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ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΔΙΕΘΝΩΝ ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΩΝ ΑΝΑΛΥΣΕΩΝ
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC ANALYSES

The evolution of the European Union Security Strategy: Towards the establishment of a European Army?

LTC Georgios KOUKAKIS

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Towards the establishment of a European Army?**

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April 2024

Disclosure Statement

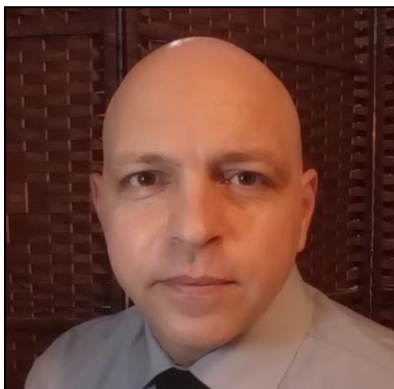
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In addition to his involvement in academic research regarding international relations, Georgios is a columnist in a number of foreign affairs, geopolitics and international affairs websites such as '*Foreign Affairs - The Hellenic Edition*', '*Policy Journal*', '*Geopolitics & Daily News*', '*HuffPost Greece*', '*Liberal*', '*Infognomon Politics*', '*LEP*' and '*Active News*'.

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDF	European Defence Fund
EU	European Union
EUSS	European Union Security Strategy
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
LAS	League of Arab States
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
RDC	Rapid Deployment Capacity
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

Abstract

The article aims to present the different threat perception of the European Union described in its three (2003, 2016 and 2022) Security Strategies, and how this perception has affected the European Union's strategic planning. In addition, it attempts to elucidate the cause-effect relation between security threats and the elements of the European Union Security Strategies, also assessing the possibility of the establishment of a European Army in the context of the on-going threat posed by the Russian war in Ukraine.

The author uses the comparative analysis method of research, applying the variation-finding comparison as the preferred research instrument, as it facilitates the systematic examination of differences among the European Union Security Strategies and provides the advantage of producing a principle that extends readily to new cases.

The most important result obtained includes a triple-case principle regarding the relation between the security environment and the elements of the European Union Security Strategies.

The main conclusions are that Russia's invasion of Ukraine affected the evolution of the European Union Security Strategy and that the future establishment of a European Army –despite the fact that is assessed as a possible scenario– faces several challenges. Therefore, this article's significance stems from its interdisciplinary approach that combines 'Security Studies' and 'Strategic Studies' and its contribution to the existing literature regarding the European security and defence, allowing political-military decision-makers to better understand the contemporary security environment and adapt future defence capabilities according to the provisions of the latest European Union Security Strategy.

Key words: European Union, Russia, Ukraine, War, Security Strategy, Strategic Compass, European Army

Introduction

The European Union (EU) was founded in 1951 as the *European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)*, aiming at the enhancement of solidarity among European states and the promotion of peace through pooling coal and steel production. Despite the fact though that it began as a regional economic organisation, it gradually evolved into an ambitious global security provider. The first time the EU addressed security issues was in 1992 by establishing the *Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)*, while in 2003 it published its first *Security Strategy* and conducted peacekeeping operations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2016 the EU published its second security strategy widely known as the *2016 Global Strategy*, setting security as the Union's first priority. Finally, in 2022 the Council of the EU endorsed the EU's third security strategy entitled *Strategic Compass*, which provided inter alia for the establishment of an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) that will allow the EU to deploy up to 5,000 troops, setting the foundations for the establishment of a European Army.

Although the *existing literature* highlights the fact that having a security strategy (Malksoo, 2016, p. 1) and periodically reviewing it (Biscop, 2019, p. 1) is of vital importance for every security actor, the EU's efforts in the field of security –to include the issuance of a European Union Security Strategy (EUSS)– and the prospect of establishing a European Army are faced by some scholars with skepticism, due to concerns related to the bureaucratic mechanisms of the EU, in addition to sovereignty issues and the lack of trust among the EU member-states (Zieliński, 2018, p. 1634). Other scholars though express the opinion that the establishment of a European Army is possible, stressing that it would be cheaper for member-states in relation to having national armies, more effective than the existing peacekeeping forces and would better support the EU diplomacy. In addition, they underline the need for creating a flexible framework of cooperation in order to fit the different economic capabilities and political will of the EU member-states (Trybus, 2016, pp. 10-12), also stressing the interconnection between military power and political authority (Weinzierl, 2021, 1049).

The *importance* of the topic lies in the fact that security has become an increasingly vital factor for in everyday live, due to the complex contemporary security environment of our era which has been characterised an era of '*permacrisis*' and '*polycrisis*' (Koukakis, 2023b). The significance of the study stems from its interdisciplinary approach that combines knowledge form '*Security Studies*' and '*Strategic Studies*', and its contribution to the existing literature that addresses security and defence issues regarding the European continent –especially among the EU member-states– and the establishing a European Army, a prospect that has come to the forth once more after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.¹

As far as *strategy* is concerned, it must be stressed that it is a term originating from the Greek word *strategia* –meaning the art of the general (Owens, 2007)– as it was first used to describe a specific military plan, it was used though in other scientific fields too over time to describe a certain course of action. It is also known –especially among the defence community– that the basic elements of a strategy are the *ends, means, and ways* (Meiser, 2017) and that strategy is closely related to the *security environment* (Owens, 2007), as *threat assessment* –the evaluation of the impact of each threat– facilitates the mitigation of threats through the balance of ends, means, and ways (Miller et al., 2017). This is confirmed by non-military scholars too, as the respective literature (Yu, 2021, pp. 38-40) indicates that the elements of a strategy include the *development goal* (similar to ends), the *major development issue* (similar to threat assessment), and the *guideline* (combination of means and ways).

Research method and frame

David Collier notes that the use of *comparison* is a fundamental tool of analysis because it enhances ones power of description and facilitates concept-formation, leading to the employment of various forms of comparisons in the discipline of political science due to the small number of instances and the nature of the phenomena studied (Collier, 1993,

¹ The first attempt to establish a European Army was made on 27 May 1952 by the signing of the '*Treaty Constituting the European Defence Community*' also known as the 'Pleven Plan', that never came into force (Klemm, 2016, p. 109). Since then, several leaders of EU member-states –such as the French President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2018– have brought up the subject of establishing a European Army (European Parliament, 2019), while in 2023 the European Parliament proposed the establishment of a *permanent* rapid deployment capacity under the operational comand of the EU in the framework of a *Defence Union* (European Parliament, 2023).

p.105). Reza Azarian also stresses the fact that –although comparison is fundamental to our cognition– scientists need to be very careful when applying comparative analysis, as the method requires to be disciplined according to the principles of production of science (Azarian, 2011, p. 115) and examine enough independent, self-contained cases in order to identify casual patterns (Azarian, 2011, p. 120). Nevertheless, the value of the comparative analysis –according to Azarian (2011, p. 123)– lies in the fact that it:

“[...] brings into fore what is otherwise hidden in the totality of social reality [...] thus helps create an ordered perception of this reality”.

Charles Tilly categorised the *comparative analysis* into four types depending on the purpose of the analysis, namely the *individualizing comparison* type (Tilly, 1984, pp. 87-96), the *universalizing comparison* type (Tilly, 1984, pp. 97-115), the *variation-finding comparison* type (Tilly, 1984, pp. 116-124), and the *encompassing comparison* type (Tilly, 1984, pp. 125-143). This article uses the variation-finding comparison as the preferred research instrument, as it facilitates the establishment of a principle of variation in the *intensity* or *character* of a phenomenon since it examines *systematic differences* among cases and provides the advantage of *producing a principle* that extends readily to *new cases* (Tilly, 1984, p. 82).

Moreover, the comparison of the EUSSs doesn't become –according to Tilly's theory (Tilly, 1984, pp. 118-119)– more dangerous and less valuable, as: (1) the *argument* is strictly specified, (2) the *observe units* (EUSSs) are the same as the unit of the argument, thus *comparable* with respect to the terms of the argument, and issued by the same actor, (3) the *measures* (ends, means, ways, threats) pertain to the same level of aggregation and correspond to the *terms* of the argument, (4) the element of *judgment* regarding the coding of evidence is minimized because the facts are expressed in written form in the official documents, (5) the *categories* of evidence are minimized to four (ends, means, ways, threats), and (6) the adopted *model* is the same as the one used in the argument.

The *purpose* of this article is to present the different *threat perception* of the EU described in its three (2003, 2016 and 2022) Security Strategies, and how this perception has affected the EU's *strategic planning* expressed by the respective official documents. In

addition, the article attempts to elucidate the *cause-effect relation* between the number and the nature (traditional and non-traditional) of the *threats* of the security environment and the *elements* (ends, means and ways) of the EUSS in order to produce a *principle that extends readily to new cases* of Security Strategies, also assessing the possibility of the establishment of a *European Army* in the context of the on-going threat posed by the Russian war in Ukraine. To achieve this, the article attempts to answer the following *research questions*:

How have the main elements of the EUSS changed –in matter of number, nature and context– through time?

How have the threats/risks identified in the EUSSs –especially Russia’s invasion of Ukraine– affected the definition of its main elements?

Is the establishment of a European Army a possible scenario or not?

In order to provide an evidence-based answer, the article’s *hypothesis* starts from the consideration that the context of the CFSP depends on the EU’s perception of existing and emerging threats of the security environment, which leads to the periodically review of the EUSS, resulting in the modification of its key elements (ends, means, ways). To this end, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine which has been characterised in the latest EUSS as a major threat for the European security, lead to the adoption of a more robust approach by the EU that emphasises on hard power and provides for the establishment of a EU RDC. Thus, the on-going war in Ukraine will most likely act as an enabler for the establishment of a European Army.

The next section describes the structure and context of the first (2003) EUSS, outlining the initial threat assessment of the EU and its main objectives, followed by a section describing the structure and context of the second (2016) EUSS that highlights how the EU modified its threat assessment and security objectives. The section after that describes the structure and context of the last (2022) EUSS, analysing its four pillars that refer to the accomplishment of several objectives, followed by a section discussing the main differences of the three EUSSs.

Finally, the last four sections of the article analyse the cause-effect relation between the security environment and the elements of the EUSs, present a principle that can be extended to other cases of security strategies, highlight the impact of the war in Ukraine in the field of the European security and defence, refer to some institutional and legal considerations regarding the future establishment of a European Army and assess the probability of its establishment.

The 2003 European Security Strategy

The first EUSs entitled '*European Security Strategy: A secure Europe in a better world*' was adopted by the European Council in December 2003 (European Council, 2022b), and consists of five main parts. The first part (*Introduction*) emphasises the unprecedented prosperity, security and freedom that prevailed at the time in Europe, a situation achieved thanks to the EU and the contribution of the United States through NATO. However, reference is also made to the inter-state conflicts that had broken out in the Balkans and the EU missions deployed outside the European continent, emphasising the leading role that needs to be taken by the EU in global security.

The security environment

In its second part '*The security environment: global challenges and key threats*' the EUSs refers to the interconnection between internal and external security, the extremely high number of civilian casualties during war conflicts, the increase in migration flows, poverty and pandemics, the upcoming climate change and the need for energy independence, stressing that security is a precondition for development. It also identifies terrorism, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), regional conflicts, the fragmentation of states and organised crime as the main threats to EU security (table 1).

Ends and means

The third part '*Strategic objectives*' sets out three strategic objectives which contribute to the establishment of security and the promotion of European values (table 2). The first strategic objective is '*Addressing the Threats*' through the adoption of specific measures, the pursuit of particular policies and the EU intervention using a variety of

means (table 3). The second strategic objective is '*Building Security in our Neighbourhood*' through the promotion of a ring of well-governed countries on the EU's eastern and Mediterranean borders, while the third strategic objective seeks to create '*An international order based on effective multilateralism*' by strengthening the role of the UN, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), NATO, OSCE, the Council of Europe and other regional organisations.

Ways

In the fourth part '*Policy implications for Europe*' the EUSS stresses that the EU needs to be more proactive in crisis management and conflict prevention, further increase its defence and diplomatic capabilities, strengthen coherence in terms of policies, EU instruments and internal activities of member-states, as well as cooperation with other partners such as the US, Russia, Japan, China, Canada and India (table 4).

An active and capable EU

The last part '*Conclusion*' of the document states that the objectives set in the 2003 EUSS are realistic, pointing out that the world order will be influenced in a positive way by an active and capable EU, leading to an effective multilateral system and a more fair, safe and united world.

Analysis of the 2003 European Security Strategy

Keeping in mind that the 2003 EUSS is the first Security Strategy of the EU, it needs to be stressed that it doesn't get into much details and that *Russia* and *China* aren't identified as security threats, justifying the EU's intent to enhance its cooperation with both actors. Moreover, several scholars note that: (1) the 2003 EUSS despite the fact that it was written based on the *2002 National Security Strategy* of the United States (Koukakis, 2022b, p. 125) it is more of a strategic concept than a security strategy mostly reaffirming the strong ties between the US and the EU and placing responsibility in the latter's member-states (Toje, 2005, pp. 132-133), (2) the EU seems incapable of using force as a mean of its security policy (Quille, 2004, p. 436), (3) the document focuses on the EU's external relations limiting its context to security policy without taking into consideration other security aspects such as the world economic interdependencies or technological-

scientific cooperation (Faust and Messner, 2004, p. 7), and (4) the 2003 EUSS focuses on both internal and external security, addresses a large number of threats and seeks to enhance the EU's political coherence (Wagner and Mauer, 2006, pp. 28-29).

The 2016 Global Strategy

The second EUSS entitled '*Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*' was published in June 2016 (European Union External Action, 2016), and includes six parts.

Policies, interests and principles

A '*Foreword*' by Federica Mogherini is the first part of the 2016 EUSS, stressing the need for EU member-states to come together to address emerging threats, clarifying that the term *Global* is not only used in its *geographical sense* but also indicates the *range of policies and methods* promoted by the Strategy. The second part '*Executive Summary*' highlights the key points of the document, the third part '*A Global Strategy to Promote our Citizens' Interests*' analyses the vital interests –peace, security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based world order– on which Foreign Action is based, while the fourth part '*The Principles Guiding our External Action*' highlights the principles of unity, cooperation, accountability and partnership.

The EU's priorities (threats, ends and means)

Its fifth part analyses the five priorities of the EU's external action, namely: '*The Security of Our Union*' identifying terrorism, hybrid threats, economic volatility, climate change and energy insecurity as the main security threats (table 1),² '*State and Societal Resilience to our East and South*' through several policies,³ '*An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises*' including pre-emptive peace, security and stabilisation, conflict

² The first priority of the 2016 EUSS also highlights the importance of ambition and strategic autonomy, with a focus on the fields of security and defence, counter-terrorism, cyber, energy and strategic communications.

³ The second priority of the 2016 EUSS was based on a credible enlargement policy, an effective European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the implementation of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), the extension of Trans-European Networks, the promotion of human rights, and a more effective migration policy.

settlement and the dismantling of the political economy of war,⁴ ‘*Cooperative Regional Orders*’ aiming at the development of a European security order and a peaceful and prosperous Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa,⁵ the strengthening of ties between the two sides of the Atlantic,⁶ the deepening of the economic diplomacy with Asian countries focusing on China and maintaining the Arctic as a low-tension region, and ‘*Global Governance for the 21st Century*’ aiming at the upholding of the rules of international law, reshaping the UN, investing in its proper functioning, faithfully implementing commitments, deepening economic relations, broadening international rules, developing new modern rules and creating additional partnerships (tables 2, 3).

Ways

The sixth part ‘*From Vision to Action*’ refers to the characteristics that the EU must possess in order to achieve the objectives *credibility*, *immediate response*,⁷ and *interconnection* of member-states and services. It also underlines inter alia (table 4) that member-states have to invest in defence capability-building through the European Defence Agency (EDA) –highlighting that they would remain sovereign in defence decisions– and defines several required actions such as the investment in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), the review of existing individual strategies, the periodic review of the overall EU Strategy on an annual basis and the initiation of a new strategic planning process whenever deemed necessary.

Analysis of the 2016 Global Strategy

Being the second Security Strategy of the EU, the 2016 EUSS is more detailed as it sets five clear strategic priorities, not identifying (again) *Russia* and *China* as security threats, expressing though its opposition to Crimea’s illegal annexation and the need for cooperation on the basis of international law. Moreover, scholars note that (1) the 2016 EUSS is more realistic as it emphasises on the hard power of its ‘defence capabilities’, more ambitious as it aims at EU’s strategic autonomy, applies a variety of tools and

⁴ The means of achieving the third priority of the 2016 EUSS were synergies in addition to restrictive measures coupled with diplomacy.

⁵ Mainly through the management of the EU-Russia relation.

⁶ Focusing on US and Canada through the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

⁷ Through investment in the knowledge base and changes in diplomacy, CSDP and development.

acknowledges the primary role of NATO regarding the European defence (Legrand, 2016, pp. 11-15), (2) has a broader focus as far as security is concerned (such as migration) leading to the politicization of the CFSP (Barbé and Morillas, 2019, pp. 765-766), but (3) isn't so useful because the priorities that need to be set and the resources that need to be provided by member-states are not fixed but must be agreed upon (Smith, 2017, p. 22).

The 2022 Strategic Compass

Although the latest EUSS was issued in March 2022 (European Council, 2022a), its planning procedure had begun in June 2020 when the European Council invited the High Representative (HR) to present a *threat analysis* by the end of 2020 in order to develop the Strategic Compass (European Council, 2020). The first part of the 2022 EUSS is a '*Foreword*' by Josep Borrell, stressing that the EU's response must be accelerated and that the Strategic Compass is not only about the war in Ukraine, but aims to provide guidance on the development of the EU's security and defence agenda for the next 10 years. The second part, '*Executive Summary*' highlights the key points of the document, while the third part '*Introduction*' underlines that war has returned in Europe forcing the EU to invest more in security and defence.

The contemporary security environment

'*The World we Face*' is the fourth part of the 2022 EUSS, presenting the results of the EU *Threat Analysis*. It characterises *Russia* as the most significant threat for the EU, while *China* is described both as a partner and an economic competitor-systemic rival of the EU, stressing that both parties can act together to address issues of global concern. Moreover, it refers to the instability prevailing on the European continent, the ongoing conflicts, poor governance and terrorist enclaves in *Africa*, the challenge of nuclear proliferation in the *Middle East*, the emerging competition in the *Arctic* and *Indo-Pacific* region, the threats posed by *Asian* countries and the imbalances in *Latin America*. Moreover, it identifies several other *emerging and transnational threats and challenges* (table 1) while as far as the *strategic implications for the Union* are concerned, it highlights that all the challenges are multifaceted and interrelated, that solidarity, unity, and immediate, decisive, joint and solidarity-based action by member-states are of vital

importance and that the Strategic Compass plays a valuable role in strengthening the EU's *strategic autonomy* in a complementary manner to NATO, which remains the cornerstone of transatlantic security and collective defence.

The first pillar - ACT

The fifth part analyses the first pillar (ACT) stressing the need for rapid action in all operational domains, making use of *all available instruments* of the CFSP along with civilian and military *Crisis Management missions*. It provides the establishment of a *EU Rapid Deployment Capacity* (EU RDC) which will allow for the deployment of up to 5,000 troops (European Union External Action, 2023a), stresses the need for a more flexible *decision-making procedure*, the use of several tools,⁸ the vital importance of the *mutual defence clause* and the *solidarity clause* (EUR-Lex, no date) and the need for appropriate *preparation* through scenario-based exercises, the development of an early warning system, the sharing of the necessary resources, interoperability and military mobility.

The second pillar - SECURE

The sixth part analyses the second pillar (SECURE) emphasising on strengthening the EU's *early warning* and *intelligence picture* in addition to *securing communications*,⁹ addressing *hybrid threats, cyber diplomacy and foreign information manipulation and interference*,¹⁰ securing the EU's *access to strategic domains*,¹¹ countering *terrorism* through cooperation initiatives with other actors,¹² promoting *disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control* by focusing on compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and enhancing *resilience to climate change, disasters*

⁸ These include inter alia the European Peace Facility (EPF), the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP), the Civilian CSDP Compact.

⁹ Through the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), the EU Satellite Centre (SatCen) and the EU Cybersecurity Strategy.

¹⁰ Through the EU Hybrid Toolbox, the Hybrid Fusion Cell, the EU Hybrid Rapid Response Teams, the EU Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox, the Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) Toolbox

¹¹ By developing a EU's Cyber Defence Policy, a new European Cyber Resilience Act, a EU Space Strategy for S&D, revising of the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and investing in investment in the EU Space Programme.

¹² Such as the Global Counter Terrorism Forum and the Global Coalition against Da'esh.

and emergencies through adapting its CFSP policies and improving the capacity to conduct *rescue and evacuate missions*.¹³

The third pillar - INVEST

The seventh part analyses the third pillar (INVEST) regarding the member-states' investments related to military capabilities and innovative technologies. It emphasises on *strategic orientation* by increasing the CFSP financing, adopting European standards at national level, and developing civilian CFSP missions, on developing *coherent and ambitious capabilities* mainly through *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO) and the *European Defence Fund* (EDF) in addition to the use of several EU instruments,¹⁴ and the conduction of annual meetings of the Defence Ministers. Finally it focuses on *innovation, disruptive technologies and reducing strategic dependencies* highlighting the creation of a Defence Innovation Hub, the creation of a European Defence Technological and Industrial Base and the pursuit of de-dependence in the field of critical technologies and the supply chain, and the need to swiftly operationalise the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre.

The fourth pillar - PARTNER

The eighth part analyses the fourth pillar (PARTNER) referring to the need for strengthening the EU's cooperation with *multilateral and regional partners* such as NATO, the UN, OSCE, the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in addition to establishing *tailored bilateral partnerships*, a biannual *EU Security and Defence Partnership Forum*, deepening the existing cooperation with the USA, Norway, Canada and the UK, maintaining cooperation with *Türkiye* (under the condition of de-escalation of tensions and respect for European values), the *Western Balkans* and the *Eastern Neighbourhood*, enhancing the security of *African* partners, maintaining the European presence in the *Indo-Pacific* and strengthening its cooperation with *Latin American* countries.

¹³ Through the use of existing structures and mechanisms of the European Military Staff (EUMS) in cooperation with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the UN and NATO.

¹⁴ Such as Horizon Europe, the Digital Europe Programme, the Connecting Europe Facility, the EU Space Programme, the European Innovation Council and Invest EU.

The European and Global security

In the final part '*Conclusion*' the document reiterates that a great war has broken out in Europe and that the EU is defending not only the European but the Global security as well, stating that the role of the 2022 Strategic Compass is the definition of the context for a stronger EU security and defence in order to become a powerful and determined *security provider* in the next decade, also stressing the fact that the set goals –although ambitious– are realistic and will be achieved through the tools and initiatives provided in the EUSS.

Analysis of the 2022 Strategic Compass

Strategic Compass, the latest Security Strategy of the EU, sets specific goals and a timeframe for their implementation (Koukakis, 2023a, p. 5), also identifying *Russia* for the first time as the most significant threat for the EU and *China* as an economic competitor and systemic rival. Moreover, scholars note that (1) despite the fact the Strategic Compass –being an upgrade of the 2016 EUSS– offers a roadmap to the European Defence Union, relies heavily upon the increase of defence spending and the political will of the EU's member-states (Blockmans, Macchiari Crosson and Paikin, 2022, p. 9), (2) one of its undeniable strong points is the fact that it is based on a threat analysis while the fact that it does not specify the resources from which the costs will be covered is considered as one of its weaknesses (Constantinescu, Dumitrache and Popa, 2022, p. 157), and that (3) it overemphasises the relation between the EU and NATO which contradicts to its proclaimed ambition of autonomy (Tučić, 2023, p. 30).

Discussion – Highlighting the differences

As stated in the second section, the main purpose of the article is to present the different *threat perception* of the EU described in its EUSSs, and how this perception has affected the EU's *strategic planning*. However, before presenting these perceptions, it must be stressed that –as stated by Javier Solana¹⁵ (European Council, 2022a)– the first ever 2003 EUSS was a milestone for the EU because:

¹⁵ High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union (1999-2009).

"For the first time, the EU agreed on a common threat assessment and set clear objectives to promote its security interests based on our core values".

The evolution of the ‘threat perception’

The EU’s initial *threat perception* described in the 2003 EUSS (table 1) defined only *five main threats*; (1) terrorism, (2) the proliferation of WMD, (3) regional conflicts, (4) state failure, and (5) organised crime. In the 2016 EUSS the threats identified *doubled* –adding hybrid threats, economic volatility, climate change, energy insecurity, and migration– not considering the proliferation of WMD and organised crime as a major threat to the security of the EU, and replacing the threat of state failure with the destabilisation of Ukraine due to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, indirectly identifying the latter as a threat.

Element	2003 European Security Strategy	2016 Global Strategy	2022 Strategic Compass
Threat Assessment	Terrorism	Terrorism	Terrorism
	Proliferation of WMD	Conflicts in the Black Sea region	Hybrid threats
	Regional conflicts	Conflicts in Syria & Syria	Climate change
	State failure	Palestinian-Israeli conflict	-----
	Organised crime	Destabilisation of Ukraine (<i>Russia</i>)	Proliferation of WMD
		-----	-----
		Hybrid threats	Violent extremism
		Economic volatility	Environmental degradation
		Climate change	Natural disasters
		Energy insecurity	Global health crises
		Migration	<i>Russia</i> (undermining security & stability)
			<i>China</i> (partner for cooperation, economic competitor & systemic rival)
			Cyber-attacks
			Disinformation
			Direct interference

Table 1. The evolution of the ‘threat assessment’ of the EUSS

Finally, the 2022 EUSS maintained terrorism, climate change, and hybrid threats as three of the major threats for the EU, and redefined the threat of the proliferation of WMD that wasn’t included in the 2016 EUSS, also adding the threats of violent extremism, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and global health crises. The most important difference though was the fact that the 2022 EUSS identified for the first time two states – namely Russia by stating that it undermines the European security and stability, and China by stating that besides a partner for cooperation, is also considered an economic

competitor and a systemic rival— as major threats, linking them to several threatening activities such as cyber-attacks, disinformation, and direct interference.

The evolution of the ‘ends’

The initial *ends* defined in the 2003 EUSS (table 2) includes only *three goals*; (1) addressing threats, (2) building security in the EU neighbourhood, and (3) effective multilateralism, while the ‘ends’ defined in the 2016 EUSS were *increased to five*; (1) security of the Union (similar to the 2003 addressing threats), (2) state and societal resilience to East & South (similar to the 2003 building security in the EU neighbourhood), (3) cooperative regional orders (similar to the 2003 effective multilateralism), (4) integrated approach to conflicts & crises, and (5) global governance for the 21st century. This increase, is assessed to be the result of the formentioned Crimea’s annexation and the spread of globalisation.

Element	2003 European Security Strategy	2016 Global Strategy	2022 Strategic Compass
Ends	Addressing threats	Security of the Union	<i>ACT</i> Become a more assertive S&D actor
	Building security in the EU neighbourhood	State & Societal Resilience to East & South	<i>SECURE</i> Be prepared for fast-emerging challenges
	Effective multilateralism	Cooperative Regional Orders	<i>INVEST</i> Increase defence expenditures
		Integrated Approach to Conflicts & Crises	Reduce critical military & civilian capability gaps
		Global Governance for the 21 st Century	<i>PARTNER</i> Deepen cooperation with partners Further tailor partnership packages

Table 2. The evolution of the element of ‘ends’ of the EUSS

As far as the 2022 EUSS is concerned, it defined *six ends*; (1) become a more assertive security and defence actor, (2) be prepared for fast-emerging challenges, (3) enhance defence expenditures, (4) reduce critical military and civilian capability gaps, (5) deepen cooperation with partners, and (6) further tailor partnership packages, in accordance to the four designated respective pillars (ACT, SECURE, INVEST, and PARTNER). The most important difference of the 2022 EUSS though was introduced through the third pillar (INVEST), which emphasised on the increase of the member-states’

defence expenditures and the reduction of critical security and defence capability gaps, two vital goals in order for the EU to become an effective security provider.

The evolution of the ‘means’

In support of the ends defined in the 2003 EUSS the EU provided for the use of political, diplomatic, military, civilian, trade, and economic necessary *means* (table 3) without referring any specific ‘tool’, not only because this was the first EUSS but also because the EU hadn’t develop any.

Element	2003 European Security Strategy	2016 Global Strategy	2022 Strategic Compass
Means	Political Diplomatic Military Civilian Trade & development activities	Credibility Investment in knowledge base Restrictive measures Diplomacy CSDP Development Interconnection of states & services International Law DCFTAs TTIP CETA	EU RDC MPCC CSDP missions/ops CMP Common costs Enhance military mobility EU Threat Analysis SIAC EU SatCen EU Hybrid Toolbox Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox FIMI Toolbox Joint Cyber Unit EU Space Strategy for security & defence CISE MARSUR EEAS Crisis Response structures Additional incentives Headline Goal process Annual Defence Ministerial meetings CARD Private funding Joint projects & procurement VAT waiver EDF bonus system Defence Innovation Hub Observatory on critical technologies EU Foreign and Direct Investment Screening Framework EDA EU-UN cooperation Security & Defence Partnerships Forum

Table 3. The evolution of the element of ‘means’ of the EUSS

On the other hand, the 2016 EUSS –which also identified the use of several means– was more detailed, since it provided for the implementation of restrictive measures (sanctions) and its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the interconnection of

states and services, the promotion of international law, as well as the enhancement of DCFTAs, TTIP, and CETA. Finally, the Strategic Concept is the most detailed EUSS as far as the necessary means are concerned, because it not only provides for the use of a variety of means, but also specifies a large number of them too (table 3).

The evolution of the ‘ways’

As far as the ways defined in the EUSSs are concerned, both the 2003 and the 2016 EUSS provide for the application of the different means through several ways (table 4) that include the shaping of multiple policies, cooperation with other major actors and the implementation of different strategies in several fields and areas of interest.

Element	2003 European Security Strategy	2016 Global Strategy	2022 Strategic Compass
Ways	Take measures Apply policies Develop strategic culture Increase spending on defence Preventive engagement Establishment of a defence agency Military transformation Systematic use of shared assets Stronger diplomatic capability Common threat assessments Increase spectrum of missions Bring together different instruments & capabilities Improve coordination between external action & Justice and Home Affairs policies Enhance coherence Enhance EU-USA cooperation Improve governance Strengthen role of UN, WTO, NATO, Council of Europe, OSCE & Regional Organizations	ENP Credible enlargement policy Trans-European Networks Promotion of human rights Effective migration policy Preventive action Strengthening security & stability Conflict resolution Dismantling political economy of war Strengthening between the two sides of the Atlantic Deepening economic diplomacy Maintaining a low-tension Arctic Upholding International Law Reshaping the UN Implementing commitments Deepening economic relations Broadening international rules Developing new modern rules Creating additional partnerships	Enable a more robust, rapid & decisive action Improve planning procedures Enhance C2 structures Conduct Live Exercises Improve integrate approach to crises Enhance resilience Counter hybrid-threats Fortify cyber-defence & cyber-security Counter foreign information manipulation & interference Strengthen rescue & evacuate ability Secure access & presence on high seas, air & space Strengthen European Defence Technological & Industrial Base Increase & leverage collaborative defence investment Invest in critical & emerging technologies & innovation Secure supply chains Protect intellectual property Cooperate with like-minded partners Maintain & deepen S&D dialogues, joint situational awareness & joint training-exercises Address partners’ need for capacity building & support

Table 4. The evolution of the element of ‘ways’ of the EUSS

Finally, the 2022 EUSS –despite the fact that it also includes a variety of ways just like the previous EUSSs– differs in the way that it emphasises on keeping up with the *contemporary conditions* of the new security environment, the *modernisation* of the European defence, and the enhancement of the EU’s *defence capabilities*, providing a

much more larger number of ways which is reasonable considering that the number of means defined in the document is twice as much as the ones defined in the 2016 EUSS. It must also be stressed that the Strategic Compass emphasises on ways applied in new areas of interest such as space, cyberspace, the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic.

The relation between the security environment and the elements of the EUSS

Considering *security* is defined as the absence of fear, concern and/or anxiety, a situation that is the result of the measures taken by an actor in order to deter, effectively manage, and/or eliminate threats, common sense indicates that a rational actor's goals, means and ways defined in its Security Strategy mainly depend on the *number, nature* and *intensity* of the threats being faced. This is verified by all three EUSSs, as the basic elements defined in them are closely related to the assessed threats of the security environment.

In the 2003 EUSS the defined 'traditional' threats are only four, leading to the definition of four ends, and a general (not detailed) description of the means and ways. It must also be stressed that the reason behind this was partly the fact the EU hadn't established the CFSP or the EAAS at the time.

On the other hand, the increased number of threats identified in the 2016 EUSS, in addition to their contemporary 'non-traditional' nature –e.g. hybrid threats, economic volatility, climate change, energy insecurity, and migration– led to the definition of a larger number of more specified means and applied by adequate ways, also seeking security in cooperation with other actors.

Last but not least, the large number of –different in nature and intensity– threats identified in the Strategic Compass including the 'traditional' security threat posed by Russia's large scale military operations in Ukraine in addition to the conduction of the 'non-traditional' cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, and direct interference on its behalf, led the EU to adopt of a more robust security strategy that was mainly depicted in its intent

to establish a EU RDC and its investment goals which aimed at the enhancement of its defence capabilities.

Element	Small number of ‘traditional’ threats	Large number of minor ‘traditional’ & ‘non-traditional’ threats	Large number of major ‘traditional’ & ‘non-traditional’ threats
Ends	Limited number of threat-oriented ends	Large number of ends with emphasis on integrated approach & cooperation with like-minded actors	Large number of threat-oriented ends with emphasis on integrated approach & cooperation with like-minded actors
Means	Variety of limited-numbered non-detailed means	Variety of large-numbered detailed means	Variety of large-numbered detailed means with emphasis on military forces
Ways	Variety of limited non-detailed ways	Variety of large-numbered detailed ways	Variety of large-numbered detailed ways with emphasis on improving defence capabilities

Table 5. The relation between the security environment and the elements of the EUSS

As far as the production of a *principle that extends readily to new cases*, the formentioned analysis leads to the categorisation (table 5) of three cases regarding the relation between the security environment and the elements of the EUSS, as follows:

✓ When the security environment is characterised by a *small number of minor ‘traditional’ threats*, actors usually adopt an equally ‘traditional’ security strategy that uses a variety of limited-numbered non-detailed means and ways, setting a limited number of threat-oriented goals.

✓ When the security environment is characterised by a *large number of minor ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ threats*, actors usually adopt an comprehensive security strategy that uses a variety of large-numbered detailed means and ways, setting a large number of goals that emphasize on integrated approach and cooperation with like-minded actors.

✓ When the security environment is characterised by a *large number of major ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ threats*, actors usually adopt an comprehensive and more detailed security strategy that sets a large number of threat-oriented ends emphasising on integrated approach and cooperation with like-minded actors, uses a variety of large-numbered detailed means emphasising on the use of force and a variety of large-numbered detailed ways aiming at improving defence capabilities.

The impact of the war in Ukraine - Towards a European Army?

As far as assessing the possibility of the establishment of a European Army is concerned, it must be stressed that although the 2022 Strategic Compass emphasises on developing various defence capabilities and establishing a common defence industrial base among the EU member-states, the future establishment of a European Army faces several challenges such as the *interoperability* of military assets, the resolution of *recruitment* issues, the establishment of a more flexible political *decision making* process as far as CFSP is concerned,¹⁶ the concession of *sovereignty* on behalf of the EU member-states,¹⁷ and *NATO's* 'approval' since the North Atlantic Alliance remains the cornerstone of the European defence.

The on-going war in Ukraine though has acted as an enabler for many initiatives that enhance the EU defence capabilities and promote the goals set in the 2022 Strategic Compass, such as the foundation of the *EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) Ukraine* (Koukakis, 2022a, pp. 8-10), the establishment of the *EEAS Crisis Response Centre*, the increase of *defence expenditures* of most EU member-states, the foundation of a *Defence Joint Procurement Task Force* (European Union External Action, 2023b, pp. 13-15), the establishment of the maritime security operation 'EUNAVFOR ASPIDES' in the wider Red Sea region (Koukakis, 2024a), the issuance of the (first ever) 2024 *European Defence Industrial Strategy* (Koukakis, 2024b) and –most important– the *European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2023* (European Parliament, 2023) which inter alia in *paragraph 3* proposes the *reform of the decision-making procedures* of the EU and in *paragraph 22*:

“Calls for the establishment of a defence union including military units, a permanent rapid deployment capacity, under the operational command of the Union; proposes that joint procurement and the development of armaments be financed by the Union through a dedicated budget under parliamentary co-decision and scrutiny and

¹⁶ The majority of CFSP decisions require consensus. However, the EU is examining the possibility of applying Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) to increase the effectiveness of CFSP (Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2022).

¹⁷ The protection of territorial integrity remains the responsibility of each member-state, as it is a matter of sovereignty (Bifulco and Nato, 2020).

proposes that the competences of the European Defence Agency be adjusted accordingly [...]”.

Throughout the evidence presented in this article and the comparative analysis implemented, it has been demonstrated that an actor’s threat assessment has a major impact in the shaping of its security strategy. In the case of the EU, it has led to a more robust EUSS highlighting the importance of hard power in order to be able to protect the European interests and implement its CFSP. The critical question though is not whether the EU will proceed to the establishment of a *European Army* –as it assessed that it can contribute to a more frequent use of force, reduce complexity by merging the EU Battlegroups and PESCO, and resolve sovereignty issues in the defence sector (Weinzierl, 2021, pp. 1070-1071)– but what characteristics will these Armed Forces have.

Several legal-institutional considerations regarding the establishment of a European Army address issues related to its *role* (replacing or complementary to the national armies), the *participation* of member-states (obligatory or voluntarily), the *political decision-making procedures* and its *parliamentary accountability* (relations between European institutions and national governments), its *operational decision-making* (unanimity or qualified majority), its *command structure* (establishing a military EU Commander in Chief or not), and finally the *national constitutional reservations* (military neutrality/non-alignment) of some EU member-states (Weinzierl, 2021, pp. 1060-1070).

It must also be noted that due to the EU’s organizational structure and bureaucratic procedures, changes –especially in the field of security and defence– are difficult to be implemented in short notice. This should not be though a factor of discourage or disappointment, since the presented ‘small steps’ taken in the field of security and defence are very important and can eventually lead to the establishment of a European Army, just like the *migration crisis* of 2015-2016 (European Commission, 2017) led in 2016 to the establishment of the *European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)* (FRONTEX, no date).¹⁸

¹⁸ Frontex was founded in 2004 as the ‘*European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union*’ and was transformed into the current ‘*European Border and Coast Guard Agency*’ in 2016.

Besides, the contemporary size and role of the EU itself –a situation that seemed unthinkable a few decades ago– was created gradually, confirming Robert Schuman’s vision that was expressed in his famous 1950 declaration (European Commission, 2015, p. 17) according to which:

“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity”.

Conclusion

To conclude, the EU has gone a long way since its foundation, constantly adapting to the regional and international security environment, leading to its transformation from an economic union to an ambitious security provider. To this end the EU has established a variety of institutions and tools, deployed several CSDP missions, created new structures, implemented different security strategies, and endorsed new concepts –such as the emerging concept of resilience which is highlighted in many security strategies (Koukakis, 2023c)– in order to ensure security in the European continent and beyond.

However, the most important ‘tool’ towards becoming a stronger and more capable security provider is the Strategic Compass, as it provides the EU member-states the necessary guidelines for implementing –through a specific timeframe– several tasks that shape favourable conditions for the future establishment of a European Army. Moreover, the Strategic Compass –through its provisions for the enhancement of the defence capabilities of the EU’s member-states, the increase of defence expenditures and the establishment the use of several tools– facilitates the exercise of both the EU’s CSFP and the member-states’ foreign policies, as according to Klemm (2016, p. 109):

“The foreign policy and the army cannot be separated. [...] Having an own army as a union makes it less, or almost nondependent on others on the field of foreign policy. It is not because it should have started a war; it is for showing the world that it has the power to strike back, if it was attacked by others”.

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