

# THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. FROM THE EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY TO THE 2016 EU GLOBAL STRATEGY

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## ABSTRACT

The Grand Strategy of the European Union took shape in 2003 through the European Security Strategy and in 2016 it continued through the appearance of the EU Global Strategy. The current article approaches the two official documents, analyzing a series of concerns regarding the development and security of the European space. Among these, what stands out is the resilience of the state in the vicinity of the EU, through the help offered with the establishment of partnerships, an example being the advisory mission for Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), multilateralism in foreign policy issues, but also the remedy of the difficulty of strategic coherence for the preparation of predetermined objectives. In a constantly changing and interconnected world, the EU aims to become an actor with strategic power at the international level. In the face of more and more challenges and uncertainties to which the European Union is subjected, the term resilience is constantly being used. At the same time, an emphasis is placed on the prevention of crisis situations that could destabilize the European community. In this work, a detailed analysis of the Grand Strategy specific to the European Union will be carried out, based on compliance with the analysis model which includes the following classification criteria: vision, interests, threats, implementation. On this occasion, it will be possible to detail the changes that the Grand Strategy of the European Union has undertaken over time, a trait that illustrates its dynamic character.

**Keywords:** European Union, grand strategy, multilateralism, European Security Strategy, EU Global Strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

To begin with, the analysis of the official document entitled “European Security Strategy” will be considered. The relevance of this Great Security Strategy of the European Union, launched in 2003, represents an important step towards

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including in a single document the threats that concern the community, but also the measures aimed at ensuring security in the region. The period in which this document was adopted by the European Council is represented by the year 2003, a context in which there was a strong crisis at the level of the European Union, caused by the invasion of Iraq by the United States of America. In such a context, characterized by a state of confusion and mistrust, it was necessary for the European Union to reaffirm its strategic vision, along with strengthening the common will directed towards what actions that should have been taken in the field of security (Bailes 2005). A stated concern for the progress of the security of the European community was defined in the Grand Security Strategy of 2003 as “an international order based on effective multilateralism” (Council of the European Union 2003). This multilateralism refers to the need to work together with other states outside the community so that a state of multilateral prosperity, beneficial to the development of common goals may emerge (Gowan 2007). Mutual support between the EU and the UN is a need for both sides to help their institutions progress and undertake economic growth actions by adopting similar economic and development policies (Gowan 2007). By using an accessible language, the document managed to attract attention both in the territory of the European Union and outside it (Bailes 2005). With the help of this document, the European Union managed to assert its position on the stage of international relations, standing out as a global player with its own interests. In order to be structured as well as possible, the document entitled “European Security Strategy” was divided into three subsections, namely: threats, political implications for the European territory and strategic objectives (Bailes 2005).

### CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The *vision* established in the European Security Strategy, through which the community is concerned about the security of its neighbours, had a significant impact on the strengthening of the strategic contribution from the EU (Dannreuther 2007). This aspect regarding involvement in the strategic and security issues of the neighbourhood for the EU is important because, even if the European Union cannot be categorized as a global actor compared to the US – due to a lack of economic and military capabilities –, maintaining regional security is an essential step (Dannreuther 2007). The way in which the context of the evolution of conflicts is characterized emphasizes the importance given to the prevalence of conflicts at the general level, together with their close connection with ineffective governance and poverty (Bailes 2005). Respecting the analysis model of a Grand Strategy, the vision of the European Union, transposed through the “European Security Strategy” document, is represented by the need to guarantee security within an international scene dominated by the possibility of the manifestation of various threats, which have the ability to destabilize the organizational system specific to

the European Union and beyond. Analysing from a strategic perspective the discourse presented in the document, one notices the existence of a post-modern approach related to various dimensions, such as political, economic and social (Bailes 2005). It also highlights the truly global approach to accountability, threats and interdependence (Bailes 2005). Regarding the category of *interests* included in the analysis model, three major strategic objectives are noted, that is, the need to manage threats in an effective manner, the need to put more emphasis on effective multilateralism in the case of the world order (Bailes 2005). It is also considered that the European Union will become more efficient, including in terms of managing collaboration with its partners through more involvement and coherence (Bailes 2005). The strategic objectives require the need to pay special attention both in the case of promoting values and in defending the European Union's own interests. It is also stated that there is a need for Europe to become more involved in the neighbouring regions, ranging from the Balkans to the Mediterranean coasts, in order to spread security (Bailes 2005).

Regarding the *threats*, the "European Security Strategy" document includes phenomena such as terrorism, regional conflicts, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, along with state incapacity (Bailes 2005). Following the enumeration of the main threats, the degree of their diversity can be observed, coming from various sources and at the same time having the power to destabilize the organization of the European Union. In the case of threats, the speech within the document "European Security Strategy" is based on the general concept of prevention, being necessary to prepare in advance to act before the eventual negative event takes place (Bailes 2005). Regarding threats to military interventions, the document is not crystal clear. It just leaves the impression that they must be managed within a multilateral context (Bailes 2005). The EU neighbourhood policy also appeared as a result of the largest expansions of the European space since 2004, when ten new countries joined the European Union (Dannreuther 2007). The multiple challenges of threats from the states that lie in the vicinity of the EU borders, such as terrorism, corruption, organized crime, have produced a focus on the formulation of coherent policies with the aim of combating these phenomena (Dannreuther 2007). These threats are specific to vulnerable states from an economic and political point of view. Since there are neighbouring states that may project such threats onto the EU, it is necessary to institute reforms, in order to record progress in combating these threats (Dannreuther 2007). At the same time, these EU neighbouring states were seen as a strategic buffer aimed at limiting the penetration of global threats – an example being the trafficking of drugs and prohibited substances from Afghanistan –, which required the tightening of controls at crossing points (Dannreuther 2007). In the context of Russia's presumption that influence in the region is a zero-sum game against the EU, the community needs firmness in its foreign policy decisions (Dannreuther 2007). European neighborhood policies have also been directed towards the Arab world,

where a partnership between the EU and Israel facilitates the access of Israeli companies to European policies, and the EU becomes a negotiator for Middle Eastern issues (Dannreuther 2007).

The document also mentions the promotion of an international order based primarily on rules, and stresses the plan to develop a strategic culture specific to the European Union, one that is able to intervene promptly when necessary in a fast manner (Bailes 2005). For this type of strategic culture to develop, it is necessary to strengthen defence capabilities. The importance of diplomacy must also be emphasized. In the absence of a concrete strategy, any actor on the stage of international relations will be totally dependent on the actions of the other actors, failing to develop their own tactics or organizational plan. Regarding the last subpoint of the analysis model, namely the *implementation*, we can mention the adoption of a new anti-terrorist program by the European Union, as a result of the bombings that took place in 2004 in Madrid (Bailes 2005). The official document “European Security Strategy” focuses mainly on promoting unity to face the existing challenges. The document also emphasizes the importance to be given to public opinion, as it has a vital role in shaping the degree of involvement of the member states (Council of the European Union 2003).

#### **FORMAL DOCUMENTS OF THE EU’S GRAND STRATEGY. CHANGE AND CONTINUITY**

The development of an organizational system that is more and more powerful represents the central element on which the “European Security Strategy” document is based. Within its framework, the desire to contribute directly to the development of international law is admitted (Council of the European Union 2003). Thus, the more stable the sphere of international relations, the more easily progress can be achieved. As ways to strengthen the international order, a series of measures are proposed, among which we mention the spread of efficient and fair governance, the protection of human rights and the definition of the important position occupied by the law (Council of the European Union 2003). Emphasis is placed on cooperation at the international level, this being the chance of long-term success, while the pursuit of objectives will be achieved through a multilateral perspective, along with the maintenance of partnerships (Council of the European Union 2003). Another key aspect that must be mentioned is the inclusion of the need to establish political relations with Russia, which was deemed as playing a significant role in the prosperity and security of the European Union (Council of the European Union 2003). The strategic partnership with Russia would rest on the mutual respect for common values (Council of the European Union 2003). Thus, in order to counterbalance the various dangers that exist on the international stage, the presence of new opportunities must be remembered. It is argued that the

multilateral system proposed by the European Union in the “European Security Strategy” document, once effectively applied, will lead to the creation of a much more united and protected world in the face of dangers (Council of the European Union 2003).

Once the “European Security Strategy” document has been analysed, the transition will be made to its revised version, more precisely to the “EU Global Strategy”, and it will also be described according to the analysis model mentioned at the beginning of the paper. This document, which was issued in 2016, emphasised from the very beginning the existence of a crisis situation, capable of endangering the European Union (European Union 2016). This situation is a consequence of the spread of violence and the terrorist phenomenon both in distant areas such as the Middle East and North Africa, as well as within the European territory (European Union 2016).

Sensing this danger, with a long range of action, emphasis is placed on the importance of both internal and external security, as the protection of the European territory depends to a large extent on external factors (European Union 2016). Only with the help of an open perspective, including regarding the international economic system, can the European Union succeed in maintaining its influence. If the European Union does not adopt a broad vision, which includes the various elements of the sphere of international relations, maintaining the position of an actor capable of pursuing its own interests will be seriously threatened. Thus, after a contextual presentation of the adoption of the revised document, the article looks at the “EU Global Strategy” with the help of the already mentioned analysis model, that is, vision, interests, threats, implementation.

The first classification criterion refers to the *vision*, and in the case of the “EU Global Strategy” the emphasis is on the prosperity of the citizens of the European Union, ensuring access to global goods, along with the guarantee of unity and democracy (European Union 2016). Regarding the *interests* expressed through this document, we emphasize the promotion of a global order based on multilateralism, the need to manage the conflicts that have arisen and prevent them from leaving their mark on an international environment conducive to peace. It also aims to guarantee collective security through cooperation with key partners, such as NATO (European Union 2016). Terrorism, economic volatility, energy insecurity and climate change were included in the category of *threats* (European Union 2016). Particular attention is paid to cyber terrorism, with the European Union declaring that it will take measures to protect against cyber attacks, but which will not affect the free and open nature of cyberspace (European Union 2016). This mention is very important, because it excludes the possibility that the virtual environment itself will be affected by the measures taken to stop the proliferation of the negative impact of cyber attacks. In order to counter these attacks, it is necessary to improve the systems responsible for guaranteeing the integrity and availability of data, also focusing on the certification of digital

services and products (European Union 2016). One can see the emphasis placed on technological development and the need to take concrete measures capable of counterbalancing the products resulting from the use of technology in a negative sense. Collaboration is also promoted, including at this level, with strategic partners such as NATO and the United States of America (European Union 2016). But the cooperation is not limited only to the mentioned partners, wanting to associate with civil society and the private sector, in order to build a culture specific to cyber security, capable of preventing possible attacks from the digital environment (European Union 2016).

Regarding the implementation of this strategy presented in the document, it is noted the need for a comprehensive approach in the case of crises and conflicts, the European Union having the responsibility to act in the case of all stages of a conflict, regardless of its type, through prompt and decisive management, capable of stopping its escalation (European Union 2016). Thus, the credibility enjoyed by the European Union comes from its unity, as well as from the degree of efficiency of the promoted policies. The allocation of existing resources in the direction of maintaining security and defence is considered to be an activity of utmost importance (European Union 2016). This fact underlines the serious danger that the European Union assesses at an international level, and which emerge as a result of the diversity of sources that cause the aforementioned threats. Therefore, a well-organized strategy is needed to be able to counterbalance this negative situation with a potentially high impact. Also, in order to successfully implement security as well as counter-terrorism, it is necessary to maintain a close link between the two types of dimensions of the European Union policies, namely the internal and external ones (European Union 2016). The whole strategy is largely based on creating a European Union as strong as possible, able to effectively manage the inevitable threats and thus contribute to the prosperity of its citizens. Therefore, the transition from the European Security Strategy in 2003, to the EU Global Strategy in 2016, assumed, as the name of the strategy suggests, a more ambitious approach on the part of the European community to the global environment.

Beyond the technical aspects previously listed on the basis of the official document of the Global Strategy of the European Union, the impact will also be analysed at the European level, but also in the international context generated by this new strategic perspective established in 2016. Following the implementation, the generated impact assumed an integrated approach to the management of security issues, which in recent years have been reduced to the management of increasingly threatening cyber attacks for European institutions (Sticea 2019). At the same time, the pursuit of supporting democracy, through the help offered to communities of people and stimulated by the emphasis on civil partnership, had resulted into better cooperation between citizens and the state on the problems of

the European Union (Sticea 2019). Through the Global Strategy, campaigns were implemented to inform citizens about the administrative structures of the European Union, but also with an impact on Russian disinformation through the establishment of “Disinformation Review” and “Disinformation Digest” (Sticea 2019). The creation of these sites involves making the general public aware, in easily accessible language, of the dangers behind disinformation. In the 2016 EU Strategy, the need to strengthen the Eastern Partnership is mentioned, which for certain EU partner countries, such as the Republic of Moldova, indicates a lack of information among citizens in relation to the benefits brought by cooperation with the European Union (Sticea 2019). In these conditions, there is a need for information through media channels distinct from those online through social media, with campaigns specifically targeting the EU’s eastern partners vulnerable to Russian propaganda (Sticea 2019). The desired impact through this attention given to the Eastern Partnership boils down to increasing the degree of integration of the European community through a coherent communication strategy aimed at bringing stability.

The Global Strategy of the EU foresees the pursuit of five pillars: security, resilience of the state and state society between East and West, addressing conflicts and crises, cooperative regional order, and effective global governance (European Union 2016). Among the five pillars targeted, the resilience of the state and society in the EU neighbourhood represents a way to analyse their implementation, by referring to a case study on the EUAM Ukraine “European Union Advisory Mission”, the mission undertaken in 2014 with the role of strengthening the Eastern Partnership (Meszaros and Țoca 2020). The purpose of this mission, part of the Eastern Resilience Plan, was to provide EU support for security sector reform in Ukraine (European Union 2014). Criticisms regarding the establishment of security reform in Ukraine, through the aid granted by the EU, point to insufficient involvement, with a low scope, focusing on advice, for fear of tensions caused by Russian influence (Meszaros and Țoca 2020). Even in the wake of complaints about implementation, EUAM Ukraine remains an Eastern resilience-building program that has helped, beyond the anti-corruption fight, to increase trust measured in EU Neighbors Survey statistics for Ukrainian citizens in the European Union (Meszaros and Țoca 2020).

A permanent concern of the European Union’s strategy, regardless of the field of activity, is ensuring resilience, a concept constantly used over time in security strategies. Thus, resilience is “the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, cope, adapt, and quickly recover from stresses and shocks” (European Commission 2016, 2). Maintaining resilience is a concern aimed at anticipating vulnerabilities, so that the shock felt by a crisis situation is mitigated, as a result of the low costs that the intervention requires, compared to the economic pressure exerted by the onset of the crisis (Meszaros and Țoca 2020). An example of a resilience plan from the EU is the one undertaken

between 2013–2020 towards countries vulnerable to the crisis, targeting the following aspects: humanitarian intervention, sustainable development and political commitment (European Commission 2013). The action plan provided for the establishment of EU aid in relation to the National Development Plans of vulnerable regions, using programs focused on the support of agriculture, social protection, the investigation of new approaches to resilience, which would be tailored to particular needs and at the same time facilitate access to methods of verifying the effectiveness exercised by the implementation of the measures provided for in the Action Plan (European Commission 2013). Thus, the multilateral approach proposed by the EU Global Strategy is focused on establishing resilience through personalized policies, reforms of justice systems, defence, security, supporting vulnerable communities (European Union 2016). This resilience must also be taken into account outside the European space to maintain stability in the community, therefore policies aimed at emigrants and refugees are needed (European Union 2016).

In addition to the concern for external resilience, in relation to the neighbourhood of the community, a document was undertaken in 2017 that marks the need to predict trends in the vulnerabilities of the external environment. The basis of this strategic thinking was to prevent before intervention was needed to repair through actions aimed at: making available the means necessary to achieve resilience at the domestic level, the power of the example in relation to the resilience ability of the EU, focusing on external policies to help EU partner countries in increasing resilience (European Commission 2017). Also, the emphasis is constantly placed on the involvement of citizens and awareness of the importance of making their actions accountable, on maintaining democracy and implicitly solidarity, for situations that require resilience at the community level (European Commission 2017). We have previously dedicated a certain part of the current article to one of the pillars of the EU Global Strategy on state and societal resilience for the Eastern region of the EU community. In the past, the same concern was addressed in the European Security Strategy, focusing on policies that would help ensure the security of the neighbours in the region. Regarding the approach to the EU's necessary policies for better security, it is proposed to focus on aspects, such as activity, capability, coherence, partnerships (Council of the European Union 2003). Coherence is an aspect directed towards the external actions of the EU in relation to its partners, to satisfy the objectives of foreign policies in two directions of horizontal and vertical coherence (Andresson 2007). Horizontal coherence is concerned with good cooperation between the EU institutions in order to achieve the objectives of foreign policies while, in the vertical plane, reference is made to the ability of the policies of the EU member states to be consistent with those of the institutions of the European community (Andresson 2007). The main obstacle in establishing coherence at the European



level remains reporting to the 27 EU member states at the time of drafting the Security Strategy, whose foreign policy objectives are difficult to homogenize with those at the level of the European institutions, so that there is a coherence of the strategic vision (Andresson 2007).

## CONCLUSIONS

The strategic importance of the European Union at the international level depends to a large extent on its ability to use a single voice, which reflects a high degree of compatibility among the interests of the European institutions and the ones of the member states. The discourse of the European community needs this coherence and consistency to aspire to the status of an important actor on the stage of international relations. In conclusion, the Grand Strategy of the European Union consists in a first act elaborated in 2003 in the form of the European Security Strategy, that was followed by the 2016 EU Global Strategy. There are a number of concerns presented in these documents, which have been analysed in this article, such as the resilience of the EU and its neighbourhood, strategic coherence in the context of the different individual objectives of the EU member states, multilateralism in relation to foreign policies. At the same time, the EU concerns itself with creating a more advantageous strategic position as a global actor. This stands as a main objective of the foreign policy of the European community, especially in its relation with the United States of America.

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