

CHAPTER «POLITICAL SCIENCES»

INTERNATIONAL ACTORNESS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-602-7-17>

Abstract. The actorness of the European Union (EU) as a complex international integrative entity in the global politics has come into existence with the appearance of this international organization and is constantly developing encompassing different spheres of life including the security sphere. In the studies, the issue under scrutiny is theoretical and methodological consideration of the EU as a global actor. Approaching the issue of the global actorness from both perspectives should be considered the key not due to its prevalence in the international politics, but ad hoc, due to its suitability for describing the EU as an international actor in today's geopolitical and security conditions, in particular, in the field of 'hard' security. *The aim of the research* is to identify the key theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding the EU's actorness. *Research methodology.* In this context, qualitative approach to understanding the EU's actorness and assessing its 'unique international potential' emphasizes that the EU has long been described and has self-identified as a distinctive actor and a power in international politics, as a soft, civilian, normative or

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some other alternative type of power, seeking to export security and stability to its neighbourhood and beyond. Due to this, one may identify different approaches to understanding the EU's global actorness. *Research results.* It has been proven that the actorness of the European Union as a complex international integrative entity in the global politics has come into existence with the appearance of this international organization and is constantly developing encompassing different spheres of life including the security sphere. The view on the EU as *sui generis* has been identified as the one that offers an alternative approach to evaluate the international role of the Union. It considers the EU as a separate category of actors, and contains different perspectives of looking at the unique international potential of the EU. As scientists note, the *sui generis* nature of the EU means that international organizations are willing to recognize it as an actor of its own right as opposed to its constituent Member States. In accordance with the *neo-functional* approach to analysing the EU's actorness, the latter is largely regarded as a 'normative power' that promotes universal principles such as peace, democracy and human rights. The neo-functional approach outlines the goal of the EU's international policy as protecting and promoting its values, but not ensuring its security through rendering power politics. The adherents to *the realist approach* believe that Europe remains essentially weak as an international actor in a realistic sense. Correspondingly, from the military perspective, the EU is inherently weak as an international actor capable of only limited or qualified autonomous action, and only at the behest of the most powerful Member States which retain ultimate control over their coercive structures. It is stated that to become the key participant of the international security system, an EU member state is expected to exercise both, international authority and military might. The EU has its own diplomatic service, extensive experience in deploying its peacekeeping and/or stabilization missions, and is perceived worldwide as a relevant (in a moral and legal sense) foreign policy actor. However, when it comes to resolving armed conflicts, especially those in the neighbouring states, the EU Member States have always struggled to find common ground on the resolution of these crises; moreover, the EU has strived to apply adequate instruments and has ultimately been forced to rely largely on the initiative of its separate Member States and external international actors such as NATO. *Value.* It has been emphasized that there are several ways of considering the

EU's actorness (realist, neo-functionalist, and constructivist) with a special accent on its aptitude for achieving its foreign policy goals. However, the key assertion is that the concepts of actorness and effectiveness of the EU's international activities are naturally linked to the context in which they are being implemented and researched.

1. Introduction

The actorness of the European Union (EU) as a complex international integrative entity in the global politics has come into existence with the appearance of this international organization and is constantly developing encompassing different spheres of life including the security sphere. Scientists [23] believe that the status of the European Union as of a global actor cannot be deemed as 'newly-acquired' – it is contested under permanent negotiation and is always produced through its practical application. To consider the EU as a global actor, the two following policies should be taken into account, namely, the economic policy being mostly concentrated upon regulations and competition, and the security policy which turns to the EU's identity and its global role. Although the role and the identity of the EU are highly controversial, they still influence the organization and its activity, albeit, on a much smaller scale. Overall, in the spheres having been deeply integrated international action is needed to preserve what has been created. On the contrary, in the spheres where there is a lack of integration, or it has not progressed much, harmonizing the positions of the EU members and combining their efforts within the Union is much more difficult, although not impossible.

Without doubt, nowadays, the European Union is demonstrating its capacity for sustained and coordinated international action in various spheres. Therefore, it is relevant to explore different approaches to understanding the concept of the EU's actorness via 'state-centric' and 'centrifugal' political force models taking into account the need for new approaches to consider the unique nature of the EU and the latest geopolitical and security challenges.

This actorness is being influenced by processes and phenomena in different parts of the world. The Russian-Ukrainian confrontation is not an exclusion. It started in 2014 and has transformed into a large-scale conflict which began on 24 February, 2022. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has

resulted in the most serious conflict on the European continent since the Balkan wars of the 1990s, if not since World War II. The amount of military and civilian casualties, displaced persons and material destruction after two months of war is astonishing [8]. The war is affecting a number of aspects of global well-being causing famine, nuclear weapons proliferation, and human suffering.

The longer the conflict continues the more negative consequences it may have for the international system as a whole. The European Union has already witnessed this devastating influence notwithstanding its role of the major international actor, a 'pole' of the international system. The '*conflict in and around Ukraine*' has since its outburst in 2013-2014 been one of the major challenges for the European Union and its foreign policy. While the organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has experienced revival and played the key role in the management of the crisis, the EU has stayed mostly aside, being considered as part of the problem rather than the solution. This understanding stems from the collision between Ukraine's European aspirations and Russia's core interests in the post-Soviet space [28]. That is why responding to the conflict taking the side of Ukraine in the large-scale war whose ostensible goal is the destruction of Ukraine as an independent nation has swept aside any lingering hesitation that the EU countries may have had. Just like that, the EU has found out that it can be a geopolitical actor possessing a huge regulatory and economic potential [1] and being able to respond to other potential challenges like those caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. What is more, the 'irony' of this war is that it has given birth to a geopolitical actor who has taken place of a traditional economic actor – the economic union of Member States. According to Anna Michaela Simakova [28], there is a chance for the European Union to ultimately transform from '*the part of international problem*' (one of the reasons for the Russian-Ukrainian war) into its '*solution*' thankfully to its geopolitical authority.

The European Union knew it possessed the soft power and extensively applied it in the international arena. The effectiveness and success of such influence of the EU as an international actor and 'the global civil entity' upon the members of the Eastern Partnership made the Russian Federation bear down on Ukraine and use 'hard' military power as the last resort, which resulted into this cruel war. Thus, starting from 2014, the conflict between

the states has stemmed from *the collision between Ukraine's European aspirations and Russia's core interests in the post-Soviet space* [28].

Consequently, it is essential to understand how this inter-state conflict may affect the European Union. Notwithstanding the fact that the EU is an international entity, it cannot operate on the global scale and project its power, both smart or hard and soft, upon the other continents without responding appropriately to soft and hard threats in its environment identified as the scope of the European Neighborhood Policy. According to S. Nemyrytch and A. Polishchuk [21], the scope is *under the fire of conflicts along the perimeter both, in the South and in the East*.

2. The EU's actorness: the insights into the phenomenon

The researchers in the field of the EU's foreign policy mostly agree that the Union does not live up to the essence of such terms as 'great power' or 'pole' of the international system, those being used while analysing or describing the other international actors [12]. However, the European Union possesses its actorness in this field as it 'exerts influence on its external environment', and it has *competence and, thus, the authority* in the sphere of foreign relations; moreover, its institutions enjoy the autonomy [in relation to its members in the sphere] and are able to implement this authority. What is more, the EU has its own capabilities in the domain of foreign policy and is recognized as an actor by international partners [12]. Considering this, scientists [5] describe the EU's international actorness as influenced by its atypical character as a multinational, non-state actor in relation to the other actors, emphasizing that the EU's atypical entity as a new type of an international player (which is seen as a strong element of its presence) invariably raises expectations as to what it should do; yet, its ambiguity limits its role performance fuelling harsh criticisms with regard to its actual global actorness. Paradoxically, what was seen as a key strength in defining the EU's international presence is also regarded as its main weakness in terms of actorness [5]. According to A. Neimann and C. Bretherton [22], the EU's actorness and effectiveness cannot be taken for granted given the nature of the EU as a multi-level and semi-supranational polity encompassing 27 Member States with diverse foreign policy preferences and positions. The abovementioned idea is corroborated

by C. Bretherton and J. Vogler [4] who tend to view the Union as *a complex, 'multi-perspectival' actor determined by a strong common identity*.

The term 'the EU's global actorness' and its synonym 'the EU's international actorness' is widely used in the West. Scientists [24] interpret them considering a generalized definition of actorness in the foreign policy, suggested by C. Bretherton and J. Vogler. They understand actorness as *'a capability of an actor to take a purposeful action through formulating goals and making decisions'* [4]. The EU's ability to be a global actor comes from its authority as an international actor due to the external environment that may influence its development or not, the EU's external presence (its ability to influence the behaviour of other actors taking the role of a peaceful project of the regional integration of states which creates well-being for its citizens), and its internal ability to take action (the activity inside the EU which may influence diplomatic perspectives and instruments of the Union and its ability to implement them in its external presence) [6]. The EU's actorness engenders its atypical identity which emphasizes upon its strengths and weaknesses of the EU's global performance. Thus, the atypical character and the EU's identity as an international actor are also conditioned by its multinationalism and its role as a non-state actor. The EU may become less effective on the global level due to its contradictory, ambivalent interaction between its international presence and the global actorness. The latter increases the expectations of the external observers concerning the EU's capabilities as an international actor, but it also limits the EU's current international roles and the global actorness. However, the EU is considered an effective global actor in such spheres of activity that clearly outline the competence of each of its members on the supranational level (European Communities). In the spheres of trade or technological progress, the EU is recognized to be an effective actor occupying strong position and being absolute leader in the international arena [18: 1]. According to N. Wright [33], the multitude of such spheres increases together with the integration of its members.

Being successful in protecting its values and interests in low politics allows the EU to be a strong international player as a global civilian state which has become particularly successful in [30: 378]:

- promoting common trade interests of its members in the world economy;

- fighting against non-democratic regimes for its ideology and values, especially, due to its perspective cooperation with the other western democracies;

- imposing sanctions to pressure economic, ideological and political competitors that have to Europeanize (R. Aizing [2, p. 255, 257] explains it as ‘a deep influence ... of the development’ of the EU on its Member States, making the EU’s political and economic dynamics an inseparable part of the organizational logic to create its national policy by making a state follow the decisions made by the EU. Then the decisions may incorporate into the logic of a local discourse, identities, political entities and local policies of the Europeanized state).

3. The EU as an actor sui generis

Based on the generally excepted definition, actorness should be defined as an ability to behave ‘actively and consciously in relation to the other actors in the frames of the international system’. The abovementioned characteristics have been manifested as soon as the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in the form of the EU’s efforts to enhance its status in various international organizations. Via the Treaties, the EU seeks not only formal recognition, but also formal rights as a special person sui generis in various international fora [28].

The view of the EU as *sui generis* offers an alternative approach on the evaluation of the international role of the Union. It considers the EU as separate category, and contains different perspectives of looking at the unique international potential of the EU [10]. As scientists note, the sui generis nature of the EU means that international organizations and fora are willing to recognize it as an actor of its own right as opposed to its constituent Member States. This leads, in turn, to substantial variations in the rights of the EU in different international organizations.

For example, some scientists consider the way the EU fights against terrorism to be unique, and state that the choice stems from the fact that the EU is an organization sui generis. Understanding the EU’s role in the fight against terrorism significantly depends on understanding the way the EU justifies and, in general, sees its role. The EU as an actor itself is totally different from its Member States, in the sense how it sees threats, and how it reacts to them. However, the fact that its approach to countering terrorism

has been shaped by the different experiences, identities and preferences of its Member States cannot be ignored. The EU's role as a global actor combating terror is directly related to its activities within the association and to the influence it can exert within its borders [16].

On the other hand, while it is clear that the EU does not fit the standard idea of statehood, some scholars like A. Neimann and C. Bretherton are convinced that the *sui generis* character of the Union refers only to its present stage, which is to develop further towards the European federation [10; 22]. Thus, the initial euphoria from such interpretation of the EU disappeared due to the unexpected difficulties and the enormous resources necessary to achieve a positive vote from the members of the General Assembly for the resolution (A/RES/65/276)25 on the EU's participation in the work of the UN during the 2011 UN General Assembly session. However, international recognition of the EU may go beyond its formal recognition and may stem simply from the fact that the EU controls significant resources and can make contributions separately from its Member States [28].

4. The neo-functionalist approach to analysing the EU's actorness

N. Wright [33] emphasizes upon *civilian* and *normative powers* and their relation to the international stage. The '*civilian power of Europe*' is the idea having been promoted since the beginning of 1970s. It develops the concept of the European Community as a 'civilian' international actor possessing significant economic, but limited military power; the one inclined to apply its 'civilian' means of exercising influence to pacify international tension and regulate international politics. The EU's civilian power involves the three key elements: co-operation, concentration of economic instruments, and the development of supranational structures of the Communities to settle international management issues. Given this approach, the EU's foreign power is based on soft power, international engagement, and attractiveness [17]. Thus, the EU's considerable soft power and its legitimacy derive from the scarcity of traditional [military] coercive instruments typical of the other states [33]. Developing its perspectives, the EU continues to focus on civilian power mechanisms in international relations. This concept has remained influential in the academic discourse as a point of reference in the debate concerning the 'militarization' of the EU. However, the idea has been heavily criticized, and the scholars now hold that the 'civilian

power Europe' concept is contested by the advent of the EU's security/defence policy integration because of an undue concept stretching, which may result in the weakening of the EU's distinctive, civilian international identity, which, in turn, may draw adverse consequences for a democratic control of security and defence policy, an essential element of the 'civilian power Europe' [22].

In accordance with *the neo-functional approach* to analysing the EU's actorness, the latter is largely regarded as a '*normative power*' that promotes universal principles such as peace, democracy and human rights which are present in the UN Charter of 1945 [27]. The neo-functional approach outlines the goal of the EU's international policy as protecting and promoting its values, but not ensuring its security through rendering power politics to acquire the spheres of influence abroad, or restrain Russia from its aggressive actions in Europe. The adherents to the conception believe that the EU has the ability to project externally the norms and values which it holds internally (democracy, respect for human rights and so on) and hence to define what passes as normal in world affairs [22].

The global policy of the European Union is based on the neo-functional idea that the EU as a global 'normative' power can externally transfer its internal successful model of democracy, economic interdependence and multilateral peace [12]. From the normative perspective, the EU is considered the most effective internationally through the expansion of governance or the development of regulatory regimes. The basis of the normative analysis is thus its view that the EU impacts the international system only by virtue of its existence [33: 16]. The thing that symbolizes the Union (its values) is as important as what it does (its international policy), its impact upon the other states and intergovernmental organizations is rendered as much through the example it sets and the actions it takes [33]. In this context, the adherents to the normative power conception emphasize upon the fact that despite the EU's greater organizational capability in international politics with the creation of CFSP and CSDP, the EU lacks hard power capabilities [27]. Due to this, in the literature, the EU's non-classical foreign policy is defined as '*structural foreign policy*', the primary means of which remain trade agreements, global development, humanitarian aid, and technical advice. Unlike classical foreign policy, the behaviour of third parties is influenced here by transforming their domestic conditions ('the rules of the

game') with state-building policies, promotion of democracy or the rule of law. Herewith, among the EU global power instruments to deal with international issues, soft or technical and procedural approaches tend to dominate instead of hard power instruments [12].

The EU is believed to have become a standard-setter in certain spheres of the global community, which definitely helps it to succeed in exporting its laws, standards, norms, and ideas, that do not coerce other entities, but rather persuade them to act in their own interests. It is true that the global regulatory influence from the side of the US has dramatically increased in recent years. Scientists describe its role as 'a global regulatory pace-setter', 'a global regulatory superpower', while the group of politicians in the US are blaming the European Union for exercising 'regulatory imperialism'. Internal integration of its Member States has resulted in the growth of the EU's regulatory activity. The European Commission often acts on behalf of the community to develop, implement, monitor, and enforce a range of regulatory regimes covering a wide range of policies across all existing and acceding EU Member States. This is considered to be a significant act of the normative external intervention. So, in terms of normative and civil power, the EU applies methods to convince the other actors [17].

However, the considerations on exerting the EU's global power are being partially criticized. Scholars doubt if the EU's norms could be projected beyond its geographical boundaries, as the studies have exposed the lack of genuinely international normative intentions or commitment of the Union towards its counterparts, its contested legitimacy for the other actors, the problematic nature of the normative processes in terms of reflexivity and inclusiveness, or the lack of normative impact of the EU [22].

5. The realist approach to analysing the EU's actorness

The adherents to *the realist approach* believe that Europe remains essentially weak as an international actor in the realist sense [33]. Moreover, they argue that the EU will never be independent or autonomous centre of power as long as it lacks either traditional coercive (i.e., military) power [to be used beyond the boundaries of the EU] or the centralized decision-making apparatus to utilize it while following the national interests of the EU or its Member States' interests [33]. From this (military) perspective, the EU is inherently weak as an international actor capable of only limited

or qualified autonomous action, and only at the behest of the most powerful Member States, who retain ultimate control over their coercive structures. Consequently, in the all-important area [for geo-political powers as the poles of the international system] – the military one – the EU lacks either independence or autonomy of action in a strategic environment dominated by great powers, particularly, the US [33]. The integrated Europe seeks to make a virtue out of its weakness by creating an international system where economic and ‘soft’ power matter more than military strength, and where multilateralism and international law are the principles for action [33].

Taking the abovementioned into account, one may presume that the realist conception of the global actorness of the EU as a unique entity requires the unique set of criteria to evaluate the impact, nature and measure of a state foreign policy [16]. J. Jupille i J. Caporaso [15] have suggested ‘*a structured analytical framework to evaluate the EU’s actorness*’ including the following four independent variables. Among them are: *external recognition* of the EU by other Member States and third parties such as NGOs; *the authority* (legal competence of the EU which allows it to act internationally – both, official and non-official authority delegated to the EU institutions and its Member States); *the autonomy* of the EU’s institutional apparatus in relation to its members, bodies and officials during international negotiations resulting from the Union’s authority (while making decisions, setting goals and implementing them), and the expectations of the EU members, who act independently as components of a decentralized system of states, and make decisions taking into account the behaviour of other actors due to their power and interests. This enables the EU to formulate its independent foreign policy goals and implement them in the way that the decisions of the EU differ from the expectations of the other actors in the international system, who make decisions on the basis of power and interest. *Cohesion* as the fourth variable is the degree to which an entity is capable of formulating and articulating internally consistent policy preferences [13]. This cohesion of the Union in the international arena has several dimensions: ‘value’ cohesion is the measure of the commonness of the basic values and goals of the Member States; ‘tactical’ cohesion presupposes the availability of methods to let the EU coordinate attaining diverging goals of its members via issue linkage or side payments to the

Members; ‘procedural’ cohesion demonstrates the degree of consensus on how to settle conflict situations among the Member States; and ‘output’ cohesion concerns the outcomes of the decisions made by the EU, its high officials and bodies, i.e., their performance while formulating common policies regardless of substantive and procedural agreement [15].

Other scholars concentrate upon the EU qualified actorness deficits in most areas of international relations conditioned, first and foremost, by the lack of military resources, limited autonomy and capabilities of its supranational institutions, and the complexity of its multilevel system. In their essential contribution to the actorness debate, C. Bretherton and J. Vogler [4] evaluate the EU’s international actorness according to the following variables: *autonomy, leverage, presence and capabilities*. These include a commitment to a common values base, domestic political legitimacy, consistency of member states’ policies, coherence between institutions, and availability of certain resources and instruments. Considering an opportunity for the EU action or inaction, external perceptions and expectations of the EU’s actorness are taken into account to understand the EU’s identity. In terms of research agendas, opportunity directs attention to various levels of analysis – including rules and structures of power at the global level and elites’ and public opinion at the level of the third-party state [22].

6. The constructivist approach to analysing the EU’s actorness

Some scholars believe that to understand and evaluate a complex nature of the EU’s actorness, the *constructivist approach* is required which views the EU influence in the foreign policy associated with the subtle, inter-subjective processes (the interaction of international actors) that construct (or constrain) the exercise of power and authority in international politics [22]. Constructivists are convinced that ideas, rather than material capabilities, generate the process of international politics [29]. Thus, the factors that may formulate the EU’s actorness are internal identity/self-perception of a community, its role, preferences, and institutional architecture [34; 32]. That is why according to the constructivist understanding, the EU’s regional actorness emanates from a certain system of values and principles which constitute the essence of the European identity and define its foreign policy objectives [29]. Researchers [7] underscore the importance of internal cohesiveness defined as a combination of cohesion, consistency, coherence,

and external recognition for the EU's actorness by the actors. The other understanding of the EU's actorness shifts the focus from the notion of actor capability to the one of actor effectiveness [22]. Scientists define actorness as the ability to function actively and deliberately in relation to the other actors in the international system. This understanding of actorness recognizes the uneven nature of the international capabilities of the EU considering that the Community possesses the characteristics of a typical actor in the international system, but lacks the others. Thus, the central criteria for actorness are delimitation from other actors and the capacity for autonomous action [22].

In this context, it should be mentioned that the EU's foreign policy status and its global capacity have extended thanks to institutional innovations within the association and the EU's growing involvement searching for the answers to the full range of international issues. On the other hand, a number of factors call into question the true foreign policy role and effectiveness of the EU. Among them are slow or minor internal reforms, increasing politization of 'low-policy' problems, less favorable external environment – all of them are striving for the development of a polycentric world order, which is not truly positive for the EU as a global actor. Actually, it may produce a negative effect, or may have ambivalent consequences for the European Union.

7. The EU becoming a military actor: theoretical considerations and implementation

Due to the absence of particular characteristics necessary to evaluate the EU's actorness, the theoretical framework has been applied systematically to understand and explain the latter in external policies. Some scholars have created the analytical framework to assess the roles of the EU in international institutions specializing in such spheres of science and research as space policy; environmental protection, in particular, climate change; security sphere; trade and so on.

Special attention in this research should be paid to the military role of the EU and, respectively, to defining its actorness in this field. Taking into account certain realist assumptions concerning the 'anarchy' of the global system, traditional security studies consider the state to be the main actor in the international arena and suggesting that the fundamental goal of every

state is survival [19]. Theorists argue that ‘strategic action is a norm of the global politics’ [31] and mutual distrust between states may prevent them from cooperating in an anarchic system [14]. For these reasons, a military oriented approach to security becomes the key to analysing the EU’s role in the global politics from a realist perspective. The approach studies the strategies for survival and strengthening the authority in the anarchic external environment used by states, such as deterrence or balance of threats.

Some scientists argue that today’s wars are mostly hybrid wars, in which the probability of victory by one of the opposing parties depends upon a cognitive and communicative control of the opposing parties over the mind, emotions and behaviour of the crowd [9]. This is the reason why the security sphere is beyond the limits of ‘normal’ politics and where the normal procedures are suspended. Security is the sphere of extraordinary measures, of secrecy and expediency, of fast and unchecked decisions [23]. Thus, the research into the EU’s actorness in the military sphere (the security sphere – in the broadest sense) is becoming topical [12; 20] considering the first, after World War II, large-scale war in Europe with the altitudinous usage of conventional weapons and the possibility of the usage of weapons of mass destruction. The war in Ukraine is the first time since World War II when a European country has annexed a part of another European country, brought about thousands of casualties among the civilians and lead to internal and external displacement [27]. In relation to this international threat (and the like, e.g., the one in Korea or the Taiwan Strait), the Union is considered a non-classical security organization (a military alliance) due to the lack of corresponding (hard) resources to provide military defence for its members as well as the lack of experience as a conflict manager or mediator having been built up for a short time [12].

Regarding the EU, the assumption is true that in order to be a key player in the global security system, a state must possess the authority based on international norms and military potential. Speaking about the action it takes to settle a conflict in a neighboring state, the Union has always tried to find common ground with the other parties and apply adequate tools to overcome a conflict, as it has its own diplomatic service, extensive experience in deploying diverse missions, and is perceived worldwide as an appropriate foreign policy actor. However, the European Union has long

been forced to rely largely on the initiative of individual Member States and external actors, such as NATO.

Researchers still argue that within the EU the key emphasis should be laid on human security, which may strengthen the EU's influence as a security actor via increasing the effectiveness, coherence, and visibility of the EU's mission. However, since the European Neighbourhood Policy has been introduced in 2003, the EU acquired the role of a new kind of an international actor and a multinational political community developing actorness in international relations in terms of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) [25]. Scientists [3] believe that this is a dynamic combination of the three types of foreign policy, namely: the CFSP, the EU and the Member States levels which interact within the European system of external relations.

In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014, the EU failed in its attempts to somehow influence the situation. After all, its 'soft' influence proved inadequate and insufficient to prevent and, then, overcome a hybrid, and later, a full-scale military conflict. Researchers believe the EU to have been a consistent 'soft' actor operating in the international context of the hybrid confrontation, which has provided the EU with the opportunity to demonstrate its power to the other powerful international actors. However, the attempt to manifest its 'soft' and 'structural' capacity to influence and control the Russian Federation actually failed. The EU successfully applied appropriate tools and methods to force Russia to follow the Minsk Agreement (2015). It introduced economic and diplomatic sanctions with the aim to isolate the Russian Federation as a potential participant of international fora and supported the UN resolutions and the exclusion of the offending nation from the G-8. However, its attempts to stop a full-scale conflict turned out to be ineffective. Therefore, at that time, researchers did not classify the Union as an effective regional security actor [27]. In addition, despite Russia's annexation of Crimea and its aggression in Eastern and Southern Ukraine since 2014, the European Union hasn't been able to reduce its energy dependence on Russia for a considerable period of time. Scientists argue that in this case Russia would have had to stop acting so aggressively towards Ukraine, otherwise, it would have never avoided potentially devastating macroeconomic problems caused by the EU's sanctions on the Russian energy imports (provided the sanctions had

been imposed in a timely manner). Thus, the absence of a long-term energy strategy before 2022 affected the EU's ability to change Russia's behaviour in Ukraine through economic sanctions.

Thus, the EU is thought to have been acting as a limited conflict manager during the years 2014-2022. The EU has been clearly playing a secondary role compared to the other participants resolving the conflict due to a lack of coherence in the positions of the Member States on this issue and their inability to consolidate and come to grips with this complicated situation [12]. Since 2022, the EU has been gradually transforming into a political, direct conflict manager: it has significantly developed its activities related to conflict management based on a solid consensus among its member states, and is introducing truly political instruments, such as sanctions, which target the causes of the conflict, and is becoming an effective mediator in communication between the parties to the conflict.

For example, P. Silva [27] evaluates the EU's actorness in the regional security and includes four sets of variables, which are context, coherence, consistency, and capability. A. Härtel [12] brings forward an analytical framework to evaluate the EU's contribution to effective international conflict management along the following criteria: the clarity of the EU's position on the conflict in question, the intensity of the EU's contribution to cooperation and stabilization of the post-conflict relations, and the nature of the EU's presence in supranational conflict management.

Notwithstanding the argument among the scientists on the EU's international actorness, the first large-scale war since 1945 has made it urgent to stick to the realistic paradigm of international development. A. Neimann and C. Bretherton [22] argue that the EU wants to join a big, geo-political game (state-dominated game), where the states have the right to apply coercive actions internally and externally, and it will have to play according to the rules of this game. The effectiveness of the EU efforts to settle the Russian-Ukrainian conflict also matters taking into account the fact that the effectiveness enhances, when the Union speaks with one voice, and its members and institutions desire to preserve and strengthen the coherence of external policy on the Community [22]. The ability of the EU to perform in international security does not necessarily depend on a full integration of Member States' military capabilities. Rather, it is proposed that the successful performance of the EU in international security affairs

should rely on the division of labour between the Member States and the EU institutions in Brussels [11].

8. Conclusions

Considering the aforementioned, we may agree that the methodological approaches to analyse the EU as a global actor are various, but they do not always grasp the EU in its institutional and functional complexity. Thus, given the complexity to define the actorness of the EU due to its uniqueness, it is difficult for researchers to find its place in the continuum between a state and an international organization. Researchers generally distinguish between several considerations of the EU's actorness (special actor, realist, neo-functionalist, and constructivist) taking into account its ability to achieve foreign policy goals. However, the key statement is that the concept of actorness and effectiveness are integral to the context in which they are being implemented and researched. In the ongoing regional crisis, caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war, when the EU is an engaged party and Russia is its main opponent, there is resistance reinforced by Russia and the US to conceptualization the EU as a 'sui generis' emerging security actor. Many states find it difficult to realize the actual role and competence of such specific association as the EU in the traditional Westphalian world system; consequently, it is becoming even more difficult to trust in the EU's effectiveness as a security actor.

As a multinational and partly a supranational organization, the EU is well placed to better assist states and other international governmental entities in coordinating efforts to address transnational security challenges. Similarly, its aspiration to become a comprehensive and integrated security provider could make the EU a catalyst and facilitator of a more open, cross-border approach and better communication between bureaucratic and ad hoc systems. The EU's asserts that the nature of the security challenges of today is far more complex to be faced by a single state, an institution, or an entity. This argument lies at the heart of the EU's claim to legitimacy in the security realm which reads that only transnational and multidimensional entities alone can adequately tackle international security challenges.

Today, the activity of the EU in responding to the war is gradually increasing. The EU undoubtedly has de jure and de facto recognition, the authority and ability to act in the Russian-Ukrainian war. In a favourable

environment, the European Union exercises both, international and domestic authority and recognition to occupy the leading role in the security of Europe. This is about the EU and its Member States coming to realize that they are able to achieve the so-called 'European goals' in a pragmatic way through viable agreements without exchanging the EU status of an autonomous actor for a collective desire to obtain better concrete results.

For any organization, to be considered an independent actor, it is crucial to be recognized as authoritative, cohesive and autonomous. All of these factors are gaining significant importance in the case of the EU. Security and geo-political circumstances having been changed, there is an urgent need to clearly outline the EU strategy based on the 2016 EU Global Strategy involving its members more actively, thereby overcoming external constraints to its effective presence on the global stage.

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