

## **European Realism: A Case for Future EU-Russian Relations**

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The absence of the European Union (EU) grand strategy was caused to a large extent by three main factors: First and foremost, there is still a considerable discussion ongoing whether the EU is an actor of international relations or not. Nonetheless, let us suggest that the EU sometimes acts as one, and thus we should focus on a unit level analysis. Second, the US-led liberal world order which arose after the Cold War caused that the EU was careless about security measures and the other great powers since there was very little to worry about. And the third factor is the existence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which prevented the balance of power on the continent from occurring. Thereby, the EU was always depending on security provided by Washington; and Washington tolerated European freeriding as a part of its superiority in European affairs. Alas, the liberal world order is collapsing mostly due to the rise of China and the resurrection of Russia as alternative powers. As well as Washington is no longer willing to tolerate European freeriding regarding its security and excludes European interests from its foreign policy agenda. This new reality in international relations is forcing the EU to act as an independent actor. Otherwise, single states such as Germany or France would not stand a chance in global affairs dominated by realist great powers like the United States and China. As former German minister of foreign affairs, Sigmar Gabriel, correctly put it, Europe is a “vegetarian in a world of carnivores.”

It is obvious that the EU needs to make a shift in the way it perceives international politics. Because as the recent example from Washington points out, following liberal foreign policy agendas in a world full of realist powers is a recipe for disaster. Thus, this paper makes a case for the realist grand strategy of the EU. Thereby, the central question is outlined as follows: *“Why should the EU pursue a realist-based approach towards Russia?”*. As I will reveal in this article, the main pillars of the realist grand strategy of the EU should be self-help, or deterrence and restraint. The main method of the article will be a qualitative case study using realism as a main theoretical approach to the analysis of historical sources and approaches in international relations, international security and applied history.

**Keywords:** European Union, Russia, grand strategy, realism, deterrence, restraint