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**EUROPE,
STRATEGY &
SECURITY**

LET'S FREE THE EUROPEAN UNION FROM SUBMISSION

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specialist in defence matters

September 2025



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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At this pivotal moment for the future of the European Union (EU), analyses abound on Europe's submission to American diktats, its military impotence, and the "century of humiliation" that supposedly lies ahead. Indeed, the verdict is damning.

THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS BECOME GEOPOLITICALLY INSIGNIFICANT

Firstly, the United States is led by a dim-witted despot, pathologically self-centered and utterly corrupt — a sort of modern-day Caligula dismantling piece by piece all that once defined the United States and its so-called "exceptionalism". Everything is being razed: at home, the independence of the judiciary and the press, the powers of Congress, freedom of expression, academic liberties, even the most established science. Abroad, the alliances and the warm welcome once extended to the world's brightest minds — all gone. Money is the only god, Donald Trump its high priest, and the Oval Office his court. The American Republic is no more. It has given way to an Empire — yet this Empire is decadent and dying; China has won, and alongside it Russia, North Korea and a few other acolytes. Secondly, the United States of America is no longer determined to protect Europe. They not only want Europeans to pay them tribute and finance their bottomless deficit — as was already the case — but also to abandon their own laws, values and interests. We have gone from a de facto protectorate to sheer vassalage. Neither ally nor friend, but increasingly subservient, the European Union has become a province of the American Empire. All because it has not known or not wished to develop its military power alongside its economic and monetary might. Thirdly, the world's dictators are closing ranks. They gather at summit after summit and flex their muscles through military parades. China and Russia's attempts to infiltrate European states and companies and meddle in their affairs are even worse than those of the United States. These countries form a motley bloc but are united by one thing: their hatred of the "West". They are actively pushing for its demise — even as the main architect of this downfall of the so-called "free world" is none other than the one meant to be its "leader". Finally, the only salvation Europeans can hope for lies in their unity. As the French Chief of Defence Staff, General Thierry Burkhard, has declared: "In the world of tomorrow, the strategic solidarity that must bind Europeans together has to be very, very strong. No country in Europe carries weight on its own," adding: "This is not meant to be against the United States, nor even against Russia; rather, it is about having the critical mass to carry weight in the world and not be sold off in pieces."¹ European

¹ Interview given to *Libération* and *Politico* on 29 August 2025.

citizens are under no illusion about this. According to the latest Eurobarometer from August 2025, nine out of ten Europeans expect the Member States to unite further to address today's global challenges (90%), and most believe the EU needs more resources to assert itself in a rapidly changing geopolitical context (77%). There are, therefore, only fools, the corrupt, or the traffickers of lies and fear who can believe that a defence built solely on national foundations would shield us from a major conflict or from commercial blackmail. Since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the so-called "Europe of defence" — a dreadful expression that means nothing — has produced no operational capability, neither to project an expeditionary force to Africa nor to defend European territory. Nor has it managed to unite Europe's arms industries into a common technological and industrial base. The supposedly "driver's-seat" European states have proven incapable of deploying even thirty thousand troops to Ukraine without relying on the goodwill of the American president. It is time to put an end to this madness!

Under these circumstances, the only question worth asking is: "What is to be done?" Or, to paraphrase the famous subtitle of Lenin's book: "burning questions for the European movement."

THE WHOLE QUESTION IS HOW TO ESCAPE THE SPIRAL OF HUMILIATION

The EU's major problem is that it has failed to build an integrated foreign and defence policy alongside — and in support of — its economic and monetary policies. These two must move in lockstep, like a man walking on both legs. If Europeans are now forced to accept Donald Trump's diktats, it is precisely because they fear the American president might cut off support to Ukraine — which is their frontline against the Russian ogre: predatory, criminal, and rogue. But fear is not a strategy. The Union cannot remain a commercial and monetary power unless it becomes militarily and diplomatically autonomous. And it will only become so if it reforms its governance in these areas. The question is how. The first, simplest solution would be to fully exploit the existing treaties to move from unanimity to qualified majority voting in foreign and defence policy. Articles in the Treaty on European Union explicitly provide for this possibility. But alas, unanimity is needed to move to qualified majority voting. In other words, this has no chance of happening. The second solution would be to amend said treaties. This would require convening an intergovernmental conference. But the European Council must first agree to this — this time by simple majority — and then national parliaments or citizens through referenda would have to ratify the revision. So far, despite the successful 2022

Conference on the Future of Europe meant to prepare such a conference, the European Council has deemed it unwise to trigger a treaty revision process. This is because the memory of the failed French and Dutch referenda in 2004 still looms large. No one dares to take this path for now. The third possible way would be to create a “defence Eurozone” — an expression used by Michel Barnier’s defence task force during preparations for the draft European Constitution (2002–2003) — or a “defence Eurogroup” (as mentioned in the French Senate’s 2012 report “to end the so-called European defence — towards a genuine European defence”), or even a “European Defence Union” as advocated by Ursula von der Leyen in her programme speech to the European Parliament in July 2024. Whatever the name, this would mean that willing European states (and only those) would jointly create, outside the current treaties, an operational capability placed under a robust political, diplomatic and military chain of command. This Defence Union would involve the joint development of key strategic enablers and their procurement procedures, harmonisation of medium-term national budget cycles, and major work on force interoperability through shared command and control (C2). All this should have been done as early as 2011 after the Lisbon Treaty, under the Permanent Structured Cooperation framework — but it was not. If implemented, such a decision-making and operational capability could become the long-sought “European pillar of NATO” that is so often talked about yet never materialises. Only then could one seriously begin to speak of extended European nuclear deterrence. This route is the most feasible, and one might see the current “coalition of the willing” for Ukraine as a foreshadowing of it. But for this coalition to bear fruit, it would have to rest on a “permanent” and “structured” basis — meaning concluded “for the long term” and able to produce structural effects... In other words, it would have to create a body capable of deciding on peace, war, and the ways and means of waging them. For now, no European leader is considering this, and we continue piling up bilateral defence treaties between Europeans that are as useless as they are barren. So the nagging question resurfaces: what can be done, other than lament our impotence? The solution could be to return to the source of European integration: the creation of a “European Federation” as envisaged by Robert Schuman in his famous declaration of 9 May 1950. It is undoubtedly a difficult struggle, but one that deserves better than shrugs and knowing smiles. We must break the iron grip of conformism and dare to say aloud what reason whispers quietly. Indeed, if the measures recommended by Mario Draghi and Enrico Letta’s reports are not being implemented, it is precisely because there is no European decision-making capability to do so, and once again everything is left to the goodwill of the Member States... We might as well cross our fingers and light candles. This European federation — these “United States of Europe” that Victor Hugo once dreamed of — will not come into being through concealment, by stealth, or in baby steps. We must not repeat the mistakes of the

“Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe” in 2004, which did not establish a constitution at all but merely aggregated previous treaties with minor advances, and whose failure nearly sank the Union given how botched its adoption campaign was, especially in France. If it is to come about, this European federation must do so in the clarity of its citizens’ consent, not through the ruses of European leaders too entangled in their power struggles, too cautious to dare, or unwilling to relinquish the illusory power they still believe is theirs. The idea must first be championed by a citizen vanguard, just as environmental protection or minority rights once were.

This will take time, for the idea of federalism is still a minority view and few dare to defend it, such as Guy Verhofstadt or Josep Borrell². But make no mistake: the world is ruled by ideas — the noblest as well as the vilest. Let us ensure that this beautiful idea regains strength and vigour, and that it may triumph in the long run.

² Declaration of the Union of European Federalists (UEF) and Consiglio Italiano del Movimento Europeo (CIME), signed in Ventotene Island on 30 August 2025.

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