

Barbara Delcourt

Academic Foresights

## Enemies of the EU



### *How do you analyze the present status of the enemies of the EU?*

It is quite common to say that the EU has no enemy in international relations, contrary to other political actors. The only antagonist relationship it would have, is with the dark side of its own past marked by war, nationalism, xenophobia, etc. This point of view is mainly built upon the absence or construction of an image of the “Other” as an existential threat against which violence can be used. Indeed, the integration of Europe is mainly seen as a civilizing process enabling Europe to portray itself as a model for all societies which are still imbued with nationalist passions leading to major conflicts, but which are not considered as “enemies” because they still can be transformed and experience the same civilising process the Europeans went through (notably thanks to the support of the EU and its knowledge in managing diversity). Moreover, the ambition of the EU to work closely with the UN in the field of crisis management is actually considered as an incentive for the development of mediation and negotiation skills, instead of confrontational discourse and military action.

A less popular storyline is developed by some realists who consider that the absence of enemies in European foreign policy is mainly the result of the lack of a truly strategic vision or, at least, of a coherent political vision that could be sustained and implemented by a centralised bureaucratic apparatus. In addition, being more rational and managerial than political and emotionally driven, the EU’s project is less sensitive to antagonist relationships founded on the concept of the enemy. According to F. Ramel, an enemy is not a rival or a competitor with whom a sort of compromise is achievable without violence. The conflict of interests between enemies is irreducible. Military confrontation between state actors is then the authentic expression of enmity, as elaborated by Carl Schmitt, i.e. something that is less likely to happen after the Cold war (1).

The various positions the EU has taken in its external relations since the launching of the CFSP (1993) give credit to the assumption that the EU has no real enemy. The EU discourse reveals various threats and the existence of serious adversaries, such as authoritarian regimes using unjustifiable violence against their own citizens. However, in such cases there is no symmetrical relationship between political entities: the regime remains isolated from its population, and economic sanctions are justified by targeting those responsible for the violence (Syria, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Ukraine...). The EU is also prone to use coercive means against the spoilers of a peace process (for instance by the government or by the rebels in Angola, Liberia, DRC, Bosnia-Herzegovina), or

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when UN Security Council decisions have to be implemented, as in the cases of Iran, Afghanistan and Libya, for instance for the sake of combatting terrorism and WMD spreading. There is also a growing tendency to sanction the authors of coup d'état and to consider that terrorist groups, extremists, organised crime and piracy are serious threats to the regional or international peace and security. In doing so, the EU is most of the time aligning with UN policies, and eschews to designate individuals and groups as proper EU enemies; they are rather considered as dangerous for the international community as a whole.

On the other hand, there are also a few examples that could be used to nuance this point of view. There are, indeed, circumstances under which the EU has been dragged into conflicts and has considered using force in order to neutralize what could appear as "enemies". For example, through the declaration of the European Council of March 25, 1999, the Europeans justified the NATO bombings against Yugoslavia by considering that the Milosevic regime was a criminal one, while pledging at the same time the "reintegration of the FRY into the international community", providing that the Serbian people ("as Europeans") would oust the responsible of the mass atrocities. In this case, as Žizek noticed, the Balkans sometimes appeared as the "Other" of Europe, a reminder of its dark ages. However, a similar stance can also be detected in the declarations during the NATO bombing of Libya in 2011, despite the fact that no decision had been taken regarding the military operation as such. Antagonistic relationships implying a high degree of dissociation which could lead to violence is also visible in some declarations regarding the war against terrorism, since the latter is depicted as an existential threat (bearing an ideology of hate and despise for all universal values Europe is standing for). No compromise can then be envisaged.

*In your opinion, how will the situation likely evolve over the next five years?*

In his seminal work on the ideological construction of the new European identity, Kolvraa does not actually use the concept of enemy (2). Instead, he found in the EU discourse a distinction between what could be considered as "barbarians" and "savages". Savages can be civilised providing their acceptance of EU values; or become barbarians in case of complete rejection. The latter case is even more dangerous when a messianic message is developed, which proves to be more attractive than the EU's vision. The controversial video released by the DG Enlargement is in a way illustrative of the civilizing mission currently endorsed by the EU:

[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xpb8ug\\_un-clip-raciste-edite-par-l-union-europeenne\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xpb8ug_un-clip-raciste-edite-par-l-union-europeenne_news)

This time the story ends well: frightening people are neutralised and transformed into the yellow stars of the European Flag.

Nonetheless, the famous EU motto "united in diversity" seems to vanish and to be substituted by the image of the EU as a "global player", the one who has to take more responsibilities for the management of global insecurities. As a matter of fact,

European citizens are being more and more accustomed to European discourses pointing to a variety of dangers, risks, and threats. Among them, some are mainly structural ones (like state failures and global warming). Therefore, it is less likely to find enemies, at least in its traditional form as public political entities against which violent means can be used (something that is still clearly envisaged by its member states). Is it a final blow to the Schmittian enemy? Even its critics acknowledge that the identification of enemies still performs an important function in the formation of identities, and proves to be useful for legitimating purposes. It would be surprising not to find enemies of some sort, alongside the multiple risks, challenges and threats already addressed by the EU. To a certain degree, the current legitimation crisis faced by the EU, coupled with the actual reluctance (or inability) to name the “enemy” and then to take coercive measures because they could prove detrimental to the economic interests of the EU itself (as demonstrated during the recent Ukrainian crisis), will probably lead the EU to rather designate “shadow enemies”, i.e. less politically risky and more “manageable” ones, considering the tools and resources at its disposal.

### *What are the structural long-term perspectives?*

Images of enmity will evolve depending on the kind of policies that are currently experienced both at the national and the international levels; not only in combating terrorism and more traditional threats, but also in fighting trans-border criminality, illegal migrations, etc. Being at the intersection of both spheres, the EU security policy could follow the path traced by national criminal policies and transnational doctrines of counter insurgency altogether. The success of a post-social criminology involves the identification not of prospective perpetrators, but rather of types based on suspicious attributes detected through probabilistic operations (3). In such cases, there is no need to define a priori enemies; only dangerous groups and profiles are at stake. In addition, the development of new, EU supported security technologies (biometrics, data mining, and simulations) will certainly deepen this trend whereas “unknowns” and uncertainties contribute to enlarge the circle of dangerous categories to all risks linked to social unrests and violent extremism (4). As in video games, the enemy will appear more and more anonymous and unreal, carrying no specific national or ethnic origin, being everywhere and nowhere at the same time (5). Hence, the EU security policy will be designed to operate on all fronts with a large array of potential targets, while maintaining the EU’s symbolic structure as a liberal power. Regarding external operations, the evolution of the EU security policy will presumably be influenced by the counterinsurgency doctrine insofar as it copes with its ambition to shape behaviour of friends and adversaries rather than imposing one’s will by violent means, even if resorting to force has to be envisaged against persistent insurgents. In “no war no peace” situations, like in many places where the EU intent to manage crisis and participate in post-conflict reconstruction, the battle space will be expanded to many aspects of the daily life of populations, leaving to its member states and allies the task to neutralize the barbarians who may actually turn out to be the “enemies of the international community”.

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## Notes:

- (1) F. Ramel, *Repenser l'ennemi dans l'après-guerre froide*, disponible sur: [http://www.institut-strategie.fr/strat72\\_Ramel\\_tdm.html](http://www.institut-strategie.fr/strat72_Ramel_tdm.html)
- (2) C. Kolvraa, *Imagining Europe as a Global Player. The ideological Construction of a New European Identity within the EU*, Bruxelles, Bern...PIE/Peter Lang, 2012.
- (3) S. Krasman, « The enemy on the border: Critique of a programme in favour of the preventive state », *Punishment and Society*, 2007/9, p. 306.
- (4) C. Aradau & Rens van Munster, *Politics of catastrophe and genealogies of unknown*, Routledge, 2011.
- (5) R. Allen, « The Unreal Enemy of America's Army », *Games and Culture*, 2011/6.

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