

Editorial

We are glad to present the 9th issue of the *European Political Economy Review*. Two years ago, we have welcomed the publication of a special issue on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). It was stated that “the Neighbourhood policy (...) represents one of the most innovative EU foreign policies as such, [thus] it serves as a real capability test for the EU status as an international actor”. There is still a growing interest among the scholars working on EU foreign policy to understand and grasp EU’s identity, role and influence capacities in its immediate neighbourhood. The current issue gathers some original contributions which propose different theoretical approaches on how to understand EU’s relations with its Neighbours. Despite a different point of departure, the authors have in common to highlight the contradictions inherent to the internal functioning of the EU and the discrepancies between EU’s official rhetoric and external action.

The first article, by *Petr Kratochvíl*, the vice-director of the Institute of International Relations (IIR) in Prague, tackles the issue of how the EU defines its own identity in the southern and Eastern neighbourhood. Adopting a constructivist approach, it looks mainly at the official documents of the European Commission to show that the EU oscillates between two contradictory positions – that of a power centre (a “dominant power”) and that of an equal among equals (a “benign power”). The author identifies two discursive areas frequently mentioned in the documents to show this: the notion of joint ownership and the EU’s stance towards the frozen conflict. He finally argues that each of the two facets of EU’s identity may become dominant under particular circumstances.

In the second article of this issue, *Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués*, researcher at the Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain) and currently Visiting Fellow at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, also adopts a constructivist methodology to approach EU's identity in the ENP, but she evolves within a different framework of analysis. The author argues that a valuable addendum on rationalist explananda for the varied impact of EU's foreign policy, can be found by exploring how the EU constructs its international identity vis-à-vis neighboring countries and how EU's collective action is perceived abroad. She uses the Northern Dimension and the Union for the Mediterranean as examples to verify how the EU identitarian projection creates contradictions and/or dissonance with neighboring countries.

A third article, by *Florent Parmentier*, a post-doctoral student at the Centre Européen in Sciences Po Paris, proposes an analysis of the Russian-Georgian war which took place in August 2008. This contribution comes in a good place at a time where, one year after, analysts come back with various interpretations of the event. Florent Parmentier argues that the Russian-Georgian conflict of August 2008 proves to be a useful case in order to understand the functioning of the EU as a normative power in times of crisis. He looks at six EU major countries – Germany, France, Great-Britain, Italy, Poland and Spain – in order to show the different ways to deal with the issue and with Russia. In the end, he shows that preferences are very much linked with norms in that geopolitical context.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this issue!

EPER's executive committee