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THE NEW CHALLENGES VS. OLD FORMULAS: WHAT WOULD MAKE THE EUROPEAN UNION A GREATER GLOBAL PLAYER?

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyse the main determinants that can affect the functioning of the European Union as one of the key global players in the contemporary world. Being a unique and highly specific international actor, the EU is a major power in terms of economic potential and the attractiveness of its social and cultural model, but it is also a dwarf in the sphere of foreign and security policy. This considerably diminishes is capabilities as an effective global actor. These weaknesses can be divided into two categories: (1) external problems resulting from the current international situation; (2) difficulties related to the internal situation of the Union. One of the main deficiencies is the inconsistency of the EU's external policy. This policy comprises a relatively well-developed economic component as well as the foreign and security policy, which is plagued with numerous flaws. Reducing their impact would greatly strengthen the EU as a global player, but this would require (in accordance with the concept of "avant-garde Europe") greater communitisation of this policy – which is what this text advocates.

Key words: EU as a global player; external policy of the EU; avant-garde Europe

THE UNIQUENESS AND SPECIFICITY OF THE EU AS A GLOBAL PLAYER

The European Union is a very important global player, even though its capabilities in different spheres vary: they are markedly smaller in the field of foreign and security policy but definitely considerable in the area of economy or in terms of cultural influence and attractiveness of its social model. This is proven by, among others, the fact that the aggregated potential of the EU Member States' economies still generates the largest share of the total world GDP that is some 20 per cent (which will change only after Brexit has been finalised).

Furthermore, European culture is known and valued on the global scale, and the territory of the European Union is the destination of huge migration flows from various continents (the list of the EU's various achievements is much longer).

The EU's general position in the world is also shown by the fact that it plays a number of important international roles. Generally speaking, they are based on the adoption of a specific catalogue of fundamental rights – which can be described as so-called European values – by the EU as its normative basis (Barburska 2016a). While this name and the catalogue itself have never been officially announced, it can still be established that they include political and ideological norms as well as norms concerning the specific European model of socio-economic development. They are founded on respect for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, civil freedoms and social solidarity. As regards the sphere of the EU's foreign policy, this catalogue further includes the promotion of searching for peaceful solutions to international problems and a clear preference for conducting dialogue, developing cooperation and providing development assistance.

As a result of adopting this particular normative attitude, the European Union acts as a soft power in international relations (Nye 1990). This means that it influences its external environment primarily through political, legal and economic instruments, through its "force of attraction", taking advantage of the attractiveness of the European civilisation. It is able to play this role of "attractor" thanks to its interesting cultural potential, a system of values that is commonly accepted throughout the world and a foreign policy based on the aforementioned "European values". In this context, the concept of soft power can constitute the conceptual basis for other theories that treat the EU in a similar way. This concerns primarily the concepts of civilian power (Duchêne 1972), normative power (Manners 2009), transformative power (Leonard 2005), as well as a number of derivative theories, like market power (Damro 2012). As implied by their names, they emphasise different aspects of the EU's soft power, but the key aspect that they all share is the assumption that the EU is trying to influence international relations in order to consolidate democracy and peace. All this makes the European Union different from other global players and thus largely determines its uniqueness (Smith 2001).

At the same time, this is not the only characteristic that distinguishes the EU from its fellow global actors; other characteristics include its unique internal structure, its goals, principles and mechanisms, as well as its very special status in international relations. As these characteristics directly impact the European Union's position and role as a global player, it is necessary to briefly present its specificity and uniqueness.

First of all, European integration is a pioneering undertaking on the global scale. Benefiting from the original historical heritage of the European civilisation the European Union constitutes the only example in human history of a so deeply integrated international community based on its own ideological and political principles. Furthermore, the EU exhibits traits that, while not all being unique or special, give rise to a new quality and make the Union a unique political entity.

The Union's uniqueness primarily concerns the depth and scale of integration. No other international organisation has managed to develop internal integration processes of that magnitude, both in terms of the depth of the solutions adopted (as proved by, among others, the Community's exclusive competence in some areas) and the scale of the integration activities.

Gradually expanding, integration spread – albeit with varying intensity – to virtually all spheres of life: economy, politics, social and cultural issues, defence, etc. The same is true of the organisational form and the institutional and legal solutions: no integration community in the world has achieved a similar degree of institutional advancement.

At the same time, one of the most important characteristics of the European Union is the indeterminacy of the EU phenomenon. It remains subject to constant transformations and is much rather an ongoing process than an achieved structure. As vividly described by Jacques Delors, at that time the President of the European Commission, the Union is an unidentified political object. This creates difficulties not only for political practice but also for scientific analysis, as shown by the fact that no one is able to provide a complete and universally applicable definition of the EU!

This is connected with yet another characteristic feature of the European Union. The EU is a heterogeneous structure in institutional, legal and functional terms and should rather be treated as a collective category. It not only includes the community-level structure but also the Member States, which naturally significantly contribute to its functioning, but at the same time implements their own internal and external policies. This, in turn, gives rise to yet another complication: the EU's governance system, which involves a division of competences between the community level and the national level. Generally speaking, the EU's competences are based on the delegation of some competences by the Member States to the community level.

What complicates the operation of this uniquely developed structure even more, is that from the conceptual perspective it is based on the principles of different models of integration, the most important among them including federalism (also referred to as the community method) and confederalism (intergovernmental cooperation). To put it simply, we could say that federalism advocates intensifying and deepening the processes of European integration, which means that it strives towards the establishment of supranational institutions having greater competences than states. Confederalism, in turn, essentially limits integration to cooperation between states that retain their sovereign competences (in accordance with the principle of "a Europe of homelands").

As we can see, the two models are based on different principles and have different objectives. Fortunately for the European integration, the two models have always formed a sort of syncretic mixture, effectively applied in practice. However, basing both theoretical reflection and political practice on those different principles could give rise to various ideological disputes or even political crises. Two classic examples of this are the "empty seat crisis" of 1965 (caused by France, which wanted to prevent the increase of the Communities' competences) and the repercussions of the famous speech given by the German Minister for Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer in 2000, which included the proposal to adopt more federalist solutions in the functioning of the EU.

Disputes on this issue are a very good example of the tensions emerging within the European Union. On the one hand, they exist between the Member States, which essentially try to retain as much sovereignty as possible, and EU bodies, which strive to consolidate their position. On the other hand, there is a rivalry on the national level, among the Member States, each of them attempting to secure its own national interests and create a power balance within the Union that would suit its own needs.

The differences between the national interests are especially pronounced in crisis situations (for example, in the context of the present refugee crisis, Brexit or the conflict in Ukraine), which makes it more difficult to maintain coherence of the Union as a whole.

The situation is made even more difficult by yet another major structural characteristic of the European Union, namely the fact that it is hard to clearly define its international status due to the unique nature and specificity of the EU. It is neither a classical state, nor a classical international organisation; instead, it is somewhere between these categories. As a result, the European Union's position in the contemporary world is quite peculiar. Generally speaking, it can be described as a socio-economic giant, with huge economic potential and an attractive model of social and cultural development. At the same time, however, the Union is a dwarf in terms of foreign and security policy.

WEAKNESSES OF THE EU AS A GLOBAL PLAYER

Before we present certain recommendations that could change this unfavourable situation, we first need to establish a diagnosis and point out the main sources of the weaknesses of the European Union as a global player. These weaknesses are the product of the influence of several factors that can be grouped into two main categories:

1. external problems affecting the EU, that is those arising in the Union's international environment;
2. problems within the EU itself and concerning such issues as its structure, the functioning mechanisms, the special nature of its foreign policy, etc.

External problems arising in the EU's international environment

The significance of the external factors influencing the EU's position as a global player stems from the rising importance of the entire sphere of the Union's relations with the rest of the world. This manifests itself not only through the considerable role of the economic and trade exchange with foreign countries, which largely determines the condition of the EU Member States' economies. It is also evidenced by the increasing weight attached to issues related to foreign and security policy, as well as by the obvious weaknesses of the Union, which in many cases simply does not have the political and military capability necessary to influence key international events. Shortly speaking, European integration does not take place in an international vacuum. What we are dealing with here is a certain dialectic feedback loop: although the European Union is a powerful actor capable of exerting considerable influence on the events in the global arena, at the same time it is very strongly influenced by its international environment.

How can we then characterise the main problems in this area? This is obviously a very difficult task, we can therefore address only some selected issues. Let us thus start by pointing out that one of the fundamental characteristics of contemporary international relations is that the world is undergoing rapid, far-reaching and sometimes even revolutionary changes as a result of the influence of many diverse factors (political, economic, cultural, military, etc.). They significantly modify the status quo, and in many cases completely upset it. This is true of virtually all the spheres of life and also concerns phenomena and processes that have had huge influence on the world for a very long time

now, such as globalisation. In other words, the world is currently at a turning point, and its future shape is only in the process of forming, so far remaining a great unknown – as is usually the case with periods of historic change.

One of the signs of this change, directly affecting the EU's strategic situation, is the instability of the current global distribution of power. It turns out that even a fundamental change, such as the fall of the Soviet Union and the entire communist system in Europe, as well as the ensuing dominant role of the United States (and the West in general), has failed to shape a lasting new international order.

While in the 1990s some voices heralded an era that would petrify this monopolist position – as did Francis Fukuyama, presenting his thesis on the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992) – these theses were definitely premature. As a matter of fact, the changes that are currently taking place in the global distribution of power seem to be heading towards the weakening of the West (as understood by Samuel Huntington)[1] and the rise of other global actors.

The emergence of such changes is largely determined by another important process taking place on the global scale, namely the obvious crisis – or even, as claimed by some, the collapse – of the socio-political and economic order based on liberal democracy and free market. At the turn of the centuries, this model, adopted in highly developed Western societies, became the dominant solution in the world. Moreover, it has been deemed the most optimal in economic terms and the most desirable in political and ideological terms. Its symbol was the Washington Consensus, while some examples of application include adopting ultraliberal principles as the basis for the development of the American and British economies under President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher.

The results of the domination of this model, however, turned out to be far from clearly positive: while considerably increasing overall economic effectiveness (in terms of growing GDP or the supply of new goods and services), at the same time it increased all manner of inequalities, both within individual societies and between countries and regions. This way, taking advantage of and simultaneously exacerbating globalisation, the model brought about many unfavourable socio-economic changes and eventually political tensions as well. Among the most adamant critics of system anomalies of this type are the so-called alter-globalists, such as Noam Chomsky (Chomsky 1999) and Naomi Klein (Klein 1999). They stigmatise the pathologies resulting from the uncontrolled course of globalisation and especially from the excessive growth of the power of large corporations.

These problems are highlighted by many other researchers as well, for example by Thomas Piketty, who criticises the phenomenon of consolidation and reproduction of the power of great capital (Piketty 2014). While feudalising its structure, it is becoming not only increasingly concentrated but also increasingly more hereditary. This facilitates the emergence and exacerbation of huge social inequalities and various pathologies, such as the wealthy avoiding paying taxes. Branko Milanovic, in turn, asked the all-important question of whether income inequalities of this magnitude would threaten the sustainability of Western democracy (Milanovic 2016). This is because the phenomenon entails a very dangerous development as it undermines the position of the middle class, which is the main guarantor of stability in highly developed Western societies.

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[1] In S. Huntington's approach, the West comprises Europe except Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Greece, North America except Mexico, as well as Australia and a part of Oceania (Huntigton 1996).

The middle class is not only losing jobs because of cheap labour in developing countries or computerisation of many professions. What is most important is that it is losing its social status, which allowed it to play a very significant political role (this trend is very vividly exemplified by the fact that the entire middle class in the US has as much wealth as just 5% of the wealthiest Americans). Many members of the middle class have joined the ranks of the new and increasingly numerous social classes called the precariat, formed by people (often young and educated) who do not have permanent jobs and stability in life. At the same time, a new upper class has emerged at the other extreme, formed by people who benefit to a huge extent from the liberal economic boom and especially people involved with the financial circles, whose significance and wealth have immensely increased.

This gives rise to a new social structure, which researchers are only attempting to describe. One of them is Herbert Kitschelt, who distinguishes new social layers not by applying the traditional criteria of class but according to the type of work performed. He introduces a distinction between workers performing jobs that do not require significant qualifications and professions performed by specialists (Beramendi *et al.* 2015). In the political sphere, the emergence of such a new social structure entails the risk of severe perturbations. Increasing inequalities combined with relative worsening of the living conditions of broad social layers creates a considerable potential for social frustration, which finds an outlet in increasingly frequent and numerous manifestations of anti-democratic radicalism. These are witnessed all over the Western world and in some other areas as well, and the Member States of the European Union are not an exception.

In the European Union, radicalisms take various forms: leftist, as it is the case with the Greek Syriza and the Spanish Podemos; but also rightist, as is the case with nationalist groups such as the Hungarian Jobbik, the French National Front and the British UKIP. Their political goals can be very diverse as well, from overthrowing the existing system and elites to vehemently opposing the inflow of migrants. Most often, however, what they share in common is the dislike of or even hostility towards the European Union – which can have serious consequences. The combined influence of these factors contributed to the success of anti-EU forces in the United Kingdom, causing Brexit and consequently a crisis of a magnitude previously unheard of in the history of European integration. What is even worse, however, is that it is not at all unlikely that we will soon be dealing with a similar scenario in other Member States. All this fuels unsettling tendencies towards criticising the very idea of European integration, ignoring everything but one's own narrowly perceived national interest or simply towards a renaissance of nationalisms in government policies, which can already be observed in a number of EU Member States, such as Poland and Hungary.

As we can see, the European Union is by all means affected by the consequences of the crisis of the socio-economic and political model based on the Washington Consensus, and its impact involves much more than just the effect on its internal situation. The crisis undermines the EU's position as a global player, weakening not only the entire Western world (of which the EU is a very important part), but also the Union itself. More and more often one can hear opinions that the attractiveness of the "European way of life" (which the EU has been proudly promoting for many years) seems to be decreasing in many ways, even though it still keeps attracting crowds of desperate immigrants. Although the European Union remains an economic power, also in this sphere we are witnessing the effects of the ongoing economic crisis in the euro area (*vide* the still unresolved problems

of Greece). Furthermore, it is beyond doubt that the divorce with the United Kingdom will considerably weaken this position. According to Andrzej Lubowski, "Europe is moving forward at a snail's pace or is even moving backwards". Additionally, he quotes an even more negative assessment formulated by his mentor, Zbigniew Brzeziński, who wrote that the Union, feeling smug, is behaving as if its overriding political goal was to create the most luxurious old people's home in the world (Lubowski 2013, 28).

What is most important, however, is the relative (because it is not necessary the same in objective terms) weakening of the European Union's position and role in the world caused by a shift in the overall global distribution of power. As Branko Milanovic rather bluntly put it, the uniqueness of the European peninsula is about to end. This has been happening already for some time, but about a decade ago the process became especially pronounced, bringing about constant growth of significance of the so-called emerging powers, and China in particular. The mechanism of this change in the international order has involved, among others, the adoption by the new powers of selected elements of the Washington Consensus, but only those from the sphere of economy, namely most (although not all) principles and instruments of the free market.

The new powers (especially China) have further complemented and enriched these elements by their own, unique solutions, such as greater role of the state, enforcing high social discipline, low labour costs, etc. What has been explicitly rejected, in turn, are the principles and norms related to liberal democracy, as well as other "flaws of the depraved West" such as hedonism, consumerism or excessive individualism coupled with atrophy of community thinking. In addition, the West has been accused of strongly imposing bad socio-economic solutions on other countries in order to hamper their development. Criticism of this kind is voiced especially strongly by the Korean economist Ha-Joon Chang, who accuses highly developed Western countries of making significant efforts to impose free trade (which could undermine the competitiveness of non-Western countries) while they themselves had for a long time implemented a policy of far-reaching protectionism (Chang 2007).

This model of economic and social development – alternative to the Western one – has begun to achieve considerable success, which in some spheres was even spectacular (for example, as regards GDP growth and improving the living standard of large masses of population). As a result, the new model has even been promoted as exemplary, being referred to as the Beijing Consensus. Moreover, some started referring to the present century as the "Age of Asia", with special emphasis on the leading role of China. This position is based on facts as the economic focal point of the contemporary world has indeed shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific.[2] One of the signs of China's rising power is that since 2013 it has strongly supported the concept of the so-called New Silk Road, which is an attempt to create not only a new format of economic cooperation but also a new model of international relations as an alternative to Western integration structures, such as the European Union.

Theses about Chinese domination are voiced by so many politicians, commentators and researchers that it is essentially hard to find someone who would oppose them. There are so many that we shall therefore stick to the authors who have already been mentioned,

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[2] At the same time, we need to remember that apart from China and India, the BRICS group includes emerging powers from other continents than Asia: Russia, Brazil and the somehow prematurely "tacked on" South Africa.

such as Thomas Piketty and Branko Milanovic (for the latter the growth of China's power simply implies a return to the situation of a couple centuries ago). Furthermore, we should also mention some staunch proponents of the concept of emerging Chinese supremacy: in Poland these include Bogdan Góralczyk (Góralczyk 2010), and some of those well-known in the international arena are the British journalist Gideon Rachman (Rachman 2016) and the Singaporean political scientist Kishore Mahbubani (Mahbubani 2008). The latter is at the same time a very vocal critic of the West, especially of what he sees as a selfish and two-faced policy of the European Union towards its foreign partners.

A more comprehensive assessment of the consequences of the new international order for the EU's position in the world, not necessarily only negative ones, shall be performed later in the text; here we shall therefore only point out some other factors that affect this position and result from the emergence of new serious challenges in the Union's international environment. This is to emphasise the fact that the phenomena briefly outlined above, concerning the lack of stability and the collapse of the Washington Consensus, are starting to threaten the entire capitalist system. One of the factors that limit its effectiveness is the increasingly difficult access to certain basic sources of socio-economic development, in this case primarily natural resources, such as mineral and energy resources, water and clean air.

Moreover, this involves growing problems with broadly defined environmental protection. They concern not only the well-known and spectacular struggle with climate warming but also a number of other, not always sufficiently appreciated issues, such as protecting biodiversity and preserving tropical rainforests. Regardless of all the possible controversies concerning the changes taking place in man's natural environment, they are an objectively existing challenge to all actors on the global stage, including, of course, the European Union. In this specific sphere the EU has been showing commendable initiative and commitment, implementing ambitious environmental standards and consistently promoting them in the international arena. The efforts of the Union have not always yielded positive results, however, as evidenced by the fiascos of a number of consecutive global environmental summits, which failed mostly due to the major powers' stalling tactics. As the Polish researcher Roman Kuźniar bluntly put it, in this sphere "Chinese nationalism and American egoism have together got the upper hand over the offer of Europe that would have served the interests of the entire world"(Kuźniar 2016, 172). As a matter of fact, however, this situation reveals the diplomatic weakness of the European Union, which is unable to successfully push its position through.

Another key global phenomenon that affects the position of the European Union as a global actor is the fact that the general civilisational development of mankind has accelerated so much. The main reason behind this is the scientific and technological revolution, which has far-reaching and all-important consequences in the sphere of information science and electronics as well as, more broadly, in terms of the influence science has on our everyday lives. This impact has always been significant (albeit it varied considerably across history), but the recent decades have seen a true revolution in this regard. In accordance with Joseph A. Schumpeter's theory of business cycles (which began in 1785 with the First Industrial Revolution), the present (fifth) cycle brought accelerated technological development on a scale unheard of in past history (Schumpeter 1983).

What certainly stands out among the many manifestations of these fundamental changes is the Internet and various derived technologies. Their emergence and unprecedented development – in symbiosis with the processes of globalisation – radically changed virtually all the spheres of human life. They affect not only the material aspects life such as the economy, management systems, ways of conducting scientific research, etc., but also have a huge impact on various aspects of social, cultural and even political life. New forms of communication and broadcasting have changed the nature of the ties and contacts between humans, the way people perceive the world and obtain knowledge and information, the forms of employment, etc.

This spurred some researchers to put forward theses about the onset of an information (and at the same time anti-systemic) revolution. One of them is Jeremy Rifkin, who predicts the end of the *homo economicus* era and the emergence of a world of what he refers to as "collaborative commons", namely a global system based on an information structure shared by all users that will revolutionise production (a radical cost reduction) and solve the main problems that plague modern societies (Rifkin 2014). Even if such theses might seem utopian at this point, we are already witnessing the emergence of new forms of business activity based on the above principles; these include the business model applied by companies such as Uber, as well as the introduction of the "blockchain", a publically available digital register that revolutionises the rules governing the conclusion of agreements transferring property rights (Tapscott 2016).

New technologies have also stimulated the changes with regard to social structures. On the one hand, they facilitate the development of identities and formulation of requests by all members of the society, including the new precariat (especially among young people). On the other hand, they contribute to the crisis of traditional forms of political participation. The existence of this phenomenon is evidenced by such factors as noticeable decrease in significance of classical political parties and the rise of spontaneous, less formalised and usually short-lived grass-root structures. This is also related to the growth of negative phenomena: first of all, decreasing interest in public issues and the increasing importance of populists, who aim the "people's anger" at broadly defined elites and bandy demagogic slogans about.

At the same time, we are witnessing progressing phenomena of fragmentation of public life due to rising individualistic (or even egoistic) attitudes on the scale of entire societies, as well as gradual disappearance of thinking focused on the good of the community. Problems of this kind are highlighted by many authors, including such eminent researchers as Zygmunt Bauman (Bauman 2000) and Alain Touraine. According to Touraine, the atrophy of public institutions (which are becoming reduced to centres providing services to the public) and growing individualisation eventually lead to disappearance of societies as we know them (Touraine 2013). This process is accompanied by tabloidization or even primitivisation of political life, which causes its quality to decrease dramatically – as evidenced by the embarrassing level of the presidential campaign in the United States and the campaign that preceded the referendum in the United Kingdom in 2016.

These processes are taking place virtually all over the world; this is of course also true of the European Union, where these processes create development-related opportunities (e.g., the use of new technologies to stimulate economic growth), as well as challenges or even threats. The latter primarily concern specific aspects of social and

political life on both the Community and the national levels. What seems to be one of the most serious problems is the decreasing quality of political life, which results not only in the emergence of anti-democratic trends – often aimed against the very idea of European integration – but also in the lack of credible and effective leadership.

Current political leaders are evidently unable to deal with all the challenges and threats facing the European Union, including those that stem from its international environment. This obviously considerably weakness the EU's position as a global player from which other international actors rightly expect consistent decisions and actions, backed by a consistent message sent by the Union as a whole. The difficulties in this regard are evidenced by, for instance, the fact that EU decision-makers do not present clear views as regards even such extremely important economic and trade agreements negotiated by the European Union as TTIP (with the US) and CETA (with Canada). The effects of this are bizarre sometimes, such as in October 2016, when the signing of the already negotiated CETA was halted for a while because of opposition voiced at a low national level – by the regional government of the Belgian region of Wallonia (sic!).

Apart from various determinants concerning the development of the general situation in the world, the position of the European Union as a global player is affected by other international factors as well, the most important ones being those linked to various crisis-related phenomena. This mainly concerns the migration crisis caused by the inflow to Europe of more than a million of refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Asia in 2015 alone. The refugee crisis is a problem the Union and its Member States have to deal with on their own; the same is true, however, of the consequences of other crises that, while international in nature, affect Europe especially strongly: the unresolved global economic crisis that started in 2008 or the growing military tensions in the EU's immediate neighbourhood: in the Middle East and Ukraine (Adamczyk 2015; Barburska, Zajączkowski 2015). From a broader perspective, among the most important challenges that the European Union is currently facing and that are closely related to its position as a global player, we should mention the issue that is of fundamental significance to every participant of international relations, namely the need to ensure broadly defined security. As regards strictly military security, the EU is currently not facing any direct threat, but there are cases of tensions rising to dangerous levels in its immediate neighbourhood, as evidenced by the aforementioned armed conflicts in Syria and in eastern Ukraine. A reaction to such conflicts would require greater consistency and, even more importantly, joint action by all the members of the Union as well as greater dedication on their part to the strengthening of EU's military capacity.

The course of the 2011 international military intervention in Libya was among many examples of the EU's weakness in this regard, which undermines its global player status. While two EU powers, the United Kingdom and France, took part in it, the operation as a whole was conducted by NATO and not by the European Union, which once again proved completely impotent. The contemporary understanding of the category of security, however, includes a much broader array of issues. It is not limited to military security but also takes into account other elements, such as the need to guarantee energy security. This is a very important issue for the European Union given that most energy resources it consumes are imported from abroad. Another important matter concerns the aforementioned environmental problems, which, if unsolved, will have increasing negative impact on economic development and living standards in EU countries.

Yet another threat, and an increasingly urgent one at that, is the struggle against international terrorism and organised crime because they directly threaten the security of certain Member States (especially France and Germany, recently). How the EU manages to solve the problems of broadly defined security will largely determine not only its future, but also its role in the global arena.

Problems concerning the EU itself

The problems that contribute to the weakening of the European Union's position as a global player and result from the situation within the Union itself form a very broad complex of issues (just as do those of international nature). For that reason we can deal only with selected ones. Those that seem the most important are the weaknesses resulting from improper functioning of the system of regulating and managing the broad sphere of the EU's relations with the external world. To better present them, it is first necessary to briefly analyse the principles, goals and mechanisms governing this sphere.

In most general terms, it includes the European Union's relations with third countries, their groupings, international organisations, etc. The scope of this sphere has been undergoing constant changes over the years, which involved a gradual increase in the number of issues, their growing complexity and interdependence. The system of links between the EU and the other participants in international relations is becoming increasingly complex and covers a multitude of diverse spheres of life: politics, economy, social and cultural issues, defence (to mention only the most important ones). Faced with the need to regulate this broad sphere of relations with the external world, the European Union (and earlier the European Communities) created a series of rules and principles, established specific institutions and introduced procedures, which all make up a complex category that can be referred to as the EU's external policy. It resembles the classical foreign policy conducted by states in terms of its objective scope and functions, but at the same time it exhibits its own special characteristics, as one would expect of an entity as unique as the Union.

These special characteristics involve the existence of certain mechanisms that can either improve the functioning of the Union's external policy or in fact weaken it. The weakening might result from the complex and unclear internal structure of the policy. In practice, this means that the sphere of the European Union's relations with the external world has not been precisely defined; it is composed of various components and lacks clearly defined mechanisms. This vagueness is further increased by the chaos surrounding the interpretation of terminology and the resulting use of various names: EU foreign policy, EU external relations, European foreign policy, etc.

Despite the said problems, we can still say that the Union's external policy has two main components: an economic one and a political/military one (Barburska 2016b; Adamczyk 2016; Jørgensen *et al.* 2015). The first one concerns the economic relations with foreign countries in the form of the Common Commercial Policy, along with development assistance and humanitarian aid, and the second one concern foreign and security policy proper in the form of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The factors that hinder the implementation of the EU's external policy include the fact that its two components do not share their underlying philosophy: economic issues fall mainly within the competences of EU institutions (the community method), while in

foreign and security policy issues it is the Member States that have the final say (intergovernmental cooperation). Consequently, the external policy is, in a sense, a conglomeration including elements of policies conducted on the EU level and of national foreign policies.

It is only natural that this state of affairs gives rise to tensions and conflicts in various spheres and dimensions (Zajączkowski 2014). Examples of this are plenty, such as the ongoing strong controversies related to the migration crisis. These controversies have both a political and an ideological dimension, which only raises the gravity of the crisis because it affects "many areas of key significance for the existence of the common integration space: from axiology and the understanding of human rights to the functioning of the Schengen rules" (Płóciennik 2016, 13). Just as it is the case with the internal functioning of the European Union, also in the sphere of the Union's external policy disputes may arise between EU bodies and the Member States, between different EU institutions, as well as between individual Member States, leading to more or less serious tensions or even crises. One of the main reasons behind this is that the EU's external policy has not supplanted the foreign policies of the individual Member States. What is more, while agreeing to the emergence of this policy, the Member States largely seek to take advantage of it to consolidate their own political and economic positions in relations with third countries. The situation is made even worse by the crisis the EU has been going through and the increasingly stronger striving of the individual Member States to protect their own interests.

All this results in general ineffectiveness of the EU's external policy. In functional terms, its main flaw seems to be the lack of consistency in political as well as institutional and legal terms. The Treaty of Lisbon represented an attempt to provide solutions to this deficiency. It introduced "Part Five: The Union's External Action" to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which consolidates the previous resolutions regulating the EU's relations with foreign countries in terms of external economic relations. At the same time, the Treaty on European Union (TEU) confirmed the significance of the rules of consistency, complementarity and coordination in external policy; of particular importance in this context is Article 21(3), according to which "[t]he Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies" (Consolidated version 2012). Unfortunately, the significance of these provisions is diminished by the fact that the political and defence component of the external policy, that is the CFSP and the CSDP, is still treated as a separate issue – the relevant provisions were placed in Title V TEU (Articles 23–46) and not in TFEU, where the other external policies of the EU are addressed.

All this means that the provisions addressing consistency of the external policy are largely declarative. There is clear inconsistency between the striving to conduct this policy in a comprehensive way that the EU has been preaching and its actual implementation. Furthermore, despite the existence of relevant Treaty provisions, the Member States still show considerable scepticism towards closer coordination of their own foreign policies within the framework of the EU. It should therefore come as no surprise that the European Union has not developed a truly common and consistent institutional system that could successfully represent it and its members in relations with the rest of the world.

This is especially true of the political and defence component of the Union's external policy, that is the foreign and defence policy. In this case we are often dealing

with, as Nicole Gnesotto put it, examples of an actual "national obsession": whenever the European Union "touches upon [...] diplomacy and the use of military force, states immediately start to cling to their national prerogatives" (Gnesotto 2012, 80).

While the very fact that the CFSP and the CSDP were established can already be considered a success, these policies obviously suffer from many flaws. What seems to be the biggest problem is the lack of an efficient decision-making centre on the Union level, one that would initiate, execute, coordinate and supervise undertakings in all areas covered by this policy.

The Treaty of Lisbon failed to solve this problem, but it introduced a new, justified and long awaited solution. The main aims were to give the Union legal personality under international law, as well as to establish the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service (EEAS). At the same time, however, the Treaty retained the special nature of the EU's foreign and security policy, basing it on the principles of intergovernmental cooperation, unanimous decision-making and not adopting legislative acts. The Treaty of Lisbon also introduced minor changes to the distribution of competences, to legal instruments and to the decision-making process within the CFSP and the CSDP. It did not introduce, however, any mechanisms that would facilitate or enforce greater consistence of the Member States' actions.

The results of the establishment of the said new positions and institutions turned out to be far from clearly positive as well. The new office of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was created as a result of merging the positions of High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and European Commissioner for External Relations, which could theoretically increase the institutional effectiveness of the EU in the sphere of external policy. This merger of the two functions is, however, only a personal union and does not change the existing legal order. What is more, the "double-hatted" nature of the new office undermines its effectiveness: one the one hand, the High Representative presides over the Foreign Affairs Council configuration of the Council of the European Union, and on the other hand, is a Vice-President of the European Commission. The High Representative's activity is therefore based on two different systems: the one founded on the principles of intergovernmental cooperation and, at the same time, the one that works in accordance with the community model.

It is therefore likely that a conflict of interests or rivalry between these two institutions will emerge. In practice, much depends on the quality of the personal cooperation between the High Representative and the President of the European Council. Certain tensions that might emerge between these politicians only prove the fact that, from the systemic point of view, the rivalry between them is an intrinsic part of the logic of functioning of the two offices. Besides, without questioning the qualities of Catherine Ashton and Federika Mogherini, who have held the High Representative post so far, they do not seem to be first-line EU politicians. It appears that the EU Member States, especially the most powerful ones, set things up in a way that gives them rather than the EU institutions the final word on the sensitive issues of foreign policy. Consequently, so far neither the formal prerogatives not the actual significance of the office of High Representatives have introduced any new quality to the functioning of the Union's foreign and security policy.

Another example of adopting institutional solutions that are not very effective is the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which is the long-advocated EU diplomatic service. It is composed of both EU officials and diplomats from the Member States, and it is headed by the High Representative.

The functioning of the Service suffers, however, from competition-related problems as it has not been given competences in the field of external trade, development and enlargement policy, which remain with the European Commission. Those who criticise the adopted solutions stress that there is no clear division of tasks between these institutions, which could lead to considerable divergences and thus prevent the EU from being successful in the international arena (Zajączkowski 2013, 653-654).

Due to all the structural, legal and institutional deficiencies, other flaws in the Union's foreign and security policy emerge. These include, among others, the vague and inconsistent formulation of the main goals and tasks. Even the adoption of the programme document titled the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003 failed to remedy this. While the ESS indeed contained a number of justified theses and requests, overall it was considered incomplete, lacking a broader vision and failing to address the fundamental question: "How could military measures help Europe in achieving political goals?" (Lindley-French 2005, 51).

Yet another problem is the highly insufficient funding the Union's foreign and security policy receives. Although the funds allocated to this aim have been systematically growing, they still constitute around a mere 4 per cent of what is spend on the entire external policy of the EU (which, in turn, has been receiving in consecutive multiannual financial frameworks the lowest funding among all the main budget items). This is further linked to an even more serious problem, namely the lack of sufficient expenditure on military goals and improper use of the available funds by a vast majority of the Member States. They spend only some 1.5 per cent of the GDP (compared to the United States' 4.5%) for this purpose, and only a few among them (e.g., the United Kingdom and Poland) try to reach the 2 per cent GDP mark recommended by NATO. What is more, however, "the funds are spent irrationally, often anachronistically, on the national level and without any preliminary consultation among the Member States" (Gnesotto 2012, 76).

Consequently, the European Union does not have a well-developed autonomous military potential at its disposal, although it should be a key element of its foreign and security policy. We shall not delve into historical deliberations on the attempts to build such a potential (Milczarek 2013). It is sufficient to note that the implementation of the ambitious initiative of establishing a rapid reaction force, initiated in 1999, has not yielded any greater success. The only relative success was the achievement of readiness to launch civilian and military missions abroad in 2003. In total, the EU has so far executed 17 such missions, mainly civilian ones, in Europe, Africa and Asia, and there is a similar number of ongoing missions. All these are, however, only ad-hoc solutions and in most cases only complementary to the operations conducted by the UN and NATO or regional organisations, such as the African Union. Thus, it is still long before EU intervention forces will be able to independently conduct major operations abroad. What is more, there is also the risk that, as Julian Lindley-French rather sarcastically put it, such operations will become "an end in themselves, a means of proving that the Union is capable of mustering a military force, regardless of whether it will actually prove globally useful" (Lindley-French 2005, 57).

Generally speaking, the weaknesses of the European Union's foreign and security policy discussed above seem to have one thing in common: the lack of political will of European decision-makers to introduce the necessary changes. This is especially true of the governments of the Member States, which evidently do not want to give up their traditional, sovereign rights in the sphere of foreign policy.

On the Union level, in turn, there is obviously not enough determination to change this state of affairs. Thus the following question arises: How can the European Union change this highly unsatisfactory situation, which makes it difficult for the Union to act as an effective global player?

HOW CAN THE EU BE A MAJOR GLOBAL PLAYER?

The most straightforward answer to this question is that all or at least the most significant among the deficiencies described above should be remedied. Since the problems concern both the sphere of the European Union's relations with the rest of the world and the internal conditions within the Union itself, this issue should be addressed while taking into account the division into these two spheres. As regards the relations with the Union's international environment, it needs to be stressed that it will be very difficult to successfully implement any possible remedial actions in this sphere, simply because of the nature, characteristics and complexity of the subject matter; most of the aforementioned external determinants are objective factors, very difficult or even impossible for the EU to influence. The key problem of the changes taking place in the international balance of power is a good example of this. As one of the two major elements of the Western world (the other one being the United States), the European Union can of course contribute to increasing or diminishing the West's potential, but its capabilities in this regard are rather limited because there are global processes and phenomena that the EU cannot influence in any decisive way, such as globalisation and its various economic and social consequences. This, however, does not necessarily imply solely negative consequences for the Union since we should remember that the weakening of the Western countries' position is only relative. Their true significance (including the position of the EU) depends therefore on the actual power of the other major global actors, especially the "emerging powers". And the trends are by far not clear in this regard: virtually all members of BRICS are currently struggling with serious problems that will certainly affect their future position in the world.

China, who is the most important member of this group, and at the same time the most serious pretender to the status of a global power, is facing considerable challenges involving, among others, the need to change the course of the country's economic, trade and social policies. They should no longer be based on the extensive development model based on mass exports but rather shift towards intensive development taking advantage of domestic resources. Failing to adjust to these requirements (as well as other challenges, such as the growing political aspirations of the Chinese middle class) could cause the economy to collapse and lead to dangerous social and political upheavals, which could all effectively weaken the country's position in the world. The other members of BRICS are not in a better situation. India keeps struggling with the huge social and economic diversity of its society, which leads, among others, to extreme poverty of large masses of population, as well as with considerable problems in the sphere of energy and communication infrastructure.

After years of an impressive economic boom and successes in eliminating social disparities, Brazil has been struck by a serious economic and political crisis. Russia, in turn, as a country highly dependent on the prices of energy carriers and subjected to international sanctions because of its aggressive foreign policy, is plunging deeper and deeper into recession and socio-political stagnation. Also South Africa is suffering from permanent economic and socio-political difficulties.

All this shows that the various problems the European Union is struggling with affect many other countries as well. It is probably not much of a consolation to the Union, but this means that many of its problems are not its fault alone. The situation is similar with regards to another fundamental problem as well – the crisis of the development model based on liberal democracy and free market economy. In this case, the EU is also unable to prevent the crisis on its own, but it can take certain preventive or remedial measures within the framework of its internal policies. What seems to be the most important factor in this context, however, is the fact that the collapse of the liberal free market model used so far is connected with a fundamental ontological transformation taking place on the global scale, namely the general lack of paradigms governing political, social and economic life.

The current ideological and scientific discourse is lacking comprehensive and commonly accepted concepts that would facilitate the analysis and understanding of contemporary international relations. As a result, there are no clear, common visions and no effective, practical recipes for ensuring that the development of the situation in the world is beneficial for everyone. As a matter of fact, there has been a plethora of ideas in this regard, concerning various more or less important elements of the global situation. What is needed, however, are not individual ideas or proposals – the main problem is that there is no single or at least dominant and consistent vision of the contemporary world.

In other words, the world has lost the compass that used to tell it which way it should be heading. Sticking to metaphors, we could describe the current global "market of ideas" as a huge supermarket where consumers – that is all participants in international relations – choose the products that suit them the most from the offers of competing producers, but where neither is attractive enough to prevail over the others. One of the reasons for this, as Zygmunt Bauman aptly observed, is that we have lost control over the world that we ourselves have created. What is more, we are not even aware of the historic significance of the phenomena and processes we are witnessing. At the same time, we are surrendering to what Bauman calls "retrotopia", that is "retro utopia", which means naive idealisation of the past, fear of the future and disappearance of positive associations with the notion of progress. Alain Touraine, in turn, is convinced that we are in the very middle of a process of disrupting the continuity of social development and deep transformation, which means that we need a new paradigm that will allow us to see the emerging new world.

Of course, the problem of the missing compass concerns not only the European Union but all participants in international relations. The lack of a commonly accepted paradigm makes it difficult for each one of them to formulate a clear vision of their relations with the external world; this is especially true of the most powerful ones, playing the role of global actors. In the case of the European Union, however, there is an additional problem resulting from the fact that the Union is a unique, *sui generis* integration entity. This is especially true of the Union's external policy, which is the main instrument allowing the EU to be a global player.

As has already been mentioned, this policy is suffering from a series of flaws and shortcomings that severely limit the EU's possibilities of effectively acting in the international arena. What can be done to eliminate or at least limit the deficiencies falling in the sphere of determinants stemming from within the Union itself? Once again, the simplest solution would be to remove the shortcomings, which would improve the overall effectiveness of the entire external policy of the EU.

This, in turn, would imply better functioning of all its constituent parts, including especially its political and military component in the form of the CFSP and the CSDP. In contrast to the economic and trade component (whose functioning does not give any serious reasons for concern), the EU foreign policy requires reducing or removing the main political, institutional and legal barriers that hamper its development. Although the list of barriers is long, remedial actions are indeed undertaken with regard to some of them.

For example, we should note that despite the quite justified criticism of their activity, the establishment of the office of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the EU's diplomatic service was undeniably a step forward compared with the previous state of affairs. (One of canonical historical anecdotes tells of the complaints of the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who was very irritated by the lack of one common "phone number of Europe" that would be useful in the event of an urgent need for mutual consultation between the transatlantic allies). We should also remember that the Treaty of Lisbon introduced important new solutions, formally giving the EU legal personality under international law or even introducing certain elements of military alliance in the form of a clause obligating the Member States to provide assistance in the event of an armed aggression against one of them (under Article 42(7) TEU).

EU decision-makers are also becoming increasingly aware of the need to develop a more consistent strategy for the Union in the area of its relations with the rest of the world, as evidenced by the European Security Strategy, among others. While the Strategy certainly deserves criticism, it also contains the following statement: "Greater coherence is needed not only among EU instruments but also embracing the external activities of the individual Member States" (*A secure Europe* 2003, 13). Furthermore, it seems that the provisions of the new Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, proposed in 2016 but not yet formally adopted, are heading in the right direction. Already the very title of the strategy: *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe* indicates that emphasis has been placed on increasing the consistency of the foreign and security policy activities. Moreover, while the document confirms the peaceful and conciliatory nature of this policy ("The European Union has always prided itself on its soft power"), it also underlines that having only soft power as the foundation "does not do justice to an evolving reality". As a result, "for Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand", which indeed seems to signify better understanding of the challenges of the modern times (*Shared Vision* 2016, 4).

This does not necessarily mean, however, a breakthrough regarding another important flaw of the EU's foreign policy, namely the insufficient spending on military issues. The situation in this area is not showing any significant improvement, but one has to admit that even here there are some actions towards at least optimising the efforts that are already being made. One of them was the establishment in 2004 of the European Defence Agency, whose tasks include supporting the development of the Union's military potential. This is supposed to take place through, for example, better coordination and harmonisation of the production of the EU Member States' armaments industries (counted among the

leaders in this industry on the global scale). Among the various undertakings in this regard, some noteworthy examples include the initiative of the European Commission to establish a special European Defence Research Fund by 2020.

As regards autonomous armed forces, in turn, the EU has at least initiated the process of forming some of its elements. Starting from 2004, the so called Battle Groups were being formed, which were supposed to be able to rapidly react to crisis situations. Combined with various earlier undertakings (such as the Eurocorps and other joint European units) this already forms a certain military infrastructure. While still far from the ambitious aims and plans, it does exist. This is even truer of the deployment of military mission outside the European Union: in order to streamline this type of activity, a special mechanism of joint funding under the name "Athena" has been introduced. At the same time, one should also bear in mind that foreign EU missions are large undertakings, involving military and civilian personnel of as much as several dozen thousand (sic!) as well as large quantities of equipment and considerable funds. Thus, the EU has important logistic capabilities in this regard, which already reflects well on it – even if, as previously mentioned, these operations are not entirely independent and do not always yield the desired political results.

All these more or less significant remedial activities cannot, however, remove the most serious flaw of the EU's foreign policy, namely the lack of political will to implement a deep policy reform. This, in turn, is a direct consequence of the general principle that governs this sphere of the Union's international activity, namely the domination of the model based on intergovernmental cooperation. It is understandable why the Member States are so fiercely clinging to this model – one of the main reasons is that they are anxious to transfer to supranational bodies competences in such sensitive areas as determining their own diplomacy and having their own armed forces, which are traditionally considered crucial for a state to retain sovereignty. This does not change the fact that in the contemporary world – globalised and full of interdependences – the notion of sovereignty is shifting from its classical meaning as no international actors, not even the most powerful global players, remain fully independent.

WHERE IS EUROPE HEADING TO?

The above assessment is, naturally, also true of the European Union. The domination of the Member States in the Union's foreign and security policy in the form of intergovernmental cooperation sanctioned in the Treaties and implemented in practice does not suit the challenges the European Union is facing in the early 21st century. Although this domination enjoys continuous strong political and ideological support (among politicians, commentators and researchers alike), the main argument against is very simple: it is ineffective. Not only scientific analyses but also – perhaps most importantly – political practice show that the present model of EU's foreign policy does not fulfil the tasks and goals it should. The proponents of retaining the existing solutions should consider the following question: If these solutions are so good, why are their results so bad?

As has been highlighted earlier, a considerable increase in the effectiveness of the Union's foreign and security policy is a prerequisite of strengthening the entire external policy of the EU, its two components being the economic one and the political/military one. Consequently, whether the European Union will be able to effectively play the role of a

global actor or not, largely depends on improvements in external policy. In order to achieve an improvement, however, far-reaching changes are needed to prevent the situation from worsening and to provide new remedial impulses.

One of the remedial measures that should be taken into account is the adoption of the concept that is the pivot of the deliberations in this book. We are talking of course about the title idea of "avant-garde Europe".

It is based on the broad concept of "Core Europe", according to which in the future the European Union should function according to a division into a core and an orbit (periphery). Such views are related to many other more or less diverse concepts, such as the "centre of gravity", *directoire*, multi-speed Europe, circles of integration, etc. The concept of "avant-garde Europe" has been presented and analysed from various angles in other chapters of the book, it is therefore not necessary to describe it here in detail as well.

What is necessary, however, is to reflect on how the concept can be applied with regard to the foreign and defence policy of the European Union. In most general terms, it is about letting those Member States that want to cooperate to take steps to strengthen the capabilities and, even more importantly, the effectiveness of the CFSP and the CSDP while not minding their other partners and not being held back by them. In legal terms, this process is made possible by the principles of enhanced cooperation, enshrined in Article 20 TEU, which allows for a diversification of the pace of deepening integration within the EU between smaller groups of Member States (at least nine states per group), which may create new forms of cooperation between them. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that theoretically, the principle of enhanced cooperation can be applied in two ways, in accordance with the principles of the major integration models. The first way is through the application of intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms; and the second one is through deepening integration processes in accordance with the community method.

As the author tried to demonstrate in the above deliberations, the use of intergovernmental cooperation within the framework of the EU's foreign and security policy seems to encounter systemic barriers that prevent it from achieving significant results. This does not mean that such solutions are not being considered. For example, when in September 2016, after Brexit had been announced, the largest countries of the "remaining" EU – Germany, France, Italy and Spain – put forward a proposal of deepening military cooperation between them (which is very much in accordance with the idea of "avant-garde Europe") Italian ministers spoke of a "defensive Schengen", that is of concluding a relevant intergovernmental agreement.

At the same time, however, this proposal provided an opportunity for a clearly more pro-community concept to be crystallised. The governments of the said Member States proposed the establishment of a European Defence and Security Union, and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker stressed on several occasions the need to create a "European army". Accomplishing these plans would be possible through, among others, launching the mechanism of "permanent structured cooperation" (PESCO), involving the use of the principle of enhanced cooperation – after all, its main goals are "to further the objectives of the Union, protect its interests and reinforce its integration process" (Article 20 TEU). Another example is the proposal put forward in 2016 to establish a new institution on the supranational level, namely permanent operational headquarters that would command all military operations undertaken by the EU (EU Operational Headquarters, OHQ).

It would increase the overall effectiveness of the Union's foreign missions, but it would also objectively force decidedly deeper military cooperation between the partners involved in them.

As we can see, the second way of implementing the concept of "avant-garde Europe" through the use of the community method, should include forms of cooperation between the Member States that would involve granting greater competences to supranational institutions, extending the scope of application of EU law, expanding common procedures and regulation mechanisms, etc. In other words, as regards the European Union's foreign and security policy, it is simply about greater communitisation – which is the key issue in the context of these deliberations.

Communitisation of this policy is not a new concept in the history of European integration. When we look at the entire history of the European Union's existence, we can clearly see that despite controversies and open opposition the foreign and security policy has indeed been evolving in this particular direction – albeit very slowly and one small step at a time. One of the many signs of this process was the establishment of the said offices of High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy together with the Union's diplomatic service. Regardless of all their political and competence-related limitations, these High Representatives were tasked with looking after the interest of the Union as a whole.

At the same time, we need to remember that there are strong tendencies negating the need for communitisation of the EU's foreign policy. As has already been mentioned, a significant share of politicians, commentators and researchers advocate the development of the confederative model based on intergovernmental cooperation and negate the utility of community solutions. The same is true of Polish researchers, some of whom have for years expressed the view that the most desirable model is the intergovernmental one with strong leadership because the community model would not have sufficient political and social legitimacy for the EU to play a significant international role (Kuźniar 2002, 29). On the other hand, numerous voices support the enhancement of European integration in the sphere of foreign policy. In the Polish academia, one of the researchers supporting this view is Dariusz Milczarek. According to him, the federalist model, in other words greater communitisation, "seems to be more useful", while continuing with the intergovernmental model "would only consolidate the present, unsatisfactory state of affairs" (Milczarek 2005, 151).

What is the most important from the point of view of this paper is that the proposal of actual communitisation of the EU's foreign and security policy seems to be one of the key elements of the "avant-garde Europe" concept. While not always directly referred to by the proponents of this concept, the idea of creating strong federal mechanisms and structures is clearly present. The views of the advocates of "avant-garde Europe" are the subject of extensive analyses presented elsewhere in this book, it is therefore sufficient here to give only selected examples. For instance, according to the idea of Great Europe formulated by Jacques Delors, there would be a federation of states where the countries belonging to the avant-garde would have their own governing bodies. Joschka Fischer, in turn, openly claims that the functioning of this avant-garde is to eventually lead to the establishment of a European federation.

When evaluating the above concepts, we need to take into account the fact that the proposal of greater communitisation of the Union's foreign and security policy might, on the one hand, be a political-science assessment, taking into account primarily the criterion of effectiveness. The dominant model so far, based on intergovernmental cooperation, is obviously not working; a different proposal should therefore be made (although we have to honestly admit that there is no guarantee that the federalist model would be fully effective either). On the other hand, however, the idea of communitisation has obvious political and ideological connotations and has to result from broader determinants, concerning the present and future model of the functioning of the European Union as a whole.

This is a separate and very broad issue, hence we can only stress that the future shape of the Union's foreign and security policy will actually depend directly on the key debate concerning the future of European integration processes. At the same time, it seems that contrary to the views of those who negate the gravity of this dispute, what will remain the key element of this debate is the clash of the two fundamental integration models: federalism and confederalism. This is because the European Union is currently facing the need to make a historic choice: whether to keep developing its supranational structures and strengthen community competences in all spheres, including foreign and security policy (which implies the adoption of the community model) or to retain the present mixed model, largely dependent on intergovernmental cooperation. The future of the European Union, including its ability to perform the role of an effective global player, depends on this very choice.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that the choice of the development model for the EU is in fact strictly political or ideological. There is no good and/or bad solution. The adoption of a specific model depends on the political and ideological preferences of the EU decision-makers and societies, who take into account various arguments, some more rational, some less so, and differently understood national interests.

This does not change the fact that the choice should be made as soon as possible, all the more so because the Treaty of Lisbon has not provided a definitive solution to the historic dilemma: more communitisation or more intergovernmentality? The visions that represent these two options still keep clashing, and prominent EU politicians become involved in the dispute. For example, Guy Verhofstadt believes that too many decisions are made on the intergovernmental level and that the Member States use their veto right too often. He further believes that a new European Union is needed because the one we have now has an institutional problem: "it is not a union but a confederation of nation states" (Przyszłość UE 2016). On the other hand, President of the European Council Donald Tusk stated that 'Europe without nation states' is just a utopia and pointed out that decision-makers got obsessed with "the idea of instant and total integration", failing to notice that ordinary EU citizens did not share this enthusiasm (Speech 2016).

At the same time, it needs to be emphasised that there are many politicians and researchers who do not become involved in the dispute and instead put forward alternative proposals. There have been a great many of those, and some of them differ from the traditional solutions proposed in the past. For example, some researchers advocate shifting the main focus of integration from state and supranational institutions to the local government level, including especially the great European metropolises. The proponents of this concept include Jan Zielonka (Zielonka 2006), as well as – in broader terms – Benjamin Barber, who believes cities to be the only efficiently functioning institutions in

the world (Barber 2013). Among other proposals, we should mention the concept of "differentiated integration", which is based on the principle of enhanced cooperation within the EU. As its name suggests, the concept advocates greater differentiation and dispersion of integration activity so as to better adapt them to specific conditions. Jan Techau described this as follows: "some needs point toward more integration, but others perhaps point toward less" (Techau 2016). Other researchers who support similar solutions include Simon Hix, who believes that the Union should be transformed into a "decentralised federation", where groups of Member States with similar interests would conclude agreements between themselves and create their own structures (*Przyszłość Europy* 2016). A group of researchers recently proposed yet another idea related to the general principles of "avant-garde Europe". They proposed the creation of what they refer to as a Continental Partnership, namely a structure that would formally organise the European Union's cooperation with its neighbours: the countries that will leave or might leave it (the United Kingdom and maybe other Member States) or those that are not really likely to ever join the EU, such as Turkey or Ukraine (Pisani-Ferry *et al.* 2016).

Considering all these determinants, we now need to ask the key question: What future awaits the European Union's foreign and security policy and, consequently, its capabilities of acting as an effective global player? Of course, in matters such as this is it hard to provide any clear predictions, even more so as the forecasts vary considerably in this regard: from disaster scenarios that predict a more or less imminent collapse to the optimistic forecasts that assume the EU could be playing an important or even leading role in the future world order.

The pessimistic scenarios seem rather unlikely, but indeed many researchers are sceptical of the EU's future as a participant in international relations. Zbigniew Brzeziński, for instance, believes that a vision of Europe as a political and military heavyweight player is becoming increasingly illusory (Brzeziński 2012). On the other hand, optimistic prognoses can be based on rational premises because they arise from the empirically proven historical regularity concerning the inevitability of great power transition. In the current circumstances, this implies the need to have the currently dominant United States (whose position is to gradually diminish) replaced by another global power. Theses of the imminent downfall of the United States have been put forward for many years by scholars such as Emmanuel Todd (Todd 2002) and Immanuel Wallerstein (Wallerstein 2003). They were often accompanied by predictions of the European Union possibly taking over the dominant position in the world; in Poland such a thesis was put forward by Dariusz Milczarek, among others (Milczarek 2005, 131-144). While still quite numerous a couple of years ago, such predictions now seem increasingly more utopian, and if there is talk of power transition, it is usually China that is expected to replace the United States as the hegemon.

As has already been mentioned in the discussion of the global determinants of European Union's international position, much will depend on the development of a new balance of power in the contemporary world. Contrary to the gloomy scenarios that are currently in fashion, the new international order does not necessarily need to lead to the weakening or even fall of the Western world. Already a hundred years ago Oswald Spengler warned that the Western world was ending, basing his prediction on the concepts of development and fall of great civilisations (Spengler 2001).

Later, many researchers voiced similar theses as well, including John N. Gray (Gray 1998), Niall Ferguson (Ferguson 2011), Ian Morris (Morris 2010), Fareed Zakaria (Zakaria 2008) and the aforementioned Benjamin Barber. Meanwhile, it turns out that so far – to allude to the famous quote by Mark Twain – the reports of the West's death have been greatly exaggerated.

Objective facts show that the West retains its advantage over the rest of the world – and this is true both when we treat it as a great civilisation and as a specific economic, social and political system constituting the foundation of contemporary capitalism. From a purely macroeconomic perspective, we need not forget that highly developed Western countries still generate approximately the half of the global GDP; furthermore, the West has a dominant share in the development of innovative technologies that will determine future development of mankind. Contrary to the gloomy forecasts, the United States as the main Western power is not about to fall, even though it certainly is experiencing a multifaceted crisis, one sign of which was the election of the highly controversial Donald Trump to the office of US President. What is more, there are still prognoses, as those formulated by George Friedman, according to which only this century will really be the "Age of America" (Friedman 2009).

At the same time, while the West's main competitors from the BRICS group do achieve some economic successes, they are also struggling with many serious problems that could at some point threaten their international position and, even more importantly, interfere with their socio-economic development. Gideon Rachman aptly observed that even if China overtakes the United States in macroeconomic terms, the key fact will remain unchanged: the average American will still have a better living standard than the average Chinese. Today, it is hard to find viable alternatives to liberal democracy (despite all its flaws) or the Western lifestyle and cultural model, including especially popular culture.

The list of the various advantages is long. Niall Ferguson, for example, lists an entire catalogue, including more effective institutions in the West, the principle of competition, property rights, the functioning of science and a specific work ethic.

The Nobel Prize winner Edmund Phelps, while criticising Western countries for the disappearance of economic dynamism, still points outs that their development was and still remains to a large extent based on the so-called modern values: the spirit of entrepreneurship, the willingness to take risks, the desire for change, etc. – in other words, on a high level of innovation, which is not always found among the characteristics of the societies and economies of the "emerging powers" (Phelps 2013). These values largely determine the vitality of the Western capitalist system. What is more, we also need to remember that many of its flaws are immanent and thus cannot be simply purged from the system (but we should, of course, try to limit their negative effects). According to the Hungarian economist János Kornai, these immanent flaws include the quasi-permanent state of economic imbalance, which does not necessarily have to be a bad thing in itself. Furthermore, he believes that a sober perception of the inherent flaws of capitalism can be reconciled with practical thinking about proper solutions and reforms (Kornai 2014).

We should also not give into pessimism as regards the problems with the functioning of the Western model of liberal democracy and society – the Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev believes the present crisis of democracy does not result from any immanent characteristics of that system; on the contrary, it is the consequence of a success of democracy.

We are indeed witnessing a dramatically decreasing confidence in public institutions, but at the same time, after a number of revolutions in the last five decades, the system is capable of mending and improving itself (Krastev 2013). Furthermore, there are some optimistic assessments as regards social issues as well: despite the persistence of phenomena related to the individualisation of the social life, Alain Touraine believes that they can lead to the emergence of a new type of personality.

The "new man" would not be an egoistic individualist but an empowered individual aware of his/her dignity; one of the role models for this new man could be the ethos of the Polish Solidarity movement of the 1980s. Given all the above, is would be not only premature but clearly unfounded to write off the entire Western world.

Still, the West should not be naively self-satisfied. If we recognise the thesis that every great civilisation must inevitably fall into decline, we have to admit that they apply to the Western civilisation as well. This would also mean significant transformations in the global distribution of power, the course of which could be quite violent. While the past historical experience shows that in most cases such changes are accompanied by wars, this is not necessarily a rule set in stone. Presently, the most realistic and the most welcomed visions of the future seem to be those that predict a gradual transition to a new, multipolar structure of international relations, in which the political, economic and military potentials will be evenly divided between a number of centres, with no clear dominance of the West or other centres of global power.

In other words, a new global order is emerging, one in which the declining Western world will no longer hold the dominant position but the other "pretenders to the throne" do not have sufficient capabilities and resources to take full power. This kind of vision has been presented by scholars such as Edmund Phelps as well as Andrzej Lubowski, who stresses the significance of various non-economic factors that influence the present and future development of the world. According to Lubowski, it is for this reason that formulating forecasts concerning future global domination of the "emerging powers" and the inevitable decline of the West merely on the basis of extrapolation of the current trends is simply too rash.

It seems, therefore, that it would be a great success for the European Union if it manages to preserve, at least for some time, the model of the international order that emerged roughly at the turn of the centuries and was to be based on the triumvirate of the United States, Europe and East Asia. Is this model, however, still in existence and can it be maintained? From the point of view of the European Union, the deficiencies and flaws of the Union as a whole and of its external policy in particular – especially the foreign and security policy – that have been discussed earlier could constitute a major barrier.

Despite all the efforts made in this regard, the European Union still has no strategic vision of what Europe is to become in the future. Its foreign policy is lacking clearly defined goals and well considered actions to achieve them. Given all this, our concerns about the future of the EU as a strong, active global player are justified. The multifaceted crisis it is going through facilitates the emergence of anti-democratic and anti-EU sentiments as well as national egoisms, which are highly dangerous especially in the sphere of foreign policy. What is even worse, however, the implementation of the proposal of greater communitisation of this policy that has been presented above – which would also make it more effective – is threatened by other risks as well.

One of the most serious ones among them could be structural characteristics that are inherent in the Union's mechanisms and institutions dealing with the relations with the rest of the world and that limit the effectiveness of the EU's activity in the international arena.

Despite all these problems, however, we should not lose hope that in the future the European Union will have the important position in the global arena that it deserves. We should also hope that Brendan Simms's sarcastic remarks about the EU will not come true: he asked whether Europeans would shirk the contemporary challenges and emphasised that if they do, "history will judge the European Union as a costly juvenile prank of an old and grumpy continent" (Simms 2015, 594). It is not in the interest of all Europeans to maintain a situation where the most powerful integration community in the world remains an economic and cultural giant but a political and military dwarf.

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