THE PERCEPTION OF THE EU AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN THE EAST EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD

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Abstract

East European neighbors (EEN), specifically Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, have declared European integration a national strategic objective. Yet, beyond the common goal of joining the European Union, these neighboring countries have perceived differently what is European integration and their ‘Europeaness.’ As a result, the pursuit of European integration has influenced differently political actors and processes from the three EEN. This paper aims at exploring the variables that define the distinct influence of European integration process on the EEN political processes. It focuses on party perceptions of the European integration perspective and builds on primary data from party leaders’ interviews from 2007. This year represents a turning point in the EEN democratic developments, as the EEN countries started backsliding on their democratic reforms and loosing the gains of electoral revolutions from the region. Thus, a better understanding of the contextual factors defining the perception of the European integration further allows answering core questions about the uncertainty or even rejection of the EU offers of deeper integration within the EEN (e.g. Ukraine in 2013). The methodological approach relies on constructivist and rational choice arguments. The paper highlights four major dimensions that define the European discourse within the EEN: historico-cultural and liberal-democratic (ideational perception), and economic and security (rationalist perception). The economic dimension emerges as the most salient in defining the European discourse in the EEN and shapes the domestic political competition.
Introduction

East European neighbors (EEN), specifically Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, have declared European integration a national strategic objective. The victory of pro-democratic and pro-European forces during the Colored revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) has made the European integration a guiding light for their domestic and foreign policy. In Moldova, the salience of this objective was a key factor in avoiding a revolutionary scenario, pushing for the reformation of the ruling Communist Party (PCRM) and its pro-European shift. The signing of the Political Partnership for European Integration between the PCRM and the pro-democratic parliamentary opposition in 2005 aimed at joining the efforts for achieving an “early accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European community.”

However, the political turmoil has caught all the three countries after 2007, reversing their democratic gains. The public protests and disenchantment with the political parties, often accused of betraying the European aspirations, emerged as common features of the EEN political landscape. Moreover, the 2013 Vilnius Summit of Eastern Partnership Countries has shown EU’s failure to stimulate democratic reforms and the limits of EU’s attractiveness and conditionality within the EU-Russia ‘shared neighborhood.’ The Ukrainian rejection of the EU Association Agreement has shed light on the importance of historical-cultural affinities but also the transactions costs for pursuing a closer European integration, even in the absence of EU membership perspective.

Apart from highlighting the failure of the ENP, the Vilnius Summit stressed that the European discourse had a different nature and salience within the EEN. Beyond the common goal of joining the European Union, these neighboring countries perceived differently their ‘Europeanness’ and what is European integration. As a result, the pursuit of European integration had a different influence on EEN political actors and processes.

While there is a rich stand of literature that assesses EU policies towards its neighborhood, less has been written on domestic factors that shape the nature and the salience of EU perception. Moreover, the existing literature often adopts a ‘top-down’ approach to examining the EU impact on domestic polity, policies and processes,
assuming that the EU is the major source of domestic change. (Bulmer and Burch 2005; Radaelli and Pasquier 2006). But this assumption screens out important domestic and regional factors. Also, the further we move away from the EU borders, the harder it is to measure the scope and scale of EU impact on domestic changes. (Timus 2008, 2010) The negotiations and the outcome of the Vilnius Summit showed that the EU had undervalued context-specific historical-cultural variables (Bafoil…). It seems that Brussels took for granted the EEN domestic commitment to European integration. As a result, it failed to acknowledge that EU’s attractiveness might be challenged by the rising Russian influence and its alternative regional project (Eurasian Union). (Popescu 2013)

This paper provides a valuable contribution to the study of domestic variables that define the perception of the EU and European integration. Building on ‘broader Europeanization’ approach (Timus 2010, 2013) and diffusion theories, the study has a two-fold goal. Firstly, it assesses the role of geographic proximity to the EU border in shaping the domestic perception of the European integration. Secondly, the paper analyses party perceptions of the EU and European integration, based on primary data collected during party leaders interviews in 2007. The data is particularly valuable because it covers the time-period preceding the wave of political turmoil, democratic and European regression within the EEN. Therefore, a better understanding of party perceptions would shed light on the roots of domestic acceptance or rejection of the EU offer of deeper integration within the EEN (e.g. Ukraine in 2013).

The analytical framework relies on rational choice (cost-benefit calculations) and constructivist (ideational) arguments. The paper highlights four major dimensions that define the European discourse within the EEN: economic and security dimensions (rationalist perception), as well as historical-cultural and liberal-democratic dimensions (ideational perception).

**Europeanization, transnational diffusion and domestic change**

The domestic adaptation to European integration process, termed as Europeanization, has emerged as a separate strand of literature on European integration. The study of domestic compliance to EU policies provided rich evidence of a strong
direct EU leverage on its members and particularly candidates (accession conditionality). (Borzel and Rise 2007; Cowles et al. 2001; Schimmelfenig and Sedelmeier 2005; Graziano and Vink 2006) Most Europeanization studies, however, highlight the importance of the discretion of domestic political elites in determining the compliance outcome. (Börzel 2005; Haverland 2000; Héritier and Knill 2001; Radaelli 2000, 2003). The picture is more complicated when we move to EU outsiders that have a low or no credible EU membership perspective. (Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2008; Schimmelfennig 2012) The Europeanization approach, traditionally building on the EU-isation arguments (compliance to EU norms and values) looses its value in the case of EU outsiders. A broader theoretical approach, combining diffusion theories and European integration arguments, are better suitable for examining both direct and indirect EU influence on domestic transformations and their relationship with other international and domestic factors. (Timus 2008, Borzel and Risse 2012)

Timus (2009, 2010, 2013) advocates the merits of a ‘broader Europeanisation’ theoretical approach for examining the domestic compliance to the pan-European democratic norms and policies beyond the EU borders. Her analysis of the combined inter-institutional effort of the EU, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the OSCE¹ identified both direct and indirect European influence on EEN domestic reforms in the field of party financing and electoral laws. But the European democracy promoters lack strong “sticks and carrots” in the EEN and their policy instruments are ‘soft’ (informative, interpretative). Consequently, the success of European democracy promotion depends on the domestic contextual factors and particularly the degree of freedom of domestic political elites to adopt and implement European standards.

This work embeds the ‘broader Europeanisation’ approach into international diffusion studies, investigating the interplay between international and domestic variables in explaining domestic transformations within the EEN. The focus of analysis is on political parties - the main actors responsible for domestic reforms in line with European requirements. The article explores the nature and the salience of party perception of the EU and European integration following a two-fold objective.

¹ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
Firstly, the study assesses the role of geographic proximity to the EU border. According to diffusion scholars, spatial dependency and geographic proximity to the epicenter are key variables in explaining the constraints and opportunities of domestic elites by the diffusion of norms and practices. Kopstein and Reilly (2000), for example, argue that the spatial dependence of the diffusion of norms, wealth, and institutions from old democracies to the establishing ones makes geographic proximity to the West European democracies to be a major factor in defining the constraints and opportunities of the post-communist political elites. (2000, 6)

Also, the rationalist reasoning argues that geographic proximity and the economic interdependence represent two of the explanatory factors that contribute towards the support from EU members for further European enlargement. (Moravcsik 1998, 26) Following this argument, the new EU member states that are bordering the East European post-Soviet countries support their European integration aspirations based on both economic (e.g. cross-border trade and capital movements) and security calculations. (Timuș 2006, 39). So, the behavior of new entries from CEE bordering EEN as the ‘drivers’ of a further EU enlargement is explained partly by their tendency to avoid negative externalities of European integration process and further develop their economic relations within the EU framework, advocating for a EU membership perspective for Ukraine and Moldova.

Based on this theoretical reasoning, the study expects to find that the sharing of borders with EU member states affects the salience of the European issue in a political space. Party European discourse becomes more specific with regard to issues related to European integration, such as economic cooperation, political values, socio-cultural affinities and historical past, etc. Also, the credibility of EU membership perspective, even if low, like in the case of the EEN, determines the political actors and the public to engage in more thorough discussions of the European integration, the perceived costs and benefits.

The close proximity to EU borders offers EEN political forces the possibility of a more advanced cooperation with their counterparts from the neighboring EU members within EU framework and higher benefits. Also, the more advantages do post-Soviet political elites receive from the EU framework of cooperation, the more realistic it seems
to achieve even higher benefits and the more willing would political forces be to reform according to EU level policies.

Secondly, the study takes a step further in examining the nature and degree of impact of European integration on party politics and party systems. This is done through the examination of party perceptions of the EU and European integration, drawing primarily on party leaders interviews from 2007. The paper investigates how the rationalist and constructivist reasoning are reflected in party European discourse. For this purpose, the analysis is structured around two major perceptions:

- **Rationalist perception**, operationalized as economic and security dimensions;
- **Ideational perception**, operationalized as historical-cultural and liberal-democratic dimensions.

The understanding of specific party perceptions of the EU and European integration would provide valuable insights regarding the driving reasoning behind political elites’ acceptance or rejection of the EU policies, including the outcomes of the Vilnius Summit.

**Empirical findings: geographic proximity**

The quick observation of the geographic location of the three examined countries reveals that they represent different cases regarding the proximity to EU borders. Georgia is the farthest away from EU borders, neighboring Turkey, a EU candidate with an uncertain accession timeline. The geographic location of Georgia determines reservations among EU countries on perceiving the affinity with Georgian people and considering it a ‘European’ country. The arguments regarding the Europeaness of Georgian nation are weaker than in the case of Ukraine and Moldova, as Georgia has not experienced the type of close historical and cultural contacts with European nations as its two EEN counterparts. (Gogolashvili 2004) Also, there is a lack of close economic contacts between Georgia and the EU members, influenced by the absence of direct borders with the EU states.

The analysis of the nature and the importance of European discourse in Georgia in 2007 reveals that it was not centered around the idea of European integration. Almost all
the relevant political parties shared a pro-European stance. However, both the ruling party, UNM, and the opposition acknowledged that it was unrealistic to discuss at that moment the perspective of European integration of the country, because there are big divergences between Georgia’s domestic standards and European norms and values. Therefore, a primary objective for political leadership of Georgia was the following of European standards in achieving successful democratic and market economy reforms, as well as the European life standards, in order to be ready to comply with the EU accession requirements in the long run.²

Moldovan and Ukrainian cases give the opportunity of analyzing two different forms of geographic proximity before 2007. Moldova was bordering Romania, a EU candidate and a new member state since January 2007. Ukraine, by contrast, shared direct borders with EU candidates and EU members (Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Romania).

From a rationalist point of view, the close interaction of Ukraine and Moldova with the EU candidates and members was motivated by short and long-term advantages from cooperation within the various EU frameworks (such as cross-border cooperation, Euro-regions, twinning programs, etc.)

Apart from the economic interests, the backing of the EEN European aspirations by the neighboring EU candidates and members was driven by their interest in promoting stability and prosperity, as it is the duty of CEE newcomers to safeguard this European frontier.

The achievement of some specific benefits from the cooperation with the EU determines Ukrainian and Moldavian political elites to perceive more realistically the attainment of even higher benefits and the willingness of domestic political leadership to comply with EU level policies. Ukrainian and Moldovan political parties stressed the importance of implementing the stipulations of EU Action Plans in order to advocate for

² These ideas were shared during party leader interviews by David Bakradze, United National Movement (UNM), Georgi Mosidze, New Rights, David Usupashvili, Repoblican Party (RP), Zurab Tkhemaladze, Industry Will Save Georgia, and Rati Maisuradze, Labour Party.
an enhanced cooperation with the EU. This cooperation was perceived as a pathway to closer European integration and a potential EU membership perspective.³

The constructivist approach offers complementary insights about the influence of geographic proximity on the impact of European integration within the EEN. The degree of cultural and historical match and, thus, the affinities between the post-communist EU candidates and members with the EEN are the major ideational factors determining the perception and the impact of European integration.

The increased geographical distance from Brussels has historically determined Georgia to be under a stronger Russian and oriental (e.g. Ottoman) influence. Compared to Ukraine and Moldova, in Georgian case the ideational arguments about sharing a common historical past are weaker both among the EU ‘advocates’ and domestic political elites.

The neighboring of EU candidates and members influences significantly the European discourse of political elites in Ukraine and Moldova. First of all, one can trace stronger arguments of ‘feeling European’ and ‘belonging to Europe’ from historical and cultural points of view both within the EU circles and the EEN domestic elites. Also, the close economic transactions with EU post-communist newcomers offer more opportunities of bilateral and regional cooperation (e.g. Euro-regions). Ukrainian and Moldovan political forces talk more realistically about the perspective of European integration. The majority of relevant political parties have declared European integration as one of their primary goals, most of them centering their political activity on this key objective. According to party leaders interviews, for most pro-European parties the priority in 2007 was the implementation of domestic reforms according to European norms and standards. They share a similar reasoning about ‘bringing Europe in our home country’ as a key objective, and not the achievement of full EU membership per se.⁴

Finally, the bordering of EU member states determines the European discourse in Ukraine and Moldova to become more specific in its nature. So, the issues of facilitating

³ Ukraine at the moment already started the negotiations on such an enhanced cooperation agreement with EU in March 2007.
⁴ This argument was supported in Moldova by Angela Arama, PPCD; Viorel Ghimpu, European Party (PE); Igor Klipii, PSL; Oleg Tulea – Democratic Party (PD); Vitalia Pavlicenco, National-Liberal Party (PNL); and in Ukraine by Ivan Popescu, Party of Regions (PR); Natalia Prokopovich, Our Ukraine (NU); and Sergiy Taran, “Pora,” and it was the electoral slogan for 2006 elections for Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU).
the movement of people between the new EU entries and their East European neighbors, particularly of the population living in the bordering regions, trans-border economic relations, together with the granting of economic preferences for trading with EU countries became some of the major topics of government-opposition discourse from Ukraine and Moldova during the last years.

In conclusion, the sharing of direct borders with credible EU candidates and EU members offer political forces the possibility of achieving short- and long-term benefits from cooperation with their bordering EU counterparts and also encourages them to promote further domestic reforms in accordance to EU standards. Also, the geographic proximity and the economic interdependence with the new EU members, as well as the sharing of a common past and of feeling European determine a support from EU candidates and members for the EEN European aspirations.

The geographic proximity to EU borders gives more opportunities for EEN political parties to speak more realistically about the European integration perspective. The discourse appears more specific in nature, with the focus on such issues like trans-border economic cooperation and movement of people.

**Party perceptions of EU and European integration**

In order to achieve a better understanding of the nature and degree of impact of European integration on party politics and party systems, the study provides an in-depth analysis of party perceptions of the EU and European integration, drawing primarily on party leaders interviews from 2007. The analysis largely relies on author’s 2007 interviews with the leaders of the relevant EEN governing and opposition parties. This is complemented with other key party documents, such as party programs and official declarations, as well as secondary sources.

The empirical findings are classified in the table 1 according to rationalist and ideational perceptions into four dimensions of party perceptions of the EU and European integration.

**TABLE 1 NEAR HERE**
Following the rationalist approach (logic of consequentiality) the economic dimension represents attitudes based on a cost-benefit analysis of economic advantages that EU can offer to its neighbors. This is the most salient dimension of the European discourse across the three examined political spaces. The EU is perceived as a model of achieving high standards of living and economic development and stability. Parties underline the benefits offered by the EU to its member states through its internal market and the four freedoms of movement (goods, services, persons, and capital).

In its turn, European integration is understood as a way of achieving important economic benefits, both at country level and individual level. In 2007, one of the priorities of the EEN political forces was the achievement of preferential trade agreements with the EU and full access to EU internal market. This was perceived as an early step towards deeper European integration. Yet, party leaders argue not only the importance of the mentioned-above country level advantages, but also the benefits for their citizens. As Yushchenko stated in his interview with Financial Times European standards are the ones to which Ukraine should aspire “because this is good not only for the country, but for the ordinary person.” (Financial Times 2005) These benefits encompass ensuring the well-being of all the members of the society and European standards of living.\(^5\)

The security dimension is another salient element of the EEN European discourse. The EU is defined by parties as a security system, an important geopolitical player on the regional and international level. EEN political forces perceive it as an institution that is able to ensure the respect of national sovereignty and independence of its member states. Accordingly, European integration process is seen as helping the newly emerging democracies of former USSR to find their own geopolitical place within the new European architecture. Also, this is expected to help the EEN to get rid of the Communist legacies, as well as offering security guarantees. Of a particular importance are statements that claim that European integration process is the only one capable of helping the post-Soviet republics to escape Russian influence in the region (“an alternative from

Russia\textsuperscript{6}) and ensuring the national statehood.\textsuperscript{7} PPCD from Moldova argued that EU integration is of main importance for Moldova to rid itself of the statute of “geopolitical annex of Russia” and the role of “sanitary cordon between Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space.”\textsuperscript{8}

One can trace a difference in European perceptions of governing and opposition parties as well as the left-right parties. The EEN ruling parties\textsuperscript{9} and some of the center-right and center-left parties had been more moderate in their official declarations with regard to the need of making a clear choice between Russia and the EU. They had stressed that European integration is not to be regarded as an alternative to the good neighborly relations with Russia. The argument in this respect is, as Yushchenko stated, that European integration is not a policy aimed against somebody, it is not “a step of revenge or disrespect,” but a matter of following the national interests. (Financial Times 2005) Also, Moldovan President Voronin did not see it as a contradiction having good relations with Russia and aspiring to become a member of EU. By contrast, he argued that this is “vital” for Moldova, a little country, which can win from cooperation with both East and West. (Euronews 2007)

Some of opposition party leaders presented a dilemma that the political elites of the three countries faced. The declaration of the aspiration for European integration is described as offering the chance of becoming a liberal-democratic state. By contrast, not doing so is interpreted as remaining in the post-Soviet space, characterized by “an anarchic, post-dictatorial regime, under Russian influence.”\textsuperscript{10} PPCD’s A. Arama put it shortly during the interview that the EU and European integration means the condition for the surviving of Moldova as a state because “otherwise the Russian will eat you.”\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{6} Interview with David Usupashvili, the chairman of Republican Party of Georgia, August 2007, the same opinion is shared by PSL, PNL, PPCD in Moldova and by Our Ukraine MP Natalia Prokopovich (interviewed in July 2007).

\textsuperscript{7} Party references in this regard are made particularly on EU’s role in solving the frozen conflicts from Moldova and Georgia (supported by Russian Federation) according to ‘European standards,’ (e.g. PSL or PNL from Moldova).


\textsuperscript{9} Our Ukraine, SPU, Party of Regions, Communist Party of Moldova and Saakashvili-National Movement.

\textsuperscript{10} Interview with Igor Klipii, general secretary of PSL, MP, May 2007, Chisinau.

\textsuperscript{11} Interview with A. Arama, MP, PPCD, May 2007, Chisinau.
Following the ideational perception, two dimensions of political attitudes towards the EU and European integration are examined: the historical-cultural and the liberal-democratic dimension. In the former case, EEN parties perceive the EU as a family of European civilized nations, based on Christianity and on the specific European history and culture that build the European identity. As D. Vydrin, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party from Ukraine (until the spring 2006 member of BYuT), put it during the interview (July 2007), “EU is first of all European values and a common European culture.” But apart from the identification of common European history and culture as the defining features of the EU, parties also remark the respect of individual features and traditions of a nation within the European club of states. 12

The European integration is perceived as the ‘return to Europe’ based on the historical and cultural resonance with European norms and values and the sharing of European identity. The president of Georgia, M. Saakashvili, during his inaugural speech from January 2004, declared his party commitment to European integration. He declared that the European flag “is Georgia’s flag as well, as far as it embodies our civilization, our culture, the essence of our history and perspective, and our vision for the future of Georgia.” (Saakashvili 2004) EEN political parties stress their Europeaness while claiming that European integration is a way of returning to the European space (represented by the EU) and assuring their country’s “natural place within the new European architecture.” 13 In the case of the Republic of Moldova, most of pro-Romanian political forces identify European integration as a way of re-joining of the Romanian cultural and historical space or even re-uniting with Romania within the EU borders. 14

The second ideational dimension embodies the liberal-democratic norms and values. The EU, in this context, is regarded as a ‘guru,’ a model of democratic and market economy reforms for the EEN emerging democracies. This represents the most popular EU perception of EEN party leaders during interviews. Among the fundamental EU values the politicians identify the democratic principles, including the respect for

12 Argument highlighted by Our Ukraine MP Natalia Prokopovich and the leader of Industrialists Party from Georgia, Zurab Tkihamaladze.
13 Interview with Serafim Urechean, president of AMN.
14 Particularly PPCD, PSL, and PNL, and to a certain degree AMN.
individual rights and freedoms, equal rights and opportunities, and market economy standards.

Following this line of thinking, European integration is perceived in the EEN as a successful transition to a democratic and market economy society based on European standards. As D.Braghiş, president of PDS, mentioned in his interview (May 2007), the EU is seen as being based on some well-defined liberal-democratic norms that represent standards for other countries. Consequently, most of political organizations from the EEN region viewed European integration as the internal implementation of European standards in all domestic policy areas. This was described as the major step towards a potential full EU integration. It was perceived to be a key element of modernization of the new post-communist democracies that would assure the status of a ‘European country’ for the three EEN not only from geographical, historical, or cultural points of view but also regarding their level of development. That is why European integration is defined as a solution to all the major problems which the three EEN face at the moment.\textsuperscript{15} Ukrainian President, V.Yushchenko, in his interview before the 2007 parliamentary elections declared that in the short-term future he sees Ukraine as “a European country,” “a democratic country,” “a country where the principal democratic values are clearly and irrevocably fixed.” (Euronews 2007)

So, the analysis of the European discourse in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, shows a multifaceted perception of the EU and European integration. Most of the parties acknowledge that full European membership was not realistic, yet it represented their strategic objective.

\textbf{Conclusions}

Combining the ‘broader Europeanisation’ approach with the diffusion studies, this paper highlights the importance of domestic level variables in the perception of the EU and European integration within the EEN. Several major findings are worth mentioning.

Firstly, the geographic proximity to the EU border influences the domestic perception of the EU and the process of European integration. As the Ukrainian and

\textsuperscript{15} This argument was particularly emphasized by Moldovan party leaders during interviews.
Moldovan cases reveal, bordering the EU provides the EEN political parties the opportunity to talk more realistically about the European integration. As a result, the European discourse is more specific in nature than in countries further away from the EU border, such as Georgia. Apart from the rationalist arguments, such as economic cooperation or movement of people, the ideational arguments of feeling European, based on the sharing of common historical past, are weaker in Georgia as compared with Ukraine and Moldova.

Secondly, the in-depth analysis of 2007 party leaders interviews sheds light on similarities and differences in domestic elite’s perceptions of the EU and European integration. It is worth stressing that the cost-benefit calculations (economic dimension) was the dominant element of the EEN European discourse. Linking this finding to Ukrainian rejection of the EU Association agreement in Vilnius in 2013, it highlights the importance of material gains in return for EEN domestic compliance to the EU policies. One can conclude that as long as the EU will not be able to provide its own estimation of costs and benefits of domestic compliance, the political elites rely on personal interpretations, often politicized and one-sided, of costs and benefits of European integration.

As the study reveals, the opposition parties shared a similar perception of the EU and European integration. Compared to governing parties, who stressed the importance of European integration, but also keeping good relations with Russia, the opposition presented a dilemma. In their view, the EEN countries had to choose between the European integration and becoming a liberal-democratic state or being an illiberal regime under Russian influence. From the security point of view, the EU and the European integration are described as the only alternative to Russian influence in the region and the protection of national sovereignty.

Further research is required to link the findings of this study with the post-2007 time period, particularly highlighting the roots of the failure of the Vilnius Summit. These findings are valuable for both the understanding of domestic factors responsible for the nature and salience of European discourse, but also for scholars assessing the success and failure of the EU policies within the European neighboring countries.
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Party Leaders Interviews

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Zurab Tkhemaladze, Industry Will Save Georgia, Tbilisi, August 2007.

Moldova
Serafim Urechean, Our Moldova Alliance (AMN), Chisinau, May 2007.

Ukraine
Dymitri Vydrin, Liberal Democratic Party from Ukraine/Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT)
### TABLE 1. PARTY PERCEPTIONS OF EU AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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<th>Perception</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>EU</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>Historical-cultural</td>
<td>- A family of European civilized nations, based on Christianity,</td>
<td>‘Return to Europe’:</td>
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<td>- European history and culture</td>
<td>- historical and cultural resonance with European norms and values</td>
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<td>Liberal-democratic</td>
<td>A model (a ‘guru’) of democratic and market economy reforms</td>
<td>Successful transition to a democratic and market economy society based on European standards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>A model of achieving European standards of living and economic development</td>
<td>Economic benefits (access to the four EU freedoms)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>- A security system, - respect of national sovereignty and statehood</td>
<td>Security guarantees:</td>
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<td>- the only way of getting rid of the communist past and Russian influence</td>
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