

*Anna Skolimowska**

The European Union as a ‘Normative Power’ in International Relations. Theoretical and Empirical Challenges

Abstract: *The European Union is currently in the process of defining its position in the international arena. European integration, especially in the context of foreign affairs, has proved to be a challenging experience, as revealed in more than one crisis. In the empirical scope, this refers mostly to the lack of unity and cohesion between the Member States in reacting to and/or resolving international issues, which results from the diversity of interests presented by the Member States. In the theoretical scope, the main issue lies in establishing the characteristic traits of the European Union in international relations. The popular concept of the European Union acting as a ‘normative power’ in international crises fails to satisfy a number of important aspects. In such a context there is a need to develop more precise and politically neutral instruments to analyse the European Union’s activities in the international sphere.*

Keywords: normative power Europe, Common Foreign and Security Policy, socialization and Europeanization, European Neighbourhood Policy

Introduction

European Studies have elaborated a number of tools for analysis of the identity and the role of the European Union (and earlier the European Communities) in the terms of international relations. The number of various approaches provides clear proof of the existence of true diversity and the multitude of instruments available in the research into this phenomenon.¹

* **Anna Skolimowska**, Ph.D. – Institute of Political Science, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

¹ The concepts in question include: the concept of civil power, neo-medieval empire, post-modern-type power, and soft power.

As the process of European integration faces a number of crises and challenges, the same holds true for the theoretical tools elaborated for the analysis of the phenomenon, as they are also subject to trials with respect to their theoretical verifiability.

In the terms of the role and identity of the European Union in international relations, researchers have so far devoted particular attention to the concept of 'normative power', which was developed by Ian Manners, a supporter of the theory of social constructivism.² Manners proposes a theoretical approach to the way in which European Union shapes the international environment (producing changes in its standards and norms), not as much with the use of material instruments (such as military power, economic or legal measures), but through the power of the attractiveness of the European project to third parties, encoded in European standards, values, principles and procedures. The policy conducted within such a framework towards the external environment is referred to as normative, i.e. promoting the standards, values and principles of the European project in the international sphere with the use of specific political instruments (so-called 'soft instruments'). The concept of social constructivism aims at explaining, *inter alia*, the reasons for the differences in the way the role and the identity of European Union are perceived by third states.

Formulated at the beginning of the 2000s, the concept of the identity of the European Union as a normative power in international relations became an increasingly popular theoretical tool for researchers, which led to the elaboration of the basic assumptions of the theory. Yet currently this concept also faces a certain crisis, reflected both in the criticism of its theoretical underpinnings and in the attempts to transform it deeply. This criticism comes not only from those who propagate alternative paradigms (such as the political neo-realism school), but also from environments which have traditionally supported the theory.

This article attempts to identify the characteristic features of the role of the European Union as a normative power in international relations, and at the same time establish the challenges, both theoretical and methodological, facing the use of the normative power concept in research into the international role of the EU. Additionally, the article tries to present the value of the normative power concept in analysing the effectiveness of the European Union's role in situations of international crisis, such as war or armed conflict.

² I. Manners, *The Concept of Normative Power In World Politics*, "DIIS Brief", May 2009, http://subweb.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Briefs2009/B09_maj_Concept_Normative_Power_World_Politics.pdf (last visited 24.10.2014).

The article consists of two parts, reflecting two planes of analysis. The first part seeks to answer the question concerning the way in which the role of the European Union is described in European studies in reliance on the normative power concept, and seeks to identify the political instruments applied as a part of a normative external policy. In this section the article also attempts to identify the research challenges involved in using the normative power concept to study of the role of the European Union in international relations. The issues elaborated include: the direction in which the research approach should or will evolve; the criticism of the said approach, i.e. the main arguments used by its adversaries (especially by the representatives of the school of political neo-realism); and both the limitations as well as the potential of the normative power concept when used in research. The methodology applied is that of discourse analysis of the theories devised by the representatives of social constructivism, which was the initial theory that provided the framework for the elaboration of the normative power concept. The scientific works examined in this article were selected mainly from the body of works written after 2002, i.e. after Ian Manners' elaboration of his theoretical conception.

The second part of the article features analysis and comparison of the normative role of the EU in international relations as declared in the policy-defining documents of the EU, and the actions of the European Union and their reception in the face of the traditional challenges to international peace and security, such as war or conflict. It might seem that such challenges should not constitute a threat to European security in the present post-Cold War globalised world order, yet recent developments have proved that they still need to be taken into account in the process of constructing the foundations of the foreign and security policy of the European Union. This detailed description and demonstration of the characteristic features of the EU's normative power and, analogically, of the European policy in international relations, is then analysed in relation to the political crises taking place in the nearest neighbourhood of the EU, namely the internationalised internal conflicts³ in Kosovo, in

³ While international law and its standards fail to provide an exhaustive definition for an 'internationalised conflict' (or, more precisely, internationalised internal conflict), it is generally acknowledged that it is characterised by the existence of at least two hostile factions fighting on the territory of a single state; the use of the organised armed forces against the enemy armed forces by the fighting factions; the fact that the two fighting factions are supported by two different states; a military confrontation of two states that have previously intervened using military force in the internal conflict and supported one of the fighting sides. A given conflict can be referred to as an 'internationalised conflict' based on the customary recognition as such by the international society (J. Stewart, *Towards A Single*

Ukraine, and in Moldova. The author has chosen these three examples of conflicts because all them have taken/are taking place in the geographical vicinity of the European Union, and therefore they play a significant role in European security. The selection was also based on the possibility of adopting a historical perspective to the analysed issue and on the need to apply the results of the analysis to establish various scenarios of actions that the European Union could take if faced with a new conflict in its neighbourhood. It should be noted that one of the conflicts chosen could be considered as 'relatively solved' (the Kosovo conflict between Albania and Serbia); another one is still active (the conflict between Russia and Ukraine); while the third (the Transnistrian conflict, Moldova) contains the seeds of a potentially internationalised internal conflict in the nearest neighbourhood of the EU in the future.

The basic assumption is that the European Union, in defining its identity in international relations as a normative actor, should exert a positive influence on the remaining participants of international relations equally in the times of crises. Such an arrangement should lead to the diffusion of the European norms that should, at least theoretically, subsequently entail progressive changes in the behaviour of both sides of the conflict. The role of the European Union is thus perceived as a 'force for good' in preventing conflicts from happening. The force of the EU's normative power in the face of the internationalised conflicts should correspond to its capability to diffuse European standards, values and principles. However, its influence on the third parties will vary: Europeanisation, and, by analogy, EU effectiveness, will be the highest in those states in which the perspective of membership in the European Union is well-defined and clearly announced. The analysis of the scale of EU's impact on the third states as presented above was first proposed by Roy H. Ginsberg. His analytical framework for measuring the political impact and influence of the European Union laid the groundwork for the assumption that European influence on the third states does indeed occur, and additionally allowed the researchers to measure the influence on a scale from '*nil political influence*' to '*significant political impact*'.⁴

The research questions asked are as follows:

- Is the EU's normative policy effective in situations of an internationalised internal conflict, and does it help to stop it from escalating?

Definition of Armed Conflict in International Humanitarian Law: A Critique of Internationalised Armed Conflict, "International Review of the Red Cross", No. 850(85)/2003, p. 315).

⁴ R. Ginsberg, *The European Union in International Politics: Baptism by Fire*, New York 2001, pp. 52–55.

- What are the decisive factors in the terms of effectiveness of this strategy in the EU's external policy?
- In the situation of an internationalised internal conflict, are the Member States unified in aiming to apply normative instruments to the foreign policy of the European Union, or are they postulating other strategies of action?
- What are the factors that could potentially hinder the implementation of the EU's normative policy in a given international problem?
- What is the perception of the actions taken by the European Union in conflict situations? Is the EU expected to be involved or to react, and if so what sort of engagement is expected; and is its normative policy respected by its addressees?

1. Theoretical approaches to the role of the European Communities and the European Union in international relations

The research on the role and the identity of the European Union in the terms of international relations was undertaken by researchers interested in this area of study and in European affairs even before the 1990s, when the Treaty of Maastricht enriched the political map of international relations with the appearance of the European Union. The role of the previous European Communities was established based on the category of 'civilian power'. François Duchêne, who authored this approach, claimed that in the then-current geopolitical conditions (namely in the 1970s, a time marked by growing economic interdependencies related to the globalisation processes), the power of the European Communities in international relations was founded not on their military force, but rather on their common market and political instruments, which enabled the Communities to construct their areas of influence in the world. The notion of 'civilian power' refers to those international entities whose foreign policy consists of, for example: accepting the necessity of co-operation with other participants of the international forum (i.e. the idea of multilateralism); using non-military instruments (mostly economic instruments) to secure the states' individual interests; and being ready to create or to enter into supranational structures in order to resolve current issues.⁵ A foreign policy of 'civilian power' is constructed via the use of economic, diplomatic and cultural measures, as opposed to the use of

⁵ F. Duchêne, *Europe's Role in World Peace* in: *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, R. Mayne (ed.), London 1972, pp. 32–47.

military power. Duchêne additionally noted that Western Europe, in its role as a civilian actor, was greatly contributing to international politics and helping to eliminate the risk of military conflicts by focusing on the necessity of economic, social and cultural co-operation.⁶

Until the 1990s, the European Communities realised its external policies based on the use of economic instruments. In 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht introduced a qualitative change in the nature of European integration by bringing the European Union into existence and by changing the framework within which its political external relations were established. At present, the European Union is conducting its external activity both in the economic scope (mainly its commercial policy) and in the scope of its foreign policy within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

The qualitative changes in the conditions according to which the European Union fulfils its role in international relations have given rise to a transformation of the theoretical approach to the matter as well. The researchers specialising in the area of the EU's identity have voiced concerns that the idea of the European Union as a 'civilian power' was no longer applicable because of its ambition to expand the military dimension of its integration and, *inter alia*, to change the international order within which it operates. Instead of referring to the EU's identity in the terms of a 'civilian power', it is now suggested that it can be described using the notions of 'a normative power' or a 'quiet superpower'.⁷

The change in the manner of conceptualising the international role of the EU can be illustrated by the concept of a normative power (*Normative Power Europe*, NPE), developed by Ian Manners.⁸ Normative power refers to the European Union's ability to spread the norms and standards of European integration into the international communities. Such norms and standards are ruled by the following principles: respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights (TEU, Article 21); and convey the legal, economic, social, political, and cultural norms elaborated during the European integration process.

Analysis of the role of the European Union in international relations in accordance with Manners's concept of normative power was supposed to leave behind the formal analysis of institutions or external policies of the EU in international relations, and to focus instead on the approaches

⁶ H. Maull, *Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers*, "Foreign Affairs", No. 69(5)/1990, pp. 91–106, www.foreignaffairs.com (last visited 12.10.2014).

⁷ A. Moravcsik, *The Quiet Superpower*, "Newsweek", No. 17/2002, <http://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/commentary.html> (last visited 29.08.2015).

⁸ I. Manners, *op.cit.*

within a sociological or cognitive framework. Manners claimed that the phenomenon of normative power should be understood as the ability of one international entity to exert its ideological influence on other members in international relations (described by the notions of the '*power over opinion*' and '*ideological power*'). Therefore the concept itself is not founded on analysis of the economic resources held by the EU in international relations. It rather refers to its ability to diffuse European legal and political standards, ideas, discourses and integration standards, and to shape the international environment with the use of such tools. The innovative and original character of the concept of the European Union as a normative power was built on the assumption that the power of the EU in international relations does not lie in its military capabilities or economic resources, but stems from the importance of the ideas, standards and values underlying the project of European integration.⁹

Manners emphasised the fact that the European Union constitutes neither a civilian power, nor a military power; instead, it possesses the features of a *normative* power built on the founding principles of the European project. Manners identified the basic ideological notions developed during the course of the European integration, included in the declarations and treaties, which additionally constitute a part of the criteria for political membership in the EU. These include peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, social progress, non-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance.¹⁰ These norms, as highlighted by Manners, are regulatory for the governance system within the European Union, but first and foremost they are indispensable in forming a political community with its own identity, one which is separate from its components. In the international relations of the post-Cold War period, the European Union should offer not only its governance of economic external relations, but should establish its own value and a new quality in political international relations.¹¹

The normative power of the EU lies in exporting the systems of norms (or: the normative system), as described above. This occurs through:

- spontaneous diffusion – the European Union's norms are naturally diffused in the third states without the EU's engagement or activity;
- the use of communication strategies – the informational activity of the EU;

⁹ I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction In Terms?*, "Journal of Common Market Studies", No. 2(40)/2002, p. 239.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 252.

- procedural activities – the institutionalisation of relations with the EU;
- transference of mutual benefits in the relations of the European Union with third states;
- the presence of the EU in the third states;
- cultural diffusion and the process of learning European norms by third states.¹²

The normative identity of the European Union in international relations translates into its ability to shape the international environment using the norms and standards of European integration, said norms and standards being: human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. The catalogue of norms includes all the legal, economic, social, political and cultural norms established in the course of European integration, as well as the norms featured in the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Final Act), the Charter of Paris, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in other documents. The normative presence of the European Union in international relations should lead to a change in the norms, standards and principles of international politics. Such power is related to the European Union's ability to exert influence on the external environment not merely by the use of economic instruments (as in the case of 'civilian power'), but rather by the attractiveness of the European project to third parties. Socialisation according to the logic of appropriateness constitutes an important instrument used in the promotion of European norms and values. Once third parties recognise the European values as attractive and convincing, the mutual relations between the entities become institutionalised and political dialogue concerning the conditions of cooperation between the entities is established. The European Union thus acts and promotes its values through its policies, for instance through development aid and assistance, through trade, enlargement policies etc. Yet it is still political dialogue with the third parties that remains the most important channel for the transfer of European norms and values. This dialogue, however, needs to be institutionalised, for example in the form of association agreements, the European Neighbourhood Policy, or strategic partnerships, and accompanied by the socialisation process of its participants.¹³ Such an assumption requires research into the power of the European Union, as well as into the issues of Europeanisation and

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 254.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

socialisation of the third entities, perceived as the instruments used to demonstrate the power of the EU's influence, or the lack thereof. These two processes should provide the framework within which the EU could fulfil its role as a normative power. The effectiveness of the strategy applied by the normative actor should, in turn, be measured by an indicator of the degree of transposition of the European model (or the ideological/normative standards) in those states within which such a strategy is being implemented. The Europeanisation of third entities can also be observed (among others) in the public discourse or in the public opinion of those societies towards which it is directed, as this is the dimension in which the discursive shaping of the specific character of the EU as a normative power should take place.¹⁴ This further allows us to search for the reasons for accepting or rejecting the EU as a normative power by the third states.

Thomas Diez is of the opinion that the concept of a normative power has become an important subject of discussion in the field of European studies. However, a number of important questions related thereto give rise to controversies, among which he lists:

- 1) The issue of dichotomy: the particular interests of the Member States *versus* collective European norms in external relations. This particular issue has seemed quite visible, for example, in relation to the attitude adopted by the EU towards the democratic movements in the Arab states (referred to as 'the Arab Spring'). On one hand, the European Union declared that it would take an active part in building democracy in the region; while on the other it has supported authoritarian regimes in order to stop the wave of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea and in order to secure petroleum supplies coming to Europe.¹⁵
- 2) The issue of establishing whether the EU as a normative power constitutes an effective actor in international relations; that is, whether the European norms truly influence the behaviour of third states. When researched, this question presents a number of difficulties, as the EU is usually but one of the actors in the process. It is equally difficult to provide a conclusive and unambiguous proof that, at a given moment, it was the European norms that most influenced the course of events.
- 3) The issue of the level of analysis of the normative power of the EU. In light of the fact that the supra-national integration model for external

¹⁴ I. Manners, *op.cit.*

¹⁵ T. Diez, *Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering Normative Power Europe*, "Millennium: Journal of International Studies", No. 3 (33)/2015, p. 635.

affairs has not yet been established, the research into this matter must encompass a number of actors taking part in the process; this concerns both the Member States and private actors, such as European companies involved in weapons trade.¹⁶

Kalypto Nicolaidis and Robert Howse state that the image of the EU's role in international relations is created by the EU itself and does not reflect its actual role, but constitutes a reflection of the ideal that Europe wishes to attain.¹⁷ This means that the European Union does not truly export its normative offer, rather a certain representation of what the EU wishes to be. The authors of this conception refer to it as 'EUtopia', i.e. a utopia that the European Union has created about itself. Hence the international activity of the EU constitutes a form of projection or a presentation of the myth that Europe is a community of norms and values. This particular strategy is based on the assumption that the EU is indeed a role-model for the rest of the world and that it sets an example to be followed. This attitude can be seen, for instance, in the European support for regional forms of integration in various parts of the world, such as for example the African Union. However, as pointed out by Nicolaidis and Howse, the true identity of the EU and the image that it wishes to create in international relations are not consistent, which, in turn, decreases its credibility in the eyes of the international public.

Those researchers interested in the European Union refer to the concept of normative power especially in relation to the following issues: analysis of the international identity of the EU, its role,¹⁸ the European Neighbourhood Policy,¹⁹ analysis of the manner of exporting European principles and values, and the question of maintaining international peace and conflict management.

2. Polemics with the normative approach

Up to the present, the concept of the European Union as a normative power has been both praised and faced academic critics as well, the latter

¹⁶ T. Diez, *Normative Power as Hegemony*, http://www.euce.org/eusa/2011/papers/71_thomas.pdf (last visited 23.08.2015), p. 2.

¹⁷ K. Nicolaidis and R. Howse, *This is my EUtopia...: Narrative as Power*, "JCMS", No. 4(40), p. 768.

¹⁸ Ch. Bretherton, J. Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, London 2006.

¹⁹ Z. Laïdi, *La norme sans la force: L'énigme de la puissance européenne (Norms over Force. The Enigma of European Power)*, Paris 2005; *What Kind of Power? European Foreign Policy in Perspective*, H. Sjursen (ed.), "Journal of European Public Policy", No. 2(13)/2006, Special Issue, pp. 169–181.

in particular from a segment of the representatives of neo-realism.²⁰ Among others, the NPE conception is accused of rejecting the previously applied approaches to the notion of 'power' elaborated in international relations studies, and perceiving the normative pressure tools mostly in the terms of their ethical aspects, which do not take into consideration the weaknesses or failures of the implementation of such tools. Neo-realists state that the EU's ability to fulfil the role of a normative actor depends on the decisions and the willingness of the Member States, and is possible only because it is being secured by the traditional attributes of power. Supporters of the neo-realist approach argue that it is often the case that the instruments of normative influence prove insufficient to solve international issues, thus creating the need to use classical attributes of power. Neo-realists often claim that European Union is not capable of convincing third states to adopt the European normative model unless it supports its offer by additional economic or military arguments. Such an approach additionally assumes that European Union, when fulfilling its role as an actor in international relations, is inseparable from its Member States. The EU does not constitute a separate entity in this regard; it should rather be seen as being used by the most powerful states to realise their own interests in the international arena.²¹

Other scholars emphasise the lack of consistency between the normative rhetoric and the *de facto* actions of the European Union in its international relations, in addition to the equally loudly-voiced concern about the lack of precision in defining the notion of 'normative power' and the determining its role in the construction of a collective identity of the European Union in international relations.²²

For example, Helene Sjursen identifies a number of theoretical challenges faced by the concept of a normative power,²³ pointing to the lack of precision in the assumption that the special and exceptional character of the EU in international relations actually somehow predisposes it to play a special and norm-imposing role in international relations. The scholar urges other academics to elaborate normative theory statements

²⁰ A. Hyde-Price, *Normative power Europe: a realist critique*, "Journal of European Public Policy", No. 13(2)/2006, pp. 217–234.

²¹ I. Manners and R. Whitman, *The 'Difference Engine': Constructing and Representing the International Identity of the European Union*, "Journal of European Public Policy", No. 10(3)/2003, p. 383.

²² S. Lucarelli and R. Menotti, *The Use of Force as Coercive Intervention in: Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy*, S. Lucarelli and I. Manners (eds.), London 2006, pp. 147–163.

²³ H. Sjursen, *What Kind of Power?* "Journal of European Public Policy", No. 13(2)/2006, pp. 169–181.

with greater precision, and not to ignore the evolving role of material factors in the foreign policies of the European Union. In addition, Sjørnsen draws attention to the fact that the academic concept of the EU as a normative power strongly corresponds to the European definition of its own identity, as presented in the policy-defining documents covering the external relations of the European Union. According to her, such a situation presents some risks, especially as it excludes the possibility of objectively and critically approaching the phenomenon analysed.²⁴

Knud E. Jorgensen and Katie Laatikainen unveil the next weakness of the normative approach, treated as a concept meant to account for the special character of the EU's identity in international relations. Namely, such an approach ignores the category of material European interests.²⁵ By presenting itself as a 'force for good' in international relations, the European Union seems not to care for its own interests. According to them, this is caused by the intergovernmental character of European integration in the scope of international relations, which leads to the impression that European Union has no separate European interest in foreign affairs and that its role is merely to serve the interests of its Member States. This proves that the statement about the existence of some common, normative, interests promoted in the international space is false – it could be confirmed only if there existed some form of political community that would undergo some kind of integration in terms of foreign affairs and that would display shared and common interests in the international sphere. In addition to this, Jorgensen and Laatikainen emphasise the fact that if the EU were to attempt to realise some common interests in its external activity, this would be contradictory to acting on morally right and ethically justified prerequisites, the imperative which should lie at the foundation of the normative power of the European Union. Additionally, if one assumes that the normative identity of the EU results from its foundation on European values, such values would have to be exceptional and exclusively EU-specific, while in truth the normative system that is being internationally promoted by the EU is shared by other participants in international relations, for instance by the United States or the United Nations.²⁶

Some scholars have argued that the concept of the European Union as a normative power seems rather incomplete as it focuses on a single aspect

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ K.E. Jorgensen and K. Laatikainen, *The European Union and the United Nations*, Paper prepared for presentation at panel 154, Second Pan-European Conference on EU Politics, Bologna 24–26 June 2004.

²⁶ Ibidem.

of European power in international relations, namely on European norms and values. It is equally difficult to prove the relationship between the normative power of the EU and its influence on international politics. One of the arguments that seems to confirm the insufficiency of the normative approach to the identity of the European Union in international relations is the progressive militarisation of the European project, which is being gradually introduced alongside other reforms in the Treaties. In response to this argument, Manners states that the militarisation of the European project carried out within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy does not contradict the normative identity of the European Union so long as the European integration is not dominated by, nor does it support the development of, a mentality treating traditional military force as the best tool to remedy international unrest.

3. The application of the normative power concept in the political crises in the EU neighbourhood

This section of the article presents the outcome of an empirical study aimed at answering why the EU's normative power in those states engaged in international conflicts is not equally effective in all cases. What is the state of legitimisation of the normative strategy of the EU in the face of the selected internationalised internal conflicts, and what are the decisive factors in the role and the position of the European Union in the process of preventing or ameliorating the escalation of such a conflict? The characteristics of the normative power of the European Union when faced with internationalised internal conflicts, are elaborated in this section with respect to the events in Kosovo (during the declaration of independence in 2008), in Ukraine (during the dispute over Crimea between Russia and Ukraine, 2013–2014), and in the Republic of Moldova (during the dispute over Transnistria in the years 2004–2015).

The initial assumption was that the European Union has taken upon itself the burden of fulfilling the role and of realising its identity as a normative power in international relations, and that it is accomplishing this task rather effectively in times of peace and relative stability in the international system. The European Union should play the role of a stabilising actor, in particular in the times of crises or when there is a realistic threat to European security. By defining its identity in international relations as a normative actor, the European Union should thus exert a normative influence on the other participants in international relations. This in turn should provide the proper grounds for a spontaneous diffusion of European norms and values, and trigger a change in the

behaviour of the conflicted parties, which would mean that the role of the EU should be perceived as a force for good in conflict prevention.

However, on the basis of the analysis of the EU's activity in the face of the three selected international conflicts, the hypothesis that the European Union (which defines its identity in international relations as a normative actor) exerts a positive influence on other participants in international relations cannot be verified. It has been noted that the importance of the normative power of the European Union in the cases of the Kosovo and Moldova conflicts was marginal, as was the effectiveness of its strategy as measured by the level of its influence on the resolution of the conflict. Generally speaking this poor outcome was the result of a lack of approval and unity between the Member States, which never declared unanimous support for the introduction of the EU's normative politics in the case of the given conflicts, which in turn added to the lack of a consistent image of the EU (which wishes to be viewed as a force for good) among the political elites and societies of the states involved in the internationalised internal conflict.

In the case of Kosovo, evaluation of the fulfilment of the role of a normative power by the EU (and, by analogy, evaluation of the EU's external policy with respect to Kosovo) is rather complicated. In this particular case the European Union has displayed traits of a rather imperial policy, as it acted with the aim of realising its own goal in external politics, not refraining from the violation of certain norms and principles of international law, such as the territorial integrity of a sovereign state. This could be noted for instance in the EU's support for Kosovo's claims of independence, which went against resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council, which emphasised the principles of sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.²⁷

Such deviation from the course of legal actions as defined by international law has decreased the EU's credibility as a normative power in the eyes of the international society, as it exposed the fragility and lack of consistency in the EU's ideological stances. The imperial policy towards Kosovo has negatively influenced the perception of the EU within both the newly founded state itself and the entire region, where the EU used to be seen as an impartial force for good in international relations. Moreover, the Kosovo case helped set the legal grounds for legitimising the recent Russian activity in Crimea.²⁸

²⁷ A. Shepherd, *A milestone in the history of the EU: Kosovo and the national role*, "International Affairs", No. 85(3)/2009, pp. 513–530.

²⁸ For more, see M. Sulkowski, *Normatywna polityka zewnętrzna Unii Europejskiej w obli-*

The strongest and the most decisive factor that influenced the participation of the EU in containing the conflict in Kosovo was the perspective of European Union membership. The Republic of Kosovo has accepted the European model of power and the resulting external policy, based on its calculation of the economic and political profits that could come from cooperation with the EU. However the actual attractiveness of and aspiration to recreate a European normative structure within its social and state system, as expressed in the declarations made by the members of Kosovo's community, impacted their decision only to a relatively small extent. A certain paradox appears here; namely that the low support in Kosovo for the EU's actions aimed at stabilising the conflict did not influence the generally high support for the very idea of the integration with the EU. Such an approach among the inhabitants of Kosovo could be regarded as confirmation of a rather instrumental approach to the process of the European integration and provide proof of the actual ineffectiveness of basing the power of the European Union on ideational normative grounds.²⁹

The second case to be analysed, namely the conflict in Ukraine, and the evaluation of how the European Union fulfilled/is fulfilling its role as a normative power and what the EU's normative policy is in that case, is also rather difficult.³⁰ This results from the fact that in the initial phase of the conflict, during the so-called *Maidan* period at the end of the year 2013, the EU conducted a rather *status quo*-oriented policy that was realised through the use of soft instruments such as consultations and calls for a peaceful course of the social protests, or simply for peace during the visits of EU officials in Ukraine. It was only when the conflict became aggravated (which was expressed for instance in the organisation of the independence referendum in Crimea in March 2014) that the EU felt the need to undertake more material measures in its external policy in order to protect the international society's norms and values. As a consequence, all European Union Member States signed the United Nation's resolution on the need to solve international disputes by peaceful means, which additionally included the principle of protecting the territorial integrity

czu konfliktu w Kosowie (EU's foreign policy towards Kosovo) in: *Normatywna potęga Unii Europejskiej w obliczu umiędzynarodowionych konfliktów wewnętrznych (Normative Power Europe and internationalised internal conflicts)*, A. Skolimowska (ed.), Warsaw 2015, pp. 99–130.

²⁹ Five out of the 28 EU Member States have still not recognised Kosovo: Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Spain and Slovakia.

³⁰ Ch.J. Bickerton, *Legitimacy Through Norms: The Political Limits of Europe's Normative Power*, EUSA conference Montreal 17–19 May 2007, <http://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/5080382.pdf> (last visited 31.08.2015), p. 20.

of a state. Yet the lack of action in Ukraine on the part of the EU and the fact that the pro-Russian separatists brought up the Kosovo case have both decreased EU's chance to effectively and adequately fulfil its role as an important stabilising factor during such events.

European Union has indeed been marginally active in mitigating the conflict, especially in its first phase. The following factors contributed to decreasing the EU's chances to effectively fulfil its role as a normative actor: differences between the Member States in the terms of which model of relations with the Russian Federation should be chosen, and in consequence the extent to which the EU should be involved in the Ukrainian conflict; lack of common position on whether a single European statement towards the conflict was needed and if so, on what its contents should be; feeble attempts to make an attractive offer to Ukraine or to conduct informative actions; abandonment of the discursive tools to shape the image of the EU as an economically and politically attractive institution; passing the initiative to two European capitals – Paris and Berlin – rather than elaborating a single European position or statement concerning the conflict, i.e. one that would be supported by all Member States; lack of clarity as to which model of EU–Ukraine relations should be chosen, which resulted from the difference of opinion between the European institutions (for instance, the European Parliament provided an arena for the discussion of EU membership for Ukraine, while the European Commission clearly stated that the enlargement process will not be continued for the time being); and lack of a European military force (pointed out as a contributing factor in the last phase of the conflict, namely during the Crimean crisis).³¹

Hence in the case of Ukraine a large number of factors contributed to the European Union's inability to effectively realise its declarative identity as a normative actor. The only argument that seemed attractive enough to garner the support of all EU Member States was that of the economic profits which would come about as a consequence of signing an EU Association Agreement with Ukraine. It was the fact that the pro-Russian Ukrainian president rejected this document that triggered the strong social resistance in Kiev in the first place. The Ukrainian society, in particular in the Western part of the country, had high hopes for the economic, political and social change that was envisioned to result from

³¹ For more, see P. Bajda, *Specyfika normatywnej polityki zewnętrznej Unii Europejskiej w obliczu konfliktu rosyjsko-ukraińskiego (EU's normative external policy in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict)* in: *Normatywna potęga Unii Europejskiej w obliczu umiędzynarodowionych konfliktów wewnętrznych (Normative Power Europe and internationalised internal conflicts)*, A. Skolimowska (ed.), Warsaw 2015, pp. 139–170.

a closer relationship with the European Union. Yet the attitudes and the actions (or the lack thereof) on the part of the European Union in the initial phase of escalation of the conflict did not seem encouraging in this regard. Generally, the actions taken by the EU during the Ukrainian conflict have not confirmed its image as a force for good in international relations; not only when it comes to Ukraine, but also in the eyes of the wider international public.

In the case of Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict, the foreign policy of the EU evolved during the course of the conflict: it has shifted from a *status quo* foreign policy to the role of a normative actor, with a lack of interest at the institutional level of the European Union. This shift can easily be seen in the intensification of the actions emphasising the necessity to observe the principles and norms of international law and encouraging the parties to truly adopt and identify with the political norms of European integration, in terms of the EU's proposals for conflict mitigation. However, the only encouragement directed at Moldovan authorities was the formula of a close partnership, which seems to be a rather ineffective instrument when it comes to encouraging other states to adhere to the European model.³²

However, there were also some factors that increased the effectiveness of the EU in its role as a normative actor. In particular, the EU has presented proposals of specific actions in conflict management, making appeals to observe international legal norms and principles; implementing a system controlling the exportation of goods (i.e. of steel); and coordinating the activity of European institutions by appointing an EU Representative and establishing a civilian mission, encouraging political dialogue; and conducting information actions aimed at the Moldovan society, explaining the nature of the European mission in the area. Unfortunately the EU's efforts have not been much noticed by its addressees; the Transnistria region seems impermeable to the information on the EU's engagement in the case. The European Union had high hopes related to co-operation with local NGOs; it hoped that the Transnistrian organisations would help to reinforce pro-democratic and pro-EU attitudes, and that they would help to build trust for Moldova in the region. But as of today, this co-operation has not yet borne the expected fruits.

³² For more, see J. Pieńkowski, *Zaangażowanie Unii Europejskiej w rozwiązanie konfliktu naddniestrzańskieg (EU's involvement in solving the Transnistrian conflict)* in: *Normatywna potęga Unii Europejskiej w obliczu umiędzynarodowionych konfliktów wewnętrznych (Normative Power Europe and internationalised internal conflicts)*, A. Skolimowska (ed.), Warsaw 2015, pp. 171–210.

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the conditions prevailing in the modern world order, this study provides grounds for stating that the identity of the European Union as a normative actor is in a state of deep crisis. This concerns not only the ideological sphere (the basis of the concept and its assumptions), but also the sphere of real-life actions, and can be attributed to the interplay of factors such as the lack of coordination in the application of those tools actually possessed by the European Union in international relations, thus failing to solidify the self-image that it has constructed for itself and aims to project onto others. This, in turn, creates a gap between the normative activity of the European Union and the way it is perceived in the international environment, and gives rise to a presumption that the concept of a normative power in reality constitutes a certain type of a meta-narrative, utopia, or a form of ideological measure relating to the identity of the European Union in international relations, the defects of which are easily revealed in the face of international crises such as wars and other conflicts.

Nonetheless, since its formulation the concept of 'a normative power' has evolved within the field of European Studies, and has been used to account for the transformation of institutional and legal circumstances and the conditions in which the European Union conducts its activity. One of the crucial challenges that lies before the concept of normative power is the call for the militarisation of the European project announced in the Treaty of Lisbon, which will entail the departure from a norms-based and values-based foreign policy and mark the return to the paradigm of military power in the international space.

The issue of the external relations of the European Union is composed of a number of components. The first refers to the ideological foundation of the assumed identity of the EU as a normative actor, a concept that would require redefining if it is to include the development of an EU-proper military force. Additionally, in order to become an effective normative actor in international relations the Member States should form a real political union within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Without a belief in the importance and necessity of establishing one common European position in the international arena, all corrective actions towards the institutional architecture of this particular area of European integration run the risk of missing their true aim and not being properly rooted in the idea of a political community. This issue could be remedied by taking actions to formulate a new strategy for the European presence in the world. Such a strategy would present the interests and

the strategic goals which the Member States wish to attain with the help of the European Union and the conditions for carrying out and attaining said goals, i.e. an assessment of the opportunities, challenges, risks and threats. Such a solution also calls for defining the resources and means that should be allocated for the purpose of carrying out the adopted concept of activity. The European Union should be an active and strategic actor, in particular with respect to the states in its closest neighbourhood.

Thus in the actual course of events the European Union, if it is to fulfil the role of a normative actor in international relations, first and foremost requires the common political will of its Member States to assume this type of collective identity, which in turn implies the need to establish a common body of values in the area and scope of foreign affairs of the European Union. It is possible however that any potential modifications of the institutional architecture in this sphere of European integration might prove ineffective in its community component, which is the source of the definition of common goals and actions in international relations. The current crisis of the European project seems to be reducing the strength of the community component of European integration and leading to a situation whereby the political identity of the European Union, as well as its theoretical identity as a normative actor, has become controversial, proving the existence of a true diversity of models and external policies within European Union.

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