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In the light of the realistic theory, the European Union (EU) is not a state, but a subject of international law and a subject of international relations. It is a voluntary union of sovereign and democratic states, a specific international organisation. In the light of the neo-functional theory, the European Union is a self-propelling mechanism whose essence is that every stage of its development entails the need for further steps (spillover), i.e. the enhancement of its competence (deepening of integration). This leads to constant tensions caused by the scope and pace of the changes, the definition of national interests and the perception of democracy and sovereignty. This is primarily a political issue, and to a lesser extent a legal one. However, in international relations there is no world parliament, courts or government and their creation in the future is unlikely. The formation of such institutions is only possible with the treaty consent of all states, and it is the case, but only in a materially or geographically limited scope¹.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the game theory (multilevel games), the Union is internally conflicted because the governments of the Member States are dependent on national actors and therefore put forward different demands pertaining to its domestic and foreign policies. This is one of many causes of crises that have been paralysing the European Union for years and inhibiting the integration of Europe. As a result, we are dealing

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¹ Finkelstein, L.S. 1995. What is global governance. *Global Governance*, no. 1, p. 368; Czaputowicz, J. 2007. *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja.* [Theories of international relations. Criticism and systematisation.] Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 354–358.

today with a mega-crisis in the EU, which consists of the financial and economic crisis, the crisis of axiology, the crisis called 'democratic deficit', the crisis of European integration, the immigration crisis, the crisis of leadership and the crisis caused by Brexit. The result of the referendum of 23 June 2016 in which by the majority of votes 51.9% to 48.1% UK citizens decided to leave the European Union, means that Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) was launched for the first time in the history of European integration. The results of the British referendum surprised almost all political analysts and observers, including the voters themselves and me because I was convinced that pragmatic British would vote in favour of remaining in the European Union. It turned out, however, that both the public and some politicians opting for leaving the EU, did not think that this would happen. In the first polls after the referendum, when Brexit became a fact, as many as 84% of Britons were in favour of staying in the structures of the European Community².

Brexit may turn out to be a turning point in the history of the EU, either the beginning of its collapse or a reverse process that will speed up a reform and modernisation of the Union. In my opinion, at the beginning Brexit will weaken the European Union and hamper the integration process in Europe, but later it will extort deep reforms and contribute to further enlargement and deepening of the EU. There will be an increase in the number of anti-EU and Euro-sceptic sentiments, consisting in criticism of the European Union and strong opposition to it, especially by political elites. Already today, a growing lack of unity and solidarity among EU countries is evident. However, common sense and concern for Europe's security and unity against external threats will appear later. After 60 years of integration, Brexit shows that Europe has run out of binders and its foundations have been fragile. Deep divisions are accumulating and the idea of European solidarity and cohesion is being contested and at the same time the effectiveness of the EU as an active player in the international arena is decreasing³.

² Borońska-Hryniewiecka, K. 2016. Brexit a władza ustawodawcza: rola parlamentów Zjednoczonego Królestwa w procesie wychodzenia państwa z Unii Europejskiej. [Brexit and legislative power: The role of the parliaments of the United Kingdom in the process of leaving the European Union.] *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, no. 3, pp. 62–77; Kaczorowska, M. 2016. Krajobraz polityczny po Brexicie. [Political landscape after Brexit.] *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, no. 3, pp. 39–61.

³ Zielonka, J. 2014. *Koniec Unii Europejskiej?* [End of the European Union?] Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, pp. 27–32; Schulz, M. 2014. *Skrepowany*

Critical events in Kiev, Crimea and Donbas as well as in Syria, Iraq and the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice, Berlin and Stockholm have highlighted numerous shortcomings of the European Union and undermined its prestige in the world. The European Union is facing many new political, economic and social challenges due to which it necessary to modernise its structures and mechanisms of management and decision-making. The global financial crisis has been particularly dangerous and severely affected both for the EU and its Member States – especially those in the euro area. It has shown the political weakness of the Union, raising the question about its cohesion and solidarity. Michael Spence, an American economist, recipient of the Nobel Prize, says that the eurozone is exhausted because globalisation, debts and obsolete internal legislation have done a great deal of harm to it. He stresses that the Union urgently needs deep reforms and greater unification in fiscal, financial and banking matters and increased dynamics of mutual investment, capital mobility, greater investment in the knowledge-based economy⁴.

The European Union is facing a difficult and extremely important dilemma: to further develop and deepen integration or to reduce it, to make it shallower and, consequently, to reduce its importance on the international arena. Important decisions that cannot be postponed include strategic issues such as the pace of the enlargement of the Union, the future of the internal market, energy security, demographic problems, including migration of people and refugees, the security of citizens and the guarantee of democratic freedoms⁵. Today an urgent challenge is the need for close cooperation between the EU Member States in order to overcome the negative effects of the financial and economic crisis and the so-called refugee crisis. It would be ideal to create efficient and effective mechanisms protecting the EU from similar problems in the future. This was reflected in the ‘Declaration of Rome’, adopted on 25 March 2017, at the summit of 27 EU countries on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties. This document mentions ‘unprecedented challenges’ for the Union – from

OLBRZYM. *Ostatnia szansa dla Europy*. [The chained giant. Europe's last chance.] Warszawa: MUZA SA.

⁴ Stodolak, S. 2017. Europejska gospodarka dusi się w politycznym pacie. [The European economy is suffocating in a political stalemate.] *Obserwator finansowy.pl* [Online] 25 April 2017, p. 6. Available at: www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2012. *Priorytety polskiej polityki zagranicznej 2012–2016*. [Priorities of Polish foreign policy 2012–2016.] Warszawa, pp. 3–5; Skrzypek, A.A. 2016. Kryzys Unii, idei, polityki? [Crisis of the Union, idea, politics?] *Politeja*, no. 43, pp. 5–41.

terrorism, through increased migration pressures and protectionism, to social and economic inequalities. EU leaders pledged to build secure Europe (among others, with well-protected external borders), prosperous, social (e.g., combating discrimination, social exclusion and poverty) and ‘stronger Europe’ in the global context (among others, strengthening defence in cooperation with NATO). ‘Europe is our common future’ – the last sentence of the ‘Declaration’ says⁶. Unfortunately, the declaration does not contain any specific reforms and the time will show if it will remain a purely occasional document or whether its commitments will be filled in with specific content.

Summa summarum, deep changes and reforms of the European Union are necessary and essential, but we will have to wait for them till the September election in Germany. Let us hope that after this election Union’s leaders and the biggest capital cities of the Union will finally devote their attention to scenarios for further integration and the future of Europe presented on 1 March 2017 by the President of the European Commission⁷. In the foreword to ‘the White Paper on the Future of Europe’, published at that time, Jean-Claude Juncker writes: ‘There are important challenges ahead of us, for our security, for the well-being of our people, for the role that Europe will need to play in an increasingly multipolar world. A united Europe at 27 needs to shape its own destiny and carve out a vision for its own future. (...) As we decide which way to go, we should remember that Europe has always been at its best when we are united, bold and confident that we can shape our future together’⁸.

Professor Krzysztof Szczerski writes in the peer-reviewed book about all these pains and problems that the European Union is facing today, its chances and threats, and how to save it from disintegration. The author of this excellent monograph does not need to be introduced here because he is well known both in the scientific community and among political elites. He has successfully combined research with political practice for years, fulfilling many functions that allow him to analyse the situation in the EU, its internal policies and activity on the international forum in an objective way. Krzysztof

⁶ Deklaracja Rzymska. [Rome Declaration.] *Gazeta Wyborcza* 27 March 2017, p. 9. Cf. also: Bielecki: T. 2017. Rzymska wiosna w Unii Europejskiej. [Rome’s spring in the European Union.] *Gazeta Wyborcza* 27 March 2017, p. 9.

⁷ European Commission. 2017. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe. Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025*. Brussels.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 3. Cf. also: B. Góralczyk: Po 60 latach integracji Europie zabrakło spoiwa. [After 60 years of integration, Europe has run out of binders.] *Obserwator finansowy.pl* [Online] 25 March 2017, pp. 1–6, Available at: www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl.

Szczerski is an eminent political scientist, Europeanist, politician and publicist and author of many valuable scientific books devoted to the foreign policy of Poland and the European Union.

The reviewed monograph consists of a short 'introduction', written by the professor, MEP Zdzisław Krasnodębski⁹, a prologue entitled „Europa – z jaką Unią?” [‘Europe – with what kind of the Union?’] and ten chapters, divided into numerous subsections. Although the book has two ‘introductions’, it does not have a concluding chapter, and rightly so, because despite numerous threats and problems, the EU is still on its way, and European integration is continuing, because it is a process that is irreversible, despite appearances. It was written in a problematic order and can also serve as an academic textbook, very useful for students and PhD students in many fields of study, especially European studies, political science and international relations.

In the introduction to the peer-reviewed work, Krzysztof Szczerski acknowledges that the original versions of some of its chapters have appeared ‘in my publications published over the last few years (...), but for ‘the needs of this book have been thoroughly worked out, gaining a new form and content’ (p. 27) and stresses that: ‘Today the work of repairing the process of European integration has to be undertaken. In subsequent chapters of this book I wanted to present first various aspects of the contemporary crisis of the European Union, often using categories taken from the science of politics, and then to outline the pathways to its repair’ (p. 24).

Thus, in the first chapter, entitled „Historyczne źródła kryzysu integracji europejskiej” [‘Historical sources of the crisis of European integration’], the author analyses the development of the international situation in Europe after 1989, i.e. after the fall of communism and tries to show the causes of the growing crisis in the process of European integration. He advances a thesis, promoted also by other authors, as well as by the author of this review, that ‘Since the beginning of European unification after the Cold War period, we have been dealing with a flaw that has made this process imperfect and increasingly divergent in ideological sense from the roots of post-war integration. This has been sustained by the phenomenon of material domination of the western countries over the countries seeking admission. Due to this a number of political decisions about co-operation have led to the consolidation of external domination in the Central European countries, for

⁹ On page 9 in footnote 5 Z. Krasnodębski refers to Martin Schulz’s book and quotes its title in the original, that is in German. I would like to point out that this book was also published in Polish. See Schulz, M. 2014. *Skrepowany OLBRZYM. Ostatnia szansa EUROPY*. [The chained GIANT. Europe’s last chance.] Warszawa Muza SA.

example in the sphere of ownership, or the opening up of our own market, on very unfavourable conditions, for Western corporations with a much stronger tendering position, which has resulted in the practical elimination of domestic entities from many areas of the market. It had to bring political consequences' (pp. 31–32).

The second chapter entitled „Władza a rynek” [‘Power and the market’] and the corresponding third chapter entitled „Jak rozumieć obecny europejski kryzys?” [‘How to understand the current European crisis?’], devoted to the economic aspects of European integration and economic preconditions of the crisis in the European Union, are also very insightful. According to the author, the political elites of integrating Europe have put too much emphasis on economic cooperation, neglecting the ideological and political sphere. As a result, it is now justified to define the EU as an economic power and at the same time a political dwarf. Krzysztof Szczerski advances an interesting thesis here, according to which: ‘We are dealing in Europe not so much with a catastrophe but rather with deep and at the same time extensive systemic instability that requires the reconfiguration of all essential functional subsystems such as law, institutions, norms and patterns, and social order. This is a moment of reconstitution of the European Union, which can take the form of reintegration of Europe according to new rules’ (p. 71).

In the next, fourth chapter of the peer-reviewed work, entitled „Rekonstytucja, czyli nowa integracja” [‘Reconstruction, or new integration’], the author explains what the ‘reconstitution’ of the European Union should be based on. He writes here directly: ‘The notion of reconstitution in political science means making changes not in order to question (destroy) what was before – we call it a revolution – but it pertains to such a change which will preserve the continuity of political institutions, with a simultaneous change of parameters of their operation. It also means the establishment of new intermediate targets while maintaining the ultimate goal: European unity. The point is to find new political equilibrium that would fulfil the basic aims and principles the institution in question was formed for and restore its functional efficiency. The European Union needs such a change is today’ (p. 93).

In the next, fifth chapter of the reviewed monograph, Krzysztof Szczerski tries to answer the question of why the EU is not recovering from the crisis, and in the sixth chapter there are interesting reflections on the essence and the new understanding and functioning of sovereignty in common Europe. In the seventh chapter, however, he writes about Europe’s place in the world order and the need to strengthen it.

In my opinion, the subsequent chapters, that is the eighth chapter entitled „Trójmorze: nowa rola i miejsce Europy Środkowej” [‘The Three Seas Initiative: new role and place of Central Europe’], the ninth chapter „Europa wg nauczania św. Jana Pawła II” [‘Europe according to the teaching of Saint John Paul II’], and the final, tenth chapter entitled „Rekonstrukcja Europy – założenia programowe” [‘Reconstruction of Europe – programme assumptions’] deserve special attention. They contain the author’s conceptions and ideas as well as numerous hypotheses and theses, with which I do not always agree, but they compel a reflection and stimulate new thinking about Poland, Europe and the European Union. This is the biggest added value of the peer-reviewed publication.

To sum up the above comments on the peer-reviewed book, I would like to emphasise that this is a unique and important publication on our publishing market. Taking into consideration the original and linguistically alluring form of this work, I think that this book will be thoroughly analysed and discussed in the coming years, both by researchers and politicians as well as journalists.