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EU'S RESILIENCE IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP REGION VS RUSSIA'S HYBRID AGGRESSION

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The article examines the issues of counteracting the hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. It is stated that European Union has been implementing the Eastern Partnership policy for more than ten years. This implementation has been a resounding success for all, without exception, the six target states. Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia have advanced much more in their European aspirations. However, this does not stop the Russian Federation from further positioning all the states that were once part of the USSR as a sphere of its ultimate influence. Russia is also producing rivalry with the EU for influencing all, without exception, the Eastern Partnership states and even the EU. An overview of academic research analyzing the resilience of the EU in the face of Russia in the context of its impact on the Eastern Partnership countries is set out in this article. Some approaches have been used to define the EU as a “normative power” and Russia’s controversial policy towards neighbouring countries.

The examination of the works described in the article concludes that the Russian Federation continues to regard neighbouring states as its sphere of influence, particularly Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Moscow considers any attempt by a third party to interfere as an intrusion on its unique field of power. As can be observed from the investigated sources, Russia’s activities are scarcely diplomatic or focused on global democratic norms. In its Eastern

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Partnership strategy, the EU, on the other hand, utilizes values as a guideline. Simultaneously, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia must demand immediate modifications to the Eastern Partnership policy. The potential of EU membership, in particular, must be appropriately explained by Brussels.

Keywords: *European Union, Eastern Partnership, Ukraine, Russian Federation, aggression.*

Стійкість ЄС в регіоні Східного партнерства vs гібридна агресія Росії

У статті досліджуються питання протидії російській гібридній агресії РФ у країнах Східного партнерства. Констатовано, що Європейський Союз вже більше десяти років імплементує політику «Східного партнерства». Ця імплементація відбувається з перемінним успіхом для всіх без виключення шести держав-об'єктів цієї політики. Україна, Республіка Молдова та Грузія просунулись значно більше в своїх європейських аспіраціях. Проте це не зупиняє Російську Федерацію від подальшого позиціонування всіх держав, які колись входили до СРСР, як сфери свого ультимативного впливу. Також Росія продукує суперництво з ЄС за вплив на всі без виключення держави «Східного партнерства», саму політику та навіть на ЄС. Огляд академічних досліджень, що аналізують стійкість ЄС у протистоянні з Росією в контексті впливу на держави «Східного партнерства» викладено в цій статті. Застосовано підходи визначення ЄС як «нормативного актора» та суперечливій політиці Росії щодо держав-сусідів.

Аналіз згаданих у статті праць спонукає до висновку, що Російська Федерація продовжує вважати сусідні держави, зокрема Україну, Республіку Молдова та Грузію своєю сферою впливу. А найменші спроби третьої сторони втрутитись Москва сприймає як посягання на її виключну сферу впливу. Дії Росії, як видно з проаналізованих джерел, важко назвати дипломатичними та орієнтованими на загальнолюдські демократичні цінності. ЄС навпаки, застосовує цінності як орієнтир у політиці «Східного партнерства». Водночас, для України, Республіки Молдова та Грузії настав час настійливо вимагати змін у політиці «Східного партнерства». Зокрема перспектива членства в ЄС має бути чітко артикульована з боку Брюсселя.

Ключові слова: *Європейський Союз, «Східне партнерство», Україна, Російська Федерація, агресія.*

Introduction. For more than a decade, the European Union has been executing the Eastern Partnership agenda. This implementation has been a spectacular success for all six target states, without exception. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia have made significant progress in their European aspirations. However, this does not prevent the Russian Federation from further projecting all of the former Soviet Union's nations as a sphere of ultimate influence. Russia is also fueling antagonism with the EU over its ability to influence everyone, including the Eastern Partnership state, politics, and even the EU. This article provides an overview of academic studies examining the EU's resilience in the face of Russia in the context of its influence on Eastern Partnership nations. Specific methods have been utilized to describe the EU as a "normative force" and Russia's controversial policy toward its neighbours.

Methodology. Delcour probably used one of the most acceptable analytical frameworks for the topic's analysis (Delcour, 2018). The EU has been portrayed as a "normative power" that wields ideational rather than material or physical force. Its strength is derived from the ideals and standards it strives to present to its surroundings founded on universal principles (Manners, 2002). A significant implication is that the EU sees itself as a "force for good" in international affairs, particularly in its immediate proximity. This is because the EU believes that, like in post-war Western Europe and post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe, accepting its norms and practice would eventually bring peace and prosperity to the EU's Eastern neighbours. As a result, the EU's primary goal with the ENP/EaP is to expand a European postmodern security community over the rest of Europe.

On the other hand, Russia is frequently portrayed as a former hegemon attempting to reclaim its lost empire (Giusti, 2016). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's policy toward former Soviet republics has been based on the belief that Russia's security is inextricably linked to the fate of these countries. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs used the term "near abroad" in the early 1990s to describe Russia's uncertain relationship with newly sovereign nations in the post-Soviet sphere (some of whom had never been independent before the USSR collapsed). This notion was founded on two intertwined hypotheses. On the one hand, Russia acknowledged these nations' sovereignty; on the other, it saw them as a zone of privileged interests in which it had a particular role to play (Delcour, 2018, 16).

This paper aims to present the overall approach in the field of EU's resilience in the Eastern Partnership Region and Russia's countering it.

Research and Discussion. Ene's article examines the current state of European interstate construction from the perspective of EU-Russia cooperation. It provides a medium- and long-term assessment of the risks posed by regional and international security policy through a new type of war that Russia has perfected in every way. In this framework, Romania becomes a key player in European security and a source of stability on the Union's eastern border for states with pre-accession status (Ene, 2018, 96). One of the most hazardous military techniques of the period is the 5th generation war or the mixture of low-end and high-end combat. Vladimir Putin's desire to build a Eurasian empire is becoming increasingly apparent. Russia has co-opted Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, and, to a lesser extent, Greece to build the operational roots of endurance warfare in Europe. In contrast to these nations, which have diplomatic and commercial ties with Russia, other countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia, and Georgia are more dependant on economic dependency than they would want to be.

The "European Union" initiative reflects the benefit of some cultures and civilizations that have come together in an advanced societal form, relying solely on spiritual and social growth within the framework of a complex yet fluid civilization. The current global socio-political instability only proves that this supra-state entity is the model of a stable and peaceful society capable of serving as a model of international harmony. However, the development of this society must undoubtedly assume and foresee external dangers that will not go away, dangers that are inherent in the metamorphosis and substantive reorganization of some interstate macro-corporations (Ene, 2018, 102).

As for Howorth, the Russian aggression in Ukraine is undoubtedly the most severe problem in Europe's neighbourhood this century. It is not 'between medium and strong in intensity,' as several articles indicate. It calls into question the EU's core ideals, objectives, and perhaps its very existence. However, the crisis reaction has been the polar opposite of enabling. The unsustainable nature of the EU's relations with Russia, which is due in large part to policy mistakes made by both Brussels and Washington in previous decades, but also to Russia's (inevitable) reemergence as a great regional power, has placed significant constraints on the Union's ability to influence policy in Moscow. This was made worse by the disparate assess-

ments of the general situation from the EU's 28 capital cities, which were up against differing approaches from the European Commission. The EU's policy on sanctions and ties with Kyiv finally produced a facade of "unity," but it was not a plan for the use of EU "power." A team led by Federica Mogherini is now pondering and drafting such a plan. It is hoped that the lessons learned from the Ukraine conflict would be wholly implemented (Howorth, 2017, 133).

82 — The EU's and Russia's approaches to their typical Eastern European neighbourhood have frequently been portrayed as diametrically opposed, with the EU often depicted as a leading proponent of democratization in the former Soviet space and Russia frequently defined as a stumbling block to democratization, if not an outright supporter of authoritarianism in the region. Both external players have utilized a range of tactics to affect the domestic political trajectories of former Soviet nations wedged between the EU and Russia, ranging from more forceful to gentler methods. The countries' democracy scores show that while the authoritarian temptation has been strong throughout the area, democracy has found more favourable ground in certain nations than others (Noutcheva, 2018, 313).

The importance of the soft mechanisms of EU and Russian influence on the eastern neighbourhood has been highlighted by Noutcheva's article. Too frequently, the absence of significant incentives, mainly the golden carrot of EU membership, has been blamed for the lack of a more remarkable EU imprint on democracy in the former Soviet nations. The EU's democratizing impact is not restricted to the material domain, as this essay has demonstrated. It has the potential to strengthen domestic change actors by legitimizing the democratic cause both directly and indirectly. On the other hand, its soft power is constrained by home notions of legitimate political authority, and it encounters opposition in Eastern European nations that disagree about the relevance of liberal democracy in the local context. Similarly, Russia's effect on Eastern Europe has been viewed through the lens of coercive power politics much too often. The essay by Noutcheva reveals that Russia is no stranger to adopting gentler tactics of political influence and that it, like the EU, is limited in what it can do in the eastern neighbourhood by societal standards of good governance (Noutcheva, 2018, 326).

An interesting approach, Ukraine-oriented one, could be represented by Taras Kuzio's "Ukraine Between a Constrained EU and Assertive Russia" (Kuzio, 2017) and his monograph co-authored with Paul D'Anieri

“The Sources of Russia’s Great Power Politics: Ukraine and the Challenge to the European Order” (Kuzio and D’Anieri, 2018). According to the first piece, the EU’s strategy toward Ukraine has been impeded in three ways. In the first place, the EU’s potential to exert excessive influence on Ukraine’s reform process is restricted because it only offers ‘enlargement-lite’ without membership. If Ukraine were to be given EU membership, Brussels would have more authority to push Kyiv to execute fundamental reforms, fight corruption, and limit oligarch power and influence (Kuzio, 2017, 115). Aside from membership, the EU provides Ukraine with less financial assistance than potential EU members. The second point is that the EU misinterpreted the goals of Ukrainian leaders and has failed to appreciate President Yanukovich’s plans to arrest opposition leaders. Because it has been unable to comprehend and value Putin’s domestic and international policy changes, the EU’s authority has been limited. The EU continued to believe that Putin was opposed to NATO expansion and concluded that he was favourable to the EU, disregarding Russia’s rising nationalism and anti-Western xenophobia. The EU thought that its eastern neighbours should be free to pick their own paths to integration. As a result, the Eastern Partnership was never viewed as a geopolitical battlefield between the United States and Russia. As a result, the EU “sleepwalked” into the crisis, failing to see that Russia had become more nationalistic, revisionist, and hostile under President Putin. Finally, the EU’s capacity to cope with Putin’s crude nationalism and chauvinism toward Ukrainians, as well as his demands for spheres of influence, recognition as a great power, and territorial expansionism, is limited (Kuzio, 2017, 115–16).

Kuzio claims that economic, fiscal, and energy changes have developed since the Euromaidan in his previous studies with D’Anieri. Still, oligarchic power in the business and media, gradual progress toward becoming a rule-of-law state, and a delayed struggle against high-level corruption characterize Ukraine. As a result, the country remains vulnerable to Russian penetration and influence and relies on Western financial aid. Nonetheless, the EU and NATO are only offering integration, not membership; the EU has never offered Ukraine membership, and NATO has been silent on the issue since 2008. NATO is afraid of Ukraine joining because of territorial disputes with Russia, which would turn into NATO’s conflict if Ukraine were to join. The West has been frustrated by Ukraine’s failure to fulfil all of its reform pledges, notably in the areas of the rule of law and corruption (Kuzio and D’Anieri, 2018, 147–48). According to Kuzio, the

EU's response to Russia's actions was impeded even more by the idea that Russia was opposed to NATO enlargement but remained friends with the EU. Moscow was "unaware" of this fundamental divergence, even though the Eastern Partnership does not grant membership. According to Russian policymakers, the EU is not a benign player and aims to spread democracy across Eurasia (Kuzio, 2017, 110).

There are apparent disparities in attitudes toward Russia and the Eastern Partnership nations. There are differences in the orientation and "toughness" of stances toward Russia and the relative relevance of these concerns for different countries. The refugee crisis of 2015-2016 and problems relating to national authorities' roles in the EU were causing a more significant divide than the Visegrad Group's position toward Russia between the Visegrad Group and several other governments in the area and EU authorities. The Baltic nations and Slovenia have also expressed dissatisfaction with the EU's handling of refugees and quotas. Some NATO/

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— EU member nations in the region are simply not interested in limiting Russia or deploying troops to safeguard their national borders and would like the sanctions to be repealed. This does not mean that NATO's unity and resolve to act are jeopardized, mainly because the states mentioned above' actual military capabilities are negligible in comparison to Russia's, increasing the homogeneity of their positions and their reliance on NATO (primarily the United States) in security matters (Kurečić, 2017, 90).

The EU's collaboration with Russia plays an important role, and the EU will not hesitate to employ mechanisms and techniques of intervention in the Eastern Partnership plans, given historical interests and new strategic threats in the economic and military areas. It's worth noting that Russia has established influence and control islands in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Serbia at present, which is a crucial strategic consideration. Even though the Eastern Partnership was established as a platform for advancing the rule of law and democracy, rather than as a political counterweight to Russia, these features that Russia would not compromise must not be overlooked (Ene, 2017, 8).

Conclusions. The analysis of the works mentioned in the article concludes that the Russian Federation continues to consider neighbouring states, notably Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, as its sphere of influence. And the slightest attempt by a third party to intervene is perceived by Moscow as an encroachment on its exclusive sphere of emergence. As seen from the analyzed sources, Russia's actions can hardly be

called diplomatic and focused on universal democratic values. The EU, on the other hand, uses values as a guideline in the Eastern Partnership policy. At the same time, it is time for Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia to urgently demand changes in the Eastern Partnership policy. In particular, the prospect of EU membership must be clearly articulated by Brussels.

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