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POLAND IN THE EUROPEAN UNION – REACHING BEYOND THE LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE OF ANALYSIS

The accession of Poland to the European Union contributes to the successful liberal story of the Polish transformation after the fall of the bipolar order. The liberal vision of Poland's membership in the community is an image of unprecedented entrepreneurship, dynamic co-operation, and the EU's financial assistance that facilitate the state's development. The article appreciates this picture, yet it indicates that the liberal perspective forgets about some serious tendencies, both at the systemic and domestic levels, that may considerably impede future Polish development. The liberals underestimate the inequalities of power in the European Union. They miss the threat of the marginalization of Poland as a permanent "semi-peripheral" member of the community. Finally, the liberal perspective disregards about some ambiguities, misperceptions and inconsistencies in the state's own development policy.

The aim of the article is to prove that the reality of Polish membership in the European Union is too complicated to enclose it in the liberal frames of analysis. The text refers to some theoretical and practical insights reaching beyond the liberal confines, mainly to the (neoclassical) realist and globalist perspectives. It shares the liberal claims that the membership in the EU opens up new opportunities for Poland. Yet it indicates the obstacles that modify the positive impulses following the accession. It outlines possible consequences of the fall of the integration mechanisms in Europe. Nevertheless, it warns that even the positive scenario of the European Union able to overcome the recent crisis confronts Poland with some serious challenges – including the shift of the "core" of the integration to the Euro-zone. The article urges that an adequate Polish response needs the state's ability to analyse the power relations in the EU and identify its national interests. It notes, however, some domestic problems in this regard.

The text is divided into three parts. The first studies the opportunities and constraints for Polish development after the state's accession to the European Union. It refers to the weakness of the liberal analysis and the explanations offered by (neoclassical) realism and globalism. The second part considers the crisis of the European Union, the future challenges for Poland, and its role in the EU. The third indicates possible possible problems for Poland with the adequate response to these challenges and identification of the state's national interests in the new international reality. In both cases the paper notes the strengths and weaknesses of the liberal perspective of analysis and indicates the contribution offered by the (neoclassical) realist perspective.

The article refers to the author's previous considerations about the anomalies that the liberal approach faces in contemporary international relations (Więclawski, 2015b)

as well as the possible rapprochement between the liberal and realist perspectives of analysis (Więclawski, 2015a). The aim of the current text, however, is not to repeat the previous theses and focus on the theoretical considerations alone. It serves as a practically-oriented illustration of the author's main conclusion that the analysis of Polish membership in the European Union reaches far beyond the liberal perspective.

THE EUROPEAN UNION – THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF POLAND

Seen from the liberal perspective, the accession of Poland to the European Union anchors the country in the European sphere of democracy and liberal market economy. The liberals correctly indicate that the logic of cooperation and compromise contributes to the “community context” of international relations in Europe. They are right that open borders facilitate entrepreneurship and encourage contact among the people in the EU (Russett, 2010: 109–111; Gilbert, 2003: 1–4). Furthermore, the liberal perspective correctly indicates the obvious benefits for Poland from its access to the European market and the European Union's financial support for the country from the structural and cohesion funds. It is right that the last two decades of the liberal transformation have considerably changed the economic reality of Poland and membership in the EU strengthens the positive impulses. Finally, one can easily agree that the dynamic development of Polish small and medium size enterprises after the fall of the bipolar order has been Poland's spectacular success (Buckley, 2015).

Yet, the liberal perspective underestimates some tendencies, both at the domestic and international (systemic) level, which may considerably modify the liberal picture of Polish membership in the European Union and its impact on the state's further development. First, it tends to forget about the inequalities of power in the EU and the game of national interests inside the community that favours its most powerful members. Second, the liberal attitude misses the position of Poland as a “semi-periphery” state in the configuration of power inside the European Union and the danger of the permanent “semi-peripheral” character of Polish membership in the EU. Third, the liberals forget that membership in the European Union does not automatically translate itself into the state's competitiveness, especially if confronted with some ambiguities and inconsistencies in the state's development strategy.

In fact, the liberal attitude underestimates the inequality of power in the European Union between the old and the new (post-communist) members of the community. The liberal rhetoric tends to ignore its lasting consequences, especially for the position and role of the weaker members of the EU. This discrepancy, at least for the economic power, is still considerable and the GDP per capita of the wealthiest states of the European Union exceeds those of the new members by three times. The cohesion policy of the EU helps to reduce this gap and the states of East-Central Europe have generally better coped with the recent economic crisis in Europe than the Western members of the community (Balcerowicz, Rzońca, et al., 2013: 28–30). Nevertheless, the distance between these two parts of the European Union is still significant (Central Statistical Office, 2014: 115).

Poland is no exception in this regard. Despite some other components of its power, including the demographic potential, the state is a weak member of the European Union in the economic sense and its GDP per capita (PPP) remains well below the EU's average (Central Statistical Office, 2014: 115). Even if the last two decades of the Polish transformation have been a successful liberal story Poland has not so far solved its serious structural problems, which include the reform of the pension system, energy effectiveness or international competitiveness of its economy (Balcerowicz, 2015). Besides, despite the unprecedented entrepreneurship, two decades of transformation have been too short to build companies capable on being on a par with the European leaders (Wójcik, 2009: 170–176). Some examples of successful world-scale firms from Poland are still overshadowed by domestic debates about the obstacles for economic activity in the country caused by administrative barriers and bureaucracy (Smallbone, Welter, 2009: 171–178). The accession to the European Union marked a considerable recovery in this regard yet the complaints about overregulation still accompany the business activity in Poland. As a consequence, many Polish firms are valued as solid sub-contractors for stronger companies in the EU. Few of them, however, reached the level of the European leaders and David Lane indicates in this regard only one Polish firm among the 500 world largest companies at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century (Lane, 2013: 24–25).

Hence, the perspective of (neoclassical) realism will certainly not oppose the clear benefits accompanying Poland's membership in the European Union (both in the economic and political sense). Yet it reminds that the leadership of the economic processes in the European Union belongs to much wealthier old members of the community. It will warn that despite the rhetoric of the community of interests, values, and aims the political reality in Europe is still the reality of national interests. The integration processes in Europe have reduced the most radical manifestations of the power politics and introduced advanced instruments to master the struggle for power on the continent (Gilbert, 2003: 1–4). Yet, even if reduced, this struggle still manifests in the European politics and the rhetoric of the community of interests does not exclude the attempts of the most powerful members of the European Union to act for their own benefits and to promote their own interests (Taylor, 2008: 8–12). Poland, in this context, is a medium size member of the EU with limited power and it still faces the dilemma of “the consumer” of ideas proposed by the strongest.

As a result, even if the liberal perspective correctly indicates the significance of membership in the European Union for the future development of Poland, it cannot ignore that the inequality of power in the EU remains the structural obstacle that will limit the ability of the state to pursue its economic and political interests. The liberal rhetoric cannot ignore that even in the cohesion policy of the European Union a considerable part of the EU's support for Poland comes back to the enterprises from the most developed countries of the European Union. The leading European companies, with their capital, technology, and management capabilities, are usually better prepared to win the public tenders in Poland than the local competitors. The Polish firms, with few exceptions, could serve as valuable sub-contractors in the broader international consortia but they are not their leaders. Recent Polish infrastructural projects illustrate this thesis and the estimates indicate that for each Euro spent in Poland in the frame of the cohesion

policy 32 euro cents come back to the companies from the old Europe. For Germany, however, the leading economic partner of Poland and the strongest member of the EU, this figure rises to 61 euro cents (Niklewicz, 2010).

In addition, Poland and most other East-Central European members still belong to a specific “semi-periphery” of the European Union, to paraphrase the Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-system analysis (Wallerstein, 1996: 87–89). Their distance from the economic “core” of the community remains considerable and they can compete with the leaders only in some selected areas of the integration. David Lane underlines in this context that “The reformed Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) of the former socialist bloc have joined the world economic system through their membership of the European Union (EU). In doing so, they have become absorbed into the economic mechanisms dominated by the hegemonic old member states of the EU”. Besides, “They are becoming integrated into the economies of old EU states on the terms of the latter. They are bound to the political economy of the EU of which – while enjoying its freedom of movement – they are likely to remain relatively poorer members” (Lane, 2013: 23, 38).

In fact, Poland still competes in the European market more with lower costs of work than its technological and economic potential (Buckley, 2015). This translates into low salaries, which remain at one of the lowest levels in the European Union, and the fear of poverty among the people, despite the country’s membership in the community (Leszczynski, 2011; Wojciechowski, 2013: 21–24). It is difficult to expect a radical change in this regard and the globalist perspective correctly warns against the permanent, “semi-peripheral” nature of Polish membership in the EU. It indicates the structural impediments in the new members’ relations with the economic “core” of the community and concludes that despite the liberal rhetoric of equal chances, the leaders of the European Union may not necessarily be interested in change of the “semi-peripheral” character of East-Central Europe.

Furthermore, the example of Poland is even more complicated as Polish development still depends on external sources of capital, including financial support from European Union. The use of the European funds, however, seems disputable (at least in the long term perspective). Indeed, Poland will receive about 106 billion Euros in the financial period 2014–2020 and it received 67 billion Euros in the period of 2007–2013 (Steindl, 2013). This support is impressive and the enthusiasts of the infrastructural progress indicate the “infrastructural revolution” in Poland together with the inflow of the EU’s structural funds. Nevertheless, the realist perspective points out the high costs of some infrastructural projects, especially those in the network of new highways, as well as controversial practices like spending the European Union’s funds on aqua parks or training in administration and the public sector. Some of them, teaching how to use computer programs or databases, do provoke a question of advisability and purposefulness (Socha, 2011).

The dynamic investment in infrastructure is justified by Polish backwardness after the communist period. Nevertheless, the question is whether the emphasis on infrastructure will contribute to future innovation and competitiveness of Poland (Sroczynski, 2015). The realist answer is negative. It seems that the investment in infrastructure and little attention paid to pro-innovative reforms will not be able to increase

the long term competitiveness of the Polish economy. Furthermore, it may potentially be dangerous – especially in the face of the growing costs of maintenance of grand infrastructural projects. Besides, the realist approach warns that the European Union's financial support for Poland will gradually be decreased and the impact of the EU's funds on the Polish economy may be considerably reduced. It seems that, in the face of the recent economic, social, and political crisis in the European Union the next EU's financial perspective will not be as generous for Poland as 2014–2020.

Thus, Leszek Balcerowicz leaves no illusions and emphasises that without immediate reforms and new pro-innovative impulses the state will not be able to reduce its distance from the richest members of the European Union. He warns that the past successes of the Polish economy may not guarantee the state's future development (Balcerowicz, 2015; Buckley, 2015). Similarly, Ryszard Zięba indicates the low expenditures on research and development activity in Poland that remain well below the level of one percent of Polish GDP. He concludes that even if the Polish economy has so far coped with the global economic crisis, the lack of today's investment in innovation may seriously impede its competitiveness in the post-crisis reality (Zięba, 2011: 14). As a consequence, the liberals correctly emphasise the significance of the European Union's financial support for future Polish development. The realist perspective, however, corrects this optimistic picture and warns that the EU's financial assistance for Poland will not increase the state's competitiveness alone, especially if accompanied by an ambiguous and inconsistent vision of this development.

POLAND AND THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

European integration is in a crisis today that jeopardises its very existence. Even if speculation about the collapse of the European Union is exaggerated any responsible analysis must be able to outline the consequences of the fall of norms and institutions that have so far stabilized international affairs in Europe. The liberal attitude is not the best perspective in this regard. It is prepared to analyse the mechanisms of integration, cooperation, and coordination, but not necessarily the disintegration of the European project. It seems that neoclassical realism, with its understanding of the consequences of power politics and emphasis on both structural and domestic determinants of the state's foreign policy, would be a more adequate attitude to analyse the crisis and the potential fall of the EU (Taliaferro, Lobell, Ripsman, 2009: 3–5).

Thus, the gradual collapse of the mechanisms of integration would have serious consequences for all members of the community yet East-Central Europe, as the "semi-periphery" in the EU's configuration of power, would probably suffer most. It would mean the growing brutalization of international relations in Europe and disregard of the European leaders for the interests of less powerful states. It would be a return to power politics and abandoning of the previous principles of self-limitation and moderation (Fischer, 2013: 22; Gilbert, 2003: 1–4). Europe would concurrently come back to the logic of changing political alliances and counter-alliances. Yet, weak and unstable, they would only deepen the political chaos on the continent and serve the interests of the most powerful actors, to include those outside the falling EU. Ethnic con-

flicts could explode again as the collapse of the European Union would fuel the ethnic disputes on the continent and encourage some countries to solve them with more radical pressure (Troebst, Daftary, 2003: 1–7). Besides, the fall of European integration could be dangerous for the political stability of the European democracies. Growing uncertainty in the social, political, and economic future could strengthen the radical parties and bring a new wave of populism.

In the case of Poland, the collapse of the European Union would further deteriorate the geopolitical position of the state. The tendency of Germany to cooperate with Russia above the head of East-Central Europe, that has so far been mitigated by the European context of German foreign policy, would certainly be deepened (Timmins, 2007: 170–171, 178–180). It would provoke Polish efforts to prevent German-Russian rapprochement – countered by Russian propaganda and most probably inefficient. The growing fears of the Russian-German partnership would also strengthen the pro-Atlantic politics of Poland, to include the expectations of the strong US military presence on Polish territory. The US response, however, could not meet Polish hopes and analysis of the US strategic interests could finally be disappointing for Poland. Furthermore, the collapse of the European Union could result in growing economic difficulties for the state. The limited competitiveness of the Polish economy and possible (radical) outflow of investment capital could considerably slow down Polish development, depreciate the Polish national currency and cause some problems with the stability of the Polish financial system.

The problem of Poland, however, is that even with the positive scenario of the European Union able to overcome the recent crisis the state would be faced some serious challenges. There are at least three tendencies that would confront Poland with the need of its new political strategy. First, the success of the European Union would bring about a strong impulse for new federal steps, especially in the field of the economic integration and in the frameworks of the Euro-zone. Some further attempts towards the common fiscal policy seem obvious in this regard. Second, a more serious debate in the European Union would have to be initiated about the role of Germany in the community, the growing power of this country and the need to keep it in the European integration frameworks. Third, a strong tendency is expected, at least among the old states of the EU, to come back to business as usual with Russia, despite the recent aggressive policy of Moscow. In all these examples a more comprehensive theoretical analysis, reaching beyond the liberal assumptions, seems necessary as well.

Indeed, if the European Union succeeds, the centre of the community's decision-making will shift to the states of the Euro-zone. The successful transformation of the EU will increase the pressure for new federal solutions, to include the common fiscal policy and more intrusive control of the community over the financial deficits of its members – to prevent a repeat of the Greek scenario (Jokela, 2013: 4–6). This tendency, however, will promote the concentration of the most advanced integration processes in the hands of a limited group of EU members. Once implemented, it would confront Poland with the threat of real and lasting marginalization in the European Union if the state rejects the Euro.

In addition, the successful “revival” of the European Union would require no less successful an answer to the question of the Germany's role in the community (Hof-

hansel, 2005: 2–3; Miskimmon, 2007: 33–36). Paul Taylor emphasises in this context that “The EU had served the German purpose of providing a context for recovering sovereignty and becoming a satisfied power” yet “Although the Germans were still anxious to maintain and deepen good relations with the Europeans, they were now more prepared to act on their own account” (Taylor, 2008: 67). It is not clear whether the new German role would be reflected by the formal changes in the structure of the European Union, to include the establishment of the new bodies of the Economic and Monetary Union. Yet, it becomes obvious that in practice no strategic decisions in Europe would be taken without the consent of Germany.

Seen from the liberal point of view the accession of Poland to the European Union has introduced a new community context to Polish-German relations and still contributes to dialogue with Germany. The role of the German market in Polish foreign trade (about 30 percent of Polish exports) illustrates the scale of Polish-German economic relations (Baun, 2005: 375–377, 385; Hofhansel, 2005: 17–20). Nevertheless, this optimistic liberal perspective must be modified by some realist conclusions about a divergence of interests between the two states, irrespective of their membership in the EU. The Polish criticism towards the German-Russian rapprochement and the German reluctance towards “exaggerated” Polish pro-Americanism could be a good illustration of this conclusion (Oldberg, 2007: 22–23). The inequality of power between the two states is obvious and there is no need to prove it again. Besides, the experience of the first decade in the European Union confirms the limited ability of Poland to influence German foreign policy and the growing role of Germany in the EU will probably reduce it even further. In the same vein, the recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict illustrates that it is difficult to imagine the new Eastern policy of the European Union without the active participation of Germany and the acceptance for at least some German ideas. Similarly, it is difficult to believe that Poland will be able to considerably shape this policy without German support for the Polish proposals. Thus, finding its own answer to the growing power of Germany becomes a fundamental challenge for the political elites in Poland.

Finally, the context of the possible reset in European-Russian relations after the recent Ukrainian crisis becomes another crucial problem for Polish foreign policy. Poland must be aware that the country is considered by some leading European companies as obstacle for their further successful economic deals with Russia. Thus, some powerful European business groups and political forces may not be interested in the increase of the Polish role in the European Union. Some of them could even contribute to the image of Poland as the most “rusophobic” country of the EU created by Russian propaganda (Oldberg, 2007: 22–23). Besides, Polish anxiety about Russia would probably not attract any serious attention among the Western European and even some East-Central European states. The recent Czech and Hungarian declarations about the need for good economic cooperation with Russia illustrate this conclusion (Luhn, 2014). Facing the promises of new benefits in relations with Russia few European states would risk showing an “understanding” for Polish fears. This would contribute to further isolation and marginalization of Poland in the European Union and the tendency of its most powerful members to build the new partnership with Russia irrespective of Polish interests. This, again, is more the realist than the liberal perspective.

POLAND IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE CHALLENGES FOR THE STATE'S POLITICAL STRATEGY

Discussing the value of the European Union, the liberals rightly emphasise the sense of community, institutions, and norms contributing to co-operation and self-restriction (Russett, 2010: 109–111). Nevertheless, they tend to miss that the integration processes in Europe limit the struggle for power on the continent but do not eliminate it from the European politics. Thus, membership in the European Union does not exempt the state's political elites from sober analysis of the configuration of power and the game of interests inside the community's frameworks. It is not the rejection of dialogue and compromise. Yet it is the case of the state's political strategy. It is the question of the state's ability to define its interests, aims and effective instruments of its policy even in the dynamic environment of the regional integration bodies. The recent crisis of European integration complicates this ability yet some members of the EU still better cope with defining their strategic aims while the politics of others remain reactive.

The liberal perspective, again, would not be the best point of reference to analyse these problems. The liberals favour the debate about the potential of cooperation yet they tend to avoid the questions of leadership and strategy as “old fashioned” and belonging to the world of power politics (Morgenthau, 1947: 23–27). For (classical and neoclassical) realists, however, the state's ability to properly identify its interest remains the asset and the source of the state's power even in the regional integration frameworks. Some of Hans J. Morgenthau's remarks about the state's ability to distinguish between the non-negotiable national aims, fundamental to its security and development, and secondary interests that may be devoted to reach a reasonable compromise sound adequately in this regard (Morgenthau, 1952: 976–977). Morgenthau noted that “No nation has the resources to promote all desirable objectives with equal vigor; all nations must therefore allocate their scarce resources as rationally as possible. The indispensable precondition of such rational allocation is a clear understanding of the distinction between the necessary and variable elements of the national interest” (Morgenthau, 1952: 977).

Nevertheless, it seems that Poland, and most other states of East-Central Europe, still face some problems with the distinction between their fundamental and secondary aims, especially if confronted with the game of interests inside the European Union and the political strategies of its leaders. Besides, the crisis of the European Union faces Poland with the need for a more profound review of its interests and the ability of strategic analysis becomes fundamental in this regard. Yet, the practice of recent years indicates at least three tendencies in Polish foreign and domestic politics that might limit the state's ability to develop its new effective political strategy. The first is the problem of the political elites, their immaturity and tendency to focus on short-term political gains. The second is the presence of strong symbolic elements in the Polish perception of European affairs and the third is the inconsistency of the Polish attitude to the problems of European integration.

Indeed, the (neoclassical) realist perspective notes that the further development of Poland is still influenced by some domestic political determinants, including the immaturity of political elites (irrespective of their political colours). It emphasises that vari-

able and inexperienced political elites in Poland may face serious difficulties in developing a broader strategy of the state's long-term development, especially if confronted with an unfavourable international environment. The lack of their consensus on the fundamental aims of Polish foreign policy is symptomatic in this regard (Zięba, 2011: 16–17). Another problem is a tendency among the political forces to focus more on the short-term political gains than the strategic challenges. This usually results in declarative programs followed by the propensity not to provoke discontent among voters (Prażmowska, 2010: 251–253). Again, it is not a reference to any single political option but a more general conclusion and warning about possible problems.

Furthermore, the realist perspective notes that the Polish attitude towards European integration is full of symbols. It indicates that the accession to the European Union served not only the economic and political aims. It was a symbolic confirmation of the links of Poland with the heritage of the West and the full participation of the country in the mainstream processes on the continent (O'Brennan, 2006: 14; Davies, 2001: 312). The sense of belonging to the culture of the West has always been important for the Polish national character and Norman Davies concludes in this regard that "Poland's traditional culture is so deeply ingrained that [...] the pro-Western sympathies of the Polish population hardly need to be discussed" (Davies, 2001: 312). Besides, the history of the twentieth century still influences Polish-German and Polish-Russian relations and it is difficult to expect a radical change in this regard. The (classical and neoclassical) realist perspective does not ignore the significance of the nation's historical experience. Morgenthau considered the national character as one of the serious elements of the state's power (Morgenthau, 1948: 96–100). Nevertheless, the realists will warn that the presence of strong symbolic elements in the Polish attitude to European integration may affect the analysis of the game of interests in the European Union, the evolution of the power relations in the community, and the changes of its leadership. It is not a disregard for the Polish historical experience but rather a recommendation for the calm, sober and interest-oriented analysis of the dynamic changes on the international scene.

Third, the Polish attitude to the problems of the European Union has not always been consistent and consequent (Fiszer, 2007: 90). One of the examples in this regard is the case of the Euro. Joining the European Union, Poland accepted its ultimate accession to the Euro-zone. The Polish attitude towards the common European currency, however, has so far been ambiguous and, together with the economic crisis of the community, the reservation towards the Euro is considered as a political wisdom (Kiepuszewski, 2015; Mayer, 2012: 1–2). Some arguments in this context seem to be justified. Nevertheless, similar calculations may lose their ground if the "reinvigorated" European Union speeds up its political agenda. Further principal opposition of Poland to the adoption of the Euro would then risk pushing Polish interests to the margin of the new debates in the EU. It is not the aim of this article to decide this question yet if membership in the European Union serves to strengthen the economic security of Poland (also in the context of its relations with Russia) the adoption of the Euro could be considered as a reasonable decision. Similarly, if Poland declares to be among the leaders of the integration processes in Europe, it would be difficult to think about it staying outside the Euro-zone.

In the same vein, the recovery of the European Union might provoke debate about its further enlargement, to include Turkey and possibly Ukraine. Poland has unequivocally supported the idea of enlargement and the stability of the EU's Eastern neighbourhood is (rightly) the fundamental geostrategic aim of Polish foreign policy (Zięba, 2011: 29). Nevertheless, more in depth analysis of such enlargement would reveal some serious economic consequences for the current "semi-periphery" of the European Union. It seems that the accession of a new, big country to the Eastern/South-Eastern neighbourhood would inevitably mean a considerable fall in the European Union's financial assistance for East-Central Europe. The new member would probably repeat the previous Polish path and compete on the European market with the costs of work, lower even than in Poland. It would encourage Western European companies to transfer their investments to the new member state and revive the question of the sources of further competitiveness of the Polish economy (Smallbone and Welter, 2009: 166–169, 178–183). Thus, the geopolitical gains would entail an economic price.

As a consequence, the crisis of the European Union does not encourage the serious debate about the future of the continent and the scenario of the collapse of the integration mechanisms still scares the political elites in Europe. Nevertheless, if the community overcomes the crisis, it will hardly be possible for Poland to play a significant role in the EU without clear answers to some fundamental problems of integration, to include the question of Polish accession to the Euro-zone. If the community survives, its new dynamic evolution may confront Poland with the need for adequate reactions to the growing power of Germany, the revival of the EU's relations with Russia and the danger of stagnation of the Polish economy. The difficulties in the analysis of the new power relations in Europe and problems with the identification of the state's primary and secondary interests may contribute to the marginalization of Poland in the European Union. Similarly, the lack of the state's long-term strategy could result in an emotional and ineffective foreign policy. It is up to the responsible leadership to prevent this scenario and think about the problems.

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The article proves that any serious analysis of the social, political and economic reality of Poland after its accession to the European Union must reach beyond liberal confines. The question of Polish membership in the EU is too complex to enclose it in the liberal frameworks. The liberal perspective tends to miss the consequences of the inequality of power in the European Union and the game of national interests still being played in the EU. The liberals underestimate the role of the systemic and domestic constraints that may considerably influence the further development of Poland. They miss the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the country's vision of this development. Thus, some (neoclassical) realist conclusions about the limited competitiveness of the Polish economy and difficulties with the identification of the state's strategic interests seem justified in this context. Similarly, some globalists warn against the danger of the marginalization of Poland (and East-Central Europe in general) as permanent "semi-peripheral" participants of the integration processes on the continent sound seriously as well.

It is obvious that the membership in the European Union has considerably strengthened Poland's chances of dynamic development. The aim of the article has not been to undermine the success story of the Polish liberal transformation. Nevertheless, the article insists that this liberal picture needs some realist correction. In the same vein, the danger of the fall of the European Union's mechanisms of integrations only strengthens the previous challenges and the possible dynamic changes in the configuration of power on the continent will face Poland with some new strategic problems. The case of the shift of the "core" of the European integration to the Euro-zone and the question of the new role of Germany in the community, as indicated in the article, seem only to illustrate the many future challenges. Thus, the analysis of the crisis of the European Union and its consequences for the Polish role in the community certainly crosses the liberal confines.

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ABSTRACT

The article refers to Polish membership in the European Union and the liberal perspective of its analysis. The paper discusses the shortages of the liberal approach. The article accepts the liberal thesis regarding the opportunities that the accession to the EU opens up for Polish development. It notes the significance of the European mechanisms of regional cooperation. Nevertheless, the paper emphasises that the liberal perspective ignores the inequalities of power in the European Union and misses some serious tendencies, both at the level of the community and in the domestic politics, that impede the state's development. Thus, the article refers to the limited competitiveness of the Polish economy and the state's difficulties with the identification of its interests in the dynamic and variable international environment. It warns against the marginalization of Poland as “semi-peripheral” member of the European Union. The main conclusion of the paper is that the case of Polish membership in the EU is too complicated to close it in the liberal frameworks. The liberal perspective needs a realist correction. It is extremely important in the context of the challenges that Poland faces together with the crisis of the European integration.

Key words: European Union, Poland

POLSKA W UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ – WYKRACZAJĄC POZA LIBERALNĄ PERSPEKTYWĘ ANALIZY

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł odnosi się do członkostwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej i liberalnej perspektywy analizy tej problematyki. Autor wskazuje wyraźne problemy liberalnego podejścia do omawianej kwestii. Artykuł akceptuje wprawdzie liberalne tezy o szansach, jakie członkostwo w Unii Europejskiej otwiera dla dalszego rozwoju Polski. Uznaje również znaczenie europejskich mechanizmów współpracy regionalnej. Podkreśla jednak, że liberalna perspektywa ignoruje nierówności potęgi między państwami członkowskimi Unii oraz pomija kilka istotnych tendencji (w wymiarze wspólnotowym, jak i wewnątrzpolitycznym), które utrudniać mogą dalszy rozwój kraju. W efekcie, artykuł odwołuje się do problemów z efektywnością polskiej gospodarki, a także trudności państwa w zdefiniowaniu swych interesów w zmieniającym się dynamicznie środowisku międzynarodowym. Ostrzega przed marginalizacją Polski jako “półperyferyjnego” członka Unii Europejskiej. Podstawową konkluzją artykułu jest, że złożona kwestia członkostwa Polski w Unii wykracza dalece poza liberalną perspektywę analizy tej problematyki. Ujęcie liberalne wymaga oczywistej realistycznej korekty. Jest to szczególnie istotne w obliczu wyzwań, jakie stają przed Polską w związku z kryzysem procesu integracji europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska, Polska