

## CLOSING REMARKS

As explained in the Preface, this special issue of *Politeja* presents a broad spectrum of political, cultural, and economic relations between Europe and Asia approached from different perspectives. The articles may seem disparate thematically and a question might arise what actually binds them into a coherent whole. It is evident that EU–Asia relations come to the fore as an area of growing interest to students and scholars of European Studies, Politics, and Area Studies. In these closing remarks, I would like to offer a reflection on the common background of the individual pieces of research included in this issue.

First, we should note the broader context of considering and researching EU–Asia relations which is reflected in the papers and on which they largely draw upon. A concrete example of this broader context is the EURASIA project, funded under the Capacity Building Action of the Erasmus+ Programme, which has been running for four years and has involved a balanced group of partners from EU countries and universities in China and Asia. It has steadily provided the ground for a dialogue between academics presenting different perspectives, including geographical, on EU-related policy issues. It has consistently drawn upon an epistemic interest around the discipline not limited to Europe but upon a growing interest for European Studies in many non-European states. The project is a continuation of a series of projects embedding a specific ethos and approach to rethinking European studies beyond the narrower EU integration perspective to a broader global context.

Second, the EU has become a rather consolidated player in the international arena and the expanding EU foreign relations has prompted many non-European states to take interest in European Studies, create research centers for European Studies, and introduce postgraduate, graduate, and certificate courses in European Studies, as the outcomes of the EURASIA project show. Providing opportunities for students in higher education who are willing to engage with European Studies has been the main objective. Additionally, the project addresses the challenges of establishing, updating, and

modernizing curricula in European studies in a globalized world based on shared ideas, the exchange of educational know-how and the development of resources, thus empowering all stakeholders in higher education. However, modernization of curriculum in higher education requires a significant research input by academics and course developers. European Studies can be revitalized through a research-oriented curriculum responding to the specific interests and students' needs in different local educational contexts.

Third, the issues of the perception of the EU and EU's policies outside have become a central point of reflection, not always in a direct way but as an important research background, initially as part of the previous project, the Euromec Jean Monnet Network on European Identity, Culture, Exchanges and Multilingualism, involving later some of the partners of the EURASIA Capacity Building Project. The aim has been to provide insights about attitudes of the European Union, which may run counter to the assumptions of EU policy makers, and thus to contribute to finding ways of overcoming an excessively Eurocentric perspective, to incorporating better the role of the Others in foreign policy and identity formation, and to a reflection on the relation between images of the EU and images of Europe.

This dimension becomes particularly manifest in the case of Asian states as their interest in Europe are in foreign relations with the EU rather than on EU integration process. With all that said, the fundamental question arises that is asked at some of the EURASIA public events: Do these variations in the form and substance of European Studies impact the essential philosophy of the discipline? How does research by EU and non-EU scholars contribute to this understanding of the philosophy of the discipline in a broader higher education context? Does the epistemology of the discipline get enriched by departing from the discourse of the EU-as-a-model? How can the approach of non-European states towards European Studies be streamlined with the Bologna Process?

The EU is now legally represented in almost all countries and regularly interacts on multiple tracks with governments as well as with business, educational institutions, civil society, and other stakeholders. Interaction and dialogue with these various actors and institutions cannot be carried out without serious consideration of the EU's perception in the rest of the world. Looking at external images of oneself is a fundamental component of a political identity along with public debate and self-representation. Self-reflexivity and mirror imaging contribute to shaping European identity among Europeans based on the liberal core of the EU and the pluralistic nature of its policies. It is useful for reconsidering how we teach and engage with European studies in the internal EU context and what actions the EU takes to face specific crises related to its changing identities and the challenge of enhancing of the EU model itself.

This special issue is an example and a contribution to sustaining this approach to European Studies, which is useful in shaping its future in an inside and outside perspective.

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