

The EU's Approach Towards Ukraine - Normative or Market Power?

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to assess which power conceptualisation is best suited to explain the EU's approach towards Ukraine. We have chosen Ukraine because it is the largest and most important country in the EU's eastern neighbourhood. In such capacity, Ukraine can make or break the neighbourhood policies of the EU.

During the past decades, many authors have published numerous articles which try to grasp the power configuration of the EU. They have focused on different aspects of the internal and external dimensions of the EU and come up with labels such as civilian power, military power, small power and structural power. In order to assess the EU's role towards Ukraine we have chosen two conceptualisations which are particularly interesting, namely Normative Power Europe and Market Power Europe. These two conceptions both argue that the power of the EU derives from 'what the EU is', respectively a unique combination of shared values and a large internal market. However, similarities end here, because the former tends to see the EU as a force of good which promotes norms and values, while the latter considers the EU as an actor which promotes economic standards in order to satisfy tangible and commercial interests.

In order to examine whether the EU is more of Normative Power than a Market Power or conversely, this thesis brings forward the goals, the means and the impact of the EU towards Ukraine. Although both concepts seems equally salient at first glance, we argue that the EU is a Market Power in a Normative disguise. This is mainly because most EU Member States have economic interest in Ukraine, which is the same case for Ukraine in the EU, meaning that the large single market of the EU is the fundamental basis of the EU's power towards Ukraine. The inclusion of norms in the EU's approach towards Ukraine is therefore basically a response to the increasing politicisation of the economy in Ukraine. Political transparency and predictability have become key in developing the investment and business climate in Ukraine and because of this, the EU pushes for the adherence to its norms and values such as democracy, rule of law and human rights. Although arguing that the EU is indeed a Market Power, we do not advocate for the removal of norms and values in the EU's approach

towards Ukraine or even in general, due to its 'win-win' character, yet only plead that the EU should stop presenting itself as a unique altruistic force of good.