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## CRISES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION FROM THE SECURITY STANDPOINT

Affected by crises, the European Union may be facing the biggest challenge in its history<sup>1</sup>. The ongoing problems represent a specific test of the EU's functioning in the present form. There are opinions questioning the future of this organization, not to mention its objectives, mechanisms and procedures used in the EU. One of the solutions suggested is to take integration to the higher level, with this being a serious challenge for the European governments. The situation seems to be even more dramatic, as all these difficulties are experienced by the EU facing the substantial imbalance in the international order, with threats likely to magnify all the dysfunctions. The question arises, whether the European Union is prepared and equipped with the adequate instruments to effectively overcome the weaknesses?

### The “shocks” and their consequences for the EU

Both the year 2016 and the previous year have seen the unprecedented European migrant inflow<sup>2</sup> and the resulting threats for the security of countries and the whole community. The migrant crisis that has a destabilizing effect on the community and increases terrorist risk in the continent, cannot be analysed in separation from the crises in the nearest neighbourhood of the EU i.e. North Africa and the Near East<sup>3</sup>. This standpoint leads to a reflection and questions concerning the overall ability or inability

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<sup>1</sup> A crisis is understood to mean the inability or, due to complex reasons, debility in acting based on current regulations, methodologies and based on instruments that are currently used as a reaction to current challenges. It is also the state that stimulates changes in functioning.

<sup>2</sup> According to the official data, over one million migrants and refugees came to the European Union in 2015 (compared to barely 280,000 people in the previous year), fleeing from war and terror in Syria and other strife-torn countries, see *Refugee crisis*, European Commission, Brussels, <http://publications.europa.eu/webpub/com/factsheets/refugee-crisis/pl/> [September 8, 2016].

<sup>3</sup> See *French PM Manuel Valls says refugee crisis is destabilising Europe*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/22/french-pm-manuel-valls-says-refugee-crisis-is-destabilising-europe> [September 8, 2016].

of the EU to actually cope with and solve both internal and external problems in the following years, and the questions about the cause of this situation.

The crisis of management and effectiveness of the EU, reflected by the lack of proper analysis and response to the problems that arose, did not appear suddenly and unexpectedly. Europe has not made the key and often politically unwelcome and complex decisions for years, and, consequently, its credibility as an effective and necessary community-based structure with a clear vision has vanished. Ensuring security to the member states inside and outside the EU borders, based on a transparent strategy, ceased to be identified as a key priority for further coherent functioning and development of the European Union.

The theory, according to which the EU's development is reinforced by crises, cannot hold true any more. According to the definition by Zbigniew Czachór, crisis is a time of contradictions and no control over the problems and difficulties in functioning of the European Union, a state of disorganization, lack of coordinated activities and disturbed functioning, as well as the necessity to make decisions that force changes in the previous rules, conduct and procedures<sup>4</sup>. The problems the EU faces due to the migrant crisis, do not seem to be reducing.

On the contrary, the European Union, as argued by its President and the members of the European Commission, assures that all measures to combat the primary causes of the crisis have been taken. Furthermore, the EU presents its own initiatives and activities, among which are the substantial increase in support for the people who need humanitarian aid, both inside and outside the EU, activities to relocate refugees who are already in the area of the EU, relocation of people who need help from the neighbouring countries and help in returning for people who do not meet the asylum conditions, as well as improvement of security at the borders by means of new border and coast guard, combating people smuggling and proposals for legal entry to its territory<sup>5</sup>.

Although these objectives seem to be totally righteous, the chances are that they appear only in the rhetorical context, since they were planned too late and demonstrate the fact that the right moment for building the European migration policies was "overslept". In its documents, the European Union has often highlighted the need to develop coherence in their activities and strategies, but all the measures failed to be implemented in practice. The best of intentions were different from the reality. The lack of unity among the member states in terms of solution to the problems, at least concerning the voluntary admission of the immigrants, including the level of relocation quotas, has substantially divided the countries of the Western and Eastern part of Europe<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> As cited in Z. Czachór, *Wstęp do teorii kryzysu integracji i Unii Europejskiej. Analiza podstawowych uwarunkowań*, [in:] *Unia Europejska w czasach kryzysu. Najważniejsze wyzwania i scenariusze na przyszłość*, eds. M. Musiał-Karg, Poznań 2014, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Refugee crisis*, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> *How to solve Europe's migration crisis*, <http://www.politico.eu/article/solve-migration-crisis-europe-schengen/> [September 9, 2016].

After the agreement of September 2015 by the governments of the EU countries on a two-year program of distribution of immigrants from Syria, Iraq and Eritrea in the member states, the negative approach to this solution was voiced by the countries of the Visegrád Group, and after some time, also by Denmark.

The countries of the Southern Europe located at the external borders of the EU are facing the greatest challenges caused by the inflow of immigrants. They are burdened with accepting the refugees<sup>7</sup>. It is these countries that suffer the consequences of the lack of a coherent system of admission and distribution of refugees by the EU countries. The lack of such mechanism inhibits the efficient relocation, additionally overwhelming the EU's border countries which are first-contact countries responsible for implementation of asylum procedures<sup>8</sup>.

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) that has been developed for years and determines minimal standards and procedures for processing and evaluation of applications for asylum, revealed its inefficiency and lack of adjustment of the previous solutions to the real conditions face today by Europe.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the lack of common migration policy translates into coexistence of 28 different policies in this area, leading to insufficient control over the migration of people to and inside the European Union. In recent months, individual member states have implemented their own plans and principles concerning selection and relocation of refugees, one example being the UK, relocating refugees from Syria and its neighbouring countries<sup>10</sup>. The complexity of the situation is complicated by the fact that migration processes in the EU have become uncontrollable.

The proposal by the European Commission to extend the authority of Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) and agreement with Turkey, concluded in March 2016, on limitation of the inflow of immigration to the EU countries, have been indicated as the most important components of the strategy for dealing with the migrant crisis<sup>11</sup>. Despite these measures, the problem of control and protection of the

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<sup>7</sup> *Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast)*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=celex:32013R0604> [September 9, 2016].

<sup>8</sup> *Common European Asylum System*, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index_en.htm) [September 11, 2016].

<sup>9</sup> *Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union*, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-migration-and-asylum-european-union> [September 11, 2016].

<sup>10</sup> *Syrian refugees flight lands in UK*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34839477> [September 11, 2016].

<sup>11</sup> A. Pawlak, *Szef niemieckiej dyplomacji: „Nie wrzucamy uchodźców i terrorystów do jednego worka”*, <http://www.dw.com/pl/szef-niemieckiej-dyplomacji-nie-wrzucamy-uchod%C5%BAc%C3%B3w-i-terroryst%C3%B3w-do-jednego-worka/a-18943081> [September 11, 2016].

external borders of the EU is intensifying and becoming of key importance for security of individual countries and the whole European Union.

The country that is most often accused of non-observance of their obligations in this field is Greece. Several EU countries, including Austria, threatened Greece to expel the country from the Schengen Area<sup>12</sup>. The cases of two-time imperceptible crossing of the border were also observed in Croatia and Hungary. For these reasons, it is more and more often discussed, whether the internal border control should be reinstated in the continent, which was tested in the beginning of 2016 in Sweden and Denmark, and raised concerns of other members about the future of the Schengen Area<sup>13</sup>. Apart from the results, the abovementioned agreement with Turkey produced a negative overtone, revealing another weakness of Europe: tolerance for non-democratic practices and policy of the president Erdoğan and its passive attitude with respect to repressions against Kurds and the opposition.

In the political debate the issues of immigrants are extremely vital and full of negative emotions. Apart from the fact that it is time-consuming, solving this problem at the level of the European Union also faces the challenges of political and social differences between individual countries. Consequently, the increasing number of EU institutions attempts to develop common regulations, and many member states seek individual solutions. One prime example is questioning of the open door policy for implementation of the laws at the international level, such as the Geneva Conventions, by the skeptics. Consequently, the decisions made by the European governments have a character of non-functional compromises or concern only one of the numerous aspects of the problem. This was one of the reasons behind the opinion voiced in the report of the Doctors Without Borders published in January 2016, which found the European Union as the main culprit of the migrant crisis<sup>14</sup>.

The importance of these issues, not only for the European policy but also for national policies, is highlighted by the increase of anti-immigrant sentiments in societies and, consequently, successes of anti-immigrant political groups. The result of elections to the European Parliament in 2014 were the straws in the wind for these tendencies. The political conflict concerning the inflow of immigrants became the most fierce dispute dividing Europe today and a tool for political fight that undermines the EU's credibility and readiness to bring words to life.

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<sup>12</sup> *The EU in Crisis: What Future for the European Union?*, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-eu-in-crisis-what-future-for-the-european-union/5506012> [September 15, 2016].

<sup>13</sup> *Kontrola na wewnętrznych granicach UE. Obawy o Schengen*, <http://www.dw.com/pl/kontrola-na-wewn%C4%99trznych-granicach-ue-obawy-o-schengen/a-18964353> [September 11, 2016].

<sup>14</sup> *Obstacle Course to Europe. A policy-made humanitarian crisis at EU borders*, [https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/2016\\_01\\_msf\\_obstacle\\_course\\_to\\_europe\\_-\\_final\\_-\\_low\\_res.pdf](https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/2016_01_msf_obstacle_course_to_europe_-_final_-_low_res.pdf) [September 11, 2016].

### Crisis of unity and credibility of the EU

The lack of unity in terms of the objectives and forms of activities also challenges the credibility of the European Union and contributes to the crisis of European unity from the standpoint of both values and functional issues. However, consequences of the lack of real and necessary compromises extend much further than the issue of immigrants' relocation alone and the need for creation of a coherent migration policy. What should be emphasized is the permanent divergence between the interests of individual countries, which generates a substantial division inside the EU.

Although ineffectively, the European Union has long attempted to display itself as a unity. However, it turns out that seeking the "common denominator" goes much beyond its capacity. The growing stagnation and procrastination in making unpopular decisions even intensify the general sense of powerlessness and lack of effectiveness of the EU's mechanisms. Therefore, this situation raises doubts about the process of further integration or finalization of the political union. The divisions have also weakened the readiness to provide immediate support to the EU countries in need and, importantly, weakened the general capability to start common initiatives of the whole EU in different areas.

These weaknesses undermine the EU's output and the role of the organization as a vital and effective player, thus contributing to intensification of disintegration tendencies in the EU member states. After Brexit referendum in the UK the integration ceased to be irreversible. Brexit has reinforced the sense of destruction of the EU's coherence and undermined the foundations of the European integration, leading to the uncertainty about its future<sup>15</sup>.

The first leaving of the EU in the history is possible due to the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, which specified a two-year transition period in such cases, valid from the date of formal notification of the EU about the intention to leave the community<sup>16</sup>. Undoubtedly, this is the historical turning point, which fully reflects the sceptic attitudes within the EU, and has challenged its authorities, as well as European governments, to redefine the willingness to maintain the European unity. The ministers of foreign affairs from six EU member states who participated in the crisis meeting held after the Brexit referendum declared this willingness, while emphasizing it as a key priority. However, it remains unclear whether the return to the "spirit of founders", which is the European unity, will also become the priority for other member states<sup>17</sup>. Anti-EU climate in societies is not conducive to the decisions that support such views.

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<sup>15</sup> The referendum in the UK took place on 23 June 2016. See also G. Grevi, *A Global Strategy for a soul-searching European Union*, „Discussion Paper”, 13 July 2016, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Art. 50, consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), with the amendments of the Treaty of Lisbon.

<sup>17</sup> *Brexit: Szefowie dyplomacji 6 krajów UE chcą utrzymać jedność Europy*, <http://businessinsider.com.pl/polityka/brexit-spotkanie-ministrow-spraw-zagranicznych-6-panstw-ue/mzg61hx> [September 16, 2016].

Dissatisfaction of the UK with being a member of the EU stems from concrete grounds, among which was the deficiency of the EU's policies, with the final straw being the willingness to "regain control over borders", meaning the internal borders in the context of the right of citizens to relocate and work in all the EU countries as one of the most important successes in the process of integration. This privilege has been also criticized by Eurosceptics from Denmark, France and the Netherlands<sup>18</sup>. In this context, the question arises whether the community, with its present form, can be attractive and have any drawing force? Do current doubts about the way the EU functions undermine the sense of its future integration?

Although it remains unclear whether, and to what extent, Brexit can additionally impair the NATO cohesion, it is beyond the shadow of a doubt that it must affect the EU's cohesion, and strengthening or acceleration of the integration, viewed as a specific "forward escape" proposed by the European politicians, is impossible in the nearest future. The multitude of crises prevents from taking these steps. In his annual State of the European Union speech on September this year, Jean-Claude Juncker highlighted the diagnosis of the poor condition of the Union, and said that the EU is facing an existential crisis<sup>19</sup>. While emphasizing the presence of many unsolved problems, Juncker continued: "... never before have I seen such little common ground between our Member States. So few areas where they agree to work together. Never before have I heard so many leaders speak only of their domestic problems, with Europe mentioned only in passing, if at all. Never before have I seen representatives of the EU institutions setting very different priorities, sometimes in direct opposition to national governments and national parliaments. It is as if there is almost no intersection between the EU and its national capitals anymore. Never before have I seen national governments so weakened by the forces of populism and paralysed by the risk of defeat in the next elections. Never before have I seen so much fragmentation, and so little commonality in our Union"<sup>20</sup>.

Although in the past the member states were able to communicate even more controversial problems, never before have the unsolvable issues have accumulated so much, nor has been such a pressure from Eurosceptics and populists in individual governments. Other speeches and declarations at the EU level are not going to earn credibility in terms of effectiveness and capabilities of the European Union. Disappointed with the EU's weakness, citizens are likely to be the key factor in impeding the consensus for EU solutions in many critical areas.

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<sup>18</sup> See T. Bielecki, *Brexit wywoła najgorszy kryzys w historii Unii Europejskiej? Polska znajduje się na peryferiach Unii*, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75399,20294346,brexit-widziany-z-brukseli-grozi-nam-najgorszy-kryzys-w-historii.html> [September 11, 2016].

<sup>19</sup> J-C. Juncker, *Orędzie o stanie Unii 2016 r.: Towards a Better Europe - a Europe that Protects, Empowers and Defends*, [http://ec.europa.eu/poland/sites/poland/files/docs/news/orędzie\\_o\\_stanie\\_unii\\_2016.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/poland/sites/poland/files/docs/news/orędzie_o_stanie_unii_2016.pdf) [September 11, 2016].

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

### Existential crisis of the European security policy

All the abovementioned crises have occurred when European order in the field of safety was disturbed, whereas the closest and unstable neighbourhood of the EU has a strong effect on the community. The increased number of immigrants in Europe raises concerns of societies about elevated risk of terrorist acts, fuelled by the most recent attacks in France, Belgium or Germany. The figures seem to boost imagination: since 2004 (Madrid train bombing), the number of such incidents has soared to over 30, of which 14 took place in the previous year. The death toll was 600 victims<sup>21</sup>. Although the problems of the link between refugees and terrorism is complex and unequivocal, the security issues are of critical importance in the light of European Union policies implemented today.

The internal and external security, and their mutual correlations and dependencies, are becoming more and more interwoven. In this situation, intensification of activities in terms of widely understood security and defence capability is not a matter of choice but necessity. Nevertheless, this obligation was agreed by the member state at the moment of implementation of the most basic instrument in this field, i.e. the Common Security and Defence Policy<sup>22</sup>. Apart from reactions to the external crises, the EU declared their mutual support in the spirit of solidarity to face internal challenges, which is reflected by current management of the external borders of the EU. A Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union provides the example of missions and operations within the common security and defence policy, working with the European Border and Coast Guard and specialized EU agencies to improve border protection and maritime security<sup>23</sup>.

Although it was expected for a long time, the document intended to face the strategic problems of Europe and its neighbouring regions, represents a wish list rather than the real roadmap for the EU. It is uncertain whether it will become the breakthrough to activate the European Union and its members to collaborate in the period which is especially difficult for the organization. The topical question is whether it is not too late to formulate strategic assumptions in the times of enormous international destabilization, the problems of terrorism, migration and political turmoil.

The EU's security and defence policy has been stagnant for years. The European Union is incapable of solving internal and external security problems since collaboration between the member states does not function in this area. Jolyon Howorth defined

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> With the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was renamed the Common Security and Defence Policy, see. *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community*, „Official Journal of European Union”, „C 306”, 17 December 2007 .

<sup>23</sup> *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*, [https://eeas.europa.eu/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_pl\\_.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/eugs_pl_.pdf) [September 19, 2016].

this status as an existential crisis<sup>24</sup>. The future of the EU is uncertain for several reasons. The first problem the EU countries are unable to cope with remains unchanged: the conflict of interests, visions and lack of willingness to implement common initiatives. This also means priority initiatives, such as development of comprehensive rules of collaboration and long-term strategy in the field of foreign policy, security and defence of all member states<sup>25</sup>.

Current EU operations are becoming less and less important component of the international response to crises. The EUAM Ukraine mission for civilian security is involved only in technical advisory activities concerning legislation for the security sector, whereas EUBAM Libya mission, which was supposed to support building Libya's capability to control borders, has been suspended due to the internal conflict in the country. No progress has been observed in the development of military competencies, since the member states did not make decisions on neither reform of European concepts of armed forces nor on using them. Furthermore, the programmes for cooperative acquisition of armaments within the European Defence Agency have not advanced<sup>26</sup>.

Losing such an important partner in the field of security as the UK, the biggest military power in the EU and one of the most important participants of military operations within the union, does not herald stronger Europe, but rather less willingness of the EU members to collaborate<sup>27</sup>. Although the UK impeded the reinforcement of the CSDP by, for example, inhibiting the creation of a fixed high command for the EU missions during the Polish EU presidency in 2011 or increasing the budget and scope of competencies of the European Defence Agency (EDA), the country also substantially contributed to the UE missions. Consequently, it remains an open question whether there are capabilities and political will to conduct more ambitious operations in this area without support of the British forces, which has been critical, at least in the marine operations of EUNAVFOR Atalanta<sup>28</sup>.

The facilities implemented in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon also have not performed their role. The redefined mechanisms and re-established institutions for foreign policies, security and defence were intended to contribute to greater efficiency and cohesion of operations, but the innovations are being implemented too slowly or

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<sup>24</sup> J. Howorth, *CSDP and NATO Post-Libya: Towards the Rubicon?*, "Egmont Security Policy Brief", no. 35, 2012, p. 3

<sup>25</sup> See more in: M. Soja, *Kryzys gospodarczy a CSDP. Wiarygodność, odpowiedzialność i zaangażowanie UE*, [in:] *Unia Europejska w czasach kryzysu. Najważniejsze wyzwania i scenariusze na przyszłość*, eds. M. Musiał-Karg, Poznań 2014, pp. 137-139.

<sup>26</sup> M. Terlikowski, *Konsekwencje Brexitu dla UE: polityka bezpieczeństwa po szczycie NATO*, „Biuletyn”, no. 43 (1393), 2016, pp. 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> See J. Solana, *Co oznacza Brexit dla Europy?*, <http://projectsyndicate.natemat.pl/175255,co-oznacza-brexit-dla-europy> [1.10.2016]

<sup>28</sup> The EU measures taken to combat Somali and Gulf of Aden pirates, see A. Siemaszko, *Implikacje wyjścia Wielkiej Brytanii z UE dla bezpieczeństwa w Europie*, Narodowe Centrum Studiów Strategicznych, June 2016, p. 4, M. Terlikowski, *Konsekwencje Brexitu dla UE*, op.cit., p. 1.

remain unused<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, the reform did not solve the most critical problem of this policy, that is, the communitarisation. The member states are not interested in changing the formula of collaboration, leaving it in the position of the intergovernmental policy, which substantially limits common initiatives.

Individualization of the actions of the member states weakens the international impact of the EU and current serious threats to security, which cannot be coped with independently in any country, generate the need for common security policy more than before. The hope is given by recent initiatives, including French and German proposal of reinforcement of common security policy as a component of the process of strengthening European integration<sup>30</sup>. Although the proposal does not go much beyond the previous framework of the debate, the attempt to tighten collaboration in the field of security is becoming more likely. However, does the initiative of the strongest countries of the EU not follow the tendencies of undermining the unity in the field of this policy by establishing the exclusiveness of collaboration for selected countries? Apart from France and Germany, this approach is also expressed by Spain, Italy and Portugal, which expect greater role of the EU in solving the problems of security in the neighbouring countries, yet the EU is composed of 27 countries. There is no quick fix for current problems. It is also uncertain whether the European Union will demonstrate sufficient determination to reinforce the security policy that should be performed only in the format of the whole EU.

### Summary

#### CRISES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION FROM THE SECURITY STANDPOINT

European Union may be facing the biggest challenge in its history, and the current moment is a kind of test of the EU's functioning in the present form. With many voices questioning its existence, not to mention its purpose, mechanisms and procedures used in it. The article attempts to answer the question whether the European Union is prepared and equipped with adequate instruments to effectively overcome its weaknesses?

**Keywords:** security, the European Union, integration crisis

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<sup>29</sup> I.e. potential of the diplomatic service (European External Action Service, EEAS), constant structural collaboration of the countries meeting the criteria of military capabilities or the extended catalogue of the Petersberg tasks. The latter was not reflected in any decision made since the establishment of the EEAS, and the High Representative actually does not decide on anything done instead by the bigger member states.

<sup>30</sup> J.-M. Ayrault, F.-W. Steinmeier, *A strong Europe in a world of uncertainties*, <http://statewatch.org/news/2016/jul/de-fr-strong-europe-eu-security-compact.pdf> [1.10.2016].

## Streszczenie

### KRYZYSY UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ A KONTEKST BEZPIECZEŃSTWA

Unia Europejska stoi przed być może największym w swojej historii wyzwaniem. Aktualny moment to swoistego rodzaju test jej funkcjonowania w obecnym kształcie. Z wielu kierunków dobiegają głosy, kwestionujące sens istnienia organizacji, nie wspominając o celu, mechanizmach oraz procedurach jej działania. Jako rozwiązanie proponuje się podniesienie integracji na wyższy poziom, co stanowi duże wyzwanie dla europejskich rządów. Dramaturgii sytuacji nadaje fakt, że wszystko to dzieje się w czasie, gdy porządek międzynarodowy w dziedzinie bezpieczeństwa pozostaje zachwiany, a pojawiające się zagrożenia zdają się tylko kumulować kolejne dysfunkcje. Artykuł podejmuje próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy Unia Europejska jest przygotowana i wyposażona w odpowiednie instrumenty do skutecznego przewyciężania swoich słabości?

**Słowa kluczowe:** bezpieczeństwo, Unia Europejska, kryzys integracji

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