

# Germany pushing EU military development – and seeking UK participation

*Germany is pushing for the adoption of a common threat assessment called a 'Strategic Compass' to orient the EU's military policy – and is seeking the UK's participation. The lack of democratic oversight envisaged by the plan should give all Europeans serious cause for concern.*

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Germany is using its EU Council presidency to push for the adoption of a 'Strategic Compass' – a fundamental military document based on threat assessments by intelligence services – to orient the EU's military policy. The planned strategy paper is aimed at giving a consistent direction to the Union's current militarisation projects such as PESCO and the EU Battlegroups, and enhancing the EU's military response capacity. It is also intended to align EU member states' national armaments projects with the Union's overall strategic needs.

## Timescale for the Strategic Compass

The German government first presented its plan to create a 'Strategic Compass' for the EU last year. Since then, all EU states have supported the initiative and even consider it to be 'one of the most important projects in the near future,' according to Detlef Wächter, Political Director of the German Ministry of Defense.

On 16 June this year the EU defense ministers commissioned the EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner, Josep Borrell, to launch the development of a 'Strategic Compass' based on the EU's Global Strategy of June 2016. On 13 July, Wächter discussed the project with his counterparts from the other EU states. German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer presented it to the relevant EU parliamentary committees as the core of Berlin's EU Council presidency on 14 July.

According to the plan, the Strategic Compass will be further elaborated under the EU Council presidencies of Portugal and Slovenia and adopted during the first six months of 2022 as a document binding on all EU member states. Once established, it will focus the EU's relevant activities. Accordingly, the Strategic Compass is planned to integrate existing EU military projects – such as PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) and the EU Battlegroups – into a common strategy.

## **No Democratic Control**

The key element of the Strategic Compass will be the establishment of a common 'threat assessment' binding on all EU member countries – a historical precedent for the EU. As Wächter notes, the threat assessment is conceived as a 'document of the intelligence services', not as a 'political paper'. It will be compiled by the relevant EU administration, the EU IntCen (European Union Intelligence and Situation Center), on the basis of information submitted by member states' intelligence services. There will be no final approval by member countries. Thus, the core element of the fundamental document determining the EU's future foreign and military policies will be without any democratic control.

Therefore, among other things, the EU is basing its decisions on future military interventions on the groundwork of espionage agencies. The intelligence services have, in the past, distinguished themselves by using lies to justify going

to war and by their involvement in abductions and torture of suspects within the framework of the 'war on terror'.

## **NATO 'Still Irreplaceable'**

Kramp-Karrenbauer is also clearly in favour of systematically seeking cooperation with non-EU allies, in spite of all the EU-centered military planning. Last month, she announced in EU parliamentary committees that during its term as EU Council President, Germany will seek to integrate the United Kingdom into the PESCO projects. Berlin views Norway similarly.

According to Kramp-Karrenbauer, cooperation with the United States, particularly within the framework of NATO, is completely indispensable. 'We must absolutely keep in mind that, we, as a whole, within the European Union, have a long way to go before we can replace the capabilities of NATO and our transatlantic partners with our own EU capacities,' observed the minister.

Thus, 'NATO is and will continue to remain a cornerstone of European security,' stated Kramp-Karrenbauer. At the same time, some conflicts are tangent more on the interests of the EU than of NATO. For these cases, the EU must be independently operative, requiring the EU's own military capabilities.

## **Bringing the East into Line**

Kramp-Karrenbauer recently visited the Visegrád countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary) and Bulgaria, to promote the idea of the Strategic Compass. Foreign and military policy concepts diverging from Germany's were also a reason for her trip, at least in some of those countries. Poland is strongly orientated toward the USA and seeks to increase US troop deployment in that country, which would make German control of the continent more difficult.

Warsaw is currently buying a large amount of arms from the USA, which means a possible export loss for German weapons manufacturers. Budapest, on the other hand, has already begun purchasing large quantities of weapons in Germany. Last year's €1.8 billion order made it German arms manufacturers' biggest customer.

However, Berlin is critical of the fact that Hungary is occasionally less enthusiastic than desired in its support for western military posturing in relation to Russia, a factor that the EU's Strategic Compass could correct in Berlin's favour.