The EU strategic autonomy debate

An increasing number of politicians and analysts argue that the European Union should boost its ‘strategic autonomy’ and/or develop a higher degree of ‘European sovereignty’. These concepts encompass a greater potential for independence, self-reliance and resilience in a wide range of fields – such as defence, trade, industrial policy, digital policy, economic and monetary policy, and health policy – following a series of events in recent years that have exposed Europe’s vulnerability to external shocks.

The debate emerged in the late 2010s, after the French President, Emmanuel Macron, called for a conscious ‘European sovereignty’ and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, said that Europe would have to take its destiny into its own hands, as it could no longer necessarily rely on the United States to protect it. This latter statement followed President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the landmark nuclear deal with Iran, in which the EU had invested significant political capital. In parallel, there is growing concern about the implications for Europe of the progressive hardening of positions between the US and China, on both economic and political fronts.

This note offers links to recent commentaries, studies and reports from international think tanks on the European issues related to European strategic autonomy and sovereignty.

- **The Conference on the Future of Europe: Comparing the Joint Declaration to institutions’ expectations**
  European Policy Centre, March 2021

- **Steady as she goes: Key takeaways from the Commission’s new fiscal guidance**
  European Policy Centre, March 2021

- **Money talks: EU strategic autonomy requires a strong euro**
  European Policy Centre, March 2021

- **Lessons from the battleground: EU strategic autonomy after the ‘vaccine wars’**
  European Policy Centre, February 2021

- **Stepping into the driver’s seat: The EU should double down on US-Iran diplomacy**
  European Policy Centre, February 2021

- **Fostering Europe’s strategic autonomy - Security and defence policy: Time to deliver**
  European Policy Centre, October 2020

- **How Brussels sees the future of Europe after Covid-19**
  European Policy Centre, September 2020
Differentiated cooperation in European Foreign Policy: The challenge of coherence
European Policy Centre, August 2020

Breaking the law of opposite effects: Europe’s strategic autonomy and the revived transatlantic Partnership
Egmont, March 2021

For a new NATO-EU bargain
Egmont, February 2021

The EU-MENA partnership: Time for a reset
Egmont, February 2021

No peace from corona: Defining EU strategy for the 2020s
Egmont, January 2021

Ten reflections on a sovereignty-first Brexit
Centre for European Reform, December 2020

The EU can’t separate climate policy from foreign policy
Bruegel, March 2021

Strategic autonomy or strategic alliance?
Bruegel, February 2021

The geopolitics of the European Green Deal
Bruegel, February 2021

US separates climate concerns from financial oversight in contrast to EU activism
Bruegel, February 2021

Résilience : La nouvelle boussole
Bruegel, January 2021

Getting America back in the game: A multilateral perspective
Bruegel, January 2021

From self-doubt to self-assurance: The European External Action Service as the indispensable support for a geopolitical EU
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies; Centre for European Policy Studies, January 2021

From scale to purpose? The EU’s support for start-ups in the global race for tech dominance
Bertelsmann Stiftung, January 2021

European strategic autonomy and third countries: The defence industrial dimension
Globsec, January 2021

Europe and Biden: Towards a new transatlantic pact?
Wilfried Martens Centre, January 2021

The strategic compass charting a new course for the EU’s Security and Defence Policy
Wilfried Martens Centre, December 2020
Deglobalisation in the context of United States-China decoupling
Bruegel, December 2020

Europe is losing competitiveness in global value chains while China surges
Bruegel, November 2020

What if... not? The cost of inaction
European Union Institute for Security Studies, January 2021

Fostering Europe’s strategic autonomy: A question of purpose and action
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, European Policy Centre, December 2020

Time to go beyond the meta-debate on EU strategic autonomy in defence
Jacques Delors Centre, December 2020

Sovereignty over supply? The EU’s ability to manage critical dependences while engaging with the world
European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2020

Climate superpowers: How the EU and China can compete and cooperate for a green future
European Council on Foreign Relations, December 2020

A new transatlantic bargain: An action plan for transformation, not restoration
European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2020

Protect, constrain, contest: Approaches for coordinated transatlantic economic and technological competition with China
LSE Ideas, January 2021

Unlocking European defence: In search of the long overdue paradigm shift
Istituto Affari Internazionali, January 2021

The quest for European strategic autonomy: A collective reflection
Istituto Affari Internazionali, January 2021

Space as a key element of Europe’s digital sovereignty
Istituto Affari Internazionali, December 2020

Europe of defence in the new world (dis)order: Choices for Italy
Istituto Affari Internazionali, November 2020

Going transatlantic: The EU’s lean walk towards strategic relevance
Istituto Affari Internazionali, November 2020

Pourquoi l’Europe doit-elle être stratégiquement autonome?
IFRI, December 2020

Are Europe’s leaders ready for a Biden presidency?
Clingendael, November 2020

Rebuilding the transatlantic relationship: Transatlantic policy forum in review
Europeum, November 2020