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Political leadership effect for civil protection and public administration in European Union countries: How trade tariffs and military threats affect the security and Unity of Europe to from new world order?

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Abstract

As a multinational organization, the European Union (EU) faces a set of threats that test the ability of its political leadership to ensure the peace and prosperity of the bloc. In this sense, the objective of this research was to analyze the effect of political leadership on civil protection and public administration in EU countries, to answer the question: How do trade tariffs and military threats affect the

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security and unity of Europe in the face of the New World Order? To achieve this objective, the study examined the evolution of European trade and defence policies in a context of increasing geopolitical competition, where the EU's international identity is constantly being redefined. Methodologically, the research was descriptive, analytical and documentary. By way of conclusion, all indications are that trade tariffs and military threats affect European security and unity by exacerbating internal divisions and contradictions and exposing critical dependencies. However, they also offer an opportunity to redefine priorities, as shown by the progress in common defence policies following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Keywords: political leadership, civil protection, public administration, tariffs, security and defence.

*Efecto del liderazgo político en la protección civil y la
administración pública de los países de la Unión Europea: ¿Cómo
afectan los aranceles comerciales y las amenazas militares a la
seguridad y la Unidad de Europa frente al Nuevo orden mundial?*

Resumen

Como organización multinacional, la Unión Europea (EU) enfrenta un conjunto de amenazas que ponen a prueba la capacidad de su liderazgo político para garantizar la paz y la prosperidad del bloque. En este sentido, el objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar el efecto del liderazgo político en la protección civil y la administración pública de los países de la UE, para responder a la pregunta ¿Cómo afectan los aranceles comerciales y las amenazas militares a la seguridad y la Unidad de Europa frente al Nuevo orden mundial? Para alcanzar este objetivo, el estudio examinó la evolución de las políticas comerciales y de defensa europeas en un contexto de creciente competencia geopolítica, donde la identidad internacional de la UE se ve constantemente redefinida. Metodológicamente, la investigación fue descriptiva, analítica y documental. A modo de conclusión, todo indica que, los aranceles comerciales y las amenazas militares afectan la seguridad y unidad europea al exacerbar divisiones y contradicciones internas y exponer dependencias críticas. Sin embargo, también

ofrecen una oportunidad para redefinir prioridades, como muestra el avance en políticas de defensa común tras la invasión rusa de Ucrania.

Palabras clave: liderazgo político, protección civil, administración pública, aranceles, seguridad y defensa.

Introduction

Beyond the particularities of each country, European political leadership faces an unprecedented historical crossroads in the face of growing tension between liberal and nationalist positions on trade protection and military defence. The European Union's current defence strategy is materialized through initiatives such as the European Defence Fund with €7 billion for research and co-financing of military equipment, and a €1.5 billion military mobility project to improve infrastructure and simplify customs procedures, as can be read in the official White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030 (European Commission, 2025).

However, these initiatives generate internal divisions among the partners. Central and Eastern European countries argue that the European Commission's ambitions could undermine NATO, while Nordic countries, with industrial ties to the United States, perceive these policies as an attempt to favor Western European companies rather than genuinely strengthen Europe's overall defensive capability. This fracture reflects the administrative complexity faced by European institutions in articulating a cohesive response to geopolitical phenomena such as the war in Ukraine (Bond et al., 2024)

In the current situation, the European public administration is caught between two dialectical forces: on the one hand, the need to protect strategic

economic sectors from Chinese mercantilism and growing US protectionism; on the other, it is trying to maintain its historical commitment to the multilateral trading system and the established rules. This tension is manifested in documents such as Germany's Industrial Strategy 2030 (Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi, 2019), which advocates state support for important sectors in the EU and, at the same time, for maintaining value chains within European territory.

In the words of Foulon (2021), the union's internal divergences with an ideological background that oscillates between liberalism and nationalism intensify when partners such as the Netherlands, for example, fear that European economic nationalism will damage their advantages as a trading power, while France and Germany adopt more forceful state measures to face economic competition with the United States and China. These dynamics test civil protection mechanisms and the capacity for coordinated response to hybrid threats.

Within the framework of these legitimate concerns, the aim of this research was to analyze the effect of political leadership on civil protection and public administration in EU countries, to answer the question: How do trade tariffs and military threats affect the security and unity of Europe in the face of the New World Order? It specifically analyses how civil protection mechanisms and public administrative structures respond to external pressures, assessing whether the shift towards more realistic and protectionist policies represents a necessary adaptation or a deviation from European founding values. Such an assessment is crucial to understanding how the EU reconciles its strategic interests with its historical commitment to an international order based on clear and rational rules.

This scientific article is structured in four (04) main sections that address the different dimensions of the problem posed. The first part examines the theories that served as an interpretative model of the current European reality. In the second section, the methodological design of the research is described. The third part (analysis and discussion of results) roughly describes the current geopolitical context and the pressures facing the European Union from outside and within. Next, European civil protection mechanisms and their recent evolution in the face of hybrid threats are analyzed. Finally, the fifth section offers conclusions and recommendations to strengthen European resilience and unity in the face of the changing world order.

1. Theoretical framework

Constructivist theory provides a valuable perspective for analyzing the European Union's international identity and its response to external threats. As Arkan (2014) points out, the identity of the EU is not static, but constantly evolves through political discourse and institutional practices. This view allows us to understand how the EU socially constructs its role as a global actor, distinguishing between conventional and critical identity constructions. According to Arkan (2014), discursive analysis demonstrates that the European response to commercial and military threats not only reflects material interests, but also particular conceptions of Europe that vary according to the historical and political context. The limitation of this approach lies in its difficulty in predicting concrete actions, since it focuses more on the processes of identity construction than on the results of specific policies.

In this vein, structural realism emerges as a relevant theoretical framework when examining the pragmatic shift in EU-China relations, as shown by Krumbein (2025), who documents how EU-China economic interdependence has become more complex since the rise of Xi Jinping, leading the EU to adopt a more realistic perspective, strategy and policies. In geopolitical terms, Krumbein (2025) points to two critical areas: security and defence and trade (with special attention to Taiwan) space, where the EU has increased its support to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, aligning itself with the United States. On trade, the EU is strengthening its own economic security and diversifying its trade relations in the Indo-Pacific region. This theoretical reorientation reflects an adaptation of the European institutions to a more competitive international environment, although it presents the challenge of maintaining coherence between declared values and concrete actions.

Of particular importance is the theory of complex interdependence developed by Keohane and Nye (2012), a theory that provides conceptual tools to understand how the EU navigates between economic liberalism and neoconservative nationalism. The EU is incrementally adjusting the rules-based trading system to protect key material sectors. For Foulon (2021), this balance allows policymakers to limit the negative consequences of free trade, such as the disappearance of manufacturing jobs, thus preventing further disintegration of the Union. Otherwise:

We live in an era of interdependence. This vague phrase expresses a poorly understood but widespread feeling that the very nature of world politics is changing. The power of nations—that age-old touchstone of analysts and statesmen—has become more elusive: “calculations of power are even more delicate and deceptive than in previous ages”.

Henry Kissinger, though deeply rooted in the classical tradition, has stated that “the traditional agenda of international affairs—the balance among major powers, the security of nations—no longer defines our perils or our possibilities... (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p. 3).

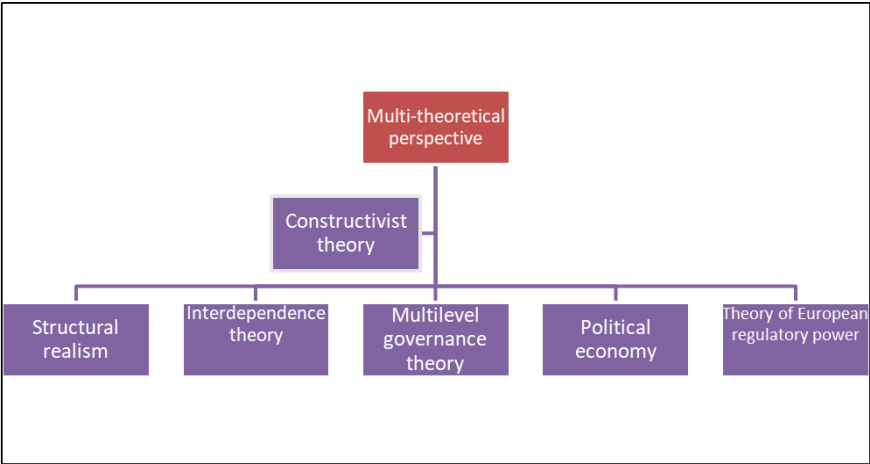
Multilevel governance theory, on the other hand, provides a useful perspective when it comes to understanding how European civil protection is articulated across different administrative levels. The book by Widmalm, Parker, and Persson (2019) examines the challenges of implementing unified civil protection mechanisms in diverse administrative contexts. This research highlights how institutional trust and national administrative cultures condition the effectiveness of EU security policies. The methodology used combines case analysis with interviews with European officials, offering an overview of institutional dynamics. However, the study has limitations in that it focuses excessively on internal factors, without adequately considering how the external pressures of the new world order reconfigure administrative priorities and condition the resources available for civil protection in different member states.

International political economy, particularly about trade protection policies, is essential to understand the European position in the face of global trade tensions. The study by Ruckteschler, Malik, and Eibl (2019) offers empirical evidence on how tariff policies imposed or negotiated by the EU have geopolitical implications beyond the immediate economic effects. This research uses quantitative methods to assess the impact of tariff liberalization, demonstrating how European trade decisions shape political relations with third countries and, at the same time, condition the perception of the EU as a global regulatory actor. This political economy perspective allows us to visualize how

the European public administration should coordinate trade policies that balance economic interests with broader geopolitical objectives.

Finally, the theory of European normative power, initially developed by Ian Manners (2002), requires critical reconsideration considering recent shifts towards realism in European foreign policy. As its study on EU-China relations suggests, the EU's traditional projection as a normative actor is giving way to more pragmatic considerations of security and competitiveness. In this sense, the methods of discursive analysis applied to official communiqués and strategic documents reveal an evolution in European rhetoric that goes from promoting universal values to defending specific interests.

Table 1. Theoretical tools of research.



Source: prepared by the authors (2025), based on the contributions of: (Arkan, 2014; Krumbein, 2025; Keohane & Nye, 2012; Widmalm, Parker & Persson, 2019; Ruckteschler, Malik & Eibl 2019; Manners, 2002).

From our point of view, this transformation in terms of political communication does not necessarily imply an abandonment of normative values,

but rather their reinterpretation in a context of greater systemic competition. The main limitation of this theoretical framework lies in its difficulty in operationalizing the concept of normative power in an international environment where actors such as China and Russia openly challenge the universality of European values and where the EU's own internal cohesion is questioned by divisions between more Atlanticist visions and those that advocate greater European strategic autonomy.

2. Methodology

This research design is based on a constructivist conception of knowledge, according to which, according to Anderson (2006), historical realities are the result of the dialectical interaction between an indeterminate multiplicity of actors and factors. In this sense, the study adopts the view that human association structures are mainly determined by shared ideas rather than by material forces, and that, consequently, the identities and interests of international actors are continuously constructed by these shared ideas, rather than being given by nature as Arkan (2014) points out, in the constructivist theory of international relations.

This epistemological perspective allows us to understand that the political and economic phenomena that affect European civil protection are not independent objective facts, but social constructions derived from intersubjective discourses, representations and practices that shape perceptions of security threats, risks and strategies, as well as institutional responses to the challenges of the new multilateral world order.

The proposed research was developed using a documentary-based methodology, which consists of a systematic investigation and analysis of existing records or documents, as established by the American Educational Research Association (2025), in its definition of documentary research. This method made it possible to comprehensively examine official documents of European institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, with particular attention to regulations, policies, resolutions and communiqués related to crisis management, civil protection and commercial security issued during the last five years (2020-2025). The selection of these sources responded to rigorous criteria of authenticity, credibility, representativeness and significance, following the methodological recommendations for evaluating documentary quality of Gadamer (2004).

In addition, scientific articles evaluated by blind peers from academic databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and JSTOR were incorporated, prioritizing publications with a high impact factor in the areas of international relations, European studies, public policy analysis and international security. As Ahmed (2010) points out, desk research has outstanding advantages such as access to historical perspectives, the availability of large volumes of data for analysis, and the possibility of establishing longitudinal trends. In addition, technical reports and specialized analyses from recognized think tanks in the field of European security were considered, which made it possible to build a robust documentary corpus to triangulate the information and guarantee the scientific validity of the findings.

The stages of the research followed a methodological sequence structured in four main phases, analogous to what Sánchez et al. (2023) describe as "phases of the research methodology". The first phase corresponded to the formulation of the problem and construction of the theoretical framework, where the research questions, objectives and working hypotheses were established, together with the conceptual delimitation of political leadership, civil protection, economic security and public administration in the European context. The second phase involved the collection and classification of documents according to thematic, temporal and geographical taxonomies. The third phase consisted of the qualitative content analysis of the selected documents, using coding techniques assisted by specialized software such as ATLAS.ti, to identify patterns, trends and causal relationships. The fourth and final phase included the interpretation of results, the development of explanatory models and the drafting of the final report with conclusions and recommendations for European policymakers.

Each methodological stage has a specific meaning and scope within the global research architecture of this work. The initial phase, of problematic formulation and theoretical framework, provided the conceptual foundations and delimits the field of inquiry, allowing to establish clear parameters to evaluate the scientific validity and contribution to knowledge of this modest research. For its part, the documentary compilation phase constituted the empirical backbone of the study, providing the informative raw material on which the analysis and discussion of results was subsequently built

The analysis of documentary content, on the other hand, represented the hermeneutical core that, following Gadamer (2004), is the moment where qualitative approaches are combined to capture meanings and narratives. The

final stage of interpretation and modelling goes beyond description alone to move towards causal explanations of how political leadership styles influence the EU's civil protection mechanisms and institutional responses to external commercial and military threats, culminating in evidence-based recommendations to strengthen European resilience and cohesion.

Table 2. Methodological architecture of the research.

Element	Description
Paradigm	Applied social constructivism.
Main Method	Systematic documentary research.
Sequential phases	Formulation and theoretical framework. Collecting and classifying sources. Content Analysis. Documentary interpretation.
Analytical tools	Atlas TI. Source triangulation.
Scientific products	- Mapping of leadership and responses. - Causal explanatory models. - Policy recommendations.

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

As Dancy (1993) points out, even the most rigorous methodological designs have inherent limitations that must be recognized for an adequate interpretation of the results. In the case of this study, the main limitations detected have to do with the historical nature of desk research, which may not capture emerging dynamics or undocumented information about informal negotiations or confidential decision-making processes in European security

matters. There is also a risk of interpretive bias in content analysis, particularly when examining political documents that may contain ambiguous or strategically vague diplomatic language.

In addition, research could be affected by the uneven availability of documentation between different EU member countries, resulting in an overrepresentation of the perspectives of states with greater documentary transparency. At the same time, language barriers may also limit access to sources not translated into English or other major languages. Finally, the current geopolitical dynamism, with rapid changes in alliances, threats and trade policies, could cause some findings to become outdated, even before the publication of the study, which would require mechanisms for continuous updating of research in future publications by the authors on this critical topic.

3. Analysis and discussion of results

As McNamara (2025) states, the European Union (EU) is in a complex geopolitical scenario marked by growing tensions and structural changes in the current world order. The war in Ukraine has definitely highlighted Europe's strategic vulnerability, especially in terms of security and energy supply, while powers such as China and Russia challenge its global influence. In addition, the EU faces trade pressures arising from its dependence on critical raw materials, mainly from China, and competition in global value chains that have been displaced by a more pragmatic and protectionist context. Internally, the EU grapples with political and economic divisions that make it difficult to achieve a unified response to these external threats. In any case, there is reason to suppose that:

What might the sky-high tariffs and shockingly disruptive foreign policymaking that have marked the first months of Trump's presidency mean for the future of Europe? Observers have struggled to make sense of the new US approach to trade, as it flies in the face of what economic theory would tell us is best for the US: liberalization and openness. Many think that cooler heads will surely prevail as US firms' dependent on the global economy will make their preferences heard, such that the trade system will reset to some version of the post-cold war globalization, underpinned by the transatlantic partnership (McNamara, 2025, para. 1).

In the military sphere, the EU is under pressure from the categorical need to strengthen its strategic autonomy, especially after the uncertainty generated by US foreign policy under the Trump administration, which has adopted a unilateralism that calls into question permanent support for NATO and Ukraine (Sullivan, 2024). As a result, this new reality has prompted the EU to review and strengthen its defensive capabilities, while internal tensions, such as political instability in key countries such as France and Germany, complicate the bloc's internal cohesion. In addition to the above, tariff pressures are also manifested in a global context where protectionism is gaining ground, affecting European trade dynamics and globalization in general.

In terms of comprehensive security and defence, civil protection mechanisms in Europe have evolved to respond to a wider spectrum of multidimensional threats, including hybrid ones, which combine military, cyber, informational and economic elements (European Commission, 2025). The EU has strengthened cooperation between member states and has developed instruments such as the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism, which facilitates coordination in emergencies and disasters of all kinds. In fact, recently, the increasing complexity of threats has led to a deeper integration of

capabilities and the implementation of policies that seek to anticipate and mitigate unconventional risks, reflecting an adaptation to a more volatile geopolitical environment, as Martínez (2025) states.

This political and institutional evolution also includes the incorporation of the cyber dimension and the fight against disinformation as an integral part of civil protection. The EU has promoted regulatory frameworks and cooperation programmes to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructures and information systems (European Commission, 2025). The development of joint capabilities and investment in surveillance and rapid response technologies are steps that demonstrate a more sophisticated and coordinated response to hybrid threats, which not only affect physical security but also the social and political stability of member states, which in turn are also part of NATO and share in their national security policy the strategic concepts for achieving the Atlantic defence (NATO, 2022).

According to official data provided by documents from the Council of the EU (Council of the EU, 2025), empirically speaking, tariff and defence policies have had a mixed impact on the EU's internal cohesion. On the one hand, increased defence spending and initiatives for joint procurement have strengthened collaboration between countries, evidenced in programmes such as *ReArm Europe* and *Security Action for Europe* (SAFE). These efforts seek to overcome historical fragmentations while building a more integrated pan-European defensive capability. However, trade tensions and competition for the strategic resources available in the Eurozone have generated frictions, especially between states with different levels of economic dependence and sensitivity to protectionist measures.

On the other hand, and as Vimont (2016) argues, for almost a decade restrictive tariff policies and pressure to protect national industries have provoked debates on solidarity and the balance between national and community interests. Some countries perceive these measures as necessary to preserve jobs and strategic sectors, while others fear that they could erode the single market and free movement, which refers to the ideological debate between nationalism and globalist liberalism. According to Foulon (2021), this dilemma reflects the difficulty of reconciling economic and defence policies in a bloc with political and economic diversity, which puts cohesion and the long-term European project to the test well into the twenty-first century.

More specifically, political leadership in and around the EU plays a crucial role in articulating responses to these challenges. In this context, Emmanuel Macron has advocated for a sovereign and strong Europe, emphasizing the imperative need for strategic autonomy in defence and economy, beyond the support of the United States of America. Normally, the political discourse of the current president of France invites Europe to take its historical destiny back into its own hands, always strengthening its defence and protecting its economic interests against external pressures. Therefore, his narrative anchors the idea of an EU that does not depend exclusively on external allies, especially in a context of global uncertainty, such as today's world:

Seven years after the Sorbonne speech, I wanted to come here, to this same place, to come back over our achievements and talk about our future. Our European future, but, by definition, the future of France. They cannot be addressed separately.

Right here, in September 2017, I said that, all too often our Europe no longer wanted to act, or proposed to act, out of either fatigue or conformism. The European spirit was left to those who attacked it.

We proposed to build a more united, more sovereign and more democratic Europe. More united, to assert ourselves among the other powers and in light of the century's transitions; more sovereign, so as not to have our destiny, our values and our ways of life imposed by others; and more democratic, because Europe is the birthplace of liberal democracy, in which its peoples decide for themselves (Élyssée, 2024, para., 1-2).

Image 1. Emmanuel Macron (President of France).



source: Britannica (2017).

In terms of content analysis, this excerpt from Emmanuel Macron's speech, delivered seven years after his famous speech at the Sorbonne, reveals a strategic vision on the inseparability between the destiny of France and that of Europe, clearly underlining that national challenges and achievements can only be understood in the light of the common European project. Currently, Macron identifies a crisis of will and leadership within the European Union, pointing out that passivity and conformism have allowed Eurosceptic voices to dominate the public narrative.

By claiming the need for a more united, sovereign and democratic Europe, the French president's speech articulates a proactive response to external and internal threats, proposing that cohesion and strategic autonomy are essential conditions for Europe to influence the global stage and protect its values against external pressures. Moreover, by linking liberal democracy with European identity, Macron not only defends the self-determination of European peoples, but also warns of the importance of revitalizing citizen participation and political leadership to prevent the European project from being defined by its detractors. In short, the scope of this fragment lies in its call for a renewal of political and social commitment to the idea of Europe, with the urgency of overcoming inertia prevailing here so that the EU can successfully face the challenges of the twenty-first century and preserve its global relevance.

For her part, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, underlined the importance of cooperation and solidarity in civil protection and security. In his speeches in the European Parliament, speeches on protecting citizens through joint action, combining resources and capacities to deal with hybrid threats and emergencies quickly and effectively, are common. So, von der Leyen emphasizes integration and coordinated response as pillars for European resilience. More specifically, it emphasizes that:

When the dream of a united Europe began, it started with a simple idea: Let us create one Single Market. Let us break barriers and take tariffs down. This is what made us strong. Because our companies grew. And so did the ties that bind us together. And then in the same spirit, we worked with partners across the world – including America. We built connections that we believed were unbreakable. And trade brought more than prosperity. It brought the idea of

a shared way of life. And with commerce, our partnership has also grown. Countless are the friendships across the Atlantic. And because of this collective experience, so many Europeans feel utterly disheartened by the announcements from the US. Let me be clear: Europe did not start this confrontation. We think it is wrong. But my message to you today is also that we have everything we need to protect our people and our prosperity. We have the largest Single Market in the world. We have the strength to negotiate. We have the power to push back. And the people of Europe should know: Together we will always promote and defend our interests and values. And we will always stand up for Europe (European Commission, 2025, para., 3).

Image 2. Ursula von der Leyen



Source: European Commission (2025).

For her part, Ursula von der Leyen in her narrative underlines the central role of the single market and the removal of trade barriers as the ontological foundations of the European project, highlighting how economic integration not only boosted business growth, but also social cohesion and shared identity in Europe. This notable speaker emphasizes that trade openness with global partners, especially the United States, was perceived as the basis of a solid and mutually beneficial relationship, extending ties beyond the economic to the cultural and social.

However, the disappointment with the recent US measures marks a turning point, evidencing the vulnerability of these links to geopolitical changes. The speech of the President of the European Commission, however, conveys a message of resilience and self-assertion: Europe has the resources, the negotiating capacity and the economic size necessary to defend its interests and values in the face of external challenges. Thus, the scope of this message lies in its call for unity and confidence in European strength, proposing that, in the face of adversity, the response must be more integration and determination in the defence of the continent's prosperity and autonomy.

In complete harmony with the values that ontologically define the European Union, Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, focused his speech on the urgency of military support and economic sanctions to contain Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, an aggression that, ultimately, has meant an attack on the peace and stability of the old continent. Since Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Zelensky has emphasized the strategic need for Ukraine's defence as a strategic extension of Europe's defence. Always ensuring that only with unity and firmness can peace and stability be affirmed in

Europe. Consequently, his political discourse promotes the idea of European solidarity as a condition of possibility for common security, appealing to shared responsibility in the face of external threats. These ideas translate into:

Everyone needs to make sure that Russia, as the sole source of this war, accepts the need to end it. This can be proved by two forms of silence that are easy to establish and monitor, namely, no attacks on energy and other civilian infrastructure – truce for missiles, bombs, and long-range drones, and the second is truce on the water, meaning no military operations in the Black Sea (The Kiev Independent, 2025).

Zelensky's political ideology poses a clear demand for international responsibility by identifying Russia as the sole origin of the war and proposes concrete and verifiable measures to move towards de-escalation: the cessation of attacks on civilian infrastructure and the suspension of military operations in the Black Sea.

The symbolic scope of this message lies in its pragmatism and in the appeal to the international community to press for tangible and easily observable solutions, rather than abstract or difficult-to-implement negotiations. Likewise, by focusing attention on the protection of civilians and regional stability, Zelensky reinforces the legitimacy of the Ukrainian cause and frames peace as a humanitarian and collective security imperative, stressing that any real progress requires recognition of aggression and a verifiable commitment to reducing violence.

Table 3. Key insights on security and civil protection in Europe from
leaders in the current context

Leader	Current Context	Security and Defence	Civil Defence
Emmanuel Macron	Need for strategic autonomy in the face of external powers and trade tensions.	Promotes a sovereign Europe with increased defence spending and cooperation.	It emphasizes the protection of the economic and strategic interests of all EU partners.
Ursula von der Leyen	Hybrid pressures and internal cohesion challenges.	Calls for joint action and pan-European coordination.	It highlights the strategic importance of solidarity and rapid response to common problems.
Volodímir Zelenski	Armed conflict and the need for international support for Ukraine to contain Russia.	He calls for European unity for defence and sanctions against aggressors such as Russia and its allies.	Appeals to European solidarity for the stability and protection of Ukraine.

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

From the point of view of the authors of this research, the simple comparison between Macron, von der Leyen and Zelensky reveals convergences and differences in their political priorities. Macron (Élyssée, 2024) focuses on strategic autonomy and European sovereignty, seeking to reduce external dependencies. For her part, von der Leyen (European Commission, 2025) emphasizes internal cooperation and joint response capacity, reflecting an integrative vision to face hybrid threats. Zelensky, on the other hand, appeals for solidarity and urgent external support, given the conflict situation in Ukraine (The Kiev Independent, 2025). These discourses show how security and civil

protection are intertwined with politics and economics, shaping a debate where European cohesion is tested against internal and external pressures. The interaction of these leaderships defines the political and strategic course of the EU in an increasingly uncertain global context.

Conclusion and recommendations

From the point of view of the authors of this research, political leadership in the European Union (EU) plays a central role in articulating coordinated responses to threats that challenge governance and internal stability. The increasing complexity of hybrid risks, from cyberattacks to systematic disinformation, calls for clear policy direction that integrates civil protection policies with national security and European security strategies.

In this regard, the European Commission has strengthened mechanisms such as the EU Civil Protection, which facilitates cross-border cooperation during emergencies, highlighting how institutional coordination can mitigate vulnerabilities (Rodas, S/D). However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on the political will to prioritise resources and overcome national divergences, especially in contexts where key leaders such as Macron insist on the need for more strategic autonomy for Europe.

Image 3. Civil Protection EU.



Source: Rodas (S/D).

The ability to anticipate and adapt in the face of multidimensional crises reflects the maturity of European leadership. For example, the 2022 Strategic Compass document (Borrell, 2022) underlines the importance of joint exercises and the development of rapid military capabilities, integrating civil protection into a broad security vision. This holistic and strategic approach, however, faces practical obstacles that cannot be avoided, countries with fragile economies prioritize domestic agendas, while others, such as Germany, balance their stance between collective defence and global trade relations. Cohesion in this area requires not only consensual regulatory frameworks, but also leaders capable of communicating a unified narrative that links physical security with social stability, beyond the particularities of each country.

Since his first government, the tariff policies promoted by Donald Trump between 2017 and 2021 fractured confidence in economic multilateralism, altering established trade dynamics. In this context, the imposition of tariffs on European products, such as steel and aluminum, not only generated retaliation, but exposed the vulnerability of global supply chains. This protectionism, now justified under the slogan "America First", encouraged European companies to redirect investments towards less volatile markets, weakening the economic interdependence that has historically been a pillar of global stability (Ottaviano, 2024). The psychological effect was equally significant, to the point that the collective perception that the United States prioritized national interests over traditional alliances eroded the credibility of instruments such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Momtaz (2025) is right about the fact that the uncertainty generated by these trade measures exacerbated dialectical tensions within the EU, where countries such as France advocated a firm response, while others, dependent on exports to the US, sought bilateral negotiations. The divergence revealed fissures in European unity, making it difficult to formulate a common position. Likewise, US protectionism strengthened arguments in favor of greater European strategic autonomy, promoting initiatives such as the European Defence Fund and alternative trade alliances with Asia and Africa. However, for the time being, the lack of consensus on the scope of this autonomy remains a challenge to internal cohesion that needs to be resolved quickly.

Following Arkan's (2014) criteria, from a constructivist perspective, the EU's leadership is based on the construction of a collective identity based on shared values, such as democracy and human rights. This axiological framework

explains initiatives such as the Civil Protection Mechanism, which transcends immediate national interests to promote regional solidarity through a process of permanent symbolic and material construction. Structural realism, in contrast, emphasizes the asymmetrical distribution of power within the EU, where countries such as Germany and France, with greater hegemony, exert disproportionate influence on security agendas, often prioritizing their military capabilities over collective needs (Krumbein, 2025). Thus, the tension between ideals and *realpolitik* defines much of European politics today.

In this common thread, the theory of complex interdependence developed by Keohane and Nye (2012) highlights how European economic integration reduces the likelihood of military conflicts, but also increases vulnerabilities to external shocks, such as Trump's tariffs. Multilevel governance, on the other hand, illustrates forward-looking scenarios in which the EU balances competences between supranational institutions and national governments, of course, a fragile balance in the face of crises that require rapid responses. As a complement to the above, critical political economy also points out that European elites have instrumentalized security challenges to justify greater integration, even when this contradicts citizen preferences in member states.

As practical recommendations for political elites in the exercise of power in the EU, we affirm that, in order to strengthen civil protection and security, the union's leaderships must prioritize four strategic areas, which are: 1) Investment in resilient critical infrastructure, using funds such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility to modernize energy and digital networks; 2) Strengthen collective intelligence, creating hybrid threat analysis centers with civilian and military participation; 3) Civic education in security, promoting programs that

explain the risks of disinformation and cyberattacks, and; 4) Preventive diplomacy, establishing structured dialogues with partners in Africa and Asia to reduce strategic dependence on the United States.

Otherwise, future research on the topic should explore the intersection between technology and civil protection, examining how artificial intelligence can improve responses to natural disasters. Comparative studies on governance models in crisis, such as those of Japan and Canada (Japan Studies Association of Canada, 2016), would offer historical lessons for the EU. At the same time, quantitative analyses of the economic impact of tariffs on specific sectors would help to design more effective trade policies. Finally, the role of social networks in the citizens' perception of hybrid threats should be investigated, to inform public communication strategies.

In conclusion, in response to the question that animated the development of this research: How do trade tariffs and military threats affect the security and unity of Europe in the face of the New World Order? Trade tariffs and military threats all indicate that European security and unity are undermining European security and unity by exacerbating internal divisions and contradictions and exposing critical dependencies.

The former distort markets and encourage fragmented responses, while the latter force the EU to choose between strategic autonomy and traditional alliances. Together, these factors challenge Europe's ability to act as a cohesive actor in an increasingly polarized and conflicted world order. However, they also offer a historic opportunity to redefine priorities, as shown by the progress made on common defence policies following Russia's invasion of Ukraine (European Commission, 2025). Undoubtedly, the key then lies in balancing geopolitical

realism with normative commitments, ensuring that unity is not achieved at the cost of sacrificing the democratic values of the union.

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