

## The constitutive power of outsiders: The European neighbourhood policy and the eastern dimension

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### A B S T R A C T

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At a time when the EU is attempting to mark itself out as a power for transformation, particularly in its neighbourhood, this article analyses the ability of outsiders in the margins of Europe to have a constitutive impact on the nature of the EU's policies, its borders and not least its identity and perception of its security environment. Analysing the EU's relationship with Ukraine and Belarus through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the article argues the ENP's effectiveness and nature is dependent upon two factors: first, where the partner countries are located (and locate themselves) along a continuum of positive–negative otherness with respect to the EU and; second, their ability to utilise particular strategies of marginality to pursue their goals. If the EU is understood as a transformative power, this article argues that the nature of this power is significantly circumscribed by the attitudes, preferences, strategies and identities of those it seeks to influence.

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### Introduction

In a recent analysis of Russian foreign policy under Putin, Viatcheslav Morozov (2007, 2010) shows how Russia has been able to dislocate Europe's identity by refusing to accept the nature of otherness assigned to it in typical Western discourses, discourses that seek to locate Russia as Europe's and the West's constitutive outside in rather unproblematic terms. Instead, Morozov embraces the idea that the constitution of otherness is an intersubjective process in which the identified Other has the capacity to impact on how the relationship of otherness is defined. This leads him to argue that by emphasising Russia's Europeanness and constantly asserting the importance of democratic values championed by the West, Putin has developed a Russian identity which cannot be easily described by the West as an enemy and driven into outright otherness, despite the fact that Putin's definitions of democracy and his sovereignty-centred conception of Europe differs markedly from that held elsewhere in Europe and the West. The result is that Russia exists in the margins, in-between, 'neither a member nor a complete alien in the family of liberal democracies'. This, he notes, 'produces dislocation in the structure of meaning which underlies the entire (neo)liberal world order' and which causes considerable

irritation to Western leaders because 'it hampers liberal universalist efforts to construct a world neatly divided into the "well-ordered peoples" and the "outlaw states"' (Morozov, 2007).

This rather arresting analysis raises significant questions for understanding how the EU is evolving as an international actor. At a time when the EU is attempting to mark itself out as a power for transformation, the example problematises its ability precisely to do so. However, while the fact that a major global power like Russia is able to unsettle Western and European identity discourses is perhaps not too surprising, in turn it does beg the question of whether smaller countries, especially those in the marginal spaces between the EU and Russia, might be able to do likewise. In this context, this article analyses the ability of outsiders in the margins of Europe to have a constitutive impact on the nature of the EU's policies, its borders and not least its identity and perception of its security environment. In other words, if the EU is to be understood as a transformative power this article argues that the nature of this power is significantly circumscribed by the preferences, strategies and identities of those it seeks to influence. In this respect, the article draws on a growing body of literature which has sought to explore the ability of margins to impact on the designs of the core, in particular developing Parker's (2008) schematic outlining of the different strategies that particular marginal actors might be able to utilise in their cause.

To demonstrate this, the article analyses the EU's relationship with Belarus and Ukraine in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). In assessing the ENP's effectiveness and development and how this is related to various sets of 'recognition

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games' (Ringmar, 2002) between the EU and these neighbours, we first analyse the EU's different conceptions of the 'Europeanness' of these countries and its ENP partners in general. This, in turn, is related to where 'Europe' and the 'EU' exist in the partners' own identity narratives, which we argue has the effect of either blurring or solidifying the EU's external border with its partners. Entailed within this is the contention that the ENP plays out differently between the cases to the extent that the EU locates states differently along a continuum between positive–negative otherness, but also in regard to where those countries locate themselves and the types of strategies they adopt in their relations with the EU. Ultimately, we argue that the various interactions entailed will help shed light on the depth of the relationship the EU is likely to develop with different partners and on how partners' differentiated interpretations and representations of the EU impact on the EU's representation of itself as a force for good in the neighbourhood and the nature of the border that it is constructing through the ENP.

Although others (e.g. Bosse & Korosteleva-Polglase, 2009; Jones, 2006) have also highlighted how the EU's neighbours are able to unsettle and constrain the EU's ability to exercise external governance by confronting the EU with their own bordering practises and preferences, by developing Parker's scheme of marginality strategies we seek to explore this power more systematically. In short, therefore, this article not only asks how the outside is constituted by the EU, but how the EU itself may be constituted by its outside.

### The constitutive power of outsiders

While much has been written about EU identity formation in recent years and the relationship between identity constructions and the nature of EU actorness, it is important to note these analyses have largely been concerned with inside-out renderings of the EU. This can be seen, for example, in Wæver's (1996) analysis that locates the constitutive narratives of EU identity in a rejection of its members' interwar past; in Diez's (2004) argument that geopolitics is replacing history in identifying a new set of constitutive others; or in arguments that the EU is a self-defined civilian or normative power (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2009; Manners, 2002). Likewise, it can also be seen in the literature on Europeanisation which focuses on the EU's ability to export its norms, values and governance model to outsiders (Clark & Jones, 2008: 308; Lavenex, 2004, 2008). Moreover, this inside-out approach is also evident in critical literature on the ENP which has highlighted how the policy is premised on discourses of exclusion and othering, but without leaving space for inter-subjectivity and whereas such the EU is seen as possessing a hegemonic ability to constitute its identity (and that of others) (Albioni, 2005; Del Sarto & Schumacher, 2005; Pardo & Zemer, 2005; Scott, 2005).

While we agree that these inside-out identity embedded accounts are valuable and insightful, they also carry the danger of producing overly static visions of the EU and the construction of identities and borders within key policies, such as the ENP. Our starting point, therefore, is to assert the importance of remembering that self-narratives of the EU do not occur against a blank slate and that the perceptions, constructions and strategies of outsiders may be just as important for framing the EU's future development.

#### *Degrees of otherness*

Although the impact of outsiders on constituting EU identity has not received much attention, a concern with the constitutive power of outsiders has been central to several theoretical literatures. Post-structuralists, for example, have demonstrated how the construction

of identity is always drawn through a dialogue of demarcating the Self from the outside. As Campbell (1992: 69–70), also Doty (1993: 316) argues, identity narratives are therefore implicitly about border drawing and making the Other foreign (not Self). Two things flow from this position.

First, understood as a dialogue the Other becomes an agent whose recognition of the Self's claims to identity is important (Hansen, 2007), not least in terms of legitimating policy and action. As Ringmar (2002: 118) notes, we need others to accept our descriptions of ourselves, to recognise us as certain types of actors. Consequently, it is not enough to simply proclaim an identity oneself. While that description may be accepted by outside actors, often such external recognition must be fought for and earned. Otherwise the Self may need to narrate an alternative story that does gain the recognition and acceptance of the outside. One example of such a 'recognition game' is the 2004 EU enlargement. As Schimmelfennig (2004) argues, the prospective EU members kept the enlargement option on the agenda by consistently referring to the EU's own foundational myths as a peace project open to all in Europe. The implication was that the legitimacy of the EU's own self-identity was at stake and would only be recognised by the outside if membership remained on the table.

Second, though, it also follows that how the Other is designated and constituted will have implications for the nature of the border established between the Self and Other. The tendency in much of the literature has been to focus on how Others are frequently constituted in radicalised terms as an enemy around which a political community can unite. However, whilst the achievement of subjectivity requires a narrative that differentiates the Self from Others, otherness need not only be negative, threatening, or oppositional (Connolly, 1985: 371; Neumann, 1992: 223). Others can be friends and partners as well as enemies. As such, Hansen (2006: 37–41) posits a spectrum of 'degrees of otherness' where otherness always exists along a plane from positive to negative. This enables us to see a significant range of possibilities which extend beyond that of the Other as either enemy or friend. For example, the identities of others may be constituted as contending, complementary or as negative. Others may also be depicted as superior to the Self and in need of emulation. This, for example, can explain the Eastern European idea of 'returning to Europe' after the end of the Cold War, a discourse which implied that these countries were simultaneously the same as, but temporarily separated from, the assumed European 'mainstream experience' of Western Europe (Hansen, 2006: 39–40). In the case of the EU's relationship with its eastern partners in the ENP we might also postulate a spectrum from willing to unwilling others depending on the neighbours' attitudes and acceptance or otherwise of EU transformative agendas of Europeanisation.

What all this indicates, though, is that as with 'recognition games' the assignment of the nature of otherness is an intersubjective process where the identified Other has the capacity to impact on how the relationship of otherness is defined. The Other has the option of either accepting how it is characterised or challenging its constitution with contending representations.

#### *The power of margins*

A similar related literature focuses on the role and power of margins in international relations. Whereas traditionally margins are perceived as lacking subjectivity and constitutive impact, and therefore are seen to have only minor significance for understanding global processes, this literature argues margins have various important strategies open to them through which they can wield considerable influence (see Browning & Joenniemi, 2004, 2008a; Christou, 2010; Parker & Armstrong, 2000; Shields, 1991).

Parker (2000: 8) therefore argues there is a need to 'dissociate marginality from the idea of inferiority to, or dependence upon, a corresponding core'. For Parker, it is precisely their uncertain status and position on the edge – at the boundaries between the inside and outside of any particular order – that provides margins with possibilities for constitutive action. To illustrate the point, he notes that in most elections the major campaign battle is on trying to attract undecided voters, whereas the support of core voters is usually taken for granted (Parker, 2000: 12–13).

Such arguments also provide space to problematise mainstream 'modernist' approaches to conceptualising territory and space in international relations, where again margins tend to be characterised in terms of their distance from central positions of power and therefore largely ignored. From a modernist perspective space is understood as divided into clearly defined territorial units, the borders between which are understood to be impermeable and clear-cut. In turn, power is seen as projected evenly from a state's centre across its territory (Ruggie, 1993). Within this perspective margins do not possess resources of their own, but remain largely subject to the designs and strategies of the centre.

This understanding of territoriality and borders is problematic. As critics have pointed out, borders rarely exist as lines of clear division but are better characterised as fuzzy zones, frontiers and as intermediary spaces of interaction and exchange (e.g. Newman, 2000; Paasi, 2003). As such, margins near, at, on or transcending the border are better seen as 'substantive territories in their own right' that, whilst closely linked to and defined by the centre(s) to which they are marginal, also exist as sites of action themselves (Parker, 2000: 7). Their connection to that which lies beyond the boundary arguably provides margins with a certain amount of constitutive power in regard to different centres. Indeed, it is precisely the connections that exist across borders in the margins which points to the fact that the very definition of the centre is also dependent upon what happens at the margins (Shields, 1991: 276–278). The result is that 'the geometry of space ordered from the center will be met by an alternative ordering (or disordering) impulse from the margin' (Parker, 2008: 6–7), which impacts on the nature of the relations possible between the centre and the margin, on the nature of the centre's borders, and as such on the nature of the centre more broadly. As Parker puts it, since 'margins and centers are defined via their *relationship*... the capacities of the center are already, in some sense, hostage to the margin' (Parker, 2008: 12).

However, if margins have influence then it is important to understand the nature of this influence and the strategies that may be available to them. Although Parker (2008: 13–16) outlines multiple strategies available to margins, adapting his model we argue five are particularly relevant for analysing relations between the EU and Belarus/Ukraine in the ENP context (Fig. 1).

The first strategy is that of *obtaining loyalty rewards*, where the margin seeks 'benefits from the center in return for not moving and enhancing another center' (Parker, 2008: 13). In our case this primarily refers to using either implicit or explicit threats of orienting towards Russia if EU concessions are not forthcoming. The second strategy is that of *obtaining intermediation rewards* by trying to gain benefits by positioning the margin as an important boundary between two competing centres' spheres of influence. In our case it refers to a possible strategy of establishing the margin as a medium of communication between the EU and Russia, perhaps as a result of claimed special knowledge of Russia's nature. The third strategy is that of *playing one centre off another*, where the margin seeks to create an auction or competition of benefits and rewards between the relative centres in return for the margin's loyalty. The fourth strategy is one of *manifest emulation* where 'a marginal player pretends to adopt characteristics from the identity

of the center(s)' (Parker, 2008: 13). This strategy delineates an instrumental adaptation and 'selective appropriation' of the centre's characteristics in order to appear familiar, reliable and easy to deal with and thereby achieve rewards. For example, Kuus (2007: chap. 6, 2008: 177) has noted how leaders in Central Europe have frequently told Westerners what they want to hear in order to attract or retain their attention and money. Importantly, though, this does not exclude the possibility of *selective* appropriation melding into *real* appropriation (which could be adopted as a tactic in itself) where there is an internalisation of the centre's core values and identity (Parker, 2008: 13–14). In this case, this might relate to the marginal actors conforming to the EU *acquis* and the conditionality principles entailed in the ENP as a demonstration of their European identity. Finally, a strategy of *manifest rejection* is also available, where the margin exerts influence over a centre by rejecting its overtures. In our case this could refer to the rejection of an EU orientation possibly in favour of an orientation towards Russia (or alternatively in favour of isolation – e.g. Cold War Albania).

A key thing to note in each of these strategies, however, is that frequently margins are constituted by their position between two competing centres, with this *betweenness* as such becoming a core aspect of their strategic resources and constitutive power. In our case the respective centres are the EU and Russia, with implications for possible marginality strategies stemming from which centre is seen as most salient (the centre with which margins have most connection) at any given point in time. Furthermore, margins can only be identified in the context of specific relationships (often over specific issues). Marginality, as such, is not to be essentialised as a distinct characteristic of different entities. In Parker's (2008: 8) view, therefore, 'The distinguishing feature of centers, that which places them "at" the center, is their capacity to organize space around them to enclose other entities. Any capacity has limits, however, and the margin is where the center's ordering capacity begins to ebb'.

Bringing the above discussion on otherness and margins together, we argue in what follows that the EU's eastern neighbours (Ukraine and Belarus) can play significant constitutive (and disruptive) roles in how the EU attempts to constitute its Self-identity, the identity of its Others, and in turn the nature of its border with those others and what this means for the EU's perceptions of its security environment. To highlight this requires two things. First, and in the next section, we analyse the EU's own identity narratives in the ENP and where it locates the neighbours along a spectrum of negative–positive otherness in this context. Second, we analyse how 'Europe' and the 'EU' are positioned in Ukrainian and Belarusian identity narratives. This enables us to indicate the intersubjective nature of how borders, identity and security are being constituted at the EU's eastern edges and to highlight the constitutive power and resources that exist in the EU's margins to impact back on the core. In short, our analytical focus can be boiled down to two concerns. First, how relationships of otherness have impacted on the success and effectiveness of the ENP and where our claim is that the ENP works best in relation to a certain category of otherness (which might be termed 'Willing Others') (Emerson, Noutcheva, & Popescu, 2007). And second, that the relations of otherness also provide the outside with the capacity to act back on the EU and affect how the EU is itself constituted at its borders (whether, for example, it remains expansionist or if the emphasis shifts to a focus on firmer borders).

### European neighbourhood policy

As has been widely remarked, at its core the ENP is about drawing borders and othering. The initial development of the ENP was spurred by the eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004 and

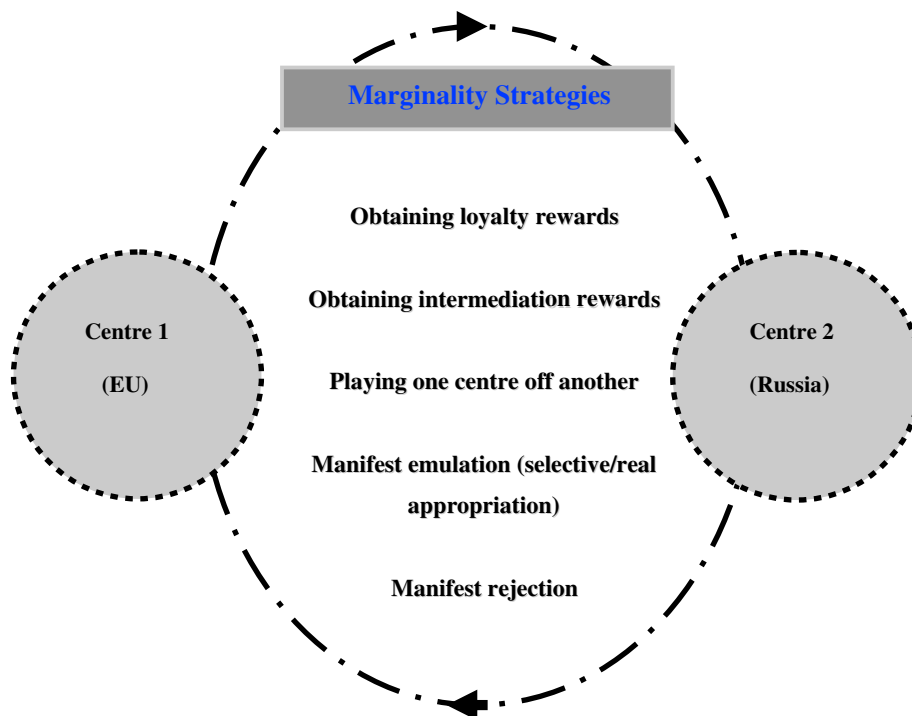


Fig. 1. The power of margins.

subsequent concerns that the expansion to 25 (now 27) member states would pose the EU with significant challenges in terms of democratic legitimacy and bureaucratic workability. In this context widespread agreement emerged that the Union's continued existence would require a decision on where the EU's final borders should be drawn. The ENP therefore stands as an initial statement demarcating the EU inside from its outside once and for all (Browning & Joenniemi, 2008a,b).

The significance of this move should not be missed for several closely related reasons. First, in terms of security the ENP marks a radical change from historical practise. Traditionally the EU has offered the promise of future membership – of incorporation within the border – as a way to promote stability and security at its edges. Establishing the ENP as a policy designed to demarcate the EU's *finalité* therefore poses questions for the EU of how it might promote stability and security in its neighbouring regions if the prospect of future membership is no longer available. Second, the desire for demarcating the Union's final borders also challenges established identity narratives depicting the EU as a peace project. In this respect, the ENP represents a radical departure that challenges traditional EU policies that have been performative of this conceptualisation of the EU's self-identity, precisely because the EU's 'peace mission' has been premised on promoting transformation in its neighbourhood via the carrot of future membership (Browning & Joenniemi, 2008a; Tassinari, 2006). (EU)rope's peacefulness and the spread of 'European values' have therefore been performed through its openness to enlargement and its unwillingness to draw definitive borders of exclusion.

The ENP attempts to address both these issues – of enhancing security beyond the border and upholding its foundational identity narrative as a peace project – by instead promising willing neighbours closer relations with the EU in return for transformations in accord with the EU *acquis*. In the current phraseology the ENP partners are being offered 'everything but institutions'. Indeed, in return/reward for good behaviour (adopting EU norms

and practises) the EU is offering to extend the EU's Four Freedoms of movement (of goods, capital, people and services) in their entirety (European Commission, 2003: 10). The previous conditionality logic behind enlargement therefore remains intact, except the carrot is now smaller.

In terms of relations of otherness the ENP implicitly establishes a spectrum across which the partners might conceivably move or position themselves. On the one hand, the relationship to the ENP countries is defined rather positively, with the EU proclaiming that ultimately the partners will come to constitute a benevolent and stable 'ring of friends' (European Commission, 2003: 4). However, friendship in this context is defined as related to the partners' willingness to transform themselves in accordance with EU preferences and the *acquis*. In other words, to qualify for inclusion in the 'ring of friends', one should demonstrate a willingness to become like 'us' and accept unconditionally EU preferences as the right path to development and the good life. Entailed, therefore, are several characteristics central to the EU's construction of the otherness of its ENP partners.

First, in this framing difference and distance from EU norms, and more particularly unwillingness to close the gap by moving in the EU's direction, has the potential to appear suspicious and threatening. Friendship, here, is all about the willingness of the partners to conform to the EU's own image. Unwillingness, in contrast, would seem to entail the designation of the Other as a non-friend, or even a threatening Other (because of its implicit challenge to the universalist prescription of the EU model) – even if such apparent unwillingness stems from abiding by democratic procedures and mandates at home (for similar criticisms on the accession process, see Raik, 2002: 16–21). In this respect the ENP appears impregnated with a totalising liberal security view whereby acceptance of the other becomes conditional on their acceptance of the EU's way of doing things (Parker, 2009: 1094). This liberal cultural view of security, premised around reproducing the Self in its outside, is in stark contrast to more traditional Realist renderings of



security premised on material interests and the balance of power (Browning & Joenniemi, 2008a: 545; Kuus, 2007: 3).

Second, the emphasis on conditionality and the transformation of the Other (the partners) to become like us (the EU) also entails a construction of otherness in terms of hierarchy, with the EU standing at the apex of a developmental model. Such a developmental discourse obviously grants the EU a privileged position and preserves for itself the role of a helper and teacher. On the positive side, for the partners it also entails a view that they can actually become 'like us'; their otherness is not viewed as irredeemable, but instead implies that over time the distance and difference could be bridged. Less positively, such a construction also seeks to deny the partners a voice in framing the ENP's goals and the terms of debate by essentially positioning them as backward.

Finally, the emphasis is on developing 'close' relations and becoming 'like us', but not actually 'of us'. As noted, everything is possible bar institutions/membership. In this context, however, despite the fact that the emphasis in the ENP has been on developing a rather homogeneous policy applicable equally to all its neighbours, it is notable that what being 'like us' entails differs between its southern and eastern borders. The issue here relates to the EU's conception of the 'Europeanness' of the different ENP neighbourhoods, and which in turn affects the nature of border drawing around the EU's perimeter. In short, the EU has fully endorsed the Europeanness of the eastern neighbours, as evident in their support of the desire of the leaders of Ukraine's Orange Revolution to 'join Europe'. The Europeanness of the East has never been questioned. They, in a sense, are Europeans 'like us' (if undeveloped or 'second class'). Arguably, this gives the eastern neighbours a notable rhetorical resource to utilise against the EU and to challenge the attempt to use the ENP as a tool to demarcate the EU's final borders. In contrast, the EU has a history of rejecting any claims to Europeanness emanating from the southern neighbourhood – as in 1980 when Morocco's application for membership was rejected on the grounds that it simply is not a European country (Neumann, 1998), or as manifest today in widespread opposition to possible future Turkish membership on the same grounds (Parker, 2009: 1095). For the most part, of course, the southern neighbours themselves do not constitute themselves in terms of Europeanness in any case. In this respect, the discourses of outsiders and the EU in the south may actually contribute to the EU's goal of avoiding further expansion towards the south.

This discussion of where the EU has tended to locate its ENP partners along a spectrum of otherness has therefore already indicated that its neighbours might actually have significant constitutive power to impact on the EU's constructions of its outside and the nature of its borders in the ENP. In part this is related to the extent to which they desire to conform to the EU's self-image; in part to their acceptance (or not) of the EU's developmental model; and in part to their conception of their own Europeanness (and the extent to which 'Europe' and the 'EU' are conflated or not). In the following this power of the outside in its relations with the EU is further explored in respect of Ukraine and Belarus. One further point is also worth noting, which is that the power of the outside is also enhanced by the obvious fact that EU discourses on its outside are themselves problematised by diverging preferences amongst EU members for the ENP in general, and for the EU's bilateral relations with particular states more specifically. Highly relevant to this article, for example, is the support of some of the EU member states (e.g. Sweden, Poland) for the EU's future enlargement to Ukraine. Such internal divisions not only destabilise attempts to present a coherent EU position towards its neighbours, but also provide strategic opportunities for the outsiders to play upon such ambiguities in pursuing their own agendas.

## From the outside-in: Ukraine and Belarus

As noted the ability of the neighbours to impact on the ENP's effectiveness and on how the EU constitutes its external borders and threat scenarios is related to how they depict themselves in relation to the category of Europe, and to the EU more specifically, and to the marginality strategies they utilise in their relations with the EU. To illustrate this argument we focus on the cases of Ukraine and Belarus for the reason that they occupy opposite ends of the spectrum. Whereas Ukraine has been strongly oriented towards the EU, Belarus has adopted a much more distanced and even antagonistic stance. Yet, in different ways, and through adopting different strategies, both have also exerted considerable influence on the EU and the construction of its borders.

### Ukraine

Ukraine's ability to influence EU constructions of its identity, borders and security and the nature of policies like the ENP has not been immediately evident since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, for the most part Ukraine often appears to have been at the mercy of arbitrary decisions made in Brussels to the exclusion of Ukrainian preferences. Such a view, however, is too simplistic, and although the immediate rewards sometimes appear meagre this should not prevent us from identifying Ukraine's considerable constitutive impact.

The marginality strategy pursued by Ukrainian elites towards the EU has undergone substantive change since the early 1990s, with changes also connected to how Ukrainian leaders have located their country in relation to the idea of Europe and the EU in terms of identity. Under the Kuchma regime (1994–2005), strategies of 'manifest emulation' (in the form of 'selective appropriation') and 'playing one center off another' dominated, and were reflective of an official position that located Ukraine between Russia and the EU and where a clear aspiration for EU membership was lacking. This was despite the fact that Kuchma's dominant public narrative was that of the 'European choice'. Instead, moves towards European integration were used as a strategic discursive tool to legitimise and reinforce Presidential power internally, whilst externally serving as a counter-balance to the pull of Russia and as a critical component of a multi-vector foreign policy (Solonenko, 2006: 47; Tassinari, 2006: 27–28; Wolczuk, 2004: 11–12). This was evident in that projections of Ukraine's 'European identity' were primarily based on geographical and historical references, in contrast to the EU's constitution of its Europeanness increasingly in terms of the acceptance of particular norms and values. Consequently, although a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed with the EU in 1994, with a 'special neighbourhood status' being afforded to it in April 2002, the strategy pursued by the Kuchma regime only served to reinforce a strict line of division between the EU Self and the Ukrainian Other. With Europeanness articulated in different ways calls for an Association Agreement by Ukrainian officials, on the ENP's inception, were clearly not perceived as credible by the EU as the basis for building EU–Ukraine relations.

Events changed significantly in the post-Kuchma era, with a new dynamic being triggered in the December 2004 'Orange Revolution' when the pro-European and pro-reformist, Viktor Yushchenko, won the elections. Yushchenko (2005) declared soon after in a speech to the European Parliament that the European choice for Ukraine 'is not just a question of geography, but a matter of shared spiritual and moral values'. Indeed, a primary objective for Yushchenko was to 'put Ukraine on a more ideologically driven foreign and security path focused on adopting the domestic reforms that would move Ukraine beyond the empty rhetoric of Euro-Atlantic integration that existed under his predecessors'

(Kuzio, 2006: 40). The public narrative projected by the new regime therefore reflected a strategy of 'manifest emulation', though this time in the form of 'real appropriation', with the aim being to legitimise the Ukrainian case for membership through internalising EU norms and 'fuzzifying' the distinction between the Ukraine positive (but inferior) Other and the EU Self. This was also complemented by a tactic of seeking benefits offered by the EU centre in order to demonstrate first, loyalty to becoming European 'with us', and second, a commitment to distancing itself from the alternative Russian centre.

However, the terms of the EU–Ukraine Action Plan had already been negotiated with the previous administration, under a conception of Ukraine as a desirable Other that had pursued a strategy of 'selective' rather than 'real appropriation' of EU norms (European Commission, 2005, 2004a,b). These terms, therefore, excluded any membership perspective and made progress towards an 'Enhanced Agreement' conditional on: first, implementation of the Action Plan; second, negotiations over a Free Trade Area conditional on WTO membership. Thus, despite the new socio-political context and the transformation in the marginality strategy pursued by Ukrainian elites in the post-Orange order, they were not initially successful in re-negotiating any significant aspects of the Action Plan. As such Ukraine's constitutive impact would at that point appear to have been minimal.

However, the Yushchenko regime has refused to allow the issue of membership to dissipate. Instead, it reinforced the need for a strategy of 'real appropriation', with the then Foreign Minister, Borys Tarasiuk, declaring that 'Ukraine is not a neighbour of the EU, but a center of Europe'. Indeed, a key foreign policy objective of Ukraine was 'to change the EU's approach' (Solonenko, 2006: 47) through implementing the Action Plan and the ten-point plan of provisions. Such a strategy would ensure not only that the possibility of becoming 'one of us' remained on the EU agenda with the support of a Member State coalition supportive of an 'Eastern Dimension' (and now Partnership), but that EU policy would also remain open and flexible on the issue of border expansion. How then, has this played out in relation to the ENP and the Association Agreement (AA) being negotiated with Ukraine?

For the Ukrainian government the AA, as with the broader ENP framework is understood as a 'stepping stone' towards becoming 'one of us' as opposed to becoming merely 'like us' through a more privileged 'partnership' arrangement. Significant changes in the broader geopolitical (structural) environment following the Russian intervention in Georgia (August 2008) have also served to reinforce Ukraine's strategy of becoming part of the EU centre through 'real appropriation'; at the same time, however, the *modernist* Russian narrative projected during and after the crisis has also acted as a constraint on such a strategy, with the EU reluctant to offer a membership perspective for fear of antagonising Russia.

Overall, the marginality strategy adopted by Ukraine has served to ensure that the question of membership has not been erased from the EU agenda and the evolving negotiations on the AA. The Georgia crisis has also, according to a draft Commission communication, increased the 'sense of urgency among member states as to the need to enhance relations with our Eastern neighbours to support them in drawing closer to the EU...and acknowledge the European identity and aspiration of these countries' (cited in Runner, 2008). So far, this has not implied offering Ukraine a membership perspective or the promise of becoming 'one of us' rather than simply 'like us' in the future. However, Ukraine's refusal to back down from its 'European credentials' has forced the EU into leaving the future open. Thus, the Association Agreement signed with Ukraine notably asserts that it was signed 'without prejudice to the partners European aspirations' (Runner, 2008). As such, the identity border remains contested, with the possibility of Ukraine

securing a membership perspective 'in the future' still there, so long as it successfully continues to implement its strategy of the 'real appropriation' of EU values and norms.

In summary, EU actions and a continued strategy of partnership that emphasises being 'like us' (but not 'one of us') has not served to catalyse deviation away from the marginality strategy of 'real appropriation' in the public narrative of Ukrainian elites (based on their projected identity narrative of being European and deserving a place as 'one of us'). It has, however, meant that such a strategy has been more difficult to implement in a Ukraine that still experiences political instability on a regular basis, and where democracy promotion and democratic consolidation has been difficult to achieve without strict EU conditionality. The reality, therefore, has been reflective of selective appropriation.

In this respect although the Ukrainian strategy has so far failed in its long-term objectives of full inclusion into the EU 'we', this failure should not be seen as supporting the argument that the EU has been able to dictate the course of events. Refusal to let the 'European choice' die has proved highly uncomfortable for the EU and has meant it remains on the agenda. At the same time, it is also worth asking if the dominant marginality strategy adopted by Ukraine throughout the period – that of manifest emulation (mainly in the form of real appropriation slipping into selective appropriation in the wake of disappointment with EU responses) – might be complemented/replaced with more high-risk strategies of 'obtaining loyalty rewards' from Russia, which may or may not, provide Ukraine with more leverage and power over the EU.

#### Belarus

Whereas Ukraine has impacted on the EU as a result of its refusal to let membership fall off the agenda, Belarus has proved problematic for the EU for quite different reasons. Until 2008 the emphasis in Belarus' foreign policy was one of 'obtaining loyalty rewards' from Russia coupled with a strategy of 'manifest rejection' of EU values. Following Russia's intervention in Georgia and the impact of the global financial crisis, however, strategies of 'selective appropriation' and 'playing one centre off another' have been instigated by Belarusian President, Alexander Lukashenko, with Belarus still standing out as a country that rejects transition towards the EU's normative *political* model.

In the post-independence era (1991) Belarus flirted with a multi-vector foreign policy with 'no pre-determined "geopolitical" direction'; there was no 'return to Europe', it rather, 'returned to the past' (Löwenhardt, Hill, & Light, 2001: 608). Lukashenko, elected in 1994, pursued a strategy of 'obtaining loyalty rewards' from Russia. He projected an anti-Western and pro-Russian narrative, utilising the latter to gain the legitimacy and acceptance of Russian leaders that was absent when he came to power. More precisely, the administration of Lukashenko focused exclusively on the Russian vector whilst distancing Belarus from 'European integration' or 'Western' narratives. This othering of Belarus was underpinned by a strategic logic aimed at furthering his own political kudos and consolidating the Belarusian nation; presenting NATO and the EU as the 'enemy' would also reinforce the credibility of a Russia–Belarus Union as an alternative integration model, whilst promoting a distinctly Belarusian notion of development. Through a combination of fusing the notion of a strong and stable Belarusian state to differentiation from the evils of the Western Other (through a 'Belarus and the rest' narrative), and maintaining a relatively strong economy through Russian support, Lukashenko was able to uphold support for his Presidency and his authoritarian regime. This has also meant, however, that Russia has been a significant influence in shaping the orientation of the Belarusian state.

After 1994 relations with the EU gradually deteriorated in parallel with the increasing authoritarianism of the regime. The impact on the EU was to pursue a policy of distinguishing between the Belarusian authorities as the negative (indifferent) other, whilst seeking to empower Belarusian civil society (perceived as a positive willing other) through directing aid towards social and educational projects, promoting democratisation, providing support for those affected by the Chernobyl disaster, and supporting activities related to the dissemination of information about the EU. In the words of Javier Solana the aim of the EU was to 'support the Belarusian population in assuming control over its own destiny, through the establishment of a democratic process' (cited in Pomorska, 2006).

Thus, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that was negotiated with Belarus in 1995 was frozen by the Council of Ministers following Lukashenko's referendum in 1996 that enabled him to amend the Constitution and ensure that he remained in power until 2001. In addition, measures were taken to limit contact politically with the Belarusian leadership and authorities, and an agreed Interim Trade Agreement did not come into force (again, frozen in 1996). Subsequent EU policies consisted of sanctions and other negative measures in order to induce change in Belarus. The flawed presidential elections in 2001 led to a visa ban on the Belarusian leadership. This was renewed on a yearly basis, and following the fraudulent events surrounding the presidential elections in 2006, the EU adopted further restrictive measures against the Belarusian authorities and leadership (Briens, 2008: 216).

In addition, despite Belarus being one of the initial candidates included in the construction of the wider Europe initiative, the lack of democratic reforms (including another flawed referendum ensuring his re-election for a third term in 2006) and denial of fundamental human rights meant that it was *a priori* excluded from the ENP framework in 2004 (Dura, 2008: 2). The EU subsequently reiterated that the ENP door was not closed for Belarus, but that in order to participate Belarus would have to 'embark on fundamental democratic and economic reforms to bring the country closer to European values' (General Affairs and External Relations Council, 2004).

The European Commission has been active in its attempts to promote democratisation in Belarus through its non-paper directed at Belarusian civil society in December 2006 (see European Commission Non-Paper, 2006). This had minimal impact on the Belarusian leadership until the new geopolitical reality of the Georgian war and the encroaching financial crisis led to a realisation that 'relying solely on Russia would have more serious consequences, not only for the country's sovereignty but for the regime itself, than playing the game by some of the "European rules"' (Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, Monitoring, 29 Jan 2009). Until this point Lukashenko had been able to use EU propaganda to strengthen anti-Western sentiment and reinforce the image of 'Belarus and the rest'. Indeed the lack of importance attached to the Commission document and other negative economic measures taken by the EU against Belarus, was demonstrated in 'undemocratic' and repressive actions against opposition forces and civil society (e.g. local elections in January 2007). This left the EU in the diplomatic position of formulating policies towards a regime that abused basic democratic and human rights, when 'we know they are not going to react to them' (EU official cited in Pomorska, 2006: 6).

There are two central factors that explain this: the strength of the Lukashenko regime and the Russian approach to Belarus. Domestically, Lukashenko has remained popular with the Belarusian electorate through his projection of a strong state ideology and a unique Belarusian model, alongside relative economic stability and growth. Owing to its reliance on Russia for raw materials, energy and as an export market, encapsulated in the creation of

a customs union and common energy market, Russian influence on the orientation of the Belarusian state has also been significant, indicating that while Belarus perceives itself as located between centres, it is the Russian centre which has acted as its primary pole of attraction. Integration with Russia in the 1990s was 'the cornerstone of Belarusian foreign policy... the rationale for integrating far too compelling to even consider other options' (Rontoyanni, 2005: 58). However, this has not come without tensions in the relationship. Whilst economic integration with Russia formed an important part of the Lukashenko narrative underpinning his political platform, he was more interested in Russian support to uphold and protect the Belarusian model (a strategy of selective appropriation with the Russian centre), than implementing genuine reform to harmonise with Russia. Thus, whilst a considerable degree of integration (economic and military) was achieved between the two countries and the concept of a Belarus-Russian union remains popular, the relationship was strained because of conflicts over what this should constitute (for details see Briens, 2008: 217; Grant & Leonard, 2006; Portela, 2008: 36; Rontoyanni, 2005: 58; Silitski, 2005: 27).

This conflict was magnified when Putin came to power with a vision of Belarus being absorbed and dominated by Russia within the 'state union'. For Lukashenko, anything beyond a loose confederation would be a threat to the Belarusian state and development model. However, with Putin's vision came a more austere stance towards reducing subsidies to Belarus which came in the form of gas and oil delivered at preferential prices. Russia, through Gazprom, secured a 50% stake in Beltransgaz (the Belarusian pipeline network which supplies the domestic population and Europe) and reached an agreement in December 2006 that would lead to a gradual increase in the price of gas to Belarus which would achieve the 'European price' by 2011. Russia also shelved plans for building a Yamal-Europe II pipeline connecting Russia to Europe via Belarus in favour of a trans-Baltic NordStream pipeline, despite Lukashenko's attempts to incentivise Russia through the offer of a transit fee waiver (Dura, 2008: 3–4).

The consequence of this more strained relationship between Russia and Belarus, exacerbated by the war in Georgia and the financial crisis, has been a more nuanced narrative amongst the Belarusian leadership on its 'new' foreign policy direction. Indeed, the common narrative of the 'Eastern vector' and the benefits that it could provide for Belarus over and above that of a Western orientation, has been complemented, by an official discourse that supports cooperation with the EU. In the words of Uladzimir Makey, Head of the Belarusian Presidential Administration, 'we are ready for an open and responsible discussion of all the problems that exist in EU–Belarus relations...and want to continue steps towards cooperation with the EU on the basis of mutual respect and equality...' (Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, Monitoring, 29 Jan 2009). On this basis the Belarusian government declared an interest in participating in the Eastern Partnership Initiative, signed a Framework Agreement with the European Commission providing a basis for implementing EU programmes, and also held high-level meetings with EU officials in the period after September 2008 to discuss reform. The EU rewarded the Belarusian leadership for its re-engagement through temporary suspension of visa bans on certain Belarusian officials for a six month period (Council Conclusions, October 2008), extended for nine months in March 2009 (Council of the EU, Conclusions, 2009). This excluded those suspected of being involved in political kidnappings and the Head of the Central Electoral Commission.<sup>2</sup>

However, whilst the Belarusian leadership has ratcheted up its pro-EU rhetoric and engagement (as it has with the OSCE), and with this offered some movement at the margins in improving democratic conditions in Belarus through the release of political

prisoners prior to the parliamentary elections on 30 September 2008, the return of the free media (two newspapers *Narodnaya Volya* and *Nasha Niva*) and registration of certain NGO's (e.g. For Freedom Movement), political change in Belarus has remained minimal (Dura, 2008: 5–6). One could argue, therefore, that the Lukashenko strategy of selective appropriation, whilst being able to secure certain incentives from the EU in areas of economic and technical cooperation, as well as financial assistance, has also been a success for maintaining his autocratic political regime. By instigating minor and potentially reversible political changes that on the surface emulate engagement with EU norms, Lukashenko has forced the EU into offering more incentives to Belarus in order to re-engage with the leadership in a more proactive way to potentially bring about political reform.

It is clear for the Lukashenko regime, however, that EU democratic conditionality for joining the ENP is too high, as it would effectively destabilise his own position as President. The Belarusian leadership only wishes to engage with the EU based on the condition that there is minimal interference in the domestic political arena; this, despite the EU's insistence that it is interested in engaging and instigating dialogue on *all* issues (Council Conclusions, October 2008). The tinkering (and dialogue) that has occurred on issues of democratisation and human rights, effectively provided additional justification and legitimacy to Lukashenko's new strategy. Despite the elections on 30 September 2008 'not meeting democratic standards' (OSCE/ODIHR, 2008) locally Lukashenko was able to manipulate the praise received from the West (through the state media) in recognition of Belarus' good intentions, to claim that the election was credible and democratic. Clearly, whilst sectoral economic engagement is palatable and can be sold to the Belarusian population without endangering his position (as demonstrated by liberal tax reform and the unveiling of a privatisation programme), democratisation would destabilise the very foundations upon which the Lukashenko regime has been built: a strong state ideology with strong leadership (with no competition or opposition) to provide a coherent political system that protects the Belarusian population from the chaos of democracy and delivers a Belarusian model that is beneficial to all.

Overall the Lukashenko regime is only interested in engaging with the EU in so far as it can potentially provide cooperative arrangements that will facilitate the longevity of the Belarusian model, whilst enhancing its economic welfare. This might well lead to deeper integration with the EU in sectors of mutual benefit, thus extending the EU's economic border. In other words, it may lead to Lukashenko further pursuing a marginality strategy of selective appropriation – or telling 'foreigners' what they want to hear to receive financial reward. Furthermore, the selective engagement with the EU by the Lukashenko regime has also been used as leverage in its relations with Russia, to extract concessions and to ensure that it continues to receive benefits from both centres in order to sustain the Belarusian model of governance. Overall, the goals of political and security stability outlined in the ENP are less likely to be achieved on the EU's border with Belarus as long as Lukashenko remains President. The regime has not declared any ambition to integrate with the EU in the form of membership, unlike Moldova and Ukraine, and whilst declaring an intention to reduce its dependence on Russia, its eastern neighbour still has a decisive impact on Belarus's orientation and identity, and is unlikely to agree to any EU policy that might undermine its own perceived sphere of influence, and the norms that underpin its own identity.

## Conclusion

The ability of the margins to impact on the effectiveness and nature of EU policies/interventions has been notable. The EU's ENP

has been initially premised on a particular narrative of othering in which the eastern partners, whilst located as potential friends, have also been designated as lesser Europeans. Although 'like us' the ENP is designed to keep them excluded as 'not us', with their 'lesser' status implicit in the EU's conditionality principles which prescribe an EU-centric view of development. More specifically, underlying the ENP has been a hope that by providing an incentive structure of a closer relationship with the EU (but excluding membership) as a reward for transformation in line with EU norms, the ENP would solve the dilemma of how to promote stability and security along its borders, while at the same time preserving the notion of the EU as a peace project open to all. However, this article has argued that EU constructions of Self and Other, and the policies which emerge from that, are not immune from the influence of the outside. Instead the EU remains locked into sets of 'recognition games' with its neighbours which impact on the likely effectiveness of EU policies, on the nature of the EU's borders, and therefore also on the nature of the EU itself.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of the effectiveness of EU policies it is arguably the case that the examples of Ukraine and Belarus each in their own way indicate that the ENP is at best sub-optimal, at worst counter-productive. For example, Ukraine's ardent desire for membership and refusal to accept the ENP's attempt at permanent exclusion has various effects. On the one hand, to the extent that the desire for membership has resulted in a marginality strategy of 'real appropriation' and explicit attempts to constitute Ukraine's European-ness in terms of EU norms, values and practises, then Ukraine challenges the EU on its own terms and makes it very difficult for the EU to avoid further enlargement East. On the other hand, Ukrainian dissatisfaction with the limited carrots offered in the ENP has also at times presented Ukraine with the option of a marginality strategy of 'obtaining loyalty rewards', that is of threatening to orient towards Russia unless the EU is more forthcoming. Following the recent Russian action in Georgia this has arguably provided Ukraine with a different way of playing this game – essentially arguing that EU (and NATO) membership is now a matter of pressing concern for both Ukrainian and European security. The argument essentially is that Russia's actions indicate that simply reproducing itself on its outside is no longer enough to ensure European stability in the face of a revanchist Russia, only membership will do.

In contrast, Belarus' total lack of interest in EU membership undermines the effectiveness of the ENP for different reasons. The ENP's approach of offering closer relations in return for political reforms has limited impact in Belarus for the reason that the EU's normative agenda is seen as undermining regime security in Belarus. Belarus initially sought to protect its own model of governance from the EU through a strategy of 'manifest rejection' and 'obtaining loyalty rewards' from Russia. However, the changing financial and security context led it to reconsider and reconstitute its strategies. Subsequently it has pursued a strategy of 'selective appropriation' towards the EU, but it has also projected a pro-EU rhetoric in order to try and extract concessions from Russia, that is, a strategy of 'playing one center off another'. The implication here then, is that such Belarusian marginality strategies severely limit the EU's capacity to influence political, if not technical, change in Belarus. In turn, Belarus emerges as a security threat to the EU because its recalcitrance prevents the EU from pursuing its liberal security agenda where security and friendship is equated with making others 'like us'.

The result, therefore, is that the attitude of the neighbours also impacts on the nature of the EU, its borders and its security environment. Although the ENP is an attempt to draw final borders, whilst simultaneously leaving them relatively porous for interaction short of membership with good partners, the neighbours



problematised this. In the case of Ukraine the EU is presented with an alternative perspective that any security without membership will ultimately be precarious. Asserting their Europeanness and desire for membership is likely to leave the border open to future enlargement, while it also challenges the EU's existential narrative as a peace project. In contrast, Belarus' indifference to the ENP positions it outside the 'ring of friends' as a site of instability and threat and results in the construction of a much harder border with the EU. The irony here is that if the goal of the ENP is to draw the EU's final borders then it is with respect to Belarus that this goal seems most likely to be attained. This, however, has little to do with the ENP and everything to do with Belarus' rejection of the EU democratic model. Or put differently, Belarus rejects the ENP and EU precisely because of its normative (political) agenda. Although this solves the EU's existential question of defining its limit, it is achieved at the expense of a considerable contradiction with its liberal security discourse. In contrast, in those instances where the liberal security discourse of normative transformation is accepted, it is in danger of failing for the opposite reason that transformation without membership is perceived as insufficient to necessarily undertake the costs of transformation. In this respect the margins 'bite back' (Parker, 2000: 8); challenging the EU with the implicit threat that either everything including institutions is offered, or these states are likely to remain unstable, semi-autocratic, and liable either to proactively look to Russia for support instead, or to fall unwillingly into Russia's sphere of influence.

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## Endnotes

<sup>2</sup> On 17 November 2009 the Council of Ministers reinforced its policy of extending the ban on certain Belarusian officials, whilst extending the suspension of travel restrictions on other Belarusian officials (until Oct 2010 in both cases) (Council Conclusions, November 2009).

<sup>3</sup> For reflections on the broader implications of the EU's 'bordering' of Europe including regionalisation, see Bialasiewicz et al. (2009).

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