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## The European Union from Its foundation to future horizons: corporate governance, political, economic, technological and military challenges

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### Abstract

In the second half of the 20th century, the European Union emerges as a historical project of reconciliation and continental cooperation after the devastation of the Second World War, based on a political philosophy of European unity, from the ontological promotion of a supranational pan-European identity. In this thematic context, the aim of this research was to analyze the historical significance of the European Union from a critical and prospective perspective. In this general purpose, it is proposed to examine four fundamental categories: a) the political challenges of the bloc; b) supranational economic

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project; c) technological challenges; d) military issues, and e) international security. To resolve this objective, the historical method was used together with the tool of prospective analysis. It is concluded that European political integration has undergone a radical dialectical transformation since its origins, from an economic project limited to six countries to a complex supranational bloc.

**Keywords:** European Union, future horizons, political challenges, economic challenges, technological and military challenges.

*La Unión Europea desde su fundación hasta los horizontes futuros:  
retos políticos, económicos, tecnológicos y militares*

## Resumen

En la segunda mitad del siglo XX, la Unión Europea emerge como un proyecto histórico de reconciliación y cooperación continental tras la devastación de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, basado en una filosofía política de la unidad europea, desde la promoción ontológica de una identidad supranacional paneuropeísta. En este contexto temático, el objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar la trascendencia histórica de la Unión Europea desde una perspectiva histórica y prospectiva. En este propósito general se propone examinar cuatro categorías fundamentales: a) los retos políticos del bloque; b) proyecto económico supranacional; c) desafíos tecnológicos; d) asuntos militares, y; e) de seguridad internacional. Para resolver este objetivo, se hizo uso del método histórico junto a la herramienta del análisis prospectivo. Se concluye que, la integración política europea ha experimentado una transformación dialéctica radical desde sus orígenes, pasando de ser un proyecto económico limitado a seis países, a un bloque supranacional muy complejo.

**Palabras clave:** Unión Europea, horizontes futuros, retos políticos, retos económicos, retos tecnológicos y militares.

## Exordium

The European Union emerges as a historic project of continental reconciliation and cooperation after the devastation of the Second World War, based on a philosophy of European unity and from the ontological promotion of a pan-European supranational identity. In the Bank of Spain's chronology (2024), in 1944, the Benelux countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) signed the first treaty that eliminated internal borders, laying the foundations for unprecedented economic and political integration. On May 9, 1950, Robert Schuman, considered one of the founding fathers of European unity, proposed creating an organization to control the production of coal and steel, fundamental raw materials for the reconstruction of the continent at this historical moment.

According to the Government of Navarre (2023), European economic cooperation formally began with six founding states: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In 1951, these countries signed an agreement to jointly manage their heavy industries, creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). A definitive step was taken in March 1957 with the signing of the Treaties of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), consolidating a common market that would allow the free movement of goods, people, services and capital (Banco de España, 2024).

According to the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (2022), from a geopolitical perspective, the European Union is configured as a regional power bloc with ambitions for global influence. The recent response to the war in

Ukraine, for example, has demonstrated its ability to act as a coherent geopolitical actor, implementing sanctions against Russia, reducing energy dependence on Russia, and using instruments such as the European Peace Facility to provide military support to Kiev. For these reasons, the EU is strategically positioned as a community of nations that seeks to maintain stability and contain the imperialist aspirations of competing powers, with clear internal and external objectives<sup>5</sup>.

In this thematic context, the objective of this research was precisely to analyze the historical significance of the European Union from a critical and prospective perspective. In this general purpose, we propose to examine four fundamental categories: a) the political challenges of the bloc; b) its supranational economic project; (c) technological challenges; d) military affairs, and e) international security. The research questions that guided the analysis were: How has European political integration evolved historically since its origins? What economic transformations has this supranational project undergone? What are the main technological challenges facing the EU today? And, finally, how is the European security and defense strategy being reconfigured in the wake of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine?

It is worth mentioning that due to the intrinsic complexity of the proposed objective, it was necessary to articulate a hybrid methodology, which integrated, under equal conditions, multiple theoretical and methodical perspectives, coupling to the heat of the research process the historical rigor in the

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<sup>5</sup> To find out about the objectives of the European Union, please consult: (European Union, 2024), available online, at: [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values\\_es](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_es).

management of documentary sources, critical geopolitics and prospective analysis. All of which, with the aim of understanding not only the past and present of the European Union, but also building potential scenarios for its future development. Thus, this multidimensional approach allows us to offer a complex three-dimensional understanding (past-present and future) of the dialectical development of this unique continental project of its kind.

At least for the authors of this study, the main limitations of this research lie in the inherent complexity of the object of study. The European Union is a flexible and constantly transforming entity, which makes it difficult to establish definitive interpretative frameworks on the subject, even more so in a highly dynamic geopolitical context such as today's Europe. At the same time, the diversity of national perspectives, global geopolitical changes, and the volatility of international scenarios represent significant methodological challenges for a comprehensive approach that manages to persist in its categorical statements.

The relevance of this study is based on the strategic need to understand in a historical key the mechanisms of supranational integration in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. As Muñoz (2024) points out, the European Union represents a unique laboratory for analyzing processes of construction of political identities beyond traditional nation-states. In this common thread, this research seeks to contribute to the academic debate on the evolution of regional integration projects and their capacity to generate spaces for cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution, in a world subsumed by growing tensions and contradictions of all kinds.

Finally, the future horizon of the European Union is emerging as a scenario of multiple challenges. The maintenance of the welfare state, the transition to a



more sustainable and inclusive economy, adaptation to technological changes and the management of geopolitical crises will be crucial elements for its survival and development in the twenty-first century. Consequently, the EU's ability to reinvent itself in the heat of the challenges of each historical moment, maintain its internal cohesion and respond effectively to global problems, will be the primary cause of its legitimacy to determine its role on the international stage in the coming decades.

## 1. Materials and methods

The purpose of this section is to present the reader with an exercise in historiographical balance as a technique for comprehensive analysis of the main academic works on the European Union, unraveling in the process of critical rereading their methodological contributions, interpretative perspectives and conceptual limits. It was interesting here to critically understand how different authors have addressed the historical complexity of this supranational project, exploring the historiographical approaches that have allowed the construction of a coherent narrative on European integration since the second half of the twentieth century. This hermeneutical exercise aims to identify the dominant trends in academic production, revealing the interpretative frameworks that have shaped our understanding of European institutional evolution.

Among the fundamental works in the English language is "The Cambridge History of the European Union", published in October 2023. This collectively authored text proposes an innovative perspective from an "internal and external or from the outside in" approach. The book examines how external forces have shaped the process of European integration, paying particular attention to critical

events following World War II. Its thematic structure analyses external events, international trends and the role of ideas, networks and collective memory in the construction of the European Union as an institutional reality, offering a multidimensional view that goes beyond traditional approaches to institutional history (Segers & Van Hecke, 2023).

For its part, the work "Highs and Lows of European Integration" edited by Luisa Antonioli, Luigi Bonatti and Carlo Ruzza (Antonioli, Bonatti, & Ruzza, 2019) represents another fundamental historiographical milestone due to the quality of its contributions to the institutional history of the EU. Published in 2018, the book reassesses the challenges and perspectives of the integration process in a context of prolonged crisis. At the same time, it analyses the external dimensions of the European Union, institutional changes, the emergence of populism, nationalism and the euro crisis, providing a critical diagnosis of the contemporary tensions that run through the European project, a crisis that will determine for better or worse the future of the bloc in the next decade.

In this order of ideas, the work "Reinventing Europe: the history of the European Union, 1945 to the present" by Brigitte, Katja and Laurent (2023), is considered a classic for a concise historical reading of the European Union, as it offers a balanced narrative that contextualizes European integration in the history of the post-war period. In its course, this research is distinguished by presenting a clear interpretation of the integration processes, highlighting both the achievements and the objective limitations of the European project. The perspective of these authors is particularly valuable for understanding the historical evolution of EU institutions in a geopolitical scenario that oscillates between centrifugal and centripetal forces.

Finally, the "Historical Dictionary of the European Union" by Finn Laursen (Laursen, 2016) represents an important encyclopedic contribution, for its more than 400 entries on the EU, the dictionary also offers an exhaustive compilation on personalities, member states, internal policies, external relations, basic theories, treaties and European legislation, among other aspects of interest. For these reasons, its value lies in providing a systematic access point for researchers and scholars interested in European institutional complexity.

In terms of the primary sources consulted for this research, the founding documents of the European Union emerge as primary instruments in the construction of the European project. In this textual context, the Treaty of Paris of 1951 (European Community, 1951), which established the European Coal and Steel Community, represents the first formal step towards integration, which arose in a scenario of post-war reconstruction of European international politics. Similarly, the so-called Treaty of Rome of 1957 (European Community, 1957), deepens this process, creating the European Economic Community and laying the foundations for a European common market, with the explicit objective of promoting economic and political cooperation between member states. In fact, Article 2 establishes that:

**La Comunidad tendrá por misión promover, mediante el establecimiento de un mercado común y de una unión económica y monetaria y mediante la realización de las políticas o acciones comunes** contempladas en los artículos 3 y 4, un desarrollo armonioso, equilibrado y sostenible de las actividades económicas en el conjunto de la Comunidad, un alto nivel de empleo y de protección social, la igualdad entre el hombre y la mujer, un crecimiento sostenible y no inflacionista, un alto grado de competitividad y de convergencia de los resultados económicos, un alto nivel de protección y de mejora de la calidad del medio ambiente, la elevación



del nivel y de la calidad de vida, la cohesión económica y social y la  
solidaridad entre los Estados miembros. (Comunidad Europea, 1957,  
p. 2). (Bold added)

More recently, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 constitutes another key  
milestone, transforming the European Economic Community into the European  
Union, which transcends the idea of an economic and commercial community to  
create a much broader political and legal association, to represent the States  
Parties as a power bloc to the rest of the world. This document (European Union,  
1992) introduced revolutionary concepts such as European citizenship,  
established the bases for a common currency and defined the criteria for  
economic convergence. The historical context of his signing was marked by the  
fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, representing a  
moment of European geopolitical reconfiguration, beyond the coordinates of the  
bipolar world of the Cold War. Title I of the Common Provisions reads that:

El presente Tratado constituye una nueva etapa en el proceso creador  
de una Unión cada vez más estrecha entre los pueblos de Europa, en la  
cual las decisiones serán tomadas de la forma más próxima posible a  
los ciudadanos. La Unión tiene su fundamento en las Comunidades  
Europeas completadas con las políticas y formas de cooperación  
establecidas por el presente Tratado. Tendrá por misión organizar de  
modo coherente y solidario las relaciones entre los Estados miembros  
y entre sus pueblos. (Unión Europea, 1992, p. 4).

In this timeline in which texts and contexts are intertwined, as is natural in  
any historical-political process, finally, the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007 symbolizes  
the culmination of this constitutive process of the EU, reforming the European  
institutions to make them more democratic and efficient. Introduced after the  
failure of the draft European Constitution, Lisbon redefined decision-making  
mechanisms, strengthened the role of the European Parliament and established

new frameworks for the common foreign and security policy, responding to the geopolitical transformations of the 21st century:

INSPIRÁNDOSE en la herencia cultural, religiosa y humanista de Europa, a partir de la cual se han desarrollado los valores universales de los derechos inviolables e inalienables de la persona, así como la libertad, la democracia, la igualdad y el Estado de Derecho... (Unión Europea, 2007, p. 17).

Table 1. Historical documents constituting the European Union.

Document	Historical Context	General Purpose	Remarks
Treaty of Paris (1951).	European reconstruction after the Second World War; Franco-German Reconciliation Quest.	Create a common market for coal and steel production and prevent future conflicts between European countries.	The first founding document of European integration, signed by six countries (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg).
Treaty of Rome (1957).	Consolidation of the European economic integration project on the scene of the Cold War.	To establish the European Economic Community (EEC); for which a common market is created with free movement of goods, services, people and capital.	It extended the economic objectives of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and laid the foundations for a closer union between the peoples of Europe.
Maastricht Treaty (1992).	Fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the Cold War. It is the context of Europe's geopolitical	To transform the European Economic Community into the European Union, for which European citizenship is created and the economic and monetary union of the	It introduced revolutionary political and legal concepts such as European citizenship and defined criteria for

Document	Historical Context	General Purpose	Remarks
	transformation.	community is established with the Euro as a monetary sign.	economic convergence.
<b>Treaty of Lisbon (2007).</b>	Expansion of the European Union. Need for institutional reforms.	Reform the European institutions, make them more democratic and efficient and strengthen the bloc's common foreign policy.	It changed the structure of European institutions. It gave new powers to the European Parliament and improved institutional working methods.

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

Due to its legal development in terms of what public international law means and the quality of its supranational institutions, such as: The European Parliament, the European Bank or the Council of the European Union, among others, this geopolitical and geostrategic alliance can be seen as the maximum evolution of a process of creation of power blocs. that begins with the Greek peoples in ancient times in the so-called amphictyony, passing through the Amphictyonic Congress of Panama, convened by Simón Bolívar in 1826 or the Arab League, just to mention a few milestones; where a group of national states twinned by history, identity and common tradition, constitute a power bloc to act jointly before the rest of the world, from the unity of their interests and purposes, which does not mean that there are no tensions or contradictions internally.

2. Methodology

Critical geopolitics emerges as a useful interpretative model for understanding the complexity of the European Union, going beyond traditional

approaches to geopolitical analysis. According to Cabrera (2020), this cognitive tool allows us to reveal the underlying power structures, the dynamics of supranational identity construction, and the processes of geopolitical transformation, beyond the typical official narratives of the discourse of power. For Aalto (2001), critical geopolitics is configured as an analytical instrument that decomposes hegemonic discourses, revealing the internal and external tensions that shape the European project. Thus, its value lies in the ability to unravel the mechanisms of construction of geopolitical subjectivity, beyond the official narratives of integration and cooperation.

Together with critical geopolitics, the historical method is presented as a scientific method for understanding the genesis and evolution of the European Union. Its systematic approach allows us to reconstruct the processes of European integration from a diachronic perspective, analyzing the political, economic and social contexts that made possible the emergence of this supranational project. As Tkocz and Trujillo (2018) argue, institutional history, in particular, offers a privileged view of the transformation of political structures, allowing us to decipher how European institutions have evolved from the Coal and Steel Community to the current European Union. This methodology allows for a deep understanding of the mechanisms of integration, beyond superficial events.

The history of political and institutional ideas complements the historical method, providing an interpretative framework (heuristic and hermeneutical) that allows us to analyze the conceptual foundations of European integration. In general, the history of ideas focuses on the discourses, projects and conceptualizations that have underpinned the process of European construction,

from the ideas of the founding actors to contemporary debates on the identity and future of the Union. This allows us to unravel the conceptual genealogies that have shaped the European project, exploring through various documentary sources how the concepts of citizenship, supranational sovereignty and cross-border cooperation have been reinterpreted and transformed over time with varied meanings.

In operational terms, the research is structured in four clearly defined methodological stages:

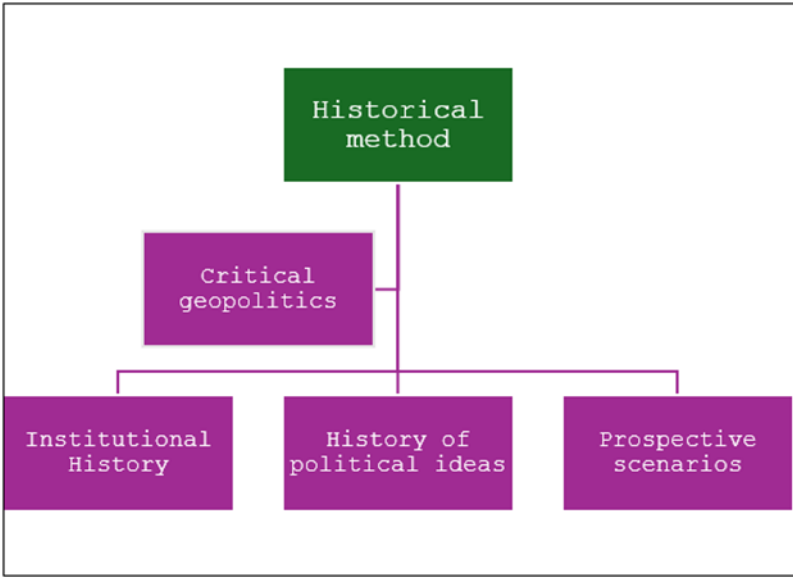
- The first phase consisted of an exhaustive review of primary and secondary documentary sources, with special emphasis on the founding documents of the EU, founding treaties and specialized academic literature on the subject.
- The second stage develops a genealogical analysis of the processes of European integration, identifying continuities and ruptures in the supranational project.
- The third phase implements a hermeneutical analysis of different historical moments, using cognitive tools from critical geopolitics and the history of ideas.
- Finally, the fourth stage focuses on the construction of prospective scenarios, using strategic foresight methodologies.

It should be remembered that prospective analysis is configured as a tool capable of visualizing the future horizons of the European Union. Following the epistemological approaches of Bugeau (2024), scenario construction techniques are used to explore multiple possible trajectories. In fact, this methodology contemplates the analysis of geopolitical, economic, technological and security variables, building scenarios that oscillate between optimistic and pessimistic visions, but always with a deep sense of reality. Here, special attention was paid



to the transformations derived from the digitization of information, contemporary geopolitical challenges and the potential reconfigurations of the current international order.

Image 1. Methodological tools of the research



Source: prepared by the authors (2025)

The proposed methodological synthesis integrates complementary perspectives that allow a multidimensional understanding of the European Union. Critical geopolitics, the historical method, the history of ideas and prospective analysis are configured as central tools in the purpose of unraveling the complexity of this supranational project. The final purpose is to overcome linear and simplifying narratives, offering a critical and multifaceted view that allows us to understand the political, economic, technological and military challenges that shape the future horizon of European integration.

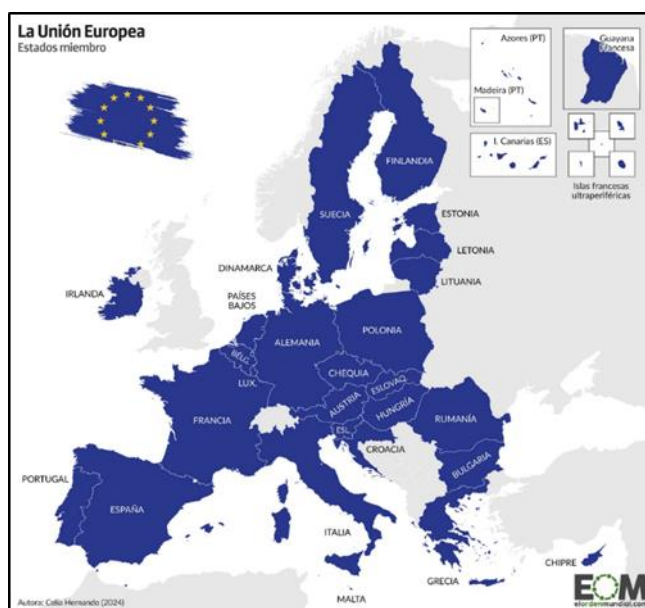
### **3. The European Union in the 21st century: political, economic, technological and military challenges**

Undoubtedly, the European Union represents a geopolitical project unprecedented in contemporary world history, emerging as a transformative response to the conflicts of the twentieth century. Since its foundation in 1957, this supranational bloc has managed to consolidate an area of peace, prosperity and cooperation that has revolutionized international relations, at least in Europe. Its genesis is marked by the need for reconstruction of Europe after the material and moral destruction of the Second World War, but its meaning transcends mere economic recovery. In the heat of its historical process, the EU was configured as a unique political experiment, where economic integration became a mechanism to prevent future conflicts and, simultaneously, build a shared identity beyond the traditional borders of nation states.

According to data from the Wikimedia Foundation (2024), the geopolitical reach of the European Union has progressively expanded, transforming from an economic project limited to six countries to a bloc that represents approximately one sixth of the global economy. In this context of historic growth, its nominal GDP reaches 19.40 trillion dollars in 2024, positioning itself as the second largest economy in the world. This economic dimension has allowed the EU to become a global player with the capacity for diplomatic, commercial and regulatory influence. In the words of Kissinger (2016), the construction of a single market, with free movement of people, goods, services and capital, has been the basis for consolidating this supranational project that challenges the traditional limits of nation-states.

The European Union's political challenges have become more complex in recent years, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resurgence of nationalist tendencies in several member states. In fact, the war in Ukraine has represented a geopolitical turning point that has forced the EU to reposition itself strategically. The European response has been significant: €20 billion in economic aid has been provided, 4 million refugees have been taken in, and the application for membership of Ukraine and Moldova has been accepted, although membership is in the process (Aalto, 2001). This context has revealed, for Lefebvre (2023), both the capacity for joint action and the internal fractures of the European project.

**Image 2.** EU Member States



**Source:** El orden mundial, 2024

On the other hand, according to Orellana and Pérez (2019), the emergence of nationalist and Eurosceptic leaderships in several member countries represents a structural threat to the cohesion of the bloc, much more so when the agenda of these political forces focuses on three general aspects:

- Una élite política que dice querer acabar con el statu quo;
- Una masa de seguidores que se sienten parte de una suerte de revolución;
- Un estado emocional o una ideología que genere un entusiasmo colectivo y favorezca (al menos en apariencia) la comunicación entre líderes y seguidores. (Orellana & Pérez, 2019, paragraph. 4).

In addition to the above, Donald Trump's new electoral victory in the United States and the strengthening of political movements that question European integration add layers of complexity to the geopolitical scenario. It is therefore not uncommon for tensions between supranational institutions and national governments to have intensified, testing the EU's ability to maintain a consensual balance between national sovereignty and continental integration. As a concept:

Euroscepticism is been traditionally the adjective used to describe those who are sceptics or show opposition to further European integration, coupled sometimes with a desire to re-establish national sovereignty in the current process of European integration. Other descriptions defend that this denomination denotes a greater field of influence: Euroscepticism has become a general term for opposition to the process of European integration. (ECPS, S/F, paragraph. 1).

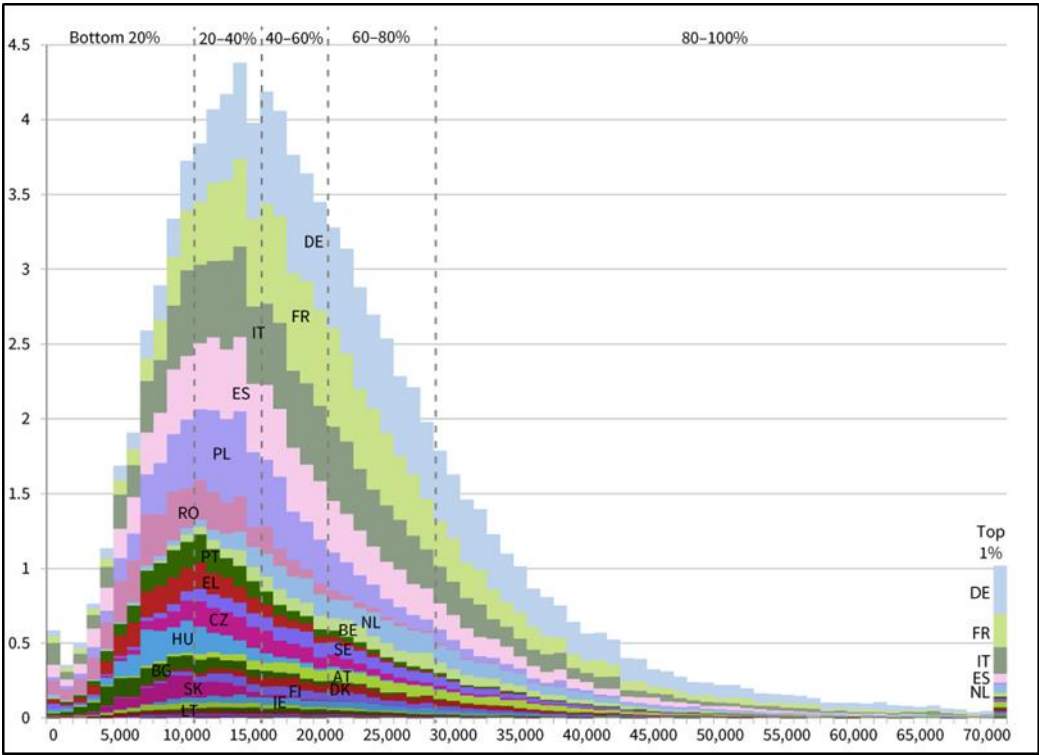
For the authors of this research, in the current scenario, the multipolar international order, characterized by different powers in conflict (China, the

United States of America and Russia), challenges the traditional European position. In this context, the EU is at a crossroads where it must redefine its geopolitical role in the face of the rise of powers such as China, the reconfiguration of relations with the United States and the conflicts on its borders with Russia. Thus, the ability to maintain a common foreign policy has become a major strategic challenge. The response to the war in Ukraine has shown both the potentialities and the limitations of this supranational political construction.

Along with the political and geopolitical dimension of the bloc, economically, the European Union is going through a period of significant challenges, as reported by Gentiloni (2024). Projections for 2024 indicate a modest 0.9% growth in GDP, with prospects for a slight recovery to 1.5% in 2025. Inflation, which reached 5.4% in 2023, is expected to decline to 2.4% in 2024. Unemployment has reached record lows of 5.9%, but significant regional disparities persist. Public debt remains high, averaging 83.4% of GDP in 2026, limiting the capacity for investment and public spending (Gentiloni, 2024).



**Image 3.** Income inequality in the EU. Share of EU population by level of PPP-euro equivalent disposable household income in 2022



**Source:** Vacas, 2024

These data show that economic disparities between Member States continue to be a structural challenge. While countries such as Luxembourg have a GDP per capita of 151,146 dollars, Bulgaria remains at 39,185 dollars. This economic heterogeneity generates internal tensions and challenges for the cohesion of the bloc. The distribution of income, with a Gini coefficient of 29.6, suggests a more egalitarian model compared to the world average, but insufficient to eliminate regional gaps between countries (Gentiloni, 2024).

In the current global landscape, the European Union faces significant economic risks, including energy vulnerability following the war in Ukraine, rising global protectionism, and low productivity in some of its member states. In this sense, projections suggest that these factors may limit wage growth and business investment capacity. So, it seems that in the coming years, the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism and European funds will be crucial to boost economic recovery (El orden mundial, 2024).

On the other hand, according to Csernaton (2024), in the technological field, the European Union has developed an ambitious strategy focused on the regulation of artificial intelligence. The AI Act, passed in December 2023, represents the first global attempt to comprehensively regulate AI systems in the world (Consejo Europeo, 2023). However, the EU faces significant challenges in competing with the United States and China in technological innovation.

Despite investing €2.5 billion in programs such as Digital Europe, the region lacks large technology companies that can compete globally (European Commission, 2025). In any case, the European technology strategy seeks to establish a human-centred and ethically responsible AI model. The aim is not only to regulate, but also to encourage indigenous innovation that reduces strategic dependencies. However, the lack of investment and a robust technological ecosystem limits the aspirations of European technological sovereignty.

Finally, in the military and security field, in an official document of the Council of the EU (2024), the European Union has undergone a significant transformation because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The war in Ukraine has prompted a reconsideration of European defense

capabilities beyond its strategic alliance with the US. The European Defense Fund has started to support the development of emerging technologies with defense applications, including systems based on artificial intelligence. In this context of aggression and uncertainty, the need for strategic autonomy has become more evident, although limitations in joint military coordination persist.

**Image 4.** Armed forces of European countries



**Source:** El punto prensa SA, 2023

For all these geopolitical and geostrategic reasons, European international security is in a moment of redefinition. Traditional dependence on NATO, tensions with Russia, conflicts in the Mediterranean and the need to develop autonomous defense capabilities make up a complex scenario. Consequently, the EU seeks to position itself as a power actor capable of ensuring its own security, but it still faces significant challenges in coordinating a common defense policy based on the 5 principles of: a) Unwavering EU support for Ukraine; b) Spend more and better together; (c) To increase the EU's capacity to act; (d)

Strengthening the EU's resilience and ensuring access to strategic areas and; (e)  
Strategic partnerships (Consejo de la UE, 2024).

#### 4. Prospective scenarios

As Castillo (2018) argues, prospective scenarios represent fundamental methodological tools for imagining possible futures, allowing decision-makers to anticipate and strategically prepare for potential transformations. In the context of the European Union, scenario building becomes a daily analytical exercise that seeks to unravel the multiple trajectories that this supranational project can follow. However, the prospective view does not aim to predict the future in a deterministic way, but to explore the possibilities and tensions that can shape different geopolitical paths (Ruiz Douglas & Garrigó Andreu, 2020). The analysis of political, economic, technological and military challenges allows us to build narratives that warn of potential challenges, offering inputs for the design of proactive public policies that guarantee the resilience and adaptability of the European bloc.

In the optimal scenario, the European Union manages to overcome its internal fractures and definitively consolidate itself as a geopolitical actor of the world's first order. In this scenario, the implementation of deep institutional reforms, a common foreign policy and a more consistent economic integration strategy would allow the EU to position itself as a global pole of power. Thus, political convergence would be achieved through supranational democracy mechanisms, strengthening the European Parliament and developing a more cohesive continental citizenship.



Strategic autonomy in defense, technology and energy would reduce dependence on external powers such as the US, while more inclusive migration and economic policies would attenuate internal tensions. This scenario would imply a radical transformation of the European project, turning it into a true "Federal State" with the capacity to have a decisive impact on global governance, including on a world order different from the current one.

For its part, in an intermediate scenario, the European Union would experience a process of stagnation and gradual erosion of its international influence. The EU institutions would maintain their basic structure but would lose their capacity for action in the face of the emergence of new alternative geopolitical actors such as the BRICS.<sup>6</sup> The internal contradictions, nationalisms and particular agendas of each member state would limit the capacity for joint response. Economic integration would be maintained, but with less dynamism, while at the geopolitical level the EU would go from being a central actor to a relatively marginal actor, incapable of articulating a coherent response to global challenges such as international conflicts, migration crises or disruptive technological transformations.

In the most negative scenario, nationalisms and particular political agendas would lead to the final disintegration of the European bloc. Internal tensions, fueled by Eurosceptic movements, would fragment the supranational project, generating a process of decomposition like the disintegration of Yugoslavia or

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<sup>6</sup> BRICS 2, formerly known as BRICS, is an association, grouping, and political and economic forum of developing countries that has emerged as an alternative international space to the G7, made up of developed countries. Essentially, the so-called BRICS means an economic and trade alliance and, at the same time, one of the five emerging economies with the greatest potential for development in the 21st century. The organization's name is an acronym for the first five official member states: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.



the USSR. The member states would reverse the integration processes, just as England did, recovering national sovereignties and generating a return to the model of traditional nation-states. The geopolitical consequences would be devastating loss of international relevance, economic fragmentation, weakening of defense capacities and setbacks in social gains and citizens' rights.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Historically speaking, European political integration has undergone a radical transformation since its origins, going from an economic project limited to six countries to a complex supranational bloc. The starting point was the Treaty of Paris in 1951, which created the European Coal and Steel Community, responding to the need for continental reconstruction after the Second World War. Subsequently, the Treaty of Rome in 1957 expanded integration, establishing the European Economic Community. For its part, the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 marked a crucial turning point, creating the European Union with a structure of three pillars (a common currency, a supranational institutionality and a European citizenship) and introducing concepts such as European citizenship and monetary union. The evolution has meant a gradual process of ceding national sovereignty to supranational institutions, with moments of advance and retreat.

The economic transformations of the European Union have been profound and multidimensional. It went from a common market with the elimination of tariffs to an economic and monetary union with a single currency, the Euro. The creation of the single market allowed the free movement of goods, services, capital and people. In addition, economic cohesion policies were implemented

that redistribute resources between more and less developed regions. The EU has developed mechanisms to respond to economic crises, such as the COVID-19 Recovery Fund, which mobilized €750 billion (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, 2022). Economic integration has generated interdependence that has significantly reduced conflicts between Member States.

The EU's technological challenges are critical in the current global context. The Union seeks to reduce its technological dependence on the United States and China, developing a digital sovereignty strategy. The Artificial Intelligence Act of 2023 (Consejo Europeo, 2023) It represents a pioneering attempt to regulate artificial intelligence, setting global ethical standards. The EU invests in programmed such as Horizon Europe to foster innovation, with a budget of €95.5 billion (European Commission, 2025). In this scenario, the main challenges include developing their own capabilities in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cybersecurity and green technologies. However, regulatory fragmentation and the lack of a unified technology ecosystem remain significant obstacles.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a radical reconfiguration of Europe's security strategy. The EU has adopted the Strategic Compass, a plan to strengthen its defense capabilities until 2030. Significant investments in joint military capabilities have been committed, including the creation of a 5,000-strong rapid intervention force. The response included unprecedented sanctions against Russia and military and economic support for Ukraine. The conflict has pushed the idea of greater European strategic autonomy, recognizing the need to reduce dependence on NATO and develop its own defense capabilities in the medium term (Consejo de la UE, 2024).

In this regard, for those interested in analyzing the EU's prospective scenarios, it is recommended that:

1. Adopt a multidisciplinary approach that integrates political, economic, technological and social perspectives.
2. Consider the growing global multipolarity and the emergence of new geopolitical actors.
3. Pay particular attention to technological transformations and their impact on supranational governance and.
4. Analyze the EU's institutional resilience capacity in the face of internal and external challenges. The EU needs to be understood as a dynamic and constantly changing project, rather than as a static structure.

Finally, the intermediate scenario, characterized by flexible but less ambitious integration, seems the most likely. However, this trajectory raises deep questions about the future relevance of the EU. Does this scenario represent a slow death of the organization? Paradoxically, the ability to adapt could be their greatest strength. The EU has historically shown that it can reinvent itself in the face of adversity. The real risk is not the loss of power, but the inability to articulate a common political project that responds to the complexities of the twenty-first century. Therefore, the survival of the bloc will depend on its strategic capacity to continuously transform itself, maintaining its essence of being a continental project of peace and cooperation in a difficult world.

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