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THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COMMUNITY: REIMAGINING EUROPE AS GEOPOLITICAL

ABSTRACT: *The European Political Community (EPC), proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron, represents an approach of reshaping the political and strategic landscape of Europe. Emphasizing the “geopolitical” in Europe, the EPC seeks to foster cooperation among European states on shared values of democracy, stability and security. This paper frames the EPC as a geopolitical construction, analysing its potential to create a more inclusive and pragmatic form of political unity in response to contemporary challenges and geopolitical shifts. The paper gives a theoretical and conceptual review of the EPC, addressing its potential to reshape Europe’s borders, identity, and geopolitical role, and evaluates its capacity to deliver tangible results in areas such as security cooperation, energy security, and humanitarian efforts. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of critical geopolitics, the paper argues that the EPC provides a model of political cooperation that transcends traditional notions of territoriality and expands Europe’s strategic influence. By examining the EPC through both practical and theoretical lenses, the paper offers insights into how it could evolve into a tangible and impactful entity in the future of European geopolitics.*

KEYWORDS: EPC; Geopolitics; Europe; IR Theory.

1. Introduction

There is an insightful interview in *Le Grand Continent* from 2017 with Alain Lamassoure (*Le Grand Continent*, 2017), where he says: „The term 'community' can be understood as something warm, embodying the European ideal, as if we were a family of peoples.“ So, here is this term, in 2022, presented by Macron at the end of the Conference for Europe, European Political Community (Conference on the Future of Europe, 2022). Again, it is not something new, we can find similarities with the Fouchet Plan (Draft Treaty — Fouchet Plan I, 1982) drafted during General de Gaulle’s term and even more the Mitterrand's European Confederation, 1989, Grand Design (Bozo, 2008), but taking into account the geopolitical necessity in which we live in, it is something what Europe needs. Even we can go way beyond Mitterrand and de Gaulle, in the early 50s and the attempt of ratification of EDC and EPC (Risso, 2004) at the same time (which failed while enforcing to succeed). By this we could claim that Europe fundamentally was always geopolitical. From the founding fathers idea up to Maastricht treaty until today’s so called geopolitical Commission and finally the Macron’s EPC. In 1963 year Robert Schuman will say: "We must construct Europe, not only in the interests of the free peoples but also to welcome in it the peoples of eastern Europe, who freed from their repression ... We consider as integrating part of a living Europe all those who desire to re-join us in a re-constituted Europe." Furthermore, up to now, there are no clear demarking boundaries of Europe, at least not formally in the EU treaties. The

problem always was how to pursue with this idea, the clash of supranational structure and national sovereignty, different historical circumstances, or difference in understanding of the European project, were just some of the obstacles on the way. In 1994 speech, Jacques Delors stated: "Europe needs to know where it is going" which Baldwin reedited into claim of "Europe needs to know how to get where it's going and what to do in the meantime.", referring to the need of "intermediate steps" while the process of enlargement gives results (Baldwin, 1994). Today's European Political Community (EPC) is a new attempt in a form of a "platform for political coordination" that aims to go 'beyond enlargement' and steer political dialogue and coordination, mainly on security issues, with like-minded countries, those that have an ambition to join the EU and those that do not." This paper looks into current initiative of EPC.

Theoretical and conceptual review of EPC

Emmanuel Macron's European Political Community (EPC) introduced as an initiative or platform, I would argue that it is also a concept. As a political idea that Macron introduced in 2022, it is a way to bring together European countries, both EU members and non-EU members, around common goals related to peace, stability, democracy and security in Europe. After all even the founding fathers, as Shuman, said the purpose and objective of Europe should be "peace and works of peace." In that line, the idea is to foster political dialogue and cooperation among European countries, transcending the EU and involving countries that may not be part of the EU but have shared interests in European security, economy, and democratic values. The EPC envisions a flexible, open forum that would allow for increased collaboration on issues such as security, energy, climate change and migration, among others. It aims to expand the EU's influence and integrate non-EU members like the UK, Ukraine, Turkey, and the Balkans into a larger European framework. But as well, the EPC is a real diplomatic initiative that has been put into action. So, thought EPC long-time efforts for common security, defence and foreign policy could be achieved. While the EPC has been discussed and some early meetings have occurred, it has not yet been fully established as a permanent institution or organization. Macron's idea aims to shape the future direction of European cooperation, and the EPC concept is still evolving. To sum up, the EPC is both a concept and an ongoing initiative, with real diplomatic efforts being made to turn it into a meaningful framework for European political cooperation. However, it remains to be seen how it will develop, and whether it will become a more formalized institution or remain a loose, flexible platform for dialogue and coordination. For the theoretical or academic purpose of this paper, I will refer to it as a concept.

The theoretical framework of the EPC will be examined from the perspective of two IR theories, which I believe will encompass the full scope of this concept. I will also attempt to answer the question use of the term "Community" from a theoretical standpoint. The use of the term "Community" is significant because it

conveys the idea of shared identity, collective goals, and cooperative action among European countries, both within and outside the EU. Finally, an explanation will be provided regarding the place of EPC in geopolitical theories. Through this, I believe the path will be opened for further analysis and new research on Macron's new project and its potential developmental forms in the future.

EPC, as a platform for cooperation, integration, diplomacy, and security between European states (those within the EU and those outside the EU with a tendency to move closer to it), is analysed in this paper through the IR theory of constructivism but also by the English school. In this way, the theoretical framework will be structured through a combination of a liberal-realist and at the same time constructivist approach. For a clarification, the use of English school is appropriate because here we don't talk about EU but of Europe as a wider idea.

Constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping international relations. It sees international systems not as static entities, but as socially constructed through human interaction, dialogue, and norms (Wendt, 1992; Guzzini, Leander (Eds.), 2005). At the same time the English School, IR theory that uses the concept of "community", focuses on the idea of an international society (Watson, 1992), where states share a set of rules, norms, and values that govern their interactions (Bull, 2012). This is closer to the concept of "community" in the sense that states form an international community based on shared understandings of law, diplomacy, and governance. The English School suggests that states form an international society based on shared values and norms. This can be seen as a community of states that adhere to common rules, such as respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

From the side of constructivism, I argue that the EPC is designed to promote a shared European identity. It aims to unite countries through respecting common democratic values, human rights, and regional stability. Further, from constructivism, the EPC seeks to reinforce and spread European norms and identities across the continent, beyond the EU. By including non-EU countries, the EPC offers a platform for socialization of those states and adopting European norms and values (like rule of law, democracy, and human rights). Even in 1973 at the EC summit in Copenhagen when the political decision was made for establishing a European identity, the goal was attempt to re-establish an international order with a central place for Europe (Strath, 2010). So EPC could promote European identity while constructing community and feelings of cohesion and holism inside. Constructivists view communities not just as geographical or institutional entities but as spaces where states and actors learn to behave according to common rules and values. This process of norm diffusion can influence the behaviour and policies of the countries in the Community, helping integrate them more deeply into the European political sphere. Within EPC the reflexivity could be achieved in its best potential. Guzzini puts reflexivity as one of the central components of constructivism (Guzzini, 2013). Highlighting the importance of shared beliefs and interests in forming communities, the EPC could be seen as an effort to build a

larger, more inclusive European political community by emphasizing common principles, even in a flexible and informal way. Constructivism often focuses on communities of practice in international relations, where states cooperate on certain issues (e.g., climate change, human rights) because they share similar understandings and beliefs about the importance of these issues. EPC concept, for instance, fits into this model as Macron aims to bring together countries (both within and outside the EU) that share certain democratic and political values, working on strategic issues.

While the English school use the term "community" to describe cooperative arrangements among states, Constructivism provides a rich theoretical tools to explore how such communities are socially constructed and how norms, identities, and shared beliefs play a critical role in the formation and sustainability of these communities. Macron's EPC by combining elements of these theories, represents a modern approach to fostering regional stability and collaboration in a changing geopolitical landscape.

When applying the principles of the English School to Macron's EPC, several key elements of international society "community" come into play:

1. Creating a New European Political Community

Macron's EPC is essentially an attempt to create a community of European states (both EU members and non-EU member countries) based on shared democratic values, human rights, and political stability. By using the term "community," Macron implies that the EPC will not just be a collection of states with common interests, but a space where states share deeper, underlying norms and principles that define their relationship to each other. Here the importance of using "Community" and not "Communities" is high, showing the construction of united Europe as a political and ideological project. By creating a common political space for countries that share a set of values, the EPC gives benefits to the envisaging of the European public sphere, as Nanz says "not only normative necessary, but already an emergent characteristic of the new Europe." (Nanz, 2006). These shared goals, as security, energy, climate change, and migration, represent the rules of international society in action, framing them as a legitimate political order that has regional appeal.

2. Inclusive cooperation among states

The EPC aims to be an inclusive forum that includes countries that are not in the EU, such as Ukraine, Turkey, the Western Balkans, or UK. This also applies in their mutual recognition. This aligns with the idea that international society can accommodate a wide range of states, even those that may not fully share all institutional features of the EU, but still recognize common norms and agree to cooperate on key issues. The EPC, as a community, suggests that these states are being socialized into European norms and values, even if they are not yet part of the EU itself.

3. A potential European "World Society"

The English school contemplates the idea of a world society, in which states and non-state actors (e.g.,

individuals, international organizations) share not just political and legal norms but also a deeper commitment to global norms like human rights, justice, and environmental sustainability (Buzan,2004). Macron's EPC could be seen as a step toward creating a European world society, where the community of European states, EU, but as well international organizations as NATO, OSCE or Council of Europe, not only cooperates on regional issues but also contributes to global governance, aligning European countries and organizations around common principles of rule of law, democracy and peace.

4. European normative and soft power

The English School discusses the role of normative power in international relations, the ability of Europe to project influence through shared norms, values, and ideas (Manners,2001). Macron's EPC represents an attempt by Europe to exercise its normative power by promoting democratic values, peace, and human rights across the continent and its neighbours. This approach is grounded in the belief that states within the EPC will work together not just for practical reasons, but because they share a common political and normative community. Macron is positioning Europe as a geopolitical actor with a normative power.

5. Balancing sovereignty with collective action

One of the key principles of the English School's idea of international society is the balance between state sovereignty and collective action. The EPC respects the sovereignty of states by not forcing them into the EU structure but encourages them to cooperate on European-wide issues. This fits with the English School's view that states can remain sovereign but still participate in a community where they recognize certain common norms and responsibilities. In practical terms, the EPC reflects the English School's tension between pluralism and solidarism (Bain,2018). Macron's idea tries to balance these two perspectives: respecting the sovereignty of states while also encouraging deeper normative alignment around shared European values.

To come back to the basic, the goal of the EPC is to provide a space for cooperation and political dialogue among European countries, including non-EU members such as Ukraine, Turkey, and the Western Balkans. Until now, the EPC is not meant to be a political union like the EU but rather a community where European countries, EU and non-EU, can share common political, foreign and security interests, engage in joint action, and reinforce European values like rule of law, democracy and human rights. Macron's EPC can be theorized as a regional version of international society, influenced by the English School's concept of community but with distinct characteristics tied to European norms, values, and political goals. The EPC aims to create a community of European states (both EU and non-EU) that share core values and seek to cooperate on issues like security, human rights, and democratic governance. While it shares similarities with the English School's vision of an international society based on shared rules and norms, the EPC emphasizes a more regionally

specific and value-based community that allows for diverse political systems but still enforces shared European values. Thus, the EPC can be seen as an attempt to forge a new kind of European community that respects state sovereignty while fostering greater political and normative cooperation among a diverse group of countries, very much in line with the pluralist strand of the English School, but with strong elements of solidarity in terms of shared European values.

Table 1. EPC from the ground of the two IR Theories

IR Theory	EPC
Constructivism	Social Construct
English school	Europe as a International Society

From the ground of the two theoretical frameworks, we could see EPC as:

Constructivism: EPC as a Social Construct

- The EPC can be viewed as a social construct, a platform for reimagining the political identity of Europe. Macron's concept seeks to shape a new European political community based not just on economic cooperation (as in the EU) or military alliances (as in NATO), but on shared democratic values, stability, and mutual understanding;
- From a constructivist perspective, the EPC is an attempt to construct a European identity that includes both EU and non-EU countries, with the idea that the perception of Europe and its place in the world can be redefined. The EPC can be a forum for establishing new norms of cooperation, identity, and collective action;
- Constructivism perspective highlights how the EPC is grounded in the promotion of shared democratic norms, human rights, and security. These shared norms are not intrinsic but are constructed through diplomatic interaction and cooperation between states. For instance, a country's decision to join the EPC may be based not only on security concerns but also on alignment with these broader normative ideals of European integration;
- Constructivism points how the EPC could challenge the traditional notion of Europe as being exclusively EU-centric. Through interaction, member states and aspirants shape new understandings of what it means to be part of Europe and how political, cultural, and geopolitical connections evolve.

Benefits of the Constructivist analysis is that it is providing a deep understanding of how the EPC can construct a shared European political identity, which is critical for the success of this initiative but as well for the Europe as a geopolitical actor. Also, through flexibility, it highlights an opportunity for the EPC members to actively reshape their interactions and the structure of Europe over time.

English School: EPC as "Europe as a International Society"

- The EPC could be seen as an effort to create an international society within Europe, where states, regardless of EU membership, adhere to common rules, norms, and understandings, thus creating an orderly and cooperative political space. This resonates with the English School's focus on shared values and cooperation among states, even in the absence of a single overarching governing body like the EU;
- The EPC could be analysed through both pluralist and solidarist lenses: EPC states may respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while still working together on issues like security, foreign relations or trade. This would emphasize a looser framework of cooperation with minimal interference in each other's internal affairs. But the EPC could also reflect a more solidarist vision, where members go beyond mere order and also emphasize human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In this sense, EPC membership could entail active commitments to shared European values;
- The EPC could also contribute to Europe's role in the global order, acting as a normative and institutional space that positions Europe as a promoter of global norms. From the perspective of the English School, the EPC could be part of Europe's effort to lead by example in areas such as peacebuilding, democracy, and regional stability.

Benefits of the English School analysis would be the emphasis on shared norms. The EPC could be seen as creating a new societal framework for European states based on shared interests and values, which could help promote stability and cooperation. The English School's pluralism/solidarism distinction provides flexibility in understanding the EPC as both an inclusive and value-driven initiative, offering a middle ground between traditional state sovereignty and deeper integration.

If we view on possible limitations, they are both from the English School approach and Constructivist approach, ambiguity in norms and values and lack of tangible outcomes. The English School perspective might struggle to offer clear prescriptions for action or specify the precise role of the EPC within the broader international system. It focuses more on normative dimensions rather than concrete institutional arrangements or measurable outcomes; and Constructivism's focus on identity and ideas may overlook the practical aspects of creating institutional structures or policy outcomes, which are critical for the EPC to function effectively. That is why the necessity to use both theories while analysing the concept.

Both Constructivism and the English School offer valuable insights into the European Political Community (EPC), but with different emphases. Constructivism highlights the social construction of identity and norms, viewing the EPC as a platform for redefining Europe's political identity, while the English School focuses on the creation of a society of states based on shared norms and the balance between sovereignty and cooperation. The EPC could be analysed through both frameworks, with Constructivism providing a deeper

understanding of identity and the discursive elements of the project, and the English School offering a more structured approach based on norms and institutional cooperation. Both frameworks complement each other in exploring how the EPC can evolve as a new model for European cooperation. Through this lens, the EPC could be understood as both a normative value-based geopolitical project, seeking to build a European political community.

Now, when we analysed the theoretical framework, in addition to these theoretical insights, adding the geopolitical discourse, we could conclude the term "community" has also important geopolitical implications:

- Political cohesion in the face of external threats: The idea of a "community" reinforces the notion that Europe is a unified entity, especially when facing external threats, such as Russian aggression or global competition with China. By framing the EPC as a "community," Macron strengthens the idea of a European political space that transcends both the EU and NATO, potentially enhancing Europe's ability to act cohesively on the world stage;
- Soft power and normative influence: By framing the EPC as a "community", Macron signals that it's not just a geopolitical tool for security or economic interests, but a normative project meant to shape the political future of Europe. This aligns with the EU's approach of projecting its values of democracy, peace, and human rights through diplomacy and institutionalized cooperation.

EPC as a geopolitical construction of Europe

Macron's European Political Community (EPC), as a geopolitical construction, can be framed within two geopolitical theories, particularly classical geopolitics and critical geopolitics, but by my understanding it could be best understood through a critical geopolitics lens due to its emphasis on normative values, flexibility in the political alliance, and its focus on shared principles rather than traditional territorial and hard power-based considerations. But I would argue, that in the time of come-back of the great geopolitical narratives, we must take into consideration as well the traditional approach. Here's how this paper approach it from both theoretical perspectives:

Classical Geopolitics

Classical geopolitics focuses on the strategic, territorial, and military dimensions of geopolitics. It's about the geography of power, the strategic positioning of states, and how geography and resources shape international relations. Classical geopolitics often emphasizes borders, territorial control, military strength, and the influence of large powers (Mackinder,1904; Mearsheimer, 2003; Gray,2015). In this sense, one could argue that the EPC could be analysed through a classical geopolitics lens, especially when focusing on its goal of strengthening Europe's strategic position against external threats and enhancing security cooperation among European states. The EPC's focus on geopolitical stability and regional security in its response to Russian

aggression (e.g. Ukraine) aligns with classical geopolitical themes of defence and the protection of borders. However, framing the EPC purely within classical geopolitics would miss its broader normative and political dimensions, such as values and the flexibility of its membership.

Critical Geopolitics

Critical geopolitics, on the other hand, challenges the traditional assumptions of classical geopolitics and places greater emphasis on how political narratives, discourses, ideologies, and identities, shape and construct geopolitical realities. Critical geopolitics does not only focus on territory and military power, but also on how these concepts are socially constructed, negotiated, and legitimized through discourse, symbolism, and narrative (Flint,2022; Agnew,1998; Tutathail,1997).

EPC could be better comprehensively analysed through the lens of critical geopolitics for several reasons. If I should give a ground to my argument why critical geopolitics is the best fit, I would wrap it up in the following points:

Table 2: EPC critical geopolitics discourse

EPC critical geopolitics discourse	
a. Emphasis on narrative, normativity and identity	The EPC is more about redefining Europe and its political identity than about traditional territorial politics or the direct exertion of power. Critical geopolitics allows us to examine how the EPC serves as a political narrative that shapes how European countries and others outside the EU think about their place in Europe.
b. Inclusion and exclusion: deconstructing the traditional boundaries	Critical geopolitics highlights the importance of inclusion and exclusion in shaping geopolitical spaces. The EPC is explicitly about who is included in the European political space, and this can be analysed as a discursive process through which political, social, and cultural norms determine who is part of Europe.
c. Geopolitical flexibility	Unlike classical geopolitics, which typically emphasizes fixed territorial boundaries and clear-cut distinctions between insiders and outsiders, the EPC reflects a more flexible approach to geopolitical space. The inclusion of countries like Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans

	challenges the fixed borders that many times have defined the EU and Europe itself.
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I am adding more explanation on each item in the Table 2, as follows:

a. Through the lens of identity and normativity:

The EPC is fundamentally about shaping a geopolitical space based not on military power or territorial control, but on shared values, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and stability. It is an attempt to create a political community that transcends the traditional borders of the European Union and includes countries that aspire to these values, such as Ukraine, Georgia, and the Western Balkans. From a critical geopolitical perspective, I would argue that EPC is a discursive construction of what it means to be European. *l'Europe vécue*, as explained in Nanz (Strath,2010). It represents an effort to redefine European identity and sense of political belonging, not just in geographic terms but in terms of norms and political aspirations. The EPC's inclusivity is shaped by the idea of Europe as a space of shared democratic values, and this ideological framing is a core component of critical geopolitics.

b. Deconstructing traditional geopolitical boundaries:

Critical geopolitics also emphasizes how geopolitical practices and relationships are often based on constructed boundaries rather than natural or static ones. The EPC deliberately blurs the lines between EU members and non-EU countries, challenging the conventional notion of a geopolitical Europe defined solely by EU membership or military alliances. The inclusion of countries that are not geographically or politically aligned with the EU, such as Georgia or Moldova, suggests a rethinking of Europe's geopolitical boundaries, which is a key theme in critical geopolitics.

c. Geopolitical flexibility - power and discursive practices:

Critical geopolitics also pays attention to how power and hegemony are embedded in geopolitical narratives. Macron's proposal for the EPC, as a French attempt to shape the future of Europe, promotes a vision of Europe that extends beyond the EU, as a geopolitical space that operates on soft power and normative leadership rather than traditional power politics based on territorial control and military influence.

While the EPC could theoretically be framed within classical geopolitics (due to its focus on security and geopolitical stability), it could not be well understood without the lens of critical geopolitics. The table below shows the breadth and depth of the EPC concept, following its members and their narratives across the 5 EPC summits held so far.

Table 3: Meetings of the European Political Community

meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	4th meeting	5th meeting
date	6.10.2022	1.06.2023	5.10.2023	18.07.2024	7.11.2024
place	Prague	Mimi Castle in Bulboaca, Moldova	Granada, Spain	Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, the United Kingdom	Budapest, Hungary
number of part.	44	45	44	43	42
who participated	the 27 EU member states Albania Armenia Azerbaijan Bosnia and Herzegovina Georgia Iceland Kosovo* Liechtenstein Moldova Montenegro North Macedonia Norway Serbia Switzerland Turkey Ukraine the United Kingdom	EU27 member states Albania Andorra Armenia Azerbaijan Bosnia and Herzegovina Georgia Iceland Kosovo* Liechtenstein Moldova Montenegro North Macedonia Norway Serbia Switzerland Ukraine	26 EU member states Albania Andorra Armenia Bosnia and Herzegovina Georgia Iceland Kosovo* Liechtenstein Moldova Monaco Montenegro North Macedonia Norway San Marino Serbia Switzerland Ukraine United Kingdom	24 EU member states Albania Andorra Armenia Azerbaijan Bosnia and Herzegovina Georgia Iceland Kosovo* Liechtenstein Moldova Monaco Montenegro North Macedonia Norway San Marino Serbia Switzerland Ukraine	24 EU member states Albania Andorra Armenia Bosnia and Herzegovina Georgia Kosovo* Liechtenstein Moldova Montenegro North Macedonia Norway San Marino Serbia Switzerland Türkiye Ukraine United Kingdom

	<p>the President of the European Commission</p> <p>the President of the European Council</p>	<p>United Kingdom</p> <p>The President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament</p>	<p>The President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Parliament, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy</p>	<p>United Kingdom; the President of the European Council</p>	<p>NATO secretary</p>
<p>what was discussed</p>	<p>peace and security, especially Russia's war in Ukraine; the energy crisis</p>	<p>joint efforts for peace and security</p> <p>energy resilience and connectivity and mobility in Europe</p>	<p>the leaders discussed how to make Europe more resilient, prosperous and geostrategic.</p>	<p>The leaders reaffirmed their continued support for Ukraine and discussed the topics of energy and connectivity, security and democracy, and migration.</p>	<p>Europe's security challenges, in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing escalation in the Middle East, irregular migration and issues related to economic security and connectivity in terms of energy, transport, IT and global trade.</p>

					EU-US relations was also a topic of discussion among leaders, in light of the recent US elections.
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Source: Consilium.europa.eu

Having on mind the earlier theoretical analysis of EPC and the Table 3 with data from the 5 EPC summits, EPC can be defined as a geopolitical construction of Europe because it represents a strategic, politically motivated framework designed to shape the geopolitical landscape of Europe. Rather than merely reflecting pre-existing political or economic structures, the EPC is a proactive attempt to create a new political space in Europe that aligns with specific geostrategic interests and aims to consolidate Europe's influence in the face of changing global dynamics.

1. Expanding the concept of Europe

The EPC expands the geographical and political boundaries of Europe beyond the European Union (EU). At the 5 Summits approximately 44 countries attended. With the evolving participation, the number of participants in the meetings fluctuated, with 44 members in the first meeting and 42 in the most recent one with participation of EU member states, along with several other countries such as Ukraine, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, showing inclusive discussions and cooperation. Demonstration of leadership engagement with the involvement of top EU leaders, including the Presidents of the European Council, European Commission, and European Parliament, leaders on high level of each participation state, further highlights the importance of these discussions in shaping EU policy and strategy, especially in terms of foreign affairs and security.

2. Strategic geopolitical objective: countering external threats

A core aspect of the EPC's geopolitical function is to enhance Europe's strategic cohesion in the face of external threats, particularly from Russia. At the 5 Summits the discussed topics were closely connected with security and stability as well international developments. The invasion of Ukraine and the broader Russian challenge to European security have highlighted the need for Europe to forge stronger ties with its neighbourhood and to solidify its geopolitical position against external pressures. The EPC provides a mechanism for cooperation and solidarity among European countries and their neighbours that are not yet part of the EU but seek to align with European values. By inviting countries like Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans

into the EPC, Macron is seeking to integrate these countries more closely into Europe's strategic orbit, simultaneously effectively strengthening Europe's eastern and southern frontiers. The geopolitical logic behind this is clear: by including countries vulnerable to Russian influence or direct aggression, the EPC aims to create a collective defence and diplomatic network that reinforces Europe's stability and deterrence capabilities. It's about forging security alliances that are not strictly military but also involve diplomatic coordination and political solidarity.

3. Geopolitical flexibility and soft power

The EPC is also a flexible geopolitical framework, in that it offers a form of cooperation that doesn't demand the full institutional integration that comes with EU membership. The Table 2 shows countries which are EU candidates but and those which are not at the moment or their status is frozen. Exactly the EPC's flexibility is important for these countries that may not be ready or willing to meet the full criteria for EU membership but still seek a form of European affiliation. Through the EPC, these countries can participate in European political affairs, contribute to shared values, and align with the EU on matters of common interest, such as democracy, human rights, trade, and security. This flexibility allows the EPC to act as a kind of soft power tool, creating political influence through the attraction of European values and integration without the rigid structural requirements of EU membership. This kind of geopolitical construction helps Europe project influence in its neighbourhood and beyond, using diplomatic engagement and normative power rather than purely military or economic means.

4. Fostering regional stability and European unity

The EPC can also be seen as a tool for reinforcing European unity by fostering cooperation among countries with varying degrees of integration into European institutions. Countries within the EPC can collaborate on regional issues such as conflict resolution, energy security, and economic development. For example, the Western Balkans, which have long struggled with political instability and tensions, could benefit from the EPC by engaging more directly with the EU and other European states in a peace-building and reconciliation process, making them seat on the same table as part of the family. The Table 3 shows also a continued support for Ukraine, being a central topic of discussion at every meeting. The EPC leaders have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Ukraine, a theme that has remained unchanged despite shifting global dynamics. The discussions also highlight Europe's security concerns, including the broader geopolitical situation in the Middle East and irregular migration. The EPC has remained focused on strategies to strengthen Europe's resilience to external and internal challenges. But the data shows focus on energy resilience, connectivity, and migration, emphasizing Europe's need to secure its energy supply and infrastructure, especially amid external shocks like the war in Ukraine and global trade disruptions.

5. Defining Europe's global role

Beyond the immediate European neighbourhood, the EPC is a key part of how Europe seeks to define its global geopolitical role. In the context of an increasingly multipolar world, where the US, China, and Russia exert considerable influence, Europe must assert its own geopolitical identity. The EPC is a way for Europe to consolidate its power and project a united front on issues of global significance, from climate change to trade and security. By broadening its conception of who belongs to Europe, the EPC also aims to increase Europe's global leverage, creating a more expansive political bloc that can assert its values and interests in global governance institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, or Paris Climate Agreement. Table 1 also shows that the global relations discussions extended beyond Europe, with the EPC addressing global topics like EU-US relations, reflecting the interconnectedness of European issues with broader global geopolitics.

6. Response to EU Enlargement lethargy

The EPC is also a response to EU enlargement lethargy. EU expansion has slowed in recent years due to challenges such as the financial crisis, the migration crisis, and the Brexit decision, but also the slow development at the side of country-candidates. The EPC provides a geopolitical framework that allows for cooperation with European countries that may not be able to meet EU membership criteria in the near future or whose inclusion in the EU may be politically sensitive, but and to those as UK or Norway. It avoids the institutional bottleneck of EU enlargement and offers a more flexible model of European political unity that can accommodate diverse levels of engagement, at least while the Enlargement policy starts giving tangible results.

In summary, the 5 EPC meetings (Table 3) have shown a consistent commitment to addressing key geopolitical and regional issues and EPC has proven to be a platform for deepening cooperation on critical security, energy, and geopolitical challenges facing Europe, with a strong focus on unity and resilience in response to external crises. EPC reflects the need for Europe to adapt to the realities of a changing global order by defining its geopolitical role more flexibly, creating a space for political cooperation that is both inclusive and strategic.

7. Conclusion

The European Political Community (EPC), as proposed by Emmanuel Macron, is still evolving and remains a concept that lacks a precise and universally accepted definition. At this moment, we could conclude, that the key points of the EPC include: Inclusivity (It aims to bring together countries that share European values, even if they are not members of the EU); Political Dialogue and Cooperation (creates a forum/platform for states to discuss and collaborate on common challenges like security, energy climate change etc); Shared European Values (commitment to democracy, human rights, and peace, values fundamental to the European

identity). However, in order to develop the EPC into a tangible, actionable entity that delivers concrete results, a systematic approach to its formation and institutionalization is necessary.

1. Defined clear objectives and vision

As there is attempt for a coherent narrative framing the EPC as a project of political and economic stability, security cooperation, and democratic values in the face of external challenges, still it lacks clarity. One of the main characteristics for geopolitical entity is common foreign, security and defense policy. The EPC should go on to be a platform for enhanced military and civilian coordination, crisis management and humanitarianism in situations of external aggression or instability (such as Russia's war on Ukraine); to serve as a platform for promoting democracy, human rights, and rule of law in its member states, particularly those in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. Here the problem could be in compliance of the EPC's members countries, are they all share the European values (CoE) of democracy and human rights or some of their governance are not democratic one? This could be issue to think about;

2. Institutionalization and structure

The EPC needs a clear institutional framework that organizes its activities, decision-making, and cooperation. Up to now it is a platform for debate without any decision-making or binding documents release. In time, this would require creating a formal structure with clear roles for both member states and non-member participants.

-EPC Summit: The EPC should continue to have a regular summits that brings together heads of state or government. Also, the presence of the NATO, EU Commissioner or Council President shows the broader influence of EPC (world society);

-EPC Secretariat: A permanent body to support the EPC's work, focusing on coordination between members, facilitating discussions, and providing technical support. The secretariat would ensure continuity and institutional memory, making the EPC more than just a series of ad-hoc meetings;

-Working Groups and Task Forces: Specific working groups could be established to focus on particular issues, such as defense, energy, climate change. These groups would be tasked with producing tangible deliverables;

-EPC Consultative Assembly: A consultative assembly, made up of representatives from member countries, could serve as a forum for political dialogue and contribute to the democratic legitimacy of the EPC, fostering the deliberative democracy among European countries and with that further constructing the European public sphere.

3. Promote a shared European identity

The EPC should actively promote the idea of a shared European identity that transcends EU membership. This includes cultural exchanges, educational programs, and initiatives that bring people together across the

continent. Without this effort, no common ground of belonging would be present among the members and no feasible future for the initiative.

The EPC's success depends on tangible results that demonstrate its value to its members and the broader international community. These results should be measurable and visible.

By establishing clear goals, institutional structures, and tangible outcomes, the EPC can become a dynamic geopolitical framework that strengthens Europe's political unity, enhances its security, and contributes to regional stability and prosperity.

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