

Why Croatia urgently needs a new holistic National Security Strategy

In the midst of the rising security challenges, daring Croatian politicians have to put delicate foreign and security issues on the table at the earliest opportunity. A new comprehensive *National Security Strategy for the Republic of Croatia* has to be created finally since the only one published in 2002, is indisputably outdated. As a consequence, this paper will focus on Croatia's current foreign and security perspective based on existing strategic documents and legislation. With that aim, firstly Croatia's security frameworks will be identified. Then, a list of current and imminent threats will be presented. Croatia's relations with some of its neighboring countries as well as with some global players will be given as well. Ultimately, the guidelines on how to proceed will be introduced.

Croatia quo vadis?

After it had ensured its territorial integrity by ending the Homeland War in 1995 and had subsequently gained its independence as well as its international recognition and finally had become a full NATO member in 2009 and EU member in 2013, the Republic of Croatia has remained without a clear foreign and security policy direction. In 2002, the Croatian Parliament adopted the first and so far only *National Security Strategy* (referred to as the *2002 Strategy*). According to the document, officially entitled "*Strategy for the Republic of Croatia's National Security*", it represents, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, a conceptual document in which the Croatian Parliament, as the highest political and legislative body, determines and accepts political views on fundamental national security issues. Not only does the *2002 Strategy* define national security as a condition in which fundamental values of society and its institutions are protected, but also stresses how new solutions have to meet new challenges. However, as of today, the country's foreign and security policy seems to be direction-

less since the *2002 Strategy* is unquestionably obsolete². In previous times there were several attempts by different governments to adopt a new one. Regrettably, all of those have failed. Due to the lack of strategic coordination, institutions concerned with foreign and security policy developed their own documents which thematically complement the *2002 Strategy* and meanwhile serve them as guidance. Just to name some of them: there exist the *National Strategy for Prevention and Fighting Terrorism (2015)*, *Strategy on Participation of Croatia in International Missions and Operations (2014)*, *the National Strategy for Development Cooperation (2015-2020)*, *Strategic plan of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (2016-2018)* and *Public Report of the Security and Intelligence Agency (2016)*. However praiseworthy this intention might be, the impression is given that crucial institutions concerned with foreign and security matters are developing autonomously instead of following a single strategic document.

The foreign and security policy is often a reflection of the domestic policy, so it is in Croatia. At present, the Croatian society lacks of political direction caused by dysfunctional institutions and missing leadership. As a result of disunity within the coalition, following disputes, controversial cabinet appointments and finally fraud allegations, the Croatian government has fallen earlier in June. After the politically inexperienced technocrat Orešković had been brought to power by the ruling right-wing coalition between the Croatian Democratic Union and the new reformist Most in January 2016, the same fickle coalition eventually turned against him. After ousting Orešković in a vote of no confidence, Croatian lawmakers voted to dissolve parliament. The country is now expected to hold new elections in September 2016. Yet, Croatia is in desperate and urgent need of an all-inclusive overview of current and future security threats which

correspond to new realities. The redefinition of its relations to immediate and distant neighbors is equally urgently needed. The country has to provide its citizens with an overall evaluation of the decades long UN and the OSCE membership as well of seven-year NATO and the three-year EU membership and decide what her new strategic priorities are.

From a security recipient to a security provider: UN, OSCE, NATO and the EU

1. United Nations

Croatia has been a UN member since 1992. During the war, Zagreb hosted several UN peace missions and operations. Moreover, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia (UNTEAS) is considered as one of the most successful UN missions. At that time, Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium peacefully reintegrated into Croatia by the means of the Erdut Agreement. Since then, from a recipient, Croatia has become a security provider within the UN. In 1999 it engaged for the first time in a UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). From 1999 until 2014 the country participated in 19 UN missions in total. Still, some civil society groups are calling for even stronger involvement due to Croatia's war time and post-war experience³. In addition, judging by the *de jure* still valid *2002 Strategy*, in terms of implementation, Croatia gives priority to UN and NATO missions. Unfortunately, in spite of proclaimed determination and perseverance, Croatia's support to international peace within the UN framework decreased. At the beginning of 2014, Croatia had 28 nationals engaged in the UN peacekeeping missions. Today, Croatia contributes 0.05% to UN peacekeeping budget and has only 17 nationals involved⁴. One of the reasons is naturally the ongoing economic crisis and consequential budget constrain. Nevertheless, the primary reason appears to be a lack of domestic public interest in

