GEOPOLITICAL EUROPE, THE CONCEPT OF EUROPE AS A POWER DIFFERENTIATED INTEGRATION AS A WAY FORWARD, SEEN FROM THE FRENCH GEOPOLITICAL CONCEPT

Katerina KLIMOSKA, PhD student

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia

katerina.klimoska@ukim.edu.mk

Abstract: *The leaders of EU member states have been frequently referring to "geopolitical Europe". Macron has been actively promoting the concept of Europe as a power since 2017, a vision based on the premise of deep geopolitical shifts and a new reality of big power rivalries on the world chessboard. Nevertheless, France must convince EU Member States that this concept is stable. As a tool for achieving "geopolitical Europe", the French concept of Differentiated Integration will be examined in this paper. An emphasis will be placed on the EU enlargement process.*

Keywords: Geopolitical Europe, differentiated integration, EU enlargement.

1. Introduction

During the years after the Second World War, Europe entered a calmer period, especially with the creation of the European Community, whose main goal was never to experience another war on the European continent, at least not between European countries. As the concept of Europe has evolved through the European Community to the European Union (which can't be defined as a state nor as an organization and has characteristics of both), Europeans have long focused only on its functionally normative aspect, namely the building of "civilian power", ignoring the shifts on the geopolitical chessboard in the surroundings. In metaphorical terms, Europeans played elegant tennis while the rest of the world played chess. Since the beginning of 2000, there have been indications of the growth of the five actors that will occupy the geopolitical space in the following years; China, Russia, Brazil, India, and, of course, the United States of America, especially in terms of their investments in the economy and the military (Renard,2009).

According to the PowerIndex 2022 score with categories ranging from military might and financials to logistical capability and geography, the top ten countries include: the USA, Russia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, France, United Kingdom, Pakistan, and Brazil, and all 10 have upward trends compared to previous years (PowerIndex,2022). This fact indicates the stability in the growth of world powers on the geopolitical map, from 2000 to 2022, with France being the only EU country in the top ten. Next is Italy in 11th place and Germany in 16th place; other EU countries are lower. However, if EU countries join forces, then the EU will be among the first in 2022, as Moravcik will argue for the fact: Europe is the 'Quiet Superpower'(Moravcsik,2009), and later, Europe: The World's Second Military Power (Moravcsik,2010).

The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy (2016), stated "An appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders.", so after in 2017, Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, stands for "European sovereignty" and in some sense advocating for Europe as power. A few years later, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, while her speech in front of the EU Parliament in Strasbourg, announced the geopolitical Commission that Europe urgently needed (Von der Leyen ,2019). Here Von der Leyen emphasized the importance of the strategic enlargement of the Western Balkans, since the Western Balkans appear today as a strategic vulnerability of the EU. However, the most critical challenge that the EU Commission faces, in making the EU a relevant geopolitical actor, remains the lack of unity among member states towards its immediate neighborhood (Outeda, González & Troitiño, 2020). The EU Commission, especially in this ongoing debate on EU strategic autonomy, states an obligatory point of reference towards Western Balkans, all the way emphasizing that promoting enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans would be essential to ensure the credibility, success, and influence of the EU in the region, especially taking into account the current global scenario, characterized by great geopolitical rivalry (Tocci,2021;Borrell,2020), and to verify the ambitions of the EU to effectively assert itself as a strategically autonomous actor in the years to come (Bonomi,2021). In short, Europe must find a way to transform itself to be able to play an increasingly influential role in geopolitical space in the years to come.

Since to understand geopolitical Europe, one should also understand regionalism, especially the new regionalism, but also and for a better understanding of the paper, we will add a few words on the matter. New regionalism can be seen as an attempt by states to strengthen regional control when traditional centralized national sovereignty no longer functions and to bargain collectively with extra-regional partners (Telo,2014). EU is a new regionalism, for which we could say that it is the most impressive proof of the trend towards regional associations based on common culture and traditions, gradually tightening and geographical expansions. This voluntary association of sovereign countries in the European community was acceptable because it brought economic and other advantages, which means that the states are part of a much wider system. Although at the beginning mainly of economic character, the initial intentions behind the first generation of regional agreements can also be long-term political. The European Union (EU), as a project for international integration, can be said to be a political model that challenges conventional governance assumptions and even sovereignty (in the EU we talk about "shared sovereignty"). Suppose we also see the "geopolitical Europe" from the point of regionalism. In that case, it could be concluded that the extent to which regionalization has developed in Europe, argues for the development of a regional actor with the potential to play a role in the geopolitical sphere. As Telo (2001) describes, 'European regionalism does not only refer to deepening integration policies but also to giving an active contribution – as a single entity, not only as a sum of member states but to filtering and sharing more autonomous international and political relations. We can sum up that the 'new regionalism' provides a theory that can include both states and regional governance as closely linked to a complex system, such as developing in Europe (Hettne & Soderbraum,1998). It should be emphasized that common foreign and defense policy is most closely linked to the construction of geopolitical entities. These policy areas are often considered to represent the fundamental features of state sovereignty, so to which extent they may be regionalized is consequently linked to the construction of geopolitical codes, so the question of possible common European geopolitical codes (NGD Rae, 2007). Furthermore, we accept here the notion that the concept of Europe needs geopolitical reasons to have political outcomes. If there is no geopolitical necessity, there is no Europe as a tangible concept, (Ozdemir,2008) which is at the very point of Macron's arguing for geopolitical Europe or Europe as power.

By conducting this research, hopefully a scientific gap will be filled in terms of building geopolitical Europe, which has been under-analyzed or, if it has been addressed, is insufficient. Ultimately, this research will clarify some aspects of Europe's path to becoming a geopolitical actor, confirming or disproving the research questions and hypotheses. Based on the provided data, argumentation will be given regarding the next steps in the enlargement process. The research questions, on which an answer the research should provide, are: Is the project for Europe as a geopolitical actor realistic? Is differentiated integration a tool that can bring that project to fulfillment? Which are the weak and strong sides of this tool toward the aim of a geopolitical actor? Has Macron's proposal been a backup to the existing European ideas for the EU's future, during the past years? The subject of research arises from the research questions and that is Europe as a geopolitical actor and the path to that. Hypotheses are the following: Geopolitical Europe can be achieved. Differentiated Integration is a tool for achieving Geopolitical Europe. Methodologically, this research uses qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data on the topic of interest has been collected using a grounded theory approach. Sources for the qualitative method have been collected from professional and academic publications, media and journals, official EU documents and policies, politicians' speeches, strategies, and policies; and for the quantitative method from statistical and index data from official organizations.

2. Geopolitical Europe, Europe as power, what that means?

But what defines a country as a geopolitical power, how can Europe achieve this, given the construction of the EU? As Flint defines in his Introduction to Geopolitics, power is "Getting what you want". Geopolitics, as the struggle over the control of spaces and places, focuses on power or the ability to achieve particular goals in the face of opposition or alternatives. In the classical sense of the word, the goal is achieved through war, while in the modern sense, through the skill of "make them follow your agenda willingly" without considering alternatives. Power can be defined as material power - according to which a country is powerful if it has a strong economy, smart population, and large army; relational power - according to which the power of a country is evaluated in comparison with other countries; and ideological power - according to which the power of the state is determined according to the degree of ability to persuade others to do what we want, willingly (Flint,2006;2016;2022). In Ó Tuathail's Critical Geopolitics (2005) the power is introduced as an important element in geopolitics "Although often assumed to be

innocent, the geography of the world is not a product of nature but a product of histories of the struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space." Further, Ó Tuathail says that 'geography is not a natural given but a power-knowledge relationship.", so it can be used in the development and reinforcement of power relations.

Europe is built as an ordered space, with the ability to radiate its beneficial effect and provide order to the disorder outside. Hence, in addition to its military capabilities, the real geopolitical comparative advantage of Europe lies in its civilian influence or use of ideological power or soft power (Nye, Jr., 2008) through economic and cultural influence, international law / the rule of law and democracy, reforms, and institutional changes prompted by the EU. This is the attractive power of the EU (Cooper, 2004). The EU is a pre-eminent civilian power, which can be seen through its goals, such as establishing a single market among its members, a zone without internal borders- the Schengen area, common security, foreign and internal security policy, and own single currency. All that, from the initial 6 to today's 27 members, but also much broader, if are taken into consideration her policies of cooperation, partnerships, as well as the EU enlargement, whit it's Enlargement Policy towards Western Balkans and Turkey, and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). As Straw said back in 2003 (Straw,2003), the 2004 Enlargement should be viewed as an opportunity for the EU to expand its sights beyond central Europe and focus on the problems of spreading democracy and prosperity along its southern and eastern borders. "The EU's greatest achievement has been to help secure an absence of war amongst its member states. Enlargement will extend this achievement and cement the intrinsic values to peace across the continent", said Straw. EU Enlargement Accession to the EU is one of the most powerful instruments of the EU to expand its power by using soft power / ideological power or attractive power. Through this instrument, Europe is expanding its influence for peace and stability, making it unique in the World. The attractive power of Europe helped in the stabilization of the polities and economies of over a dozen neighboring countries, making itself a security zone in Europe. Vachudova claims that enlargement largely reinforced domestic reforms through a set of incentives on already converged EU acquis, accession which is a rule-based process using objective criteria backed by strict monitoring and enforcement, thereby stabilizing fledgling democratic and capitalist systems (Vachudova,2005).

Going back to the above, the EU is building its power largely through EU Enlargement: the inclusion of more economies, a larger population, and greater war readiness. However,

whether this is in the function of its relation power, i.e. an increase in power compared to other forces on the geopolitical board depends on the indicators that can be drawn from Enlargement, as well as the cohesiveness of all members within the EU- how could joint decisions be made on important issues. In short, the success of this policy, towards the creation of Europe as a power, depends on the homogeneity and the capacity for EU integration within its borders, especially in the field of defense and foreign policy.

3. Differentiation Integration, as a way forward

The inability of all countries to respond simultaneously, with the same level of development, to certain issues, complicates the functioning of the EU and its Enlargement. In 2017, the EU Commission presented five possible scenarios for the future of Europe in the document "The White paper on the Future of Europe". One of the scenarios is Those Who Want More Do More, meaning the EU will allow willing Member States to do more together in specific areas. Through this, the concept of differentiated integration, as a possible solution for the future of Europe, is officially part of the strategies. Formally, this possibility is given by the Maastricht Treaty but also by the Lisbon Treaty, although some argue that it is present even back from the Treaty of Rome (Leruth,2020).

We took, as a basis of this paper, three research papers on differentiated integration, which we consider crucial when starting to define Europe as a geopolitical actor and the impact of differentiated integration in that process. They are: Lertuh's and Lord's "Differentiated Integration in the European Union: a Concept, a Process, a System or a Theory?" (Leruth & Lord, 2015), so we can define what exactly is differentiated integration for the EU; Fossum's "Democracy and Differentiation in Europe" (Fossum,2015), so we can analyze the effect of differentiated integration on fundamental values as the EU's "super glue", and Schimmelfennig's "Rebordering Europe: external boundaries and integration in the European Union" (Schimmelfennig,2021), so we can have a concept for the natural borders of Europe). We believe that differentiated integration as a reality for Europe, democracy as a value, and the question of Europe's borders, are of structural importance for this paper.

3.1. Borders of Europe

Defarges (1989) said, "France has always promoted the idea of European Europe, with its voice, particularly in East-West relations.", and further Moïsi (1989) pointed out "In a famous and ambiguous statement about Europe that would stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals, de Gaulle constituted a perfect negation of the enduring ideological nature of the East-West divide." In European Europe, we see the French attempts to break out of the bipolar World by creating a third pole and resisting attempts by the superpowers to carve up Europe, so primarily the issue of borders is significant. Europe's borders have not yet been completed or defined, and this is the key to the potential of geopolitical Europe, i.e. Europe as a power. Michel Foucher (2016), French geopolitician, answering the question: Where does Europe end?, says that the European Union has avoided setting geographical limits on Europe - even defining them would mean making political, cultural, and financial choices. The European project needs to be rethought, ... It is not a matter of excluding certain countries, but of being able to exercise an effective foreign policy that will promote common values and interests… ". From a geographical side, Europe is a peninsula of Eurasia, limited by the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the Caucasus Mountains, the Atlantic Sea, the Arctic Ocean, and the Urals and Caspian Sea, referring to De Gaulle's vision for Europe as a product of geography and history, as a mean of combining and increasing the power of the states of the continent, states which he saw as Europe's unalterable horizon.

To sum up, as Schimmelfenning (2015) says, all definitions of Europe resemble each other concerning Europe's geographical core on the Western peninsula of Eurasia and Europe's fuzzy fluid Eastern boundaries, concluding that in political and media discourse, "Europe" has become closely associated with the EU. As in the report to the European Council, by the Reflection Group on the Future of the EU 2030 (2010), is stated "The EU must remain open to potential new members from Europe, assessing every candidacy on its own merits and compliance with the membership criteria. These are the "true limits of Europe". Later in 2017, with the White Paper on the future of Europe (2017), where one of the 5 proposed scenarios is "Those who want more do more ", which allows the development of a geopolitical project or differentiated Europe, based on common values. This is the importance of Schimmelfennig 's research around borders and European integration from an aspect of this effort. In his paper,

talking about the external and internal re-bordering and different scenarios, he concludes that EU Enlargement has all but stopped. Dividing the borders as economic, political, and military, he emphasizes that the borders are relational: they not only separate but also relate territories to each other. He also emphasizes terms like 'European Strategic Autonomy', von der Leyen's pledge to lead a 'geopolitical Commission', the Commission's classification of China as a 'systemic rival' in March 2019 and talks about 'industrial strategy 'and' champions' as a signal of the rise of a rebordering discourse in EU policy. He also stresses the trap that differentiated integration facilitates cherry-picking behavior. On this issue, work has to be done, because as Macron pointed out in his Sorbonne speech, the values of democracy and rule of law are non-negotiable. There can not be cherry-picking in this matter... As a catalyst for Europe's unity and freedom, they can not be part of a two-speed Europe.

3.2. Differentiation Integration, a "normal" feature of regional integration

Leruth and Lord, in their research, suggest that differentiation integration is fully part of European integration and cannot be studied as the exception to the rule. They suggest that differentiated integration should be studied as a "normal" feature of regional integration. EU is a "system of differentiated integration", where the territorial extension of policy regimes varies among the member states and candidate states (Leuffen, Rittberger & Schimmelfennig, 2013). Here we find the justification for taking differentiation integration as a tool for achieving geopolitical Europe. Further, they see differentiation integration as a permanent, organizational principle of the Union, grounded in the need to manage divisions and disagreements that do not go away, a process as a moving target, unfolding over time and providing new forms of integration. Lord argues that differentiation integration should be evaluated by how far it improves the management of externalities between member states, especially where those externalities affect the obligations governments owe their publics to secure core values of democracy, justice, and freedom from arbitrary domination within states.

3.3. Democracy

Democracy is a core value of the European Union. To explain the importance of democracy, as one of the European values, we will refer to the three core EU values: the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. A common set of values unites people, and with that, the

society itself. If individuals lose awareness of the fundamental values of society, it loses their cohesiveness, its connection. That is, when the system loses the sense of its values, it will not be able to preserve and protect the foundations of its structure. Hence the importance of European values, the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Without them, the basis for a free, modern, and democratic European community is lost. Through the development of the humanistic world-view (the democratic world-view culminated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, applying to all human beings on Earth), which dates back to ancient times, the foundations were met as preconditions for fulfilling the commitments of the French Revolution- liberty, equality, fraternity (the most human of all slogans), such as humanistic thinking, rationality, secularity. As a result of this, today, we can talk about fundamental European values: the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. It is important to note that all these steps are sequentially interdependent: the rule of law, democracy, and human rights, without the possibility of reverse order. There must be first the rule of law, to talk further about democracy, and then about human rights (EuropäischeWerte.info). Without the rule of law, there are no preconditions for the existence of other European values. Hence the importance of coherence between all member states and candidate countries in terms of basic European values. The glue that will unite them. Democracy is not just a value in and of itself, it is also the precondition for sustainable action (Goulard & Monti,2012), which is why it is important to study the relationship between democracy and differentiated integration, so we can examine the stability of this tool for achieving geopolitical Europe.

Given that further EU Enlargement, through differentiated integration, may lead to differentiated integration or disintegration, it is crucial to monitor the opt-outs, externalities, and similar effects and their impact on democracy. Fossum studies differentiation through a democratic perspective, i.e. deliberative democratic perspective, which means the justification of every decision made, by which it will have an effect. That is why here we will mention the importance of the Conference on the Future of Europe, where the citizens themselves participate in the adoption of the strategy for the Future of Europe. Given that the states are the ones who support democracy, and the EU through incongruence, which situation has the predisposition to create a significant gap between integration and democratization. That's why Fossum suggests that the study should not start with integration but with the countries themselves to monitor the effects. Important about the enlargement process itself, it's what Fossum claims that the biggest

problem with differentiation is in those countries that are subject to EU rules and regulations but at the same time do not participate in the EU political process where they are adopted. The more the state is incorporated, the smaller the functional differentiation (Lipper,2017). To follow up on Lippert's (2017) the assertion that a debate is needed to create a new status for candidate countries such as partial or associated, or junior membership, followed by a revision of Article 49 Treaty of EU. Those countries, enter a political association and get a sense of belonging. This would be attractive not only for the Western Balkans but also for the Eastern Countries. In this way, economic integration would be achieved, and a strong political connection, too, through the geographical consolidation of the EU as a continental community.

4. Macron's proposal

4.1. Initiative for Europe

On 26th September 2017, at Sorbonne University, Emmanuel Macron gave a speech (Macron,2017) about his Initiative for Europe: sovereign, united and democratic Europe, a way how to make a stronger Europe in the World as it is today. Here, at the beginning of his presidency, he noted "I have no red lines", "let's embrace the differentiations.", "No State must be excluded from the process, but no country must be able to block those wanting to make faster progress or forge further ahead", which best illustrates his open support for a multispeed Europe. Further, he noted that the European project has always worked with "the determination of a few" countries that led the way to further cooperation and integration. Accepting the reality of the European project means accepting the differentiation: "Europe is already moving at several speeds, so we should not be afraid to say so and want it." Further, he addresses the demanding enlargement, already accepted by the Member States and the Commission, which will be so "because the European Union's stronger foundation will allow greater forms of differentiation.", reaffirming his determination that the EU needs reform inside, revision of the treaties, such as the reform of the European Union and the Eurozone, so can continue with the enlargement (Macron,2018). Opting for differentiated integration would allow the EU to ensure stability in its "natural borders" without directly linking it to a promise of enlargement. Addressing Europeans in 2019 via the so-called Letter For European Renewal, he states the crisis in which

Europe is at the moment and the need of doing more and sooner to avoid the trap of the status quo and resignation, so being at a pivotal moment is better to have Europe that advances, sometimes at different places, and it's open to all even there will be disagreements, rather than being static Europe (Macron,2019). Europe is a model based on the freedom of man and the diversity of opinions and creation. So, for Macron more flexible Europe could offer more efficient cooperation, but that means at the same time less cohesive continent (on which work should be done in line with building the same values towards "the European way of life"), which is the cost should be paid to overcome the threat of anti-European movements. France maintains that the only way for the EU to function is to introduce flexibility in its policies. Furthermore, France hopes that a Multi-speed EU will consolidate France's power as part of the EU's hard core, as it considers that it has been weakened as a result of successive enlargements (Brudzinska,Gubalova,Kudzko&Muzergues,2020).

4.2. Europe, political project

In his two interviews in 2019 (FT,2019; Economist,2019), one for The Financial Times and the other for The Economist, Macron urge Europe to start thinking of herself as a geopolitical power, ensuring having control of her destiny, saying that this is the time of truth "which is to decide whether the European Union is a political project or just a market project. I think it's a political project." Nevertheless, what kind of political system we are talking about, and what should be done to put aside the limits of the ability to act? As we see the "ever closer Union" is not in the light of the current moment, and on the other side, the more differentiated EU raises several important questions on the nature and character of the EU as a political system and the kinds of processes and mechanisms that drive its development. By linking differentiation to the notion of the segmented political system, Bátora, and Fossum explain how we understand and analyze differentiated integration with the term which provides a more apt and precise characterization of the EU as a political system and also introduces the notion of segmentation as a distinct dynamic (Bátora & Fossum,2021). They define that segments can solidify under certain structural and institutional conditions, and a political system where such structural elements and mechanisms are pervasive can be characterized as a segmented political system, referring to the EU. As stated in the introduction, the EU is different from a state. From the very outset, it was prevented from becoming a state by the strong built-in constraints on core state

powers (military, diplomacy, policy, tax, and fiscal policies). This, over time, has produced a curious paradox, wherein the EU has seen very little of the capacity build-up that we find in most states. The EU is nevertheless a vital force in Europeanizing the Member (and affiliated) States. So, to combine and fulfill its tasks, the EU had to differentiate both its decision-making methods and patterns of Member State participation in particular policies. Thus, the EU has to incorporate two institutional systems or principles: the supranational community system and the intergovernmental union system. No other solution would have been compatible with maintaining the integrity of systems at the two levels (EU-level and member state level). So, Batora and Fossum's assumptions are that, we should build the EU as a segmented political system, where states are coming together to form a new entity, that is neither a state nor an international organization, but a partial and lopsided polity consisting of one or more segments – with limited ability to summon own resources and constraints on its scope and depth of action. Here, is the main challenge in lowering these limited abilities and making the EU more action-driven. Macron attempts to combine the intergovernmental and supranational in the governing of the Union, hoping balance will be enforced, something that the federalists do not very welcome.

4.3. Differentiated Europe

Macron's strong support of European strategic autonomy, a traditional French objective, has also framed France's position on defense. Europe's quest for strategic autonomy is what he calls "a geopolitical necessity". Europe should develop the tools to think and act autonomously, when necessary. One of his 6 keys to sovereignty is defense, which again will be achieved "through discussions between the various member states who wish to move forward in this area". In recent paper (Siddi,Karjalainen&Jokela,2022) about differentiated cooperation in the EU's foreign and security policy, the founding is that it generates internal consensus and spurred the EU into action on specific policy, adhering to common European values and identity, which allows for building long-standing common EU positions. However, further is said, when differentiated cooperation has departed from the common base, it is ineffective. Macron believes that European Union in 2024 will be brought together on two pillars, the values of democracy and the rule of law and the single market. On the values, there can be no two-speed Europe, as he believes they are "the catalyst for our unity and freedom." They are the foundation and raison

d'etre of the Union (Macron,2022). All member states and candidate countries must respect these policies as fundamental common values. In the absence of these policies, there will be no basis on which the EU exists as a political union, so the key question is to be careful about which forms of differentiation are in favor of democracy and do not endanger it, and which forms of differentiation are not in favor of democracy, i.e. give the opposite result lead to disintegration. In the new reality of the geopolitical changes, Macron believes that Europe should move from being a Europe of cooperation inside the borders to a powerful Europe in the World, fully sovereign, free to make its choices and master its destiny, a new geopolitical player on the world stage.

Proposal for Multi-speed Europe we have even back in 1994, in the paper published by Wolfang Schäuble and Karl Lamers (CDU) (Lamers &Schäuble,1994). They argued in favor of a political union with developed flexible approaches to integration, led by France and Germany, together with the Benelux. The other members will converge in the future, with this core, which would have a centripetal effect. The importance of the paper is on the stability and unity of Europe and future development in the World, where common EU defense and foreign policy is one of high importance. In 2014, the two authors gave an interview for The Financial Times, recalling again to their paper of 1994 and again emphasizing the urgency of Europe as a political union "to establish cores of cooperation within the EU that enable smaller, willing groups of member states to forge ahead" (Lamers & Schäuble, 2014). The issue of differentiation is also tackled in the book "Democracy in Europe - Looking further ahead" by Sylvie Goulard and Mario Monti, where the authors argue that the unity of the 27-strong Europe is crucial to protect everyone's prosperity, but that at the same time "a kind of right to self-determination for the eurozone deserves to be acknowledged", where we can see the proposal for a differentiated approach. However, at the same time, they also believe that "democracy is not just a value in and of itself, it is also the precondition for sustainable action", and they call for democracy by the people and the people (Goulard&Monti,2012). In this context, in the 2000 year, Joschka Fischer, Germany's Foreign Minister, defended the creation of a federal Europe around a "center of gravity" (Fischer,2000) and again in the 2011 year called for "European states must combine interests for the common good" (Fischer,2011). A Treaty would formalize the "center" with its institutions, a parliament, and a directly elected parliament. The center would have emerged as a response to the potential unwillingness of some member states to advance further. This is in

line with the two French statesmen, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet Schuman, who is 1963, will say" In the coming decade, we will have to enlarge the EU to the east and south-east, and this will, in the end, mean [a] doubling in the number of members. And at the same time, if we are to be able to meet this historic challenge and integrate the new Member States without substantially denting the EU's capacity for action, we must lay the last brick in the building of European integration, namely political integration."(Dannreuther,2004). Holzinger and Schimmelfennig developed their theory on the Grabitz (1984) concept of a "Two- or Multiple-speed Europe" which by them is closest to the current EU. The concept aims to introduce a federal political union in several steps, whereby some states cooperate closer at an earlier point in time while others follow suit later" (Holzinger & Schimmelfennig,2012).

From a state, an international organization to federalization, various concepts of Europe are present, from the time of the EU Community to the present concept of EU, as a 'system of differentiated integration (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen&Rittberger,2014), where the EU by definition is not 'many Europes', with task-specific jurisdictions each having their organization, but one Europe, with a single organizational and member state core and a territorial extension that varies by function. Polities can be conceptualized as three-dimensional configurations of authority: Level of centralization, Functional scope, and the one we are interested in, the Territorial extension, where the authority of a polity can be limited geographically to a single political territory, or it may encompass several territories – up to the entire World (Leuffen, Rittberger & Schimmelfennig, 2013). Worth mentioning from Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, and Rittberger is that according to their research, there is no horizontal differentiation in a policy area if there is uniform and exclusive membership of EU member states. The patterns and trends in the data on integration suggest that differentiation is a durable feature of European integration and maybe even growing in importance, they argue. In the paper Differentiated Integration: How much can the EU accommodate? Andersen and Sitter talk about weak integration as the only viable solution for a heterogeneous system like the EU, further dividing three types of integration, from which they label for EU the imposed integration (Andersen&Sitter,2005). Here they refer to differentiated integration. So, even from years back, never a question of the EU would enlarge to her "natural borders", but when and how much-differentiated integration can the EU accommodate? As the paper mentions, the CIA study from 2005 holds that the EU might not survive in the next two decades, we see that the opposite is happening. Is differentiated

integration the way forward? We may say yes, since it's present as a normal feature for years now, and it allows the path to Europe as a geopolitical power if the fundaments that cause disintegration are well thought out and solved.

5. Data

5.1. Material power

The following data is for the EU Member States and all others that aspire to the EU, whether through the enlargement process or the partnership for cooperation. The Eastern Neighborhood has been taken into account due to recent shifts, whether candidate status should be given as an opportunity to the countries from this part of Eastern Europe. Finally, data is provided for the countries that are currently considered geopolitical powers in the World, for comparison matters. The indicators which are taken (population, GDP, education, military power), correspond to the definition of power as material power. Even some would say that material power should not be that relevant for the EU, but the current war showed the opposite.

Table 1. Material power

EU Member Country		Population (World population review,2022)	GDP percapita (nominal in $) (World population review,2022)	% Tertiary education (World population review,2022)	PowerIndex 2022 (Global Firepower Countries Index,2022)
1.	Germany	83,883.596	54076	31.3	0.2322
2.	France	65, 584.518	46062	39.7	0.1283
3.	Italy	60, 262.77	40861	20.1	0.1801
4.	Spain	46, 719.142	39121	39.7	0.2901
5.	Poland	37, 739.785	34103	32.4	0.4179
6.	Romania	19, 031.335	30526	/*	0.5938
7.	Netherlands	17,134,872	57,534	42.6	0.5937

8.	Belgium	11,668.278	51096	42.4	1.1451
9.	Czech Republic	10, 736.784	40618	24.9	0.6161
10.	Greece	10, 316.637	28748	32.7	0.4506
11.	Portugal	10, 140.57	34043	28.2	0.7282
12.	Sweden	10, 218.971	54146	44.6	0.4231
13.	Hungary	9, 606.259	33030	27.2	0.8633
14.	Austria	9, 066.71	55218	34.2	0.8924
15.	Bulgaria	6, 844.597	23817	/	1.1071
16.	Denmark	5, 834.95	58,932	39.3	0.8677
17.	Finland	5, 554.96	49853	47.9	0.8149
18.	Slovakia	5, 460.193	32709	26.8	0.9617
19.	Ireland	5, 020.199	94392	49.9	2.3147
20.	Croatia	4, 059.286	27717	/	0.9962
21.	Lithuania	2, 661.708	38824	44.1	1.7083
22.	Slovenia	2, 078.034	40067	35.9	1.9486
23.	Latvia	1, 848.837	31509	37.8	2.2758
24.	Estonia	1, 321.91	38834	42.2	2.6527
25.	Cyprus	1, 223.387	40107	/	/
26.	Luxemburg	642.371	118001	51.3	4.4489
27.	Malta	444.033	42856	/	/
The European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland, and the North					
28.	Norway	5, 511.37	65,800	45.3	0.5455
29.	Liechtenstein			/	/
30.	Iceland	345.393	55596	40.6	78.6623
31.	Switzerland	8, 773.637	72,874	45.3	0.5015

EU enlargement Western Balkans					
	Albania	2,866.374	14218	/	3.0023
	Republic of North Macedonia	2,083,374	/	/	5.7275
	Montenegro	628,066	/	/	4.8015
	Serbia	8, 653.016	19146	/	0.9923
	Turkey	85, 561.976	30253	22	0.1961
EU enlargement potential candidates					
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,249.317	15047	/	4.0288
	Kosovo	/	/	/	13.9136
The Eastern Partnership (EaP)- Eastern Neighbourhood					
	Armenia	2, 971.966	13261	/	2.3169
	Azerbaijan	10, 300.205	14431	/	1.0251
	Belarus	9, 432.8	20187	/	0.8124
	Georgia	3, 968.738	14918	/	2.0014
	Republic of Moldova	4, 013.171	12811	/	2.2515
	Ukraine	43, 192.122	13110	/	0.3266
World population 2022:	7,936,226,584				
United States of America	334,805,269	63,416	50.10	0.0453
Russia	145,805,947	27,903	56.70	0.0501

| China | 1,448,471,400 | 17,192 | / | 0.0511 |
| Brexit: UK | 68,497,907 | 44,117 | 49.40 | 0.1382 |

*no data provided

According to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts expectations, GDP Per Capita in the European Union is expected to reach 32900.00 $ by the end of 2022, which is twice lower as the one in the USA, 63416$ (Tradingeconomics.com,2022). In this sense it's very important to the GDP of the countries aspiring to the EU and the one joining, will they make stronger or weaker the EU economy. As the data shows, no one from the countries in candidate countries or potential candidates or Eastern partnership is reaching the average EU GDP, almost more than half of them have twice lower GDP than the EU. Almost the same case is with other data in the table. Only in terms of population, joining EU aspirants would be advantageous, because it would bring the EU closer to and surpass the USA and Russian populations and reduce the gap with China. However, concerning GDP, tertiary education, as well as military readiness, the indicators show the need to improve performance in these areas, although some of them have excellent results in some fields, such as Serbia with a power index. This data is an indicator that the new countries aspiring to join the EU, with the level of development they have at the moment, would not give optimal rise to the material power of Europe as a geopolitical actor.

5.2. Indicators for Democracy

To show the status of European values, especially the part of the rule of law and democracy, which were previously emphasized as the basis for connecting the EU countries and a glue that protects against disintegration, we took three indices, whose movement we followed during the last years, in the candidate countries for EU membership, as well as the countries from the Eastern Partnership (considering that they also enter what we have previously explained as geographical Europe, but also the latest movements around the candidate status of Ukraine, Moldova, etc.). With this, we want to see the danger of the effect of disintegration, i.e. the inability of these countries to integrate into the EU or vice versa.

Table 2. Democracy indexes

	Freedom in the world (Freedom House) 2022;2021;2020;2019;2018; 2017	EIU Democracy Index 2021	The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2021; 2020; 2019;2018-17
EU enlargement Western Balkans			
Albania	67/2022;66/2021;67/2020;68 /2019;68/2018;68/2017	6,11/ Flawed democracy	0,49/2021;0,50/2020;0,51 /2019;0,51/2018-17
Republic of North Macedonia	67/2022; 66/2021; 63/2020; 59/2019; 58/2018; 57/2017	6,03/ Flawed democracy	0,53/2021;0,53/2020;0,54 /2019;0,53/2018-17
Montenegro	67/2022;63/2021;62/2020;65 /2019;67/2018;69/2017	6,02/ Flawed democracy	/
Serbia	62/2022;64/2021;66/2020;67 /2019;73/2018;76/2017	6,36/ Flawed democracy	0,49/2021;0,50/2020;0,50 /2019;0,50/2018-17
Turkey	32/2022;32/2021;32/2020;31 /2019;32/2018;38/2017	4,35/ Hybrid Regime	0,42/2021;0,43/2020;0,42 /2019;0,42/2018-17
EU enlargement potential candidates			
Bosnia and Herzegovina	53/2022;53/2021;53/2020;53 /2019;55/2018;55/2017	5,04/ Hybrid Regime	0,52/2021;0,52/2020;0,53 /2019;0,53/2018-17
Kosovo	56/2022;54/2021;56/2020;54 /2019;52/2018;52/2017	/	0,55/2021; 0,54/2020
The Eastern Partnership (EaP) - Eastern Neighbourhood			
Armenia	55/2022;55/2021;53/2020;51 /2019;45/2018;45/2017	5,49/ Hybrid Regime	/
Azerbaijan	9/2022;10/2021;10/2020;11/ 2019;12/2018;14/2017	2,68/ Authoritarian	/
Belarus	8/2022;11/2021;19/2020;19/ 2019;21/2018;20/2017	2,4/ Authoritarian	0,48/2021; 0,51/2020;0,52/2019;0,51 /2018-17

Georgia	58/2022;60/2021;61/2020;63/2019;64/2018;64/2017	5,12/ Hybrid Regime	0,61/2021;0,60/2020;0,61/2019;0,61/2018-17
Republic of Moldova	62/2022; 61/2021; 60/2020; 58/2019; 61/2018; 62/2017	6.10 / Flawed democracy	0.51 / 2021; 0.50 / 2020; 0.49 / 2019; 0.49 / 2018-17
Ukraine	61/2022; 60/2021; 62/2020; 60/2019; 62/2018; 61/2017	5.57 / Hybrid Regime	0.51 / 2021; 0.51 / 2020; 0.50 / 2019; 0.50 / 2018-17

We reviewed the following indices:

- Freedom in the World (Freedom House).: index for the condition of political rights and civil liberties around the world analyses the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, the functioning of the government, freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, the rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. This index divides countries into free, partly free, and not free. Except for Turkey, Belarus, and Azerbaijan, which are in the "not free" group, the rest are indexed as "partly free". The situation is similar during the years under review, with small improvements observed in Macedonia.

- The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index: measures how the rule of law is experienced and perceived by the general public in 126 countries and jurisdictions worldwide. Scores range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the strongest adherence to the rule of law; with over 0.75, we can consider that the country has a good rule of law and below 0.50 a weak rule of law. The data in the past years show that these countries do not have good results, i.e. moderately good results, but over the years, there have been no significant improvements. However, on the other hand, there are countries with poor results among the EU member states; for example, on the last index 2021, Greece has 0.61, Croatia 0.61, Bulgaria even 0.55, and Hungary 0.53, which indicates possible disintegration due to the absence of the core values on which the Union is based. Entering new countries that do not have a good score on these issues would be a danger of further generation of a "climate" of disintegration.

- EIU Democracy Index measures the state of democracy worldwide, which, according to the results, divides the countries into full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. Here we have looked at the latest index from 2021, which gives us a picture of the current state of the countries that are of interest to us, after which it can be seen that most are "flawed democracies". Some of them are improving because they were previously hybrid regimes, but at the same time, part of them are authoritarian regimes.

The conclusion would be that even in those candidate countries, that have started negotiations with the EU, such as Serbia and Montenegro, as well as those waiting for a date for the start of negotiations such as Macedonia and Albania, no significant improvement can be observed in the area of basic EU values, crucial for the country's good integration into the Union. This indicates the need to redefine the manner of enlargement, especially in the sense previously explained in the paper, through differentiated integration with mandatory respect and incorporation of EU values as their own. Otherwise, although by involving all countries within its geographical borders, the EU will gain the opportunity for geopolitical power, the effects of disintegration will be a brake on achieving that goal, and the final effect would be negative. One of the possible solutions is through a different model of rapprochement to influence the key segments that have been defined as causing disintegration and contributing to integration (the rule of law, democracy, etc.) or the formation of different concentric circles in multispeed Europe. In this way, countries will be able to join the various EU policies when they are ready, but in the whole process, the EU will be able to have a greater influence in terms of key segments in each candidate country.

6. Conclusion

The need for Europe as a geopolitical player does not come from someone's desire but first from the circumstances in which the World finds itself. In that geopolitical space of movement of geopolitical forces, there is no place for those who cannot make decisions about their destiny, i.e. they are made by others on their behalf. This change in geopolitical reality puts Europe to the test, whether and to what extent it is ready to transform itself into a third pole in a geopolitical bipolar world. This paper examines several important aspects of Europe as a power; at first glance, perhaps different in their field of research, but interdependent and related to the

issue of geopolitical Europe. The need for expansion is present, especially in rounding off so-called Europe's natural borders, which would mean border stability through common security and foreign policy. The problem of the heterogeneity of the countries that are part of Europe's "natural borders" makes more than necessary the differentiated integration, through which it will be possible to move forward, as much as possible, based on common values. Will it be through a solution of confederal or another status, which would give a sense of belonging to countries that want to join the EU (and do not meet the conditions), until they are sufficiently reformed to meet the necessary criteria? As we have seen from the tables, enlargement as such does not give the desired effects in the area of reform of the countries concerning the basic EU values; hence a new model is needed, which would enable greater effectiveness and transformation, and at the same time contribute to geographical EU consolidation. The allegations in this paper are supported by the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe (2022), which at the initiative of Macron, the EU Commission realized from 2021 to 2022 with final points adopted on 9th May 2022. Through the voice of the citizens at this conference, Europe is on its way to taking the next step towards further enlargement, abandoning decision-making by unanimous voting, the launch of "joint armed forces" and transnational voting lists, possible federalization as the final shape of The EU, some stated as a desired destination. In his latest work, Sergio Fabbrini, gives his answer on Differentiation or federalization: Which democracy for the future of Europe? (Fabbrini, 2021) referring to federalization as an alternative to differentiation, offering the capability for the EU to advance its integration in sovereignty-sensitive policies his points are clear and justified, but the main question is how to get there (since as we saw in this paper not all countries are ready at the same time), our assumptions are through differentiated integration. At every step, pay attention to the processes that would cause disintegration, which refer to the respect of the basic EU values (the rule of law, and democracy).

A research, from 2017, by Börzel, Dimitrova, and Schimmelfennig lists three elements that are cumulatively necessary to be present to enable an effective enlargement policy, namely: a credible membership perspective, conditionality, and assistance, although will further state that this is not a guarantee of success either because it ultimately depends on the conditions in the candidate countries as well as the member states (Börzel, Dimitrova & Schimmelfennig,2017). According to them, the EU's external integration capacity depends on the existence of membership prospects for candidate countries, as well as those aspiring to the EU, such as the

Balkan countries, but also the countries of the Southern Neighborhood - Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Their recommendation is for a clear signal for an EU perspective towards these countries to be constantly present, no matter what, as a distant reality. Regarding the more credible enlargement process, which the authors recommend in the paper, the EU, in 2020, adopted a new enlargement methodology " Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans " (European Commission,2020), according to which the whole process should become more credible, with a stronger political steer, more dynamic and predictable. However, reaching the initial results of this new methodology will take a longer period, which Europe in these geopolitical circumstances, does not have the luxury to spend without in the meantime taking other steps that this region will complete (these countries that are within the natural borders of Europe, to bring closer politically). This is crucial for the stability of the borders and hence for Europe. Moreover, as the research mentioned above indicates, "accession conditionality helped improve democracy and governance effectiveness in Eastern Europe. However, after joining the EU, some governments have attempted to limit individual freedoms and undermine the independence of the judiciary to consolidate their power. The EU's capacity to promote and protect democracy and governance effectiveness weakens once candidate countries become members. The current Article 7 sanctions are too blunt and - given the near unanimity requirement - not sufficiently credible." there is a need for reform on key issues within the EU.

Additionally, as in the given Democracy Indexes above in this paper, it can be seen that in both the candidate countries and the EaP countries, there is no significant improvement in the areas of fundamental values, however, the enlargement process with all its mechanisms is ongoing for some years now. Hence, one of the logical and possible solutions for this group of countries in the European political community (Macron,2022), Macron proposed at the closing of the Conference on the Future of Europe in Strasbourg in May 2022. "We must find a political form that enables us to 'dock' to Europe some states that share the same values and geography and build together a political coordination ..", said Macron. Here is the differentiated approach again or a two or multi-tier Europe. For this, some changes should be made in the Treaties; even the current treaties starting from Maastricht, as we pointed out, accept differentiation. Natasha Wunsch in 2017 would point out that a key concern in France's positioning towards further EU enlargement is the desire to preserve the Union's achievements and maintain European

integration as a political project while embracing a policy of 'controlled enlargement' (Wunsch, 2017). This was the case in the years to come, after which point we face now a new proposal from France, which could be identified as a geopolitical one, by which countries outside the EU would be allowed to join in "European core values." This should not mean that the enlargement process would be stopped because the EU's external integration capacity depends on the perspective for membership, but is guided independently from the other until the country's candidates are ready to be full members of the EU. In the meantime, other forms (of confederal form, junior status countries, or alike) should take place as a tool for a more united Europe and a geopolitical one as a final goal.

7. References

1. R.Thomas. (2009) A BRIC in the world: Emerging powers, Europe and the coming order. Egmont Paper No. 31,Policy Paper, Available at: http://aei.pitt.edu/11869/.

2. D.Wilson, R. Purushothaman (2003). Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050. Global Economics Paper 99. Goldman Sachs, New York,

   Available at: https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/archive-pdfs/brics-dream.pdf.

3. PowerIndex (2022) Global Firepower ranking, Available at: https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php.

4. A. Moravcsik (2009) "Europe: The Quiet Superpower," FRENCH POLITICS,Volume 7, No. 3/4, pp. 403-422,

   Available at: https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/french_politics.pdf.

5. A. Moravcsik (2010) 'Europe: Rising Superpower in a Bipolar World', in Alan Alexandroff and Andrew Cooper, Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC., Available at: https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/rising_states.pdf .

6. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy (2016) Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

7. Von der Leyen (2019) Speech by President-elect von der Leyen in the European Parliament Plenary on the occasion of the presentation of her College of Commissioners and their program, European Commission, Available at: https://cutt.ly/LsyLScu.

8. C. Cancela Outeda, P. Lamoso González, D. Ramiro Troitiño (2020) EU Enlargement Policy Towards the Western Balkans: State Actors, Interests and Strategies, Journal of European Studies.

9. N. Tocci (2021) European Strategic Autonomy, What It Is, Why We Need It, How to Achieve It, Rome, IAI, link: https://www.iai.it/en/node/12819.

10. J. Borrell (2020), "Why European Strategic Autonomy Matters", EEAS (HR/VP Blog), Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/why-european-strategic-autonomy-matters_en.

11. Edit: M. Bonomi (2021) In Search of EU Strategic Autonomy: What Role for the Western Balkans? The International Spectator, Istituto Affari Internazionali,
Available at: https://www.tepsa.eu/in-search-of-eu-strategic-autonomy-what-role-for-the-western-balkans-matteo-bonomi-eds-iai-italy/.

12. M.Telo (2014) European Union and New Regionalism Competing Regionalism and Global Governance in a Post-Hegemonic Era, Routledge,
Available at: https://www.routledge.com/European-Union-and-New-Regionalism-Competing-Regionalism-and-Global-Governance/Telo/p/book/9781472434395.

13. M.Telo (2001) European Union and New Regionalism: Europe and Globalization in Comparative Perspective Edition, 1st edition, Routledge,
Available at: https://www.routledge.com/European-Union-and-New-Regionalism-Europe-and-Globalization-in-Comparative/Telo/p/book/9781138704916.

14. B.Hettne,F.Soderbraum (1998) The New Regionalism Approach, Politeia,Vol 17,No3., Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2399180.

15. Norman Gregor David Rae (2007) Reinventing Geopolitical Codes in the Post-Cold War World With Special Reference to International Terrorism, Doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow.

16. H.Ozdemir (2008) The meaning of Europe and its geopolitics: Europe as a democratic peace project, Journal of modern science, Tom 1/4/2008.

17. C. Flint (2006) Introduction to Geopolitics, 1st edition, Routledge.

18. C. Flint (2016) Introduction to Geopolitics, 3rd edition, Routledge.

19. C. Flint (2022) Introduction to Geopolitics, 4th edition, Routledge.

20. G. Ó Tuathail (2005) Critical Geopolitics The Politics of Writing Global Space, Taylor & Francis.

21. J. S. Nye, Jr. (2008) Public Diplomacy and Soft Power, AAPSS American academy of political and social science, Vol 616, Issue 1.

22. Cooper, R. (2004) Hard Power, Soft Power and the Goals of Diplomacy. In: D. Held & M. Koenig-Archibugi, eds. American Power in the 21st Century. Cambridge: Polity Press.

23. J. Straw (2003) Straw: EU reform essential, The Guardian,
Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/sep/09/eu.politics.

24. M. Anna Vachudova (2005) Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration After Communism, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

25. B. Leruth (2020) Differentiation as a Response to Crises? In the book: Theorising the Crises of the European Union, Routledge,
Available at: https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003001423-12/differentiation-response-crises-benjamin-leruth.

26. B.Leruth, C.Lord (2015) Differentiated integration in the European Union: a concept, a process, a system or a theory?, Journal of European Public Policy 22(6).

27. J.E.Fossum (2015) Democracy and differentiation in Europe, Journal of European Public Policy, Vol.22, No.6,799-815.

28. F. Schimmelfennig (2021) Rebordering Europe: external boundaries and integration in the European Union, Journal of European Public Policy.

29. P. Defarges (1989), France and Europe. In Godt, Paul Ed. Policy-Making in France: From De Gaulle to Mitterand, Pinter Publishers, London.

30. D.Moisis (1989) The opening curtain, chapter French Policy Toward Central and Eastern Europe, Routledge.

31. M. Foucher (2016) Where does Europe end?, Le Monde diplomatique.

32. F.Schimmelfennig (2015) Europe, chapter 10, Oxford Handbook for Comparative regionalism, Tanja Borzel and Thomas Risse (eds.).

33. PROJECT EUROPE 2030 (2010) Challenges and Opportunities A report to the European Council by the Reflection Group on the Future of the EU 2030,

Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30776/qc3210249enc.pdf.

34. WHITE PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE, Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025 (2017) European Commission COM 2025, Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf.

35. L. Dirk, B. Rittberger, F. Schimmelfennig (2013) Differentiation Integration, Enplaning variation in the European Union, Basingstoke:Palgrave.

36. Definition of the most basic European Values and their significance for our modern society, CC by EuropeanValues.info, Available at: http://europaeischewerte.info/fileadmin/templates/Documents/ewdef_en.pdf.

37. B.Lipper (2017) The nexus between enlargement and differentiation, EU60:Re-Founding Europe.The responsibility to propose, Istituto Affari Internazionali,

Available at: https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eu60_2.pdf.

38. E.Macron (2017) Sorbonne speech of Emmanuel Macron, Initiative for Europe, Available at: https://www.elysee.fr/en/all-actualities.

39. E.Macron (2018) Speech at Ambassador's Conference 2018, Available at: https://www.elysee.fr/en/all-actualities.

40. E.Macron (2019) For European renewal, Available at: https://www.elysee.fr/en/all-actualities.

41. K. BRUDZIŃSKA, V.GUBALOVA, A.KUDZKO, A.MUZERGUES (2020) Making Flexible Europe Work? European Governance and the potential of differentiated integration. GLOBSEC Policy Institute; PP, 47-48, Available at: https://cutt.ly/DuPZoAx.

42. E.Macron (2019) FT Interview: Emmanuel Macron says it is time to think the unthinkable, Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/3ea8d790-7fd1-11ea-8fdb-7ec06edeef84.

43. E.Macron (2019) Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead, The Economist, Available at: https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead

44. J. Bátora, J. Erik Fossum (2021) Differentiation, and Segmentation, SSRN Electronic Journal.

45. M.Siddi, T.Karjalainen, J.Jokela (2022) Differentiated Cooperation in the EU's Foreign and Security Policy: Effectiveness, Accountability, Legitimacy, The International Spectator.

46. E. Macron (2022) French president Emmanuel Macron Press Conference speech, Available at: https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/speech-by-emmanuel-macron-at-the-closing-ceremony-of-the-conference-on-the-future-of-europe/.

47. K. Lamers, W. Schäuble (1994) Reflections on European Policy, Bundestague, Bonn.

48. K. Lamers, W. Schäuble (2014) More integration is still the right goal for Europe, Financial Times, Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/5565f134-2d48-11e4-8105-00144feabdc0.

49. S. Goulard, M. Monti (2012) De la démocratie en Europe: VOIR PLUS LOIN, FLAMMARION.

50. J. Fischer (2000) From Union to Federation: Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration, European Affairs,
Available at: https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/ea/2000_summer/ea_sum00d.html

51. J. Fischer (2011) European states must "combine interests" for common good, EU affairs,Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20110110STO11398/joschka-fischer-european-states-must-combine-interests-for-common-good

52. R. Dannreuther(2004) European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy, Taylor&Francis group.

53. HOLZINGER, K. & SCHIMMELFENNIG, F. (2012) Differentiated Integration in the European Union: Many Concepts, Sparse Theory, Few Data. Journal of European Public Policy, 2012. Vol. 19, N° 2, pp, 292-305; pp, 294.

54. F. Schimmelfennig, D. Leuffen, B. Rittberger(2014) The European Union as a System of Differentiated Integration: Interdependence, Politicization and Differentiation, Political Science Series, Working Paper No. 137.

55. D. Leuffen, B.Rittberger, F. Schimmelfennig (2013) Differentiated Integration. Explaining variation in the European Union. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

56. S.Andersen, N.Sitter (2005) Differentiated Integration: How much can the EU Accommodate?, 37th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology, Stockholm,5-9 July.

57. World population review, Available at: https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gdp-per-capita-by-country.

58. World population review, Most Educated Countries 2022, Available at: https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/most-educated-countries .

59. Global Firepower Countries Index, Available at: https://www.globalfirepower.com/.

60. EU GDP, Trading Economics, Available at:: https://tradingeconomics.com/european-union/gdp-per-capita .

61. Freedom House, Available at: *https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores*.

62. The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, Available at: https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/.

63. EIU Democracy Index, Available at: https://www.economistgroup.com/group-news/economist-intelligence/democracy-index-2021-less-than-half-the-world-lives-in-a-democracy.

64. Conference on the Future of Europe, Report on the outcome (2022) Available at: https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/reporting.

65. Fabbrini S. (2021) Differentiation or federalization: Which democracy for the future of Europe? Eur Law J.;1–13, Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12384.

66. TA Börzel, A. Dimitrova, F. Schimmelfennig (2017) European Union enlargement and integration capacity: concepts, findings, and policy implications, Journal of European Public Policy.

67. European Commission (2020) Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans, Brussels, 5.2.2020 COM (2020) 57.

68. E.Macron (2022) Speech by Emmanuel Macron at the closing ceremony of the Conference on the Future of Europe, Strasbourg,

Available at: https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/speech-by-emmanuel-macron-at-the-closing-ceremony-of-the-conference-on- the-future-of-Europe /.

69. N. Wunsch (2017) Between indifference and hesitation: France and EU enlargement towards the Balkans, Journal of South East Europe and the Black Sea,

Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14683857.2017.1390831.