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**EURO-SPHERES AS MILESTONES FOR A EUROPEAN  
UNION GRAND STRATEGY. CASE STUDY EURO-  
MEDITERRANEAN EURO-SPHERE**

**Summary of the PhD Thesis**

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**Key-words:** European Union, Grand Strategy, Euro-sphere, Euro-med, European integration, Constructivism, European Identity, European Neighborhood Policy

## **Introduction**

In 2003 the European Union has self-proclaimed as a global actor, launching its own security strategy aiming to place a milestone for a further development and deepening of its Common Foreign and Security Policy. Regardless of the many shortcomings and limits, the document has an important significance marking a premiere in the EU CFSP, proving that there is will among the member states to jointly define mutual interests, threats and projects, even if it is at a very high level. Since its establishment in 1992 through Maastricht Treaty, the CFPS remained limited due to the states inability to agree an action plan through which to address their interests and respond to the multiple threats that the EU was facing. The emergence of a multipolar system in which actors as United States of America, Russian Federation, China and India threaten the European power of influence at the global level, make the EU states dream of the period in which they were rulers of the world. This should be an incentive for the member states to increase the level of cooperation among them and continue to deepen the integration process. In comparison with the Chinese, Russian or American power, individually each member state has a limited power, while acting as EU, united their power increase significantly.

The aim of the present thesis is to address the European Union need to revision its external policy objectives and behavior. The central argument is related to the fact that the European Union requires a Grand Strategy that should stay at the basis of its foreign policy action. Such Grand Strategy should allow it not only to truly become a global power but will offer rationale for further integration and survival. The thesis does not limit itself only to demonstrating the need and design of a EU Grand Strategy, but it also creates and introduces a concrete example of a functioning EU Grand Strategy, one that is based on euro-spheres creation. Reviewing the articles and books that deal with the CFSP and CDSP, it is not hard to notice the cooperation deficit between the member states and the relevant European institutions. This deficit is a major draw-back and disadvantage for both the EU and each individual member state because it decreases the effective power at the global level. Such disunity and incoherence have

a significant impact upon the EU credibility as a viable global actor and decrease also the effectiveness of its decisions. Due to the absence of unity at the European level, many authors are reluctant to discuss about a global role of Brussels. Thus, for some critics bringing into discussion an EU Grand Strategy appears to be an attempt failed from the beginning. This paper will not only prove that the EU needs a Grand Strategy and how this concept can be applied to a supranational actor as the European Union, but it will also develop a theoretical framework for a grand strategy conceptualization, one based on euro-spheres and it will also provide an explanatory case study to prove the viability of such a model.

A Grand Strategy could offer the Union the framework required to diminish the fragmentation and to unite the actors, while at the same time bring more coherence to the EU foreign actions which will in the end lead to an increase of credibility and EU ability to pursue its own objectives and interests. Currently, at the centre of the EU relationship with neighbouring countries can be easily observed a fundamental asymmetry of power, with EU as the central actor managing its own periphery. There is also a tendency of the EU to deal with the neighbouring countries under the auspices of a conditionality policy, and a relation based on conditionality will always be “in between coercion, and consent and between force and contract.”<sup>1</sup> Although it declares that it moreover seeks to be surrounded by “a circle of friends”, currently the EU has persisted in applying Javier Solana’s vision that the EU objective in its neighbourhood should be to create a “ring of well-governed states”.

One of the arguments that will be tested and further developed within the present paper is regarding the EU foreign policy inefficiency in the Mediterranean neighborhood. For an increased efficiency in external actions, the European Union should distance itself from the geopolitical and territorial perception as this tends to put too much emphasize on the regional interests and to favor an inside-outside dichotomy that on the longer term inhibits the possibility of a trustworthy cooperation. A better approach should be a flexible one based on the development of mutual projects and interests, which will take the shape of euro-spheres.

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The Euro-spheres should be understood as networks which rely on partnerships in which the parts equally share rights and responsibilities committed to reach common objectives. Defining these interests and the action plans should not be unilateral, one-sided, but be made by both partners eliminating as much as possible the asymmetry of power. The main idea would be that EU stop forcing the partner countries to adopt policies and changes that are in contradiction to their own foreign policies and security objectives. More important it should be made a clear difference on how to speak with the states that wish for integration and how to relate to those that have no interest in integration.

Within the Euro-sphere the EU could manifest its power not by imposing conditions that alter their behaviour and preferences, but by developing the type of power that Dwight Eisenhower referred to: the power to affect the preferences of the others so they will wish what we wish, without being necessary to impose them to change. These euro-spheres could function on the basis of a limited integration model, based on the model of the European integration.

### **The research hypothesis and main objectives of the study**

The present research aims to test two main hypothesis that find themselves in a direct relationship in the sense that if the first hypothesis is not confirmed there is no point to test the second one, and at the same time, the second one validity may strengthen the importance of the first one.

The first research hypothesis is that **for EU to ensure, promote and pursue its interests in the globalization era in which multipolarism seems to define more and more the global distribution of power in the international system, the European Union needs to define an own global strategy that will allow it to remain one of the main poles of power in the world.** This research hypotheses can be resumed to the following questions:

- Does the EU need a Grand Strategy?
- Why would the EU need a Grand strategy? Which would be the associated benefits?
- How can the concept of Grand Strategy apply to a hybrid organization as the EU?

The second chapter of the thesis will provide an answer to these questions, in direct relation with the findings from the first chapter. In order to provide an answer to the third question, the thesis will aim to define and validate if the concept of Grand Strategy can be applied to an organization like EU.

The second research hypothesis that will be tested is that an **efficient grand strategy should be based upon the creation of euro-spheres defined as intensive cooperation areas based on partnership in the neighbourhood areas of the EU, areas in which the EU already exerts a direct or indirect influence, but which can be sources of both opportunities as well as threats.** In direct relation with this hypothesis we can extract also a second important objective of this thesis: **to demonstrate that the euro-spheres creation can serve as milestone for a functioning EU Grand Strategy.** This second hypothesis is in close relationship with the first hypothesis not only due to the dependency between the two, but also because it can better emphasize the necessity of developing a Grand Strategy by introducing the advantages of such a policy.

The relevant questions that the paper should answer are the following:

- What kind of Grand Strategy for the EU?
- Which are the grounds for a European Grand Strategy?
- Why an EU Grand Strategy based on euro-spheres?
- How can be constructed a euro-sphere?

Considering the centrality of this second hypothesis for the current analysis it is worth mentioning that the first hypothesis has to be tested within a specific context: that the EU Grand strategy is needed specifically because of the emergence of multilateralism as an international reality that cannot be ignored by the EU if it wants to remain a global power. A secondary objective would be to determine if a grand strategy can be the key towards a better pursue of EU interests at global level, although it may be considered that simply maintaining the presence at global level is not the ultimate aim for EU, but mainly the associated advantages that come with such a quality.

**As a third main objective of the current research I aim to evaluate the efficiency of the EU foreign policy in the Southern Mediterranean area, and to analyse how EURO-MED euro-sphere can be created and if it would constitute a better alternative to the current way of conducting international relations in the area.**

#### **Methodology and the main research methods used in the current paper**

The methodology adopted for the purpose of conducting the current research is specific to the social sciences and especially to the international relations research. The main methods used are:

1. **The analysis of content of primary and secondary sources:** the thesis deals with a lot of theoretical assumptions and aims to bring new contributions to the Grand Strategy field of research as well as to the European Integration theories, a significant number of secondary bibliographical sources have been analysed for the purpose of identifying which concepts and assumptions can be useful for the construction of a grand strategy theory adapted to the EU as well as for the elaboration of a euro-sphere theory and definition.
2. **the comparative analysis** – widely used for several purposes: comparison of the various definitions of the key theoretical concepts in various IR theories, secondly, for testing the first hypothesis it will be needed to compare the current status quo with the situation that was aimed to be achieved in the various strategic documents of the European Union and the one that can be achieved by having a Grand Strategy in place; thirdly, in the elaboration of the theoretical framework of analysis of the Euro-sphere it will be used the comparative method for establishing a link between the integration theory and the euro-sphere conceptualization.
3. **The case study** – used in the fourth chapter of the thesis in order to prove the applicability of the euro-sphere concept in the Mediterranean Region and what would EURO-MED euro-sphere mean.

Three main elements underline the **novelty, innovation and originality** of the present research:



1. the analysis of a Grand strategy of a non-state actor, the European Union. Grand Strategy has mainly as subject of study the states that have own interests, resources and vision of how to tackle various threats. Although in the last 5 years various scholars and IR analysts have argued that the EU should define for itself a grand strategy that will help it be more coherent and efficient in pursuing its objectives. Despite this fact currently there aren't exhaustive studies to explain how the concept can be applied to the EU, as a consequence we are dealing with a relatively under-researched field.

2. the euro-sphere theory is relatively new and although the concept can be met also in works of other scholars this thesis brings a totally new approach of the concept and it aims to design a real theoretical framework that could serve later for other analysts and researchers to define and elaborate grand strategies for EU based on euro-spheres.

3. Multi-theory and multi-disciplinary approach - that takes into account definitions of certain concepts used by various schools of thought to generate a new theoretical framework for the proper study of a grand strategy for an actor like the European Union. The thesis is a reconciliation of concepts and assumptions belonging to several IR and European studies and an example of how it can be conducted in the current complex times an analysis of a certain international relations' phenomenon.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into 4 chapters following a logical order of verifying the hypothesis and research objectives and having strong interconnections with one another.

The **first** chapter of the thesis, "*Conceptual and Theoretical Approach of the paper. Defining the framework of analysis*", is one of the most important chapters and one of the innovation aspects that this thesis aims to bring into the field. The main aim is to delimit the general framework of the analysis, the definitions and perspectives to be considered in the following chapters. This chapter provides definitions to key concepts relevant for the understanding of the current paper and the main assumptions to be used from more theories of international relations and European Studies. It also contains an explanation related to why placing the research under the constructivist theory umbrella. Concepts like security, power,

interest, foreign policy, threat, identity, integration, cooperation, are reviewed in the chapter. The work introduced in this first chapter is divided into three main sub-chapters: the first one is defining the main theoretical framework under which is placed the current analysis – the constructivist one and the Copenhagen School with the main assumption to be taken into account, a second sub-chapter briefly introducing the key concepts relevant for an understanding of the Grand Strategy main characteristics as it will be defined in the current paper and a third sub-chapter referring to integration theory as main framework explaining and constructing the concept of euro-sphere.

As shown within this first for a complete, explanatory and not one sided analysis the multi-theory approach represents a correct choice especially when trying to take into account the behaviour of multiple actors from the international arena, and these actors are not guiding their actions according to same theoretical beliefs in relation to new subjects of interest on the international chess field. For the present thesis I used a multi-theory approach considering the fact that it presents the following advantages and opportunities for a scholar: transcends old levels-of-one sided theory analysis, provides a framework complex enough to analyse and compare different actors and regions, allows the grounding of the evolving international relations and European studies in a dynamic framework, prevents the researcher from offering reductionists interpretations.

The first sub-chapter main arguments are related to why choosing the Constructivist theory and the Copenhagen School main findings as the general umbrella for the present analysis. The constructivist ideas related to the fact that the world is socially constructed, and the states' identities are changing in the basis of various interactions and socialization processes that shape also these actors main interests, is one important assumption for the current thesis, as combined with the spill-over effect definition it constitutes the milestone for the effective design of a EU Grand Strategy. The euro-sphere evolution towards a self-sufficient and self-governing area, where all actors are more interested in protecting the interests that they share in common and preserve or even deepen the level of cooperation are more easily to be explained in the context of the exposed theoretical concepts. At the same time, the fact that cooperation can happen under all major theoretical school of thoughts presumption, in correlation with the socialization

that the constructivist lay significant importance and the spill-over effect, is another encouraging argument that euro-spheres are possible to be constructed. The second sub-chapter of the chapter is briefly identifying the main incentives for cooperation according to three main theories of international relations and defines the concepts of power and interests as important concepts for the drawing of a Grand Strategy as well as main reasons for an actor to define such a strategy. The current thesis suggests two main new experiments that EU should undertake to consolidate its position and not lose the normal evolution trajectory that any international actor should have: to extend further the integration in the sense of designing a grand strategy and to test the lessons learned within the neighbourhood. The European integration experiment constitutes up-to-now a successful and unique process that could be replicated in the EU neighbourhood area within the context of euro-spheres creations. From the EU integration model several characteristics are of utmost importance for both arguing for a EU Grand Strategy, as well as for the euro-spheres definition: the fact that the EU was a step-by-step process, it was designed to achieve specific goals, the fact that each step was formally registered through the signing of specific treaties and the threefold analytical framework based on the complex relationship between territory, identity and function, and the ties and tensions that are generated by the integration process itself.

**Chapter two** of the thesis, *“Grand Strategy Theory and the European Union”* builds on the theoretical assumptions presented in the first chapter and goes much more into details on the subject of Grand Strategy for the European Union, while at the same time is more grounded into the reality of the present times and brings into discussion concrete examples to provide the validity of the assumptions presented. The main objectives are to provide a clear definition and understanding of what is intended through grand strategy, how it can be designed and applied to an entity like the EU and how it can be defined in a constructivist framework, as well as to answer to the questions: why is it needed a Grand Strategy of EU and which would be its main characteristics? This second chapter aims to test the first hypothesis and answer to some of the main questions raised by the paper.

The second chapter is divided into three sub-chapters: the first one offering a theoretical framework on how to define and apply the concept to the EU, the second one focusing on

answering the questions of why is it needed a Grand Strategy of EU and which should be its defining characteristics and the third one briefly introducing the Grand Strategy of a world global power originating from the same period in which the EU was build and achieving impressive results, containing at the same time some lessons to be applied and considered also by the EU. The merits of the first sub-chapter are that it introduces the most important definitions of Grand Strategy as well as key characteristics that should be take into account when defining a EU Grand strategy. The common denominator of the most important definitions are the fact that grand strategy have at their core concepts of interest, threat, resources and policies. Secondly, the subsection contains an analysis of how grand strategy can be analysed from a constructivist point of view. When it comes to discussing about a grand strategy from constructivist point of view, the scholars in the field have introduced the concept of strategic culture that defines the of general beliefs, attitudes and behaviours patterns and helps state better understand the other actors international behaviour and increase predictability by creating grounds for expectations on how certain actors will behave under a specific situation.

The main reasons why the EU needs a grand Strategy are analysed within the second sub-chapter. The last sub-chapter provides a concrete example of a functioning grand strategy which is based on principles similar to the ones that will be further on elaborated in the chapter regarding the euro-sphere 8 principles for analysis. China and EU are two important actors at which the world looks when international problems arise, but often they are having divergent reactions to the same problems, deriving from two very different approaches of foreign policy and inter-states relationships and two divergent political ideologies.

The **third chapter**, “*Euro-spheres– security community*”, completes the study of the grand strategy and the answer to the questions “why the EU needs a grand strategy” and “how can be shaped such a strategy?”. Also it initiates the validation of the second hypothesis of the paper, namely of the fact that euro-spheres can serve as milestones for a EU functioning grand strategy.

The chapter is divided into two main sub-chapters, the first covering the issue of identity and border policies introduced by EU and their impact upon the creation of an EU identity and how the “others” react to this identity. Within this context a special attention is given to the

analysis of the Schengen Agreements impact upon differentiating inside-outside EU area. The second sub-chapter aims to define the euro-spheres as concepts and to elaborate a framework of analysis for this euro-spheres that could be applied also in other regions than the Mediterranean Area. The main concepts on which the sub-chapter builds on are the European integration as a toolbox for euro-sphere creation and the relationship between euro-sphere and sovereignty. The first subsection of the chapter analyses the concept of borders as both subjects, objects, rewards and reasons for states cooperation, dialogue and alliances. Same as identities and interests also the borders are dynamic and in a continuous transformation process, historically, they have served as demarcation lines of territories, identities, cultures, political systems. In the context of euro-spheres, it is important to clearly define the borders of the region under analysis from all their points of view in order to understand if euro-sphere can be create or not, and under which conditions. In what it relates the EU borders, with the integration process it was both a deepening and a widening of the EU borders, deepening due to the political integration and institution building and widening as geographical spill-over.

Beside the border as a concept, for euro-sphere creation and its further successful implementation, the concept of identity may play a significant role constituting a factor that at its turn can deepen the integration or hinder potential cooperation. Identity differentiates between those inside and outside EU. It was brought into attention also the issue that due to the different speed integrations from the EU level, some countries although inside, are feeling as outsiders. Also, within the sub-chapter it was highlighted also the risk that having a close EU, a “citadel” or a “fortress” will make difficult the creation of a euro-sphere. The second sub-chapter – *European integration toolbox for a euro-spheres* highlights the 8 principles of J. Ørstrøm Møller that could determine the success or failure of an economic integration: : positive sum game, step by step, clear political objectives, the role of problem grinder, links to the domestic political system, impose discipline/self-discipline on member states, balance between small and large/powerful member state, political will to compromise and accommodate other member states, one or more states as driver for the integration. When analyzing the factors that can lead to the creation of a euro-sphere, and its potential success, it is needed to go through these 8

principles and analyse each potential policy to understand how it can be leading to further integration.

The **fourth chapter**, “Mediterranean region and EU- an area of lost opportunities, vulnerabilities, threats and failures of EU foreign policy actions”, aim is to provide a case study to prove how the euro-sphere and grand strategy theoretical frameworks developed in the previous chapters could work on a concrete example. Within this chapter are analysed the premises of creation of EURO-MED euro-sphere. The chapter is divided into two main sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the limits of the current policies and agreements of the EU and why the need of a rethinking of the strategy in the Mediterranean region as well as what is to avoid in the establishment of a euro-sphere. The sub-chapter presents the EU policy in the region’s main objectives, evolution and shortcomings. After an analysis of the European Neighborhood Policy evolution, objectives and main achievements as well as of other EU initiatives in the area it is obvious that the EU has been mainly unable to create “a ring of friends” and to prevent the region from becoming an “arc of instability”.

The second sub-chapter is dedicated to the EURO-MED euro-sphere analysis, to the definition of how this euro-sphere should look like in order to be efficient and to work. The sub-chapter explains how EURO-MED can be formed around the main purpose of managing migration in the Mediterranean region.

### **Main findings of the thesis**

Within the context of the EU having reached some limits in the European integration process especially in terms of the foreign policy achievements, the creation of grand strategy appears to offer new incentives for future developments in the sense. A grand strategy would offer a framework for cooperation, directions and guidance in foreign policy and will ensure that the member states have a mutual understanding over the final goals of their cooperation and the acceptable means of achieving them. Considering the many un-accomplishments of the EU in foreign policy as well as the limited influence that it has in the process of decision taking at international level, the EU needs to immediately take actions in order to be considered a global power and have an ability to change course of major events into its favour, or at least to prevent

the fact that such events will have a significant negative impact on itself. In the last 25 years, the Union did not succeed in achieving such a result, and in most of the cases its interests were affected by decisions taken mostly outside the EU borders.

Several events have proven that the lack of coherent external action of EU will in the end seriously affect also its internal policies especially if we are referring to conflicts that arise at its borders. First it was the Georgian crisis in which the EU was unable to react firmly and to enforce its will to the Russian Federation, then the Ukraine crises (gas crisis, Crimea crisis) which have shown how volatile is the concept of security at the Eastern borders of EU and how easily the Russian Federation can influence the stability of EU. The Eurozone crisis, although an internal one, could have been better managed if a grand strategy was in place to find alternative external solutions to the crisis or to prevent the worsening of the Greek situation. Having defined such a strategy one should have noticed the fragility of the Eurozone and which should have been the actions to be taken by countries like Greece before the crisis appeared.

Nonetheless, the most recent example and argument proving the validity of the first hypothesis is the Syrian crisis, which is already happening for a significant period of time and has become directly an European problem due to two associated consequences of it: the massive refugee influx into the EU which proved the inconsistencies and limits of the EU asylum policy and capacity to act coherently prior to a crisis., and the increase of terrorist threats and attacks on member states, as reactions of the ISIS terrorist group to the interventions of some EU member states into the Syrian conflict. What started as a problem outside the EU has deeply become a serious problem for the Union not only because of the direct consequences that the immigration has, but also because nowadays the EU experiment appears to be more insecure as ever.

Considering the Liddell Hart definition of grand strategy as an equilibrium between the resources used and the achieved ends a grand strategy would have the role to make a better use of the limited EU resources and the exploitation of every opportunity. Any success of EU policies has become crucial for a re-validation of the European experiment. Outside the framework of a grand strategy it will become more and more difficult for the EU to face all the difficulties on the

horizon. A grand strategy will preserve the core interests of the EU over the long term and will help it prevent making mistakes in the conduct of both internal as well as external policies.

The main reasoning behind the pledging for a Grand Strategy that has as milestones the creation of euro-spheres is directly related to the potential evolution of these euro-spheres considering the integration model and spill-over effects. The euro-spheres main purpose would be to secure EU and its neighbour's interests so to create an area of stability and prosperity. The ultimate form of integration of the euro-sphere would be the one in which the members of the euro-spheres would become stakeholders of their own security and economic functioning in tandem with the EU and would reject out of self-interest any non-euro-sphere interference.

For the establishment of a EURO-MED euro-sphere have been identified some core areas that can offer mutual grounds for the involved partners: development of the Maghreb-wide energy market; develop and construct more efficient energy infrastructure networks, build infrastructure connections between the Trans-European Transport network and the transport of goods and people, joint management of migratory flows and solve the Syrian crisis. From this I have chosen the joint management of migratory flows to prove the main arguments around the euro-sphere and how a euro-sphere can start. The history of European integration points out, that political integration advancements have coincided with important crisis and challenges. As such can also be the case currently for moving ahead towards a new model of cooperation in the neighbourhood of EU, based on the euro-spheres, if we take the example of the most significant crisis from the Mediterranean region in the last decades: the Syrian conflict and the mass migration generated by it. For this reason, I chose to exemplify how the EURO-MED euro-sphere can be built using as a starting point for cooperation the objective of jointly managing the migration flows.

Based on these findings at the end of the paper 9 recommendations are provided for future investigations of the problematic and for European Union institutions.

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