eternal peace' safeguard the EU's position in the Russian political narrative as a "beacon" not only for a whole number of other European countries but also for other regions of the world (Chizhov, 2012b).

As far as the force of attraction is concerned, it is recognized that EU power resides not only in economic factors, but also in its gravitational pull, as a number of the countries in the region choose the EU as a reference point for their foreign policy orientation despite the apparent European predispositions to build highly asymmetrical relations with its neighbours (Chizhov2005b) Russian political leaders also occasionally refer to the EU as an actor in the neighbourhood in metaphorical terms as "a shining temple at the top of the hill" (Chizhov, 2014i; Chizhov, 2004b) to describe the attractiveness of the European project in the neighbourhood.

However, it can be said that Russian recognition of the EU's self-perceptions is counterbalanced by the parallel existence of opposing images. The very concept of the "shining temple at the top of the hill" (Chizhov, 2014i; Chizhov, 2004b) is imbued with a somewhat negative colouring suggesting that the EU overestimates its own importance and hints at its exclusive identity pointing out that it is a hard-to-reach aim for the aspiring states. Besides, in the words of Russian Permanent Representative to the EU, in the past few years the "shining temple" faded as "the very concept of the European integration has seen better days, to put it mildly" (Chizhov, 2012b). The EU's economy plunged into predicament, prolonged sovereign debt dilemmas, the rise of 'Euro-scepticism' and mushrooming nationalist parties dealt a heavy blow to the image of the EU's attractiveness and its gravitational pull[153]. The vivid example of the fading EU attractiveness and weakened gravitational pull is provided by the fact that only three of the six EaP countries are eager to engage in a deeper cooperation with the EU within the Eastern Partnership framework (Chizhov, 2013a).

As table 10 indicates other aspects of the EU's ideational representations are more vehemently and categorically rejected.

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[153] This narrative is placed within a wider discourse on the decline of the EU as a global actor, which entails the inability of the EU to weather the vicissitudes of globalization on its own and the shift of the power balance to the BRIC countries.

Table 10. Paradigms of discursive contestation of the EU's ideational representations in Russian political narrative

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reactions
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU	inclusive	exclusive	misrecognition
	a model, a force of attraction, an anchor of stability, a pole of attraction, a source of inspiration, a positive reference	attractive, a beacon, a shining temple at the top of the hill whose attractiveness has faded	parallel recognition and misrecognition
	transformative power, force for good and a catalyst for reforms	self-seeking	misrecognition
	driven by logics of mutual 'historical' responsibility towards the target countries and self-interest	driven by geopolitical interests, has to share responsibility with Russia	misrecognition
	soft power/ not imposing	imposing, unilateral	misrecognition
	promotes its values	applies double standards in promotion of its values	misrecognition
Eastern European countries	partners, equals, share common values and responsibility	focus countries, not equal, not sovereign	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

Thus, the concepts of the transformative power Europe and 'a force for good' are called into question. Although, not explicitly stated, the EU is not seen as 'a force for good' which aims at promoting the welfare and prosperity; rather, the EU is portrayed as a self-seeking power. EU policies in the adjacent territories are not seen in transformative terms as bringing about economic prosperity and good governance based on universal values, rather they are driven by the geopolitical and economical rationality. According to Russian discursive line, the ENP and later the EaP constitute a logical extension of the EU's endeavour to fill up the geopolitical void that emerged after the collapse of the

USSR when the EU feverishly admitted new members[154]. In the economic dimension Russian President warned Ukraine against becoming "an agricultural appendage [to the EU]"[155] that would exert a detrimental effect on the Ukrainian economic development (Putin, 2013). These perceptions conflict with the EU's discourse on the 'historical' responsibility for the region. Besides, the concept of 'mutual responsibility' which allegedly underpins EU-Eastern European states' relations is totally incompatible with Russian images of the EU as acting as an uncompromising 'normative hegemon'. Instead, Russian political narrative routinely brings to the fore the concept of 'joint responsibility' based on the belief that the European Union and Russia, being two powers in the region, are to share the obligation for maintaining regional security, stability and prosperity in the shared neighbourhood.

Moreover, the EU's self-referential images related to the notion of a benevolent actor relying on its force of attraction and soft power are undermined by its imposing nature. In contrast with European discourse with portrays itself as a power bringing prosperity and benefits to the partner countries, Russian perceptions depict EU policies as asymmetric and imposing EU standards on the neighbouring countries. The EU's manner of conducting policies is compared with the military "drill-and-ceremonies manual" as it is perceived as taking on the civilising mission to impose "one-size-fits all" Western standards on the enormous post-Soviet territory (Chizhov2004b). Unilateralism is another suggestive concept that frequently appears in Russian discourse, in particular in relation to the Association Agreements between the EU and the neighbourhood countries that imply the unilateral adoption of the technical, regulative and other EU standards into domestic legislation including the full removal of barriers for the EU's trade expansion without the possibility of real negotiation. Russian Foreign Affairs Minister (Lavrov, 2014a) describes the asymmetric EU-neighbours relations vividly "if you accept the European choice – then you must fulfil all the orders of Brussels, even if they do not

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[154] In that enlargement frenzy the EU disregarded the up until that time strict criteria concerning the political and socio-economic development, state of the legal and judicial systems, absence of territorial disputes and existence of the treaties on definition of borders with all neighbours (Lavrov, 2011).

[155] The numbers the Russian decision makers use are as follows: Ukraine sells to Russia $7 billion worth of machinery and equipment, whereas Europe imports $5 billion worth of Ukrainian agricultural goods (Putin, 2013).

comply with existing obligations, including within the framework of the CIS". From this perspective, the EU is seen as a colonizing power.

In this respect, the post-Soviet states are portrayed as unequal partners of the EU. The Russian usage of the term 'a focus country' is meaningful and utterly indicative as Russian political leaders conspicuously avoid the EU-coined nomination of 'partner countries'. Furthermore, Russian political discourse frequently underlines that the post-Soviet states are deprived of "free choice", that is, EU leaders treat them "as no one's territories" and not as the fully-fledged sovereign countries which are not only actors in their own right in international affairs, but also participants of various integration processes, the CIS in particular (Chizhov, 2005a). Thus, the EU not only uses imposition but oftentimes applies pressure in an aggressive way. In this respect Lavrov's (2009d) response to Javier Solana "What is the Eastern Partnership? Is it not a case of intimidating and pressuring others, including Belarus?" is vividly illustrative of those perceptions.

Quite predictably, those perceptions tarnish the EU's images as an actor pursuing value-informed policies in the common neighbourhood. For instance, using double standards in the promotion of human rights and democracy is the most frequently levelled accusation. Besides, on numerous occasions the EU has been accused of instigating political processes inter alia colour revolutions and conflicts by undemocratic methods. Particularly, Russian political elites tend to cite as an example the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia when, with the "implicit connivance of the EU", Georgia "certified" as democratic by the West took the path of war [156] (Lavrov, 2008a). Frequently, to exemplify the usage of double standards and the EU's unwillingness to stick to the common codes of conduct Russian politicians more often than not draw parallels between the recognition of Kosovo and the refusal to recognize Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Trans-Dniester[157].

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[156] Another illustration of this practice is the fact that the EU turns a blind eye to Romania lavishly handing out Romanian passports in Moldova, while accusing Russia of endowing Russian citizenship on the population in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

[157] Putin (2008) describes it quite overtly "Are you Europeans not ashamed to apply double standards in settling one and the same issue in different parts of the world?... Here in this region we have Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Trans-Dniester that exist as independent states. We are always being told that Kosovo is a special case. This is all lies. There is nothing so special about Kosovo and everyone knows this. It is exactly the same situation of an ethnic conflict; crimes committed on both sides and complete de facto independence".

Another example is the Western attitude to the political crisis in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution when the self-proclaimed "zealous champions of democracy and legality [the EU and the USA]" engaged in sending clear signals that the West would not recognize the unsuitable candidate and in support of this they embarked on providing undisguised support to the opposition even in cases when its leaders "were actually provoking street disturbances and a forcible seizure of power" (Lavrov, 2004). Thus, the EU is seen implicated in contributing to a split of society, destabilization of the situation and forcible imposition of democracy from the outside. The discourse that came forth during the 2014 Ukrainian crisis seems strikingly repetitive. In a déjà vu manner Russian Foreign Affairs Minister pointed to the confrontational nature of the EU's policies in the neighbourhood and the Eastern Partnership in particular by highlighting that European countries unilaterally decided that the Ukrainian "free" choice inevitably meant "European future" and that this choice justified the violation of constitution and the emergence of "street democracy" (Lavrov, 2014a).

7. Conclusion

The empirical investigation of the selected set of texts proved the initial expectation that the role of the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood is an utterly salient one and also ranks high on the European and Russian political agenda. The EU tends to define the autonomy, integrity, capabilities and ideational content of the ENP and EaP in a predominantly positive light. The self-critical depictions concerning its unity and capabilities also sporadically emerge in the discursive landscape, however, they are either not accentuated or are counterbalanced by the discourses on the improvements and institutional advancement.

While the EU discursively constructs itself as an actor that is able to act in its own capacity in the neighbourhood that in its pursuit of the mutually beneficial spread of the wellbeing beyond its borders, conducts value-informed policies based on the logic of responsibility, the Russian 'uncomfortable looking-glass' returns a distorted image. Basically, while recognizing that the EU has established itself as an important actor in the common neighbourhood, Russia challenges the predicative descriptions of every aspect of EU identity as an actor placing an emphasis on the depictions of the EU as an inclusive and a novel type of actor. The few cases of partial Russian recognition embrace the EU's

autonomy that refers to its visibility to act as an important regional actor drawing on its institutional apparatus and resorting to its force of attraction. However, analysis of Russian discourse trajectory reveals a conspicuous tendency to depict EU actorness in a more negative light. For instance, the images of EU autonomy are undermined by Russian perceptions of the predominance of the intergovernmental governance in the EU's decision-making structure. Besides, while partially recognizing a certain degree of unity achieved by EU member states, the empirical findings testify to the predominance of Russian beliefs that the centrifugal forces turned out stronger than forces of integration. This disunity is reflected in the existence of internal inconsistencies that plague the EU, which are particularly visible in the frictions between member states and EU institutions and the member states' diverging attitudes towards Russia. From the Russian perspective EU capabilities is another weak point in EU actorness, as Russian discourse either neglects EU self-images or mirrors back antithetical descriptions of the EU's instrumental arsenal. Another striking contrast between EU self-referential descriptions and Russian feedback is blatant in the ideational dimension, as Russia resists endowing recognition to the images of the EU as a 'new' and qualitatively different type of actor.

This case study possesses a colossal explanatory potential of the sources of the strained EU-Russian relations in the neighbourhood in the decade preceding the Ukrainian crisis. The constant Russian resistance to the EU's images is indicative of conflictual predispositions at the ideational level of interactions in two ways. First, they create an 'uncomfortable' situation for the EU, thereby forcing it to react in one way or another, and second, they are symptomatic of Russian discontent with the Self/Other ideational characterizations. Thus, although the discourse of the analysed period can be characterized as a period of 'taciturn irritation', it can be treated as a kind of a precursor to the Ukrainian events. In fact narratives of this decade remerge in the post-2013 discourses in a more intensified form thereby alluding to old grievances voiced before the outbreak of the conflict.

The empirical analysis embraces the epoch of the increasing Russian assertiveness[158] in its attitude towards the post-Soviet space after the years of a relatively reactive position in the 1990s. Moscow's attempts to re-establish itself as a 'significant Other' are traceable

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[158] There was a mixture of factors that contributed to Russia's growing self-confidence: the economic boom due to energy prices and the arrival of a charismatic and strong political leader who was able to carry out the recentralization and consolidation of domestic political power.

throughout the discourse. For instance, Russian irritation with the EU's exclusive identity as manifested in the neighbourhood, its tendencies to establish asymmetric and self-seeking relationships with third countries based on the premises of its superiority, the intransparency of the EaP testify to Russian fears of being unheard and not listened to. The emphasis on the 'joint responsibility' abundant throughout the Russian discourse can be interpreted as an attempt to re-establish itself as an important actor in the region to be reckoned with.

Despite the European rhetoric depicting Russia as a strategic partner in the neighbourhood whose ties with the NIS are to be respected, Russia felt largely excluded from European policies. Russian hopes to become a kind of positive Other and an equal partner that were expressed at the inception of the ENP, have evolved into more negative depictions of its role in the European architecture. In particular, Russian Foreign Minister referred to the EU's alleged attempts to depict Russia as "an alien element of Europe" by creating "a bristling Russia as a tool to give a second wind to the existence of the West with regard to the outside world" (Lavrov, 2008a).

European discourse does not mitigate Russian fears. According to the analytical framework highlighting the effects of the (mis-) and (non-)recognition, the conflict between both actors lies in the Russian discursive resistance to the EU's representations. However, in its reciprocal reactions, the EU does not seem to opt for changing its images but rather insists on reproducing them and thereby 'misrecognizes the misrecognition' thus intensifying further the conflict. In this vicious cycle Russia feels like or chooses to feel like an 'invisible Other' and aims to re-establish itself as a relevant actor. However, both actors demonstrate inflexibility about changing narratives, as both discourses remain stable and relatively unchanged throughout the studied period before going to the next level of 'struggle for recognition' as manifest in the post-2013 developments. This fact empirically confirms the theoretical presumptions about the conflictual repercussions of the Self-Other (mis-) recognition that intensify disagreements at every phase of this potentially *ad infinitum* cycle.

CHAPTER VI

**IMAGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A PROMOTER OF
HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN EUROPEAN AND
RUSSIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSES**

1. Introduction

The EU routinely depicts itself as an entity whose *telos* is based on the set of constitutive EU's self-images[159]. Human rights and democracy have been prioritized among other founding values as an object of analysis as they are arguably the most visible normative components of European identity discourse. Besides, it can be said that they constitute a discursive pair as they are frequently inseparably interlinked as mutually interdependent in the political and academic discourses.

The respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and promotion of democracy constitute fundamental raison d'être of European integration and are institutionalized in a number of milestone declarations and founding treaties. For instance, the 1991 Luxembourg European Council declaration on human rights confirms that human rights and democracy (HDR) constitute the core principle of the European integration and an essential part of the Community's relations. The Maastricht Treaty confirmed the allegiance to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and contained the first legal commitment to the inclusion of HRD in the Community's external policy. The Treaty of Lisbon reiterated European adherence to the founding values in its relations with the wider world and enhanced the human rights and democracy framework at the EU level by giving a legal effect to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and announcing the accession of the Union to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Besides, an impressive number of communications issued by the Commission

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[159] For a detailed account of the normative constitution see Manners (2006a) who argues that the normative role of the EU in the world rests on nine values: peace, liberty, democracy, human rights, rule of law, equality, social solidarity, sustainable development and good governance.

of the European Communities further embedded human rights and democracy in European rhetoric and legislation as an integral part of the EU's active international identity.

Such salience of the EU self-proclaimed role as a guardian and a promoter of human rights and democracy could not but feedback on its relations with Russia, as the EU has repeatedly endeavoured to introduce the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as democracy into the agenda both through the inclusion of the values in strategic documents and agreements and by constantly referring to them in their interactions with Russian counterparts. However, despite the fact that the collocation 'shared values' became routine in EU-Russian discourses, Russian agreement to the symbolical inclusion of references to HRD in the milestone EU-Russian documents can arguably be qualified as the best outcome of European normative influence as Russia tended to resist it or try to provide their own normative alternative.

This chapter intends to subject to scrutiny the discursive 'encounter' of the EU and Russian political rhetoric concerning the EU's self-assumed role as a protector and promoter of human rights and democracy. The underlynig assumption is that these values function as structural irritants in the relations between the European Union and Russia as they are directly linked to identity of both actors, thereby making them more susceptible to the effects of mutual (mis-) recognition.

First, this chapter outlines briefly how this case study can contribute to the existing stock of literature, then looks into EU self-descriptions to reveal the discursive patterns related to the role and compares them with the images provided by Russian 'mirror' in four criteria of the EU's identity as an actor. The chapter is closed by concluding remarks on recognition and misrecognition of the EU's role and their implications for the EU-Russian interaction at the ideational and foreign policy levels.

2. The European Union as a promoter of human rights and democracy: state-of-the-art

The EU identity self-representations as an entity whose *telos* is based on its founding values has not gone unnoticed in academic literature which approached the issue from a number of perspectives.

First, the EU's rhetorical commitment to the HRD is tightly linked to the so-called 'distinctiveness thesis' that serves as an umbrella term for a row of cognate ideational conceptualizations such as the "Normative Power Europe" (Manners, 2002), "a normative area" (Therborn, 2001), "a norms exporter" (Panebianco, 2006b) and to a certain extent "a model power" (Ferreira Pereira, 2010) and "an ethical power" (Aggestam, 2008). Manners and Whitman (2003) characterize the European Union's normative identity as active that manifests itself in the EU endeavours to externalize its value-informed internal governance (Lavenex, 2004) through enlargement (Noutcheva, 2008), the ENP (Shapovalova and Youngs, 2012) or political dialogue, the conditionality clauses and provisions in the development aid and agreements with the wider world[160] (Sedelmeier, 2006; Baracani, 2010).

Second, there have been voices arguing that the distinctiveness of the European Union as an actor engaged in advancement of human rights and democracy has been exaggerated at best. From this critical perspective, the EU's active position in the promotion of values combined by the evident asymmetry of power has generated the attributive descriptions of doubtful colouring such as "a regional normative hegemon" (Haukkala, 2008b), "soft imperialistic power" (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005), "empire" (Zielonka, 2008), an actor driven by pragmatism at the expense of idealistic objectives of HRD (Farrell, 2005; Panebianco, 2006a; Tocci, 2007; Hyde-Price, 2006) or simply "a normal power" (Johannson-Nogués, 2007; Wood, 2009). Other arguments against EU's distinctive actorness as promoter of human rights include the accusation of failing to "live by example" as it suffers from human rights crises inside its borders (Manners 2008: 56; Tilley, 2012). Besides the EU's self-images as an advocate of HRD are tarnished by lack of any substantial results in the promotion of these values in bilateral relations with its neighbouring countries or at the level of international organizations (Panebianco, 2006b; Shapovalova and Youngs, 2012; Gowan and Brantner, 2008).

The aforementioned strands have tended to be conducted from the EU's perspective. In contrast, this empirical chapter places an empirical focus on third parties' recognition of the EU's self-assigned role as an upholder of the human rights and democracy based on the premise of the relational nature of identity as a point of departure. As such, this

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[160] The EU has been conducting human rights dialogues and consultations as well as introducing human rights clauses in agreements with non member states since 1995.

approach is expected to overcome the incrimination that the analysis of the issue has predominantly been carried out by European and for European audience (Tocci, 2007). Besides, the investigation conducted from the Russian perspective can serve as a credible empirical test to the debates of the (anti-) distinctiveness of the EU's actions as an agent advancing human rights and democracy beyond its borders.

This empirical chapter also seeks to contribute to understandings of conflictual dynamics in the relations between both actors by assuming that the EU's promotion of HRD is one of the major stumbling blocks in EU-Russia political agenda. The conflicting proclivities arise from two factors.

First, Russia acts as a principal impediment to the sedimentation of the EU's role as an active promoter of human rights and democracy as Russian political elite exhibits growing unwillingness[161] to accept normative requirements of European partners as a *sine qua non* for cooperation (Mendelson, 2001; Kanet, 2009; Tilley, 2012). Literature analysing Russian resistance tends to emphasize the ideational divergence between Russia, which is a unitary and centralized state (Kortunov, 2009) that prioritizes state-centrism and collectivism and the Western individualistic culture and European post-modern thinking (Moulioukova-Fernandez, 2012; Nygren, 2009) as the main source of conflict. However, divergent identities in themselves do exclude the possibility of peaceful coexistence. What is missing in this literature is the analytical narrative on the perceptions as 'intermediaries' that can explain how these conflictual dynamics are formed at the ideational level and how they spill over into the foreign policy outcomes.

Second, scholarly inquiry portrays Russia as a challenger of the EU's capacity to act as a normative actor by bringing to the fore its deficiencies. In particular, the EU is accused of having failed to develop a tough position in response to the Russia's de-democratizing tendencies and human rights violations due to its inability to act as a unitary actor (Emerson et al., 2005; Saari, 2010; Fawn, 2009), lack of "the means and the determination to hold Russia accountable for human rights violations" (Bader 2008: 72),

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[161] With the arrival to power of Vladimir Putin Russia allegedly "abandoned all pretence of democratization and re-established many of the institutional arrangements of a traditional authoritarian political system" (Kanet 2009: xvi). As one of the most vivid illustrations of the reversal of the Russian transition to democracy Shevtsova (2006: 307) cites the "ersatz democracy" referring to pseudo democratic practices that Russian political elites use to legitimate an order based on "personified power and bureaucratic authority".

the EU's proclivity to be driven by its strategic and economic interests rather than norms and values (Daskalova, 2013; Fernandes, 2007; Emerson et al., 2005). The perceptions of the EU's disunity enabled Russia to pursue its infamous divide-and-rule strategy inter alia in the normative field and to apply what Preissler (2012) defines as the instrumental usage of democracy and human rights, which Russia deploys to achieve its strategic and security goals, as well as to fend off the EU's criticism of Russia's poor democracy and human rights record. The European weakness is also evident in the fact, that due to the lack of sufficient bargaining power and legitimacy, in its relations with Russia the EU predominantly opts for promotion of bilaterally designed norms or at best international norms instead of the EU norms (Barbé and Herranz Surralés, 2010; Sabiote et al., 2010).

This literature apart from pointing to some roots of the Russian resistance to the EU's normative influence, functions as an important indicator that the more traditional criteria of the EU actorness based on its capabilities still retain their currency in the state-dominated world and particularly, in EU-Russian relations. Thus, this chapter aims to offer an alternative explanation of the tensions between both actors by combining both the identity and actor-centred approaches in analysing the role of the EU as a HRD promoter. In this manner the chapter intends not only to scrutinize how Russian rhetoric echoes European self-representations of its 'capacity to act' and of its qualitatively different nature, but also to elucidate the sources of the conflict manifest in the cycle of mutual (mis-) recognition as possible precursors of the escalation of antagonism against the Ukrainian background.

3. Russian discursive contestation of the EU's self-understandings of its autonomy as an actor

Human rights and democracy rank high within European discursive fabric as they form part and parcel of the EU's founding values and are visible at various levels: they are required for obtaining the EU membership and respect for these values is included in all forms of cooperation with neighbours and the wider world. The question if the EU has succeeded in becoming an autonomous actor that possesses institutions and policies to enact its role as an actor that fosters the diffusion of these values is to be answered positively when looking at the European discourse. In contrast with other empirical chapters, the EU refers to individual institutions and key actors rather than referring to

common institutions in general. For instance, the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy adopted in 2012, which is probably the most elaborated and detailed document on the issue, states that "while respecting their distinct institutional roles, it is important that the European Parliament, the Council, the Member States, the European Commission and the EEAS commit themselves to working together ever more closely to realise their common goal of improving respect for human rights" (Council of the European Union, 2012: 4). Thus, the list of these institutions is taken as nominations that serve as nodal points for predications that define their role in the promotion of HRD.

The European Commission is predictably singled out as a European institution endowed with an important role and numerous functions in the promotion of human rights and democracy both within the EU and in the wider world with a greater emphasis given to external dimension. Just to outline the main points[162], its prime responsibility is defined as undertaking multiple tasks as regards the incorporation of the values throughout the EU policies. In external dimension, the European Commission engages with candidate countries and potential candidates in the field of the HRD as they constitute an integral part of the Copenhagen criteria and coordinates policies and programmes on human rights, in particular through its delegations in target countries (Council of the European Union, 2014). Besides, the Commission jointly with the EEAS and member states ensures the universal adherence to HRD by encouraging the ratification of international human rights treaties, promotes culture of human rights and democracy in EU external action by organizing trainings for staff, provides effective support to democracy through the world by developing EU joint comprehensive support plans and programmes for third countries and develops a rights-based approach in development cooperation, trade and conflict prevention (Council of the European Union, 2012).

The High Representative assisted by European External Action Service has also been assigned a distinctive institutional role with a wide array of responsibilities related to the promotion of human rights and democracy. Although the EEAS is also responsible for ensuring the internal cohesion of the values-based policies by, for instance, working with

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[162] The EU political discourse provides an extensive and detailed description of multifarious functions assigned to all actors. The chapter outlines only the main points to give a general picture of the roles in the promotion of HRD. For a full list of the Commission's responsibilities see, for example, the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (Council of the European Union, 2012).

civil societies and facilitating regular consultations with the member states on the implementation of human rights treaties, the discursive emphasis is placed on the incorporation of HRD in all EU external policies. Thus, the EEAS is involved in implementing the EU's priorities on human rights, working with bilateral partners and inside multilateral institutions, encouraging ratification of international human rights treaties, cooperating with the UN Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts and integrating human rights in its trade policies, conflict prevention and crises management activities as well as in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice (Council of the European Union, 2012).

In this context EU delegations and EU Special Representative for Human Rights are seen as indispensable institutions for promotion of human rights and democracy. EU delegations provide a platform for the EU's normative influence on the ground by providing support for democracy, monitoring important human rights related trials and following up the implementation of human rights country strategies (Council of the European Union, 2012). EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR) is another key actor committed to promote HRD through dialogue with third countries as well as in international and regional organizations. The Human Rights report issued by the Council of the EU defines the duties of the EUSR as follows: "strengthening the EU's human rights engagement with EU strategic partner countries; addressing human rights challenges with countries in transition in pivotal world regions; elevating the EU's visibility and engagement with multilateral and regional human rights mechanisms and empowering civil society throughout the world" (Council of the European Union, 2014: 14).

Another relevant institution that is frequently referred to in the European official discourse is the Council of the European Union Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) that consists of the Brussels-based EU diplomats dealing with human rights in the internal and external relations in collaboration with the Commission and the EEAS. COHOM is in charge of ensuring consistency between the EU's domestic and external human rights policies and overseeing the overall implementation of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. In the external dimension COHOM is involved in mainstreaming human rights in EU external action, in particular, by working on various EU guidelines on human rights, the human rights dialogues and

consultations with third countries and setting the EU's strategic priorities in multilateral human rights forums.

The European Parliament (EP) occupies another prominent place in the ranks of the European institutions supporting the autonomous action of the EU as its "democratic mandate gives it particular authority and expertise in the field of human rights" (Council of the European Union, 2012: 4). The EP's role and legitimacy as an actor in promotion of HRD is boosted by such descriptions as "the House of democratically elected representatives from all over the EU" and "a champion of Human Rights, in the EU and in the world" (Ashton, 2011c: 5). The EP is engaged with human rights issues through its Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), which cooperates with the European External Action Service (EEAS), other EU institutions and human rights NGOs, as well as multilateral human rights institutions (Council of the European Union, 2014). The Subcommittee on Human Rights follows human rights dialogues and consultations conducted by the EEAS with third countries and drafts parliamentary reports, including the Annual Report on Human Rights (Council of the European Union, 2014). Besides, the EP provides an unwavering support to democracy through the European Parliament's Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy, which supports and strengthens parliamentary institutions in newly emerging democracies (Council of the European Union, 2014).

Russian attitudes towards the European Union as an entity able to act in its own capacity while pursuing value-informed foreign policies exhibit certain conspicuous patterns of discursive recognition summarized in table 11.

The EU's visibility as an actor promoting human rights and democracy is somewhat grudgingly accepted by Russia as these values constitute an almost obligatory part in EU-Russia summits and other official and occasional declarations, documents and remarks issued in the process of EU-Russian political interactions[163]. However, as table 11 illustrates, Russian perceptions distort in a quite particular way the European Union's self-images of its autonomy as an actor which mainstreams human rights and democracy in all aspects of its external and internal policies.

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[163] In bilateral relations the human rights and democracy form part and parcel of official interactions as EU-Russia Human Rights Consultations are held during EU-Russia summits. Besides, Russian representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have had human rights dialogue meetings with the EU's Special Representative for Human Rights since 2012.

Table 11. Images of the EU's institutions as constitutive of autonomy in the EU and Russian political discourses

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
Autonomy (institutions)			
The European Commission	incorporates the values throughout the EU domestic and external policies	monitors implementation of HDR in member states, possesses legally, institutionally and voluntarily limited competencies	misrecognition
The High Representative and the EEAS	ensures greater coherence of the value-based policies inside the EU and incorporates the HRD in the EU external action	absent discourse	non-recognition
EU delegations	assist the HRD promotion on the ground	absent discourse	non-recognition
EU Special Representative for Human Rights	promotes HRD worldwide, strengthens the EU's human rights engagement with other states	a potential additional channel for the EU-Russian contacts, is not engaged into monitoring human rights in the EU member states	misrecognition
Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM)	deals with HRD in external and internal dimensions	absent discourse	non-recognition
The European Parliament	democratically elected, is endowed with particular authority and expertise in HRD	democratic institution, discusses human rights has a limited scope of competence	parallel recognition and misrecognition
the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights	absent discourse	acts as a consultant for the EU institutions, biased, competence is limited	misrecognition
the EU ombudsman	absent discourse	receives complaints about the activities of supranational institutions, competence is limited;	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

When it comes to the predication strategies grouped around the European Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and the European Parliament, although their existence is acknowledged in the Russian narrative, the evaluative judgement of their roles is carried out in predominantly gloomy colours. Besides, Russian discursive trajectory exhibits a curious trend of ideational resistance at it tends to shift the focus from the external to internal dimension of the EUs' self-assumed role in accordance with Russian discursive offensive on the human rights records and democracy standards within the EU.

In clear contrast with the voluminous EU narrative on the institutions, Russian discourse dedicates little attention to their role in enhancing EU autonomous action in the field of HRD. When it comes to the narrative on the role of the European Commission, Russian discourse concentrates on domestic policies rather than on external dimension, thereby shifting the discursive attention to inherent imperfections that undermine the perceptions of EU autonomy. For instance, the "Report on Human Rights in Certain States" produced by Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that, in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Commission monitors the convergence of the national legislation with the principles of the Charter[164] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation: 2011). However, the action of the European Commission is seen as limited in two ways, legally and institutionally and voluntarily. In the first case the competency of the Commission is perceived as restricted by the fact that the protection and promotion of human rights remain the prerogative of EU member states (Dolgov, 2012a). The self-imposed constraints are revealed in the fact that the European Commission is reluctant to engage in human rights violations in the member states' territories under the pretext of the lack of the relevant competencies[165] (Dolgov, 2012c). As Nebendzya (2012) describes it: "if we raise an acute problem, in response they, as a rule, lift their hands and say that the issue belongs to the competence of Member States and not the European Commission".

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[164] The mentioned report cites the deportation of gypsies from France in 2010 and Hungarian 2010 law which limits the freedom of speech as two examples when the Commission succeeded in spurring the changes in the national legislation.

[165] The Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation mentions the failed initiative of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland who proposed the President of the European Commission to launch its own monitoring mechanisms at the EU level to keep track of human rights, rule of law and democracy in the territory of the member states and to sanction the violators. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013).

Thus, it can be said that Russia tends to misrecognize the European images of the European Commission as an institution engaged in the enactment of the EU's role as a promoter of HRD given that its primary responsibility is seen as overseeing the implementation of values inside the EU rather than mainstreaming them across the world. Besides, Russian political discourse accentuates that European Commission's autonomy is visibly limited by the insufficient authority granted by the member states and the tendency at the finger-pointing practices inside the Commission itself.

Another European actor that receives certain discursive attention on the part of Russian political leaders is the EU's Special Representative for Human Rights who interacts with his counterpart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in the field of human rights. In the usual fault-finding vein that intends to direct the attention to the EU's own deficiencies, the added value of the EUSR is undermined by the fact that the internal issues and monitoring of human rights in the EU member states are not included in his mandate and consequently his contribution to the solution of the systemic problems accumulated in the EU is marginal (Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union, 2012). However, it is hoped that the EUSR becomes an "additional channel" for the EU-Russian contacts with the EU in the field of human rights (Dolgov 2012a) thereby partially mirroring the EU's anticipation that he strengthens the EU's engagement with strategic partners. Taking into account that the discourse on the EUSR has been scarce and is characterized by the change of focus and only 'hope' is expressed that he contributes to the EU-Russia dialogue, Russian reaction to EU self-images tends to gravitate towards misrecognition.

Another European institution whose self-perceptions of autonomy and distinctiveness are cast in doubt is the European Parliament. Similarly with the discursive 'encounter' related to the aforementioned institutions, Russian discourse on the role of the EP is strikingly laconic when compared to European descriptions and is focused on its deficiencies. On the one hand, Russian political discourse recognizes the increasing role of the EP in the context of the growing role of democratic institutions both in the EU and in Russia (Chizhov, 2005a). However, the attention is brought to the fact that competencies of the EP and its Subcommittees are limited. For example, during his speech at the session in the European parliament, Russian Permanent Representative to the EU expressed his doubt if its Subcommittee on Human Rights "has enough competence to analyse the full scope of our consultations on human rights" as monitoring the human rights situation

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within the European Union is not included in the competence of the Subcommittee, thus making the session one-sidedly concentrated on the human rights situation in Russia (Chizhov, 2011a).

In this manner, Russian discursive reaction to EU self-representations is dual and manifests itself in parallel recognition and misrecognition. Thus, Russian recognition of the democratic nature of the EP does not automatically endow it with special authority and competencies in the field of human rights and promotion. Rather, in Russia's eyes the EP's autonomy is undermined as its tasks are boiled down to the 'discussion of human rights' due to the limited scope of competencies.

The discursive orientation of the thesis assumes that the premise that what is 'not said' frequently is no less suggestive than what is 'said'. In this respect, absent discourse as regards the High Representative and the EEAS, EU delegations and the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) is indicative of a number of factors. First, these institutions are excluded from the ranks of the distinctive institutional settings that contribute to the autonomy of the EU as an actor. Second, it draws attention to the fact that Russia does not perceive the EU as a promoter of the HRD in the external world, as the EU first has to deal with the HRD-related problems inside its own borders.

These attempts to redirect the debate are also echoed in the fact that Russian political discourse points to the existence of EU institutions which are not mentioned in the selected samples of European discourse on human rights and democracy promotion, namely, the EU Ombudsman and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. These institutions emerged in Russian discursive landscape due to their involvement in monitoring HRD inside the EU, the task that they allegedly do not quite successfully deal with. Thus, it is pointed out that neither the EU Ombudsman, which processes complaints against the supranational institutions, nor the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights which serves as a consultant for the EU institutions do not possess sufficient capacity to contribute to the solution of the systemic challenges that plague the EU (Dolgov, 2012c). Besides, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, which keeps a record of violations and monitors the progress within the EU territory, is perceived as biased as in its reports it reflects the human rights situation in the member states in a superficial and sometimes distorted manner (Dolgov, 2014a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013). Besides, the competencies of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the EU

Ombudsman are seen as limited by the fact that that the protection and promotion of human rights remain a prerogative of the member states (Dolgov, 2012a).

Hence, although Russia recognizes that some of the EU institutions have a certain role to play in promotion of HRD, inter alia, in the interaction with Russia, their autonomy seems to be undermined by the lack of authority granted by the member states and the inability to live by their own standards within the EU, that make the EU's aspirations to act as an advocate for HRD worldwide illegitimate. In this respect EU institutions are perceived as lacking political will and having failed to develop institutional and legislative means to respond to the systematic human rights violations in the member states (Dolgov, 2012c). Thus, Russian Foreign Ministry Commissioner for Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law states that efforts of EU institutions rarely go beyond "taking into account 'European values and constitutional 'heritage' when elaborating EU legislation", as they "virtually ignore the real situation in the EU" and "show indulgence" towards violations of human rights by member states under the pretext of the lack of necessary powers (Dolgov, 2012c)[166]. These critical images definitely disrupt the EU's images of autonomy on which its capability to act is based.

The descriptions of policies, which constitute the second prerequisite for the EU's autonomous action are laconic in European and even more so in Russian political discourses.

European discourse emphasizes that human rights and democracy underpin all aspects of internal and external policies of the European Union and are incorporated in the key community policies such as CSDP, financial cooperation, trade, development policy, immigration and the ENP (Ashton, 2011c). Predications grouped around the nomination "the EU" indicate that it has a broad agenda in the field of HRD promotion. The European Union adopted a wide range of guidelines to support EU policies in key human rights areas, developed about 150 human rights country strategies[167] and maintains human rights consultations and dialogues with many countries (Council of the European Union,

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[166] Dolgov (2012c) cites as an example the EU Commission's reluctance to interfere in consistent human rights violations of the Russian speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia and the fact that EU institutions do not keep track of crimes committed on the grounds of anti-Semitism or other manifestations of xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and hate crime.

[167] EU delegations and CSDP missions have human rights and democracy focal points which are engaged in mainstreaming the principles laid out in country strategies.

2014). EU leaders routinely express their support to the vital work of civil society and to human rights and democracy defenders (Ashton, 2012). Besides, the European Union takes an active stance in defence of women's and children's rights, rights of persons with disabilities, it supports electoral processes in third countries by deploying Election Observation Missions and Electoral Expert Missions as well as by providing technical and financial assistance to elections bodies and domestic observers (Council of the European Union, 2014). Thus, the EU places human rights promotion and democratization at the centre of its external policies by making them constitutive elements that permeate all external policies in bilateral relations as well as in the multilateral fora.

These issues also rank high in European political discourse targeted at Russia. At the bilateral level the EU pursues its objectives through human rights consultations, public statements and bilateral diplomatic contacts[168]. In multilateral settings the EU and Russia continue to "seek common ground on human rights issues of concern" notably in the framework of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council (Council of the European Union, 2014: 205).

Table 12 points to the fact that Russian counter-discourse concerning policies of the European Union in the field of HRD offers a rather bleak reflection of the European self-images.

Table 12. Russian non-recognition of the images of EU policies in the field of HRD

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
Autonomy (policies)			
The European Union	Incorporates HRD in all EU external policies	absent or extremely rare and negatively-coloured discourse;	non-recognition

Source: Author's elaboration

This table demonstrates that profuse European rhetorical references to an impressive number of EU policies launched to encourage better human rights record and democratic transition worldwide are not mirrored in the samples of Russian discourses collected and

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[168] The list of the EU's criticisms is long. The EU points out suppression of the civil society and independent media, the so called 'foreign agents' law on the NGOs, numerous violations of freedom of expression, human rights violations to list just a few examples.

analysed in this thesis. This striking absence can be explained by Russia's offensive on the EU self-pronounced role of the advocate of human rights and democracy. In line with its attempts to fend off the European normative influence and criticism, Russian discourse focuses on deficiencies and imperfections of the EU's internal policies.

Thus, Russian decision-makers' infrequent remarks about the EU's actions pertinent to the promotion of human rights and democracy are normally tinged with a certain degree of negative colouring. For example the Head of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation talking about "the so-called European support of democracy in Russia", says that these actions hinder Russian attempts to establish a stable governance of the country as the EU supports political outcasts who oppose legitimate authorities and are sometimes involved in relations with bandits (Kosachev, 2005). These perceptions are tightly linked to the perceptions of the insufficient autonomy granted to EU institutions and consequently inability to pursue independent policies. On the other hand this non-recognition is explained by Russia's beliefs that the EU that is not able to stick to these high-flown values 'at its own home' is not authorized to promote them beyond itsborders. And if it engages into externalization of HRD it does it in an instrumental manner by using them as a shield for its interests[169].

4. Russian misrecognition of the EU's unity

The political discourse as espoused by EU officials rests on recognition that the European Union has achieved an unprecedented degree of unity which, given the complexity of EU institutions, levels of governance and actors is quite expectedly subject to various inconsistencies and incoherencies.

The predicative strategies attached to the nomination "the EU" portray it as "a Union of law" (Barroso, 2012b), "an ever fuller democratic system of governance" and "the much closer union" (Barroso, 2014d) which emphasize the degree of unity. Other predicative descriptions directly indicate the achievements of EU integration. Thus, Barroso (2008b: 3) defines the EU as an experiment, which is exceptionally advanced in terms of political integration and democracy achieved by citizens of the member states who "have decided

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[169] For a detailed discussion see section 6. on ideational facets of the EU's role as a promoter of HRD.

together, of their own free will, to build a common future together". EU discourse perceives the concept of democracy as forming the pivot of European integration. For instance, the gravitational pull of democracy was palpable in each subsequent phase of the European integration as pro-democratic movements in Germany and France in the 1950s, Greece, Spain and Portugal in the 1970s and the Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s opted for closer integration with the EU.

 However, in a self-critical vein it is acknowledged that the EU is not exempt from inconsistencies and incongruities that are seen as a logical consequence of institutional complexity of the EU and the fact that human rights and democratization make up a broad theme that permeates all external policies of the EU.

EU narrative predominantly focuses on internal incoherencies. The most visible inconsistency that plagues the EU is, according to European discourse, visible in discrepancies between the EU and its member states. Barroso (2014d) defines "cognitive dissonance" between the political processes at the national and European levels as one of the problems for Europe's democracy. Similarly, the High Representative echoes this discursive line by indicating among her priorities the need to enhance vertical coordination and "bring the national legislation into line with EU standards of full compliance with all relevant treaties and conventions on human rights in the wider United Nations framework" (Ashton, 2011c: 4).

While the vertical inconsistency is overtly stated, other types of incongruities, namely the institutional and intrapillar as well as external inconsistencies are referred to in a less categorical and more implied manner. European rhetoric refers to them not by concentrating on deficiencies as such, but rather in the context of measures undertaken to rectify them. In this manner, the analysis resorts to the nominations "the EEAS", "the Charter of the Fundamental Rights", "the Strategic Framework and Action Plan", "EU delegations" and "EU Special Representative for Human Rights" as means to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of the EU.

European political discourse highlights a number of steps taken to achieve a "joined-up approach" Ashton (2011c: 4) to mitigate various kinds of incongruities. For instance, the role of the EEAS and its newly created department on human rights and democracy are described as vital contributions to the institutional consistency as they collaborate with the European Parliament, member states and civil society (Ashton, 2011c). Such

milestone developments as the adoption of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights within the framework of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 and the Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy[170] in 2012 followed by appointment of EU Special Representative for Human Rights were seen as essential steps to promote consistency between EU internal and external policies by constituting the basis for 'a truly collective effort' involving both EU member states and common institutions. Besides, the intensification of cooperation between the Council Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons within the EU and the Working Party on Human Rights in external action (COHOM) enhanced coherence and consistency between EU internal and external human rights policies.

The European Union has also made attempts to enhance external coherence. In order to achieve this aim EU delegations jointly with embassies of member states prepared the EU's human rights countries strategies to ensure a more targeted and consistent approach to human rights in third countries (Council of the European Union, 2014). These 146 human rights strategies prepared collectively by EU delegations, EU institutions and member states are expected not only to improve the external consistency but also to contribute to the internal consistency of the EU's approach to promotion of HRD by requiring concerted efforts of EU institutions and member states. In this manner, European discourse concerning its unity, although not exempt from acknowledgements of its own imperfections, is predominantly optimistic and is characterized by a palpable degree of optimism.

As the summary of empirical results of the comparative analysis of EU-Russian perceptions presented in table 13 demonstrates, Russian political discourse tends to recur to negative recognition and misrecognition thereby emphasizing disunity and internal discordances as principal characteristics of the European Union.

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[170] The EU Action Plan brings together 97 actions under 36 headings, prepared by the EEAS in collaboration with the European Commission and EU Member States, which are jointly responsible for putting the objectives into practice.

Table 13. Perceptions of EU unity through the prism of Russian (mis-) recognition

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
Unity			
The EU	the much closer union, a Union of law, an ever fuller democratic system of governance	"united Europe" not monolithic;	misrecognition
	suffers from vertical inconsistencies	suffers from vertical inconsistencies	negative recognition
the EEAS, the Charter of the Fundamental Rights, the Strategic Framework and Action Plan, EU delegations, EUSR	contribute to greater internal and external consistencies	(Charter) does not expand competencies of EU institutions, deepens demarcation between the EU and its members, (EUSR) does not contribute to greater coherence	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

Generally speaking, Russian political discourse on EU unity as related to the European performance in the field of human rights and democracy is congruent with the broader discourse on the EU as an actor. As such Russian political narrative tends to prioritize descriptions of the European Union as a group of nation states thereby belittling the integration component.

It is indicative, as table 13 points out, that EU self-representations as 'a Union of law', 'the much closer union', 'an ever fuller democratic system of governance' generate the discursive resistance and can be classified as discursive structures that are misrecognized by Russia. The sceptical attitude of Russian political elite regarding the degree of European integration can be concisely but precisely summarized by the brief description of the EU as "united Europe" used in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs report and taken into the inverted commas (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013). Besides, it is suggestive that Russian perceptions of the old-new member states divisions re-emerge in the value-diffusion context. For instance, the former Russian President states that new members of the EU are not better than Russia when it comes to the application of the concepts of human rights and freedoms (Medvedev, 2009a). He immediately adds that "it would, therefore, be utterly wrong to state that there is some

monolithic Europe with fully accomplished democracy versus a primeval, ignorant Russia" (Medvedev, 2009a). The implications of this discourse are double. First, Russia returns unfavourable images of EU unity by defining the new member states as the EU's Others that undermine the vision of EU as a unitary actor. Second, it contests its own place as the European inferior Other and intends to re-establish itself as a player to be treated by the EU on equal terms.

One of the very few points of coincidence between European and Russian official discourses of doubtful value for the EU's identity is the image of vertical inconsistency that manifests itself in the discrepancies between EU institutions and the member states. However, while European discourse is characterized by a neutral, matter-of-fact tone that concentrates on the ways of rectifying these discordances, Russian discourse is emphatic, intensified and focused on deficiencies as such. Russian rhetoric cites various examples to illustrate this inconsistency by pointing out flagrant human rights abuses which several members states commit in clear violence of the EU's official stance, such as the participation in the notorious CIA program which involves arrest and detainment of suspected persons in the 'secret prisons', violations of rights of Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States, anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant policies and hate crimes to name just a few issues. In these cases EU institutions justify the unbalances between national and European political stances by the lack of competence when it comes to internal matters of member states and continue turning a blind eye to the violations (Dolgov, 2012c). Thus, there is a clear asymmetry in the EU-member states relations as the protection of human rights is the prerogative of member states and the EU is devoid of means to monitor and contribute to solution of the problems in the human rights ambit that the member states face.

Russian decision-makers also sporadically mention several developments that, according to the EU discourse, are expected to mitigate various types of internal and external discrepancies that haunt the EU. However, Russian discourse runs contrary to European self-identification images. According to Russian political opinion even the institutialization of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as an integral part of the Treaty of Lisbon has not contributed to greater unity between the EU institutions and its members. From the legal point of view the Charter does not expand the competencies of EU institutions. On the contrary, it deepens demarcation between the EU and its members as it regulates only activities of EU institutions and actions of the

member states only when they implement EU legislation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013). As for EU Special representative for Human Rights it is pointed out that he does not possess a mandate of monitoring the HR situation within the member states and as such lacks capacity to contribute to the solution of the systemic challenges that plague the EU (Dolgov, 2012c).

In this way, there is a glaring perceptional gap in ideational narratives of both actors on EU unity. The predominantly positive European self-images are shattered by Russian discursive resistance as the patterns of Russian discursive reaction manifest the intensification of the self-critical EU representations and generation of antithetical descriptions.

5. Analysis of Russian discursive reactions to the EU's self-images of its capabilities

The European Union as an actor that places the promotion of human rights and democracy at the centre of its external policies has at its disposition a wide gamut of economic instruments such as funding and financial assistance, development aid, human rights clauses in the Free Trade and Association Agreements. European discursive narrative accentuates the role of financial instruments; in particular the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) created to promote EU-sponsored human rights and democracy policies. For the period of 2007-2013 the EIDHR received €1.1 billion to support civil society, promote fundamental rights and provide better protection for human rights defenders in the countries where they are most under threat (Barroso, 2008a). The EU also disposes of other financial instruments that complement the EIDHR in its efforts to promote core values of the EU, including the Development Cooperation Instrument and the ENPI. In fact, all EU financial instruments are expected to include elements addressing promotion and respect for human rights and democracy; the commitment, reiterated by the statement that these principles should be "taken into account consistently in the programming of all EU external financial assistance" that go beyond EIDHR (Ashton, 2011c: 5).

EU Free Trade Agreements with third parties constitute another important instrument as they contain either human rights or 'passerelle' clauses to tie them to the human rights

provisions contained in the political framework agreements if there is an Association or Framework Agreement in force (Council of the EU HR report). The inclusion of these clauses does not only signal the shared commitment of the parties to human rights but also provides the legal basis for adopting appropriate measures in case of poor human rights records (Council of the European Union, 2014). The EU also has at its disposal instruments to exert pressure (sanctions, rechanneling aid, curtailing its engagement, suspending financial assistance) in the event of grave human rights and democracy standards violations (European Commission and High Representative, 2012b).

The European Union also increasingly describes itself as an actor able to apply effectively its diplomatic instruments to assist HRD promotion. These core principles are included in EU dialogues and consultations with third countries to ensure a constructive partnership and to promote the diffusion of human rights and democracy. The EU also possesses declaratory diplomatic tools such as political statements, public declarations, demarches and resolutions issued by the Commission, the High Representative and the European Parliament. Furthermore, the EU supports electoral processes worldwide by dispatching election observation missions and electoral expert missions. The EU also appointed the first EU Special Representative for Human Rights, who is expected to ensure more effectiveness, coherence and visibility of EU human rights dimension. Besides, the EU supports work of multilateral human rights fora that promote universal adherence to human rights, in particular, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Human Rights Council and UN specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organization,

The analysis of the samples of Russian political public discourses reaches somewhat unexpected conclusions. The study reveals that when referring to the EU human rights toolkit Russian leaders circumvent the issue of EU economic instruments, which is surprising, given the nature of the EU and Russian tendency to challenge this aspect of the EU actorness. Only the Report on Human Rights in the EU produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation alludes to a somewhat biased nature of the European financial assistance. It states that the EU allocates funding to the NGOs, whose activity is in line with the European Commission's priorities and contribute to promotion of the better image of the EU (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013). However the analysed samples of Russian official discourse do not contain other

references to EU funding and such instruments as the EIDHR, the ENPI or other financial and aid programmes.

On the other hand, and in a bit unexpected manner, Russian decision-makers and official documents occasionally recognize EU diplomatic instruments used both in internal and external dimensions. Thus, high-ranking political leaders make references to political dialogues, namely consultations on human rights that form part of EU-Russian cooperation and which are aimed at "exchanging views between equal partners on issues of mutual interest and harmonizing approaches on achieving most crucial goals of international cooperation in the field of human rights" (Chizhov, 2012a). Russian political elite also frequently makes references to EU declaratory diplomatic tools, such as political statements and declarations as well as resolutions of the European Parliament. Moreover, Russia has established contacts with EU Special Representative for Human Rights with the hope to continue cooperation on a regular basis. It is also recognized that the EU resorts to the multilateral fora to promote its interests in particular in the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the UN Council on Human Rights.

However, consonantly with Russia's tendency to shift the focus towards internal problems that afflict the EU, Russian rhetoric depicts the EU as having failed to develop "a comprehensive set of tools that the EU institutions could use to respond to the systematic human rights violations in the member states" and prosecute those responsible (Dolgov, 2012c).

Table 14. Patterns of Russian discursive reactions to the images of the EU's capabilities

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	Russian perceptions	
Capabilities			
Instruments at the EU disposal	economic	scarce or negative discourse	misrecognition
	diplomatic	diplomatic	recognition
	wide range	lack of real tools	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

As table 14 that summarizes the empirical findings implies, the Russian discourse represents a rather uncomfortable 'mirror'. It either ignores the EU's depictions of the instruments that buttress its normative action, or, while recognizing that these instruments

exist, strips them of their influence and importance. For instance, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which became legally binding after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty is not perceived as effective due to the "lack of real tools for its implementation in the EU" (Dolgov, 2014a).

6. Patterns of Russian (mis-) recognition of ideational representations of the EU as a promoter of human rights and democracy

Given the specificity of the EU role under scrutiny, ideational representations occupy a vast bulk of political discursive space of both actors. Therefore, it is an arduous task to delineate succinctly only the main discursive lines of this criterion of the EU's actorness. For the sake of brevity, the analysis is based on two referential strategies "the EU", which forwards the European Union as a subject of analysis to see what kind of an actor it is perceived as, and the "values/ human rights and democracy" to highlight to what extent these values have been incorporated in the EU's identity.

Table 15 that graphically summarizes the results of the empirical scrutiny makes evident that Russia acts as an utterly uncomfortable 'mirror' as basically all EU self-images are subject to Russian contestation predominantly through misrecognition of the EU self-conceptualizations.

Promotion of human rights and democracy form an inalienable part of the EU identity as a qualitatively different actor. The predications attached to the nomination "the values" suggest that they constitute the fundamental basis for the EU, being "the building blocks of European integration" and "the EU's raison d'être" (Barroso, 2008b), "the European spirit" and "fundamental objectives" (Barroso, 2006), "a silver thread" (Ashton 2012). These depictions characterize the HRD as key political objectives and core principles placed at the centre of European activities. They are non-negotiable and rank first in the EU's internal and external action. As the President of the European Commission puts it: "we place our democratic values above everything else" (Barroso, 2006: 5).

This discourse generates a number of frequently used metaphorical descriptions of the EU as "a Union of values" (Barroso, 2012b), "a light and a magnet" (Barroso, 2005), "an extraordinary laboratory for the future" and "an example that can help the consolidation of democracy" (Barroso 2008a), "a very important inspiring force for democracy in many

parts of the world" (Barroso 2008b). Europe is seen as a cradle of the human rights and democracy (Barroso, 2006) as it was in Athens that democracy was born 25 centuries ago (Barroso, 2008a). These ideational representations equate the EU with its values, as Barroso (2008b: 4) describes it "Europe stands for democracy and freedom".

Table 15. Russian discursive resistance to the EU's ideational self-representations

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self perceptions	Russian perceptions	
Ideational representations			
Values/HRD	constitute the European spirit, core principles, universal	empty declarations, commitments on paper	misrecognition
The EU	a Union of values, the only supranational democracy, a cradle of the human rights and democracy, attractive, example that can help the consolidation of democracy, inspiring force for democracy	a new association of the European nations …based on common aspirations and values (rare discourse) "advanced democracy", "beacon", "the arbiter"	Parallel recognition and misrecognition
	transformative power, a major catalyst for peace and democracy;	engaged into democratic messianism and a civilizing mission	misrecognition
	driven by responsibility and 'enlightened' self-interest	driven by its interests, using double standards	misrecognition
	not imposing, soft power	imposing, superior	misrecognition
	promotes universal values and tailor-made approaches	promotes auxiliary visions of human rights and one-sided interpretation in violation of cultural sensitivity;	misrecognition
	suffers from some internal problems	suffers from numerous internal problems	negative recognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The predicative descriptions combine not only reflexive but also active dimensions that prescribe the EU to assume responsibility to promote HRD beyond its borders. The concept of responsibility in the EU's understanding is closely linked with the discourse on the EU's transformational power. The EU that underwent an impressive

transformation itself, moving from the horrors of war to what Prodi (2003) calls "the only supranational democracy" based on the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms by its very existence serves as a powerful and inspiring example. Thus, the EU is predicated as "a powerful driving force for democratisation" (Barroso, 2008a: 3), "as a major catalyst for peace and democracy, with fundamental values such as human rights" (Barroso, 2008b: 3) under which transformative influence the peoples of Spain, Greece and Portugal, later of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia shed off the dictatorship (Barroso, 2005).

The EU's justification for its active engagement in human rights and democracy promotion can be succinctly summarized by the Barroso's (2008a: 4) phrase that "it is a question of values. It is also a question of interests". By promoting respect for HRD the EU spurs development and stability in third countries, which in turn, feedbacks positively on the EU by bringing the democratic peace dividends. However, the EU's interest is not purely self-seeking. Rather, the EU's soft power is applied to promote its own 'version' of fairer globalization based on more solidarity (Barroso, 2008a: 4). Thus, the EU's motivations are underpinned by "enlightened interest" and "global solidarity" (European Commission, 2007).

Another narrative line that is vividly distinguishable in European discursive ambit is the emphasis on the voluntary nature of the HRD promotion. In this vein the EU is portrayed as a soft power. As Barroso (2008a: 3) states it "our soft power is hard reality". The EU spurs democratic transition and better human rights records by providing incentives such as EU membership, aid, financial cooperation and prospects of social and economic development. To avoid the accusations of arrogance and imperialism the EU justifies its actions as based on the universality[171] of values and the tailor-made approaches. As Barroso (2008a: 4) puts it the EU "does not want to set itself up as a model or give anyone lessons in democracy…Showing the way does not mean imposing a way… people take ownership of democracy and shape it following universal democratic principles, but taking into account their own vision". In this way, the EU discursively commits itself to deliver more than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach for 150 countries, thereby avoiding handing out automatic templates.

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[171] European political discourse is replete with references to EU's allegiance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other international human rights and democracy treaties and conventions.

However, despite the endeavour to ensure that "our own house is in order" (Ashton, 2011c: 5), there is also recognition that EU self-assigned role as a promoter of HRD suffers from emerging nationalism, populism, xenophobia and ultra-protectionism. It is pointed out that inside the EU there are still communities subject to exclusion, isolation, neglect and violence, in particular, the Roma, Jewish and Muslim communities and national minorities (Diamantopolou, 2003).

Switching to the predications prevalent in the Russian political discourse listed in table 15, it becomes clear that EU self-images are predominantly misrecognized by Russia, as the normative dimension of the EU's role as a promoter of human rights and democracy arguably generates more irritation and criticism of Russian leaders than other aspects of the European Union's actorness.

The discourse on the EU as united by common values is very exceptional and sporadic in the rhetoric of Russian political leaders. One of the very few instances of this discourse is found in Putin's (2007) article devoted to the 50th anniversary of the European integration that described the EU as "a new association of the European nations …based on common aspirations and values" that managed to overcome hostilities and enjoy the 'peace dividend' of European integration. However, this recognition is counterbalanced by the parallel misrecognition the EU's self-images as 'a Union of values', 'the only supranational democracy' that can be replicated in the external world. In fact, Russian politicians not infrequently ironically frame these attributes to show their sceptical attitude to the EU's self-assumed role. The usage of the inverted commas for the EU's self-descriptions is indicative as Russian political discourse abounds in such ironically framed predications such as the "democratic" Union and "advanced democracy" (Dolgov, 2012a), "freedom of speech" and "democracy" (Nebendzya, 2012). In this manner, the EU's commitment to values is perceived as only 'declared'. As Russian Foreign Ministry's report on human rights in the EU states that, although the EU commits itself to the values inscribed in the Lisbon Treaty, these words remain only "commitments on paper" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013). And in the context of recurrent violations of human rights and democracy within the EU member states, the EU's pretensions for the role of the "beacon" and "the arbiter" for human rights and democracy are seen as "empty declarations" (Dolgov, 2014a). Hence, given the internal and external flaws of the EU, Russia perceives it as incapable of being qualified as a model, a source of inspiration and a qualitatively 'new' type of actor.

The concepts of transformative and soft power do not appear in Russian discourse, rather, they are replaced by the notions of 'democratic messianism" and 'a civilizing mission' to refer to the EU's efforts to promote democracy and human rights the beyond its borders. Russian rhetoric is based on the assumption that democracy and human rights cannot be exported from the outside. Kosachev (2007) argues that "democratic messianism simply does not work" as it is not only "undemocratic to force people into a 'bright future' but it may also bring about serious internal conflicts". In fact, Russian political discourse draws direct parallels between the EU's current democratization efforts and the colonial practices that were justified by "the civilising mission" of Europe in the last century (Putin, 2006a). Russian President argues that the objectives were identical; "if you change the words 'civilising role' and 'civilisation' for 'democratisation' and 'democracy' you will get the same picture (Putin, 2006a). Thus, the concept of transformative power underpinned by soft influence in the European interpretation is rejected by Russian political discourse on the basis that the EU exhibits tendencies towards applying imposition, pressure and the instrumental usage of the HRD to promote its interest- driven policies.

In this way, the EU is perceived as using human rights and democracy instrumentally to achieve its interest-based policy objectives, and this interest, in Russian understanding, is far from being an 'enlightened' one as the EU tries to present it. Russian politicians are explicit about this linkage by stating that "human rights concerns are used as a pretext and reason for intervention, even a military one, in internal affairs of sovereign states and, at the same time, as a method of promoting one's own political and economic interests" (Nebendzya, 2012). Another vivid example is provided by Kosachev (2007) who states that the

> "export model of democracy" contains a genetic defect: as a rule, it contains elements of desovereignisation of the target country … Apart from introducing their standards in the field of rights and … outside forces seek to increase their influence, carry out geopolitical reorientation, neutralise competitors, take control over resources and major economic assets, and create footholds for the deployment of military facilities".

The EU is precisely seen as an example of the 'democracy exporter' whose 'declared' values run contrary to its real interests and final policy outcomes. In this context, the phrase 'double standards' has become a catchword in the Russian rhetoric. As Alksnis (2005) argues the EU "is ready to fight till the last breath for the life of three Chinese

dissidents but will not do anything to protect rights of half a million Russians who are deprived of rights in Latvia".

One of the main charges levelled against the European Union is that it adopts a didactic patronizing tone when talking to the 'inferior' Russia. The EU is seen as linking its policy to Russia on the basis of the "subjective assessment" of the Russian domestic political situation by adopting "the mentoring tone" and expecting Russia to do its "homework" (Kosachev, 2005). Actually, according to Russian beliefs, there is the glaring absence of the dialogue based on equality; rather, as in the situation with the candidate countries, the EU expects unilateral adoption of norms by Russia without having the prospects of the EU membership as a reward. Russian Ambassador to the EU calls it "the syndrome of transistor" which in analogy with physical phenomena allows "the electric current to proceed in one direction only" (Chizhov, 2011a). Elsewhere he directly accuses the EU of applying "the selective approach" and "imposing" the implementation of human rights on third countries in a "didactic and categorical manner" (Chizhov, 2012b), the discourse which runs contrary to the EU's assurances that it is not arrogant in its endeavours. Russian political elites routinely reiterate their belief that the EU frames evaluations of itself and the target countries terms of superiority and inferiority. This approach generated the notion of separation of human rights space into "oases of well-being" in the West and "misery zones" outside (Nebendzya, 2012), an interpretation that justifies EU policies for promotion of human rights and democracy.

The EU's alleged adherence to universality of human rights is also cast in doubt. The EU's commitment to universal rights is seen as "declared" as, according to Russian politicians, the EU tries to promote "auxiliary visions of human rights" (Lavrov, 2012) and "arbitrarily interpret human rights" (Chizhov, 2012d). Thus, Russia oftentimes rebukes the EU for its failure to join the European Convention on Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It is said that that certain EU countries, despite their rhetorical commitment to the international human rights norms and standards, decide not to assume "responsibilities even under basic multilateral treaties on human rights. And if they do assume such responsibilities, these are often accompanied by "strange neutralizing reservations"[172] (Dolgov, 2012c).

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[172] In contrast, Russia states that it has not introduced any reservations when ratifying international human rights treaties. The EU also calls on Russia to ratify conventions that have not been ratified by some of its

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Russian political discourse also rejects the EU's commitment to the development of tailor-made approaches which take into account cultural sensitivity. For instance, in 2012 the Russian Federation submitted the resolution "Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind" that advocated greater respect for cultural diversity and which was adopted by absolute majority in the UN Human Rights Council. Russian Permanent Representative to the EU points out that the USA and the EU voted against the resolution, which testifies to the fact that they believe in their right "to monopolise the formulation of principles related to human rights… to promote, under the veil of a universal standard, its one-sided interpretation" (Chizhov, 2012d). Thus, the EU is seen as not bothering with the fact that although human rights are universal, there is also diversity of traditions and cultures to be taken into account. In the case of Russia, the EU also violates cultural sensitivity as it does not take into account differences in European and Russian mentalities. While Europe traditionally put the emphasis on the rights of the individual, Russian political elites advocate a more holistic approach arguing against creating the society "where certain individuals enjoy absolute freedom while others should be grateful for small mercies" (Chizhov, 2012b).

And the final and the most important accusation which constitutes the principal argument against the EU's adoption of the role is the fact that the EU is not able to live to its own standards within its borders. While European discourse admits that the EU suffers from a range of problems such as xenophobia, ultra-nationalism, and protectionism, Russian rhetoric applies the strategy of negative recognition by magnifies the scope, number and gravity of human rights violations within EU borders. In addition to the frequent accusations of the crimes committed on the grounds of anti-Semitism and violation of minority rights of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia, Russia adds to the list participation of several member states in the notorious CIA programs that ran 'secret prisons', Neo-Nazism, human trafficking, violations of multilingualism, promotion of homosexuality and same-sex marriages, violations of freedom of movement

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member states yet (Nebendzya, 2012). Thus, he cites as examples that a number of EU States have made reservations to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Besides, a whole set of protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights, to the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and other important instruments have not been ratified by some EU members (Nebendzya, 2012).

and expression. All these cases of human rights abuses run contrary to the EU's self-depictions and undermine the EU's aspirations towards enacting its self-appointed role as a champion for human rights and democracy.

This section testifies to the fact that the EU's ideational representations are vehemently resisted by Russia as the discursive patterns not only exhibit a clear tendency to misrecognize the EU's self-interpretations and magnify the EU's deficiencies, but provide an evidence of the Russian attempt to launch a counterattack[173] on the EU as being an inappropriate candidate for the role of the promoter of human rights and democracy.

7. Conclusion

The promotion of human rights and democracy constitutes one of the topics that function as a constant irritant in EU-Russian relations. The unimpressive achievements of the EU in the enactment of its role as a promoter of these values is illustrated by the fact that Russia accepted only symbolic inclusion of the references to the democratic principles and human rights into the key documents and expressed routinely the rhetorical adherence to the 'common values' in less biding settings. Following the analytical steps and empirical questions the chapter intends to find the reasons for Russian resistance and conflictual predispositions that characterize the relations between both actors in the interplay of European self-perceptions and Russian 'mirror' images concerning the promotion of human rights and democracy.

The self-images of the EU as a promoter of human rights and democracy are predominantly positive and continuously reify and reproduce the self-appointed role. Although European rhetoric is not exempt from the self-critical remarks, they mainly occur within the discourse on the developments to rectify these deficiencies.

As for Russian counter-discourse, it becomes evident that it tends to resist the EU's self-descriptions of basically all aspects of the EU's identity as an actor, thereby creating the

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[173] In 2012 the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation held the parliamentary hearing "On Problems with Observing Human Rights in Member States of the European Union" for the first time with the intention to continue this practice on a regular basis. Moreover, in 2011 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued a "Report on Human Rights in Certain States" that includes the criticism of the European Union and in the 2012 separate "Report on the Human Rights Situation in the European Union" which was followed by another report in 2013.

conflict-prone situation both for the EU and for Russia. Russian recognition of the EU's self-perceptions is extremely sporadic, rare and context-bound and is counterbalanced by parallel negative and antithetical images. Besides, Russian discursive reactions frequently apply negative recognition that reinforces and reifies the EU's self- images of its deficiencies. The non-recognition is another recurrent pattern which testifies to Russia's unwillingness or failure to recognize certain facets of the EU's role as a promoter of HRD as existent. Misrecognition is the most frequent discursive paradigm that manifests outright and categorical rejection of EU self-conceptualizations by Russia.

According to Russian rhetoric the implementation of the EU's role is hampered by its deficiency as an actor that failed to develop institutional and legislative means as well as a comprehensive set of tools to support its autonomously conducted policy. The EU's shortcomings are also seen in its inability to overcome discordances and inconsistencies that impede its performance as a foreign policy actor in the normative field. Besides, the EU's ideational representations as a distinctive kind of an actor are being vehemently resisted. Thus, the empirical findings reveal that Russian perceptions are in clear contradiction with the EU's self-representations as a transformative power driven by the 'enlightened self interest' and cooperating with third partners on equality terms. In the eyes of Russian political elite these images are undermined by the perceptions of the EU's self-seeking motivations, proclivity to take advantage of the asymmetry of power and destructive effects of the EU's activities for the recipient countries.The 'silver thread' that underpins Russian discourse across all the four criteria of the EU's actorness is that the EU has no moral responsibility to undertake the role of the promoter of HRD as it itself is not able to live to its own standards. Thus, Russia launches a discursive 'counteroffensive' on the EU to hit back at human rights and democracy criticism it frequently receives from the EU.

This situation of the continuous resistance is uncomfortable for both actors as exposing and intensifying conflicting predilections. For the EU the misrecognition of its identity is 'an upsetting experience' that generates cognitive dissonance and leads the EU either to rethink its role descriptions or persist in the self-portrayals. The fact that the EU discourse has not changed during the decade embraced by the investigation suggests that the EU preferred to stick to its self-depictions despite the emphatic Russian resistance.

For Russia this discursive battle is not exempt from antagonism either. First, Russia does not only reject the EU's self-understandings as an actor involved in the promotion of HRD but first and foremost, Russia resists its own images assigned to it by the EU in the framework of the implementation of this role. It can be said that the Russian attack is not directed against the EU values as such because Russian decision makers not infrequently identify themselves with the European principles and claim the belonging to the "shared civilization" based on the "shared values" that, according to the former Russian president "came from Europe" (Medvedev 2010). The counter-offensive is rather on the application, usage and EU's methods of HRD promotion in relation to Russia[174]. Thus, this chapter highlights is that it is not the incompatible identities as such that cause discursive resistance, but mutual *perceptions* of the ideational incompatibility that generate the conflicting dynamics in EU-Russia relations.

Besides, the conflicting potential of the perceptions of incompatibility is multiplied given the misrecognition in framed in terms of hierarchy. Russia contests the place assigned to it by the European Union in the normative dimension. On numerous occasions Russia expresses its protest against being treated as an inferior Other and 'a junior partner' who has no say in the issue. In this context the EU's promotion of HRDsis seen not only as endeavours to encroach on Russian domestic matters and thus sovereignty but also as an attack on its identity and a status as a significant player. Therefore, Russia intends to re-establish its role as an equal partner, which is more congruent with its identity as a world power by accentuating that the EU itself is 'no better' than Russia and, thereby, refusing to endow the EU with a recognition as 'the one' capable and legitimized to downplay Russia as an inferior Other. In this manner, both actors are seen as being captured in the vicious cycle of mutual non/misrecognition that is fraught with inherent antagonism and that represent one of the contexts where discursive battles unfolded that contributed to the escalation of conflict against the Ukrainian background.

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[174] The irritating factor in the relations is the "democratic hysteria" that increasingly accompanies public declarations of the EU, as set against Russia's "sober realism and its own bitter experience of imposing the 'only true teaching' on others" (Kosachev, 2007) as well as "arrogance, a didactic tone, double standards" and the proclivity to use democratic values as bargaining chips for achieving selfish geostrategic interests" (Lavrov, 2005).

CHAPTER VII

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AS AN ACTOR IN THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS IN EU AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSES

1. Introduction

The Ukrainian crisis is of a transcendental importance as having immediate repercussions on EU-Russian relations but also as one of the factors contributing to the reconfiguration of international relations. Within the framework of this thesis, the Ukrainian case is taken as an apogee of the conflicting proclivities that were manifest during the previous decade fraught with disillusions, stagnation, restrained mutual irritation and collisions. In this manner, the chapter draws upon the previous case studies, which provide the narratives that serve as precursors of the upcoming escalation of conflict and which found their continuation in a more intensified form during the Ukrainian crisis.

The crucial, nearly ontological significance of the development of the Ukrainian events for the EU and Russia in terms of identities and aspiration for status recognition, generated intensified and utterly expressive discourses emanating from both actors, which are not only highly indicative of the self-perceptions as actors possessing certain identities but of the differing visions of each other, values, regional and even the world order. Although the basis of the 'common European home' began deteriorating long before the events in Ukraine, the so called Euromaidan and sbsequent events became the milestone, when the years of EU-Russian misunderstandings and misperceptions found their climax revealed in the impossibility to maintain the *status quo*. Hence, the ongoing profound crisis in EU-Russia relations exacerbated the necessity to take into account Russia's beliefs and visions on Ukraine and the post-Soviet space which the EU members had previously failed to take into serious consideration.

Against this background, the analysis of the images found in the discourses is important in various ways. Despite the declarations of EU high-ranking representatives that the

ongoing rift will hamper the return to the business-as-usual relationship, Russia will remain 'an inescapable Other'. Therefore, the EU is bound to grope for a new, more pragmatic paradigm its relations with Russia in the context of what scholars call, "the new European order" (Natorski, 2015b). In this way, Russian perceptions of the European Union as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis function as a second 'mirror' for the EU, which posits itself as an active actor participating in the mediation and assisting Ukrainian political and economic reforms. On the other hand, the analysis carried out from the Russian perspective can also give valuable hints on suggesting a possible exit from the seemingly deadlock situation in EU-Russian relations and avoiding mistakes when dealing with Russia regarding Ukraine and the wider post-Soviet Space in the future.

The first part of this chapter provides a brief sketch of emerging scholarly literature to highlight how the issue has been approached by the academic community and how this chapter contributes to existing literature. The remaining parts are devoted to an extensive empirical analysis of EU self-descriptions of its identity as an actor in the Ukrainian conflict, set against the Russian counter discourse on the same issue.

2. State-of-the-art

The internalization of the conflict involving not only the domestic front, but Russia and the EU as external actors could not but ignite curiosity of academic community that ventured into exploration of various facets, factors and multiple actors. Looking for the sources of escalation of the conflict from the Russian perspective scholarship tends to underline that Russian motives succumb easily to the Realpolitik explanations (Karaganov, 2015a; Mearsheimer, 2014; Morales, 2014). The revisionist and imperialist Russia (Zubok 2016) tries to backlash against being treated in a denigrating way in the post-Cold War period (Karaganov, 2015a and 2015b; Mearsheimer, 2014), to prevent Ukraine from joining the EU and probably NATO, to thwart the potential spill over of the 'colour revolutions' into Russia (Allison, 2014; Shevtsova, 2010 and 2015; Arbatov, 2014) and to protect itself from subversive actions undertaken by the EU and the USA against its sovereignty (Sakwa, 2015; Glazyev, 2014).

Another strand of research extends the explanation to the constructivist ambit by arguing that the crisis between Russia and the EU over Ukraine can be understood along

ideational lines as Russian foreign and security elites drew on the narrative on identity which was frequently based on the degrading images of the Other to muster support for Russian actions both within Russia and in the Eastern Ukraine and Crimea (Allison, 2014; Shevtsova, 2010 and 2015, Arbatov 2014) and to present a normative and institutional alternative to the European Union through the Eurasian Union (Casier, 2016). Some researchers refer to clash of perceptions, understandings and interpretations of motives and processes (Serra i Massansalvador, 2015; Claudín and de Pedro, 2015), mutual suspicions (Fernández Sola, 2015; Forsberg and Haukkala, 2016) contestation between the 'universalist' identities (Korosteleva, 2016), conflict between the democratic order based on liberal principles preached by the EU and the Realpolitik presented by Russia (Mearsheimer, 2014; Natorski, 2015b) as constituting the core of the antagonism.

The role of the West has also been embraced by the scholarly attention which exhibited a certain tendency to focus its mistakes that triggered the conflict (Wedgwood Benn, 2014; Mearsheimer, 2014; Krastev and Leonard, 2015; Morales, 2015) by indicating the failure to create a stable European security order that would integrate Russia not from the position of normative superiority of the West and the EU in particular, but on conditions acceptable to all parties (Sakwa, 2015; Trenin, 2014; Fernández Sola, 2015; Lukyanov, 2016). The string of fundamental Western mistakes include NATO enlargement, EU expansion and imposition of democracy (Mearsheimer, 2014), the decision to detach Ukraine from Russia (Wedgwood Benn, 2014), misjudgement and underestimation of the importance of the Orange Revolution to Russia (Krastev and Leonard, 2015) and the EU's endeavours to lock Russia to its unilateral normative *modus operandi* (Korosteleva, 2016; Haukkala, 2015; Morales, 2015).

Another relevant strand of literature critically evaluates the EU's identity as an actor against the Ukrainian background. The EU is seen as a weak actor that failed to develop a genuine strategically-informed CSDP and displayed a lack of coherence and instruments (Shevtsova, 2014 and 2015; Sakwa, 2015; Krastev and Leonard, 2015), and that in Sakwa's (2015: 574) critical remark, not only failed to act as a conflict regulator, but itself became "a source of conflict". Besides, in clear contradiction with its post-Westphalian *telos* that fosters its distinctive identity, the EU manifested itself as a geopolitical actor trying to establish a 'zone of comfort' at its border (Trenin, 2014), by pursuing political and asymmetric projects based on the neo-imperialist logic (Glazyev , 2014) prioritizing pragmatism over values (Shevtsova, 2015).

This chapter endeavours to provide empirical evidence to the literature on the EU's actorness in the Ukrainian conflict through the lens of external perceptions. Besides, it contributes to the explanation of the sources of conflict. Although the geopolitical rationale definitely exists in Russian actions, it cannot provide the full account of its actions as in the Ukrainian conflict Russia not infrequently acts contrary to any rational logic both in economic and political terms. Moreover, the identity-informed studies about the crisis in Ukraine, though meritorious in their efforts, still leave some margin for alternative and insightful additions. The fact that EU-Russian relations in the region were strained due to competing rationalities and clashing identities and visions of the regional order do not provide a complete picture of the mechanisms that triggered the escalation after the decade of 'restrained' contestation.

Clearly, the Ukrainian conflict serves as a confirmation that identity and status concerns are ontologically important both for Russia and the EU, and an analysis conducted in this vein, according to Forsberg (2014), should invariably include the interplay of the emotionally loaded mutual perceptions. However, in spite of the explicit emphasis that the Ukrainian conflict is first and foremost the clash of visions and perceptions that was ingeniously and sharp-wittedly called by Popescu (2014) the "war of wor(l)ds" [175], scholarly literature has not yet incorporated the interplay of the EU and Russian perceptions that emerged through the prism of (mis-) recognition during the period of antagonism[176]. Such a perspective could be an answer to the literature that indicated that the EU (and the West) at some point lost interest in knowing Moscow's perceptions of the world and its place in it.

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[175] The acuteness of the confrontation is felt among other things in the intense discursive structures and political manipulation of historic memories on both sides. Russian, Western and Ukrainian political leaders recur to World War II historical narratives as Putin and other Russian high-ranking diplomats portray the newly elected Ukrainian government and Maidan protesters as fascists and heirs of Bandera while Western and Ukrainian authorities draw parallels between Hitler and Putin (Siddi, 2014).

[176] Notable exception Korosteleva (2016) who indicates that having securitized the issue and having failed to recognize each others' rationalities in the region, the EU and Russia fell into the vicious cycle of the logic of war.

3. Russian (mis-) recognition of the EU's autonomy

The EU rhetoric underlines the importance of the Ukrainian developments by framing it as "a test for Europe" as it "challenges our policies as decision makers" (Barroso, 2014c: 1) This analysis follows this logic by seeing this case study as an opportunity to check the EU's perceptions as an actor engaged in the solution of the crisis and furthering well-being and prosperity in Ukraine through the help of its institutions and actors in the real-life context of enormous relevance.

By convention, this section starts with the analysis of the EU's self-perceptions, its institutions and actors and then proceeds with the examination of policies which constitute the second component of EU autonomous action. Afterwards, the chapter engages with the patterns of Russian discursive reactions to the EU's self-representations. Apart from the focus on predications grouped around the images of the EU's institutional design and policies, the analysis includes Russian perceptions of the EU's autonomy from external actors, namely, the USA. In this sense, the meaning of autonomy acquires a different character in comparison with the previous case studies and is dictated by the empirical data in such an insistent manner that the analysis of the EU's identity as an actor in the Ukrainian conflict would be blatantly incomplete without its inclusion.

In the first case, the empirical focus is placed on the predications attached to the nominations: "the EU institutions" which include "the European Commission", "the High Representative" and "the European Parliament" [177] as the most recurrent in both discourses and as endowing these institutions and actors with a certain extent of autonomous action. According to the European political discourse the aforementioned EU institutions acquired a visible role and left a 'footprint' in their attempt to pave the way for finding a solution and peaceful settlement for the conflict in Ukraine.

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[177] Although the European Council and the Council of the European Union are important figures in the Ukrainian crisis as these EU institutions enabled the member states to formulate a common position with regard to the developments, their role in terms of autonomy is excluded from the chapter for various reasons. First, the theoretical assumptions confirmed by empirical investigations posit that the samples of European international identity in its purest form emerge in the discourses of permanent EU officials (Wodak, 2004; Bretherton and Vogler, 2006). Therefore, the analysis was guided by the discursive patterns found, with few exceptions, in the discourses of the European Commission and the High Representative. Second, the very analytical category of autonomy implies the degree of authority granted to t EU institutions by its members and the visibility of independent existence that can be distinguished from that of its constituent states. In the case of the European Council and the Council the analysis would require a more elaborated approach.

It comes as no surprise that the European Commission along with its commissioners is portrayed as a front-rank player committed to "undertake the political and economic reforms that are necessary to consolidate a democratic, independent, united and prosperous Ukraine" (European Commission, 2015: 1) as well as to contribute to the stabilization of the country. In order to achieve this objective the Commission launched a number of policies such as developing and promoting a package of measures that includes managing the financial aid flows to Ukraine, the creation of the Support Group, the incorporation of Russia into the high level political consultations on the implementation of the AA/DCFTA, numerous visits paid to Ukraine by the President of the Commission and other Commissioners[178] and the preparation of a package of restrictive measures targeted at Russia.

Another outstanding element of the distinctive institutional design that contributes to the implementation of the EU's autonomous action is the High Representative who is frequently mentioned in European political discourse. The High Representative is described as a strong player able to draw both on national and European tools and enhance the European action by acting in concert with the European Commissioners for Trade, Development and Humanitarian Aid as well as for Neighbourhood Policy (Juncker, 2014). Besides, the High Representative contributes to the 'presence' of the European institutions by on the ground paying regular visits to Ukraine on par with the EU Commissioners and is endowed by the Foreign Affairs Council to further improve strategic communication in support of EU policies and establish a team to carry out these actions (Foreign Affairs Council, 2015).

The role of the European Parliament is also noted, although not frequently, in the analysed samples of European political discourse and is basically limited to the references to the visits of the European Parliament delegations to Ukraine[179].

As the summary of perceptions presented in table 16 indicates the EU self-images found their partial reverberation in the Russian official rhetoric.

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[178] Symbolically, the first bilateral visit of President Juncker to a third country was to Ukraine.

[179] For instance, in February, 2014 a multi-party delegation from the European Parliament led by the Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee flew to Kiev to meet with counterparts in the Verkhovna Rada.

Table 16. Paradigms of the discursive resistance to the images of the EU's autonomy (institutions)

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	Russian perceptions	
EU institutions	have an important role	possess significant leverage in Ukraine, act in the shadow of its member states, inflexible and slow	partial recognition
EU Commission	supports the Ukrainian economic and political reforms, manages financial assistance, pays bilateral visits, participates in the trilateral talks, prepares a package of restrictive measures	pays bilateral visits, participates in the trilateral talks, prepares a package of restrictive measures directed at Russia, A mediator in the Minsk Agreement;	recognition
The High Representative	combines national and European tools, acts in concert with European Commissioners, pays bilateral visits, improves strategic communication of the EU policies	fairly independent actor, pays bilateral visits to Kiev, pursues political dialogue with Russia	recognition
The European Parliament	pays bilateral visits to Ukraine	endorsed the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, impedes the efforts to normalize the situation in Europe	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The table visualizes the discursive tendency of Russia to recognize that the EU possesses distinctive institutional design that acquired a certain degree of autonomous existence and fulfils certain functions and roles. However, it is not an unconditional recognition as Russia from time to time colours some aspects of EU institutional autonomy with somewhat negative connotational evaluations.

Thus, EU institutions managed to carve out a visible role for themselves on the Ukrainian stage which is felt across various dimensions. In relation to Ukraine, Russian political elite repeatedly acknowledges that EU leadership possesses significant leverage on Kiev,

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which must be used to achieve a political solution of the crisis. Besides, Russian political discourse recognizes that EU institutions function in their own capacity in EU-Russian relations. For instance, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs points out the fact that the change of EU leadership of the Commission signals the resumption of EU-Russian political dialogue at the highest level[180] after "an artificial pause" in the Ukrainian context (Meshkov, 2015).

However, perceptions of the autonomous EU apparatus are tarnished in two ways. First, its role is attenuated to a certain extent, by the outstanding role of the French and German leadership within the Normandy format. It is mentioned on various occasions that the EU is, strictly speaking, not a party to the Minsk Agreements, and, as the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU notes, the EU in the Ukrainian conflict keeps some distance in the shadow of the two European countries that act as independent actors (Chizhov, 2015h). Second, the "EU machinery" is seen as inflexible, cumbersome and slow that "makes it very difficult to change a previously agreed, albeit wrong and outdated, course of action" (Chizhov, 2015a).

In line with EU discourse, Russian narrative pays attention to three constituents of the EU institutional architecture. Here again, the EU Commission and its commissioners outstand other European institutions in terms of visibility in Russian political discourse. In broad lines Russia acknowledges functions assigned to the College of Commissioners. For instance, it is explicitly stated that, although the EU is not a party to the Minsk Agreements, the Commission acts as a mediator in this process (Chizhov, 2015g). Besides, the EU's images regarding the Commission's mandates are reflected when it comes to Commissioners' visits to Kiev, its role in the elaboration of anti-Russian restrictive measures and its initiative in the Trilateral Ministerial Meetings on Implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement along with Russian and Ukrainian counterparts. Regarding the trilateral meetings, Russia describes them as a platform to address its concerns in respect to the compatibility of the DCFTA regime with the Russia-Ukrainian free trade agreement in the framework of the CIS, specifically, tackling the issues of customs cooperation, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary questions. Furthermore, Russian political discourse assigns to the European Commission a visible role as a mediator in Russia-Ukrainian gas talks. In October, 2014

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[180] Among other things, he mentions the meeting between the Russian President and the newly appointed President of the European Commission on the margins of the G20 Summit in Brisbane (Meshkov, 2015).

Russia and Ukraine signed the so called "Winter Package" following long and painstaking negotiations under the auspices of the EU Commission.

Interestingly, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, whose role has previously been largely unnoticed in Russian discourse, acquired a certain prominence in the Ukrainian context. The post was even predicated as a "fairly independent" actor in the framework of the EU-Russian strained relationship (Chizhov, 2015b). In Russian political rhetoric the role of the High Representative is seen as paying visits to Ukraine and maintaining a political contact with Russia, although it cannot be called "a close contact" in the full sense (Lavrov, 2014b) given that it boils down to the occasional phone calls and meetings on the sidelines of other multilateral events[181] concerning the peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis and other issues on the EU-Russia international agenda.

The least discursive attention in the analysed set of the empirical data is devoted to the role of the European Parliament. First reference is a neutral and a matter-of-fact comment of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the European Parliament endorsed the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in September 2014. Second remark harshly states that by passing anti-Russian resolutions containing "an absurd tangle of lies and blatant misrepresentation" the European Parliament "not only devalues its importance but also impedes efforts to normalize the situation in Europe" (Lukashevich, 2015a).

In brief, the EU-Russian discursive 'encounter' on EU autonomy based on its institutional architecture is of a relatively non-controversial nature. Russian political discourse recognizes the presence of EU institutions and actors that are distinguished from the institutional design of its member states, however, it exhibits certain dualism in its patterns of (mis-) recognition of the predications referring to functions assigned to the European Parliament and the degree of authority granted by the member states.

The empirical findings concerning the other two components of the autonomy (policies and autonomy from external actors) are summarized in table 17. When it comes to EU-associated policies in the ambit of Ukrainian developments, they have been partially mentioned in the roles, carried out by EU actors, given that it is the EU institutions that

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[181] For instance, Russian Foreign Minister had an opportunity to discuss with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy a number of issues in the framework of the OSCE Ministerial Council on December 4, 2014. More recently, Lavrov and Mogherini had a focussed discussion on various issues including the events in Ukraine on the margins of the 70th UN General Assembly session in September 2015.

formulate and implement EU policies and sometimes the separation of the two elements of EU autonomy seems artificial. However, the following paragraphs will attempt to provide a brief and general overview of the EU's policies found attached to the nomination "the EU" which constructs it as the actual 'doer' that produces certain actions. As is evident from table 17, in both European and Russian discourses, the EU's engagement in Ukraine can be subdivided into two broad but closely interlinked policies.

Table 17. Russian (mis-) recognition of the EU's images of autonomy (policies and autonomy from external actors)

Nomination	Referential strategies		Recognition (Russian)
	EU self-perceptions	Russian perceptions	
The EU	supports the Ukrainian reform process	not doing anything to support Ukraine	misrecognition
	brokers peace in Ukraine and facilitates dialogue both within Ukraine and with Russia	acts as a mediator and participates in the dialogue both within Ukraine and with Russia, a biased and ineffective mediator, should act jointly with Russia	parallel recognition and misrecognition
	absent discourse	lacks an independent foreign policy (from the USA)	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

First, the European Union expresses its firm commitment to provide unprecedented level of support to the reform process in Ukraine. The objectives are clearly defined: constitutional reform, new and inclusive democratically elected government constitute the necessary prerequisites for reforms on the way to the peaceful way out of the political crisis towards stability and prosperity (Barroso, 2014b). Besides, the EU expressed its commitment to launch an ample support programme and ensure financial contributions provided by the EU and European Financial Institutions to assist the Ukrainian sector reforms, which include energy sector reforms, reforms of public administration and judiciary, the fight against corruption, support of medium and small-sized businesses, and help to restore a safe environment around Chernobyl (Ušackas, 2015b).

The second frequent pervasive predication is that the EU is committed to brokering peace in Ukraine. Thus, EU High Representative has stated that the European Union "has to

reinforce the efforts in support of the political solution to the current crisis" (Ashton, 2014: 1). The EU intends to prevent further escalation of the conflict and facilitate dialogue both internally between the authorities, the opposition and civil society and externally by involving Russia. The sanctions imposed on Russia and Crimea constitute one of the most important instruments to carry out this policy as the amplification and withdrawal of sanctions is linked to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

The analysis of Russian views on the EU's performance in the Ukrainian events demonstrates the prevalence of opposing and contesting reactions. First, the EU self-images as a provider of reforms are not recognized as they are closely related to the concept of the transformative power acting for the benefit of all, which is either ignored or is heavily criticized in Russian political discourse. Therefore, EU rhetoric of its support to the profound Ukrainian transformation through the wide range of sectoral reforms and financial aid is not mirrored in the Russian leaders' discourses. Quite the opposite is true as Russian decision-makers continuously highlight the lack of financial involvement as an essential tool on which effective policies are expected to be based. As President Putin in his usual, brusque manner describes the peculiarity of this situation as follows:

> "our partners in Europe recognise the legitimacy of today's authorities in Kiev, but are not doing anything to support Ukraine – not a single dollar, not a single euro. The Russian Federation does not recognise the legitimacy of the powers in Kiev, but continues to provide economic support and still subsidises Ukraine's economy with hundreds of millions and billions of dollars" (Putin, 2014a, emphasis added)

Thus, in a single move, Vladimir Putin emphasizes the lack of any substantial actions on the part of the EU to support Ukraine and creates antithetical descriptions between the EU and Russia in terms of their real engagement in Ukraine.

Regarding the images hinging on the nomination of the EU as a broker and mediator that contributes to peace and assists in establishing a dialogue among the various actors involved in the conflict, the analysis of predicates indicates partial recognition on the part of Russia. It is highlighted that although the EU is not a party of the Minsk agreements in the strict sense, it acts as a mediator (Chizhov, 2015g) even though somewhat in the shadow of Germany and France (Chizhov, 2015h). While recognizing that the EU managed to carve out a role in the Ukrainian mediation process, Russian official discourse endeavours to bring to the fore flaws that plague the EU's self-assigned activities.

First of all, the EU mediation is perceived as characterized by a certain degree of ineffectiveness and even negative influence. For instance, according to Russian Permanent Representative to the EU, the EU-brokered agreement in February 2014 was followed by the violent coup d'état and the arrival to power of individuals "with highly questionable credentials" (Chizhov, 2014c). This belief is set firmly in the discursive chain that the ongoing conflict testifies "to the failure of the EU's Eastern Partnership policy" that confronted Ukraine with an artificially created geopolitical choice (Chizhov, 2014c). Moreover, the European role as an arbiter and broker is undermined by the Russian perceptions of the EU as a biased actor, which tenaciously, unconditionally and sometimes blindly supports the Kiev authorities and simultaneously "continues to stubbornly follow the course of escalating the already strained relations with Russia" (Chizhov, 2015b). These perceptions generated the assertions that "such a lop-sided view of the conflict in Ukraine deprives Brussels of the very ability to be an impartial mediator" (Chizhov, 2015b) and "a potential neutral mediator" (Chizhov 2015c) and unnecessarily aggravates its already turbulent relationship with Russia.

Instead, Russian political narrative abounds in assumptions that the EU's joint action with Russia can rectify the EU's partiality and enhance its effectiveness as an actor in the Ukrainian conflict. Therefore, Russian leadership is unambiguous about delineating its role in the conflict by underlining that it is not a party but a mediator on a par with the EU.

This case study highlights one peculiar feature of Russian discourse on the EU's autonomy that differentiates it from the pre-2013 discursive trajectory, namely, the dependence of the European Union on the USA. Although Russian political elites occasionally framed EU-American relations in the terms of hierarchy especially in security and military matters, this discourse became pervasive in the Ukrainian context. While the EU discourse is conspicuously silent on the matter, Russian leaders forthrightly assign the role of the puppets pulled by the USA not only to the Kiev authorities but also to the European Union[182]. In this respect, Russian political discourse highlights that Brussels lost its autonomy as an actor vis-à-vis its transatlantic partner. In Russian eyes the EU's loss of autonomous action is visible in its decision to outsource the settlement of

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[182] President Vladimir Putin outspokenly affirms that formally the Europeans supported the oppositional forces but the real puppet masters are the Americans, who helped to train the combatants and militant groups and instigated turmoils in the Maidan Square (Putin in Kraus (2015).

the Ukrainian crisis to the American leaders (Chizhov, 2014e) and the EU's agreement to be dragged into this costly confrontation to its own detriment. In this respect sanctions are seen as "a knee-jerk reaction on behalf of the United States" (Putin, 2014c) as the European Union is perceived as "shooting itself in the foot, acting at the behest of its transatlantic ally against its own better interest and judgment" (Chizhov, 2015c).

Russian officials argue that the interests of the USA are transparent and easily guessed. By pulling the strings in the Ukrainian conflict Washington intends to deliberately "confront" the EU and Russia by dragging them into an economically no-win campaign[183], to sow instability in the common neighbourhood and to revive NATO (Chizhov, 2014e).

These images deal a heavy blow to the EU's identity as a credible actor able to act in its own capacity which can be exemplified by the words of a Russian high-standing diplomat who states that Brussels lacks an independent foreign policy which discounts the EU's ability to become a valuable strategic partner for Russia or for anyone in the world (Chizhov, 2014e).

4. The images of the EU's unity through the prism of Russian (mis-) recognition

Based on the inherent logic of the empirical data, the analysis of this section hinges on a somewhat symbolic triangle of nominations as it scrutinizes the referential strategies "the Ukrainian crisis", "the European Union" itself and "Russia" as crucial factors in (de-) stabilizing European unity. Surprisingly, and in clear contrast with the previous case studies, the European discourse on the EU as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis pays relatively little attention to the EU's unity and various discrepancies that pose challenges to its ability to 'speak with one voice'.

The nomination "the Ukrainian crisis" is chosen for analysis as this process is considered to be an important indicator against which the unity can be gauged. The former President

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[183] Thereby the USA allegedly tries to prevent the emergence of a genuinely independent continental "core" stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok as a result of the energetic, commercial, technological and intellectual merger of the EU and Russia (Chizhov, 2014e) and reap the economic benefits of the EU-Russian confrontation. To give evidence of the wilful American logic, Russian diplomats use numbers to point out that in 2014 Russia-EU trade turnover decreased by 11% in comparison to the same period of 2013, while the Russian trade with the United States in 2014 manifested 7% growth (Chizhov, 2015c).

of the European Commission wrapped it vividly in a predicative structure that the Ukrainian conflict "challenges our unity as Europeans" thereby succinctly but in a disturbingly accurate manner, interpreting the situation as "a test for the Union" (Barroso, 2014c: 1). This test is seen as critical and decisive as having transcendental impact given its potential to change the geopolitical configuration on the continent.

The second element of the nominative triangle is "the EU" which explores the predicative descriptions of if and how the European Union managed to cope with the challenge posed to its unity by the Ukrainian events. Within this referential strategy there are two lines of discourse. One discursive narrative conveys the message with a somewhat negative valence that the EU still lacks external unity and capacity to identify "common responses" (Juncker, 2014). These deficiencies are evident, for instance, in the lack of unity when it comes to the sanctions that the EU imposed on Russia (Juncker, 2015). Such a state of affairs is not surprising taking into account the complexity of the EU. The President of the European Commission defines the Union as a complex network including EU institutions and EU member states with their national governments and national parliaments which are constantly found in danger of slipping into internal and external inconsistencies should just one in the network "stumble" (Juncker, 2015a).

On the other hand the EU is self-portrayed as able "to rise to the challenge" and to "show solidarity" in its efforts to mobilize support for Ukraine (Barroso, 2014c: 2). One of the prominent proofs that the EU is able to act as one is the imposition of sanctions on Russia despite different opinions and attitudes espoused by the member states. The EU Ambassador to the Russian Federation consonantly with the discourse on the EU's unity revealed in previous case studies analysed in this thesis states that the attractiveness and strength of the EU lies in the diversity of opinions, cultures and traditions, including political traditions, however, despite this heterogeneity the EU member states are able to agree on a common position, and, for example, to coordinate a position of 28 member states as was illustrated in the case of sanctions (Ušackas, 2015c).

And the final nomination that is taken under scrutiny is "Russia" as a prospective 'negative promoter' of the EU's unity as it pursues the divide and rule policy as described in the academic discourse. These images of Russian behaviour reverberate in European political discourse concerning the Ukrainian conflict as EU leaders overtly or more tacitly point to Russia's role as challenger of the EU unity. Ušackas' (2015c) outrights statement

that Russian politicians sometimes make attempts at driving a wedge between the EU member states is highly indicative of the EU's attitudes.

In line with European discursive logic the empirical analysis of EU unity in Russian political narrative of unity focuses on three referential strategies: "the Ukrainian conflict", "the EU" and "Russia". Table 18 that provides a brief summary of the discursive patterns, points out the Russia's fully-fledged resistance to the EU's ideational self-representations. The only exception of questionable value for the EU is Russian acknowledgement and magnification of the EU's depictions of its weaknesses.

Table 18. Contestation of EU's self-images of unity in Russian political narrative

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	Russian perceptions	
The Ukrainian conflict	challenges unity, a test for the EU	a pretext to impose Russophobic approaches	misrecognition
The EU	is still not united, needs better mechanisms to swiftly identify common responses	divided, lacking collective will and fully-fledged foreign policy	negative recognition
	28 member states able to 'show solidarity' and agree on a common position despite the diversity of opinions, cultures and traditions	28 states with different records and different histories of relations with Russia, Russophobic lobby	misrecognition
Russia	makes attempts at driving a wedge between EU member states	wishes to have a strong and consolidated EU	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The first clash of perceptions refers to the visions of the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on EU unity. While European rhetoric portrays the Ukrainian conflict as a crucial test for its unity and consequently its actorness on the regional and global scale, in the eyes of Russia the ongoing events constitute another proof of the deeply entrenched belief that the EU is afflicted by disunity. The official press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation states that "the Ukrainian crisis is only a pretext to impose Russophobic approaches and hinder normal cooperation between Russia and the European Union" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015a). This vision is broadly in line with the Russian discourse that has already become a catchword

in Kremlin's rhetoric that the ongoing crisis in Ukraine is not a test for EU actorness, but rather 'a moment of truth' in EU-Russian relations in the common neighbourhood, hinting partially, at the intensification of the Russophobic lobby within the EU that always functioned as a brake in the political dialogue between both actors.

Russian predicative descriptions attached to "the EU" as a nomination largely coincide with the strand of European discourse that calls for more unity within the EU. In broad agreement with Junker's (2015a) description of the EU as a multi-centred and multi-institutional organism that is bound to be balancing on the verge of falling into discrepancies, Russian Ambassador to the European Union describes it as "28 countries – members of the EU…a multiheaded complex organism, with a complicated distribution of competencies" between the EU and member states (Chizhov, 2014d). As a consequence, Russian samples of discourse somewhat undiplomatically but earnestly describe the EU as "rarely united on serious issues" (Chizhov, 2014a), "lacking collective will" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015a) whose foreign policy is a "newborn child" (Chizhov, 2014d). Therefore, this is the only instance when European self-perceptions are endowed with recognition, which is negative as it reifies and magnifies the images of the EU's deficiencies and weaknesses as an actor.

Thus, the empirical analysis attests to the lingering Russian conviction that the European Union is plagued by inherent disunity. In this manner, in clear contrast with the second strand of the EU discourse that portrays the EU as able to agree on a common position despite its inherent heterogeneity, Russian political narrative places emphasis on the lack of sufficient degree of integration. This disunity is manifest, first and foremost, in the routine narrative on the Russophobe lobby in the ranks of EU members. For instance, one vivid description perfectly illustrates this point by indicating that the EU is

> "not one body. There are 28 states with different records and different histories of relations with Russia. Some of them are more serious and responsible than others. But some are adventurous and want to be more Catholic than the Pope" (Karasin, 2014).

The very fact that Russian political discourse pays greater attention to the political achievements brought about by the Normandy format testifies to the fact that Russia gives more credit to certain member states for their efforts in Ukrainian political dialogue. However, in the situations where the EU steps in, the Russian leaders point to the fact that the attitudes towards Russia constitute the principal division line within the European Union. Hence, Russian official discourse is abundant with the references to "the

Russophobic aggressive minority" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015a), "Russophobic lobby" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015b), "the 'newer' member states of the EU still possessed by phantom pains of the past" (Chizhov, 2015k). These countries with anti-Russian attitudes are seen as the primary factor that shatters the EU's unity against the Ukrainian background. For that reason the EU is perceived as having "its hands tied by a vocal minority bent on a dogmatic course of confrontation with Russia" (Chizhov, 2015c).

And finally, Russia definitely does not recognize itself as resorting to the 'divide-and-rule' politics. On the contrary, Moscow's officials unceasingly underline that it is the EU that engages in the zero sum geopolitical games that endeavour to exclude Russia, while the Kremlin continuously underlines that it wants to deal with a strong and consolidated European Union.

Therefore, the EU's self-evaluations of its unity in the Ukrainian contexts are subjected to total and thorough contestation on the part of Russia. An interesting feature of Russian discourse that has an enormous significance for EU identity and has a potential of explaining the confrontational dynamics of the EU-Russian relations is Russia's insistence on the 'Russophobic aggressive minority' as the main dividing line within the EU.

5. Patterns of discursive resistance to the images of EU capabilities in the Ukrainian conflict

The main bulk of both EU and Russian official discourses on the EU actorness in the Ukrainian events is devoted to the European Union's instruments that the EU possesses to pursue its policies directed at the stabilization of Ukraine and its economic and political reform. The analysis proceeds with the predications that attach evaluative judgements to the following nominations "the instruments at the EU disposal" and the more specific references to the instruments that fall into two categories: economic and diplomatic.

Starting from the predicative descriptions attached to the general nomination of the EU instruments taken as a whole, European narrative indicates that there is still indispensability for improvements to ensure the fully-fledged European foreign policy backed by efficient tools. The point is that there is a need for a better synergy and

coordination of the capabilities proceeding from diverse ambits, be it from trade policy, development aid, involvement in international financial institutions or a neighbourhood policy.

First and foremost, the instrumental portfolio at the EU's disposition represents tools of the economic nature described in the positive tonality. The European Union self-reflexively describes itself as the biggest donor as there is an impressive set of financial assistance and programmes [184] launched by the EU and European financial entities (European Commission, 2015a). Another breakthrough economic instrument to govern the EU-Ukrainian relationship and to facilitate their approximation is the Association Agreement, which includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area negotiated over the period 2007-2011.

The Ukrainian crisis also outstands by bringing into the EU's range of instruments a package of restrictive measures that have been progressively imposed on Russia since March, 2014 in light of the escalation of conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. The extensive package of sanctions is a mixture of economic and diplomatic measures including cancellation of EU-Russia summits, suspension of talks on visa issues and the New Agreement between Russia and the EU, cancellation of the G8 meeting in Sochi, economic sanctions that target trade and economic cooperation with Russia in certain sectors, individual restrictive measures that involve asset freeze and travel restrictions for individuals and entities that are deemed responsible for the destabilization and violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity.

Also the European Union established the Support Group for Ukraine that draws both on economic and diplomatic resources designed to rise to the challenge posed by the events in Ukraine. It is envisioned as a focal point to provide guidance and summon the Member States' expertise to assist the Commission in its attempts to monitor and help Ukraine in the implementation of the Association Agreement as well as to spur deep and systemic political and economic reforms in Ukraine.

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[184] Just to mention some of them, EU Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy signed a Financing Agreement to assist Ukraine's Decentralization and Regional Policy Reforms (European Commission, 2014), later he signed a €55 million financing agreement for the programme EU Support to Ukraine to Re-launch the Economy (EU SURE) (European Commission, 2015b). Besides, the EU is engaged in provision of humanitarian assistance with donations exceeding €26 million to cover the needs of internally displaced people, people returning to their homes and those remaining in the conflict-ridden zones.

The European Union has also resorted to a large variety of diplomatic tools to advance a negotiated political solution to the events in Ukraine. It has clearly expressed its commitment to facilitate and engage in a meaningful political dialogue involving Ukraine and Russia inter alia by supporting the multilateral initiatives such as the Minsk Agreements. EU high-ranking leaders have paid a number of high level visits and issued a number of statements related to different issues and events in Ukraine. Furthermore, the EU has brought into play diplomatic non-recognition of various political processes, such as the annexation of Crimea and the 'parliamentary' and 'presidential' local elections in the self-proclaimed republics in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The EU also maintains working links with international partners in particular the Council of Europe and the OSCE and supports the presence on the ground of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine[185] and the work of Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office in the Trilateral Contact Group. Besides, the EU launched the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) to assist Ukraine with the task of strengthening the rule of law. This civilian mission under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy is unarmed and headquartered in Kiev and was endowed with a budget worth €13.1 million for the first twelve months.

The European discourse that emerged in the post-2013 period added an additional tonality to the political narrative on EU actorness. Although the European Union leaders pronouncedly accentuate the fact that in comparison with Russia the EU does not use "polite people" and recurs to political and diplomatic methods (Ušackas, 2015c), President of the European Commission brought in security and defence dimensions by arguing that although the EU is undoubtedly a soft power, it needs to build up a long-lasting structured cooperation reflected in common military procurement and joint participation in crisis zones that draws on the defence capabilities of its member states (Juncker, 2014).

Table 19 graphically exemplifies that while Russian political discourse recognizes the existence of the economic and diplomatic instruments that the EU recurs to in the framework of crisis in Ukraine, the value judgements attached to attributive descriptions tend to diverge from those projected by the EU.

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[185] The European Union's support of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine totalled €25 million by June 2015 (European External Action Service, 2015a). Besides, the EU Satellite centre provided access to satellite imagery and analysis, while the EU provided armoured and unarmoured vehicles and medical equipment to enable the Mission to monitor the ceasefire and weapons withdrawals among other functions.

Table 19. Russian recognition and resistance to the images of EU capabilities in the Ukrainian crisis

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
Instruments at the EU disposal	need improvement and better coordination	declarations of intent not backed up by real actions	misrecognition
Economic instruments: Financial assistance	an impressive set of financial assistance programmes	miserable financial assistance	misrecognition
Association Agreement (DCFTA)	transformative benefits	EU-serving at the Ukraine's expense	misrecognition
Economic restrictive measures and asset freezes	economic and diplomatic sanctions detrimental to Russia	politically motivated, inconsistent, biased, illegal, mutually detrimental	misrecognition
The Support Group	helps Ukraine to implement the AA, spur reforms	absent discourse	non-recognition
Diplomatic tools: Political dialogue High level visits, multilateral initiatives	positive or neutral predications	neutral predications	recognition
Statements	Ukraine-related	politically motivated and biased	misrecognition
Diplomatic non-recognition	of annexation of Crimea and the 'parliamentary' and 'presidential' local elections	politically motivated and biased	misrecognition
Diplomatic sanctions	suspension of EU-Russia summits, talks on visa issues and the New Agreement, travel bans	ineffective, biased again the international law	misrecognition
Working with international organizations	financing the OSCE Mission	absent discourse	non-recognition
EUAM Ukraine	strengthens the rule of law	absent discourse	non-recognition
Military instruments:	need to be built up	absent discourse	non-recogntion

Source: Author's elaboration

Russian perceptions of EU capabilities in general are far from being flattering ones. The representations of the instruments at the EU's disposal can be condensed to the images of ineffectiveness, intrinsic hollowness or even inexistency. In the eyes of Russian politicians what matters most is the EU's inability to back its words and promises by real action, the fact, that makes them nothing more than "a declaration of intent" (Putin 2014b) based on "petty politics and pompous empty promises" (Putin 2014c).

The similar fault-finding line is endemic in the evaluative predications related to specific economic and diplomatic instruments. The economic instruments, in particular the financial assistance constitute one of the main targets of Russian criticism. In fact, the Russian political discourse is characterized by a perpetual comparison of the financial assistance provided to Ukrainian government by Russia and the EU. The European Union is seen as unwilling or unable to back up its lofty promises by "a single euro" in comparison with Russia, which while calling into question the legitimacy of the authorities in Kiev, provides tangible material support by subsidizing Ukrainian economy by "hundreds of millions and billions of dollars" (Putin, 2014a) [186].

Besides, the EU is not only reluctant to back up Kiev with real actions, but is also unwilling to share the burden of assisting Ukrainian economy undermined partially by the unbalanced trade with the EU (Putin, 2014b). Therefore, the discourse hinges on the depiction of the EU which through association undertook certain commitments and was partially to blame for the collapse of Ukrainian economy, and then refuses to lend a helping hand to Ukraine, thereby calling into question the "transformative" influence of the Association Agreements[187]. Hence, although it is recognized that the Association Agreement is a powerful economic instrument, it is first and foremost, a one-way tool serving to improve the EU's well-being at the expense of Ukraine.

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[186] In the interview Putin called the sums of money lent by the West to Ukraine as "humiliating" comparing the $40 million of Western assistance with the $25 billion that Russian banks invested in Ukraine and the $3 billion loan provided by Russia's Finance Ministry, not even mentioning the loans and gas discounts from Gazprom (Putin, 2014c).

[187] Putin (2014b) explains the nefarious consequences of the EU-Ukraine association as follows: "the European Union is using Ukraine's economy as a source of raw foodstuffs, metal and mineral resources, and at the same time, as a market for selling its highly-processed ready-made commodities, thereby creating a deficit in Ukraine's trade balance amounting to more than $10 billion …To a large extent, the crisis in Ukraine's economy has been precipitated by the unbalanced trade with the EU member states (Putin 2014b)

Russian political discourse is replete with references to the restrictive measures targeted at Russia and the Republic of Crimea introduced by the EU. Moscow vehemently brands them as politically motivated, inconsistent, illogical, futile and reciprocally detrimental. In the eyes of Russia sanctions are a product of combined external and internal influences, that is, the pressure exerted by the United States and the "Russophobic aggressive lobby" used as a routine political instrument to achieve its political aims (Chizhov, 2015i). The comments of Russian leaders continuously indicate that the restrictive measures were introduced under the pretext that Russia does not adhere to the Minsk Agreements despite the fact that it is not a party to the conflict. In their opinion this is a picture of a distorted and biased reality, given that it is Ukrainian central authorities that act contrary to the spirit and letter of the above mentioned agreements. Besides, the pointlessness of the sanctions lies in the fact that they do nothing to ameliorate the situation on the ground or stabilize the economic situation in Ukraine, on the contrary, they aggravate the EU's economy and subvert the EU's position as a potential neutral mediator in the conflict [188] (Chizhov, 2015c). In a persistent and somewhat far-fetched manner Russian representatives manipulate the discourse to place the EU actions in the Ukrainian conflict against a fascist background. The extension of anti-Russian sanctions on June 22, 2015 is seen as a cynical act; given the unfortunate coincidence that this was the day Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015b).

Besides, the Kremlin rhetoric emphasizes that the sanctions against Russia are illegal in terms of international law. A Russian high-ranking diplomat highlights the fact that even the EU tries to avoid the term "sanctions" in the official documents because the EU actions that lack the authorization of the Security Council of the United Nations which is the only body is legally entitled to impose sanctions, can be considered only as "unilateral, illegal restrictive measures" (Chizhov, 2015d).

As for the diplomatic instruments in the possession of Brussels, Russian political discourse mentions almost all the tools enumerated in the European rhetoric except the EU's support and financing of the OSCE and EUAM Missions employed in Ukraine. Table 19 outlining the main patterns of the Russian discursive reactions points out the

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[188] Russian politicians also point to the moral side of the sanctions, when the EU approves Ukraine's alignment to the EU's sanctions against its own citizens thus violating their rights in the absence of any judicial order (Chizhov 2015i).

only instruments endowed with relatively positive recognition are the promotion of political dialogue, high level visits and supporting multilateral initiatives. However, these European tools are mentioned in a fleeting and occasional manner in the context of their existence in the EU's instrumental arsenal and are neutrally predicated.

Other European instruments employed in the crisis are negatively predicated and are given more attention by Russian political leaders. First of all, the EU's non-recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk parliamentary and presidential elections and their right to defend their interests as well as the failure to acknowledge the new status of Crimea as a federal subject of the Russian Federation are seen as politically motivated and biased acts. Similarly, the EU's statements on the Ukrainian developments and Russian implication in the crisis are seen as exhibiting a blatant degree of prejudice and partiality. Russian narrative also mentions the following diplomatic restrictions applied by the EU in relations to Russia: suspension of the EU-Russia summits, a slowdown of political dialogue, a selective approach to the dialogues on the level of expert consultations[189] and travel restrictions of a string of individuals and entities. All these measures are considered as ineffective, mutually damaging, biased and against international law[190].

There are also several cases of the non-recognition, namely, Russian discourse is conspicuously silent on the creation of the Support Group, the EU's support and financing the OSCE and EUAM Missions employed in Ukraine as well as the EU's narrative on the EU's need to build up military capabilities.

Thus, Russia posits itself as an uncomfortable 'looking glass' for the EU as it contests all the EU's self-representations concerning its capabilities with the exception of the 'neutral' recognition of some diplomatic instruments.

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[189] Some sectors were selectively suspended such as a dialogue on the Balkans and the visa issues.

[190] Russian Special Representative to the EU cites as an example of a flagrant violation of international law Finland's (and the EU's) decision to refuse entrance to the six members of Russian delegation headed to participate in the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE (Chizhov, 2015i).

6. Paradigms of discursive contestation of the EU's ideational self-representations in Russian political discourse

This section focuses on the referential strategies to provide a profound discourse-historical analysis of the EU's images of the ideational dimension of its actorness in the Ukrainian conflict as reflected in the 'mirror' of Russian political discourse. The analysis following the patterns visible in the empirical materials singles out two nominations acting as discursive nodal points: the EU as a social actor and the Eastern Partnership/ the association with the EU as a process to give a better picture of the discursive panorama.

Table 20. Patterns of Russian misrecognition of the EU's ideational representations

Nomination	Referential strategies		Russian discursive reaction
	EU self-perceptions	**Russian perceptions**	
The EU	magnetic, transformative power, force for good	absent discourse	non-recognition
	responsible, having a duty to protect those under pressure	a source of conflict	misrecogntion
	responsible for failing to predict Russian reactions	misunderstood Russian motives and neglected Russian interests	negative recogntion
	jointly responsible (with Russia) for common neighbourhood	jointly responsible (with Russia) but tends to put all the responsibility on Russia, lacks involvement	partial recogntion
	soft power in need of strategic engagement and military dimension	'soft' power in need of more involvement, uses traditional methods of pressure	misrecognition
	committed to its founding values	regional normative power, double standards, demagoguery, supports Neo-Nazism	misrecognition
EaP/ Association with the EU	extending and anchoring stability, rule-of-law, investment opportunities	failure, does not contain any tangible benefits for Ukraine	misrecognition
	empowering but not imposing	dangerous unilateralism neo-colonialism	misrecognition
	inclusive, is not anti Russian, transparent	exclusive, anti-Russian, a soft-power substitute for NATO expansion, non-transparent	misrecognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The first referential strategy that nominates the EU as an object of discursive scrutiny represents the most direct self-representation of the European Union as a qualitatively different type of actor. In this case the European Union is predicated as a magnetic power which attracts the Ukrainian people who aspire towards the EU despite the difficulties and obstacles on the way. The image of the EU as a magnetic power is based on its inherently good and beneficial nature and is tightly linked to its representations as a good and transformative power that also re-emerges in the Ukrainian context.

It can be said that these EU self-images are not granted Russia's recognition as Russian rhetoric does not contain any direct references to the magnetic power of the EU or other attributes denoting its attractiveness. This is a very remarkable change in the Russian discursive chain, as prior to the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine and in the context of the launch of the Russia-sponsored Eurasian Economic Union, Russian politicians sometimes referred, due to varying motives, to the European Union as being attractive and magnetic to the post-Soviet space. However, since late 2013 the images of the force for good and transformative power as underlying basis of the magnetic power of Europe do not appear in the Russian discursive field as they are totally contradictory to Moscow's overall narrative on the Ukrainian events.

Another discursive representation closely linked to the self-images that appeared in previous case studies are that of the EU's responsibility. Interestingly, the European discourse on responsibility bifurcates in a bizarre manner. The first discursive junction depicts the EU as committed, responsible and having a duty to protect Ukraine that, in its aspiration towards Europe and European values, found itself under undue pressure. Within this discursive strand Russia is pictured as a challenge and a threat to stability (Barroso, 2014f). In this context the EU sheds itself of all responsibility for the tragic events except for not having been able to foresee the vehement Russian reaction to the events in Ukraine and for having nurtured mistaken beliefs that Russia and the EU share common values, in particular, in respect of their neighbours (Ušackas, 2015d).

As expected, this European discourse generates a fervid resistance from Russian political leaders. In a twisted reflection of the Russian discursive 'mirror', the EU is not only seen as having a duty to protect those under Russian pressure, but is itself seen as partially responsible for unfortunate events. On the one hand, the crisis in Ukraine is perceived as "a result of unintended blunders of EU policy" (Chizhov, 2014a) that inadvertently

sparkled the conflict in Ukraine by confronting it with an artificial geopolitical choice. On the other hand, the EU's biased and politically manipulated approach to the Ukrainian conflict does not contribute to the peaceful solution of the crisis. Russian President states in a harsh manner that during February 2014 the situation on the Maidan square was deliberately created and then got out of European control because of their unprofessional actions (Putin, 2015). Besides, it is pointed out on various occasions that the EU's persistent and unconditional support of Kiev that wages "a war against its own people" makes it co-accountable for the civilian casualties in the Eastern Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2014a).

In turn, as table 20 suggests, the EU's beliefs that its responsibility in the crisis is boiled down to its failure to predict the Russian reactions to the European policies in Ukraine are mirrored in Russian political discourse through negative recognition in a conspicuously intensified manner. Russian political elite repeatedly points out that the Ukrainian crisis is the result of European misunderstandings of Russian motives in the post-Soviet space (Chizhov, 2014e), archaic bloc thinking and "gross miscalculation of the West after "victorious" nineties" as "the Western Europe and Washington thought that everything was possible in the post-Soviet space" (Karasin, 2014). Russian counter-discourse points the finger at the erroneous European conception of the EU-Russian strategic partnership that conceived Russia as "a torpid prospective student" who sooner or later will follow the EU and whose interests amongst other things in the post-Soviet space can be neglected (Chizhov, 2014e).

When it comes to the EU's images of Russia as the challenge and the threat, Moscow is fully aware of these descriptions. Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation says that for the European Union "Russia is not a partner in solving the strategic problems, but is itself a strategic problem" (Karasin, 2014). Moreover, Russian political leaders frequently complain of the propaganda and demonizing images of Russia that prevail in Western media and institutions. However, Russia does not perceive itself as a challenge or a threat. The official press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation states in this respect that the European Union is seized by the "mythical 'Russian aggression in Ukraine'… and unreasonably laying the blame on Moscow"(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2014b). On the contrary, Russian diplomats intend to dispel one of the common misperceptions of the West that Russia is a party to the conflict; by underlying its role as a facilitator and an arbiter along

with Germany and France and OSCE (Chizhov, 2015e). Rather, Russian political statements point to Kiev and Ukrainian government formed by radicals as the main challenge and the threat. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs underlines the EU's erroneous politics by referring to the lessons of European history that testify that "peace and stability in the continent was ensured in periods when Russia actively participated in European affairs, while attempts to isolate our country have always led to the activation of processes leading to sleepwalking into the disasters of world wars" (Lavrov, 2014a). In this manner, the exclusion of Russia is only detrimental for the whole European continent.

And last but not least, the EU's processes of Othering Russia as an element not sharing European values finds a radically opposite reflection in Russian political discourse. Kremlin's narrative depicts Russia as a "natural partner of the EU" with which Russia shares "a common cultural heritage" and "closely aligned core interests" (Chizhov, 2014c). In contrast with the EU emphasis that the Ukrainian crisis uncovered the glaring gap in values, Russian sources point out that unlike the "Cold War" period the conflict between the EU and Russia does not hinge on ideological differences, rather, it is "a sharpening of geopolitical conflict of interest and intentions" (Karasin, 2014). In spite of the current disagreements, Russia continues to see its place within wider Europe as "a historical, religious, linguistic and cultural centre of gravity within the great European civilization" (Chizhov 2015j).

The second rhetoric branch of the EU narrative on the responsibility points out the necessity of involving Russia in the stabilization of the Ukrainian conflict. As EU Ambassador to the Russian Federation stated there was a belief that the EU and Russia could become "a powerful joint force for good" based on democratic values and liberal conceptions of the world order (Ušackas, 2015b).

Speeches and statements, emanating from Russian authorities echo the EU discourse on the necessity of joint responsibility for the solution of the Ukrainian crisis. However, the tonality of Russian political discourse suggests that the answer to the question of the Russian Ambassador to the EU (Chizhov, 2014c) if the EU and Russia are able to "jointly master the dangerous course of events in the common neighbourhood", is probably the pessimistic one. Russian political leaders highlight that instead of assuming joint responsibility for the solution of the Ukrainian conflict, the EU actively puts the blame on

Moscow for the dramatic developments in south-eastern Ukraine. As the conflict in Ukraine escalated, the EU continued to put responsibility on Russia for involvement in the conflict as well as for the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Besides, Russian leaders frequently indicate that the EU lacks genuine involvement in the conflict. For example, Vladimir Putin deplored the fact that "European partners have unilaterally withdrawn from the concerted efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis and from holding consultations with the Russian side" (Putin, 2014b). The lack of strategic engagement is also evident in the insufficient instruments, in particular, the financial aid.

The next relevant image self-reflexively describes the EU as a soft power which is in need of more strategic thinking and enhanced defence dimension. The former Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement points out the necessity to go beyond mere rhetoric on cooperation and approximation with the Eastern Partnership countries. He highlights the indispensability of becoming more strategic in the meaning that "and if we are saying 'A' and we want to transform that part of Europe, then we should be ultimately ready to say 'B', that we are ready to use the most appropriate instrument we have for transformation" (Füle, 2013e). In some sense the continuation of this thought can be found in the discursive logic of the newly appointed President of the European Commission who advocates a stronger Europe whose soft power is supported by enhanced security and defence capabilities (Juncker, 2014a).

These EU's self-representations are challenged by Russian counter-discourse. Russia's perceptions of the EU as a soft power are oftentimes laden with negative and sarcastic connotations. In particular, Kremlin rhetoric pays attention to the fact that the EU resorts to the old and traditional methods of pressure to boost its interest-centred policies. Russian Representative to the EU indicates that "it is self-revealing that countries that profess to be champions of modernity and "soft power", utilize 19th century instruments of economic coercion to achieve their geopolitical objectives" (Chizhov, 2015f). Thus, ironically the EU's discourse on the need to enhance security and defence capabilities is counterbalanced by the Russian accusation of the EU as already using the traditional instruments.

Another prominent European self-understanding related to the Ukrainian conflict reiterates the EU's adherence to its founding values such as peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law which constitute 'a silver thread' underlying the EU's foreign

policies. European rhetoric also adds to this list such situation-relevant values as the freedom to choose one's one destiny and freedom of association in the context of the sovereign right of each country to define its own vector of development. In this respect the recent events in Ukraine constitute a frontal challenge to the EU values (Barroso, 2014c) by testing the EU's commitment and allegiance to its values in the predicament.

A great part of Russian discursive criticism is levelled against the image of the EU as a promoter of values and, as table 20 summarizes, the discursive offensive generates a string of opposing portrayals. Thus, the EU is described as "a regional normative power" which considers "Communitary norms…are somehow superior to other international legal arrangements, including those previously concluded by EU Member States with third countries" (Chizhov, 2015j). Besides, the EU's self-assumed role of the "normative regional power" rests on a "messianic dimension" that is confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty and that endeavours to advance the principles that inspired the EU creation in the wider world (Chizhov, 2015j). However, in a paradoxical and self-contradictory manner, in its 'civilizing' mission the EU does not eschew heavy-handed methods and mentoring rhetoric to impose its norms and standards in the target states.

Furthermore, when it comes to values, the EU is portrayed as a hypocritical actor, that turns a blind eye to the flagrant violations of human rights and democratic principles committed by the Kiev "radical" and "neo-Nazi" authorities, thus, exhibiting notorious and infamous "double standards" (Chizhov, 2014e; Dolgov, 2014b). Thus, the EU's rhetoric concerning the protection of human rights and democracy runs counter to the EU's own actions, that makes it look like nothing but demagoguery[191] (Lukashevich, 2015b). A well-known and frequently used example of the EU's selective approach to the principles and values is the EU's support of what is deemed by Russian politicians as an unconstitutional coup-d'état and forceful seizure of power, the situation "when the process of democratic will is replaced by 'street democracy', when the opinion of several thousands of protesters attempting to influence authorities by force is claimed to be 'vox populi'" (Lavrov, 2014a). Therefore, the EU exhibits contradictions between its real actions and declarations of commitments to values of humanism, democracy, human rights and freedoms.

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[191] Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman cites as an example the contradiction between the EU's "concerns" over the alleged human rights violations in particular against Crimean Tartars, while violating human rights of all the Crimean population by closing the consulates in the Crimean Peninsula (Lukashevich , 2015b).

Russia even targets the value that constitutes the very *telos* of the European Union. The Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation expresses her surprise and indignation that Europe which relatively recently experienced untold sufferings caused by fascism, supports the "criminal actions" of the Ukrainian authorities (Matviyenko, 2014). The Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a comment regarding the OSCE conference coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, in which it harshly accused the European Union of attempting to falsify the history of World War II and place equal responsibility on Nazi Germany and the USSR for unleashing the war; the dangerous game, that allows the revival of Nazism in Ukraine and in a number of EU members (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015c). Russian political discourse also laments that EU countries abstained from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution on Combating Glorification of Nazism and Other Practices that Contribute to Fuelling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, while the USA and Ukraine voted against. Thus, the narrative involving references to Neo Nazism and manipulation of historical memory appear frequently in Russian discourse to disqualify the EU as a postmodern entity based on values.

While the first referential strategy explored the ideational dimension of the EU as an actor, the second nomination centres on attributes assigned to the Eastern Partnership or the association with the EU to reveal the qualitative characteristics attributed to the EU sponsored process and activities in Ukraine within the framework of the EaP. As table 20 suggests, the ideational descriptions of the EaP-driven Ukrainian association with the EU are broadly based in the EU discourse on three predications: transformative, empowering but not imposing, inclusive and transparent.

In terms of the transformative power, the Partnership is defined in European narrative as "extending and anchoring stability, rule-of-law, investment opportunities and growth beyond the European Union borders" thus, ensuring more prosperous neighbourhoods enjoying better living conditions (Barroso, 2014a). The Association agreement is seen as endowing Ukraine with a European toolbox to become a democratic and well-to-do state. The people of Ukraine are perceived as "the main beneficiaries" of the transformative effects of the Association Agreement (Ashton 2013c). As Juncker defines it precisely and concisely, the relationship between the EU and Ukraine is not about imposing: it is about empowering (Juncker, 2015b). Thus, the Association with the EU is expected to spur

reforms and bring about overall benefits to Ukraine while basing EU-Ukrainian relations on respect for the sovereign right to define its own way of development.

An important component of the European narrative is the emphasis that the project is inclusive both in relation to Ukraine and Russia. It is underlined that the Ukrainian aspirations are reciprocated by the EU which commits itself to assist Ukraine in its endeavours and, according to Barroso (2014f), to include it into the "European family". However, this EU-Ukrainian approximation is in no way designed as a confrontation and exclusion of Russia[192] despite the fact that the latter mistakenly perceives the EaP as a threat. The relationship with Eastern partners is described as inclusive, following the model of "open regionalism, and not of autarchic self entrenchment" (Barroso, 2014c: 3) which is in no way designed as "a protectionist wall cutting the continent in two" based on zero-sum game mentality (Füle, 2013c: 2). On the contrary, the EU is discursively committed to involve Russia in the process and take into account its concerns related to the potential effects of the implementation of the DCFTA[193]. Besides, the EaP is sketched as a transparent process given that since its very inception in 2009 all activities and documents including Action Plans, annual and regional progress reports have been publicly available and Russia has also been invited to participate at the Senior Official level in the "Eastern Partnership Information and Communication Group" (European External Action Service, 2015b). However, Russia has not only rejected participation in these projects, but also did not require any information before the launch of the EaP nor exhibited any serious concern before 2013 (European External Action Service, 2015b).

The empirical analysis of the predicative strategies applied in the Russian rhetoric reveals that these EU self-images are mirrored in a cardinally opposite way.

First of all, the notion of transformative effects of the association with the EU are crossed out by Russian interpretation of this process as a "failure" (Chizhov, 2014c) and as a policy based on "the erroneous assumptions and questionable goals" as it became evident

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[192] EU leaders believe that the EU was exhibiting inclusive behaviour towards Russia, not only by trying to approximate with it, but helping Russia to integrate into the Western structures, the Council of Europe, the G8, the WTO, and the OECD.

[193] Thus, the European Commission held several bilateral EU-Russia as well as trilateral EU-Russia-Ukraine consultations to discuss the implications of the legal and regulatory EU- Ukraine approximation brought about by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement. To show its flexibility the EU postponed the implementation of the economic part of the AA until the end of 2015 (Ušackas, 2015a).

during the Ukrainian crisis (Chizhov, 2015e). The failure of the EaP is palpable across various dimensions. First, it is in no way associated with extension of stability and the rule of law. According to the Russian rhetoric it is evident that the Association Agreement "does not contain any tangible benefits for Ukraine, but rather leads to deindustrialisation of its economy turning it de-facto into a market for EU goods" (Lukashevich, 2013) and "Europe's agricultural appendage" (Putin, 2013). Secondly, Russian political discourse completely rejects the EU's image of Ukraine as the main beneficiary of its policies. Quite the opposite, Ukraine is believed to have fallen 'victim' to policies of the US and EU geopolitical ambitions. Even in the economic dimension, which according to the authors of the Association Agreement was bound to boost the Ukrainian economy, Russian politicians point to the asymmetric trade balance as one of the reasons of the Ukrainian economic plight and political instability.

The EU's descriptions of the EaP as empowering but not imposing find do not find recognition in Russian official narrative either. The EaP is characterized as dangerous unilateralism which adopted the form of "mentor policy vis-à-vis the focus countries" (Chizhov, 2015e). Moreover, to achieve its geopolitical goals the EaP involved large-scale propaganda, economic pressure and in some cases overt interference in the domestic matters (Chizhov, 2014e). The Association Agreement is interpreted as "neo-colonialism" and "the absolute supremacy of European regulations and directives over Ukrainian laws and, by the same token, over Ukraine's national interests" as it demands Ukraine adopt the EU legislation without being given advantages of membership (Medvedev 2014).

In striking contrast with European discourse, the Association Agreement in the framework of the EaP is depicted as exclusive in a double manner. First, its aim is to bind Ukraine by making it accept European standards without any prospects of EU membership. Here, Russian political leaders vehemently resist the EU discourse by highlighting that the EU has neither intention nor capabilities to admit Ukraine as a member, however, it has no intention "to let it go" as there is too much geopolitics involved (Chizhov, 2014b). Therefore the AA is seen as an instrument to keep Ukraine within the EU's orbit of influence while simultaneously barring the genuine inclusion into European structures.

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Second, the EaP is blamed for being about squeezing Russia out from CIS territories[194]. In this manner, the Russian political narrative depicts the European Union as acting in the post-Soviet space in violation of the spirit and letter of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia, the 2005 Road Map on the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice as well as the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE Charter for European Security, in which parties reiterated their commitment to build 'a new Europe without dividing lines'. However, despite these explicit commitments the EU confronted Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries with an artificial 'either-or' geopolitical choice. In this sense, a Russian diplomat succinctly summarizes the description of the EU that fully mirrors the Russian understandings by defining it as "an exclusive club of influence" that seeks to extend its geopolitical influence (Chizhov, 2015a).

In this manner, the EaP launched by the EU is perceived as "as a soft-power substitute for NATO expansion in the post-Soviet space" (Chizhov, 2015a) with the aim of drawing the target countries into the EU orbit as far away as possible from Russia. Thus, Russian narrative runs contrary to the European discourse on the attempts to anchor Russia within the EaP. Russian decision-makers indicate that despite their readiness to participate in the joint projects within the EaP framework, they hadn't received any proposal in years. Besides, when Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich made a decision to postpone the signing of the Association Agreement, he suggested holding trilateral Russia-EU-Ukraine consultations to tackle the issues of common concerns, a proposal that was allegedly rebuffed by the European Commission (Chizhov, 2015e).

And finally, the EaP and the association with the European Union are defined as non-transparent, anti-Russian and exclusive processes. As regards the non-transparency it is argued that the draft of the Ukraine-EU Agreement and the negotiation process had been kept secret from Ukrainian and international public opinion due to its clear disadvantages for Ukraine[195] (Lukashevich, 2013; Chizhov, 2014e).

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[194] Russian official discourse emphasizes that the EU's tendency to exclude Russia contributed to the failure to establish a stable pan European security structure. The fault that the European continent did not succeed in becoming "an example of political wisdom for other regions" is the EU's , as Russia put in all the effort to lay all the necessary foundations for that, first and foremost by ending "the inexorable ideological confrontation, which separated Europe in the XX century" (Lavrov, 2014a)

[195] For instance, Chizhov (2014e) points to the fact that the absence of the visa-free regime in the Association Agreement has come as an unpleasant surprise to the Ukrainian youth who believed that Yanukovich's decision to postpone the signature of the agreement closed the EU's doors. Russian Prime Minister (Medvedev, 2014) indicated that "Ukraine hasn't had a public discussion about what's in the

Hence, in Russian perceptions the EU emerges as a geopolitical actor, driven by the 20th century stereotypes[196] which "puts geopolitical considerations rather than interests of Ukrainian citizens at the cornerstone of its policies" (Lukashevich, 2013). According to Russian officials EU representatives themselves acknowledged the geopolitical motives by framing the association with Ukraine as "winning Ukraine" in a "geopolitical battle of Europe" (Chizhov, 2015j). The EU's actions to exclude Russia and to draw Ukraine and other EaP countries into its orbit are interpreted as an attempt to bring back to life the so called buffer zone, that Western Europe was trying to create in the 1920-30s to isolate the Soviet Union and that was one of the factors conducive to the Hitler's aggression (Matviyenko, 2014). In this perspective the arrival to power of the Western oriented authorities in Kiev is a brick in the wall of the new 'buffer zone' to strip Russia of sovereign politics and own historically developed links with Ukraine. These descriptions and vehement mis- and non-recognition of the EU's depictions definitely undermine the EU's images as a qualitatively different type of an actor.

7. Conclusion

The Ukrainian conflict became simultaneously a test for the EU-Russian 'strategic partnership' and 'a moment of truth' functioning as a tipping point in their already strained relationship which generated interesting samples of the picturesque and vivid narratives of breath-taking intensity surrounding the EU and Russia's legitimacy claims.

European self-conceptualizations represent a continuation with its high-flown constitutive narrative that depicts the EU as a fully-fledged actor which is actively involved in the restoration of peace and order, as well as furthering well-being and prosperity in Ukraine drawing on its institutional design, policies and a gamut of instruments based on EU endemic values. The EU discourse is even less prone to refer to its deficiencies when compared to the discourses of the preceding chapters, an observation, which can be

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Association Agreement or an honest accounting of its pros and cons for the economy in general... For a long time, a Ukrainian translation of the document wasn't even available".

[196] These images are placed within a wider discourse on the Western-dominated world, where the USA and its allies to borrow Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs words, embarked on "the 'vertical structuring of humanity' tailored to their own hardly inoffensive standards" in violation of the principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act (Lavrov, 2014c). Ukraine is only one of the examples of the colonialist attitudes of the West and consequence of the profound systemic flaws of the existing Euro-Atlantic architecture.

attributed to the EU's consolidation of its identity as an actor in the face of the crucial test in the Ukrainian context.

In turn, Russian political narrative is characterized by more vehement, almost total non- and misrecognition of the EU's images than in the preceding decade. In rare cases where recognition and partial recognition was endowed it concerned only the existence of EU institutions, policies and some diplomatic capabilities. The positive development is the increasing visibility of the role of EU High Representative which was largely ignored in previous case studies. However, the recognition was visibly 'tacit' and 'reserved' and was almost in all cases counterbalanced by simultaneous presence of negative emotion-laden evaluations. Thus, the EU's images of its institutions, policies and capabilities were offset by Russian negatively coloured and opposing qualitative judgements. Besides, the EU's visions of autonomy were undercut by the flamboyant perceptions of the EU's dependency on the USA which constitute another relatively new line of discourse.

As for other aspects of EU identity as an actor they were subjected to fiery contestation as they were either not- or misrecognized. Russia also recurred to negative recognition which reiterated and emphasized EU self-referential critical depictions. In this 'uncomfortable mirror' the EU is represented as a visible, but not effective actor, whose high-flown representations do not coincide with the reality. Interestingly, Russia rejects not the EU as such as it largely acknowledges the existence of the EU's institutions, policies, unity and capabilities but the qualitative meanings attached to these criteria of actorness. Russian discursive reactions to the ideational characteristics present a different picture as this criterion constitutes the main target of Russian discursive contestation. Thereby, Russia challenges the rationale and declared objectives of the EU by depicting it as a geopolitical actor pursuing its interests and perceives the EU's identity as an actor as *rhetorical* in nature. Consequently, following the analytical scheme of the possible outcomes of the (mis-) recognition, the situation is fraught with conflict as the EU is bound to feel uncomfortable with Russian discursive resistance.

In an interesting way, Russian and European discourses on the EU exhibited a striking continuity; some samples of discourses pronounced in 2014 almost word for word repeat the 2004 rhetoric that emerged in the context of the Orange revolution. Besides, several predicative strategies re-emerged in the Ukrainian context in a magnified and more intensified manner, and sound disturbingly reminiscent of the discourses highlighted by

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previous three case studies. This striking continuation suggests several conclusions. First, the EU and Russian narratives were flowing in parallel with few touch points, and the EU did not do anything to modify its discourse to adapt its role conceptions to the divergent external perceptions, thereby augmenting the conflictual predispositions by refusing to grant Russia recognition of being 'the one' to impose its perceptions of the EU. In turn, Russian discourse also exhibited absence of malleability and tended to reify its perceptions during years and in various contexts thereby confirming its 'misrecognition of the EU's misrecognition' of its status as an '*insignificant* Other'.

Thus, the vicious cycle of mutual misrecognition function as the mechanism that triggered the intensification of conflict between both actors. Following the analytical premises of the outcomes of the (mis-) recognition even the rare cases when the EU's images were recognized or partially recognized by Russia are not exempt from a certain degree of antagonism as Russia felt that it was considered as inferior and continuously intended to reaffirm its significance. These Russian endeavours permeate the discourse during the whole period preceding the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict. In the case of discursive resistance, which is a recurrent practice in the EU-Russian discursive 'encounter' in the previous decade, and a practically ubiquitous phenomenon during 2013-2015, the conflict is magnified as both actors fall into the conflict-prone logic of mutual misrecognition.

Thus, the Ukraine crisis has emerged as a 'moment of truth' for the EU and Russian relations as it revealed not only the hollowness of the widely announced 'strategic partnership' between both actors and their rhetorical commitment to common values but also the impossibility to return 'to the business as usual'. The Russian narratives during the Ukrainian developments revealed that Russia does not only reject the EU's self-representations, but its own place in the Ukrainian and European context assigned to it by the EU. Although the EU believed that it endowed Russia the recognition of the 'significant Other' and tried to facilitate its rapprochement with Western dominated structures, Russia felt the opposite, not least due to the EU's deafness to its laments of being treated as a junior partner in the neighbourhood and in the wider global context. Russia that felt its status as an equal partner was denied, was more prone to resort to the actions and 'extraordinary measures' that contradicted the geopolitical and geoeconomical logic to satisfy its aspirations for its status recognition.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

1. Recapitulating the research questions and the main analytical points

The European Union is one of the objects of meticulous and unfaltering academic attention that generates multiple theoretical conceptualizations and empirical investigations of the EU's multifaceted nature of actorness, roles and identity. However, the prolific stock of European foreign policy literature exhibits a visible degree of self-referentiality while the external representations of these roles and identity remain an undeservingly under-researched field of inquiry. Therefore, the thesis makes an attempt to enrich the strand of literature on perceptions that the EU projects in the outside world by making use of the analytical and conceptual framework emerged as a result of the merger of the postpositivist and Foreign Policy Analysis strands of literature.

In this manner, the theoretical, analytical and methodological basis of the thesis is structured around two fundamental premises. The first point of departure is that the discourse matters and the language is a valuable analytical tool able not only to materialize the existing social phenomena but is endowed with the constitutive role in the creation of the reality. Second, the thesis draws upon the constructivist and poststructuralist premises on the identity as the result of the Self-Other mutual constitution through discursive interactions. This assumption brings to the fore the binary nature of identity that blends two constitutive aspects of identity: internal and external.

The thesis takes advantage of the explanatory potential opened up by the focus on the external dimension of identity and argues that it is possible to enrich this perspective by incorporating external perceptions to approach the Self/Other ideational interactions in a manageable way and pitching the research at a more concrete level of the foreign policy roles. These images serve as intermediaries that convey (non-) and (mis-) recognition in the dynamic and reciprocal cycle of identity formation in the Self/Other nexus. Thus, the thesis argues that the patterns of discursive reactions directly influence both identities and foreign policy interactions between involved parties.

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However, despite the heavy reliance on the sociologically-informed premises and concepts, the line of reasoning adopted in this research does not endeavor to burn bridges with more traditional state-as-an-actor approaches that still have not lost their currency in the real-world context. Therefore, the thesis suggests that symbiotic combination of the state-centric and more sociologically informed approaches on actorness can be better suited to capture the unique and multidimensional nature of the European Union. Following this logic, the thesis 'makes a step back' and 'reintroduces' the notion of actorness into the analysis thereby integrating the concepts of identity and actorness into an all-embracing understanding of identity as 'a feeling of Selfhood' that consists of the following criteria of the EU's identity as a foreign policy actor subject to external recognition or misrecognition: autonomy, unity, capability and ideational representations.

This thesis applies this theoretical, analytical and methodological framing to the European Union whose political identity was created first and foremost at the level of European political elite and which is presumably contested by and formed in the interaction with Russia exerting an immediate impact on their foreign policy outcomes. To guide the empirical research the thesis poses the main research question: *How can the interplay of the EU-Russian perceptions contribute to the explanation of the strained EU-Russian relations at the ideational level and how did these dynamics contribute to the climax of the conflict as presented by the Ukrainian events?* Following the assumption of the binary nature identity reflected in internal and external dimensions, the interactive process of identity formation involving the perceptions of the EU and Russia and the mutual (mis-) recognition cycle that can be repeated *ad infinitum,* the main empirical question is structured into the following stepping-stone questions.

In answering the first question *What are the EU's self-images related to a specific international role?* the empirical research compiles EU self-representations to summarize the internal content of the European identity exposed to the judgment of the recipient party. The second empirical research question: *How are the EU's self-understandings mirrored in the Russian political discourse?* involves the analysis of the contesting and constitutive counter-discourse of the outsider. To answer this question the thesis scrutinizes the EU self-images through the prism of Russian perceptions thereby revealing the existing patterns of recognition or misrecognition. That brings the inquiry to the third in-between empirical question: *What are the implications of Russian recognition/ misrecognition as the EU's 'significant Other' for the EU identity?* In

answering this question the thesis draws on the premises of the literature on recognition, status and prestige and postpositivist debates on identity that indicate the ineluctable effects of Russian recognition on the EU's self-identification as a political group given that the hypothesized status of Russia as a 'strategic partner' and 'significant Other' endows it with constitutive functions. Besides, due to the inextricable links between identity and foreign policy outcomes, Russian (mis-)recognition is bound to influence the dynamics of relations between both actors, thereby offering a plausible explanation to the main empirical question.

To answer these questions the thesis draws heavily on the concept of recognition. Hence, Russian recognition of the EU's self-conceptualizations has an ontological significance as it not only confers the right for existence, but the right to exist in a certain way by reifying and sedimenting the intersubjective understandings of EU identity. In this case the patterns of interaction are expected to be cooperative and potentially leading to the change of Russia's status in Self/Other terms[197] and establishment of the overarching framework of cooperation[198]. However, even recognition is a tricky thing as it can camouflage inherent conflictual predispositions. First, the EU must wish to obtain recognition from Russia and second, according to Ringmar (2014), the recognition must be granted on terms of equality, that is, by someone the EU respects. Otherwise the situation might turn out intrinsically conflictual as Russia might feel its status is neglected or downgraded.

In turn, the lack of Russian recognition of European narrative exerts a negative impact on the EU's self-identification as a foreign policy actor as it places the EU in an uncomfortable situation by discrediting the way the EU perceives and presents itself to external judgment. In this way, lack of external recognition undermines the EU's self-esteem, denies acknowledgement of what is considered as a legitimate social standing and serves as a peremptory signal that relations with Russia are under strain. In this case the EU is bound to exhibit three reactions with varying degree of underlying conflict: it can try to adapt its role understandings to conform to the external perceptions, it can resist and *misrecognize the misrecognition* and try to reestablish its identity, or it can simply neglect

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[197] As Wendt (1992) suggests the Others can become closer to the Selves, change the status from enemies/outsiders to friends or even become an extension of the Self through the processes of recognition.

[198] The rapprochement between the Self and Other through mutual recognition brings the Self and Other closer to the creation of a "World State" and the formation of the all-inclusive collective identity (Wendt, 2003).

Russian perceptions. In the latter two cases Russia's "reaction to reaction" (Abdelal et al., 2006) is anticipatedly negative as Russia sees its status endangered, thereby making the situation utterly inflammable as both actors are in danger of slipping into the mutual misrecognition 'trap'.

In this manner, the thesis uses the three empirical research questions as stepping stones to answer the main empirical question. The analysis of the patterns of Russian (mis-) recognition does not only serve as a reality check for the EU's identity as an actor but can also come up with an account of the sources of the pre-existing conflictual dynamics in the EU-Russian interactions. Besides, this analytical perspective also possesses explanatory potential that can shed light on the triggering mechanisms that upgraded the relations between both actors to the next stage of antagonism.

2. Main findings of the thesis

This section outlines the main empirical findings resulting from the analysis of the discursive 'encounter' of the EU and Russian political narratives. The thesis subjected to Russian judgment the self-representations of the four foreign policy roles that the EU assumes while exercising its actorness as a foreign policy actor, namely, the images of the EU as a model of regional integration, as an actor in the common neighbourhood, as a promoter of human rights and democracy and as an actor in the Ukrainian conflict. These roles have been chosen due to their salience, ontological importance to the EU identity and high-priority status on EU-Russia political agenda and have been analysed in the interactive and intersubjective manner, by combining both perspectives to reconstruct to the maximum the EU-Russian ideational dynamics.

2.1. Identity of the European Union as an international actor: in its own eyes.

Each empirical chapter starts with the European perspective to reveal how the European Union constructs itself as an actor and what images it sends to the external 'audience'. The results of the analysis, although anticipated to a certain extent, provide an empirical confirmation of the cognitive bias that manifests itself in the fact that the self-images tend to be self-ingratiating and positive (Jervis, 1985; Hermann, 1988).

The painstaking analysis of the predication strategies in the selected discursive samples across the case studies confirms that the EU constructs itself as a fully-fledged credible actor that has achieved an unprecedented level of integration, autonomous existence in terms of its institutional design and policies, fostered by an ample instrumental portfolio and distinctive identity. In this manner, European official discourse exhibits positive perceptional patterns across all the criteria of the EU's identity as a foreign policy actor, namely, the autonomy, unity, capabilities and ideational representations.

The discourse on the abovementioned criteria of actorness produced during these twelve years exposed a surprising degree of coherence and stability. The patterns of the EU self-representations seem to be largely unaltered by the crises[199] and reflected only important institutional changes in the EU foreign policy institutional design and decision-making such as the innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and new functions and tasks dictated by the changing foreign policy environment.

Thus, among other things the coherence and inertia of the EU political narrative served to highlight certain recurrent patterns across the case studies. The EU self-reflexively describes itself as an entity that has achieved certain autonomous existence based on two interlinked components: distinctive institutional architecture and EU-led policies. In this manner, the EU is seen as possessing a unique legal and institutional design created as a result of the competencies granted by its constituent members. This authority granted by the member states enables the action of the key EU actors in the ambits associated with the foreign policy roles under scrutiny. Concerning the second component of the actorness, EU unity, EU leaders describe the EU as an organization that, despite internal diversity, achieved an impressive degree of integrity transcending the Westphalian order and is able to agree on a common position and work towards deeper integration. In a similar optimistic tone the EU refers to the wide gamut of its instruments to support its foreign policy action.

However, the most positive self-descriptions are attributed to the ideational dimension of the actorness that predicatively confirms the 'distinctiveness' thesis in a direct and indirect way. The most recurrent ideational representations that appear across the case studies include the self-conceptualizations of the EU as a distinctive, value-based

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[199] The tendency to adhere to continuity even in times of crises is explained by the need to eschew the epistemic uncertainty and is empirically tested in the case of the ENP review in the context of the Arab Spring and profound institutional changes of EU foreign policy during 2010-2011 by Natorski (2015a).

community, force-for-good, transformative and soft power, an anchor of stability, a beacon acting out of a mixture of 'enlightened self-interest', altruistic motives and responsibility that does not impose its will on its partners that are seen in terms of equality. These representations portray the EU as a distinctive, unique, qualitatively different, a kind of a 'post-imperial' and 'post-Westphalian' value-informed entity in international affairs that generates benefits for its own consumption and for external environment.

On the other hand, in its soul-searching exercise, EU discourse is not exempt from self-critical remarks. The European Union self-reflexively points to the deficiency in unity and capabilities as weak points of its actorness. European political narrative, while giving credit to the unparalleled degree of unification reached within the framework of the European project, acknowledges the existence of various types of internal inconsistencies (interpillar and institutional incoherencies, frictions between the EU and its member states) that debilitate the images of the EU as a consolidated and coherent actor performing one of the foreign policy roles under study. Other critical remarks of lesser intensity but recurrent throughout the case studies refer to the imperfections in the set of instruments available to the EU.

However, both discourses on the flaws of the EU's unity and instrumental capacities are frequently either ancillary and infrequent or are placed within the context of the rectification of these deficiencies by the institutional and legal developments of the EU foreign policy action, in particular by the innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. In this way, in the process of contemplating its performance as a political actor in various ambits the EU created quite a 'comfortable mirror' that, with the exceptions of some flaws, predominantly returns positive and somewhat flattering images with self-laudatory connotations.

2.2. Identity of the EU as an international actor in the eyes of Russia: patterns of (mis-) recognition

The analysis of the discursive 'encounter' of European and Russian political narratives serves as another empirical testimony to the existence of the axiological gap between self- and external perceptions. Both types of images are subjective and as such they are characterized by a cognitively-informed tendency "to assume negative intent in the

behaviour of the counterpart, while explaining one's own behaviour as legitimate" (Casier, 2016: 17). The analysis of the Russian discursive feedback to the EU's representations endorses these cognitive perceptional trends. Table 21 that provides a recapitulation of the patterns of the Russian (mis-)recognition presented in the empirical chapters presents an unpromising picture as the perceptions transmitted by the key actors in the Russian foreign policy discourse exhibit a pronounced disposition towards resisting the EU's self-referential descriptions in one form or another.

Table 21 presents the paradigm of Russian reactions to the EU's self-descriptions of the four constitutive criteria of its identity as an actor: autonomy (institutions, policies and in the last empirical chapter autonomy from external actors), unity, capabilities and ideational representations as enacted in four of the EU's foreign policy roles. Due to the fact that each criterion frequently contains several discursive clusters of images organized predicatively around one or more nominations, the analysis revealed that Russian counter-discourse can simultaneously contain fluctuating or even antithetical descriptions characterized by a varying degree of acknowledgement of the EU self-portrayals.

The analytical chapter of this thesis hypothetically assumed, that the set of Russia's reactions to the EU's presentations can be extended beyond the customary recognition/misrecognition dichotomy to include also such concepts as negative recognition, partial recognition, and parallel recognition and misrecognition. As table 21 shows, all those patterns, characterized by a varying degree of discursive resistance to the EU's self-images, are found in the Russian counter-discourse.

Table 21. Summary of the patterns of Russian (mis-)recognition of the EU's self-conceptualizations[200]

Criteria of EU identity as an actor	Images of the EU as a model of regional integration	Images of the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood	Images of the EU as a promoter of HDR	Images of the EU as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis
Autonomy (institutions)	recognition	recognition, partial recognition	parallel recognition and misrecognition, misrecognition, non-recognition	partial recognition, misrecognition
Autonomy (policies)	recognition	misrecognition	non-recognition	parallel recognition and misrecognition, misrecognition
Autonomy (from external actors)				misrecognition
Unity	recognition, partial recognition, parallel recognition and misrecognition, negative recognition	partial recognition, negative recognition, misrecognition,	negative recognition, misrecognition	misrecognition, negative recognition
Capabilities	recognition, non-recognition	negative recognition, misrecognition, non-recognition	recognition, non-recognition, misrecognition	recognition, misrecognition, non-recognition
Ideational represent-tations	recognition, partial recognition, parallel recognition and misrecognition	parallel recognition and misrecognition, misrecognition	parallel recognition and misrecognition, negative recognition, misrecognition	partial recognition, negative recognition, misrecognition, non-recognition

Source: Author's elaboration

The analytical categories of recognition and negative recognition basically deal with Russian acknowledgement of the EU's self-portrayals with a difference that they exert dissimilar impact on the ideational relations between both actors. While recognition involves a positive affirmation and refers to the discursive 'encounter' when the EU positive self-portrayals are accepted unconditionally or in broad terms by Russia, negative recognition refers to the Russian agreement with the European self-descriptions of the deficiencies that weaken its standing as an international actor. In this situation Russia not only reproduces the negatively-coloured discourse on the European inherent flaws, but displays an apparent predilection to place a greater discursive emphasis and return to the EU magnified and exaggerated mirror images of its flaws, thereby exerting a potentially negative impact on the EU's self-understanding as a political actor.

In turn, partial recognition occupies an intermediate position in the discursive acceptance-resistance equation as it reflects only fragmentary Russian agreement with some aspects of the EU's image. The paradigm of Russian reactions to European narrative envisages the possibility of the coexistence of dual and diametrically opposed images that express parallel recognition and misrecognition of the same discursive self-representations transmitted by the EU. And finally, both misrecognition and non-recognition refer to Russia's outright and categorical resistance of the EU self-categorizations with a certain connotational difference. According to Seglow (2012: 133, emphasis added) non-recognition arises as a result of the failure to acknowledge the self-representations because "we stigmatize, degrade, or humiliate them or simply because *we do not engage with them at all*". In this manner, the absence of the Russian feedback to certain European self-representations is indicative of the tendency to ignore or dismiss them as inexistent. In turn, misrecognition is a kind of discursive resistance that involves rejection, contestation and reinterpretation of the presented EU images at the ideational level. Therefore, the thesis assumes that while both non- and misrecognition exert an unpropitious impact on the EU's identity, the latter has more profound negative repercussions. While non-recognition implies the rejection of certain qualities as inexistent or insignificant for various reasons, misrecognition denotes that the issue is considered as vital and critical to be challenged and contested at the ideational level.

In this manner, the compendium of the (mis-) recognition trends of the narratives provided by table 21 is indicative of the fact that Russian political discourse demonstrates a discernible predominance of the categorical or partial resistance to European self-

reflexive characterizations with quite sporadic instances of 'positive' recognition. The only notable exemption from this discouraging trend can be granted to the case study analysing the images of the EU as a model of regional integration.

Therefore, it can be concluded that among four ideational role representations of the EU actorness exposed to the Russian judgment, only the role of the EU as a model of regional integration acquired a greater, although not unconditional, recognition on part of Russian political elites. Regarding this role, in the eyes of Russia, the EU's images of its autonomy (policies and institutional apparatus) were endowed with almost unconditional recognition, while the positive feedback on its self-representations of unity, capabilities and ideational self-representations were attenuated to a certain extent by some discursive resistance. However, in general, the 'mirror' provided by Russia in this case is the most comfortable one out of all case studies as the Russian counter perceptions recognize or endow partial recognition to all aspects of the EU's self-conceptualizations. On the other hand, this case study exhibits almost complete absence of outright rejection of the EU's images. On the contrary, Russian perceptions display a certain degree of duality of images manifest in the numerous instances of partial recognition and parallel recognition and misrecognition. The fact that this role somewhat falls out from the Russian intransigent attitudinal patterns towards EU self-representations is explained by Russian endeavour to capitalize on the legitimacy and positive foreign policy outcomes of the European integration and its desire to create an alternative to the EU's integration.

When it comes to the images of the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood, as a promoter of human rights and democracy, and as an actor in the Ukrainian events, all three roles are subject to Russian discursive resistance and sporadic recognition to a more or less equal extent. Generally speaking, the analysis of the (mis-) recognition patterns dominating the Russian political narrative on these role conceptions suggests that Russian political leaders acknowledge that the EU has acquired a substantial degree of actorness that enables it to leave a visible 'footprint' in all three ambits. This fact is also confirmed by a relatively small number of instances of non-recognition across the case studies that might testify to the insufficient 'presence' of the EU and/or Russian unwillingness to engage in meaningful interaction. What constitutes the object of criticism is the enactment and externalization of these roles, that is, the way the EU describes its stance, outlines its objectives and frames its action. Thus, Russian confrontation does not revolve around the EU's identity as an actor as such, as the EU's presence seems to be

established, but rather hinges on the questions *how*? and *why*? thereby challenging and criticizing the content of the European self-representations underlying the implementation of foreign policy roles.

Summing up the holistic overview of the images of the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood, as a promoter of human rights and democracy and as an actor in the Ukrainian conflict it can be said that Russia functions as a largely 'uncomfortable looking-glass' that returns to the EU predominantly distorted mirror images by challenging every aspect of its identity as an actor.

When it comes to Russian perceptions of each of the four criteria of EU identity as an actor taken separately and assessed across all the case studies it can be said that the following patterns are revealed. Taking 'mirror' images with positive valence as a foothold, it can be assumed that in the eyes of Russia the strongest features of the EU's actorness lie predominantly in its ability to achieve an autonomous and relatively independent existence. There is also some positive recognition of certain aspects of the EU's unity, capability and attractiveness (ideational dimension) that appear very infrequently and in very limited contexts.

The perceptions of the autonomy are tightly linked to the EU's ability to establish its presence and visibility in foreign policy action. The EU's existence as an independent actor that is distinguished from its member states is enabled by its distinctive institutional design and the EU-associated policies and actions. If we analyse the first aspect of the autonomy setting aside the evaluative judgements, EU common institutions and key foreign policy actors succeeded in creating a visible presence by undertaking active roles in all case studies. However, only in the case of the images of the EU as a model of regional integration, qualitative characteristics of European legal and institutional design as unique created by the delegation of a part of the national competencies are echoed in Russian political discourse. In other cases, with the exception of the case study of the EU as a promoter of HRD, only the existence of the European distinctive institutional architecture is recognized or is endowed with partial recognition. Similar patterns are observed regarding the EU-associated policies. Only in the case of the EU as a model of regional integration EU policies are acknowledged both in terms of their existence and in terms of their attributive characteristics, while in the other cases, with the exception of the

perceptions of the EU as a promoter of HRD, only the existence of the EU-promoted policies is recognized.

Regarding unity as a benchmark against which EU actorness is measured, the case study related to the EU's images as a model of regional integration suggests that, although not without conflicting images that co-exist in the same narrative strand, the EU has achieved a status of the most integrated and consolidated regional project in the world despite its inner heterogeneity. This discourse reappears sporadically, exceptionally and only partially in the discursive interactions regarding EU actorness in the common neighbourhood. The recognition of capabilities is also very limited even in perceptions of the EU as a model and is normally bound to the acknowledgement of existence of economic (the EU as a model and as an actor in the common neighbourhood) and diplomatic instruments (the EU as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis, the EU as a promoter of human rights and democracy).

Regarding the last component of the EU's identity as an actor, the only ideational aspects that are granted positive, but partial recognition are the self-images as attractive (the EU as a model, the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood), a peace project, a model, a pillar of stability on the continent, soft power, an example of governance structures in the globalized world (the EU as a model), a value-based community (the EU as a model and extremely rarely in the EU as a promoter of HRD). All these aspects are not completely recognized as constituting the content of the EU's identity given that they either appear infrequently in Russian political discourse or their usage is context limited. In all cases they are simultaneously accompanied by a more frequent and emphatic discursive rejection of the presented images being either partially recognized or being a weaker counterpart of the dual discursive images.

Russian discursive resistance to European self-descriptions is far more pronounced and offers a more variegated mosaic of non-/misrecognition patterns across the criteria in all case studies. Taking a holistic perspective it can be said that all aspects of EU identity as a foreign policy actor are heavily contested by Russia. Thus, Russian political narrative tends to criticize certain aspects of autonomy targeting institutional design and policies, as well as pointing out unity, capabilities and ideational representations as substantial flaws in the EU's self-representations in all role conceptions analysed in this thesis.

Starting from autonomy as the strongest component of the EU's self-image, as it has already been said, Russian discourse tends to recognize that EU common institutions and key foreign policy actors have achieved a visible presence in the enactment of the assumed international roles. However, their presence is devalued by Russian judgmental perceptions of the qualities and roles attributed to the institutions, precisely, by non- and misrecognition of the degree of authority and competences granted to the EU by the member states and the roles carried out by EU institutions and actors. Thus, the EU's autonomy as an actor is discounted by the perceptions that the EU acts in the shadow of its member states and the intergovernmental approaches clearly limit the EU's action in all four case studies (with the exception of the EU as a model). Another perceived weakness of EU autonomy is evident in the perceptional incongruity between the functions assigned to the institutions and actors by the EU and Russia. The images of the European Union as a promoter of human rights and democracy perfectly illustrate this tendency. On the one hand, Russian narrative exhibits various cases of non-recognition by refusing to acknowledge that various EU institutions have a role to play in the promotion of HRD. On the other hand, while describing the roles and activities of the institutions and actors that Moscow recognizes in terms of their 'presence', Russian political discourse misrecognizes the EU self-descriptions concerning the qualities and tasks attributed to them by assigning them different functions. This tendency is also visible, although to a smaller extent, in the case study analysing the EU's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict.

Similar patterns are discerned in the interplay of perceptions concerning the EU's autonomy manifested in its ability to formulate and implement policies associated with a certain role: misrecognition of the predicative qualifications attached to the ENP and EaP (the EU as an actor in the common neighbourhood), non-recognition of the existence of the EU's policies (the EU as a promoter of human rights and democracy and the EU as an actor in the Ukrainian crisis) and misrecognition of the European self-referential descriptions of its policies in the Ukrainian context.

And finally, in the eyes of Russia the EU's autonomy greatly suffered due to the perceptions of its subaltern position vis-à-vis the USA routinely reiterated in the discourse that was present during the previous years but which became so peremptory and compelling during the Ukrainian developments that could not be discarded without distorting the integrity of the Russian vision of the EU's actorness.

Shifting to the next criteria it can be said that EU unity constitutes one of the main targets for Russian discursive contestation as the European Union is seen as an incoherent and internally fragmented actor plagued by heterogeneity of its members manifest in divergent levels of social, economic, political developments and attitudes to Russia and inveterate tug-of war for the division of competencies between national and European levels. In terms of the resistance patterns it can be observed that negative recognition is a prevalent strategy applied by key Russian foreign policy leaders that tend to place a greater discursive emphasis and magnify the EU's self-critical comments on the flaws that undermine its unity. Besides, the EU's level of integration is never unconditionally acknowledged as it is either only partially recognized or attenuated by the simultaneous presence of the antithetical images. Misrecognition that involves mirroring back the distorted and oftentimes antithetical images is another recurrent trend in the Russian counter narrative related to the EU's unity.

Capabilities is the aspect of the EU's identity as an actor that received the least discursive response on the part of Russia, therefore the discursive 'encounter' can hardly be classified as fully-featured. However, Russian discursive resistance based on negative recognition, non-recognition and misrecognition suggests that the EU's instrumental arsenal is either not considered as being worthy of attention or is seen as inherently flawed. The paradigm of Russia's discursive reactions sends the message that the EU is seen as lacking 'real tools' or is using them in a politically motivated, biased and self-serving manner.

And last but not least, the EU's self-referential descriptions concerning its ideational representations, or what is habitually referred to as 'distinctive identity' in the academic discourse, constitute the main object of Russian discursive resistance across all case studies. Russian contestation of the EU's images framed in partial, negative recognition and misrecognition patterns suggest that in general terms the EU is seen as a self-interested, biased actor that acts contrary to the declared high-flown objectives, resorts to double standards in promotion of values, pursues its interests taking advantage of the asymmetrical relations with other actors and is unable to live up to its own standards within its borders. This discourse is recurrent across the case studies in all the period embraced by the analysis with apparent intensification of the narrative concerning the EU's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict.

While negative perceptions of the EU have been intensified in the Ukrainian-related discourse, an opposite trend is observed in the metamorphosis of the images with positive valence. For instance, the EU's predicative descriptions as 'attractive' and 'a magnetic force' which were partially acknowledged by Russia in the pre-2013-2014 discourses disappeared completely in Russian narrative with the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine. Another illustration of this tendency is the evolution of the partially recognized perceptions of the EU as a 'peace project' and 'pillar of political stability' to the image of an actor creating tensions in the post-Soviet space through the zero-sum attitude to becoming 'a source of conflict' itself.

One of the main corollaries of the analysis of Russian perceptions framed in the patterns of (mis-)recognition is that the EU's identity as an actor is uneven, context dependent and varies not only across the case studies but across the criteria both in terms of its ability to leave 'a footprint' and in terms of its qualitative characteristics. Another interesting pattern that must be mentioned is that although the overall self-reflexive European tone is predominantly optimistic, the self-critical remarks relate predominantly to more 'traditional' and 'state-centric' criteria of actorness, namely, the EU official discourse points to autonomy, unity and capabilities as weak points while exhibiting an overarching positive attitude to the ideational content of the self-assumed roles. Russian approach is somewhat different as while challenging all the aspects of the EU's performance as an actor, it makes the identity-related conceptualizations the main target of its criticism. Therefore, the EU's distinctive qualities that are perceived by the EU as its main strength are being almost totally rejected by Russia. And finally, comparing the cases of Russian messages with positive affinity and negative connotations, the balance is glaringly shifted towards non- and misrecognition, thereby indicating a clear dissonance between the EU's self-understandings as a political actor and the Russian 'discursive mirror'.

2.3. Implications of Russian (mis-)recognition for EU-Russian ideational interactions

This section summarizes the answer to the empirical question concerning the effects of the Russian (mis-)recognition on EU identity that are correlatively tied to the potential consequences for EU-Russian relations. The ontological importance of external recognition for consolidation of identity is based on two dimensions: psychological and

normative. The psychological aspect is correlatively linked to self-esteem which is enhanced if recognition is granted. On the other hand, normative dimension conditions the adoption of a certain type of behaviour towards the other actor depending on the status granted to it.

For the European Union, whose identity is highly intersubjective, the effects of external (mis-)recognition are arguably more resonant in psychological terms. The analysis of the trends of (mis-)recognition prevalent in Russian political discourse highlights that there is a critical gap between the EU's self-understandings and the way it is perceived by Russia. This 'uncomfortable mirror' is bound to have a detrimental effect on the EU's self-awareness as a political group which is still in the vulnerable position of establishing itself as a credible international actor which strives for the affirmation and sedimentation of its own particular identity. On the other hand, Russian misrecognition can potentially have negative repercussions at the European domestic level given that in light of the rising Euro-scepticism some national leaders might feel tempted to take advantage of it.

The EU in its confrontation with the predominantly 'uncomfortable mirror' in the face of Russia that denigrates its self-esteem is theoretically expected to recur to the following psychologically-informed reactions: either to change its images under external pressure or to neglect the dissonance and resist in reestablishing its identity. Although the detailed European reaction to the Russian feedback is beyond the scope of this thesis, the coherence and immutability of the EU's discourse during more than a decade testifies to the EU's inclination to engage in the 'struggle for recognition' and insist in reiterating its self-representations.

This perspective allows us to come up with an answer to the main empirical question concerning the need to explain the tense nature of EU-Russian relations and their evolution into an open conflict against the Ukrainian context by shedding light on the sources of the conflictual predispositions that have been an overarching characteristic of interaction between both actors during the decade preceding the crisis. The paradigm based on the lack or deficiency of positive recognition is by itself a vivid indicator that the relations are under a strain and of the debilitated EU's legitimacy and weakened political and economic leverage vis-à-vis Russia. In the normative dimension the (mis-) recognition patterns condition Russian behaviour towards the EU as the lack of European

legitimacy and its perceived deficiencies will tempt Russia to exploit these weaknesses thereby intensifying the conflictual relations.

On the other hand, psychological consequences of the (non-) and misrecognition provide another plausible explanation. Bringing together Russian propensity to challenge the EU's identity as an actor and the EU's persistence in discursive reiteration of its self-images, it is possible to come up with an account of the conflictual dynamics underlying relations between both actors. The way the EU presents itself generates discursive resistance of Russia which colours the interaction in negative terms and generates conflictual predilections. In turn, the absence of the EU's malleability in its reactions to the Russian feedback recreates and intensifies the conflict. In fact, discursive narratives of the EU and Russia expose very few touch points flowing in parallel rather than intersecting. Thus, the 'dialogue' could be an imprecise term for describing the ideational interactions between both actors, as the discursive 'encounter' is more about 'listening to but not hearing'. This state of affairs makes the status of 'strategic partnership' routinely reiterated by Russia and the European Union a purely declarative concept.

This logic helps to delve further into the sources of the accumulated mutual irritation between both actors. Taking into account that the cycle of mutual (mis-)recognition can be repeated *ad infinitum,* the EU's rejection and neglect of Russian discursive 'protest' is bound to arouse Russian retaliatory resentment as it feels that its status of strategic partner worthy of listening to is threatened and it feels propelled to engage in the 'struggle for recognition' of its own status, thereby bringing the conflict to the next level of intensity. Even the infrequent cases of recognition harbour Russian resentments as it feels its reconition is of little value for the EU in the conditions of asymmetric relations. Thus, according to Forsberg (2014) it is not the objective status that matters but the actors' perceptions that the recognition that it merits has not been granted. In this manner, the EU insists in resisting the external misrecognition as it feels that its self-representations deserve to be recognized, while Russia expects the denigrating treatment from the EU that endangers its status of 'a significant Other' and therefore tends to misinterpret even inoffensive EU actions.

From this point of view the first three empirical chapters exploring Russian perceptions of the EU in three different settings in the pre-2014 period, can serve as precursors of the upcoming conflict as Russian political narrative not only exhibited varying patterns of

misrecognition of the EU's images, but also routinely indicated to its grievances related to the perceived power asymmetry and Russian attempts to renegotiate its position as a junior partner in the basically unilateral European world. However, the EU seemingly remained 'deaf' to Russian discursive protests, thereby intensifying its resentments and forcing it to undertake decisive steps in its quest for recognition. Thus, the EU-Russian conflict can be presented in terms not only of the 'struggle for recognition' but the 'struggle for recognition of the status' unfolded between both actors. This explanation brings to the fore the constitutive role of the language as an instrument in the 'struggle for recognition', and which serves as a means of politicizing and securitizing discourse by both parties, that is presenting the issue in terms of the "existential threat" and priority, thereby legitimizing the need to treat it with "extraordinary means" (Buzan et al., 1998: 26).

The crisis in Ukraine can be seen, in this respect, as a logical continuation and culmination of the EU-Russian mutual (mis-) recognition battles at the ideational level. The fact that the post-2013 EU and Russian narratives recreate the previous discursive patterns in the most intensified and politicized form along the Self/Other nexus serve as evidence that both actors found themselves embroiled in the next level of the self-reinforcing cycle of misrecognition.

Here it should be kept in mind that the status concerns are always potentially antagonistic, in the case of Russia and the EU this precariousness is double as the quest for recognition involves not only the struggle for the affirmation of the particular identity, but the struggle for who is endowed with the right to grant recognition[201]. In this manner, in case of the EU and Russia it is not only the existential battle of the EU to gain recognition as an established actor characterized by distinctive identity but also Russia's resistance to being denied the right to grant this recognition being treated as a junior and *insignificant* partner. Thus, it can be concluded, that both actors found themselves caught in the *mutual misrecognition 'trap'* which is not so easy to get out of given that according to Forsberg (2014: 324) status concerns are difficult to solve and even more so if they are framed in zero-sum terms and involve the questions of hierarchy.

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[201] World politics is not only the battlefield scene to be recognized, but also is the struggle as Ringmar (2002: 120) frames it, for "who should have the rights to impose what descriptions on whom".

3. Theoretical contribution to existing literature

The thesis endeavoured to fill in gaps in the literature on the EU's foreign policy identity and roles, EU-Russian relations and the literature on the Self-Other interactions based on the constructivist and poststructuralist theoretical underpinnings by introducing an under-explored explanatory potential of the external perceptions.

3.1. Identity of the EU as an international actor

The EU's identity enjoyed a lively academic interest that generated a prolific and variegated stock of literature that in one way or another revolves around the 'distinctiveness' claim. This thesis contributes to scholarly literature by offering a more empirically-oriented and theoretically-based approach to rectify the EU-centrism of the debates and by subjecting self-representations of the EU to external judgment to check if the EU's allegedly distinctive foreign policy action is positively evaluated by the 'target audience' and if it matters in the real-life context. This exercise is particularly useful for the EU which, positing itself as a distinctive and qualitatively different actor is even more dependent on the outcomes of the struggle for recognition in the state-centric world. Besides, the European Union that is currently undergoing an existential crisis will find the external perspective useful in the strategic reconsideration of its roles in international affairs.

The external reality check, as the empirical analysis carried out in this chapter testifies, can challenge the EU's ambitions towards 'distinctiveness' and the relevancy of the related concepts of the EU in the real-world background. In fact, the EU's self-reflexive conceptualizations as a normative, ethical, transformative power and other related depictions constitute the main target for Russian criticism. The EU's image is far from being distinctive with the exception, probably, of the EU's integration experience. Besides, as the analysis of the empirical samples across the case studies shows, this distinctiveness is potentially 'inflammable' and dangerous as it can generate resistance at the ideational levels with repercussions on foreign policy outcomes. Thus, the EU's endogenous construction of the identity does not guarantee its international legitimacy.

Another contribution of the thesis is based on a holistic view on the identity by combining traditional criteria of the actorness implying the 'capacity to act' and the ideational

content that qualifies the EU as a certain type of an actor. In this manner, the investigation advances understanding of how the EU's capabilities, policies, institutional design and ideational representations contribute to the EU's images as a coherent foreign policy actor characterized by certain values, objectives, rationale and distinctive nature, an approach justified by the fact that the EU has to operate in the state-centric system. However, the external scrutiny of the EU action conceptualized in this manner suggests, that although in the eyes of Russia the EU managed to become a visible regional and global actor, its identity as a 'new' type of an actor is uneven in case studies and differs depending on the field of action. Besides, the EU's identity is rather unsettled given its numerous deficiencies both in its 'capacity to act' and qualitative characteristics. In this way the thesis indicates that EU actorness, which was frequently pre-theorized and taken for granted, is to withstand the empirical test of external recognition. Up till now, the results of the external reality check provided by Russia are rather unsettling as the EU's identity as an actor is perceived as predominantly *rhetorical* with its objectives and purposes being declaratory and not backed up by real deeds.

3.2. EU-Russian relations: ideational interactions, conflictual predispositions and future prospects

The findings of this thesis also contribute to the scholarly debates on EU-Russian relations in the following ways.

First, the findings of the empirical analysis confirmed the theoretical assumptions of the constitutive force of the political utterances and their disruptive potential. Therefore, the thesis contributes to the enormous stock of literature on the topic by applying the language-informed perspective to explore the understandings of the conflict at the ideational level between the EU and Russia and by providing an account of how the conflicting but restrained rhetoric became 'securitized' to the level of 'existential threat' through discursive practices.

Second, one of the main corollaries of the argument presented in the thesis is that the sources of the conflict are not rooted in the security dilemma, clashing and incompatible identities and status concerns as such, but are based on the 'struggle for recognition', or, more specifically, *perceptions* of these factors. Thus, the thesis emphasizes the importance of the subjective perceptions attached to the real-life situations as the

mechanisms underlying the conflicting dynamics. Following this analytical narrative both actors are embroiled in the vicious cycle of misrecognition as the EU, which is struggling to have its identity as an actor sedimented in the intersubjective structure resists perceivably undeserved contestation of its images by Russia. In turn, Russia perceives its security, interests, identity and status as a significant, relevant and equal counterpart and an important power on the European continent as threatened.

Besides, this thesis contributes to the literature on the role of status concerns and prestige in EU-Russia relations and scholarly debates on recognition in general. The empirical findings confirm the hypothetical assumption that the dialogical nature of ideational interactions represents a much more complex panorama than can be fully captured by the simple recognition-misrecognition dichotomy. Thus, the thesis suggests that the conceptual toolbox should be expanded to include other in-between analytical categories that reflect better the varying tinges of the discursive resistance and which possess varying impact on the outcomes of the ideational 'encounters'.

Third, this perspective might prompt the scholarship to not only rethink the role of the Otherness attributed to Russia but to embark on a further conceptualization of the nature of the Otherness expressed not only along the negative-positive difference scale, but involving the active and passive dimensions. The literature on identity is unequivocal on the constitutive role of the external outside, however, it frequently disregards how the interactive process occurs based on the interchange of images and the degree of the Self's receptiveness to the Other's influence and, therefore, the acknowledgement of the real constitutive role of the Other. Following this logic it might be justified to suggest, that the Other can be a passive referent point against which the Self's identity is mobilized or an active participant in the identity formation being accepted and *permitted* to act as a truly constitutive participant in the ideational process, thereby, acquiring a status of the 'Significant Other' in the true sense.

This analytical angle encourages recasting Russia's conceptualization as the 'EU's significant Other' having an active and constitutive role in the formation of the EU's identity which is accepted not only in academic thought, but which found its embodiment in the concept of 'strategic partnership' routinely reiterated in European and Russian political discourses. Rather, as this thesis indicates, Russian role in the EU identity formation can be characterized as limited Otherness.

This tendency is also reciprocated to a certain extent, as Russia, that was torn by its ambivalent position in relation to the ideational linkages with the EU(rope), steadfastly moves away towards disassociation as the European model is losing its relevance for Russia and the images of the EU and its leverage are being discredited. In this way, this thesis also contributes to the literature on the 'eternal' civilizational identity debates within Russia, by providing empirical evidence that Russia, in its vector of development moves away from Europe as a model and Europe as an idea towards the concept of Europe as a geopolitical reality that is based on the ambivalent perceptions of the EU as an inevitable competitor and a partner.

And finally, this investigation contributes to the nascent literature on the future of the EU and Russian relations and the way out of the current *impasse.* The thesis shares the pessimistic tone of the literature given that the identity-related status concerns are incredibly difficult to resolve. It is even more difficult to get out of this vicious cycle of reproducing the logic of confrontation at the current stage of securitization of the issue when extraordinary measures[202] have already been applied in the 'struggle for status recognition'. Thus, the analytical perspective of this thesis indicates, the EU and Russia got locked in the self-reinforcing cycle of contestation of each other's rationalities and statuses which makes the current collision the most probable and lingering characteristic of the future dynamic. As both parties got bogged down in the mutual misrecognition 'trap', the most practical solution could be to focus on pragmatism and concentrate on the small things to break this vicious cycle.

In the most positive, although now seemingly unlikely outcome, it is possible to speak about slow rapprochement between two actors that may happen through the "internalization" of collective norms, the process through which the former enemy state can not only be seen in a more positive light but even consider each other as friends (Wendt, 1999), "a positive Other" (Neumann and Welsh, 1991) but even "as an extension of the Self" (Wendt, 1994: 386). However, the approximation requires enormous efforts on both sides. When it comes to the EU it should enhance Russia's self-esteem by proposing a truly equal cooperation. In this perspective the advancement of the common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok proposed repeatedly by Russian political

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[202] In this context the destabilizing existence of two self-proclaimed 'people's republics' in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea will remain the stumbling blocks that will keep EU-Russian relations at loggerheads.

leaders would not be a bad idea at all by becoming a practical implementation of the theoretical idea of the Other-Help system[203] based on mutual recognition of the Self and Other's identities. The EU's responsiveness to initiatives proposed by Russia could potentially diminish Russia's feelings of being a somewhat passive recipient of norms in the EU-centric order by giving it more ownership. In turn, Russia should embark on an open-minded reconsideration of its relations with the European Union, in particular in the common neighbourhood. First, the Russian political elite should take the EU seriously as an actor thereby not only recognizing its existence, but also assuming obligations to treat it as such in the foreign policy interactions. Besides, in view of the EU's ability to provide a consolidated response to Russian actions in Ukraine (Natorski and Pomorska, 2017) Russia should 'learn a lesson' that it can question and even undermine to a certain extent the EU's rationale and existence, but it can not change the EU's rules or disrupt European integration. And last, but not least, both actors should take into account each other's rationalities and face the necessity of mutual recognition, 'listening and hearing', as the Ukrainian crisis testifies to the fact that both actors lost the opportunity to construct a genuine dialogue acting as 'deaf' counterparts.

4. Future research

This thesis does not make a claim of providing an exhaustive description of Russian perceptions of the EU identity and an all-embracing explanation of the sources of conflictual predispositions and of the mechanisms that triggered the intensification of conflict. There are too many interlinkages and factors underlying these questions that this investigation offers just one of the plausible explanations based on the ideational mechanisms activated by the processes of (mis-) recognition.

The thesis has certain limitations. It concentrates only on the official discourse of the key actors and fundamental foreign policy documents related to the four EU's international roles. To advance a fuller understanding of the Russian perceptions of the EU and their repercussions on the relations between actors it is possible to extend the research to other issues on the EU-Russian agenda and other EU international roles or to transfer the focus

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[203] Mercer (1995) drawing on the constructivist accounts of identity points to the existence of the "other-help" international system as an alternative to the neorealist concept of anarchy based on "self help". This is a cooperative security system that is based on joined responsibility, empathy and altruism and emerged as a result of the Self and Other approximation as deemed possible by Wendt (1992).

to other foreign policy setting, for instance, in the multilateral fora. Besides, the analysis can be deepened by embracing other intertextual models to scrutinize images of the EU in the wider contexts involving domestic political debates, the media, corporate institutions, academic debates or the wider public and, in a revolutionary manner, even the electronic and televisual images as having immediate effect.

Thus, the investigation testifies to the fact that there is a glaring gap between the EU's subjective self-descriptions and intersubjective understandings, partially caused by the fact that the European Union became somewhat 'blinded' by its own high-flown images. In this way, this thesis suggests that further investigations providing more empirical evidence on the perceptions of the 'target audiences' are needed to develop a more real-world applicable classification of the EU as a certain type of an actor and assist the EU in making its distinctiveness matter. Moreover, such research can advance understandings of what the EU can do about the potential discrepancies between its subjective self-descriptions and intersubjective understandings.

The theoretical and methodological framing of the thesis broadens the avenue of research on EU identity by highlighting not only the need to focus on the outsiders' perceptions of the EU but on the EU's reaction to this external feedback. More empirical insights are needed to find out if the Europeans are at all aware of the way they are perceived by outsiders and to trace the influence of the external perceptions on the internal self-awareness, domestic debates and the EU's acceptance or resistance to its mirror images.

And last but not least, in light of the uncertainty of future developments, theoretical and empirical findings can provide valuable insights into further investigations of the EU-Russian relations in the following ways. Some researchers argue that the Ukrainian crisis heralded the return of Russia as the EU's 'significant Other' (Timofeev, 2015; Shevtsova, 2015) that makes the EU rethink its existence through the antagonism with Russia. Thus, research is needed to highlight what meaning is to be attributed to the 'significant Otherness'. In the case of growing opposition framed in the antagonistic terms, the ideational and mutual perceptions gap will be widened as a result of intensification of reciprocal depictions in antithetical terms thereby colouring the Self/Other interaction in negative tones.

On the other hand, however chimerical it might sound in the current context, the EU and Russia might have learnt 'a lesson' and will choose a more pragmatic path based on more

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open and dialogically-informed ideational interaction and constructive engagement, thereby opening up possibilities for sustainable cohabitation of the divergent, but not necessarily conflicting identities.

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