



**Call for Papers "Geopolitics & Values: what is the real power of the EU?"**

**THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS ROLE AS PROMOTER OF EUROPEAN VALUES  
AND PEACE IN WORLD POLITICS**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

With a sanitary, economic and political crisis worldwide and having to cope with the effects of the Covid19 pandemic, the consolidation of the Chinese giant as emerging economic and technological power and the United States of America, immersed in a political crisis and extreme division after the presidential elections, the need of defining the role of Europe in international foreign affairs is more important than ever.

None of the Member States of the European Union has the power or resources to respond on their own to the threats that we are currently facing. As a union of nearly five hundred million citizens, the potential of the European Union has no comparison. The diplomatic network of the European Union is widespread and rooted in every corner of the globe. One of the three first economies in the world is Europe's and its role as the first trading partner and investor is strongly consolidated. The European Union together invests more than everyone else in the world in cooperation for development.

Notwithstanding the above, it is also clear that the European Union is not fully using this potential. European citizens understand that Europe should take responsibility for its role in the world and become a global security provider. Only by acting together, strengthening the bonds among the member states the European Union will allow to meet the needs of the citizens and maintain its leader role in the world's politics.

### **Short bio**

Begoña has 9 years of experience in Management Consulting and Tax Law. She has participated in important projects for the Public Sector related to the redesign of both the organisation and the processes model, with an impact on the functional and even technological evolution of the information systems. She has a sound experience in working for European Institutions as well as the Member States' authorities, in the compliance with policies and regulations and the implementation of the changes. She is the former President of the Young Democrats for Europe, the youth organisation of the European Democrat Party.



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According to the legend of Europa contained in Britannica, it is said that Zeus, disguised as a bull, kidnapped the young princess Europe from Phoenicia, taking her from the Eastern world to Crete, in the West, and therefore, fulfilling the metaphor of Europeanizing the West. Europe was and is the reference based on which the new free and modern world has been built.

The political, ethic and social crisis of the old continent is provoking that Europe, with its moral and strategic values, is again kidnapped by the new gods of the Olympus, which entails the detriment of the standards of living and the increase of the lack of security for the European citizens.

### **The lack of a military strong common policy in the European Union**

Historically, the nations have gained advantage at the cost of others, by occupation of lands, grabbing material sources and slave labouring the population for the profit of the oppressor. Leaving the ethical and moral considerations aside, it has been proven that this kind of power used as an instrument has been successful in a temporary way, as no empire or leadership has lasted forever .

Even though certain nations have positioned themselves strongly in the military axis, the evolution of the nature of war and the use of weapons used have changed the geopolitical scenario. The destruction has been built proficient with the evolution of the nuclear and chemical weapons and nowadays the civilian casualties would be devastating in a war situation.

The evolution of international politics spells worrying and uncertain scenarios for the European Union nowadays, especially in terms of its geopolitical position in world politics. Just before the coronavirus crisis, one of the main discussion topics in European institutions were the limited military capabilities of Europe, being especially significant the gaps in technological innovation, a lagging military industrial base and the low national military allocation of expenses.

The background problem that arises is the inexistence of a strong common military policy or a common military force in the European Union, leading to the dissemination of the national efforts, which end up in the duplication of weak efforts at national level. The military capabilities of the EU countries are increasingly oriented towards crisis management operations and not that much towards territorial defence.

**Figure 1. Government expenditure in defence made by the EU (2019) with respect to USA**

Expenses in defense policies	 European Union	 United States of America
Total amount	EUR 227.000 millions	EUR 545.000 millions
% over GDP	1,34%	3,3%
Investment per soldier	EUR 27.639	EUR 108.322

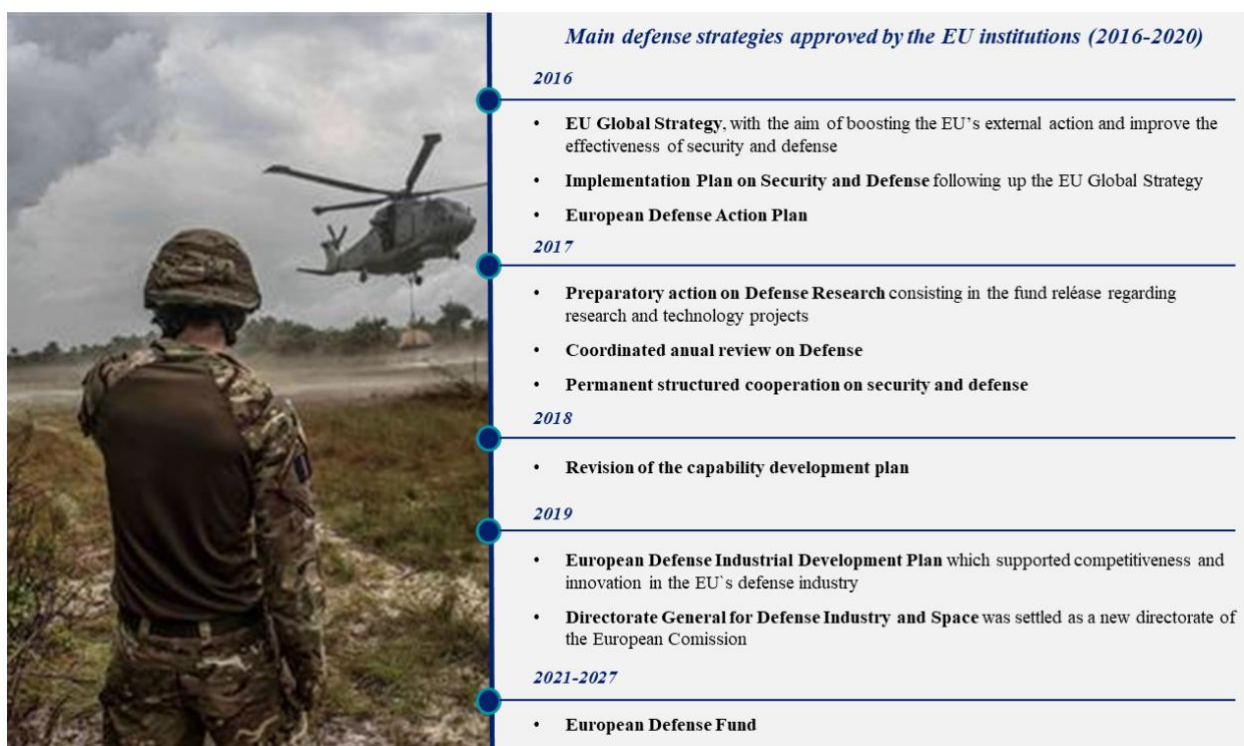
Source: Eurostat 2019

In recent years the European Union is moving forward towards a voluntary military integration, which would also consider a new model of integration and decision-making policies

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in the military scope. In addition, a bunch of European countries are as well increasing their military and defence budgets. These efforts might lead us to the wrong acknowledgement that finally Europe is assuming the geopolitical role that it should in world politics, due to its strategic and economic weight, in military terms. As mentioned in the policy brief released by the Netherlands Institute of International relations (Clingendael, 2016) the assumption of the freedom of military access and movement which has guided the European strategic thinking since the end of the cold war, is no longer valid and the new military strategic paradigm should be analysed with an updated approach and related capabilities.

**Figure 2. Main defence strategies approved by the European institutions (2016-2020)**



Source: *EU Strategy and European Defence, Clingendael (2020)*

### **Foreign policy catalyst of EU values**

The European Union's position in world politics has consolidated as a global soft power based in cultural, social and economic influence among other players. This position can be understood as positive, considering that the European Union already contributes significantly to cultural, social and economic developments and therefore, its international role is secured.

On the other hand, as Tuomas Forsberg analyses in his book "The Power of the European Union", the detractors might argue that other global powers have shown mixed attitudes towards the international influence of the European Union, considering that its foreign policy is not effective, as the power of the European Union is declining in favour of new emerging players.

In this age of digital transformation and globalisation, there is an increasing influence of the non-state and non-governmental players in the political scenario, being more appropriate to

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exert power “ with “others than “on” others. In this sense, the development of trust and collaborative networks to achieve common goals and the use of soft power instead of hard power, becomes more relevant in this context.

The use of hard power, as well as soft power always begins with diplomacy, the art and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of groups and states. Diplomacy is therefore the instrument through which different players conduct foreign policy.

For the past 40 years Europe has been working to strengthen its role in foreign policy. Over the last decades, the European Union has raised its profile as a credible moral force focused in the strengthen of human rights, supporting democracy and enhancing the rule of law worldwide as stated by the European Parliament.

The power of the European Union is strongly associated with persuasion. The fundamental characteristic of the foreign policy of the European Union is its role as a key player in the development of a large part of the world’s regions. As mentioned in the article “The European Union's soft power: Image branding or neo-colonialism?” published by the University of Navarre (Spain) in 2018, the European Union has participated in numerous projects in the economic, cultural and political field in order to promote its values and interests and contribute to peace, security and sustainable development though solidarity and respect.

### **Successful foreign policies driven by the EU**

#### Trade and international development as a driver of European values

The military capability, understood as the hard power in geopolitics, and historically considered the fundamental vehicle of power, has proven to be ineffective these days on its own.

Nowadays, the economic power, understood as the capability to produce goods and trade with them is where the real power resides and so, what it should be fostered as a catalyst to promote and spread European values within the Union and outside its borders, consolidating the Union’s position as the warrant of democracy, justice, rule of law, freedom and solidarity.

The European Union is one of the most advanced and stable economies worldwide and as long as it integrates the economies of 27 member states it can be considered the first commercial and economic power in the world. The trade activities of the European Union can be considered as part of the soft power as they involve both: trade agreements with other countries which foster cooperation and development projects which help middle and low-income countries.

In this regard, the European Union has been working together with Latin America for over 20 years, contributing to vast investments and as a result obtaining positive collateral effects in both, economic and diplomatic relationships. Nowadays, the European Union is allocating grants for Latin American regions to be used in fields such as security, good governance or social equity. By influencing these issues, the European Union enhances development and fosters democratic values and solidarity principles in different regions. Fighting against poverty and corruption in Latin America, for instance, would contribute to peace and the development of a more equal society, which would finally contribute to the enriching of the society and have an economic impact derived from trade.

In addition, the European Neighbouring Countries (ENP) cooperation project, fostered by the European Commission, must also be mentioned at this point. The ENP is a cooperation project to enhance prosperity, stability and security in the States bordering the European Union.

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Through the ENP, the European Union is able to work together in issues concerning both sides such as migration and mobility, security, good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights and economic stabilisation.

Culture, the soft power that builds bridges between communities

The cultural exchange allows to promote ideas, knowledge and share different views among different people. According to the European Commission, the cultural promotion policies driven by the European Union are based on three pillars.

The first pillar is the establishment of the cultural and behavioural values first when acting. In this sense, peace, democracy, freedom, dignity, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights are at the core of European Union's foreign policy.

The second pillar is the fact that the European Union uses culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development. In this sense, the European Union promotes dialogue and peaceful relations and fosters cultural heritage in other countries. As an example of these soft power policies Latin America must be mentioned, is the initiative fostered by the EU-LAC Foundation since 2017, where the European Union has encouraged the development of audio-visual projects with the objective of confronting social problems.

Lastly, the third pillar consists in the European Union's approach to cultural diplomacy by joining forces with relevant stakeholders in order to create a soft power ecosystem.

European Union's mediator role in global politics

The European Union is seen by the rest of the globe as an international player that shows cohesion and unity.

In the last decade, notwithstanding the above, the European Union's foreign policy has been certainly complex. Since the approval of Lisbon Treaty in 2007, the European institutions have more influence and representation powers, which have resulted in the aggrandisement of figures such as the High Representative of Foreign and Security Policy (in the Treaty of Amsterdam), a position currently occupied by the Spanish Josep Borrell. This role is the responsible of negotiating and representing Europe on behalf of the member states accordingly with the European Committee of the Regions. In this sense, the role of this figure as an international mediator (a neutral actor in international conflicts) must be mentioned, in order to raise awareness on the position that Europe holds as a peacemaker and warrant of freedom.

Mediation, peace building and conflict prevention are at the heart of the European Union's action as already mentioned, though the influence of the High Representatives on European Union's foreign policy depends on the approach of the person occupying the position and their capability to interact with self-selected groups of member states leading a particular foreign policy.

As stated by J. Berman in his study "The European Union as a peace Mediator" (2016), although the mediation role of the European Union is still not as strong as the United Nations, the European Union has achieved certain goals that must be taken into account, such as its role as facilitator between Kosovo and Serbia, fostering the dialogue among the parts of the conflict.

**Expectations of what the EU can achieve internationally**

As already analysed in the European External Action policy papers, the European Union plays an important role in diplomacy, the promotion of human rights, trade, developments, and



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humanitarian and collaborating and cooperating with different countries. Despite of this, is the European Union a real political union regarding its role in foreign affairs? It is said that Henry Kissinger once said, “Who do I call if I want to call Europe?”. Even if this can be considered a bad joke, the truth is that it explains perfectly the current situation, in which Europe shows limited capabilities in the development of common foreign policies, adapted to today’s challenges.

With a sanitary, economic and political crisis worldwide and having to cope with the effects of the Covid19 pandemic, the consolidation of the Chinese giant as emerging economic and technological power and the United States of America, immersed in a political crisis and extreme division after the presidential elections, the need of defining the role of Europe in international foreign affairs is more important than ever.

### **Macron’s vision of a sovereign, united and democratic EU**

The challenges of our time, such as migration, digital transformation, development or climate change are fought individually by the European Member States, which try to defend their interests and values. But, can these challenges be fought individually? In this context, the vision and initiative of French President Emmanuel Macron, is today more up to date than ever.

On 26 September 2017, the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, gave the Initiative for Europe speech, where he expressed his vision to rebuild Europe with a sovereign, united and democratic approach, in order to ensure our future.

#### A sovereign Europe

President Macron’s vision of a sovereign Europe is based mainly on the establishment of a common intervention force and a common defence budget for the European Union, in order to deal with the security challenges such as terrorism with a common approach. Secondly, his vision considers that Europe must address jointly the migration challenge and act together regarding border management and asylum procedures.

The sovereignty vision fostered by President Macron also considers relevant the development of bilateral relationships with countries of the North of Africa and the Mediterranean, being exemplary regarding sustainable development, the development of regulation and facilitating the research related to the digital world and maintaining the eurozone at the heart of Europe’s economic power.

#### A united Europe

Macron’s vision of a united Europe stands in a common social and tax convergence and must be based on common culture and knowledge, conserving Europe’s vast heritage and fostering cooperation and exchange among universities and students.

#### A democratic Europe

Finally, Macron’s vision of a democratic Europe stands in the involvement and empowerment of European citizens and making them participate more actively in European politics. In this sense, this vision recalls the need of a real European debate among citizens and the need of strengthening the European Parliament through the creation of transnational lists, which would allow Europeans to vote for a more coherent and common European Project.



### **The importance of a Franco German tandem**

President Macron's vision included a call to European member states to refund Europe, to renew the treaties between countries. He made a call to the Élysée Treaty, which was a treaty of friendship between France and West Germany, signed by President Charles de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in January 1963 at the Élysée palace in Paris. This treaty ended centuries of rivalry between countries and called important questions concerning defence and reconciliation among other topics and laid the groundwork for a closer bilateral cooperation to support European integration.

This treaty settled the cornerstone for European cooperation over 50 years ago. In this context, the need of refunding Europe with a new approach of shared sovereignty between countries is more necessary than ever. In this sense, the refoundation can start with France and Germany, but it must be made extensive to all the countries in Europe. Fear of change is understandable, disagreement among members is also probable, but discussing and debating in order to reach an agreement that makes Europe have its own common and shared project is what we, Europeans, deserve.

### **More flexible and quicker decision taking procedures**

Recently, the European Commission has launched a debate on more efficient decision-making processes to be implemented in the European Union. There are still relevant policy areas in which a qualified majority voting is necessary to reach agreements and implement policies. In this regard, the European Commission considers that higher flexibility would improve the decision making process of the European Union, foster quick and more accurate responses and effectiveness.

### **Conclusions**

As it has been shown in the previous pages, both, the objectives and the way in which the current European Union is acting are being questioned. However, now more than ever, European citizens firstly and the rest of the world need a strong European Union.

None of the Member States of the European Union has the power or resources to respond on their own to the threats that we are currently facing. As a union of nearly five hundred million citizens, the potential of the European Union has no comparison. The diplomatic network of the European Union is widespread and rooted in every corner of the globe. One of the three first economies in the world is Europe's and its role as the first trading partner and investor is strongly consolidated. The European Union together invests more than everyone else in the world in cooperation for development.

Notwithstanding the above, it is also clear that the European Union is not fully using this potential. European citizens understand that Europe should take responsibility for its role in the world and become a global security provider. Just by acting together, strengthening the bonds among the member states the European Union will be able to meet the needs of the citizens and maintain its leader role in the world's politics.



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