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### ***Institutional Foundations and Legal Nature of the European Union: Reflections and Perspectives***

In a speech delivered on September 12, 2012, José Barroso told the European Parliament that the only way to address the major economic and social challenges facing the Continent was through a new «decisive Pact for Europe». Such a pact, he argued, would enable the Union to project itself – along with its core *principles* and *prosperity* – into the future of an increasingly globalized world.

Barroso's remarks implicitly reflect how, in just six decades, the process of European integration has endowed the Union with an institutional architecture capable of dynamically adapting to emerging challenges. This integrative process remains in constant evolution, prompting jurists, historians, and political scientists to interrogate its foundational principles and legal-institutional character. A particularly relevant aspect of this debate concerns the Union's classification: while its founding treaties do not explicitly define it as an «international organization», the Court of Justice has nonetheless conferred such a designation upon it.

This has led some scholars to question whether the European integration process – and indeed the Union itself – should be analysed not through the traditional framework of a «classical» international organization but rather through models that align, at least in part, with the principles of multilevel constitutionalism, characteristic of federal states. A central argument in support of this perspective is the role of the Court of Justice of the European Union, which, through its jurisprudence – dating back as early as the 1960s – has enshrined both the primacy and direct effect of EU law over domestic legal systems.

The first two decades of the 21st century have undoubtedly been tumultuous for the Union. This period began with the failure of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* (following its rejection in France and the Netherlands), and continued with the arduous process leading to the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. Subsequently, the Union faced a succession of crises: the financial and economic downturn that severely impacted the entire continent (most notably Greece), the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's recent military aggression against Ukraine and the urgency of establishing a European defence strategy, particularly in light of evolving policies of the United States.

In view of these ongoing and future challenges, reconsidering the *legal nature* of the Union and its *foundational principles* is not merely timely but imperative.

The final draft should be submitted to  
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Languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish