

Ruben Elamiryan

Eastern Partnership Countries on the Crossroads of the Eurasian Integration Processes

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the analysis of geopolitical and geostrategic essence of the following integration projects: Eastern Partnership Program (EaP) of the European Union, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). I argue that as the six Eastern Partnership countries are geographically and geopolitically situated on the cross-roads of these projects, they should become the “bridge” of cooperation and dialogue among them.

From this perspective, **the main research goal** is to understand the essence of each integration project separately. The actor and interest analysis will allow **the main declared and latent goals of the above-mentioned Eurasian integration projects to be revealed**. At the same time, the **article aims to reveal and understand foreign policy priorities of the Eastern Partnership participant countries within the framework of globalization and Eurasian regionalization**.

Taking into consideration a wide range of symmetric and asymmetric challenges and threats in Eastern Partnership countries, specifically in the South Caucasus, all the actors need more peaceful, stable and cooperative regions. In this context, the research understands “Eurasian dialogue through cooperation” as factor of humanization of the region based on promotion of cooperation culture. This article argues that EaP should be modernized to become the platform of humanization of the Eurasian security architecture and “bridge” regional integration processes in Eurasia.

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INTRODUCTION. NEW WORLD ORDER: HUMANIZATION AND COOPERATION CULTURE

The beginning of the 21st century signaled the start of the development of multipolar world order. This process is accompanied by the development of the EU, rise of China, fresh restart of Russia, as well as the establishment and development of a number of international regional organizations and cooperation platforms, such as Shanghai Cooperation and BRICS. This allowed F. Zakaria to announce the “rise of the rest”¹, as an antithesis to S. Huntington’s famous “the West and the Rest”.

This transition allowed many researchers to trace the end of the unipolar world order of 1990. China has played a specific role in this transition and became the 2nd largest economy in the world after the US, outrunning Japan in 2010².

However, this means only transition towards multipolarity. Famous American scientist Z.Brzezinski wrote that even if the US will experience decline, hardly a single power would start to dominate in the world, particularly, China. Moreover, China will not be able to take the role of the US neither now, nor in upcoming few decades³.

Following Z.Brzezinski, it could be concluded that recent developments in international relations, as well as the “rise of the Rest” is able to claim that the world is in the process of development of a new world order.

H.Kissinger writes: “A reconstruction of the international system is the ultimate challenge to statesmanship in our time. The contemporary quest for world order will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order within the various regions, and to relate these regional orders to one another. These goals are not necessarily identical or self-reconciling: the triumph of a radical movement might bring order to one region while setting the stage for

¹ Zakaria, 2008, p.2

² Bloomberg News, 2010

³ Brzezinski, 2012, p.p.75, 79

turmoil in and with all others. The domination of a region by one country militarily, even if it brings the appearance of order, could produce a crisis for the rest of the world”⁴.

The experiences of the last two decades, specifically of Iraq war, Libya, Syria, Ukraine, etc. stresses the importance of cooperation and humanization driven construction of the new world system based on the ideas of peaceful co-existence, stability, and sustainable development.

In this context, the development of the new world order should be based on the necessity of humanization of international relations and development of cooperation culture. This will foster the harmonized development of international relations in the process of the formation of a new world order.

The idea of humanization of international relations became widely known based on Jan Tinbergen`s report to the Club of Rome titled “Reshaping the International Order”. The report stressed the importance of human social organization named “humanistic socialism”. The latter was called to provide equal opportunities inside and among countries, based on universal human values⁵. This approach allowed various researchers to develop the necessity of humanization of world order. René Kemp and his colleagues have researched the concept of humanization of the economy and define it as “an umbrella term for activities of living and working based on values of reciprocity, responsible citizenship, integrity and autonomy, connectedness and trust, suggesting new ways of doing that operate on a different logic and principles such as trust-based cooperation, mutuality, autonomy, and respecting the environment”⁶.

In this regard, writing about humanization of international relation, professor E.S.Markarian proves its necessity in the following way: “The situation started completely changing when the humankind in the process of planetary crisis entered into current phase of

⁴ Kissinger, 2015, p. 214 [e-book]

⁵ Гвишиани, 1997

⁶ Kemp, René, et. al, 2016, p. 10

globalization, thus, becoming an integral socio-economic organism. As a result, it received its own interests and needs. This is critically important for the self-preservation of humankind”⁷.

Thus, we see that nowadays humankind faces global challenges and threats. From this point of view, humanization of international relations will foster peaceful and safe human development on a planetary scale.

Another important way to provide peaceful coexistence in the world and specifically in Eurasia, is the possible development of cooperation culture.

There is no a united approach towards understanding and explaining the concept of cooperation culture in academic research of international relations and political science, as it is, for instance, the stance with the concept of peace culture, developed by Johan Galtung.

An American business strategist and blogger Evan Rosen distinguishes seven steps to achieve culture of collaboration in the business (in the context of collaboration hackathons):

- Plan: a key question to be answered
- People: broad participation in cross-functional collaboration
- Principles: value system
- Practices: principles in action
- Processes: prototype and test ideas
- Planet: to address how their ideas impact the communities in which the organization does business
- Payoff: the work product of the hackathon which must create value⁸.

At the same time famous world thought expert on Customer Experience Colin Shaw outlines four critical elements to create a collaborative culture (for patient/customer experience):

- Leadership: the leaders are required to demonstrate and set the stage for the transformation.
- Motivation: the trick is to get employees to be internally motivated.

⁷ Маркарян, 2008, с. 39

⁸ Rosen, 2017

- Coaching: The central method of showing the way is about micro teaching that can occur organically throughout the workday.
- Measurement⁹.

Interestingly most of these components and steps could be easily transited to the realm of international relations, making them more cooperation and peace oriented.

In this regard Polish professor Barbara Kozuch defines three types of collaboration:

- Collaboration, i.e. positive collaboration;
- Competition, or rivalry;
- Battle, i.e. negative collaboration¹⁰.

Thus, our goal is to develop positive collaboration based on responsible leadership, motivation, clear vision and strategy, as well as mutually accepted principles.

Talking about the possible opportunities of political cooperation Clayton M. Christensen, Matt MarxHoward, and H. Stevenson emphasize the role of democracy to foster cooperation: “Democracy can be used as a tool to encourage cooperation. An important insight from this model is that democracy will not work except where people agree strongly on both dimensions of the matrix: what they want and the rules of cause and effect. The very functioning of democracy depends upon the existence of strong cultural beliefs that are often rooted in the teachings of certain religions”¹¹.

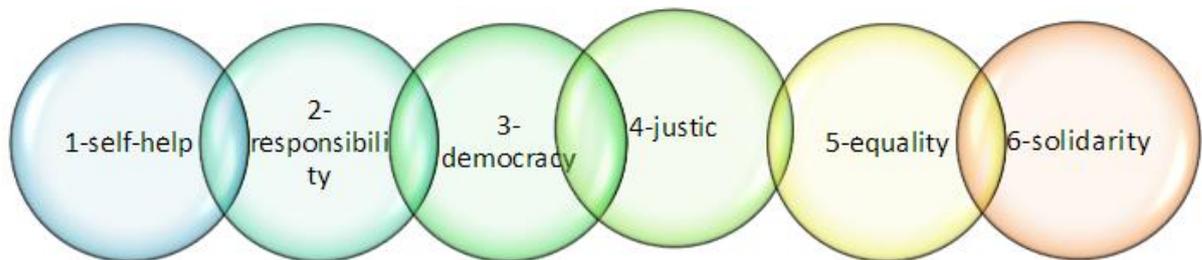
Following the idea of democratic cooperation, a group of Iranian researchers develops a six-step combination to foster cooperation culture¹²:

⁹ Shaw, 2012

¹⁰ Kozuch, p.p. 17–29

¹¹ Christensen, MarxHoward, and Stevenson, 2006

¹² Rahmati, Molokaneh, Mojtaba, Fard, 2012



Thus, the concept of the “culture of collaboration” (or cooperation)¹³ in international relations could be summarized as set of such components as responsibility, democracy, leadership, motivation, trust, broad participation of all interested stakeholders, dialogue and strategic approach/long-term interests, aiming to achieve positive cooperation and peaceful co-existence among nations and countries on local, regional and global levels of world order.

EURASIAN INTEGRATION PROJECTS ON THE CROSS-ROADS

Eastern Partnership Program

EaP is a relatively new regional integration project officially presented by the EU to six neighbor countries in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. It was presented by Poland with active Sweden participation on May 26, 2008 during the EU Foreign affairs Council meeting. It is designed to promote regional stability and sustainable development through economic cooperation, democratic institution-building, as well as stabilization of the EU eastern neighborhood.

The EaP was not established on “empty space”. Particularly following the fifth round of the EU enlargement, officials in Brussels started to rethink its external relations with regional borderlands and as a result initiated the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

The ENP includes sixteen neighboring countries to the south (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Lebanon) and east (Armenia,

¹³ The expressions – “culture of collaboration”, “culture of cooperation” and “cooperation culture” are used in the article with the similar meaning.

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine). The idea was to increase influence in these countries by offering economic advantages and innovative mechanisms needed in those countries comprehensive modernization.

However very soon it became clear that “single size fits all” policy would hardly work for the whole region with so much historic, cultural, political economic and other differences.

As a result, EU policymakers, recognizing the necessity of diversified approach to the ENP participating states, launched the Eastern Partnership in May 2009.

According to European External Action Service, “the EaP is a joint initiative involving the EU, its member states and 6 eastern European partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It is based on a commitment to the principles of international law and fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also encompasses support for a market economy, sustainable development and good governance”¹⁴.

The official objectives of the EaP are to develop the political association and economic integration of the EU with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. It was designed to advance human rights and good-governance norms through the creation of a free-trade zone that would give partner countries access to the EU’s five hundred million consumers. However, the initiative did not go further to offer EU membership to partner countries. On one hand it was reasonable decision taking into account the limited possibilities of the further EU enlargement. On the other hand, this move was widely seen as an impediment and restriction for partner counties to enact serious economic and political reforms¹⁵.

There is also the third opinion, which claims that the EaP was intentionally designed to stop the EU enlargement to the East.

As the main goal of EaP, the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit (Prague, 7 May 2009) emphasizes the creation of the necessary conditions to accelerate

¹⁴ European Union: External Action

¹⁵ Park, 2014

political association and further economic integration between the EU and interested partner countries. The latter was to be implemented by developing a specific Eastern dimension of the ENP. “With this aim, the Eastern Partnership will seek to support political and socio-economic reforms of the partner countries, facilitating approximation towards the European Union. This serves the shared commitment to stability, security and prosperity of the European Union, the partner countries and indeed the entire European continent”¹⁶.

At the same time EaP provides strategic security dimension for the EU. Particularly, the EU Global Strategy of 2016 clearly states “... We have learnt the lesson: my neighbour’s and my partner’s weaknesses are my own weaknesses. So we will invest in win-win solutions, and move beyond the illusion that international politics can be a zero-sum game... Internal and external security are ever more intertwined: our security at home entails a parallel interest in peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions. It implies a broader interest in preventing conflict, promoting human security, addressing the root causes of instability and working towards a safer world”¹⁷.

Thus, successful EaP implementation will contribute to the EU external and internal security through establishing peaceful, sustainable and stable region in its neighborhood. Nowadays this approach is more than taking into account the Ukrainian conflict, migration crisis in the EU, increasing violence in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, etc.

Trying to further understand the role and significance of the EaP, I am presenting below some opinions of Hungarian policy-makers and researchers who reflected on that issue during expert interviews. As it was agreed not to disclose them, I am presenting direct words without naming the experts:

“The EaP is the result of strategic thinking of (Radoslaw) Sikorski... I think that the EaP has two strategic goals: to prepare the participating states to tighter integration with the EU and decrease the Russian influence in that region”.

¹⁶ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, 2009, p.5

¹⁷ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy, 2016, p.4, 14

“At short there is European Union which wants to shift its neighborhood away from Russia. And to have neighbors with whom we can commerce and trade. This is the reason why it was created”.

“I do not think that the EU needs EaP. We are not interested in these countries, especially the South Caucasus at all, they are far from us and can not give us anything. The EU is doing EaP only because it is a normative power and it feels necessary to spread European values in the region. But I repeat, we do not have any real interest in the EaP participating countries”.

However, there is the opposite opinion too: “Why they are not important? All the neighbors are important for the EU. The EaP at least helps Brussels to see, to understand possible developments in these region with regard to the EU. At the same time the Project allows to understand Russian influence and strength in various fields”.

At the same time Hungarian researcher András Rácz outlines specifically two major points of interest for Hungary in the EaP: diversification of energy imports and the issue of Hungarian minorities. He brings the words of the Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai who stressed the importance of the Partnership for Hungary and the EU as it improves energy security and allows having alternative sources of gas and alternative transit lines¹⁸.

Despite the fact that Nabucco pipeline project is completely dead at the moment, the EU is still interested in Caspian and Iranian gas.

The Director of the Policy Planning Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic David Král has outlined the following Czech interests:

- Democratization
- Economic interest: “Czech companies are in a pressing need to look for new markets and also, with increasing labour costs in the Czech Republic, in need to invest in lower-cost countries. From this perspective, Eastern Europe seems to be a natural choice for Czech businesses due to the knowledge of local environment, as well as overly good reputation of Czech industry and products in the region”.

¹⁸ Albrycht, p. 19-25

- Resurgence of Russian influence in Eastern Europe¹⁹.

Thus, it can be concluded that back in 2009, the EaP has been and currently remains a strategic initiative, which covers wide range of EU foreign policy issues in that region, including economic, political, social and other fields. Summarizing, it could be said that the EaP was established mainly due to the following reasons and interests:

- EU as a normative power
- Economic interests: trade and new markets
- Diversification of energy import
- Political and economic stability in neighborhood as a precondition for the stability in the EU
- Geostrategic motives: decrease the role of Russia in the region which is in the EU's close neighborhood
- Better understanding of Russia's motives and capacities to promote these motives
- Control of strategic ground routes from East to West
- Tool of influence on the EU's international environment.

Eurasian Economic Union

In 2000, Vladimir Putin took the office of the president of the Russian Federation. He was a "fresh air" for Russian politics after Yeltsin's 90s. Putin's approach was based on the desire to strengthen geopolitical positions of Russia and diversify the unipolar world. In early 2000s, Putin succeeded in uniting Russia and stabilizing the political-economic situation. This allowed the development of old and initiate new integration frameworks in post-soviet area, particularly, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), etc.

¹⁹ ibid

In 2011, then-prime-minister Putin published an article in “Izvestia” newspaper, where he elaborated the idea of establishing a new regional integration organization – the Eurasian Union²⁰.

“Creation of the Customs Union and United Economic Area establishes the basis for further development of the Eurasian Economic Union... We do not stop on it and have the ambitious vision to step up onto the next, higher level of integration – the Eurasian Union”, clarifies Putin. After returning to the Office in 2012, Putin continued the new term as the president with active promotion of the idea of establishment of the Eurasian Union.

The EEU was launched on January 1, 2015 and currently includes 5 members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Russia. Thus, developing the idea of multipolar international system, president Putin`s objective is to establish a new mechanism of balance of powers, based on the promotion of an alternative to Euro-Atlantic global polar.

At the same time, the essence of the current processes with regard to the Eurasian Economic Union and its further development could not be fully disclosed without comprehensive study of the historic routes of current developments.

The idea of Eurasianism is not new. According to the Modern Philosophical Dictionary Eurasianism is an ideocratic geopolitical and social-philosophical study, morphological complex of ideas and intellectual movement, which was founded in 1921 among the Russian emigrants and which preserves the ideal-political potential until now. The movement was presented by such founding fathers and leading ideologists as G.Phlorovski, L.Karsavin, N.Alekseev, G.Vernadski, B.Visheslavitsev, N.Trubetskoy, R.Yakobson, V.Ilyin, etc. According to the Dictionary, based on the social and geographical outcomes of V.Kluchevski, N.Danilevski and S.Solovyev the Eurasianism theorists not only opposed Russia-Eurasia and Western Europe, but also accentuated the potential importance of traditional and modernized founding triads of Russian mentality: “Orthodoxy – autocracy – nationality”, “centralization – discipline – self-sacrifice”²¹.

²⁰ Путин, 2011

²¹ Новейший философский словарь

In this context, one of the founding fathers of the study P.N.Savitskiy thinks that Eurasianism should provide the spiritual synthesis of Eastern and Western identities as Russia is the center of the Eurasian continent. According to him, only the availability of that center allows providing the unity of those two identities, but its elimination would lead to disintegration of all the other parts, which he calls the continental outskirts, including Europe, Central Asia, Iran, India, Indo-China, China and Japan. And only the presence of Russia ensures the unity and integrity of the continent²². Thus, Eurasianism develops the central place and role of Russia, as the Eurasian heartland. It sees Russia as a unique unite, which should become an alternative polar on international arena.

At the same time, the process of development of the EEU has rather long history of regional integration. The idea to establish a Eurasian Union on the territory of the former Soviet Union was expressed by the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1994²³. Starting from early 2000s we see rather significant activation of Russian-led integration and cooperation initiatives on post-Soviet space in political, military, economic and other dimensions. Particularly, in 2002 Collective Security Treaty was transformed into full-scale military organization – CSTO²⁴. The latter could be treated as the military wing of Russian influence in the region.

Almost simultaneously with the CSTO, Eurasian Economic community was established in 2001 within the framework of CIS and with the idea of further development into a customs union. Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia was launched in 2011. A year later (in 2012) it was leveled up to the next stage of economic integration – United Economic Space.

All these phases prepared the necessary ground to establish Eurasian Economic Union. Generally speaking this is what was reflected in Putin`s article of 2011, where than-prime-minister, particularly stresses the importance of the following issues:

- The EEU is not an attempt to re-establish the Soviet Union, as the latter left in history. “Unification of natural resources, capital, and strong human capital will allow the Eurasian

²² Савицкий, 1933

²³ Назарбаев, 2011

²⁴ Организация Договора о Коллективной Безопасности

Union to be competitive in industrial and technological race, in the competition for investors, creation of new working places and leading manufacturing”.

- The Eurasian Union as a center for further integration processes, which gradually merge the independently functioning Customs Union and United Economic Space²⁵.

However today these approaches are challenged by wide range of issues, specifically, lack of unity among the most influential actors in Eurasia. The situation became even worse after the start of the Ukrainian conflict.

While Russia is currently not in the position to provide further geographical enlargement of the EEU, it needs to develop cooperation within Eurasia in face of specifically increasing economic sanctions from the US.

In this controversial international environment called by many researchers “New Middle Ages” or “Period of uncertainty”, motivated by the necessity to improve relations with the EU and deepen cooperation in Eurasia, Putin brought to the international political agenda the vision of creation, the Greater Eurasian Union and establishment of “integration of integrations”, which had been formulated during the 70th annual UN General Assembly Summit in 2016.

At the same time, during the opening ceremony of “One belt, one Road” International Forum in Beijing on May 14-15, 2016 Putin stated in his speech: “I think that unification of potentials of such integration formats as EEU, One belt, one road, Shanghai Organization, ASEAN is capable to become the basis for formation of a larger Eurasian partnership... We would greet participation of the EU member-states in this partnership. In this case it would be really harmonic, balanced and comprehensive, allowing to realize a unique chance to create a united space of cooperation from Atlantic to Pacific Ocean – actually, for the first time in history... This is a real civilizational project directed towards Future”²⁶.

Interestingly, the first signs and elements of the Greater Eurasia project can be found in Putin`s 2011 article. Particularly he writes: “The two largest units of our continent – EU and

²⁵ Путин, 2011

²⁶ Владимир, 2017

forming Eurasian Union – based their partnership on the principles of free trade and compatibility of regulation systems, objectively, including through the relations with third countries and regional structures, are capable to spread these principles to the whole area – from Atlantic to Pacific Ocean”²⁷.

Similar ideas we can be found in the updated Foreign Policy Concept of Russia of 2016, which in comparison to 2013 version keeps stressing the importance of the development of the EEU, but also accentuated the importance of “integration of integrations” from Atlantic to Pacific²⁸.

Thus, we see that currently Eurasianism is developing at least on two tracks – EEU, which is formed reality even if with controversial outcomes at the moment. Another vector is the Greater Eurasia, which currently is much more difficult to implement due to not only tensed EU-Russia relations, but also often contradicting Russia-China interests. Developing the idea of the Greater Eurasia, Russia does not give up the process of strengthening the EEU and promoting the integration process in the “Near abroad”. It finds the EEU as an important mechanism to harmonize integration processes in European and Eurasian regions.

Summarizing, it could be said that the EEU was established mainly due to the following reasons and interests:

- Strengthening influence in the region, which Russia considers as the sphere of its interests
- Development of multipolar world order
- Economic interests: trade, labor force
- EEU as a buffer zone against EU and NATO enlargement
- EEU as a buffer zone against increasing Chinese influence in Central Asia
- Foreign military bases
- Connectivity bridge towards the Middle East (in terms of Armenia), Europe (Belarus) and Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan).

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации, 2016

- Eurasianism as an ideology to unite Russian society, pro-Russian forces domestically and abroad and secure Russia's place in global order for the Future.

Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative is a comprehensive project aiming at better economic integration in Eurasia. The Project encompasses the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The BRI was initially proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.

According to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the BRI is a comprehensive visionary project for global economic development in the new world order. It refers to both historic Silk Road and also takes into account the modern tendencies of global economic development to foster inclusive growth and development in the 21st century. The BRI covers more than 60 countries and regions from Asia to Europe via Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia and the Middle East. The region estimates about 30 per cent of global GDP and more than 35 per cent of the world's merchandise trade. At the same time the Project sets ambitious plan by 2050 to advance three billion more people into the middle class in the Belt and Road region through providing 80 per cent of global GDP growth²⁹.

On May 10, 2017 (shortly before the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, which took place on May 14 and 15) China issued a detailed explanatory document on the Belt and Road Initiative. Starting from the first words, the document outlines the economic nature and economic motives of the BRI: "Economic globalization and regional integration has stimulated strong potential for economic activity, while scientific and technological progress has greatly improved the efficiency of work and daily life"³⁰.

²⁹ One Belt, One Road – Navigating New Opportunities, 21 Aug 2017

³⁰ Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China's Contribution Office of the Leading Group for the Belt and Road Initiative, 2017, P.3

According to the above-mentioned document, particularly, the BRI sets the following seven areas of cooperation³¹:

1. Promoting connectivity of infrastructure and facilities
2. Enhancing economic and trade cooperation
3. Expanding production capacity and investment cooperation
4. Expanding financial cooperation
5. Strengthening cooperation on ecological and environmental protection
6. Promoting orderly maritime cooperation
7. Strengthening cooperation and exchanges in cultural, social and other fields

The BRI mostly sets to foster economic cooperation through the development of infrastructure projects, which will bridge and make Eurasian economic centers closer. From this perspective the following routes are presented:

The Silk Road Economic Belt has three routes:

- from Northwest China and Northeast China to Europe and the Baltic Sea via Central Asia and Russia;
- from North-West China to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, passing through Central Asia and West Asia;
- from Southwest China through the Indochina Peninsula to the Indian Ocean.

The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road has two major routes:

- one starts from coastal ports of China, crosses the South China Sea, passes through the Malacca Strait, and reaches the Indian Ocean, extending to Europe;
- the other starts from coastal ports of China, crosses the South China Sea, and extends to the South Pacific.

Based on the above five routes, and the focus of cooperation and spatial distribution for building the Belt and Road, China has proposed a framework including six corridors, six means of communication, multiple countries, and multiple ports. The “six corridors” are:

- the New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor,

³¹ Ibid, p.p. 18-48

- the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor,
- the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor,
- the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor,
- the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,
- and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor³².

At the same time Chinese authorities developed financial instruments to provide the implementation of the BRI – the Silk Road Fund (USD 40 billion) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with approximately USD 100 billion³³.

However, the problem is that according to different estimations the total cost of BRI ranges from USD 6 to 8 billion, where USD 140 billion makes up less than 2 percent. On the other hand, the Initiative is a huge long-term project. It cannot be excluded that financial flows will be provided according to successful or unsuccessful implementation of specific parts of the project.

In this regard, the following excerpt from the interview with Hungarian analyst brings more clarity into the discussed issue: “Silk Road is a new geopolitical concept of China, which is offering money, infrastructure for the countries involved. Actually, china is not even giving so much money, interestingly. For me it was a big surprise. They try to collect different private investors, big companies, big groups to invest in the Silk Road. So, China is mostly an organizer, of course they are also offering money, but they expect money from investors, from participating countries and private investors”.

This means that currently China provides or organizes a platform for cooperation for all interested participants, investing is either strategic for China or attractive from business perspective projects. This approach can be explained also by the decreasing interest in China towards BRI after US president D.Trump`s U-turn in “Pivot to Asia” strategy.

My interviewee explains the change in Chinese position in the following way: “The most important region is South-East Asia, if you control this region, you can control global economy.

³² Ibid, p.p. 11-17

³³ Leer, 2016

It produces altogether about 40% of global GDP, maybe a bit less... “Pivot to Asia” a bit frightened China, as it was designed to reduce their role in South-East Asia. As a result, China presented BRI as a “turn towards West”, however Trump’s suspension of the “Pivot to Asia” frees China’s hands in the region and brings the focus back to “East”. However, he continues that there is no way to start back now in BRI, but the core region will be South-East Asia, as it the most important region in the global economy.

Based on the above statement, a question can be raised, if the BRI is solely about economy. In this regard, analysts largely vary in their opinions:

“According to my perspective the world previously had one hegemon, US, because it has navy, which controlled the most important trading lines in the global system. Because the most important trading lines were connected to the seas, with navy you have capacity to control global economy. The New Silk Road is something to introduce a new connections. And this is against the unipolar American system”, says a Hungarian expert on China.

His colleague argues, that BRI is more about geopolitics, than trade to really change the unipolar world, “so it is more about that some countries try to enlarge their territory by military and some countries try to do that through infrastructure and money”. His colleague makes it clear, that according to him, the BRI is a global geopolitical concept, which tries to unite the Eurasian region: “In China it is not allowed to say that it is a geopolitical concept, but it is, because it tries to move closer at least three regions: Europe, Asia and Africa, and this is geopolitics because this would be against the previous system with the hegemony of the USA and control of maritime trade roads. That is reason it is geopolitics. Intention is not to destroy the US or challenge it in conflict way, it is smarter: we build roads, not battleships, if you build carrier it is clear sign for the US that you want to challenge my position, when you build road, you can say it is against my system, but it is really hard to motivate people to mobilize people against China, which is building a road”.

Another Hungarian expert on Eurasian geopolitics, answering the question on the real nature of the BRI, told the following: “I think there are several reasons for BRI to be established. First of all it was a reflection to economic situation in the country. I mean the

power accumulated in China should have its further development. At the same time the initiative is a response to Eastern Partnership and Eurasian Economic Union”.

At the same time the Lowy Institute analyst Peter Cai outlines three main interests of China in BRI:

- Strive to find new markets for Chinese goods and services, enhancing connectivity and trade between Asia, Europe and Africa.
- Domestic economic development in China. According to the author, 16 out of 27 provinces in China are covered by BRI, which will become a unique opportunity to increase connectivity both among the Chinese provinces and with neighboring states. “For many less developed regions, mostly in inland China, the initiative is a clear opportunity to catch up with the more advanced provinces on China’s East coast. Central government also intends to bring more stability to the interior states (most notably Xinjiang) by establishing better connectivity with other regions”.
- BRI is also China’s grand strategy for spreading its leadership role on the international stage both regionally and globally³⁴.

Another important issue is the necessity to ensure secure energy supply routes and open up new market opportunities for both its established low-value and the increasing volume of high-value goods. Being an industrial superpower China needs stable energy supply. BRI connects China with such oil and gas rich regions as Central Asia, Middle East and Africa.

Stephen Aris, a researcher at the Center for Security Studies, also points out huge currency reserves in China as a reason for the establishment of BRI. “One viewpoint is that holding on to these currency reserves is not of much strategic or economic benefit. As a result, Chinese policymakers are said to have been searching for a way to make productive use of these reserves to support the nation’s wider geopolitical interests”³⁵.

Thus, it can be concluded that BRI is a comprehensive long-term project which includes economic, political, geopolitical and other dimensions. The project is designed to become an

³⁴ Cai, 2017

³⁵ Aris, 2016

impetus for domestic development in China, foster connectivity in Eurasia, as well as provide economic cooperation and energy security for China. At the same time, it aims at transformation of Chinese economic power into political influence and provide “place under sun” for China in the global and regional developing order.

EAP, EEU AND BRI ON THE CROSS-ROADS OF EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS

The “father” of political realism Hans J. Morgenthau specifies two types of external interests – complementary and conflicting³⁶.

At the same time American political scientist Michael G. Roskin is adding “identical” interest to the H.Morgenthau’s classification, clarifying, that “two countries, even allies, seldom have identical national interests”³⁷.

Identical are the interests of the parties, generally allies, which are practically the same. Complementary are those interests, which do not completely match, but provide large room for agreement around the exact issue on the basis of a compromise, which satisfies all the parties. Thus, it means that complementary interests do not completely match, but provide points of contact during this or that period of political time and environment.

There are very few cases in history when national interests are identical, especially in the long run. In most cases they are complimentary or conflictual.

Thus, reflection of this trilateral approach on the results of the above performed research clearly demonstrates that both EaP, EEU and BRI contains at least two types of the interests presented by H.Morgenthau.

It is worth to mention that if one side has the same interest as the other, this contains dual potential for both cooperation and conflict. For instance, if we speak about the fight against terrorism, it is clear that if all sides have this interest, they can relatively easily combine their

³⁶ Morgenthau, 1964, p. 203.

³⁷ Roskin, 1994, p. 5.

forces. However, when it comes, for example, to energy security, it is much more difficult. Each side is interested in energy security, but the provision of one`s energy security could lead to the other side`s energy insecurity, as kind of security dilemma. For instance, if the EU sees the EaP as an opportunity to alternate its gas import from Russia, and buy it in Azerbaijan, this causes counter-reaction of Russia. As the latter will lose the EU gas market in the amount equal to the import from Azerbaijan.

In this context the below table presents EaP, EEU and BRI interest-comparison. It follows the above presented Morgenthau-Roskin combined approach.

Table N1:

Initiative Interest	EaP	EEU	BRI
Political			- Domestic political stability
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade, - New markets, - Labor force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade, - New markets, - Labor force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade, - New markets, - China as a rule-setter in global (particularly Asian) economic order, - Domestic economic development
Geopolitical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decrease the role of Russia in the region, - Control of strategic ground routes from East to West. - Tool of influence on the EU`s international environment. - Tool to understand Russia, the level of its influence, capabilities and interests in specific areas, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening influence in the region, which Russia considers as the sphere of its interests, - Development of multipolar world, - EEU as a buffer zone against EU and NATO enlargement, - EEU as a buffer zone against increasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening influence in the region - Decrease of US, EU and Russian influence in EaP, and, broadly, Eurasian region, - Counter-balance the "Pivot to Asia" project, - Provide better connectivity in Eurasia

	- Connectivity bridge towards “East” (Russia, Central Asia, China) and Middle East.	Chinese influence in Central Asia, - Connectivity bridge towards the Middle East (in terms of Armenia), Europe (Belarus) and Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan).	
Civilizational/ Normative power	EU as a normative power: export of values, norms and standards	Eurasianism as an ideology to unite Russian society, pro-Russian forces domestically and abroad and secure Russia’s place in global order for the Future	Development of Chinese order in Eurasia
Security	- Diversification of energy import, uninterrupted energy supply - Political and economic stability in neighborhood.	- Foreign military bases, - Political and economic stability in neighborhood, - Uninterrupted energy export.	- Uninterrupted energy supply, - Political and economic stability in neighborhood.

Based on the Table N1 and Morgenthau-Roskin methodology, it is important to understand what kind of interests all three projects share, and where they collide or could collide.

	Identical	Complimentary	Conflictual
EaP/EEU		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity bridge towards “East” (Russia, Central Asia, China) and Middle East. • Buffer zone against increasing Chinese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence in the region • Conflict of normative powers

		<p>influence in Central Asia,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninterrupted energy supply • Political and economic stability in neighborhood • Development of multipolar world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU gas import diversification policy vs. Russia's gas export
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	Identical	Complimentary	Conflictual
EaP/BRI		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade and new markets, • Diversification of energy import • Political and economic stability in neighborhood • Decrease the role of Russia in the region • Control of strategic ground routes from East to West • Better understanding of Russia's motives and capacities to promote these motives, • Development of multipolar world, • Better connectivity in Eurasia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue of normative power, • Trade and new markets

	Identical	Complimentary	Conflictual
EEU/BRI		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade, • Provide better connectivity in Eurasia • Uninterrupted energy supply, • Political and economic stability in neighborhood, • Development of multipolar world, • Better connectivity in Eurasia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition for influence in the region (specifically Central Asia), which Russia considers its own sphere of interests, • Competition for normative dominance, • The issue of sparsely-populated Siberia

Thus, summarizing it could be concluded that all the parties have both complementary and conflictual interests, and not surprisingly no identical ones. All the sides need long-term political stability in the region, development of multipolar world order, better connectivity and cooperation in Eurasia, as well as peaceful coexistence.

On the other hand, all the sides are interested in trade and new markets, but in case of EaP/EPP this interest is complimentary because of a different structure of trade balance with the EaP states. However, in case of EaP-BRI this interest is merely conflictual as both sides compete (or have intentions to in future) for the same markets with similar export structure.

However, the main question here is which of the above presented interests are more vital in long-term perspective – peaceful co-existence with global and regional stability or economic interest, where it is much easier to find a compromise.

Hans J. Morgenthau writes: “The concept of the national interest, then, contains two elements, one that is logically required and in that sense necessary, and one that is variable and determined by circumstances. The former is, then, of necessity relatively permanent while the latter will vary with circumstances”³⁸.

³⁸ Morgenthau, 1958, p.66

Accepting the leading role of long-term permanent interests, it is clear that EaP, EEU and BRI should strive for peaceful co-existence, directed towards cooperation, not confrontation. On the other hand, competition is an inalienable part of human and state nature. For this reason, the importance of cooperative competition should be emphasized, which aims not at destruction, but construction.

At the same time, it should be clear for all sides that nowadays each EaP country has its own rather developed identity with nation-centric core population. For this reason, it's counter-productive to promote the idea of exclusive sphere of interests. Absence of strong pressure will allow small states to be more self-sufficient on one hand, and promote more straight and clear foreign policy. This will allow work in with each center of power more openly and honestly, very often cooperating in the framework projected together with the center of power.

On the other hand, the greater the pressure from the center of power, the greater is the desire of the relatively small state to join another side. The latter is the first step to induce tensions in the region.

"I think Ukrainian conflict led to the domination of negative narrative between, particularly, the EaP and EEU. It made the sides to concentrate on differences of these projects", says my interviewee, answering the question about the impact of Ukrainian conflict on cooperation between EU, EEU and BRI.

Taking into account the fact that all the sides are interested in cooperation and trade, it becomes evident that accentuation on differences is not the best or most desirable outcome. Hence it would be much more effective to foster development in the region instead of confrontation and concentration on spheres of influence. Open cooperation will allow receiving as much output as you invest, at the meantime enjoying political, economic and social stability in the neighborhood.

American political scientist Donald Nuechterlein in a lecture on "National interest as a basis for decision-making", given at the University of Virginia's NAVAIR Executive Seminar on June 5, 2007, particularly, outlined (talking about the US national interests), that "... in time of war,

defense of homeland and world-order receive the highest priority. In peacetime, economic well-being and promotion of values usually get more attention”³⁹.

Given the continuing turbulent developments and feeling of uncertainty in Eurasian geopolitics, all three initiatives are in need of deep and comprehensive cooperation among each other and with the EaP countries, at least to promote their own self-interest.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMM, EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION, BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE AND EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

The interest-based comparison of the EaP, EEU and BRI among each other raises the necessity to analyze and understand the state of cooperation among EaP countries and three initiatives.

The following table provides a short overview of the current picture in that relations:

Project Country name	EaP	EEU	BRI
Armenia	Pre-signed Framework Agreement with the EU, since March 2017	Full member, since January 2015	Bilateral developing cooperation with China
Azerbaijan	Participation in the EaP, Preparation of a comprehensive agreement (in the framework of EaP)	Bilateral cooperation with EEU member-states, member of CIS	Joint Declaration on development and deepening the relations of friendship and cooperation the

³⁹ Nuechterlein, 2007

	between the EU and Azerbaijan) is under negotiations		Republic of Azerbaijan and the People's Republic of China, December, 2015
Belarus	Participating country with large potential for further cooperation with the EU	Full member, since January 2015	China-Belarus Joint Statement on Establishing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, September 2016
Georgia	Association Agreement, since July 2016	Bilateral cooperation with EEU member-states	Free Trade Agreement, which is supposed to enter into force at the end of 2017/beginning 2018
Moldova	Association Agreement, since July 2016	Bilateral cooperation with EEU member-states, member of CIS	Negotiations to sign a free trade agreement
Ukraine	Association Agreement, since September 2017	Bilateral cooperation with EEU member-states	Developing bilateral relations

Simultaneously the picture would not be complete without economic indicators of cooperation, driven by the above mentioned political and legal bases. In the economic overview the article stops on three indicators – export, import and foreign direct investments. This choice is explained by the declared economic nature of all three initiatives. At the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind cooperation in political, military and other fields. These factors only strengthen the necessity of tighter multivector cooperation.

The table below resembles the EaP countries' main trading partners for 2015⁴⁰:

	Export/USD	Import/USD	Foreign Direct Investments/USD
Armenia	<i>Total: 1.66B</i>	<i>Total: 3.26B</i>	<i>Total: 4.169B</i>

⁴⁰ The source for export/import data is the Observatory of Economic Complexity, <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/aus/>
The source for FDI data is IMF Data, <http://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61227424>

	Russia – 14% China – 10% Germany – 8.8%	Russia – 28% China – 9.4% Germany, Italy, France – 12.1%	Russia – 1.921B Argentina – 247M UK – 244M France – 268 Germany – 168
Azerbaijan	<i>Total: 16.9B</i> Italy – 25% Germany – 10% France – 6.7%	<i>Total: 11.1B</i> Russia – 15% UK – 7.9% Germany – 7.6%	<i>Total: 22.229B</i> UK – 4.424B Turkey – 4.150B Norway – 3.087B Iran – 1.910B Russia – 1.497B China – 169M
Belarus	<i>Total: 26.1B</i> Russia – 39% UK – 11% Netherlands, Poland, Latvia – 9.6%	<i>Total: 28.4B</i> Russia – 54% China – 7.2% Germany, Lithuania, Italy – 9.6%	<i>Total: 17.9729B</i> Russia – 10.258B Cyprus – 2.929B Austria – 649M Netherlands – 442M China – 196M
Georgia	<i>Total: 2.77B</i> Bulgaria, Italy – 14.3% Russia – 6.6% China – 4.6%	<i>Total: 7.72B</i> Ireland, Germany – 11.5% China – 8.1% Russia – 7.4%	<i>Total: 14.827B</i> UK – 1.656B Azerbaijan – 1.592B Netherlands – 1.526B Russia – 601M China – 455M
Moldova	<i>Total: 2.4B</i> Romania, Italy, Germany – 38.1% Russia – 11%	<i>Total: 4.08B</i> Romania, Italy, Germany – 28.9% China – 9% Russia – 7.1%	<i>Total: 2.634B</i> Russia – 476M Netherlands – 326M Cyprus – 224M Spain – 212M France – 206M
Ukraine	<i>Total: 41.7B</i> Russia – 12% China – 5.9% Italy, Poland, Germany – 13.3%	<i>Total: 39.6B</i> Russia – 21% Germany, Poland – 17% China – 9.5%	<i>Total: 26.522B</i> Germany – 6.594B Netherlands – 4.151B Cyprus – 3.124B France – 1.699B Russia – 833M

Thus, the above presented overview can be summarized with an image, where all six countries have rather significant bilateral political and economic routes with Brussels, Moscow and Beijing. The level of cooperation varies from country to country. However, it is worth it to

acknowledge that multi-vector cooperation with and within EaP, EEU and BRI will be profitable for all EaP countries.

“Being proactive, the EaP countries can largely enjoy the situation, when they can work with different stakeholders and gain as much as possible”, says a Hungarian expert on Eurasian geopolitics.

A question could be raised, if Ukrainian conflict has alienated Kiev and Moscow with no possibility to cooperate. However, there is a deep-rooted opinion that the conflict has even increased Russian influence in Ukraine.

“Currently Ukraine is more dependent on Russia than it used to be before the conflict. The reason is the conflict itself”, says a Hungarian expert on Russia-Ukraine relations.

The problem is that negative collaboration as a starting point will never lead to the development of neither a separately taken country, nor the whole region. The same could be acknowledged for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Disintegrated South Caucasus will never have the development it could have as a united and cooperative entity, taking into account small economic, political and geopolitical potential of separately taken South Caucasian countries.

At the same time the main question for all the end users, specifically, for small and medium-size, what they can offer to their “big partners”.

Answering the question if the EaP countries can become a “bridge” between EU, EEU and BRI, a Hungarian expert on China and BRI: “We all believe to be bridge, but infrastructure is nothing, you need to have something to export, or you need to have some product to involve in this giants` relations. Just to be a bridge – it will have some economic impact, but not that much. Your region (South Caucasus) will be one of the corridors, and not the main one, because it`s too complicated. It is good to be part of the corridor, but how will you integrate into this huge formulating relations. It is necessary to connect, but how to use it: do you have product, do you have talent, can you provide a logistic center? These are the real questions. You need to have a strategy how to be involved in this region! We have a clear vision that the

world is changing and then what to do? For our countries it is an historical chance, but we have to be smart”.

Continuing the discussion on opportunities of being a bridge for EaP countries, another Hungarian expert explains that it is very difficult to receive the role of “bridge” among global and regional powers. Particularly, Brussels, EaP countries have different “bridge” role taking into account their low influence in international relations. Moreover, big actors prefer to talk directly. “I know very limited number of small and medium size states which succeeded in being a “bridge”. For instance, that is Switzerland. But in that stance, we should acknowledge the role of strategic and geopolitical knowledge of Swiss elites, which has been accumulated during centuries”, he explains.

Thus, it can be summarized:

- First of all, all the sides are interested in mutual positive cooperation. Negative cooperation will not provide any solution to solve the existing problems.
- Secondly, each EaP country needs a clear strategy how to deal with Eurasian integration initiatives not to wait what Brussels, Moscow or Beijing will offer, but to have clear vision.
- Moreover, each EaP member will have stronger negotiation positions if it would be possible to develop a joint strategy and approach for six countries. At the moment it could seem not that realistic, taking into account the existing problems among EaP countries. However long-term interests could lead the countries to take this decision.
- At the same time, if the EaP countries want to take a significant role in the Eurasian geopolitical arena, there is strong necessity to continue the process of development of strategic elites with strategic knowledge and connections, of that elite, which would be able to lead those countries throughout the current stage of political and economic turmoil to more politically and economically stable region.

COOPERATION AND MODERNIZATION IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP REGION

The previous parts demonstrated deep necessity for cooperation both among the initiatives themselves and EaP countries with all three projects. From this perspective, it is worth it to understand the opportunities and room to maneuver for all the players, to create a more stable and peaceful region. This will allow the sides to foster their goals based not on confrontation but the necessity of peaceful co-existence, cooperation and fair competition.

There are different opinions on how it is possible to provide the cooperative framework taking into account the interests of the EaP, EEU and BRI. Particularly, very often these projects have competing and even conflictual interests.

Below some approaches are presented from the expert interviews on how to deal with this issue.

“We mentioned that the EU is rather skeptical about BRI, because of the values, etc., but the EU has already started to change. Because of the Brexit, Germany seems to be in next few years the real core of the EU. Inner balances will be changed, Germany will have more voice. At the current situation the EU and the US will move further from each other, and this will support BRI. And this will enforce BRI. The big picture will change towards multipolar system. Germany has to make decision to move closer to China or not”.

Answering the question about how Germany and China can move closer, if they are exporting or will export similar things and to the same markets, my interviewee replied: “This is the problem, you are trying to look at this in Western conflictual way. If we want the same thing, we think, that the outcome will be a conflict. But in China they have different view about this. Why don`t you think in terms of favors. For example, if Germany wants to move closer to China, probably they should ask about favor. Ok, I want to support your idea, but I want this. And if China accepts this, this favor starts to be exchanged. In that case it is possible to avoid conflict. E.g., you are exporting to Russia this, and I am this. This is different kind of thinking that we have in the West”.

“I would not suggest the EU not to participate in this project, but to be smart enough to have strategy and idea how to take part in it... There is always competition between great powers, and is it new? It is normal to have different interests... How to change the others

behavior, don't see it as a problem, the problem is when we see it as a problem... Those regions in the history which tried to avoid competition, they always lose... China is this country with completely different culture and historic experiences, and China now is a rule-setter power, but we do not have this kind of experience”.

“When you think about Eurasia, at the moment Russia could be the bridge. For Russia being in this cold war situation is the worst case, as in longer terms it means it will be the minor part of China, and less and less important. It is much more important to have Eurasian region, where they can export gas to both economic centers. They can be road. On the other hand, China thinks that Russia is important, because it can create problems, so it provides to Russia acceptable role, not too much of course, but not to make Russia openly argue BRI”.

“The development of these three integration projects not necessarily will lead to collision. The EU has not declared the strategic goals of the EaP (spread of influence and decrease of Russia's role in the region), and Ukrainian conflict forced to forget about them. I think it is possible for the projects to cooperate. First of all, that would be beneficial for the countries in the region to receive advantages from all the projects. On the other hand, it is possible to provide cooperation between EaP, EEU and BRI in case of development and promotion of mutually beneficial plan. The issue is that each initiative has its own goals”.

The issue is the level of influence. The EU wants to recognize partners and decrease influence of Russia and China, Russia strives to have what EU wants, plus hard-power (including military cooperation) and development of new political and economic relations. China tries to adopt the European approach and add economic component. Thus, the development of these three integration projects will not necessarily lead to collision, as EaP is more about promotion of democracy, China – infrastructure, and Russia – military cooperation. If the sides will agree to develop only “their own” field, it could provide peaceful coexistence and cooperation, when each actor plays its own game without interfering into the partner's “garden”.

Agreeing with the expert, at the same time it is worth to mention that all three initiatives are also about trade. In this regard fair market competition based on international norms and principles could be the best solution to avoid confrontation in the region.

The main point is that neither the EU nor China has the necessary military or hard-power capabilities to enter into the EaP region. At the same time, most security problems in the region have hard-security essence. Thus, the issue is that both EU and China should either develop hard-power capabilities in the region, or promote economic cooperation and normative power.

From this perspective most of the EaP countries could be a reliable basis for the EU to develop cooperative values in the region, including both EaP countries and centers of power. This will allow avoidance of Ukrainian scenarios in the future.

The main point here is that survival is more essential than attempt for one-sided domination, especially given the process of development of multipolar world, when it is no longer possible to promote one-sided solutions to other players.

From this perspective, development of cooperation culture and humanization of international relations could become the necessary ground and framework, to allow putting aside less important and short-term interests and focus on long-term interests of peaceful co-existence.

The director of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association Alexander Duleba acknowledges that there is the necessity of cooperation for the EU with both Russia and China. He says: "It is not clear for many politicians, what to do with Russia, Europeans are lost, if they do not have constructive agenda. Once we lost these common spaces, then we offered this Partnership for modernization, so Europeans should have something constructive with Russia..."

At the same time, he suggests two possible variants for cooperation with Russia and EEU. According to him, one variant is the establishment of a common economic space on the standards and principles, which were developed in the EU during a few decades.

Another option is cooperation between EU and EEU on the institutional and not bilateral (country-to-country) basis: “Good example is MERCOSUR. They established regional cooperation and the EU has deal with them as a whole”.

Mr. Duleba also accepts the necessity to work with China: “We can agree with China and the talk started after Trump decided to withdraw from the trade agreement with the EU”.

All these ideas bring us to the understanding that there is necessity and what is more important there is a certain room for cooperation among EaP, EEU and BRI.

However, the development of each initiative should take into account not only bilateral relations, but it should be strategic enough to be responsible for the regional and global security architecture. This raises the necessity of modernization for each initiative to provide more cooperative ground.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, we see that all the above discussed sides are deeply interested in cooperative, humanized and peaceful relations in Eurasia. From this perspective the EU can become the locomotive of transformations, using and fostering its normative and economic power to provide:

- More interdependence between the EU and EaP countries, as well as among EaP countries, as the less conflictual the region is, the easier it is to provide the EU’s strategic goals. “These will lead to more interdependence among this countries, on one hand, and increase EU’s leverages. As a result the EU will be able to develop more peaceful agenda in the region, providing political stability and sustainable development”, says a Hungarian diplomat.
- More financial support for economic development (not to provide a fish, but to teach how to get the fish out of the river), as it will make the countries more self-sufficient and as a result less dependent and more cooperative.

- Ongoing work with local elites. The above cited diplomat explains it the following way: “Going hand to hand with traditional European lines, reforms of public administration, business relations, we should focus on educating of local elites to foster more democratic views and how such issues as, for instance, business to business cooperation or local administration can be handled...”, and he continues, “... because whatever happens in the capitals mostly stays in the capitals and if you can educate basically in municipalities and in long term perspective this can force, speed up integration processes...”
- Another solution could be stimulation of positive collaboration in political, economic, social and other fields among six EaP countries.
- No less important is standing hard on the bases of the normative power. “The thing is that because of the economic interest we sacrifice our values that was also problem within this region. If you want to transform this region towards our values to be big brother of the region, you have to be more coherent in your views”, explains the Hungarian expert.
- At the same time there is a strong voice for diversified approach towards those EaP countries which have signed the Association Agreement and which have not. On one hand it is a fair point and the policy “more for more” should be in place. However, on the other hand, such kind of policy could lead to the alienation of those participants or groups within exact countries which see cooperation with the EU as one of the main foreign policy priorities.

However, modernization of the Eurasian cooperation architecture is not a unilateral process and should be developed by all stakeholders.

Thus, if the EU becomes the locomotive for normative change, other actors should also take the responsibility for change and provide the maximal input into the “common budget” of peaceful co-existence. The first step could be the re-evaluation of the principles of doing business and politics, based on fair competition, mutual respect and responsibility to provide peaceful coexistence among EU, Russia and China, and EaP countries on the other hand. At the end of the day, the more developed the small or medium-size country is, the more opportunities it can offer to the investors and trade partners. One can think that the richer

the six EaP countries are, the more they will distant themselves from “big partners”. But this is only partially true, as interdependence and the necessity for further cooperation and peaceful coexistence will make these countries continue cooperating on local, regional and global levels in all existing fields of current collaboration.

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