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## The EU Security Strategy Revised: Europe Hedging Its Bets

ASLE TOJE\*

**Abstract.** The 2008 Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy was written to update the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), the EU's overall foreign policy strategy. This article offers a comparative analysis of the two documents through the prism of four 'conceptual pairs': Strategic culture and human security; war on terror and terror as crime; preventive engagement and hedging; and effective multilateralism and normative power. It is argued that the revised strategy is a sign that the EU may be shifting towards an overall strategy of 'hedging' strategy vis-à-vis the great powers. While admirably succeeding in asserting an independent EU approach to foreign and security policy, it does so at the cost of re-submerging the Union's strategic ambition in ambiguity. By adopting a hedging strategy, the EU can be seen as seeking to opt out of the turbulence usually associated with a systemic shift towards multipolarity.

### I Introduction

The European Union (EU) security policy is a remarkable document. It was constructed under an agreement that the EU should have such a policy but not what it should be about. On 12 December 2003, the leaders of the EU approved the first ever European Security Strategy (ESS), proclaiming an intention to 'share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world'.<sup>1</sup> The ESS summons up the EU's external dimension, in a manner that transcends the metaphorical 'pillars' intended to visualize the workings of the Union. The ESS encapsulates foreign and security policy, which spans from the development and neighbourhood policies of the European Commission, via the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), under the auspices of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to police and judicial cooperation.

The ESS is, as Sven Biscop has argued, important because it sums up the EU's political project, its hopes, and its ambitions.<sup>2</sup> Its significance lies not so much in what the document actually states as in what it is seen to represent. For decades,

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<sup>1</sup> Javier Solana, 'A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy', 15895/03, PESC787 (Brussels, 12 Dec. 2003), <[www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/76255.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/76255.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> S. Biscop, 'Odd Couple or Dynamic Duo? The EU and Strategy in Times of Crisis', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, no. 3 (2009): 367–384.

Europeanists called for a document such as this as a foundation on which to construct a viable, active, and influential collective presence.<sup>3</sup> Five years later, on 11 December 2008, the European Council published a Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (RI-ESS) titled ‘Providing security in a changing world’.<sup>4</sup> Highlighting the achievements of the common EU foreign and security policy while identifying the shortcomings was never going to be an easy task. At first glance, the document looks uncontroversial, even generic. A closer examination reveals notable discrepancies from the document it comments upon. This article offers a comparative analysis of the 2003 ESS and the 2008 RI-ESS with the aim of highlighting trends and changes in EU strategic thinking during the first five years of the CSDP.

## II Five Years and a World of Change

In 2003, amidst the tensions in the run-up to the Iraq war, the EU undertook a first appraisal of its strategy and foreign policy interests. At that time, many still believed that the world was on a path towards a global society based on shared ideals and regulated by supranational institutions: a world where soft power and internationalist inclinations would be of greater significance than interests and power resources. The resulting ESS was, among other things, characterized by a strong affirmation of liberal internationalism. While embracing American strategic leadership, the ESS at the same time asserted a distinctly European approach to this agenda. The EU embraced different means to the Americans. Measures such as dialogue and economic aid were emphasized over coercion and armed force.<sup>5</sup>

Five years later, the world had changed profoundly. The post-modern agenda so present in the original strategy has been joined by more familiar threats including of a military nature. As American satirist Jon Stewart commented – while we were building a bridge to the future, the nineteenth century was busy tunnelling. The return of intra-state warfare to Europe, and the global financial crisis, has in a remarkably short time altered the *modus operandi* of international affairs. The shift towards multipolarity has been accompanied by a resurgence of power politics, at a time when the institutional and normative framework constructed in the aftermath of the Second World War is coming under pressure. Amidst a confusing mix of traditional and post-modern threats, it appears increasingly likely that the

<sup>3</sup> See F.S. Berenskoetter, ‘Mapping the Mind Gap: A Comparison of US and European Security Strategies’, *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 1 (2005): 71–92; S. Duke, ‘The Future of EU-NATO Relations: A Case of Mutual Irrelevance through Competition?’, *Journal of European Integration* 30, no. 1 (2008): 27–43; A.J.K. Bailes, ‘The European Security Strategy: An Evolutionary History’, *SIPRI Policy Paper* 10 (2005).

<sup>4</sup> European Council, ‘Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World’, S407/08 (Brussels, 11 Dec. 2008).

<sup>5</sup> A. Toje, ‘The 2003 European Union Security Strategy – A Critical Appraisal’, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10, no. 1 (2005): 117–133.

post-Cold War interlude is drawing to a close – seemingly making the question of a multipolar international system a question of not if, but when.<sup>6</sup>

It has been argued that the EU is an altogether ‘different’ kind of actor – a ‘different kind of super power’ as one study had it.<sup>7</sup> Ten years after the Saint Malo Declaration that initiated the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)/CSDP, the EU has assembled a ‘unique range of instruments’ – economic, diplomatic, and military.<sup>8</sup> Although the EU is a potential superpower in terms of size of economy, population, and defence spending, the CSDP was never about creating a European army or supplanting North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)’s responsibility for territorial defence. Each Member State remains solely responsible for its own defence. Each has a veto on the approval of every individual operation, and none is obliged to take part in it. Rather, the CSDP developed from an understanding that many of today’s security challenges are not interest-driven: conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict stabilization. The emphasis is on how to build states that have market economies, rule of law, human rights, and democracy – the cornerstones of modern statehood.

Logic dictates that for the CFSP to be effective, Member States must channel relevant components of their foreign and security policies through the EU. For this to occur, they must set common goals and agree on how to achieve these goals. This taken into consideration, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the security strategy is that it did not arrive earlier. It is noteworthy how little serious discussion has taken place among the Member States over the future direction of the EU security policy. However, looking back, the call to write the ESS was not the offspring of the debate over the need for a firmer policy platform. It was rather triggered by the American decision to go to war in Iraq. The 2003 Iraq crisis brought the United States at odds with key European allies. It also made obvious a lack of common policy grounding among the EU states. Something they so far had successfully clouded in ambiguity.<sup>9</sup> Faced with what possibly amounts to the most pre-announced crisis in modern history, the EU states failed, despite trying, to reach an agreement on how to tackle the Iraq question and the US attempts at influencing the policies of its European allies. In spite of overwhelming public opposition to pre-emptive war, EU unity crumbled under the conflicting short-term interest of the Member States.

Although nobody had suggested that the EU should play a role in the Iraq war, the crisis paralysed the CSDP through the spring of 2003. The rift also stole the thunder from the EU Constitutional Treaty that was being canvassed at the time.

<sup>6</sup> See F. Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); R. Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> P. Rieker & S. Ulriksen, *En Annerledes Supermakt?: Sikkerhets- og Forsvarspolitikken i EU* (Oslo: The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> RI-ESS, see n. 4 above, 11.

<sup>9</sup> This point is elaborated by François Heisbourg, ‘Europe’s Strategic Ambitions: The Limits of Ambiguity’, *Survival* 42, no. 2 (2000): 5–15.

A broad majority of Europeans opposed the intervention. After all the talk of unity, the handlings of the Iraq crisis made the EU look impotent at the informal General Affairs and External Relations Council at Gymnich in Greece in May, Greek Foreign Minister, George Papandreou concluded an ‘urgent need of a European strategic concept’.<sup>10</sup> The ESS was, in other words, driven – not by calls for reform from within the EU but by outside pressure.

This considered, the basic aims of the commissioned document can be said to have been threefold: to provide the EU states with an agreed platform on which meaningful policies could be formulated; to craft a foreign policy consensus among the EU states that would make it possible for the EU to mobilize resources; and to give some indication of the purpose of EU power. All these questions point towards policy output. Even when military capabilities and institutional frameworks are present, the EU frequently fails to put them to strategic use. For all the talk that the EU is the world’s biggest aid donor, it is hard to find examples of economic clout being used to gain influence beyond the states seeking EU membership.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the EU’s impact on world affairs has been somewhat less than the ‘formidable force for good in the world’ that it aspires to be.<sup>12</sup>

It was in this context that the 2008 French EU presidency called for a review of the ESS.<sup>13</sup> In integration history, ‘great leaps’ forward are often associated with the EU presidencies of the three largest powers – Germany, France, and Britain. Importantly, the EU presidency coincided with a number of parallel processes being completed, notably the CSDP reached full operability, a French reintegration into NATO’s military structure and a new American president taking office. Commenting on the re-branding of the document, a member of the EU Policy Unit said: ‘It was clear for us [in the EU Policy Unit] from the beginning that we wanted to write an updated version of the ESS – in much the same way that the US updates their National Security Strategy (NSS) at regular intervals.’<sup>14</sup>

By late 2008, President Sarkozy wished the French presidency of the EU to be marked by the EU states agreeing on a new ESS. France gained strong support for this initiative from a number of countries, but it was not to be. Over 2008, the expectations were progressively lowered. In an interview, a senior French diplomat involved in the security policy aspects of the 2008 French EU presidency noted that ‘Britain and Germany opposed any new strategy’. The British, particularly, were concerned that the CFSP/CSDP should deliver tangible capabilities, not more ‘visionary’ documents. In Germany, the debate over their forces in Afghanistan

<sup>10</sup> President-in-Office of the Council, Informal General Affairs and External Relations Council, Press Statement (Gymnich, 2–3 May 2003).

<sup>11</sup> See P. Holden, *In Search of Structural Power: EU Aid Policy as a Global Political Instrument* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 2.

<sup>13</sup> European Council, see n. 4 above.

<sup>14</sup> Exchange with member of the Policy Unit, EU Council Secretariat General (Brussels, 22 May 2009).

made any debate on military security difficult.<sup>15</sup> There were also concerns that a new ESS would complicate implementation of the Lisbon Treaty that was finally passed in 2009.

The Lisbon Treaty sets a grand, if not altogether realistic, goal for EU foreign policy: 'The Union's competence in matters of CFSP shall cover all areas of foreign policy.' In the RI-ESS, 'all areas' designates a rather more narrow selection of questions, namely, those that are currently on the table in a wide range of international forums.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, the overall objectives of EU foreign policy are not spelled out, and the EU's ambitions in core security policies of national interest (i.e., security, autonomy, wealth, and prestige) remain unclear. The term 'interest' as applied in the ESS is used as a synonym for 'policy' – hence, whatever the EU does or plans to do is elevated to the level of interest.<sup>17</sup> The RI-ESS acknowledges a need for 'better institutional coordination and more strategic decision-making' and concludes that 'the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty provide a framework to achieve this'.<sup>18</sup> The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU does indeed introduce some innovations aimed at streamlining the EU's institutional architecture. However, because there is no clear hierarchy among the members of the reshaped, post-Lisbon 'Troika' (the new Council President, Herman van Rompuy, the High Representative Catherine Ashton, and the European Parliament), it is too early to tell if any of these actors will, single-handedly or in concert, improve the effectiveness of the CFSP/CSDP. President Obama's decision to skip the annual United States-EU summit meeting in 2010 was taken as a signal that the Washington believes that it will not.<sup>19</sup>

The European Council instead agreed to write an 'Implementation Report'.<sup>20</sup> In an interview, a member of Javier Solana's staff stated that the document was intended to be 'a guide to be used while pursuing the ESS agenda that expresses the purpose, nature, and fundamental security tasks of EU. It is meant to identify the central features of the security environment while specifying the progress made on the ESS'.<sup>21</sup> Helga Schmidt, the Director of the EU Policy Unit where the RI-ESS was written, claimed that the report 'does not supplant the ESS, which remains fully valid, but examines how it has fared in practice, what more needs to be done'.<sup>22</sup> This is imprecise. Unlike the European Union Institute of Security Studies (EU-ISS) background report, the RI-ESS does not evaluate the progress

<sup>15</sup> Personal communication, senior German Diplomat (Berlin, 6 May 2009).

<sup>16</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 4 above, 9.

<sup>19</sup> S. Erlanger, 'Europe Feels Snubbed by Obama', *The New York Times*, 2 Feb. 2010.

<sup>20</sup> European Council, 'Presidency Conclusions', 16616/1/07 REV (Brussels, 14 Dec. 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication, Justus Lipsius building (Brussels, 7 Jun. 2009).

<sup>22</sup> The ESS is then apparently meant to operate in a manner similar to the EU treaties that each comes in addition to the previous treaties.



made.<sup>23</sup> The obvious problem with the report is that, although it aims to complement the ESS, it does not offer concrete recommendations for the future, nor is any follow-up mechanism provided.

To compare the ESS and the RI-ESS is arguably a bit like comparing apples and pears. The two documents are different not only in terms of formal categorization but also intended audience. The ESS was written for public consumption, and the RI-ESS was written foremost as a consensus-building exercise. Yet it stands the RI-ESS reads like a new version of the ESS. The two documents are similar in terms of date of presentation and title ('A secure Europe in a better world'/'Providing security in a changing world') and are structured in a similar manner. More to the point, the RI-ESS looks and reads much as one would expect an updated ESS to read. This has, however, proved more difficult than anticipated due to reasons we will return to later. The issuing of implementation reports rather than new strategies is one way to avoid controversy. The reason for this is simple: it was intended to be the new ESS. Several functionaries involved in the process admitted that the RI-ESS was indeed written as if it was to 'fill the shoes of the ESS', as one of them put it. Several voiced a view that there would be no new strategies, only implementation reports.<sup>24</sup> As it stands, the RI-ESS offers the best available indicator of evolution in EU strategic thinking since the 2003 ESS laid the foundations.

### III Strategy as a Codification of Practice

Strategy is one of the most overused terms in the international relations canon. Just as people tend to attribute virtue to whatever makes them happy, powers are prone attribute strategy to whatever they are doing. Strategy is the weaving of policy threads into predefined patterns. Strategy requires constant adaptation to changing conditions and circumstances where the actions or intentions of others are uncertain, and where intentions and outcomes are often interrelated in a tenuous way. It wedes political objectives to a larger context and to resources – political, economic, and military. Strategy is a process, which is why academic attempts to define it often fail. There is no direct transmission belt between power resources, strategic choices, and outcomes. Carl von Clausewitz concedes that strategy is often undermined by the endless complexities of the real world,<sup>25</sup> while Gideon Rose specifies that 'the impact of power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex,

<sup>23</sup> The report was the result of a series of workshops arranged by the EU-ISS hosted in several European countries over the span of 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Author's interviews with senior national and EU officials (London, Paris, Berlin, and Brussels, May–December 2008). It would therefore appear that the ESS has suffered the same fate as the EU 'common strategies', which after some initial progress (regarding Russia (1999/414/CFSP), the Ukraine (1999/887/CFSP), and the Mediterranean region (2000/458/CFSP)) was shelved due to the many conflicts spurred by the drafting process.

<sup>25</sup> C.V. Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 283.

because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening unit-level variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structure'.<sup>26</sup>

It is, at the same time, a subject of great importance to the fate of the EU and its Member States. In order to understand the ESS in its past and present incarnations, it is important to keep in mind that the term 'strategy' has in contemporary use lost much in terms of precision. Russell Frank Weigley begins his seminal text by distinguishing between 'military strategy' and 'national strategy' where the former is concerned with achieving objectives by threat or the use of force, and the latter is the development and use of political, economic, and psychological powers to secure predefined objectives.<sup>27</sup> The ESS and the RI-ESS are clearly attempts at strategy in a national, not military, sense. Political objectives vary over time; traditionally, a strategy paper is expected to define goals and establish priorities to achieve policy objectives. It should describe what means can be used, and under what conditions, in order to fulfil that specific purpose. Both the ESS and the RI-ESS fall short of these criteria. As Richard Wright, a Director at the European Commission, points out, the ESS reads more like a 'policy concept'.<sup>28</sup> Robert Cooper, rumoured to have penned the original ESS, admits that 'initially the term strategy was not in the first draft ... because we did not think it was a strategy'.<sup>29</sup>

The RI-ESS repeatedly refers to the 'complexities' of the international situation as if complexity was something that invalidates strategy when, in fact, strategy is a response to complexity. In this sense, the EU can be said to use strategy to 'black-box' phenomena that could have been better explained in reference to measurable variables. For example, rather than to specify the policy goals to be attained – in terms of security, autonomy, wealth, and prestige – the strategy can be spun into an almost mystical connection with reference to the 'uniqueness' of the EU approach.<sup>30</sup> All strategies seek to make a link between means and political, evaluative, ends – and they can be criticized on the basis of the validity and logical consistency of this link.<sup>31</sup> The greatest weakness of the ESS and the RI-ESS is that they do not offer even the roughest guide as to how the EU's foreign policy 'tool kit' can be administered to deliver concrete results. Frank Weigley notes that before 1941 the United States did not have such a strategy for the use of power to attain political ends.<sup>32</sup> The same can be said about the contemporary EU.

<sup>26</sup> G. Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144.

<sup>27</sup> R.F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

<sup>28</sup> R. Wright, 'International Conference on the Power of Europe', communication given at the Clingendael Institute (Brussels, 7–8 May 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication carried out on 21 May 2008.

<sup>30</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 2.

<sup>31</sup> T. Barkawi, 'Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies', *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 159–184.

<sup>32</sup> See Weigley, n. 27 above, xix.

In this sense the ESS and RI-ESS bear testimony to the lack of a European strategic culture.

Javier Solana is said to have been opposed to updating the ESS, fearing that the policy climate was not conducive to such a process.<sup>33</sup> Events have proved him right. Three developments in 2008, the Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty in May, the South Ossetian war in August, and the financial crisis that erupted in September, served to limit the range of policies influenced by the document and are important reasons why it has attracted relatively little attention. One EU pundit who followed its development closely blames the unsatisfactory outcome on the EU obsession with process. He noted: 'While the ESS was written without due process, the RI-ESS was written with all the process one could wish for. The documents illustrate the dangers when precision is traded for inclusiveness. The ESS is frankly a much better strategic document.'<sup>34</sup>

#### IV From Strategic Culture to Human Security

The most frequently quoted phrase from the ESS is the 'need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and when necessary, robust intervention'.<sup>35</sup> While strategic culture means different things to different scholars, most will agree that the term refers to the management and exercise of hard power.<sup>36</sup> The implementation report refrains from referring to this concept altogether. In its place is a stronger emphasis on 'providing security'. There is no echo of the 2010 Headline Goal's opening line, 'the EU is a global actor, ready to share in the responsibility for global security'.<sup>37</sup> In the RI-ESS, the EU is not referred to as a strategic actor. As a matter of fact, it is not referred to as an actor of any sort. The implication of this shift is that the great power ambition of the EU seems to have been abandoned.

The ESS did not offer even the roughest guide to the sort of situations in which coercive military and economic power might be used. The only direct reference to the use of armed force is when it states that: 'In failed states military instruments may be needed to restore order.'<sup>38</sup> The RI-ESS takes a similar line. Its sole reference to the use of armed force is hidden in a none-too-clear passage where conflict management and conflict prevention is mixed with ideological affirmations in a

<sup>33</sup> Interview with senior adviser to HR-CFSP, Javier Solana (Paris, 27 May 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Interview with a member of the EU Policy Unit, Javier Solana (Brussels, 6 May 2009).

<sup>35</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 13.

<sup>36</sup> See J. Snyder, 'The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options', a project Air Force report prepared for the United States R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, September 1977); K. Longhurst, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture', in *Military Sociology*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, ed. G. Kummel & A.D. Prufert (Germany: Baden-Baden, 2000), 200.

<sup>37</sup> European Union, *EU Security and Defence Policy: Core Documents 2004*, vol. V (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 9.

decidedly un-strategic manner.<sup>39</sup> By failing to spell out the types of situation where EU military capabilities might be called upon, the RI-ESS indicates that EU strategic policy will continue to find its *raison d'être* in low intensity, low technology crisis management. One centrally placed EU official explained the apparent lack of ambition with the words: 'We only recognize as much threat as we can handle.'<sup>40</sup>

In the RI-ESS, it could be argued that the EU dispenses with some of the ambition to be what Robert Keohane calls a 'system-determining power' that can influence the international system through unilateral or multilateral action; instead, it settles for playing a part in maintaining 'an effective multilateral order around the world'.<sup>41</sup> Both the ESS and the RI-ESS opt for a 'status quo' focus on making sure that the ordering mechanism of the system is multilateralism, rather than positioning the EU in relation to a unipolar or multipolar strategic reality. Charles Grant has explained this by claiming that Europeans recoil from balance-of-power politics: 'They believe that the major challenges of the twenty-first century, such as climate change, energy security, migration and terrorism, require cooperation among all the leading powers, rather than just the democratic ones, and strong multilateral institutions.'<sup>42</sup>

The EU is in its 'comfort zone' when focus is placed on mapping institutional frameworks or listing statistics indicating a high level of activity. The focus on process diverts attention away from the elephant in the room, namely, that the EU lacks agreed *ends* towards which *means* are to be applied.<sup>43</sup> There are at least three schools of thought on the geographical role of EU security policy. One school, consisting of smaller states led by the neutrals Finland and Austria, would like to see the CSDP continued as a consensus-guided, altruistic, regional crisis management instrument – somewhat like a regional branch of the United Nations (UN). They are opposed by Europe's two remaining military powers, Britain and France, who would like to see the EU safeguarding European interests on a global scale. They do not, however, agree on what these interests are. Finally, Germany has focused on the need for UN mandates and common assessment of missions, preferring to see the CFSP/CSDP less as a tool for power projection than as a means to deepen European integration.

The same three lines of argument can also be discerned in the current literature on EU foreign and security policy. Zaki Laïdi takes an optimistic view, stating that the EU is acquiring military capabilities while maintaining its character as an essentially civilian power: 'European defence will remain an instrument of soft

<sup>39</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Personal communication (Brussels, 7 May 2008).

<sup>41</sup> R.O. Keohane, 'Lilliputian's Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics', *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 295–296; RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 6.

<sup>42</sup> C. Grant, 'Europe, China and the Multilateral World Order', *The Global Times (China)*, 27 Jul. 2008.

<sup>43</sup> R. Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Policy Review* 113 (June and July 2002).

power; more to do with peacekeeping than coercion.’<sup>44</sup> A second perspective, in which the majority of EU security studies make their case, applauds the progress and laments its shortcomings, but without making any attempt to think about what role a European power might play on the world stage. A third view is that the CSDP is a token gesture that does not reflect any real intention to defend or deter. Anand Menon argues that the EU does not have the capacity to become an effective strategic actor and that ‘the CSDP may even serve to promote European insularity and strategic myopia’.<sup>45</sup>

A significant obstacle to developing an effective EU strategic actorness is that the current mode of collective decision-making limits policy output. Surprisingly, the period 2003–2008 failed to produce the anticipated increase in policy coordination among France, Germany, and Britain. The EU finds itself bound by the *modus operandi* of formulating security policies with twenty-seven potentially vetoing states. Experience has shown the difficulties involved in building consensus under pressure. For this reason, there is much optimism about the reforms, but it is not yet clear how the Lisbon Treaty’s plan for a common EU Foreign Minister will fit with the strategy’s recurring theme of ‘multilateralism’ as the essence of EU foreign policy. In the RI-ESS, much of the pretension of becoming an integrated actor is done away with and the EU is treated more as a multilateral arena than as a player in its own right. In this sense, the RI-ESS represents a return to the *status quo ante*, that is, before the ESS called for the rise of the EU as a strategic actor.

In the RI-ESS, there is no reference to strategic culture, or indeed to ‘security culture’, a term that figures prominently in the EU-ISS Assessment Report (2008).<sup>46</sup> Instead, a new concept is introduced, namely, ‘human security’.<sup>47</sup> Human security is a post-modern ‘theory’ that challenges the traditional notion of national security, arguing that the proper referent for security should be the individual’s welfare rather than that of the state. The concept stems from a post-Cold War, multidisciplinary understanding of security that draws from a number of research fields, including development studies, international relations, social constructivism, and human rights. Proponents of human security have criticized realists for having a ‘state bias’ – where the focus on the nation state as the source of international relations overlooks important perspectives and encourages an amoral approach to international politics.

Human security, on the other hand, is open to criticism that it has yet to prove its worth as a guide for actual policymaking. The limited success of transforming

<sup>44</sup> Z. Laïdi, *Norms over Force: The Enigma of European Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>45</sup> A. Menon, ‘Empowering Paradise? The ESDP at Ten’, *International Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2009): 227–246.

<sup>46</sup> A. Vasconcelos et al., *The European Security Strategy 2003–2008: Building on Common Interests* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> M. Kaldor, *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007).

human security into a workable basis for policymaking in those countries that subscribe to it, such as Canada and Norway, indicates that developing a workable human security doctrine is going to be anything but easy.<sup>48</sup> What is important in the present context is that the human security paradigm is in many ways the opposite of the geopolitical aspiration captured in the call to develop a strategic culture. The RI-ESS simply claims that the human security paradigm is already in operation: ‘We have worked to build human security, by reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity.’<sup>49</sup> In this respect, the RI-ESS could be seen as indicating a shift away from the great power ambition introduced in the ESS.

## V War on Terror or Terror as Crime

The unipolar context that the EU security policy had been constructed in response to is showing strains. This is the end of the post-Cold War. As the difference in power between the United States and its rivals diminished, old threats began to reappear, not least in the form of rapid Russian rearmament. The EU security cooperation was a child of the post-Cold War security environment, in a period when the choice of when, or indeed, whether to act or not was optional. It was, therefore, to be expected that the RI-ESS should devote much attention to redefining the ‘threats and challenges’ of the ESS. The lists attempt to provide a common policy for the EU states and in these can be seen the clearest attempts at independent European strategic thinking. The documents have a number of notable dissimilarities in their conclusions.

The ESS identified ‘failed states’ as a primary threat on the assumption that such states may provide sanctuary and support to terrorist organizations. In the ‘key threats’ section terrorism, weapon of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation and failed states were highlighted, while stressing regional conflicts and criminal networks as enablers for WMD terrorism.<sup>50</sup> Fundamentally, the two documents differ in teleology. The ESS assumes that these three threats can be expected to converge in a situation where WMDs are placed in the hands of terrorists by failed/rogue states: ‘Taking these different elements together – terrorism committed to maximum violence, the availability of WMD, organized crime, the weakening of the state system and the privatization of force – we could be confronted with a very radical threat indeed.’<sup>51</sup> In this, the ESS subscribes to the logic of the American-led ‘war on terror’, even if the term itself does not appear. The RI-ESS changed the

<sup>48</sup> For a critical appraisal of the efforts of applying human security, see R. Paris, ‘Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?’, *International Security* 26 (2001): 87.

<sup>49</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 14.

<sup>50</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 5–6.

<sup>51</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 18, and ESS, n. 1 above, 6. The ESS identified terrorism as a challenge to be addressed primarily by police and justice rather than the military measures.

EU's list of priorities, placing terrorism in the category of 'terrorism and organized crime'. In doing so, it signals that the EU now sees terror as a severe form of crime, not as a military matter. The threats are still referred to but terrorism has been relegated and WMD proliferation has been placed at the top of the list. The two remaining categories from the ESS, 'failed states' and 'regional conflicts', have been replaced by 'energy security' and 'climate change'.<sup>52</sup>

Initially, EU security policy focused on the crisis management lessons learned from the Yugoslav civil war of the 1990s; it has evolved with the international security agenda. This point should be emphasized since the EU has, in a number of policy areas, found it difficult to respond to new challenges. The fear of upsetting hard-fought for consensus has frequently led to the EU getting stuck in ineffectual policies.<sup>53</sup> The various European countries face different threats and, therefore, tend to view priorities differently. Wyn Rees has noted the apparent paradox in that the primary anti-terror instrument, the 2001 'Action Plan against Terrorism', has failed to meet its objectives. The reason is simple – there is little shared understanding among EU members of what constitutes terror.<sup>54</sup> Since the 2001 initiative has proven to exceed the consensus capacity, it is perhaps to be expected that terror is downgraded to crime in the RI-ESS. It is therefore curious that the EU, the Lisbon Treaty in a parallel development, choose terrorist attacks as the basis of its new 'solidarity clause', the remnants of the talk of collective defence.<sup>55</sup> The talk of 'mobilizing the military resources' is surely a bit excessive to fight crime.

The 2003 ESS made a clear distinction between the general 'global challenges' and specific 'key threats' sections. The RI-ESS combines them, replacing the hierarchy of the ESS with an assortment of goals. It is worth noting that the global challenges and threats facing the EU are understood to be identical and interchangeable. There is no longer any attempt to prioritize, as was the case in the ESS. The RI-ESS states that the EU should simply 'be still more capable, more coherent and more active'.<sup>56</sup> Keeping in mind the patchy record over the past decade, the combination of the lack of focus and the monumental tasks chosen could be a formula for policy overload. No priority is given for the tasks listed and the RI-ESS offers few answers. The authors in the EU Policy Unit have probably judged such a prioritization as too divisive and left it out in order to ensure unanimous support for the document. The difference between the clarity of the ESS (when subscribing to

<sup>52</sup> The new list of priorities resembles the key external security issues identified in the Global Europe agenda, set out by the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in October 2007 apparently continuing Britain's central role in EU strategy formulation.

<sup>53</sup> The EU common agricultural and fisheries policies are the most obvious examples of this.

<sup>54</sup> W. Rees, 'Inside Out: The External Face of EU Internal Security Policy', *Journal of European Integration* 30, no. 2 (2008): 102.

<sup>55</sup> Under the Treaty of Lisbon, Member States should assist if a Member State is subject to a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. As reflected in Arts 1–43 of the Treaty of Lisbon.

<sup>56</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 2.

a modified US agenda) and the lack of clarity and structure in the RI-ESS suggests that an EU willingness to set its own security agenda has not been matched by a corresponding rise of independent EU strategic thinking.

## VI. Preventive Engagement as Hedging

Stephen Walt distinguishes between ‘balancing’ and ‘bandwagon’ powers in the international system.<sup>57</sup> Far from making the distinction between the two a moral one, Walt asserts that the ‘soft balancing’ entailed in coordinating positions on minor issues means that actors may become more comfortable with each other (and thus better able to collaborate on larger issues); repeated success can build the trust needed to sustain a more ambitious revisionist coalition: Thus, successful soft balancing today may lay the foundations for more significant shifts tomorrow. If other states are able to coordinate their policies so as to impose additional costs on the United States or obtain additional benefits for themselves, then America’s dominant position could be eroded and its ability to impose its will on others would decline.<sup>58</sup>

Recent scholarly literature suggests that the ESS represents such an attempt at ‘soft balancing’ against the United States.<sup>59</sup> EU satisfaction with an overall favourable *status quo* exists alongside policy aspects that in some respects make the EU act as if it were a balancing power. Analysing these arguments, Jolyon Howorth and Anand Menon reach the conclusion that the soft-balancing concept cannot reasonably be applied to the particular case of the EU. At least not in the sense of actively amassing power in order to prevent or resist American influence.<sup>60</sup> Developments over recent years have clearly made European governments think anew about the EU’s geopolitical position. The question of pre-emption is perhaps the most important difference between the 2003 ESS and the 2002 NSS, the latter noted for its open-minded attitude towards pre-emptive warfare.<sup>61</sup> In an apparent response, the ESS claimed that ‘preventive engagement can avoid more serious problems in the future’.<sup>62</sup> This is restated in the RI-ESS: ‘Prevention threats from

<sup>57</sup> S.M. Walt, ‘Can the United States Be Balanced? If So, How?’, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Chicago, IL, 2–5 Sep. 2004).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> R.J. Art, ‘Striking the Balance’, *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2006):177–185; B. Posen, ‘European Union Security and Defence Policy: Response to Unipolarity?’, *Security Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006):149–186; S.G. Brooks & W.C. Wohlforth, ‘Hard Times for Soft Balancing’, *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 72–108.

<sup>60</sup> J. Howorth & A. Menon, ‘Still Not Pushing Back: Why the European Union Is Not Balancing against the United States’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 5 (2009): 727–744.

<sup>61</sup> US Department of State, ‘The New National Security Strategy, Transcript’ (20 Sep. 2002), 19.

<sup>62</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 7–9. The draft version of the paper contained the phrase ‘pre-emptive engagement can avoid more serious problems in the future’. The wording was changed in the second draft, according to a source involved in the drafting of the document, due to opposition from the Nordic countries. ESS (Thessalonica draft), ‘A Secure Europe in a Better World’, 10.



becoming sources of conflict must be at the heart of our approach.’<sup>63</sup> Usually, preventive engagement is understood to be an attempt to defuse a conflict before it erupts. The RI-ESS lists diplomacy, aid, and sanctions as elements of the preventive engagement approach. This implies a curious logic where the EU proposes to respond to a crisis by preventing it from arising.

The EU position in the RI-ESS could be understood as an implicit criticism of American use of armed force, or even as an attempt at influencing the Obama administration, which was at that time in the process of drafting an updated version of the NSS. The EU wishes to handle rogue states by offering them a way into international society through dialogue and cooperation. The EU non-proliferation efforts directed at Iran indicate that those failing to meet EU standards will primarily be met with the offer of rewards for compliance or – as in the case vis-à-vis Russia over the South Ossetian conflict – with threats to withhold rewards. This approach has proved effective with EU candidate countries, although it is less clear what leverage it provides with states not seeking EU membership.<sup>64</sup>

The ESS confirmed the EU as a power concerned with maintaining the current international order. Still, it is questionable whether this suggests it is a power that seeks to maintain the *status quo*. In the ESS, the EU members’ pledge, to ‘share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world’, manifests a desire for the EU to become a more powerful actor on the world stage.<sup>65</sup> The idea of fashioning the EU as a counterweight to the United States is a goal often encountered among the European intellectual elite and popular opinion.<sup>66</sup> Instead, the RI-ESS underlines the EU’s preference for multilateral solutions and international governance. The justification for this is the wish to preserve elements of the *status quo* that it sees as threatened by the United States, such as international norms, the integrity of multilateral institutions, and barriers to the use of force that provide protection to small- and middle-sized states.

The operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have eroded the faith of many European leaders in the American brand of liberal interventionism. In its shift away from the made-in-America security agenda, its interventionist logic, the RI-ESS invites a question about whether the EU is pursuing a strategy of abrogation vis-à-vis the United States. Glen Snyder defines abrogation as a ‘fail[ure] to provide support in contingencies where support is expected’. This is less hostile than de-alignment, or ‘fail[ure] to make good on explicit commitments’, which could be seen as the ‘soft-balancing’ option. Although in substance the two amount to

<sup>63</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 9.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., the case studies in R.O. Keohane & J.S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977).

<sup>65</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 1.

<sup>66</sup> N. Witney & J. Shapiro, ‘Towards a Post-American Europe’, ECFR Report (November 2009), 1–3.

much the same thing.<sup>67</sup> One European example can stand in the place of many. The EU policy process shrinking and redefining of EU police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) away from the goals originally intended and explicitly promised offers interesting insights into the subtle differences of abrogation and de-alignment.<sup>68</sup> By substituting the American global agenda with a distinctly European one, the RI-ESS offends against what Stanley Hoffmann once called the ‘true destination’ of an integrated Europe, namely, ‘playing its part in America’s orchestra’.<sup>69</sup>

One way to think about these developments is to consider that the EU is ‘hedging’. Hedging is a term borrowed from finance sector that refers to risk reduction by spreading investments geared towards contradictory developments.<sup>70</sup> Hedging has become a new buzzword in US strategic discourse. This was most notable in the 2006 NSS, which stated that American strategy ‘seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities’.<sup>71</sup> Hedging is a behaviour in which an actor seeks to offset risk by pursuing multiple policy options that increase the likelihood of a beneficial result from a range of different outcomes. Borrowed from the field of finance, the term has been utilized in international relations to refer to a strategy that can be distinguished from balancing and bandwagoning. The term is in many ways related to ‘soft balancing’, which is meant to not directly shift the balance of power but rather to undermine, frustrate, and increase the cost of unilateral action for the stronger power. Hedging behaviour, as an alternative, is seen as pursuing policies that combine ‘engagement and integration mechanisms’ with ‘realist-style balancing in the form of external security cooperation and national military modernization programs’.<sup>72</sup>

Although the hedging concept clearly is underdeveloped as an analytical tool, it has been used not only to describe great power strategies, but also small-power strategies.<sup>73</sup> In the case of the EU, this could help explain the apparent willingness to accept and enjoy the benefits of American hegemony while doing as little as possible to sustain it in terms of military spending or commitment to shared

<sup>67</sup> G.H. Snyder, ‘The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics’, *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984): 461–495.

<sup>68</sup> E. Gross, *Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan: The EU’s Contribution* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009).

<sup>69</sup> S. Hoffmann, ‘No Trumps, No Luck, No Will’, in *Atlantis Lost – US-European Relations after the Cold War*, ed. J. Chace & E.C. Ravenal (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1976), 1–22.

<sup>70</sup> See J. Dow, ‘Arbitrage, Hedging, and Financial Innovation’, *Review of Financial Studies* 11, no. 4 (1998): 739–755.

<sup>71</sup> US Department of State, ‘The National Security Strategy, Transcript’ (16 Mar. 2006, accessed on 11 Dec. 2009).

<sup>72</sup> E.S. Medeiros, ‘Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability’, *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005): 145.

<sup>73</sup> See R.J. Art, ‘Europe Hedges Its Security Bets’, in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, ed. T.V. Paul, J.J. Wirtz & M. Fortmann (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

endeavours. After all, the role as auxiliary carries a greater inherent danger under conditions of multipolarity than in a unipolar system. To hedge, the EU and the United States are pursuing policies that, on one hand, stress engagement and integration mechanisms and, on the other, emphasize alternative security cooperation in the shape of the CSDP and regional military modernization programmes. The RI-ESS spends a considerable amount of time listing other ‘partners’ such as Russia, China, and India.<sup>74</sup> The role of the EU in acting as a buffer between emerging powers such as China, Russia, and Iran, on the one hand, and the United States could also be understood as examples of hedging.

## VII Effective Multilateralism and Normative Power

While the RI-ESS differs from its ESS counterpart with regard to the main threats to international peace and stability, it concurs on the means by which international security is to be upheld – and on whose authority. Multilateralism is at the core of the ESS, which commits the EU to work for ‘an effective multilateral system’.<sup>75</sup> The UN Security Council, the World Trade Organization, and NATO are singled out – followed by a string of regional institutions – as influential proponents of multilateralism. This is reinforced by the RI-ESS: ‘The UN stands at the apex of the international system. Everything the EU has done in the field of security has been linked to UN objectives.’<sup>76</sup> A strong claim; although the document is sprinkled with references to ‘friends and allies’, these are expected to accept UN authority.

In explaining the logic of multilateralism, Martin Ruggie has noted that in order to define the concept it is necessary to move beyond what he calls the ‘nominal’ definition: that multilateralism is the practice of coordinating national policies. What is characteristic about multilateralism is its qualitative aspect: ‘what is distinctive ... is not merely that it coordinates national policies in groups of three or more states, which is something that other organizational forms also do, but that it does so on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among states’.<sup>77</sup> It is these rules of conduct, and not the particular interests of states or the ‘strategic exigencies’ of a specific situation, that specify what is the appropriate course of action. In this way, Ruggie negates the assumption that the state with most resources at its disposal can, on this basis alone, expect to have the final say on any given question in such a multilateral setting. This collective ethos helps explain why the ESS/RI-ESS do not bestow any similar authority on the twenty-seven Member States about when to act militarily.

<sup>74</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 11.

<sup>75</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 11.

<sup>76</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 11. See also European Council, ‘Joint Statement on UN-EU Cooperation in Crisis Management’, (Brussels, 7 Jun. 2007).

<sup>77</sup> J.G. Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity Essays on International Institutionalization. The New International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1998), 106.

The EU does not look to NATO as the arbiter of war and peace, as it did in the lead-up to the 1999 Kosovo war.<sup>78</sup> Instead, it calls for a strengthening of the UN as the keeper of international peace and the ESS states that the EU must 'be ready to act when [UN] rules are broken'.<sup>79</sup> In establishing this, the EU keeps to its founding myth of supranational governance, which is seen as an antidote to international anarchy.<sup>80</sup> This perspective is likely to prove popular with the EU population, who are generally firmly in favour of the UN. That said, the UN Security Council seldom agrees upon firm mandates for assertive action, and when it does, the result has frequently been less successful than this stance by the EU would imply. According to the RI-ESS, threats and challenges are to be countered with 'political, diplomatic, development, humanitarian, crisis response, economic and trade cooperation, and civilian and military crisis management'.<sup>81</sup>

'Effective multilateralism' has been the key term during EU's first ten years (1999–2009). Looking back, effective multilateralism has had mixed results in resolving key issues facing the EU in the period from the 2003 Iraq war, through Kosovo's independence, to the Afghan stabilization mission and the South Ossetian conflict of 2008. It is worth noting the mounting evidence to suggest that 'effective multilateralism' is an oxymoron. It has not led the EU to distance itself from the UN, at least not in rhetoric. Robert Kagan posits that the real tension is not, as many assume, between unilateralism and multilateralism as foreign policy outlooks, but between effective multilateralism and pragmatic multilateralism.<sup>82</sup> This poses a particular challenge to the EU. The continued insistence on effective multilateralism when it has been tried and found wanting underlines a distinctive trait of the EU as a security actor, namely, its belief in the concept of 'normative power', that 'in its ideal or purest form, is ideational rather than material or physical'.

This means that 'its use involves normative justification rather than the use of material incentives or physical force'.<sup>83</sup> For this reason, the lessons learned are not reflected in the use of 'effective multilateralism' in the 2008 RI-ESS.<sup>84</sup> Recently, Zaki Laïdi has argued that 'normative power' should be understood in the sense that EU does not stand for abstract values, but for those that reflect social preferences embedded in European societies.<sup>85</sup> These preferences, furthermore, reflect European interests that the EU promotes and defends. The RI-ESS espouses an

<sup>78</sup> Which was fought without a clear UN mandate.

<sup>79</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 11.

<sup>80</sup> The multilateralism of the ESS serves much the same functions as 'freedom' in the NSS, which is mentioned no less than forty-seven times.

<sup>81</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 9.

<sup>82</sup> R. Kagan, 'Coalition of the Unwilling', *Washington Post*, 17 Oct. 2001.

<sup>83</sup> I. Manner, 'The Concept of Normative Power in World Politics', DIIS Brief (May 2009), 2.

<sup>84</sup> While the 1995 NSS makes twenty-four references to 'multilateralism', the 2002 NSS has ten such references.

<sup>85</sup> Laïdi, see n. 44 above, 3–6.

approach where values are not seen as being in causal relation with interests, but that the two are identical: ‘the EU’s security interests [are] based on our core values’.<sup>86</sup> It remains to be seen whether this rhetorically pleasing, yet intellectually flawed, logic will prove workable in practical terms as a means of giving direction to policy.

### VIII A Hedging Strategy for Europe?

Given the challenging internal situation of the EU, it would have been a difficult task to write a traditional strategy paper. Therefore, it is easy to understand why the RI-ESS – like the ESS – fails to meet the mark as a strategy document. The complexities of the current international system, along with the dynamic and multifaceted character of the threats facing Europe, also meant it was problematic to compose a strategy in a conventional sense. Moreover, the text was written at a time when intra-European views on the role of the EU as a strategic actor were in flux. The long time frame in which the text was written allowed for extensive deliberation and the evaluation of much information; the lack of any shared understanding of an EU *raison d’état* that precluded any focused document from emerging. The difficulties were compounded by traits latent in the EU: the lack of an agreed policy platform; lack of access to independent intelligence; an unwillingness to subordinate national positions to EU foreign policy; and a continued belief in voluntary security – that is, the EU should freely define its own security agenda unhampered by such old-school principles as deterrence or territorial security.

Above all, the RI-ESS underlines the lack of a strategic culture that would enable ‘early, rapid and robust’ decision-making. The 2003 ESS implied that such a culture would materialize as a result of experience. To this purpose, the strategy rightly states that ‘Common threat assessments are the best basis for common actions’.<sup>87</sup> If anything, the RI-ESS illustrated that the EU cannot hope to be an effective strategic actor without defined policy goals and the means by which they are to be attained. As a result, the RI-ESS was unable to state in unambiguous terms the territorial challenge facing the EU in the shape of Russian belligerence. The rapid rearming and borderline revisionist intentions of modern Russia also poses a challenge to those states concerned that a very traditional threat is materializing on their outer borders – a threat that the RI-ESS largely fails to acknowledge.

The 2008 strategy update is noteworthy for its apparent detachment. The authors chose to de-emphasize the transatlantic security partnership, with regard to shared agenda, vocabulary, and the sense of urgency found in the ESS, through the removal of the term ‘strategic culture’ and castrating the ‘failed state supplies terrorist organization with WMD’ line of reasoning. Less high profile, but

<sup>86</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 3.

<sup>87</sup> ESS, n. 1 above, 14.

equally important, the RI-ESS illustrates that the EU is trying to create a European alternative to the US global agenda. The strategy sets itself apart from the ESS by reaffirming the EU as a pragmatic force, less concerned with upholding the current international order than with preserving the ordering mechanism of UN-centred multilateralism. The EU will not strive to uphold the US primacy, nor will it work against it. The document makes it clear that the EU continues to favour non-coercive means to counter threats and that it will draw legitimacy for action from somewhere other than its own Council or the transatlantic partnership.

Thus far, the shift towards multipolarity has failed to bring new impetus to the EU security dimension. That said, the RI-ESS threat assessment displays a laudable ability to respond to the evolving security agenda. In terms of delivering a foundation for EU security policy, the strategy represents a return to *status quo ante*. It tips the scales in favour of those who see EU security policy primarily as a means to deepen European integration. The politically correct tone and somewhat naive belief in multilateralism in times of systemic shifts is clearly not meant to signal the rise of a great power. The EU, at least for now, accepts that the EU is not ready to become an individual pole in a multipolar system.

It is popular to berate those who focus on hard power, in the case of the CSDP, while forgetting that the initiative has everything to do with the power status of the EU. The proponents are left with a question that the EU developed military means in order to become a power, or whether it is a token effort. Thus, the RI-ESS re-established the ambiguity that existed prior to the Iraq crisis, where all agreed that the EU should have a security policy, but not what it should be about. Whether the 'effective multilateralism' of this strategy will ensure continued relevance for the EU, in a system where national interests and power politics play a more prominent role than under unipolarity remains to be seen. That said, it is difficult to ignore the fact that EU strategic thinking has grown increasingly bland and post-modern at a time when the South Ossetian war could have been expected to focus European minds on the selfish aspects of security policy.

So what does EU security strategy tell us about its ability to remain 'an anchor of stability' on the world stage?<sup>88</sup> By convoluting global challenges and key threats, the EU reasserts a liberal internationalist understanding that the international system is a global community with common goods and interests. At a time when the global financial crisis is challenging the assumed community of values and interests, the EU may well find it difficult to get members to sign up to ever-new altruistic endeavours. Various scholars have suggested that at times international actors use hedging strategies to manage risks, retain strategic flexibility, keep a maximum amount of options open, and developing fallback strategies as alternative to balancing or bandwagoning.<sup>89</sup> The vagueness of the RI-ESS allows

<sup>88</sup> RI-ESS, n. 4 above, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ø. Tunsjø, 'Hvordan "Hedge" i Internasjonal Politikk?', *Internasjonal Politikk* 67, no. 2 (2009): 259–271.

for different interpretations. Actors choose to hedge at times of uncertainty. The uncertainties involved in the shift from unipolarity to multipolarity encourage such behaviour. The EU apparent distancing from the US global agenda and friendly ties with emerging powers is to be expected at a time when American power is on the decline.

### *AIMS*

The aim of the *Review* is to consider the external posture of the European Union in its relations with the rest of the world. Therefore the *Review* will focus on the political, legal and economic aspects of the Union's external relations. The *Review* will function as an interdisciplinary medium for the understanding and analysis of foreign affairs issues which are of relevance to the European Union and its Member States on the one hand and its international partners on the other. The *Review* will aim at meeting the needs of both the academic and the practitioner. In doing so the *Review* will provide a public forum for the discussion and development of European external policy interests and strategies, addressing issues from the points of view of political science and policy-making, law or economics. These issues should be discussed by authors drawn from around the world while maintaining a European focus.

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