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'East-East' aid in the transformation of the post-socialist countries

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Introduction

The post-socialist New Member States (NMS) of the EU have re-emerged as donors in recent years. They share similar priorities, delivery mechanisms and discourse

Bilateral aid is focused on IPA countries, with smaller amounts for post-socialist ENPI countries except Russia, for former socialist countries outside Europe, & 'war on terror' countries

The main form of multilateral aid is the EDF, into which NMS have successfully embedded an orientation to post-socialist countries in Europe and the former USSR

Private aid agencies (charities) also work in a range of developing countries, humanitarian crisis zones, and countries deemed to require 'democracy promotion'

Fixing geographical priorities (1/2)

The overriding concept is 'comparative advantage' within a globally harmonised regime of Official Development Assistance (ODA). For NMS, this is deemed to be in 'transition management'

These policies reflect an integration of the local elites and middle classes into the western-dominated historic bloc

Neither authentically local nor a western imposition, NMS aid reflects the transnationally constituted social relations in the region. The NMS both promote and help shape broader western aid policies.

Fixing geographical priorities (2/2)

The discourse of NMS aid draws on local and western geopolitical traditions, development aid discourse, and ideas generated during the 1990s in the 'first wave' of transition.

Competing or inconsistent discourse can be related to tensions at the edges of the historic bloc, between local and western actors, and between dominant and marginal factions in the local ruling and middle classes.

Aid discourse is important in legitimising transnational policies abroad and at home.

The contradictions of East-East aid

Liberalism offers a framework of commonality across the post-socialist region, but market mechanisms and geopolitical interests divide the region and create hierarchies of need

Conditionality of aid is the central example of this paradox

The debate on more aid or less opposes civil society actors and the MFA against the Ministry of Finance

The debate on development or democratisation reflects both a left-right polarisation and the existence of civil society coalitions linked to EU and US donors respectively

Debates on aid also reflect a tension between Imperialising or socialising transition.

Contesting transition aid is extremely difficult

The geopolitics of NMS 'aid'

Within a EU-led strategy of concentric rings of peripheral integration, the NMS are significant minor players in the subordination of post-socialist Pre-Accession and Neighbourhood countries.

They reproduce here the same mechanisms as were used internally in the 1990s: conditionality, new constitutionalism, extending the state into civil society, privatisation.

Justifications of aid priorities conceal as much as they reveal about the geopolitics of the post-socialist region

Continued debate on the geopolitics of IPA and ENPI should incorporate more detailed study of East-East aid

Thank you!

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