Strategic Autonomy: between a rock and a hard place

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Strategic Autonomy

- Context – EU dependence and solitude
- Realisation - The wake up call we need
- Narrative – The power of ambivalence
- Process – From strategic innocence to strategic culture
- Integration – Towards an integrated approach
- Partnerships – the Sine Qua Non Condition for effective SA
- French Presidency
EU dependence and solitude

- EU facing structural dependence in critical sectors (vis a vis China, Russia and US) amplified by Covid, Trump, Afghanistan, AUKUS
- The US will not always be there – Old alliances can be very fragile
- Trust can be destroyed easily, confidence building measures are essential.
- Biden/Macron diplomatic shuttle useful, but statements are one thing – concrete action is another, EU-US Strategic Dialogue still to be restored
Strategic Autonomy is a wake up call

- Strategic Autonomy is a wake up call not just to assess economic and security vulnerabilities but also trends and priorities.
- Becoming a more geopolitical actor: the heart of the COM Strategic Foresight Report (sept 2021).
- May be an old French and CSDP term but now addressing all sectors, defending values and pushing back aggressive actors.

Trends

1. Climate Change
2. Digital Hyper connectivity
3. Pressure on Democracy
4. Shifting global Centre of gravity

Priorities

1. Resilient health and food system
2. Decarbonised energy
3. Digital sovereignty
4. Critical raw material
5. Standards
6. Security and Defense
7. Resilience of institutions
The power of ambivalence

- Key narratives always carry a certain degree of ambivalence: “liberté, égalité, fraternité” in a very centralized country, or « l’union fait la force » in a very fractured country,

- Strategic Autonomy (or OSA) is no exception. Apparent ambiguities are:
  - Collective where we can, autonomously when we must
  - SA and Multilateralism
  - SA and the Single (open) Market
  - SA and interdependence

- But those terms are not contradictory to each other. Instead they constitute a balancing act. Cf HRVP: EU is neither a follower, a bystander or an edger. Our way is a question of threshold and EU discretionary power

- A certain degree of ambivalence is essential in a competitive world. “on ne sort de l’ambiguïté qu’à ses propres dépends” - Cardinal de Retz
Looking Forward – Will the narrative survive?

• Much contestation over what SA means (NATO support / Neutrality / liberal free market views)

• Same in the EU Institutions, no agreement and no uniform understanding

• French Presidency has a chance to further refine and use the term: but will they?

• However, even if the concept may disappear, SA has open up to a more strategic approach to a competitive world
The Long Road from Strategic Innocence to Strategic Culture (I)

Operationalizing the concept: the Strategic Toolbox on Economy

OSA Tools
- Digital Services and Market Act
- FDI
- Global Gateway Initiative
- Industrial Strategy
- Foreign Subsidies

Key Enablers
- Strategic Clusters
- Ecosystem
- Important Projects of Common European Interest
- Strategic Value Chains
- Supply Chains

TRP
The Long Road from Strategic Innocence to Strategic Culture (II)

Operationalizing the concept: the Strategic Toolbox on Security

- **Crisis Management**
  - Scenarios for military and civilian missions
  - Geographical priorities
  - Petersberg tasks
  - Headline Goals Revision
  - Force generation
  - Institutional capacity
  - European Peace Facility
  - Civilian CSFP Compact

- **Partnerships**
  - EU-UN
  - EU-NATO
  - EU-US
  - Africa (African Union, 65 Sahel)
  - Eastern Partnership
  - Indo-Pacific (OULAS, ASEAN, bilateral)

- **Resilience**
  - Mutual assistance (Art. 42(7) TEU) and solidarity (Art. 222 TEU) clauses
  - Protecting critical infrastructure
  - Supply chain security
  - Military mobility
  - Global commons
  - Non-traditional threats

- **Capability Development**
  - Technological sovereignty
  - PESCO
  - European Defence Fund
  - Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
  - European Defence Agency
  - Space, cyber and maritime capabilities
The road from strategic innocence to strategic culture: still a long way to an Integrated Approach (III)

• On Economy:
  • Bringing coherence between COM strategies and between key enablers
  • IPCEI as a Franco-German Driver: forces and weaknesses
  • Reaching out to all EU MS but also to SMEs

• On Security:
  • Bringing together all security actors: civilian/military, CSDP/COM
  • Bridging gaps between economic and security sectors (DITB, Digital, Space, Maritime)
  • We cannot succeed without a new approach to partnership: the micro-processor dual use case
Partnerships: a “sine qua non” condition for effective SA

- OSA success will lie mainly in renewed partnerships to increase external resilience with like minded but also beyond like minded partners. It starts with the neighbourhood and Africa
- US essential partner to EU success on OSA
- EU pivot to Asia: first tier or second tier partnerships?
- But it requires more than just a transatlantic partnership to become geopolitical: China, Russia, and Multilateral Organisations (WTO reform) all needed through a balancing act
What about the French Presidency

• Upcoming French Presidency (Jan – June 2022): is it a make it or break it moment for SA?
• Ambitious: innovation and industrial policy
• Strategic Value Chain taken further and Strategic Compass Presented and Adopted

“The Europeans must stop being naive. When we are under pressure from powers, which at times harden (their stance), we need to react and show that we have the power and capacity to defend ourselves. Not escalating things, but protecting ourselves”
“My Commission will not be afraid to speak the language of confidence. But it will be our way, the European way.

This is the geopolitical Commission that I have in mind, and that Europe urgently needs.”