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Dejana M. Vukasović
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THE POWER OF “NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE” DISCOURSE***

Abstract

The article aims to analyze the concept of the EU as a normative power. In this regard, the article explores the concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE) introduced by Ian Manners. The intention is not to debate on whether the EU is a normative power acting in accordance with its norms, or whether it is an actor that acts strategically in pursuit of its interests, i.e., to debate on constructivist vs. realist/rationalist dispute in international relations. Instead, this paper is focused on the discursive representation of the EU as a normative power. It seeks to analyse the power of the discursive construction of the EU identity as a normative power with the ability to shape conceptions of “normal” in international relations and with the power to legitimise its actions in international politics. Through the example of the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans, the paper concludes that the normative power identity discourse establishes a distinctive EU identity by turning parties into “others” and by representing the EU as a “force for good” in international relations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of the concept of Normative Power Europe by Ian Manners (2002), the EU studies have been shaped by the debate about the uniqueness of the EU in international relations. Manners' influential article had a considerable impact on the study of European foreign policy. In the last decade, the concept of NPE has become one of the most widely used concepts in EU studies. It had become a fruitful avenue for research and contributed to moving forward the research agenda (Sjursen 2006). However, due to its conceptual vagueness, many scholars challenged the claim of the EU as a "normative power" and stressed the need for its further clarification (Sjursen 2006; Merlingen 2007; Diez 2005; Hyde-Price 2006; Diez, Pace 2011; Forsberg 2011; Keene 2012; Cebeci 2012, 2017). At the same time, the concept of NPE has led to the use of a variety of competing concepts introduced to describe the specific nature of the EU as an actor in international relations, such as soft power (Nye 2003), ethical power (Aggestam 2008), transformative power (Börzel, Risse 2009), quiet superpower (Moravcsik 2009), ideal power (Forsberg 2011). Nevertheless, the concept of NPE remains dominant in academic circles when it comes to the role of the EU in international relations (cf. De Zutter 2010).

However, the existing NPE literature does not pay enough attention to the question of discursive representations of the EU as a normative power. Most of the studies have been focused on the question whether the EU is a normative actor or not, ignoring the question of the power that lies in the representation of the EU as a normative power (cf. Diez 2004, 2005; Cebeci 2012, 2017; Merlingen 2007). In recent literature, there have been attempts to clarify the nature of the "power" through the debate on this concept, including the importance of the discursive or status context for whether the EU can be regarded as a normative power (Larsen 2014: 896-7). In this regard, some authors argued that the precondition for the EU to be a specific, "normative power" is that the outside world attributes a distinct role to the European Union (Forsberg 2011; Keene 2012; Diez, Pace 2011; Persson 2017).

This article does not attempt to demonstrate whether the concept of NPE adequately describes the EU's international behaviour, i.e., whether the EU is a "normative power" that acts in accordance

with its norms, or whether it is an actor that acts strategically in pursuit of its interests. In other words, the aim of this article is not to analyse the constructivist/normative vs. realist/rationalist dispute in international relations about the role of the EU in world politics. In this article, the NPE is analysed as a practice of discursive representation rather than as an objective category (cf. Diez 2013). The discursive representation of the NPE is of double significance: on the one hand, it is a precondition for other actors to agree to the norms set forth by the EU, and on the other, it constructs a particular normative identity of the EU (Diez, Manners 2007). The article seeks to analyse the power that lies in the self-representation of the EU as a normative power prescribing what is 'normal' for others and legitimising EU's acts in international relations. To this end, the concept of normative power Europe introduced by Ian Manners will be analysed first. Then, the focus of analysis will be on the relationship between the EU as a normative power and the Western Balkans, in order to demonstrate the power of NPE discourse on what is considered as appropriate behaviour by other actors. It is argued that the EU enlargement policy is the main tool of the EU normative identity discourse. Given that the European Commission manages the enlargement process on behalf of the EU, the article will be limited to official documents, speeches and statements that originate from the European Commission. It is concluded that the NPE discourse shapes a distinct EU identity by turning parties into "others". It is through the practice of discursive representation that the EU's "normative Self" is constructed in contrast to the "non-normative others". Therefore, the EU represents a hegemonic power because it claims a monopoly on defining what its norms entail and thus creates the boundaries of 'normality' and 'Europeanness' (Haukkala 2008).

2. THE CONCEPT OF "NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE"

For decades, EU studies have been shaped by the question of the international role of the European Community/European Union. During the 1970's, François Duchêne elaborated the concept of "Civilian Power Europe" (CPE) (Duchêne 1972, 1973), by arguing that the European Community (EC) represents a "new stage

in political *civilisation*”, an entity that “would have a chance to demonstrate the influence which can be wielded by a large political co-operative formed to exert essentially *civilian* forms of power” (Duchene 1973:19). According to Duchêne, the civilian power of the EC represents a force for the international diffusion of civilian and democratic standards, as well as the promotion of values such as “equality, justice and tolerance” (Duchêne 1973: 20). Duchêne’s attempt to conceptualise Europe’s international role laid the ground for further debate about the role of the EC in international relations. In the 1980’s, Hedley Bull considered the concept of “Civilian Power Europe” as a contradiction in terms and argued that “Europe is not an actor in international affairs, and does not seem likely to become one” (Bull 1982: 151). In line with his realist approach to Europe’s world role similar to De Gaulle’s concept of *L’Europe puissance*, Bull’s main argument was that “civilian nature” of the EC in international affairs was the consequence of “state of the art”, i.e., its incapability to provide for its security out of its own resources and its dependency on the United States (Ibid: 151-2). Therefore, he advocated the “military power of Europe”, i.e., the necessity for the EC to take steps towards making itself more self-sufficient in the domain of security and defence (Ibid:152).

Influenced by this debate about the role of the EC/EU in international affairs, Ian Manners in 2002 developed the concept of the EU as a normative power, as a third way between these two concepts already established in the international relations theory. What does the concept of Normative Power Europe represent?

Manners’ concept of the EU as a normative power relies on two core premises. First, it underlines the *normative difference* of the EU in international relations which is due to three basic features: EU’s historical context, its hybrid form of polity and its political-legal constitution (Manners 2002: 240). Namely, the historical context in which the EU was created committed the Europeans to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty. Also, over time, the EU became a “hybrid of supranational and international forms of governance which transcends the Westphalian norms” (Ibid). Finally, the EU constitution as a political entity occurred as an “elite driven, treaty based, legal order” (Ibid: 241). The combination of these features enabled the constitution of the EU as a normative type of actor. According to Manners, the most important

factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says but *what it is* (Ibid: 252). In other words, the EU is “*predisposed*” to act like a normative power because it is different “to pre-existing political forms” (Ibid: 242). In this regard, “the EU has been, is and always will be a normative power in world politics” (Manners 2008: 45). Thus, the EU represents a hybrid, postmodern/post-Westphalian form of actor which has assured a sustainable peace among its Member States (Parker, Rosamond 2013: 230).¹

According to Manners, the EU gradually developed a normative framework based on the values it promotes in its foreign policy. He distinguishes five “core” norms within the *acquis communautaire* and *acquis politique* which constitute the EU’s *normative identity*: peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law and human rights. In addition to these core norms, he also distinguishes four “minor” norms, i.e. social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance. The normative difference of the EU to other polities is reflected in its “commitment to universal rights and principles” (Manners 2002: 241). Thus, Manners’ claims that the EU promotes a series of normative principles “that are generally acknowledged, within the United Nations system, to be universally applicable” (Manners 2008: 46). The difference of the EU as a power in the international system consists also in the EU’s pursuit of the spread of norms. Therefore, he distinguishes six mechanisms for norm diffusion in international relations: contagion, transference, informal diffusion, procedural diffusion, overt diffusion and cultural filter (Manners 2002: 244). The diffusion of these norms enables the EU to be a normative power.

Second core premise of the concept of Normative Power Europe concerns the *nature* of the EU’s normative power. Manners underlines the difference between the normative power of the EU and the traditional forms of power. Normative power Europe is about ideational power, about socialization and adoption of norms. Unlike civilian or military power, the normative form of power represents the ability to use normative justification rather than an ability to use material incentives or physical force (Manners 2011:

¹ The EU’s normative uniqueness as a postmodern polity is not new in academic circles. John Ruggie wrote in 1993 about the EU as the first post-modern polity (Ruggie 1993). Other scholars also underlined the role of the EU as a postmodern polity (Van Ham 2001; Ortega 2003), thus advocating the normative uniqueness of the EU.

230), i.e., it is “power over opinion” (Manners 2002: 239). Manners does not *a priori* reject the reinforcing effect of military power, but considers that the EU as a normative power does not need military power in order to be a distinctive international actor. In a similar manner, when speaking of civilian power, Manners argues that civilian power is about the “ability to use civilian instruments”, while the normative power is “the ability to shape conceptions of “normal” in international relations” (Manners 2002: 239). This ability to “define what passes for “normal” in world politics” is, according to Manners, “ultimately, the greatest power of all” (Ibid: 253). Manners argues that “simply *by existing as different* in a world of states and the relations between them, the European Union changes the normality of international relations. In this respect, the EU *is a* normative power: it changes the norms, standards and prescriptions of world politics away from the bounded expectations of state-centricity” (Manners 2008: 45). Thus, the ethics of the EU’s normative power are located in the ability of the EU to normalize a more just, cosmopolitical world (Ibid: 47). In Manners’ words, the NPE approach highlights “the cosmopolitan nature of EU normative power, in particular through a commitment to placing universal norms and principles at the centre of its relations with its member states and the world” (Manners 2006: 176). In other words, the EU is “doing good” in the international system (Sjursen 2006). The goals of the EU are linked to *universal goods* rather than being in the narrowly defined self-interest of the EU. Thus, he claims that these goods should be defined as something that is accepted as “normal”.

The concept of NPE, mainly due to its vagueness, triggered different interpretations as well as critics (Orbie 2006; De Zutter 2010). Several authors argued that this concept is a contested term (Sjursen 2006; Nicolaïdis, Howse 2002; Diez 2005; Merlingen 2007; Hyde-Price 2006; Forsberg 2011). Some of the critics were concerned about the lack of conceptual clarity between the two key concepts of the term, i.e. “power” and “norm”. While the term “power” is usually associated with coercion, the term “norm” is linked with legitimacy (Sjursen 2006: 172), so it remains unclear how these two concepts can be interlinked. On the other hand, some authors considered that the boundary between civilian and normative power is not clearly demarcated in Manners’ work

(Keene 2012; Orbie 2006). They stress that we cannot clearly see the difference between these two types of power, since “one could use civilian instruments to *shape* conceptions of what is ‘normal’” (Keene 2012: 941). Moreover, Manners itself argues that one of the most important means which enables the EU to diffuse its values is “carrot and stickism” of financial awards and economic sanctions (Manners 2002: 245). Some authors criticized Manners’ standpoint that the EU prescribes what is “normal” in international relations, comparing it with an empire. As Jan Zielonka points out, by spreading institutional structures and rules of legitimate behaviour, the NPE represents a “normative power “*civilising*” the external environment” and therefore should be regarded as an empire (Zielonka 2013:35). In a manner similar to Zielonka, Raffaella del Sarto rejects the instrumental-normative dispute about the concept of NPE, considering it a “false dichotomy” and defines the EU as a “normative empire” aiming to “stabilize the periphery, to draw economic advantages from it, to export the imperial order and cultivate elites there” (Del Sarto 2016:216). The concept of NPE has also been criticized from a neo-realist perspective. For Adrian Hyde-Price, structural neo-realist theory represents a more suitable framework for explaining the emergence, development and nature of the EU foreign policy cooperation. According to him, the EU is not a normative power but is used by its Member States as a collective instrument for shaping its external milieu by a combination of hard and soft power (Hyde-Price 2006).

The concept of NPE encouraged many scholars to examine the correlation between interest-driven and normative-driven action of the EU as a normative power. However, not enough attention has been paid to the discursive representations of the EU as a normative power. How is the EU constructed as a normative power? Is the concept of NPE an objective category or represents the practice of discursive representation of the EU as a normative power? And what about the power that lies in the representation of the EU as a normative power? Michael Merlingen outlines that the norms associated with a virtuous EU are “Janus faced”, and that the concept of NPE is “dangerous” (Merlingen 2007:449). The “hidden face” of the NPE lies in the “EU’s self-styled mission for humanity”, by which it “inscribes the very agency of those it seeks to empower in relations characterised by epistemic violence, the technologisation

of politics and administrative arbitrariness” (Ibid: 436). What is then the “power mechanism” in the concept of normative power Europe? Manners himself stressed that the EU is a normative power because it has a normative identity (Manners 2002: 239). He also argued that it is the *EU’s normative difference* which enables the EU to define what is ‘normal’ (Manners 2002; Manners, Whitman 2003). However, the concept of NPE includes a relationship, i.e. is relational. If power represents “the ability to make others do what they would not otherwise do”, then the concept of normative power appears as “a contradiction in terms” (Sjursen 2006: 172). In a similar manner, Thomas Diez suggests that the concept of NPE is controversial and cannot be seen solely as a specific kind of actor in international relations that is different from other actors by its normative difference. It includes a relationship, i.e. “the power as A being able to make B do what he/she would otherwise not have done” (Diez 2005: 616). Thus, how do we know that the normative power that the EU is using is legitimate? How do we know that EU’s acting “in a normative way” is a “good thing”, something that is “normal”? And what is “normal” in international politics?

According to Diez, the NPE is an EU identity that generates a set of images, values and norms against an image of others in the “outside world” (Diez, Manners 2007: 174). It is through the discursive practice that the EU’s “normative Self” is constructed against “non-normative others”, and “EU-norms” against “non-EU norms”. Thus, the EU as a normative power is a construct which establishes a particular normative identity for the EU through turning parties into “others” and representing the EU as a positive force in world politics (Diez 2005). This invokes a moral superiority of the EU vis-à-vis a variety of others (Parker, Rosamond 2013: 235). In this regard, the self-construction of EU’s normative identity enables the EU to determine the nature of the relationship it has with others. By presenting its norms as distinct, as of universal standing, the EU relationship with others implicates the asymmetry of power and enables the construction of an EU identity through differentiation which implies a hierarchy and subordination. In this regard, the EU as a normative power can be regarded as a hegemonic power because it seeks a monopoly on defining what its norms entail and thus creates the boundaries of ‘normality’ and ‘Europeanness’ (Haukalla 2017; Diez 2005).

One of the most powerful features of the discursive self-construction of the EU as NPE is its ability to shape the conceptions of 'normal' in international relations. However, the quest for defining what is 'normal' for others appears highly problematic (Cebeci 2017: 64). Is it about the ability of the EU to shape the conceptions of 'normal', or about "the ability to use ideas and values to get what you want or to make others do what you want" (Keene 2012: 942)? As some authors outline, defining 'normal' is "a disciplinary practice- an act of political power", i.e., the construction of EU identity having 'a sole monopoly on what can be called Europeanness" (Cebeci 2017). This points to the hegemonic power of the EU as the power to shape the values of others (Diez 2005: 616). The EU as a normative power can be seen as a "European governmentality", i.e., the sum of all discourses, procedures, processes and tools - governmental (especially security) apparatuses and knowledge - that are created and used to empower the EU and legitimise its acts" (Cebeci 2017: 70).

3. NPE DISCOURSE IN THE PROCESS OF ENLARGEMENT: THE EU AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

The EU enlargement policy is one of the most important policies of the EU as a normative power. The "core" norms identified by Manners have been elaborated in a series of declarations, treaties, policies and as an explicit set of membership conditions, thus creating the EU *acquis communautaire* and *acquis politique*. These norms were placed at the heart of the EU enlargement policy.

In the process of enlargement, the EU is represented as a value community where commitment to shared, "core" norms steers the activities of the members and at the same time serves as a "role model" that encourages others (candidates) to adopt the same norms. Therefore, Article 2 TEU stipulates that the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Hence, as the former Commissioner Oli Rehn stated, "*the values define Europe*" (Rehn 2008: 8), i.e., the main determinant of enlargement is the embracement of "European values". This was reiterated by the current president of the European Commission:

“For me, Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than a currency, more than the euro. *It was always about values*” (Juncker 2017). The importance of “European values” is confirmed by Article 49 TEU which states that acceding countries must accept these values and promote them. As for candidate countries, through the process of monitoring, the EU applies strict conditionality, i.e., the complete fulfillment by the candidates of the criteria required before joining the EU. In the process of enlargement, the projection of the “core” norms (in Manners’ terms) is thus one-sided and enables the construction of the EU’s normative Self against the non-normative others, by imposing “EU-norms” against “non-EU norms”. As some authors highlight, the EU tends to treat its norms as absolutes that are imposed coercively as conditions upon negotiating partners (Diez, Pace 2007):

“The EU has successfully used its membership conditionality to export its economic and political models to post-communist Europe. History will show this is *to be the most successful example of long lasting regime change ever*” (Rehn 2008:8).

In this regard, the EU self-representation in enlargement has from the beginning been based on domination: the EU “provided models and the applicant states were supposed to copy or to imitate them (...) the key terms of the conditionality policy were safeguards, benchmarks, guidance and screening. The EU discourse was exceedingly inflexible and hierarchical, leaving little space for negotiation” (Zielonka 2013: 43). The “partners” engaged in the process of EU enlargement are obliged to be “transformed” according to “European values”. This process is “irreversible”, because it is an investment in peace and stability, as stated in the Enlargement package of the European Commission: “A credible enlargement perspective requires sustained efforts and *irreversible reforms*. The EU Enlargement is an *investment in peace, security and stability in Europe*: a prospect of EU membership has a *powerful transformative effect* on the partners in the process, embedding positive democratic, political, economic and societal change” (European Commission 2018a). In a similar vein, Commissioner Johannes Hahn outlined: “Let’s be clear: a credible enlargement perspective is not a free lunch. It requires *a tough transformation* of our partners. They must now “walk the talk” and deliver. The criteria are clear and they will not change; they are not technical, but

essentially about *European values!*” (Hahn 2018a). Enlargement is thus about transformation, about making accession candidates “European” with the principle of conditionality “which marks the core of the inherent asymmetry of enlargement with the bigger, more powerful side determining the conditions of entry for the other, weaker side” (Adebahr, Wunsch 2011: 23).

The EU enlargement policy is important for the EU normative power for two reasons: first, the compliance of applicant states with the norms promoted and spread by the EU is conditional upon a successful exercise of the NPE and second, it enables the construction of a particular identity of the EU (Diez, Manners 2007). The recognition by others enables the recognition of the discursive self-construction of the EU and legitimises its actions in international politics. Therefore, the discursive construction of EU identity has an inclusive aspect, i.e., the necessity to assimilate others. On the other hand, the EU self-construction as a normative power is also exclusive in nature, i.e., it is a self-constructed specific kind of actor in contrast to “non-normative “others. This exclusive identity comprises distinctiveness of the EU in comparison to others and thus implies the creation of “value” boundaries between EU-Self and Other. It is the Other that delineates and defines the EU-Self. Therefore, the necessary difference is constructed through a variety of boundary drawing practices:

“Enlargement needs to be understood as a process which supports reform and the fundamental changes needed to meet the obligations of EU membership. Such changes inevitably require time. This makes it all the more important to reaffirm unequivocally the European perspective of the enlargement countries. If the prospect of moving forward on the road to the EU is seen as real and credible, the risk of countries turning away from the EU will be mitigated, as will the risk of disillusionment with the process or even failing in or backsliding on reforms” (European Commission 2015: 3).

The Mannersian concept of NPE conceives the EU’s normative actorness as a consequence of the uniqueness of its history and experience, which gives it a *missionary* responsibility and the ethical duty to be engaged in the development and prosperity of the people in its neighborhood. The NPE discourse thus produces

a link between specificity, uniqueness and responsibility with significant implications (Meyer, Voigt 2006). The EU is represented as an actor best equipped for promoting the wellbeing not only of Europeans, but also of the whole world. Therefore, the ethics of the EU's normative power are located in the ability of the EU to "normalize" a more just, cosmopolitical world. In the Commission discourse, the EU represents the "force for good", illustrated by the words of Federica Mogherini: "So just imagine, for one moment, what if the European Union didn't exist. For the rest of the world, it would be a *disaster*. Our world that is already quite chaotic - to put it bluntly - would be definitely *in a much worse situation*" (Mogherini 2017). So the EU has "eternal duty", "perpetual responsibility" to act as a NPE (Juncker 2018)².

How was the NPE discourse constructed vis-à-vis the Western Balkans? How has the EU's normative identity been constructed by turning the Western Balkans into Other? The Western Balkans occupy a specific place in the process of EU integration. During the civil war in Yugoslavia, and after the end of the conflicts, the Balkans was represented as a region that violated the "core" norms of the EU (Vukasović 2018). The EU's normative power identity was constructed in opposition to the identity of the Balkans, i.e. through the dichotomy integration/fragmentation, unity/disunity, peace/war, Europeanisation/Balkanisation. The new context of post-Dayton era demanded a new representation of the former Yugoslavia in the new "reality". The deconstruction of Yugoslavia was followed by its transformation into a regional formation. From 1996 onwards, by inclusion of the Balkans region in the Regional approach, the EU aimed to transform the Balkans to Western Balkans within the framework of regional cooperation and integration (Vukasović 2018). The negative image of the Balkans has been reconstructed in a "western" manner. We are thus witnesses of the harmonization of the EU discourse about the Balkans with the new political circumstances and processes. The introduction of the notion "Western Balkans" is the expression of the change in the EU's approach to these countries. Thus, the notion of "Western Balkans" no longer is a synonym for conflict, but represents a new label created in the new context as a symbol of peace, cooperation

2 "Living up to Europe's rallying cry – never again war – is our eternal duty, our perpetual responsibility" (Juncker 2018).

and domination of “European values” (Svilar 2010: 512). These new characteristics of the region had a double effect. On the one hand, the EU approach towards this region had changed and, on the other hand, the normative identity of the EU has been strengthened. The new term “Western” offered a vision of the EU as a “healthy, comprehensive, prosperous and tolerant community” (Berzani 2008: 17) and at the same time symbolized the possibility for the region to be transformed according to “Western” norms and to enter the “European club”. Since the 2003 Thessaloniki summit, all Western Balkan states have an irrevocable accession perspective and are considered potential candidate states, with candidate status to be awarded once a certain number of conditions have been met. The Western Balkans becomes a region in “transition” with a “European perspective”. From then onwards, the only alternative for the Western Balkans is the acceptance of “European values”:

“Our common goal is clear: We want to see the Western Balkan countries to ultimately join the European Union (...) This is the *right way* to defend the long term prosperity of all the citizens in *our European family* and also to defend European stability” (Barroso 2014)

“Enlargement to the Western Balkans is about bringing peace, stability and prosperity” (Füle 2014)

“A credible accession perspective is the *key driver of transformation in the region* and thus enhances our collective integration, security, prosperity and social well-being” (European Commission 2018)

“The Western Balkan countries now have a *historic window of opportunity* to firmly and unequivocally bind their future to the European Union” (European Commission 2018).

“The EU is by far the *biggest beacon of hope* and the *most attractive model* for the people in the region” (Hahn 2018b).

Some observations can be made about the Commission’s normative discourse. First, there is no alternative for the Western Balkans but to comply with the norms of the EU because “this is the right way” and because the EU is the role model for the people of the region. Therefore, the path of the region towards EU is irreversible. Second, the Western Balkans have an opportunity to

become part of the “European family”. Third, only by accepting the EU norms as the only valid, as “normal”, will the Western Balkans become a region of peace, stability and prosperity. In parallel with this new “reality”, the discourse of a “responsible EU” becomes dominant in the EU normative power discourse towards the Western Balkans. It is characterized by the EU’s *duty* to support the enlargement of this region and to *help* the candidates to “understand” EU norms. As stated by Federica Mogherini, “our joint commitment to *helping* all Western Balkans partners to take irreversible steps forward on their EU integration paths *stands as firm as ever*” (Mogherini 2018). This responsibility of the EU towards the Western Balkans is even more important because “it is a part of the world where *only us* really make a difference” (Mogherini 2017). This “duty” of the EU for the Western Balkans is represented as going beyond the self-interest of the EU and as the ability of the EU to normalize a more just, cosmopolitical world (cf. Manners 2008). In other words, the EU is “doing good” in the international system (cf. Sjursen 2006). It has a “*mission normalisatrice*” towards the Western Balkans, i.e. the duty to help the region to accept the “normal” norms of the EU, and to protect the region from other international actors with different norms. As the Commissioner Johannes Hahn outlined, “a hard look at the map will show you that a lack of engagement on our part would create *a vacuum that other powers would only be too happy to exploit*” (Hahn 2018b). In this regard, “it would be *unwise* and almost *negligent* to leave behind a vacuum that other international actors, *whose values do not agree with ours*, make use of” (Hahn 2018a). The similar statement is expressed by the president of the Commission who declared that “we must find unity when it comes to the Western Balkans and their future membership. Should we not, our immediate neighbourhood will be *shaped by others*” (Juncker 2018). These statements point to the hegemonic power of the EU as the power to shape the values of others (Diez 2005: 616), as having monopoly on what it means and what it takes to be “European” and “Europeanness” (cf. Haukkala 2017).

However, the process of EU norms diffusion can only be implemented with the voluntary acceptance of these norms by outside states (O’Brennan 2006: 160). In other words, the normative power of the EU must be accepted by candidate countries. The

identity of the Western Balkans as Other is based on the deep-rooted “Europe syndrome”, i.e., the unconscious acceptance of the image of self as inferior. The discursive construction of the Western Balkans as a non-normative Other, whose norms are inferior, backward, is taken for granted, i.e., is internalized in the process of self-identification. Therefore, in the process of enlargement, the discursive power of the EU to represent itself as a “progressive”, “role model” value community creates the standard of “normal” which is accepted by others. The recognition of the EU normative Self means superiority of the EU normative identity. The norms of the Western Balkans, as a region in “transition” and therefore as a non-normative Other, are competitive to those of NPE, and thus must be presented as inferior and replaced by EU norms. For some authors, “the Union seems to enjoy the authority of pronouncing what it means, and perhaps more importantly what it takes, to be “European” (Haukkala 2008: 1606).

4. CONCLUSION

The article focused on the normative power identity of the EU, drawing inspiration from the Normative Power Europe (NPE) concept. It argues that the EU as a normative power is a discursive self-construction which establishes a distinctive EU identity by constructing the EU “normative Self” against the “non-normative others” and the “EU-norms” against the “non-EU norms”. In other words, the NPE discourse establishes a particular EU identity through turning parties into “others”. The EU self-construction as a normative power is of double nature: it is exclusive, i.e., it comprises distinctiveness of the EU against others and thus implies the creation of boundaries between the EU-Self and the external Other, but it is also inclusive, i.e., is dependent on the recognition by the Other which invokes superiority of the EU towards others. The paper focused on the EU enlargement policy as the main tool of the EU normative power. Through the analysis of the EU normative actorness towards the Western Balkans, the paper explored the power that lies in the representation of the EU as a normative power. By presenting its norms as distinct, as of universal standing, the EU relationship with the Western Balkans implicates the asymmetry of power and enables the construction of an EU identity

through differentiation which implies a hierarchy and subordination. In this regard, the EU can be regarded as a hegemonic power because it seeks a monopoly on defining what its norms entail and thus creates the boundaries of ‘normality’ and ‘Europeanness’.

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