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## The European Union and the Tradition of Normative Prudence

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### Abstract

While the European Union (EU) is not beyond dispute, political theorists have ignored or unsatisfactorily dealt with the question of whether a moral justification exists for the EU. The present article aims to address this lacuna by proposing a moral-political standard for EU assessment rooted in the virtue-ethical tradition of 'normative prudence'. The article's thesis is that the relatively demanding, more other-regarding 'higher prudence' is the virtue the EU as a supranational organization should come to embody in order to qualify as morally justified. A fourfold argument is developed. First, the moral-political tradition of normative prudence is highly relevant to international and European politics. Second, the realistic, more self-regarding 'lower prudence' applies to the state sovereignties the supranational EU has characteristically aimed to transcend and therefore could not suffice as its virtue. Third, to meet the as yet unmet requirements of 'higher prudence', the EU should assume positive and negative moral obligations for giving extra weight to other-regarding considerations in its policies, since (i) as 'security consumer' and 'welfare creator' it possesses the added economic capacity to do this and (ii) as a 'regionalist' project it is in basic and historical tension with global justice. Fourth, for the EU to transform itself into a sovereign, 'lower prudent' European 'state' would tragically imply the moral failure of the European integration project.

Keywords: European Union; global justice; justification; normative prudence; supranationalism

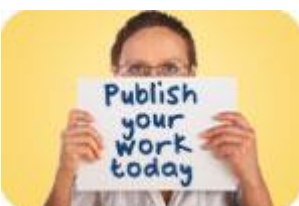
### Article body

#### Introduction

Is there a moral justification for the European Union (EU)? What would such a justification involve? The winner of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize, the EU is often praised for its contribution to peace, prosperity, human rights protection, and global climate policy. Indeed, it has united former enemies, created the largest integrated market in the world, improved the life conditions of half a billion people, and become the world's largest development aid donor and UN contributor (Blair 2010: 103, 105-106, 112). Yet the EU has critics as well as supporters, popular and scholarly. Renowned international ethicists have criticized the EU for being a danger to national democracy, solidarity, and social justice (Miller 1998; Rawls, in Rawls and Van Parijs 2003; cf. Kamminga 2014), for selectively addressing the human rights of outsiders (Brown 2014), and for harming poor agricultural producers elsewhere by its heavily-funded common agricultural policy (Caney 2006: 127-128; Pogge 2010: 206). It is unfortunate, then, that political theorists of European integration often tacitly presume the EU's justifiability (Morgan 2007: 333-334; cf. Dobson 2006: 519). Cherishing a 'normative power Europe' or 'ethical power Europe' (Manners 2002, 2006, 2008; Whitman 2013; Eriksen 2014; cf. Diez 2005; Sjusen 2006), they idealistically regard the EU as a self-justifying post-national organization, which should merely enhance its normative legitimacy by becoming truly democratic and human rights-attentive (cf. Aggestam 2008).

Realists also ignore questions of EU justification, but they tend to simplistically treat the EU as resulting from how nation-states compete under anarchy for material capabilities-based power. Regarding the EU as a militarily 'weak power' (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2003; Rynning 2005; Hyde-Price 2006, 2008), realists just cannot appreciate it as a non-state, voluntary membership-based organization that features a 'supranational' identity (Neyer 2012; cf. Beck and Grande 2007) and that, 'by existing as different in a world of states', at least *tries* to '[change] the normality of "international relations"' (Manners 2008: 45). Thus, the realist view does no justice to the EU as a genuinely normative attempt to advance the force of

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ideas, transcend state sovereignty, and defend human rights, democracy, and rule of law (Manners 2002: 239-242, 252-253, 2008: 45; Scheipers and Sicurelli 2007; albeit cf. Diez 2005: 614, 620-622, 635). Remarkably, arch-realist Hans Morgenthau acknowledged that perhaps 'the present division of the political world into nation states will be replaced by larger units of a quite different character, more in keeping with the technical potentialities and the moral requirements of the contemporary world' (1973: 10). Yet modern realists often fail to see that an ethical analysis of the EU makes sense (cf. also Neyer 2012: 172).

Some theorists do examine the question of justifying European integration but fail to achieve adequate critical distance. Thus, Glyn Morgan argues that we urgently need 'a standard of justification that arguments in support of the European project ought to be able to satisfy' (2005a: 24, cf. 2007: 35). Morgan's own answer is a 'democratic standard', which imposes the requirements of 'publicity' (reliance on reasons open to all Europeans involved), 'accessibility' (intelligibility to ordinary Europeans as well as experts or specialists), and 'sufficiency' (demonstrability of adequate protection of distinctive goods or benefits; 2007: 335-342, cf. 2005a: 25-44). However, Morgan's standard seems too restrictive for being purely regional-European from the outset. Especially given its expansionary history, the EU should rather embody that 'normative reasoning is incomplete if it fails to take account of the interests of everyone affected' (Beitz 1994: 126; cf. Dobson 2006; Neyer 2012). Indeed, in focusing on defending European integration against euroskeptics and addressing the concerns of European citizens, Morgan (2005a: 24-41, 2007) loses sight of possibly justified claims from people located outside the European borders yet affected by European integration. Whereas his democratic standard leads Morgan (2005a) to argue that the EU should be transformed into a superstate that protects European security – allegedly, only security can justify far-reaching European integration to Europeans, not peace or welfare – morally his strategy is unduly conservative, with no interest in 'global justice' (Nagel 2005).

Jürgen Neyer (2012) examines EU justification from a pragmatic-moral perspective called 'normative realism', one that abandons utopian idealism for critical reflection on existing realities and political possibilities. Plausibly, he prefers the morally more basic standard of (transnational) 'justice' to that of 'democracy'. The latter is irreconcilable with '*demos-less*' supranationality and already (to be) protected by '*demos-encompassing*' states (cf. Weiler 1999: 268-270, 337; De Wilde 2011: 14); while states, with their coercion monopoly, should be democracies, supranational layers cannot. Yet Neyer appears to take the very existence of the EU and its basic normative value for granted. For all the supposedly critical bite of his normative realism, his subsequent critique of 'the double standard dividing [the EU's] internal and external relations', and his critically nuanced analysis of the EU (Neyer 2012: especially 169-184, quotation 183), he does assume that the EU must be morally accommodated for being 'the reality', an obviously 'good' one, which should merely overcome its 'justice deficit' (Neyer 2012: 149, cf. 183). Troublingly, Neyer's normative realism appears dependent on his EU preference, which makes his account of justice come to occupy the middle ground between universalism and contextualism (Neyer 2012: 83-84). But that something is a reality does not make it justified; that Neyer's normative-realist methodology intends to make the EU (much) better than it is does not suffice. Ultimately, Neyer's strategy of 'justification' displays some circular reasoning for taking the EU as given in its current shape (whereas Morgan is at least willing to rethink the EU's nature). Thus, his acceptance of empirical reality is too 'thick', going beyond the 'thinner', Rawlsian 'realistic utopia' (Rawls 1999: especially 12) that leaves open the fundamental possibility of existing realities not being morally justifiable (Kamminga 2014).

We need, then, an EU-relevant standard of moral justification that possesses critical distance by analytically keeping 'supranationality' and 'the EU' more separate than Neyer is willing to do. Rather than 'arguing backwards' by starting with European integration and then looking for a justificatory standard for it, as both Morgan and Neyer do (albeit in different ways), we should adopt a more external and autonomous political-ethical perspective. Thus, we should focus on the supranationalism behind the really existing EU and examine what independent standard supranational, integrated, and realistically state-linked (Borg 2015) entity ought to meet in order to have a right of existence. The question, then, is whether the EU meets this norm or what, if anything, it could, and thus should, do to achieve compliance.

In the present article, I aim to engage critically with the literature and debate about the EU by asking what might morally justify the project of European integration. Thus, I seek to offer a critical moral-political standard for EU assessment rooted in the virtue-ethical tradition of 'normative prudence', or 'practical wisdom' (Coll 1999; Dobel 1998; cf. Manners 2008: 55-56). My thesis is that the relatively demanding, more other-regarding 'higher prudence' (Cochran 1983, 2014) is the virtue the EU as a supranational entity should come to embody in order to qualify as morally justified. A fourfold argument will be developed. First, the moral-political tradition of normative prudence is highly relevant to international and European politics. Second, the realistic, more self-regarding 'lower prudence' (Cochran 1983, 2014) applies to the state sovereignties the supranational EU has characteristically aimed to transcend and therefore could not suffice as its virtue. Third, to meet the as yet unmet requirements of 'higher prudence', the EU should assume positive and negative moral obligations for giving extra weight to other-regarding considerations in its policies, since (i) as 'security consumer' (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2003) and 'welfare creator' it possesses the added economic capacity to do this and (ii) as a 'regionalist' project it is in basic

and historical tension with global justice. Fourth, for the EU to transform itself into a sovereign, 'lower prudent' European 'state' (Morgan 2005a) would tragically imply the moral failure of the European integration project.

### The relevance of normative prudence

My first argument is that the tradition of normative prudence is of serious importance to international and European politics. I start by explaining this moral style of political thought.[1]

As prudence theorists Alberto Coll (1999) and Patrick Dobel (1998) have argued, 'normative prudence' is rooted in Aristotelian and Christian moral-political ideas. As such, it rejects the amoral, purely self-interested view of 'prudence' inspired by Hobbes and Machiavelli. While normative prudence opposes *realpolitik*, it is also critical of idealistic moralism, stressing 'the difficulty of translating ethical intentions and purposes into policies that will produce morally sound results' (Coll 1999: 75). Therefore, political leaders are needed who do not operate ideologically, or religiously, but possess the virtuous character to deliberate carefully and act responsibly, even if success is not guaranteed (Coll 1999: 76; Dobel 1998: 80). Thus, first, put in Aristotelian terms, prudent leaders acknowledge that 'practical wisdom' accepts the ultimate authority of 'the [higher,] "theoretical" wisdom of what we might call moral philosophy and theology' and may only choose its means with *relative* autonomy (Coll 1999: 84) - like how 'health' constitutes 'the medical art' (Aristotle 2002: VI, 1145a, 6-11). Theoretical wisdom is needed to make prudence avoid an unwarranted moral conservatism and help individuals apply values in complex or unfamiliar situations (Arnaud and LeBon 2000: 8). But second, while a sophisticated moral philosophy can illuminate political decision-making, practical wisdom also involves perception, with knowing the right thing to do in a particular circumstance. It deals with the contingent, with things that change, and with knowing how to seek successful means to justice. Prudence 'is not only about what is universal, but needs to discern the particulars as well, since it has to do with action, and action is concerned with particulars' (Aristotle 2002: VI, 1141b, 15-16).

Although the guidance that prudence offers may not seem straightforward, concrete or rational (Coll 1999: 95), it has serious moral significance for international political conduct because of the personal and particular nature of political decision-making. Typically, political decision-making is the work of persons operating within unique, complex conditions that both enable and constrain the application of moral principles. In Aristotelian terms, 'theoretical wisdom does not become embodied in action except through a filtering process that includes the reason, imagination, will, choices, and particular acts of particular human beings' (Coll 1999: 96). That is why the moral character and virtues of leaders are so important. Moreover, prudence helps to mitigate bad inclinations such as hubris, mean-spiritedness, self-righteousness, moral fanaticism, and ideological obsession (Morgenthau 1973: 14). Most directly, the need to virtuously balance morally relevant motives, means, and consequences is unavoidable for any political leader. If political decision-making is to be moral - rather than cynical, moralist or ideological - prudence is inescapable (Coll 1999: 95-98; Dobel 1998: 76; Cochran 1983: 192, 195-196, 2014: 120, 122-123; Amstutz 2013: 79-80). This, then, applies especially to the complex international domain, where a mere application of moral principles easily has undesirable effects (Hyde-Price 2008: 40-41).

An internationally adequate practical wisdom must be clear about its theoretical wisdom firstly. Theoretical wisdom seeks knowledge of necessary and non-contingent principles: it is 'the most precise kind of knowledge' (Aristotle 2002: VI, 1141a, 16). From the perspective of theoretical wisdom as a moral-philosophical one, then, Neyer seems right to draw attention to 'justice' rather than to accept Morgan's (regional or state) 'security' (cf. also Coll 1999: 96). Yet the meaning of 'justice' is hard to specify. During the last decades, a 'global justice' debate has occurred between 'cosmopolitan', 'internationalist', and 'global harm' theorists (Beitz 1999; Nagel 2005; Pogge 2002; cf. Brown 2015: 184-204). Cosmopolitanism stresses the need to develop and implement roughly egalitarian principles of global distributive justice (Beitz 1999; Pogge 1989; Caney 2005). Internationalism favors limited, people- or nation-bound conceptions of distributive justice, with merely humanitarian-like duties to the poor and oppressed beyond the state's borders (Rawls 1999; Miller 1995, 2007). Global harm theory highlights the negative duty not to harm the human rights of the global poor (rather than the positive duties to transnationally distribute or assist), which, unfortunately, have actually been violated by the West-imposed world order (Pogge 2002, 2010). Each of these positions has its attractions. Cosmopolitanism weighs global and sectional considerations from a single, transparently egalitarian perspective; internationalism stays close to what many people believe about the moral value of the national community (Beitz 1999: 216); and the negative duty-approach is strategically strong for offering a moral minimum - do no harm - which almost everyone will accept. I agree with Hedley Bull that cosmopolitanism is most fundamental 'because the ultimate units of the great society of all mankind are not states (or nations, tribes, empires, classes or parties) but individual human beings, which are permanent and indestructible in a sense in which groupings of them...are not' (Bull 2002: 21). Yet I will not try to resolve this debate here but simply assume that 'global justice' broadly demands two things: (i) insofar as necessary, helping poor and oppressed people

elsewhere up until the point that the helpers' own national loyalties become endangered (distributive assistance based on positive duties); (ii) insofar as relevant, stopping and compensating for harm done to people outside the borders (correction based on negative duties). So understood, 'justice' will be seen as defining international theoretical wisdom: the rights and interests of individuals and communities are more basic than the security of states.

Subsequently, international practical wisdom should address internationally relevant 'particulars' as well as global justice, and somehow include those in the deliberation process in order to avoid utopian moralism (cf. Coll 1999: 96). This means that state, or regional, security (Morgan) may return on the agenda of international leadership as a 'particular' not to be overlooked, since ensuring survival in an insecure global context is anything but self-evident (cf. Waltz 1979: 91-92). In order to deal responsibly with tensions such as those between global justice and state security, prudent leadership embodies a number of practical virtues as well as knowledge and technical skills to generate moral-political action (Amstutz 2013: 80). Following Dobel (1998), I mention seven such prudential virtues and suggest their EU relevance by briefly showing their roles in the early period of European integration.

First, 'disciplined reason and openness' make prudence value historical knowledge (Dobel 1998: 76). With European leaders having awareness of causes and consequences of two world wars, post-war European integration was driven by problem-solving rather than ideology or grandiose visions (Eriksen 2014: 7). Second, there is 'foresight and the long term' (Dobel 1998: 76-77), like how European leaders saw integration as effective for eliminating war and consolidating peace. Third, skillfully 'deploying power' helps arrange the resources necessary for achieving goals. Thus, postwar German president Konrad Adenauer managed to create a power base by gaining trust, respect, and support for Germany's reintegration into the European community (Dobel 1998: 77) based on a close relationship with arch-enemy France (Blair 2010: 13, 20). Fourth, 'timing and momentum' safeguard leadership from mere passivity (Dobel 1998: 77-78, 80), like how European leaders seized the opportunity to start the integration project under the postwar US security umbrella. Fifth, there must be a close relationship between 'means and ends', like how in Europe cooperation and integration have contributed to permanent peace. Sixth, leaders must create outcomes with 'durability and legitimacy' in the eyes of the individuals affected, like how Adenauer established his government's moral authority by providing national economic welfare and prosperity (Dobel 1998 78-79) and the European integration project acquired acceptability by adopting economic well-being as a central goal. Seventh, prudent leaders engage in 'building community' among diverse social groups with their diverging interests, so that groups will interact peacefully and respectfully (Dobel 1998: 79). Overall, prudent leadership regards rules of war as action constraints but not as laws of history (Dobel 1998: 80). Indeed, the creation of Franco-German friendship was aided by the belief that key states can display calm behavior and leave war behind (Rynning 2005: 27-28).

In conclusion, the normative prudence tradition is clearly and meaningfully applicable to international and European conduct. The basic question of international and European prudence concerns how much weight in practice should be attached to 'justice' and 'security'.

### **The insufficiency of lower prudence**

Second, I argue that the virtue of 'lower prudence' (Cochran 1983, 2014) applies to the state sovereignties the EU has characteristically aimed to transcend and as such cannot be sufficient for a supranational entity such as the EU. That is, since lower prudence is appropriate at most for states, meeting this more self-regarding version of prudence could not make the EU morally justified. Within the prudence tradition, the lower version creates the largest gap with global justice, namely by basically disregarding it. Indeed, lower prudence in international politics comes close to an attitude of skepticism towards theoretical wisdom, since practical wisdom is understood as dictating that 'security comes first, and justice comes next' (Lánczi 2015: 68). Surely, a more extensive explanation of lower prudence, which at best includes *ad hoc* moral considerations, is required first.

Within the prudence tradition, Clarke Cochran (1983, 2014: 100-125; cf. Coll 1999: 94-95) has developed an important distinction between 'lower' and (to be explained in the next section) 'higher' prudence, each with their own value hierarchies and specific virtues. Both, Cochran insists, are legitimate forms of prudence, considering their shared rejection of ideology, or religion, as instant solution for social problems and direct, at times violent, challenge to political regimes. Featuring in the Old Testament, the Pauline letters, and the work of Augustine and Reinhold Niebuhr, lower prudence is cautious, defensive, and focused on survival; it is conservative and realistic, respects authority, and appreciates stability because of the fragility of order and the evil that results from social chaos; it acknowledges the role of self-interest and emphasizes the limits of political possibility (Cochran 1983: 195, 2014: 122-123). Lower prudence, then, characterizes modern realism. For Morgenthau (1973: 8), state leadership demands risk minimization and benefit maximization for the state and its citizens; such 'trusteeship' barely permits action guided by universal moral principles in a dangerous world. To quote him:

'The individual may say for himself: "*Fiat justitia, pereat mundus...*," but the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care...[T]he state has no right to let its moral disapprobation...get in the way of successful political action, itself inspired by the moral principle of national survival...Realism, then, considers prudence...to be the supreme virtue in politics' (Morgenthau 1973: 10, emphasis in original).

Thus, while his notion of prudence has Aristotelian roots (Lang 2007), distinguishing between 'ethics in the abstract' (theoretical wisdom) and 'political ethics' (practical wisdom), Morgenthau (1973: 10) sees hardly any international-political room for 'abstract' ethics beyond not causing undue harm to other collectivities (cf. Coll 1999: 95).

Realists may want to stress immediately that one should not expect the EU to exhibit more than lower prudence, if only because the EU's actual behavior displays little more than amoral, egoistic prudence overall. Thus, the EU has instrumentally served the economic interests of its member states within the global economy (trade, agriculture, standards, etc.) and, at best, their second-order normative concerns such as human rights, democracy promotion, environmental protection, and tackling African poverty (Hyde-Price 2008: 31-32, 36, 44, 2006: 222-223). In fact, the European goal of food security (self-sufficiency) led to the creation of a common agricultural policy in 1962, which has since contributed to poverty and hunger elsewhere for large numbers of people (Hyde-Price 2008: 32). Also, the EU has combined 'internal liberalism' with 'external mercantilism', based on the mercantilist notion that free-market liberalism requires power-supported boundaries in order to be viable. This way, the EU also maintains a distinction between its own citizens and outsiders (Wolf 1995: 333-336). Moreover, studies about the admission of China and Russia to the WTO indicate that the EU can act as a 'realist' power in trade negotiations driven by geographical-economic and mercantilist relative-gains considerations (Zimmerman 2007; cf. Morgan 2005b: 202). Another study shows that, in the period 1994-2005, the EU weakened its normative agenda in favor of strengthening relations with Russia as a key strategic partner. Human rights violations in Chechnya did not stop the EU from pursuing *realpolitik* based on economic interests and great power ambitions (Forsberg and Herd 2005).

Yet, while such state-like behavior matches realist logic, it is not simply unavoidable or appropriate but based on choices deplorable from the perspective of state egoism-surpassing supranationalism. Thus, first, the realist, lower prudence goal of survival does not apply as much to a supranational organization such as the EU as it may do to states (with their armies). As Reinhold Niebuhr (1941: 221-233) has argued, no collectivity has a stronger tendency towards egoistic behavior than the nation-state, because it can enforce the individual's obedience and lacks serious behavioral (self-)control. Therefore, it seems natural to expect of *supranational* (or post-national) entities not to duplicate such conduct but to morally transcend it (Beck and Grande 2007), even if that goes at the expense of their own democratic content. Whereas the primacy of survival sounds reasonable for states, an organization such as the EU does not seem to have a comparatively strong right to survival (if indeed rights states have this right). While realist, lower prudence is right to warn against the zealous pursuit of utopian visions at the expense of order and security (Hyde-Price 2008: 42-43), this alone would be unduly conservative for a supranational entity. Mere lower prudence, then, is relevant to, and at most embodied in, nation-states, inward-looking and indifferent about their effects on outsiders as they characteristically are. Moreover, EU member states are still sovereign regarding their defense decisions and actually have the intergovernmental North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States (US) to help defend their security. Thus, a merely lower prudent EU would lack basic significance and have little added value at most. Indeed, lower prudence is the standard for 'normal' affairs in international relations (Morgenthau), whereas the supranational EU is to be 'beyond normal' (cf. Manners).

Second, a realist theory that emphasizes state sovereignty and relative gains cannot fully account for the politico-economic EU, which is aimed at low politics (economy, ecology, human rights) as well as high politics (self-security), if not more so. In fact, the member states have formally agreed that the EU will 'promote...the well-being of its peoples' but also 'contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights' (2012, article 3). Therefore, it

'shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to...preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security...;...foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty;...encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade;...help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources...;...assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters; and...promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance' (EU 2012, article 21).

The EU itself, then, does not want to settle for lower prudence but expresses higher, transnational goals, arguably precisely because it acknowledges its supranational mission.

Thus, lower prudence, while typical and perhaps right for states, is insufficient for EU justification. A supranational organization should represent a prudence that is more ambitious.

### **The appropriateness of higher prudence**

Third, I argue that the EU, in order to meet the as yet unmet demands of 'higher prudence', should assume positive and negative moral obligations for giving extra weight to other-regarding considerations in its policies, since (i) as 'security consumer' (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2003) and 'welfare creator' it possesses the added economic capacity to do this and (ii) as a 'regionalist' project it is in deep and historical tension with global justice as theoretical wisdom. That is, the EU could and should meet the virtue of higher prudence as its supranational standard of justification but actually does not do so. However, it should become higher prudent without wholly disregarding lower prudence: so-called 'stewardship' requires a supranational entity to pursue global justice more than its own security albeit not at the cost of the security of its member states and their citizens. I explain higher prudence (and stewardship) first and then discuss what this means for the EU as a supranational entity.

Resembling the prudence found in the Gospels and Thomas Aquinas as a Christian Aristotelian, higher prudence is active, and cares more for justice than survival, more for love than respect; it accepts risks for the purpose of realizing higher values such as justice and compassion. Yet, in striving for 'stewardship', higher prudence recognizes the contribution of lower prudence for rightly valuing order as opposed to instable or violent disorder (Cochran 2014: 122-123). Without lower prudence – always indispensable in international relations – higher prudence could become irresponsible and lapse into a utopian desire to moralize politics (cf. Coll 1999: 95). It would then embody stewardship no longer, for that demands the prohibition of resources wastage or foolish investment thereof in unwise or unproductive enterprises as well as the acceptance of responsibility for the accompanying risk. Both risk-taking and prohibition of squandering are required; what matters is that compassion be maximized without neglecting collective interests. This way, the demand remains that the 'lower' is governed by the 'higher': the task is to optimize justice in concrete circumstances (Cochran 1983: 196-199, 2014: 122-125). Leaders should display the courage to seek for possibilities for realizing higher moral goals, while relativizing realist cautiousness and avoiding utopian radicalism. Remarkably, higher prudence, which does accept the demands of 'abstract' ethics, seems consistent with the critical, *status quo*-questioning, component of Morgenthau's work on politics (Lang 2007). The radical implications of global justice must be taken seriously, albeit not rigorously. In short, political leadership should move up from 'trusteeship' to 'stewardship', acting creatively as well as responsibly for global justice.

To begin with, then, supranational organizations are needed for stewardship rather than trusteeship. Generally, they can be morally justified only insofar as they actively help minimize the gap between group security concerns and global justice and thus transcend the 'normal', lower prudence closeness to skepticism about theoretical wisdom. As such, in order to have the required added moral value to 'normal' international relations, supranational organizations must be qualitatively different from international institutions that merely result from bargaining among mutually self-interested sovereign states (Nagel 2005: 138, 141, 143, 146). Actually, the importance of higher prudence for supranational organizations is twofold. First, it explains why such organizations, the EU included, must accommodate their obligations of global justice regarding the scope and content of moral obligation. But second, it avoids the impractical theoretical consistency of utopianism by acknowledging the practical stubbornness of those (at best) lower prudence factors generally left out by EU idealists: egoism, self-interest, material power and capabilities, distribution of power, anarchy, balance of power, and self-defense. But to see such things as bad does not make them disappear. Thus, supranational bodies, too, should incorporate justice, courage, and risk-taking but also the earlier explained, seven (EU-relevant) virtues of 'disciplined reason and openness', 'foresight and the long term', 'deploying power', 'timing and momentum', 'means and ends', 'durability and legitimacy', and 'building community' (Dobel).

Specifically, in the EU's case, we should acknowledge that the immediate, post-1945 goal of achieving peace on a continent torn by a second world war does not contradict the general guideline, as higher prudence would not have allowed for much global activity at the time. Indeed, the European continent was in need of outside help (hence the American Marshall Plan) as well as the seven leadership virtues for its rebuild. Yet the standard of higher prudence for supranational organization strongly suggests that, so far at least, the EU cannot count as morally justified. Its 'European-ness' (however defined exactly), or 'regionalism' as a combination of integration and European-ness, is what makes the EU as a project violate theoretical wisdom: it has never actively considered global justice. During its history, in a globalizing world, the EU and its leaders have never taken the theoretical wisdom of notably economic global justice into account. The post-1980 (Eastern) enlargements may be understandable for historical and geopolitical

reasons, but they cannot convincingly be reconstructed morally as somehow cosmopolitan or internationalist (Kammringa 2017, 2014). This explains the EU's regional economic overshoot in depth and breadth, which cannot be morally offset by its 'relatively generous' development aid as a consolation afterwards for the global poor. From very early after its postwar beginning, 'Europe' should have directly included claims from outsiders and have demonstrated that it cares more for global justice than self-interested stability and respect for its member states. Admittedly, to require of the EU that it fully meets global justice and abandon its collective-egoistic orientation would be utopian or moralistic and falling beyond the scope of virtuous prudence. While the EU as a supranational entity should not value its own survival so highly, some lower prudence, embodied in its intergovernmentalism and other particulars, is needed for saving its member states' resources from squandering. But again, it is the 'regionalist' neglect of global justice that has made the EU morally unjustified.

Simply breaking down the EU would not be a prudent leadership solution for certainly violating the seven leadership virtues. But for the EU to achieve moral justification by becoming higher prudent is a challenging, even if principally possible, task. To start with, the EU owes much to the efforts of others: from the bipolar global system time onward, the US has spent enormous financial resources to provide for its own security and that of its smaller allies. As Kenneth Waltz explains, this facilitated the development of small-power Europe into a community:

'The emergence of the Russian and American superpowers created a situation that permitted wider ranging and more effective cooperation among the states of Western Europe. They became consumers of security... For the first time in modern history, the determinants of war and peace lay outside the arena of European states, and the means of their preservation were provided by others...Because the security of [European states] came to depend ultimately on the policies of others...unity could effectively be worked for' (Waltz 1979: 70-71; cf. Rynning 2005: 19; Hyde-Price 2006: 225).

While arguably no 'immediate cause' of European integration, American hegemony has offered the international geopolitical context necessary for European unification to become possible, and thus is its 'permissive cause' (Waltz 1959). During both the Cold War and the age of terrorism, European states as 'consumers' of American security have had little reason for worrying in this regard (Mearsheimer 2003: 381; Waltz 2004: 5), so that the European integrative project – with its economic welfare and generous system of welfare provision – has become a constant possibility. Since the arrival of a unipolar world after 1990, the EU has given more attention to a security and defense policy due to the US being a less reliable security partner for its decreased security interest in Europe and increased freedom of action. Yet, in the presence of American hegemony, the absence of a common or internal hegemonic enemy, and the necessity of member states' agreement, the attempts concerned have been rather modest and sluggish, anything but fundamental or radical (Waltz 2000: 30-32; Hyde-Price 2006: 228-231). A long-term security consumer, then, the EU has been able to create the world's largest integrated economic zone.[2] With its economic power widely regarded as the centerpiece of its international power (Wright 2011: 20), the EU possesses great capacity to contribute to global justice, which is a first reason to think that it should do much in order to become higher prudent and be morally justified.

But the EU does not only have such substantial 'positive' duties to meet. A second reason for believing that a strong effort is required lies in its historical violation of 'negative' duties. Notably its creation of a common agricultural policy should be recalled (Blair 2010: 33-37). While the now rich EU countries collectively have come to give more to development cooperation than the rest of the world taken together, this effort does not offset the external effects of the common agricultural policy of which the export subsidies 'are widely seen as serving the rich at the expense of the poor' (Risse 2012: 263): 'In 2000, the EU provided \$913 for each cow and \$8 to each Sub-Saharan African' (Wolf 2004, quoted in Risse 2012: 263). The EU's export subsidies, large as they are, directly harm producers abroad by lowering world market prices and indirectly may 'also harm consumers in those countries by undermining their chances of working for such producers, and so by negatively affecting their job prospects' (Risse 2012: 263). Thus, since the EU conflicts with global justice in a corrective (cf. Pogge 2002) as well as a distributive (cf. Beitz 1999) sense, this supranational entity should make a very strong sacrificial effort to achieve moral justification.

The EU's current and future leaders should start showing that they value global justice more than survival of the EU as an organization. Going beyond lower prudence towards higher prudence does not mean that the EU will 'indulge in quixotic moral crusades – with the attendant risk of hubris leading to nemesis', although it does mean that it will surpass a 'modest...Weberian [ethics of] prudence, skepticism and reciprocity' (against Hyde-Price 2008: 29). Again, it is the primary, lower prudence task of the member states and their NATO alliance to take care of their own security,[3] with the EU in a supportive role at best (cf. Wright 2011: 27). The primary task of the EU as a supranational organization is to demonstrate higher prudence courage and risk its own survival for the sake of global justice, up to the point where prudence lapses into utopianism. Realists rightly emphasize the role of power, disagreement, and conflict in politics, rather than harmony and consensus as emphasized by liberals (McQueen 2016: 3). Yet it is not enough to say that the EU should promote 'a series of normative principles that are generally acknowledged, within the United Nations system, to be universally applicable...[such as]...sustainable peace, freedom,



democracy, human rights, rule of law, equality, social solidarity, sustainable development and good governance', and do so by 'living by example', carrying out 'reasonable' actions, and 'doing least harm' (Manners 2008: 46, cf. 47-59). Rather than just considering 'the merits of EU aid and trade', 'encouraging local ownership and practicing positive conditionality', and going on by 'doing least harm' (Manners 2008: 58-59, quotations 59), European leaders should directly address the EU's protectionism, notably its resources-consuming common agricultural policy with its subsidies, and acknowledge the EU's historical violation of negative duties of global justice and its duty to stop this policy and compensate for the harm done.[4] Moreover, they should acknowledge that the EU's internal welfare creation and solidarity is at odds with positive duties of justice within a global capitalist economy. The major issues recently put on the agenda of international ethics are gross human rights violations, deep poverty, and climate change. Indeed, if there is one item on the international agenda that raises truly global practical-ethical questions and thus justifies taking risks concerning EU survival, it is global climate change, because that potentially affects every person on the planet.

Overall, under current circumstances, higher prudence would, first, require the EU to find ways to permanently and fruitfully transfer a substantial part of the (added) economic benefits of economic integration to the global poor. The burdens involved should be distributed fairly over member states and their citizens according to criteria such as historically acquired benefits, historical involvement in harm done, and ability to pay. Second, higher prudence would expect EU leaders to cooperate with other leaders to transform international institutions such as the financial, trade, and climate regimes in such a way that they distribute goods and services more fairly globally (Beitz 1999: 215-216; cf. Rawls 1999: 105-120).

### **The moral tragedy of a lower prudent European superstate**

Critics of the above arguments may want to object that my conclusions are too quick for assuming a naïve and obsolete picture of the world in which the US will simply continue to safeguard European security. Perhaps, in a world dominated by Donald Trump's America and Vladimir Putin's Russia, the EU should choose to try to finally overcome its security dependence on the US by becoming a superpower itself by using its resources to change into a self-securing, unitarily-integrated sovereign state (Morgan 2005a, 2005b: 205-207; cf. Waltz 2000: 30-33). In other words, 'America first' and 'Russia first' now require a strong 'Europe first'. But, fourth, I argue that for the EU to transform itself into a sovereign, 'lower prudent' European state would tragically imply the moral failure of the European integration project. That project would then give in to realist theory and suffer from serious moral loss.

Influenced by Bull's 'international society' and by realist theory, Morgan (2005a, 2005b) argues that, while during the Cold War Europeans' security was safeguarded by the US, their post-Cold War problem is that the hegemonic US can pursue aggressive, unilateralist foreign policies. Europeans face three dangers: (i) US overestimation of third party threats to its own and its allies' security (cf. the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq); (ii) US underestimation of threats to its allies' security (if the US shifted from interventionism to isolationism); and (iii) being kept fully dependent militarily on the US and thereby deprived of the security-crucial ability to elect and remove a government that represents their political agency. A Europe of nation-states cannot eliminate such dangers, because these states are too weak to operate independently in an environment dominated by the US, Russia, and China. However, Morgan argues, the vulnerabilities could be remedied by a more politically integrated Europe that managed its own foreign and defense policy. Europeans should create a relatively unitary, sovereign state (Morgan 2005b: 204, 2005a): a 'United States of Europe' with a centralized (federal) government and strong military system that qualifies as a superpower, no matter how impractical this may seem at present (Morgan 2005b: 200, 205-206, 2005a). Thus, Morgan proclaims a European superstate that will feature lower prudence at best.

Morgan's argument implies a European polity that could no longer be called 'supranational'. Thus, the EU could only become a European superstate through a process of transformation. Arguably, the EU's 2016 Global Strategy (EUGS), which underlines the security interests of EU citizens, could be seen as a step in Morgan's direction. Observing that an increasingly fragile world puts the EU under threat, the EUGS recommends an EU defense industry and effort to guarantee security, since soft power suffices no longer and the member states each lack the capacities to tackle these issues alone (EU 2016). Thus, increasing military means at the EU level would bring the EU closer to a not-so-'normative' but regular, albeit larger-scale, state and correspond to power politics (Whitman 2013: 180-182; Manners 2006: 183, 194-195; Diez 2005: 635) and lower prudence.[5] But as a *non*-superstate the EU is inherently unable to operate state-like and deploy military capabilities for safeguarding international security (Wright 2011: 11-12) and act in a consistently lower prudence manner. Economic integration and a soft power focus on peace, cooperation, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are the enemy of European military strength; actually, the EU's very existence is based on the rejection of power politics and military dominance (Kagan 2004: 65; Wright 2011: 15-16; Manners 2002: 253, 241-242). And again, considering the primacy of NATO and the security capabilities of individual member

states, any EU security role will be complementary at most (Wright 2011: 27). Therefore, Morgan's 'post-NATO' European superstate would be something very different from the EU with its post-Hobbesian, soft power-oriented, pluralist, and hybrid nature.

However, for the supranational EU to convert into a lower prudent European superstate, even if rational strategically, would be a step backwards morally. Thus, first, the EU's assets include soft power, '[c]onstitutional tolerance, mutual respect for national regulatory traditions and political cultures, and constructive cooperation', certainly not 'standardization and unification' (Neyer 2012: 24). As Manners notes, 'we have built the EU precisely to *escape* great power mentality' (2006: 183, emphasis added, cf. 182), so we should not transform the EU into a (nineteenth-century) great power (2006: 193-194). As Tim Dunne puts it: 'A United States of Europe that articulates a militarized hegemonic identity...would be a Europe that had passed up its historic second chance' (2008: 15). Second, more fundamentally, direct moral objections against Morgan's lower prudent idea of a sovereign rather than post-sovereign Europe must be raised. As Lynn Dobson (2006: 519-523) insists, Morgan's appeal to security for Europeans to be assured by a regional superstate is insufficient in its partiality. Again, Morgan's superstate idea results from an unduly limited democratic standard against which I objected in the introduction. It is not just that the superstate is problematic realistically-practically and that the very purpose of the EU has been to overcome state egoism. Ultimately, when justification relates to supranational organizations, the presumption should favor impartial, not partial, justification and therefore include, at least to a significant extent, the rights and interests of non-Europeans. Thus, it would be morally dubious for Europeans to secure their freedom only by adding to others' unfreedom (Dobson 2006: 522). And as a superstate, Europe may also come to be seen as threat by others, in contrast to its current state, and so contribute to international insecurity.

Still, Morgan may want to insist: 'Europe must...become a superstate. Those who refuse to accept this conclusion are either deluding themselves or they are prepared to see Europe remain a weak and dependent power' (2005a: 161; cf. Láncozi 2015: 67-68, 124-127, 134-135). However, my point is not that a lower prudent, 'security-based justification of the European project' (Morgan 2005a: 168) makes no sense at all. Rather, it is that such a justification, in Europe or elsewhere, could hardly qualify as *moral*.

Thus, a transformation towards a European superstate would signal the moral defeat of the EU as a *sui generis*, supranational community of concurring states. Indeed, it would be a tragic relapse into lower prudence at best: the original attempt to overcome the egoism of states would end up as a state of collective egoism on a larger scale.

### Conclusion

It is regularly suggested that the EU is in crisis (Beck and Grande 2007). But if the argument of this article has been correct, then to say that this crisis is related to the EU's 'democratic deficit' or its failure to halt nationalism and populist skepticism is misplaced. Rather, the key problem is a focus on the internal context of the European polity without paying sufficient attention to how the EU manifests itself in the global context. Even Neyer, who does incorporate the moral importance of the EU's outward role, is too quick in assuming a justifiability the EU does not (yet) possess. State leadership concerns trusteeship, but supranational EU leadership should involve stewardship. Whereas the state may be justified when it meets the virtue of lower prudence, the EU could be morally justified only if it meets the supranational virtue of higher prudence. While from the perspective of theoretical wisdom the EU's 'justice' is dubious, the EU could still acquire justifiability by attaining higher practical wisdom through the inclusion of global justice considerations up to the point of lapsing into utopianism by fully abandoning its collective-egoist focus. Hopefully, the EU will indeed achieve stewardship as still the world's only true supranational body. Alternatively, if the EU chose the self-security path of altering itself into a superstate, it would display a morally failed attempt to overcome the state's lower prudence.

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### Notes

- [1] The accounts of 'prudence' in the present and subsequent sections make use of earlier ones (see Kamminga 2008, 2016).
- [2] The passage containing the Waltz quotation and the present paragraph up to this note draws on earlier ones (see Kamminga 2007, 2013: 16).
- [3] States may not act wisely if they adopted Cochran's advice that 'the prudent steward...might urge his nation to take the risk of cutting arms spending before its adversary does' (Cochran 1983: 198, 2014: 123).
- [4] To defend a 'cosmopolitan Europe' that basically requires the EU to develop more sensibility to openness, plurality, and difference (Beck and Grande 2007) is insufficient for not clearly transcending lower prudence.
- [5] Of course, it remains to be seen whether (all 28, or 27) member states will want to transfer sovereignty in this area.

## Information

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