

УДК 327/061.1(ЄС):477

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SOFT POWER VS HARD POWER: IS THERE PLACE FOR THE EU AT SUCH «COMMON NEIGHBOURING» COUNTRIES AS UKRAINE?

Every time while choosing behaviour strategy we try to analyze our strengths and find the right set of tools to reach particular goal. The large heterogeneous space of the newly independent post-USSR countries caused many concerns and confusion among the main actors being unable to find a policy option suitable for all the targeting countries. Enlargement of 2004 made some of the EU member states and many others part of the European Neighbourhood. Understanding that these «Eastern Neighbours» largely varies on their characteristics and objectives bring dynamics to the EU policies. Alongside with internal changes and challenges posed by external players, it shapes EU's path in the integration-enlargement paradigm. An important question behind this is whether by choosing «multi-speed EU» path we open a door for multi-speed Europe in a broader sense? As The less obvious inside/outside paradox is, the more space for manoeuvre in involvement of our partners is available.

Relations of the EU and its «Eastern Neighbours» has gone through at least three stages, including European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) creation in 2004; new ENP in 2008 and recent revision of the ENP in 2015. Beginning with the New ENP divided into two regions of Mediterranean and Eastern Partnership (proposed in 2008 by Poland and Sweden) there is an understanding of high demand for closer relations up to membership aspirations at the New Eastern European countries. The mechanism of cooperation can be called «all for all», as countries treated without prejudice to individual countries' aspirations for their future relationship with the EU. Meanwhile Eastern Partnership as such was created to support their aspirations for closer ties. These are main countries for the EU to pursue change using «soft power» between countries able and willing to change on the EU pattern.

The main obstacle on the way of these «closer ties» lies at the fact that these neighbours are not only neighbours to the EU as such, but also to the

Russian Federation that has no aspiration to forget its glorious past. Keeping in mind the abovementioned fact, it becomes extremely difficult for the Union to foster relations at this «common neighbourhood» in parallel with the EU's strategic partnership with Russia. And the core contradiction is not only in lack of resources or will to cooperate on both dimensions, but rather at the extremely different understanding of role of the «common neighbours» by the EU and the RF. While constructing a «ring of friends», mentioned above for the EU, whose security and prosperity is crucial for the security and prosperity of the Union these countries also treated as betrayers of the «common past of friendly nation» if not being involved into newly created by Russia unions. After the failure of «soft power» and soft approaches by the RF, meaning leading by example and try to attract rather than compel, Russia has returned to old reliable and «hard power». This indeed foresees that countries which are not in line with the Russian politics are posing a threat to become part of the Western block and even more importantly, show to Russian people alternative way of transformation into democratic and prosperous state.

Eastern partnership countries are different in their nature and aspirations and by recognition of this fact enabled the EU to move toward a tailored approach to these states. Of course a lot now depends on internal transformations of such frontrunners as Ukraine and further path of development of the Union itself, combined with dynamics of the war and frozen conflicts used by Russian Federation. One way or another multi-speed Europe in a broader context with practical means of integration seems to be currently the only alternative to all-or-nothing approach that do not grant membership or even membership perspective but combined with funding reforms would stabilize Eastern neighbours, provide them with real objective to keep orientation on the EU and resist Russian new policy.