

# THE EUROPEAN UNION'S IDENTITY AS AN INTERNATIONAL CIVILIAN ACTOR

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## Abstract

Treating the EU through the civilian power prism and its civilisatory mission (*la mission civilisatrice*) is one of the oldest distinctive European concepts relating to its international political power, and consequently, of its nature as a security actor in the international relations. Conceptualization of the EU as a civilian power first makes the author *François Duchêne*, that interpreting the security and power structure of the European Union, its attributes (such as: weak diplomacy, incoherency, and total deficit of armed forces) and of course its nature as *foedus pacificum* (League of peace), can be concluded and its existence as a civilian actor, tending to achieve civilian objectives. In that sense, this paper describes and analyzes the nature of the EU identity as a civilian security actor on the international political scene.

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**Keywords:** EU, civilian power, security, international relations

## Introduction

This paper is analysis of the essential features and elements of the civilian power Europe as a political and security concept. Namely, accompanied with the definition of the Union as a civilian power, is concluded and its essence as a *foedus pacificum* or the *League of peace*, as Immanuel Kant coined it in the book: *Project for a Perpetual Peace* (1795). Consequently, this formulation directly results from the pacifist orientation and determination of the Union as such, and its attitude towards the world, seeking to impose its pacifist and civilian vision on the international scene. Starting from the complexity and depth of this issue, this paper makes a short analysis of the ontological and epistemological manifestations of the presented phenomenon. In the text bellow, we will try to present the EU identity as an international civilian actor.

### **The EU's Identity As An International Civilian Actor**

The European Union (EU; Union) possesses its own exclusive “personality contour” that drastically differentiate it from other international actors, of course regarding its civilisatory mission and its civilian profile as a international security actor. Therefore, do not need at all costs to talk about the “nationalization” or “etatization” of the EU, because the geopolitical, strategic and certainly the geo - economical conditions, in which the EU is born, grow and function, are radically different *in relation to the states* as major international security actors. Thus, the Union sketches its identity through its specificity, distinctiveness and separateness in relation to other security and political actors. On this basis, it can be concluded that the identity is not something static, or fixed and once given, but it is a *dynamic process of (self) recognition, differentiation and establishment of a recognizable image of certain political community in the social environment*. In this context, the politics of identity refers to a particular set of ideas about political community (Nicolaidis, 2004: 98), and values about the particular political community which are used to mobilize and to induce *a state of cohesion and solidarity*, in order to legitimize the international security and political identity of the particular actor. Thus, the *cohesion* as such is key element for building such international security and political identity of particular community or actor. Accordingly, the authors like Jupille and Caporaso noted four different dimensions of coherence, especially within the EU framework.

The first dimension is called *value cohesion*, which basically has inclusive and integrative functions. Then, the second dimension is called *tactical cohesion*, which appears in terms of disharmony of the political attitudes of the member states, which use this “tactical” harmonization, for the fulfillment of their planned tasks and objectives. These authors also noted *the procedural cohesion*, which implies to a consensus in implementing the procedures for solving the “problematic” issues. Finally, as the fourth dimension, these authors noted the *output cohesion*, which directly refers to the situation where and when the member states of the Union, will fail to formulate a joint policy, regardless of the specific procedural rules. This type of cohesion directly implies the ability to articulate and formulate coherent and consistent foreign and security policy, which should provide a unique approach to the international relations of the Union *as unique and unison international security actor*. Analogously, the significance of this component within the EU emphasizes its inability to consistently formulate a cohesive and coherent foreign and security policy, because of different political and security views of its member states, in certain situations and under certain circumstances (e.g.: Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo etc.).

Namely, it is very important to underline that the Union *must not and should not build its future on the nation - state concept*, but it should continue to build itself on its genuine, distinct and civilian basis, which draw its legitimacy precisely from the postmodernism as its philosophical discourse. Regarding that, the postmodern political theory assumes several significant features, which are noted by the author Robert Cooper:

1. Breakdown of the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs,
2. Mutual interference in (traditional) domestic affairs and mutual surveillance,
3. Rejection of force for resolving disputes and consequent codification of self-enforced rules of behavior
4. Growing irrelevance of borders, come about both through the changing role of the state, but also through missiles, motor cars and satellites, and
5. Security based on transparency, mutual openness, interdependence and mutual vulnerability (Cooper, 2002: 2).

In favor of the EU distinctiveness and its postmodern identity as a civilian security actor, the theorist François Duchêne emphasized that: “Europe as a whole could well become the first example in history of a major centre of the balance of power (...) not a colonized victim but an *exemplar of a new stage in political civilization*” (Nicolaidis, 2004: 99). Even Romano Prodi, stressed the importance of the *Union exemplarity* and its successful model, when he said that the EU represent a “living example” which other international security actors undoubtedly should follow it. Also, the EU as civilian security actor assumes practicing the civilian power *through the use of civilian assets in achieving civilian purposes and objectives*, which directly derive from its ideological framework. Or as the author Laurent Cohen – Tanugi will highlight the EU pacifist orientation, describing it as a baggage of its ideological matrix: “multilateralism, global governance through law, and *pacifism* – Europe’s ideological baggage (...)” (Cohen – Tanugi, 2008: 88). Also, Hanns Maull further described the feature elements of the EU civilian power, which assumes certain characteristics closely related to the EU’s behavior and its international status as a *cooperative international security civilian actor*:

1. The acceptance of the necessity of cooperation with others in the pursuit of international [security] objectives,
2. The concentration on non - military, primarily economic, means to secure national goals, with military power left as a residual instrument serving essentially to safeguard other means of international interaction, and

3. A willingness to develop supranational [security] structures to address critical issues of international management (Smith, 2005: 2).

Based on that, key issue which arises is the need for differentiation between the *non - military vs. minimal military assets* and of course their use in the civilian security aims within the context of EU international civilizatory mission. Also, K. J. Holsti offers several possible variants that represent the way of imposing influence by one international security actor through: “using persuasion (eliciting a favorable response without explicitly holding out the possibility of punishments); offering rewards; granting rewards; threatening punishment; inflicting non - violent punishment; or using force” (Smith, 2005: 4). Likewise, Prof. Christopher Hill emphasized some additional variants for imposing influence: “an actor can *compel* another actor to do something, using force (the stick) or deterrence (the threat of the use of force). Or it can *sway* another actor’s decisions, using persuasion (the carrot) and deference (latent influence)” (Smith, 2005). As far as the Union with its co - operative and co - optive nature, this variants of persuasion and cooperation for imposing its influence in the international relations, are definitely compatible with its existing normative infrastructure and its ideological matrix, which undoubtedly assumed the necessity for cooperation with others, concentration on non - military primarily economic assets for achieving the international security objectives and a willingness for developing a supranational security structures, as an effort embodied in its *institution – building* motive.

The ideological framework of the EU, directly relates with its values, starting from its originality as post - war, pacifist, and postmodern actor. This is about those values that are directly and closely derived from the contemporary axiological constitution of the Western civilization, which modern civilization seems acceptable and desirable. Those are the following values: freedom, human rights, democracy, rule of law, individualism, civil society, pluralism, solidarity, protection of minorities, secularism, social - liberal economy, rationalism (as the greatest achievement of the Enlightenment) etc. Therefore, starting from the acceptability, progressivity, and the eternity of these value paradigms, it is constructed and the structure of the ideological matrix of the EU. Whereas, the main mechanism for EU operating as a civilian security actor in the international relations according to its ideological matrix, fundamentally can be articulated on three basic postulates: **(co)operation, (co)optation and (co)ordination**.

Primarily, the EU can base its civilian security influence on two levels, both *formally*, through connecting, networking, or institutionalizing its security relations with other actors (e.g.: strengthening the EU dimension within NATO), and *informally*, through its model as virtuous exemplar,

where according to Romano Prodi, the Union represents a “living example” of success in achieving the peace. The informal level assumes emulation of the EU by the other international actors in the political and security aspect. But, as regards the formal aspects of practicing its security influence in the world, or the legitimizing and norming the *cooperation* with other actors, as an axiom of its specific, multi-facial and polyvalent international civilian power. Then, through *co-opting*, the EU accepts to be a part of a certain group of international actors, which acting mutually complement each other, thusly accomplishing together their anticipated security goals and objectives, thereby maximizing their gains by collaborating. As an example for this, should be mentioned the peacekeeping missions and operations, organized and implemented by multiple actors including the EU, where EU primarily appears as a civilian security actor. Such are the following missions: Operation ARTEMIS, EUPOL Proxima, EUPAT, EUJUST Themis, EUFOR, EUPOL Kinshasa, AMIS EU, UNAMID, EUFOR RD Congo, EUFOR Chad/RCA, MINURCAT, AMM, EUPM, EUFOR Althea, EULEX Kosovo, EUBAM, EUMM Georgia. These missions have already been completed. While the following are ongoing missions: EUSEC RD Congo, EUPOL RD Congo, EU SSR Guinea – Bissau, EUNAVFOR Somalia (later called: EU Naval Operation Atalanta), EUJUST LEX, EUPOL Afghanistan and EUPOL COPPS.

Based on that, it can be concluded that the EU as a civilian security actor participate as an equal partner of the NATO and UN in implementing such peacekeeping (and police) missions worldwide, which undoubtedly strengthens the EU international identity and its security significance on the international scene.

Whereas, as a third element appears the term *coordination*, which construed means: common organization, norming and pacification of mutual relations between the international actors on the global political scene in order to achieve some preferential goals and security objectives. Likewise, these three postulates, are also basic elements of the EU multilateral reasoning and acting in the international relations.

Then, unlike the US doctrine of pre-emptive war and the “nation-building”, the EU in parallel to its *pre-emptive engagement*, affirms the concept of “state-building” or “institution-building” as an institutional and structural instrument for harmonization and integration of divided, conflicted or post-conflict societies. Or as Mark Leonard emphasized: “The EU doctrine of pre-emption in contrast is predicated on a long-term involvement, with the military just one strand of activity, along with pre-emptive economic and legal intervention, and is aimed at building the political and institutional bases of stability, rather than simply removing the immediate source of threat” (Leonard, 2005: 63). In that context, the EU doctrine of pre-

emptive engagement is *European Security Strategy* determination. Accordingly, as an example can be taken and the Balkans, where more than necessary was the creation of political structures, which possessed the strength to resist the ethnic nationalism, rather than to enhance it. Namely, “the core functions of state-building in Bosnia have been consciously designed to feed into the process of EU accession: building institutions, establishing the rule of law and economic reform, as well as encouraging refugees to return” (Leonard, 2005: 65). Namely, the urge to build institutions, emphasized in the aforementioned Maull’s typology, reflects the will of the *EU to develop supranational security structures* as a way to resolve critical issues and security infringements. Or as Jean Monnet stated: “Nothing is possible without men, nothing is lasting without institutions” (Ilik, 2009). In contrast, the absence of traditional armed forces of the EU (as regular means for imposing the influence through coercion and threat), regardless the installed *EU battle groups* and *Rapid Reaction Forces* within the Lisbon Treaty, does not represent a substantial deviation from the civilian nature of the EU and its identity as civilian security actor in the international relations. Within that, the author Stelios Stavridis emphasized: “Just because the EU has acquired military means *does not invalidate the concept of civilian power EU*. In fact, he contends that the EU *must* have military means in order to be a civilian power, because it is only by wielding military power that civilian ends can be pursued. Force can be necessary to promote human rights and democratic principles, and the EU should not hesitate to use it for those purposes” (Smith, 2005: 8). On this basis, it can be concluded that such situation is closely associated with the previous theoretical versions according to K. J. Holsti and Prof. Hill, in relation with their typology of imposing influence, which states that despite the violent (and non-violent) forms of coercion, there is also a form of persuasion, which directly implies *effective diplomacy*. Unlike the “bare” practicing of the power politics (the “stick”), which solely relies on military assets and potentials, using them as an identification for its diplomatic machinery (actually it's a problem with the growing power of China, and also the persistence of the “stubborn” unilateralism of the United States). Accordingly, such tendency for *militarily legitimization of diplomacy is not relevant for the Union as such, because its security discourse is based on the values generated through its ideological and all – inclusive ideological framework, constituted upon the norms stipulated in its constitutive treaties*, which include only a civilian forms of international activities. That means that the EU does not have a legal and political capacity to legitimize its diplomacy on masculine and military propositions. But with the Lisbon Treaty, the EU installed, so called, *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (as a special contribution to the enhancement of its quasi-militarily operative capacity), which should be

understood as investing in the minimalist “hard power” segment, which directly arise from the need for dealing with a possible external military aggression against any of the EU member states (the principle of solidarity), and the fight against the global terrorism (as a paradigm of the international cooperation and co - optation), the prevention of potential conflicts and dealing with other natural and humanitarian disasters. According to the Lisbon Treaty stipulations, and the expansion of the Petersburg tasks, the *Union will only gain legitimacy and an initial capacity to act in certain situations*, such as: disarmament, humanitarian actions, and conflict prevention, which fall within *the minimal military or military humanitarian activities of low rank*, in order to achieve its civilian security goals and objectives. With such assets, the Union declines itself from the practice of aggression, and “obliges” itself that such low military assets will only use in the specific security and defense situations under the certain circumstances, just then, when the practice of such assets is conditioned by the specific civilian goals and objectives. Or as Kofi Annan has argued in the context of the Kosovo war: “that there are times when the use of force may be legitimate [only] in the pursuit of peace” (Hyde-Price, 2004: 15). Through this formulation, it can be concluded that *the use of force by the Union must be an exception, while the use of law must be the rule*. Therefore, the use of force should be reduced only under the specific circumstances with a previously specified tasks and above all, human and civilian purposes, as essential elements of the EU identity as a civilian security actor in the international relations. Thus the Union should contribute to the maximum reduction of the power politics worldwide and its logic in general, permanently trying to substitute it with a *policy of cooperation* as I stated before. But the use of force must be oriented only in order to preserve the EU as *Foedus pacificum* because as Robert Cooper stated: “The EU cannot protect its postmodern paradise much less spread its postmodern message if it is not prepared to play by the rules of the jungle outside it” (Smith, 2005: 13). This kind of multilateral and pacifist psychology of the Union, was often contested and qualified as a sign of its weakness by the realist, not its potential power. In that regard, especially the “militant” and pro – *realpolitik* Americans, qualified the Union on several occasions, as an impotent, obstructionist, utopian and cynical. Or as Robert Kagan questioned: “Is Europe ready to oppose the knife with a knife?” (Kagan, 2002). Also, Kagan described the *modern European strategic culture* as a: “conscious rejection of the European past, a rejection of the evils of European *machtpolitik*. It is a reflection of Europeans’ ardent and understandable desire never to return to that past. Who knows better than Europeans the dangers that arise from unbridled power politics, from an excessive reliance on military force, from policies produced by national egoism and ambition, even from balance of

power and *raison d'état*?" (Kagan, 2008). In that sense, the new Europe spawned from the "gun barrels" had already started to build itself on some totally different, unconventional basis, which actually represent an axiological, normative, ethical and antimilitaristic construction, designed for totally pacification of the European continent (and the world), and progressing towards the protection, maintenance and achievement of a perpetual peace within the Europe, and the world as a whole. Accordingly, when discussing the Union as a civilian security actor in the international relations, should be noted the specificity of its *strategic culture*, which in its essence is highly pacifist - oriented, fully accepting the postulates of peaceful resolution of the conflicts, notorious affirmation of the culture of prevention *versus* the culture of repression, and the use of diplomacy instead of armed forces in the processes of solving the security issues.

## Conclusion

The civilian power Europe certainly is sympathetic and *basically* utopist concept of international relations, regarding the actual and *realpolitik* constellations of global political power. But, if the EU wants to identify itself as a relevant international civilian actor, with highly efficient dynamic, it must slowly to transform its civilian power assets. Mainly, it refers to the *transformation of its power perception* and acceptance of the "*smart power*" concept, which represents a deliberative combination of both concepts, the soft and hard power concepts, which assumes structured investment in the military capacities, legitimized with the Lisbon Treaty provisions for the *Permanent Structured Cooperation* and the *European Defense Agency*. The EU must not abuse them in aggressive and oppressive way, but to use them in direction of establishing a political stability and stability in particular region, where the need arise for security intervention by the Union, of course in coordination with the NATO and UN. This kind of (low) "militarization" of the Union, is categorized as a "civilian power *plus*". Or as the former EU High Representative, Baroness Catherine M. Ashton stressed: "We must mobilize all our levers of influence - political, economic, *plus civil* and military crisis - management tools - in support of a single political strategy (...) At the same time, the EU should work to strengthen cooperation with world powers such as the US and Russia, and rising powers such as China and India (...) in a world of deep interdependence where threats are global, everybody needs partners" (Andreas, 2010). The EU need adapt itself to the reality and to learn how to make a junction between the civilian and military assets, but also to formulate an adequate military mechanism that will use it *when the law starts to lose the battle against the force*. In that sense, the strengthening of internal and external coherence and low militarization of the

EU system, provided by the Lisbon Treaty, will enable the EU to act as a single and *smart international civilian security actor*, with full operative capacity on the international political scene, aiming to fulfill its civilizatory mission.

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