

EUROPEAN UNION



The European Union, a Geopolitical Power?

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Many European politicians seem to me to be increasingly out of touch with citizens and realities, including F. Mogherini, who was High Representative of the European Union (EU). In her speech to the general assembly of the *Belgium* section of the Union of European Federalists, which was held on 7 June at the College of Europe in Bruges, of which Mogherini has been rector since 2020, she said in essence that the EU is a geopolitical power.

According to Mogherini, the EU is perceived internationally as a leading and stabilising partner, often seen as the “partner of choice” by global actors seeking predictability, legality and co-operation. She also said that the EU’s internal complexity allows it to better understand and respond to external challenges, making it a particularly reliable player in an increasingly fragmented world. For her, the EU’s main sources of power are its normative power, its *soft power* and its global credibility, and then its strong and stable currency. Finally, she highlighted the EU’s unique ability to maintain a central position on the global stage, and to, engage meaningfully with major and minor international players – a strategic asset that makes the EU “indispensable”.



Source: <https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/05/20/the-parties-election-programs-6-eu-enlargement-promises-and-the-intertwined-fate-of-the-treaties/>

What Is a Geopolitical Power?

The S&D notes that today, the EU seems to carry much less weight on the international scene than Turkey, because the latter has a different conception of the sources of power than Mogherini; it is more in line with ours.

For us, geopolitical power stems from the following factors: the size of the territory and the maritime domain; the population and its growth; technical-scientific innovation; the strength of the economy, industrial production and foreign trade; the military capabilities, in terms of manpower, equipment and operationality, as well as intangible factors, such as moral forces, the ability to manage crises and *soft power*. This is a useful complement to *hard power*, it is not a main source of power as Mogherini thinks.

The weakness of Europe's geopolitical position is nevertheless obvious in the current context of great instability on the international scene. The second Trump administration favours unilateral or bilateral approaches; it undermines the multilateral global governance that the United States of America had played a major role in establishing after the Second World War. Russia, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has militarily attacked two neighbouring countries; it violates the fundamental principles of international law and humanitarian law; it is waging a hybrid war on Europe. China wants to be the first on the world stage, economically, militarily and politically; it subjects our industries to unfair competition and threatens the freedom to navigate in the China Sea.

The size of Europe's territory and maritime domain is not negligible, but it is not gigantic either; Europe is only the western extremity of Eurasia. Europe's population is ageing and now represents only a limited percentage of the world's population. For lack of implementation of the Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2000, technical and scientific innovation is much less in Europe than in China or the United States of America. The reports by E. Letta and M. Draghi have once again highlighted Europe's industrial, economic and financial decline.

The military capabilities of European States are considerable in terms of manpower, but the equipment of our million and a half military personnel is disparate and the operationality of our units is doubtful, in particular because of the vacuity of our ammunition depots. Our increasing dependence on defence was highlighted by S. Niinistö.

A Divided European Council

Because of the selfishness of our leaders, there is almost always at least one who prevents decision-making in the European Council. It appears that the three above-mentioned reports were archived before their recommendations were followed by remediation.

As for the moral forces of Europeans, how could they be strengthened in the absence of a vision for the future of Europe? The members of the European Council apparently care little about the general interest of Europeans, but a lot about the interests of the Member States.

Europeans have had to note the mediocre ability of the EU institutions to manage the crises (financial, monetary, migration, health, war in Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East) that have followed over the past 20 years. For example, it took six weeks in April-May 2020 to finally implement the emergency package that Italy was urgently demanding. However, this mechanism had been organised in 2002 by Council Regulation (EC) No 1217/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the *European Union Solidarity Fund*, subsequently clarified on 13 March 2020 by the European Parliament and the Council “*to provide financial assistance to Member States seriously affected by a major public health emergency*”. This episode is, among many others, a striking manifestation of the inability of the EU institutions to take urgent decisions.

A European Commission that Has a Finger in Every Pie, but Is Ineffective

The *Green Deal*, which should have been the Commission's major achievement for 2019-2024, is limited to a package of additional binding standards that have made energy more expensive. Ursula von der Leyen has not had the means to subsidise the green transition as both the United States of America under J. Biden and China have done.

What von der Leyen has achieved between 2019 and 2024 is the gradual concentration of power in her hands, to the detriment of the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the High Representative. It ousted the French Commissioner, Mr Breton, who was overshadowing her. She divided the files entrusted to the vice-presidents so that they could not act in an important area without her formal agreement. She was nevertheless much better confirmed in her position by the European Parliament in July 2024 than for her first term, while the Commission's 2024-2029 programme seems to be inspired by G. Meloni or D. Trump, E. Musk or J. Milei: it consists of deregulation in the social, environmental and digital fields... On migration, von der Leyen is continuing the action taken with Erdogan: she is distributing tens of billions of euros to Egypt and Tunisia to prevent migrants from leaving their countries for Europe. She continues to support Israel and to isolate Europe from the countries of the South.

So far, von der Leyen has failed to increase the financial resources of the European institutions or to strengthen the Union's cohesion and capacity to act. She has not been able to renew the *Next Generation EU* operation and borrow significantly on a European scale, this time to address the energy crisis caused by the war against Ukraine (*RePower EU*), to counter China's *Belt and Road Initiative (Global Gateway)* and to revive the European defence and defence industry (*ReArm Europe*). The €150 billion SAFE programme,

adopted on 27 May 2025, the first part of *ReArm Europe*, consists of loans that will have to be repaid by the Member States. SAFE allows borrowing at a lower interest rate than those imposed on governments, but in most cases the difference is minimal and the countries where it is not are those that are already over-indebted. The 2028-2034 European multiannual budget is likely to be smaller than the previous ones, as it will have to include the repayment of *Next Generation EU* loans.

Which Phone Number Should be Dialed to talk to Europe?

It is clear that the question asked by Henry Kissinger in the 1970s has not yet been satisfactorily answered. The EU's external representation is not the prerogative of any of its institutions, all of which have a fragment of it, which constantly leads to confusion among its interlocutors.

The powerlessness of Ursula von der Leyen makes her no longer credible, neither vis-à-vis Putin, nor vis-à-vis Trump, nor vis-à-vis the Europeans. The same applies to its European Commissioner for Defence, to whom the treaties do not give any competence in this area. She should stop presenting herself as if she were the head of a European government: she is not. Lacking democratic legitimacy, the EU is not a State, and it has no government. It is only an association of States that constitutes a free trade area. For nearly seven decades, politicians' communication has misled us. They have imposed on European citizens surrogate democratic institutions, such as a European Parliament deprived of a substantial part of the normal powers of a legislative assembly. A flag, an anthem, a motto is not enough to establish a European State.

Charged by Article 15 TEU with "*giving the Union the necessary impetus for its development and defining its general political orientations and priorities*", the European Council, made up of the Heads of Government of the Member States, ensures that national governments and parties retain real power, as demonstrated by the absence of supranational political parties, in the absence of a legal basis to create one, as Volt has experienced. This prevents any transnational European public debate and makes it difficult for a European public opinion to emerge, which can hardly express itself other than by means of recurrent vague Eurobarometer opinion polls.

In line with its motto and the principle of subsidiarity, the EU tends to favour the "diversity" aspect over that of democratic unity. Even in areas presented as models of cooperation, such as space, the principle of "fair return" on the financial contributions of the various States constitutes a brake on any real common ambition and efforts to increase the efficiency of public spending. This is particularly the case in the field of defence.

In Conclusion

In order to ensure the European common good prevails over the particular interests of the national States, in order for Europe to exist geopolitically in a world that has become explicitly and resolutely hostile, Europe should become a federal State, governed by a constitution that clearly and democratically establishes the respective competences of its organs, in whatever field it may be, eliminating encroachments and preventing abuses of power.

The multiple crises mentioned above should have led to replace the baroque governance of the EU, this mixture of inter-community and intergovernmental methods, with a federal State, better able to face such challenges. So far, this has not happened, but the S&D is continuing its efforts to identify the first government to be persuaded to initiate the federative process. The month of June comprises several stimulating anniversaries: on the 17th, in 1940, in Chartres, Jean Moulin was the first to resist the occupier; the next day, on the BBC, de Gaulle launched his appeal; on the 20th, in 1789, in Versailles, at the *Jeu de Paume* hall, the deputies to the "States-General" initially convened by the King, swore not to separate each other without having given France a constitution.