

## **Soft and hard power in the design of the “Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy”**

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### **Abstract**

The European Communities, founded over 60 years ago, after the end of the dramatic Second World War, were meant to bring peace between Europe’s great powers, by appointing cooperation as the desirable method to resolve issues. For decades, this aim was successfully achieved, the six founding Member States being, in time, joined by other European countries that shared the same ideals of peace, rule of law, social welfare, and were attracted by the development model offered by the Communities. While the geographic expansion of the European Union can be considered as a regular model of soft power use, the continuous thoroughness of the organization can be regarded as a consequence of the strong influence of the European model. The aim of this paper is to analyze the ways in which the European Union is conducting the shift from an iconic soft power to a more involved hard power. In order to achieve this, we will introduce the explanation of the two types of power and the meanings associated with them by various specialists in the International Relations theory and continue by presenting the main provisions of the European Union Global Strategy – key document in the field of foreign and security policy. We will continue by highlighting and debating on Europe’s need for hard power in its strategy, and then present the conclusions on the analysis of the Strategy in this frame.

**Keywords:** *security, European Union, hard power, soft power, policies.*

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### **1. First steps in creating a European security identity**

The struggle for European defense can be traced back to the end of the Second World War, when the Cold War divided Europe in two teams. But, starting from 1917, Europe’s security also depends on the Americans, who interfered in the First World War, but also on the Soviets, whose socialist revolution aimed, at first, for the Western part of Europe, too (Vaisse 2008: p. 28). After 1947, the soviet threat forces the European states to stretch the lines, the Brussels Pact creating, in 1948, the Western European Union. But the Europeans are soon to realize they cannot be protected without help, so the United States take on the task of defending Western Europe, by creating the North Atlantic Organization (Cook, 2017).

Also, created with the aim of controlling the German arming process, the European Defense Community (European Defense Community Treaty 1952: p. 167) turned out to be a fail. On the other hand, the integration process within the European

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Communities was significantly progressing in the economic sector. The exception is represented by General de Gaulle's attempt to build a "European Europe" throughout the Fouchet Plan, and later on within the Elysee Treaty (Vaisse 2008: p. 29), where the military dimensions were obvious.

In 1969, at the Hague Summit, the European Economic Community (EEC) member states discuss the issue of security again, as part of the European political cooperation (Buchwald 2015). But the Tindermans Report, aiming to include the foreign and defense policies among the competences of the EEC is not accepted (Thorn 1976: pp. 130-131). A couple of years later, the Ottawa statement of the Council of the Atlantic Alliance states the absence of an incompatibility between the progresses towards European unity and Europeans' contribution to NATO.

To sum up, until the late years of the Cold War, in the matters of European defense had not been made significant progress, despite the fact that the Single European Act in 1986 (The Single European Act 1986: art. 30) included a formal juridical commitment of political cooperation. The political struggles in Eastern Europe and the Gulf crisis proved that Europe was absent in the international arena. The French president Mitterand and the German chancellor Kohl suggest, in April and December 1990, "defining and creating a common foreign and security policy (CFSP)". This is soon to be put to test by the Yugoslav crisis and by the void created in Eastern Europe by the extinction of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, void soon to be filled by the North-Atlantic Organization.

European defense needs to join the new strategic concept of NATO, that demands creating mobile multinational forces. So, in 1992, a common French and German body of army is being created, presented as the core of a future European army, named Eurocorps, which becomes operational in 1995; it has over 50 000 soldiers (France, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg), staff of Eurofor (Terrestrial rapid action force) and of Euromarfor (naval force). The European Union seemed to be the virtual frame of creating a European defense, towards which even the British started to show interest. After the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), in which the European Policy for Common Security (EPCS) was adopted, the Treaty of Amsterdam (June 1997) brought along the decision to create the High Representative for EPCS, position to be occupied by Javier Solana.

At the summit in Koln (June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 1999), the fifteen Member States expressed their will to accelerate the building of the "European identity for security and defense" and anticipate that, by 2003, the Eurocorps (which took command of the KFOR troops in Kosovo in the spring of 2000) would be transformed in a European quick action troop. In March, 2000, a military committee is being installed in Brussels, as the prefiguration of a future General Headquarters. At last, the meetings in Nice (December, 2000) foresee a permanent structure for security.

The evolution of the European Communities, and, later on, the European Union, in the field of security and defense, displays the attempts made in order to build a common force, able to represent all the member states in these matters. The current "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" brings forward the goals undertaken by the Union in this regard and the policies and instruments meant to be used in achieving them.

## **2. Soft power and hard power in international politics**

The idea of highlighting the differences between soft power and hard power, as well as defining them, was first introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990. Hard power uses tools such as military interventions, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions (Wilson 2008: p. 114) and is usually based on power resources such as armed forces or economic means, which can be counted (Gallarotti 2011: p. 29). The Realists have always considered force, military strength, as the value that determines the power of a state, as Waltz contends, “in international politics force serves, not only as the ultima ratio, but indeed as the first and constant one” (Waltz 1979: p. 113). Nye, on the other hand, defined power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want” (Nye 2008: p. 94), giving way to speculation on the nature or source of this ability. Also, he identifies three ways in which behavior can be shaped: threats of coercion (“sticks”), inducements and payments (“carrots”), and attraction that makes others want what you want (Nye 2008: p. 95).

Regarding soft power, it can be defined as “the capacity to persuade others to do what one wants” (Wilson 2008: p. 114). Nye also argues that this type of force, based merely on persuasion rather than strength, includes phenomena such as attraction and emulation, being usually “associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions”. These can, therefore, be considered the tools for the spread of this kind of power. Other specialists, such as Robert Cooper, draw the attention upon the concept of legitimacy when speaking of soft power (Cooper 2004: p. 173). In his perspective, the actions of the states need to be perceived as legitimate in order to enhance soft power. Such is considered to be the example of the dispersion of American culture within the Eastern bloc during the Cold War, indicating the existence of American soft power, or even the more recent processes of EU enlargement, as indices for soft power possessed by the EU.

However, soft power “is more difficult, because many of its crucial resources are outside the control of governments, and their effects depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audiences” (Nye 2004: p. 1). Furthermore, soft power is also difficult to achieve because it can take a long time for a country to be able to develop adequate soft power capabilities (Nye 2004: p. 5).

## **3. Main provisions of the “Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)”**

The *Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the Area of Security and Defence* issued in November, 2016, state, even in the first paragraph (Council of the European Union 2016: p. 2), the need for a “strong European Union, able to promote peace and guarantee the security of its Member States and citizens. This demands a concerted and cooperative response by the EU and its Member States to address evolving security threats and challenges, making full use of the Treaties. In this respect, the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) provides a shared vision and proposes common action”.

In the understanding given by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and also Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, “global” does not only have a territorial meaning, but it also regards the wide array of instruments and policies included in the Strategy. Therefore, its content designs anti-terrorism policies, development of military capabilities, but also social and economic instruments meant to ensure the security of

the European citizens. In order to achieve all the goals proposed in this document, the European Union needs to bring together both elements of hard and soft power, to match all the various types of threats the current international arena displays.

The “Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy” issued in June 2016 is structured under four main titles, as follows: 1. A Global Strategy to Promote our Citizens’ Interests, 2. The Principles Guiding our External Action, 3. The Priorities of our External Action, and 4. From Vision to Action. The third part of the document brings together the main issues this Strategy is meant to address, including: The Security of Our Union, State and Societal Resilience to our East and South, An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises, Cooperative Regional Orders and Global Governance for the 21st Century.

The first title, “*A global Strategy to promote our citizens’ interests*”, advances the idea that the principles and values of the European Union go hand in hand. Furthermore, it is stated that “peace and security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based global order are the vital interests” (EUGS 2016: p. 13) underpinning the external actions of the European Union. This way, the main policy interests in the field of civilian security are included in the foreign relations agenda. These desiderata of peace, security, prosperity and democracy, meant to support the welfare of the European citizens, are common ground to all the Member States, as expressed by the idea that “as a Union of medium-to-small sized countries, we have a shared European interest in facing the world together” (EUGS 2016: p. 15).

The second chapter of the Strategy, “*The Principles Guiding our External Action*”, enhances the very nature of this document, arguing that “Principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead”. Even from the signing of the Brussels Treaty back in March, 1948, the same fundamental values of the Western society worth defending are stated: human rights, the democratic principles and freedoms (Sauron 2010: p. 30). The principles that the current Strategy refers to are: unity, engagement, responsibility, partnership, each of them standing as common fundamental values of the Member States. Unity is regarded as the foundation of the European construction, both in purposes and in actions, across Member States and between institutions. Regarding the engagement in all external affairs, the European Union is demanded to take part in the international decision process, tackling issues such as international migration, the terrorist threat, global value chains, in order to turn them into opportunities. Responsibility is another one of the guidelines for the common foreign activity, setting out the need for Europe to engage in solving international crises, by enforcing the rule of law and human rights. In the matter of partnership, the EUGS highlights the need for the European institutions and representatives to cooperate with international partners, including states, companies, international organizations, in order to set and achieve common goals.

Following these principles, the third title of the Strategy, *The Priorities of our External Action*, sets five main priorities for the future actions of the EU: the Security of Our Union, State and Societal Resilience to our East and South, An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises, Cooperative Regional Orders and Global Governance for the 21st Century.

The first priority, ensuring the security of the European Union, sets its grounds on the achievements of the previous years, aiming to “strengthen ourselves on security and defence in full compliance with human rights and the rule of law” (EUGS 2016: p. 19). Furthermore, this priority is intended to be responded by five lines of action. The

first one, Security and defence, includes deterrence, protection and quick response to all possible kind of external threats, recalling the EU-NATO strategic partnership but also the need to strengthen the security community. The second line of action regards the Counter-terrorism, identifying as the core of this battle the need for the EU to live up to its values internally and externally. Cyber security is the third line of action, expressing the common will to mitigate threats and the resilience of critical infrastructure, network and services, and reducing cybercrime. As stated in the Strategy, “Cooperation and information-sharing between Member States, institutions, the private sector and civil society can foster a common cyber security culture, and raise preparedness for possible cyber disruptions and attacks” (EUGS 2016: p. 22). Energy security is the fourth direction of action assumed by the European Union, including the attempts to diversify energy resources, routes and suppliers, as well as monitoring the evolution of nuclear safety standards in third countries. Last, but not least, EU internal security means Strategic communications, by investing in and joining-up public diplomacy across different fields, in order to connect EU foreign policy with citizens and communicate more efficiently with the partners (EUGS 2016: p. 23).

The second priority regards State and societal resilience to the East and South. Arguing that fragility beyond the borders of the European Union threatens all the vital interests, the need to invest in the resilience of states and societies to the east stretching into Central Asia, and south down to Central Africa is reinforced. This section of the Strategy includes specifications regarding the enlargement policy, which should be “grounded in strict and fair conditionality”, as an “irreplaceable tool to enhance resilience within the countries concerned”.

Resilience is defined as a strategic priority across the EU’s east and south both in countries that want stronger ties with the EU and in those – within and beyond the ENP – that have no wish to do so. In this regard, the EU plans to pursue a complex approach to resilience, and to cooperate with other international players, coordinating EU’s work on capacity-building with the United Nations and NATO in particular.

Regarding the migration policy, a special focus will be on the origin and transit countries of migrants and refugees. The tools meant to support these initiatives in the countries of origin are development, trust funds, preventive diplomacy and mediation, while transit countries are to be supported by improving reception and asylum capacities, and by working on migrants’ education, vocational training and livelihood opportunities.

In the third part of this chapter, *An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises*, it is stated that “Implementing a *multi-dimensional* approach through the use of all available policies and instruments aimed at conflict prevention, management and resolution is essential” (EUGS 2016: p. 31). The Strategy thus regards all types of threats, expressing the will to invest in prevention, resolution and stabilization, as well as to avoid premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts elsewhere. This integrated approach designed by the EU fight conflicts and crises is based on several dimensions: establishing a climate of pre-emptive peace, ensuring security and stabilization, conflict settlement and fostering the space in which the legitimate economy can take root and consolidate. In the enunciation of the Strategy, “restrictive measures, coupled with diplomacy, are key tools to bring about peaceful change. They can play a pivotal role in deterrence, conflict prevention and resolution. Smart sanctions, in compliance with international and EU law, will be carefully calibrated and monitored to support the legitimate economy and avoid harming local societies” (EUGS

2016: p. 32). All these actions aim at protecting the civilians first of all, thus the foreign action of the European Union being designed to bring a better standard of life for the European citizens.

The fourth part of this section, *Cooperative Regional Orders*, defines the fundamental rationale for the EU's own peace and development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The strategy sets the goal of supporting regional organizations, not in the meaning of exporting the European Union model, but rather by seeking reciprocal inspiration from different regional experiences. The meaning of cooperative regional orders does not only comprise regional organizations, but also a mix of bilateral, sub regional, regional and inter-regional relations, also featuring the role of global players interlinked with regionally-owned cooperative efforts (EUGS 2016: p. 32).

The strategy also sanctions, one more, the fundamental principles that apply to all states, both within and beyond the EU's borders: sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The relationship with Russia represents a key strategic challenge for the European common security, demanding a consistent and united approach as the cornerstone of EU policy towards Russia. "Substantial changes in relations between the EU and Russia are premised upon full respect for international law and the principles underpinning the European security order, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter" (EUGS 2016: p. 32). The European Union Global Strategy also states that the EU will not recognize "Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilization of eastern Ukraine".

Furthermore, the European Union commits to a global order based on international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. This commitment involves the ambitious determination to reform the UN and the International Financial Institutions, in order to stand up for the principles of accountability, representativeness, responsibility, effectiveness and transparency. In addition to this, the European Union intends to invest in the peacekeeping, mediation, peacebuilding and humanitarian functions of the United Nations.

The final part of the Strategy, *From Vision to Action*, reinforces the Union's commitment to pursue these priorities by mobilizing the unparalleled networks, the economic weight and all the tools at the disposal of the EU in a coherent and coordinated way. In order to achieve this, the Common security and defence policy must become more effective, and the Member States are required to enhance the deployability and interoperability of their forces through training and exercises. The need for a more joined-up Union, in the establishment and functioning of the European institutions playing parts in the external actions – such as the innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon - the double-hatted High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission (HRVP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS), can be translated into a more effective and stronger common voice.

A general overlook at the European Union Global Strategy gives the impression of an intention of transformation, a shift that is to take place in EU's foreign policies and actions. The European Union considers itself as the biggest exporter of soft power, but, in order to preserve its leading role in the international arena, it is willing to take more part in the debate for hard power, as we will see in the following section.

#### **4. The need for hard power in EU's security**

After the end of the Cold War, in a world facing the globalization process, but yet so fragmented, Europe must undertake all the responsibilities implied by the management of these phenomena. The role it should play is that of a power fighting against violence, terror, fanatics, and that does not remain untouched by all the injustice the world is facing nowadays. To sum up, it should be a power that aims at influencing the development of international events, so that the beneficiaries are not only the rich countries, but also the poorer ones (Luzarraga and Lorente 2011: p. 290).

But, as some opinions point out (Buzan and Little 2009: p. 376), once the state of conflict was replaced by mutual security, the transforming and shaping forces of competitions become less driven by military arguments, and more by the economic and social ones.

For decades, the European states have faced the need of a stronger voice in the international security matters (Sauron 2010: p. 27-29). Despite the fact that the European Union has provided enough resources in the area of soft power, managing to make this international organization one of the major players in the international arena, current threats reinforce the demand for stronger action. Some authors assert that (Tuomioja, 2009: 3) "while the European Union is not a military super-power or even a lesser one, nor does it have any plans or need to become one, all the member states of the European Union do employ national armies. The military capabilities of the EU countries are increasingly oriented towards crisis-management operations and not towards traditional territorial defense".

As stated in the final part of the European Union Global Strategy, "In this fragile world, soft power is not enough: we must enhance our credibility in security and defence. To respond to external crises, build our partners' capacities and protect Europe, Member States must channel a sufficient level of expenditure to defence, make the most efficient use of resources, and meet the collective commitment of 20% of defence budget spending devoted to the procurement of equipment and Research & Technology" (EUGS 2016: p. 44). Some specialists assert that "The European Union has no army although this is one of the areas where unity would bring obvious increase in efficiency and influence. It relies on law, on negotiation, on multilateral organization. Its relationships are often in the form of "contractual agreements", itself a revealing phrase. It seems a model of soft power, as America is of hard power" (Cooper 2004: p. 169).

Furthermore, it seems that the global changes occurred after the end of the Cold War argue for the possibility that the international system is entering a new phase of transformation that raises questions regarding the nature of the dominant element. Since the beginnings of human civilization, the dominant elements have always been the political and military ones, usually integrated in a territory. But can this pattern be maintained if the political and military sector loses its domination and globalization pushes the state from many aspects of the economy? (Buzan and Little 2009: p. 371). It seems that the economic actors (companies, organizations) have a much more important role to play than military forces.

Being given all these international coordinates, the European Union needs to find itself a role, a status on the chessboard, as long as it wants to be one of the major stakeholders. Being for decades regarded as the "cradle of civilization", a model of multiculturalism, political plurality, multiethnic cohabitation, "united in diversity", the

world now turns the look on the old continent for more decisive actions in matters of international security, border protection, human rights enforcement. And this are the quests the Europe of the future is called to fulfill, in order to preserve its leading role in the world.

## 5. Conclusions

The European Union is an international actor with a unique architecture, evolving from an organization to a union of states, borrowing from its members' national sovereignty in order to legitimate its own actions. The issue of soft and hard power in its international agenda is rather a matter of the extent of tasks it is enabled to perform. Despite the fact that it is commonly agreed that a single voice speaking for all the Member States has more power than 28 different voices, the representatives of the countries still seem reluctant to giving away too much of the national sovereignty in order to strengthen the Union. With the growing diversity of both external and internal threats, it seems that nationalism is more present on the European agenda than ever, linking sovereignty to territories more bounding than ever: "although nationalism is potentially subversive of any particular territorial *status quo*, it is the basis of territorial sovereignty *per se*" (Griffiths and Sullivan 1997: p. 56).

The soft power of the European Union is a remarkable success; but ultimately the order was based on hard power (Cooper 2004: p. 178). The case of the European Union – as well as others – is merely a proof that soft power can play a crucial role in international relations as well as in a domestic order, as long as it obeys and promotes the respect of international law. The main issue is that of establishing legitimacy. Whereas in domestic situations our ideas of legitimacy are well explored and, in the West at least, well established, in the international sphere the position is less clear. There are many sources of legitimacy and, therefore, also of soft power (Cooper 2004: p. 179).

Despite the fact that the European Union is usually regarded as a leading model of soft power, one would be wrong to assume that this is a natural strength of Europe. For instance, the internal order in the EU is based on law, while in its foreign actions force is largely used. But soft power goes with hard power internationally as it does domestically.

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