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Towards a Confident Europe: Fostering European Foreign Policy as a Premise to Enhanced European Economic Security & Competitiveness

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Abstract:

The present research comes to comprehensively analyse the path towards a confident Europe both in the regional and global environment by considering the necessity of European foreign policy consolidation as an imminent premise to enhanced European economic security & competitiveness. Despite of multiple competing political and economic interests, socio-cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, and historical animosities, the only choice of the European Union's nations to maintain and improve their current regional and global politico-economic positions resides in their capacity to act jointly through a unique representation. Accordingly, the results of the present research explicitly underline the idea that: as long as the "influence" centre of the European Union will be dispersed among national governments, each of them promoting individual interests contrary to the groups' ones, the community as an integrational block will face important difficulties in defending its regional and global positions. The qualitative analysis undertaken highlights the idea that the European Union in the present form and institutional arrangements is not able to provide feasible and efficient solutions to the current and future challenges. This fact can be explicitly noted in the area of foreign affairs where the dualism between national and supranational bodies makes the European Union to falter on key directions including the Middle East, Eastern Partnership, the Russian Federation, and Turkey as well as on the global arena.

Keywords: European foreign policy, regional challenges, strategic leadership, economic security, European identity

JEL classification: F02, F15, F42, F50, F63

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1 Introduction

The foreign policy of the European Union has met important challenges in the last years starting with regional ones such as the raise of radicalism in the Middle East, tensioning of the politico-economic relations in the Eastern Europe and finishing with global issues including the raising economic power of China and US domination in the financial and economic spheres. In the present form, the European Union lacks strategic leadership including in the area of foreign affairs capable of mobilising the efforts of its member states assuring vivid realisation of common aspirations enhancing economic security of the continent. Despite of multiple competing political and economic interests, socio-cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, and historical animosities, the only choice of the European Union's nations to maintain and improve their current regional and global politico-economic positions resides in their capacity to act jointly through a unique representation. This fact is directly linked to the strength of the member states adhesion to the common European identity which plays a crucial role in providing a stable basis for cooperation to foster the realisation of the mutual interests.

The present research comes to comprehensively analyse the path towards a confident Europe both in the regional and global environment by considering the necessity of European foreign policy consolidation as an imminent premise to enhanced European economic security & competitiveness. To realise this goal, specific objectives were established. First objective is set to analyse the main priorities of the European Union as regards the regional security in the Middle East and North Africa where there are pointed the main strategic weaknesses which the community demonstrated as a result of the present weak institutional cooperation in the area of common security and foreign affairs. Second objective regards the analysis of the stagnating reform process in the Eastern Partnership countries proving the limited capacity of the community in the present institutional arrangements to act efficiently to eradicate corruption and enhance the rule of law in the countries

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of strategic importance in the Eastern neighbourhood. Third objective assesses the tools the European Union can use to counter-balance the present “insurgent” Russia & Turkey, some of the main economic partners of the EU which during the last years have moved towards “authoritarianism” and distanced from the European democratic values. Finally, it is demonstrated that the European Union needs “federalisation” in order to efficiently deal with the declining influence on the world’s arena and, consequently, strengthen its positions not only as a global economic but also a political power. As a result, the first hypothesis was formulated (H1) and namely: the consolidation of the European foreign policy is a premise to enhanced European economic security & competitiveness and there is a need to strengthen the present institutional framework, while the second (H0) states the vice-versa or there is no need to either reframe the current European foreign policy nor the existing institutional framework. It is necessary to underline that the present research applies qualitative analysis to either prove or reject the first hypothesis.

The results of the analysis explicitly underline that the European Union in the present form and institutional arrangements is not able to provide feasible and efficient solutions to the current and future challenges in the area of foreign affairs. As long as the “influence” centre of the European Union will be dispersed among national governments, each of them promoting individual interests sometimes contrary to the groups’ ones, the community as an integrational block will face important difficulties in defending the regional and global positions of the member countries. It is necessary to underline that none of the member states have sufficient political and economic power as to act as a global power since there is a considerable difference between the leading EU economies, i. e. Germany, France and Italy and the global ones: the United States or China. Unless, the member countries of the European Union “unite” under single government, the efficiency of the promoted policies will face important internal and external obstacles which can be only overcome by joint approach. This fact can be explicitly noted in the area of foreign affairs where the dualism between national and supranational bodies makes the European Union to falter on key directions including the Middle East, Eastern Partnership, the Russian Federation, and Turkey as well as on the global arena.

2 Literature Review

In order to more comprehensively understand the issues related to key features and weaknesses of the European Union foreign policy and its impact upon the European economic security & competitiveness a subset of relevant literature has been selected. Thus according to Dijkstra (2009) the dualism of power inside the European Union and namely between national and supranational organisms certainly brings incertitude and inefficiency in policy promotion, this fact is particularly valid when speaking about diplomatic issues where each member state tends to promote its own interests neglecting the interests of the community. Moreover, there are important bureaucratic tensions even between the EU institutions at the supranational level, the fact undermining overall efficiency and influence of the community as a global economic and political player. Also, Koehler (2010) underlined that the Treaty of Lisbon has empowered the representative power of the European Union ensuring higher coherence of policy promotion in the area of foreign affairs. The lever of influence of the community in this field has been enhanced and the positions of the EU as an international actor were consolidated. Nevertheless, there are still important limiting factors subverting the EU’s effectiveness in the diplomatic field which can be summarised to the degree to which the member states are willing to support or not certain decisions. Furthermore, Krotz and Maher (2011) highlighted that the national interests certainly predominate over the communitarian ones. Still, during the last decades it can be observed that supranational bodies were empowered and the character of common foreign and security policies have accentuated. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the present state of consolidation is sufficient to enhance the role of the European Union as a global actor. Authors argue that the European Union and the national governments are confronting a major “dilemma” a similar situation the United States of America faced in 1940s: to enforce common institutions to have greater global influence or to maintain the present “status-quo” and adjust the interest to the limited national capacities, or in other words go global or not through consolidation. At the same time, Barbé and Johansson-Nogués (2008) pointed that the influence of the European Union upon its neighbouring countries can be assessed as modest and “fatigued” not speaking about global issues since national interests and empowerments of the member states clearly dominate over the supranational ones. Moreover, the common institutions are rather likely to promote the interests of larger nations of the EU this fact affecting overall effectiveness of the policies. In such conditions, the “gravity centre” of the foreign affairs in the European Union remains under the influence of few countries, the communitarian institutions playing a secondary role. Moreover, Schimmelfennig and Thomas (2009) stressed that the decision making process inside the institutions of the European Union, including those dealing with foreign affairs issues, are bureaucratized and based on highly normative institutionalism. In the present realities of the European Union bureaucratization and dominance of national institutions over

the communitarian ones leads to limited capabilities of the community to lever its interest on the global arena. Moreover, there is a clear tendency of the public opinion to determine policy issues which fosters the biasness of the decision making reducing its effectiveness. Simultaneously, Miskimmon (2012) mentioned that the influence of the European Union institutions over global and regional issues is limited since community represents rather a forum where decisions already taken are only stated and “post-factum” announced. This situation is characteristic only for the larger EU’s economies which tend to pursue their own interests in the detriment of the communitarian ones. Therefore, the lever of influence of the European Union as well as of the national states upon global events is limited since one lacks empowerments and the others influence.

Halperin and Clapp (2007) determined that the dispersion of power in foreign affairs means that in most of the cases individual and group interests of the integrated countries will be offered secondary prioritisation, the primary one being assured to larger nations. Leadership should not be underestimated as this fact leads to minimisation of responsibilities and accountability. Thus, it could occur the situation when “no one” is liable for something which has already happened. This fact is particularly valid in foreign affairs where the competition between nations to gain certain advantages is tremendous. Furthermore, Sasse (2008) emphasized that the empowerments of the European Union’s institutions in promoting efficient foreign policies are limited due to the “vague” character of the established institutional framework. For instance, the European neighbourhood policy promoted in the Eastern European nations does not offer clear membership perspective and certainly lacks conditionality, clear incentive and enforcement structures. Instead, the foreign policy the European Union promoted in these countries of strategic importance offers rather a “loose” platform for socialisation and dialogue the fact fading efficiency and goal orientation. Thus, the influence of the European Union is minimised and its position as a global player is undermined since it lacks determination in fostering the stability of countries near proper borders not speaking about global affairs. Moreover, Oppermann and Spencer (2016) highlighted that one of the present goals of the European Union is to enhance the competitiveness of the member states in the conditions of raising globalisation. Without consolidated foreign policy this aim could not be reached, this fact weakening the overall security and competitiveness level of the member states. Thus, lack of unity when going global reduces the influence of the European Union levers the fact resulting in weak effectiveness. Also, Beau regard (2016) accentuated that the European Union has passive influence upon solving international crises due to the lack of empowerment offered to communitarian institutions. The foreign positions of the EU are certainly weak and incapable of promoting Union’s interests on the global arena as compared to its present economic positions and ambitions. Hampered decision making process and lack of a timely response to challenges makes the European Union a secondary actor ceding strategic positions due to power dispersion. Further, Furness and Gänzle (2017) said that one of the core objectives of the Lisbon Treaty was to make the decisions related to foreign policy issues more coherent at the level of the European Union. Although several improvements were registered since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in this field, the overall levers of the European Union remains inefficient and weak in promoting community’s interests on the world arena. The excessive bureaucratisation remains one of the main causes of poor European performance. Moreover, the European Union lacks strategic direction, leadership and efficient hierarchy including in the foreign affairs dimension. At the same time, Jones, Kelemen, and Meunier (2016) underlined that the governance architecture of the European Union is characterised by a high degree of incompleteness. Present intergovernmental bargaining leads to hampered decision making processes and lack of timely response to socio-economic challenges. In such a way, the European Union is affected both politically and economically as the perception of the EU integration tends to become unfavourable since the community is not capable of offering solutions to increase the welfare of population. Simultaneously, Saurugger and Terpan (2015) pointed that the EU foreign and security policy certainly lacks empowerment as the national governments are reticent in delegating more responsibility to supranational bodies of the European Union. This situation leads to scattered effort which reduces the effectiveness in realising both national and community’s interests. Besides this, Falkner (2016) accentuated that national governments tend to delegate too much responsibility to European Union structures in the conditions when they are reticent to offer additional authority to the supranational bodies. National governments tend to have primacy in determining foreign relations, EU having secondary role the fact fading overall effectiveness since there are weak common positions. Finally, Ignatov (2017) highlighted that the European Union provides enough opportunities for states to succeed. This fact requires responsibility and long term orientation of policies promoted which must not to be politically driven. Accordingly, the prosperity of states resides in their capacities to follow development directions comprising feasible solutions. Thus, countries’ policies need to pursue a balanced character stimulating productivity and minimising economic waste and costs.

Huke, Clua-Losada, and Bailey (2015) stressed that the European Union was born in the period of a devastated post war Europe. At that time, Europe lost its privileged position in the global economy to USA which has become since then the dominating power on earth. Integration was meant to consolidate each member country’s economic potential under the protection of EEC. Until the present days the integration has grown in intensity and coverage comprising more states and economic areas. However, the level of integration is

insufficient as to compare the European Union to the United States. There are important differences among the European Nations which in the conditions of the present institutional framework cannot be eradicated. Thus, in the present form the European Union as an entity cannot offer feasible solutions to present economic challenges to countries which were poorly governed. Likewise, Schimmelfennig (2015) mentioned that the European Union plays the role of an intergovernmental dialogue platform which in the present framework cannot offer the means of efficient problem solving. The countries immerse in permanent debates trying to reap the biggest part of common welfare. The European Union is a secondary decision making power, ceding the primacy to national governments, yet in the case of failure it bears the greatest part of responsibility. Furthermore, Storm and Naastepad (2015) pointed that Germany tends to benefit the most from the present “status-quo” in the European Union since its economy is clearly dominating the community being the EU’s “locomotive”. There are important economic competitiveness differences between Germany and other economies of the European Union the fact which weakens the overall community’s positions on the global markets. In the present form, the EU is not capable to provide solutions to solve current economic challenges and smooth the existing differences among the member countries since these issues are in the responsibility of national governments which heavily rely on political environment and “election” factors. Alongside, Pereira, Snel, and ‘T Hart (2015) concluded that the single market will be successful only when the countries integrated are of the same or similar development level. The expansion of the European Union to the East starting with 2004 did not taken into account the previously mentioned idea. This fact created economic misbalances which rather benefited “old” European countries than the “new” ones since the integration led to immigration of the population to the Western EU. The Eastern part cannot reach the development level of the “older” part of the community without the support of supranational institutions. In order to fully overpass the development gaps, it is necessary to increase centralisation to foster investments in the disfavoured regions. Additionally, Thimann (2015) underlined that despite of the European Union membership not all the countries benefit at the same extent from the integration process. Thus, not all EU members are parts of the Eurozone and Schengen, two essential steps towards deeper cooperation. This situation is called “multi-speed” integration in which some countries of the EU are offered a larger number of rights while others do not. This situation creates important misbalances and reduces the capacities of all member countries of the European Union to gain equal opportunities. Still, Blyth (2016) highlighted that the present economic stagnation in the Eurozone is a direct consequence of poor coordination of policies at the supranational level. Thus, countries being interconnected through numerous economic relations sharing a common currency promote different policies which destabilize other countries’ economies. In such conditions, inter-governmental approaches to policy implementation are not suiting the requirements of a modern world competitive environment and, therefore, centralisation reforms are of crucial importance. Moreover, Copelovitch, Frieden, and Walter (2016) stressed that the efficiency of European integration is rather determined by political than economic factors and interests. European policy makers need to consolidate their institutional framework to be able to provide efficient solutions to modern day internal and global challenges. There is a need to enhance the centralisation in the European Union to be capable of overcoming present day misbalances in the Eurozone and in the Union as a whole. Also, Marelli and Signorelli (2017) determined that in the present conditions moving forward towards the integration can increase the risk of disintegration. Nevertheless, in a globalised society when the “human civilisation” centres move towards America and Asia, the need for further integration is imminent. The fragmentation of Europe certainly will lead to the total shift of power to other regions and this fact will be irreparable. Finally, Sirbu, Ignatov, and Crudu (2017) mentioned that European Union has limited resources to undertake large scale reforms of the member countries’ economic structures; instead it can mark strategic directions which can assure long run growth perspective. For instance, the European Union can develop entrepreneurial programmes and provide funding opportunities for participants. To increase the efficiency of policies as well as their coverage it is necessary to develop stronger cooperation mechanisms.

As a result, it can be underlined that the European foreign policy framework is weakened by the competition of interests between national and supranational bodies. The present empowerments offered to the European Union’s institutions are insufficient in order to efficiently represent the interest of the community on the world arena. The EU is limited in its ability to develop and implement policies capable of serving the interest of the whole integrational block not only of the particular nations. Moreover, the uneven character of integration permits the formation of multiple misbalances resulting in economic deficiencies undermining the idea of “Europeanisation”. Strong effort is required to consolidate the power of the European Union in order to adjust governance quality across the Union and efficiently regulate socio-economic environment.

3 Methodology

The present research is based on qualitative research of the key European Union's foreign policy challenges and applies fundamental analysis to enhance readers' understanding regarding the main causes why the community is facing difficulties in this area. Firstly, it is examined the issue of regional security in the Middle East and North Africa and its importance for the European Union. It underlines the key foreign policy actions the community has undertaken in this region to assist refugees and assure security for the population affected. Also, it is pointed the main policy errors the European Union committed and the impact of present institutional arrangement upon foreign policy's efficiency in the Middle East and North Africa. Secondly, it is analysed the efficiency of the Eastern Partnership policy by identifying its key priority actions and assessing the main causes of reforms implementation stagnation in the EaP nations which aligned to the European Union's principles and values. Moreover, it is assessed the success of these nations in terms of the European economic integration and institutional transformation including in these areas i. e. control of corruption, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, political stability, rule of law, voice and accountability. There are also underlined the key observations considering the future development perspectives of the EaP in the regional context. Thirdly, there are analysed the European Union's foreign policy efficiency in relation with the Russian Federation and Turkey. It is underlined the main challenges which the community should tackle in relation with an "insurgent" Russia. Moreover, it is underlined the main pathway of Turkey's transformation from an "allied" state to the European Union's principles and values to a present nation "opposing" Europe. There are highlighted key actions which the community has undertaken in relation to these countries and determined key EU's weaknesses in this regard. Fourthly, it is underlined the main causes of the decline of the community as a global economic power, and provided comprehensive overview of its weaknesses as related to United States of America. Also, it is analysed the impact of Brexit upon both the economic strength of the European Union and United Kingdom. Finally, it is assessed the perspectives of the consolidation of the European foreign policy as a premise to enhanced European economic security & competitiveness. There are analysed the ways the EU can strengthen its economic positions and the advantages of the advantages resulting from these transformations. On overall, the present research intends to provide a comprehensive study of the main weaknesses of the European Union caused by its present institutional framework, their impact upon the foreign policy efficiency on the key directions and the future perspectives as well as several recommendations are provided .

4 Key European Foreign Policy Challenges

4.1 Regional Security in the Middle East and North Africa

Recent migratory crisis has shown how much the European Union is vulnerable and incapable to undertake consistent measures to defend its interests not only in the foreign countries but also on its own territory. According to European Commission (2017a) the main foreign policy actions which the European Union carries on to cope with this challenges is summarised to assistance provided to refugees worldwide, resettle of refugees to the EU countries and improves the cooperation with transit countries to deal with the crisis. For instance, the European Commission mentions that it provides funding to support self-employment in transit zones and six migrant centres for vulnerable migrants and "hands-on EU support on the ground helping to tackle smuggling and trafficking in human beings". The same source underlines that there has been allocated €17.7 billion from the EU budget to deal with migratory crisis in the period of 2015–2017. €2.2 billion were directed to Turkey to support migratory facilities. Alongside, the European Union has allocated €9.4 billion as a response to the Syrian crisis. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention that the cost of the migratory crisis is by far larger if considering the financial expenses of particular EU member countries. Thus, according to OECD (2017) Germany in 2015 has spent €16 billion & Sweden €6 billion. Moreover, it costs Germany additional €50–63 billion to support refugees for 2016–2017 (DW 2016). Is this financing necessary? Certainly yes, it is important to support these people to efficiently integrate into the European society. They moved to the European Union because of the security and safety reasons and it is a human commitment to help each other in times of need. Was the European Union, in general, and in particular the leading member countries efficient in dealing with regional security in the Middle East and North Africa? Probably not since the European Union as an integrational block as well as the member states promoted weak foreign policy which resulted with a high insecurity stokehold. The European nations were passive participants incapable of defending their own interests in the nearby border region i. e. stability, peace and safety. The migratory crisis is a consequence of the European policies failures and weaknesses at the national and supranational levels. The benchmarking indicator in this regard is the result: 400,000–470,000 estimated deaths and more than half of Syria's 2010 population forcibly displaced which makes more than 10

million people (World Bank 2017). The European Union and the leading member countries failed in efficiently dealing with the direct threats to security at the nearby border regions due to the weak inter-institutional cooperation and lack of strong leadership capable of assuming responsibility. Thus, there was poor communication between foreign policy representatives and institutions in charge of defence and security of the community. The European Union’s leadership failed in undertaking steadfast decisions capable of solving crisis situation. In this regard, it is referred to a peace-keeping mission which had to mobilise the Europeans to bring stability to its borders. National and supranational institutions proved to be weak and inactive the passive attitude worsening the security threat. This fact demonstrates that European Union in the present formation plays a secondary role even in solving crises situation directly affecting its own interests not speaking about global challenges requiring more steadfast decisions. Moreover, the leading nations of the community are unable to undertake measures to defend the interests of the European nations. Accordingly, it is important to underline that the financial resources which were allocated to defence of the EU and member countries during the period of 2007–2016 (Figure 1) ranging annually between 184 and 200 billion EUR and accounting for more than 1.9 trillion EUR resulted in a poor performance. Moreover, as it can be observed in Table 1, European nations did not managed to efficiently deal with the security issues even if during the last decade they allocated billions of EUR for security reasons i. e. UK 480 billion, France 369 billion, Germany 288 billion, Italy 205 billion, etc. The European nations demonstrated passive implication and incurred the consequences not playing an active role in defending its interests in crisis situation in the nearby border regions. As a result, despite of growing allocations to defence and large investments in this area, the political elite weakness and lack of leadership transformed the European Union and leading economies of the integrational block into followers and passive participants incapable of assuming responsibility to consolidate the strategic positions of the community to assure not only efficient representation of its interests but also in demonstrating ability to provide quick, resolute and steadfast solutions to emerging global crisis situations.

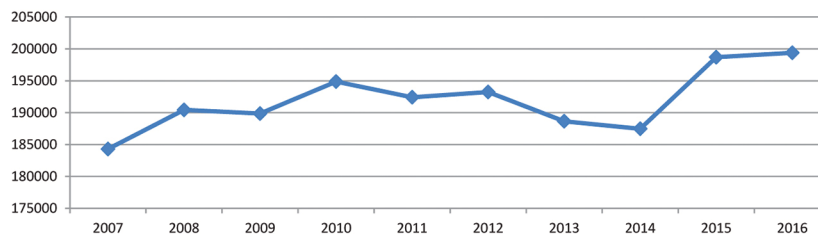


Figure 1: Total general government expenditure on defence of the EU, million EUR. Source: Eurostat, indicator’s code [gov_10a_exp]

Table 1: Total defence expenditure of EU countries within 2007–2016, million EUR.

UK	480,602	RO	15,428,7
FR	368,846	CZ	14,132,7
DE	287,663	HU	8946,7
IT	205,017	IE	7393,8
ES	105,213	SK	6429,4
NL	79,057	HR	6402,8
PL	61,748,8	BG	5165,6
SE	55,219,6	SI	4266,4
EL	53,961	LT	4146,2
BE	35,578	EE	3218,7
DK	32,689,6	CY	3073,4
FI	28,165	LV	2564,1
PT	21,755,3	LU	1542
AT	20,607,5	MT	535,3

Source: Eurostat, indicator’s code [gov_10a_exp]

4.2 Stagnating Reform Process in the Eastern Partnership Countries

The Eastern Partnership countries are offered strategic importance by the European Union representing a “buffer” zone between the East flank of the EU and the Russian Federation. Control over this region offers

strategic advantages linked to socio-economic security concerns. Presently, the EaP states comprise Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Only three states out of six are oriented towards European integration including Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, these states signing Association Agreements (AA) and concluding free trade areas with the EU. In turn, Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan are closer linked to the Russian Federation, these countries facing important challenges related to democratic mechanisms and institutional transparency. The European Union has a stake in fostering the development of the EaP nations which have chosen the EU as their development model by signing AA (Korosteleva, Merheim-Eyre, and van Gils 2018). The reform process in these nations meets important difficulties, despite the fact that these countries' democratic institutions are stronger than in the rest of the EaP, yet, they are far from the European standards (The Economist 2017). Consolidating these partner countries' governance and rule of law remains one of the main challenges since the situation in these nations directly affects the Eastern European Union countries' security. The fifth Eastern Partnership Summit from November 2017 concluded as the main directions of development of EaP states strengthening the countries' public administration, fighting against corruption, promoting democratic institutions and decreasing social vulnerabilities. The priorities have not essentially changed as compared to one decade ago when the partnership was established, the community during these years supporting reforms process in these nations. Policy advice and financial support offered for the consolidation of institutional framework have been widely applied to bring these nations closer to the European Union standards (European Commission, 2017b). These actions are particularly valid for Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia the states which developed the deepest cooperation relations with the EU. Another important priority of the European Union in the EaP has been the consolidation of regional economic integration through boosting trade and investments. In this regard, there have been undertaken important efforts which made possible the establishment of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas between the EU and EaP nations which aligned to EU values and principles. Other priority actions include assisting the partner nations in solving peacefully regional conflicts as well as to strengthen their institutions' capacities in combating information warfare and cyber-attacks. Wesselink and Boschma (2017) mentioned that on overall the European Union has reported important achievements in EaP nations particularly in the area of economic integration and implementation of Association Agreements. Yet, it failed in key areas including combating corruption and strengthening democratic institutions. According to the information provided in the Table 2, it can be observed that within the period of 2009, when EaP was established and 2016, there has been reported relatively poor evolution of governance indicators for the EaP states which signed Association Agreements with the European Union. Thus, Moldova registered the poorest evolution in terms of corruption control as well as government effectiveness. Also, it has been registered modest evolution in the area of regulatory quality, political stability and voice and accountability. Moreover, during the examined period, the rule of law worsened. Besides this, it is necessary to mention that the Republic of Moldova's self-declared "pro-European" government adopted the "controversial" mixed electoral system on 20 July 2017 despite of the European protests (Caľus 2018). According to the same author, this electoral system increases the chances of "obscure" control over the politics in the Republic. The Venetian Commission declared this decision to undermine the independency of Parliamentary system which shifts Moldova from a weak democracy to "hybrid" authoritarianism (Caľus 2018). According to Table 2, Ukraine registered slight improvements in terms of corruption control, government effectiveness, regulatory quality and voice and accountability. At the same time, it registered drop of its political stability and of the rule of law. Georgia has recorded improvements at all chapters including corruption control, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, political stability, rule of law and voice and accountability. In such conditions, it can be mentioned that on overall the foreign policy of the European Union in the region of EaP countries meets important difficulties, 3 states out of 6 being under the influence of the Russian Federation and showing weak will towards deepening the relations with EU i. e. Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the other three countries including Ukraine, Moldova and less Georgia the policy performance is also weak. The support offered to these countries' has shown little impact upon institutional efficiency in terms of corruption control, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, political stability, rule of law and voice and accountability. Thus, Moldova and Ukraine meet severe impasse at these chapters being characterised by poor institutional performance. At the same time, it is necessary to underline that Georgia registered improve of the situation in these areas. As a result, it can be mentioned that the foreign policy of the European Union failed in 5 out of 6 EaP countries since 3 states are still under the control of the Russian Federation and the other 2 which are supported by the EU face stagnation in their socio-economic development. Accordingly, the European Union should consolidate this policy area in order to enhance democracies in the regions neighbouring its Eastern borders.

Table 2: Governance Indicators, EU associated Eastern Partners (−2.5 min to 2.5 max).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
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Moldova	Control of Corruption	-0,70	-0,67	-0,62	-0,61	-0,75	-0,85	-0,91	-0,96
	Government Effectiveness	-0,56	-0,66	-0,62	-0,57	-0,41	-0,42	-0,65	-0,62
	Regulatory Quality	-0,13	-0,10	-0,08	-0,10	-0,07	0,02	-0,07	-0,12
	Political Stability	-0,59	-0,38	-0,05	0,05	0,00	-0,16	-0,33	-0,28
	Rule of Law	-0,44	-0,36	-0,33	-0,32	-0,37	-0,25	-0,35	-0,54
	Voice and Accountability	-0,30	-0,06	0,05	-0,03	-0,07	0,01	0,03	-0,03
	Ukraine	Control of Corruption	-1,04	-1,03	-1,05	-1,08	-1,13	-0,99	-0,98
Government Effectiveness		-0,83	-0,78	-0,82	-0,58	-0,65	-0,41	-0,52	-0,58
Regulatory Quality		-0,57	-0,52	-0,60	-0,60	-0,62	-0,63	-0,59	-0,43
Political Stability		-0,30	0,01	-0,07	-0,09	-0,78	-2,02	-1,96	-1,89
Rule of Law		-0,76	-0,81	-0,82	-0,78	-0,80	-0,79	-0,81	-0,77
Voice and Accountability		0,06	-0,08	-0,13	-0,28	-0,32	-0,14	-0,09	0,02
Georgia		Control of Corruption	-0,12	0,01	0,12	0,40	0,47	0,79	0,68
	Government Effectiveness	0,29	0,31	0,55	0,61	0,59	0,49	0,40	0,51
	Regulatory Quality	0,50	0,59	0,66	0,69	0,76	0,93	0,92	1,01
	Political Stability	-0,97	-0,72	-0,66	-0,68	-0,44	-0,32	-0,47	-0,29
	Rule of Law	-0,20	-0,21	-0,12	-0,01	-0,01	0,19	0,27	0,37
	Voice and Accountability	-0,19	-0,16	-0,17	0,02	0,14	0,28	0,27	0,22

Source: World Bank, available at databank.worldbank.org.

4.3 Insurgent Russia & Turkey

Öniş and Yılmaz (2016) underline that the intensification of bi-lateral relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation is set to undermine the influence of the European Union countries in the middle East and the Eastern Europe by sharing the spheres of interests. Moreover, it can be noted that these nations tend to become more distant from the Western World by shifting to “Asian-style” authoritarian regimes. Accordingly, it can be highlighted that Turkey within the period of 2010 to 2017 constantly declined in terms of democracy efficiency with the lowest score in the last year. Thus, the Democracy Index provided by The Economist (2017) identifies Turkey as a hybrid regime ranking 100th worldwide behind Madagascar, Uganda, Kyrgyzstan and Kenya. According to the same source, the situation in the Russian Federation is even less favourable, this country registering 135th rank behind Congo, Rwanda, Egypt and Cuba. Consequently, it can be underlined that two of the main economic partners of the European Union having large influence in the region face the erosion of democracy, this situation making more unpredictable the future of cooperation.

The implication of the Russian Federation in the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine and the violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity by annexing Crimea have motivated the community to impose economic sanctions against this country. The European Union prolonged these restrictions till the 15th of September 2018 (The Council 2018). Dong and Li (2018) mention that the economic sanctions which the European Union has imposed on the Russian Federation certainly undermines this nation’s economy more than the community’s one. However, a question occurs, and namely, how long the European Union is willing to keep these restrictions on Russia, are these long term priorities? If so, the European Union should insure its energetic independence and strengthen democracies in the pro-European EaP countries which should serve as a stable and prosperous “examples” of welfare driven by the rule of law and institutional efficiency. In such a way, the European Union will strengthen its long run positions in the neighbouring regions. In such a way, the community will consolidate its verticality as a democratic and strong partner capable of ensuring stable economic development and propitious level of living for its and partners’ citizens. If the European Union decides that sanctions are no more “functional” and cancels them, this fact will mark the community’s weaknesses and its incapacities to defend “core” principles of democracy. This situation and the stagnating “reform” process in the pro-European EaP nations will undermine the positions of the community in the Eastern Europe demonstrating community’s infirmity and as a result, it will be increased the risk of the EU’s policies collapse in the Eastern Europe. First signs of the second-unfavourable scenario are visible, as it was demonstrated by the Republic of Moldova which

benefited from the support and assistance of the European Union but faced the collapse of its banking “system” resulting in a theft of 1 billion EUR which makes 1/8 of nation’s GDP (Crudu and Ignatov 2017). Endemic corruption, declining rule of law, worsening economic environment, raising poverty and multiple infringements of the human rights in the conditions of a “soft” attitude of the European Union which continues to finance “inefficient” reforms motivated the drop of trust of the Moldovan population in the EU the fact demonstrated by the election of “pro-Russian” president. In the same situation is repeated in Ukraine than an eminent “collapse” of the European Eastern Neighbourhood is inevitable (Nodia, Cenușă, and Minakov 2017).

According to Blockmans and Yilmaz (2017) the consolidation of authoritarianism in Turkey led to the “cooling” of bi-lateral relations between Turkey and the European Union. In 2004 the community offered the invitation for Turkey to begin the membership negotiations to include this nation in the “exclusive” club of Western democracies. Presently, Turkey looks more distant as a European nation and more like a Middle East country with strong autocracy shifting to dictatorship. Turkey started to shift towards an autocratic nation in 2013 beginning with “Gezi Park protests” which marked massive civilian demonstrations and mass unrests. Despite the riots were motivated by the construction plans in Istanbul’s Taksim Gezi Park, these rebellions shortly raised against suppression of the freedom of the press, of expression, assembly, the government’s commination on Turkey’s secularism, and corruption concerns. At the protest participated more than 3 million people, 11 of them were killed and more than 8000 injured (de Bellaigue 2013). The European Union condemned the excessive use of force by policy, and the AKP government’s handling of the protests the position supported by main representatives of the Western World including the USA, UK and Germany (Today’s Zaman 2013). These riots served as passing “*The Rubicon*” as the relations between the European Union and Turkey became increasingly strained. In 2016, the European Parliament suspended the negotiations with Turkey regarding the European integration of the country because of human rights violation and rule of law concerns (European Parliament 2016). In the spring of 2017, it was conducted the Turkish constitutional referendum in which 18 amendments to the Turkey’s supreme Law were adopted, which were promoted by the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP). The results indicated the shift of Turkey from Parliamentary to Presidential Republic in which the head of the state was offered key role in governing the country in the detriment of Parliament. This fact marked the further distancing of Turkey from the Western World it embracing “Middle East” governing principles. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) criticised the referendum (Grigoriadis 2018). The final step towards the “freeze” relations between Turkey and the European Union followed the “2016–present purges in Turkey” which emerged as a reaction of the government against the 15 July 2016 failed coup d’état in which more than 160 000 officials were suspended or arrested (Pamuk and Gurses 2017). The European Union’s reaction followed, EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini declaring that “*What we’re seeing especially in the fields of universities, media, the judiciary, is unacceptable.*” (Reuters 2016).

As a result, it can be underlined that two countries bordering the European Union shift towards “unpredictable” excessive centralisation of power serving as important competitors of the community in the region. Thus, it can be underlined that the Russian Federation tends to expand its influence upon the whole EaP region drying out the European Union from these countries while Turkey distanced itself from “Western” values moving towards authoritarianism. Accordingly, these nations with a combined population of almost half of the European Union’s and centralised governmental power can serve as important threats to “decentralised” European Union and its interest in the Eastern Europe.

4.4 Declining Influence of the European Union on Global Arena

Brexit demonstrated the existence of serious disagreements inside the European Union. The “leave” option of the United Kingdom sent important signals for the political and economic elites in the European Union. Euroscepticism is an important threat towards the unity of the EU since it does not only divides European governments but whole nations. The anti-immigration and anti-establishment sentiments gain increasing strength and could lead to the community collapse (Hobolt 2016). Kierzenkowski et al. (2016) underline that Brexit will weaken both the European Union and the United Kingdom as it will be reduced the degree of economic cooperation between the “island” and the continent. If the UK is set to lose from 3–5 % of the GDP growth in the short run and till 7.7 % in the long run, than the European Union will lose 16 % from the GDP (Kierzenkowski et al. 2016; Eurostat 2016). If in 2016 the European Union represented 21.6 % of the global GDP, then after the Brexit this share is set to decrease with 3.5 % which (World Bank 2016). Accordingly, the exit of the United Kingdom is set to weaken the economic power of the European Union and consequently decrease its economic potential and competitiveness since the UK is one of the leading EU’s economy with high innovation potential.

As it can be observed in the Figure 2, the weight of the European Union’s economy in the global GDP has declined in the period of 1990 to 2016 with almost 12 % and with 8.3 % since 2006. As it can be observed, in 1990 33.5 % of the Global GDP was made in the European Union, 30 % in 2006 and only 21.7 % in 2016. At the

same time, the share of UK in the global economy ranged between 4.8 % in 1990, 5.5 % in 2004 and 3.5 % in 2016. The United States accounted in 1990 for 26.5 % of the world’s economy, then reached its highest value in 2002, 31.1 %. In 2016 is made up 24.6 %, the values compared to the beginning of the period. As a result, it can be underlined that the European Union’s economy within this period shrunk the most as a share in the global GDP, far behind the USA. Furthermore, if analysing the values of the European Union without UK, then it can be observed that in 1990 the EU accounted for more than 28 % of the global economy, 24.8 % in 2006 and only 18.2 % in 2016, the fact which highlights the idea that the continental economic potential of the EU has declined much in the researched period and this situation worsens as a result of the UK’s leave. It is also necessary to point out that in 1990 the EU represented 126.7 % of the US’s economy (or 108.5 % not accounting for the UK), by 2006 it made up for 111 % (or 91.8 %) and in 2016 this ratio decreased to 88.5 % (or 74.3 %). Consequently, it can be noted that within the period of 1990 to 2016, the European Union’s economy decreased with 38.2 % or 34.2 % not considering the United Kingdom. Certainly, the European economy is stagnating both in comparison with the global dynamics, but also in comparison with the United States of America. In such a way, it can be marked that the European Union’s influence is declining on the global arena, and the intra-communitarian processes are not favourable for its economic competitiveness.

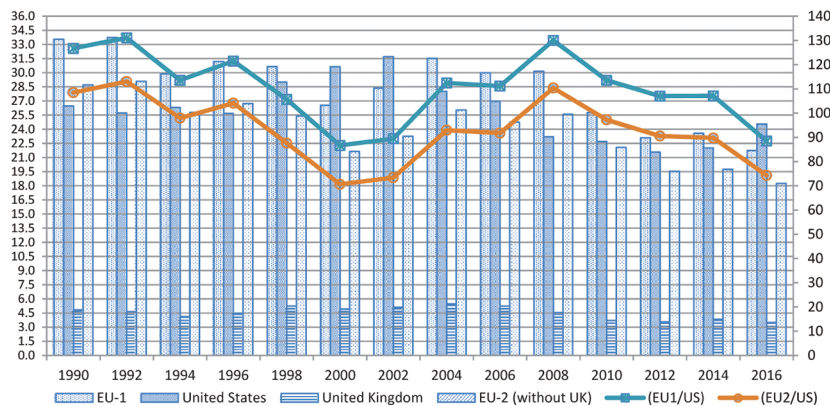


Figure 2: The share of the EU, US, UK in the global GDP (%).
Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

5 Consolidation of European Foreign Policy as a Premise to Enhanced European Economic Security & Competitiveness. The Need for Stronger European Institutions

Presently, the European Union’s role in several key international issues matches that of the United States, including trade, IMF (coming second after the USA since the Eurozone crisis) and anti-trust issues (the European Union due to its large and attractive market can determine international standards for multinationals which need to obtain Commission’s approval, as it is in the United States where the US Department of the Justice approval is necessary). Nevertheless, the EU has several weaknesses including limited integration of foreign and defence policy, lack of unity and common European identity which make the Union a weak player on the global arena in key political issues (Nye 2016).

The European Union faces multiple challenges which could not be efficiently dealt with unless the community solves its key structural weakness i. e. slow decision making, over-bureaucratization of socio-economic environment, multi-speed integration process, politicisation of wealth sharing values, slowly developing East and under-developed economic policies (Nugent 2017). These challenges result from the over fragmentation of the European Union as a politico-economic formation and the negative effects of this situation are explicitly reflected in its foreign policy efficiency. As it was observed previously in this research, internal weaknesses of the community lead to poor performance on the foreign arena including on key-directions for the European Union: Middle East, Eastern Partnership, Turkey, the Russian Federation and European Economic positions in the world. The key idea summarises to: individually, no country of the European Union is strong enough to efficiently deal with the present foreign policy challenges, while the communitarian institutions have limited empowerment in this area. As a consequence, key-decisions and European interests are lacking institutional backing and therefore not reached.

Lack of European leadership will have highly negative impact upon the future of the European continent, since incoherent political decisions and absence of firm policy direction will determine decrease of the EU cit-

izens' trust in communitarian values, the fact already demonstrated by citizens' negative perception about the future of the European Union (Parlemeter 2017). Consolidation of the European Union's leadership, including in the foreign policy area may not suit all member countries, yet it is a key factor in establishing key development directions for the entire continent. Federalization of the European Union should find consensus in all member countries since it can bring mutual benefits to each European citizen (Fossum 2017). The consolidation of European diplomacy should be regarded as the first step in this way, since the EU needs strong leadership in this area capable of defending community's interests in the "fierce" global environment. In the current conditions, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy which is set to shape common policy lacks international stature and institutional backing, the function's empowerments being limited, the fact demonstrated by the failures of the EU's policies on key foreign policy directions. The main difficulty for the future of the European Union is the determination of European elites to speak "with single voice" on the international arena or remain a disperse group of countries each pursuing its one interests powered by national identities and politics. In a globalised society, the European Union needs to strengthen its "European identity" through the consolidation of the continent under this endeavour as to be capable of facing global economic and security challenges. Unless the European and national elites consolidate the European project, the community will not be capable of defending the member countries' interests in a permanently changing environment challenging the current global "status quo".

6 Conclusions

Eurozone economic difficulties, massive immigration, Brexit, and the raise of populism across the European Union marks an European identity crisis which occurred to as a result of structural weaknesses of the EU including: absence of strong leadership, excessive bureaucratisation, multi-speed integration, politicisation of wealth sharing values, slowly developing East and under-developed common economic policies. European identity crisis is explicitly reflected in the efficiency of common policy promotion in the area of foreign relations where it can be observed halting coherence, the EU being limited in its decision making by the competing interests of member countries in this area. Accordingly, it can be observed that the European Union failed in tackling the challenges which occurred in the Middle East, a region of high interest for the European Union, the fail which has negative consequences upon the unity of the EU. The fail of foreign policy of the European Union in neighbouring border regions demonstrates the limited capacity of the community, in the present institutional arrangements, to offer solutions to severe challenges, the fact marking the necessity of European efforts consolidation in this area. Dispersed Union demonstrated its incapacities to defend the common interests of the European citizens in crucial areas for the stability of the EU. Moreover, the European Union is losing ground in the region of Eastern Partnership. Three countries out of six i. e. Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan being closer linked to the Russian Federation despite of the European Union's efforts in offering these national economic opportunities. At the same time, in 2 EaP nations i. e. Moldova & Ukraine which have chosen the European Union as their development model meet severe difficulties in terms of institutional efficiency and transparency, human rights, rule of law, political and economic stability. The Republic of Moldova since 2014 when it deepened the cooperation with the EU by signing and rectifying the Association Agreement registered fail of its banking system, unprecedented raise of corruption and decline of political integrity the facts which heavily damaged the EU's reputation in the society of the Republic of Moldova and undermined the weight of the EU's authority in the regional context. The present "big stake" of the European Union's foreign policy is linked with Ukraine, and if it follows the example of the Republic of Moldova, then an eminent collapse of Eastern Neighbourhood policy of the EU is inevitable. Georgia despite registering growth in terms of institutional efficiency is not offered a clear EU integration perspective which could weaken the country's EU's aspirations. The raise of "authoritarianism" in Russia and Turkey can serve as an important challenge for the European influence in the Eastern Europe and Middle East, the countries which can rival the EU's present positions. In the current circumstances when the European Union's is facing important internal difficulties i. e. Eurozone crisis, massive immigration, raise of populism, the foreign policy is not prioritised at the extent to be capable of facing the "insurgence" of two strong, centralised nations which combine make up almost half of the EU's population. Furthermore, in the present form, decentralised Europe with weak leadership cannot provide enough efforts to consolidate the global economic positions of the community. Thus, it can be remarked that the European Union's influence upon world's economic development is decreasing at a great extent.

As a result, it is necessary to underline that the European Union needs consolidation in the form of federalisation to be able to empower its present positions and face the economic challenges; otherwise it risks disintegrating under the pressure of internal socio-economic tensions and external raising competitiveness. Strengthening the European Union should start from the consolidation of its foreign policy which should con-

centrate the power and direct to defending the interests of the whole community not only of the particular member states on the global arena, since the growing economic power of the USA and China can compete the EU from key world's markets. Also, the European Union should re-think the present cooperation framework in the EaP region to increase the efficiency of reforms implementation and eradication of corruption. A strong Europe with consolidated institutions and external policy will have enough influence levers to realise its democratic commitments and foster its socio-economic competitiveness edges by effectively tackling both internal and external challenges.

The present research is address to decision making factors in the European Union and partner countries as well as to European academics, business representatives and general public to underline the necessity of European consolidation aiming to re-enforce economic development and competitiveness of the block as a whole. The paper is directed towards stimulating further research on the topics related to the European Federation, federalism in the European Union, present and future challenges to the member countries and the ways of efficiently tackling them through joint effort and action.

It is necessary to underline that the present research has several limiting factors including detailed analysis of the EU policies promoted in EaP nations, also the fundamental assessment of cooperation framework between the European Union and the Russian Federation as well as Turkey, key areas of common interest and, consequently, areas of rivalry. Also, it is necessary to analyse in depth the causes of European economic decline as well as the benefits and challenges the "federalisation" will bring to the community as a whole and particularly to the member countries. These factors can serve as potential matters for deepening the research on the issues related to the federalisation of the European Union as the most feasible solution to present socio-economic challenges.

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