# A STRATEGIC COMPASS
## FOR EUROPE'S RETURN
## TO POWER POLITICS

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# ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

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# INTRODUCTION

Those who need a compass have usually lost their bearings before – and this is certainly true of the European Union (EU) and its Common Foreign and Security Policy. At least this is what a new basic document puts forward, with which the European Union more or less openly admits to having operated at various levels and for many years with strategies and concepts that had no "reasonable" relation to one another. The "Strategic Compass"[1] *(SC) adopted at the EU summit on 25 March 2022 is intended to provide an explanation for this and to set the direction of future European military policy. As a new link, the Compass aims to close the currently gaping gap between the general objectives of the Union set out in the "European Union Global Strategy" of 2016, the outdated "Headline Goal" dating back to 2004 and the various mechanisms that have existed since about 2017 to build up military forces and capabilities (CDP/CARD; PESCO; EDF).*

As the ultimate goal, the EU Global Strategy stated that it was necessary to achieve extensive "strategic autonomy". To achieve this, in the first instance, a massive expansion of the military apparatus is considered necessary. Only then will the Union be able to assert its interests in times of increasing conflicts between great powers.[2] The objective of the Strategic Compass is to operationalise this requirement and synchronise it with the various levels of strategy and armed forces planning, which have so far been quite disparate. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, which began in the final stages of drawing up the document, acted as a kind of catalyst for such efforts. The previously prominent "return of power politics" thus became the all-dominating element, which is now to be the focus of most of the attention, due to unplanned recent revisions. The European Union needs a "quantum leap" to be able to "expand its geopolitical position". This is any case how the Strategic Compass refer unabashedly to the actual goal, which is what is hiding behind the somewhat harmless term of strategic autonomy (SC: 6).

What is unusual is that the document not only attempts to close a significant gap between strategy and armed forces planning, but also expresses "clear targets and milestones" (SC: 3) in the form of over 60 individual proposals. Military build-up and arms investments, in particular, are sometimes quite specific and ambitious, and the project to set up a "Rapid Reaction Force" with 5,000 soldiers was widely recognised. Officially, these targets are intended

to strengthen commitment, but to some extend the impression is given that controversial issues have simply been put off. As ambitious as the Strategic Compass may seem, its scope will therefore crucially depend on the extent to which it will be possible to actually achieve the stated goals. Another potential area of conflict could also be the contradiction between increasing efforts in European towards achieving autonomy, and the leadership claimed by NATO (or the US), which is also rather tediously glossed over in the document. In fact, the Compass lays the foundations for positioning itself as an independent military world power, possibly even in competition with the US in the struggle between the great powers.

The really problematic issue in all of this is the full commitment to the expansion of the military apparatus as the only proven means of responding to the increasing conflicts between great powers. Other aspects are reduced to add-ons within these power conflicts – confidence-building measures, disarmament initiatives or arms control, which would be suitable for reducing the ever-increasing tensions, but unfortunately only lead a shadowy existence in the Compass. The Compass could have given the EU the chance to distinguish itself with a countermodel to the militarised competition between great powers. This would be of central importance if to concentrate efforts on the truly pressing human problems: the climate disaster, poverty and hunger and the health crisis. The Compass barely touches on these matters. Instead of starting here and focusing on issues of justice, the Compass turned into a mere work programme for the accelerated armament of the Union.

# I. THE COMPASS AS A MISSING STRATEGIC PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

The following chapter aims to shed some light on the current document jungle of the European Union. Roughly speaking, at the top level of the hierarchy, the European Global Strategy of 2016 contains a paper defining the general objectives and interests of the Union. Without a clear reference to this, there are military targets which, if concrete targets are attributed to them, are hopelessly outdated, or else they are totally missing. And then, in the engine room of militarisation, there is a process of armed forces and capacity generation, which is in a certain way coherent, but also largely decoupled from the considerations at higher strategic levels.

The position of the Compass in the document hierarchy is, therefore, obvious: It ranks below the Global Strategy and identifies threats to the interests defined therein. This, in turn, should serve as a starting point for updating the military target, the task of which will ultimately be to provide concrete figures for the generation of armed forces and capacity: "The Compass gives the EU a chance to define the missing piece of the puzzle that became apparent after the publication of the EU Global Strategy: namely what the EU should be able to do in concrete operational terms with its military and civilian toolbox."[3]

## GLOBAL STRATEGY – GLOBAL POWER THROUGH STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

In December 2003, a top-level planning document was published with the "European Security Strategy" (ESS). At that time, however, questions surrounding interventions in the "Global South" still almost entirely dominated the agenda. All that was said about Russia (or even China) was: "Major attacks against Member States have now become unlikely."[4] Following an update of the ESS in 2008[5], but which contained hardly any significant innovations, on 28 June 2016, the Council approved the "Global Strategy for EU Foreign and Security Policy" (EUGS) as the currently highest-ranking EU document in this area. The EUGS calls "interests" an "open and fair economic system" and "access to resources". This included the "protection" of trade routes "in the

Indian Ocean", "in the Mediterranean", on the "Gulf of Guinea" to the "South China Sea" and the "Strait of Malacca". The other areas of interest extend east "to Central Asia" and south "to Central Africa".[6] It also stresses the need for military operations to "consolidate peace," especially in "neighbouring eastern and southern regions".[7] However, a clearly more critical tone was taken against Russia than in the ESS of 2003: "Major changes in EU-Russia relations depend on fully complying with international law and the principles on which the European security order is built, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. We will not accept Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea or the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine."[8]

Finally, the EUGS sets out the objective that the Union must achieve "military excellence"[9], which should also enable it to "act autonomously."[10] Since then, the achievement of strategic autonomy has become a, if not the central, objective of the European Union. For example, President of the Council, Charles Michel, said: "We are sending a message not only to our citizens, but also to the rest of the world: Europe is a world power. We are determined to defend our interests. […] European strategic autonomy is not just a word. The strategic independence of Europe is our new joint project for this century. That is in all of our interests. 70 years after the founding fathers, Europe's strategic autonomy is the number one goal for our generation. For Europe, this is the very beginning of the 21st century."[11]

It is commonly assumed that strategic autonomy includes the ability to make foreign and security policy decisions without too much dependence on third-party preferences.[12] This concerns a number of policy areas, but not least, of course, foreign and security policy, a term usually associated with at least three dimensions: Political autonomy involves establishing the "necessary" decision-making structures for quick and smooth resolutions. Operational autonomy means having all the planning capacity, troops and equipment to wage (and win) wars independently; and industrial autonomy means being able to equip your military with weapons produced "domestically".[13]

DIMENSIONS OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

**STRATEGIC AUTONOMY**

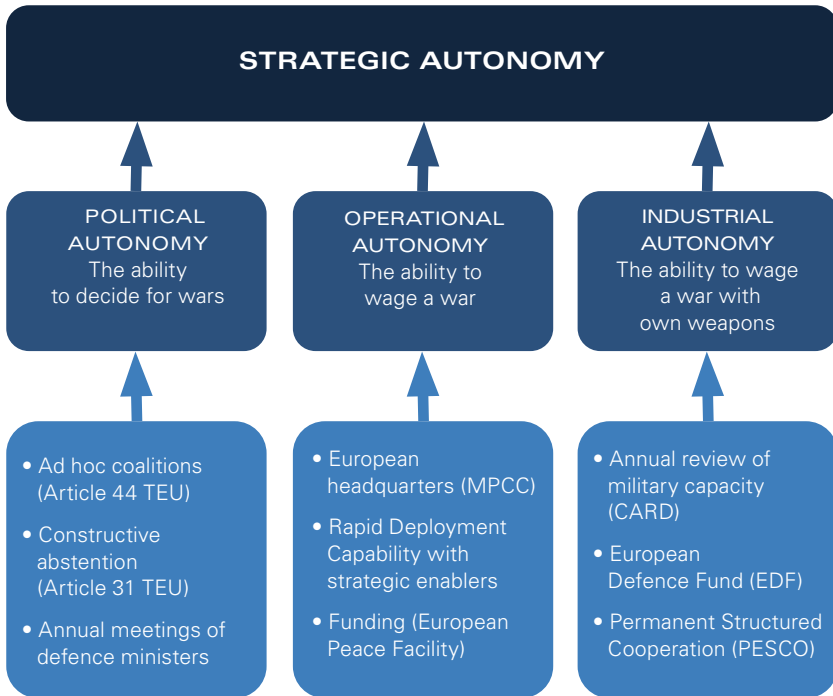| POLITICAL AUTONOMY<br>The ability to decide for wars | OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY<br>The ability to wage a war | INDUSTRIAL AUTONOMY<br>The ability to wage a war with own weapons |
|---|---|---|
| • Ad hoc coalitions (Article 44 TEU)<br><br>• Constructive abstention (Article 31 TEU)<br><br>• Annual meetings of defence ministers | • European headquarters (MPCC)<br><br>• Rapid Deployment Capability with strategic enablers<br><br>• Funding (European Peace Facility) | • Annual review of military capacity (CARD)<br><br>• European Defence Fund (EDF)<br><br>• Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) |

Figure 1: own chart

## OUTDATED TARGETS FOR AUTONOMOUS ARMED FORCES

The EU Council Summit in Cologne in June 1999 is considered to be the actual genesis of autonomous armed forces, which can also be deployed independently of NATO. The "European Council statement on strengthening the Common Security and Defence Policy" stated: "In view of this, the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, based on credible military capabilities, as well as the means and willingness to decide on its deployment to respond – without prejudice to NATO actions – to international crises."[14]

Six months later, at the follow-up meeting in Helsinki in December 1999, the key data for the new intervention force was defined with the military target: It should be able to deploy up to 60,000 soldiers within 60 days (corresponding to a total of around 180,000 soldiers due to the required rotation and logistical support) within a radius of 4,000 km around Brussels. Although these forces were declared operational in 2003, they still exist only on paper. For this reason, the "Military Target 2010" ("Headline Goal 2010") was issued in 2004, which primarily provided for the establishment of EU combat troops ("Battlegroups"). These are practically worldwide, fast, deployable units with 1,500 soldiers each, two of which have been constantly on call since 2007, but which have not yet even been deployed.

With the EUGS, the demand for autonomous capacities was again expressed and, based on this, more details were added to the "Implementation Plan on Security and Defence" by the EU external representatives of that time in November 2016. The EU must be able to carry out "joint crisis management operations", "joint stabilisation operations", "maritime security operations" and "military capability building".[15] However, this plan did not answer the question of what this should mean in concrete figures, and was soon forgotten.[16]

## CDP – PESCO – EDF: DISCONNECTED ARMAMENT PLANNING

If the complicated EU arms process is simplified, the "Capability Development Plan" (CDP) follows the concretisation of the military target, which does not currently existent. Its task is to identify capability gaps for the implementation of the military target and to define priorities. The current version of 2018 highlighted 11 priority areas with 38 sub-points.[17] To significantly increase insight into the existing – and above all planned – capabilities of the Member States, the "Coordinated Annual Review on Defence" (CARD) was adopted by the Council in May 2017. Not formally, but by being closely linked to another new instrument (PESCO), Member States are *de facto obliged to fully account for their current and planned defence spending, investment and research efforts. The first CARD report of November 2020 also identifies capability gaps that are particularly suitable for transnational implementation, which the EU Commission promises to exploit to make massive efficiency gains.*[18]

The prioritisation carried out via CDP and CARD then leads to the next step, the establishment of concrete transnational EU projects to close the capability gaps. In particular, the "Permanent Structured Cooperation" (PESCO), which has existed since December 2017, should provide the framework for this. PESCO is forcing Member States into a tight brace by making participation dependent on a total of 20 conditions. They range from an obligation to close capability gaps identified in the CDP related to EU cooperation projects, to participation in the CARD process, to an increase in military spending and arms investment. It is also important to make a significant contribution to European troops and operations and to agree on common technical and operational standards for the armed forces, including the sharing of existing capabilities.[19] Although these commitments go quite far, almost all EU Member States decided to participate in them[20] because that was the only way they could have a say in the design of the concrete PESCO projects.[21]

Participation in PESCO is of great importance for many countries, simply because their projects can be funded (30 per cent instead of 20 per cent) through the "European Defence Fund" (EDF), with which the acceptance of PESCO criteria was sweetened financially. The EDF was finally approved by the European Parliament in April 2021 – despite massive legal concerns[22]. Almost 8 billion euros are now available for the research and development of transnational EU arms projects (at least three participants) between 2021 and 2027 (plus national contributions of up to 80 per cent depending on the project). The distribution of these funds is explicitly linked to the condition that the European armaments industrial base must benefit from this, in order to contribute to the consolidation of the European defence sector and to strategic autonomy.[23]

## TIMELINE: EU MILITARISATION 1954-2022

1954:  Failure of the "European Defence Community" (EDC).

1992:  Maastricht Treaty: Introduction of the "Common Foreign and Security Policy" (CFSP).

1997:  Treaty of Amsterdam. The "Western European Union" (WEU) and thus also the so-called "Petersberg Tasks" ("humanitarian tasks and rescue operations, peacekeeping tasks as well as combat missions in crisis management including peacekeeping measures") are transferred to the European Union by way of this Treaty.

1999:  "Helsinki Headline Goal": Decision to establish an EU reaction force with 60,000 soldiers (including rest and rotation contingents (180,000)). Original radius 4,000 km around Brussels.

2003:  First EU military operations (Macedonia and Congo). Adoption of the "European Security Strategy".

2004:  "Headline Goal 2010". The Battlegroups decision, two of 1,500 soldiers each comprising worldwide quick deployment combat units, two of which can be called up at any time.

2009:  The Treaty of Lisbon enters into force. The EU military sector is renamed the "Common Security and Defence Policy" (CSDP).

2010:  The "European External Action Service" (EEAS) begins its work. It unites the defence, foreign and large parts of the Ministry of Development compared to the national level.

2013:  Arms summit. For the first time since 2008, the Council addresses military issues alone. Commission communication "Towards a more competitive and efficient defence and security sector", which promotes, inter alia, the idea of EU arms research funds.

2015: Commissioner for Industry sets up a high-level group on the issue of EU arms spending, which is almost exclusively staffed by politicians close to the military and arms representatives. Their proposals were widely adopted by the Commission in later drafts for the European Defence Fund.

2016: Adoption of the EU Global Strategy, which replaces the EU Security Strategy as the most important document in this area. Commission defence action plan for the creation of a European armaments industrial complex.

2017: Establishment of the EU headquarters known as the "Military Planning and Conduct Capability" (MPCC). Activation of "Permanent Structured Cooperation" (PESCO).

2018: Commission proposal for the regulation establishing the "European Defence Fund" (EDP).

2019: First cycle of the "Coordinated Annual Review on Defence" (CARD) is completed. Establishment of an EU Ministry of Defence, the "Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space" (DG DEFIS).

2020: Agreement on the EU budget 2021-2027 (MFF) including various arms pots.

2021: Establishment of the European Defence Fund and the "European Peace Facility" (EPF).

2022: Strategic Compass is adopted. Delivering weapons to Ukraine (via the EPF).

# THE STRATEGIC COMPASS –
# PURPOSE AND HISTORY OF ORIGIN

Work on the Strategic Compass was started under the German Presidency in the second half of 2020 and completed under the French Presidency, and was adopted on 25 March 2022. The debate on the document was preceded by a threat analysis carried out by the European External Action Service (EEAS) using intelligence from the individual states and concluded in November 2020. To this day, neither members of the European Parliament nor national parliaments have been able to view this threat analysis – even storing it at the secret security office of the Bundestag was rejected.[24]

Based on the subsequent dialogue between the Member States, the European External Action Service again took on the task of preparing a first draft, which should have originally only contained 15 pages. However, this initial version (REV0) of 9 November 2021 in the German version already had 28 pages. REV1, which was published on 6 January 2022, is the first "real" version written by the Member States responsible for this EU policy area. The majority of the text should have been in place following the additional revision (REV2) on 18 February. As a result of the Russian attack on Ukraine, however, the threat analysis was significantly revised, with the addition of further versions – REV3 (5 March) and REV4 (15 March). All but a few details were contained in the 47-page text, which was finally adopted by the Heads of State and Government on 25 March 2022.[25]

## CHRONOLOGY OF COMPASS VERSIONS

9 November 2021: Proposal (REV0)

6 January 2022: 1st version (REV1)

18 February 2022: 2nd version (REV2)

05 March 2022: 3rd version (REV3)

15 March 2022: 4th version (REV4)

17 March 2022: 5th version (7334)

18 March 2022: 6th version (7334 Rev1)

21 March 2022: 7th version (7334 Rev2 - final)

21 March 2022: Adopted (EU Council) and

25 March 2022: (European Council)

The Strategic Compass sees itself as a "common strategic vision for the security and defence policy of the EU" for the "next five-to-ten years" (SC: 6). In the future, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is to present an annual progress report and, as early as 2025, they can "submit proposals for a possible revision of this Strategic Compass" (SC: 47). The text itself begins with a threat analysis, on the basis of which around 60 proposals are subsequently submitted, most of which have been provided with concrete timelines in four different areas ("acting", "securing", "investing", "working with partners"), to contribute manifestly to a greater commitment.

Although the Compass is quite clearly located in second place below the global strategy within the strategy levels, it also partly updates the situation assessment presented in the EUGS, which has changed since then, especially with regard to Russia (and China). The Compass also aims to clarify and operationalise the much-vaunted strategic autonomy. At the same time, the Compass is intended to guide an update of the targets, in some cases even presenting very concrete figures which, as in the case of the Rapid Reaction Force with 5,000 soldiers, tend towards what the task of a military target actu-

ally is. Finally, the document seeks to synchronise global strategy and targets with implementation within the triad of CDP/CARD, PESCO and EDF.

## JOSEP BORELL: "LANGUAGE OF POWER"

"To avoid being among the losers of the rivalry between the US and China, we need to re-learn the language of power and see ourselves as a top-tier geostrategic player. [...] Whether through the use of European trade and investment policy [...] or by strengthening security and defence instruments – we have many starting points to make an impact. Europe's problem is not a lack of power. The problem is rather the lack of political will to pool these power factors to ensure they are coherent and to maximise their impact" (Josep Borell (EU High Representative): The EU must re-learn the language of power, Tagesspiegel, 08.02.2020).

The core of all this, however, stems from demands by the EU's High Representative, Josep Borell, who vociferously argues that Europe must learn the "language of power" in times of intensifying conflicts between the major powers to continue to assert its interests in the future – and the Strategic Compass is a central document to implement this: "The framework conditions for European security and defence policy have changed. For example, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) from 2016 is considered partly outdated. The geopolitical context has become more competitive with the intensification of China-US rivalry, the redefinition of US leadership and the questioning of global governance. The EU's ambitions have also increased: The Union should speak the "language of power". The Compass should also close a gap in the EU document hierarchy, namely that of the operationalisation of the EUGS. The EU's military ambitions, as reflected in capabilities and cooperation needs and how the armed forces fit into a future approach to defence, have not been sufficiently clarified. The Strategic Compass should provide this and cover the next ten years."[26]

EU DEFENCE PLANNING PROCESS

## EU GLOBAL STRATEGY
Defining general objectives and interests

### MILITARY TARGET

- Determining specific troop sizes
- Determining weaponry, etc.

### STRATEGIC COMPASS

- Threat analysis
- Clarification of targeted skills

### PRIORITIES (CDP/CARD)

- Stocktaking
- Priority setting
- Identification of cooperation options

### PROJECTS (PESCO)

- Major EU projects
- Minimum 3 countries
- 20 armament criteria
- Incl. commitment to CDP, CARD and strat. autonomy

### FUNDING (EDF)

- Financing research & development of EU projects
- Minimum 3 countries
- PESCO preference
- Strengthening the arms base
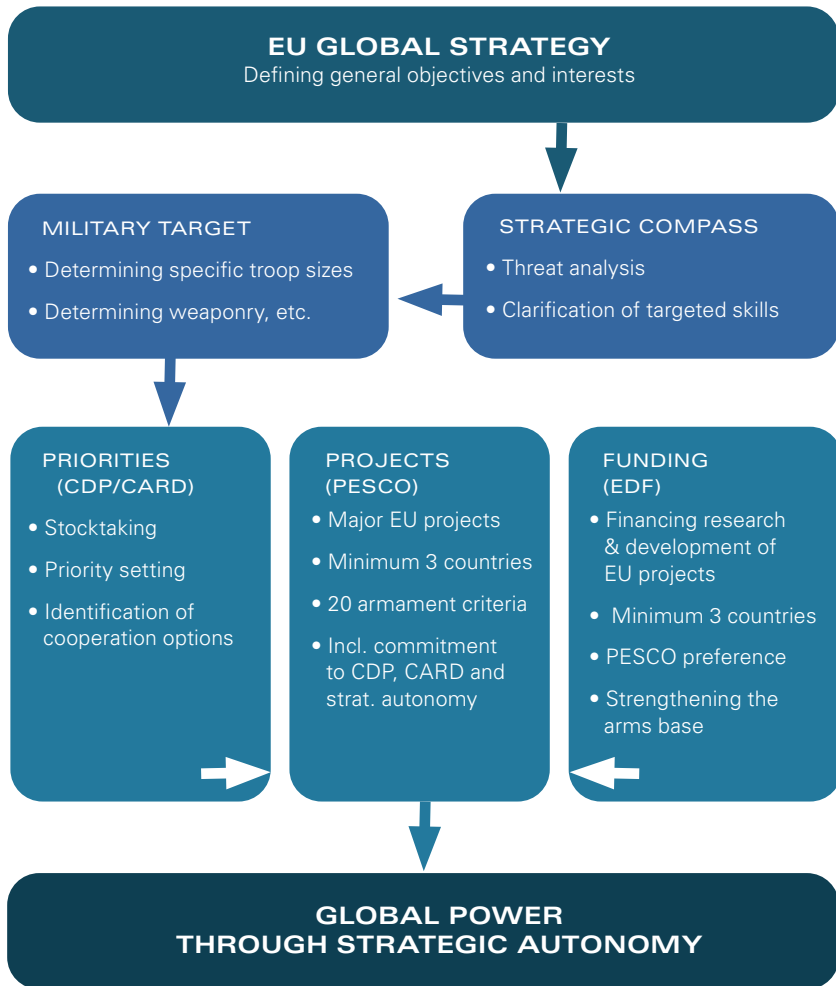
## GLOBAL POWER THROUGH STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Figure 2: own chart

# II. THREAT ANALYSIS – RUSSIA AND THE RETURN OF POWER POLITICS

For the first time, the Member States agreed on a joint threat analysis as part of the Strategic Compass, which will be updated every three years in the future, and which is considered a process of some importance.[27] Whilst secret, it can be assumed with some certainty that their results were included in the first chapter of the Compass ("The world in which we live"). The EU faces "multiple threats" ranging from "terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime to hybrid conflicts, weapons proliferation and irregular migration". These threats are considered to threaten "the security of the EU on our southern and eastern borders and beyond" (SC: 8). It goes on to say that the "recent geopolitical changes" require the EU to "urgently assume more responsibility for its own security", both "in its neighbourhood and beyond" and "if possible with partners and if necessary alone" (SC: 12).

In short: So the EU feels threatened by almost everything and everyone – almost everywhere. Since this threat bundle was presented up to version REV3 without any priorities, very different camps sometimes criticised the Compass somewhat arbitrarily.[28] It was, therefore, almost a friendly under-statement when, before the outbreak of the Ukraine war, for example, a paper from the "Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik" accused "the security policy tasks" of not being clearly prioritised in the Compass."[29] Paradoxically, the Russian attack on Ukraine and the subsequent unplanned revisions led in some ways to a much more compelling document. Now, every aspect is viewed almost exclusively from a single perspective: its role in increasingly tough rivalry with Russia (and to a lesser extent, China).

## RUSSIA AND THE RETURN OF POWER POLITICS

From the very first draft Compass of 9 November 2021, there was a signifi-cant shift in emphasis compared to the EU Global Strategy of 2016, in which the rivalry between the great powers, and with Russia in particular, was given a much greater and more threatening status. After the Russian attack

on Ukraine, the Compass was revised several times as described, and a separate sub-chapter, "The return of power politics in a disputed multipolar world", was inserted. It now classifies Moscow's "aggressive and revisionist actions" as a "serious and immediate threat to the European security order and the security of European citizens" (SC: 7). Compared to the first versions, passages such as the following have been added: "Russia's war of aggression means a tectonic shift in Europe's history, [hence] the most important change in international relations is a return to power politics and even armed aggression" (SC: 5).

As if the world had suddenly become completely different; now, after the Russian war of aggression, everything seems to make "sense". Where it was not previously clearly stated – or could be – why the European Union should become more involved in certain regions or areas, a clear answer could now be given: because of Russia.

Geographically, it is not least the Sahel region where, incidentally, the EU was present long before Russia with military operations, which has now been chosen as the theatre where Moscow's increased influence is to be pushed back. For example, a passage about the actions of the Russian mercenary group, Wagner, was not included in the Compass in version REV3 until the Russian attack on Ukraine: "Russia is taking part in operations in places such as Libya, Syria, the Central African Republic and Mali, and uses crises opportunistically, including recourse to disinformation and mercenaries such as the Wagner Group. All of these developments pose a long-term and immediate threat to European security, which we will continue to resolutely oppose" (SC: 7). A little later it then says: "Stability in the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa and in the Mozambique Channel remains a major security concern for the EU, partly because they are important trade routes. At the same time, we are seeing growing geopolitical rivalry in Africa involving both global and regional players" (SC: 10).

The war against Ukraine showed Russia's "willingness to use maximum military force, regardless of legal or humanitarian considerations, combined with hybrid tactics, cyberattacks, foreign information manipulation and interference, economic pressure and pressure on the energy sector and aggressive nuclear rhetoric" (SC: 7). Because of the "return of power politics", for example, the "high seas, airspace, space and cyberspace […] are increas-

ingly contested" and states taking part in "rivalry for governance systems and a real struggle of narratives" (SC: 5).

That is why, this year, the Union intends to present an "EU toolkit against hybrid threats" and a "toolkit against foreign manipulation" and to begin "work on a joint cyber unit". This year, the EU would also like to "initiate strategic deliberations on aviation to ensure free and safe European access to airspace", to submit an "EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence" by 2023 and to further develop "EU mechanisms for observing the maritime security situation" by 2025 on the basis of an updated "Maritime Security Strategy" (SC: 27f.).

## CHINA AS A SYSTEM RIVAL

When the European Union warns against a return of power politics, conflicts with Russia have dominated, especially since recent events, but of course this always means China. Compared to Russia, the tone of China is much softer, but the Compass contains the following sentence, for example: "China is a cooperation partner, economic competitor and systemic rival" (SC: 8).

In doing so, the document included an expression first adopted by the Commission in 2019, which was the starting point for a much more confrontational EU-China policy.[30] For some time now, the so-called Indo-Pacific has been regarded as the main scene of current and especially future Western-Chinese power conflicts. Its central role as a trade route, the increasing militarisation of the region and unresolved and increasingly gruff claims to ownership of various islands make the Indo-Pacific one of the current and future geopolitical pivotal zones. With the adoption of the "EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region" by the Council conclusions of 16 April 2021[31] and the Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative of 16 September 2021[32], officially known as the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, the EU emphasised not only the growing importance of the region, but also the desire to show a stronger military presence there in the future.[33]

The Strategic Compass also highlights the region itself and the need for greater engagement there: "A new centre of global competition has emerged in the Indo-Pacific region, where geopolitical tensions are threatening the rule-based order in the region and putting pressure on global supply chains. The EU has a vital geopolitical and economic interest in stability and security

in the region. We will, therefore, protect our interests in the region, including by ensuring the primacy of international law in maritime and other areas. China is the EU's second largest trading partner and an essential partner to meet global challenges. At the same time, China's increasingly assertive stance in the region is encountering a backlash" (SC: 10).

A major means of countering this increasingly assertive Chinese stance is a greater military presence in the region. Central to this is the new instrument of a "Coordinated Maritime Presence" (CMP). The mechanism provides that in regions that have been branded as areas of primary interest by the EU, the maritime presence of the individual states will henceforth be coordinated and systematised under the official umbrella of the EU. The Gulf of Guinea was selected as a pilot project for this in January 2021, and in February 2022, the Council decided to establish another such presence in the Indo-Pacific (which, according to EU understanding, extends from East Asia to the East Coast of Africa): "Based on this positive example, the Council […] has decided to initiate the implementation of the CMP approach in the North-Western Indian Ocean by identifying a maritime area of interest that extends from the Strait of Hormuz to the southern tropic and from the north of the Red Sea to the middle of the Indian Ocean."[34]

The subsequent Strategic Compass states that the EU wants to "strengthen maritime, aviation and space activities, in particular by extending the coordinated maritime presence to other areas, starting with the Indo-Pacific region" (SC: 3). It can, therefore, be assumed that regions further east, possibly even the highly conflicted South China Sea, could be considered in this case. It goes on to say that "until 2023, in addition to more frequent port visits and EU patrols, the intention is to carry out LIVEX maritime exercises with partners in the Indo-Pacific region " (SC: 46)

## COMPETITION FOR GREAT POWER & NEED FOR ACTION

The threat analysis in the Strategic Compass, which primarily focuses on Russia, provides the breeding ground to suggest an immense need for action from a military perspective, which is then reflected on the following pages in phrases such as "our security is at stake" or that the EU must "double its efforts to implement our integrated approach to security issues, conflicts

and crises" and "act with significantly increased urgency and determination due to the new strategic landscape". (SC: 12).

However, while the threat analysis presented in the first chapter was thoroughly revised after the Russian attack on Ukraine, this does not apply to the recommendations for action contained in later chapters. In itself, however, this is not surprising, because the overarching objective of establishing the European Union as an independent military power under the heading of strategic autonomy existed long before Moscow decided to take this fatal step.

# III. ACT & INVEST – AUTONOMOUS POLITICAL, OPERATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL CAPABILITIES

Following the threat analysis, the Strategic Compass attempts to "better" coordinate the various hierarchical levels of European strategy and armed forces planning. It also presents, however, as already mentioned, around 60 concrete proposals, many of which are intended to "improve" political and operational capabilities in the area of "action", while in the area of "investment" the focus is primarily on industrial autonomy.

## REACTION FORCE WITHOUT CONSENSUS

The reason for the failure to deploy the EU combat troops available since 2007 is above all the consensus principle, which has been branded as crippling. It

delayed all the decision-making processes, giving individual countries occasions to block decision, which would have meant that the EU combat troops would have had to stay in the garage time and time again. Against this background, the EU High Representative, Josep Borell, took the initiative at the end of August 2021, proposing to set up a new 5,000-soldier reaction force. Together with four other EU countries (the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and Slovenia), Germany then fed a discussion paper on the EU ministerial meeting on 21 October 2021 into the debate. Subsequently, this unit, called the "Rapid Deployment Capacity" unit, was also an integral and prominent part of the Strategic Compass from the first version. Preparations are expected to begin in 2022, with full operational capability planned for 2025. As a "modular armed force", the Rapid Deployment Capability will consist of up to "5,000 operational forces, including land, air and naval components", including the "required strategic enablers" (SC: 14).[35] Both "rescue and evacuation operations" and the "initial phase of stabilisation operations", i.e. war operations in a "non-threatening environment", are planned as fields of use (SC: 14). At the

same time, a series of "improvements" are intended to ensure that the new force does not meet the same "fate" as the combat troops. This includes "longer standby times" (SC: 14) of one year (compared to six months for combat troops), frequent manoeuvres, "better" financing, but above all new planning, leadership and decision-making structures.

The European Union having its own military headquarters for planning and carrying out military operations has long been regarded as an essential building block towards operational autonomy.[36] The battlegroups are still commanded by the respective leading nation, but this will change in the future when the new unit is set up. In future, national headquarters be able to do this, as will the "Military Planning and Conduct Capability" (MPCC) launched in June 2017 as a key part of a future EU headquarters. At first, it "only" had the ability to lead non-executive operations with no powers to aggressively enforce mandate objectives. In November 2018, however, its powers were extended to smaller executive military operations involving up to 1,500 soldiers.[37] According to the Strategic Compass, this capability is now to be increased to the battalion size of the Rapid Deployment Capability: "By 2025 at the latest, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability will be able to plan and carry out all military missions without executive powers and two smaller or medium-sized military operations and LIVEX exercises" (SC: 19). The MPCC, no longer the national operational headquarters, should then constitute the "preferred management structure" (SC: 16).

With regard to political autonomy, the Compass stresses that the Union must "strive for greater flexibility in our decision-making process" (SC: 14). This refers to the decision to initiate an EU military operation, which remains subject to the principle of consensus, which makes EU intervention considerably more difficult and is therefore, apparently, to be overturned. This should be achieved through a combination of the formation of ad hoc coalitions (Article 44 TEU)[38], which in future should be able to carry out military operations as small groups on behalf of the EU, and the introduction of "constructive abstentions" (Article 31 TEU) (SC: 14). With such abstentions, a decision will only fail if at least one third of the Member States, making up at least one third of the Union's population, explicitly disagree with it. The consensus principle that has been in force up to now would thus be effectively overturned on one essential point, and the influence of Germany and France, in particular, would increase considerably.[39]

The main aim seems to be for sceptical states to come under enormous pressure in the future, instead of vetoing military action, agreeing by constructive abstention to pave the way for a coalition of the willing parties. Whether this will actually succeed remains to be seen; for small and medium-sized Member States, in particular, the principle of consensus is an essential means of exerting any influence at all on decision-making in the EU. In any case, it was announced that the practical arrangements would be decided by 2023 – one of the most important decisions that the Compass shifted into the future.

Another stumbling block so far has been financing EU military operations. For the lion's share of costs, the polluter pays principle has been applied, with each country having to pay its own share ("costs lie where they fall"). However, this procedure is primarily a thorn in the side of the countries that generally provide the majority of soldiers in EU operations, and they would like to see these costs "socialised" to a greater extent. The criticism is also often raised that this approach has the effect of discouraging smaller Member States from becoming more involved in EU military operations because it entails additional high costs. For this reason, the "European Peace Facility" (EPF), which was launched in March 2021, was intended to increase the share of costs financed by all EU states to between 35 and 40 per cent (previously, only about 10 to 15 per cent was possible via the so-called Athena mechanism).[40] According to the Compass, this share is to be increased even further by 2023 in order to further increase the willingness to participate in EU military operations: "We are committed to creating incentives for the establishment of forces for military missions and operations, for example, by improving the transparency and predictability of troop rotation and by expanding the scope for common costs under the European Peace Facility" (SC: 17).

## ARMAMENT INCENTIVES – MILITARY AMBITION AND INVESTMENT

The investment chapter of the Strategic Compass proposes concrete arms projects and incentive systems for transnational projects. Above all, however, the aim is to establish the link between generating troops and capacity with the higher strategic levels, which has hitherto been weak. So, one of the most important Compass measures – postponed, however, to the future once more – is likely to be the announcement of an update of the military target: "By 2023, we will revise our target process and bring the development of military

capabilities closer to operational needs, making a critical contribution to the capability development plan" (SC: 36).

Subsequently, in the key areas identified in the CARD process, the aim was to launch transnational arms projects under PESCO and to finance them using the EDF. This is how a "round" armament process is to be created – and for this to even happen, the entire area will be kept more prominently in view in the future: "We will maximise coherence between EU defence initiatives – the Coordinated Annual Defence Review, Permanent Structured Cooperation and European Defence Fund. In this context, the High Representative / Vice-President / Head of the European Defence Agency will chair the annual meetings of defence ministers on EU defence initiatives on capability development and make full use of all existing formats" (SC: 33).

Specifically, it would then be necessary to make full use of "Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Fund" in order to "develop the following strategic capabilities": regarding aviation capabilities, "fully interoperable capabilities of the next generation, in particular combat systems of the future (FCAS)"; regarding land capabilities, a new "main battle tank"; regarding maritime capabilities, the "priority area of a European surface patrol ship"; regarding space capabilities, "space-based earth observation and technologies for space situational awareness and space-based communication and navigation services"; regarding cyber capabilities, "new technologies, in particular quantum informatics, artificial intelligence and big data" (SC: 32).

Numerous other arms projects will also be named, preferably to be initiated transnationally in the coming years – as stated, the EU promises to achieve significant efficiency gains by consolidating arms contracts and arms companies. For this reason, "additional incentives" will apply (SC: 36), which in the first instance means the financial side. While EU military spending has also increased significantly from EUR 159 billion (2014) to EUR 198 billion (2020), adjusted for inflation, the Strategic Compass is pressing for further increases: "We will, therefore, significantly increase our defence spending – with a significant share of investment – focusing on identified strategic deficits" (SC 30).

| EU MILITARY EXPENDITURE 2014 TO 2020 (IN BILLION EURO) | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2014 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| 159 | 164 | 174 | 186 | 198 |

Table 1: The figures are inflation-adjusted and exclusive of Denmark and the UK.
Source: EU Defence Agency (Defence Data of 31.12.2021).

Furthermore, a "possible reinforcement of the EDF premium system" (SC: 33) is considered, which so far envisages being able to cross-finance PESCO projects with 30 per cent instead of 20 per cent from this pot. It is also essential "to promote and facilitate access by the defence industry to private finance until 2023, including through optimal use of the European Investment Bank" (SC 37). This should primarily be about recouping the previous plans for a taxonomy that would, at least in part, classify the defence industry as socially harmEU military spending 2014 to 2020 (in billion euros)s of financing.[41] Finally, concrete tax relief for the arms industry is to be tackled, as the EU plans "to work on a Commission proposal by early 2023 that would allow VAT exemption to promote the joint procurement and ownership of defence capabilities developed jointly within the EU" (SC: 38).

# IV. QUO VADIS COMPASS – WITH OR AGAINST NATO?

The concept of strategic autonomy leaves a great deal of room for manoeuvre, which is actually specifically intended. This is why it has repeatedly been the subject of various controversy.[42] For some, especially most Eastern European states, it can only mean a strengthening of the operational European military potential with clear subordination to NATO (and thus the US). Others, notably France, want a military apparatus that stands, as far as possible, on its own feet and that can certainly compete with the US in future. Germany occupies a central position here and the effort to balance both parties is also evident in the Strategic Compass: "This Strategic Compass will strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy and its ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests. A stronger and more capable EU in the field of security and defence will make a constructive contribution to global and transatlantic security and will complement NATO, which remains the foundation of the collective defence of its members. Both go hand in hand" (SC: 13).

Some commentators stress that the war in Ukraine has once again confirmed that Europe cannot defend itself in an emergency without the US, which is why it has shifted the balance in favour of NATO.[43] However, even after the departure of US President Donald Trump and the Russian attack on Ukraine, there are still many voices who want the EU to, as a minimum, be able to achieve full autonomy, at least in the medium term, should relations with the US deteriorate again – and possibly permanently – as in the time of Donald Trump. And it seems to be precisely such a partial autonomy that the Strategic Compass seeks: NATO continues to play first fiddle in it; at the same time, the condition have been created politically, operationally and industrially for significantly greater autonomy so that a transition to full autonomy can be achieved in the event of serious conflicts.

## ARTICLE 5 VS ARTICLE 42.7?

The order in the last Compass chapter "Working with partners" makes the EU priorities abundantly clear: First comes NATO, then the United Nations,

then the OSCE.[44] In this respect, it is not surprising that it says that the "strategic partnership between the EU and NATO" is "of decisive importance" for Euro-Atlantic security, as the "Russian aggression against Ukraine" has also shown (SC: 39).

The Compass refers to "unprecedented progress" in "strengthening cooperation with NATO", which was accompanied by two NATO-EU declarations in 2016 and 2018 (SC: 39). It agreed on close cooperation in various areas, such as military mobility or the fight against terrorism, and on a total of 74 individual measures.[45] Accordingly, in the meantime, the question of whether a third NATO-EU declaration should be published as a commitment to the importance of the alliance before the Strategic Compass was debatable. However, the Russian attack on Ukraine pushed the issue into the background and the declaration was postponed to the NATO summit in June 2022.

There is also tension between the two parallel promises of assistance – Article 5 in the case of NATO and Article 42.7 in the case of the EU. Article 5 of the NATO Treaty is well-known; it obliges Member States to assist in the event of an attack (but does not specify the form it should take). Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in 2009, also includes a so-called assistance clause: "In the event of an armed attack on the territory of a Member State, the other Member States owe it all the aid and assistance in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter."[46]

Quite a few experts consider the wording in the EU version even more binding than that in the NATO Treaty text.[47] Here it is noticeable that after the Russian attack, for example, compared with REV1, the new chapter "Preparing together" was inserted in the Strategic Compass, in which the assistance clause now plays a more prominent role: "We will continue to invest in our mutual support under Article 42(7) […], in particular through frequent exercises" (SC: 17). It is stressed that this must be "in line with the obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation" (SC: 17); however, the tension between the two assistance clauses is obvious and their relationship to one another has to a certain extent not been clarified, or even seriously addressed.

## ATTACHMENT – REINSURANCE – COUNTER-POWER FORMATION?

To understand the direction taken in the Strategic Compass with regard to the relationship with the US and the substance of strategic autonomy, it is worth

taking a look at a study by the EU's own most important EU think tank, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). It distinguishes three possible "forms of autonomy", which are described here somewhat casually with "attachment", "reinsurance" and "counter-power formation".

**Attachment** describes the development of comprehensive operational capacity to provide maximum support for NATO and the US, but without political or industrial arrangements – would be bought primarily "off the shelf" and in the case of the US that means: "Autonomous operational capabilities and autonomous industrial capacities need not be linked. From this perspective, the performance of defence equipment is more important than its origin."[48] In the case of **reinsurance**, on the other hand, capacities already substantially decoupled from NATO would be built up, although not (yet) with the objective of forming a counter power, but as a basis for being able to transition as quickly as possible to full autonomy in the event of a serious crisis. Indications of this include continued close cooperation with NATO while establishing autonomous troops for medium-intensity operations, including planning and leadership capabilities, and costly strengthening of its own armaments industrial base (rather than buying much cheaper "off the shelf"): "From this point of view, strategic hedging is intended as a kind of insurance policy in the event that relations between two actors deteriorate and/or the hegemon withdraws its security guarantees."[49] An entirely different dimension, on the other hand, is an active and offensive **counter-power formation** that is recognisable by features such as the full planning and operational capacity for high- and the extremely high intensity wars. Moreover, any Europeanisation of French nuclear weapons and an increase in military spending to 2% of the gross domestic product would be clear signs in such a direction: *"This form of autonomy would go far beyond current security policy targets and require a significant increase in defence spending, including the need to ensure any form of deterrence for European territory."*[50]
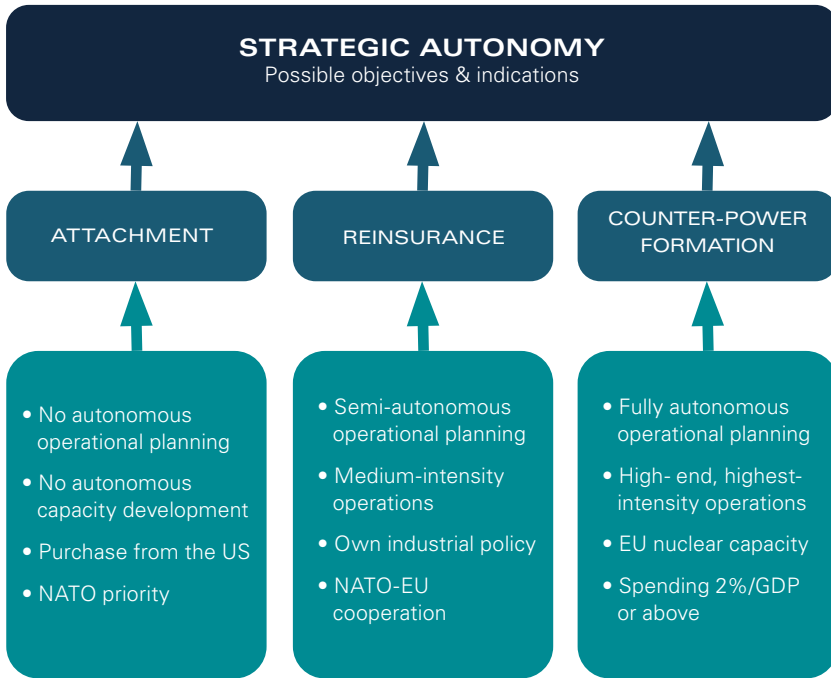
POSSIBLE FORMS OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY



**STRATEGIC AUTONOMY**
Possible objectives & indications

| ATTACHMENT | REINSURANCE | COUNTER-POWER FORMATION |
|---|---|---|
| • No autonomous operational planning<br>• No autonomous capacity development<br>• Purchase from the US<br>• NATO priority | • Semi-autonomous operational planning<br>• Medium-intensity operations<br>• Own industrial policy<br>• NATO-EU cooperation | • Fully autonomous operational planning<br>• High- end, highest-intensity operations<br>• EU nuclear capacity<br>• Spending 2%/GDP or above |

Figure 3: own chart

At the time of publication in 2018, the author, Daniel Fiott, placed the EU somewhere between attachment and reinsurance. Despite the oft-heard thesis that the Ukraine war has resulted in the strengthening of NATO, it is relatively obvious that most of the measures envisaged in the Strategic Compass shift the pendulum more towards reinsurance. This is supported, for example, by the autonomous Rapid Deployment Capability for medium-intensity operations along with corresponding planning and leadership capabilities, but also by the strengthening of the triad of CARD, PESCO and EDF, which is explicitly intended to strengthen the development of a European armaments industrial complex. At the same time, a number of EU states – Germany, in particular – are now moving into the realm of possible counter-power formation in defence spending.

The planning and operational capacities for wars of high and the highest intensity are, however, still lacking – the defence against possible large-scale attacks is and remains a matter for NATO until further notice. This is also the case because at the moment, at least, nuclear deterrence continues to come primarily from the US, and a repeatedly discussed Europeanisation of French nuclear weapons is not yet foreseeable (or is likely to fail due to French resistance).

So, it can be said that the Compass points towards partial autonomy with the option of counter-power formation. After all, neither states nor alliances have friends, but interests, and according to the Strategic Compass, for the EU these are that "partnerships" have the task of contributing to the "EU objective to appear as a global strategic player" (SC: 39). As long as this is the case with regard to the US and NATO, it is unlikely for there to be enough momentum towards counter-power formation. But if the US continues to reject European desires for a much more equal "eye to eye" partnership, that may change – and the Strategic Compass lays essential foundations for making that possible.

# V. MISSED OPPORTUNITY

As a kind of positive counter-vision to the intensifying rivalry between great powers, the Compass stresses various values and principles to which the EU is committed: "Together with its transatlantic partners, the EU defends the central principles on which European security is based and which are enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the OSCE founding documents, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. These principles include, in particular, sovereign equality and the territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders, the renunciation of threats or the use of force and the right of states to freely meet or change their security policy provisions" (SC: 8).

Unfortunately, the document does not show the slightest spark of self-criticism here, since almost all of these principles were violated, for example, in the NATO wars against Yugoslavia or Libya. It also goes unmentioned that at the 1999 OSCE Summit, among other things, all NATO countries committed themselves to the objective to create a common area of equal and indivisible security, in which no state or organisation is able to claim primary responsibility or special zones of influence. In addition, freedom of alliance was tied to the fact that no other state should feel threatened by it.[51] Instead, it is suggested that these principles are being violated exclusively by declared rivals such as Russia and even, to a lesser extent, China – and here, too, no thought is given to whether and, if so, to what extent European Union policy – such as its policy on Ukraine – has also contributed in this case.[52]

This lack of self-criticism paves the way for alternatives to militarised power rivalry, the first of which is that, in future, the well-formulated "values" and "principles" must no longer just pay lip service to them, which no longer play a role if EU interests are to be asserted.

International law and non-aggression can only be strengthened provided that the western states are once again fully committed to this. This could have been an opportunity for the Strategic Compass to present ideas for a new security architecture in Europe. At the same time, concrete diplomatic and arms-control measures that are generally for confidence-building purposes could and should have been proposed. But here we have not heard another word, not even half a page is devoted to a key theme such as the "promotion

of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control" in the almost fifty-page document as a subsection in the "Securing" chapter of the Compass. Moreover, almost no substantive measures are announced in these areas, unlike the parts dealing with military build-up and arms investment.

But apparently none of this was intended either – instead, the Strategic Compass points purposefully towards further militarisation of the European Union, and will most likely also contribute to further intensification of competition between the great powers. Whether rightly or wrongly, the European Union has long been seen as an answer to the problems of militarism, the quest for power and geopolitics[53] – but with the Strategic Compass, it is now once again becoming a bit more of its embodiment.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jürgen Wagner is a political scientist and historian. He is a managing member of the Tübingen Information Centre for Militarisation (IMI) e.V. and author of a number of specialist articles on security policy issues, with a focus on: Militarisation of the EU, NATO expansion to the East, current wars. In 2018, he published with Claudia Haydt the book: "The militarisation of the EU. The (un)stopable path of Europe to a military superpower".

# ENDNOTES

1   The passages cited here in the text all come from the final version of the document: General Secretariat of the Council: A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to world peace and international security, Brussels, 21.03.2022.

2   Back in 2019, the current EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, spoke up by saying that the "return of competition between super powers" was the "outstanding feature" of today's era, and Germany and the EU could not remain "neutral" because they were "part of this competition". (Leyen, Ursula von der: Speech at the 55th Munich Security Conference, Munich, 15.02.2019). She repeated this phrase again, for example, during the speech by President von der Leyen on the State of the Union, 15.09.2021.

3   Fiott, Daniel: The next level, in: Directorate of Defence Policy and International Relations [DViB] (Ed.): The Strategic Compass of the European Union. Objectives, perspectives and opportunities for Austria, Vienna 2021, pp. 39-44, pp. 39f.

4   European Security Strategy: A secure Europe in a better world, Brussels, 12.12.2003, p. 4.

5   Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy: Creating security in a changing world Brussels, 11.12.2008.

6   Common vision, common action: A stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union (EUGS), Brussels, 28.06.2016.

7   Ibid., p. 24.

8   Ibid., p. 29.

9   Ibid., p. 39f.

10  Ibid., p. 16.

11  Council of the EU: Plan de relance: un plan pour l'autonomie stratégique de l'Europe Discours du Président du Conseil européen Charles Michel à l'occasion du Forum économique de Bruxelles, Press, 08.09.2020 (translated with deepl.com).

12  "Strategic autonomy is defined here as the ability to set one's own foreign and security policy priorities and make decisions, as well as the institutional, political and material conditions for implementing them in cooperation with third parties or, if necessary, independently. […] A high degree of strategic autonomy enables rules to be maintained, developed or created in international politics and not to be unwillingly subject to foreign rules. The opposite of strategic autonomy would be a status as the party that is subjected to the rules and strategic decisions that third parties – the US, China or Russia – make with a direct effect on Europe." (Lippert, Barbara et al.: Strategic autonomy for Europe. Actors, fields of action, conflicting goals, SWP study, February 2019 (Preface).

13  See e.g. Kunz, Barbara: France, Germany, and the Quest for European Strategic Autonomy, Notes du Cerfa, No. 141, Ifri, December 2017.

14  Declaration by the European Council on strengthening the European Common Security and Defence Policy, Cologne, 03/04.06.1999.

15  Draft Council conclusions on the implementation of the European Union Global Security and Defence Strategy, Brussels, 14.11.2016.

16  "This IPSD has been largely forgotten today. It was probably not sophisticated enough to provide effective and actionable guidelines. So, it became "another document" and not a strategy that controls the CSDP." (Biscop, Sven: A defence strategy for the European Union, in: DViB 2021, p. 24-30, p. 25)

17  Capability Development Plan, EDA Factsheet, Brussels, 28.06.2018.

18  2020 CARD Report, EDA/EEAS, Brussels, no date.

19  Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315, Brussels, 11.12.2017.

20  Only Malta and Denmark are yet to participate in PESCO, which could soon change in the case of Denmark.

21  For more details on PESCO, see Haydt, Claudia/Wagner, Jürgen: The militarisation of the EU – Europe's (unstoppable) path to great military power, Berlin 2018, Chapter 8.

22  Fischer-Lescano, Andreas: Legal opinion on the illegality of the European Defence Fund, November 2018.

23  The EU Commission, for example, writes: "The European Defence Fund was designed to an instrument to promote the competitiveness and innovation capability of the technological and industrial base of European defence, thereby contributing to the strategic autonomy of the EU" (Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Defence Fund, Brussels, 13.06.2018 (COM(2018) 476)).

24  This resulted, among other things, in the response of the Federal Government to a minor enquiry from the group DIE LINKE: "Even a CI classification and storage of the requested information in the German Bundestag's secret security office would not take sufficient account of its considerable sensitivity with regard to intelligence cooperation and the fulfilment of the tasks of the Federal Intelligence Service, since disclosure cannot take account of its need for protection even with a limited circle of recipients. […] It follows from what has been said that the requested information touches on interests of secrecy that are so vulnerable that the public interest far outweighs the parliamentary question and information law" (Intelligence analysis of the EU threat for a "Strategic Compass", response of the Federal Government, printed matter 19/28576, 19th election period, 15.04.2021).

25  See detailed information on the process of creating the Compass and the disputed points in the most recent revisions: Pugnet, Aurélie: Comment s'est concoctée la boussole stratégique? On vous donne la recette!, Bruxelles2, 31.03.2022.

26  Major, Claudia: Process, Objectives and Challenges, in: DViB 2021, pp. 50-55, p. 51.

27 "This first joint work is undoubtedly one of the most interesting aspects of the Compass. Even if it won't automatically be the most read. Externally, it has merit: to put on paper the "threats", i.e. the opponents or enemies of Europe." (Pugnet, Aurélie: (Boussole stratégique) Le monde qui nous fait face. L'analyse des menaces. Un exercice de culture commune, Bruxelles2, 23.03.2022, translated with deepl.com).

28 See, for example, Expert opinions on the Strategic Compass hearing in the Bundestag on 14.02.2022.

29 Kaim, Markus/Kempin, Ronja: Compass or wind chime? An analysis of the draft for the EU "Strategic Compass", SWP News 2022/A 01, 05.01.2022, p. 4.

30 EU-China – Strategic Perspectives, JOIN (2019) 5, Strasbourg, 12.03.2019.

31 EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region – Council conclusions, Brussels, 16.04.2021.

32 EU Strategy for Indo-Pacific Cooperation, JOIN (2021) 24, Brussels, 16.09.2021.

33 For more details on EU policy in the Indo-Pacific, see Wagner, Jürgen: Deployment in the Indo-Pacific. The West and the New Cold War with China in the Indo-Pacific region, European Studies on Foreign and Peace Policy edited by Özlem Alev Demirel MEP No. 3/2022, Chapter 6.

34 EU Council: Coordinated maritime presence, press release, Brussels, 21.02.2022.

35 The "enablers" are attributed great importance in that they are meant to be an integral part of the Rapid Deployment Capability, making an important difference to the battlegroups. See Biscop, Sven: Fighting for Europe. European strategic autonomy and the use of force, Egmont Paper, 103/2019, p. 16.

36 Coelmont, Jo: European Strategic Autonomy: Which Military Level of Ambition? Egmont Security Brief, 103/2019, p. 3.

37 Council conclusions on Security and Defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy, Brussels, 19.11.2018.

38 The use of Article 44 TEU seems to stem from a German initiative. In September 2021, the following was said: "We want to strengthen the western alliance putting it 'on an equal footing' with the US, which is why the Federal Republic is talking 'with interested EU states' and promoting a 'coalition of willing parties'." Kramp-Karrenbauer argues that Article 44 of the EU Treaty can be applied to this" (Kolb, Matthias: Berlin is promoting a "coalition of willing parties," Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02.09.2021).

39 See Schirmer, Gregor: The Treaty of Lisbon and the militarisation of the European Union, in: Z – Zeitschrift für Marxistische Erneuerung (Journal of Marxist Renewal), No. 78, June 2009: "But there are instruments to keep the EU on a military course even without unanimity. There is the possibility of declaring a "constructive abstention" in accordance with Art. 31 para. 1 TEU. The Member State abstaining from voting is "not obliged to implement the decision but accepts that the decision is binding on the Union". It must not hinder the implementation of the decision. The other Member States must respect its position. If at least one third of the Member States, making up at least one third of the Union's population, announce constructive abstention, the decision will not be taken. This is an almost insurmountable hurdle to prevent a decision that is desired by the 'big players' in the EU."

40 See Peace Facility, Demirel, Özlem Alev/Wagner, Jürgen: War is peace. EU Peace Facility as incentive system for military operations and arms supplies, in: EXPRESSION (2-2021), pp. 70-74.

41 Kaiser, Tobias/Maaß, Stephan: The arms industry is appalled by the EU's plans, Die Welt, 14.02.2022.

42 Major, Claudia/Mölling, Christian: Toxic quibbling, Spiegel Online, 29.11.2020.

43 "With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Compass is once again losing its importance," believes Markus Kaim of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "You have to put it so harshly: The western military alliance is the great winner of this war" (Biederbeck-Ketterer, Max: Europe's "quantum leap" is likely to be brief, Wirtschaftswoche, 22.03.2022).

44 Assuming that the order of the listed institutions is indicative of their importance to the EU, the OSCE was upgraded after the beginning of the Ukraine war. In previous versions, such as REV1, it was still ranked behind the African Union, with which it traded places in the final document.

45 Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, Warsaw, 08.07.2016; Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, Brussels, 10.07.2018.

46 The assistance clause was activated for the first and, to date, only time in November 2015 after a terrorist attack in France, and subsequently served as justification for military action against the Islamic State, joined by a number of EU allies, including Germany. For the assistance clause, see Wagner, Jürgen: EU assistance clause: How terror becomes war, IMI viewpoint 2015/041.

47 "In the EU Constitution, Article 42(7) contains an assistance clause, which in my view goes further than Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. Russia would certainly not be enthusiastic about Ukraine's EU membership" (Roger Näbig cit. Is the West complicit in Russia's war? N-tv, 20.03.2022).

48 Fiott, Daniel: Strategic autonomy: towards "European sovereignty" in defence? EUISS, Brief Issue, 12/2018, p, 4.

49 Ibid., p. 4.

50 Ibid., p. 6.

51 This is what the "Charter for European Security" of 1999 states: "Every participating state has the same right to security. We reaffirm the inherent right of each participating state to freely choose its security arrangements, including alliance agreements, or to modify them as they develop. Each state also has the right to neutrality. Each participating state will respect the rights of all others in this respect. They will not consolidate their security at the expense of the security of other states."

52 For the EU's role in escalating conflicts in its neighbourhood, especially Ukraine, see Haydt/Wagner 2018, Chapter 5.

53 "The founding philosophy of the EEC, which became the EC and then the EU, turned inward and developed a counter-concept to geopolitics and geostrategic dimensions: Pacification, reconciliation and political cooperation through economic integration as antitheses to geopolitics and imperialism" (Guérot, Ulrike/Witt, Andrea: Europe's new geostrategy, in: From Politics and Contemporary History (B 17/2004), pp. 6-12, p. 6f.)

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