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European Security and Defence Forum Workshop

A New European Security Architecture?

Considering a 'European Soft Grand Strategy'

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11 November 2010

This paper was presented at the European Security and Defence Forum (ESDF) organized by Chatham House. Chatham House is not responsible for the content of this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

The following paper wishes to theorize about the possibility of a “European Grand Strategy”. The concept “grand strategy” has been applied extensively by academic literature to US foreign and security policy. Only recently has it been used in a European context in order to describe the goals of the EU.¹ This paper wishes to contribute to that literature by focusing on two key questions:

- Is it possible to apply the concept of grand strategy to the EU made of 27 different member states?
- What would such a strategy look like, if it was possible to define one

These two central issues are in close connection to the thesis of the paper. It proposes that, although it is impossible to talk of a grand strategy in a classical sense due to lack of necessary European means, it is possible however, to talk of a “European Grand Strategy” in an unconventional sense. Thus, the thesis of the paper reads as follows: *the “European Grand Strategy” is the strategy of aiming to influence other international players (mainly in its neighbourhood) through soft policy tools.* Thus, what the EU is developing – mostly unconsciously – is a “soft grand strategy”.

The paper therefore introduces the distinction between the traditional and the novel approach to grand strategy. The difference between the two is based on distinguishing between hard and soft power. I define soft power – a concept mostly attributed to Joseph S. Nye² - to cover capabilities not of a military nature. Based on this distinction, I attempt to introduce the concept of “soft grand strategy” – the pursuit of certain goals by means other than military and traditional. Thus, “hard grand strategy” refers to the use of all means available to a (great) power including military, economic, social and

¹ See: Pascal Vennesson: 'Europe's Grand Strategy: The Search for a Postmodern Realism' pp. 12-26. In: Casarini, Nicola; Musu, Constanza (eds.): *European Foreign Policy in an Evolving International System. The Road Towards Convergence.* (Basingstoke; New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.); Also: 'Beyond 2010. European Grand Strategy in a Global Age', The Venusberg Group. Bertelsmann Stiftung, Guetersloh, July' 2007. http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2007/2007_Venusberg_Beyond_2010.pdf Accessed: 22.10.2010.; Also: European Union: Grand Strategy, Normative Power and Military Policy', Interview with James Rogers by Leonhardt von Efferink. April 2010. Exploring Geopolitics. http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Interview_Rogers_James_European_Union_grand_strategy_Normative_Civilian_Power_Military_Foreign_Policy_Threats_Human_Security_Top_Down_Bottom_Up_Process.html Accessed: 22.10.2010.; etc.

² It is important to highlight that according to the concept of Nye, hard power is not necessarily only of a military nature. In my definition, however, I define hard power as the possession of military capabilities. Therefore, only a hard capability, such as a standing army could be considered a source of hard power. See: Joseph S. Nye: *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of*

cultural policies – as in the case of the US for example. In this comparative perspective US national strategies are a good example of hard, and therefore traditional grand strategies.

The explanation of the thesis requires a definition of what (un)conventional means when discussing grand strategy. Any discussion of grand strategy should be based upon a sound definition of the concept and the methodology used throughout the paper should also be clear. Thus, the paper will continue with a chapter on definitions and methodology. Following that, the paper will take a look at the empirical dimension based on the methodology to see if one can identify a “European Grand Strategy”. The work concludes by summarizing the main findings based on the following analysis.

1. THEORETICAL BASIS: DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

There is an abundance of literature on this matter and there is no consensus on a single definition of grand strategy. Since it has already been discussed extensively elsewhere, instead of going in to the endless details of this debate, I will choose one definition that I will stick to throughout the rest of the paper.³ It is essential to point out that theorizing about grand strategy means theorizing about security and international affairs – the paper wishes to use the concept in this sense. The definition I chose is a combination of the definition used by Paul Kennedy⁴ and the one John Lewis Gaddis uses for 'strategy'⁵:

grand strategy is the practice of relating ends to means by using all the military and non-military tools available to a political entity in order to preserve and enhance its long-term best interests.

Of course, such a definition has to take into account the special feature of the EU if the concept is to be applied to it, namely, the fact that the EU is not a nation state. Hence the "political entity" part of the definition. It is also a broad definition – it feeds all dimensions of international political power into the ends-means equation. It is important to note that conceptualizing a grand strategy is essentially about theorizing in the field of security. Although grand strategy is defined here to be a strategy which uses capabilities of all kinds – political, economic, military, etc. - but in order to underpin the long term security of the given polity. The above definition will be used as a basis for introducing modified versions of the concept.

As for methodology, I will follow the logic introduced by Terry L. Deibel who proposes a three-stage process for devising strategy⁶:

1. **Assess:** The first step is to examine both the international and domestic contexts of a possible national foreign affairs strategy.⁷

3 For an excellent collection of definitions of strategy see: Deibel, Terry L.: Foreign Affairs strategy. Logic for American Statecraft. (Cambridge; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007) "Appendix A", pp. 415-422.; Also: Liddell Hart, B. H.: Strategy (New York, Meridian, 1991 – 2nd., revised edition). Also: Kennedy, Paul: Grand Strategies in War and Peace (New Haven; London, Yale University Press, 1991) p. 5. Also: Gaddis, John Lewis: Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy (New York; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982) p. viii.; Also: Art, Robert J.: A Grand Strategy for America (Ithaca, London; Cornell University Press, 2009). pp. 1-2., etc.

4 Paul Kennedy uses the following definition: "The crux of grand strategy lies therefore in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and nonmilitary, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime and peacetime) best interests." Kennedy: Ibid p. 5.

5 John Lewis Gaddis's well known definition for strategy reads as follows: "By "strategy," I mean quite simply the process by which ends are related to means, intentions to capabilities, objectives to resources." Gaddis: Ibid p. viii.

6 Deibel: Ibid.

7 It is worth noting that Deibel uses this model for planning "Foreign Affairs Strategy" - which is different from grand strategy in the sense I use it in this paper.

2. **Analyze:** The second phase of planning is to analyze the interests and capabilities of the given state.
3. **Plan:** The final step is to relate ends to means to see if they are in balance or not.

Drawing on this model, I will try to provide a brief insight into the international and domestic environment of the EU, I will also attempt to define the nature of European power and see if those two dimensions add up to form a balance between European means and ends.

2. THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE EU

This paper puts forward that as far as the international environment is concerned, there are three main immediate security threats the EU must confront in order of priority:

1. Terrorism
2. Threats to the security of energy supplies
3. Unstable neighbourhood (border security)

This is a far narrower notion of security threats than what is assumed by the 2003 European Security Strategy.⁸ It does not explicitly include organized crime, state failure, proliferation of WMDs, regional conflicts – threats listed in the ESS. These are either incorporated into the above priorities (organized crime as part of an unstable neighbourhood and border security; failed states and regional conflicts as part of the problem of terrorism and an unstable neighbourhood) or are not necessarily immediate threats to the EU – such as the proliferation of WMDs. Threats to the security of energy supplies is not even listed in the ESS – clearly one of the greatest concerns in Europe today. Migration is not included in either the ESS or the above list – the problem of migration in Europe is not one that emerges in a concentrated manner and therefore does not concern each European state. An unstable periphery on the other hand is often viewed by a number of EU member states as the main source of non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, international organized crime and migration.⁹ I therefore argue, that the most pressing problems originate from those three threats. A hypothetical “European Grand Strategy” should be built around focusing on those threats. It needs to be emphasized that this does not mean that the importance of the other threats listed in 2003 ESS (such as the proliferation of WMDs) should be downplayed. This paper only proposes that the above mentioned three threats should be given priority.

8 'A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy', Brussels, 12.12.2003. Council of the European Union. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> Accessed: 22.10.2010.

9 The significance of the European neighbourhood from a European foreign and security policy perspective is also suggested by others: “[...] There is a recognition that it is likely to be in the EU's immediate neighbourhood, rather than on the broader international stage, that the EU will have the greatest opportunity to utilize the full range of its instruments, not just economic, but also political and military.” See: Roland Dannreuther: 'Introduction: setting the framework', in: Roland Dannreuther (ed.): *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 2-3.

As far as relations with third parties are concerned, the EU should avoid calling too many of its partnerships with other powers as "strategic." If most of the partnerships are strategic, then most of those will lose significance, when the goal of granting strategic status to some of these partnerships should be the exact opposite. The EU can not have a structure of foreign relations where everyone is a strategic partner, since it risks losing the practical and political advantages of setting up priorities – a key element of strategic thinking. Such partnerships are justified in relation to the US, Russia and China. But granting the importance of strategic nature to countries such as Indonesia and South Korea lacks strategic logic¹⁰, no matter how important those players may be in the present international environment.

The US is important for security, economic and cultural reasons. As far as economic ties are concerned, according to a 2008 assessment, the "EU and the US form the largest bilateral trade partnership in the world" considering the amount of "goods and services combined" and "the US remains the first destination for EU goods."¹¹ 2007 data show that US direct investment in Europe topped 1,5 trillion US dollars. Similarly, European direct investment in the US for the same year amounted to more than 1,4 trillion dollars.¹² Thus, the US and Europe are each other's most important partners in terms of investment.¹³

Russia obviously remains important as a source of European energy. 2007 statistical data prove that the Russian Federation was the most important source of hard coal, crude oil and natural gas imports for the EU 27.¹⁴ This

10 Gálík Zoltán: "A következő felszólaló: az Európai Unió" A közös európai külpolitika első valódi lépései: felszólalási jog az ENSZ-ben, nagyköveti kinevezések és az új stratégiai partnerek. (In Hungarian) [Zoltán Gálík: "The next speaker: The European Union" The first real measures of European foreign policy: rights to speak at the UN, appointment of new ambassadors and new strategic partnerships'] – Short Analysis, 2010/16, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs. <http://www.hiia.hu/index.php?menu=26&gyors=2051> Accessed: 22.10.2010. See also: Biscop, Sven; Thomas, Renard: 'EU's strategic partnerships lack content' 27.08.2009 EU Observer <http://euobserver.com/884/28584> Accessed: 22.10.2010.

11 'Global Partners: EU-US Trade and Investment' – Brno, 10 June, 2008. Global Europe. Trade-European Commission. http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2008/june/tradoc_139108.pdf Accessed: 28.10.2010. p. 1.

12 Bloodgood, Laura: 'Inbound and Outbound U.S. Foreign Direct Investment', 2000-2007. Journal of International Commerce and Economics, Vol. 2, August 2009, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CD-10-220/EN/KS-CD-10-220-EN.PDF http://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/journals/inbound_outbound_fdius.pdf Accessed: 28.10.2010. p. 8. (Figure 4.)

13 According to data on foreign direct investment inward stocks from the end of 2007, the most significant amount of outside investment in the EU 27 came from the North American region representing some 48.8% of the total sum. Also, when looking at the same data one finds that most of the FDI from the EU 27 went to the North American region amounting to 37,2% of the total. See: 'Europe in figures', Eurostat yearbook 2010. European Commission Figure 1.28 and 1.29 on foreign direct investment, p. 142. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CD-10-220/EN/KS-CD-10-220-EN.PDF Accessed: 28.10.2010.

14 For 2007 the share of Russian hard coal, crude oil and natural gas imports amounted to 22.6%, 30.3% and 30.7 respectively. These were the largest shares in European energy imports in all three categories. See: 'Main origin of primary energy imports, EU-27, 2000-2007 (% of extra EU imports)', Eurostat. European Commission.

relationship has a distinct interdependent nature: not only does the EU depend on Russian energy imports, but many tend to forget that Russia depends on European energy markets as well.

China is a trading great power and the most important trading partner of the EU. It is the largest source of European imports representing almost 18% of total EU imports in 2009. It is also the third most important destination for EU goods exports.¹⁵

To term the relationship with these entities as "strategic", therefore, is justified. However, it is hard to see that significance in relation to other countries where the EU has granted this status recently.

Moving on to the domestic arena, one has to consider two factors: internal divisions within the EU and public opinion on matters related to CFSP, ESDP and EU foreign relations in general. The first one is important because no coherent grand strategy is worth even discussing if there are internal divisions within the particular political entity that is aiming to formulate such a strategy. This paper argues that no "traditional grand strategy"¹⁶ is possible in the EU due to the diverging interests on specific issues. Take for example the relations with Russia. States will not be able to agree on the importance of such relations, since Poland and the Baltic states, for example, have a very different view of Russia than Germany does. European countries take different views on the Nabucco project. European countries would not agree on how much support Europe should provide to the US in the international arena. Applying a traditional approach, the EU will not be able to come up with a coherent set of ideas which are supported equally by all of the EU 27.

Considering the issue of public opinion, Eurobarometers since the mid-1990s show that the European public supports both ESDP (around 70-75%) and CFSP (63-67%).¹⁷ In the autumn of 2006, the support for a common security and defence policy among then EU members stood at 75%. These data seem to show an even stronger support in the case of new member states.¹⁸ It is also worth noting, that the "EU remains the most popular entity to decide on European defence policy" - even more popular than NATO in this respect. The idea of a common foreign policy was supported by 68% in the autumn of

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:Main_origin_of_primary_energy_imports,_EU-27,_2000-2007_%28%25_of_extra_EU-27_imports%29.PNG&filetimestamp=20100503141336 Accessed: 28.10.2010.

¹⁵ See: 'EU trade in the world. Statistics-Bilateral Relations-Trade-European Commission' <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/statistics/> Accessed: 28.10.2010

¹⁶ The paper will elaborate on this concept in the conclusion.

¹⁷ Pascal Vennesson: *Ibid* p. 13.

¹⁸ This obviously refers to the 10 new members that joined in 2004.

2006.¹⁹ Thus, public support for EU action in the field of foreign and security policy is clearly supported. One should also note, however, that such assessments are not necessarily representative in all aspects. Furthermore, when European citizens are asked about what issues the EU should focus on, they tend to answer that the fight against unemployment, poverty reduction and social exclusion should be given priority.²⁰ Still, strong support for ESDP and CFSP indicates that efforts in the field of foreign and security policy, and thus formulating a "European Grand Strategy" is not out of touch with reality.

This shows that although there is a lack of consensus on external relations of the EU due to internal division, public support remains strong for ESDP and CFSP. Despite the latter, the domestic context is not fully promising for a traditionally formulated grand strategy.

19 See: 'Eurobarometer 66. Public Opinion in the European Union.' September 2007. European Commission. pp. 178-185. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.pdf Accessed: 28.10.2010.

20 The results of Eurobarometer 65 are cited by the Venusberg Group in its study on a European grand strategy: The Venusberg Group: Ibid. p. 38. http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2007/2007_Venusberg_Beyond_2010.pdf Accessed: 22.10.2010

3. EUROPEAN CAPABILITIES

It is conventional wisdom, that the EU 27 are behind in terms of military spending in a comparative perspective. According to 2008 data, the US²¹ spent an astonishing 696.3 billion US dollars on defence²², while the EU 26²³ approximately spent 278 billion US dollars in the same year.²⁴ The difference is even larger in a proportionate sense. The US has a 310 million population,²⁵ while the EU 27 has around 500 million inhabitants.²⁶ In terms of GDP both entities have approximately the same size economy, thus, it is only the difference in population and defence spending, which one would have to consider when comparing the two players.²⁷ By relating population numbers to defense spending, proportionately the EU would have to spend some 840 billion more in US dollars.²⁸ In light of the present world financial crisis and also the fact that a significant amount of Europeans think that social and economic matters should be priorities, it is hard to see how the EU could fill that gap.

After having taken a look at quantitative factors, one should not forget about the qualitative dimension either. Boosting EU defense spending would not be enough by itself – the EU should also develop a joint structure for defense budgeting and military integration. In short, catching up with the US would

21 I compare the EU to the US since the latter is still the sole “super power” in the international arena. It may seem too demanding from an EU perspective to set US standards as benchmarks for the EU. Nonetheless, the concept of grand strategy is mostly applied to the US – a traditional great power with all the necessary means to develop a grand strategy. Thus, this approach can be justified methodologically.

22 'U.S. vs. Global Defense Spending', May 21, 2010. The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/policy/securityspending/articles/US_vs_Global/29.10.2010.

23 The figure is only for the EU 26, since Denmark was not included. See: 'Defence Data 2008', European Defence Agency, 01.29.2010. p. 1. <http://www.eda.europa.eu/defencefacts/default.aspx> Accessed: 29.10.2008.

24 Ibid, pp. 2-3 The figures were given in Euro, thus I converted the sum into dollars using “Universal Currency Converter” at www.xe.com. (See: <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi?Amount=1&From=EUR&To=USD&image.x=47&image.y=15&image=Submit>) According to the converter 1 euro was worth 1.39093 US dollars at the time. Using that exchange rate, 200 billion euros equal 278 billion US dollars. The figure was rounded to simplify calculation.

25 See: 'US Census Bureau-US & World Population Clocks' 29.10.2010. <http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html> Accessed: 29.10.2010.

26 Monica Marcu: 'The EU-27 population continues to grow. Population statistics in Europe 2008: first results', 31/2009 Population and Social Conditions. p. 1. Figure 1. Eurostat - Data in focus. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-09-031/EN/KS-QA-09-031-EN.PDF Accessed: 29.10.2010.

27 US GDP (calculated by the method of purchasing power parity) was \$ 14.14 trillion in 2009, the same figure for the EU was \$ 14.43 trillion for 2009. Economy-United States-CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>; Economy-European Union-CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html> Both accessed: 29.10.2010.

28 The sum is a result of the following simple calculation: $696,3/310=2,25$ for the US, while in the case of Europe the equation looks like this: $278/500=0,56$. Thus, US defence spending is proportionately 4,02 times larger than that of the EU 26. The EU therefore would have to spend $4,02*278=1117,56$ billion US dollars to level the US advantage and it would have to increase its spending by some 839,56 billion US dollars to reach US levels of defense spending. (Figures used were rounded.) Of course, all of this is meant in a relative sense. If one considers absolute figures, the EU would still be far behind the US – but the difference would not be as large as suggested by the calculation above.

demand a standing army, which can only be a result of a full fledged European political union – a scenario not likely in the near future. This is to prove that the EU does not stand a real chance at developing original (hard) military capabilities in the near future.

As far as other capabilities are concerned, however, the EU has significant soft capabilities. First of all it is one of the largest trading powers in the world. It is the largest exporter of goods with the value of exports amounting to 1094 billion euros in 2009. It is also the largest importer of goods – European imports reached 1200 billion euros the same year.²⁹ Considering official development assistance (ODA) data, the EU is the largest donor in the world.³⁰ It has a number of initiatives – such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and cooperation with countries of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific region for example not to mention further initiatives designed for the Mediterranean.³¹ Due to its economic significance, the EU is deeply embedded in the world economy and thus, it can exercise considerable leverage over various actors of the international system. It uses a carrot and stick approach by setting standards for partners. These partners are encouraged to transform to become more “EU-like.” Economic and trade relations are used as a way to encourage partners to embrace European values such as free trade, rule of law, democracy, etc. Only those partners stand a chance of being provided additional privileges, which are willing to share European values. The European Neighbourhood Policy is an excellent example of this.³²

Moving on to other sources of leverage it is worth studying the nature of CFSP and CSDP. This paper considers CFSP and CSDP to be part of soft capabilities.³³ In this context only a standing European army ready to be deployed at short notice could count as a source of hard power. CFSP and

29 'A new Eurostat publication on the EU and the G-20', 20.10.2010. Eurostat newsrelease p. 3. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/1-20102010-AP/EN/1-20102010-AP-EN.PDF 29.10.2010.

30 EU ODA amounted to 49 billion euros in 2009. See: 'Financing for Development - Annual progress report 2010, Getting back on track to reach the EU 2015 target on ODA spending?' p. 14. Commission Staff Working Document. 21.04.2010. Brussels, European Commission. http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/SEC_2010_0420_COM_2010_0159_EN.PDF Accessed: 30.10.2010.

31 See: Erzsébet N. Rózsa: 'From Barcelona to the Union for the Mediterranean: Northern and Southern Shore Dimensions of the Partnership', HIIA Papers. Series of the Hungarian Institute for International Affairs. 2010/9 www.kulugyiintezet.hu/letoltes.php?letolt=10111 Accessed: 31.10.2010

32 The official homepage of the ENP states that “The level of ambition of the relationship depends on the extent to which these values are shared.” meaning that embracing European values is the basis for additional privileges provided by the EU. 'The Policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?' European Neighbourhood Policy-European Commission. http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm 29.10.2010.

33 This is not to say that the EU does not have military capabilities – it obviously does, however, it is not enough to make Europe be seen as a great power. For a summary on European military

CSDP are both designed for the so called Petersberg tasks, namely peacekeeping, humanitarian and rescue operations and crisis management.³⁴ Those capabilities are important tools, nonetheless, they are not enough to provide the EU with the leverage stemming from the ability to threaten with the use of force.

The threat of the use of force provides credibility to political resolve in various international political situations.³⁵ This is to say, that a hard (or traditional) grand strategy would require such hard powers and capabilities. Since the EU does not possess those, it can only develop a non-traditional grand strategy, one that is focused purely on soft means.

The "means side" of the strategic equation shows that the EU is not capable of behaving as a traditional great power, such as the US. It does have, however, significant soft leverage over international partners, especially in the neighbourhood of the EU, which could be a basis for a comprehensive strategic framework.

capabilities see: Karen E. Smith: *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008) pp. 72-73

34 See: Fabrizio Pagani: 'A New Gear in the CFSP Machinery: Integration of the Petersberg Tasks in the Treaty on European Union', *European Journal of International Law* Vol. 9. No. 4. (1998) p. 738. <http://www.ejil.org/pdfs/9/4/695.pdf> Accessed: 30.10.2010.

35 This view, in fact, is held by the realist tradition of foreign policy. A well known advocate of linking diplomacy to the threat of the use of force in order to make the former more effective is former US national security adviser Henry Kissinger. See: Henry Kissinger: *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957)

4. RELATING ENDS TO MEANS

Having examined the means side, one has to look at what sort of ends are justified by the means. Ironically, none of the three main threats mentioned in the second chapter (terrorism, threats to the security of energy supplies, an unstable neighbourhood and border security) can be handled through the traditional approach to security – all of those require a set of tools to be combined according to a certain logic. Most of them are not of a military nature. This also requires a more novel approach to security – the sectoral concept of security namely, promoted by Barry Buzan.³⁶ Thus, military and hard power alone are not enough to tackle those threats – other sectors of security will need other tools.

Therefore, the conclusion one may come to is that although the EU does not have hard military capabilities, *it does not necessarily need such means to provide for its own security against the most pressing threats.* If the EU focuses on ends more modest than suggested by the ESS, and cutting back on strategic goals, the EU could guarantee its own security more effectively. This also means that the ESS is not considered to be a sound basis for a “European Grand Strategy” by this paper. It is too comprehensive, and instead of choosing ends that are justified by the means it endorses strategic goals that are not necessarily viable for a polity with mostly soft policy tools.

The ESS sounds as if it was written for a traditional great power, when in fact the EU is not a traditional great power. Does this logic suggest that the EU should put aside its great power aspirations? *This paper argues that it should, but that does not mean that the EU ought to withdraw from strategically important regions, nor does this idea propose European isolationism.* The concept, however, is based on a more sober view of European opportunities. Creating capabilities similar to that of the US for example is not a viable scenario. *However, the EU can secure itself without actually being a traditional great power.* This means that the goal to transform the “economic giant and political dwarf” into both a “political and economic giant” would have to be given up and reserved for a distant and more suitable time to develop such capabilities.

In the meantime the EU should focus on the strategy of transformation. In the past decades the EU has been very adept at pushing international actors to embrace European ideas and values.³⁷ It also had an important role in

³⁶ See: Buzan, Barry: *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998)

³⁷ Keukeleire and Macnaughtan point out that the EU has been pursuing this policy of transformation (they use the term 'structural foreign policy') in the case of some countries for

transforming Turkey³⁸ and East-Central Europe.³⁹ Thus, the EU already has a grand strategy – it just has not been realized so far by so many. As mentioned earlier, the most important policy initiative in this respect is the European Neighbourhood Policy. This transformative effort can be pursued without hard political power and tools. This approach implies economic and trade policy tools, the promotion of various ideas and values – all of which are possible without possessing hard power. Transformation is a slow process – it could take decades to bear fruit. Thus, it does not produce immediate results as traditional diplomatic efforts would. It is also more costly in many respect, due to its long term nature. If it is successful, however, it does foster genuine political change in target countries.

The most important benefit that comes with such an approach is that it is not likely to create further dividing lines between EU member states. Stronger and closer relations with Russia or the US will generate friction between members, because they have diverging interests. To the contrary, it is quite likely, that every member would support a more European-like, more democratic and more stable neighbourhood.

It is just as important to note, that forcing great powers to transform can not be part of a “European Grand Strategy”. Since the EU is not a traditional great power, it does not have the capabilities necessary to force Russia or China for example to transform and become more democratic. This would create additional conflicts with those partners. The grand strategy of transformation can only be applied in the European neighbourhood and in countries over which the EU has significant economic leverage. This reinforces the need for a narrower view of European interests and ambitions. Such a view can still guarantee a secure Europe, without the prospect of turning the EU into a traditional great power – an enterprise bound to fail in the present phase of EU integration.

Since forcing the transformation of China and Russia could backfire, the EU should strive to maintain good relations with those entities on the basis of pragmatism. In the case of these three partners this requires walking a very fine line between the interests of individual EU member states and European

quite a long time now. 'Structural foreign policy' in their concept refers to the influencing of "sustainable political, legal, socio-economic, security and mental structures." This is quite similar to what this paper refers to as 'transformation.' See: Stephan Keukeleire and Jennifer MacNaughtan: *The Foreign Policy of the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) pp. 25. See also the chapter on 'The Main Areas of EU Foreign Policy': Ibid pp. 255-297
38 See: Gilles Dorronsoro: 'The EU and Turkey: Between geopolitics and social engineering', pp. 48-61. In: Roland Dannreuther (ed.): *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy*, (London: Routledge, 2004)

interests. In essence, it is an effort to find the “lowest common denominator” between European and member state interests.

The concluding chapter will elaborate on both the political and theoretical implications of a possible soft grand strategy for Europe.

39 See: Pál Dunay: 'Strategy with fast-moving targets: East-Central Europe', pp. 27-47. In: Roland Dannreuther (ed.): *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy*, (London: Routledge, 2004)

5. CONCLUSION – THE CASE FOR A “EUROPEAN SOFT GRAND STRATEGY”

This paper focused on two questions: A.) is it possible to apply the concept of grand strategy to the EU, B.) and if it is, what would such a strategy look like?

I put forward that it is possible to apply the concept of grand strategy to the EU but I also argued that it has to be modified in order to make it applicable. It makes sense to apply the concept to the US, a nation state that has all the political tools, hard and soft alike, to carry out a full fledged grand strategy. In case of the EU, only a soft grand strategy is a viable answer to strategic challenges since *only such an approach is justified by the means*. This paper underlined that the EU is far from achieving “strategic parity” with a great power as the US. Instead of focusing on how to become a “political giant”, it should focus on its own security first. This can be reached through concentrating more intensively on initiatives that could transform its immediate neighbourhood. In fact the ENP is proof of the fact, that the EU has realized the importance of such initiatives. This implies a grand strategy of transformation that would include all the political and economic efforts to transform partners of the EU in its immediate neighbourhood. This is essentially a soft policy strategy – one that excludes the use of real military means.

It is absolutely imperative to emphasize that this is a different strategy of transformation than that of the George W. Bush era, often referred to in similar terms.⁴⁰ The Bush doctrine and the so called transformational diplomacy⁴¹ is very different in that it was willing to rely on hard policy tools, namely the use of force in particular. Therefore it is based on the complete opposite view of international political power and its tools.

What would such a strategy exactly look like? Such a consensus would identify terrorism, threats to security of energy supplies, and an unstable neighbourhood as strategic threats. This would not mean, that other threats identified in the ESS should be dismissed, but these three should be given priority in terms of resources and efforts. The top strategic partners would be the US, Russia and China, because of their economic and political importance to the EU.

40 For an excellent analysis on this see: John Lewis Gaddis: 'A Grand Strategy of Transformation', Foreign Policy, No. 133, November-December 2002, pp. 50-57

41 See: Justin Vaïsse: 'Transformational diplomacy', Chaillot Paper No. 103, June 2007. European Union Institute for Security Studies. <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp103.pdf> Accessed: 31.10.2010

How is this “narrower view” of EU interests to be prevented from becoming a type of “new European isolationism”? A more realistic balance of means and ends should not cause the EU to withdraw from the world stage. Instead it should distinguish between spheres of European interests.⁴² The first and most important sphere of interest should be its immediate neighbourhood. This is where the core elements of a “European Soft Grand Strategy” would be implemented. The second sphere would contain its strategic partners – the US, Russia and China. In relation to these states the EU would seek to balance EU and member state interests. In this second sphere there would be clear limits to a “European Soft Grand Strategy of Transformation”. The third sphere would consist of states of relative economic and political importance – such as Japan, South Africa, Israel, etc. The fourth and final category would include third world countries from Asia and Latin America mostly. In this sphere, the interests of the EU are the same as in the first one: trying to transform those countries with soft policy tools (eg. trade policy tools), but due to the great distance the EU is not capable of being as effective as in its immediate neighbourhood. In this final sphere the EU could also identify goals to be reached for moral purposes – namely, the fight against poverty for example.

Of course, CFSP and CSDP efforts would remain, but special emphasis would be added to the neighbourhood of Europe. CSDP missions elsewhere would be limited.

The first sphere of this structure is the terrain of a “European Soft Grand Strategy”. The rest is where the EU seeks to walk a fine line between a number of different interests – therefore it aims to establish relations on a pragmatic basis. Pragmatism does not necessarily contradict efforts to offer help and aid to countries of the final sphere.

The evolution of the concept of strategy led to the emergence of the notion of grand strategy. The way this paper used the concept implies that such a strategy has many dimensions: political, military, economic, etc. Although it has all these dimensions, it serves one purpose: the security and the prosperous future of a given polity. This evolution of strategic thought is perfectly in line with the metamorphosis of the concept of security. The concept of security itself has become multidimensional, multisectoral. Thus, grand strategy and the sectoral view of security are essentially the two sides

⁴² The expression “sphere of interest” should not be understood as it was back in the days of the Cold War, when it was mostly used to refer to the special rights the Soviet Union claimed in Central and Eastern Europe.

of the same coin. This is due to the development of globalization, where most security challenges require multidimensional solutions.

Europe finds itself in an international security environment, where the need for those multidimensional responses make hard security means less useful and valuable than they were before the fall of the Soviet Union. They are but one possible means capable of answering mostly conventional challenges. Most challenges are, however, unconventional. These require a mixture of various different responses. Therefore, the lack of European hard power does not mean that the EU can not answer strategic challenges – quite to the contrary. It means that it can not behave as a great power can and it can not use the threat of the use of force to back up its diplomacy. But it can still secure itself! Any grand strategy should be focused on securing a prosperous future for the given political entity, political prestige should be a second-order priority – even if those two are connected in a way.

There are further important factors which justify the so called soft approach to grand strategy. In one of his short essays, John Lewis Gaddis, one of the most well known doyens on strategic thinking, quotes a line from the famous English poet, Samuel Jackson:

“Depend on it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.”⁴³

Mr. Gaddis uses this line to underline the fact that since the fall of the Soviet Union the nature of security threats have changed. Before that we had a threat that was easy to see and define and it was imminent. Thus, our perceptions forced us to keep our minds focused in order to come up with answers to strategic challenges. That all ended after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the international environment changed and threats all of a sudden were not as clear cut as they were before. Professor Gaddis's paper is mostly concerned with US grand strategy, but his analysis should be applied to Europe as well. Others refer to the same problem as the phenomenon of antagonism, on which every political order is based on. Antagonism meaning the presence of an opponent that is perceived to be hostile. ⁴⁴ This all forces us to think strategically – the pressure that was previously present, however, is gone. We do have threats, but they are not as

43 John Lewis Gaddis: 'What is grand strategy?' p. 1. Duke University Program in American Grand Strategy. <http://www.duke.edu/web/agsp/grandstrategypaper.pdf> Accessed: 31.10.2010.

44 'European Union: Geopolitical and Chronopolitical Ordering', Interview with James Rogers by Leonhardt von Efferink. April 2010. Exploring Geopolitics. April 2010. Exploring Geopolitics. http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Interview_Rogers_James_Discourse_Theory_Ernesto_Laclau_Chantal_Mouffe_Equivalence_Difference_Dislocation_Chronopolitical_Geopolitical_Othering_Structure_Agency.html Accessed: 31.10.2010.

visible and clear cut and so responses to strategic challenges are harder to identify. Traditional approaches will not work anymore and that is why the EU needs to think in terms of non-traditional methods – concepts such as a “European Soft Grand Strategy” based on a narrower view of European interests.

Thus, Brussels is slowly and not necessarily consciously inventing its own concept of European foreign policy – a type of “postmodern realism.”⁴⁵ This is an effort to pursue European interests with acknowledging the fact that the EU at this moment does not possess certain capabilities needed to behave as a traditional realist.⁴⁶ Therefore it is developing its own interpretation of realism by pursuing its interests with tools available.

The above logic does not suggest that the EU should give up on its long term goal of becoming a traditional great power. Instead, for the time being Europe should focus on goals justified by the means and pursue its goal of becoming a more important political factor in the international system in the long run. A more favorable international environment is needed for Europe to further develop its political prestige. Such an environment is characterized by an international economic boom, and “domestically” a solution to social and economic problems within the EU.

In the mean time, the EU has to find a way to think strategically without being pressurized by clearly visible security threats, which “concentrate the mind wonderfully”. A soft grand strategy of transformation, where ends are in balance with means, could be a viable answer to those unconventional threats. It would also make the EU look more credible in the international system. Will the EU make that move? Only future can tell.

⁴⁵ Pascal Vennesson: *Ibid.* p. 26.

⁴⁶ Dorrnsoro notes: “The EU tends to transform societies at its periphery, rather than projecting power in the realist tradition.” Gilles Dorrnsoro: *Ibid.* p. 59.