



*The 10<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference*  
**“DEFENSE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT  
IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY”**  
Braşov, November 13<sup>th</sup> 2015



## **THE EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY, A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

**MAJ. Ioana-Cristina Teişanu**

Ministry of National Defense/Romania

### **Abstract:**

This paper is focused on the European Security Strategy and its content. The main idea is to try to have an overlook from the pragmatic point of view on whether the strategy is still a viable one, due to the fact that it was adopted twelve years ago. By pointing out the historical background, the context and its provisions, the role of NATO and US in the security of Europe, and also the new regional threats, the paper is underlining the necessity of a new European Security Strategy.

*Key words: Security Strategy, European Union, key threats, terrorism, NATO, ambivalence, preventive engagement.*

### **1. Introduction**

The first European Security Strategy (ESS) was adopted in 2003, in the merge of Iraq War, and, in that point of time, given the political context and the geostrategic situation, it was an important asset for the European Union (EU). For the first time since its foundation, all members' states agreed on a path to follow when discussing common security issues, identifying key threats and vulnerabilities. Twelve years after, the ESS adopted in 2003 is still in place. The question if it's still a viable document for the EU, considering the changes in the world and the role of the EU, is more pregnant than ever. Is indeed the ESS a security strategy, as define by specialist? Is there a place and time for a new security strategy or not? Does EU really need a strategy of a sort, considering its characteristic as a union and a non-state actor? How can European leaders reach an agreement on this issue? These are some of the question that this paper is trying to find an answer.

### **2. The European Security Strategy – ESS**

In order to better understand the European Security Strategy and its importance we have to keep in mind what European Union (EU) represents, its past, and, also the background of the adoption of the ESS.

#### **2.1. The European Union- General Facts**

Constituted as a politico-economic union of 28 member states, EU has a system of supranational institutions and functions through intergovernmental decisions of the members' states. The European Commission, the European Council, The Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Parliament are just a few of the EU institutions.

The European Union was at the beginning an economic community, started in 1952 with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), considered to be the beginning of a

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federative Europe, which had as member states Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed by the same six countries. The treaty extended the earlier co-operation within the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and created the European Economic Community (EEC), establishing a customs union. This community have grown over the years by the coming of new member states and also in power by new policy domains. At present, the UE has 28 member states. The Maastricht Treaty established the name “European Union” in 1993 and the European Citizenship. In 2009, the latest major amendment to the constitutional basis of the EU, the Treaty of Lisbon came into force. During the years, the EU grown a single market. Also, the freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital are guaranteed and common policies on trade, agriculture, regional development and so on, are in place. In 1999 the monetary union came into practise. The EU has also a Common Foreign and Security Policy, through which it developed external relations and defence. It, also, have diplomatic missions throughout the world, a Military Committee and a Military Staff. EU has over 500 million inhabitants, 7.3% of the world population. In 2012 the nominal gross domestic product (GDP) was 16.584 trillion US dollars - approximately 23% of global nominal GDP. If it were a country, the EU would come first in nominal GDP.[1]

### **2.2. Adopting the European Security Strategy – “A Secure Europe in a Better World”**

On December 12, 2003 the heads of states and governments of the EU members’ state, adopted the European Security Strategy, proclaiming an intention “to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world”. [2] What the ESS did was to summon up the dimension of external activity of the EU, “in a manner that transcends the metaphorical ‘pillars’ intended to visualize the workings of the Union.” [3] The ESS emerged the foreign and security policy, which comes from the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

It was considered at the time an important document, because it represented the EU’s political project, its hopes and its ambitions. Actually, we can say that it wasn’t what the document had to say, but what it represents: a common political view of the key threats, global challenges and vulnerabilities. And it was a step forward because for the first time the political leaders reached consensus on a common strategy.

The issue of a common security strategy came during the Iraq crisis, which made obvious the lack of common policy grounding among the EU states. It was the 2003 Iraq crisis and the opposite opinions of the world leaders that pull the trigger and it is also surprising how little discussions were concerning what should or should not a Security Strategy contain. Basically, the decision to adopt a security strategy came from the pressure of the public opinion, when the leaders of the EU failed on handling the Iraq crisis. Thus, the basic goal of the document was to give the EU leaders a common and agreed platform on which they could be able to formulate common and meaningful policies.

### **2.3. Report on Implementation of the ESS (RI-ESS) – Providing Security in a Changing World.**

Five years after the adaptation of ESS, it was obvious that the document needed to be changed or at least upgraded, mostly because, as we are going to discuss later on, it failed to its purpose, which is to create outputs. It is well known that even when the military capabilities and institutional policy are present, EU does not have clear guidelines in order to use them properly.

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As it was said at the time, wishing to write history, in 2008, the French presidency of the EU called for a review on the ESS. “It was clear for us, from the beginning that we wanted to write an updated version of the ESS, in much the same way that the US updates their National Security Strategy at regular intervals”, a member of the EU Policy Unit about the updating the ESS. But, as it sometimes happens, the leaders of the EU couldn’t reach a consensus regarding this issue. Some considered that a new or even a revised ESS would be an impediment for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, others, like Great Britain and Germany find it irrelevant or had to face some other internal problems. But, the European Council reached consensus on writing an “implementation report“.The Implementation Report of ESS (RI-ESS) aimed to complement the ESS and it didn’t offer “concrete recommendations for the future, nor is any follow-up mechanism provided”. Indeed it is debatable wheatear or not the RI-ESS is compulsory or not for the members ‘states, as we are going to discuss further on about the differences between this document and the ESS.

### **3.The European Security Strategy – A Strategy?**

#### **3.1. Strategy, a definition**

One definition stipulates that “a strategy is a policy-making tool which, which on the basis of the values and interests outline the long-term overall policy objectives to be achieved and the basic categories of instruments to be applied to that end. “[5]It is basically a framework for policy making in a continuously shifting geopolitical situation. A strategy must define goals; establish priorities in order to achieve policy objective, and must adapt to shifting geopolitics. When talking about a national security strategy we have to bear in mind that it is “the development and use of political, economic psychological powers to secure predefined objectives.”[6]

During the years after its adoption, there have been questions whether the ESS is or not a strategy, as define by specialists.

In a first opinion,[7] the critics of ESS suggest that this document falls short on some very important criteria, such as a lack in defining the means to use in order to fulfill the specific purposes. Also, taking into consideration that strategies link the means and political goals, the greatest weakness of the ESS is considered to be, according to its critics the fact that the ESS doesn’t provide the directives as to the ways “the EU foreign policy tool kit can be administrated to deliver concrete results.”[8] Another opinion is that the ESS is indeed a strategy, by all means, that it has the guidelines, the overall policy objectives to be achieved and the basic categories of instruments to be applied in the end. Some experts statues that “a strategy is not meant to be an operational document, but a mission statement, which has to be translated into sub-strategies for specific policy fields and then into concrete policies and actions. This mission statement does contain a number of explicit choices.”[9] Considering this the ESS is a strategy by all means. Anyway, the discussion if the ESS is or not a strategy is somehow irrelevant. It is obviously not perfect and it some ways is vague, due to the lack of consensus. In some other way, maybe the question we should ask ourselves is in what way the ESS is still relevant in a shifting geopolitics context, after twelve years.

#### **3.2. The ESS and the RI- ESS– Shifting Away from Strategic Culture towards Human Security?**

At the beginning of this section it must be said that in 2003 the geopolitical situation was no doubt different that nowadays. Although it uses general and overall terms when coming to define global challenges and key threats, the world has change dramatically in

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the last few years. And when adopted the EU had only 15 members' state in comparison with 2013 when the EU counts 28 members' states. It is obviously that almost half of them didn't get the chance to influence the strategy. It must be said from the beginning that the ESS is based on the "founding myth" of the EU, specifically to the historical responsibility for creating lasting peace among democratic European states. But "founding myth" is been proven to not to be a useful tool on which to base the use of force which is what a security strategy is mainly about.

The ESS implies, also, the "need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and when necessary, robust intervention." In other terms, the ESS is talking about strategic culture which "means the management and exercise of hard power." But, it does not offer guidelines when the hard power, meaning, using of military power or economic coercive power can and must be used. It only stipulates that in: "In failed states military instruments may be needed to restore order". The explanation can be that the members' states failed to reach an agreement. Another explanation is that the European leaders took a different approach in order not to replace NATO' role and to stay committed to "founding myth". Hence, the EU is concerned only to be involved in low intensity crisis management.

In this aspect we have to say that the RI-ESS takes a step back and does not refer to this concept of strategic culture anymore. In other words, the RI-ESS brings into discussion the concept of human security, which means that the national security is replaced with the individual welfare. It is considered that the ESS and also the RI-ESS focus on a status-quo, and making sure that the in nowadays the current challenges demand cooperation between nations. The human security is obviously the opposite of the strategic culture and the EU ambitions are no longer the ones of a great power. Regional crisis management, safeguarding European interests on a global scale or focusing on the need for UN mandates and common assessment of the mission, these are still subjects to debate for the EU leaders'. In other words, when talking about EU foreign and security policy we must admit that even if the EU is beginning achieving military capabilities it is, meanwhile, maintaining the civilian power characteristics [10], which is synonymous to less coercion and more peacekeeping. The fact situation is due to the decision-taking process within the EU, and therefore on the difficulty on making consensus among the members' states, but also to the belief that the EU must be more of a soft power. An important aspect of the strategy is the emphasis on an effective multilateral system. Cooperation between member states, as well as international cooperation, is an important aspect of the strategy.

The United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United States (US), and NATO are seen as important actors in the international order. Regional cooperation is also mentioned. The ESS clearly states that the EU doesn't want, nor is able to face global challenges alone.

### **3.3. The ESS and the RI- ESS- Terrorism, a crime or not?**

In the ESS, adopted in 2003, the potential of a classical war is considered to be improbable. Its place is taken by what it is defined as a "less visible and less predictable threat": terrorism. Also, the ESS identifies "failed states" as a primary threats, as they are known to offer support and hosting the terrorist activities. Seen in connection with the weapon of mass destruction proliferation (WMD) and the "failed states", the ESS assumes that these threats can result in the situation when WMD are placed in the hands of terrorist with the help of "failed states ". These can result in a serious threat, and it is closer to the US concept known as: "war on terror", which define terror as a military matter.

The other threats are regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime. The RI-ESS changes the way of dealing with terrorism. In fact, the document is referring to

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terrorism under the section of: “terrorism and organized crime”, meaning that it is not seen as a distinctive threat, but as a severe form of crime. So, it is no more a military matter. As for the other threats as defined in the ESS, they are replaced with “energy security” and “climate change”. In other words, it is minimizing the importance of this threat. In some views this change can be easily explain on the basis there is a limited understanding between the European states on how terror can be defined.

We can also find a contradiction with the RI-ESS in the body of the treaty of Lisbon, where it is stipulated in clear that the terrorist attacks is the basis of the new “solidarity clause”. And with terror described as a crime in the RI-ESS, “mobilizing military resources to fight crime is somehow excessive.” If the ESS clearly separated and defined the key threats and challenges, having separate section for each of them, the RI-ESS doesn’t prioritize them, but treats them together. There is a lack of prioritizing and the RI-ESS does not detail the matter. And also, we can find in the RI-ESS what it is known as a policy overload, due to the statement according to which EU should be “still more capable, more coherent and more active”. The coherence of ESS and the lack of it in the RI-ESS could be explained by the difference between the political and the strategically thinking of EU. In other words, whether there was at the time a willingness of the EU to define its own priorities, different from the US agenda, these couldn’t be reflected at the level of strategically thinking.

### **3.4. The ESS and the RI- ESS – Hedging strategy as a counterweight to the United States?**

The ESS adopted in 2003, provided that “preventive engagement can avoid more serious problems in the future”, and also the RI-ESS stipulated “prevention threats from becoming sources of conflict must be at the heart of our approach.”Diplomacy, aid and sanctions are the tools to achieve it. It is largely admitted that by preventive engagement it is understood the possibility to weaken a conflict before it begins, which is what the RI-ESS is implying. These can be interpreted as an opposite position from the US, dialogue and cooperation being seen as instruments to handle problem making states. Also, the ESS states that Europe must “share responsibility for global security and in building a better world”.All in one, Europe is seen in the ESS as a balance for the US, a position sustained also by the public opinion and the intellectuals even nowadays.

The American way of solving hot issues by military interventionism is not seen as positive to the EU. What the ESS and the RI-ESS tried to do is to find new ways of dealing with conflicts, in order to have a different approach that the US. This soft approach, that deals with diplomacy, aid and sanctions is not always a good way to solve problems nowadays. A good example is the redefining and restraining the EU police mission in Afghanistan, from its original goals and objectives. The EU position as defined in the RI-ESS is seen by specialists as **hedging** – a financial term meaning the minimizing of risks. Related to foreign policy, its goals is to destabilize a unilateral actions (US, in these case), by rising its coasts. EU accepts all the profit from the US being a great power, but does as little as possible to sustain it in military costs or spending’s.

On one hand both U.S and EU are talking about engagements, and on the other hand they search for alternative security cooperation. The best example is the RI-ESS where we can find a list of other “partners” such as China, Russia and India. The role assumed by EU as a buffer between emerging powers such as China, Russia and Iran and the U.S. is also considered to be a good example of hedging. Although the threats differ in both documents, it concurs on the means to maintain the global security. In fact, multilateralism is the key word. Multilateralism commits the EU members’ states to work for “an effective multilateral system” – UN Security Council, The World Trade

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Organization and NATO are the relevant institutions when talking about imposing security. Iraq, Kosovo independence, Afghan stabilization mission and the South Ossetia conflict in 2008 are recent examples of multilateralism and the results are questionable.

### **4. The future of ESS**

#### **4.1. Twelve years after, a changing world**

Twelve years ago, in 2003, the world looks different then nowadays. During all this time, the world, from geopolitics to threats changes considerably. In 2004 and 2007, the EU has expanded. New European members' states, mean new issues on the EU' agenda. The threats situation changed also. Terrorism -including cyber security-, weapon of mass destruction proliferation, regional conflict, state failure, organized crime, energy security, and climate change, are still there, but the context and nature may be different.

The changes in North Africa and Middle East, the rising of a so called "new auto declared state" -I.S.I.S- a terrorist organization spread in the North of Iraq and Syria, responsible for the latest terrorists attacks in Paris-, phenomenon of uncontrolled migration - a supranational security issues-, economic crisis- the most fundamental security threat so far-, trans boundary threats and another new phenomenon- the migration of young European Muslims to Middle East to join I.S.I.S, and then return to Europe to organize terrorists attacks-, are all to be considered in the immediate future. And we must not forget the recent crisis from Ukraine - the invasion of Crimea, and the fear that Russian will invade Ukraine - that threats to affect the stability of Europe and the security of its eastern border. Some other important issues are related to the international system and shifting geopolitics. Different opinions concerning the Ukraine -Russia conflict are to be found among the EU member states. Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary, have different opinions than the majority, partially, in support to Russia.

The time for a new strategy has come if EU wants to have a word to say. One of it is related to EU relations with different global powers such as Russia, Turkey and Iran. There is no definite position on the relationship with these countries. Some other countries like US, India and Brazil cause only small divergence among the EU members' states. The rise of China, also, creates problems when talking about a common EU position. China roles grow up considerably in EU from the economical point of view, but also from a political and less obvious approach - in the UN context, in Africa, in climate negotiations. The EU leaders failed to have a common approach and that allows China to exercise a "divide and rule" strategy.[11] The US ambivalence must be, also, taken into consideration. After the crisis in Libya it was clear for all, that US wants EU to increase its responsibility in its neighborhoods. The changes in the US foreign policy are from "unilateral intervention" to "unilateral retrenchment".[12]And if Europe wants to be a global actor it has to start acting like one and assume some of the responsibilities involved when talking about the security environment.

#### **4.2. EU and NATO, for the security of Europe**

At the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010, the heads of State and Government adopted NATO Strategic Concept. US have for certain a considerable influence over NATO and no one doubts this, although 21 NATO members' states are members of the EU. Collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security are all important for NATO and represents "essential source of stability in an unpredictable world"[13]. A partnership with NATO implies 'shared values and interest'.[14]

Conventional threats in NATO's concept are the following: terrorism, energy security, proliferation of ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons and weapons of mass

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destruction. It is for certain that the Alliance was and will be based also on nuclear weapons, seen as a security warranty for the Allies. UN and EU are considered important international organizations to cooperate with.

The strategic importance of a 'NATO-Russia cooperation' is mentioned in the document, and it is stipulated that "NATO poses no threat to Russia".[15] As stated before, 21 of 28 member states are also part of NATO. The most important contributor to NATO, from the financial point of view is US. As both organizations are concerned about the security of Europe and 21 EU member states are contributing with military resources to NATO forces, and in the same time to the EU peacekeeping operations, the financial issues is needed to be taken into consideration, also from the perspective of the financial crises. Which one should prevail? And, is it necessary to talk about EU participating in military or peacekeeping operations when the majority of its states are also involved in NATO operations? To what extend? These are the problems to which a new or at least a revised ESS must provide clear solutions.

### **4.3. Reinvalidate, revise or reinvent?**

Twelve years from its adoption, considering the change in the security environment and much more, the question if the ESS is still a viable document for the common security still hasn't found an official answer from the EU leaders. It has, on another hand, created a wide intellectual dispute. A study issued by The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, published in 2011,[16] "The European Security Strategy: Reinvalidate, Revise or Reinvent?" brought to discussion three possible solutions.

First alternative, **reinvalidate** the current ESS involves maintaining the relevant elements of the ESS, to animate the EU "geographical and topical sub-strategies along with country-specific strategies." [17] These sub-strategies ought to make the ESS more approachable and workable strategy.

The second alternative consists in the **revision** of the current ESS. This implies to evaluate and revise the various section, "while keeping the incipient layout and substance of the original document -what goals and methods are still relevant nowadays and an update of the threats menacing Europe"[18]

The third alternative is a considered by this study to be the "more ambitious": "**reinvention of the ESS into a new comprehensive 'European External Action strategy'**" This implies starting from scratch towards amplifying the goals of the document "to guide all of EU's external action, from aid and trade to diplomacy and CSDP missions." [19]

## **5. Conclusion**

Security Strategies are not always produced on regular basis. They are created whenever political emergencies require them. It is also the case of the ESS who was written in a crisis situation mainly the opposite opinions of US and European states in respect to the invasion of Iraq. But, when talking about ESS, we also have to take into discussion that many things have change since 2003.

In 2015, we can say that for Europe, as for the entire civilized world, the time of crises didn't stop to exist. Whether we discuss about the economic crises, the Russians potential threats to the security of Europe, the terrorists attacks, not far then January, 2015, when Paris was for a few days under terror, the Middle East uncertainty, it is clear that for the European leaders the time has arrived to sit together at the negotiation table in order to elaborate and adopt a new and more appropriate strategy. The time for divergent opinions is over. If the European Union wants to become a reliable character on international level it must start by conciliating its divergences. No one says that it will be an easy task to

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achieve. As there is no doubt that due to the dynamics of the European Union and its internal situation, there is no wonder that both ESS and RI-ESS are not to be considered strategies in the academic understanding of the notion.

The current international situation, the rapidly development in the change of the nature of threats, their complexity and multifaceted character are mainly the reason why it is so difficult to create a strategy. Also, the lack of an agreed policy platform, of an own intelligence service, a nonexistent will to subordinate national positions to EU foreign policy, made it hard for the EU experts to come with an efficient security strategy.

It is important to understand that a new security strategy shall provide the basis for the EU leaders to respond promptly to various threats and to have a constant way of action. The lack of a consensus makes it most of the time difficult for the EU to reach consensus on sensitive matters. A new strategy shall also provide a more detailed way of action and of using the military forces. Lately, there have been some discussions at the level of European Commission, concerning the creation of an EU Armed Forces. A positive attitude towards the need for a European Armed Forces is obvious. The details are still missing, but it is a necessary step in the right direction. The future will tell us if the European leaders will reach an agreement on this matter. The creation of an EU Armed Forces will also give the means for reaching the ESS objectives’.

We must not forget the relations with NATO and US, and nevertheless with Russia. A new strategy shall also have to be more concise on these matters. But, as long as the European Union remains divide on whether a new strategy is opportune or not, has divergent opinions about what represents or not threats and about the way of actions concerning them, and has no intention of taking off the veil that covers all the sensitive subjects on its agenda, such as its relations with US, it is obvious that the time for a strong, secure and united Europe did not came yet.

And, what else can be said, but the fact that a fragmented EU is a vulnerable one, and a vulnerable Europe means less security in the world.

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