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## A Study on The Psycho Political Reasons for The European Union's Policy of Integration, Security, and Peace in Europe

### Abstract

The European Union is an international organization that has been founded, integrated, and expanded with psychological as well as economic and political effects. The union sees itself as a guarantee for the European Continent to live in peace and produces policies in international relations depending on this vision. This article explains the structural, economic, and political underpinnings of EU integration and peace while examining the implications of these phenomena on political psychology. While existing EU literature examines the economic, social, and institutional aspects of the EU and its globalization policies, there are very few studies on the political psychology, and political cultural structure of these phenomena. Therefore, this study focuses on the implications of EU integration, security, and peace policies on political psychology. The study hypothesizes that the EU's unity, integration, security, and peace policy is dependent upon socio-psychological reasons, primarily tradition, culture, power, and social structure. Moreover, the study's aim and its anticipated contribution to literature are to present an interdisciplinary effort and contribute to intellectual discussion on EU integration and peace policies. The study on the EU's integration, security, and peace policy is delimited by the EU institutional structure and the political dynamics that constitute it.

**Keywords:** European Union, European Security, European Integration, Ontological Security, The Political Authority, The Political Legitimacy.

## Avrupa Birliği'nin Avrupa'da Entegrasyon, Güvenlik ve Barış Politikasının Psiko-Politik Nedenleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma

### Öz

Avrupa Birliği, ekonomik ve politik olduğu kadar psikolojik etkilerle kurulan, bütünleşen ve genişleyen bir uluslararası örgüttür. Birlik, kendisini Avrupa Kıtası'nın barış içerisinde yaşamasının bir teminatı olarak görmekte ve bu bağlamda ilgili vizyona bağlı olarak uluslararası ilişkilerde politika üretmekte ve geliştirmektedir. Bu makale, AB entegrasyonunun ve barışının hem yapısal, iktisadi ve siyasal sebeplerini ararken aynı zamanda mezkûr olguların siyaset psikolojisine dair izdüşümlerini sorgulamaktadır. Mevcut AB literatüründe AB'nin iktisadi, sosyal ve kurumsal yanları, küreselleşme politikaları işlenirken, mezkûr olguların siyaset psikolojisine, sosyal psikolojiye ve siyasal kültürel yapısına dair az sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, AB entegrasyon, güvenlik ve barış politikalarının siyasal kültür ve siyaset psikolojisine dair izdüşümlerini odak noktası yapmaktadır. Çalışmanın hipotezi, AB'nin birlik, entegrasyon, güvenlik ve barış politikasının siyasal olarak gelenek, kültür, güç ve öncelikli sosyo-psikolojik nedenlere bağlı ve dayalı olduğudur. Çalışmanın amacı ve literatüre beklenen katkısı, disiplinler arası bir çalışma sunmak ve AB entegrasyonu ve barış politikaları üzerine entelektüel bir tartışma başlatmaktır. AB'nin entegrasyon ve barış politikası üzerine çalışmanın entelektüel çabası, AB'nin kurumsal yapısı ve onu oluşturan siyasal dinamiklerle sınırlı tutulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Avrupa Birliği, Avrupa Güvenliği, Avrupa Entegrasyonu, Varoluşsal Güvenlik, Siyasal Otorite, Siyasal Meşruluk.

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## **1. Introduction**

Throughout history, Europe has experienced increasingly bloody conflicts, civil wars, country-regional wars, and even world wars both on the Continent of Europe and outside of it. The war-filled history has inevitably caused deep traumas and interactions in social psychology (Volkan, 2014a). But, for the last seventy years, with the influence of various factors, it is observed that Europe has gradually been integrating and uniting. In terms of international relations and political science, this integration has psychological dynamics, such as economic and social aspects. The European integration process seems to have been reinforced by chosen traumas. Moreover, the internal and external dynamics and the concepts of belonging-otherness seem to have led to the consolidation of Europeanism identification, which is a supranational identity (Sander, 2012; Houghton, 2014; Held, et al., 1999: 22). There is a close connection between the effect of social, political, and economic developments in the continent on social psychology and the integration of Europe (Kinnvall, Manners and Mitzen, 2018). In the context of the association, integration and a sense of security are closely related and are commonly discussed among social scientists and political psychologists.

Following World War II, driven by technological advances and particularly by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world witnessed an acceleration of economic globalization. This acceleration of communication and related tools brought trade and economics closer together across the globe, giving rise to the process of globalization (Baylis et al., 2020: 7). For this reason, globalization requires cooperation at local, regional, national, and international levels, Europe has pragmatically entered a period of integration by converging economically and politically. Barry, 2010: 101). At the same time, European nations have become aware of the philosophical, psychological, and political implications of establishing a cosmopolitan union in peace, integration, and harmony, both in historical context and in today's conditions.

This article examines the psychological dynamics and motivations of the economic, social, and political unification of the European Continent and the integration of the European Union. This study examines the hypothesis that the European Union (EU), which emerged as a result of cooperation, unity, and integration on the European Continent, emerged as a result of psychodynamic reasons, with a historical hermeneutic pattern and qualitative method. In the political and social sciences, the historical hermeneutic method, unlike positivism, interprets the existence of phenomena within the historical process through the lens of political culture and political structure. At the same time, the method interprets data sets through the contextuality, semantics, and historicity. In this context, the study tries to provide insight into the political culture and psychological codes underlying the peace and integration of the EU. In the other words, the article investigates the hypothesis that European integration throughout the historical process, as the dependent variable, is shaped by social psychological emotions such as fear and anxiety, as the independent variable, and by the concept of democracy and the rule of law, as well as the phenomenon of social capital that constitutes soft power. The study attempts to investigate the psycho-political reasons for the integration of the European Union and the European Peace through historical interpretative analysis of social contact theories, using surveys, quantitative data, and public opinion polls on EU integration, in harmony with theory and practice. The study has made historical interpretative analyses using empirical studies on EU integration, as the Benefits of EU Membership, Perception of Trust, Perception of EU Politics, and EU Identity. The article argues that the integration and enlargement of the

European Union have developed through psychological processes such as ontological security, chosen traumas, and victories. The article argues that the EU's foreign policy and historical development of the EU are continuous with relevant psychological processes. The article discusses how the psychological dynamics of the integration and effective foreign policy of the EU from its establishment to the present operate. Further, the relationship between the integration, identification, and foreign policy of the EU with psycho-political concepts is examined.

The study discusses the psycho-political reasons for the EU's policy of integration and peace on the European continent's soft power at the global level. In this respect, it would be meaningful to explain the conceptual and theoretical framework of political psychology and to see its correlation with the integration of the European Union. Moreover, research and publication ethics have been followed in this study. The article is limited by its broad subject. Therefore, while investigating the psychological factors of the founding and construction processes of the European Union, it will explain the conceptualizations of security, the modern state, and the social contract mentioned by Hobbes. Although the study occasionally draws on EU sociology, history, and economics, its primary axis is the underlying basis of the EU's political legitimacy and authority. The study draws on other disciplines, but it is grounded in concepts, terminology, and methodology from political science. Survey datasets on European society were analyzed with a historicist, interpretative, hermeneutic approach, also making use of the theoretical framework. The effects of political science concepts such as democracy, the rule of law, political legitimacy, power, force, and consent, on EU integration have been investigated. The social, psychological, and economic cause-and-effect relationships that shape the EU's political structure are attempted to be understood through concepts such as public opinion, political legitimacy, power, and consent.

## **2. Integration Theories and Law of European Union**

The EU, established as the European Coal and Steel Community with six founding members, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, with the Paris Agreement in 1951, completed its economic integration with the Single European Act in 1986. Having completed monetary (Euro) integration with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the EU advanced integration in justice and home affairs with the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 (Bauer & Trondal, 2015: 2).

The European Union, consisting of 27 countries, is an economic, social, and political union. The European Union has a regional multi-national parliamentary system. The functional instrument of this parliamentarianism is the European Parliament (De Vreese, Claes and Boomgaarden 2005: 61). The European Parliament, on the other hand, assumes the integrative role of integration and uses the soft power of pluralistic democracy. In other words, the European Union, with its institutions, especially the European Parliament, seems to legitimize its power in international relations with the concepts of democracy and the rule of law.

Moreover, all institutions of the EU, such as the EU Central Bank, the European Council, the European Summit, the European Court of Justice, the European Investment Bank, and the European Union Consultative Bodies, declare that they operate with the principles of democracy and the rule of law. In other words, all institutions of the EU develop domestic law and international relations with soft power concepts such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as economic power. The 2001 Nice Treaty ensured that union members

democratically work with EU institutions. Since the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, the constitution of the EU has been adopted, and the concept of democratization as soft power has become a cultural, sociological, and psychological symbol.

Despite Euro-skepticism's criticism (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005: 63) that the union remains economic, the abundance of theoretical and practical acceptances that it is cultural is striking in the literature. McLaren (2002: 552) states that European traditional integration forces multi-cultural integration in the EU. The economic and political conditions and necessities have historically forced European integration into the multicultural union. Soft and economic power together and in correlation seem to have realized this phenomenon.

The European Union appears as a supra-state structure and presents the image of being the state of all historically European nations. In a way, it is a state established by Europeans through a contract. In a broader explanation, the EU, as a supranational regional organization, is a regional union that has benefited from the conditions that emerged after the Second World War and has successfully transformed this situation into a process of peace and integration, as well as a search for economic markets on the European continent (Wincott, 2000: 169). In short, the EU has managed to ensure the economic and political development, as well as the peaceful coexistence and integration of European nations, by building on the lessons learned from the devastation of two great wars. In short, the EU has managed to ensure economic and political development, peaceful coexistence, and integration of European nations despite the devastation of two great wars and the current situation.

### **3. Theoretical Framework: Conceptions of Ontological Security, Belongs, Otherness, And Chosen Traumas**

As Hobbes (2013) emphasized in his theory of contract, ontological security, defined as the search for a safe space by escaping from the state of nature with a sense of fear, is a current issue. Hobbes, one of the social construction theorists, accepts the state or the state apparatus as a necessity in the dilemma of security and fear. In this respect, the trust building that Hobbes mentioned is possible through the social contract. The fact that the state is a necessity based on the security concerns of individuals has revealed the state as a superstructure. With a Hobbesian view, just as states emerge through social contracts, the formation of regional unions can also be evaluated in the context of fear and security. As Kinnvall et al. (2018), Manners (2014), and Volkan (2014b) mentioned, communities have experienced coexistence since the early ages. As a result of the experience, human beings have been divided into specific tribes, tribes, clans, groups, and communities. People have constructed social and political structures for emotional reasons, such as fear, anxiety, and worry. The state, as one of these structures, establishes a voluntary, yet compulsory, union, as argued by social contract theories. These unions, which derive their legitimacy from compulsion and voluntariness, initially consisted of clans and tribes but later evolved into states. Social structures are constructed in this way through emotions, but through political power, consent, and legitimacy. Over time, from modernization to globalization, supranational, local, regional, and global unions have become necessary.

This way of dividing into large groups is realized by grouping those who are similar and declaring the dissimilar as others. In other words, as Lacan (2011) states, individuals and societies create themselves with others. Human existence, which has formed large groups with the urge to protect itself against dangers, has felt the need to belong to a community or society throughout history (Volkan, 2014b). Today, especially in times of crisis or chaos, the sense of

belonging comes to the fore and defines the boundaries of large groups. Therefore, it is sayable that feelings and emotions, especially fear, are significantly influential in terms of social psychology and political psychology, as political science explains with the concepts of security and political legitimacy (Surowiecki, 2004: 141). Likewise, as Volkan (2014b) emphasizes, psychological formulations of self and otherness become evident through a chosen victory or a chosen defeat. In the example of the European Union, the integration of Europe can be associated with the convergence of historical, cultural, and traditional codes belonging to the continent. Transmission and social storytelling, which pass through generations in these codes, ensure the continuity of these selected facts and events as a psychological boundary. Therefore, a substantial part of the phenomenon, events, and experiences that Europeans have experienced are the processes of creating the other through generational transmission and instrumentalizing the other as a mirror (Sander, 2012). Many past experiences, from the wars on the continent before the Renaissance, to the relations with the East, from the Reform and Enlightenment processes, to the struggle for sovereignty, to the Ottoman Empire, contributed psychologically to the EU integration.

Moreover, many traumatic facts and events, from the expansionist threat of the USSR -today Russia- to the East of Europe to the Nazi genocide and the massacres in the Balkan countries, have psychologically affected the existence and policies of the EU. Therefore, it can be explained that the EU's establishment, integration, and enlargement concern the concepts of belonging-otherness identification, ontological security, and chosen traumas. The mentioned concepts explain the political legitimacy of the EU.

#### **4. The Theory of Emotions and The Emotional Capital**

Emotions and effects are psycho-political conceptual dynamics that play a transformative role in international relations and political science (McDermott, 2004). The dynamics are called emotional capital. As Barry Richards (2019) states, emotions have functions in social and political identities. In other words, since the human being is an emotional being, the communities and societies are formed by human activity with a bundle of emotions. Communities create, define, protect, and secure themselves just like individuals, so that they emerge with the presence and interaction of emotions.

Concepts such as security, dignity, and cultural traditions can be considered psychological nexus and qualify as emotional capital. Socio-psychological resources of societies can produce two-sided results in moments of stress, crisis, or chaos. The first is the state of social triumph, in which emotional capital drives social integration. The second is the trauma of intolerance and anger. In other words, emotions emerge in a conflict while they are imagined or accepted socially. The main reasons for political violence and rebellion are anger and intolerance. The basic cause of local, regional, or global conflicts is due to emotional intensity. In this case, the determining factor is the emotional capital, which is cultural-psychological. The concept of emotional capital can lead to social welfare when used with suitable psychological investments or can cause social crises by being misdirected. Emotional capital can turn into a social crisis and social violence without deliberation. Emotional capital is channeled into a destructive culture of anger and constructive anxiety into a culture of compromise and deliberation (Richards, 2019: 47). The psychological reason for the success of the establishment, development, integration, and enlargement of the European Union is that the EU creates this sense of concern for the European society and the surrounding communities with the emotion of trust in the union. The psychological milestone of this political success is the psychological

atmosphere during and after the Cold War, in which integration would prioritize peace, tranquility, and prosperity, and separation would fuel conflict (Volkan, 1993; Erisen, 2018; Richards, 2019). Accordingly, the EU has fulfilled both the economic and social requirements of the globalization process and expanded by succeeding in creating emotional and psychological foundations. Feelings of fear, anger, and enthusiasm are dynamics that psychologically affect and transform real and international politics. The action-reaction reactions of these emotions are different from each other. It is sayable that the aforementioned conceptualizations of emotion in political psychology correspond to the notion of authority in political science.

The most prominent of these emotions is the feeling of fear. The basis of motivation for fear is uncertainty. At the same time, fear is an upper emotion that includes anxiety in terms of political science. Because when humans experience political anxiety, they also feel the emotion of fear. In political consciousness, these two emotions act together. Anxiety can also refer to the absence of fear. This situation may result in instability or indifference in the political decision-making processes.

Another determinant of emotion in social and political psychology is anger. Anger is a way of choosing to “fight” over the fight-or-flight impulses created by fear. Further, anger is the emotion that activates the impulse to make decisions in politics. Anger brings with it partisanship, grouping, polarization, or taking sides (Erisen, 2018). As society gets angry with any one side, it becomes more supportive of the other side. As anger increases, political introversion increases, and tolerance for diversity decreases. The main factor that separates fear from anger is that, politically, while fear fosters integration, anger feeds decomposition.

In studies on emotions, especially after the case of the 9/11 attack, it has been observed that anger instigates distinction, and fear facilitates integration (McDermott, 2014). It can be said that fear supports cooperation, solidarity, and integration, while anger produces political consequences for separation, disintegration, and conflict. In the example of the political development of the European Union, it is seen that fear is integrative, but anger is divisive.

Thirdly, enthusiasm is fed by a motivation that eventually results in an image of success, happiness, or reward. At the same time, the politically motivated individual is immersed in a particular enthusiasm and believes in a specific political idea. In this context, the emotion of enthusiasm is an element that activates the individual. Enthusiasm and anger are the main motivations and politically empowering factors. Fear paves the way for reconciliation and agreement to emerge. In this way, political propaganda increases enthusiasm, anxiety, and anger, and these three emotions have a substantial role in political psychology (Erisen 2018). Emotions can be affected externally and internally. It can be said that the manipulable aspect of emotions also constitutes a methodological tool to be manipulated and investigated. Therefore, Europe has built its social and political structure on European history, tradition, and culture. Political and social ideals, similar and convergent cultural codes, long years of war, and, of course, geographical conveniences have brought out the spirit of unity in Europe.

According to Hobbesian contract theory, the feeling of fear among people requires loyalty to an authority, namely the state or a supra-state structure. According to Rousseauian contract theory, the feeling of inequality among people conditions the commitment to this authority, the state or a supra-state structure, with the general participation of the will of society. In terms of Lockean contract theory, societies reserve the right to object to the superstructure to which they submit through contract when the consent and legitimacy of the government are lost. This

article claims that EU member states and their peoples have achieved Hobbesian integration and peace. Similarly, the second argument is that the EU is built on a Rousseauian social contractarianism of general will, the role of the citizen, public consent, and public participation. The article's third claim is that the EU, following a Lockean anarchy, allows member states to withdraw from the EU through votes or referendums, if necessary, based on their policies. The Brexit process is a fact that reinforces this claim.

### **5. Political and Historical Background of European Integration**

Although the European Union (EU) owes its historical past to the European Coal and Steel Community established under the influence of the economic and political crises and the problems experienced in the coal, iron, and steel trade, it is also a protectionist peace union within its region. Economic and commercial influences are the functions that reveal this formation, but the idea of a united Europe carries the psychological traces of centuries of conflicts, civil wars, bloody rebellions, and revolutionary experiences (Sander, 2012). The idea of a united Europe discussed in the world of political thought from Ancient Greece and Rome to the modern period has been tried several times with various mechanisms under the conditions of history.

However, the continent of Europe, which was deprived of political unity until the end of the feudal period due to historical circumstances, experienced the Renaissance, Reform, and Enlightenment Periods and became a structure in which distinctive parts became more practically and theoretically integrated with the changing and transforming power of economic and social conditions. In other words, Europe has become a continent where economic and commercial relations, which started with the dominance of the understanding of Mercantilism but accelerated with the Industrial Revolution, gradually strengthened, and this developing trade network also reinforced political relations and played a substantial role in the integration of today's EU (Volkan, 2014a). The continent of Europe, which was in disjointed parts until the Industrial Revolution and constantly hosted wars within Europe, was formed by the foundation of philosophical and thought schools that started with the Reformation and continued with the Enlightenment. The continent has become an area that is considered a political unity in this period. The historically war-weary continent had entered a new process with the philosophy of the Enlightenment, such as rationality and secularism, bringing down the political legitimacy of power and authority.

Further, the determinist social and political mentality was affected by pure materialist and positivist thinking and was carried over from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century in a dimension that encompasses both the European Continent and the world. The first of this positivist and enlightened understanding was dominant in Tsarist Russia, the eastern neighbor of the European Continent, in October 1917 and witnessed massacres and destruction for the sake of a new ideal positivist order. The second practical result of the Enlightenment philosophy and the social-political psychology it created is the emergence of Hitler and the Nazi Party, which came to power in Germany in the 1930s and developed with a materialist, positivist, and idealist perspective. Nazis not only caused destruction, massacres, and genocide in the heart of Europe but also brought the world to the brink of a second war. Thus, Europe again faced great destruction with the spiral of violence, conflict, and war that it wanted to keep away from the European Continent with the Reformation, Renaissance, and Enlightenment. The historical process has forced Europe to develop own policies more effectively to be protected psychologically from violence, conflict, civil wars, and regional wars.

In this respect, the EU's peace and soft power policy is based on psychological as well as economic factors. The EU, which has become an economic, political, legal, and cultural power, establishes relations with the countries in its region and the rest of the world through the mission of democratization and the rule of law through political symbols. It is significant to look for the sociological, cultural, and psychological main factors of this relationship development. Europe, which has sociologically different ethnic affiliations and religious denominations, has become a continent that aims to live together peacefully because it has been a place where differences have been fought for many years. For Europe, war means experiencing the wars and sufferings of the past in the region. Further, this situation pushes the EU, as it were, to a state of alarm. The phenomenon is the psychological expression of traumatic events such as the Nazi events, the Soviet experience, and the painful experiences after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, Europe has become a more integrated structure in addressing political problems, thanks to social-historical experiences.

The experiences of history have led the European Continent and the whole EU to pioneer a policy of ontological security, in which the feeling of fear comes to the fore. In short, the EU is seen as a barrier and protector to prevent new traumas for many European countries, especially its members.

## **6. Chosen Traumas for the Continent of Europe: Pro-Longed Bloody Wars and Genocide**

As Freud (1955) and Volkan (2001: 82) mentioned, societies and communities, in other words, large groups, define themselves with the concepts of self and otherness. According to this definition, societies or communities that gain an identity and belonging thus have a large group psychology. Community or Gesellschaft psychology creates itself, that is, "us", with the "other". This form of identification is a phenomenon that has persisted throughout human history. All groups, communities, people, and societies in human history have identified themselves with this psychological process. The phenomenon of gaining identity is related to the emergence process of the subject that Lacan (2011) tries to describe with the mirror metaphor.

As Volkan (2014a) mentioned, this imagery takes place with what is different and unlike itself in socio-psychology and political psychology. Since the individual creates the image and identity of the subject of the other, it exists by excluding but coexisting with it. The European Continent is a battle center where inhabitants have been fighting each other for many years. But, due to the economic effects and social factors, it has managed to accommodate the differences in peace. Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment processes constitute motivation processes that make this success effective. Following these processes, the other for the continent was Muslim or Turkish identities, and this othering became a significant motivation in the integration of Europe (Sander, 2012; Baylis, Smith, and Owens, 2020). Therefore, Europe, after the Reform process, saw the Ottoman-Turkish identity as the other with the clash of civilizations or cultural-based differentiation, and thus built its social coding and integration on cultural differences.

Moreover, the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment periods transformed the real-political conflict between Christian-Hellenistic-Germanic Western culture and Ottoman-Turkic-Muslim culture into psychological processes. As Volkan (2001: 83), who set off from Lacan's mirror metaphor (Lacan, 2011), sees the Turks who are different, the other, and their closest neighbors, as mirror figures, the Europeans laid the philosophical foundations of their

integration in this direction. For example, Vienna is a substantial psychological border in this context and a reflection of the other for Europe. Thus, the fact that Türkiye's EU candidacy process took many years may be an indication that the EU made political decisions with ontological security concerns that refer to historical traumas.

Although this political rivalry with Turks, Muslims, or the East, in general, is only one of the determining psycho-political factors of European integration, this rivalry is a psychological beginning of the EU's existence because of its historical, cultural, and archaic nature. As Stuart Hall (1991: 18) stated, the first thing that can be said about the story of European identity is that it is an identification adorned with political, sociological, and cultural symbols such as self-otherness, inside-outside, as revealed by political psychology. The internal or external relations of the continent played a significant role in its integration. For instance, since the Treaty of Westphalia, Europe has achieved internal peace, and its integration has become possible (Hansen, 2002: 262).

Although it is possible to go back even further historically, when we look at the recent period, the painful events experienced in the Second World War, the phenomena and events in the Cold War period, and the twentieth century played a psychologically accelerating role in the integration of Europe. Policy-making processes, foreign policies, security policies, and diplomacy of the EU and its members have emerged with existential security and emotions (Manners 2014; Manners 2021). The genocide of the Nazis in the Second World War and the suffering caused a heavy shock and trauma in Europe as a whole. Although it is possible to see the traces of this trauma in the establishment atmosphere of the United Nations, it is also possible to see the results and traces of the relevant chosen trauma in the current real policy of Europe and the EU.

Following the Holocaust, Europe has been making substantial psychological, sociological, and political efforts on the permanence of peace and the absence of war (Arendt, 1994). For example, this psychological dynamic lies behind the establishment of various international institutions and organizations to ensure "eternal peace" in the West, especially in Europe, such as the United Nations. At the same time, the establishment of the European Union, the formation of a union that would protect the whole of Europe and make it free from war, was supported by a chosen trauma (Arendt, 1994). It would not be wrong to say that the European Union has emerged psychologically based on ontological security threats as well as economic, social, and political threats. In other words, the EU has psychologically assumed the role of a protective and unifying parent for the entire continent to prevent any violence that may occur.

Therefore, the continent has seen integration as a psychological necessity in terms of security. Secondly, the wars, genocides, and bloody events in the Balkans caused the integration of the union to expand towards these regions. The gradual inclusion of the Balkan countries into the EU involves psychological dynamics, just as it does economic and social reasons. Chosen traumas and security sensitivities are at the forefront of the spread of the union to the Balkans. Balkan countries, especially after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, psychologically need a supra-national structure that represents them (Volkan, 2014a). Thirdly, during the Cold War period, the danger of the USSR, security problems and traumas, and the events and events experienced, especially in Eastern Europe, affected the foreign policy and integration of the European Union psychologically. Eastern European Countries, which are former USSR members or neighbors, are other countries that see the EU as a safe ally against the Russian

threat and attack. In this context, the traumatic events experienced during the USSR period provided a motivation that psychologically affected the EU integration towards Eastern Europe. Therefore, European Union integration has gained psychological strength thanks to the events experienced in the Second World War, the regional and local wars, genocides, and bloody sufferings after the Second World War, and the dangers during the Cold War Period. The EU's integration has developed as a result of the psychological need for a unifying subject that builds the sense of trust of communities living in Europe.

Although this need has been created by economic globalization and its necessities, psychological dynamics regarding existential security, coping with the human emotion of fear, and future projection for selected traumas are substantial factors that create unity integration (Wincott, 2000: 170). In other words, the European Union is a union with psychological foundations from its founding stages to the present. All the historical and cultural facts mentioned are related to the political legitimacy of the EU.

Authors such as Kinnvall (2002) and Manners (2021), who work on ontological security, stated that the feeling of fear works in a very operational way in international relations and a sub-national and regional unity such as the EU. In other words, European nations want psychological confidence by transferring their powers to the EU in the face of uncertainties. For example, it can be said that this psychological dynamic has been influential based on the former Eastern Bloc countries' eagerness to become members of the EU. The efforts of the Baltic countries, countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, which are neighbors of Russia, are examples of ontological security concerns in EU integration and participation in this direction. The fact that Ukraine-Russia War, which has been attacked by Russia these days, also wants to join the union quickly stems from a similar psychological reason. Similarly, the whole of Europe, especially Poland and Germany, appears to be on a security alert against the Russian threat (Palmowski and Fedorov, 2020: 22). In short, the course of global politics draws the EU into its core ontological security concern.

The policies of the European Union that give importance to diplomacy are concerned about cultural and soft power, and trying to solve things with diplomacy without violence or military intervention, explainable by these psychological dynamics and expressions. From the Cold War to the present, the European Union has gradually built a clear ontological security corridor and security in terms of political psychology, with its structure caring for diplomacy, cooperation, solidarity, and unity within the continent.

It is also possible to explain the psychological factors regarding the unity of the EU as originating from political power and consent. The European Union is an internally coherent regional democracy, an international organization that has emerged from the Hobbesian anarchy of Europe's past through contract and is building both Rousseauian representative democracy and Lockean individual freedom. Moreover, the EU political-social structure and culture are common myths, traditions, and cultures from Ancient Greece to Erasmus. Therefore, the construction of the EU identity is rooted in political tradition and culture, and this has supported the EU as a political infrastructure. European states, which had been political rivals for years, came together and built their economic and political power by persuading the public opinion of their countries. Occasional public opinion polls or scientific articles also show that Europeans identify with the union.

For instance, an empirical study by Koenig-Archibugi in 2004 offers striking results on European identity and integration. Drawing on empirical data on the integration of the EU, Koenig-Archibugi (2004: 144) presented an important data set on EU citizens' perceptions of the EU as a regional and global power.

**Table 1:** Koenig-Archibugi's Fuzzy-set Membership Scores of EU Member-States (2004: 144)

Country	Europeanized Identities (General Public)	Europeanized Identities (Opinion Leaders)	Supra-nationalist Government	High Policy Conformity	Strong Regional Governance	High Material Capabilities
Austria	0.92	0.18	0.00	0.70	0.80	0.09
Belgium	1.00	0.63	0.69	0.97	0.80	0.14
Denmark	0.25	0.21	0.05	0.96	0.00	0.05
Finland	0.25	0.19	0.12	0.80	0.00	0.09
France	0.33	0.84	0.84	0.26	0.40	0.68
Germany	0.92	0.47	0.37	0.88	1.00	1.00
Greece	0.75	0.36	0.21	0.49	0.10	0.14
Italy	0.92	0.95	1.00	0.99	0.60	0.64
Luxembourg	0.92	1.00	0.98	1.00	0.00	0.00
Netherlands	1.00	0.53	0.54	0.94	0.30	0.18
Portugal	0.67	0.42	0.19	0.98	0.10	0.05
Spain	0.83	0.55	0.28	0.59	0.60	0.41
UK	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.10	0.86

(Minimum Value: 0, Maximum value:1)

Since the study was conducted in 2004 (Table 1), when EU integration and globalization were at their peak, EU membership and integration policy also mean security and freedom from EU threats and fears, especially from Russia. Moreover, the regression and fuzzy analysis provide various data indicating that the EU is building a supranational, international identity and that identity formation in Western and Central Europe is strengthening. According to Table 1, the attachment of Western and Central European nations, such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Austria, and Germany, to the European identity is quite strong for historical and sociological reasons. The values in Table 1 for Germany, which claims to be the driving force of the EU, and the Central European countries that have historically constructed the European identity appear to result in values close to 1. In this empirical study (2004) conducted years before the Brexit process, the fact that the values of belonging to the European identity were close to 0 in the United Kingdom also proves the argument that the EU identity has been identified with the culture of the Continental Europa historically and sociologically since the first part of this article. That is because, as this article has emphasized, the United Kingdom is historically, geographically, sociologically and psychologically, therefore politically distinct from continental Europe. Consequently, the Brexit process is not surprising when viewed from interdisciplinary and different perspectives.

### **7. A Chosen Victory and Symbol: Globalization and Integration**

The collapse of the Soviet Bloc and its subordinate regimes is considered a significant victory for the West and a herald that allowed the spread of cultural codes. The situation is evaluated

as a Western supremacy or Western Hegemony supported by psychological dynamics by many authorities and writers (Volkan, 2014). There are psychological repercussions regarding a unipolar world order and its design by Western powers. The claim of integration led by the European Union has changed the hegemony paradigm in international relations in this unipolar and globalized world. From the 1990s, European Integration gradually expanded and continued with Maastricht and Schengen.

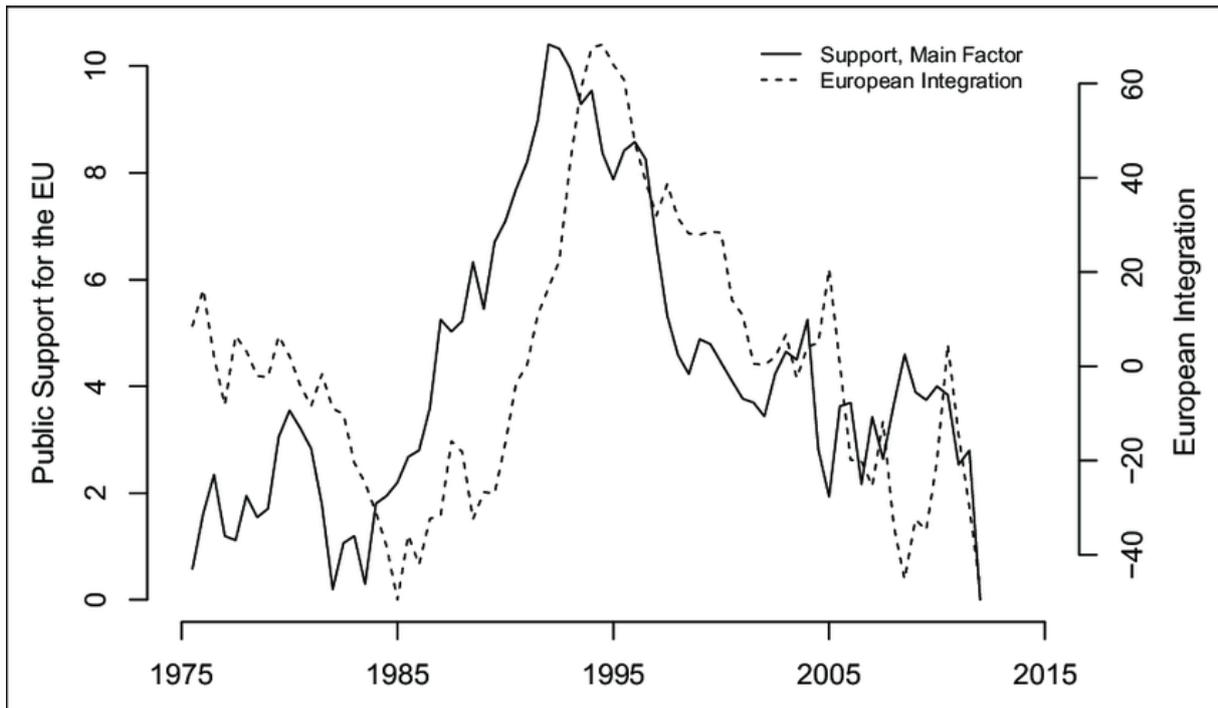
In short, it is sayable that group psychology and psychological effects based on security concerns are seen effectively in the EU's decision-making processes. The European Union, which has become a favorite international institution since the decline of the nation-state and national nationalism and the acceleration of the globalization processes, is a cultural and psychological integration, just as an economic and political union (Held et al., 1999: 22). Thus, the symbolic events that are very significant in terms of political psychology, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, are substantial developments that paved the way for the Union psychologically.

Secondly, continental countries against the East or the Eastern Bloc have integrated to compete economically and psychologically. While some countries that left the Soviet Bloc have become members of the European Union in the last forty years, others try to get closer to the EU politically (Volkan 2001: 84). The attraction of globalization and unipolar world politics and the desire to move away from Russia or the Eastern Bloc, in general, have been the psychological dynamics that contributed to the integration of the EU.

Thirdly, the global atmosphere of adherence to the principles of the rule of law, participatory and deliberative democracy, and economic and democratic development, such as transparency, accountability, efficiency, and productivity, has affected the West in general and the European Union in particular in the last forty to fifty years. The EU has provided a perception of psychological superiority by making it a soft power. The perception is the third contemporary psychological development that directly contributes to the integration of the EU.

In other words, with the advantage of being an economic, social, and political power, the West and the EU have managed to encode the image of being psychologically superior beyond being able to integrate. Therefore, taking benefit of these contemporary advantages, the European Union has become an active, transformative base actor in international politics (Wincott, 2000: 170). This fact, which corresponds to real policy, also provides significant motivation for its integration. The European Union is historically an expanding union based on security. This concern has become highly instrumentalized in the political and diplomatic fields, and the EU has turned into a political structure that gives advice and export policies to other countries in the region or countries in many different parts of the world.

For instance, Bølstad, J. (2014) finds in an empirical survey study that European integration was on the rise, particularly in the early to mid-1990s, and that this continued until the millennium. In his empirical study on European integration, Bølstad (2014: 34) concluded that post-1994 integration was political and psychological, as well as economic and social.



**Graph 1:** Relationship between EU integration and Public Support for the EU by Year (Bølstad, J. 2014: 34; European Commission, 2024)

Graph 1 presents the substance of the European Union's integration and the basic periods that contribute to the EU's consolidation in the world. It is observed that there is a significant correlation between EU Integration and Public Opinion. Since the early 1990s, there has been an increase in both EU integration and the tendency towards said integration. Essentially, Graph 1 shows that public support increases or decreases as integrations increase. It is sayable that the globalization process has made a direct positive contribution to the European Continent and EU regionalization, peace, and integration.

### **8. The Politic-Psychology of The European Union Against Current Crises**

Faced with new crises since 2009, the EU has overcome many of them thanks to the distinctive role of emotions. Along with the theories written on emotions in international relations and political science literature, in practice, the 2008 Mortgage Financial Crisis and the 2015 Refugee crisis coincided with the 2020 Brexit process and the Coronavirus Crisis (Sirin, Valentino, and Villalobos, 2021; Terzi, Palm, and Gürkan, 2021). This intersection reveals that international relations and the practice of world politics are transforming. The series of crises that the EU has faced in the last fifteen years has made the sentiments of European society significant.

Firstly, Crises such as the 2008 financial crisis, the 2012 Eurozone debt crisis, and the unemployment problem between 2001 and 2009 did not psychologically damage the nature of the union. On the contrary, they contributed to its integration. But, the political issues in the Middle East, especially in Syria, leading to the refugee crisis, have a psychological blow to the European Union integration and its soft power in international relations. The supranational and cosmopolitan dynamic of the integration policy has turned into a neglected political image with this crisis (Moffitt, 2016). The proactive character of EU foreign policy is in trouble due to this political choice. While most economic concerns contributed to EU integration, the fact that values such as pluralism, multiculturalism, supra-nationalism, cosmopolitanism, democracy,

and diversity are considered the basis of the EU started to be questioned in this process, psychologically undermining the soft power of the union in international relations.

Secondly, the wars in the Middle East deeply nourish both the integration of the European Union and the increasing contemporary populism. Today's affairs in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Black Sea, and the EU's policy's attitude, while limiting the influence of the EU in global politics, also cause the rise of populism, which causes it to close in on itself. The weakening of the EU's soft global power in the wake of the European Union's attitudes that contradict its principles in the face of the refugee crisis is a psychological consequence.

Thirdly, the far right, which threatens EU integration, seems to have emerged after September 11 and to have risen in Europe through the processes of creating and making enemies as a result of a psychologically perceived threat. During this process, the feeling of anger, as stated by the theory of perceived threat, has been used towards the source of the perceived threat, replacing the feeling of anxiety and panic, and the instrumentalization of in-group pride and out-group humiliation. This situation has reduced tolerance, and similarly reduced the awareness of the society and the notion and motivation of coming together. As a result, integration based on externalization and fear is losing its legitimacy globally and weakening its soft power with the degeneration of the structure based on multiculturalism based on differences within the EU.

Thus, the European Union has recently faced real political challenges. In today's changing, transforming, and increasingly multipolar world politics, the EU is far from competitive in producing international politics. The EU seems to be having difficulty keeping its famous integration strong in the face of Russia's challenge to the West over the Ukraine-Russia War due to today's economic, political, and realpolitik conditions. In today's global politics, Ukraine's war with Russia and the situation in Poland have led to the emergence of the EU's fundamental security-related settings (Anadolu Agency, 2025). For example, the German Chancellor's statement of "firm and unwavering support for Poland" is evidence that the EU, in its general political stance, pragmatically wants a Europe that is war-free and secure (Deutschland.de 2025).

According to a survey (Table 2) published by Euronews (2024: 1), support for far-right and conservative parties is quite high in the six founding countries of the European Union (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), which established the European Community in the 1950s and are known as the "Inner Six". Secondly, the June 6-9 2024 election results have shown that the far-right and far-right populist politics are gaining strength (NTV, 2024: 1). As a factual reality, the gain power of a political party that directly opposes EU integration, immigration and multiculturalism through refugee issues in the 2024 EU Parliament elections is also evidence that the feeling of EU integration and its future, which is the subject of this article, are not being managed well. The rising far-right and extreme populist politics seem to be proving a view that is corrupting EU integration by creating its opposition.

Moreover, other empirical studies are shown in Table 2 (European Social Survey 2015; Castanho Silva 2018: 842; European Commission 2024) also highlight the sociological opposition to European Integration. Empirical and survey-based studies conducted after the 2015 Paris attacks have noted an increase in the tendency to view different cultures as a social threat (Castanho Silva 2018: 847-848). According to the surveys conducted in 2015 and the

dataset study based on the surveys, it is observed that refugees and immigrants are subject to externalization, and the increasing trend of discrimination is striking. These studies have emphasized that Muslim immigrants who want to participate in European integration or Muslim Europeans are felt as a sociological, psychological, and also political threat. These facts have weakened the emotional capital and soft power of EU domestic law and foreign policy.

**Table 2:** Surveys of EU Public Opinion on European Integration

Survey	Country/Region	Findings	Source
Euronews (IPSOS) 2024	EU Founding Countries	Rising support for radical right parties due to dissatisfaction with EU migration policies.	Euronews (2024)
6-9 June 2024 Elections	Europe	Far-right gains power in election. Far-right politics is playing a role in changing governments by changing the balances in Europe. Furthermore, far-right politics can also reveal its own opposition to the extent that it harms EU integration.	Euronews (2024)
Post-2015 Paris Attacks Surveys	Europe	Increased perception of Muslim immigrants as a social and political threat; strong link between anti-Islam sentiment and Euroscepticism.	European Social Survey (2015) European Commission (2024)

On the other hand, according to a public opinion poll (Table 3; Eurostat 2024) conducted in Europe in 2024, the biggest problem of the European people is the Ukrainian-Russia War (Russian threat), with 35 percent. The issue of immigration, or refugees, comes second with 24 percent. International conditions appear to be defined as a problem in third place, with 22 percent (Reuters, 2024). Therefore, one of the main arguments of this study, the claim and assumption that the EU is facing a challenge in terms of international relations conditions, seems to be reflected quantitatively in the survey.

The fact that EU citizens voted for the EU as beneficial at the highest rate since 1983 and pointed out that the biggest problem is Europe's security reveals the thesis that feelings of anxiety and fear are effective in the integration process of this article.

**Table 3:** Eurobarometer Survey Results

Survey	Year	Findings
Benefits of EU Membership and Trust	2025	- 74% of EU citizens believe their country's EU membership is beneficial, the highest level since 1983. - 35% view the EU's role in maintaining peace and security as its primary benefit (Eurostat, 2024) (Reuters,2025).
EU Image and Future Perspectives	2024	- 44% of EU citizens perceive the EU's image positively, 38% remain neutral, and 18% hold a negative view. - 62% are optimistic about the EU's future (Eurostat, 2024).
Economic Situation Perception	2024	- 47% believe the European economy is in good condition, marking the highest percentage recorded since 2019 (Eurostat, 2024).
EU Citizenship and Identity Perception	2024	- 74% of respondents feel like EU citizens, a 2% increase from the previous year (Eurostat, 2024).
Main Concerns in Europe	2024	- Key concerns include the war in Ukraine (35%), migration (24%), international affairs (22%), and rising prices/inflation/cost of living (19%) (Eurostat, 2024).
EU Policies and Priorities	2024	- Respondents believe the EU should prioritize security and defense (34%), climate and environment (30%), health (26%), and economy (25%) (Eurostat, 2024).

Secondly, according to Eurostat 2024 (Table 3), 62% of survey participants are optimistic about the EU's future. At least half of the respondents see the future of Europe as positive in economic and social terms, and it is safe to say that the union provides social and political psychological security against possible or perceived external threats. Moreover, 74% of respondents feel like EU citizens, a 2% increase from the previous year. According to the survey, an increase is observed in the rate of those adopting a European identity. It is said that the Russia-Ukraine War is seen as a threat, and has an emotional and psychological political effect that increases consolidation.

Thirdly and finally, 77 percent of those surveyed share the view that the EU should have a security policy, and 71 percent share the view that it should have military equipment. The aforementioned factuality expresses the emotional reaction and points to the fact that the EU is built on fear and anxiety about security. For instance, according to the survey participants, the primary issue is the Ukrainian-Russia War, or the Russian threat, with 35 percent. The Ukraine-Russia conflict is followed by the refugee issue, with 24 percent, and international relations, with 22 percent. In the responses to the question of which policy should be prioritized, the rate of those who prioritize defense and security is 34 percent. In short, the surveys seem to confirm the hypothesis that theories and concepts of emotional capital, the political role of feelings of fear and anxiety, chosen symbols, victories, or traumas, and ontological security form the basis of integration for EU citizens, which is emphasized in all sections of this article. Therefore, the EU is pursuing a stable political agenda with its ontological security policy in regional and global issues or threats, as is especially evident in the Russia-Ukraine War.

## **9. Conclusion**

As the social contractarian and social constructionist theories of political science state, concepts related to psychological and emotional processes, such as existential security, trauma, and victory, are paradigm-transforming notions in International Relations. The numerous examples above that traumas or victories chosen from the past or history in Europe increase integration are evidence of this theoretical framework. Although the distant historical background of the European Continent is influential in integration and peace policies, its recent history is more decisive in the implementation of these policies. Because the events and phenomena experienced in the last century are transformative and fast. For this reason, developments since the twentieth century are much more effective psychologically than before. The political psychology of the continent, which was directly affected by the devastating effects of the Second World War, can be explained by the concept of ontological security. Confronting major wars until the second half of the twentieth century, Europe was psychologically affected by the past, and integrated and united. The integration also involves psychological elements, as well as social, economic, and political dynamics. In this context, the Holocaust and the USSR problem pushed the continent into an ontological security concern and integrated it into World War II. The countries that left the Eastern Bloc for a long time and the Balkan countries that left Yugoslavia want to join the EU in terms of security and prosperity. In this context, the integration of the Europeans is achieved through chosen traumas and feelings of anxiety and fear. Moreover, with the second chosen victories, the integration has expanded with feelings of enthusiasm and hope. In short, the political institutional structure of the European Union is both a product of the myths, traditions, cultures, and customs of the masses of people, defined as demos, and constructs democratic culture as a part and result of two political concepts, namely

power and legitimacy. Thus, the European Union has achieved two political successes through integration. First, it has transformed the economic gains of globalization into opportunities, becoming a customs union. Second, it has succeeded in keeping Europe out of local and regional conflicts by achieving peace, integration, and standing together against all external threats, especially Russia.

On the other hand, the EU only applies the EU concepts such as accountability, transparency, participation, efficiency, human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, which have become the principles of governance and post-globalization democracy and the rule of law. However, the EU does not follow these principles in the international arena, especially in regional and global crises. The European Union received intense criticism over the allegations that it cannot take concrete enough steps to implement these principles in the EU's foreign policy. For instance, during the Ukraine-Russia War, the Russian threat appeared to be a new threat to European integration, forcing the EU to form new alliances, as seen in the Sweden and Finland accession examples. Therefore, the EU owes its integration to the continent's will to live in peace. In other words, as seen in the example of its attitude during the Russia-Ukraine War, the EU has managed to coexist with the construction of tradition and culture with psychological and sociological factors, and has also demonstrated that it maintains its capacity to react in unity to political risks. In this regard, there is consistency in both theoretical and practical aspects in terms of action and discourse regarding internal EU integration. The fact that emotions, especially archaic fear and anxiety, which political science and political psychology try to explain, affect foreign and security concepts is observed in the example of EU integration and foreign policy. EU integration and foreign policy have been shaped by political-psychological phenomena such as chosen trauma, chosen victory, and ontological security.

The EU has practically implemented all the aforementioned reasons for integration within the globalization process. However, the EU is criticized for not showing the same sensitivity in its foreign policy, the lack of justice and law in the international arena, and its migration policy as it does in its own internal integration and peace processes.

For instance, the same consistency does not appear in external issues such as global inequalities, international law, foreign policy, migration, and the refugee crisis. Although the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as an institution in 2012 for ending the Second World War and for its success in war-free policies in Europe and Asia during the Cold War, it has received current and contemporary criticism. Due to its silence on wars, disasters, environmental problems, climate change, and the migration-refugee crisis in many parts of the world, it receives intense criticism because it cannot exert pressure to apply the principles accepted as the basic nuances of democracy and the rule of law in international relations and political science. In this respect, if the EU is to make it to the test in the light of these principles into practice, it can be tested in the context of transparency, accountability, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the migration and refugee issue. For example, the European Union has failed to do a good job when it comes to refugees from the Middle East, especially Syria. Another example is its failure to use EU's internal democratic dynamics to protect civilians in the Palestinian issue.

After Trump confronted the EU with new challenges economically, socially, politically, and psychologically, Trump can take economic, military, and political steps to shake the Transatlantic alliance. Therefore, the EU intends to strengthen economic, social, political, and

military integration to be free from the political fear and anxiety caused by the psychological roots of Europe. Similarly, the European Union cannot present a stable, just, and legitimate image in foreign policy on issues such as democratization, the rule of law, and human rights, which constitute the emotional capital and soft power of the union. The European Union's strength stems not only from economic considerations but also from its soft power policies, such as integration, human rights, and the rule of law. Any damage to these soft powers could lead to a loss of legitimacy and an existential threat. If the EU, instead of becoming an international or cosmopolitan union and integration, turns into a regional union where orientalist and nationalist populism, discrimination and racism increase, and if it fails to produce a policy that embraces pluralism, diversity and disregards conflicts of interest regarding human rights violations anywhere in the world, it may face the danger of disintegration. In short, the EU is a successful example of cosmopolitan regionalism in terms of internal integration, peace, consistency, institutionalism, law, and democracy in the 21st century and the age of globalization. Countries and regions striving for regionalization can benefit from the EU's experience. However, the EU's current foreign policy poses an obstacle to the application of a similar integration in international law and international relations.

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