

The European Union in the World: From Liberalism to Realism

Summary

The European Union (EU) has only been functioning as an international organisation since 2009. From the beginning of its existence, it has been striving to be an active player in international relations and in shaping global order. The EU has substantially strengthened its global participation in economic activity and humanitarian aid since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty by first establishing the Common Foreign and Security Policy and then the Common Security and Defence Policy. It was then that the EU launched the implementation of missions and operations, the scope and specificity of which have evolved over the years. As new challenges emerged in international politics, both in terms of internal and external conditions, the EU tried to react, at least theoretically, to the changing political reality, as exemplified by the events in Afghanistan and Iraq. The EU focused on undertaking various initiatives in the spirit of international law, EU law and respect for accepted values. It should be emphasised, however, that the liberal approach – very often used in the EU's international policy – was wrong in many cases, and decisions made in the spirit of liberal ideology proved to be inaccurate, late or ineffective. Based on dialogue, mediation and political consultations, these decisions could not generally lead to success in international politics. This approach and way of thinking began to change after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York

on 11 September 2001. The increasingly visible departure from the liberal approach towards pragmatism and realistic concepts took place after 2008, i.e. after the Russian-Georgian war, the outbreak of Arab revolutions and, finally, after the Russian Federation took over Crimea and the Kremlin got involved in the Syrian conflict. In this context, attention should be paid to the very essence of the EU's functioning in international relations. On the one hand, the EU strives to be faithful to the values and standards it adopts; on the other hand, it must skilfully reconcile the interests of individual member states.

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the related Common Security and Defence Policy, have evolved since they were established. They have undergone stages of increased development and implementation, as well as stages of decreased interest in their meaning and dimension. In recent years, however, they have taken on special importance. An active process has been started to create structures and organisations, as well as to develop the ability to take actual measures. The policies have ceased to be treated only as reactive projects, used in response to the events taking place, and have become policies with a strategic planning spectrum. At the same time, the EU has begun using them not only to coordinate the activities of member states, but also to implement its own and supranational goals for the right mechanisms and instruments for which it has always been looking. These policies are also meant to be an element of agreement between the Commission, the Council and member states. Therefore, in this work, the author seeks evidence for a change in the EU's approach to the planning and implementation of actions within both policies and a transition from the level of ideas to that of implementation, pragmatism and realism. To this end, he poses the following questions: Are the assumptions of realism rightly abandoned and criticised as a theory that is completely incompatible with the realities of the EU's functioning and structure?; Are its critics right to claim that the EU is best characterised based on the conscious use of basic or more or less advanced elements of liberal theory, which are easily attributable to the EU, its institutions, tasks, philosophy of action and role in the world?; What elements of realistic theory do we see in the EU?; What features specific to this intergovernmental and transnational entity, which is the EU, are common to the pragmatic approach that it implements?; Does pragmatism in action translate into the realistic approach, and,

if so, to what extent and in what dimension?; Did this pragmatism appear only with the adoption of a new global strategy, or had it been already used earlier, and, if so, what had been its connotations and the awareness of its use?; Is or can the EU be an international entity that effectively shapes global order?; Can it be a partner in political aspects and the areas of hard power and decisive action towards neighbouring countries with identical values and strategic goals?; Will pragmatism help create strong mechanisms of cooperation between member states and strengthen the EU globally?