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## FOREIGN POLICY OF EUROPEAN UNION: EURASIAN AGENDA

Oleksiy KANDYUK\*

**Abstract:** *EU's influence at so-called post-Soviet space gradually increases and becomes a significant factor of regional policy. Today we can already speak of the European Union as a full participant in the political processes occurring in the post-Soviet and broader – Eurasian area. Foreign policy of EU is evolving under impact of reasons stemming from both structural and political context and from external geopolitical trends. At the same time, challenges in the geopolitical environment in Europe today require the EU to develop new conceptual approaches helping to deal with the problems of relations with its eastern neighbours and the Russian impact. Only the development of a new Eurasian agenda could help to improve European eastern policy, consolidate the position of EU as a geopolitical actor in this region and foster Europeanization and integration of neighbour countries.*

**Keywords:** European integration; Foreign policy of EU; European neighbourhood policy; Eastern partnership

### Introduction

The European Union as one of the most powerful geopolitical actors has progressed along a difficult way from narrow-profile engagement between most developed European countries to a Europe-wide commonwealth in order to achieve a higher level of social and economic development. The phenomenon of the EU still requires more research. Theoretical constructs of European integration are unstable because the structure, the agenda and the very nature of the European Union are undergoing permanent change.

In this context, the EU foreign policy is also evolving under impact of reasons stemming from both structural and political context and from external geopolitical trends.

Despite the fact that the common EU foreign policy is still a vague concept, dependant on constant dialectic change within the EU itself, it is clear that now we can talk about the existence of certain rules. The assumption we make is that one of the leading trends can be interpreted as consolidation and compromise unification of European policy in general, and its foreign component in particular.

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In this regard, the European Union foreign policy influence in Eurasia gradually increases and becomes a significant factor of regional policy. Today we can already speak of the EU as a full participant in the political processes occurring in the post-Soviet and Eurasian area.

At the same time, due to the complex system of political decision-making, requiring lengthy procedures, the EU foreign policy influence is often proves to be insufficient to achieve required goals.

EU enlargement to the east and south-east, the complex relationship with its eastern neighbours and Russia, as well as awareness of miscalculations and failures of the eastern vector of EU foreign policy creates an internal need for urgent formation of a new agenda for the Eurasian space.

Thus, the article will deal the following questions:

- Whether the European Union becomes a powerful geopolitical actor in Eurasia?
- Could the Eastern Partnership remain the basic tool of Eastern policy of European Union?
- Shall we witness the emergence of a new common European foreign policy paradigm and in what form it will appear?
- The answers to the above queries suggest, in our view, the following objectives:
- To examine possible and desirable changes in Eastern dimension of EU's foreign policy.
- To outline trends and prospects of EU's Eastern policy further development.
- To give recommendations on basic features of a new Eurasian paradigm of Eastern policy of European Union.

## **1. Theoretical framework**

From the very beginning, the effectiveness of the Eastern policy of European Union has been questioned in academic literature, mainly on the grounds that the incentives offered by the EU are too weak to entice its neighbouring countries into domestic reforms (Batt *et al.*, 2003; Gould, 2004; Milcher and Slay, 2005; Kelly, 2006; Smith, 2005; Hillion and Cremona, 2007). The leverage of the EU is weak not only because no membership perspective is provided but because it is ultimately unclear what the actual award for enacting EU conditionality is.

A number of experts have noted a significant influence of the EU's enlargement policy experience on the formation of EU policy towards the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe (Dannreuther, 2006; Gebhard, 2007). Some researchers have looked European policy in this region as a continuation of the security policy (Bengtsson, 2008). Very popular is the idea of the European Eastern policy as of an element of geopolitical struggle between the EU and Russia (Haukkala, 2007).

Researchers from Central and Eastern Europe, especially Poland, are critical on EU Eastern policy, which is, in their opinion, inconsistent, ideological and having a declarative character. Experts generally share the view that the Eastern Partnership and the EU's Eastern policy as a whole failed to lead to a convergence between EU and partner-countries and that very approach to European integration differs to such an extent that any collective action becomes extremely difficult (Fedorowicz, 2011; Szczepanik, 2012).

Even more researchers tend to be critical on the EU's neighbourhood policy for the absence of the prospect of membership and non-efficient financial assistance, as well as for the fact that it does not take into account the specifics of individual countries in the region. A. Eberhardt draws attention to the fact that the biggest problems EU experiences with the elaboration of a strategy for those countries that are not interested in development of cooperation, like Belarus and Azerbaijan (Eberhardt, 2014). Some experts, like J. Fiszer, even argue that the European Union conducts an inconsistent policy and, in particular, acts differently towards Ukraine and Belarus, because it is afraid the reaction of Russia and accusation of interfering into internal affairs (Fiszer, 2012).

The European view of the effectiveness of EU foreign policy and, in particular, its eastern dimension is much in common with CEE authors who criticized the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership for not meeting the expectations of the Eastern partners, and not creating enough motivation for reforms (Kempe, 2007; Longhurst, 2009; Jensen, 2012).

In general, despite the diversity of expert approaches to the understanding and perspectives of EU's Eastern policy issues, the vast majority of experts agree with the necessity of a radical transformation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, as its instrument.

## **2. Eastern Partnership and European diffusion**

The emergence of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its eastern direction was directly related to the EU expansion to the East, which began in 2004. During the preparation it became obvious that after the completion of this process, opportunities for integration into the EU of new members will be exhausted in the foreseeable future. At that time the formation of the future strategy of the ENP began. It should compensate reaching the expansion limits and ensure the spread of the European influence on the neighbouring countries through creation of co-operation models, which do not provide full membership.

It should be noted that European officials and strategists did not consider the rigid fixation and strengthening the EU's new eastern border because it could lead to the creation of a new dividing line

in Europe. Besides, the impulse of external expansion of the European Union maintained its strength and relevance despite the fact that the real possibility of further formal expansion was greatly reduced. Thus, it was necessary to find other solutions to the challenges related to the integration of the CEE countries.

Thereby, the policy which originally contained a defect and the basis for creation of political dilemmas in the future has been formed. In fact, Eastern Partnership (EaP) as the ENP instrument could only develop in two ways: transform into a more ambitious project, and accordingly recognize the possibility of further extension, or remain inefficient as foreign policy initiative, which is gradually degrading and losing relevance. For a long time, things were going under the second scenario.

But the year of 2014 brought some positive improvements to the Eastern aspect of the EU foreign policy. The signing of Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in June 2014 and the establishment of a visa-free regime with Moldova brought European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership Programme to a completely new level. At the same time new challenges and threats (Ukrainian crisis, annexation of the Crimea, Russia's transition to hard line policy in the former Soviet Union area) require better unity of the EU and the development of fundamentally new approaches to its Eastern policy. In March 2015, European Commission and the High Representative F. Mogherini presented Joint Consultative Report "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy" (European Commission, 2015b), which initiates discussions on the future of the ENP.

Discussions within the European Union regarding the Eastern Partnership have deteriorated sharply over the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine. Two basic groups were formed, that could be so called value-geopolitical and narrowly pragmatic. According to the experts and politicians of the first group, in the context of annexation of the Crimea and Russian aggression in Donbas, The European Union has to offer countries aiming at integration (first of all Ukraine and Moldova) a deeper political and economic cooperation with more ambitious goals. It comes to the possibility of recognition of membership at least in the long term (10-20 years), and a more active investment of resources in the integration of these countries into energy, economic, scientific and educational space of the European Union. Experts admit that the lack of progress the EU is offering its neighbors will mean weakening of the European Union and recognition of failure to compete with Russia.

"Ambiguity and weakness will only demonstrate that the course Moscow has chosen is the right one and that the EU is weak in its preparedness to stand strong and united against Russia", says the expert of the EPC analytical centre A. Paul (Paul, 2015).

Pragmatists instead believe that European politicians have underestimated Russia's readiness to confront the economic and regulatory expansion of the EU to the countries of the former Soviet Union, and its abilities to do it. The destructive influence of the Russian Federation today leads to the fact that the conflict in Donbas is not frozen and any time risks to escalate into an open military conflict again. Escalation of conflict may also affect the neighbouring Moldova. Armenia actually sabotages the EaP and has chosen the Eurasian Union. In this case, there is a risk of continuation of an armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Generally, this approach advises to take into account the position of Russia, and in relation to the neighbouring countries to make efforts for a minimum stabilization, both military and political. For the first time this option was announced by foreign ministers of the Weimar triangle (Germany, Poland, France) at the end of March 2014 (MFARP, 2014).

It must be noted, that despite the fact that the first approach prevails in the political rhetoric of Brussels, its practical actions are more inclined to the second one. That's why the Riga summit of Eastern Partnership, which took place in May 2015, triggered a wave of pessimism among the supporters of active integration of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. Just before the summit the formula the EU's relations with its eastern neighbours was finally determined: "political convergence and economic integration". Hence, the EU countries once again, even under pressure exacerbated geopolitical confrontation with Russia, refused to talk about the prospects of membership in a context of the Eastern Partnership program.

Besides, in November 2015 a new document called "Review of the Foreign Policy" appeared, which was prepared jointly by the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. In fact, a new key priority of the neighbourhood policy was determined there – its stabilization. The policy "should help partner countries to become a place, where people want to build their future and deal with uncontrolled movement of people" (European Parliament, 2015).

Consequently, at the level of practical policy the European Union has determined not Russian aggression as a threat, but migration flows from the countries of the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood caused by wars in Syria and Ukraine. Planning horizons in Brussels narrowed basically to ensure minimum short-term objectives of stability at external borders.

Thus, disparity of incentives and defined goals has become more and more obvious. The lack of prospect of membership remains one of the main obstacles for serious improvements of the EU policies in Eastern direction. The EU is fully aware of how highly motivating this tool is. However, the lack of unity inside the association regarding the possibility of expansion does not allow

consolidating the European prospect for the participants of Eastern Partnership. Uncertainty of the ultimate purposes is one of the main reasons of structural weakness of the ENP and it potentially reduces the attractiveness of the project for its members. Despite the obvious and understandable need for the transformation of Eastern Partnership into a more ambitious political program, the EU is still not ready to make this move fundamentally and confidently.

Also obvious is the difference in the goals of each participant: three member countries of the program (Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia) do not declare their intention to join the European Union. On the one hand, the heterogeneity of participants and their motivation was partly taken into account by the EU during the first stages of the ENP as a principle of “differentiation”. Later the “regatta” strategy was developed that worked well in terms of the outspread and application of the “more for more” principle, which involved providing more support to partners in exchange for progress in reforms.

This principle – a more individual and differentiated approach to cooperation of the European Union with Eastern Partnership countries, was reflected in the results of the Riga Summit. In fact, the EU agreed to change mechanism of implementation of Eastern Partnership and determine its priorities. Thus, the depth of cooperation will be determined in each case on the one hand by the EU, on the other – by “by the EU's and partners' ambitions and needs as well as the pace of reforms” (European Commission, 2015a).

Moreover, the principle of differentiation can become the beginning of a model change of both Eastern Partnership and, broadly speaking, the European Neighbourhood Policy. Most of all it will apply to the new “core” of the EP. But it's a bigger innovation from the point of view of the EU, because Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova see Association Agreement as an already existing tool for modernization, but not the ultimate purpose of relations with the EU. So, we can acknowledge a reversal of the European Union towards a new stage of Eastern Partnership, although a slower one than it is required by time and ambitions of Eastern Partnership member countries.

### **3. The Russian impact and Eastern policy failure**

Russia's refusal to participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy has caused increasing competition between the EU and Russia in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, Eastern Partnership can be seen as a manifestation of the first serious clash of the Russian-European interests in Eastern Europe. Despite assurances of the EU in non-opposition of the goals and objectives of the ENP and EaP to the interests of Russia, the project has been clearly perceived as anti-Russian from the very

beginning, and an additional argument in favour of this was the concurrence of the Eastern Partnership program development and the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008.

One of the indirect consequences of the ENP was its impact on the transformation of the Russian foreign policy strategy. Eastern policy of EU was aimed at resolving the two related problems: alteration of the periphery and alteration of Russia. And according to experts, the latter task was fulfilled quite successfully, because during the first decade of the XXI century Russia started using the strategy of “soft power” (Wilson *et al.*, 2014, p.6) on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, Russia has actually adopted the EU’s methods and tools to be used in its own integration projects. Tactics of combination of incentives and rewards alongside with elements of coercion, which together form the components of the “soft power” was actually copied from the model of relationship between the EU and partner countries.

But, the situation has radically changed before the Vilnius summit, where a major breakthrough in EU eastern policy should happen and that could show the advantage of the European integration model. The Ukrainian crisis and the Russian transition from soft to hard power policy signaled the failure of not only the Russian integration strategy in Eastern Europe, but also of the European attempt to use the ENP as an instrument of soft power to influence Russia and cause its transformation.

In the context of further development of relations in the triangle EU – Russia – EaP countries, it is interesting to examine a research of an international scenario construction group upon request of Friedrich Ebert Foundation. In order to predict possible future scenarios, 20 experts from 12 countries participated in the project “The EU and the East in 2030” (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014). As a result, four major scenarios of possible cooperation between the countries from 2015 to 2030 have been developed.

### ***Scenario I: Shared Home***

As a result of the war in Donbass and the introduction of the EU and US sanctions against the Kremlin, relations between them can be characterized as an unstable balance. At the same time there remains a serious threat of an open conflict. But, with the course of time, the EU will overcome the economic crisis and as a result of entering into a basic financial agreement the Eurozone will be saved. Due to change of elites in Russia and the initiation of economic reforms, EU Member States will be ready again to cooperate with Moscow, not least of all in order to stimulate their stagnant economy. As a result, the EU and Russia will concentrate their efforts on common interests and pragmatic cooperation, which will lead to signing a free trade agreement, including Eastern Partnership countries.



***Scenario II: Common Home***

Experts call this scenario the most advantageous to Ukraine. It will be possible under condition of democratic reforms in Russia. By 2024 Russia will elect a new Democratic president, and an agreement on visa-free regime between Russia and the EU will be signed, and the Eastern Partnership countries will implement successful reforms, strengthening their economies, but will not become members of the EU. Conflicts over Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Crimea will have been solved by that time. As a result, the EU and Russia will join its efforts not only to resolve conflicts in Europe, but also to deal with shared threats.

***Scenario III: Broken Home***

As a result of the unsolved conflict in Donbas a massive military race will be started in Eastern Europe, launching a spiral of escalation. Russia will aggressively respond to the NATO's plans to expand its commitment of protection to its Eastern European member states. Russia will develop a new military doctrine, which will establish the possibility of using nuclear weapons in response to attacks with conventional weapons. A relative success of authoritarian modernization in Russia and the transition to alternative energy sources in the EU will allow both sides to act independently.

***Scenario IV: Divided Home***

The last scenario expects the implementation of the agreement between Ukraine and the EU to be permanently delayed due to the Russian pressure, in 2017 year this can lead to a new Maidan. Meanwhile, the solidarity of the EU Member States will continue to be challenged due to EU's economic sanctions against Russia, and Russia's response to these sanctions, which will inevitably cause damage to both European and Russian economic interests. Despite the sanctions and political tension, economic relations between the EU and Russia will continue to have a high level of interdependence, mainly because of the huge importance of energy resources and trade, as well as Russia's need for European technology to modernize its economy. This significant interdependence of economies will not allow any of the sides to slide into an open conflict. Thus, relations between the EU and Russia will remain in a deadlock situation. Such a "cold peace" will not allow any political and economic reforms to happen. Meanwhile, Eastern Partnership countries will sway between East and West.

The author believes that all the four scenarios are to a certain extent schematic, speculative and hardly feasible. However, they demonstrate well the two major trends in the United Europe's

perception of its own Eastern policy: a) continuation of focus on Russia (because forecasts do not take into account the presence of own interest in the Eastern Partnership countries) and b) perception of the Eastern Partnership as a containment tool for the EU periphery without the right of recognition it as a part of the European *oecumene*. With such an approach, not only Eastern policy, but EU integration as the whole is doomed to a failure.

#### **4. Leadership of Germany and inner European consensus**

However, there are obvious signs of changes in the EU's perception of Russia and the emerging fragile consensus on the Eastern policy.

Russian aggression in Ukraine and its transformation into an open confrontation with the West has caused the formation of two opposite groups within the European Union, depending on their position on the Russian question.

Among the EU countries, on the one hand, there are “hawks” calling to actively confront Russia, increasing economic sanctions and providing more active support to Ukraine. Some of them even back the possibility of weapons supplies to Ukraine for protection. From the very beginning such a hard line was chosen by Poland, the Baltic States and Romania. Each of these countries has its own internal reasons, related primarily to some recent historical events. The United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries also tend to belong to this group.

On the other hand, some EU countries have opted a controversial position on Ukraine and Russia in the current war. This group of the so-called “Russia's understanders” includes France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and South-Eastern Europe. Some of them can probably veto new sanctions against Russia in the near future or try to block their prolongation. Such intentions have been repeatedly expressed by government officials of Italy, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greece and Hungary.

Germany plays the most prominent role in this process of consolidation of common European position. It has taken the initiative and has been leading the process of resolving the international crisis in Ukraine. And it has managed to unite the EU for the implementation of a unified policy, and specifically, diplomatic and economic pressure on Moscow, despite the resistance of some EU countries.

The influence of Germany has played an extraordinary role not only in the imposition of effective EU sanctions against Russia in March 2014 and their expansion in July and September 2014, but also in the failure of the “South Stream” pipeline project and prevention of rapprochement

between Hungary and Russia. Moreover, Germany has persuaded France to join the sanctions, having left the group of skeptics, and used Paris for an indirect influence on other Southern member countries. Thus, German political leadership contributed to the formation of certain inner European consensus. And even though this consensus is apparently temporary, but it is very important for Ukraine at the current state of affairs.

Berlin's efforts to form a common position of the West towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict consist of two key components: the coordination of its actions with the United States and support of EU vision of the conflict solution. In general, the German policy at this point actually represents a common approach of the European Union and comprises three major components: searching for mainframes of negotiations to settle certain aspects of the conflict through diplomacy, sanctions against Russia and financial support of Ukraine.

The main objective of Germany, the EU and the West as a general policy in relation to Ukraine is to transfer the conflict from military confrontation to diplomatic and economic spheres. In order to lift the sanctions against Russia it is necessary to make progress in resolving the conflict. In this aspect, the goals of Germany do not always meet Ukrainian interests: its policy is aimed at a cease-fire regime and the freezing of the conflict in eastern Ukraine for a rapid "resolution" of the Ukrainian crisis.

It should be noted that Berlin was very reluctant to respond to the military aspects of the crisis. The position of Germany emphasizes that the solution of the conflict lies beyond the military aspect, so there is only a diplomatic way to resolve it. This is evident in particular in Germany's opposition to the idea of possible permanent deployment of NATO troops in Poland, the Baltic States and Romania, which was actively discussed on the eve of the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014.

Nevertheless, the current position of the European Union on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has also demonstrated a significant modification of its eastern policy. Russian annexation of the Crimea and the war in the east of Ukraine has resulted in the emergence of a bigger realism and more unity in the EU's policy towards Russia. This gives reason to believe that in the near future the whole paradigm of the Eastern policy, and in particular its attitude to Russia and countries of the Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus may change.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

The last results of the EaP include the signing of Association Agreements with three countries – Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, as well as visa-free regime for Moldova. So in terms of the EU it

was significant achievements that confirmed the viability of the EaP program and eastern policy as a whole. However, recent Summit in Riga demonstrated a striking discrepancy between the expectations of some member countries and the willingness of the EU to respond to those expectations.

Similarly, Riga has not responded to expectations of the differentiation format of relations with neighbours. The final Declaration only mentions a “sovereign right of each partner freely to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union” (European Commission, 2015a), and the intention of the EU to develop differentiated relations between the EU and the six partner countries.

Besides, the differentiation format of relations with Eastern neighbours must be considered in conjunction with the development of a strategy of relations with Russia which is a key challenge for the foreign policy of EU on its eastern borders. From the very start Russia considered Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy as geopolitical projects of the European Union, tools of struggle for common neighbours. Eastern Partnership summits are becoming more and more geopolitical each year and challenge the EU-Russia relations. In the recent years the European Union has faced aggressive Russian counteraction to EU rapprochement with its neighbouring countries, especially Ukraine and Armenia, where political and economic competition shifted to an open geopolitical confrontation.

Such situation dictates the need to revise the EU toolbox in this rival toward pragmatism and moving from the purely technocratic approach to elaboration of a new “Eurasian” agenda to deal with trends and issues on post-soviet area.

The European Union should become more geopolitical and subjective in its foreign policy. Attempts to use normative powers have been successful in the expansion policy, when the EU has not actually faced foreign resistance. Today, the Eastern Partnership countries do not consider the European Union as the axis of power and a security guarantor. Hence, the regulatory impact of the European Union, with its time lag between the action and the result cannot fully compete with the geopolitical influence of Russia. Obviously, the incentives offered by the EU will take effect in the long term, but the measures of influence used by Russia, work immediately. Therefore, the existing instruments, which EU operates in its Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, will fail to counteract Russian levers which are based on foreign policy and economic pragmatism.

The increase in the EU's geopolitical subjectivity should proceed both through strengthening and accelerating Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as through the introduction of security features into the Eastern Partnership or may be other instrument of EU's foreign policy.

Today, the European Union is gradually becoming a geopolitical player, including in Eurasia, and the EaP in its current form is not able to be an adequate geopolitical tool. Since the Eastern Partnership initial aim was to create a safe environment on the eastern borders of the EU, a new reality outlined by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict arises the need of filling the program with security content. Moreover, under a constant threat of Russia, the European Union's rejection to create a new security concept including the EaP countries is very likely to lead to the creation of local security structures out of the EU (the Baltic-Ukrainian, the Black Sea, etc.).

The European Commission emphasizes this aspect in its document on key benchmarks of the ENP review (March, 2015) (European Commission, 2015b). That gives optimism to hope that the updated version of the ENP (and later, perhaps, EaP) will include security constructions within the CSDP.

The EU must do everything to overcome the tendencies of deconsolidation, caused by different position of member countries towards the development of relations with Russia. Russia will continue policy aimed at further deepening of contradictions within the EU, by ignoring the actual development of relations with the EU institutions. Instead, it will proceed in exclusively bilateral format of relations with each individual member states within the so-called “privileged partnership”, which provides economic preferences. Russia will also actively support parties and movements of the anti-European wing in France, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Greece and other countries.

Therefore, Russian presence and activity in Europe, as well as the consensus principle of making decisions at the level of the EU institutions, which gives member states the right to have a significant impact on the development of a shared position on certain aspects of the Ukrainian issue, can create some pro-Russian group of countries within the EU, which would undermine the consolidating policy of Germany and France (as EU leaders), prevent the successful implementation of the European eastern policy, and actively counteract the pro-American pool of EU member states (the UK, Sweden, Poland, Romania and the Baltic countries). Such a diffusion induces by Russia can undermine not only Eastern policy of EU but European unity itself.

European Union should determinately reject the “buffering” of cross-border area. Such an approach, which has originally been incorporated into the essence of the Eastern Partnership, and, unfortunately, is part of it today, has proved to be ineffective. The EU planned to establish a zone of stability along its borders but today it facing a territory of growing instability. Gradual democratization and Europeanization of Eastern Partnership countries were expected. But now we have a more pro-Russian Armenia, authoritarian Azerbaijan and no changes in Belarus. The European

Union constantly stressed that the Eastern Partnership does not oppose Russia, but received the “Cold peace” with Russian Federation.

Thus, continuing the policy of creating a buffer zone, the European Union risks being caught in a dilemma between the belt of instability and a belt of pro-Russian autarky along its borders.

The prospect of membership should be given as a reward for those EaP countries that have made the greatest progress in implementing European standards and practices. Designing the future relations with its neighbours, European planners have chosen the most familiar and probably the most obvious way, by using a sample of the original model of relations with Central and Eastern European candidate countries. But tools and principles that operated successfully in relations with CEE countries, which had a clear perspective of EU membership, have become ineffective for the neighbouring countries. That happened cause European Union in fact, offered this countries sort of “quasi-membership” using the principle of “everything but the common institutions” (Prodi, 2002) declared by Romano Prodi in 2002.

The European Union should support the development of civil society in EaP countries. Today, we can observe gradual shift in EaP instruments from the “more for more” principle to the “back-to-the-basics” principle, both of which are only partly efficient because of their focus on institutions. Therefore, the main recipients of the reform impulses become government and state institutions. That poses a threat of corruption, reform simulation and rapid rollback even in the case of success. Encouraging the establishment of institutions of European bureaucrats overlooks potentially profound changes that can be achieved by reform of society at a grass-roots level rather than governmental structures.

EU should enhance the differentiation between “associated” and “unassociated” Eastern Partnership countries depend on the level of implementation of reforms. The European Union should focus on the leading countries: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Firstly, the success of these countries can bring new impetus to EaP policies. And secondly, it can be an incentive for outsider countries and awaken a new interest in reforms under the auspices of the Eastern Partnership.

Finally, the EU should abandon the idealistic notion that economic cooperation with Russia could help eventually transform it politically. Such an approach is untenable, because the years of Russian political development proves the opposite. By contrast, democratization of the EaP partner countries may serve as a tool to foster gradual democratization of Russia.

## Conclusions

Thus, proceeding from international political realities of the early 21st century, the European Union's foreign policy eastern dimension cannot be called either successful, or effective. Dynamic global changes and a number of both internal (deconsolidation, unity crisis) and external factors (Russian aggression, Middle East issues, etc.) have transformed the instrument of Eastern Partnership into indefinite policy with vague objectives and weak impact on regional political processes.

In fact, apart from the financial support and vague prospects “for further integration”, the EU today has nothing to offer to neighbouring countries as a prize for a pro-European course of implementation of the required political and economic reforms. The problem of uncertainty of ultimate goals and the crisis of political conditionality remains today one of the main obstacles to the progress of the EU Neighbourhood Policy.

But the EU's foreign policy is evolving and the result of the evolution of the EU Eastern policy is the transition of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership from a purely technocratic instrument to a value-oriented tool and the maintenance of the EU as a regulatory actor and geopolitical player in the post-Soviet and broader Eurasian space. At the same time, challenges in the geopolitical environment in modern Europe require the EU to develop new conceptual approaches to the problems of relations with its eastern neighbors and the Russian impact over European eastern policy. Only the development of a new Eurasian agenda could help to improve European eastern policy, consolidate the position of EU as a geopolitical actor in this region and foster Europeanization and integration of neighbour countries.

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