**What kind of international actor is the EU? Changes in the constructions of EU actorness**

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The discussion about what kind of actor the EU is is almost as old as the EU itself. The existing literature which has studied/debated the EU’s character as an actor has mainly looked at what the EU’s external policies could say about the EU’s character as actor according to given external standards for foreign policy. The paper reverses the way this question is approached: the focus is on how the EU articulates itself as an international actor and examines the way in which this has shaped and enabled the EU’s foreign policy during the last decade. The theoretical point of departure of the paper is that the EU’s foreign policy identity can be studied as a discursive phenomenon. The EU’s discursive constructions of its own actorness are performative in contributing to shaping and constituting EU foreign policy. The paper is particularly interested in the EU as a normative power. The main point in the paper is that the EU does not have one dominant foreign policy identity but rather parallel or competing identities. The EU’s foreign policy identity is contested and an object of discursive struggles. Over the last decade there has been continuity as far as the articulations of the EU as a trade power is concerned. However, the discourse of principled pragmatism has replaced the discourse of the EU as an actor with unique means. Also, the EU no longer articulates itself as an actor with a broad normative legitimacy and attraction; only the case in the field of peace and conflict resolution is the EU presented as having a special legitimacy. This constitutes a new framework of meaning for EU foreign policy. In this sense, the EU is a different actor from what it was a decade ago.

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