

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Strategic Autonomy: between a rock and a hard place

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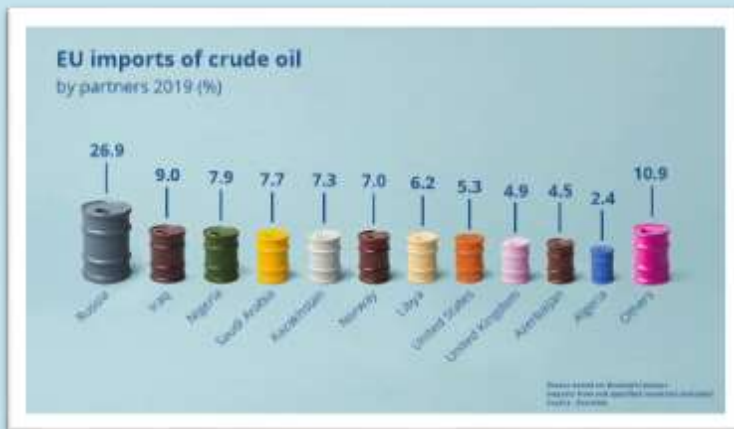
Strategic Autonomy



- 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

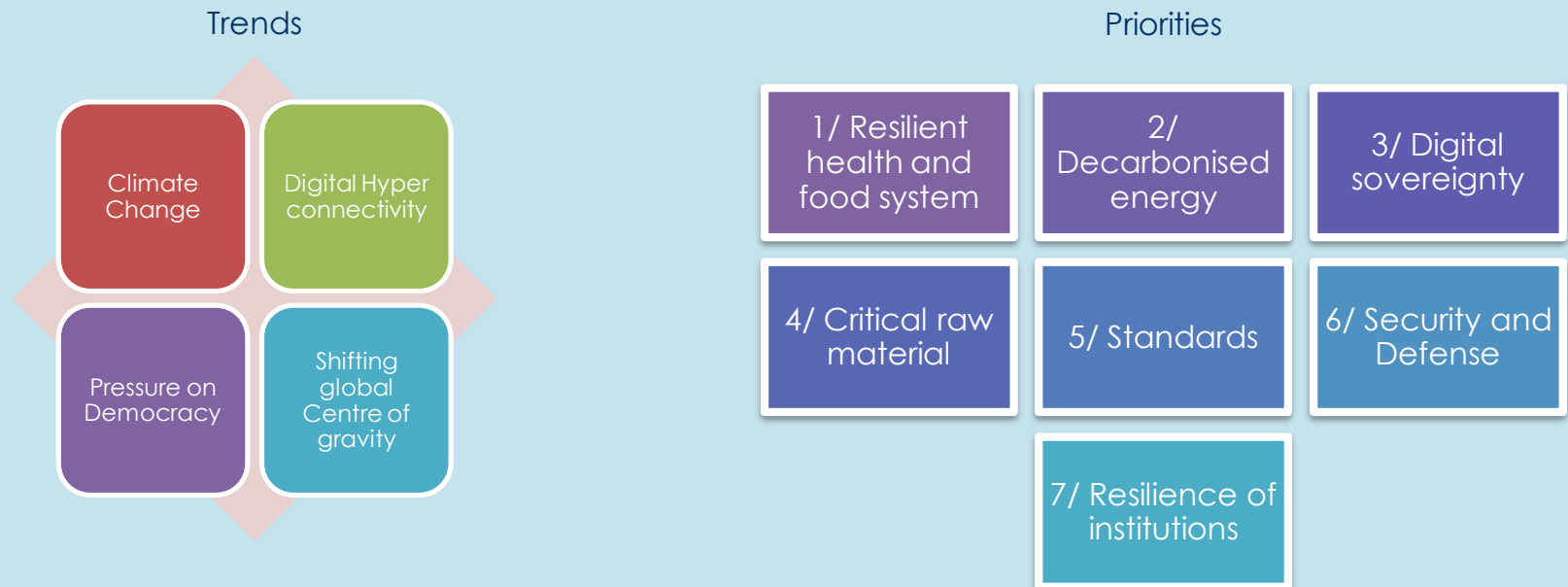
EU dependence and solitude

- 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



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

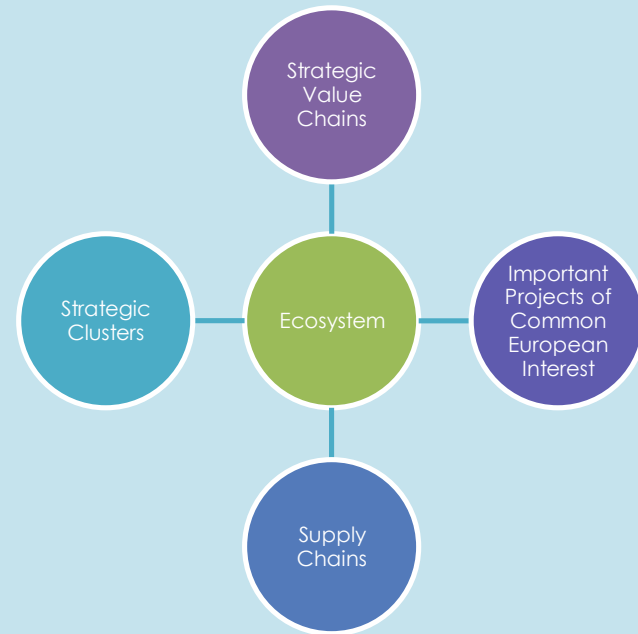
The Long Road from Strategic Innocence to Strategic Culture (I)

Operationalizing the concept: the Strategic Toolbox on Economy

OSA Tools

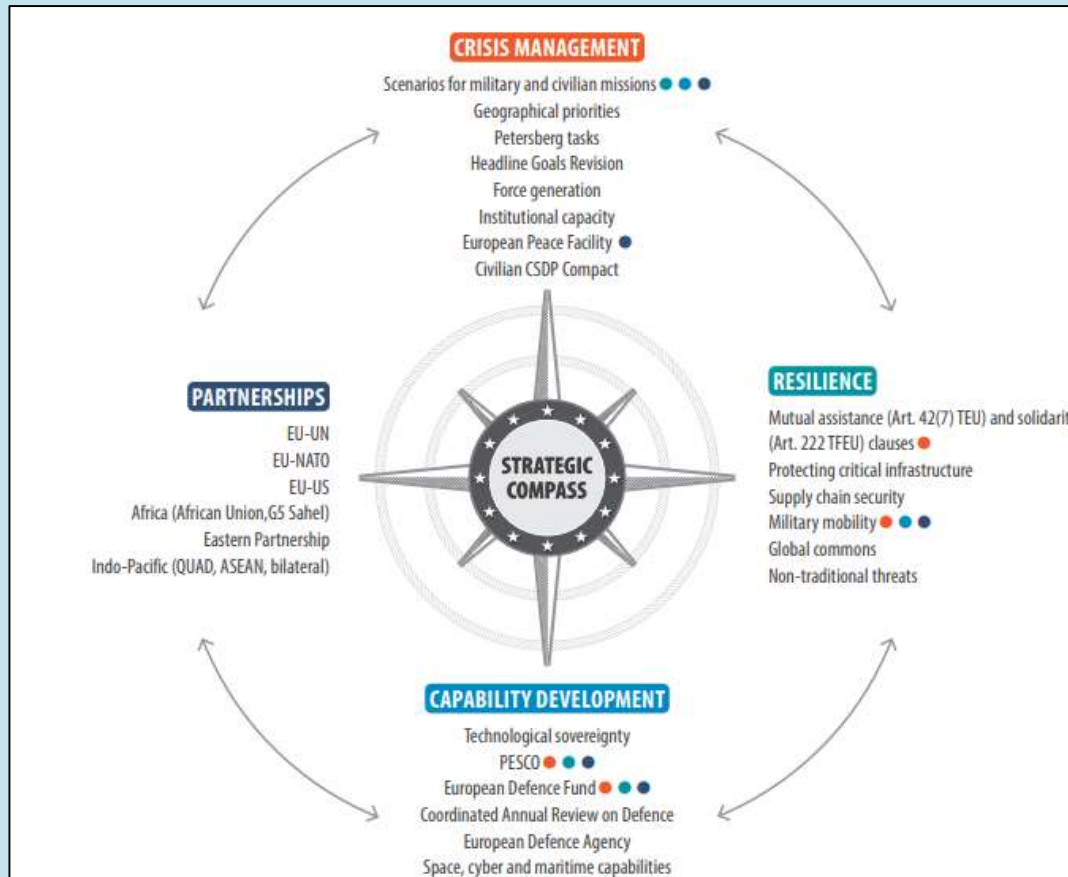


Key Enablers



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

Operationalizing the concept: the Strategic Toolbox on Security



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"

Final Comments and Questions



"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"