

CHAPTER «POLITICAL SCIENCES»

THE RIGHT-WING MARCH IN THE EU: WHEN NATIONAL PRAGMATISM HARMS LIBERAL GUIDANCE

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Abstract. The main stream of the modern EU political space reflects the slogan we know well that politics is the art of the possible. The contradictions of this space of human rationality have been clearly demonstrated in recent years by the slogans, intentions and goals of the main political forces of the EU countries during the election races at the national and pan-European levels. A vivid example of the fact that the spirit of the concept of “Europe of different speeds” really works, and is not a temporary state of affairs of the European political and economic reality, was the turn of 2015-2017, when the EU countries were subjected to considerable pressure from the wave of consequences of the “Arab Spring” and the conflict in Syria. On the one hand, for European politicians this time became a test of the maturity of national resilience and the effectiveness of crisis management to work in conditions of many uncertainties. And on the other hand, the newcomer countries of the eastern wing of the EU such as Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria

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demonstrated their special position on this issue, even in an extreme way. That is, because of disputes with Brussels and disagreements over implementing directives “from above”. The reason for this behavior was all too obvious – the weakness of the financial and economic system of these countries. In the face of the influx of refugees, it ceased to function as a “system stabilizer”.

In a purely party-political dimension, Europe has felt the negative “marks” of this time since the 2020s, when the economies of the EU’s leading countries, France and Germany, began to “slow down,” and the purchasing power and standard of living of the average European began to fall rapidly. The response to such dynamics was the reaction of the “economic man”, who showed himself through a purely democratic procedure of political life. First of all, it is about supporting the slogans of the “right” political forces, which, through the mechanism of “elections,” led the fight against the absolute power of Brussels and the policy of ignoring the problems of small countries.

Therefore, such an existing retrospective of European realities and the growing threat of a military conflict on the eastern flank of the EU require a more thorough analysis of European affairs.

The author’s novelty of the article is determined by the purpose, structure and logic of the research. The material covers the ontological aspect of the liberal problematic of social peace, reveals the country-specific reactions of member states to Brussels’ policy and reveals the views of modern US and European politicians on EU problems. This has provided an opportunity to analyze the tangle of European events in a dialectical manner and to invent critical points of the new reality that was being prepared by “WORLD ORDER 2025”.

The purpose. The purpose of the study is to clarify the reasons for the phenomenon of political upheaval that occurred within the EU following the results of the election races in 2023-2025 in such leading countries as Germany, France and Italy. The degree of “right-wing bias” during this period was experienced by virtually all of Europe and, as a result, all institutions of the European Union. The combination of theoretical and methodological, political and applied and informational tools made it possible to clarify the roots of the most controversial events and facts, and predict the further course of socio-political and military-security processes.

The objectives, the content of which were disclosed in five sections of the study, contributed to achieving the goal. The sections are organically interconnected and reflect the mechanism for revealing the problem posed.

Methodology. The research has been carried out on the basis of comparative, dialectical, historical and systemic methods. This has allowed us to consider the phenomenon of the “right march” within the EU as a holistic picture of the contradictions between the main political players in the field of political confrontation and the slogans of the election race, to identify the root causes and roots of their confrontation, its features and retrospective.

Results. The ontological foundations and strategies of the main players of the European political avant-garde, which are currently the “liberal democrats” and the “right”, have been revealed. From the standpoint of the sounding of the liberal idea, these are two wings of one goal – “happiness for all and everyone”. The difference between them lies only in the set of tools and rules of the game used by the main economic and political forces of the two competing camps. It is noted that the liberal democrats led by U. von der Leyen adhere to the idea of a directive style of governance contrary to the national interests of the member states. It [style] is based on instructions from a single center, a single financial policy and the de-sovereignization of the EU space. The right, on the contrary, strive to preserve sovereignty as the highest principle of state preservation and a tool for positioning their special national collective “WE”. It is stated that the combination of this version of self-awareness in the context of the worsening economic crisis within the EU serves as the basis that embodies the “root cause” of the confrontation between Brussels and national centers.

Conclusions. Europe today is not going through the best of times. The events of the last 5 years have become for ordinary Europeans the “time of truth” of the slogans of European democrats regarding “a happy and prosperous life” as a permanent goal of human nature. The laws of the market economy and the rules of the game regarding personal success from time to time prove a very simple thing: in the race for survival – “happiness for all and everyone” is impossible apriori. In the postulates of the liberal ideology “everyone is not everyone”. This means that the great goal of liberal democrats contains a false message, when the idea as a goal is perceived by the mass consciousness as a mandatory result in the form of

a certain list of material goods and the postulate “for everyone and now”. The best representatives of the national schools of European liberalism warned about such an ideological trap of the reasoning of the ordinary European back in the 20-30s of the last century. The “secret caves” of this message were also vividly revealed by our contemporary, the famous American political scientist and ideologist of liberalism, F. Fukuyama.

In today’s European realities, the connection between economics and politics has been most prominently manifested in the “party priorities of political life”. The results of the election races to the national parliaments of the EU countries and the European Parliament in 2023-2025 caused a real “political shake-up”, the result of which was a “right-wing march” from Italy and France to Finland and Sweden. The average European made it clear to the Eurobureaucracy that the latter reacts to his warnings about the decline in living standards, rising prices and unemployment, uncontrolled emigration, etc. “generally in slogans” and at the expense of the interests of society. The consequence of the rejection of such a strategy of the “race for survival” was a change in political priorities in favor of forces that focus on solving the root causes, not the consequences.

1. Introduction

Before proceeding to the consideration of the main issue, let us clarify the presence of an economic determinant in the phantoms of “happiness for all” of European liberalism. This is of great importance, if only because the latter contains a number of issues of a theoretical-methodological, political-applied and informational nature. Taken together, this is the key to decoding the European present, which is intertwined with the country-specific reactions of the EU member states to what is happening within the Union in all components of its life.

Today, most of the inhabitants of the European house [EU] can hardly be called happy. The eve and consequences of the three-year war between Russia and Ukraine have sown anxiety for the future among Europeans and have shown the confusion of politicians in the contradictory present. First of all, these intentions of the social moods of the European community have made themselves felt through the stagnation of the economies of the EU’s industrial leaders, numerous bankruptcies of small and medium-sized businesses, the increase in the cost of living and disappointing forecasts for

the future. In addition, the general pessimism of Europeans is stimulated by the disappointing socio-economic dynamics and statistics of European agencies regarding the state of living standards in the countries of the Union.

The picture of European opportunities and prospects was also spoiled by the US elections, as a result of which, in the person of the new owner of the White House, President D. Trump, Brussels received a pragmatic leader who strives for “American greatness” at all costs. In the strategic vision of the US president, this means at the expense of Europe and Europeans, who, in his opinion, have been living at the expense of Americans for a long time. The unpleasant news for the eurozone countries is that the new White House administration has announced the increase in trade tariffs on goods from Europe. On the one hand, this means that allied relations must have a specific price, that is, a monetary dimension, and on the other, that Europe ceases to be an island of confidence and predictable opportunities in relations with the US. However, the outsiders of the concept of “Europe of different speeds” can [and are predicted to] suffer the most from this situation. We are talking about a group of newcomer countries from Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, which, due to the weakness of their national economies, risk remaining on the sidelines of the “road to happiness” of the European express for a long time.

The standard of living in European countries is a convincing marker of the socio-political mood of Europeans, which refutes the rhetoric of Eurobureaucracy that “everything is in order on the European ship and everything is under control”. The life-affirming slogan of Eurobureaucrats is spoiled by official statistics, and the “digital gamut” of the real life of the average European as the central and most sensitive element of the system of national stability that politicians of European countries care so much about. The wave of social pessimism was most eloquently demonstrated by the election campaign of 2024 and 2025 to the European Parliament, the EU governing bodies, the national parliaments of France, Germany and the President of Romania. Their results convincingly proved that the united Europe is rapidly being absorbed by the risks of the new realities of the “WORLD ORDER 2025”, which deny the “WORLD ORDER 2000s”, where its content and grand policy were single-handedly dictated by the “golden billion”, the countries of the “G-7” club and the Democrats in the USA [1; 2].

In Hegelian dialectics [let us recall the “law of unity and struggle of opposites”], the world is characterized by contradictions and changes, and the result of the “struggle of opposites” is a new reality: either natural, or social, or political. In the context of international relations, this phenomenon was clearly recorded by the former US Secretary of State H. Kissinger. “Problems have arisen in the system based on rules”, states H. Kissinger. Calls to make a feasible contribution, to play by the rules of the 21st century and to be responsible participants in the process within the framework of a common coordinate system clearly show that there is no common understanding of this system for all, a common understanding of “possible contribution” or justice for all. Outside the Western world, those countries that took a minimal part in the creation of modern rules question the effectiveness of these rules in their current formulations and clearly demonstrate their willingness to make every effort to change the said rules. Thus, the international community is unable to agree, or at least agree – on an unambiguous and non-contradictory set of goals, methods and restrictions. Let’s not be deceitful: there was no truly global “world order”, – he states [1, p. 7-8]. If we add to this statement of G. Kissinger Hegel’s statement that “interests are different from interests... nothing comes true except interest” then we get the phenomenon of paradox. That is, we are talking about a state of permanent situation [situationality], which is characterized by the competition of opposite and mutually exclusive statements on the same issue, when each of the statements has its own arguments [counterarguments].

Bearing in mind the connection between domestic and foreign policy, it can be argued that to some extent such a situation is also inherent in the socio-economic and political space of modern Europe, where Brussels directives are “absolutely correct” in nature, but do not take into account the national and regional specifics of the organization and space of existence of national communities. It is this [situationality] that forms the “BUT” that helps the forces of the “right camp” to assert themselves.

In Europe, the disease of “order” and “justice” that Kissinger was talking about is visible both through the country-specific reactions of national life and through the struggle of the political elites of the EU club countries, which belong to opposing political and ideological camps. It is enough to look at the presence of liberal democrats and right-wingers in the European Parliament

and in the EU's governing structures following the 2024 elections [3]. The desire of democrats to focus on living standards within the community goes hand in hand with the strengthening of the role of the Eurobureaucracy and its supranational status in making important decisions within the EU. On the one hand, this is attractive to a significant part of voters who seek economic stability. Of course, this provides democratic politicians with a place in power. And on the other hand, it limits the national political and economic elite in its intentions to influence important decisions within the country. This confrontation forms an opposing political camp that insists on strengthening the institution of the state and defending national interests, the list of which has increased significantly since the migrant crisis of 2015. In the sector of modern European political life, these forces are classified as RIGHT-WING. Here it is appropriate to recall the sharp skirmishes between V. Orban and U. von der Leyen. The latter is constantly accused by the Hungarian leader of usurping power. According to the Hungarian Prime Minister, "instead of being the guardian of the treaties, the European Commission under her leadership has become a political body and a political weapon" against its opponents [4].

As the dynamics of the implementation of the "happiness for all" strategy by European democrats show, this in no way means that the end point will be "happiness for everyone". In the liberal road map, "everyone is not everyone", because in the pursuit of their own interests, everyone can use asocial methods. It is enough to turn to the reflections of the classics of liberalism Guido Di Ruggiero B. Croce, J. Dewey, L. Hobhouse and others [5]. This perspective of liberal happiness is not denied by the ideologist of the global liberal revolution F. Fukuyama. In "The End of History" he argues that the success of the implementation of the idea of "general happiness" itself is not so important as its victorious march. Like a phantom relay race of human consciousness, it [the idea] is passed on from generation to generation, forming a hedonic lifestyle and a personal idea of happiness, prosperity and success. The implementation of these conditions and aspirations in the practical plane, according to F. Fukuyama, should lead to the construction of a liberal "universal state", in which "all contradictions are resolved and all needs are satisfied" [6, p. 136]. The symbol and foundation of the universal state becomes the "universal culture of consumption" [6, p. 141]. So, in such a "truth of history"

[F. Fukuyama's phrase] the author positions another paradox of the countries of the "golden billion" in general and modern Europe in particular: there is a demand [standard of living/level of consumption], – but where to find so many resources? Together they exert incredible pressure on one and the same object – liberal individualism. G. Di Ruggiero and his compatriot B. Croce see the overcoming of this disparity through "rejection of utilitarian morality, which liberalism was concerned with in the past and is concerned with today" [7, p. 1027-1032; 8, p. 320-324].

However, the impossibility of this step is denied by both the "stomach problem" that the British politician S. Ross stated on the eve of the First World War [9, p. 58.], and the permanent struggle between countries at the global and regional levels for resources that was discussed by G. Kissinger. This is also denied by the living conditions of a particular person, his natural inclinations, financial and economic opportunities, interests and goals. In practice, this means that the main value and priority of a person in a democratic society as "freedom" will be subjected to considerable pressure from other people as representatives of a competitive environment, the law of life of which reflects the already known slogan "war of all against all". Its spirit is inherent in all social groups, and most importantly – it manifests itself in two dimensions. The first is connected with the ethics of life, where one's own success "at any cost" is the goal of the average European's life. This is required by the laws of life of an "economic person" and market morality as a shell of everyday life. The second is with the economy, because money and its quantity serve as the equivalent of a successful person. Ultimately, such a game of life symbols further destroys the nature of man [according to I. Kant – the evil man] and contributes to the generation of socio-political conflicts that we observe in the political life of modern Europe. The attachment of large groups of the population to certain political forces [parties] is nothing more than an all-pervading ether of conflicting interests that divides people according to political views.

A certain way to reduce the degree of confrontation is elections at the level of national authorities. The example of France [elections to the National Assembly] in 2024 and Germany [elections to the Bundestag] in 2025 is the best proof of this. In both cases, the success of the "right" caused a real shock. But even under such conditions, as evidenced by the state of the internal life of these EU leaders, the situation in these countries is

unlikely to improve. After all, the inertia of the current crisis of the 2020s tends to continue and deepen.

This is evidenced by the current European and global dynamics of the state of health of the manufacturing sector, world trade and regional military-political processes. And the political forces of the “right-wing camp” of the EU countries understand this well. In their actions today, the phenomenon of “opposite politics” is a “revolution of common sense” [a phrase by D. Trump in his inaugural speech on January 20, 2025] [10], which includes sovereignty, traditional values, the fight against emigration and the risks of multiculturalism. Such a strategy was announced at a gathering of the European right at the European Conference of National Conservatism, which took place in Brussels in April 2024 [11] and confirmed their presence at the Conservative Political Action Conference [“CPAC”], which took place in the USA in February 2025. The presence of the country’s first persons at this conference in the person of President D. Trump and Vice President J. Vance and numerous “right-wing” guests from Argentina, Great Britain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, etc., on the one hand, testified to the growing dynamics of such social demands in the mood of voters in many countries of the world, and on the other, to the public demand for radical changes in a wide range of state and international politics and its radical de-oligarchization and de-bureaucratization [12].

The apotheosis of the success of right-wing forces in Europe can be considered the rally “Make Europe Great Again” in Madrid, which took place on February 8, 2025. It was announced by the political force “Patriots for Europe” created six months ago – a united party of the EU’s far-right forces. It includes, in particular, the Fidesz party of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban [the main initiator of the unification of the European right]; the French National Rally party, whose de facto leader is Marine Le Pen; the Spanish Vox and far-right political movements in 10 more European countries. Of the 720 members of the European Parliament, re-elected in the summer of 2024, 86 are currently members of the Patriots for Europe, making this political force the third largest in the European Parliament [13]. As evidenced by the dynamics of changes in political slogans and effective actors on the European political scene, the success of the RIGHT in Europe was facilitated by four problematic issues that have made themselves known since 2020. The war in Ukraine has

become an additional factor of tension and added a degree of socio-political confrontation to these problems. So, we are talking about the following:

- cost of living crisis;
- slowdown in the industrial sector;
- the problem of emigrants;
- rising defense spending.

2. Cost of Living Crisis

According to European statistics, the poorest countries among the EU countries are Romania, Croatia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. The latter, by all accounts, ranks first in the ranking of the poorest with an indicator of 17 thousand dollars of GDP per capita [14]. The locomotives of the EU – Germany and France – are not in the best condition either, whose economy has shown zero growth for the third year in a row.

However, as the economic realities of the lives of the inhabitants of the European house show, the slogan “GDP per capita” and the game of numbers usually overlook the risks of statistics as a certain abstraction, behind which the real picture is not visible. This is just the magic of the perception of financial reality, which hides the real problems of the greater Europe. As numerous publications show, the most urgent problem of Europeans in the last 5 years has become the cost of living crisis. Official statistics only shed light on what is behind this growing concern. As Euronews states [15], the increase in the cost of living is the most urgent problem for more than 90% of Europeans. In support of this thesis, experts also cite the relevant figures. In 2022, the largest share of household expenses in the EU fell on housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels – 24.1%. This is followed by food and non-alcoholic beverages – 13.6% and transport costs – 12.5%. If we compare the shares from 2002 to 2022, the biggest changes occurred in housing costs. So, if in 2002 the total household expenses were 1,000 euros, then 211 euros were spent on rent and bills. By 2022, this amount had increased to 241 euros. Moreover, the share of household expenses on housing and utilities has been steadily growing, reaching a peak of almost 25% in 2013. In 2020, these figures amounted to 25.6%.

Experts say that the cost of housing as a percentage of total household expenditure varies significantly across European countries. In 2022, Slovakia topped the list, with housing spending accounting for over 30% of

expenditure. It is followed by Finland and Denmark with shares of 29.6% and 29.1% respectively. A recent OECD report on affordable housing highlights that housing costs can be a heavy financial burden for households, especially those on lower incomes. In 2022, almost half of low-income private tenants in the UK [49%] spent more than 40% of their income on rent, compared with 32% in France and 28% in Italy. The most sensitive issue in the housing topic is the cost of heating and electricity. This is a critical indicator of household financial costs. It [the indicator] is constantly growing, which is the most sensitive stimulus for solidarity in society and in the mood of large social groups. The most sensitive of them are young people, the elderly or those with physical disabilities, people who do not have a permanent job or have low qualifications and level of competences or have lost their jobs as a result of bankruptcies. Taken together, this is the protest potential that in the last 10 years has become the main threat to European unity, both for the political forces that cement it with the help of liberal-democratic values, and for the financial and economic capabilities of the welfare state.

However, the limitation and fading of this resource in the struggle for power that was witnessed in 2005-2015 due to the “crisis” of emigration policy within the EU and the deepening of the socio-political crisis due to the “braking” of industrial locomotives – Germany and France – became a signal that the EU countries gradually began to enter a phase of a long recession with many unknowns. According to Eurostat, as of July 2024, compared to May 2023, the industrial activity indicator in the eurozone decreased by another 2.9%. The largest decrease was observed in Slovenia [- 7.3%], Germany [- 6.6%] and Bulgaria [- 6.3%], Romania [- 6.9%], as well as in Denmark [- 4.9%]. Other countries of the European Community are not in a better condition [16].

Thus, the general picture of the well-being of the European community as a complex system convincingly indicates that the stable functioning of the socio-economic and political-ideological spheres as its main components in the conditions of growing internal and external pressure becomes impossible. The situation is also worsened by the possible variable choice of probable strategies for overcoming the crisis. Either it [the European community] relies on internal resources, or it seeks a way out in active and constructive diplomacy with external players and waits for better times in

the economic and political situation. However, one thing should be kept in mind here – in the conditions of growing tension between the main centers of power, which is happening today, countries that are not part of them are beginning to adhere to a balanced [slightly removed] line of behavior. The first path/choice will most likely be of an “isolationist” nature and is catastrophic for the national economies of the EU leader countries, which are dependent on resources and trade. The second is “national egoism”, when leading countries will start implementing their own projects at the interstate level. Here it is appropriate to recall the speech of US President D. Trump at the Dawis 2025 forum [17] and his statement that he will communicate with Europe through national governments, and not with the European bureaucracy, which represents no one but itself.

Brussels’ response to D. Trump’s statement was even greater consolidation through various formats of emergency meetings of the leaders of the European Union countries, in which London began to play a significant role. It is appropriate to note here that in the US/EU confrontation, the British government seeks not to lose the spirit of Anglo-Saxon solidarity within the framework of **AUKUS** [2021] and to preserve the economic opportunities for cooperation with the EU, which London lost as a result of **BREXIT** [2020]. Let us recall the famous G. Palmerston – the former head of the British Foreign Office, who defined the “eternal basis” of London’s political behavior. “We have neither eternal allies nor permanent friends, but our interests are eternal and permanent”. However, this does not mean that in the conditions of growing tension in the eurozone, this formula will not be followed by other European countries.

The immediate reaction of Paris and Berlin to the statement of the US president has testified to this approach. In the policy of “rapprochement with the US” of President E. Macron [two meetings with D. Trump in 2025], France has shown that it will not move far from the US. In the rhetoric of Paris regarding world and European affairs, there is only rhetoric and the game of the familiar “grandeur”. After all, in addition to European affairs, the two countries have common interests in the Middle East, the South Caucasus, North and Central Africa. As in previous centuries, peace in France is provided by the resources of the colonial heritage, which Paris will hold on to at all costs. It is enough to turn to the well-known concept of “Francophonie” and the updated French national defense strategy-2022 [18].

As for Germany, in the realities of the modern world, its position is the most vulnerable. The path of its prosperity over the past 50 years has been ensured by the “energy” friendship with the former Soviet Union, and then with Russia. From now on, the slowdown of the “German machine”, which began in the past 5 years, can be stopped by cheap resources, trade and integration projects with the most important partners, which primarily include the USA and China. For Germany, with its GDP of 4 trillion. USD [2024 figure], the EU market is too small.

3. Slowdown in the industrial sector

The slowdown in the industrial sector is the main factor in the crisis of confidence in the political forces in power both in Brussels and in the EU countries. The first signs of a recession in the eurozone showed themselves in 2020. At the end of 2024, this process acquired even more threatening dynamics due to government collapses in Europe’s two largest economies and growing distrust among businesses and consumers. As Bloomberg writes, citing Eurostat data, gross domestic product in the fourth quarter of 2024 did not change compared to the previous three months, contrary to analysts’ forecasts, which believed that the bloc of 20 countries showed growth of 0.1%. Production fell by 0.2% in Germany and by 0.1% in France. In Italy and Austria, GDP remained almost unchanged. In addition, the threat of punitive trade measures by US President D. Trump became an additional factor in the growing negativity of public sentiment. The European Central Bank’s [ECB] intentions to lower the deposit rate by another quarter of a point, to 2.75%, do not add to optimism [19].

The stagnation of the economies of Germany, France and other EU countries is stimulated by two factors – dependence on energy carriers and the policy of purchasing necessary resources outside the eurozone countries. According to M. Draghi – the former head of the ECB, they form the roots of Europe’s economic problems. The cost of energy for industry is already 158% higher than in the USA, and for natural gas it is even higher – by 345%. The situation is also aggravated by the fact that 80% of all necessary resources are purchased by eurozone countries outside the union [20].

Here it is appropriate to recall the statement of the head of the ECB, K. Lagarde, who stated in Davos – 2025, “that the economy is the distribution of resources that are not enough. In the 1980s-1990s, the economy,

through the development of globalization and free markets, focused on the redistribution of resources from the point of view of efficiency. Today, she stated, efficiency has receded into the background, giving way to the importance of security [21]”. So, in the language of a person responsible for finance, she tried to convey a fairly simple message – big business is concerned about the loss of perhaps the most important source of excess profits, which is symbolized by the slogans “efficiency” and “free markets”. And this threatens the flow of “cheap money”.

It seems that the European Commission is inclined to overcome the difficult times in Europe based on the recipes of M. Draghi, who, at the request of U. von der Leyen, proposed his vision of a salvation strategy in 2024. It provides for about 170 proposals for “radical changes” [20].

According to the expert community of the Politico publication, the recipe for saving Europe in the conditions of many uncertainties of today and growing competition from the USA and China can be considered in the following five steps:

- increased investment in decarbonisation of the economy, digital innovation and infrastructure, which are a common European good and serve as a proven basis for the success of the market economy; reallocation of the EU budget (today it amounts to more than €1 trillion) from poorer regions of Europe to industrial policy, digitalisation and innovation;

- increased labour productivity and a culture of production; a coordinated strategy covering the entire value chain: from raw materials to the final product;

- use of tariffs to counter the protectionist policies of the US and China; application of the principle of joint procurement of raw materials through coordination of trade agreements;

- support for the “social model” of the economy, the preferences of which can be beneficial for European producers and companies;

- improved governance in EU structures.

According to Draghi, it will be difficult to implement this ambitious plan, because the main challenge is the modern strategy of governance in the EU. Europe needs a clearer coordination of fiscal policy, and for this it is necessary to reform the work of the European Commission. Here it is appropriate to recall F. Bacon – a representative of the English philosophical school and his doctrine of “idols” [idolum – false images] that

haunt a person throughout his life. Apparently, in the conditions of national polyphony, the modern European bureaucracy is unable to overcome these idols of consciousness, if only because the path it is paving for Europe is a permanent field of misunderstanding between the unification of actions, images, values, strategies, etc. and the spirit of national existence, which awakens in each country at critical times in its history. And for the EU member states, they have come.

4. The problem of emigrants

According to UN estimates, in 2017, there were 61 million emigrants in the EU countries. The largest number was registered in Germany – 12.2 million, Great Britain – 8.8 million, France – 7.9 million, Spain – 5.9 million and Italy – 5.8 million. However, in a country like Austria, although their absolute figure is quite insignificant – about 700 thousand – it is critical. After all, we are talking about almost 10% of the total population of the country [22]. Data on the emigrant wave in Europe for 2017 is a response to the echoes of the “Arab Spring”, which the expert community associates with two reasons. The first was formed by systemic socio-economic and political injustice in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, and the second – the intervention of the USA and leading European countries in the civil and political confrontation in these countries on the side of “those” or “other” forces that were in a state of conflict. Vivid examples of the fact that a conflict is easy to inflame but difficult to extinguish are the events in Syria and Libya, which are in fact a continuation of the “Arab Spring” and are still actively taking place today.

In the distant past, the problems of these years in the emigrant history of Europe can be considered more settled. Europe/EU proved to be able to withstand this wave of pressure on the socio-economic component of the national stability of the member states of the EU club and direct it in a more civilized direction. However, in 2015-2018, against the background of the readiness of the government of A. Merkel – Chancellor of Germany – to “accept everyone”, the position of Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and other new EU countries looked more than restrained and not very solidary. The matter was not only in the economic capabilities of the country of refuge, but also in the risks of the ethics and lifestyle of Europeans for emigrants as representatives of other national groups and cultures. As

evidenced by the entire previous (2000-2005) and subsequent (2015-2020) waves of emigration, these aspects of emigrants' lives were and remain the most problematic and socially conflictual. Here it is appropriate to recall the outbreak of terrorism in Western Europe in the early 2000s and the well-known work of Thilo Sarrazin, "Germany is destroying itself" [Deutschland schafft sich ab], in which the author expresses the opinion that Germany's current emigration policy is erroneous. In his opinion, for a long time, instead of importing "brains", it has been aimed at importing "begging" [23]. "Germany", he says, "should begin a policy of building up an intellectual resource that is inexhaustible and capable of renewal. But this requires a consistent state policy" [23].

The issue of emigration within the EU was also exacerbated by Russia's war against Ukraine. The wave of emigrants from Ukraine in the first years of the war [2022-2023] caused significant pressure on the socio-economic, financial and administrative spheres of countries located on the eastern and southern wings of the EU. These are Poland, Slovakia, Germany, Hungary and Romania.

According to Eurostat, as of the end of July 2024, 4.1 million Ukrainians had received temporary protection in the EU, mainly in Germany and Poland. Almost half were women, a third were children, and less than a quarter were men. However, according to the UN, as of the end of September 2024, more than 6 million Ukrainians had temporary protection in European countries. Almost 600 thousand more Ukrainians received protection outside Europe [24].

In the history of emigrant hospitality in Europe, the years 2023-2024 were turning points. The general "fatigue" was first expressed by Germany, which was one of the first to provide refugees with the best conditions of stay. In the first sociological studies of this period, more than 52% of Germans surveyed would like Germany to accept fewer refugees. The main reason was the increase in expenses from the federal and local budgets for the maintenance of a large number of people. The second is the abuse of their status by a certain part of the refugees and the unwillingness to find temporary employment in the country of residence. This situation prompted the Government of German Chancellor U. Scholz to change the policy of supporting Ukrainian refugees. The main guidelines of the new approach were a decrease in the amount of social support and mandatory employment

[25]. The governments of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and other EU countries also witnessed a change in the rules for supporting refugees from Ukraine. The new strategy for supporting refugees has actually outlined the “limit” of the integration capabilities of the EU countries and the willingness of a number of governments of the EU member states to establish border controls within the Union. Paradoxically, this opinion was expressed in 2024 by the leader of the CDU/CSU, F. Merz (A. Merkel’s successor as party leader), in the new party program “Living freely – confidently leading Germany into the future” [26], who is running for the position of Chancellor of Germany in the 2025 elections. By the way, anti-immigrant rhetoric has become a significant factor in the election races in the EU countries and in relation to the Union itself in 2024 and 2025.

5. From increasing defense spending to a European army

Plans to create a European military power as a separate sign of its independence from the US and NATO, where Washington would play the role of the dominant power, began to be actively promoted in the early 2000s. The first violin in this project was played and is played by France, which positions itself as the political locomotive of the new Europe and at the same time pursues a policy of “light detachment” from NATO. A vivid example of this was Charles de Gaulle’s “decisive step” regarding Paris’s withdrawal from the military component of NATO in 1966 and the “quiet” return to the club during the presidency of N. Sarkozy in 2009.

The policy of returning Paris in the 2000s reflects both President E. Macron’s own political ambitions and the phenomenon of “the greatness of France” as the self-proclaimed status of Paris in the eyes and history of Europeans. Here are present the slogans of the French Revolution of 1789, the spirit of Napoleon, and the determination of De Gaulle [27, p. 27-51] in plans for the policy of European unification.

The coming to power in the USA of D. Trump following the results of the 2024 presidential elections, and his special views on the future of the world order and the role of Europe [EU] in world politics, pushed the topic of a “European army” into the discussions of European politicians. The signal that the best times are coming for Europe were D. Trump’s speeches at the Davos forum-2025, the speeches of US Vice President

Jay Dee Vance and US Secretary of Defense Pete Haggett at the Munich Security Conference-2025. The main message regarding the security of Europeans sounded too pragmatic – European countries should spend 5% of GDP on defense. And secondly – from now on, Europe should bear greater responsibility for its security and not rely on constant support from the USA [17].

The growth of defense spending within the EU raises two questions: what does Europe have? and what does Europe want? Data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) – London show that in 2024, European NATO member states and Canada spent an average of 2% of GDP on defense. The United States spent almost one trillion dollars on defense, which is equivalent to 3.4% of GDP [28]. As experts state, the peace in Europe in the 2000s became a very critical time for the military component of EU security. This is the so-called “forgetting anxiety”, when service in the army ceased to be an attractive thing, and the military-industrial complex [MIC] of the leading EU countries gradually began to lose its purpose. This was especially evident in aviation, missile and artillery weapons systems, ground and space communication systems, control, etc. The situation for the European military-industrial complex was worsened by the fact that, starting with the first wave of NATO expansion [1999], all new NATO countries were automatically tied to military contracts with the US military-industrial complex.

There is another very significant shortcoming of the armies of Europe – their controversial “readiness” to perform the task of defending the European theater in the event of the start of high-intensity hostilities. The first bell rang during the Yugoslav crisis in the 1990s of the last century. Then the NATO military machine did not dare to conduct the ground part of the military operation against Serbia due to possible high losses in the conflict. The picture of the war was created by massive rocket attacks and air strikes on the territory of the country. Such a picture of the war testified to a very simple truth: the rhetoric of politicians and another picture in the media of large-scale exercises are one thing, the practice and moral readiness of the troops to perform specific tasks during the conflict are quite another. The Afghan campaign [2001-2021], where European national contingents within NATO strengthened the US military machine, is a good example of this. In addition, as Western experts state today, in the event of

an aggravation of the situation on NATO's eastern flank, the allies have a too "broad" view of possible reactions. For example, Great Britain will be able to deploy one division. In the officer corps of the French armed forces, there is generally "pessimism" about participation in the conflict. And some Polish politicians, judging by the socio-political discussion in the national media, have stated the need for Warsaw to acquire its own nuclear weapons.

The answer to the question "what does Europe want?" is contained in the summit in Brussels held on March 6, 2025. At it, the leaders of the European Union countries approved the lifting of budget restrictions, which makes it possible to increase military spending. According to the European Commission, 650 billion euros could be released in this way. The summit participants also approved the European Commission's proposal for a loan fund for EU countries of 150 billion euros for further investment in defense. First of all, attention will be paid to air and missile defense systems, artillery systems and ammunition, as well as unmanned systems and protection against them. This decision became a consolidated response of the EU member states to the implementation of the **ReArm Europe** plan, which was publicly presented by the President of the European Commission U. von der Leyen. According to the document, the EU assumes responsibility for its defense and expresses its readiness to assist Ukraine [29]. Time will tell how far the **ReArm Europe** plan will extend its military construction in the EU [the creation of a European army], but it seems that in this matter Brussels still has plans to get rid of the strict US guardianship through NATO – a tie.

Making a decision under the mechanism of "relaxing budget restrictions" means that this money will be "transferred" from other items of consolidated EU spending, which usually have a socio-economic focus. And this means a strengthening of the field of criticism of the course of the EU's democratic leaders from the "rights" and a growth of protest sentiments among the most vulnerable segments of the population.

6. Conclusions

1. The crisis of confidence in liberal democrats and the success of right-wing forces in the EU today are a manifestation of the unlearned lessons of the theory and practice of liberal ideology on the part of the European bureaucracy, which in the last 50 years of being in power used the resources

of previous times of “economic peace” and military-political stability. Low defense spending, the NATO umbrella, cheap resources and controlled markets accompanied the successes of the European democrats’ strategy of “happiness for all” until “cheap money” ran out, super-profits from the “price scissors” of market morality and trust between the main centers of power regarding the openness of their intentions “in relation to” conducting transparent and honest policies. Here the natural law of self-preservation [national interest] worked, which G. Kissinger captured in the slogan “in a system based on rules, problems arose”.

2. The hopes of the “RIGHT FORCES” to seize the levers of power in the EU institutions are rather phantom. Today – this is the success of time and circumstances. This is inherent in the complex system that the EU is, at least by virtue of the laws of Hegelian dialectics. As well as inherent in the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of this club live by the law of self-preservation and are under the pressure of the culture of consumption and personal success. In the vastness of Europe, the spirit of the German bourgeoisie has transformed into the morality of the “outside the problematic life” of a citizen of the Union, in the mass consciousness of which dangers and threats are equally “devoid of root causes” and permanent in nature – emigrants, market, conflicts, war, etc.

3. Today, Europe [the EU] is in a situation of permanent pressures and rapid changes. Their nature is dictated, first of all, by the economy and the military security sector. Both of them require a lot of financial injections and coordination of actions by Brussels and national governments. The hope of the European bureaucracy to ensure the military component of Europe’s security “immediately and now” with the help of the announced **ReArm Europe** plan is rather a “call in the desert”. On the one hand, this will take time [at least 5-7 years], and on the other, the nature of missile systems based on the “hyper-gas” principle and their TTX already allow achieving the military-political goals of the conflict in a limited time and without conducting a ground operation. The geo-natural conditions of the countries of Europe and the economic atlas of the location of industrial production and energy system facilities make them an ideal target for such systems. With changes in the rules of the game in world politics, the “borders of what is permissible” will also change. Nuclear arsenals are nothing more than insurance in the politics of the “powers of the world”.

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