

The EU's Strategic Role in In facing to Russian Expansion in Ukraine: A Geopolitical Test of International Identity

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Abstract

This article explores the European Union's strategic response to Russian expansion in Ukraine, presenting the crisis as a critical turning point in shaping the EU's geopolitical identity. It examines how the war influenced the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), promoting political cohesion and enabling a relatively unified reaction to Russian threats. The article highlights how the EU's role has evolved from being a primarily economic and normative power to a more assertive geopolitical actor with growing strategic tools and ambitions. At the same time, it identifies key structural and political challenges that continue to limit this transformation, such as the absence of a unified defense framework and disparities among member states. The article further analyzes how the Union's response reflects its vision of its international role, shedding light on its pursuit of greater strategic autonomy. Finally, it assesses the long-term geopolitical implications of the conflict for EU influence in Eastern Europe and global power dynamics.

Keywords:

International identity of the European Union; Geopolitics of expansion and dominance; War in Ukraine; The Common Security and Defence Policy; Russian expansion; European-Ukrainian cooperation.

Introduction

The war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, led to a radical change in the international system. The war resurfaced the logic of geopolitical conflict and ushered international relations into a new phase characterized by increased polarization, the erosion of collective security principles, and the return of traditional wars to the heart of the European continent. In this context, the Ukrainian crisis was not just a regional dispute between two neighboring countries, but reflected a deeper conflict over the balance of power in Europe, and a direct challenge to the European system, which for many years relied on "soft power" and multilateral diplomacy.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was a crucial test for the EU, not only in terms of its political, economic, and security response, but also in terms of its international identity and geopolitical role. The EU was born as a project of economic integration and a political experiment based on the values of peace, democracy, and human rights, but it now finds itself facing a strategic challenge that touches the core of its self-perception as an international actor. This requires it to overcome its historical reluctance in the areas of defense and security, and to formulate a more assertive and effective unified position.

Against this backdrop, this article seeks to analyze the EU's strategic role in confronting Russian expansionism in Ukraine. This will be done by deconstructing the dimensions of the European response to the crisis and assessing the coherence of common European policies in light of geopolitical threats. The article focuses in particular on examining the EU's geopolitical identity, considering its ability to transform from an economic and value-based entity into an influential geopolitical power that can defend its interests and values in its biosphere.

The Problematic : To what extent was the Russian invasion of Ukraine a real test of the EU's geopolitical identity, and what are the limits and features of the transformation of its international role in the context of this crisis?

The hypothesis: The Russian invasion of Ukraine has triggered a shift in the EU's role, prompting it to redefine its geopolitical identity; however, this transformation remains incomplete due to structural challenges that threaten the sustainability of its cohesion.

In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis, we divided the study into three themes as follows:

I. The implications of the war on Ukraine on the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

II. The construction of European identity through the EU's strategic response to Russian expansionism:

III. The long-term geopolitical implications of the Ukrainian crisis for the EU's international role:

Firstly: Implications of the war on Ukraine for the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

The conflict in Ukraine has had profound effects on European countries, especially with regard to the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which forms the core of its unity in terms of goals and principles. However, this unity is increasingly challenged by the war in Ukraine, which has radically transformed the European security environment. The EU High Representative has described this conflict as “the biggest challenge to the European security system since the Second World War”.

1. Strengthening Strategic Cohesion

The Russian aggression has significantly affected defense cooperation among EU states, as the conflict has emphasized the role of European states as international actors. The war in Ukraine has also prompted enhanced cooperation on foreign policy, security, and defense within the Union, even though Ukraine is not a member but has close ties with it ¹

Some observers have described the event as a "September 11 moment for Europe," noting the impact of Russian aggression on European foreign and security policy. In the Versailles Declaration of March 11, 2022, European countries pledged to take greater responsibility for their security and strengthen their sovereignty. The extraordinary meeting of the European Council on May 30 and 31, 2022 emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation within the EU and making the Union stronger in the areas of security and defense.

Denmark, which had been opposed to cooperation in the Common Foreign and Security Policy since 1992, decided to abandon the exit option. Consequently, all EU countries are now participating in this process, including those that previously opposed it².

2. Increased military support to Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has highlighted the role of EU institutions in promoting cooperation in security and defense. In April 2022, senior European officials visited Kiev to support Ukraine, highlighting the EU's role as a key player in this context. The European Commission has also worked to provide medical equipment, care for refugees and activate the civil protection mechanism. In addition, the EU Council approved the use of European Peace Facility funds to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces and finance military equipment³.

3. Accelerating Defense Integration Processes

The impact of Russia's armed aggression on the EU's "strategic compass" has boosted efforts to coordinate strategic visions in the fields of security and defense among member states. The process of developing this strategy began in June 2022, and it was adjusted to fit the repercussions of the war, with a focus on cooperation with the Commission and the European Defense Agency. The strategy aims to strengthen the role of existing institutions and instruments to ensure their sustainability after the end of the conflict, noting that the realization of objectives has

become easier due to global and geopolitical developments, making the need for action urgent⁴.

The CFSP Strategic Compass addresses concrete measures, including the implementation of Article 44 of the EU Treaty, which allows a group of member states to carry out tasks based on a unanimous decision. Although this mechanism has not been implemented since 2007 due to uncertainty, practical arrangements were established in 2023 with the approval of member states, strengthening operational cooperation and focusing on military planning. Staff bodies will be strengthened by increasing personnel and improving the communication system by 2025, increasing the capacity to plan and execute military missions. Tactical groups established in 2004 have also been modified to provide rapid response in crises⁵.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has strengthened defense cohesion within the EU, manifested in steps such as Denmark joining the Common Security Policy and providing military support to Ukraine. However, the absence of a unified defense plan and differing capabilities among member states remain a challenge to the sustainability of this cohesion. The Strategic Compass marked a practical shift toward the maturation of the European defense architecture, although commitments remain vague and common political will remains weak.

Secondly : Building European identity through the EU's strategic response to Russian expansionism

Restrictive measures are an essential part of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), used as sanctions within a comprehensive strategy that also includes resolutions and political dialogue. These instruments aim to respond quickly to political challenges, with a focus on protecting the Union's values and interests, maintaining peace, promoting democracy and human rights, and preventing conflicts⁶.

The Ukrainian crisis, which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and worsened in 2022, is a test of the EU's unity and cohesion in the face of geopolitical challenges. Examining this topic makes it possible to assess the EU's success in maintaining a unified stance and identify factors that strengthen or threaten this cohesion.

1- Political and Diplomatic Cohesion: A unified position despite differences:

The EU's political and diplomatic cohesion after the Russian invasion of Ukraine reflects the unity of the European position, despite the existence of internal differences. Among the decisions that reflect this cohesion

A. Joint Statements

In the Versailles Declaration of March 11, 2022, EU leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening defense capabilities by increasing military spending, supporting common procurement programs, developing defense industries, and reducing dependence on Russia by accelerating the use of renewable energy and developing the hydrogen market⁷. In the European Council statement of February 24, 2022, the leaders condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the participation of

Belarus, calling for the cessation of military operations and urgent political and humanitarian support for Ukraine⁸. The statement of February 26, 2022 also indicated the intention of the leaders of the Commission and the major European countries to impose strict financial and banking sanctions to isolate Russia from the global financial system, while supporting the Ukrainian resistance⁹. In the joint statement of February 24, 2025, the Union announced 135 billion euros in support for Ukraine, including military aid and reconstruction, while continuing to impose sanctions and using the proceeds of frozen Russian assets to support Ukrainian defense and energy, as well as starting negotiations for Ukraine's accession to the European Union (European Parliament, European Council, and EU).¹⁰

In addition to joint statements by EU member states, the EU has also adopted sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including

B. Political sanctions:

EU heads of state and government met on February 24, 2022 in Brussels to impose sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions, of which 15 sets have been implemented, aim to reduce the Kremlin's ability to finance the war. The sanctions included freezing the assets of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and canceling visa-free travel for Russian passport holders. Sberbank's assets were also frozen, and former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his son were blacklisted. Sanctions were imposed on 121 new individuals and entities, including Iranian operators, as well as military and economic officials. Individuals involved in the deportation of Ukrainian children were also targeted, and Russian nationals can no longer hold management positions in critical EU infrastructure¹¹.

The EU added several companies to the list of sanctioned entities, including three Russian companies in Hong Kong, an Iranian company, two from the UAE, and two from Uzbekistan. The 13th package of sanctions against Moscow was adopted on the eve of the second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, targeting 106 individuals and 88 entities, freezing their assets and barring them from entering the territory of the Union. The blacklist includes supporters of Russia's military-industrial complex from countries such as China and India, helping Moscow bypass sanctions. The measures also target individuals responsible for deporting Ukrainian children. On March 18, 2024, G27 foreign ministers added another 30 Russian individuals and entities to the list¹².

2- Economic Cohesion: A test of interdependence: The 27-nation EU has implemented policy measures in response to Russia's war on Ukraine, making it a key partner of the United States on this issue.

a. Harsh economic sanctions

Since February 2022, the EU has imposed 15 packages of sanctions on Russia aiming at reducing its ability to finance its war against Ukraine and increasing the burdens on Russian elites. These sanctions require the agreement of all EU members

and include the government, financial, trade, defense, technology, and media sectors. They are as follows

- Freezing the assets of about 2,400 individuals and entities with travel bans.
- Restricting transactions with the Central Bank of Russia and blocking access to its reserves.
- Expanding restrictions on lending and investment to certain Russian banks and companies.
- Banning transactions with Russian state-owned companies in the military industry.
- Separating 10 Russian financial institutions, including Sberbank, from the SWIFT system.
- Export bans on aviation, maritime, and technology exports, as well as bans on the export of drone engines and luxury goods.
- Ban imports of steel, alcoholic beverages, seafood, gold, diamonds, and other products from Russia.
- Closing European airspace and ports to Russian operators.
- Suspending the broadcasting activities of 18 Russian media outlets¹³.

b. Reducing dependence on Russian energy:

Political differences between Russia and the EU escalated after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, increasing European concerns about the security of energy supplies. Demands have risen in Europe to move away from Russian energy to ensure security. Although no binding agreement was reached between EU countries until June 2022, the Union began implementing an energy strategy that aims in its first phase to abandon 90% of Russian gas supplies by 2024, followed by a second phase to completely abandon Russian gas¹⁴.

The EU relied on energy imports from Russia before 2022, making it difficult to impose sanctions on the Russian energy sector. While Russian natural gas is not banned, sanctions include

- Banning imports of crude oil and seaborne oil products, which covers 90% of Russian oil imports.
- Banning oil transportation services from European companies, except for deals with non-member countries at agreed prices or below specified limits.
- A ban on the transfer of Russian liquefied natural gas through EU ports.
- Banning exports of oil refining technologies.
- Banning imports of Russian coal.

The EU also seeks to prevent circumvention of sanctions, including banning Russian ships from accessing European ports¹⁵.

c. Not signing new gas supply contracts with Russia

In light of the geopolitical tensions caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU began to reformulate its energy strategy, especially as gas supply contracts from Gazprom, which provided about 40 billion cubic meters per year, were coming to an end. It launched the REPowerEU initiative as a plan to enhance energy security and

wean itself off dependence on Russian fossil fuels by 2030, with a focus on renewable energy. By the end of 2024, solar power capacities reached 96 GW and wind power 221 GW. According to the 2024 report, Russian gas imports decreased from 45% to 18%, while gas imports from Norway and the US increased. The Union also strengthened its LNG infrastructure, signed new MoUs, and reduced gas demand by 18% through strict regulatory measures¹⁶.

3- Security and Military Cohesion: Towards common defense policies: The Russian invasion of Ukraine radically changed the EU's approach to security issues, strengthening military cohesion through

A. Strategic Compass

In 2017, German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed concern about the challenges facing the EU, such as the Trump effect and Brexit, as well as security crises. International developments, such as China's power projection and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have increased the need for greater unity in foreign and security policy. Josep Borrell emphasized that "Europe is in danger" and needs to defend its interests¹⁷. On March 21, 2022, the EU adopted the Strategic Compass, which represents a new plan to strengthen its response to future challenges. Although not legally binding, the compass reflects an ambition to link foreign policy to new geopolitical realities. The war in Ukraine has strengthened the cohesion of member states, prompting the Union to develop a military response and economic support to address the crisis¹⁸.

The EU's Strategic Compass is organized into four main axes. The "Act" basket aims to enhance the speed of response by developing the Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) and improving the utilization of the European Peace Facility (EPF). The "Secure" basket, on the other hand, seeks to strengthen the Union's resilience to hybrid threats, although it is limited in its treatment of terrorism. The "Invest" basket focuses on increasing defense spending and supporting technological innovation. Finally, the "Partner" basket promotes cooperation with NATO and international organizations, although there is little focus on bilateral partnerships and traditional crises¹⁹.

B. European Peace Facility (EPF)

Established in 2021 as an extra-budgetary instrument of the EU, the European Peace Facility (EPF) is the main channel for military assistance to Ukraine. The fund supports Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) activities and strengthens defense missions. It aims to prevent conflicts and strengthen the military capabilities of partner countries, with an initial budget of €5.7 billion for the period 2021-2027. In December 2021, the Union provided the first non-lethal military aid to Ukraine, and with the start of the aggression in February 2022, the Union opened the Facility's resources to offset the costs of lethal military equipment. The European Peace Facility was used to compensate member states for the delivery of military equipment, with details of quantities and types not made public. As of February 2023,

€3.6 billion was allocated in seven installments to assist Ukraine with equipment and ammunition, as well as maintenance and repair services²⁰.

Ukraine has benefited from the "Assistance Measures Pillar" and the "Operations Pillar" under the European Peace Facility, with the EU providing €61 million to cover the common costs of the military assistance mission until March 2023. Due to resource cuts, the Union decided to increase the financial ceiling of the fund by €2 billion, with the possibility of a further increase of up to €3.5 billion, bringing the total budget until 2027 to around €7.98 billion.

In response to the artillery ammunition shortage crisis in Ukraine, the EU increased its support to the Ukrainian military. In March 2023, the European Council decided to deliver one million artillery shells to Ukraine via joint procurement, with €2 billion allocated for this purpose. One billion euros was allocated to cover the delivery of ammunition from member states' stockpiles, and an additional one billion euros for the purchase of 155mm ammunition according to NATO standards. The European Peace Facility will reimburse the costs of ammunition sent to Ukraine²¹.

4- Social and media cohesion: Uniting European Public Opinion

In the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, the EU relied on the media and solidarity with Ukrainian refugees to promote public cohesion and counter Russian propaganda.

a. Information Warfare

Russia engaged in an international campaign to spread disinformation and manipulate information in order to destabilize neighboring countries and the EU. These operations targeted European political parties, especially during elections, as well as civil society, Russian minorities, and refugees. Russia also used disinformation to justify its military aggression against Ukraine, deliberately distorting the facts²².

On February 27, 2022, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced measures in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including banning Russian state-owned media outlets such as Russia Today and Sputnik. Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs, emphasized that the ban is aimed at stopping Russian disinformation in Europe. This was followed by a decision by the Council of the European Union to suspend the broadcasting activities of these outlets as part of the sanctions against Russia.

On March 1, 2022, the EU Council adopted a decision to impose sanctions on RT and Sputnik as part of reactions to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions include a ban on broadcasting any content from these entities across all broadcasting means, including cable, satellite, IPTV, and internet platforms. All broadcast-related licenses and agreements for these platforms within the EU have also been suspended, with any activity aimed at circumventing these sanctions prohibited. The regulation entered into force on March 2, 2022, the date on which it was published in the Official Journal of the European Union²³.

b. Embracing waves of Ukrainian refugees:

The refugee crisis in Ukraine, resulting from the Russian invasion in February 2022, revealed an unprecedented response from Europe, which moved quickly to provide support, different from its handling of previous crises from the Middle East and Africa. By mid-2023, more than 8 million Ukrainians had fled to neighboring countries, with millions more displaced within Ukraine. This crisis called for an extraordinary response from European countries and international organizations, which provided assistance and resources. The EU also activated the Temporary Protection Directive, granting Ukrainian refugees' immediate residency and access to the labor market, healthcare, and education²⁴.

At the Council meeting in Brussels, a unanimous vote was taken to activate the Temporary Protection Mechanism for fleeing Ukrainians, for the first time in twenty years. This mechanism allows Ukrainians to bypass the immigration rules of the Dublin Regulation and obtain temporary protection status, with the possibility to stay in EU countries for up to 90 days without a visa. Ukrainians receive temporary protection for one year, renewable up to three years, with the right to reside in any EU country and access to the labor market, healthcare, and education. The mechanism provides for assistance from member states, with no current plans to launch a relocation scheme similar to the one implemented in 2015. The TPS rules for Ukrainians represent a "European-wide minimum," allowing each country to relax the criteria. For example, France has extended the validity of residence permits for Ukrainians, while Poland provides health care, housing and education, as well as subsidies for children. Denmark has also passed a law allowing Ukrainians to enter²⁵.

European support for Ukraine is part of geopolitical interests to counter Russian aggression and maintain regional stability. Providing sanctuary to Ukrainians is a manifestation of solidarity and a strategic step to strengthen Western alliances. Geopolitical considerations have not been as strong in previous refugee crises, resulting in uneven responses. The media also played a role in shaping public perceptions, as positive images of Ukrainian refugees contributed to influencing public opinion and political will²⁶.

From the above, it can be said that politically, although the EU is coherent in its response to the Russian invasion, its effectiveness faces structural challenges such as the different priorities of member states and slow decision-making, which weakens the credibility of the sanctions imposed. Economically, the REPowerEU plan was successful in reducing Russian gas imports, but this came at high costs and without a radical restructuring towards renewable energy. The distribution of subsidies to Ukraine, amounting to 134 billion euros, has also sparked debate about the sustainability of the recovery given the heavy reliance on loans.

On security, the Union has made progress in developing tools such as the Strategic Compass and the European Peace Facility, but the lack of binding mechanisms and ambiguous priorities limit its effectiveness. The extent to which there is democratic control over the arming of parties to a conflict is also

questionable. Socially, the temporary protection mechanism for Ukrainian refugees has been activated, but the selective treatment of refugees from the Middle East and Africa reflects double standards based on geographical proximity and cultural affiliation, supported by a biased media image.

Thirdly: The long-term geopolitical implications of the Ukrainian crisis on the EU's international role

The Ukrainian crisis has reshaped the geopolitical balances in Europe, prompting the EU to reassess its international role. With the increasing competition between major powers, it has become necessary for the Union to go beyond its traditional roles to become more effective and independent.

1. From soft power to geopolitical actor

The Russian threat and the US distancing itself from its allies led to thinking about the need for a European defense policy to complement NATO. Joint initiatives began as early as the end of the 1990s, and in 2003, the EU began implementing military crisis management missions. With the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, 40,000 international troops were deployed on NATO's eastern flank. The 27 countries are seeking to strengthen their military capabilities and defense industry, as outlined in the EU's "Strategic Compass". The European Defense Fund was established in 2021 with a budget of €7.3 billion to support cross-border projects, and increased defense budgets in countries like Germany reflect a shift in European defense doctrine. Weapons deliveries were also co-financed with €11.1 billion through the European Peace Facility.

On March 4, 2025, the Commission proposed a "Rearming Europe" plan to address security threats and strengthen the defense of European countries, aiming to raise around €800 billion, of which €150 billion would be loans to the 27 countries.

Although European defense is gradually evolving, it is still complementary to NATO, which remains the main forum for Europe's defense. European defense policy focuses on crisis management outside the continent. To be militarily effective, it requires the consensus of EU countries, where political will is often what is missing rather than capabilities²⁷.

2. Strengthening the security partnership with NATO and the limits of strategic independence

Since the founding of NATO in 1949, the U.S. military has convinced Europeans of the importance of military protection. Thirty European countries, including 23 from the European Union, have joined the alliance. The war in Ukraine since February 2022 has changed Europe's perception of NATO. The alliance is divided between countries that prefer to rely on U.S. protection, such as the Baltic states and Poland, and others, such as France and Germany²⁸, that advocate the development of an independent security structure. Historically, countries such as Ireland and Austria have followed a policy of neutrality, but the war pushed Europeans to adopt a clearer stance toward NATO. NATO's importance in protecting

Europe increased, As a result, Finland and Sweden submitted applications to join, with Finland joining in April 2023 and Sweden in March 2024.²⁹

In response to the security challenges resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO and the European Union agreed to strengthen their cooperation in a joint declaration issued in January 2023. Signed by Jens Stoltenberg, Charles Michel, and Ursula von der Leyen, the declaration includes a commitment by both parties to use all available tools to achieve their common goals. Von der Leyen highlighted four new challenges including hybrid and cyber threats, emerging technologies, the climate crisis, and information interference, noting that the Russian threat is the most pressing. Michel emphasized the importance of "European sovereignty and strategic independence," despite concerns about the impact of an enhanced EU role in defense on NATO. The declaration noted the complementary roles of the two organizations in promoting international peace.

3. Rebuilding European energy and geopolitical policies

Before Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, the EU was heavily dependent on Russia for its fossil fuel needs. Since then, natural gas imports from Russia have dropped from 45% to 15% by 2023, and European countries have stopped buying Russian coal and reduced their oil imports. In May 2022, the European Commission launched the REPowerEU plan to phase out Russian fossil fuels by 2027, focusing on diversifying sources of supply and promoting renewable energies. LNG imports from the US increased significantly, and Russia became the fourth largest supplier of gas to Europe with a 15% share, while the US, Algeria, and Norway topped the list. The EU has also sought non-traditional partners such as Brazil. Europeans realized significant energy savings and diversification of supply sources, with natural gas demand falling by 10% in Italy and 11.7% in France between 2022 and 2023. Researcher Phuc Vinh Nguyen points to a general decline of 8% in gas consumption, and up to 20% compared to average consumption between 2017 and 2021, linked to higher prices and active policies of EU countries. Renewable energies have contributed to reducing gas consumption, with their share in the electricity mix expected to reach 44% by 2023. Ursula von der Leyen emphasized the failure of Vladimir Putin's attempts to blackmail the EU, boosting the green transition.³⁰

The project includes doubling solar PV to 600 GW by 2030, focusing on diversifying sources of supply and increasing the share of renewable energy to 42.5% of final consumption in Europe. At the end of 2022, member states took steps to speed up permitting for renewable energy projects³¹. The EU is investing in hydrogen to produce 10 million tons domestically and import a similar amount by 2030, while creating a European hydrogen bank with an investment of €3 billion. The project needs additional investments of up to €210 billion by 2027, with partial funding from reduced imports from Russia and unused loans from the European Recovery Plan³².

The EU faces increasing challenges to strengthen its defense independence after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as the war showed limited self-reliance despite

initiatives such as the "Strategic Compass" and the expansion of joint military financing instruments. Despite progress in cooperation with NATO, U.S. protection remains necessary in the absence of unified political will within the bloc. On the other hand, European energy policy seeks to reduce dependence on Russia through the REPowerEU plan, but it faces difficulties related to the rapid shift towards renewable energies and poor coordination among member states.

Conclusion

In light of what has been mentioned, it is clear that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has marked a critical turning point in the geopolitical direction of the European Union. The repercussions of this crisis have activated unconventional mechanisms in common foreign and security policy, contributing to the adoption of a more stringent strategic approach in addressing threats on the eastern margins of the European continent. The collective response from European countries has also demonstrated a qualitative shift in the geopolitical identity of the Union, which is no longer limited to the use of soft power tools and multilateral diplomacy, but has begun—albeit gradually—to engage in the logic of strategic deterrence and to redefine regional security balances.

Nevertheless, this transformation cannot be considered a complete break from the structural functional model upon which the European project was built. Rather, it is, in fact, a process of shaping a hybrid geopolitical identity, where considerations of political unity, national balances, and the structural dependency on NATO intersect. Consequently, the European Union is today repositioning itself as an international actor striving to achieve a balance between the ambition for strategic independence and the requirements of partnership.

The answer to the issue raised in this article shows that the Russian expansion in Ukraine was not merely an external challenge, but has become a mirror reflecting the position of the European Union in the international system and its ability to redefine itself as an integrated strategic actor. Therefore, it can be said that our hypothesis, which suggests that the European Union is in the process of reconstructing its geopolitical identity based on its response to the Ukrainian crisis, has been confirmed through the multiple indicators analyzed. However, this identity remains in formation within complex internal and external balances that require ongoing monitoring and analysis.

Margins:

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