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EUROPEAN UNION AND THE LANGUAGE OF POWER**



Juška, Žygimantas. 2025. *Soft Power of the European Union: Mastering*

the Language of Power Politics.
Cham: Springer, 202 pp.

The book by Žygimantas Juška on the European Union's (EU) soft power and the refinement of its use of the language of power is an important read for practitioners in the field of European integration, as well as for students who are just beginning to explore its various dimensions. The author of this book is an EU diplomat who has served in Delegations in Ukraine and Rwanda, making him a profound connoisseur of the contexts he writes about. In addition, he is a visiting lecturer at the University of Rwanda.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, this book contains the following five chapters: (1) an overview of the soft power pillars, (2) the effectiveness of the soft power pillars, (3) an overview of the EU's soft power influence across four regions, (4) the hard power game with Russia, within the case study of Ukraine, and (5) the European way to power

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** This book review was written within the research activity of the Institute for Political Studies, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

politics. Professor Juška starts from the definition of soft power developed by the originator of the concept, Joseph Nye, providing a brief explanation: “Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others and achieve one’s objectives through attraction or persuasion and contrasts with hard power, which relies on military strength or economic coercion.” (Juška 2025, vii).

In his book, Juška outlines six pillars of the EU’s soft power, which include: (1) development assistance, (2) foreign policy, (3) economic cooperation, (4) communication, (5) culture, and (6) science and education. Interestingly, the author does not list the enlargement policy as a separate pillar of soft power, even though Andrew Moravcsik sees it as the “single most powerful policy instrument Europe possesses” (Moravcsik 2010, 93). On the other hand, it can be concluded that the enlargement policy underlies nearly all of the mentioned pillars of soft power.

In the second chapter, Dr. Juška presents the instruments and mechanisms through which the pillars of power exert influence, while the third chapter analyzes their effectiveness. For clarity, this review discusses the second and third chapters as a single unit. Professor Juška states that the European Union provides

development assistance to support economic, environmental, social, and political development through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI). This instrument is structured around geographic, thematic, and response pillars and includes a reserve of funds for unforeseen circumstances. When discussing the impact of development assistance, the author identifies the most effective instruments: budget support, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), grants, technical assistance, and contribution agreements. Within the same chapter, the author examines foreign policy instruments, highlighting political and public policy dialogue, and the *Global Gateway* program. *The Global Gateway* aims to promote partnership instead of dependency, and Professor Juška identifies China’s *Belt and Road Initiative* and the U.S. *Build Back Better World* as its competitors. Although the author does not mention *Global Britain*, we consider that it could also, in a broader sense, be seen as a competitor to the aforementioned initiatives (see: Krstić 2023, 161–166). Professor Juška notes that the foreign policy pillar is further strengthened by the role of the High Representative of the Union

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Economic cooperation, speaks for itself, as one of the pillars of power, given that the EU is the leading investor in strategically important regions and the world's third-largest economy, following the United States and China. As one of the leading economic powers, according to Dr. Juška, the EU essentially possesses the capacity to expand its regulatory power. The European Union's soft power, through the pillar of economic cooperation, is reflected in the incorporation of data protection and carbon provisions in numerous trade agreements with as many as 78 partner countries. Communication is conceived as a combination of public diplomacy and strategic communication, which includes the creation and the fight against disinformation, manipulation, and various forms of interference. In this section, Professor Juška also offers normative recommendations regarding the development of the EU's soft power, particularly concerning challenges where some progress has been made but which are portrayed differently in the public eye – such as the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the migration crisis, and the war in Ukraine. The author further notes that

culture, science, and education are considered secondary pillars of power, as their ability to influence the behavior of various actors remains limited. Although we believe these secondary pillars deserve more space and deeper analysis, their mapping nonetheless represents progress compared to 2022, when science and education had not yet been recognized as potential sources of EU power (Young and Ravinet 2022, 981). An international organization with 27 member states possesses an immense wealth of cultural heritage, and thanks to its economic development, it also has the means to finance activities in the field of cultural diplomacy. Professor Juška, within the pillar of science and education, highlights *Horizon Europe* and *Erasmus+* as highly significant programmes that contribute to the spread of the EU's soft power.

In the fourth chapter, the author overviews the European Union's relations with four geopolitically significant regions: the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership, the Southern Neighbourhood, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to examining the EU's soft power pillars in the Western Balkans, Dr. Juška also analyzes the region's prospects for EU membership. The analysis is structured in pairs, ranked

according to their perceived likelihood of accession, from the most to the least promising: Serbia and Montenegro, followed by North Macedonia and Albania, and finally Bosnia and Herzegovina and so-called Kosovo*. The European Commission's 2018 Enlargement Strategy anticipated that Serbia and Montenegro would become the next EU member states by 2025. The author notes, however, that this has not materialized, citing Serbia's lack of alignment with the EU's foreign policy decisions – particularly following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine – and because of internal political turbulence in the case of Montenegro. When it comes to the Eastern Neighbourhood, the author distinguishes between the “distant trio” (Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Armenia) and the “associated trio” (Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia), and suggests that this *de facto* division should also be institutionalized *de iure*. The European Union aims to strengthen the economy, governance, connectivity, and society as a whole in these six countries, while expecting them to focus their efforts on combating corruption and curbing the influence of oligarchs. The

Southern Neighbourhood, known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or the Barcelona Process, focuses on economic cooperation and conflict resolution. This process includes ten countries: Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, and Tunisia. It would be redundant to discuss the EU's successes in resolving conflicts in this region, given the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although the author notes that the EU has not done much economically for the participants in the Barcelona Process. Regarding Professor Juška's observation, these countries have experienced relatively modest economic growth due to insufficient domestic reforms and political will, low intra-regional integration, and unfair conditions on the international market. Finally, the EU's activities in the Sub-Saharan Africa region have a legal basis in the Cotonou Agreement and the Post-Cotonou Agreement, which was officially replaced in 2023 by the Samoa Agreement. These agreements cover a total of 79 countries, including 47 African countries, 16 Caribbean countries, and the Republic of the Maldives. This geopolitically significant region

* All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

also encompasses the widest range of actors, which is why the EU increasingly encounters other interested parties, such as the People's Republic of China, which aims to surpass the EU in both the number and volume of investments. In the conclusion of this chapter, Dr. Juška states that the European Union has not achieved the expected influence in four important regions. He argues that the main reasons for this are the failures to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, the migration crisis (see: Cvetković and Obrenović 2024, 63–64), and the health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

According to the author, the game of hard power between Russia and the EU is reflected in Russia's instrumentalization of its energy resources, while the EU seeks to weaken Russia through sanctions and simultaneously provides financial, humanitarian, and military assistance to Ukraine. This *game*, will have long-term effects on the perception of the European Union in the future, particularly in the context of Ukraine's potential membership. Despite being at war, Ukraine applied for EU membership, was granted candidate status, and opened accession negotiations in record time. Apart from Ukraine, Moldova has also opened accession negotiations, while Georgia was

granted candidate status even though it met only three of the twelve recommendations set by the European Commission. Professor Juška criticizes the determination of EU member states in the field of energy trade with Russia, citing as an example the fact that by 2015 Germany was importing 35% of its gas from Russia – a figure that rose to 65% by 2020, despite the official policy (Caon 2022 cited in Juška 2025, 170; see: Đorić and Obrenović 2022). For all these reasons, the author devotes Chapter 6 to analyzing the required number of votes, that is, the different majorities (simple, qualified, and unanimous) needed for decisions that influence the EU's power perception. He concludes that there is an increased need for the use of *passerelle* clauses, which have proven effective in establishing the EU's civilian mission in Kosovo* (EULEX), as well as in the case of providing military aid to Ukraine in 2022.

The conclusion of this book consists of three recommendations: (1) the use of the carrot and stick approach, (2) unity when acting on the international stage, and (3) sacrifice for the sake of the collective good. As an example of using the carrot and stick approach, the author cites the suspension of financial aid to Ethiopia in 2020 due to internal conflicts. Unity

would be easier to achieve after changing the decision-making process for joint actions, but this requires sacrificing financial, economic, or diplomatic gains. Professor Juška acknowledges that it is impossible to achieve these three recommendations fully but believes that even the attempt to realize them is significant for the future of the EU.

The book “Soft Power of the European Union: Mastering the Language of Power Politics”

is not only a timely read but also a unique opportunity to examine the current and future position of the European Union from the perspective of a diplomat of this international organization. In addition, it offers a wealth of concrete data and tabular overviews, which can be helpful to any researcher interested in the European Union, development assistance, or one of the four strategic regions – one of which is the region we live in.

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* This book review was submitted on August 1, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.