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EU External Relations - EU at the crossroad

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Introduction

This paper analyzes the European Union (EU) external relations on the basis of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union with United States of America, Turkey and Russian Federation. Liberal Intergovernmentalism is used as a theoretical background for the analysis of the EU external relations. We argue that the foreign policy of the European Union is the foreign policy of the member states. After the rejection of the Treaty establishing the Constitution for Europe in referenda held in France and Netherlands, the EU stopped integrating. Under the new circumstances in the international relations, it is time for the EU and its member states to redefine its foreign policy and relations with US, Russia and Turkey. The international system is different as it was after the Cold War. The Arab Spring, war in Syria, Donald Trump's election victory in the USA, Russian annexation of Crimea and events in Turkey after alleged coup d'état are the main challenges and the European Union needs to find proper way to address them. In order to prove the thesis in the first part of the paper the main arguments of the Liberal Intergovernmentalism are going to be presented. In the second part of the essay we are going to analyse the relations of the EU with USA, Russia and Turkey.

Liberal Intergovernmentalism

Liberal Intergovernmentalism is middle range theory of the European integrations and suitable theory for explaining the CFSP of the EU. Intergovernmentalism is a response to the Neofunctionalism, which claimed that the progress of the integration and automatic spillover are irreversible processes. Events in the 1960's and 1970's have brought states back as the key actors of the European integrations (Ilić in Jović, 2014: 184). The Intergovernmental position is based "heavily on realist assumptions about the roles of states, or more accurately, the governments of states in IR" (Bache et al, 2011: 11). Governments are more willing to spread the integration on the field of "low politics" than the field of the "high politics". Decisions on the international level, made by the governments, are influenced by the interest groups at the domestic level, political calculations concerning domestic problems, economic interests and electoral implications of the governing party or parties (Ibid). The governments possess legal sovereignty and political legitimacy so they can and are the arbiters in the international arena. Stanley Hoffmann, one of the first representatives of Intergovernmentalism, claimed that governments are constrained by the role of the state in a world system (Ibid). The early Intergovernmentalism stressed that states guard their sovereignty and security so it failed to

explain why states started to integrate the field of the high policy as well, especially foreign and security policy. The American scholar Andrew Moravcsik developed the Liberal Intergovernmentalism as a response to the critics and showed why states accept to work together. This approach assumed that states are rational actors and that governments are acting at two levels. The first level is domestic level where the national interest is determined and the second level is international level. At the international level the various and often conflicting interest need to be reconciled (Bache et al., 2011: 13, Saurruger, 2013: 74-78). In the European Union the interests of the states are presented in the Council of the EU. According to Liberal Intergovernmentalism the main actors in the EU are its member states. Why then the member states are willing to upload some competences form their domain to the EU level? Moravcsik's answer is the concept of credible commitments. States want to be sure that everyone respect the agreements made at the supranational level. Supranational institutions make sure that member states respect the agreements, lower the cost of collective actions and raise the cost of non-cooperation. Despite the existence of supranational institutions, member states keep power what confirms right of veto in those areas where unanimity is needed (Saurruger, 2013: 83). Liberal Intergovernmentalism claims that the European integrations had three phases. In the first phase, national preferences were made, in the second phase, national preferences were harmonized and in the third, supranational institutions were created (Ilić in Jović, 2014: 190-197).

With the Treaty on the European Union (Treaty of Maastricht), the EU was created. The three pillars structure was adopted as a compromise between Germany on one side and United Kingdom on the other side. Germany supported stronger cooperation on the issues of foreign policy, but the UK took different position, claiming that foreign relations and security are the matters of the states. UK saw CFSP as a threat to NATO (Bache et al. 2011: 513). The compromise was the tree-pillar structure of the EU and the CFSP was one of the two intergovernmental pillars, the second was Justice and home affairs. The European Union external relations and foreign policy is the policy of the member states, because their "policies and preferences are crucial in the formulation of policies adopted under CFSP" (Gross, 2011:3).

The external relations of the EU with third countries are especially influenced by the views of France, Germany and UK. UK views on CFSP changed with the election of Labour Government in 1997. Their position became more moderate so they have recognized that EU's autonomy in foreign policy and security does not present a threat to NATO alliance. German views on foreign policy did not change. They supported multilateralism and pacifism, principles which the EU still supports. Germany also saw CFSP as opportunity to influence world affairs. On the

other side, France was worried about their influence and status in changed geopolitical relations, especially after the unification of Germany. France, UK and Germany “occupy a central position in the formulation and the putting into practice of EU foreign and security policy...the three are indispensable in diplomatic terms” (Gross, 2011: 6). The Treaty of Lisbon made changes concerning CFSP. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is the Vice-President of the Commission. High Representative chaired the Foreign Affairs Council which means that the position of High Representative is the link between the Commission and the Council. Besides the High Representative, European External Action Service came into existence and the position of the permanent President of the European Council was introduced, who raise the presence and visibility of the Union in the international arena (Begović in Grubiša, 2012: 100-102) Despite these changes and the abolishment of the three-pillar structure, unanimity is still required in almost all questions concerning CFSP and the Union cannot override a member state on the question of foreign policy so that “the CFSP stays the last policy field in the EU which is intergovernmentally institutionalized and...subjected to specific rules and procedures” (Alec de Flers, 2012: 23)

EU and the United States of America - long lasting partnership at a crossroad

United States (US) has been the most important partner and ally of Europe since the World War II. US offered not just security during the Cold War, but also economic and political support to the process of the European integrations. Even when the Cold War ended and there was no more threat from the east, United States and NATO kept the central role for European security. European Union and its member states wanted to preserve this alliance (Gross, 2011: 7-8). UK was the main supporter of the alliance with US together with Portugal, Netherlands and East European and Baltic states. On the other side, there is group of states which are more in favour of European security, led by France and followed by Italy and Spain. Germany is somewhere in between. It is obvious that European Union could not had the structured foreign policy in cases like intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya because the member states were divided on this and similar issues. Even the member states cannot be completely independent in the decision making as long as Europe is dependent on US protection.

Europe has “greater freedom to pursue its own foreign policy, but it does so in a world increasingly dominated by American preferences and concerns” (Clark, 2008: 277). The US primacy was seen as factor of stability and security, but the choices they made brought more instability. Instead of public goods and positive externalities what is expected from the state

with such role as US had, but they did the opposite. Values and beliefs of Europeans and Americans differ. European view on economic and political relations are different than the views of Americans. One example is the European support to United Nations and authorization of military interventions, while Americans are not so strong committed like Europeans. European understanding of economy and trade are different than those of US, for example European social economic model on the one side and American business model on the other side (Clark, 2008.) International relations shifted from the unipolar to multipolar world order and Europeans must decide whether "...they want Europe to constitute one of those poles or whether are happy for it to remain an appendage of American power..." (Clark, 2008: 288).

The transatlantic relationship has been predictable for a long time. US gave support to the EU and guaranteed security to its European allies. They were the most important partner of US and the partnership was framed in NATO and the EU. US President Barack Obama stressed the need for strong EU and he expressed his worries for the European unity. Obama saw Germany as the leader in Europe and stability factor in the changing geopolitical circumstances (Janning and Möller, 2016: 6).

The elections results in USA and the victory of Donald Trump were unexpected in Europe. President Trump has not spoken much about foreign policy during the campaign, so his views on foreign policy were not clear. From what he said in Campaign and did after taking office, things got clearer. Trump foreign policy is based on three ideas. First is that America gets bad deals from its allies, second is that multilateral free trade agreements have impoverished Americans and the third is his admiration for authoritative leaders such as Vladimir Putin (Shapiro, 2016). Trump announced that Europeans states need to pay for protection, which means 2% of the GDP spent on defence. Another problem according to Trump is free trade agreements. He is in favour of bilateral trade agreements, knowing the power of US economy and political influence, all such agreements would be in favour of US. Trans-Pacific Partnership, NAFTA, WTO and TTIP were criticized by the president Trump. TTIP negotiations are probably over, without success. President Trump wants bilateral deals with European states, which is impossible because of the fact that trade policy is in supranational domain, not in the domain of member states. Last, but not least is Trump's admirations for authoritative leaders. Despite the facts that liberal democracies and free market economies are the richer and stronger than authoritative regimes, he stressed that strong leadership is what states need because they get things done (Shapiro, 2016). EU does not have such leaders, but has rules and procedures, which in Trump's eyes makes it weak and condemned to

disintegration. He was the first president of the US who openly supported the disintegration of the Union and called other member states to follow British example, knowing that no individual member states could endanger the US economic and political primacy.

Changes in the transatlantic relations are the opportunity for Europe to rely on itself. Transatlantic relations are not going to be as they were. UK was the bridge between the EU and USA. One of the key components of the British foreign policy was the special relations with US and as member of the EU key supporter of transatlantic partnership. UK is leaving the Union and together with the changes in USA, member states need to find new solutions and relationships with UK and USA. After 2005 the European Union stopped integrating, it just continued to accept new members. Now, the reverse is needed. Trump, Brexit, latest events in Turkey and in Middle East is more than the impetus for the European Union to deepen integration. The EU is not integrated enough what Trump and Putin recognized. Trump named Germany as a hegemon in Europe, which uses the European institutions for its own goals, hoping other member states will stand up against so called German hegemony. Europe should do the exact opposite, stand together in defending their values, unity and accomplished international agreements. EU is “soft power” and with the power of Single Market it influences world politics, but it must do more, it must adopt itself to the changed international environment. Even though the Vice-President Mike Pence stressed US support for NATO, Europe cannot take this for granted. US foreign policy under Trump administration is unpredictable. US military intervention in Syria on Assad military base and recent threats to North Korea showed that US still wants to be world policemen, exact the opposite what he was announcing during the Champaign. European Union needs to become more independent from the US, because the views of the US under Trump on security, environment issues, international relations, trade politics, and situation in Middle East differ to a large extent. EU needs stand together to be relevant actor in the international arena because individual member states are weak, even France and Germany. European Union and relations with US as we know it today, can no longer exist, Brexit and Trump gave the Union opportunity to transform. The white paper of the Commission’s president is the sign that the EU along with its member states recognized the need for change. What is left now is to see who will win the elections in France and Germany, because elections in these states, will decide the future of the EU positions in the world and relations with the United States of America.

EU and Turkey – decades long relationship in question once again

Considering affairs between the European Union and Turkey, it is a complex and decades long on-off relationship. From historical ties and animosities, to the everlasting religious clash (which is related to tradition and cultural circles nowadays), to modern day alliances and affairs in international politics, the EU-Turkey relation is as important as it is convoluted. The transition of 2015/2016 marked an intensification in relations between these two actors, due to the refugee crisis, and the serious involvement of both EU countries and Turkey. In 2016 EU-Turkey relations experienced both improvement and impairment – the rise with the historic deal on refugee resettlement and the fall after Turkey’s President Erdogan’s crackdown following the failed July 15 coup (Aydıntaşbaş: 2016). After the decision of the European Parliament to stop Turkey’s accession negotiations, the relationship is once again in crisis. In addition to that, the most recent development is definitely the held referendum in April, when more than 50 percent of the Turkish nation decided to support Erdogan’s referendum question on increasing presidential powers, that has received much condemnation.

Concerning Turkey’s EU membership negotiations, throughout the past more than fifty years of accession talks (mainly three phases: pre-Helsinki, post-Helsinki and after-2005 opening of negotiations), it is important to stress the term of democratic (political) conditionality that has been used as a model for these negotiations. Turkey has been affected by the EU process politically, economically and socially, “especially after the December 1999 Helsinki Summit, where Turkey was granted candidacy, the EU process has gone beyond being a relationship that merely affects Turkey’s foreign policy and economic affairs, and has turned into a transformation process that has deep effects on social and political life” (Erdenir, 2012: 130). Of course, there is a second side to the story – possible change in Turkish nation’s stance toward entering the EU, which has decreased throughout the years due to the stagnation in the talks. This brings effectiveness of EU’s democratic conditionality which “can be effective in Turkey’s reform process, only if the EU restores its credibility in the eyes of the Turkish people” (Erdenir, 2012: 157). In addition to that, president Erdogan’s policies have been criticised by the European Union, and due to the fact that democratic conditionality demands liberal democratic system, the recent referendum will most probably affect future relations and Turkey’s potential place in Europe. Nevertheless, many factors, beside EU’s and Turkey’s will affect this topic, such as Turkey’s international involvement – mainly in Syria and the Kurdish question, US and EU’S plans for Turkey, as well as Turkey’s relationship with Russia.

As previously discussed, the refugee question has played (and still is) an important role in European politics, as well as Turkish. With the refugee settlement being far from solved, and with constant using of this question as a leverage between the two actors, it is imperative that EU and Turkey come to a sustainable, and not temporary conclusion. After all, the Syrian war is nowhere near conclusion with international involvement and recent events, and this is most definitely a mutual standpoint on which the two should agree, as European leaders should be aware “that asylum seekers fleeing the crackdown will become an issue between Turkey and EU countries during 2017” (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016).

What is needed is a long-term strategy from the EU. Following Brexit, Turkey might soon become an appealing ally, especially concerning its geopolitical position and its importance for West’s relations with Russia and the Middle East. Also, Germany, being home to many Turks, has a momentum to play a significant role in EU-Turkey relations, and not allow diplomatic mistakes in already intense affairs. Focus on democratic conditionality that has shown successful with other EU members, as well as strategic relations for the benefit of both EU and Turkey are crucial for future developments.

EU and Russia – heterogeneous stances on Russia in Europe

Energy dependence has been a foundation for EU-Russia relations for long, but recently, following sanctions for Russia, there has been a decrease – on one hand, diversification of energy provision in EU, and Russia’s approach to China as well as their search for new markets. “Despite political tensions, economic ties between the two sides remain close. The EU is by far Russia's largest trading partner, whereas for the EU Russia comes in fourth place. Russia is also the EU's leading energy supplier” (EPRS, 2016). The Ukrainian War and the question of Crimea have set a milestone in EU-Russia relations. Following the war in 2013 and 2014, sanctions were enforced on Russia, forcing Moscow to turn to other countries, markets and allies – which has resulted in deterioration of EU’s relations with Russia. But, it is important to note that EU’s policy toward Russia is not unified, that there have been different opinions on the matter of

Ukraine and Russia and some EU members’ approach to is different from what the original stance on Russia was. It is important to note that European countries’ politics concerning Russia are very often revolving around the question of Ukraine, such as the Dutch referendum on closer EU links to Ukraine and political, trade and defence treaty, which was rejected in 2016 (Van der Loo, 2016: 1).

Economic sanctions are costing Russia as much as 2% of GDP per year, as well as the restricted access to Western capital markets which is making it difficult for Russian businesses to finance investments (EPRS, 2016).

Conclusion

EU's heterogeneity is in many ways beneficiary for both the member states and the European Union itself. But, the lack of strength of the Union's foreign policy can affect both EU and its members, as well as international factors and international relations. With US's changing foreign policy, Russia's turning to emerging key factors in international politics and Turkey's national strengthening, EU must use its momentum to set a strategic foreign policy from which its members will prosper, avoiding new conflicts in the world of international politics in constant deterioration towards conflict. European Union is faced with changed international environment. Relations with USA are at the crossroads. New administration under president Donald Trump does not hide negative attitudes towards the EU. Even the role and the meaning of NATO are uncertain. Relations between Russian Federation and the EU, more precisely EU member states, are at the very low level. Relations of the EU towards Russia are in the shadow of the US-Russian relations. As long as the EU is dependent on USA in case of security and on Russian gas, the EU cannot develop independent foreign policy. Foreign policy of the European Union is the foreign policy of its member states. As long as the unanimity is needed to make a decision on foreign policy issues, it will stay that way. Member states are divided on many foreign policy issues, what could have been seen on matters such as intervention in Iraq and Libya. Recent migrant crisis proved the divisions of European states, which did not stay unnoticed in Russia and Turkey. EU foreign policy, highly on intergovernmental basis, and its position at the world stage will be decided after the elections in France and Germany. If the European Union wants to be a significant actor, it needs to cooperate more; integrations in all almost all fields need to be continued. Otherwise, the divisions will prevail and the EU will not be able to respond on the new challenges of the 21st century.

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