
THE PAST AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGIC CULTURE AND THINKING IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENSE

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***Summary:** The article is devoted to the evolution of European Union strategic documents, considered in the light of the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Security and Defense Policy/Common Security and Defense Policy integrated in it. Through the comparative analysis, conclusions are drawn that contribute to the understanding of the dynamics shaping strategic thinking and culture in the European Union in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy/Common Security and Defense Policy.*

***Key words:** Strategic culture, European Union, security and defense, security strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics since the end of the Cold War have unlocked new opportunities for cooperation between countries and organizations that could not have been realized before. The “fall” of the Berlin Wall changed the geopolitical landscape, allowing to start processes of restructuring of the allied blocs, the entry of liberal democracy in the countries of the former “Eastern” bloc, the creation of new partnerships, etc. The European Union (EU) has become one of the possible alternatives for these countries. The attractiveness of the pro-European choice for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was dictated by the seemingly feasible attractive alternative in economic, political and social terms. These processes have also had a relevant impact on both the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the development of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)/Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) ideas.

The blurred prism through which all these processes were observed both by the EU and the entire international community gave a distorted picture of what was happening on the old continent. Moreover, everyone (both the EU itself and the countries of the “Eastern” bloc) were enthusiastic because the door of opportunities and prospects for development in a better direction was opened before them.

The thesis in the present article mainly uses a comparative approach. In particular, the analysis is aimed at finding answers to the following questions:

- Has the EU, through its strategic documents, been able to find mechanisms to jointly and effectively respond to the European and global challenges to the continent's security?

- Whether the strategic documents managed, on the one hand, to adequately foresee the developing situation in the relations between the EU, Russia, Ukraine and, on the other hand, whether only the preparation of strategic documents by the EU is a sufficient condition to support the Union in its actions to prevent a dangerous escalation leading to war, such as the one that broke out between Russia and Ukraine?

The evolution of the EU's strategic documents, seen in the light of the development of the CFSP and its integrated ESDP/CSDP, define the time frame for this comparative study. As it is based on the study of specific EU strategic documents, reflecting both the position of the Union itself and its Member States, this method is expected to lead to relatively accurate conclusions in providing an understanding of the dynamics shaping strategic thinking and culture in the EU in the field of CFSP/CSDP.

1. THE STRATEGIC CULTURE AND THINKING OF THE EU IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENSE IN THE PERIOD 2003-2008

The beginning of the development of the EU's strategic awareness and thinking in the field of security was set in 2003 with the adoption of the first European Security Strategy (ESS), often referred to as the "Solana Document". Although it already has a "historical" dimension (Türke, 2016, p. 3), it is one of the main stages in the development of European security (Keinis, 2017, p. 69; Bazaluk, & Svyrydenko, 2017, p. 89). The document of strategic importance for the EU provided the conceptual framework for the CFSP in which the ESDP was integrated and which later became the CSDP (Heusgen, 2005, p. 7; Keinis, 2017, p. 69).

Entitled "A Secure Europe in a Better World", the ESS was primarily a response to the political pressures in Europe generated after the Iraq War in 2003 (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015, p. 1; Andersson et al., 2011, p. 5) and for this purpose it had to contribute to the EU's own crisis management capabilities after the diplomatic failure crystallized around the invasion of Iraq on the one hand in Europe and on the other between the EU and the US (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 375). One of the main reasons why the EU was so divided on Iraq was precisely the lack of strategic thinking about things in a logical and sensible way. In contrast, most member states dealt with the problem through political motivations, some internal, some external, leading to a merely reactive policy (Haine, 2004).

The very opening sentence of the ESS, which says that "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure and free" reveals how much the EU's external environment – and the internal situation – has changed in the

meantime (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015, p. 2). On the other hand, it is also a eulogy of Europe as a peace project, giving it the main credit for reaching “a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history”, inter alia, through the policy of enlargement (Mälksoo, 2016, pp. 377-378).

As a way to deal with the complex, multifaceted and more dangerous security environment of the 21st century, reinforced by globalization (Balla, 2017, p. 400), Europe for the first time analyzed the EU security environment and identified the key security challenges and the resulting hence political consequences for the EU (Keinis, 2017, p. 69).

This first ESS had an ambitious geopolitical scope, stating that the EU “is inevitably a global player” and therefore had to be “ready to share responsibility for global security” and “contribute to building a better world” (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015, p. 1). In the words of Mälksoo (2016), this marks the maturation of the EU as a strategic actor aiming to constitute and communicate its ambition to become and be recognized as such. The author identifies this as the first comprehensive communication of the EU's aspirations for status as a security factor, itself a status symbol (p. 377).

The document is also seen as significant as it sets in motion the momentum the EU badly needed to become a more effective security player. Said dynamics include a top-down approach to security requirements: i.e. starting from the definition of basic interests and objectives, passing through the identification of threats and risks, to formulating a set of coordinated policies and thus an EU security strategy (Baroowa, 2006, p. 44). Thus, with the shared foreign policy priorities defined in the document, it was intended to encourage concerted collective foreign action (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015, p. 1).

While the authors of the ESS clearly state that “large-scale aggression against any member state is now unlikely”, they explicitly emphasize that “Europe faces new threats that are more diverse, less visible and less predictable” (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 3). The latter, outlined in the document as key, come down to: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, statelessness and organized crime. Moreover, the ESS not only lists threats, but also highlights the possible interaction between key threats and calls for policy implications of the new security environment (Keinis, 2017, p. 69). Thus, the EU's strategic document shows that internal and external security are intertwined to the point of almost impossible distinction (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 378).

In addition to threats, the ESS established principles and set clear objectives to advance the EU's security interests based on its common core values such as respect for freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights and dignity (Balla, 2017, p. 400). Europe's strategy is based mainly on three goals that the EU claims to realize in order to protect European security and values (Heusgen, 2005, p. 7):

- Taking action against identified key threats;
- Expanding the security zone around the EU – i.e. to build security in its neighboring regions (the Balkans, the Middle East and the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus) by extending the benefits of social and economic cooperation as stabilizing factors (Balla, 2017, p. 400; Heusgen, 2005, p. 7), and the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is defined as a strategic priority for Europe;

- An international order based on effective multilateralism – in a world of global threats, markets and media, Europe's security and prosperity depend on a vigorous system of multilateralism (Heusgen, 2005, p. 7). On this basis, the UN and the transatlantic partnership are the key words in the document. The ESS also reaffirms the need for the EU to engage on the world stage proactively and to act when the rules are broken (Balla, 2017, p. 401).

By its very nature, the ESS of 2003 is not a perfect document, but it is an important achievement for the EU in creating its own, authentic form of security and defense policy. Along with the noteworthy positive intentions and achievements of the ESS, it should be pointed out that there are not a few criticisms of this document, which are concluded in what gives rise to ambiguity or what has not found a place in it.

To the catalog of criteria that this strategy does not fulfill, we can point to the following:

1. The main criticism faced by the ESS since 2003 was its general nature (Balla, 2017, p. 407) and this gave grounds to argue that the "Solana Document" was rather a fundamental concept for the development of the CFSP, and not a strategy (Türke, 2016, p. 3). To clarify the grounds for this criticism it is pertinent to relate Mintzberg's (1987) five Ps of strategy. If we define strategy as the perspective it claims to be, this, according to Mintzberg (1987), raises intriguing questions about intention and behavior in a collective context (p. 21). If, in Mintzberg's (1987) view of strategy as a perspective, we replace the expression "group of people" with member states and replace "organization" with the EU, then we would say, in Mintzberg's spirit, that "the organization (i.e., the EU) is collective action in pursuit of a common mission (i.e. a group of people (the member states) acting under a common label somehow find the means to cooperate)". Then, according to Mintzberg, "strategy as a perspective focuses our attention on the reflections and actions of the collective (EU) – how intentions spread across the group of people (the member states) to become shared as norms and values, and how patterns of behavior become deeply rooted in the group (the member states)" (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 21). And in this context, one of the reasons for the criticism of the general nature of the strategy is rooted in the cultural differences in the strategic thinking of the European countries, which required finding the lowest common denominator to unite the member states. The other reason is that the EU strategy paper (2003) does not propose

scenarios. A document of the future should be an opportunity to approve specific decisions and priorities as a security provider (Balla, 2017, p. 407). This again can be linked to the view of Mintzberg (1987) who states that “as a plan, strategy is concerned with how leaders attempt to set direction for organizations, to steer them towards predetermined courses of action” (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 20). In this sense, the EU itself has given rise to widespread discussions about the importance of having a White Paper that lists possible scenarios that are useful to assess the EU's power and guide it towards a "common security vision" (Türke, 2016, p 6).

2. In the context of the time in which the ESS was adopted, it aimed to state the EU's ambition to become a global player and set out a rules-based concept of international relations driven mainly by humanitarian incentives (Balla, 2017, p. 403). The EU's aspiration to become a “global power” is well highlighted in the ESS, but the criticism here is that the strategy fails to set out clear policy goals, means and instruments (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 378). As a continuation of the reasoning in this direction, the other aspect is subject to criticism that the EU does not mention the concept of strategic autonomy, thus limiting the EU's global actions in support of multilateral security frameworks (Arteaga, 2017, p. 1). Supporting this contention is Mälksoo's (2016) view that the main target audience of the ESS – and a key contextualizing factor/actor due to the transatlantic Iraq crisis – is the US, whose dominant position as a military factor is duly acknowledged but also subtly criticized in the document, which says: “no single country is capable of dealing with today's complex problems on its own.” Hence the announcement of the EU's intention to “share responsibility for global security and building a better world” and calls for a more active pursuit of the Union's strategic goals (p. 378). In the same vein is the claim of Balla (2017), who emphasizes that it is to this end that the EU document begins with the remark that the US has played a critical role in European integration and European security, and ends with the statement, “acting together, the EU and the United States can be a formidable force for good in the world” (p. 402). In this sense, the EU is defined as a global actor in a narrower sense, since its international political influence is based on the existence of a system of effective multilateral institutions and accepted norms and principles that are worth preserving (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015, p. 2).

3. The ESS outlines the story the EU tells about itself and the world in 2003 (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 377), i.e. the snapshot the document takes is of the perception (at that time) of threats as a central diagnostic element in the management of EU security and foreign policy objectives (Suissa, 2010, p. 6). Therefore, the limitations of the ESS can also be explained by the specific circumstances of its genesis (Balla, 2017, p. 403). As of 2003, the EU is at an important moment that deserves a strategic reflection on the objectives and priorities of the ESDP (Biscop, 2010), but this instrument did not receive

a specific strategic concept from the ESDP. The text of the strategy itself touches only superficially on the issue of mutual defense, and the ESDP is limited to crisis management and conflict prevention (Balla, 2017, p. 403). In the words of Biscop (2010), there is a lack of connection between the vague ambition expressed in the 2003 ESS – “sharing responsibility for global security” – and the practice of ESDP operations and capability development. According to the author, even if the EU's commitment to global peace and security could be strengthened, there are unfortunately too many conflicts and crises for the EU to deal effectively with all of them, especially with its stated leading role. While resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict is considered a strategic priority for Europe, building security in Europe's eastern neighborhood, the Balkans and the Mediterranean, are emerging as key regional focuses of the ESS (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 378). Despite this clear statement of geographic priority in the strategy, this does not necessarily mean proactive engagement. This predetermines the need to define priority regions and scenarios in relation to Europe's vital interests. In addition, it requires that the EU's interests and objectives in a given region determine the extent to which it will contribute or even take the lead in conflict resolution and crisis management through diplomatic, civilian and military instruments. On this issue, the strategic thinking of the EU is the least clearly expressed (Biscop, 2010).

4. In order to fulfill the ambition of contributing to a wider range of missions and sustaining several operations simultaneously, engaging both civil and military measures, more defense resources had to be allocated. Defense spending was to be used more efficiently by reducing duplication of assets and improving shared intelligence between EU member states and partners. In this connection, the slogan of an “effective multilateral approach” (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 378) appears in the ESS. On the one hand, this finds expression in the EU's stated intention in the strategy to continue working for closer relations with Russia, which is a major factor for the security and prosperity of the Union. This stems from the fact that Russia's resurgence on the world stage and China's economic dynamism were key factors in international security at the time (Balla, 2017, p. 404). On the other hand, global governance based on multilateralism necessitates seeking better cooperation with another strategic partner such as the UN. Close cooperation with the UN was hoped to be complemented by the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO in crisis management (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 378). But as the 2003 snapshot shows, the majority of EU member states still prefer NATO to Europe as a separate security force. Confidence in NATO is largely based on US military assets, from which EU member states cannot easily distance themselves (Balla, 2017, p. 403). This again raises the question of the effectiveness and autonomy of the EU as a security actor, which is caused on the one hand by the specific structure and complex functioning

mechanisms of the EU, and on the other hand, by the very limitations of the EU compared to some of its well-secured countries members. Unlike NATO, which was primarily created as a defense alliance, the EU has evolved into a *sui generis* security provider role (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 375). Thus, a certain lack of coherence remains in the European document regarding the distinctive European approach to foreign and security policy. In reality, the definition of European politics seems to be based on European interests, and these differ because member states differ in size, economic power, and geographical and historical facts. The differing national interests of EU member states have often placed constraints on the ESDP and continue to be a problem. So the ESS of 2003 failed in this sense to move the ESDP project towards a real expression (Balla, 2017, pp. 403-404).

Five years after the adoption of the ESS, a number of reasons emerged that underpinned the revision of the strategic document. One of them is due to the ambiguity in the ESS regarding the concrete results of the policy, which required them to be considered more constructively (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 379). The other reasons that led Member States to 'reconsider' the strategy are linked to a number of key events that have taken place both within and outside the Union. One of the changes within the Union is its expansion to twenty-seven member states, many of which were not involved in the drafting of the 2003 ESS. As for the external dimension of the changes, it can be mention the evolving security environment, and in particular Russia, which has taken a more assertive position in the neighboring region. This position was reinforced during the war with Georgia in August 2008¹, which caused great concern for many EU governments (Andersson et al., 2011, p. 22). In this context, the undertaken revision of the ESS was a request for an ambitious attempt to assess the changes that occurred between 2003 and 2008, including the signing of the Lisbon Treaty, and to prepare a new version of the document (Balla, 2017, p. 404).

Although sufficient arguments had been made regarding the need to revise the ESS, there were also disagreements on the part of some member states. The example that Andersson et al. (2011) point out is mostly linked to Germany, which fears that reopening the ESS will trigger an uncomfortable debate on Russia, creating or even reinforcing divisions between new and old member states. Another group of member states feared that this would lead to the risk of "securitizing" the EU's energy and climate policies. Adding to the list of concerns is the risk of "watering down" the ESS into a less successful product and that rewriting the ESS would hinder ongoing efforts to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon (pp. 22-23).

¹ Russia's war with Georgia caused a distinct decline in relations between Russia and the EU, and at the time it seemed like a simple "galvanization" of relations between Europe and Russia, but in fact it heralded a decisive split. Bildt, C. (n.d.). *Russia, the European Union, and the Eastern Partnership*. ECFR Riga Series. Retrieved January 12, 2024, from https://ecfr.eu/archive/page/-/Riga_papers_Carl_Bildt.pdf

The 2008 revision did not result in changes to the existing security strategy, nor did it lead to the development of a new one, but ended only with an ESS implementation report entitled “Providing Security in a Changing World”², which was presented to the European Council by Javier Solana, together with the European Commission.

In the 2008 Report, the authors tried to clarify the main threats to European security, as events clearly did not follow the ESS scenario of 2003. It became clear that the strategy was not able to predict the real course of events (Bazaluk & Svyrydenko, 2017, p. 89). In this regard, the 2008 Report, in addition to clarifying the role of the European Defense Agency (EDA), battlegroups and civil response teams (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 379), also included some noteworthy additions to the document by 2003, on several new challenges such as: cyber security, energy security, maritime security (piracy) and climate change, and some emphasis on better institutional coordination and more strategic decision-making, as well as greater commitment with the EU's neighbors (Balla, 2017, p. 405; Mälksoo, 2016, p. 379).

The context of the report showed that the EU remains an anchor of stability and carries greater responsibilities than at any time in its history. Europe faced increasingly complex threats and challenges, accelerated by globalization, power shifts and differences in values. To meet these new challenges, Europe has had to examine its practice and further develop implementation, as the identified range of threats and challenges to its security interests has not disappeared, but has become more significant and complex (Keinis, 2017, p. 69).

The generally accepted view is that the conclusions of the 2008 Report were not satisfactory and in reality the new document failed to meet its initial ambition, as well as not assessing the successes and effectiveness of the EU's foreign and security policy (Balla, 2017, p. 405). Moreover, according to Bazaluk and Svyrydenko (2017), there are too many miscalculations in the 2008 Report, some of which are: 1) EU enlargement with border countries; 2) the failures in the development and behavior of the Russian Federation in the international arena. All events were not foreseen in either the 2003 strategy or the 2008 implementation report (p. 90). In addition, Andersson et al. (2011) point out that the report offers very little guidance on the type of situations in which military tools can be used. It fails to recognize the significant difficulties facing the conduct of security policy in the EU, particularly in relation to issues of institutional coordination. It offers few concrete recommendations for change and, despite some criticism since the

² For the full text of the document, see: Council of the European Union. (2008, December 11). *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World*, Brussels. Retrieved January 29, 2024, from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/104630.pdf

2003 ESS, does not include any follow-up and review mechanisms. As such, the 2008 ESS implementation report cannot be defined as a “strategic review” in the sense that it does not assess the effectiveness, consider the interaction between sub-strategies, policies and actions or set EU foreign policy priorities (years 24-25).

2. THE PATH OF STRATEGIC RETHINKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW GLOBAL STRATEGY OF 2016

From 2008 to 2016, Europe has faced its worst nightmares. A wave of new foreign policy and security challenges have rendered some aspects of the EU's previous strategic thinking obsolete (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015). In this context, it should be noted that the ESS of 2003, as well as the subsequent revision of 2008, lost their relevance, and in the conditions of growing internal and external uncertainty, European strategic autonomy began to move more than its industrial and technological component (Arteaga, 2017).

And while the EU was slowly building and connecting its internal institutions, capacities and capabilities (with more or less success), the world changed (Žutić, & Vukadinović, 2017, p. 101), and Europe found itself facing a deteriorating environment for security (Drent, & Zandee, 2016, p. 70). This deterioration, according to Bendiek and Kaim (2015), is the result of the simultaneity of those crises (the financial crisis of 2008, the Arab Spring, the shock of Russian military adventurism in Georgia, Ukraine, terrorism and the rise of the Islamic State, European jihadists and the refugee crisis), which were in some respects very different, and which threatened the interests and values of the Union at different levels.

Most of the conflicts and wars raging in 2003 either continued or were replaced by new ones, in the same or nearby areas of the world. Although these conflicts disturbed the EU's sense of security, the real risks came from the new conflicts that arose on the EU's borders (Žutić, & Vukadinović, 2017, p. 101). In this regard, Drent and Zandee (2016) point out that the so-called “ring of fire” that surrounded the EU could rather be defined as a “crescent of complex security threats” in the east, southeast and south (p. 70).

To the east, with Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, European borders were forcibly redrawn for the first time in decades. To the south and southeast, the advance of the Islamic State in Iraq, Syria, and also Libya has challenged the foundations and territorial boundaries of the Middle East and North African state system (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015). This destabilization of the European security environment further led to a huge increase in refugees to Europe. On the other hand, the tragic terrorist attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 proved that extremism in the Middle East can reach the press offices, cafes and theaters of a European capital (Drent, & Zandee,

2016, p 70). All this clearly highlighted the sad realization that “peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given” (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 379). The change in the global security landscape from 2003 to 2016 (Žutić, & Vukadinović, 2017) made it clear that no one had to explain anymore that the external and internal dimensions of security were inextricably linked (Drent, & Zandee, 2016, p. 70). Thus, the crises and conflicts of 2014, including the crisis in Ukraine and the advance of the Islamic State, have revived the question of the EU's impact on security and geopolitical horizons (Bendiek, & Kaim, 2015).

In June 2015, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, presented her strategic assessment of the global context to EU leaders and she was asked to prepare an EU Global Strategy for Foreign Affairs and Policy of security to guide global policy for EU action in the future (Balla, 2017, p. 406). This was a unique opportunity for the EU to reposition itself as a world leader and promote greater unity and joined-up approaches in its external actions (Gavas et al., 2016).

Security in 2016 was more tumultuous and uncertain for the EU than in 2003 (Žutić, & Vukadinović, 2017, p. 101) and a brief analysis of the post-2003 EU security environment shows that the new strategy had to be developed in times of growing uncertainty and uncertainty. The strategy had to take into account the highly turbulent environment in Europe and beyond, marked by the Brexit referendum, the migration crisis, the ongoing war in Syria, terrorist attacks inside and outside the EU and the “arc of instability” around Europe (Buitelaar, Larik, Matta, & de Vos, 2016). Thus, Federica Mogherini, designated as the architect of the new strategy, had the challenging task of defining the goals and direction of the Union's strategic engagement in what she described as a complex, interconnected and contested world (Drent, & Zandee, 2016, p. 69). In the current geopolitical and security environment, in the words of Gavas et al. (2016) the development of the EU Global Strategy was faced with two challenges:

1. Considerations of security threats (especially in Europe's neighborhood) had to be carefully balanced with global challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. In this context, Europe needed a holistic view of peace and sustainable development beyond short-term interventionism, taking into account the underlying and deep-seated problems rooted in poverty, inequality, oppression and environmental degradation.

2. Political problems could no longer be classified as either external or internal, posing significant challenges to EU institutions and policy-making. Individual policies could not address global threats (such as terrorism, armed conflict, infectious diseases or climate change) and opportunities (such as better integrated markets, good health and well-being, decent jobs and economic growth). They required unified responses across a range of foreign

and domestic policies. However, path dependence in the EU tends to keep the spheres of external (and internal) action separate, avoiding joint competences and responsibilities. Institutional barriers and short-sighted policy development undermined efforts to improve coherence and collective action (Gavas et al., 2016).

Driven by the above considerations, in July 2016 the European Council in Brussels adopted the brand new Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) entitled "Shared Vision, Shared Action: A Stronger Europe".³ The document reveals that the EU has understood its immediate geopolitical dangers. In reality, it is a cautious language document that recognizes the importance of the Union, but proclaims only further cooperation and not further integration between European partners (Balla, 2017, p. 409). Just a quick look at the EUGS build makes it clear that it is, in fact, everything that the ESS aspired to be, but never was. In the light of the EUGS, it can be argued that the ESS is actually an aspirational project that shows the need for an EU strategy, while the EUGS is the strategy itself (Žutić, & Vukadinović, 2017, p. 104). Compared to the original 2003 ESS, the distinctive features of the EUGS include an explicit recourse to EU self-interest and a reduction in the transformative ambitions of EU foreign policy. Unlike the ESS, the EUGS is "more aware of the limitations imposed by its own capabilities and the intransigence of others" and is more specific about the EU's strategic priorities ("Security and Defence", "Building State and Society Resilience", "An Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crisis", "Cooperative Regional Orders", "Rules-Based Governance", and "Public Diplomacy") (Rabinovych, & Reptova, 2019). Seen from another angle, in the EUGS the leading theme of "pragmatic idealism" and the building blocks in which EU interests precede EU principles betray the attempt at an interest-based approach (Drent, & Zandee, 2016, p. 72). This defines the EUGS as different from the ESS in the way the strategy is presented. It does not outline global challenges and key threats, but reveals common interests, principles and priorities for achieving its goals. In other words, the EUGS talks from the inside-out – what the EU wants, needs and can do to achieve its goals – while the ESS observes from the outside-in – what are the threats and problems surrounding the EU and how should the EU position itself towards them (Žutić, & Vukadinović, 2017, p. 103).

What is striking about the EUGS is that the EU's belief in its own "permanent pulling power" capable of driving the Union's transformation to the east and south appears intact, even though the Ukrainian upheaval and the Arab Spring have significantly tempered the EU's normative self-confidence. In addition, the geographical scope of the EU's commitment ambitions is more emphatic – "in Europe and surrounding regions", while

³ For the full text of the strategy, see: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf

pursuing commitment further afield is envisaged as more “targeted”. This healthy dose of realism is particularly relevant now that the most capable defense actor (the UK) has decided to leave the Union, thereby severely curtailing the already dubious pool of resources and capabilities available to the EU to fulfill its lofty strategic objectives visions. In general, more emphasis is placed on linking visions to implementation, for example through enlargement and migration policies (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 380).

Another distinctive feature of the EUGS is that it re-emphasized the importance of the industrial component for the EU's strategic autonomy and defense policy and proposed to develop a specific defense strategy that would define the level of ambition, the tasks and capability requirements and the priorities of the Member States. However, the defense strategy was never finalized, and in November 2016 the Council adopted as its priority ambition to intervene in external conflicts to manage crises, strengthen the capacity of vulnerable countries and protect populations. Such levels of ambition limit the CSDP's strategic autonomy by excluding collective defense from its purview (Arteaga, 2017).

Important corrections have also been introduced regarding the previously too optimistic position of progress towards a strategic partnership with Russia. The strategy clearly supports the EU's decisive policy line taken after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its involvement in the Ukraine crisis. Russia's fall from the EU's graces – from “a key factor in our security and prosperity”, as the ESS put it, to a country with which relations “present a key strategic challenge” – is indeed steep. Thus, “sustainability” also refers to the defense of the European security order, which has been significantly disrupted by Russia's actions in Ukraine, showing the EU's learning curve in the encounter between “postmodern” and “modern” security actors (Mälksoo, 2016, p.380). The question remains whether, overall, the Union has fully achieved the initial goals set back in 1999, or whether it continues to react *ad hoc* and refine its political and strategic “talk”. In the case of the most recent missions launched in 2022 and 2023 in Ukraine and Moldova (already with the status of candidate states), however, it is a question of the EU's pre-concern for its own security. In addition, the EU indirectly demonstrates to Russia its own importance in the field of regional security, including in the civilian aspects of the CSDP (Rabohchiyska, 2023, p. 188).

Despite the progress made, which was particularly relevant in relation to the civilian dimension of the EU's security and defense policy, and in the Union's efforts to address key hybrid threats, obstacles to operational implementation persist in the form of different mentalities as well as competing were prioritized, which in turn led to an unbalanced distribution of political attention and resources (Pirozzi, & Ntousas, 2019). In confirmation of what has been said, Balla (2017) argues that the new

document declares further cooperation and not further integration between the European partners. But what the EU really needed was a genuine transformative agenda that promoted further unity and integration between its member states (p. 410).

The security environment and the geopolitical situation both in 2016 when the EUGS was adopted and in 2017 and 2018, with the release of progress reports on the implementation of the Global Strategy, show that Europe remains at a crossroads. The member states of the Union faced two options: either to stick to the national approach to dealing with the enormous security challenges of the 21st century, or to take the necessary steps towards deepening defense cooperation. According to Drent and Zandee (2016), the first option will automatically lead to a loss of importance and influence on the international chessboard, as a fragmented Europe will not be able to play a serious role against the rising kings and queens. The second option provides the EU with the capacity to support its international role in diplomacy, trade and economics, as well as to contribute to conflict management. The conclusion the two authors point to is that without more defense cooperation the EU will not be able to act as a security provider or have the capacity to protect its own security (p. 77).

It is therefore important that documents such as the ESS and the EUGS serve as a guiding star in stormy waters and do not end up in a desk drawer, having failed to make their mark in the critical times in which they were adopted (Buitelaar, Larik, Matta, & de Vos, 2016). In other words, the Global Strategy process was not to remain limited to a document, but was to be a catalyst for much-needed implementation (Drent, & Zandee, 2016, p. 78). In this regard, Pirozzi and Ntousas (2019) point out that the political, financial and institutional seeds that make the EU speak and act united on the world stage have been planted, but their flowering depends and will continue to depend for the foreseeable future on the level of engagement of the institutions in Brussels and the Member States to act on the strategic advice of the EUGS: overcoming the silo mentality⁴ and avoiding internal competition (p. 6). Furthermore, sailing at the right knot speed and reaching safe ports will require Europe to have all the necessary capabilities (Drent, & Zandee, 2016, p. 70).

⁴ The definition of a silo mentality states that it is a mindset found in organizations that is inward-looking and opposed to sharing information and resources with other people or departments within the organization. With this mindset, people have little interest in understanding their role in the success of the organization as a whole. Perception Dynamics. (n.d.). The Leadership Game from Perception Dynamics. Improving every aspect of organizational performance: Leadership, Project Management, Strategy, Business Processes, Team & Measurement. *Perception Dynamics Ltd.* Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.perceptiondynamics.info/silo-mentality/how-to-remove-silo-mentality/>

3. NAVIGATING WITH THE EU STRATEGIC COMPASS TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE EUROPE

In June 2020, EU Member States tasked the High Representative with launching a two-year reflection process to develop a “Strategic Compass” to guide the implementation of the security and defense dimension of the EU Global Strategy (Blockmans, 2022). The fruit of many months of debate in Brussels, this effort to align the strategic thinking of the 27 member states, each of which has its own foreign and defense policies, was conceived as a foundational document for a geopolitical EU (Withney, 2022). In this regard, a number of reports were developed, based on webinars and conferences organized jointly by the Ministries of Defense of the countries holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). The results of these webinars and conferences came out in the form of recommendations with which the development of the new strategy document should be synchronized.

For example, a report of 4 June 2021, based on a conference jointly organized by the Ministry of Defense of Finland, the Ministry of Defense of Latvia and the EUISS, emphasizes the importance of security of supply for EU security and defense and improving resilience of the EU.⁵ The document states that supply and logistics sustainability is a multidimensional topic that includes legal, economic, industrial, environmental and strategic aspects. It states that there is no agreed EU definition of what security of supply means in the defense sector, but there is widespread recognition that it is crucial that Member States fulfill their defense commitments at national and international level. In addition, it is considered that for the defense sector, constraints in the supply of key raw materials and technological components could undermine the effectiveness and maintenance of defense capabilities and equipment. Due to the fact that some critical raw materials are in the hands of only a few countries, the risk of harmful dependencies is quite high. Yet it is not only defense equipment that is important, security of supply is also fundamental to the functioning of critical infrastructure in the EU. In this context, it is stated that the security of financial services, health systems, transport and the digital economy of the Union are also dependent on the sustainability of supply and logistics. In this regard, security of supply has internal and external dimensions. In close relation to the above, the report articulates as a key challenge the management of cross-border supply chains in the EU, because at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic it became clear that there was a lack of solidarity within the Union, which led to border restrictions and lack of trust between EU member states. The paper makes

⁵ For the full text of the report, see: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). (2021, June 04). The Strategic Compass: how to ensure security of supply and enhance the EU’s resilience? EUISS. Retrieved January 04, 2022, from <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-compass-how-ensure-security-supply-and-enhance-eu%E2%80%99s-resilience>

clear that having a coherent national security of supply strategy does not necessarily protect a country from cross-border supply shocks. This, of course, has a direct bearing on defense, as any cross-border restrictions that may emerge between EU member states and NATO allies could seriously undermine military mobility and the supply of equipment, fuel, spare parts and ammunition. In conclusion, the document states that a truly comprehensive approach to security of supply is needed, bringing together Member States, industry and EU institutions (EUISS, 2021, June 04).

Another report from 7 July 2021, based on a webinar jointly organized by the Slovenian Ministry of Defense and the EUISS, in the context of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, emphasizes the need to build a flexible and tailored partnership framework that takes into account the specifics of each partner and the importance of its contribution to EU action.⁶ In particular, the document highlights the EU's enhanced engagement with the Western Balkans on CSDP and CFSP, assuming that the Strategic Compass will provide an opportunity to achieve closer engagement and deeper dialogue with the region and EU candidate countries. Taking into account the strategic realities, the report states that the Western Balkans is a geopolitical priority for the EU and the Union remains the region's main economic and trade partner, but China, Russia and Turkey are also showing interest in the region. For example, after the Covid-19 pandemic, the presence of Russia and China in the Western Balkans increased in part because the EU was too slow to provide medical aid to the region. In this regard, the report states that the EU must understand that it is engaged in a battle for "hearts and minds" in this region. The EU is seen as a unique actor in the region, but is still largely perceived as an economic rather than a security or defense actor. The EU should be seen as a comprehensive security actor, but has so far failed to establish itself as such in the region. For this to happen, the recommendation for the EU is to first consider the candidate countries of the Western Balkans as security providers rather than security consumers. Secondly, it states that there is a need for a shift in thinking and recognition that the EU accession process has facilitated stronger security cooperation between the countries of the region in areas such as counter-terrorism, counter-radicalization and the management of illegal migration. This means that the EU is well placed to work with candidate countries to generate knowledge and gather intelligence. Given these strategic challenges, a new push is needed, with the recommendation that the EU develop tailor-made strategic partnerships for its Western Balkan partners. The bottom line is that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to partners

⁶ For the full text of the report, see: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). (2021, July 07). The Strategic Compass and the Western Balkans: Towards a tailor-made and strategic approach to partnerships? *EUISS*. Retrieved January 04, 2022, from <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-compass-and-western-balkans-towards-tailor-made-and-strategic-approach>

in the region because each has specific needs and contributions. Partnerships must be in the interest of both parties (EUISS, 2021, July 07).

The 28 September 2021 report, based on a webinar jointly organized by the Hungarian Ministry of Defense and the EUISS, highlights the existing challenges facing EU capability development processes and suggests possible options for streamlining them in the context of the Strategic Compass.⁷ In relation to the realities of EU capability development, the paper highlights that there is still a major capability deficit in Europe that hinders the operational effectiveness of the EU and NATO. It is also reported that EU capability development processes are perceived as too complex. The priorities of the Capability Development Plan (CDP), the Coordinated Annual Review of Defense (CARD), the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda (OSRA), the Key Strategic Activities (KSA), the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defense Fund (EDF) and the Headline Goals (HLGs) do not automatically line up, despite some interconnections. This makes it more difficult to synchronize national and European capability priorities. In addition, the multiple EU prioritization tools are considered to add an additional level of administrative burden at national level. Such burden and complexity of the EU process is not an effective way to generate support for EU initiatives from EU member states. All this provokes the need to make a tangible difference in the Strategic Compass on the process of streamlining EU capability development. In this regard, cooperation between the EU and NATO is a critical element of improving the development of capabilities in Europe. EU capability development efforts can have a tangible impact on the goals of the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP) in the area of multinational cooperation. Here again, the main issue that should not be overlooked by the Strategic Compass is the gradual overcoming of the voluntary and collective nature of EU capability processes. The development of a true “EU Defense Planning Process” (EU DPP) could be one option for the future, in full complementarity with the NDPP. In addition, the EU could use the Strategic Compass to specify specifically how the Union will fill 3 to 4 specific capability gaps that would benefit EU Member States and NATO allies, working towards an EU level of military ambition and the Full Spectrum Force Package. And as a final recommendation, it is stated that EU capability development processes could be better aligned with EU financial incentives and national budget cycles. In this regard, the proposed level of ambition is to build on the EDF, the European Peace Facility (EPF) and military mobility

⁷ For the full text of the report, see: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). (2021, September 28). The Strategic Compass and capability development: towards greater coherence? *EUISS*. Retrieved January 04, 2022, from <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-compass-and-capability-development-towards-greater-coherence>

with increased collective financial resources after 2027 (EUISS, 2021, September 28).

The latest report we will look at is based on a high-level online conference organized by the Slovenian Ministry of Defense and the EUISS on 14 October 2021.⁸ Its importance is predicated on the fact that it is dedicated to EU-NATO cooperation and the need for the Strategic Compass to assess how they can better respond to complex crises, emergencies and the overall defense of Europe. The paper's analysis shows that Russia's illegal seizure of Crimea has brought the EU and NATO closer, and that the EU's own shift from strategic innocence to greater responsibility for security and defense has contributed to a more mature EU-NATO partnership. However, it is recognized that there are challenges standing in the way of greater cooperation between the EU and NATO. One of these dynamics is related to the growing importance of EU security and defense and the changing priorities of US interests vis-à-vis Europe and the Indo-Pacific region. In one important respect, the Biden administration appears open to the idea that the EU should take more responsibility for security and defense in its own neighborhood. For some, this may be seen as an opportunity to strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy, but the concept remains divisive among European capitals. Another major issue facing EU-NATO cooperation is the issue of China. In fact, NATO has increasingly focused on the security challenges posed by China, and this approach is largely seen against the backdrop of the US approach to security in the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard, it may be desirable for the EU to have a more balanced approach to China, which implies a more holistic approach to the region. Recognizing the importance of the EU-US dialogue on security and defense, the document makes three suggestions of key areas where the EU and NATO can explore further cooperation: resilience, emerging and disruptive technologies, and climate change. In conclusion, the paper states that the Strategic Compass and Strategic Concept processes represent a key opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the EU and NATO. In this way, through the Strategic Compass and the Strategic Concept, there will be clear opportunities to find synergies and ensure that the results of further EU-NATO cooperation will be greater than the simple sum of the efforts of both sides. For this to happen, both processes must be transparent and encourage further dialogue. The aim should be to increase the capacity of European governments when facing traditional and non-conventional threats. Indeed, both the EU and NATO are in similar strategic situations where it is clear that a zero-sum game mentality will not contribute to the cause of Euro-Atlantic security (EUISS, 2021, October 14).

⁸ For the full text of the report, see: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). (2021, October 14). EU-NATO Cooperation and the Strategic Compass. *EUISS*. Retrieved January 04, 2022, from <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/eu-nato-cooperation-and-strategic-compass>

Thus, as a result of the conducted phase of structured dialogue between EU Member States, EU institutions and experts, as well as based on the first-of-its-kind threat analysis contributed by the intelligence services of the 27 EU Member States, during November 2021, the initial text of the Strategic Compass was presented. Successive versions of the text were discussed in February and March 2022 to reflect the debate between Member States and to take into account the Commission's package of 15 February on defense and space and recent international developments, including in particular, Russia's military aggression against Ukraine (Council of the EU, 2022).

Ultimately, to chart the EU's course through the turbulent waters of the new security environment, shortly after Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the EU Council at its meeting on 21 March 2022 approved the Strategic Compass for Security and Defense.⁹ The Compass provides the EU with an ambitious action plan to strengthen EU security and defense policy by 2030 (Council of the EU, 2022). The question we would ask ourselves is: Has the EU, through the Strategic Compass, been able to make a “qualitative leap and increase its capacity and readiness to act, strengthen its resilience and ensure solidarity and mutual assistance”?

As stated in the strategy paper, the Compass covers all aspects of security and defense policy and is structured around four pillars: acting, investing, partnering and protecting (Council of the EU, 2022). The document clearly spells out what was missing from previous EU strategy documents. It sets out clear EU security and defense objectives, the means to achieve them and concrete timescales by which progress can be measured. As Blockmans (2022) notes on paper, the Strategic Compass provides an opportunity to pre-empt the logjams that have held EU foreign policy back for too long.

In view of the return of power politics, characterized by increased transactionalism¹⁰, shifting partnerships, the use of economic interdependencies as weapons, hybrid warfare and attacks on “global goods”, the document recognizes the need for a more comprehensive defense of Europe, which is a prerequisite for a comprehensive security concept. While the EU will continue to support dialogue aimed at multilateral solutions, it is abundantly clear that the Union will need to strengthen its defense and expeditionary capabilities and invest in new technologies to be able to support diplomacy with force when needed (Blockmans, 2022). In this context, the Compass states in the first pillar “Acting” that in order to be able to act quickly and decisively in the event of a crisis – jointly with

⁹ For the full text, see: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

¹⁰ Transactionalism (from Latin *transigere*), in anthropology, is a theory first presented by Frederick Barth in 1959 to examine social processes and interactions. *Transactionalism*. (n.d.). Encyclopedia69.com. Retrieved May 22, 2023, from <http://www.encyclopedia69.com/eng/d/transactionalism/transactionalism.htm>

partners where possible and alone when necessary, the EU will develop a strong capacity of the EU for rapid deployment with personnel of up to 5,000 people to act in various types of crises (Council of the EU, 2022). The challenge here will be to raise the funds needed to achieve the level of ambition (Blockmans, 2022). In this regard, Withney (2022) points out that this is perhaps the clearest example of the Compass being now obsolete. In support of his claim, the author points out that this has always been a dubious proposition: following the Union's failure to meet the post-Kosovo headline goal of an intervention force of 60,000, and similar lack of success with the subsequent (and never used) 1,500-strong battlegroups, there seems no obvious reason why Europeans or anyone else should take this new initiative seriously. Especially when it is envisaged that command will not be carried out by an EU Operational Headquarters, as first envisaged almost 20 years ago, but by something called the “Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)” – a headquarters that dare not to name itself and which the Compass admits is lacking in manpower, facilities and communications (Withney, 2022).

When additional capabilities are needed, partners will also need to be found to gather intelligence, recruit troops and provide equipment. Here cross-channel and transatlantic relations will prove key. Post-Brexit EU-UK relations require stronger and more structured dialogue and cooperation mechanisms in foreign affairs and security policy (Blockmans, 2022). The Compass clearly states that in order to address common threats and challenges, the EU will develop more adapted bilateral partnerships with like-minded countries and strategic partners such as the US, Canada, Norway, the UK, Japan, etc. (Council of the EU, 2022). As Antinozzi (2022) points out, it must be emphasized here that it is important for the EU to recognize that excluding the UK from European defense would be an unrealistic and counterproductive solution. As such, any mixed feelings and wider political tensions surrounding Brexit must now give way to constructive dialogue between the parties on defense. To this end, Brussels should offer attractive port mechanisms to London, such as *ad hoc* participation in Foreign Affairs Council meetings and other CFSP processes. According to the author, security and defense are multifaceted policy areas with the potential to help restore trust between London and Brussels. And *ad hoc* cooperation in these areas can provide a basis for better political relations in the future. As for Norway, the author says it is startling that the Strategic Compass mentions it alongside the UK and Canada, the latter two having much less institutionalized relations with the EU. This seems to ignore the fact that Norway, which is not a member state of the EU and which is the most integrated in it, could potentially reduce its willingness to deepen its security and defense relations with the Union. Any special partnership with

Norway must therefore reassure Oslo that it will not be left out of EU defense integration (Antinozzi, 2022).

Antinozzi (2022) also emphasizes the fact that strategic partnerships are a political issue, and in politics perceptions matter. Unlike the previous strategic documents, the Strategic Compass tries to distinguish and divide the strategic partners of the EU, even organizing them into separate groups of multilateral (NATO and UN), regional (African Union, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and bilateral ones. The strategic compass also makes a difference in the segment of the EU's bilateral relations, with the US prominently featured as an important partner. In the words of Antinozzi (2022), in the implementation of the Strategic Compass, what must be avoided in the field of security and defense is not to allow the proliferation of partnerships to become a convenient way to create the illusion of progress.

In conclusion of the above analysis, it is perhaps appropriate to mention a story told by Withney (2022), which tells how in 1707, the splendidly monikered British Admiral of the Fleet Sir Cloudesley Shovell drowned himself and some two thousand sailors when he ran his ships aground at night on the rocks of the Isles of Scilly. There was nothing wrong with his compass: in the absence of a means to determine longitude, he just did not know where he was. Perhaps this history or the far-sightedness of Monika Panayotova (2021) provoke her to point out that apart from a Strategic Compass that sets the direction of the EU, it also needs a “GPS” to determine its location and speed.¹¹ According to the author, a strategic “GPS” would help the EU strengthen its position as a global actor, learn what High Representative Josep Borrell called the “language of power” and engage in effective multilateralism. The Union must not only know the direction of its travel, but also take into account the speed at which it travels and the time it takes to travel. The Union must also be prepared to find alternative routes when necessary.

Nothing would be worse for the Union's reputation than widening the huge gap between the ambition of what it can achieve and its actual achievements in security and defense (Puglierin, 2021). For the strategic compass process to deliver results, it should not rely solely on the executive authorities and the general EU budget (Blockmans, 2022). Security knowledge is highly specialized and dispersed, and for this purpose it is necessary to build multiple, mostly horizontal connections between people, institutions and organizations for their grouping, storage, distribution and practical application (Stoykov, & Dimitrova, 2018). Strategies should not be just an exercise for the bureaucracy in Brussels, in which it speaks in well-clichéd political phrases. Today we are witnessing the greatest confrontation

¹¹ As Stoykov (2019) points out, “When you don't know where you are, but you follow the direction of the compass, you will only get lost further north than if you were going without it!”.

between the East and the West, in which the people of Ukraine are the biggest victims, and the stage is Europe. This brought to the fore the united European commitment to a strong EU in the field of security and defense, which served as a starting point for the EU to review its strategic priorities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evolution of European security strategies from the 2003 ESS through the 2016 EU Global Strategy to the 2022 Strategic Compass reflects a profound change in the EU's strategic culture and thinking. Over the past two decades, the EU has undergone significant transformations in response to internal and external challenges, necessitating a reassessment of its security and defense priorities and approaches.

The 2003 ESS is seen as the cornerstone of the EU's efforts to formulate a common understanding of security threats and responses. However, the document mainly focuses on traditional security challenges such as terrorism and weapons proliferation, reflecting a state-centric approach to security.

In contrast, the 2016 EUGS represents a diversion from the traditional state-centric paradigm by adopting a more holistic and comprehensive approach to security. Emphasizing the interconnectedness of heterogeneous security challenges, including hybrid threats, climate change and cyberwarfare, the EUGS seeks to integrate civilian and military tools, prioritizing conflict prevention and building resilience.

Building on the foundations laid by its predecessors, the Strategic Compass 2022 represents the latest iteration of the EU's strategic thinking, reaffirming the Union's commitment to a more comprehensive approach to security and defense. With a special focus on emerging technologies, strategic autonomy and partnerships, the Strategic Compass seeks to position the EU as a more assertive and capable actor on the global stage.

Essentially, the development of European security strategies highlights the EU's adaptability and willingness to innovate in response to changing security dynamics. By taking a more comprehensive and proactive approach to security and defense, the EU aims to protect its interests, uphold its values and contribute to global stability in an increasingly complex and insecure world.

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