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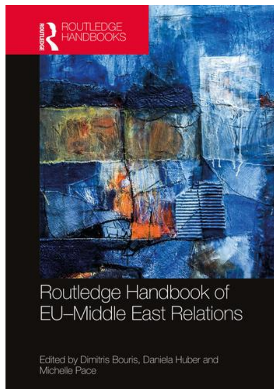

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Dimitris Bouris, Daniela Huber, Michelle Pace

Security within and beyond the borders of Europe

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8

SECURITY WITHIN AND BEYOND THE BORDERS OF EUROPE

Locating the European Union as a security actor

Zeynep Arkan Tuncel

Introduction

Security considerations have been at the heart of post–World War II cooperation efforts in Western Europe. In fact, one of the main drivers of post-war integration efforts was to bring together the former belligerent states and societies, and to lay the foundations for their peaceful coexistence. From the 1947 Anglo-French Treaty of Dunkirk against potential German aggression and the 1948 Brussels Treaty that expanded the alliance to include the Benelux states, to the Schuman Plan and the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, security and mutual defence have occupied a central place on the post-war European agenda. The dynamics of externalisation of European security, to actors mainly in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on the one hand and internalisation through institutionalisation of a shared foreign and security policy at the European level on the other, have shaped the way in which the security policy of the European Union (EU) evolved (Howorth, 2013). Despite failed initiatives such as the European Defence Community and the Fouchet Plans of the early 1960s, the steps that eventually led to the creation of a policy framework at the Union level intensified in the 1980s and culminated in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the newly created EU in the 1990s. While not on par with other (mainly economic) policies of the Union in terms of its policy toolkit, security policy gradually moved to centre stage as the EU prepared to play a more central role in the world, in line with the changes taking place in the global security environment.

In comparison to other actors on the world stage, the EU is an unconventional security actor in terms of its nature, vision, goals and means. As such, it is a difficult actor to locate and analyse, particularly in a security milieu that appears significantly altered in recent years. The changes that took place in the global and European security environment pertained to the nature of the threats such as terrorism, cyber and energy security, climate change, economic volatility and the so-called hybrid threats that originate from a variety of actors, and the policy responses formulated to counter these by the states and international organisations. In this context, the EU, with the emergence of its unique institutional structure and policy tools since the 1990s,

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strategically delineated its role in the field of security as one of the main actors with the capabilities to respond to the changes taking place in this new security milieu.

In exploring the EU as a security actor within and beyond its borders, it is possible to approach the unit of analysis from a number of perspectives that shed light on different dimensions of the EU's nature and contribution.[1] Taking into consideration the theme of this handbook, a number of perspectives that explain how the EU decides and operates as a security actor and its concrete impact in the field of security, particularly beyond its borders, will be discussed in the following parts. Accordingly, the first part of the chapter aims to locate the EU as an actor in the field of security through a brief analysis of the evolution of the concept of security and of the EU as an international actor in its own right. The following parts provide two different ways of dealing with the EU as a security actor. The first analyses the emergence and development of the EU as a security actor through the security communities perspective that started out as a liberal framework developed to deal with Cold War security structures and was gradually revised with a mainly but not exclusively constructivist twist from the 1990s. The following part will then take a more critical path and scrutinise how the EU narrates itself, its vision and contribution as a security actor in its region and beyond, building on an analysis of the EU's security discourse.

Locating the EU as a security actor

With supranational legislative, executive and judicial institutions which exercise considerable control over a wide variety of policy areas that would traditionally be under the authority of the sovereign state, the EU is a remarkable combination of state-like features and an international organisation in a novel political system (Hix and Høyland, 2011). As a distinctive political system that offers a new way of organising relations between states, the EU "has profoundly altered the study of the domestic-international interaction" (Gourevitch, 2002: 320). The new order created in Europe under the EU, which is sometimes characterised as the world's first truly postmodern polity, have important ramifications in the field of security. This is particularly true in terms of the increasingly blurred division between internal and external security, requiring broader action that brings together different policy areas of the Union.

Security is a critical concept for the discipline of International Relations, in whose evolution particular wars or periods of insecurity have served as important milestones. Traditionally, for the principal subject of international relations, i.e. the state, security is a key priority and driver of foreign policy in as much as the state's top priority is to protect itself from internal and external threats, and to ensure its survival. Parallel to this, the traditional security studies literature is based on the assumption that states, whose nature and characteristics are seen as given and fixed, are situated in an environment within which they face certain threats (Weldes, 1999). To counter this situation of insecurity, which is a consequence of the anarchic nature of the international system, states seek to secure themselves "against objective and external threats", often in the form of military threats (Weldes, 1999: 9). Securing the state involves the "spatial exclusion of threats" and the establishment of a threat free environment, a daunting task that is never fully achieved (Dalby, 1992: 98).

With the deepening of the referent object of security beyond the state and widening of the security agenda to include sectors other than the military at the end of the Cold War, the contemporary security studies literature expanded to include new approaches, research questions and methodologies (Buzan, et al., 1998; Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Krause and Williams, 1997). These critical openings in security studies overlapped with increased interest in the study of the newly formalised structures of cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy within

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the European Communities that eventually evolved into the CFSP through the lenses provided by alternative approaches in International Relations and European Union Studies. This early period was marked with a critical interest in the distinctive presence, capabilities, role and identity of the EU as an actor in its own right in the field of foreign and security policy. As Thomas Risse-Kappen argued (1999: 144), "the rather narrow focus and sterility of the debates" that took place between the two dominant theories of integration, i.e. neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, provided room for alternative approaches to capture the agenda, the most popular among them being social constructivism. In addition to this approach, other critical voices in International Relations and Political Science scrutinised the EU, its institutional architecture and functioning as well as external impact; a research area that expanded parallel to the increasing visibility and impact of the EU as an international actor. Numerous studies offered different characterisations of the EU's international role, presence and identity, focusing on the different facets of its external relations – the EU as a transformative power (Grabbe, 2004; Börzel and Risse, 2009; Börzel and Pamuk, 2012), a (vanishing) mediator (Nicolaïdis, 2004), a global conflict manager (Whitman and Wolff, 2012), a Kantian power (Kagan, 2004), an ethical power (Aggestam, 2008), a civilian or civilising power (Duchêne, 1972; Sjursen, 2006), a quiet superpower (Moravcsik, 2002) and a normative power (Manners, 2002, 2010, 2011). The main themes explored in these studies to locate the EU as an international actor included its distinct process of evolution and foundations, institutional architecture, and its potential and actual contribution to global security and politics. In terms of the security dimension of the EU's international role and presence, these various characterisations often highlighted the Union's predominantly civilian, as opposed to military qualities that rendered it different in comparison to other powers. As many of the observers noted, the EU is singular both in terms of the limited nature of its autonomous military capabilities, and the focus of its security outlook. The former implies that the EU is dependent on its Member States and NATO in terms of its security and defence policy. In terms of its security outlook, the EU, unlike other international actors, seems more focused on international peacekeeping and conflict prevention than the defence of its own territories (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014). Today, even its critics acknowledge the EU as a prominent actor with a role to play in European and global security, with its strong emphasis on democracy and human rights as well as peacekeeping and conflict prevention in its activities and missions around the world. In fact, despite its relatively limited operational capacity, the EU "evolves from being a one-dimensional 'civilian power' to a more multifaceted security provider equipped not only with the instruments of declaratory diplomacy and economic statecraft, but also with the means for military and civilian crisis management" (Hyde-Price, 2013: 18).

The EU as a security community

Writing in 2003 about the new world order, Robert Cooper explained that the end of the Cold War brought an end to a political order (in Europe) which rested on two dynamics: "the balance of power and the imperial urge" (2003: 16). Building on this argument, he argued that we now live in a divided world that contains pre-modern, modern and postmodern parts. The part that he labelled as postmodern Europe was created as a consequence of the failures of the modern world order, caused by aggressive nationalism and the failure of the balance of power. The postmodern system was, according to Cooper, built on an understanding that did not rest on the sovereign rights of the states but their self-imposed constraints, mutual interference, the irrelevance of borders and the blurring of the line between domestic and foreign policy (Cooper, 2003). Despite the return of a number of these themes, particularly in relation to the re-emergence or hardening or borders, in recent years, in this postmodern system, NATO and

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particularly the EU play a crucial role in ascertaining that European countries are no longer willing to fight with one another. As members of the same organisation, these states have abandoned military conflict and competition and the use of force, replacing it with new ways of and frameworks for settling disputes among themselves. They have, in fact, created what some refer to as a security community within which a group of states "have developed a long-term habit of peaceful interaction and ruled out the use of force in settling disputes with other members of the group" (Acharya, 2001: 1).

The concept of security communities was first developed by Karl Deutsch and his associates in the 1950s as part of their attempts to explore ways to one day abolish the possibility of war. In a discipline so dominated by the causes and conditions of war, Deutsch, et. al. instead chose to focus on the ways of eliminating war as a social institution through building a broad political community that extends beyond the borders of territorial states, and rests on shared understandings, values and mutual trust (1957). Differentiating between *amalgamated* and *pluralistic* security communities on the basis of how the constituent units of these communities are governed and their level of integration, either by a common government as a unified entity in the case of the former or by separate governments which retain their legal independence and sovereignty in the case of the latter, they claimed that what mattered for a sense of community to emerge is communication, measured in the form of transaction flows, as the foundations of a "we-feeling" (Deutsch et al., 1957).

The ideas of Deutsch were refined in the 1990s, particularly through the writings of Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett. While acknowledging the contributions made by Deutsch to the study of security communities, these scholars criticised his behaviouralist take and disregard for alternative actors such as international organisations and social groups/classes (Adler and Barnett, 1998). In their account of security communities, they directed their focus to the new intellectual openings that were taking place in the discipline of International Relations, particularly regarding the previously disregarded "content and sources of state interests and the social fabric of world politics" (Checkel, 1998: 324). Combining the insights of Deutsch with mainly (but not exclusively) those of constructivism, scholars offered new research programmes to study the emergence and development of (pluralistic) security communities (Adler and Barnett, 1998; Adler, 1997; Acharya, 2001; Williams, 2001; Williams and Neumann, 2000; Risse-Kappen, 1996).

Distinguishing between various forms of multilateral security cooperation in the form of security regimes, alliances and collective security arrangements, Acharya argued that differently from other forms of cooperation, security communities are "based on a fundamental, unambiguous and long-term *convergence* of interests among the actors regarding the avoidance of war" (2001: 17). This implies that security communities are founded on common (or at the very least compatible) understandings, norms, values, interests and identities, i.e. a "we-feeling", as well as formal or institutional ties between the members that render the possibility of military competition and conflict between them unthinkable. In this respect, security communities are regarded as "socially constructed 'cognitive regions'", the citizens of which see themselves as members of a broad community that fulfils their economic and security needs, held together by a collective identity (Adler, 1997: 250).

For many scholars and practitioners of security, the most prominent and well-institutionalised examples of a security community in Europe were the Western European Union (WEU) and the European Communities, which eventually evolved into the EU that gradually incorporated the WEU into its institutional framework (see, for example, Bellamy, 2004; Bremberg, 2015; Adler, 1991, 1992). The EU, whose founding goal was to make war between the former enemies "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible" (Schuman Declaration, 1950),

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was at times defined as an expanding security community that, together with NATO and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), transformed "the 'European space' through practices of economic and political integration" and sought "to transcend a closed meaning of 'security' by redefining national security away from an emphasis on territorial defence to non-military threats and transboundary risks" (Bremberg, 2015: 675). The expansion of this security community as well as the stable peaceful order within the borders of the Union is carried out in the periphery predominantly through Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, and the associated processes of interaction and social learning. This contributes to what might be called a "multi-speed security community" which is "stronger at its core and weaker as it spreads towards its margins" (Laporte, 2012: 5).

Beyond the territories and the periphery of the EU, assessing the impact of the EU's security community is more complicated, particularly in a region like the Middle East where security dynamics have been of a different nature, particularly in the last decade. Amongst attempts made to address this issue is the work of Alder et al. (2006). The Middle Eastern regional order, whose building blocks were laid after the First World War through great power involvement, have also more recently been challenged on many fronts as a result of conflicts and uprisings (Del Sarto, 2017). These challenges presented the bordering states and the EU with a new set of security risks and concerns including terrorism and migration in the fight against which the EU has to act in collaboration with other regional and external actors.[2] In terms of the EU's involvement in the region, different platforms of cooperation and interaction exist for states that are partners of the EU and its Member States in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Yet, the contribution and influence of the Union as an international actor have so far been limited and not altered the security dynamics in the region, particularly in relation to building shared understandings, norms, values and interests. While the EU is an active partner working in cooperation with other countries to lay the foundations for a secure and stable region through its emphasis on democracy, human rights and political reforms, the Middle East region, seen in the Union as one of the main exporters of many of the EU's security risks and threats, is still a major concern for the Union. As a consequence, the diffusion of "shared" norms and values, and even more so a "we-feeling", beyond the European periphery to expand the European zone of peace remains contested and resulted in policy incoherence and failures. While these do not "threaten the EU security community, in that they do not portent intra-European war" (Mitzen, 2018: 394), they do prove that the mechanisms, models and standards developed and adopted in Brussels do not necessarily apply in regions such as the Middle East where the regional order is based on different foundations and possesses distinct internal and external dynamics.

Writing the EU into existence as a security actor

As discussed previously, the traditional security studies literature is based on the assumption that states exist in an environment within which they face certain external security threats from which they have to protect themselves. From a critical standpoint, however, these threats do not present themselves to observers as objective external facts in the international system. Instead, they are constructs which are produced and reproduced in the security policies and practices of the actors concerned. Security is thus a political and discursive practice, and does not depend on the existence of objective and exogenous threats. Instead, it is the successful production of threats that matter: threats that are narrated successfully into existence define the security priorities, actions and policies of the actors, those threats that are not so successfully constituted are silenced.

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This account, which can be associated with the poststructuralist approach to security studies that is influenced by continental social and political thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida and Bourdieu, claims that "sovereignty and security are products of political practices" and as such, are linked to the identities of the actors concerned (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 37). Through their political practices, actors define a condition of insecurity, point out the threats to the security of the Self and develop their responses, thereby constructing the objects of security (the state, the society, the individual, etc.) (Hansen, 1997). Security discourses are, therefore, essential sites for actors to define the environment in which they are functioning, identify the threats and challenges they are faced with and, in this process, write themselves into existence as specific types of security actors (Mälksoo, 2016).

In the process of policymaking, the Self constructs itself on the basis of the differences it has from the Other in its foreign and security policy practices. Security, then, functions both in the traditional sense of the term, i.e. as a requirement for the actor, and as a constitutive dynamic: The actor needs a sense of insecurity to continue to exist and, consequently, is never entirely secure. The very existence of the Self, be it a state or any other actor, depends on the constant production of danger or threats to its security.

In *Writing Security*, David Campbell (1998: ix) noted that transformations in the established order and practices of statehood have led to assertions about "the threat of ambiguity" and "the need for new order(s)". He argued that a striking theme common to these assertions is the desire to "rethink security", "usually expressed in terms of how to expand the old register of hazards to incorporate what are perceived as the newly emergent dangers that imperil settled modes of life" (Campbell, 1998: ix). In this vein, while representations of danger or threat remain constant in political life, their meanings and contents change, reflecting a concurrent change in the definition of the security environment in which the actors are located, compelling them to "rethink security". These changes are also reflected in the way in which the actors define themselves and the potential dangers they face, together with the "appropriate" policy response required to counter them. The responses developed within the framework of security discourses, then, "invest those enacting security policies with the legitimate *power* to undertake decisive and otherwise exceptional actions" while at the same time endowing them with the *responsibility* to take action (Hansen, 2006: 35).

An analysis of the EU discourse on security, particularly its key strategy documents, demonstrates that, following the consolidation of the CFSP, the EU sought to "rethink security" through a diagnosis of its security milieu and a comprehensive definition of its own position and priorities in this context. This rethinking shaped the EU's narrative on its own distinct identity and contribution as a security actor.

The EU published its most recent framework document on foreign and security policy in June 2016. This bold move on the part of the EU came at a difficult period during which the Union was faced with a multitude of challenges in its external realm, not to mention the continuing effects of the Eurozone crisis and the devastating outcome of the British referendum just days prior to the publication of the document in its domestic realm. In a period during which the very nature of the integration process was being questioned, the ambitious framework document entitled *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe* (EUGS) set out to (re) define the interests, objectives and priorities of the Union together with what it stood for in the world. And it did so in a forceful manner. Long gone were the days of the 2003 *European Security Strategy* which professed that "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history" (European Council, 2003: 1). In contrast, the EUGS opened with quite a pessimistic reading of the current situation: "We live in times of

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existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned" (EEAS, 2016: 13). This period, according to the EUGS, was one in which the world has become less secure, unpredictable, its order more fragile, complex and contested yet at the same time increasingly interdependent and connected. The EU's response to the changing nature of the international order and its very own "existential crisis" was to redefine itself and its position as a global actor through a (re)imagining of its security milieu and global outlook.

One of the most striking themes in the EU discourse on its global outlook is the unfulfilled potential of the Union as a global actor and a distinct entity that represents the collective will of its constituent units; the Member States and their peoples. It is often argued that only the Union, not the individual Member States, can cope with the complexities and challenges of the world today and therefore possesses the legitimate power and responsibility to enact policies in the sphere of foreign and security policy: "United, and only united", the EU has the potential to "withstand the challenges and threats as well as seize the opportunities a changing world represents" (EEAS, 2019: 8). As one of the principles guiding the external action of the EU, unity dictates that Member States can achieve more together and "deliver security, prosperity and democracy to its citizens and make a positive difference in the world" (EEAS, 2016: 16). Ultimately, the definitive goal of the EU to promote a global order "based on rules and on multilateralism" (EEAS, 2016: 4) that has the potential to "contain power politics and contribute to a peaceful, fair and prosperous world" can only be achieved through closer cooperation between the European Union's member states on the basis of their shared interests and principles (EEAS, 2016: 15).

To materialise its vision of a rule-based global order, which is identified as an "existential interest" (EEAS, 2019: 8), the EU has to compete with great powers "in a world of giants and global challenges" (EEAS, 2017b: 6), and act in close cooperation with partners such as NATO, the United Nations (UN) and other regional actors including the African Union, the UfM, the League of Arab States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In this respect, the EU's emphasis on its vision of a new global order based on engagement, multilateral action, partnerships and regional cooperative orders is portrayed as the defining feature of its external action and identity that renders the Union different from other global powers.

In terms of the EU's posture as a security actor, it is argued that distant instabilities, tragedies, conflicts and threats are also indirectly linked to the security of the Union, requiring it to take on certain global responsibilities and adopt a global vision of security: the security of Europe ultimately depends on peace outside its territories, which necessitates engagement with the wider world (EEAS, 2016). The recent developments in security, which have resulted in an increased sense of insecurity, have thus urged the Union to intensify its efforts to "take its share in the responsibility for global security" through an ambitious and comprehensive Action Plan, not only to contribute to the security of its citizens, but also to achieve this through "the European way", that is "a unique mix of tools that no other actor on the global scene has" (EEAS, 2017a). According to the EUGS, the term "global security provider" is not just a geographical reference; it also refers to a wide spectrum of instruments and policies available to the EU, combining elements of soft and hard power (EEAS, 2016). A combination of these various policies and tools is seen as vital to achieving one of the main goals of the EUGS: strengthening the resilience of the states and societies to the East and South so their fragility does not threaten the EU.

The EU's newly defined role as a global security provider implies that the security and stability of the Middle East, a region which is defined by the EU as fragmented and "in turmoil", is one of its priorities (EEAS, 2016: 34).[3] Yet, as an actor whose security is more affected by the developments in the region compared to other external actors such as the United States and

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Russia, the EU is in a difficult position, particularly due to the limited nature of its capabilities, policy tools and presence on the ground.

A number of the countries in the region are identified by the EU as potential sources and exporters of insecurity that might threaten the European order, the perilous Others of the EU. The EU's proposed method of dealing with conflict and instabilities in the Middle East is distinctly "European" and relies on multilateral, institutionalised engagement and cooperation with different state and non-state actors as well as building partnerships with regional and sub-regional organisations. Through its engagement in the region, the EU seeks to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and to promote "development and human rights" to ultimately address the threats related to "terrorism, the challenges of demography, migration and climate change" (EEAS, 2016: 34). While its "European" approach renders the EU different from other external actors that the EU at times distances itself from, particularly in view of the United States' unilateral actions towards the Palestinians and Iran, its leverage remains limited reflecting the divisions within the EU, and the restricted nature of its policy toolkit and autonomous capabilities. Therefore, despite the idealistic tenor of its global outlook, the EU's achievements seem limited and isolated to specific missions, geographies or issues, be it in the form of the EU Advisory Mission in Iraq, promoting dialogue with Iran following the Trump administration's unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or supporting state and societal resilience in the region. As such, the EU is not, and in the foreseeable future will not be in a position to shape the regional order and contribute to the definitive resolution of the conflicts in the region. Furthermore, despite its emphasis on engagement and partnership, the EU is unlikely to adapt its identity narrative to be more open and inclusive towards the actors in the Middle East, as the many references in the EU's discourse to threats and risks associated with terrorism and irregular migration originating from the region illustrate.

Conclusion

As an international organisation founded with the purpose of putting a decisive end to conflict between states and laying the foundations of a stable peaceful order in Europe, the EU has accomplished a lot since its modest beginnings. Today, military conflict and competition between the Member States of the EU is a thing of the past. Building on its domestic success, the EU seeks to export the basic features of its security order to its neighbourhood through various policies and actions. Beyond its immediate neighbourhood, however, the EU's record remains uncertain, particularly in more distant geographies where the Union has to compete with other global players such as the United States, Russia and China for influence.

As a region built on distinct historical experiences, great power involvement and internal dynamics, the Middle East remains a difficult geography wrought with instabilities and state and societal fragility, and is seen as a major exporter of insecurity into the European security order. As a response, the EU sought to engage with different state and non-state actors and international partners to stabilise the region and to contribute to the solution of its long-standing conflicts and divisions. Yet, the leverage and influence of the EU in the Middle East remain limited at this point due to the profoundly civilian nature of its policy toolkit and outlook, its restricted autonomous capabilities, and internal divisions. While the EU's distinct "European" approach that highlights the importance of shared interests and values as well as multilateralism and dialogue resulted in pockets of success, this does not put the EU in a position of great influence in comparison to other external actors in the region. Today, the EU is not playing a decisive role in shaping the regional order or in diffusing its global security outlook to the Middle East, which remains as a battleground of conflicting endogenous and exogenous dynamics and actors.

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Notes

1 For a detailed analysis of the EU as a security actor from the perspective of different International Relations theories, see Jørgensen and Aarstad (2013).

2 In terms of the distinctive worldview of the EU, Biscop argues that the members states of the Union might have internally created a postmodern order and assumed that the EU's foreign and security policy "serves only to make the world a better place, as if the Union were nothing but a huge NGO" (2019: 1). This does not change the fact that beyond its borders, actors operate with a traditional geopolitical mindset that is more in tune with the realities of power. For another lucid critique of normative conceptions of the EU's international role, see Del Sarto (2016).

3 In her *Regional Security in the Middle East*, Pınar Bilgin offers a detailed analysis of the different spatial representations of the region, including "the Middle East", "the Euro-Med Region" and "the Arab Regional System", as well as the security practices associated with these representations during and following the Cold War (Bilgin, 2019).

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