

**One Step Back, Two Steps Ahead-
Revisiting the ESS: Towards the EU as a Regional Player.**

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List of Acronyms

CEPS	Centre for European Policy Studies
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSS	National Security Strategy
UN	United Nations
US	United States

Introduction

“If we try to defend everywhere we defend nowhere”¹

The 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) has been welcomed by many authors for outlining clearly what challenges the EU faces and how it seeks to tackle them (Becher, 2004; Biscop, 2004). In other words, it states for the first time how the EU sees itself as a security actor in the international arena. However, almost five years down the line a lot of the initial enthusiasm has vanished and one comes to realize that the ESS, like so many EU policy-documents, is haunted by an old friend: the gap between high ambitions and actual performance.

¹ Interview with Kilburn, 2008.

Nevertheless, there seems to be reason for optimism. Already in December 2007 heads of state and government tasked High Representative Solana to draw up a plan for better implementation of the ESS. President Sarkozy expanded this point and made the revision of the ESS one of the priorities of the French presidency in the second half of 2008. Thus, contrary to 2003 the EU could re-assess its security actorness without an exogenously induced crisis and tackle the question of how to narrow the aforementioned gap (Pullinger, 2007; Missiroli, 2008).

The spectrum of approaches to tackle this fissure is wide and ranges from the wish to enhance the EU's powers in order to claim a stronger place in the centre of world affairs to rolling-back the EU's engagement or even to settle for the rather provocative idea of 'comfortable irrelevance' (Rachman, 2008). Taking into account the special character of the EU as a security actor, the paper's point of departure might be situated somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. By analyzing the ESS it identifies five underlying key tensions which evolve around the questions: what are the threats the EU is facing, how (if at all) will it use force to counter these threats, what precisely are the objectives and interests Brussels seeks to achieve and defend and what capabilities does the EU need for these ends, how will it structure its interaction with the US/NATO, and what is the realm – the geographical scope – of the EU's security ambitions? The paper is well aware of the interlinkage of these questions but chooses geography as a starting point of analysis. The ESS in its current form displays the strain between 'building security in our neighbourhood' and 'building a better world' but appears to position itself more in the realm of a global actor while the EU – given its limited capacities – might not be apt yet to assume this role (European Council, 2003). Hence, would a more precise and narrower focus on the region allow the EU to do less but better? Put differently, if a revised ESS took one step back, would this nonetheless mean two steps ahead for its performance as a security actor?

Such an approach seems to be complementary with the definition of a security strategy. According to Biscop and Coolsaet it "is a policy-making tool that, starting from the values and interests, outlines the long-term overall objectives

that are to be achieved and the basic categories of instruments that are to be applied to that end” (Biscop and Coolsaet, 2003, p. 1). If, however, ambitions and actual performance diverge too much, a security strategy loses its function as a policy-making tool as it cannot be considered a reference framework for daily policy-making anymore (Biscop, 2004). Therefore, a viable security strategy ought to be realistic and precise in its ambitions so as to remain utile. Consequently, instead of stressing that the EU is ‘inevitably a global player’, several authors have pointed to the idea that the ESS might want to seek to contribute to global security by being an effective regional player (European Council, 2003; Bildt, 2003; Menotti, 2003).

This paper wants to take up and expand on this idea. It therefore argues that by narrowing the geographical scope of the ESS, i.e. positioning the EU as a regional rather than a global security actor, positive externalities may occur which can contribute to solving other underlying tensions found in the ESS discourse. In the long-run such a regional focus has the potential to narrow the gap between expectations and performance.

Hence, this paper will be divided into six parts. After discussing in detail in part I the implications of limiting the geographical scope of the ESS, the following four parts will address the impact of the proposed changes on four other tensions identified in the ESS: threat perception (part II), the triangle of interests, objectives, and capabilities (part III), the use of force (part IV), and relations with the US/NATO (part V). In the final part, the paper seeks to defend its findings against the critique of neglecting the EU’s global responsibilities.

I. The Challenge of Geography

a) Geography and Strategy

A number of authors have underlined the link between geographical scope and strategy. Terriff, for example, stresses that the geographical realm ought to lead the policy orientation of an entity (Terriff et al., 2007). More precisely Sheehan

analyzes that “location, space, and distance influence the projection of political power...” (Sheehan, 2005, p. 22). It appears that in the absence of a clearly defined geographical scope, security strategies risk to lose their stringency. The broader a strategy remains on this point, the more likely it is that actors encounter difficulties in defining their own roles, their stakes and measures to approach the realm of security (Hansen, 1997). “Knowledgeably and sensibly applied, however, geography is a discipline that can clarify strategic issues and increase the chances of success in any political, economic, or military endeavour” (Hansen, 1997, p. 1). How then has the ESS approached this tandem of geography and strategy?

b) Tension of Priorities: The ESS’ Geographical Scope

The scholarly debate is divided on the interpretation of the ESS and its geographical scope. On the one hand, we find the camp acknowledging a tug-of-war between regional and global outlook but affirming that the regional outlook prevails. Duke states that “in spite of the explicit recognition of the global nature of the challenges facing Europe, the overall emphasis of the strategy tends to be littoral” (Duke, 2004, p. 468). To Posen it is evident that while most of the language of the ESS is predominantly global “it is not difficult to infer that peace and order on Europe’s periphery is the number one security priority for the EU” (Posen, 2004, p. 35). On the other, the tug-of-war seems to have ended in favour of the global. Bildt underlines that the ESS would need to focus more on its regional component (Bildt, 2003). Even when regional issues are evoked, the ESS tends to fill them with a more global meaning. For instance, when assessing the impact of ‘regional conflicts’, the first two cases cited are Kashmir and the Korean Peninsula (Menotti, 2003). It is in this respect that Menotti deplores the lack of regional sensitivity, stating that it is here “where geography becomes a key point: a major nuclear crisis in Korea may pose less immediate risk to the EU than a political assassination in the Western Balkans, a contested election in North Africa or a relatively minor border dispute in the Caucasus” (Menotti, 2003, p. 15).

Taking these two views into consideration we can assert that “the EU’s strategic horizon is thus caught in an unresolved tension” between global and regional outlook (Berenskoetter, 2005, p. 77). Bearing in mind the previously mentioned tandem of geography and strategy it seems save to assume that the EU has not yet finished its *Selbstfindungsprozess* (process of self-discovery) (May, 2005, p. 7). These contradictory processes come to the fore on several other occasions as well. The ESS appears divided between its first part highlighting global challenges and key threats (which take a rather global outlook as well) and its section on ‘building security in our neighbourhood’, which is to be found under its second part on strategic objectives (European Council, 2003). The transition is fairly uneasy and the ESS cannot connect these two parts or put them in a mutually beneficial context. Therefore, the reader is left with a discourse somewhat at odds in which “even in an era of globalisation, geography is still important” but “the first line of defence will often be abroad” (European Council, 2003, p. 7). Additionally the ESS states on the one hand that Europe has never been so secure, thus highlighting the importance of a narrower European region, but on the other hand outlining in one third of its text the key threats which are inherently global in focus. In underlining both the relative security and the eminent threats the ESS “brings to the surface a tension of priorities” (Berenskoetter, 2005, p. 82) which can explain the somewhat awkward formulation that “taking these different elements together...we *could* be confronted with a very radical threat indeed” (European Council, 2003, p. 5 [emphasis added]).

How can we account for this global-regional gap though? Of course no definite answer to this question can be found but some indicative remarks can be made. Firstly, at the time of writing the ESS functioned mainly as a document of reconciliation between different Member States’ views after the frictions of the war in Iraq. Secondly, and closely related to the first point, “the bows in the direction of global security aspirations do serve a second purpose. They please the US” (Posen, 2004, p. 35). Such a move had become necessary in order to avoid a further drift in transatlantic relations. Finally, we should recall that in 2003 the ESDP, and European security in general, was still a rather novel and pioneering undertaking. Hence, we should grant the ESS some leeway as it was still in

its fledgling stages. Nonetheless, five years later the situation has changed. The EU is more experienced in the realm of security, the Member States are not haunted by a rift with the US, and the possibility of a new administration in Washington could give the EU a window of opportunity. Consequently, we may ask ourselves how to approach a possible re-thinking of the ESS' geographical scope?

c) Re-thinking the Geographical Scope: the EU as a Regional Actor

Just as the scholarly debate is divided over the interpretation of the ESS, it appears at loggerheads when it comes to the question of what geographical aspirations the EU should highlight in the future. Already in 2003, after a debate on the ESS, organized by the CEPS and IISS, Heisbourg summarized the diverging opinions about the EU's security realm, stating that "some agreed with the proposition that the EU should define its strategic interest globally, while others put forward regional priorities, in the ark-of-crisis and Wider Europe" (Heisbourg, 2003, p. 2). Similarly, the views of the Member States depart on this point. While notably France under President Sarkozy advocates a "bolder ESS' aiming to turn the continent into a global power with a decisive role in promoting a more just and effective world order", smaller Member States, and to a lesser extent Germany, regard Europe and its 'backyard' as the first priority (Pullinger, 2007, p. 1).

While acknowledging the argument of the EU as a *global* actor, it appears that we can make the case for the EU as a *regional* player when drawing on the range of arguments provided for by the literature. They evolve around five main ideas.

Firstly, asking oneself the question of where to become active, means at the same time asking oneself where beneficial results can be achieved? In this context Serrano stresses that a narrower geographical scope is desirable taking into account the "capacity for the EU to exercise its political clout. ESDP operations/actions will be more relevant in those places where the European Union's political influence or impact is greater" (Serrano, 2006 in Nowak, 2006, p. 44). Further exploring this point Biscop demonstrates that norms and values from Brussels

have the highest possibility to be shared and accommodated by its neighbouring countries (Biscop, 2004). Permanent and close interaction could then support the emergence of a security community between the EU and its neighbourhood (ibid.). The necessity to step up efforts in Wider Europe is sometimes underestimated, and security challenges are perceived to be in distant places, like Kabul or Bagdad. However, Mahbubani notes that this ‘bubble of security’, in which Europeans frequently like to see themselves, can be deceiving, and that one should not too readily dismiss the ‘arc of insecurity’ spanning around the EU (Mahbubani, 2008). The European Parliament implicitly acknowledges this argument by outlining in its 2008 report on the ESDP and the implementation of the ESS the importance of disputes and instability in the EU’s neighbourhood, for example, the Balkans, Belarus, Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia (European Parliament, 2008). In sum, a narrower geographical focus implies more concentrated efforts, potentially yielding more *benefits* for both the EU, by securing its region, and the neighbouring countries, which profit from more dedicated European action.

Secondly, and in support of the first argument, the still limited capabilities of the EU add to the difficulties of conceiving and following up policies on a wide range of issues. Consequently, Everts suggest limiting a revised ESS to 3-4 policy priorities which will “increase the chance of producing one or two much-needed successes” (Everts, 2004, p. 42). Indeed, the fact that the ESS touches on the whole spectrum of possible international security challenges does not necessarily enhance its performance or its standing in the eyes of the international community. Everts even goes as far as saying that “politicians should resist their current inclination to dream up a policy on all issues, regions and conflicts in the world” (ibid.). Thus, a geographical limitation could enhance rather than stifle *credibility*.

Thirdly, since the end of the Cold War the Member States have developed in less than 20 years from an economic entity that prospered under the US security umbrella and predominantly sought to defend Western Europe against a possible Soviet attack into a political entity that seeks to

project power around the globe (Jones, 2007). Accordingly, the ESS displays the EU as a global power. Nonetheless, this development has been relatively rapid and might have gone too far too soon. In other words, in the realm of security the EU has evolved from a child to a grown-up without living through puberty, jumping from a narrow Western European focus to a global outlook. Hence, Becher analyzes that:

The ESS and “its implications—including the need for active, sustained engagement in crisis areas *outside Europe*, transformed military and other security-sector capabilities that can underpin such risk-prone engagements, and a credible willingness to use force when necessary and legitimate— have not yet been fully realized and digested in most member states” (Becher, 2004, p. 351) [emphasis added]

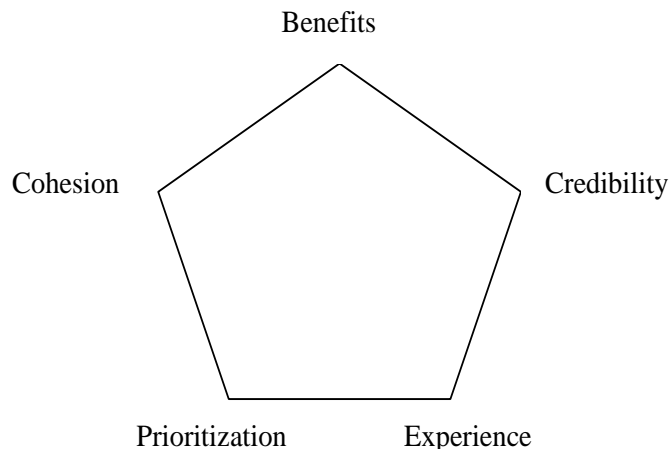
In this situation EU security activity might content itself by refocussing from the global to the EU’s own backyard, including the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus (Everts, 2004). As an entity the EU has to gain *experience*, which will take the shape of a gradual process. Taking into consideration the special nature of the EU, one has to ensure that the vast majority of Member States backs the geographical scope of the EU’s ambitions.

Fourthly, and to be understood as a result of the former three points, putting more emphasis on the ‘arc of instability’ surrounding the EU facilitates *prioritization*. For instance, “a more detailed geopolitical vision” would help “to differentiate among levels of threat” (Menotti, 2003, p. 15). As the EU is “surrounded by regions with a high potential for problems and tensions” its security strategy could help restricting the geographical focus and thus ensure a clearer perceptions of the direct risks to European security (Gnesotto and Grévi, 2006, p. 204; Bildt, 2003).

Finally, the larger the EU’s geographical scope of action, the higher the probability to encounter difficulties in finding a common ground between the Member States. The Balkans is the only region which the EU can present with a more or less consistent strategy. The long-term goal of integrating these countries in the EU, the acceptance that these countries must be stabilized in order to secure the EU, and the economic and

political tools put at Brussels' disposal in order to shape the Balkans (e.g. the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA)) underline this point. Admittedly, Member States still display a level of incoherency in approaching the Balkan countries, but they all agree that common advances are necessary and desirable (Quille, 2004). This latter commonality appears to slowly fade away the more one departs from the core European region. On most countries outside the European continent "individual member-states maintain differing – and sometimes mutually contradictory – policies" (Leonard and Gowan, 2003, p. 16). In the case of Iraq or Chad, Member States were not even united in the question of whether one should get active or not. As Colonel Kilburn *Officier de Liaison Interarmées* highlights, the driving motor behind the mission in Chad turned out to be primarily France, with other Member States scratching their heads about the utility of such an undertaking (Interview with Kilburn, 2008). Hence, it appears that the highest possibility to find common ground between the states lies in its direct neighbourhood (Martín, 2003). In this respect, Kilburn suggests that a "geographical limitation of the ESS, and consequently the EU's civil-military actorness, would enhance *cohesion*" (Interview with Kilburn, 2008). According to Quille, "the ability of the ESS to lead to greater coherence in the Union's future role in the Balkans ought to be a measure of the success of the EU's [comprehensive] approach" (Quille, 2004, p. 427).

Figure 1: The Pentagon of Geo-Strategy



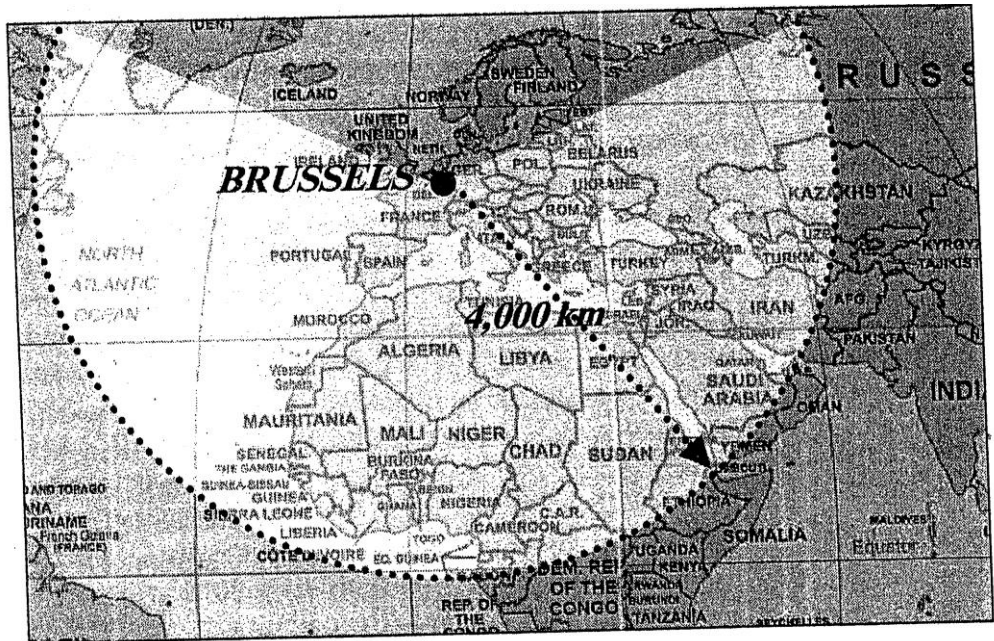
Having outlined the argument for a more restricted geographical approach, which can be summarized by the pentagon of geo-strategy consisting of benefits, credibility, experience, prioritization, and cohesion (**Figure 1**), it is necessary to state precisely what we consider as the region which a revised ESS should prioritize and on which the EU should focus its civil-military security efforts. Based on the arguments above, and particularly in reference to Everts' idea of 'few policy priorities', this paper suggests the following three main points, hence defining the EU's region (Everts, 2004):

- 1.The Balkans
- 2.The Caucasus and Russia
- 3.Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus

In the course of this paper, above all in part VI, we will further explore how the EU will approach other important regions, such as the Maghreb, Africa or the Middle East. For now suffice to say that such a narrower approach would allow the EU to half its current radius of action from 4000km, as proposed by Jones (**Figure 2**), to 2000km (taking Brussels as the originator).

Summarizing this first part, we have observed that geography plays an essential role in security strategies (section a)). However, the ESS appears to be caught in a tension of priorities between the global and the regional (section b)). Subsequently, the case for a more regional outlook of the ESS is made (section c)). By analyzing the pentagon of geo-strategy we have also touched upon the interlinkage of the variable 'geography' with other tensions in the ESS discourse, such as threat perception (see Menotti, 2003), interests, objectives and capabilities (see Everts, 2004), the use of force (see Becher, 2004) and relations with the US and NATO (see Posen, 2004). We will turn now to these tensions and examine in how far a narrower geographical scope has the capacity to ease these strains.

Figure 2: The EU's current radius of action



Source: Jones, 2007, p. 216

II. Threat Perception

a) A Threat Assessment in Question

Clearly assessing the threats to the EU was - as Bailes notes - one of the “greatest objective wants before the ESS was drafted” (Bailes, 2005, p. 14). Accordingly the ESS identified five threats in the following hierarchical order: Terrorism, proliferation of WMDs, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime (European Council, 2003). Works on the ESS are divided about this threat assessment. Oikonomou regards them as ‘clearly identified’ (Oikonomou, 2007) and Becher considers it as “both well-focused and general enough to be reflective of the positions of all member state governments, representing a wide range of political traditions and preferences” (Becher, 2004, p. 353). Other authors, however, are more critical and deplore two main shortcomings:

Firstly, the threat assessment is deemed ‘vague’ as it is neither linked to a clear definition of what the EU seeks to achieve nor specifies more in depth what notions like terrorism actually mean (Menotti, 2003; Biscop, 2004). The former point

will be dealt with in part III, while the latter deserves our attention now. The ESS' assessment appears to provide only a "common ground between the inevitably different threat perceptions" of the Member States (Haine, 2008, p. 21). This can explain why the ESS features rather uncomfortable formulations such as 'may or could be a threat to European security' (European Council, 2003). In addition, Biscop insinuates that a pull between global and regional threats in the ESS can account for this imprecision (Biscop, 2004). He makes out terrorism and WMDs as essentially global threats, while a softer European approach is reflected in the enumeration of the other three threats, calling it "an intra-European compromise" (ibid., p. 16). To some extent, this strain can also be explained by the need to display "a European awareness of the same new threats that had come to dominate US thinking" (Bildt, 2003, p. 3). The danger, however, is that the ESS is more focused towards international terrorism and new terrorism, hence neglecting the classic variant embodied by organizations such as ETA (Martín, 2003).

Secondly, Valášek is of the opinion that "the most obvious change to Europe's security environment since 2003 is the return of state-based threats", in particular Russia, and hence advocates that a revised ESS include such a reference to Moscow (Valášek, 2008a, p. 1). While the emergence of states as major challenges to the EU is also acknowledged by Missiroli, few agree that a direct mentioning of Russia as a threat would help ease tensions between the two players (Missiroli, 2008). Still, the urgency to address the relations with Russia is evident and in the next section we seek to develop how to reconcile these views taking into account a narrower geographical outlook of the ESS.

b) How to Perceive Threats in The EU's Region?

Hence, could we achieve a clearer understanding of the threats to the EU if we limited the geographical scope of the ESS as proposed in part I? It appears that there are some indicators pointing into this direction. Scholars of international security highlight that "the geographical element is crucial, because the sense of 'threat' is crucially shaped by geographical distance and terrain" (Sheehan, 2005, p. 22). Moreover, one of the key questions for a security actor is who or what constitutes a

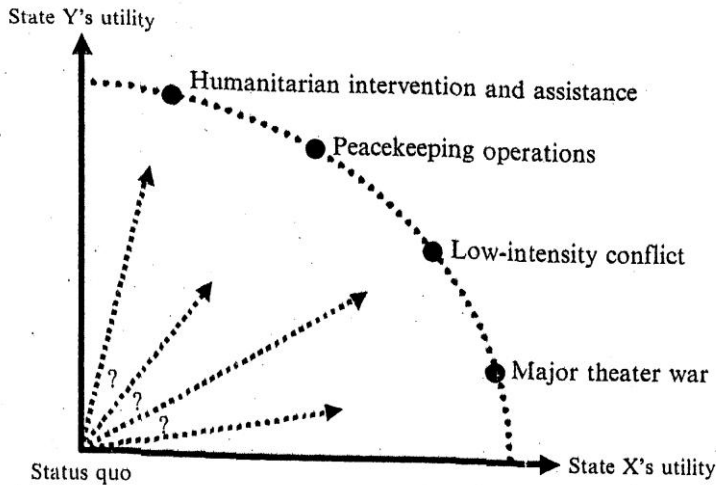
threat, which is to some extent pre-conditioned by the geographical realm of activity (Terriff etc. al, 2007; Sheehan, 2005).

The ESS, on the contrary, opted for a rather broad perception, stating that “the threats described [in the ESS] are common threats, shared with all our closest partners” (European Council, 2003, p. 13). However, taking into account the arguments above, the ESS might want to show more confidence in defining what the EU, both as a regional actor and as an international entity of special character, regards as threats to its security.

A possible dilemma, resulting from a broader approach to threats, is analyzed by Jones (Jones, 2007) (**Figure 3**). He stipulates that the nature of the threat conditions the scope of military forces to be used. Thus, a greater threat would incite high-end military responses, while a diminutive threat would stimulate a low-end reaction, such as peacekeeping. However, as Jones insinuates threats might be perceived differently, resulting in different preferences for cooperation (ibid.). Subsequently, Lipson outlines that “if actors prefer different outcomes, the range of possibilities creates bargaining problems.

Which cooperative outcome should they choose?” (Lipson etc. al in Jones, 2007, p. 188). Hence, we can assume that a narrower geography supports a clearer definition of threats, leading to two beneficial consequences: Firstly, states are more likely to have the same preferences; and secondly, states, although they might have different preferences for intervention, will be more likely to compromise. This becomes even the more important if we consider that “Europe’s [27] separate militaries are trained to very different levels of combat intensity” (Howorth, 2007, p. 115) (**Figure 4**). Given these diverse strategic traditions it appears essential to have a univocal threat perception.

Figure 3: Different options of EU forces to counter threats



Source: Jones, 2007, p. 188

Figure 4: Armed forces along the conflict intensity line

Level of Intensity	Type of Operation	Countries	Required Capabilities
1		Luxembourg, Malta	
2	Petersberg tasks with low intensity	Cyprus, Estonia,	General purpose ground forces
3		Finland, Hungary,	
4		Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia	
5	Czech Republic, Poland		
6	Petersberg tasks with medium intensity	Austria, Belgium,	
7		Denmark, Greece, Portugal	
8		Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden	
9	High intensity Petersberg advanced expeditionary warfare.	France, United Kingdom	Special forces, sea control, air support, air-to-air refuelling, strategic lift, nuclear deterrence, satellite intelligence
10	Full scale warfare	United States	

Hence, if we take into consideration the proposals from part I, we can more clearly identify the threats to the EU. The instability in the Balkans, Moldova and the Caucasus undermines Europe's security. In the EU's region the biggest threats to European security therefore appear to be what we will call 'failing' states, of which organized crime is a main component, facilitating human, drug and arms trafficking (Bildt, 2003). Furthermore, terrorism will remain an important threat to the EU, but its roots are essentially domestic and sometimes paired with (Islamic) fundamentalism (Martín, 2003). A revised ESS should therefore insist on a more 'European' approach to terrorism and delineate itself from Washington's rather bold approach to international terrorism, which so far has done little to ease tensions with the Muslim world. In consequence, if the EU has re-oriented itself accordingly, capabilities will be liberated in order to invest more verve into relations with Russia, of which a durable plan for energy security would be the dominating component. Rather than rubberstamping Russia as a threat, Swedish Minister for European Affairs Malmström suggests to coin Moscow and energy security as a 'key priority', thereby satisfying both those who wish to lend more prominence to Russia as a threat and those who regard it rather as a challenge than a threat (Conference with Malmström, 2008). Before turning to the triangle of interests, objectives, and capabilities, we can conclude that a revised ESS with a regional outlook could comprise failing states and terrorism as the two threats, and Russia and energy security as the key priority.

III. Interests, Objectives and Capabilities

a) Interests-Objectives-Capabilities: The ESS' Triangle Without Corners

Taking into consideration the definition of a security strategy provided for in the introduction, we realize that it evolves around three interrelated components: the definition of the actor's interests, the objectives he seeks to achieve, and the capabilities necessary for these ends. We will now analyze how the ESS has dealt with this triangle of interests, objectives, and capabilities.

The scholarly debate almost unanimously highlights that the ESS fails to define both the EU's general interests and more specifically the interests which are vital for its survival (Biscop, 2004; Coolsaet, 2003; Everts, 2004; Interview with Kilburn, 2008; Martín, 2003; Missiroli, 2008). This is also demonstrated in the introduction of the ESS where the EU calls itself a global player not because of its values and interests but because of its GDP and population figures (European Council, 2003). Hence, its "responsibility for global security" is taken on by default rather than by calling" (Berenskoetter, 2005). In this absence of a clear 'missionary spirit' it becomes clear why in the past most ESDP mission were offered to the EU (e.g. Aceh), and not necessarily based on Brussels' interest to intervene (Serrano, 2006 in Nowak, 2006).

Additionally, most authors underscore that the ESS' lack of clearly defined interests leads to increasing difficulties when addressing its objectives (Pullinger, 2007; Toje, 2005). While the ESS' third part does list three strategic objectives (addressing the threats, building security in our neighbourhood, and an international order based on effective multilateralism), it appears that these objectives are rather broad and lack any detailed plans for their achievement (ibid.). Therefore, the ESS would need to define more explicitly the benchmarks for assessing its objectives, an end-state, and an exit strategy for the missions falling under its objectives (Ehrhart, 2008; Howorth, 2008).

Under Part III (Policy Implications) the ESS sets out that the EU needs to become more capable (European Council, 2003). Nonetheless, the measures set out suffer from two shortcomings. Firstly, the non-existence of clearly defined interests and objectives makes it hard for the ESS to answer the question *why* and for *what* rationale do we want capabilities? The ESS can thus not explain what spectrum of civil and military capabilities it seeks to acquire. For instance, for what purpose (if at all) does the EU need to purchase rather costly transport planes? Secondly, and to be seen as a result of the first point, no commitment can be found on either procurement or spending (Duke, 2004). Valášek, for example, points to the necessity to fix a spending requirement for defence in the ESS of at least 2% of GDP (Valášek, 2008a). Correspondingly, Malmström suggests including some budgetary references (Conference with Malmström, 2008). In the absence of such

clearer obligations, Dempsey wonders if the “EU’s goal of becoming a major defense and security player can be met” (Dempsey, 2008a, p. 1). It appears that if interests and objectives were more precise, a clearer picture of the necessary capabilities could emerge, in which more *rational* rather than *increased* spending could be achieved (Howorth, 2008). Therefore, whether a narrower geographical scope has the capacity to give this triangle corners will be discussed in the next section.

b) The EU’s Region: A Triangle Taking Shape

Nowak points out that “the realisation of the ambitious EU agenda set in the European Security Strategy now depends on the Member States providing appropriate means and resources” (Nowak etc. al, 2006, p. 37). However, if we consider that the CFSP budget, which funds ESDP missions, has only amounted to 103 Million in 2006, and the fact that for the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina “the Union had to struggle hard, scratch around for leftovers from different budgetary stratagems to put together a mere € 14 million”, or the mission in Aceh in which the budget could not cover the € 9 million common costs of the mission, the ESS’ agenda might be over-ambitious (Gourlay, 2006 in Nowak, 2006, p. 109). In the face of these numbers, the ESS’ statement that “as we increase capabilities in the different areas, we should think in terms of a wider spectrum of Missions” appears almost out of touch with reality (European Council, 2003, p. 12).

Thus we should understand that in 2008 ESDP is still a ‘scarce resource’ and should be used and treated as such (Serrano, 2006 in Nowak, 2006). Hence, instead of calling for ‘stronger global presence’ (Missiroli, 2008), the EU should only engage “in those regions where the EU has key/vital interests, areas which have direct impact on Europe’s security” (Serrano, 2006 in Nowak, 2006, p. 45). Civil-military intervention should therefore be confined to the EU’s region, where its vital interests are at stake. While stability in Kosovo and Macedonia qualifies as such vital interest, missions in Congo and Chad appear to be of lesser importance (Interview with Kilburn, 2008). Indeed one of the few times the ESS deploys the notion of interest is in connection with ‘countries on our border’ and more specifically the Balkans (European

Council, 2003). However, in order to lend sufficient prominence to these interests, “the EU should restrict itself geographically” (Interview with Kilburn, 2008). Posen further elaborates on this point and concludes that if the ESS was more specific on its geographical realm “it would also provide guidance for how new money would be spent, and how to reorder current defence spending” (Posen, 2004, p. 36). The EU then might realize that transport planes are not its main priority, and resources can be spent smarter.

In this respect the importance of public support for civil and military interventions as well as higher defence spending ought to be acknowledged (Dempsey, 2008a; Howorth, 2007). Taking into account the tensions in the realm of geography, the rather broad-brushed nature of threats, and vaguely defined interests and objectives it appears evident that the ESS cannot explain to the citizens why more money should be spent on defence, and that security is not a free good (Posen, 2004; Martín, 2003). However, “if the strategy’s commitment to the pacification of Europe’s periphery were more explicit and distinctive it might catch on with European publics” (Posen, 2004, p. 36). Hansen equally supports the idea that a narrower geography would clarify the actor’s objectives and hence increase public support (Hansen, 1997). Furthermore, Sheehan highlights that a more precise geopolitical delineation and discourse can contribute to “creating the political identity of the domestic community”, subsequently increasing public backing (Sheehan, 2005, p. 22). Valášek and Meyer both assemble data indicating that issues nearer to Europe attract more public attention and support (Meyer, 2005; Valášek, 2008).

Having observed in this third part the tensions in ESS discourse concerning the triangle of interests, objectives, and capabilities; and the possible beneficial impact of a narrower geographical scope, we now turn to the question of the use of force.

IV. Use of Force

a) The ESS’ Dilemma

A key component of a security strategy is to determine what incites the actor to use (or not to use) force (Kolodziej, 2005).

In the case of the ESS, a coalescing answer to this question becomes even more important as the repository of a monopoly of legitimate violence remains the state, hence underlining the tendency for diverging actions, and a European level which can best be described as ‘supranational intergovernmentalism’ (Howorth, 2007). How then has the ESS tackled this challenge?

The ESS’ key phrase in this respect is that “the United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” (European Council, 2003, p. 9). Meyer and Becher have interpreted this formulation as an indicator that the European views steadily evolve into a consensus regarding the UN as the primary actor legitimizing and authorizing the use of force (Becher, 2004; Meyer, 2005). Nonetheless, neither of them went as far as saying that the use of force is not possible without a UN mandate. It is this point which leads Biscop to complain that “the Strategy thus leaves a lot of room for interpretation, which on this issue detracts from its utility as a framework for policymaking” (Biscop, 2004, p. 23). Hence, without stating clearly when and under which conditions force will be used “leaves each member state free to apply its own perspective on multilateralism” (Martín, 2003, p. 4; Bailes, 2005; Quille, 2004; Toje, 2005).

This ambiguity represents somewhat of a dilemma for the EU. This becomes even more apparent when we consider that the ESS stipulates that there are states outside the international society which, if they are “unwilling to [rejoin it,] should understand that there is a price to be paid...” (European Council, 2003, p. 10). With the current formulation of the ESS, however, it is not so clear what this price entails. The underlying contradiction is best summarized by Leonard and Gowan who dissect that even though the EU might give primacy to the UN, “effectiveness of multilateral solutions frequently rests on their detachment from the UN framework” (Leonard and Gowan, 2003, p. 26). In this regard, Allin stresses that coupling EU military action to a UN mandate will have a restraining effect and indeed be ‘counterproductive’ (Allin, 2003). On the other hand, an EU which uses force without any benchmarks and restrictions is neither desirable nor an adequate model for other entities.

Thus, how can the ESS find a way out of this ‘moral and legal dilemma’ (Becher, 2004)?

b) The Ineluctability of a Double-Standard?

In the face of the 2003 Iraq crisis French Foreign Minister Villepin already acknowledged this dilemma, demonstrating that

“Nous ne refusons pas l’usage de la force, mais nous voulons mettre en garde contre les risques d’un emploi préventif, érigé en doctrine : quel exemple donnerions-nous aux autres Etats de la planète ? Quelle légitimité accorderions-nous à notre action ? Et quelle limite mettons-nous à l’exercice de la puissance” (Villepin, 2003, p. 3)?

From this emerge two priorities for a revised ESS. Firstly, it needs to state clearly how it seeks to reform the UN in order to make it more functional. We will explore this point further in part VI. Secondly, it needs to set out for itself when and where it will use force and under what conditions.

Therefore, if we resort back to the EU’s narrowly defined region, the threats within this region and the fact that we have defined stabilizing failing states as the EU’s main interest in order to create democratically governed countries in the EU’s neighbourhood, then what can we infer about a UN mandate? We can assume that where vital EU interests are at stake, and this is the case in its region, a UN mandate should be desirable but not a necessary precondition for the use of force. The European Council should be accorded with the ultimate authority to legitimize violence as it would be a questionable approach to “delegate the security of our nations to a body that is often unwilling or unable to act responsibly and quickly” (Bereuter, 2004, p. 24). It is also in this region that countries and citizens are more willing to accept a non UN mandated mission. Previous experiences in the Balkan interventions and the will to accept sacrifices in this region are testimony to this trend (Interview with Halford, 2008; Meyer, 2005).

If the EU should get active outside of its clearly defined region, it should make a UN mandate a necessary precondition for the use of force. Admittedly, this proposal displays the tendency towards a double-standard but it is a step forward in

the sense that it could be agreed upon by the Member States, it gives a framework within which decisions for the use of force are taken and hence might be able to forestall future fissures between European capitals, and it can consequently prevent that in the case of crisis states use the imprecision of the ESS as an excuse to put their 'heads in the sand' (Mahbubani, 2008). The geographical re-focus of the ESS could thus help to delineate where and under which conditions force will be used. Of course, this does not alter the fact that "far from having a monopoly on the use of force, as in the classic definition of a state, the EU depends upon its member-states for coercive power" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 10). Therefore, compromise will still be hard to achieve. However, without a rather clearly defined answer to the question of the use of force, it might be increasingly difficult to find a satisfactory answer to the tense ESS' discourse on the EU's relations with the US and NATO, which we will turn to now.

V. Relations with the US and NATO

a) A Silent Strategy

On the issue of the relations with the US and NATO the ESS' discourse is not so much a tension as it is the absence of any profound reference to this topic at all. Therefore, as Terriff highlights, the strategy fails to address an important part of the question of 'who provides for security' (Terriff etc. al, 2007). The ESS contents itself to state that "the United States has played a critical role in European integration and European security, in particular through NATO", without, however, specifying how any future relation should look like (European Council, 2003, p. 1). The only hint to this relation is the ESS' vaguely defined call for "an effective and balanced partnership with the USA" (ibid., p. 13).

This has led several authors to criticize that the ESS understates the role of NATO and that in the future EU forces should align more clearly with NATO, as it must remain the cornerstone of common defence. In their view, an EU which is more independent from the more power-based and threat-oriented NATO would be a net loss to Brussels (Bereuter, 2004; Valášek, 2008). Other authors, as for example Duke,

take a more prudent stance and simply highlight the importance for the ESS to elucidate its outlook on these two actors; consequently asking the central question: “What degree of autonomy is desirable” (Duke, 2004, p. 481)? Once more we interrogate ourselves whether the EU, defined as a predominantly regional player, could help the ESS resolve this impasse?

b) Heading for European Emancipation in the Region

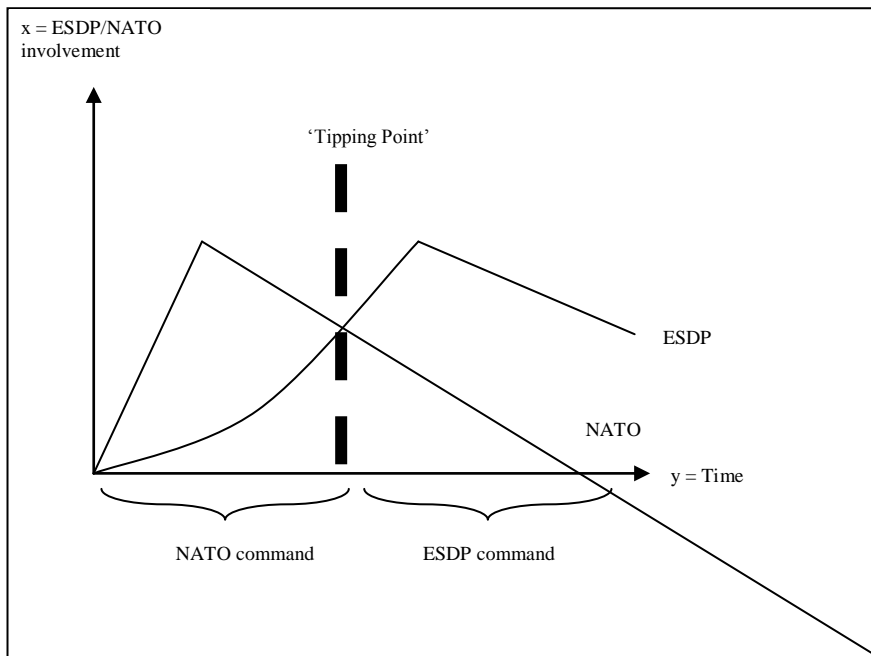
To be precise, the EU and the US need each other, not least because they share common positions on numerous issues. Furthermore, a revised ESS should neither have to choose between positioning the EU as a rival or an equal partner of the US. The different nature of these two actors would make this appear like comparing apples and oranges. In the same breath, a new strategy should abstain from painting ESDP and NATO as competitors. Nonetheless, a revised ESS ought to allow the EU to reach a degree of autonomy, or in other words to emancipate itself, in the regions where its vital interests are at stake.

In this spirit, Moisi proposes a geo-strategic divide of spheres of influence, in which the EU would be responsible primarily for Europe (in particular the Balkans), and the US would focus on the Americas and Asia (Moisi, 2003). Due to the historical and geographical legacy, each actor has a *légitimité propre* in his respective region; a quality which becomes ever more necessary if public support is desired (ibid.). His proposal is not intended to break European ties with the US, it is merely a step of the EU towards taking responsibility in its region as “it is neither healthy nor, in the long run, possible for EU member states to continue to depend on the open-ended commitment of an ally which is overstretched in many parts of the world and for which Europe hardly figures on the strategic radar screen” (Howorth, 2008, p. 11). If the ESS is explicit on this breakdown of influence between the US and the EU it can assist reducing the “continuous existence of multiple centres of authority in the field” which for most of the time represents “two competing universalistic claims” (Zielonka, 2006, 142).

Transferring this idea to the relation between ESDP and NATO, we could affirm that the ESDP's realm of responsibility lies in the EU's region, with NATO only intervening in this sphere in exceptional circumstances, for example, when a NATO entry force is needed (Interview with Kilburn, 2008). If such a situation is to arise, NATO would command the mission up until the point where the ESDP's civil-military involvement starts exceeding the degree of involvement of the pure military approach of NATO ('Tipping Point'), after which the command would pass to ESDP, in order to avoid a duplication of command structures (ibid.) (**Figure 5**). However, such a scenario of 'division of labour' can only take place after all options for a 'division of spheres' have been exhausted. The central goal of ESDP should be the ability to conduct missions in its region autonomously without recourse to NATO. Such an approach would allow inducing more responsibility into the EU, and could also help to define clearer what capabilities are required to secure its region.

A revised ESS could thus lend a hand to alleviating the geographical strain between 'globalism and regionalism' which characterizes the relation between NATO and ESDP (Posen, 2004). Posen describes this dilemma as an 'unstated bargain' in which "NATO grudgingly tolerates the ESDP, because the EU lends its political legitimacy to the pursuit of NATO's force goals. Though the EU cares mainly about its periphery, NATO promises the US global assistance in the war on terror" (Posen, 2004, p. 37).

Therefore, we realize that NATO suffers from two main weaknesses. After the Cold War it has lost its *raison d'être*, i.e. collective defence, which is likely to play no significant role in the EU's region anymore. On its quest to bestow itself with a new mission it has tinkered with the idea of indulging more profoundly into civil-military crisis prevention, a predominantly EU domain. It is at this point that we realize its second deficiency: as a purely military alliance it tends to lack legitimacy (Duke, 2004; Jones, 2007).

Figure 5: ‘Division of Labour’ between NATO and ESDP

Source: Based on Interview with Kilburn, 2008

A revised ESS should not be shy to acknowledge these arguments, as the risk of relying on a US-led NATO is “the possibility that the US will impose its will on Europe in areas of strategic importance” (Jones, 2007, p. 208). Hence, a narrower geographical approach to a revised ESS would allow the EU to call for more autonomy from the US and NATO in its region. Such a step does not only have the potential to guide more clearly the EU’s procurement strategy, but might also increase its stand vis-à-vis the public. ESDP has generally had a better image in the eyes of the public and the US has suffered from a severe blow to its reputation since the Bush administration took office (Gnesotto and Grévi, 2006). Without breaking ties with either US or NATO, a more self-assertive stance of the EU’s ESDP could be anchored in the ESS.

Having observed in these five parts the possible beneficial impact of a narrower geographical approach to the ESS, we will now examine in how far this regional outlook is compatible with the EU’s global responsibilities.

VI. Neglecting Global Responsibilities?

Having argued the case for the EU as a regional actor in the previous parts, this paper could be reproached with the critique that such an outlook would neglect Brussels' global responsibilities; that is to say that "l'Europe se transforme en une grande Suisse, égoïste, prospère, provinciale et impuissante, dont la neutralité serait essentiellement passive et auto-protectrice" (Moisi, 2003, p. 522). Nonetheless, the geographical refocus is proposed for a specific purpose. It seeks to offer a stepping stone to solve underlying tensions, and subsequently principal conflicts, apparent in the ESS. Prioritizing the region is deemed necessary as threats manifest and vital interests ought to be protected here. Since the EU has limited civil-military capabilities to act, it should favour employing them in its region. Accordingly, the main security focus of the ESS should be the region. This, however, does by no means imply that a revised ESS should not treat the global scene.

As Gnesotto and Grévi emphasize: "The biggest strength of Europe is its own experience of continental integration and stabilisation, and the new language of international relations that it has generated..." (Gnesotto and Grévi, 2006, p. 207). This language, or discourse, is as Schmidt remarks that of creating a values-based community, which seeks to promote this discourse and itself as a 'model regional power' (Miliband, 2007 in Schmidt, 2008). Until now the ESS can be interpreted in a way that it displays the EU as such a model but "this is communicated without the same moral conviction", as for example the threat of terrorism (Duke, 2004, p. 464). Only once does the ESS state that "regional organisations also strengthen global governance" and hence have the potential to increase security (European Council, 2003, p. 9). The lack of detail on this issue is regrettable as according to Howorth, the EU should underscore its model character and seek to shape the environment towards a 'post-Westphalian order' and a 'multi-polar space' (Howorth, 2008).

Therefore, a revised ESS should stimulate the EU to invest its energy on a global scale into the promotion of regional organizations like the EU. This follows the logic that the most beneficial scenario for the EU in the global arena would be the existence of ever more EU-like entities. The recently founded

Union of South American States, which is modelled on the EU and even possesses a legal personality like the Communities, or the African Union, whose role in African security missions increases steadily, are two examples of organizations which demand intense EU engagement (Oualalou, 2008). The ESS stresses the importance of such a commitment, saying that “our history, geography and cultural ties give us links with every part of the world” (European Council, 2003, p. 14). Hence, the profound knowledge the EU Member States share concerning the cultural and historical sensibilities of these regions can augment the EU’s leverage to promote its model (Hansen, 1997). Rather than trying to make a difference with limited civil-military engagement, the ESS should steer the EU towards using its economic and political clout to stimulate closer cooperation between the countries of these regions (Mahbubani, 2008). Trade benefits could be accorded only to whole regional organizations, and only under the condition that they respect European values on democracy and human rights. The more success the EU will have in infusing its fifty year experience into other regional organizations, the more these regional states will be able to secure their own region and consequently lighten the burden of the EU. This becomes even the more important if we consider three trends Gnesotto and Grévi outline for the future development until the year 2025 (Gnesotto and Grévi, 2006). Firstly, regional organizations will consolidate further. Secondly, former colonial powers will decrease their engagement in Africa, Asia and South-America, while emerging powers like China and India will increase their influence in these regions. Finally, globalization will enlarge complexities and hence impede addressing security issues straightforwardly (ibid.). These three trends taken together the necessity to ensure that the consolidation of these regional organizations is predominantly shaped by the EU in order to forestall a disproportionate sway by undemocratic states like China and consequently to ensure a common understanding of security challenges is ever more vital. Bearing this in mind a revised ESS can set out some contours to answering Zielonka’s question of how “a ‘civilized’ Europe [can] survive in a largely ‘uncivilized’ world?” (Zielonka, 2006, p. 156).

In this light we should also understand a more precise ESS formulation on how the EU seeks to reform the UN. Bearing in mind that an enlarged number of permanent members in the

Security Council are unlikely to lead to improved decision-making, the EU should seek to promote a common EU seat provided that other countries like Brazil or Germany give up their national claims in favour of common seats for their respective regional organizations (Biscop, 2004).

Finally, the Middle East, not least for the danger of proliferation of WMDs and the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, deserves the ESS' attention. However, and this leads us back to part III of this paper, the ESS should set out one or two clear objectives in the Middle East instead of stating rather indistinctly that the EU "must remain engaged and ready to commit resources to the problem until it is solved" (European Council, 2003, p. 8). If the EU agreed to organize an extensive regional conference in the Middle East, bringing together all parties, it would not only contribute to global security but also highlight its own profile of how to do things the European way, distinct from the US.

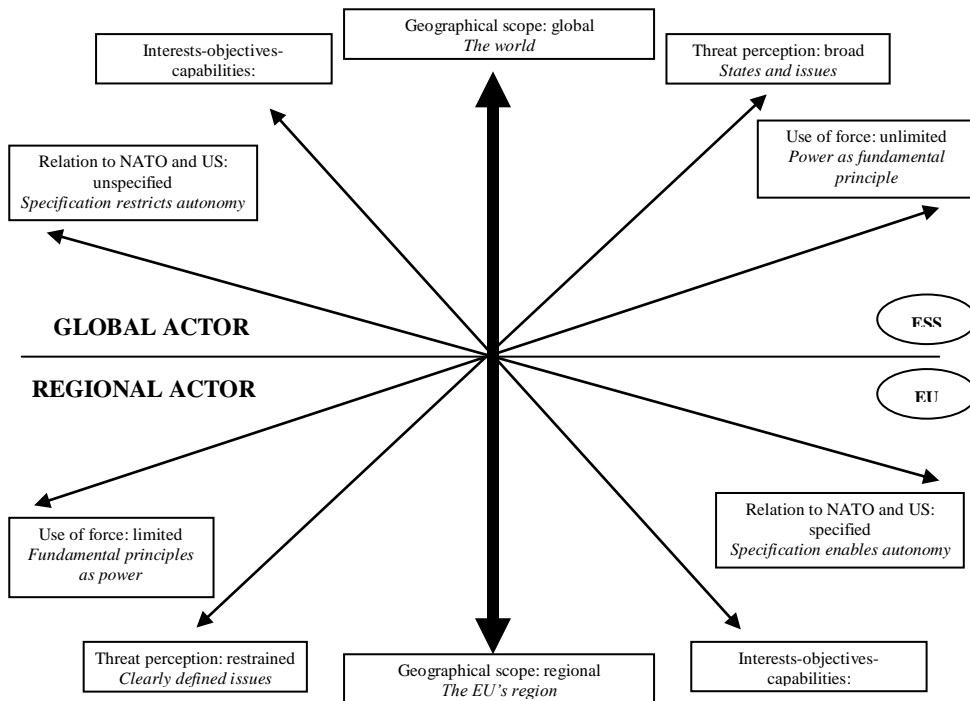
In this final part we have thus observed how the ESS, despite a clear regional focus, has the potential to address the global stage. Without compromising its limited capabilities, which are predominantly used in its region, the ESS could highlight three main priorities, i.e. promoting and supporting regional organizations, reforming the UN, and the Middle East.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War has initiated a strategic re-thinking of previously unknown extent – a process which is by no means over yet (Roper, 2005). Hence, repositioning oneself in an international system in which security has become a 'fluid' concept is even the more difficult for an actor like the EU, who - regardless of whether we call him *sui generis*, regional state, or neomedieval empire - is different, particular, maybe even ambiguous by his very nature, which consists of a previously unknown project of states guarding *de jure* their sovereignty but *de facto* pooling some of it on a supranational level (Roper, 2005; Gnesotto, 2004; Schmidt, 2006; Zielonka, 2006). Due to this unique nature, the EU's ESS, which has been considered as a first vital step towards defining Brussels' actorness, should nonetheless not strive to live up to comparable documents of global, traditional nation-state players, e.g. the US' NSS.

In this context, this paper has made an attempt to show that when analyzing the discourse of the ESS five key underlying, interconnected tensions become visible which wrestle with the strain between the global and the regional (**Figure 6**). While the figure below offers two ideal models of a global and a regional actor, the paper has nevertheless tried to demonstrate that the ESS has a tendency to position itself more inside the ‘global’ realm, while the EU in reality is situated in the ‘regional’. This fissure leads to the trend that high ambitions outlined in the policy document cannot be met by actual performance. This does not only spur frustration between the Member States but has the side-effect of diminishing European credibility abroad.

Figure 6: Tensions in the discourse of the ESS



Consequently, the paper has argued that a revised ESS might want to limit its geographical scope to a clearly defined region (i.e. the

Balkans, the Caucasus, Russia, Moldova, the Ukraine and Belarus). Besides a beneficial impact for the pentagon of geo-strategy (**Figure 1**), such a regional re-focus could also lead to positive externalities in regards to the other four tensions identified. In a concisely defined region, the EU could more clearly perceive threats to its security; define its vital interests to which it can assign objectives, and it's still limited capabilities. Moreover, a clearer stance could be achieved towards relations with the UN (and the use of force), NATO and the US. By doing so a revised ESS should function as an effective policy-making tool and go beyond its current stage where it "was made to serve, not to direct and not even fully to reflect, the dynamics of 'real politics' in Europe" (Bailes, 2005, p. 22).

Favouring the region as the predominant realm for civil-military activity means that scarce resources are concentrated where they are needed the most. Hence, the EU can do less but better. Besides, on several occasions the importance of the region to public opinion was outlined, which is deemed crucial considering that "legitimacy will be the hard currency of future international relations..." (Gnesotto and Grévi, 2006, p. 198). In the face of the latest referendum in Ireland, the EU should not take this point light-heartedly. Outside of its region the ESS must thus rethink the notion of power and concentrate on its function as a model. Promoting this model with the support of the whole spectrum of economic and political instruments at its disposal will be crucial in shaping the world (and more specifically regional organizations which resemble the EU) in a European way.

Narrowing the geographical focus of a revised ESS appears therefore as an "an essential element of analysis ... and policy recommendation" with which the EU could enhance its share in 'building a better world' (Hansen, 1997, p. 7; European Council, 2003). While this signifies one step back from the current ESS, it could mean two steps ahead for the EU's performance as a security actor.

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