

# Soft power or postcolonial theory? West - Poland - Ukraine

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**Abstract.** For decades researches have been trying to understand the geopolitical situation of Slavic countries in Central Europe. The topic is particularly challenging because in many published studies their regional context tends to be overly simplified.

The popular but somewhat naive and too limiting approach forces into the scheme West vs. Post-Soviet World. The cardinal mistake here is the assumption that Slavic countries are homogeneous, so that grouping them in the one category 'of Post-Soviet states' would be representative for studies and drawing conclusions. In fact, they are more heterogeneous than one might expect at glance.

At the other extreme one can find analyses which consider Slavic countries in isolation, neglecting their common history, social and economic ties. In the present day, many regional business or political alliances and initiatives stem from these commonalities.

We propose an alternative view, which is *context-aware* and effectively *bridges* these two aforementioned extremes. Grounding on the 'no free lunch' principle, we advocate an accurate albeit more complex model where *multiple Slavic countries* are actors and their cross-ties are recognized and analyzed depending on the studied case. This allows for a holistic understanding of their relations with global actors (such as European Union, NATO or United States), which would be inadequate otherwise as it will be further demonstrated in the studied case.

To illustrate this concept, this paper pushes forward a complementary perspective for relations between postcolonial theory and soft power, considering the *triple* relation West - Poland - Ukraine; in this case historical links play an important role. To study ties between these actors, drawing on the concepts of broadly understood *power* introduced by Foucault, this analysis utilizes frameworks of *soft power* (Nye, 1990) and *postcolonial theory* (Said, 1978; adapted to post-soviet states by Thompson). The postcolonial literature is rich but soft power approach is more appealing from the quantitative perspective (available tools such as data mining techniques, methodological indexes). Therefore, soft power sheds more light on issues which postcolonial theory is unable to describe accurately.

**Keywords:** Soft power · Postcolonial theory · Tripple Relation · Poland · Ukraine

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