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Peace and Security in 2023

Overview of EU action and outlook for the future



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Overview of EU action and outlook for the future

Russia's war on Ukraine has caused the European Union (EU) to intensify its work for peace and security. The Peace and Security Outlook, produced by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), seeks to analyse and explain the European Union's contribution to the promotion and restoration of peace and security internationally, through its various external policies. This study provides an overview of the issues and current state of play. It looks first at the concept of peace and the changing nature of the geopolitical environment, as European security faces the most tangible military threat since the end of the Cold War.

Linking the study to the Normandy Index, which measures threats to peace and democracy worldwide based on the EU Global Strategy, each chapter of the study analyses a specific threat to peace, and presents an overview of EU action to counter the related risks. The areas discussed include proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, democracy support, conflict prevention and mitigation in fragile contexts, the security impacts of climate change, cyber-attacks, disinformation, and terrorism, among other issues. The study concludes with an outlook to the future. A parallel paper, published separately, focuses specifically on the state of play of the EU's relations with Iraq.

EPRS has drafted this study as a contribution to the Normandy World Peace Forum, taking place in September 2023.

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Executive summary

Russia's war on Ukraine has shattered assumptions and expectations about protracted peace in the wider European space. It has stimulated serious reflection about the instruments and tools available to restore peace in times of contestation between great powers and of weakened multilateral institutions, phenomena that have been observed consistently throughout the past decade.¹

At the same time, the promotion of global peace and security continues to be a fundamental goal and central pillar of European Union (EU) external action, following the model of its own peace project. Both within and beyond the EU, there is a widespread expectation among citizens that the Union will deliver results in this crucial area. Nevertheless, as the security environment poses what could be the most significant challenge to security in the post-Cold War period, the EU is urgently intensifying its work for peace and security in a number of key policy areas.

According to the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2023, the state of peace in the world again deteriorated in 2022, continuing a long-running trend. In addition, multilateralism, a core element of EU foreign policy and identity, and a cornerstone of its approach to peace and security, is under increasing pressure from alternative value systems and ideologies; a situation that has been dramatically exacerbated by the launch of Russia's war on Ukraine and the subsequent geopolitical polarisation.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the parallel weaponisation of energy, food supplies, migration and information, have inflamed and exploited pre-existing fractious trends evidenced by the coronavirus crisis, and signal the advent of a more 'competitive and less secure international geopolitical environment. In response to these trends, the European Commission under President Ursula von der Leyen, with the support of the European Parliament, committed to reinforcing the EU as an external actor, able to act more strategically and autonomously, while fully upholding the fundamental values stipulated in the founding Treaties, including the achievement of peace. To this day, the over-arching values and objectives of the EU guide all facets of its external action, including common foreign and security policy (CFSP); democracy support; development cooperation; economic, financial and technical cooperation; humanitarian aid; trade; and neighbourhood policy.

While the promotion of peace remains the objective of EU foreign policy, achieving it is also linked to understanding peace and its components. Thus, measuring peace and the threats that challenge it is becoming an increasingly relevant exercise. In that context, the Normandy Index attempts to measure threats to peace based on variables identified in the EU Global Strategy. The EU Member States, supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS), conducted a comprehensive threat analysis in 2020, as part of the development of the EU Strategic Compass, which was adopted by the Council and endorsed by the European Council in March 2022.

The EU's contribution to countering threats to peace, security and democracy globally has grown significantly through legislation, financing and the creation of new structures and initiatives. A significant share of EU aid goes to fragile states and to issues related to securing peace. The EU's 'new consensus on development' emphasises the role of development cooperation in preventing violent conflicts, mitigating their consequences and aiding recovery from them. On the ground, the EU has been able to strengthen the nexus between security, development and humanitarian aid through the implementation of comprehensive strategies, for example in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel. Through its common security and defence policy (CSDP), the EU runs several missions and operations in third countries, making it one of the United Nations' main partners in peacekeeping. To help partners withstand sometimes violent attacks on their democratic structures by domestic

¹ For detail, see [previous editions](#) of this study.

illiberal forces and external authoritarian powers, the EU has been strengthening its tools to support democracy all over the world.

In 2022, the EU continued to advance its work on countering new threats to peace, such as disinformation, cyber-attacks and climate change. New elements strengthening EU security and defence capabilities were implemented with the aim of boosting EU strategic autonomy, including its capacity to work for peace and security. These elements of 'hard power', together with the EU's long-standing experience in the practice of soft power, form the backbone of its action for peace and security.

The EU also continues to be a staunch promoter of multilateralism at global and regional levels to counter global threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and global food and health crises. The EU's immediate neighbourhood is a consistent focus in its work, with the aim of building resilience and upholding peace and democracy – both now seriously challenged at the EU's eastern border by Russia's war on Ukraine.

Looking to the future, peace and security are increasing in complexity. Even in Europe, the war in Ukraine has shown that the assumption of sustained peace can no longer be taken for granted. The effects of the war on Ukraine reverberate around the world in the form of diminishing food and energy security, inflationary pressures, economic crises and global polarisation. New types of threats and destabilising factors such as pandemics, climate change, foreign interference in democracy, cyber-attacks and bio-terrorism, as well as various types of hybrid warfare, call for innovative thinking and new types of resources and solutions. While the EU has made significant progress in furthering its aim of strengthening its presence and efficiency in the area of peace and security, more remains to be done. The 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF), although focused on streamlining the EU's programmes and instruments to allow for flexibility and on using innovative financial instruments to address unforeseen threats, is already at risk of being depleted by January 2024. This urgent budgetary constraint, largely caused by the pandemic and the Russian war of aggression, led the Commission to propose an urgent legislative budgetary and financial package on 20 June 2023.

While the EU's quest for flexibility, efficiency and innovation in recent years has been underpinned by the strategic goal of empowering the EU in its global role as a promoter of peace and security, no event has made this challenge as urgent as Russia's war on Ukraine. While adapting to the new realities of the international order and the rapid technological, environmental and societal changes of our times, the war has also precipitated bold and rapid change in the EU's capacity to act for peace and security, such as unprecedented sanctions on Russia and support for substantial arms deliveries to Ukraine. Adapting to the rapidly transforming world has meant that the EU has to become a more autonomous, strategic and holistic actor for peace and security by bringing together elements of normative, soft and hard power with steadfastness and resilience.

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List of main acronyms used

AI	artificial intelligence
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ASAP	Act in Support of Ammunition Production
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
BMVF	Border Management and Visas Fund
CARD	coordinated annual review
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials and agents
CCC	civilian CSDP compact
CFSP	common foreign and security policy
CMP	coordinated maritime presence
CSDP	common security and defence policy
DSA	Digital Services Act
ECPM	EU Civil Protection Mechanism
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDF	European Defence Fund
EDIRPA	European industry reinforcement through common procurement act
EDTIB	European defence technological and industrial base
EEAS	European External Action Service
EDIP	European defence investment programme
ENISA	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity
EPF	European Peace Facility
EUCBRN CoE	EU Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence
FDI	foreign direct investment
FIMI	Foreign information manipulation and interference
FTA	free trade agreement
G7	Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the USA
GDP	gross domestic product
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, currently Josep Borrell Fontelles
Hybrid CoE	European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats
INF	Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty
INSC	Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation

IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISF	Internal Security Fund
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran
LNG	liquefied natural gas
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)
MFA	macro-financial assistance
MFF	multiannual financial framework
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
New START	New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
NGEU	Next Generation EU recovery package
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
ODA	official development aid
PESCO	permanent structured cooperation
SDGs	UN sustainable development goals
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. Introduction

1.1. Peace and security in a world fragmented by protracted war

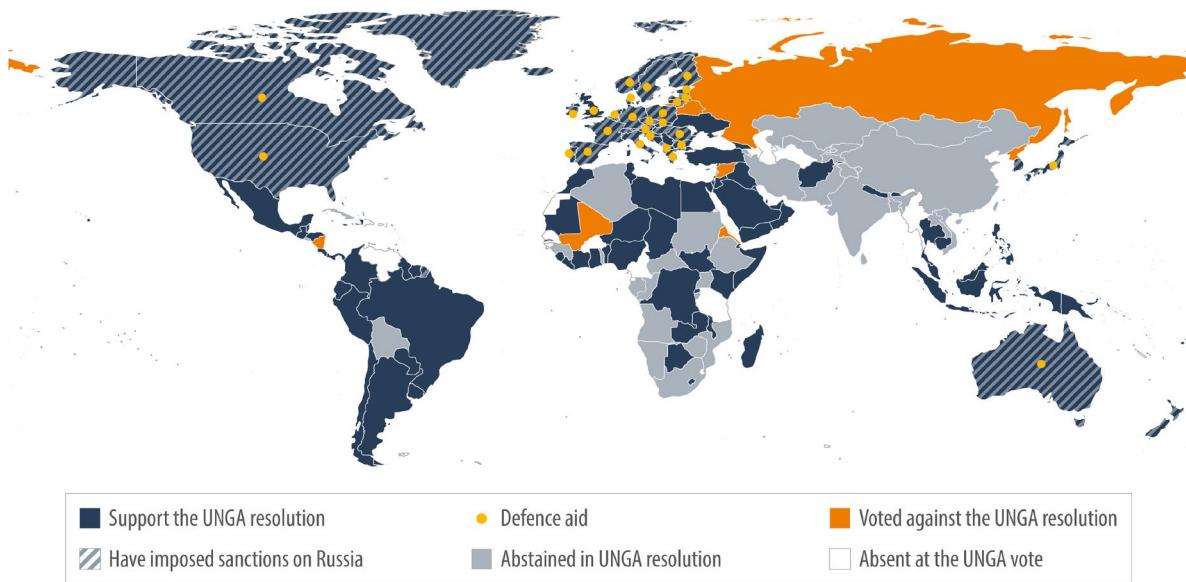
More than a year after Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine was launched and with the end of the war far from sight, the paradigm shift in the EU's thinking about peace and security has moved from concept to practice. New initiatives spanning the full spectrum of traditional and emerging threats, aiming not only to counter those threats, but also to build resilience – a prerequisite for peace and stability – in the EU and beyond are launched and set in motion at an unprecedented pace. In a world at risk of increasing polarisation – including on the very issue of the response to the war – and fragile multilateralism, the EU's aim to promote peace and security is challenged, perhaps more than ever before. In response, diplomacy, strategy, financial and human resources, foresight and stronger alliances are among the tools that the EU-27 look to for their collective response to the unprecedented geopolitical landscape.

The full spectrum of global repercussions of the war is still unknown, but its multiple domino effects, challenging European and international peace and security,² continue to unfold: economic crises, energy shortages and food insecurity are some of the many such effects known to function as multipliers of conflict and instability.

As a manifestation of a widening rift between authoritarian states and liberal democracies and of heightened competition between the world's great powers, the war also challenges multilateral institutions' ability to safeguard world peace. Some of the new dividing lines became evident on 2 March 2022, when the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (UNGA) convened in a special session, adopting resolution ES-11/1 reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by a broad majority (141 votes in favour, 5 against, with 35 abstentions and 12 absentees). The resolution condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine and calls for the unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine. China, India and South Africa were also among the 32 countries that abstained in the vote on UN resolution ES-11/6 on 23 February 2023 – while Mali and Nicaragua, which abstained in March 2022, voted against the resolution. This second resolution calls for an end to the war and demands that Russia 'immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine and called for a cessation of hostilities' (see Figure 1).

² L. Boehm, E. Lazarou, G. Sabbati, S. Chahri, [Domino effects of the war](#), EPRS, European Parliament, June 2022.

Figure 1 – International reactions to Russia's war on Ukraine
 (UNGA resolutions [A/RES/ES-11/1](#) and [A/RES/ES/11-6](#))



Data source: [EPoS](#), 2022, UN [2022](#) and [2023](#), update G. Macsai.

Russia's 25 February and 30 September 2022 UN Security Council vetoes on action on Ukraine adds renewed momentum to longstanding debate about the reform of that body and of the UN more widely, including European Parliament calls for comprehensive reform.³ As several analysts maintain, the war on Ukraine has further exposed the geopolitical fault lines and great power rivalries of the current environment, which challenge the capacity of multilateral institutions to act as loci of crisis management and of consensual solutions.⁴ Divisions were further illustrated in the failure of the November 2022 G20 leaders' summit in Bali to agree on a common approach to the war. It instead included in its concluding declaration that 'most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy – constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity, and elevating financial stability risks. There were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions. Recognizing that the G20 is not the forum to resolve security issues, we acknowledge that security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy'.⁵

Together and in parallel with its G7 allies and partners, the European Union (EU) has condemned the Russian military aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. In the face of an attack on a neighbouring country, the 27 EU Member States (EU-27) reacted with unprecedented unity to provide humanitarian, financial, diplomatic and unprecedented military support to Ukraine and to support the resilience of other countries in the region.⁶ The EU has leveraged its partnerships around the world by coordinating swiftly and consistently with likeminded partners on all these fronts. At

³ I. Zamfir, [European Union involvement in the United Nations system](#), EPRS, European Parliament, September 2020.

⁴ E. Lazarou, [The Future of Multilateralism and Strategic Partnerships](#), EPRS, European Parliament, September 2020.

⁵ Council of the European Union, [G20 Bali Leader's Declaration](#), Bali, Indonesia, 15-16 November 2022.

⁶ The support provided to Ukraine is analysed in detail throughout this study.

the Hiroshima Summit on 19 May 2023, the G7 leaders renewed their commitment to providing the financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support Ukraine requires for as long as it takes, and agreed to impose further sanctions and measures to increase the costs to Russia and those who are supporting its war effort.⁷

Russia's actions and their consequences have brought traditional warfare back to European debate as the most pressing threat to peace and security. However, they do not occur in a vacuum. Russia's aggression follows the COVID-19 outbreak, which also fundamentally altered understandings of security and led to thinking about how to preserve security in the face of new frontlines linked to digital, environmental and supply chain issues, among otherthings. At the same time, the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, disinformation, cybersecurity, democracy, state fragility, energy insecurity, violent conflict, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction, illustrate the scale of the challenges to the promotion of peace and security, one of the main goals of the EU and its foreign policy. Alarmingly, the same categories of threats, accentuated by the pandemic,⁸ have now grown due to the war to Europe's east. As discussed in the sections that follow, the EU Strategic Compass,⁹ adopted in March 2022, along with new legislation and strategies in areas ranging from energy security to foreign interference and manipulation of information (FIMI), and an orientation towards economic security unveiled by the Commission in mid-2023, are reflections of these realisations and concerns – translated into policy action.

The war on Ukraine, occurring just as the devastating pandemic abated, has exposed a key weakness in policies pursuing peace, security and prosperity: the ability to deal with the unexpected and the need for preparedness. Preparedness to counter traditional and non-traditional threats – globally and in the EU – has been tested, and found, if not inadequate, then displaying room for improvement. Russia's war on Ukraine has made the need for resilience even more urgent. However, it has also highlighted the need for greater capacity to act in the defence of peace. In an address to the European Parliament, on 1 March 2022, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) Josep Borrell unequivocally stated the urgency for the EU to 'amplify our reflection, adjust our means and anticipate our responses'.¹⁰

In the wake of the pandemic, leaders and experts worldwide acknowledged that threats to peace and security can be caused by non-traditional security threats, such as viruses and extreme weather events. The tragic reality of a (so far) conventional war on the territory of an EU neighbour in the 21st century is a harsh reminder that traditional threats are also here to stay. In a world already marked by heightened geopolitical tensions and declining security guarantees, of war and 'weaponisation of everything',¹¹ the EU is called upon to realise its maximum potential as an actor in defence of peace and security. In the words of HR/VP Borrell 'this war has been an occasion for the European Union to be more assertive and to push for the creation of a European stand – from the foreign policy side and also from the military and defence perspective'.¹² However, it is also called upon to listen to others in order to carry out this herculean task. As the HR/VP cautions: 'We

⁷ [G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine](#), 19 May 2023.

⁸ Peace and Security in 2021: [Overview of EU action and Outlook for the Future](#), EPRS, European Parliament, June 2021.

⁹ European Union External Action Service, [A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#), 28 October 2021.

¹⁰ Josep Borrell Fontelles, in [Russian aggression against Ukraine: debate on European Council, Council and Commission statements](#), European Parliament, 1 March 2022.

¹¹ M. Galleoti, *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War*, Yale University Press, 2022.

¹² [European Diplomatic Academy: Opening remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the inauguration of the pilot programme](#), EEAS, 13 October 2022.

have to listen more. We have to be much more on 'listening mode' to the other side – the other side is the rest of the world'.¹³

European public opinion, which has consistently supported the further development of a common EU security and defence policy in recent years, has also largely manifested solidarity for Ukraine (Figure 2). Eurobarometer polls carried out in the winter of 2022-2023, almost one year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, indicate solid and continued support for Ukraine. Humanitarian aid enjoys most

Figure 2 – EU public opinion on the EU response to the war in Ukraine



Data source: [Standard Eurobarometer 98](#), Winter 2022-2023

approval among EU citizens (91 %), followed by welcoming Ukrainian refugees (88 %). Some 77 % of European citizens approve of providing financial support to Ukraine, while imposing economic sanctions on Russia gains the support of 74 % of EU citizens polled and providing military support receives approval from 65 % of citizens.¹⁴ The polls also indicate high public backing for a common security and defence policy among EU Member States, with support for common EU action in the field of security and defence at 77 %.

¹³ [EU Ambassadors Annual Conference 2022: Opening speech by High Representative Josep Borrell](#), EEAS, 10 October 2022.

¹⁴ European Union, [Standard Eurobarometer 98 – Winter 2022-2023](#).

1.2. A geopolitical EU and the return of war to Europe

'The return of war in Europe, with Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, as well as major geopolitical shifts are challenging our ability to promote our vision and defend our interests'. This is the opening phrase of the introduction to the European Union's Strategic Compass, a document adopted in March 2022, and intended to guide the EU's security and defence action for the coming years. Notably, the Compass's stated aim is to achieve 'a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security'.¹⁵

More than a year into Russia's war on Ukraine, it has become clear that instability is the new normal. Yet, the war did not emerge from a vacuum. For over a decade it has been common to say that the world is leaving a period of relative stability to enter a profound transformation of the global order. Volatility and disruption have led to continual adaptation and transformation at local, regional and global levels alike – disorder and tension having gradually replaced two decades of relative global stability. Conflicts have steadily risen, with 2022 marking the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War.¹⁶ Violent extremism, terrorism and hybrid threats have grown to constitute new sources of major risk to security, peace and stability around the world.¹⁷ Beyond conflict in its traditional form, new forms of threats to security confront humanity. In 2023, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked societal risk linked to the cost of living crisis as the top global risk (in terms of severity of impact) in the short term (two years), while a multitude of environmental risks linked to the failure to mitigate the climate crisis ranked first in the longer-term analysis.¹⁸

The multidimensional nature of the emerging threats necessitates new approaches to peace and security, merging conventional notions of power with new scientific methods, including foresight, to assess the impact of variables such as natural resources, demographics and technology in the formulation of policy. The EU Global Strategy¹⁹ notes, 'we live in a world of predictable unpredictability'. As early as 2019, the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System report on Global Trends to 2030 suggested that the EU was facing a moment of choice between 'strategic action' and 'strategic inaction'.²⁰ Beyond the urgent need to address Russia's aggression strategically, dealing with China's global role, population movements, disruptive technologies, accelerating climate change, economic and food crises around the world – to name only a few challenges (see Figure 3) – have all brought pressure to bear on the EU to provide for a concrete and targeted EU external response. An understanding of the current global risk landscape necessitates concepts and knowledge going far beyond the traditional interpretations of war and peace. This is why the European Parliament has undertaken to map the structural risks facing the EU regularly, as well as the EU's capabilities and gaps in its capacity to address these risks.²¹ These studies have

¹⁵ For more on the Strategic Compass, see the chapter on security and defence policy.

¹⁶ [With Highest Number of Violent Conflicts Since Second World War, United Nations Must Rethink Efforts to Achieve, Sustain Peace, Speakers Tell Security Council](#), UN Press Release, 2023.

¹⁷ [A New Era of Conflict and Violence](#), UN, 2023.

¹⁸ World Economic Forum, [Global Risk Report](#), 2023.

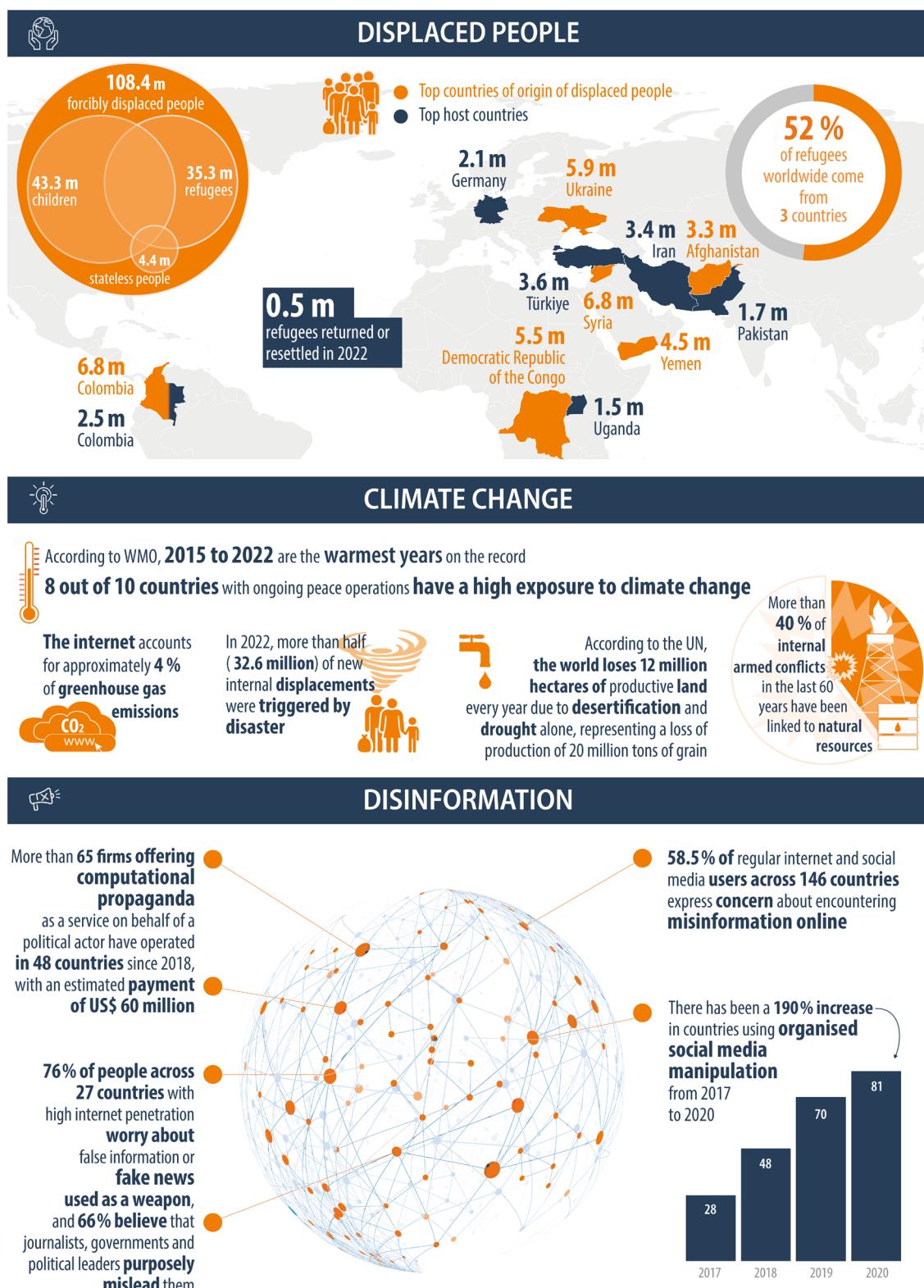
¹⁹ European Union External Action Service, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 15 December 2019.

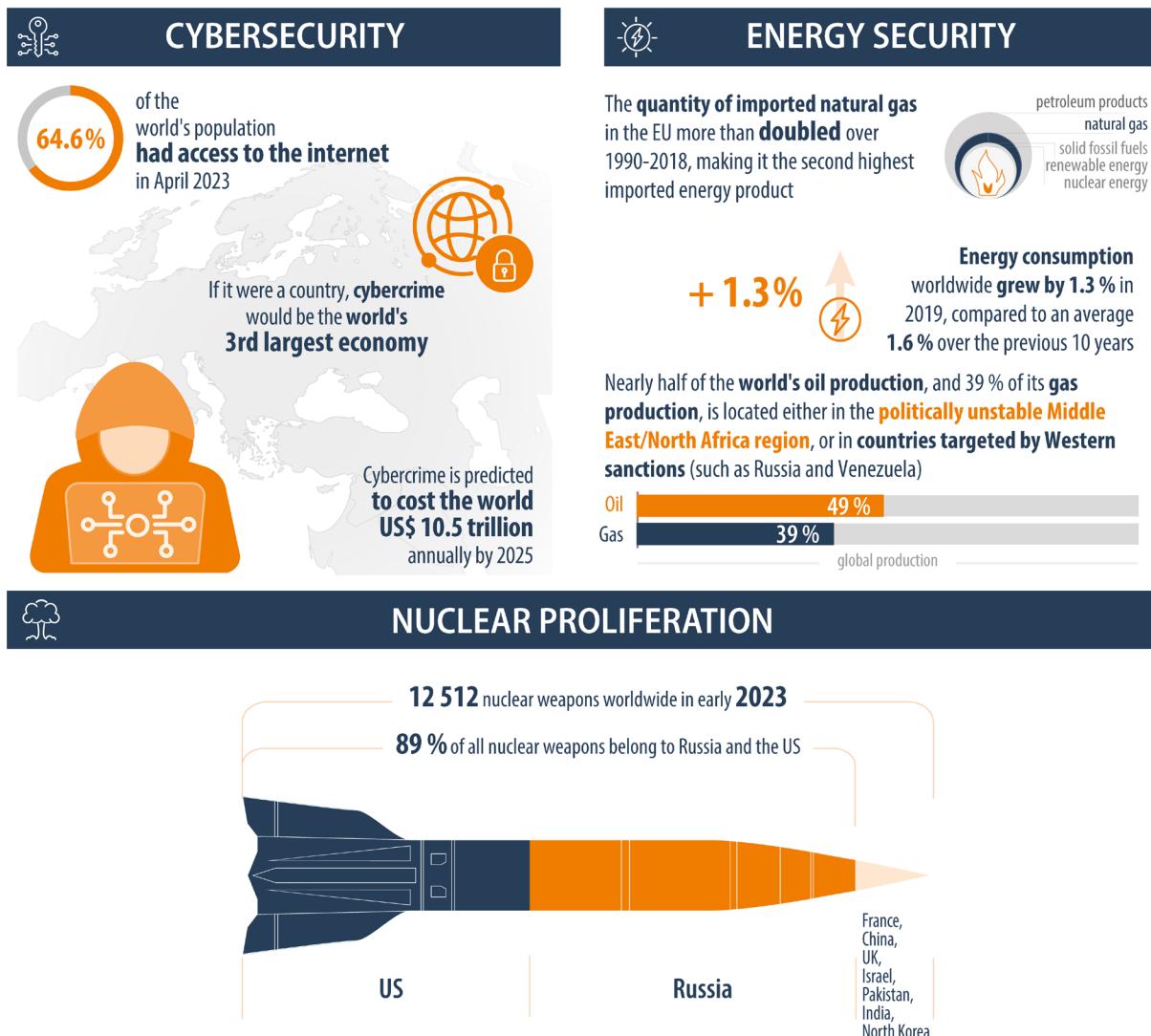
²⁰ ESPAS report, [Global Trends to 2030](#), 2019.

²¹ European Parliament, [Towards a more resilient Europe post-coronavirus. An initial mapping of structural risks facing the EU](#), EPRS with the Directorates-General for Internal Policies (IPOL) and External Policies (EXPO), European Parliament, July 2020; and European Parliament, [Towards a more resilient Europe post-coronavirus. Capabilities and gaps in the EU's capacity to address structural risks](#), EPRS with DG IPOL and DG EXPO, October 2020; E. Bassot and A. Cahen, [Future Shocks 2022: Addressing risks and building capabilities for Europe in a contested world](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2022.

underlined the need for increased anticipatory governance, structured contingency planning and stress testing of existing and future policies.

Figure 3 – Threats to peace and security in the current global environment





Main data sources: [UNHCR](#), [WMO](#), [Migration Data Portal](#), [UN Secretary General](#), [UN Peacekeeping](#), [Oxford University](#), [Harvard University](#), [Edelman](#), [Statista](#), [Cybersecurity Ventures](#), [Eurostat](#), [Federation of American Scientists](#), [SIPRI](#).

In this environment, global actors of all kinds have found themselves in a process of reconsidering and adapting their strategies with regard to security and the preservation of stability. Recognition of new threats to peace and security is reflected in the national security strategies (or equivalent strategic documents) of all the UNSC members, the EU and other G20 states, some of which are summarised in Figure 4). The EU Global Strategy, presented in 2016, echoes concern about the state of the world, labelling the present as 'times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union'. The Strategic Compass, which included an unprecedented joint EU-27 threat analysis to produce a shared assessment of the strategic environment, concurs that 'the spectrum of threats has grown more diverse and unpredictable'. These key strategic documents detail threats including: continuing violation of European security in its east; the rise of terrorism and violence in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as within Europe itself; lagging economic growth in parts of Africa; mounting security tensions in Asia; disruption caused by climate change; the exertion of foreign influence through the spread of disinformation; and the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction.

Figure 4 – Threats to peace and security recognised in strategic documents

Threats addressed in the EU Strategic Compass	UN Security Council					Other G20 countries			
	China	France	Russia	UK	USA	Brazil	Germany	Japan	Australia
terrorism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hybrid threats		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic crisis		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Climate change		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Energy insecurity		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health insecurity/ Pandemics				✓	✓	✓			
Violent conflicts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Cyber security	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Disinformation/ Information warfare		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fragile states		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Organised crime		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
WMD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Space		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Food insecurity*		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

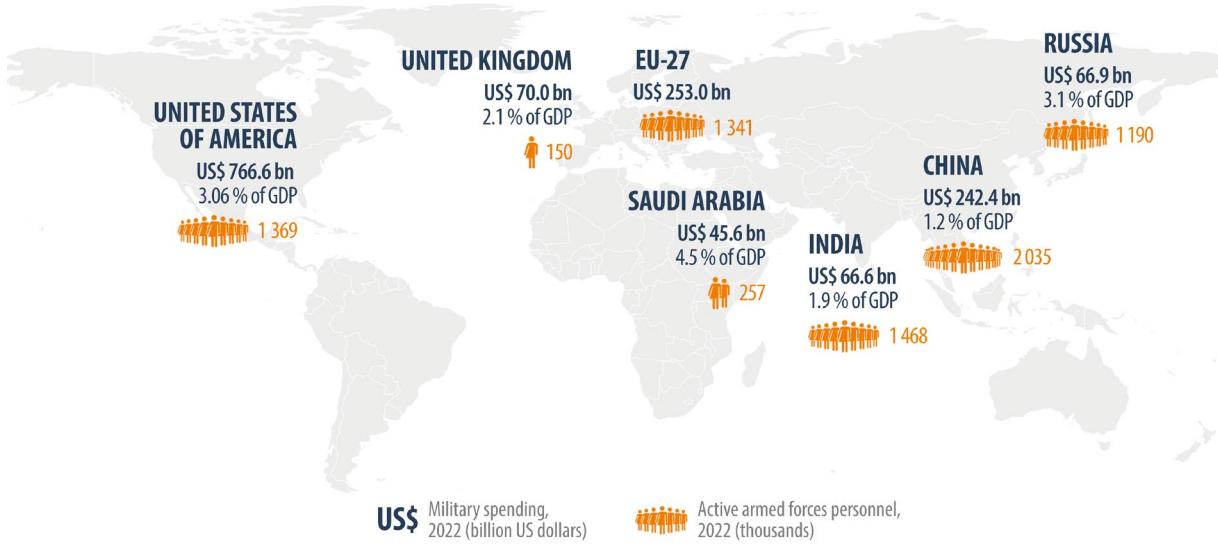
*Not explicitly mentioned in the EU Strategic Compass

Main data sources: [EU Strategic Compass, 2022](#); [China - State Council information office, 2019](#); [France - Ministry of the Armies, 2023](#); [Russia - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020](#); [UK - Cabinet office, 2023](#); [USA - White House, 2023](#); [Brazil - Presidency of the Republic, 2022](#); [Germany - Federal Foreign Office, 2023](#); [Japan - Cabinet Secretariat, 2022](#); [Australian Government Defence, 2023](#).

In response to the challenging security environment, global actors such as Russia, China and India, have been boosting their defence spending (see Figure 5) for years. Global military expenditure grew by 3.7 % in 2022, reaching a new record high of US\$2 240 billion. Defence spending in Europe saw its largest year-on-year increase in 30 years, with a total expenditure of US\$335 billion²².

²² [World military expenditure reaches new record high as European spending surges](#), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023; 'Europe' is defined in this database as the sum of western, central and eastern European countries, for more information the data is available at <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>

Figure 5 – Major global actors' military spending



Source: IISS [Military Balance 2023](#).

The Global Peace Index, an annual report produced by an Australian think tank, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), confirms that in 2023 global peacefulness continues to deteriorate for the ninth consecutive year.²³ The report also notes that, in 2022, the economic impact was US\$449 billion, equivalent to 64 % of Ukraine's GDP. It also highlights that conflicts are 'becoming more internationalised with 91 countries now involved in some form of external conflict, up from 58 in 2008'.

1.3. The EU and the pursuit of peace and security: institutional and strategic dimensions

In 2012, the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize for advancing the causes of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe by transforming it from 'a continent of war to a continent of peace'.²⁴ More than six decades after two world wars with devastating consequences, the achievement of peace in the part of the continent that constitutes the EU is hailed as one of the Union's major achievements, and is enshrined in its Treaty as one of its main aims (Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union – TEU).²⁵

The promotion of peace in the world is one of the fundamental pillars of the EU's external action. Article 3(5) TEU lists the contribution to peace among the objectives of the EU's relations with the wider world, alongside security, sustainable development and the protection of human rights. These objectives guide the EU in all facets of its external action, including EU common foreign and security policy (CFSP); development cooperation; economic, financial and technical cooperation;

²³ The deterioration is 'slight', which is likely because the report only partially captures the effects of the invasion of Ukraine. See [Global Peace Index](#), Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023.

²⁴ [European Union receives Nobel Peace Prize 2012](#), European Union, Brussels, 2012.

²⁵ [Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#), Official Journal of the European Union, 2016.

humanitarian aid; common commercial policy; enlargement and neighbourhood policy.²⁶ It follows that the promotion of peace goes hand in hand with any type of EU engagement with the world.²⁷ In that sense, the EU's foreign policy derives directly from the very nature of the EU itself and its ambition to achieve long-lasting peace through integration. This inherent principle places particular emphasis on multilateral cooperation, the primacy of diplomacy (as opposed to coercion), the use of mediation to resolve conflicts and the promotion of human rights and the rule of law.²⁸

Since the CFSP came into being with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, it has become increasingly clear that to pursue the aims of its external relations effectively, the Union needs to be able to speak with one voice and take common – or coordinated – action.²⁹ The Treaty of Lisbon addressed the first issue, creating the position of the 'High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy' (HR/VP). Appointed for a five-year term, the HR/VP steers EU foreign policy, represents the EU in diplomatic negotiations and international forums, including the UN, coordinates the EU's foreign policy tools, and helps build consensus between the 27 EU Member States. The High Representative, currently Josep Borrell, is assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Union's diplomatic service, also created following the Treaty of Lisbon. On a substantive level, the first major effort to strengthen the EU's presence as a global actor, by defining specific principles, aims and tools, was the 2003 European Security Strategy, along with the more recent 2016 EU Global Strategy.³⁰ The Treaty of Lisbon also reinforced the European Parliament's powers in the CFSP, creating more space for scrutiny. Parliament also shapes the CFSP through its budgetary powers, which include the power to decide on the EU financial instruments that sustain the EU's activities outside its territory. Article 36 TEU requires the High Representative to consult Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the CFSP, and to inform Parliament of the policy's development.

Beyond the CFSP, the EU carries out its pursuit of global peace and security through a number of policies (analysed in this study). The promotion of peace is also the goal of the EU's active participation in mediation and diplomacy, including through the UN.

With the establishment of the common security and defence policy (CSDP), the EU also began to engage in crisis-management activities outside its territory, aimed at 'peacekeeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security' (Article 42(1) TEU), in line with the UN Charter. Today, the EU is a major peacekeeping actor, through its own peacekeeping operations and together with the UN, with which it cooperates systematically at strategic and operational levels. In 2021, the EU and the UN decided to extend this strategic partnership to new priorities, to respond more effectively to the evolving threat landscape and cross-cutting challenges, such as climate change, disruptive technologies and misinformation, as well as the consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic.³¹ The UN recognises the EU as one of its most important regional partners in peacekeeping, both for its operational capacity but also due to the broad convergence of norms and values. Moreover, the EU and its Member States contribute around one quarter of the funding

²⁶ See: [European External Action Service](#) website; European Commission, [Global Gateway](#) website; [Article 212 TFEU](#); European Parliament, [Humanitarian Aid](#) factsheet, 2023; EUR-Lex, [Common commercial policy](#).

²⁷ I. Manners, [Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?](#), Blackwell, 2002.

²⁸ S. Keukeleire and T. Delreux, [The Foreign Policy of the European Union](#), Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

²⁹ [Common foreign and security policy](#), EUR-Lex.

³⁰ P. Pawlak, [A Global Strategy on foreign and security policy for the EU](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2016

³¹ See EU Council, [Conclusions on taking the UN-EU strategic partnership on peace operations and crisis management to the next level: Priorities 2022-2024](#).

for UN peacekeeping.³² Sanctions are also an important part of the EU foreign policy toolbox (see next section).

The commitment to multilateralism is one of the cornerstones of the EU's action for peace and security. Multilateralism lies at the core of the EU's identity, and of its strategy to promote its values and defend its interests. Article 20(1) TEU, the 2003 European Security Strategy, and the Global Strategy, as well as the Commission President's political guidelines, reiterate the EU's dedication to the promotion and upholding of the rules-based global order, with multilateralism as its key principle and the UN at its core. In February 2021, the EU adopted a new strategy on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism, stating (among other things) that: 'in a world of increasing geopolitical tensions, conflicts and threats to international and regional stability, the EU has a deep interest in enhancing its efforts to prevent conflict, promote peace and security, uphold fundamental values and strengthen its capacity to act, together with other partners'.

The EU Global Strategy, presented by former HR/VP Federica Mogherini in 2016, guides the EU's action in all areas of external relations encompassing its work on peace.³³ The connected, contested and more complex world described in the Global Strategy remains a reality today, but the need for action has arguably become more urgent. According to HR/VP Josep Borrell, through the Ukraine war, 'Europe's process of learning how to use the language of power is speeding up'.³⁴ Although placing greater focus on security and defence policy, the Strategic Compass complements the Global Strategy by providing a shared threat assessment, as mentioned above. It also outlines key plans for action for the preservation of peace and the mitigation of threats.

To implement its strategic goals for the pursuit of peace and security, the EU is mobilising all tools at its disposal to strengthen all dimensions of foreign policy in accordance with its values. Coordination and coherence in external action is a key priority in the von der Leyen 'geopolitical Commission'. The Commission College therefore systematically discusses and decides upon external policy. A specific Group for External Coordination (EXCO) prepares the external aspects of College meetings on a weekly basis, aiming to enhance coordination between the Commission and the EEAS.³⁵ In her [political priorities](#), Commission President Ursula von der Leyen drew a link between peace and power: 'Europe has always gained its power through peace, and its peace through power' and pledged to strengthen the EU's global action. To achieve this objective, the mobilisation and cooperation of all relevant EU institutions, actors and instruments is a prerequisite to delivering peace and security (see Figure 6).

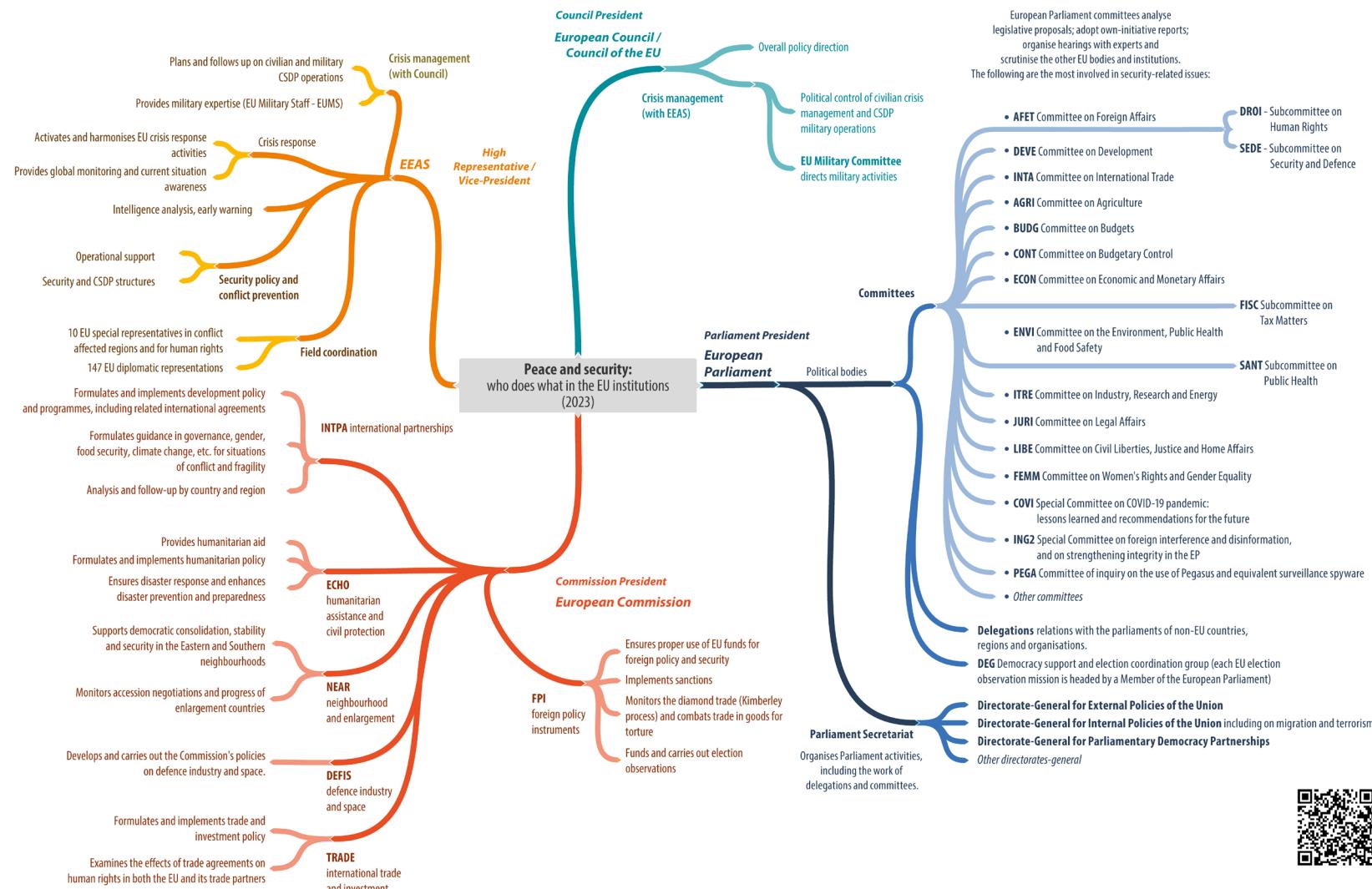
³² [The EU at the United Nations](#), Factsheet, EEAS, 2022.

³³ For more detail, see previous versions of this study; and P. Pawlak, A global strategy on foreign and security policy for the EU, EPRS, European Parliament, 2017.

³⁴ Idem, [The value of Europe: Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell on Europe Day](#), May 2022.

³⁵ E. Bassot, [The von der Leyen Commission's priorities for 2019-2024](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2020.

Figure 6 – Peace and security: Who does what in the EU institutions?



Data source: [European Commission](#), 2015, with updates from EU websites, 2023.

1.3.1. Spotlight on sanctions

One of the EU's most prominent foreign policy tools in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine is the option to impose sanctions.³⁶ Sanctions (called 'restrictive measures' in legal documents) are a significant tool in the EU to promote the CFSP's objectives. An instrument of a diplomatic or economic nature, they seek to bring about a change in activities or policies, such as violations of international law or human rights, or policies that do not respect the rule of law or democratic principles.

EU sanctions are always targeted and form part of a comprehensive approach, including political dialogue, incentives, conditionality and – as a last resort – coercive measures. The EU often implements its own, autonomous, sanctions in cooperation with other states or regional organisations (see Figure 7). Restrictive measures imposed by the EU may target governments of non-EU countries, or non-state entities and individuals (such as terrorist groups and terrorists). The types of sanctions employed include:

Figure 7 – Three major categories of sanctions

1. UN sanctions	2. Mixed sanctions regimes	3. EU autonomous sanctions
The EU implements all sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council.	The EU may also reinforce UN sanctions by applying supplementary measures in addition to those imposed by the UN Security Council.	The EU can adopt autonomous sanctions on its own initiative, in the absence of a common UNSC position.

Source: EPRS.

- diplomatic sanctions (expulsion of diplomats, severing of diplomatic ties, and suspension of political dialogue and official visits);
- suspension of cooperation;
- trade sanctions (general or specific trade sanctions, arms embargoes);
- financial sanctions (freezing of funds or economic resources, prohibition of financial transactions, restrictions on export credits or investment);
- flight bans;
- boycotts of sports or cultural events, and restrictions on admission.

An embargo on arms may be applied to interrupt the flow of arms or military equipment to conflict areas or to regimes that are likely to use them for internal repression or aggression against a foreign country. Arms embargos generally comprise prohibitions on the sale, supply, transfer or export of arms and related material.

There are currently EU arms embargos – in the form of UN mandatory, EU supplementary or EU autonomous sanctions – in place against 20 states or non-governmental forces³⁷ operating within a specific country (see Figure 8). Moreover, arms embargos are in place against two terrorist organisations – al-Qaeda and ISIL/Da'esh – and associated entities. Reviewed at regular intervals, the

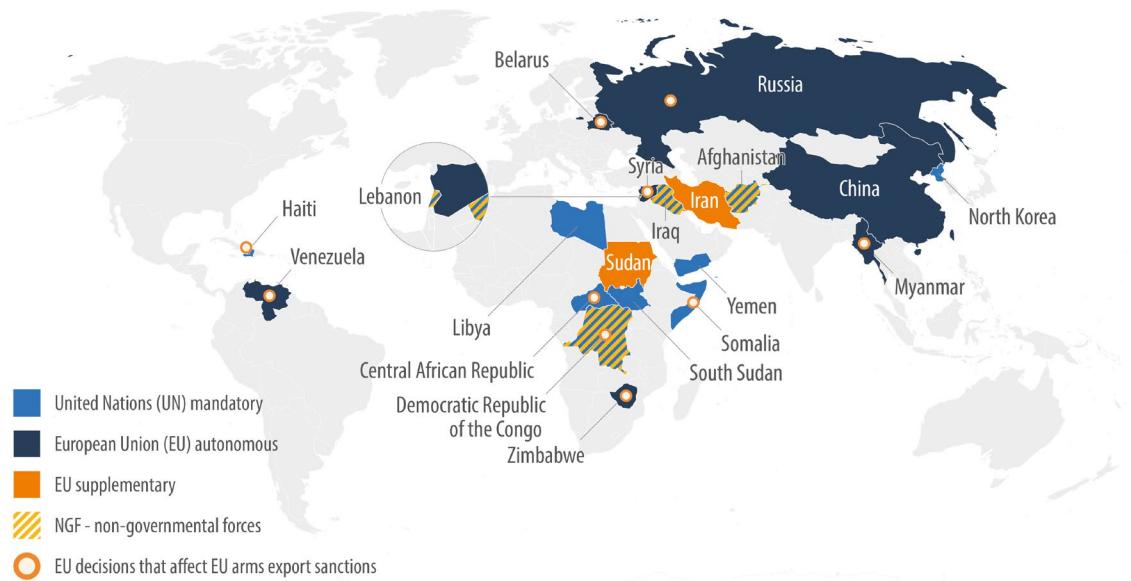
³⁶ A. Caprile, A. Delivorias, [EU sanctions on Russia: Overview, impact, challenges](#); EPRS, European Parliament, March 2023.

³⁷ The UN has not officially recognised the Afghan Taliban administration as the government of Afghanistan. In December 2022, the 193-member UN General Assembly approved postponing, for a second time, a decision on whether to [recognise the Afghan Taliban](#) administration by allowing them to send a United Nations ambassador to New York.

Council of the European Union decides whether EU sanctions should be renewed, amended or lifted. The European Parliament does not have a formal role in the adoption of CFSP sanctions, but it has the right to be informed and has been very vocal in calling for severe sanctions, against Russia in particular. Traditionally, most EU sanctions programmes are geographical in scope, and are therefore applied to individuals and organisations linked to a particular country. However, the EU also has four thematic programmes with an international scope – the most recent of these was adopted in December 2020, and covers a wide range of human rights violations. The remaining three programmes concern terrorism, chemical weapons use, and cyber-attacks. Today, the EU has established over 40 sanctions regimes against third countries, entities, legal and natural persons, and a new embargo to tackle grand corruption is currently under consideration.³⁸

Sanctions on Russia

Figure 8 – Arms embargos implemented by the EU



Data source: [EU sanctions map](#), accessed in June 2023

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a number of like-minded countries,³⁹ including the EU, the USA, the UK, Canada, Japan (G7 countries), Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Norway and Switzerland, have decided to impose some degree of sanctions against Russia. Russia is now the world's most sanctioned country, surpassing even North Korea.

The cumulative effect⁴⁰ of successive waves of EU and international sanctions since February 2022 was intended to weaken Russia's economic base and curtail its ability to wage war. It also seeks to hamper Russia's access to military technologies and components, whilst targeting political and economic elites to undermine their support for the regime.

³⁸ U. von der Leyen, [State of the Union Address](#), 14 September 2022.

³⁹ W. Adeyemo, [America's New Sanctions Strategy: How Washington Can Stop the Russian War Machine and Strengthen the International Economic Order](#), Foreign Affairs, December 2022.

⁴⁰ See [Infographic - EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine \(since 2014\)](#), Council of the European Union, June 2023.

Measuring the exact impact of EU and international sanctions on the Russian regime (as on any other country), is fraught with difficulties, not least because several objectives are targeted at the same time (economic and political),⁴¹ as well as the lack of a consistent 'sanctions doctrine'.⁴² Timely measures adopted by the Russian Central Bank, coupled with the exceptionally high prices for oil and gas during the first months of the war (before the imposition of import bans and an oil price cap) have contributed to Russia's economic resilience being higher than expected.⁴³

Nevertheless, experts agree that the international sanctions against Russia have met three important objectives:⁴⁴ they sent a strong signal of Western resolve and unity to the Kremlin, they have degraded Russia's military capabilities, and they are asphyxiating its economy⁴⁵ and energy sector, with long-term consequences. Experts warn, however, that the impact of the inevitable fall in revenue for Russia, especially on the oil and gas sectors, will not be severe enough to limit Russia's ability to wage its war against Ukraine in 2023.

⁴¹ C. Portela, The Changing Nature of CFSP Sanctions: Evolution and Assessment, by, in '[European Integration Perspectives in Times of Global Crises](#)', pp 73-87, June 2022.

⁴² F. Medunic, [Code of coercion: A European sanctions doctrine](#), ECFR, July 2022.

⁴³ M. Snegovaya et al., [Russia Sanctions at One Year](#), CSIS, February 2023.

⁴⁴ A. Demarais, [Sanctions against Russia are working. Here is why](#), Foreign Policy, December 2022 and F. Medunic, [Damage done: Ways to measure European sanctions' success against Russia](#), ECFR, April 2023.

⁴⁵ See [Infographic – Impact of sanctions on the Russian economy](#), Council of the European Union, May 2023.

EU sanctions against Russia

EU sanctions against Russia were first introduced in 2014, following the occupation of Crimea. Since Russia's military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, the EU has adopted 11 sanctions packages, unprecedented in scope and scale, in what has been labelled a 'sanctions revolution'. Sanctions include:

- ✓ Targeted sanctions against: asset freezes (over € 24 billion in the EU) and travel bans against nearly 1 800 individuals and entities, targeting primarily Russian officials, elites and propagandists, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and commanders of the Wagner group, as well as associated entities;
- ✓ Blocking access to Russia's Central bank reserve holdings (€300 billion);
- ✓ Banning transactions with certain Russian state-owned military-industrial enterprises;
- ✓ Disconnecting 10 leading Russian financial institutions, including Sberbank, Russia's largest bank, from the SWIFT international financial messaging system;
- ✓ Prohibiting export to Russia (including transit) of dual-use goods/technology, drone engines, arms, civilian firearms, ammunition, military vehicles, paramilitary equipment;
- ✓ Banning certain exports in the aviation, maritime, and technology sectors (e.g., semiconductors) and the export of luxury goods to Russia;
- ✓ Closing EU airspace, seaports, and roads to Russian aircraft, vessels, and transport operators, respectively;
- ✓ Suspending the broadcasting activities of several Russian state-owned media outlets;
- ✓ Banning imports from Russia of coal and of crude oil and petroleum products (in phases and with limited exceptions);
- ✓ Imposing a price cap on Russian crude oil and petroleum products exported to third countries, banning the provision of maritime transport, insurance and other assistance services for the transport of products sold above the cap (G7 oil price cap);
- ✓ Prohibiting exports to Russia of goods and technologies in the oil-refining sector and prohibiting new investments in the Russian energy and mining sector;
- ✓ Applying restrictions on Russian nationals holding any position on the governing bodies of EU critical infrastructures and entities.

Source: [EU sanctions against Russia explained](#) (Council)

One important factor to consider is that, while the 'sanctions coalition' countries represent over half the world's economy, two-thirds of the world's population live in neutral or Russia-leaning countries regarding the war in Ukraine.⁴⁶ Key trading partners, such as the remaining BRICS countries (Brazil, India, China, South Africa) or Türkiye, do not currently impose sanctions, nor do Russia's neighbours, such as Armenia or Central Asian countries. Today's sanctions against Russia are multilateral, but not global, which leaves ample room for manoeuvre to circumvent them.⁴⁷

Looking forward, the EU will concentrate its efforts in addressing its sanctions' porosity and enforcement inconsistency, by increasing multilateral alignment around them, and the efficacy of their enforcement.⁴⁸

In this context, the EU has stepped up its 'sanctions diplomacy' with the nomination of David O'Sullivan as the first International Special Envoy for the Implementation of EU Sanctions, in charge of reaching out to third countries to broaden the coalition and contribute to addressing

⁴⁶ [Ukraine war: Russia's relations with the West and geopolitical trends](#), EIU report, 2023.

⁴⁷ J. J. Schott, [Economic sanctions against Russia: How effective? How durable?](#), PIIE, April 2023.

⁴⁸ K. B. Olsen, S. Kjeldsen, [Strict and Uniform: Improving EU Sanctions Enforcement](#), DGAP Policy Brief, September 2022.

sanction circumvention through third countries. Until now, EU sanctions have had no extraterritorial effect, meaning they only applied to European entities, contrary to the US, which applies secondary sanctions on third country actors doing business with targeted regimes, persons, and organisations. However, the 11th package of sanctions on Russia, approved on 23 June 2023, included the possibility of sanctioning non-EU individuals or entities actively involved in sanctions' circumvention in Russia in particularly sensitive areas, such as military and dual-use equipment. This is a major policy shift for the EU, which had been requested by the Parliament in its resolution of 16 February 2023.⁴⁹

Also a significant step was the Council decision in November 2022⁵⁰ to add the violation of restrictive measures (sanctions) to the list of areas of particularly serious crime ('EU crimes') under Article 83.1 TFEU. Shortly after, the Commission presented its proposal for a directive 'on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures', establishing harmonised minimum rules across the EU – a necessary step for implementing the above decision across the EU. The directive, currently in the adoption procedure,⁵¹ is seen by experts as a 'major milestone in the harmonisation of EU sanctions enforcement, as well as in the development of European criminal law more generally'.⁵²

1.3.2. Working with neighbours for peace

In a world of changing geopolitics and trans-border threats, geography matters immensely (Robert Kaplan). The stability and security of the EU's neighbourhood is intrinsically linked to the EU's own peace and security, and is the first stepping stone in the promotion of peace and prosperity abroad. Current crises and conflicts on the EU borders, such as war in Syria or in Ukraine serve as a reminder of the crucial relationship between the EU's security and that of its neighbours. As noted in the 2016 EU Global Strategy⁵³, working with neighbours is a prerequisite for enlarging the space for stability, security and prosperity, and a priority for HR/VP Borrell. In its partnering chapter, the Strategic Compass, approved in 2022, committed to continued investment in the resilience of partners in neighbouring states and beyond, in particular through the Union's wider peace, security, neighbourhood, development and cooperation instruments. New initiatives for neighbourhood engagement in the political and security domain, such as the proposed European Political Community, also emerged in 2022.⁵⁴

The EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policies are thus critical tools in the pursuit of peace externally, and ensuring their continuity and efficiency is a key goal looking forward. As noted in the new 2019-2024 strategic agenda,⁵⁵ the EU aims to continue to pursue an ambitious and realistic neighbourhood policy, and develop a comprehensive partnership with Africa to work towards global peace and promote democracy and human rights. Stabilisation of the neighbourhood and

⁴⁹ European Parliament [resolution](#) of 16 February 2023 on one year of Russia's invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine (2023/2558(RSP)).

⁵⁰ Council [press release](#), 28 November 2022.

⁵¹ [Legislative train schedule](#), European Parliament.

⁵² P. Vander Schueren et al., [European Commission proposes common definitions and penalties for EU sanctions violations](#), Mayer Brown, December 2022.

⁵³ [Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy](#), European Commission, June 2016.

⁵⁴ B. Stanicek, ['Beyond enlargement': European Political Community and enlargement policy reform](#), EPRS, European Parliament, November 2022.

⁵⁵ European Council, [A new strategic agenda 2019-2024](#), press release, 20 June 2019.

acceleration of the enlargement process were defined as the geopolitical priorities of the new Commission. In her political Agenda for Europe,⁵⁶ the Commission President reaffirmed the European perspective of the Western Balkans, and the Commission's enlargement strategy for the Western Balkans offered the region's six countries a 'credible strategy'. On 25 March 2020, the Council opened negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.⁵⁷ On 15 December 2022, EU leaders granted Bosnia and Herzegovina candidate country status.⁵⁸ Western Balkans countries performed well in the 2023 Normandy Index and demonstrate that the region is converging with the EU-27 well ahead of their EU accession: Albania ranks 24th (+2), Bosnia and Herzegovina 44th (+4), Montenegro 39th (-6), North Macedonia 18th (-1), and Serbia 26th (+4).⁵⁹ Nevertheless, insecurity and fragility remains high in some countries, mainly due to external interference.⁶⁰

The Commission's February 2020 revised enlargement methodology envisages further integration of Western Balkan countries into EU policies, programmes and markets, which would deliver some of the benefits of EU membership even before accession.⁶¹ In October 2020, following the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb, the Commission adopted an economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans to support economic recovery and convergence, with a financial package of €9 billion that can leverage up to €30 billion of investment. As regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are key elements in the EU accession process for all Western Balkan countries, the EU is supporting the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other regional initiatives.⁶²

The latest EU-Western Balkans Summit took place in Tirana on 6 December 2022. The EU leaders reaffirmed the full and unequivocal commitment to the Western Balkans' European Union membership perspective. They called for the acceleration of the accession process, based on partners' credible reforms, fair and rigorous conditionality, and the principle of own merits. The summit also reaffirmed the urgency of making tangible progress in resolving outstanding bilateral and regional disputes, particularly the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue on normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. In July 2022, the EU and Albania held the first Intergovernmental Conference opening negotiations for the country's EU accession. The EU held its first intergovernmental conference with North Macedonia in July 2022. Kosovo remains a pre-candidate country; Kosovo visa liberalisation was signed in April 2022 and will enter into force in January 2024.

Looking to the main hotspots, the EU and its Member States remain key contributors of financial (and other) support for the Western Balkans, and eastern and south Mediterranean countries, including through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument –

⁵⁶ Ursula von der Leyen, [A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe](#), Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024.

⁵⁷ [Council conclusions](#) on enlargement and stabilisation and association process – Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia, 25 March 2020.

⁵⁸ [European Council conclusions](#), 15 December 2022.

⁵⁹ As Kosovo* is not recognised by all EU-27 countries, it was not included in the Normandy Index study. (*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁶⁰ A. Caprile and B. Stanicek, [Russia and the Western Balkans: Geopolitical confrontation, economic influence and political interference](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2023.

⁶¹ See B. Stanicek, [A new approach to EU enlargement](#), EPRS, European Parliament, March 2020 and P. Mirel, [In support of a new approach with the Western Balkans: Staged accession with a consolidation phase](#), Robert Schuman Foundation, May 2022.

⁶² B. Stanicek, [Belgrade-Pristina dialogue: The rocky road towards a comprehensive normalisation agreement](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2023.

Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe)⁶³ instrument under the current EU multiannual financial framework (MFF), which entered in force in June 2021. In addition, enlargement countries are beneficiaries of some €12.9 billion from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)⁶⁴ funds. The European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)⁶⁵ will remain the financial arm of the EU external investment plan,⁶⁶ which covers investment in the EU's neighbourhood and Africa. Innovative financial instruments, such as the European Peace Facility (EPF),⁶⁷ aim to contribute to the stabilisation of the neighbourhood, financing defence and medical facility programmes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (€16 million), Georgia (€30 million), Moldova (€40 million) and Ukraine (€5.6 billion). On 26 June 2023, the Council adopted a decision increasing the overall financial ceiling of the European Peace Facility by €3.5 billion.

On 28 February 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced Ukraine's official request for 'immediate [EU] accession via a new special procedure'. In response, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed her support for Ukrainian membership. Following the Ukrainian example, Georgia and Moldova signed requests to join the EU. On 10 March 2022, the European Council acknowledged Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova's European aspirations. The Commission's opinions backed candidate country status for both Ukraine and Moldova, underlining the need to speed up reforms, in particular against corruption and in judiciary, as 'at present, the judiciary [in Ukraine] continues to be regarded as one of the least trusted and credible institutions'. The European Parliament's resolution on the social and economic consequences for the EU of the Russian war in Ukraine, adopted in May 2022, supported Ukraine's EU bid, as well as financial support for the country's reconstruction. On 23 June 2022, the European Council decided to grant candidate country status not only to Ukraine but also to the Republic of Moldova. The European Parliament reiterated its support for Moldova's European future and repeated its unwavering support for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, the Council expressed its readiness to grant Georgia candidate country status once the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on Georgia's membership application have been addressed. On 20 June 2023, the Commission proposed to set up a dedicated facility to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation that will complement already existing initiatives, such as the European Union Military Assistance Mission Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).⁶⁸ The Commission has confirmed that out of seven priority steps necessary for accession negotiations' opening, Ukraine fulfils two.

Since February 2022, the EU, its Member States and its financial institutions, in a 'Team Europe' approach, have made €37.8 billion available to support Ukraine's overall economic, social and financial resilience. This support has taken the form of macro-financial assistance, budget support, emergency assistance, crisis response and humanitarian aid. Together with around €15 billion military assistance, this brings the total support made available so far to Ukraine to around €54 billion. Together with the resources made available to help Member States cater for the needs

⁶³ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe.

⁶⁴ EURLex, Summary of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) (2021–2027), 1 December 2021.

⁶⁵ European Commission, [European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus \(EFSD+\)](#), website.

⁶⁶ European Commission, [EU external investment plan](#), factsheet (undated).

⁶⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of 22 March 2021 establishing a European Peace Facility, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2015/528.

⁶⁸ [EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine](#) (EUMAM), website.

of Ukrainians fleeing the war to the EU, the overall support to Ukraine and Ukrainians amounts to around €70 billion.

The EU's southern neighbourhood faces several challenges, such as economic and social crisis, security, democratic weakness and demography. Nevertheless, some indicators, including the Normandy Index data, also signal a very dynamic and positive evolution in some countries and policy areas. War in Ukraine accentuated divergent views and interests of regional players and the EU. Egypt, which rose 15 places to 88th position in the 2023 Normandy Index, signed several cooperation agreements with the Russian Federation, including in the domain of defence and civil nuclear facilities; applied to join the BRICS in June 2023.⁶⁹ In 2022, Egypt hosted the UN climate change conference (COP27) marking the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁷⁰ Türkiye (+24 to 90th) continued its non-binary policy towards the war in Ukraine. With a reinforced position following his re-election in May 2023, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's stance has been pro-Ukrainian but not anti-Russian, enabling him to strike a delicate balance between North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expectations, economic relations with Russia, and domestic political pressures – while also straining relations with partners and allies at times. Algeria also performed well, improving its ranking in the 2023 Normandy Index (+16 to 83rd). During his state visit to Russia, President of Algeria Abdelmadjid Tebboune took part in the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum on 16 June 2023. A ceasefire signed in Libya (+17 to 109th) in October 2020 augured progress in the political process under UN auspices, however following the postponed December 2021 elections, the political situation has stalled.⁷¹ While the internal situation in Tunisia (-2 to 61st) remains fragile, the EU and Tunisia have nevertheless agreed to work together on a comprehensive partnership package.

Arab countries normalised their relations with Syria (+6 to 130th), despite current EU and US sanctions.⁷² Syrian President Bashar al-Assad attended the Arab League Summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 18 May 2023. While Saudi Arabia and other Gulf investors are willing to invest in Syria, they are constrained by Western sanctions, in particular those applied by the USA since 2020 under the Caesar Act of 2019. It has been argued that these sanctions blocked substantial reconstruction funding and also more efficient relief following the 6 February 2023 earthquake: 'Despite the exceptions, sanctions affect humanitarian operations in Syria in a number of ways, including by making it difficult to access essential goods, leading to reduced funding for aid organizations, restricting travel and movement, increasing bureaucratic hurdles, and more generally, impeding economic activity'.⁷³ Humanitarian organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, are calling for a permanent extension of the humanitarian exemptions introduced following the February 2023 earthquakes in Syria and Turkey.

Immediately after the earthquakes, the EU reacted swiftly, by deploying humanitarian and relief support (providing €3.5 million in emergency assistance to Syria), as well as hosting an International Donors' Conference for the people of Türkiye and Syria on 20 March 2023, together with the Swedish Presidency and in coordination with the Turkish authorities. The conference accomplished a total pledge of €7 billion, of which €6.05 billion takes the form of grants and loans for Türkiye and €911 million represents grants for Syria. The total Team Europeshare, which includes the European

⁶⁹ B. Stanicek, [Egypt's foreign policy within a challenging regional context](#), EPRS, European Parliament, October 2021.

⁷⁰ H. Morgado Simões and B. Stanicek, [Egypt's climate change policies: State of play ahead of COP27](#), EPRS, European Parliament, October 2022.

⁷¹ B. Stanicek, [Situation in Libya](#), EPRS, European Parliament, November 2022.

⁷² G. Leclerc, [Impact of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in Syria](#), EPRS, European Parliament, June 2023.

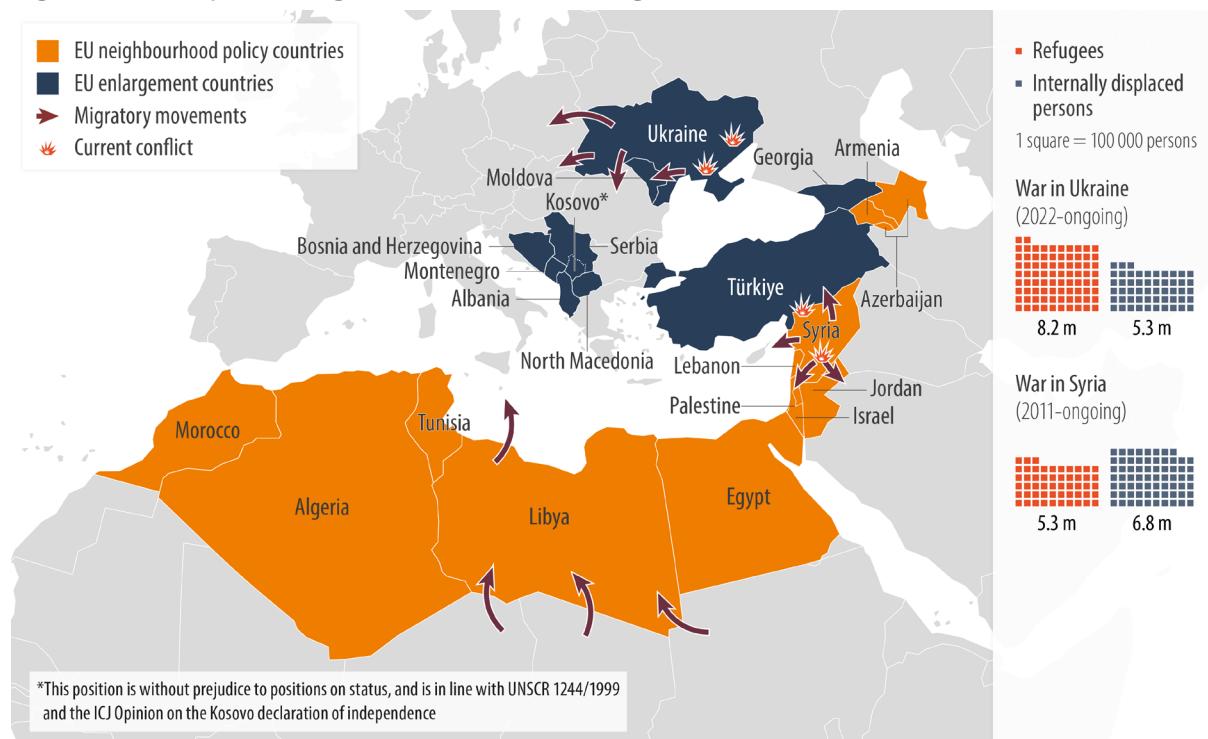
⁷³ [Questions and Answers: How Sanctions Affect the Humanitarian Response in Syria](#), Human Rights Watch, June 2023.

Commission and the EU Member States, as well as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, represents more than 50 % of the total of pledged grants, at €3.6 billion. Finally, on 18 June 2023, following the meeting with the Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit in Cairo, HR/VP Borrell noted that the EU's position on Syria will not change until requisite progress has been achieved on the implementation of UNSCR 2254.

The recent dynamic evolution in the southern neighbourhood and in the broader Middle East region was stimulated by significant economic and diplomatic achievements, which are also reflected in the 2023 Normandy Index ranking: Oman (+18 to 14th), Qatar (+13 to 19th), United Arabic Emirates (+11 to 24th), Kuwait (+7 to 28th), Bahrain (+33 to 53rd) and Saudi Arabia (+18 to 55th). Saudi Arabia's quest for what experts refer to as more pronounced strategic autonomy, has led to a degree of reconciliation with Iran mediated by China. On 6 June 2023, following a seven-year rupture, the Iranian embassy reopened in Riyadh and Saudi Arabia took steps to reopen its embassy in Tehran. Reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran will also impact the security situation in Lebanon (-8 to 121st); as well as in Israel (-2 to 59th), where massive civil society demonstrations protest the Netanyahu government plans for judicial reform.

In its resolution on promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region, adopted in November 2022, the European Parliament called for the EU to support these diplomatic efforts towards reconciliation wherever possible and to encourage 'regional ownership and responsibility for de-escalating tensions in the Middle East'. In March 2023, the EU welcomed resumption of bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran: 'as both countries are central for the security of the region, the resumption of their bilateral relations can contribute to the stabilisation of the region as a whole'.

Figure 9 – European Neighbourhood and Enlargement, 2023



Data source: [European Commission](#), [UNHCR](#) 2023.

1.3.3. Financing EU action for peace and security

The EU promotes peace and security worldwide through its external financing instruments in policy areas shared with the Member States, such as development, democracy support, security and defence. Together with its Member States, the EU is a leading provider of official development assistance, the world's biggest humanitarian aid donor, and a main trading partner and foreign investor⁷⁴ for many of its partners.

EU budget for 2023

The start of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF) coincided with the launch of the Next Generation EU (NGEU) facility, aimed at financing the post-pandemic recovery and building further EU resilience. The 2023 annual EU budget, the third under the 2021-2027 MFF, is set at €186.6 billion in commitments, and at €168.6 billion in payments, representing 1.03 % of the EU's GNI.⁷⁵ This represents, in current prices, an increase of 2.4 % in commitments, and a small decrease in payments (-0.8 %), compared with the 2022 annual budget. Unlike the pandemic, but as in 2022, the crisis requiring budgetary adjustment is directly related to the peace and security situation at the EU's borders: Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. However, adjustments responding to the complicated security situation are restricted on the one hand by limited flexibility and on the other by the fact that the EU budget remains predominantly focused on internal EU policies.

On 20 June 2023, the Commission presented its communication on the Mid-term Review of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (COM(2023) 336), together with three legislative proposals, expected to come into force on 1 January 2024, given the urgent budgetary constraints, which will already materialise in 2024:

- a) a proposal amending Council Regulation 2020/2093 laying down the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2021 to 2027 (Parliament's consent needed) (COM(2023) 337);
- b) a proposal for a Regulation of the Council establishing the Ukraine Facility (ordinary legislative procedure: co-decision Parliament+ Council) (COM(2023) 338);
- c) a proposal for a Regulation of the Parliament and of the Council establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) (ordinary legislative procedure: co-decision Parliament+ Council) (COM(2023) 335).

Parliament also calls for strengthened parliamentary scrutiny and transparency over EU expenditure, including through NGEU and other EU financing tools, in particular off-budget instruments, including the European Peace Facility.⁷⁶

In 2023, EU budget Heading 6 'Neighbourhood and the world' (see Figure 10) accounts for €17 212 million in commitment appropriations, split mainly between development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The overall level of commitments for Heading 6 increases by 0.2 %, and of payments by 8.4 %, compared with 2022. The margin under Heading 6 was already exhausted in 2022, necessitating a €368.4 million mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument. For the 2023 budget, the Flexibility Instrument will provide €882.9 million in commitment appropriations to reinforce Heading 6.⁷⁷ Of the 2023 total allocation for Heading 6, €12 251 million goes to the main instrument, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global

⁷⁴ [EU budget for the future](#), Volume 20, Factsheets, European Commission, 2018.

⁷⁵ A. D'Alfonso, M. Höflmayr, K. Kowald, S. Mazur, Marin Mileusnic and M. Pari, [Economic and Budgetary outlook for the European Union 2023](#), EPoS, European Parliament, January 2023, p. 1.

⁷⁶ ibid, Executive Summary, I, II.

⁷⁷ ibid, p. 38.

Europe, which covers EU action with a very broad geographical and thematic scope, including climate change, migration, human rights, democracy and rule of law, and the civilian component of security. The allocation for humanitarian aid amounts to €1 765 million. Assistance for EU candidate countries ('Pre-accession assistance') accounts for €2 351 million.

The smallest allocation under Heading 6 of the 2023 budget, €371.2 million, goes to the EU CFSP. This is nevertheless a strategic element under Heading 6, funding the EU effort on global security, especially given that the 'CFSP budget' finances the 13 ongoing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) civilian missions that the EU deploys worldwide in a number of partner countries. These include, for instance, the EU civilian Partnership Mission in Moldova,⁷⁸ launched on 22 May 2023 for a renewable two-year duration or 'mandate'⁷⁹ Conversely, the nine EU CSDP military missions and operations, including for instance the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine⁸⁰ are funded under the European Peace Facility.⁸¹

Budget Heading 5 'Security and defence' was introduced as a separate heading under the 2021-2027 MFF (see Figure 10). It is the smallest heading, accounting for 1.1 % (almost €2 117 million) of the 2023 budget.

The biggest allocation under Heading 5 goes to the defence cluster, with €1.42 billion mainly devoted to research and development (€945.7 million) through the European Defence Fund (EDF) and to military mobility (€295.2 million – an increase of 27.4 % compared with 2022) through the 2021-2027 Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).⁸² Funding for the security cluster represents €688.7 million, out of which €309.9 million (45 %) is allocated to the Internal Security Fund (ISF), to ensure a high level of security within the EU through common action to prevent and combat terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime and cyber-crime, and to protect victims of crime. No margin remains for this heading in 2023. Moreover, the Flexibility Instrument had to be mobilised for an amount of €170.6 million.⁸³

Migration and border management continue to be financing priorities in the 2023 budget and are covered under Heading 4 'Migration and border management', pertaining to internal policies (see Figure 10). With an allocation of €3 723 million in 2023, this heading accounts for 2 % of the total EU 2023 budget and is the second smallest in the MFF, but nevertheless finances EU action of growing importance. The main funds under Heading 4 are the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), and the Internal Borders Management Fund (IBMF). Covered by the migration cluster, AMIF

⁷⁸ [EU Partnership Mission Moldova](#) (EUPM), EEAS, June 2023.

⁷⁹ Due to the scarcity of available money in the 2023 CFSP budget, disbursement to the civilian Partnership Mission in Moldova should take place in [two stages](#): a preliminary budget of €3.53 million has been released for the first four months of 2023, to cover activities until August 2023; the main part of the budget (€13.35 million for the first two years of the mission's activities – 24 April 2023-21 May 2025), should be disbursed at a later stage.

⁸⁰ [EU Military Assistance Mission Ukraine](#), EEAS, December 2022.

⁸¹ On 23 May 2023, EU Defence Ministers [discussed](#) HR/VP Borrell's [proposal](#) for a possible civilian-military CSDP mission to be launched in the Gulf of Guinea. This mixed regional mission would aim to support four countries – Bénin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo – in their combat against terrorism and piracy, and to counter the foreign influence of countries such as Russia in the region. The funding for this mission would reflect its dual (civilian and military) nature. The CFSP budget would fund the civilian component of the mission, while the European Peace Facility would finance its military component.

⁸² M. Pape, [Connecting Europe Facility 2021-2027 – Financing key EU infrastructure networks](#), EPRS, European Parliament, July 2021, p. 5. The Connecting Europe Facility is the funding source for the development of EU strategic transport infrastructure fit for dual civil-military use.

⁸³ A. D'Alfonso, M. Höflmayr, K. Kowald, S. Mazur, Marin Mileusnic and M. Pari, [Economic and Budgetary outlook for the European Union 2023](#), EPRS, European Parliament, January 2023, p. 38.

expenditure in 2023 has a 10 % rise in commitments than in 2022.⁸⁴ An additional €151 million is allocated to the Border Management and Visa instrument (BMVI) in the 2023 budget – an increase of 15.8 % compared with 2022. Three EU agencies, accounting for one third of the expenditure under Heading 4, are in charge of migration, border management and security: the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Coast Guards and Border Agency (Frontex) and the EU Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA).

Figure 10 – EU Budget

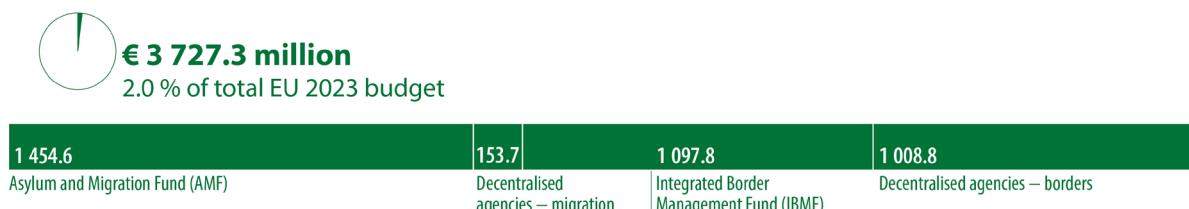
Heading 6 - Neighbourhood and the world, 2023 commitment appropriations



Heading 5 - Security and defence, 2023 commitment appropriations



Heading 4 - Migration and border management, 2023 commitment appropriations



Data source: [Economic and Budgetary outlook for the European Union 2023](#), EPRS, European Parliament, January 2023, Figures 19-20-21, pp. 37-38, updated.

European Peace Facility

Operational since 1 July 2021, and established by Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of 22 March 2021,⁸⁵ the European Peace Facility (EPF)⁸⁶ is an instrument outside the EU budget, which provides the financial means for the execution of operational actions with military and defence implications under the CFSP that are specifically excluded from EU budget funding under the terms of the EU Treaties. It furthermore covers assistance for foreign partners, including providing support through training, logistics and military equipment, including of a lethal nature. This is the case, for

⁸⁴ A. D'Alfonso, M. Höflmayr, K. Kowald, S. Mazur, Marin Mileusnic and M. Pari, [Economic and Budgetary outlook for the European Union 2023](#), EPRS, European Parliament, January 2023, p. 37.

⁸⁵ [OJ L 102](#), 24 March 2021, p. 14.

⁸⁶ [European Peace Facility](#), Council of the European Union, June 2023.

the first time in EU history, for a significant part of the military equipment delivered by Member States to the Ukrainian army since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The EPF aims at enhancing the Union's ability to prevent conflict, build peace and strengthen international security. It replaces and enlarges the former Athena Mechanism, which funded the common costs of CSDP missions and operations with military or defence implications and the African Peace Facility, which was limited to deployment in Africa. The EPF budget has a financial ceiling of €5.69 billion (in 2021 prices) for 2021-2027, with a projected annual ceiling of €420 million in 2021, rising to €1.132 billion in 2027.⁸⁷ Each EU Member State contributes an amount to the EPF budget calculated according to its gross national income.⁸⁸

Over half of the EPF's initial ceiling was mobilised for Ukraine in a single year (2022) and 86 % of its overall ceiling for 2021-2027 was already committed in 2022. On 12 December 2022, to ensure the EPF's financial sustainability, the Council reached a political agreement to increase the ceiling by €2 billion (in 2018 prices) in 2023, with a possible further increase at a later stage.⁸⁹ A total increase of this ceiling to 2027 was agreed up to €5.5 billion (in 2018 prices). On 13 March 2023, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2023/577, amending Decision 2021/509, thereby increasing the EPF ceiling to nearly €8 billion (in current prices) until 2027. On 20 March 2023, the Council approved a note on delivery and joint procurement of ammunition for Ukraine, in which it agreed to consider a further increase of the overall financial ceiling of the EPF of €3.5 billion (in 2018 prices), while respecting the ceiling for payments agreed for 2023. The March 2023 Council agreement aimed at providing a million rounds of artillery ammunition in a joint effort within 12 months, under a three-track approach mobilising €2 billion from the EPF (the first two tracks). This has therefore already brought expenditure close to the new ceiling. On 16 May 2023, the HR/VP proposed to use the €3.5 billion in one go, making a new increase inescapable.

For Track 1 of the three-track approach, (allocated €1 billion under the EPF), the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2023/810 (amending Decision (CFSP) 2022/338 of 28 February 2022 – the first ever 'lethal' package) on 13 April 2023.⁹⁰ This allows for the reimbursement of donated materiel (ground-to-ground and artillery ammunition and, if requested, missiles) from existing Member State stocks or from re-prioritisation of existing orders;

With a further €1 billion from the EPF, Track 2 allows for joint procurement of 155 mm ammunition and (if requested) missiles, as quickly as possible and before 30 September 2023. The ammunition is to be supplied by the European defence industry (and Norway) within the context of an existing European Defence Agency (EDA) project or through complementary joint acquisition projects led by a Member State. The Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2023/927 on this assistance measure on 5 May 2023.⁹¹

For Track 3, a draft act in support of ammunition production to boost European defence industry capacity ('ASAP')⁹² is under consideration. With a proposed EU budget contribution of €500 billion (from redeployment of the €260 million European Defence Fund), funding for this initiative is likely to remain a point of concern. The act should also garner a further €500 billion through leverage, plus

⁸⁷ B. Bilquin, [The European Peace Facility: A new tool in action](#), EPRS, European Parliament, February 2022.

⁸⁸ B. Immenkamp, [European Peace Facility Investing in international stability and security](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2021.

⁸⁹ Legislative train schedule, European Peace Facility, EPRS, European Parliament, June 2023.

⁹⁰ Council [Decision \(CFSP\) 2023/810](#), 13 April 2023, amending Council [Decision \(CFSP\) 2022/338](#), 28 February 2022.

⁹¹ Council [Decision \(CFSP\) 2023/927](#), 5 May 2023.

⁹² S. Clapp, [Act in support of ammunition production](#), EPRS, European Parliament, July 2023.

€240 million under the proposed European defence industry reinforcement through common procurement act (EDIRPA),⁹³ currently under negotiation. On 7 July 2023, the Council reached a provisional agreement with Parliament on the ASAP,⁹⁴ with Parliament adopting the legislation on 13 July 2023.⁹⁵

Assistance measures funded under the EPF to date cover four regions: the Eastern Neighbourhood, Western Balkans, the Southern Neighbourhood and Africa.⁹⁶

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, by far the biggest share of EPF funding is directed towards the Ukrainian armed forces, with €5.6 billion provided for military equipment to help Ukraine face the Russian invasion, in seven tranches of €500 million each, covering both non-lethal and lethal military assistance.⁹⁷ A further €2 billion was allocated to the first two tracks of the initial artillery ammunition plan. In addition, the EPF finances the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). EPF-funded assistance goes, to a much lesser extent, to Georgia (€62.75 million) and to Moldova (€87 million).

The EU contributes EPF funding worth €25 million to assistance measures in support of the armed forces in five countries in the Western Balkans. Some €10 million is allocated to strengthening security engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular.

The Council has mobilised a total of €815 million from the EPF for assistance to countries in Africa (the EPF contribution to the common costs of the CSDP missions and operations excluded). The two main streams of EPF funding take the form of either the provision of military equipment in relation to CSDP missions/operations, or support for military components of African-led Peace Support Operations. Under the former, the Mozambican Armed Forces/EU Training Mission in Mozambique and the Malian Armed Forces/EU Training Mission in Mali benefitted from €89 million and €24 million in EPF support respectively, while Niger/the EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger received €40 million. Of the latter, €600 million is allocated to general programmes supporting the African Union (AU) in 2022-2024 (of which €205 million is allocated to the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), and €15 million to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission in Mozambique (SAMIM)). Support under the EPF may also take the form of direct support to a partner African army; this is the case for the Mauritanian (€12 million), Somali (€25 million), and Nigerien⁹⁸ (€25 million) armies, as well as for the Rwandan deployment to Mozambique (€20 million)

⁹³ S. Clapp, [European defence industry reinforcement through common procurement act \(EDIRPA\)](#), EPRS, European Parliament, July 2023

⁹⁴ Council of the European Union, [ASAP: Council and European Parliament strike a deal on boosting the production of ammunition and missiles in the EU](#), press release, 7 July 2023.

⁹⁵ European Parliament [resolution](#) of 13 July 2023 on the Act in Support of Ammunition Production.

⁹⁶ Please refer to the updated official [timeline on EPF mobilisations](#). European Council and EU Council (and for the geographic coverage of EPF-funded action until November 2022: B. Bilquin, [European Peace Facility: Ukraine and beyond](#), EPRS, European Parliament, November 2022).

⁹⁷ 'Three Member States which abstained from the provision of lethal equipment in October 2022 (sixth tranche) made extra contributions of €100 million to the non-lethal component, signalling a significant increase in the non-lethal support and raising the total to €3.6 billion' (B. Bilquin, [European Peace Facility: State of play as of 31 March 2023](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2023).

⁹⁸ On [7 March 2023](#), the Council decided a new assistance measure for the [Nigerien Armed Forces](#) (FAN), in addition to the €25 million decided in July 2022. This €40 million equipment, infrastructure and training package, conceived in conjunction with the EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger (established on 12 December 2022 for a three-year duration, the common costs of which – €27.3 million – are partly covered by the EPF. On [8 June](#), the Council approved a €4.7 million assistance measure, the first of a lethal nature beyond Ukraine, for military equipment for the FAN ([ammunition for helicopters](#), in support of Niger's fight against terrorism), and another non-lethal assistance measure of €0.3 million. Total EPF support to Niger now amounts to €97.3 million. On the EU Military Partnership Mission to

to support the continued deployment of Rwanda's defence force to fight terrorism in Cabo Delgado province).

European Union response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Between 2014 and 2022, the EU provided over €17 billion in macro-financial assistance (MFA) to support the implementation of an extensive reform agenda in Ukraine. This macro-financial assistance represents massive EU assistance in terms of loans to Ukraine. To continue support for Ukraine in 2023, the EU is providing an unprecedented support package of up to €18 billion, in the form of highly concessional loans, of which €7.5 billion has already been disbursed.⁹⁹ An amendment to the MFF (approved by the Council, after Parliament's consent, on 15 December 2022) was needed to use the 'headroom' then available under the 2021-2027 MFF, i.e. the difference between own resources and the payments ceiling, as a guarantee for those loans.¹⁰⁰ The Commission's January to June 2023 funding revisions¹⁰¹ envisage a new macro-financial assistance (MFA+) programme for continued support for Ukraine, worth around €10 billion.

The EU delivers additional aid to Ukraine through the Civil Protection Mechanism, both directly and through logistical hubs located in Poland, Romania and Slovakia. During the EU-Ukraine summit in Kyiv, on 3 February 2023, the EU mobilised a further €145 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine. On 20 April, the EU announced it would provide a further €55 million to top up its humanitarian funding for Ukraine to a total EU of €630 million.¹⁰²

1.4. Measuring threats to peace – Normandy Index

The modern definition of peace refers not only to 'an absence of war', but also includes elements of wellbeing: we demand more from peace. This positive dimension of peace is difficult to measure, as it is a continuum between inter-state war and positive public perceptions. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) argues that this continuum includes international (i.e. wars, hybrid conflicts) and intra-national violence (i.e. gang or police violence, forced displacements).¹⁰³ Any measure of peace has therefore to consider numerous dimensions. For example, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) 'Positive Peace Index' (PPI) takes 24 indicators into account, ranging from ongoing conflict, to the acceptance of the rights of others and societal safety.¹⁰⁴ It thus tries to go beyond a negative conception of peace as non-war, to show that qualitative peace includes a broad number of dimensions. 'Positive Peace' is defined as the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.

The Normandy Index, prepared annually by the European Parliament together with the IEP, adopts an approach to – and tailored by – European Union action, assessing the overall state of 'conflictuality' of a given entity as a product of factors linked to the main threats identified by the EU

Niger, see: B. Bilquin and E. Pichon, [Mission de partenariat militaire de l'UE au Niger](#), EPIS, European Parliament, February 2023.

⁹⁹ [Assistance to Ukraine](#), European Commission, 2023. See also: M. Pari, [Macro-financial assistance for Ukraine in 2023](#), EPIS, European Parliament, November 2022.

¹⁰⁰ A. D'Alfonso, M. Höflmayr, K. Kowald, S. Mazur, Marin Mileusnic and M. Pari, [Economic and Budgetary outlook for the European Union 2023](#), EPIS, European Parliament, January 2023, p. 45.

¹⁰¹ [NGEU funding plans website](#), European Commission.

¹⁰² [European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations: timeline](#), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), European Commission, 2023.

¹⁰³ M. Caparini, G. Milante, [Sustaining peace and sustainable development in dangerous places](#), SIPRI Yearbook, 2017.

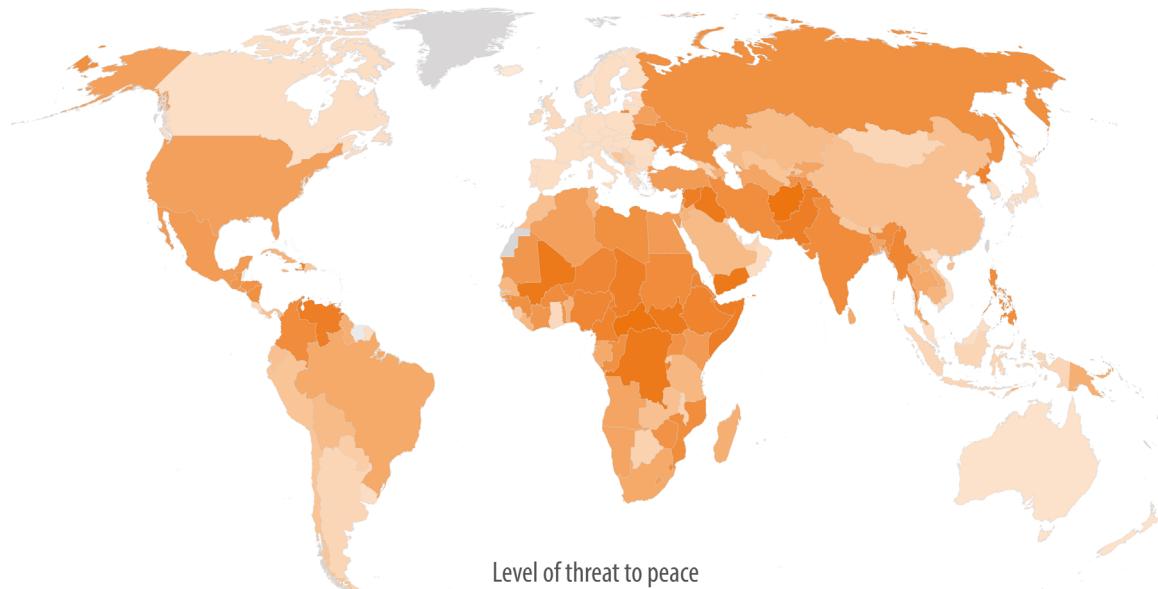
¹⁰⁴ [Global Peace Index 2023](#), Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023.

in its external action strategy. As described above, the EU Global Strategy identifies the following 11 threats as the main current challenges to peace and security: terrorism, energy security, fragile states, hybrid threats, violent conflicts, trans-border crime, economic crises, cybersecurity, weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), climate change, and disinformation.¹⁰⁵

The index uses 9 of these 11 threats as factors assigned equal weight in the final result for 137 UN countries (with the EU-27 being counted as a single entity). The Normandy Index adds the quality of the democratic process to the 10 above-mentioned factors, as democracy support is a core dimension of EU external action. In addition, as analysed in the following sections, there is a strong correlation between weak democratic processes and threats to peace and security. The Normandy Index is therefore a tool to be used by EU policymakers to assess countries most at risk in the world according to the EU's Global Strategy. It is not a ranking of countries according to their peacefulness, but rather a ranking of specific threats to peace per country (see Figure 11).

¹⁰⁵ [Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy](#), European Commission, June 2016.

Figure 11 – Normandy Index, 2023

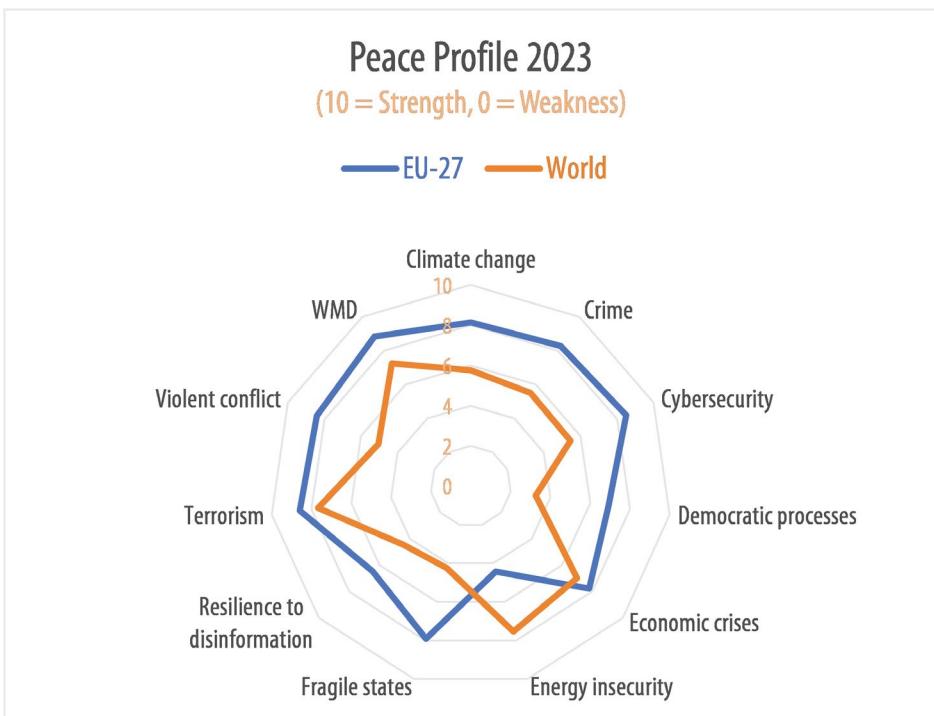


more at risk			moderate risk			less at risk					
Rank	Country	NI	rank change	Rank	Country	NI	rank change	Rank	Country	NI	rank change
1	Switzerland	8.58	0	47	Morocco	6.24	▲ 8	91	Mauritania	5.22	▼ -4
2	Norway	8.37	0	48	Zambia	6.23	▲ 21	91	Guatemala	5.22	▼ -25
3	Iceland	8.23	0	48	Panama	6.23	▼ -24	94	Palestine	5.19	▲ 21
4	Australia	8.12	0	50	Ecuador	6.16	▲ 7	95	Togo	5.14	▼ -6
5	New Zealand	7.93	▲ 1	51	Bolivia	6.14	▲ 3	96	Guinea-Bissau	5.13	▼ -8
6	Canada	7.83	▲ 1	51	Kazakhstan	6.14	▼ -14	97	Uganda	5.11	▼ -1
7	EU-27	7.66	▲ 4	53	Bahrain	6.13	▲ 33	98	Zimbabwe	5.10	▲ 7
8	South Korea	7.62	0	53	Timor-Leste	6.13	▲ 8	99	Tajikistan	5.09	▲ 10
9	Malaysia	7.51	▲ 4	55	Saudi Arabia	6.12	▲ 18	100	Honduras	5.06	▼ -18
9	Singapore	7.51	▼ -4	56	Tanzania	6.05	▼ -5	101	Philippines	5.05	▼ -4
11	Mauritius	7.45	▲ 1	57	Senegal	6.02	▼ -10	102	Eswatini	4.99	▼ -26
12	Uruguay	7.38	▼ -3	58	Liberia	6.01	▲ 21	103	Mozambique	4.95	▲ 14
13	Vietnam	7.34	▲ 5	59	Israel	6.00	▼ -2	104	Iran	4.92	▲ 12
14	Oman	7.33	▲ 18	60	Jamaica	5.98	▼ -45	104	Djibouti	4.92	▼ -9
15	Japan	7.31	▼ -1	61	Tunisia	5.95	▼ -2	106	Guinea	4.87	▼ -27
16	United Kingdom	7.11	▲ 4	61	Cuba	5.95	▼ -22	107	Congo	4.86	▼ -3
17	Costa Rica	7.10	▼ -7	63	Cambodia	5.89	▲ 14	108	Nicaragua	4.84	▼ -7
18	North Macedonia	7.03	▼ -1	64	Jordan	5.86	▲ 2	109	Libya	4.83	▲ 17
19	Qatar	7.01	▲ 13	65	Benin	5.84	0	109	Russia	4.83	▼ -3
19	Ghana	7.01	▲ 10	65	Guyana	5.84	▼ -24	111	Sudan	4.79	▼ -3
21	Indonesia	6.99	▲ 9	67	Papua New Guinea	5.83	▼ -3	112	India	4.78	▼ -5
21	Argentina	6.99	▲ 3	67	Laos	5.83	▼ -19	113	Ukraine	4.77	▼ -11
23	Mongolia	6.80	▼ -1	69	Madagascar	5.75	▲ 4	114	Burkina Faso	4.75	▼ -5
24	Albania	6.79	▲ 2	70	World average	5.74	0	115	Colombia	4.64	▼ -4
25	United Arab Emirates	6.77	▲ 11	70	Azerbaijan	5.74	▼ -25	116	Haiti	4.55	▼ -19
26	Serbia	6.75	▲ 4	71	Sri Lanka	5.73	▲ 20	117	Myanmar	4.54	▲ 7
27	Armenia	6.72	0	72	Thailand	5.70	▲ 12	117	Eritrea	4.54	▲ 1
28	Kuwait	6.70	▲ 7	73	Gabon	5.66	▲ 17	119	Niger	4.51	▲ 2
29	Botswana	6.61	▼ -13	73	Brazil	5.66	▼ -10	120	Nigeria	4.37	▼ -8
30	Malawi	6.60	▲ 30	73	South Africa	5.66	▼ -11	121	Lebanon	4.35	▼ -8
31	Paraguay	6.51	▲ 11	76	Kyrgyzstan	5.61	▼ -5	122	Cameroon	4.33	▼ -2
32	Moldova	6.50	▼ -11	77	Angola	5.59	▲ 15	123	Burundi	4.32	▼ -4
33	Rwanda	6.48	▲ 5	78	Bangladesh	5.58	▲ 21	124	Ethiopia	4.26	▼ -2
34	Sierra Leone	6.46	▲ 19	78	Turkmenistan	5.58	▼ -7	125	North Korea	4.19	▲ 6
35	Georgia	6.45	▼ -7	80	Namibia	5.54	▼ -28	126	Venezuela	4.15	▼ -3
35	Dominican Republic	6.45	▼ -13	81	Equatorial Guinea	5.52	▲ 4	127	Pakistan	4.00	0
37	Trinidad and Tobago	6.42	▼ -18	81	United States	5.52	▲ 1	128	Chad	3.73	▲ 1
38	Nepal	6.41	▲ 41	83	Algeria	5.51	▲ 16	129	Somalia	3.62	▲ 5
39	Bhutan	6.40	▲ 16	84	Belarus	5.47	▼ -9	130	Syria	3.56	▲ 6
40	Montenegro	6.37	▼ -6	85	Lesotho	5.43	▼ -15	130	South Sudan	3.56	▲ 3
41	The Gambia	6.36	▲ 7	86	El Salvador	5.40	▼ -42	130	Mali	3.56	▼ -6
41	Uzbekistan	6.36	▲ 5	87	Kenya	5.38	▲ 6	133	Iraq	3.54	▼ -5
43	Chile	6.35	▼ -4	88	Egypt	5.33	▲ 15	134	Yemen	3.51	▲ 1
44	Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.32	▲ 4	89	Mexico	5.24	▼ -11	135	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.40	▼ -3
45	Peru	6.30	▼ -3	90	Turkiye	5.23	▲ 24	136	Central African Republic	3.07	▼ -6
46	China	6.26	▲ 22	91	Côte d'Ivoire	5.22	▲ 3	137	Afghanistan	2.82	0

Data Source: [EPRS and IEP, 2023.](#)

All 27 EU Member States rank within the top 45 states on the list, scoring 'very high' or 'high' in the level of positive peace, which would explain why Europe continues to rank as one of the least threatened regions in the world, in spite of the war in Europe's east.¹⁰⁶ By all accounts, the combined level of threats to peace in the EU remains very low compared with other regions and countries. In the 2023 Normandy Index rankings, the EU-27 (counted as one entity) rank as the 7th least threatened area in the world. Energy security is the only dimension where Europe is more at risk than the world at large (see Figure 12). This has become all the more challenging in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, given the EU's past dependency on Russia for oil and particularly natural gas.

Figure 12 – EU-27 Peace Profile



Source: [Normandy Index](#), 2023.

At the same time, in addition to the war in Ukraine, the EU's neighbourhood continues to be subject to ongoing conflicts. Out of over 70 crises in the world monitored by the International Crisis Group (ICG) global conflict tracker¹⁰⁷, several are located in countries negotiating their accession to the EU, or with a European perspective or association agreement. According to the Normandy Index, beyond Ukraine (which fell 11 places to 113th position), the situation deteriorated strongly in Azerbaijan (-25 to 70th) and Belarus (-9 to 84th). A more positive evolution was observed in Türkiye (+24 to 90th), Libya (+17 to 109th) and in Syria (+6 to 130th). The EU needs to continue its support for fragile countries in a decisive manner, as rising threats for one country tend to spread to neighbouring regions. As analysed further in this study, the EU also works to encourage positive development in pivot countries that might have positive spill-over effects on their whole region and ultimately global peace.

¹⁰⁶ [Positive Peace Index](#), Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, [Crisis Watch](#), 2023.

2. EU action to counter threats to peace and security

2.1. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

2.1.1. Russia's war against Ukraine: Reviving the nuclear threat

The most significant development regarding weapons of mass destruction (WMD) over the past year has without question been the Russian leadership's repeated threats to use nuclear weapons in the context of Russia's military aggression on Ukraine.¹⁰⁸ As experts have pointed out, 'Russia's attack on Ukraine marks the first time that nuclear blackmail has been used to shield a full-scale conventional invasion'.¹⁰⁹ As Russia's war on Ukraine continues into its second year, there are particular concerns that Russia's nuclear threats might become more intense – and extreme – in response to the Ukrainian counter-offensive. In their statement on nuclear disarmament issued on 19 May 2023, G7 leaders condemned Russia's nuclear rhetoric as 'irresponsible' and 'unacceptable'¹¹⁰.

For many observers, the nuclear threat is now at its highest level since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.¹¹¹ The US Government reacted to the Russian invasion of Ukraine by pausing the Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia, which had started in June 2021 with the aim of laying the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures between the two countries. The Russian government, for its part, has threatened to pull out of major agreements with the West, including the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) – the nuclear arms reduction agreement signed with the US in 2011 and the only bilateral nuclear arms control treaty currently in force. On 21 February 2023, President Putin announced that Russia would 'suspend' New START.¹¹² Russia has since stopped transmitting data on Russian strategic nuclear forces to the United States, as required by the treaty, and is not implementing other key provisions of the treaty. The USA, for its part, provided the required data update to Russia in May 2023, with data current as of 1 March 2023. In that context, the USA called on the Russian Federation to return to full compliance with the New START Treaty and all the stabilising transparency and verification measures it contains.

Leading experts are worried that Russia 'might cut itself off from everything that it has accomplished in controlling and limiting nuclear weapons'.¹¹³ As China is taking steps to dramatically increase its nuclear arsenal and military capabilities, experts are calling for greater efforts to engage China in arms control negotiations, including bilateral talks with the USA. However, China has so far shown little interest in such talks. Moreover, in April 2023, the G7 called on China to engage in strategic risk reduction discussions with the USA.

In a particularly worrying development for efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Ukraine will be seen by many to have paid a heavy price for giving up its Soviet-era nuclear weapons arsenal, even though experts disagree over whether Ukraine could ever have used these weapons (as a deterrent). In 1991, the country held the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world. However, in 1994, following independence from the Soviet Union, Ukraine transferred its estimated

¹⁰⁸ The Economist, [Russia's invasion of Ukraine has eroded the nuclear taboo](#), 4 June 2022.

¹⁰⁹ O. Meier, [Back to Basics: The Nuclear Order, Arms Control, and Europe](#), Arms Control Today, April 2022.

¹¹⁰ [G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament](#), 19 May 2023.

¹¹¹ The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist has reset the minute hand on the Doomsday Clock at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been. Science and Security Board, [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](#), 24 January 2023; D. Kimball and K. Crandall Robinson, [Putin's Assault on Ukraine and Threat of a Wider War](#), 18 March 2022.

¹¹² S. Bugos, Understanding the dispute over New START, Arms Control Today, April 2023.

¹¹³ R. Gottemoeller, [How to Stop a New Nuclear Arms Race](#), Foreign Affairs, 9 March 2022.

1 900 nuclear warheads back to Russia and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Non-Proliferation Treaty – NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state-party. In return, the USA, the UK and Russia provided security assurances (enshrined in the Budapest Memorandum) precluding the use of force against Ukraine's territorial integrity or political independence. All three countries, including Russia, promised explicitly to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and existing borders.

Russia's nuclear threat is having a very significant impact on the way the world views nuclear weapons. Coupled with the growing importance that nuclear weapon states in general attach to their nuclear weapons, experts believe that it is likely to make efforts to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and stop their proliferation much harder. While proponents of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) consider that banning nuclear weapons altogether is the best solution to address the dangers they pose, support for the TPNW is likely to wane in the current climate, especially in Europe.¹¹⁴

In the Strategic Compass, EU Member States vowed to 'reinforce concrete EU actions in support of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control goals', promising, in particular, to 'to increase [their] support to partners', to help them 'fully implement sanctions and control procedures'. The EU Member States also vowed to 'continue to call for post-New START agreements'.¹¹⁵

2.1.2. Other developments

Fears also persist that Russia is preparing to use chemical and/biological weapons in Ukraine. The EU has provided extensive support to Ukraine to prepare for any attack involving chemical, biological, nuclear or radioactive material, providing protective equipment and medication (see section below).

In separate developments, hopes in early 2022 that the nuclear agreement with Iran would be revived have faded away as talks have stalled. Iran has repeatedly violated all its commitments under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).¹¹⁶ Preparations for a potential military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities are reported to have accelerated significantly. However, indirect talks between the USA and Iran are reportedly continuing, raising hopes that Iran may be persuaded to freeze its nuclear programme 'where it stands', in return for the release of substantial amounts of Iranian funds held abroad. Experts also point to mounting concerns over North Korea's expansion of the quality and quantity of its nuclear forces, including missile tests, which the US Government has called a 'serious escalation'.

2.1.3. Nuclear weapons worldwide – New drive to modernise existing arsenals

The number of nuclear weapons worldwide has been declining since the mid-1980s, when they reached an all-time peak of nearly 70 000 nuclear warheads (see Figure 13). The decline has been due primarily to cuts made in the Russian and US nuclear forces as a result of three arms limitation treaties agreed since 1991, as well as unilateral force reductions. Nevertheless, there are still approximately 12 512 nuclear warheads worldwide; of these, an estimated 3 844 are deployed with operational forces¹¹⁷ and around 2 000 of these are kept in a state of high operational alert, mainly

¹¹⁴ O. Meier, [Back to Basics: The Nuclear Order, Arms Control, and Europe](#), Arms Control Today, April 2022.

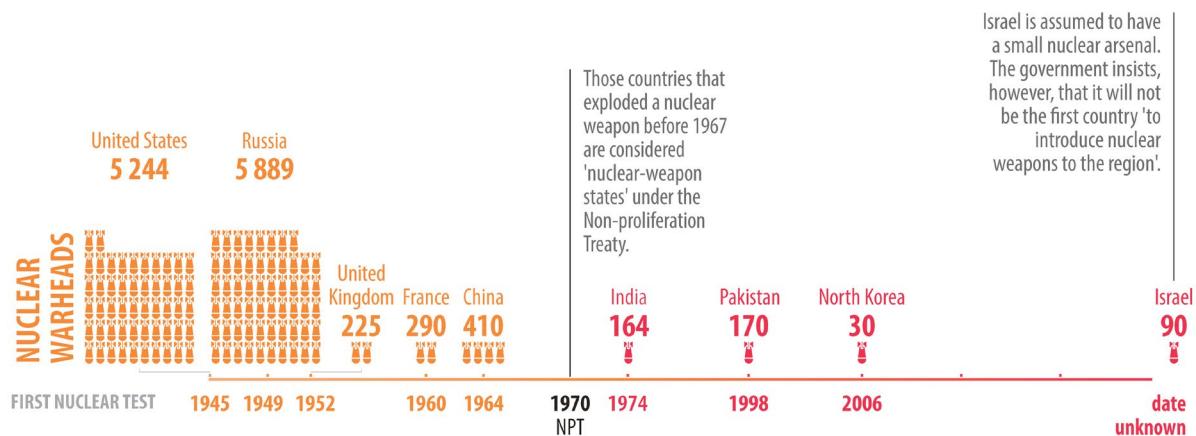
¹¹⁵ [EU Strategic Compass](#), 2022, p. 41.

¹¹⁶ B. Immenkamp, [EU relations with Iran](#), EPRS, European Parliament, January 2023.

¹¹⁷ Hans Kristensen & Matt Korda, [World Nuclear Forces](#), in SIPRI Yearbook 2023

by the USA and Russia, ready to be used at short notice.¹¹⁸ Between them, the USA and Russia still possess some 11 133 deployed and stockpiled nuclear warheads. Moreover, the pace of reductions in nuclear arsenals is slowing. Neither Russia nor the USA – which together hold about 90 % of the world's nuclear weapons (see Figure 13) – has so far signalled any intention to make further reductions in its strategic nuclear forces beyond the cuts mandated by New START. In 2021, New START was extended for another five years, until 2026. Even though Russia has unilaterally 'suspended' the Treaty (see above), the country has indicated that it will continue to adhere to New START's central limits on the deployment of strategic nuclear warheads.

Figure 13 – Nuclear weapons worldwide in 2022



Data source: [Federation of American Scientists](#), early 2023; all figures are estimates.

At the same time, nearly all nine nuclear weapon-possessing states are modernising their nuclear weapons, and some are 'significantly increasing and diversifying their nuclear arsenals and investing in novel nuclear weapon technologies and systems'.¹¹⁹ Russia and the USA have launched large-scale programmes¹²⁰ to replace and modernise nuclear warheads, missile and aircraft delivery systems, and nuclear weapons production facilities. President Joe Biden's administration has conducted a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) – the fifth since the first NPR in 1994 – to determine whether to adjust the nuclear programmes that the administration inherited from its predecessor and whether or how to amend corresponding spending plans. The result has been described as a disappointment¹²¹ from an arms control and risk reduction perspective.¹²² Even though the nuclear arsenals of the other nuclear-armed states are much smaller than those of Russia and the USA, all are either developing or deploying new weapon systems or planning to do so. The US Department of Defense forecasts that by 2030, China will have almost tripled the current stock of nuclear warheads, to 1 000. The UK is also increasing the size of its nuclear arsenal, from 225 nuclear warheads currently to a maximum of 260.¹²³ Pakistan, which has an estimated 170 nuclear weapons, is reported to be expanding its nuclear arsenal faster than any other country and developing new

¹¹⁸ Federation of American Scientists, [Status of World Nuclear Forces](#), 30 March 2023; Hans Kristensen & Matt Korda, [World Nuclear Forces](#), in SIPRI Yearbook 2023.

¹¹⁹ [G7 Non-Proliferation Directors Group statement](#), 17 April 2023.

¹²⁰ For further detail, see [Peace and Security in 2021 – Overview of EU action and outlook for the future](#), p. 28.

¹²¹ H. Kristensen and M. Korda, [The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review: Arms Control Subdued By Military Rivalry](#), Federation of American Scientists, 27 October 2022.

¹²² ICAN, [UK to increase nuclear stockpile limit](#), 16 March 2021.

delivery systems. India has developed more sophisticated technology, enhancing the effectiveness of the country's nuclear arsenal.

Moreover, in 2022, Belarus held a referendum to delete the reference to the country's non-nuclear status from its Constitution. Belarus is a close ally of Russia and the country offered material and logistical support to the most recent Russian invasion of Ukraine. Belarus gave up its Soviet-era nuclear weapons infrastructure following the fall of the Soviet Union, and had transferred all remaining nuclear weapons to Russia by 1996. However, in March 2023, President Putin announced that Russia would deploy tactical nuclear weapons on Belarus territory and on 28 May 2023, Russia reportedly moved ahead with this plan. This constitutes the first deployment of tactical nuclear weapons outside Russia since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union. Russia has also helped modernise Belarusian warplanes to allow them to carry nuclear weapons and has trained Belarusian pilots in nuclear weapons use. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of the Russian President, has promised nuclear weapons to any nation that joins the union between Russia and Belarus. The EU has condemned the agreement by Russia and Belarus to allow the deployment of Russian nuclear warheads on Belarusian territory, as a step 'which will lead to further extremely dangerous escalation'.

2.1.4. Nuclear proliferation concerns over Iran and North Korea

North Korea initially signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but left the treaty in 2003, and tested its first nuclear weapon in 2006. The exact size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal is unknown, but the country is believed to have tested nuclear weapons six times and to own some 30 nuclear weapons. Pyongyang has developed nuclear-capable ballistic missiles capable of reaching the USA and its allies, Japan and South Korea. Over the past year, North Korea has conducted multiple ballistic missile launches, 'with unprecedented frequency and in an unprecedented manner'. In January 2021, the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong Un, outlined a set of 'ambitious, wide-ranging, and multifaceted' plans to modernise North Korea's nuclear arsenal. Experts are concerned that North Korea is continuing to pursue plans to expand the quality and quantity of the nuclear threat posed by its nuclear forces, presaging a new security crisis with the country. The EU repeatedly condemned North Korea in 2023 for launching intercontinental and long-range ballistic missiles, in February, March and April. The EU called on North Korea to 'cease all illegal and dangerous actions that violate UN Security Council resolutions and recklessly escalate military tensions in the region'.

Nuclear proliferation concerns also persist in relation to Iran's commitments¹²³ under the 2015 JCPOA and to the country's obligations under the 1974 bilateral NPT safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).¹²⁴ Following the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018,¹²⁵ Iran resumed uranium enrichment to increasingly high levels incompatible with the JCPOA in 2019. Iran's break-out time – the time required to produce enough enriched uranium for a nuclear bomb – is believed to be down to a few days. For the first time, the country has enriched uranium to 83.7% Uranium-235, which is nearly weapons-grade. The JCPOA signatories (France, Germany, the UK, the EU, China, Russia, the USA and Iran), began meeting in Vienna in early April 2021, to explore ways to bring both the USA and Iran back into compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal. However, talks have since broken down, not least because of Iran's military cooperation with Russia, which has included the delivery of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or drones) deployed

¹²³ C. Dietrich and P. Pawlak, [The nuclear agreement with Iran](#), EPRS, European Parliament, January 2016.

¹²⁴ Safeguard agreements under the NPT ensure that all nuclear activity a state undertakes is for peaceful purposes and that a state is not engaging in illicit nuclear activities.

¹²⁵ B. Immenkamp with contributions from F. Garcés de Los Fayos Tournan, [Future of the Iran nuclear deal. How much can US pressure isolate Iran?](#), EPRS, European Parliament, May 2018.

by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine. The G7 countries – and many experts – consider Iran to be in blatant violation of the UN missile embargo imposed on the country by United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231, adopted in 2015 to endorse the JCPOA. Experts have noted that it is difficult to see how the JCPOA could be revived while Iran is violating the UN missile embargo, due to expire in October 2023, by transferring drones to Russia and participating in the widespread killing of civilians and the large-scale destruction of infrastructure. The IAEA has also expressed very serious concerns over the fact that the agency has found traces of enriched uranium in places that Iran has never declared as places where any nuclear activity has taken place. There has been some speculation that the recent diplomatic rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, brokered by China, might provide new impetus for the revival of the JCPOA, or an alternative agreement. Moreover, the USA and Iran are reported to be discussing an 'arrangement' (not a 'deal') that would see Iran cap uranium enrichment at 60% and accept more IAEA inspections, in return for an easing of US sanctions.

2.1.5. Other weapons of mass destruction: Chemical and biological warfare

The USA and others have warned that Russia may be preparing to use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine. The last known use of chemical weapons in an armed conflict occurred during the Syrian civil war. The use and possession of chemical and biological weapons is prohibited under international law. Russia is a states-party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction, which entered into force in 1997, and currently has 193 states-parties. Russia is also a party to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), a legally binding treaty with 183 states-parties that outlaws biological arms, which entered into force in 1975. In conclusions adopted in February 2023, the EU called for the total prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and specifically Russia's threat to use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, the EU's Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative (EU CBRN CoE initiative) has proven invaluable as a platform for cooperation to channel Ukraine's requests for support and to facilitate regional solidarity with Ukraine. The EU launched the CBRN CoE initiative in 2009-2010. There are eight CBRN centres of excellence around the world, seeking to strengthen the institutional capacity of 62 non-EU partner countries to mitigate CBRN risks. Ukraine is a partner in the CBRN CoE initiative and has been one of the countries participating in two ongoing regional projects in the South East and Eastern Europe (SEEE) region, including one project on the strengthening of CBRN medical preparedness and one on biosafety and biosecurity.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has triggered the largest ever European civil protection operation, of which protection against incidences involving CBRN is an important part. Following a request from the Ukraine Government for emergency assistance, the EU coordinated the delivery of essential supplies to support the civilian population via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (ECPM), including through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC).

In addition to fears concerning the deliberate use of chemical and biological weapons, the Ukrainian authorities are very concerned about incidents or accidents in nuclear plants controlled by Russian troops, or chemical installations and plants. On 23 March 2023, the European Council called on Russia to 'immediately cease actions endangering the safety and security of civilian nuclear facilities in Ukraine'. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has criticised Russia for compromising the safety of nuclear power plants and radioactive sources it controls, through 'shelling, air attacks, reduced staffing levels, difficult working conditions, frequent losses of off-site power, disruption to

the supply chain and the unavailability of spare parts, as well as deviations from planned activities and normal operations'. In at least five incidences, Russian missiles have hit chemical installations, leading to the release of dangerous chemicals. In 2022, Ukraine requested medical supplies to counter such incidents, including antidotes, personal protective equipment, detection equipment, and specialised intensive care unit (ICU) equipment. Member States have provided supplies, including hundreds of dosimeters to measure radiation levels, personal protective equipment, therapeutics and treatments. Moreover, the EU has used its rescEU medical reserve to procure potassium iodide tablets, which can be used to protect people from the harmful effects of radiation. Almost 3 million iodide tablets were delivered to Ukraine via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in April 2022. So far, the EU has provided Ukraine with CBRN and medical assistance worth more than €50 million from rescEU stockpiles. The assistance includes medical countermeasures, medical devices and response equipment. The EU has also assisted private sector companies to provide Ukraine with medical equipment to counter CBRN. The EU is signing agreements with three EU Member States to have decontamination teams on standby, to tackle possible future CBRN incidents in Europe. The EU is also preparing a CBRN stockpile, a strategic reserve of items relevant in the case of a CBRN incident, worth €545 million. In February 2023, the Commission launched a call for proposals for a total value of €636 million, focusing on the response to pathogens with pandemic potential, CBRN threats and antimicrobial resistance. Finally, the EU plans to enhance its CBRN detection capacity.

2.1.6. Multilateral arms control under threat

The past year has been marked by the continued waning commitment of major countries to multilateral arms control, an issue that is of great concern to the EU.¹²⁶ Some experts have gone as far as declaring 'arms control (almost) dead'.¹²⁷ While New START was extended in 2021, it is the last remaining treaty limiting the size and composition of the nuclear arsenals of the two leading nuclear weapon states. Experts believe that President Putin's announcement suspending New START makes it 'far more likely' that, after the treaty expires in 2026, there will be 'no agreement limiting USA and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals for the first time since 1972'.¹²⁸

However, while this is indeed problematic, any threat to peace and security emanating from the USA and Russia does not lie solely in the size of their nuclear arsenals. Experts point, in particular, to a new presumption of 'controllable nuclear exchanges', 'which will reduce the calculations of risk and increase the likelihood of conflicts escalating to nuclear war'. Some consider the risk of nuclear war between the USA and Russia to be as great now as it was in 'the most dangerous periods of the Cold War'.

Some experts regret that Russia's assault on Ukraine has undermined prospects for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament for years to come. Russia's actions are seen as a clear example of a

¹²⁶ J. Linn, [Recent Threats to Multilateralism](#), 2018.

¹²⁷ U. Kühn, [Why Arms Control Is \(Almost\) Dead](#), 5 March 2020.

¹²⁸ D. G. Kimball, [Putin's Reckless Decision to Suspend New START Will Increase Chances of Global Nuclear Arms Race](#), Arms Control Association, 21 February 2023.

nuclear-armed state bullying a non-nuclear state,¹²⁹ thus reducing the incentives for disarmament and making it more difficult to prevent nuclear proliferation.¹³⁰

2.2. EU external democracy support and its importance for peace

2.2.1. Democracy and peace

According to the democratic peace theory,¹³¹ democracies are more peaceful in their foreign relations than undemocratic states. Based on historical evidence, democracies do not go to war with each other,¹³² are less inclined to go to war with undemocratic states than the inverse,¹³³ and are more stable and peaceful.¹³⁴ Several experts¹³⁵ have noted that the current war in Ukraine provides a clear confirmation of this theory – the war would have been unlikely without Putin's authoritarian regime. The classical arguments of the theory state that since democracies are based on common values, such as human rights, they are better equipped to solve their disagreements in a peaceful manner; their citizens have the final say in decisions of war, can hold leaders accountable and are much less inclined to support the burden of war. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has highlighted another possible factor – the 'dictator' trap',¹³⁶ where authoritarian rulers' repression of dissent and appointment of advisors, based on loyalty rather than efficiency, contributes to poor information and policy miscalculations.

2.2.2. Recent developments: Threats to democracy and factors for resilience

In recent years, attacks and threats against democratic regimes have taken on a new virulence. Russia's war on Ukraine, aiming to topple its democratic government,¹³⁷ marks a new external threat from an autocratic regime willing to flout international law to undermine democracy beyond its borders.¹³⁸ While the war is exposing the limits of authoritarianism,¹³⁹ the risk remains that other authoritarian states could be encouraged to carry out similar acts of aggression. Russia itself has

¹²⁹ D. G. Kimball, [Putin's Assault on Ukraine and the Nonproliferation Regime](#), Arms Control Association, March 2022.

¹³⁰ For information on the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, the EU's action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and EU dual-use export control, please see T. Lažici and E. Lazarou, [Peace and Security in 2021 – Overview of EU action and outlook for the future](#), EPRS, European Parliament, pages 34-35.

¹³¹ For a definition and overview see D. Reiter, [Democratic peace theory](#), Oxford Bibliographies, 2019

¹³² This holds for democracies that have reached a certain threshold of maturity and stability. Defenders of the theory explain that democracies, which went to war in the past against other democratic countries, were not fully democratic. See M. W. Doyle, [Liberal Peace: Selected Essays](#), New York: Routledge, 2011.

¹³³ D. Reiter, [Is Democracy a Cause of Peace?](#), Oxford Research Encyclopedias, January 2017.

¹³⁴ V-Dem Institute, [Does Democracy Bring International and Domestic Peace and Security?](#), Policy Brief, 11 May 2021.

¹³⁵ See P. Formosa, [Guide to the classics: Immanuel Kant's Toward Perpetual Peace and its relevance to the war in Ukraine](#), March 2022; [IDEA International, The Ukraine War and the Struggle to Defend Democracy in Europe and Beyond](#), March 2022.

¹³⁶ See B. Klaas, [Vladimir Putin Has Fallen Into the Dictator Trap](#), The Atlantic, March 2022 and G. Egorov and K. Sonin, Why Did Putin Invade Ukraine?: A Theory of Degenerate Autocracy, Working Paper No 2023-52, Becker Friedman Institute, April 2023.

¹³⁷ While Russia did not state explicitly that it wanted to topple Ukraine's government, many commentators (see also [Washington Post](#), October 2015) consider that 'denazification' included, at least initially, such an objective.

¹³⁸ There is a perception in many countries that Western democracies have applied the principle of national sovereignty inconsistently, which is one factor in their decision not to take sides against Russia. See for instance, [Democracy Index 2022: Frontline democracy and the battle for Ukraine](#), Economist Intelligence Unit, 2023, pp. 26-28.

¹³⁹ See, R. Benedikter, [Putin's war in Ukraine shows the limits of authoritarianism](#), LSE, March 2022

made territorial claims on other neighbouring countries, such as Kazakhstan and Moldova.¹⁴⁰ There are growing concerns that China could use force to bring democratic and de facto self-governing Taiwan under its control. Short of overt use of military force, Russia is employing 'political warfare' to destabilise its 'near abroad'.¹⁴¹

Threats to democracy and democratic transition also come from within. A succession of military coups and coup attempts across the world have broken the trend of a continuous reduction in coups.¹⁴² In addition, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and power struggles between military factions in Sudan are having severe repercussions on these countries' attempts to transition to democracy and on broader regional stability.¹⁴³ In Tunisia, the only country to build a democracy following the 2011 Arab Spring, democratic reforms have been eroded.¹⁴⁴ In 2023, Brazil, one of the biggest, if relatively young, democracies experienced post-election violence, when supporters of the former president stormed the Congress, presidential palace and Supreme Court. While Nigeria's watershed general election in February 2023 was not followed by political violence, as some had feared, it was marked by high levels of pre-electoral violence.¹⁴⁵ Global monitoring shows high levels of pre-electoral violence, for instance in Brazil and Kenya in 2022 and in Cuba in 2023.¹⁴⁶ The insurrection at the US Capitol in Washington DC on 6 January 2021 had huge symbolic impact, showing that the world's most powerful democracy is prone to the same type of post-electoral violence and contestation as some emerging democracies.¹⁴⁷ Although the 2022 US mid-term elections passed off without any such attacks, riskfactors – including increased political polarisation – remain for the next presidential elections in 2024.

'These events have multiple causes. A lack of effective international deterrence, with a paralysed UN Security Council, has played a role in the failure to prevent direct assaults on democracy by foreign military forces and internal actors.¹⁴⁸ The real or perceived loss of legitimacy of elected governments, due to their incapacity to tackle security or economic crises, has been a crucial encouraging factor for coup perpetrators in Africa, as well as for Russia's leadership. Polarisation and disinformation have also fuelled discontent, aggravating political instability and favouring 'autocratisation'.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁰ See for example, [Kazakhstan Responds To Recent "Territorial Claims"](#), Eurasian Research Institute, 2020 and [Russia's Change in Foreign Policy Spark Concerns in Moldova](#), Balkan Insight, February 2023.

¹⁴¹ For a definition and overview, see, [What Is 'Political Warfare'?](#), Congressional Research Service, January 2023. [Moldova](#) is one of the [countries](#) affected.

¹⁴² In 2021, the UN Secretary General [spoke](#) of 'an epidemic of coups d'état'. With five successful coups, 2021 saw more coups than the preceding [five years](#) combined. In 2022, [Africa](#) saw two takeovers in Burkina Faso as well as failed coup attempts in Guinea Bissau, The Gambia and Sao Tome and Principe. Other examples are [Myanmar](#), [Guinea](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#) and [Peru](#).

¹⁴³ See for example the EPRS briefings [Afghanistan once more under Taliban rule](#), 2021 and [Sudan crisis: Developments and implications](#), 2023.

¹⁴⁴ See, S. Hamid, S. Grewal, [It's not too late to save Tunisian democracy](#), The Brookings Institution, May 2023.

¹⁴⁵ See [Political Violence and the 2023 Nigerian Election](#), Election Watch, February 2023

¹⁴⁶ See the [ALCED year in Review: Global Disorder in 2022](#) and the individual entries for Brazil, Kenya and Cuba.

¹⁴⁷ See for example: D. L. Byman, [The risk of election violence in the United States in 2024](#), Brookings Institution, 27 January 2023.

¹⁴⁸ See for example: [The U.N. Has Turned Turtle on the Ukraine War](#), *Foreign Policy*, 1 March 2023; [Russia, China block UN Security Council from supporting new sanctions on Mali](#), France 24, January 2022; [Human Rights Watch, UN Security Council Should Act on Myanmar Atrocities](#), January 2022.

¹⁴⁹ See for example, T. Carothers and O'Donohue, eds., [Political Polarisation in South and South-East Asia](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020; R. Faust, [Issue Brief: How Disinformation Impacts Politics and Publics](#), National Endowment for Democracy, May 2018.

Looking forward, climate change poses challenges for democracy.¹⁵⁰ It has been observed that some governments have already used the cover of extreme weather events to exert control and erode democratic freedoms (the 'storm autocracy' effect).¹⁵¹ Unregulated development of AI is likely to increase the risk of interference in democratic processes and erosion of trust in institutions. Public disengagement presents additional challenges for the sustainability and expansion of democracy.

Various democracy indices concur that, over the past decade, democracy has been in crisis across the world. International IDEA concludes¹⁵² that in 2022 democracy contracted globally, with 52 democracies eroding, compared to only 12 a decade earlier. According to Varieties of Democracy's (VDEM) 2023 report,¹⁵³ for the first time in over two decades, the world has more closed autocracies than liberal democracies, while the number of democratising countries has fallen to levels not seen since the 1970s. At the same time, several indices see the current moment as a possible inflection point.¹⁵⁴ The 2023 world report from Freedom House¹⁵⁵ concludes that the democratic decline has slowed. The EIU democracy index and the VDEM report both highlight a large increase in mobilisation for democracy during 2022, evidenced in greater willingness and propensity to organise and participate in public demonstrations and protests,¹⁵⁶ even in the face of brutal state repression, as in Sri Lanka and Iran. VDEM identifies large-scale popular mobilisation as one of five common factors that have helped eight countries in different regions of the world to push back against autocratisation and revitalise democracy and which should inform the future direction of international democracy support and protection.¹⁵⁷

The increasingly complex threats to democracy put the EU policy of supporting democracy in non-EU countries to the test. In expert¹⁵⁸ views, the failure of state-building efforts in fragile states such as Mali and Afghanistan is, among other things, related to flaws in the democracy and good governance model promoted by external donors, including the EU.¹⁵⁹ Recent reviews of EU external democracy support argue that it needs to be recalibrated to adapt to the rapidly changing geopolitical environment, not least by pivoting to a partnership approach based on reciprocal dialogue and support for participatory democracy.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁰ See for example, [Democracy and the challenge of climate change](#), International IDEA Discussion Paper 3/2021.

¹⁵¹ See for example, M. H. Rahman et al, ['Storm autocracies': Islands as natural experiments](#), *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 159, 2022.

¹⁵² International IDEA, [Global State of Democracy Report 2022: Forging Social Contracts in a Time of Discontent](#).

¹⁵³ V-DEM Institute, [Democracy Report 2023 – Defiance in the Face of Autocratization](#).

¹⁵⁴ [Analysis](#) by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace argues that it is overly optimistic to say that the world has reached a turning point in favour of democracy, identifying thresholds that would have to be met for this to be the case.

¹⁵⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy](#).

¹⁵⁶ The reports cite protests in [China](#), Kenya, Malawi, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

¹⁵⁷ Bolivia, Moldova, Ecuador, Maldives, North Macedonia, Slovenia, South Korea and Zambia. See pp. 28-31 of the VDEM report.

¹⁵⁸ [A report published by Carnegie Europe](#) underlines the need for the EU to do 'its own comprehensive, independent inquiry to assess its performance in Afghanistan'. 'Without such introspection, the Union is unlikely to learn the necessary lessons of why its policy failed'. In Mali, [one reason](#) for the failure of international assistance is that donors co-drafting public policies deprived those policies of popular legitimacy.

¹⁵⁹ [A report published by Carnegie Europe](#) underlines the need for the EU to do 'its own comprehensive, independent inquiry to assess its performance in Afghanistan' to learn the necessary lessons of why its policy failed'.

¹⁶⁰ See for example, Carnegie Europe's [review of EU democracy support in 2022](#) and International IDEA's [analysis and recommendations on EU external democracy action](#) issued for the Swedish Presidency of the EU in January 2023. Expert analyses illustrate what this shift in perspective could look like, for example in the [ASEAN](#) region and in [Iraq](#), where [investing](#) in [civil society](#) and young people could help to stabilise democracy. On the deployment of the first

2.2.3. EU support for democracy and its link to peace

Support for democracy is an overarching priority of EU external action, related in multiple ways to EU efforts to preserve and promote peace in the world. According to the October 2019 EU Council conclusions on democracy,¹⁶¹ 'creating the conditions for sustainable peace and security and preventing violent conflicts through participation and accountability, responsiveness to grievances and the political mediation of disagreements' should be part of EUs broader democracy efforts. The EU action plan on human rights and democracy for 2020-2024¹⁶² sets priorities for EU action essential to creating strong democracies able to resist security threats. These are: promoting fundamental freedoms and strengthening civic and political space; supporting the rule of law; fighting impunity; and building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies, including through a human rights and a participative approach to conflict prevention and crisis resolution. The mid-term review of the action plan¹⁶³ recognises the importance of adapting EU action to new challenges, including the increase in autocracies and unconstitutional changes of government, the trend towards backsliding on human rights and democracy and the development of AI and other new technologies.

The EU has developed a wide array of tools for supporting democracy in third countries. These range from political and human rights dialogues, to support for civil society and human rights defenders, to development aid for good governance and the rule of law, and to the conditionality enshrined in its bilateral trade and cooperation agreements and in its unilateral trade preferences.¹⁶⁴

The EU has reacted systematically to grave breaches of democratic norms by issuing statements of strong condemnation (such as on coups d'état in Mali, Myanmar, Sudan; on flawed elections in Nicaragua or Venezuela; and on repression of anti-governmental protesters e.g. in Hong Kong and Iran). The EU has also raised such concerns directly in its meetings with its partners. For example, during the 2022 EU-China Summit, the EU referred to human rights defenders, pointing to individual cases, as well as to the dismantling of the 'One Country Two Systems' principle in Hong Kong. As the summit's failure to produce a joint statement shows, however,¹⁶⁵ this type of diplomatic engagement risks becoming empty rhetoric as authoritarian regimes become increasingly assertive and closed to outside criticism. For this reason, the European Parliament insists¹⁶⁶ that the EU should include clear benchmarks in its human rights dialogues with third countries, and go beyond 'mere words'.

ever [EU election observation mission](#) to Iraq in 2021, HR/VP Borrell already stressed that the EU wants 'to support the strengthening of Iraqi democracy through Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned inclusive and participatory elections'.

¹⁶¹ [Council Conclusions on Democracy](#), adopted on 14 October 2019

¹⁶² [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024](#)

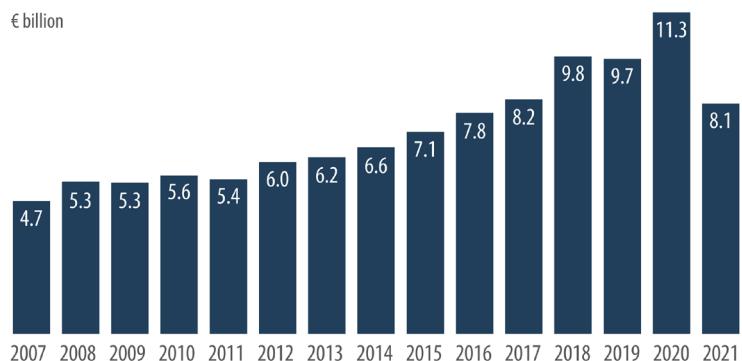
¹⁶³ [Joint Staff Working Document on the Mid-term Review of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024](#), European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 9 June 2023. The conclusions will orient the implementation of the plan up to 2024 and feed into the next multiannual action plan.

¹⁶⁴ See also: R. Shreeves, [EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders](#), March 2023; I. Zamfir, [Human rights in EU trade agreements](#), July 2019 and [New EU scheme of generalised preferences](#), July 2022, EPoS, European Parliament.

¹⁶⁵ HR/VP Borrell [described](#) it as 'a dialogue of the deaf' during the April 2022 European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg – e.g. China did not want the EU to talk about human rights. In February 2023, 10 human rights groups [urged](#) the EU to continue to suspend human rights dialogues with China until conditions are met for tangible outcomes and progress.

¹⁶⁶ For example, in 2023, in its [annual resolution](#) on human rights and democracy in the world and [resolution](#) on human rights defenders.

Figure 14 – Total EU and Member State official development assistance for government and civil society

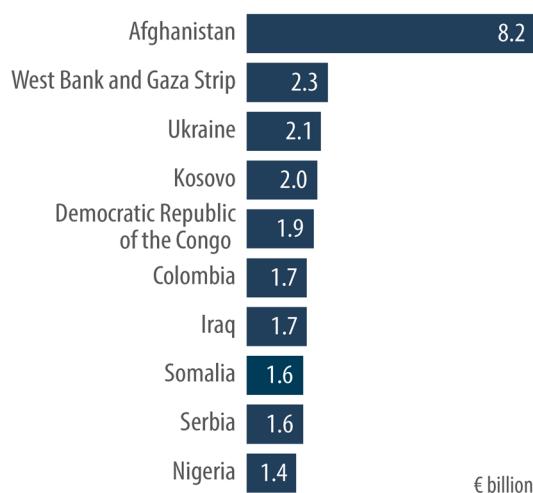


Data source: [EU aid explorer](#), data retrieved May 2023.

The EU remains one of the major providers of development aid for government and civil society in the world, with its aid focused on conflict-affected countries. For example, the largest 10 recipients (see Figure 15) over the last 16 years of EU aid for government and civil society, include countries afflicted by conflict, either currently or in their recent history. The Global Europe regulation entered into force

in June 2021. As part of the 2021-2027 MFF, this regulation gathers several EU development aid components. The geographical component (85 % of total funding) provides bilateral assistance to developing partner countries under objectives commonly agreed with national governments.¹⁶⁷ These objectives usually include a pillar on good governance, often in close relation with security issues. The thematic component of Global Europe includes a human rights and democracy sub-programme, as well as a stability and peace sub-programme.

Figure 15 – Largest beneficiaries of EU and Member State official development assistance for government and civil society 2007-2022 (in € billion)



Data source: [EU aid explorer](#), data retrieved July 2023.

Development aid is conditional on the respect of democratic norms, rule of law and human rights. In the more than 20 cases in which the EU has suspended its development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in the past, it has done so mainly in response to coups d'état or flawed elections, i.e. clear breaches of democratic principles with major potential to lead to internal conflict. Development aid was reinstated after partner countries made progress on compliance with EU recommendations, for instance to Burundi in February 2022 (in response to the peaceful political process that started with the May 2020 general elections in the country and the

commitments undertaken by the government in its roadmap). In Afghanistan, the EU suspended

¹⁶⁷ Detailed information on Global Europe programming and objectives is available [here](#).

regular development assistance following the Taliban takeover in 2021, but continues to provide humanitarian aid and support to civil society.

EU sanctions adopted in response to recent coups in Africa and Asia or to electoral crises, such as in Venezuela or Belarus, have yet to produce political effects. The regimes targeted have withstood international pressure, often with political and economic help from their authoritarian protectors.¹⁶⁸ The EU has imposed targeted sanctions, consisting of travel bans and asset freezes against top political and military leaders responsible for undermining stability, democracy and the rule of law in Mali and Myanmar (as well as against the energy company controlled by the Myanmar junta).¹⁶⁹ Despite calls¹⁷⁰ to extend sanctions to economic sectors, the EU has not withdrawn the broad trade preferences it grants to these developing countries under the Everything but Arms clause of its Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP).¹⁷¹ The EU's GSP legislation enables it to withdraw preferences in case of serious breaches of international human rights norms, including civil and political rights, however there are concerns about the negative economic impact on local populations and limited effectiveness of such a move, given the structure of these countries' exports to the EU.

With the new European Peace Facility,¹⁷² the EU is able, for the first time, to support the provision of military aid, including of a lethal nature, to the armies of partner countries. The EU promptly used this possibility to facilitate and fund the provision of military equipment by its Member States to Ukraine, to respond to Russia's aggression.¹⁷³ In providing arms to partners, the EU has to deal carefully with the potential risks of such military assistance, particularly the eventuality that arms fall into the wrong hands and are used for committing human rights violations,¹⁷⁴ or breaches of democratic norms.

The EU has gone to great lengths to extend its cooperation with democratic partners as a way to counter the rising influence of authoritarianism and reduce its economic dependence on resources from undemocratic countries.¹⁷⁵ The new transatlantic agenda with the USA covers security and democracy, while the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC), launched in 2021, aims to deepen transatlantic relations based on shared democratic values.¹⁷⁶ In May 2023, the fourth TTC ministerial meeting issued a joint statement on combating disinformation and building the capacity to counter

¹⁶⁸ See Freedom House, [The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule](#), 2022.

¹⁶⁹ For information on the state of play of EU sanctions, see the European Commission's [EU Sanctions Map](#).

¹⁷⁰ See [France presses EU to agree to sanctions against Mali, in line with ECOWAS](#), December 2021; [Trade unions call for immediate withdrawal of EU trade preferences in light of labour and human rights abuses](#), October 2021; [MEPs call for suspension of tariff preferences to sanction Myanmar's military junta](#), Agence Europe, April 2021.

¹⁷¹ European Commission, [Everything But Arms](#) website.

¹⁷² European Commission, [European Peace Facility factsheet](#), May 2023.

¹⁷³ In June 2023, the Council of the EU [adopted](#) a €3.5 billion top-up to the European Peace Facility (EPF) to ensure the financial sustainability and predictability of the EPF in the longer term and continued support for Ukraine.

¹⁷⁴ There are reports that the EU-trained army in Mali has committed human rights atrocities. See: [EU-trained troops committed abuses in Mali](#), Investigate Europe, April 2022. The army also continues to hold power, after two coups d'état, despite strong international pressure to ensure a return to civil government.

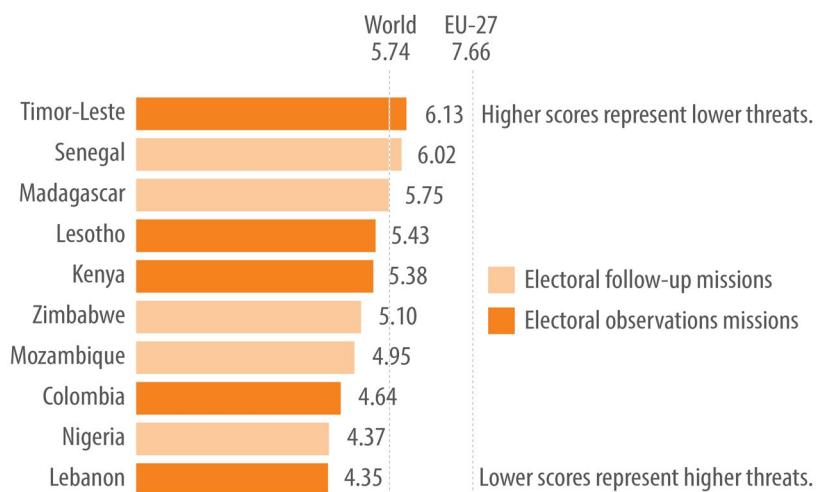
¹⁷⁵ In her [2022 State of the Union Address](#), the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen stressed, in light of Russia's war on Ukraine: 'This watershed moment in global politics calls for a rethink of our foreign policy agenda. This is the time to invest in the power of democracies. This work begins with the core group of our like-minded partners: our friends in every single democratic nation on this globe'. Experts have [identified](#) ways that the EU and its Member States could harness the momentum of the second global [Summit for Democracy](#) in 2023 to deepen cooperation between democracies.

¹⁷⁶ See M. Szcepanski, [EU-US Trade and Technology Council: New forum for transatlantic cooperation](#), September 2021, EPoS, European Parliament.

it in partner countries. The EU has also launched a Trade and Technology Council with India, which held its first ministerial meeting in May 2023. To continue to improve its trade relations with democratic partners, the EU is updating its free trade agreements (FTAs) with Chile and Mexico, and is heading towards new FTAs with Mercosur, Indonesia, India, Australia and New Zealand.¹⁷⁷ Infrastructure investment is becoming a domain of competition between different political systems. In view of this, the European Commission and the High Representative launched the 'global gateway' initiative in 2021, to drive investment in developing countries, as an alternative to China's belt and road initiative.¹⁷⁸ The flagship projects announced in 2023 cover digital technologies, climate, energy and transport, as well as health, education and research.¹⁷⁹ The example of the New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted in June 2023, shows how the EU is including 'global gateway' investment in human development alongside democracy support.

The EU's electoral observation missions (EOMs) represent a central instrument of democracy support, which also promotes internal peace and stability. For more than two decades, the EU has sent EOMs to many regions of the world. The missions only take place on invitation from the country concerned, only after consultation with the European Parliament, and only in those countries where there are credible prospects of free and fair elections. Every EU election observation mission is headed by a chief observer from the European Parliament. There is documented evidence of the effectiveness of these missions in building trust among opposing groups in society, and therefore in preventing conflict.¹⁸⁰ In some cases, EU EOM findings, revealing serious electoral shortcomings, have attracted the ire of the national government, such as in Venezuela, where the EU observed the local and regional elections in 2021. Venezuelan civil society

Figure 16 – Threats to peace in countries to which the EU sent electoral observation missions in 2022



Note: An EU mission to São Tomé and Príncipe took place in 2022, but the Normandy Index does not provide data on this country.

The lower the score, the higher the threats

Data source: [European Union Database on Election Missions, Normandy Index](#).

¹⁷⁷ Information on ongoing FTA negotiations and current agreements is [available](#) from the European Commission.

¹⁷⁸ See for example, S. Tagliapietra, [The Global Gateway: a real step towards a stronger Europe in the world?](#); Brueghel blog, December 2021 and M. Szcepanski, [The Global Gateway: Taking stock after its first year](#), January 2023, EPRS, European Parliament

¹⁷⁹ The European Commission's [infographics](#) on the flagship projects illustrate the range of projects across regions.

¹⁸⁰ Particip GmbH & GOPA Consultants, Evaluation of EU Election Observation Activities July 2016-January 2017, European External Action Service.

however considers that the implementation of EU recommendations is critical for a return to a free and fair electoral path.¹⁸¹

The European Parliament has established its own measures to support parliamentary democracy in third countries identified as priority partners for democracy assistance. Some of these measures aim specifically at building trust and facilitating dialogue and consensus-building on legislative issues among conflicting political forces, in parliamentary environments characterised by a lack of political trust. Parliament's delegations have made efforts to facilitate dialogue between political forces, public authorities and other stakeholders in third countries (such as Tanzania or Kenya), to prevent electoral violence. The European Parliament has awarded its prestigious Sakharov Prize for Human Rights to actors that fight for democratic norms in the world's most difficult situations, such as to the Venezuelan democratic opposition (2017), the Belarussian opposition (2020), to Alexei Navalny, an outspoken critic of Putin's authoritarian regime (2021) and to the Ukrainian people (2022). Parliament's response to Russia's war on Ukraine has included strengthening its connections with Ukraine's Parliament. This comes on top of its usual support programme for capacity building in national parliaments.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ See [New EU report recommends improvements for future electoral processes in Venezuela](#), Peace for Venezuela, April 2022

¹⁸² For an overview of the European Parliament's growing role in democracy support see: N. Bentzen and B. Immenkamp, [The European Parliament's evolving soft power: From back-door diplomacy to agenda-setting: Democracy support and mediation](#), September 2019, EPRS, and Parliament's [brochure](#) on global democracy support. Information on support for Ukraine's parliament is available on Parliament's [website](#).

2.3. Preventing and addressing conflicts in fragile contexts

2.3.1. Conflict and fragility aggravate each other

According to the OECD,¹⁸³ a quarter of the world's population lives in a fragile context. More strikingly, this is also the case for three quarters of the world's extreme poor. While not all states with fragile contexts are experiencing violent conflict – this is the case for 21 in 60 of the fragile contexts identified by the OECD – they constitute two thirds of the world's violent conflict situations.

In fragile contexts, violent conflict correlates with several fragility dimensions (see Figure 17), such as vulnerability to climate change, gender inequality, high level of debt,¹⁸⁴ food insecurity or dependence on external commodities (see box).

In conflict-affected areas, the intertwined impacts of climate change, displacement, difficult access to resources, destruction of livelihoods and lack of economic opportunities fuel violent armed groups, drug trafficking, and social or ethnic conflict. Conversely, conflict hinders development: in 2022, violence had an average cost equivalent to 34 % of GDP in the 10 countries most economically affected by violence (it was less than 3 % in the ten countries least affected by violence);¹⁸⁵ this level has risen up to 63.1 % in Ukraine (see Figure 18).

Concepts of fragility

A fragile country is characterised by a weak state capacity and/or legitimacy and a weak resilience to shocks. While there are several definitions of fragility, those most used in research and in practice are:

The World Bank distinguishes between:

- Fragile countries not in conflict: 'Countries with high levels of institutional and social fragility, identified based on indicators that measure the quality of policy and institutions, and manifestations of fragility'; and
- Countries affected by violent conflict, identified based on a threshold number of conflict-related deaths relative to the population'.

The OECD characterises fragility as the combination of:

- exposure to risk[s]; and
- insufficient coping capacities of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks.

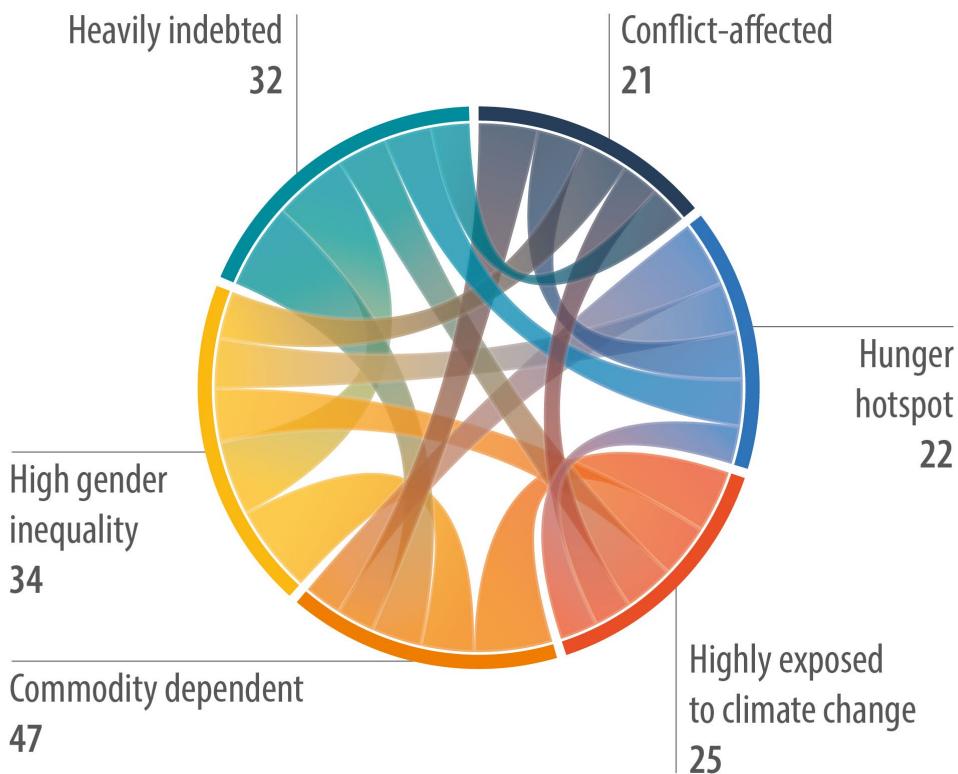
The OECD multidimensional fragility framework 'captures the diversity of those contexts affected by fragility, measuring it on a spectrum of intensity across six dimensions: economic, environmental, human, political, security and societal'.

¹⁸³ [States of Fragility 2022](#), OECD, September 2022. The OECD identifies [60 fragile 'contexts'](#), including 15 'extremely fragile contexts': Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Syria, Congo, Haiti, Burundi, Sudan, Eritrea, Iraq and Equatorial Guinea.

¹⁸⁴ These issues are addressed in more detail in other sections of this study.

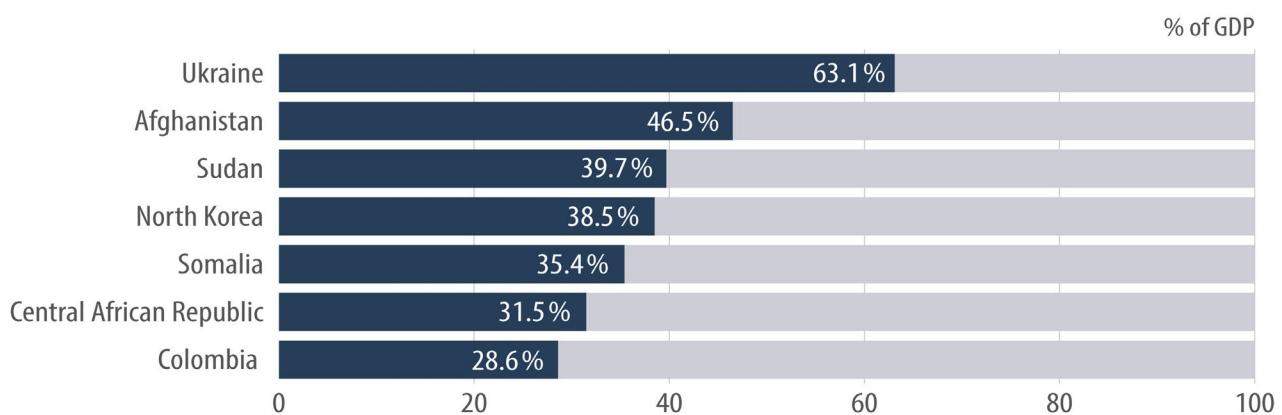
¹⁸⁵ According to the Institute for Economics & Peace [Global Peace Index 2023](#), June 2023.

Figure 17 – Violent conflict compounds several fragility dimensions



Note: Numbers represent total economies ('contexts') hit by each fragility situation: 'Among the 21 conflict-affected contexts, 12 are highly exposed to climate change, 12 are heavily indebted, 15 are hunger hotspots, 15 are facing high levels of gender inequality, 19 are commodity dependent'. Source: [OECD](#), 2023.

Figure 18 – Economic cost of violence outstrips a quarter of GDP in seven countries



Cost of violence as % of gross domestic product. Data source: [Global Peace Index 2023](#).

Food insecurity and commodity dependence

In fragile states, conflict puts additional pressure on the availability of a nutritious diet for all – coupled with climate change, rapid demographic growth and unsustainable agriculture – as it intensifies population displacement and land grabs. In addition, belligerents use starvation as a method of warfare in some conflicts, despite its prohibition under customary international humanitarian law. In 2022, interstate or intra-state conflicts, internal violence, banditry and criminality, civil unrest or political crises were the primary driver of acute food insecurity for 117 million people in 19 of the 58 countries or territories assessed by the Global Report on Food Crises (see more figures in the section on managing financial and economic crises). This figure does not include the severe impact of Russia's war on Ukraine on fragile states. The resulting shortages and sharp increase in prices of energy, agricultural commodities or fertilisers, due to destruction, blockade or protectionist measures by other producers, have exacerbated existing food system vulnerabilities. Fragile states, notably those that are highly dependent on Ukrainian or Russian wheat, maize, sunflower seed, other basic commodities or fertilisers, were severely affected, not least as they were already weakened by the impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. While the UN World Food Programme (WFP) deliveries, disrupted a few weeks after the beginning of the conflict, resumed in September 2022 from Odesa and other Ukrainian ports that remained operational, shortages and higher energy prices seriously affect the WFP's capacity to provide food assistance to fragile countries. Along with other causes, such as drought and human-made crises, this has contributed to the number of people facing or at risk of acute food insecurity rising to more than 345 million – double the 2020 figure. Food and energy insecurity have cascading effects on households, which in turn fuel other inherent risks, such as unrest, political instability and conflict. Several studies find that changes in food prices can trigger or aggravate political instability, state violence or armed conflict.

2.3.2. Comprehensive approach and conflict sensitivity tools – Examples in Africa

Development cooperation and humanitarian aid are long-standing EU commitments, enshrined in the Treaties (Article 21 TEU; Article 4(4) and Title III TFEU). The EU and its Member States are committed to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and other development effectiveness international frameworks. They endeavour to avoid any possible negative impacts when planning and implementing aid programmes. Aid can be effective in reducing the level of violence only when it is informed by a good knowledge of the social context that led to the conflict – sectarian divisions, for example.¹⁸⁶ This implies that the complexity of each conflict or fragility situation must be taken into account (see Figure 17).

The Council has advocated 'new approaches in policies and legal frameworks' since 2017, and most EU stakeholders acknowledge that better coordination fosters the complementarity of short-term humanitarian interventions and longer-term development programmes (the 'humanitarian-development nexus'). The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the 'EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles' (COM(2021) 110), for example, proposes that the EU and Member States strengthen coordination with other players active in development cooperation, security, and climate change adaptation and mitigation, including the military, 'in full respect of humanitarian principles'.

In fragile and conflict-affected areas, clearly targeted by the 2017 'European consensus on development', EU staff apply a conflict sensitivity approach: appropriate analytical tools inform this approach, based on a large set of lessons learned and the sharing of expertise with other multilateral actors, in particular the World Bank. The deployment of a conflict early warning system (EWS) has

¹⁸⁶ Research nuances the intuitive notion that aid and relief necessarily appease tension: see references in the [previous editions](#) of the EPRS Peace and Security Outlook.

been a way to address the root causes of potential violent conflicts. The EWS involves actors across the relevant Member States and EU services, both centrally (European External Action Service – EEAS and European Commission) and in the field (EU delegations, Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) field offices, EU special representatives, Member States' embassies). Based on statistical risk information and input from the field, the EWS allows action to be planned to target inequalities, weak governance and security issues, where they are most urgently needed and most likely to be efficient.

The EU also intervenes in fields where conflicts are ongoing or which are emerging from conflict. In conflict-affected areas, the combination of trade and sustainable development concerns has led to policies aimed at securing EU access to critical materials while promoting measures against human rights violations or child labour. These include policy encouraging better governance, responsible sourcing and due diligence.¹⁸⁷ Emerging from an entrenched conflict is a long and costly process: the Recovery and Peace-Building Assessment methodology (RPBA) is designed to analyse the drivers of the conflict and to assess its impacts, to draw up a roadmap for the implementation of recovery measures. Rather than providing a set of tools, the RPBA is a process. The EU and other international organisations play a crucial role in this process, coordinating action to create the conditions for effective recovery under the ownership of a legitimate government.¹⁸⁸

The EU has strategies in place to put these approaches into action. The European Commission has proposed to strengthen EU cooperation with African peace efforts in those parts of Africa where tensions are highest.¹⁸⁹ This has triggered the revision of the EU strategies in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes countries. Over the years, the maritime dimension of the EU strategy in the Gulf of Guinea has also expanded.¹⁹⁰ These strategies combine humanitarian intervention, support for the security sector, and development cooperation, notably with a view to tackling the root causes of migration and internal displacement. Since 2021, the European Peace Facility (EPF), an off-budget instrument, funds the military components of the African Union's peace support operations, while the EU budget funds the civilian components of these operations from the Global Europe: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument.¹⁹¹

Despite this rich toolkit, tensions between several external policy objectives (such as between stabilisation efforts and tackling illegal migration,¹⁹² or between appeasing tension between former

¹⁸⁷ See: M. Latek, [Conflict minerals](#), March 2017; M. Szczepanski, [Critical raw materials in EU external policies](#), May 2021; G. Ragonnaud, [Critical raw materials act](#), May 2023; S. Spinaci, [Corporate sustainability due diligence](#), May 2023; A. Altmayer, [Proposal for a ban on goods made using forced labour](#), February 2023, all EPoS, European Parliament.

¹⁸⁸ See [Recovery and peacebuilding assessments, post-disaster needs assessments and COVID recovery needs assessments](#), European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments; see case study: E. Pichon with J. Karhilo, [The EU and multilateral conflict management: The case of the Central African Republic](#), EPoS, European Parliament, June 2020.

¹⁸⁹ E. Pichon, [Understanding the EU's approach to a new partnership with Africa](#), EPoS, European Parliament, 11 February 2022.

¹⁹⁰ See E. Pichon with M. Betant-Rasmussen, [New EU strategic priorities for the Sahel Addressing regional challenges through better governance](#), EPoS, European Parliament, July 2021; E. Pichon, [The Horn of Africa](#), EPoS, European Parliament, September 2022; [A renewed EU Great Lakes Strategy: Supporting the transformation of the root causes of instability into shared opportunities](#), Council Conclusions, 20 February 2023.

¹⁹¹ See section on finances (1.3.3); The African Union welcomes EU aid on security matters, provided the EU respects the principle of finding [African solutions for African problems](#). While the African Union takes this strong stance with its international partners in [addressing conflicts](#) and [coups](#) on the continent, the African Union [peace and security architecture](#) is mainly financed by non-African donors, particularly the EU.

¹⁹² For example, in an analysis of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa's achievements, a researcher from the Institute for Security Studies (South Africa) found that 'across the Sahel, the approach has been almost an externalised border

belligerents and putting transitional justice in place),¹⁹³ are not completely resolved, as they reflect debates that cut across European society. The EU's comprehensive approach is also challenged by the realities on the ground. In the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, the complex geopolitical situation challenged the implementation of a fully-fledged EU humanitarian/development/security nexus. While the EU suspended €90 million budget support in protest against restricted humanitarian access and supported African mediation efforts, Member States failed to reach an agreement, on sanctions against the conflicting parties, despite European Parliament demands.¹⁹⁴ While the EU has made the improvement of partner countries' governance a centrepiece of its new regional strategy in the Sahel, the political situation in the region has deteriorated.¹⁹⁵ The RPBA used in Burkina Faso in 2019-2020¹⁹⁶ failed to prevent two successive military coups in January and September 2022 – in cases where the coup actors justified their action by a need to redress the deteriorating security situation. Mali's withdrawal from the G5 Sahel regional group of countries and the termination of the French Barkhane and European Takuba operations further weaken EU influence on development and security issues in the region, despite the creation of a new EU military partnership mission in Niger (EUMPM Niger, see also next section).¹⁹⁷

policy of the European Union. The focus was on the movement itself and not what are the opportunities that people are not getting at home that result in this desire to move', [Deutsche Welle](#) (DW), 4 December 2022.

¹⁹³ 'While, in post-conflict situations it is sometimes difficult to balance the overall aim of establishing peace and the need to combat impunity, the European Union should ensure that there is no impunity for war crimes', European Union Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL), [2005/C 327/04](#).

¹⁹⁴ European Parliament resolution of 7 October 2021 on the humanitarian situation in Tigray ([2021/2902\(RSP\)](#)); Failure on Ethiopia sanctions 'my biggest frustration' this year, says EU's top diplomat, [Euractiv](#), 14 December 2021.

¹⁹⁵ The military takeover of Chad's government in April 2021, and the succession of coups in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021) and Burkina Faso (January and September 2022) are a reminder that the Sahel remains politically highly unstable, despite strong demands from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to return to civil governments.

¹⁹⁶ [Programme d'urgence pour le Sahel au Burkina Faso \(PUS-BF\)](#), 2019-2020.

¹⁹⁷ N. Wilén, [The impact of security force assistance in Niger: meddling with borders](#), International Affairs, Volume 98, Issue 4, July 2022, p. 1405-1421. For a description of the Nigerien context: [Mission de partenariat militaire de l'UE au Niger](#), EPRI, European Parliament, February 2023. On [7 March 2023](#), the Council adopted a €40 million European Peace Facility assistance measure, conceived in conjunction with the EUMPM, to provide non-lethal equipment, infrastructure and training for the Nigerien Armed Forces.

2.4. Supporting peace through military action: EU security and defence policy

Although already challenged, Russia's war on Ukraine shattered illusions about protracted peace in the wider European space, fuelled proxy wars further afield, and has unequivocally brought military strategy and hard power considerations back to the fore.¹⁹⁸ Made up of both conventional and novel threats, from transnational crime networks and terrorism, to the corrosion of arms control regimes, climate security risks, cyber-attacks, and hybrid warfare, the threat landscape was nevertheless already wide and complex. Even prior to 2022, EU leaders and policymakers, including the former and current HR/VPs, argued in favour of an urgent move towards a European defence policy, as envisaged in the Treaty of Lisbon and supported by the European Parliament.¹⁹⁹ A progressively framed EU defence policy, incorporated in Article 42(2) TEU, is also explicitly linked to peace through Article 42(1) TEU. In the words of HR/VP Borrell, the security environment is 'becoming less and less secure', and 'if we want to stay safe, we cannot afford to lower the level of ambition for our security and defence'. The EU's strategic autonomy ambition reflects these concerns and aspirations.²⁰⁰ While strategic autonomy has become a concept used across policy fields, a large focus of the EU's planning since 2016 has been on the development of a degree of autonomy in security and defence, which in a geopolitical world arguably matters more. The EU Strategic Compass, agreed by the Council and endorsed by the European Council in March 2022, builds on these efforts, and presents a concrete action plan for the EU's security and defence for the next 5-10 years.

The European Peace Facility in support of Ukraine

On 28 February 2022, only three days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, EU Member States agreed to activate the European Peace Facility (EPF) to jointly finance the provision of military equipment (including lethal weapons for the first time in EU history) to Ukraine. The total support under the EPF currently stands at €5.6 billion. The equipment provided by EU Member States ranges from protective equipment to heavy artillery, tanks and even Soviet-era fighter jets. Operating within the EEAS, the EU Member States set up a clearing house to coordinate supply and demand corresponding to requests submitted by the Ukrainian armed forces. Once the Member States deliver equipment to Ukraine, eligible items can then be reimbursed through the EPF. The EPF is also being used to provide Ukraine with essential supplies of ammunition and missiles for which €2 billion is being mobilised under the EPF. The EPF is also funding the common costs of the EU mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) and equipment for EUMAM Ukraine.

See: B. Bilquin with B. Immenkamp, Russia's war on Ukraine: [The EU's financing of military assistance to Ukraine](#), EPRS, European Parliament, March 2022.

¹⁹⁸ S. Clapp, [Russia's war on Ukraine: Reflections on European security, neutrality and strategic orientation](#), EPRS, European Parliament, May 2022.

¹⁹⁹ European Parliament, [Common security and defence policy](#) Factsheet, April 2023; [EU must guarantee security to its citizens, warns Defence Subcommittee Chair](#), press release, European Parliament, May 2020.

²⁰⁰ S. Anghel et al, [On the path to 'strategic autonomy': The EU in an evolving geopolitical environment](#), EPRS, 2020.

2.4.1. Common security and defence policy missions and operations

Through the CSDP, the EU has developed a broad crisis management agenda, which includes conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilisation, in accordance with the principles of the UN, one of the EU's most important partners in peacekeeping. Currently, the EU has 21 CSDP missions and military operations on three continents, with a wide range of mandates including military training, capacity-building, counter-piracy, rule of law and security sector reform, and border assistance. They deploy around 4 000 civilian and military personnel (see Figure 19). The EU's civilian missions carry out tasks consistent with the EU Global Strategy commitment to strengthen the resilience and stability of partner countries recovering from or threatened by conflict. They also provide training in countering trafficking, human resource management, legislative drafting, policing, and other areas.²⁰¹ The EU's military missions are currently focused on countering terrorism, irregular migration, piracy and armed forces capacity-building, among other tasks. The type of training provided by executive and non-executive²⁰² military missions includes infantry skills, tank and fighter jet operation, force organisation, sniper skills, mortar firing, leadership, engineering, logistics, tactical air control and intelligence gathering.

EU Military Assistance Mission Ukraine

On 17 October 2022, the Council agreed to establish the EUMAM Ukraine, aiming at increasing Ukrainian armed forces' military capability. It was officially launched on 15 November 2022. The mission carries out individual, collective and specialised training and aims to coordinate and synchronise Member State training activities. Several Member States had already launched national training efforts for the Ukrainian armed forces in the preceding months, including Germany, Lithuania, Slovakia and Spain, among others. Building on these efforts, the EUMAM Ukraine works in EU Member State territories and has an initial two-year mandate, with 24 Member States offering training modules and personnel. In 2023 alone, the initial number of soldiers to be trained is 30 000. The Council also adopted €16 million in assistance measures under the EPF (both lethal and non-lethal equipment) to support the EUMAM Ukraine in building Ukrainian armed forces capacity. Officially launched on 15 November 2022, the common costs of the mission stand at €106.7 million.

See, European External Action Service, [EU Military Assistance Mission Ukraine](#), Factsheet, December 2022.

EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine

On 13 April 2022, the Council amended the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) mandate. Under the new mandate, the mission will also 'provide support to Ukrainian authorities to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of any international crimes committed in the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine'. Under an earlier amendment, shortly after the beginning of the war, the mission was mandated to provide support for law enforcement agencies, to facilitate refugee flows from Ukraine to neighbouring EU Member States, and of humanitarian aid into Ukraine. Recently, the mission also launched efforts to strengthen the protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage.

See: [European Union Advisory Mission \(EUAM\) Ukraine](#), website.

The majority of EU CSDP missions and operations to date have taken place in Africa, in many cases operating in parallel with UN peacekeeping operations and African Union (AU) missions. Since 2017,

²⁰¹ European Union External Action Service, [Common security and defence policy of the European Union: Missions and operations – Annual report 2021](#) (latest available report).

²⁰² Non-executive military missions are operations that support the host nation through an exclusively advisory role.

the EU has strengthened the coordination of its security efforts in the Sahel, by creating a regional coordination dimension for its CSDP operations in the region. The EU established a regional coordination cell based within EUCAP Sahel Mali in 2017. The regional coordination cell (renamed regional advisory and coordination cell (RACC) in 2019), includes internal security and defence experts in G5 Sahel countries, deployed in Mali, as well as in EU delegations in other G5 Sahel countries (Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad). This reinforced regional approach aims at supporting cross-border cooperation in the Sahel and regional cooperation structures, and enhancing G5 Sahel countries' capacity.²⁰³

The EU CSDP missions and operations cooperate with over 150 national counterparts. These include local interior, security, justice, and foreign affairs ministries, law enforcement associations such as judicial councils and policing boards, as well as local civil society organisations. They also cooperate with almost 180 international partners (e.g. EU delegations, EU agencies such as Frontex and Europol, the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Interpol, the African Union, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and several development agencies. The European Peace Facility (EPF), a new mechanism covering all of the EU's external action with military and defence implications, including the common costs of military CSDP operations, was adopted in March 2021 as an off-budget fund, worth €5.69 billion in current prices under the 2021-2027 MFF planning period.²⁰⁴ On 12 December 2022, the Council agreed to increase the financial ceiling of the EPF by €2.287 billion in current prices. It was also agreed that, if necessary, the ceiling can be increased by a further €3.5 billion up to 2027. On 13 March 2023, the Council agreed to raise the EPF financial ceiling to €7.979 billion in current prices to 2027. On 26 June 2023, the European Peace Facility was topped up a second time. Due to the successive top-ups, the EPF now has an overall financial ceiling of €12 billion (in current prices). The EU supports peace operations led by the African Union and partner countries through the EPF, and is able to provide military equipment, subject to strict safeguards and control mechanisms. Importantly, the EPF has been activated to support Ukraine through the provision of both lethal and non-lethal military equipment (see first box in this section).

In 2018, the EU adopted the civilian CSDP compact (CCC), designed to enhance mission capabilities in terms both of response time and access to relevant training.²⁰⁵ Its aim was to boost responsiveness, flexibility and reaction time. The civilian CSDP compact (CCC) commits to actively promote the representation of women in the EU's missions. According to the EEAS, the overall share of women personnel in CSDP missions and operations is 24 %, and 20 % when it comes to operational and management functions. As a signatory of the UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (WPS), the EU has agreed to increase the overall number of women dealing with crisis management and peace negotiations and the EEAS adopted a gender and equal opportunities strategy for 2018 to 2023.²⁰⁶ The European Parliament has called for the EU to lead efforts to implement Resolution 1325.

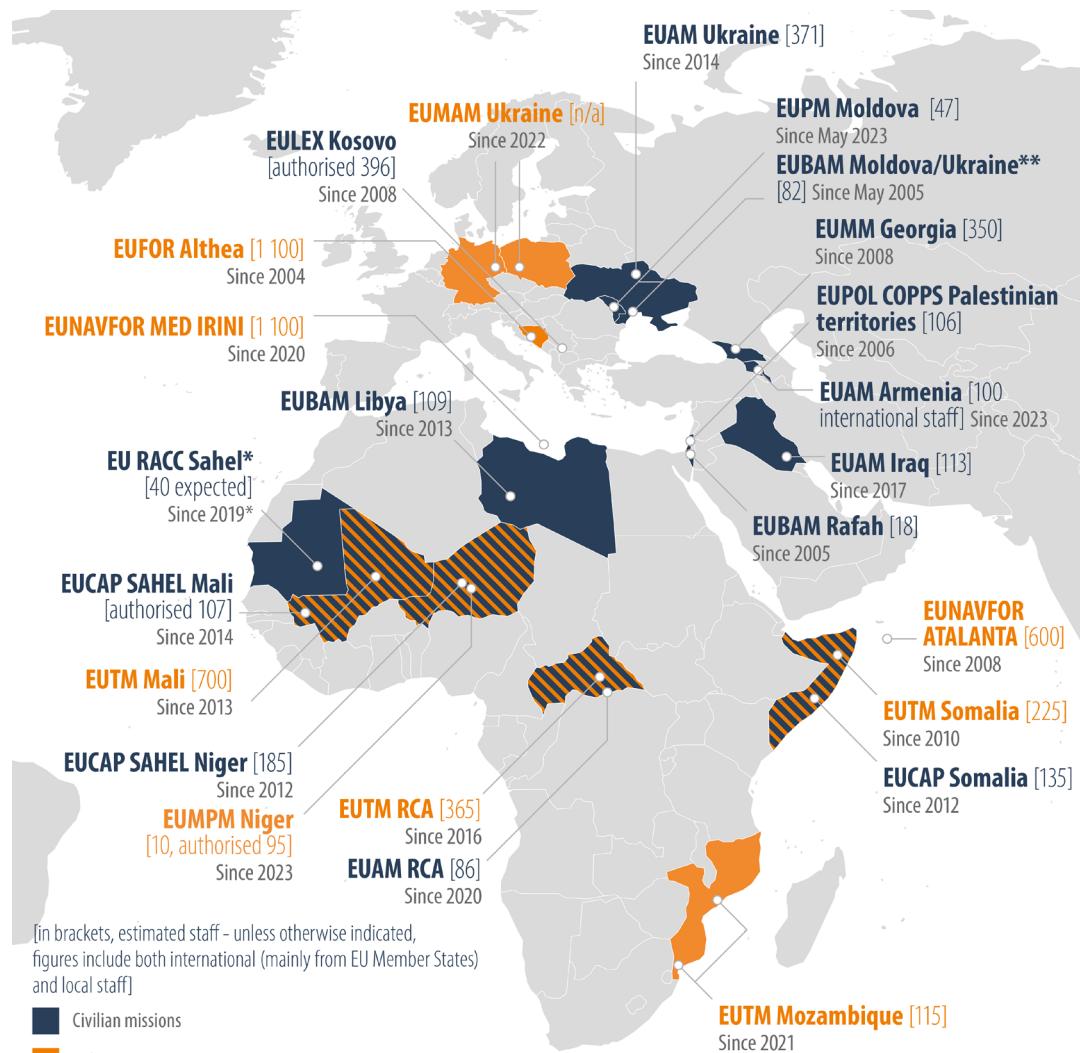
²⁰³ I. Ioannides, [Peace and security in 2020: Evaluating the EU approach to tackling the Sahel conflicts](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2020.

²⁰⁴ Council of the EU, [EU sets up the European Peace Facility](#), 22 March 2021.

²⁰⁵ T. Laçıcı, [The civilian CSDP compact](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2018.

²⁰⁶ European External Action Service, [Women's leadership at the forefront of the civilian CSDP Missions](#), March 2021.

Figure 19 – CSDP missions and operations



*The EU regional advisory and coordination cell for the Sahel (RACC), based in Mauritania, supports the Sahel countries' security and defence cooperation and facilitates internal EU coordination on security and defence. The RACC was previously hosted by EUCAP Sahel Mali in Bamako. An agreement with Niger to establish the RACC Sahel in that country is expected to be signed soon.

**EUBAM Moldova/Ukraine is not, technically, a CSDP mission: it was not created by Council decision, but rather by the Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2005 by the European Commission and the Moldovan and Ukrainian Governments. The mission is funded from the CFSP budget (DG NEAR envelope) and operated by the IOM.

Main sources: [EEAS](#), [B2 Pro](#).

The EU Strategic Compass called for the development of a new CCC by mid-2023. This new CCC was approved on 22 May 2023.²⁰⁷ It aims at strengthening the civilian dimension of the CSDP and enhancing the civilian missions' flexibility, robustness, effectiveness and impact. The Strategic Compass includes a commitment to hold annual discussions at ministerial level to enhance the political visibility of civilian CSDP. It also aims at building EU capacity to deploy 200 civilian experts within 30 days when necessary and comprises concrete commitments to have strengthened

²⁰⁷ European External Action Service, [Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\): EU strengthens its civilian missions to better respond to crises around the world](#), press release, May 2023.

headquarters for civilian missions and to enhance the resilience of host states. The Strategic Compass provides for establishment of a civilian capability development process to, *inter alia*, assess capability needs. Moreover, a European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management was established in Berlin, Germany, in February 2020.²⁰⁸

The EU launched two important civilian CSDP missions in 2023. Firstly, following a request from the government of Moldova, the EU launched the EU Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova (EUPM Moldova)²⁰⁹ on 22 May. Its objective is to enhance the resilience of the security sector in crisis management, hybrid threats, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference.

In response to a request from the Armenian authorities, the EU launched the EU mission in Armenia on 20 February 2023. It aims to 'contribute to stability in the border areas of Armenia, build confidence and human security in conflict affected areas, and ensure an environment conducive to the normalisation efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan supported by the EU'. The mission was deployed on the Armenian side of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and builds upon the EU Monitoring Capacity in Armenia (EUMCAP), which was deployed in the same area in October 2022.²¹⁰

The maritime dimension of CSDP missions is becoming increasingly significant as geopolitical activity, from illegal trafficking and piracy operations to energy exploration missions and military posturing, continue to increase.²¹¹ The EU currently deploys two major naval operations: the EUNAVFOR Somalia operation Atalanta in the western Indian Ocean and EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini in the Mediterranean. Launched in March 2020, Operation Irini has a mandate to patrol the international waters of the central Mediterranean, about 100 km off the Libyan coast, to implement the arms embargo imposed on Libya by UN Security Council Resolution 1970 (2011). Since its launch, the operation has boarded and inspected 25 suspect vessels; investigated 1 131 suspect flights, 25 airports and 16 ports, and provided 41 special reports to the UN Panel of Experts on Libya, among other things. Its mandate was renewed to March 2023 and again to March 2025.²¹² Operation Atalanta was deployed in the territorial waters of Somalia in 2008, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1816, with the aim of protecting vulnerable vessels off the Somalian coast, such as those operated by the World Food Programme, by 'deterring, preventing and repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery'.²¹³ Atalanta has two complementing civilian 'sister missions': the EU capacity-building mission (EUCAP Somalia) and the EU training mission (EUTM Somalia).²¹⁴

The EU's strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, approved by the Council on 16 April 2021, highlights the value of regional partnerships in support of maritime security more broadly. Specifically, the EU aims to conclude new framework participation agreements with Indo-Pacific partners and welcomes 'the contributions of Asian partner countries' naval forces' to Operation Atalanta.²¹⁵

²⁰⁸ [European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management](#) website.

²⁰⁹ European External Action Service, [European Union Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova](#), factsheet, June 2023.

²¹⁰ European External Action Service, [EU Monitoring Capacity to Armenia](#), website, October 2022.

²¹¹ T. Laćić, B Stanicek, and E. Pichon, [Charting a course through stormy waters. The EU as a maritime security actor](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2021.

²¹² European External Action Service, [Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI - Results Report](#), April 2022.

²¹³ E. Pejsova, [The EU as a maritime security provider](#), EUISS, 2019.

²¹⁴ EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA, [Sister missions](#), website.

²¹⁵ U. Jochheim, [Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Major players' strategic perspectives](#), EPRS, European Parliament, July 2023.

The Council launched a new concept to increase the EU's maritime engagement. The coordinated maritime presences (CMP) tool aims at strengthening EU maritime security engagement around the world. This flexible tool uses existing EU Member States naval and air assets (remaining under national command), which can be implemented in any maritime area of the world designated by the Council as a maritime area of interest (MAI). A specially established MAI Coordination Cell (MAICC) within the EU Military Staff coordinates the activities of the EU Member States' naval assets and enhances situational awareness and information sharing between them. Two CMPs are currently operational: one in the Gulf of Guinea (launched in January 2021 and extended in February 2022) and another in the North Western Indian Ocean (launched in February 2022).

In March 2023, the European Commission and the HR/VP adopted a Joint Communication on an enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS).²¹⁶ They also adopted an updated maritime security action plan. These specify action to be taken in areas such as stepping up activity at sea, cooperation with partners, maritime domain awareness, managing risks and threats, boosting capabilities and education and training. Delivering on the commitment to enhance cooperation with partners in 2023, the EU and the USA conducted the first ever joint naval exercise, agreed upon during the last round of EU-US High-Level Consultations on the Indo-Pacific in December 2022.

2.4.2. Developing the EU's defence capabilities

Since the presentation of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016, Member States and the European Commission have launched a series of initiatives to achieve robust and efficient enhancement of defence capabilities. The Strategic Compass process, as well as the serious deterioration of the security situation in Europe brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has reinforced the pressing need to accelerate these efforts. This is reflected in the Versailles Declaration and in the European Commission's proposals accompanying its 2022 defence investment gap analysis.²¹⁷

Efforts to enhance the EU's capabilities in security and defence build on important initiatives launched as part of the implementation of the EUGS. They include the Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF) among others. PESCO was launched in December 2017, with the participation of 26 EU Member States (all except Malta, as Denmark officially joined PESCO in May 2023).²¹⁸ PESCO members commit to increase their national defence budgets and defence investment expenditure to 20 % of total defence spending, and invest more in defence research and technology. They pledge to develop and provide 'strategically relevant' defence capabilities in accordance with the capability development plan (CDP) and the coordinated annual review on defence (CARD),²¹⁹ and to act jointly, making use of the financial and practical support provided by the EDF, part of the EU budget. As PESCO is complementary to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), military capacities developed within PESCO remain in the hands of Member States, which can also make them available in other contexts, such as in cooperation with NATO or the UN. Non-EU states may exceptionally participate in PESCO projects, subject to certain conditions. Collaborative projects are the most visible aspect of PESCO, with 68 PESCO projects currently in action in areas such as maritime, cyber, space, land and air defence.

²¹⁶ HR/VP, [Joint communication on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan "An enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy for evolving maritime threats"](#), March 2023.

²¹⁷ S. Clapp, [Member States' defence investment and capability gaps](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2022. See also: S. Clapp, [Reinforcing the European Defence Industry](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2023

²¹⁸ E. Lazarou, [Permanent structured cooperation \(PESCO\): From notification to establishment](#), EPRS, 2017.

²¹⁹ See: European Defence Agency, [Capability Development Plan](#), fact sheet, 2018; [Coordinated Annual Review on Defence](#), website.

Military mobility

In the 2021-2027 MFF, €1.5 billion was allocated to military mobility, including funding for action on civil-military synergies on transporting dangerous goods, speeding-up cross-border movement permissions and developing overall military mobility, with a view to countering hybrid threats. In addition to being the subject of a European Commission action plan, military mobility is also a Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence (PESCO) project (jointly with the USA, Canada and Norway), and a binding commitment on all PESCO members. It is also a priority area for EU-NATO cooperation. Delivering on the Strategic Compass commitment to agree a revised action plan on military mobility, the HR/VP and the Commission proposed an action plan on military mobility 2.0 on 10 November 2022, to cover 2022-2026. The new action plan has a strong focus on improving dual-use infrastructure, but will also, *inter alia*, include measures to protect transport infrastructure from hybrid and cyber-attacks, emphasises the importance of carrying out exercises, and seeks to enhance cooperation with NATO.

See: T. Laćići, [Military mobility: Infrastructure for the defence of Europe](#), EPoS, European Parliament.

Under the EDF, €8 billion is available during 2021-2027, of which €2.65 billion is earmarked for research and innovation, and €5.3 billion for capabilities. The fund consists of two legally distinct, but complementary, windows for developing collaborative projects: (a) the defence research window, and (b) the defence capability window.²²⁰ Through the EDF, for the first time ever, the EU is dedicating part of its budget to defence research and providing co-financing for defence projects incentivising Member States to increase their defence spending in a collaborative manner. The results of calls for proposals under the 2021 and 2022 EDF²²¹ are a positive sign of things to come: In the 2021 round, 61 collaborative defence research and development projects were chosen and awarded a total of €1.2 billion in funding. The successful proposals involve 18 entities from eight EU Member States and Norway, on average, and half of the capability development proposals selected linked to PESCO. In the 2022 round, €832 million will be invested in 41 defence projects, with an average of 22 entities from 9 EU Member States and Norway participating per project. Some 11 of the selected development proposals are linked to PESCO. In 2023, the third EDF work programme, with €1.2 billion in EDF funding, includes dedicated calls for proposals from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and targeted measures to

stimulate defence innovation with a particular focus on disruptive technologies. Projects in critical domains include space situational awareness, the European patrol corvette and countering hypersonic missiles. With the adoption of the third work programme, the total EDF financing for EU collaborative defence research and development, including its precursor programmes, will have amounted to €3.6 billion since 2017 (€3 billion EDF plus €500 million EDIDP, plus €90 million under the EDF precursor programme, the reparatory action on defence research (PADR).²²²

Moreover, the 2022 CARD report brings some positive news when it comes to defence budgets. It observes an increase in participating Member States' collective defence budgets of +6 % to around €214 billion in 2021 and notes that annual defence budgets are estimated to reach around €284 billion to €290 billion (if Denmark is included, as it only joined the European Defence Agency in May 2023). The report notes that, with these increases, Member States 'will have possibly

²²⁰ A budget of €90 million for 2017-2019 was allocated to the preparatory action on defence research, and the budget for the European defence industrial development programme was €500 million for 2019 to 2020.

²²¹ European Commission, [Defence Industry: EU takes steps to invest almost €1.2 billion to support 61 defence industrial cooperation projects](#), press release, July 2022 and [European Defence Fund: EU to invest €832 million in 41 ambitious defence industrial projects](#), press release, June 2023.

²²² European Commission, [European Defence Fund](#), factsheet, 2023.

recovered from the underspending of the previous decade 'and be able to close long-standing capability gaps.

On 18 May 2022, the Commission and the HR/VP presented a joint communication on the defence investment gaps analysis and way forward. The communication identifies gaps in three areas: industry, investment and capabilities. These gaps have been exacerbated by substantial EU Member State deliveries of military equipment to Ukraine. One proposal from the Commission and HR/VP to remedy these gaps was a short-term joint defence procurement instrument worth €500 million. On 19 July 2022, the Commission put forward its proposal for a regulation on establishing the European defence industry reinforcement through common procurement act (EDIRPA).²²³ Co-legislators reached a political agreement on EDIRPA on 27 June 2023. Based on the EDIRPA proposal, the Commission was scheduled to propose a longer-term European defence investment programme (EDIP) regulation in the third quarter of 2022. However, this proposal has been postponed.

In light of the Russian war on Ukraine, the Council has recognised a specific urgent need for ground-to-ground ammunition, artillery ammunition and missiles, which. On 2 March 2023, Ukraine sent a request for assistance to the EU for the supply of 155 mm calibre artillery rounds. The Council agreed on a three-track proposal on ammunition on 20 March 2023, which was endorsed by the European Council on 23 March 2023. On 13 April 2023, the Council adopted a €1 billion assistance measure under the EPF to support the Ukrainian army (Track 1). It will enable the EU to reimburse Member States for ammunition donated to Ukraine from their own existing stocks. Under Track 1, EU Member States had provided 220 000 items of artillery ammunition of different calibres, and 1 300 missiles by 23 May 2023. On 5 May 2023, the Council adopted another €1 billion assistance measure (Track 2) under the EPF to jointly procure ammunition and missiles from the European defence industry and deliver them to Ukraine. Regarding Track 2, on 20 March 2023, EU Member States and Norway (24 participants by 1 May 2023) signed a European Defence Agency (EDA) project arrangement for the collaborative procurement of ammunition (track two of the three-track proposal). In parallel, complementary projects, led by France and Germany are also ongoing. On 3 May 2023, the Commission proposed an act in support of ammunition production (Track 3). The proposed act is intended to facilitate increased EU production capacity for ammunition and missiles, to ensure that the European defence industry can better support Ukraine and EU Member States in facing the new security environment.²²⁴

2.4.3. EU-NATO cooperation

Greater cooperation between the EU and NATO advanced through two joint declarations in 2016 and 2018. Cooperation covers 74 action points, including cyber, hybrid and terrorism, as well as maritime security, capacity building for partners and traditional military domains. Russia's war against Ukraine has triggered unprecedented momentum in the need for coordination and complementarity between the two organisations, including on military support for Ukraine. The importance of the EU partnership with NATO is reflected in the Strategic Compass and features in the new NATO Strategic Concept (June 2022) and the January 2023 joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation. Sweden and Finland's application to join NATO, also largely a reaction to the security situation brought about by the Russian aggression, led to NATO leaders' historic decision to invite the two countries to become members of the Alliance during the Madrid Summit in June 2022.

²²³ See S. Clapp, [European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act](#), EPRS, European Parliament, May 2023.

²²⁴ S. Clapp, [Regulation establishing the act in support of ammunition production](#), EPRS, European Parliament, June 2023.

Finland officially joined NATO in April 2023. At the time of writing, Türkiye and Hungary have indicated that it may no longer block the ratification of Sweden's NATO accession.²²⁵ NATO's 2022 new Strategic Concept, adopted at the summit refers to the EU as 'a unique and essential partner for NATO' and asserts that 'NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security'. Since Russia's war on Ukraine began, the two organisations have sought to ensure that their responses to the invasion are complementary. For instance, NATO Allies have coordinated weapons deliveries with the EU. It is in this context that the third EU-NATO declaration, signed on 10 January 2023, outlines common threats, areas of cooperation, support for European defence, and is the first to mention China.²²⁶

European Parliament's position

In the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Parliament recommended making swift progress in establishing a defence union by implementing the actions under the Strategic Compass. In that context, Members also called for intensified 'cooperation with like-minded partners around the globe, especially with transatlantic NATO allies, in order to maintain the strongest possible unity in defence of the rules-based international order, thus promoting and defending peace, democratic principles and respect for human rights, and ensuring that economic dependencies do not prevail over the defence of human rights and the values the Union stands for'. In its resolution of 18 January 2023 on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2022, the European Parliament calls on the EU to step up and accelerate its efforts to support Ukraine, not least through the provision of lethal military equipment, 'especially heavy weaponry, needed to win this war'. It welcomes the use of the EPF to support Ukraine and the establishment of the EUMAM Ukraine. Parliament also expresses its support for the new defence initiatives such as the Strategic Compass and advocates the swift implementation of its over 80 concrete deliverables. The report supports the review and reinforcement of all CSDP missions and operations, underlining the need to align these more closely with the needs of the host countries, and calls for more 'robust and flexible mandates' for them. The Parliament calls for security and defence partnerships with like-minded partners and to deepen EU-NATO relations. Finally, it calls for increased parliamentary scrutiny of the CSDP, stressing the need to involve the European Parliament more actively in the CSDP and defence-industrial decision-making, not least in the implementation of the Strategic Compass and the EPF. Parliament also calls for the creation of a fully-fledged Council formation for defence, and a full Parliament committee on security and defence.

See: European Parliament Recommendation to the Council and the Commission Vice President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the EU's Foreign, Security and Defence Policy after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, [2022/2039\(INI\)](#); European Parliament [resolution](#) of 18 January 2023 on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2022 (2022/2050(INI)).

2.5. Addressing cyber (in)security and disruptive technology

2.5.1. Recent developments: New threats require increased resilience

A spike in cyber-attacks accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic, riding the wave of the virus in the information sphere. Cyber criminals took advantage of the millions of people working remotely, and the swift digitalisation of numerous industries' supply-chains led to attacks, disinformation and misinformation dominating the cyber-threat landscape in Europe in 2021 (non-exhaustive list).²²⁷ In

²²⁵ Euronews, [Sweden's NATO bid: Hungary joins Turkey in lifting veto](#), 11 July 2023.

²²⁶ S. Clapp, [The third joint EU-NATO declaration](#), EPoS, European Parliament, February 2023.

²²⁷ ENISA, [ENISA Threat Landscape](#), 2021.

2022, EU Member States faced other threats, including against data and availability,²²⁸ as well as social engineering attacks. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), malware and ransomware attacks increased by 358 % and 435 % respectively in 2020 – and are increasing more swiftly than society can prevent them.²²⁹ The WEF describes cyber threats as a critical short-to mid-term threat globally.²³⁰ While the number of people using the internet in the EU is rapidly growing every year (84 % of Europeans used the internet every day in 2022),²³¹ cyber threats have also increased in sophistication, complexity and impact. Some estimates place the global cost of cybercrime in 2021 at over US\$6 trillion, rising to US\$10.5 trillion by 2025.²³² In 2020-2021, these attacks increasingly targeted digital service providers, public administrations, governments and critical infrastructure.²³³ Cyber incidents can have disastrous consequences, as an attack on Brno University Hospital in Czechia in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak showed. Surgeries were cancelled and patients in need of urgent medical attention had to be rerouted to other hospitals, with a real risk of loss of life.²³⁴ Moreover, the specialised literature often documents that a push for 'cyber sovereignty' can easily escalate – from resistance, to international regulation, into geopolitical tension. Cyber sovereignty, or a digital arms race, could compromise the fragile progress on global cyber norms and even risk resulting in offensive deployment of disruptive technologies in order to 'win the race'. Politicised discussions about 5G deployment and artificial intelligence demonstrate this trend towards geopolitical technological competition.²³⁵ In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine drastically reshaped the threat landscape. The most significant changes concern 'hacktivist' activity – cyber actors conducting operations in concert with kinetic military action, cybercrime, sponsored by nation-state groups taking part in this conflict. In Ukraine, Russian state-sponsored hackers had launched destructive 'wiper' attacks (malware destroying access to files or data) since well before the 2022 invasion. According to one analyst, the Russian war on Ukraine is 'by some measures, the most active digital conflict in history'. These cyber operations affected hundreds of systems in the Ukrainian government, information technology, energy, and financial organisations. The main objective was to deny citizens' access to reliable information and critical life services, to destroy their confidence in the country's leadership.²³⁶

The remaining legal ambiguities in cyberspace could also constitute a threat to peace and security, particularly when malicious operations fall below the threshold of armed conflict. Globally agreed international agreements or binding guidelines on rules of engagement are still lacking.²³⁷ Countries continue to disagree on the applicability of international law when it comes to self-defence and counter-measures in cyberspace.²³⁸ Importantly in this regard, the new 2022 NATO Strategic Concept recognises for the first-time that 'A single or cumulative set of malicious cyber activities ...

²²⁸ Availability is the target of a plethora of threats and attacks, among which Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) stands out.

²²⁹ World Economic Forum, [Global Risks Report, 2022](#).

²³⁰ World Economic Forum, [Global Risks Report, 2022](#).

²³¹ European Commission, [Europeans' attitudes towards cyber security](#), Eurobarometer 499, 2020.

²³² Cybercrime Magazine, [Cybercrime to cost the world \\$10.5 trillion annually by 2025](#), 2020.

²³³ ENISA, [ENISA Threat Landscape](#), 2021.

²³⁴ ZD Net, [Czech hospital hit by cyberattack while in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak](#), 2020.

²³⁵ P. Boucher, N. Bentzen, T. Laćici, T. Madiega, L. Schmertzing and M. Szczepański, [Disruption by technology. Impacts on politics, economics and society](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2020.

²³⁶ J. Przetacznik with S. Tarpova, [Russia's war on Ukraine: Timeline of cyber-attacks](#), EPRS, European Parliament,

²³⁷ Microsoft, [Protecting people in cyberspace: The vital role of the United Nations in 2020](#), 2019.

²³⁸ F. Delerue et al. [The application of international law in cyberspace: is there a European way?](#), EU CyberDirect, 2019.

could reach the level of armed attack and could lead the North Atlantic Council to invoke Article 5 [NATO's collective defence clause] of the North Atlantic Treaty'.²³⁹

Recently, there has been a significant shift in the perception of how regulations affect cyber risks, as business leaders are increasingly conscious that new technologies evolve quickly – and so do cyber-attacks. Accordingly, in 2023, 73 % of business leaders interviewed for the World Economic Forum Global Outlook agreed that cyber and privacy regulations are effective in reducing their organisations' cyber risks. By way of comparison, less than half of them agreed with this statement in 2022.²⁴⁰ Moreover, business and cyber leaders also support effective enforcement of regulatory requirements in order to increase their organisations' resilience. Cybersecurity regulations have thus become a more prominent factor in compliance and board-level conversations across many regions. However, news about cyber incidents still dominate the conversation more than discussions about why they happen and how they could be avoided.

2.5.2. EU cyber action

A 2020 special Eurobarometer survey on European attitudes towards cybersecurity found that the majority of respondents feel that they are not able to sufficiently protect themselves against cybercrime (52 %). However, this is a notable improvement from 2017, when 71 % expressed that concern. Awareness of cybercrime has also risen from 46 % in 2017 to 52 % in 2020.²⁴¹ Cyberspace is now considered the fifth domain of warfare, alongside the traditional sea, land, air and space domains.²⁴² As early as 2016, the EU Global Strategy noted that 'our union is under threat', including cyber threats.²⁴³ The strategy pledged the EU would be a 'forward-looking cyber player' and explicitly sought to support responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, based on existing international law. The 2022 Strategic Compass emphasises that, in a world that is becoming ever more dependent on digital technologies, state and non-state actors increasingly resort to cyber-attacks and that cyberspace has become more contested than ever before. The Strategic Compass notes that attacks are becoming more sophisticated and that EU institutions are increasingly targeted, and stresses that it is therefore essential to 'maintain an open, free, stable and secure cyberspace'.

By 2017, the EU had already undertaken a wide array of cyber measures, under the cybersecurity package. These included: a permanent mandate for the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA); an EU cybersecurity certification framework; guidelines for fully implementing the first piece of EU-wide legislation on cybersecurity (the 2016 Directive on the Security of Network and Information Systems – the NIS Directive); an EU-wide cyber research network; and overall improvements in the responses and deterrence across the EU, among other things.²⁴⁴ The regulation granting ENISA a permanent mandate, entered into force on 17 April 2019. A further recent addition to the resilience toolbox is the EU Toolbox on 5G, which contains measures to

²³⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, [Strategic Concept 2022](#), website.

²⁴⁰ World Economic Forum, [Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2023](#), Insight Report, January 2023.

²⁴¹ European Commission, [Europeans' attitudes towards cyber security](#), Eurobarometer 499, 2020.

²⁴² European External Action Service, [A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#), 2022.

²⁴³ [European Union Global Strategy](#), 2016.

²⁴⁴ European Commission, [Directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union](#) (NIS2 Directive) website; [Joint Communication: Resilience, Deterrence and Defence: Building strong cybersecurity for the EU](#), 2017; [Directive \(EU\) 2022/2555](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union.

strengthens the security of 5G networks and sets restrictions for high-risk suppliers, such as Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

On 24 July 2020, the European Commission set out a new EU Security Union Strategy. It underlined the need to make swift progress on ongoing legislative files such as the new NIS Directive, and emphasised the need to develop a culture of cybersecurity, building security into products and services from the start, and highlighted that the EU must continue to build robust international partnerships and assist partners with their cyber resilience.²⁴⁵ On 16 December 2020, the European Commission and the HR/VP presented a (second) new EU cybersecurity strategy, following an initial strategy adopted in 2013. The new strategy aims to 'bolster Europe's collective resilience against cyber threats' and promote trustworthy services and tools. It puts the EU in the lead of efforts to ensure secure digitalisation and details how the EU can mobilise and enhance tools and resources to become technologically sovereign. It outlines how the EU's values and partnerships can help achieve technological sovereignty. The March 2021 Council conclusions welcomed the 2020 cyber strategy. On 16 December 2020, the Commission also adopted a proposal for a revised Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems (the NIS 2 Directive), which aims at addressing the deficiencies of the previous NIS Directive, to adapt it to current needs and make it future-proof. The Council and Parliament reached a political agreement on the proposal on 13 May 2022. The Commission proposal for a new directive on the resilience of critical entities is closely connected, as all critical entities covered by the critical entities resilience directive will be subject to cyber resilience obligations under the NIS 2 Directive.²⁴⁶ The proposed directive on the resilience of critical entities intends to boost the EU's resilience in 10 critical sectors (energy, transport, banking, financial market infrastructures, health, drinking water, wastewater, digital infrastructure, public administration and space). The provisions include the obligation for Member States to draft strategies to ensure resilience in those sectors and undergo national risk assessments. This new directive was adopted in December 2022.

On 8 June 2021, the Regulation establishing the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre and Network entered into force. The Centre inaugurated its new headquarters in Bucharest in May 2022. Furthermore, a network of 27 national centres, one from each Member State, has been established to boost research excellence and the competitiveness of the Union in the field of cybersecurity.²⁴⁷ As a follow-up to the EU security union strategy, the Commission announced a proposal for an EU-wide Joint Cyber Unit (JCU) on 23 June 2021. The Commission proposes to build the JCU through a gradual and transparent process. The final (fourth) step of the set up process will be completed by June 2023. The JCU will act as a platform to ensure an EU coordinated response to cyber-attacks and crises, as well as assistance in recovery. The EU Strategic Compass set ambitious goals on cyber resilience. These include regular cyber exercises starting from 2022, and further development of the EU's cyber defence policy in 2022, inter alia through boosting research and innovation, stimulating the EU's industrial base and increasing cooperation between the EU's and Member States' cyber defence actors. The Cyber Europe 2022 (CE2022) cyber crisis exercise took place in the summer of 2022, as part of the bi-annual Cyber-Europe series of exercises launched in 2010 (temporarily

²⁴⁵ European Commission, [EU Security Union Strategy](#), 2020; European Commission, Communication on the EU Security Union Strategy [COM/2020/605 final](#).

²⁴⁶ M. Tuominen, [Improving the resilience of critical entities](#), Initial Appraisal of a European Commission Impact Assessment, EPRS, European Parliament, February 2021.

²⁴⁷ [European Cybersecurity Competence Centre and Network](#) website; [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/887](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and the Network of National Coordination Centres. PE/28/2021/INIT

suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions). Specifically, CE2022 planners developed a scenario revolving around healthcare organisations and service providers, including technical incidents inspired by real life.

As for cyber-defence policy implementation, the Commission and the HR/VP put forward a Joint Communication on an EU cyber defence policy in November 2022, to address the deteriorating security environment following Russia's aggression against Ukraine and to boost the EU's capacity to protect its citizens and infrastructure.²⁴⁸ The EU policy on cyber defence is built around four pillars that cover a wide range of initiatives. These should help the EU and Member States to be better able to detect, deter and defend against cyber-attacks, act together for stronger EU cyber defence, secure the defence ecosystem, invest in cyber defence capabilities, and partner to address common challenges. Moreover, the digital Europe programme provides €1.9 billion for investment in cybersecurity capacity and the wide deployment of cybersecurity infrastructures across the EU, for both public administrations and individuals. A new European cyber resilience act was proposed on September 2022,²⁴⁹ aiming at increasing the EU's common approach to cyber infrastructure and standards. On 23 May 2022, the Council approved conclusions on developing the EU's cyber posture, which aim to highlight the EU's determination to provide responses to threat actors seeking to deny the EU a secure and open access to cyberspace and affect its interests, including the security of its partners. The Council calls upon the Commission to propose EU common cybersecurity requirements for, inter alia, connected devices, and stresses the importance of holding regular cyber exercises.²⁵⁰

A further important way in which the EU seeks to bolster its cyber resilience is through PESCO, with 12 projects focused on the cyber domain. The PESCO Cyber Rapid Response Teams and mutual assistance in cyber security (CRRTs) project was the first to be activated in an operational context when cybersecurity experts, pooled from six participating EU Member States, were deployed to assist Ukraine with its cyber defence in February 2022.

On 18 April 2023, the European Commission proposed an EU cyber solidarity act, to improve the response to cyber threats across the EU. The proposal includes plans for a European cybersecurity shield and a comprehensive cyber emergency mechanism to create a better cyber defence.²⁵¹ The Commission also proposed a targeted amendment to the Cybersecurity Act, to make the future adoption of European certification schemes for 'managed security services' possible.²⁵² The Council adopted conclusions on cyber defence on 23 May 2023, emphasising the need for the EU and its Member States to further strengthen cyber resilience and 'enhance its common cyber security and cyber defence against malicious behaviour and acts of aggression in cyberspace'.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ European Commission, [Cyber security policies](#), website.

²⁴⁹ Council of European National Top-Level Domain Registries, [EU Policy Update – Outlook to 2022](#), 2022.

²⁵⁰ Council [conclusions](#) on the development of the European Union's cyber posture - Council conclusions approved by the Council at its meeting on 23 May 2022.

²⁵¹ European Commission, [The EU Cyber Solidarity Act](#), website, June 2023.

²⁵² European Commission, [Cyber: towards stronger EU capabilities for effective operational cooperation, solidarity and resilience](#), press release, April 2023.

²⁵³ Council [Conclusions](#) on the EU Policy on Cyber Defence 9618/23, 22 May 2023.

2.5.3. EU cyber stakeholders

Several Commission Directorate-Generals, including *inter alia* Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) and Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS), work together on cybersecurity policies and on promoting cyber resilience.

Figure 20 – Non-exhaustive mapping of EU cyber stakeholders



*12 projects are cyber-focused while at least 19 others have a cyber component.

**The fund is also geared towards funding cyber projects, among other priority areas.

Source: EPRS.

The EU's cyber landscape also spreads across bodies including ENISA, Europol (especially its Cyber Crime Centre), the EU Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA), the Computer Emergency Response Team, and the Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN). The EEAS and the EDA also play important roles, most notably on cyber defence. All EU Members currently have national cyber strategies and some have also adopted subordinate strategies on cyber defence (see Figure 20 for a non-exhaustive list of EU cyber stakeholders).²⁵⁴

2.5.4. Cyber diplomacy: A European response to a global problem

Diplomacy is always the preferred European response to security matters, including cyber threats. Since 2017, the EU has crafted a 'cyber diplomacy toolbox',²⁵⁵ establishing a framework for a joint diplomatic response to malicious cyber activities. It equips the EU with tools both to react to cyber incidents and to engage in capacity and capability building at home and abroad to ensure cyber resilience. In the Strategic Compass, EU leaders agreed to strengthen the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox in 2022, *inter alia* by exploring different response measures. The Council called upon 'the High Representative, in cooperation with the Commission, to identify possible EU joint responses to cyberattacks' within the framework of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox in its conclusions on the EU

²⁵⁴ ENISA, National Cyber Security Strategies.

²⁵⁵ Council of the EU, [Framework for a Joint EU Diplomatic Response to Malicious Cyber Activities](#), 2017.

EU cyber support to Ukraine and Moldova

Both Moldova and Ukraine faced intensified Russian cyber-attacks in the run-up and following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. The EU has therefore sought to support the cyber resilience of both countries. An EPF assistance measure of €40 million was allocated to the Moldovan armed forces, intended to strengthen cyber-defence capacities, *inter alia*. A rapid response measure under the NDICI supports national efforts to increase cyber resilience. EUPM Moldova, launched in May 2023, also contributes to strengthening Moldovan cyber resilience. The EU has supported Ukraine in countering cyber-attacks, *inter alia* by launching the EU–Ukraine cyber-dialogue in June 2021, by strengthening the operational capacity of the country's telecommunications services, and combating disinformation. The EU has delivered equipment and software worth €10 million and provided a further €19 million to support resilient digital transformation. The EU activated PESCO's Cyber Rapid Response Teams for the first time in an operational context in February 2022.

tailored partnerships in cyber defence.

For the first time, EU Member States decided to enact sanctions targeting cyber perpetrators associated with the Russian, Chinese and North Korean governments in July 2020.²⁵⁶ A total of eight individuals and four entities responsible or involved in cyber-attacks affecting the EU and its members have been sanctioned to date. Sanctions include an asset freeze and travel ban, and were extended for a further three years on 16 May 2022.²⁶¹ An essential part of the sanctions process is attribution – identifying the origin and assigning blame for an attack – which has been particularly contentious when it comes to cyber-attacks. One analysis of the first ever EU cyber sanctions attacks, found that the process of attribution is often 'fragmented and slow'.²⁶² It is therefore significant that, on 10 May 2022, the EU and several international partners condemned, and thereby attributed to Russia, a malicious cyber-attack against Ukraine (targeting the 'KA-SAT' satellite network).²⁶³

cyber posture of 23 May 2022. Besides the aim to streamline cyber diplomacy across policies and engagements, the EU has more structured cyber cooperation²⁵⁶ with its 10 strategic partners.²⁵⁷ The EU also has cyber engagements with the African Union and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as throughout its eastern and southern neighbourhoods.²⁵⁸ Since 2016, cyber has also become a key area for EU-NATO cooperation.²⁵⁹ The third joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation in January 2023, notes that 'tangible results' have been achieved in countering cyber threats and that existing cooperation will be further strengthened. The 2020 cyber strategy emphasises the EU's intention to work with partners to 'promote a political model and vision of cyberspace grounded in the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic values'. The 2022 EU cyber defence policy also emphasises building on existing cyber dialogues with partner countries to build

²⁵⁶ T. Renard, [EU cyber partnerships: Assessing the EU strategic partnerships with third countries in the cyber domain](#), European Politics and Society, January 2018.

²⁵⁷ Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the USA.

²⁵⁸ EU CyberDirect, [Cyber diplomacy in the EU](#), 2019.

²⁵⁹ T. Laćici, [Understanding EU-NATO cooperation. Theory and practice](#), EPRS, 2020.

²⁶⁰ T. Laćici, [EU cyber sanctions: Moving beyond words](#), EPRS, 2020.

²⁶¹ Council of the EU, [Cyber-attacks: Council extends sanctions regime until 18 May 2025](#), press release, 16 May 2022.

²⁶² A. Bendiek, M. Schulze, [Attribution: A Major Challenge for EU Cyber Sanctions](#), Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2021.

²⁶³ Council of the EU, [Russian cyber operations against Ukraine: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU](#), press release, 10 May 2022.

European Parliament's position

The European Parliament has advocated robust EU measures in the cyber realm. In January 2020, it called for increased EU effort to confront cyber threats, deeming the active cooperation between the EU and NATO as vital, and noted that cyber-attacks 'could constitute sufficient ground for a Member State to invoke the EU Solidarity Clause (Article 222 of the TFEU)'. In January 2021, Parliament highlighted 'the urgent need to further integrate cyber aspects into the EU's crisis management systems' and called for greater EU coordination on the collective attribution of cyber-attacks. Parliament adopted a report on the state of EU cyber capabilities on 7 October 2021, in which it inter alia underlined the urgent need to strengthen Member State military cyber defence capabilities and noted the necessity for coordinated Union-level responses to cyber-attacks. Parliament called on the EEAS and the Commission to develop comprehensive cyber-resilience measures in cooperation with the Member States. It also welcomed that the Strategic Compass will prioritise guiding capability needs, including in cyber defence, which will enhance EU cyber resilience. It reiterated the importance of EU-NATO cooperation and called for close coordination with the UN and OSCE and other like-minded partners. In the March 2022 final report of its Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (INGE), Parliament called for new counter- and deterrence measures to ensure cybersecurity and resilience against cyberattacks and the establishment of a cybersecurity emergency response fund. In Parliament's January 2023 resolution on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2022, Members welcomed the communication on an EU cyber defence policy and stressed the need to further develop the EU's cyber-defence policy and capabilities, including through cyber rapid response teams. It urged the EU to strengthen security cooperation on cyber security with Ukraine and Moldova. Furthermore, in a European Parliament resolution of 18 January 2023 on the implementation of common foreign and security policy – annual report 2022, Parliament underlined the importance of stepping up EU efforts, in cooperation with NATO and other international partners, to address and foster resilience against cyber-attacks. It also called on the EU to develop its digital sovereignty, in particular in cybersecurity.

See also: European Parliament [resolution](#) of 15 January 2020 on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report (2019/2135(INI)); European Parliament [resolution](#) of 20 January 2021 on the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – annual report 2020 (2020/2207(INI)); European Parliament [resolution](#) of 7 October 2021 on the state of EU cyber defence capabilities (2020/2256(INI)); European Parliament [resolution](#) of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2020/2268(INI)); European Parliament [resolution](#) of 18 January 2023 on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2022 (2022/2050(INI)); and European Parliament [resolution](#) of 18 January 2023 on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report 2022 (2022/2048(INI)).

2.6. Understanding disinformation and foreign interference

2.6.1. Recent developments: From infodemic to information war

Foreign interference and manipulation, including disinformation, have emerged as a rapidly growing political and security challenge for the EU and its immediate neighbourhood (Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries), as well as for global security and stability. The 2022 Strategic Compass paints a sombre picture of a world in which disinformation, along other hybrid strategies such cyberattacks, direct political interference and economic coercion, is used as a tool of power by both state and non-state actors to undermine the EU, requiring a swift and forceful response.

While foreign interference and disinformation operations have always been part of the geopolitical playbook,²⁶⁴ new technologies and the internet culture have reshaped their scale, nature and potential reach, becoming a risk even for mature democracies – as the 2016 US elections, 2017

²⁶⁴ T. Rid, [Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare](#), Macmillan, 2020.

elections in France and the COVID-19 'infodemic' demonstrated.²⁶⁵ Recent ground-breaking artificial intelligence (AI) developments in large language models (LLMs), such as Chat GPT, will likely further increment the reach and effectiveness of foreign interference operations in an exponential – and as yet unknown – manner.

Russia's full-scale assault on Ukraine and the subsequent polarisation of the geopolitical landscape has raised the stakes – and the level of threat to democratic processes in the EU and beyond. The 'weaponisation of everything' – food, energy, migration, human rights, science and historic memory – has been transposed to and exploited in the information sphere, becoming part of the toolkit of foreign interference and manipulation.

Russia is a well-known player in the field of hybrid warfare, disinformation and influence operations, and its techniques and narratives are well documented.²⁶⁶ Already ahead of the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia had significantly stepped up its coordinated campaign of disinformation and manipulation, both domestically and externally, seeking to shape the narrative around its revisionist policy in the region, justify its aggression and destabilise Western opponents. The infamous Internet Research Agency,²⁶⁷ as well as other entities created by the Wagner group's owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has been one tool in this campaign, but not the only one. Since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Kremlin's disinformation, manipulation and state propaganda activities have reached unprecedented levels, creating an alternative reality where the alleged 'facts' behind the statements are unimportant and change with the circumstances. The real objective of the 'information war' waged by Russia is not to convince audiences, but to paralyse them.²⁶⁸ Indeed, the propaganda tools used by the Kremlin are aimed at creating a domestic cognitive dissonance of such proportions that it blocks any further analysis and neutralises responses. Externally, the perversion of facts by Russian media is so staggering that often outside observers' efforts are solely focused on unveiling or debunking the false information, rather than on the crimes it is trying to cover. As an illustration, pro-Kremlin analysts and mass media have created a new Russian neologism: they now use the word *Bucha*²⁶⁹ sarcastically, as a synonym for 'staged atrocity' or 'fake news'.²⁷⁰

2.6.2. Online disinformation across the world – Figures and societal perception

Research undertaken by the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) in 2020 found evidence of organised social media manipulation in 81 countries, significantly more than in previous years.²⁷¹ Although the

²⁶⁵ See: M.-E. Dowling, [Democracy under siege: foreign interference in a digital era](#), Australian Journal of International Affairs, Volume 75, 2021, Issue 4; Federal Bureau of Investigation, [Russian interference in 2016 U.S. Elections](#), United States Department of Justice, website; H. A. Conley, J.-B. Jeangène Vilmer, [Successfully Countering Russian Electoral Interference](#), Center for Strategic & International Studies, June 2018; World Health Organization, [Infodemic](#), website; OECD, [AI language models: Technological, socio-economic and policy considerations](#), OECD Digital Economy Papers, No 352, April 2023.

²⁶⁶ See [EUvsDisinfo](#), website.

²⁶⁷ J. Aro, [Putin's Trolls](#), Ig Publishing, 2022 (Original title: *Putinin trollit*, Publisher Johnny Kniga, 2019).

²⁶⁸ J. McGlynn, *Russia's war*, Wiley, March 2023.

²⁶⁹ The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine [report](#) established that in the initial weeks of the invasion of Ukraine, Russian armed forces summarily executed or carried out attacks on individuals leading to the deaths of hundreds of civilians in several locations, including Bucha, with serious evidence of war crimes having been committed.

²⁷⁰ J. McGlynn, *Russia's war*, Wiley, March 2023.

²⁷¹ In each of these countries, researchers found that at least one political party or government agency was involved in using social media to influence public opinion. See: [2019](#) and [2020](#) Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation, Oxford Internet Institute.

very nature of information manipulation makes it difficult to identify the actors behind the disinformation campaigns, Facebook and Twitter found evidence of seven states engaging in information operations to influence foreign audiences in 2019: beyond the best-known sources of information manipulation, Russia and China,²⁷² were India, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. The report also evidences the monetisation of political influence: more than 65 firms offering computational propaganda (algorithmic and other services distributing misleading information on social media) as a service on behalf of a political actor have operated in 48 countries since 2018, for an estimated payment of US\$60 million.

The Influence Operations Report published by Facebook in 2021 shows that Russia and Iran were behind most of the coordinated manipulative operations in the platform, and the US one of the main targets, although it should be emphasised that US domestic actors also played an important role in the US (dis)-information sphere.²⁷³

Research in recent years has been less focused on contouring the global scale of the disinformation phenomenon, concentrating instead on unveiling the mechanisms, financial incentives and behavioural patterns exploited by the actors involved, as well as on societal perceptions.

Forbidden Stories, a network of more than 100 investigative journalists from 30 media outlets, published the conclusions of over a year of research, the 'Jorge Team Files', on 15 February 2023.²⁷⁴ Their investigation describes the activities of private firms, some of them based in Israel, in orchestrating disinformation campaigns at large scale for substantial sums of money, including manipulation operations ahead of elections. Investigating this network, Forbidden Stories repeatedly confronted the blurred lines between state and private companies, and the interconnected worlds of intelligence, influence and cyber-surveillance. Other researchers have unveiled the intricacies of autocratic regimes' proxy activity and actors that project their narratives and discredit opponents, including networks of allegedly fake NGOs, think tanks and election observers.²⁷⁵

Societal perception of the disinformation phenomenon is also evolving, and compelling. Recent polls evidence a growing awareness of the phenomenon, which can be seen as a positive trend, while simultaneously pointing to a worrying mounting distrust in media and governmental sources.

Some key figures:

- ✓ According to a 2022 Harvard study, 58.5 % of regular internet and social media users across 146 countries express concern about encountering misinformation online.²⁷⁶
- ✓ The Edelman Trust Barometer 2022 shows that 76 % of people across 27 countries with high internet penetration worry about false information or fake news used as a

²⁷² See: M. Elswah, P. N. Howard, '[Anything that Causes Chaos': The Organizational Behavior of Russia Today \(RT\)](#)', *Journal of Communication*, Volume 70, Issue 5, October 2020, pp. 623-645; J. Parelló-Plesner, B. Li, [The Chinese Communist Party's Foreign Interference Operations: How the U.S. and Other Democracies Should Respond](#), Hudson Institute, June 2018.

²⁷³ N. McCarthy, [Russia & Iran Are Facebook's Top Sources Of Disinformation](#), Statista, 27 May 2021.

²⁷⁴ Forbidden Stories, '[Team Jorge': in the heart of a global disinformation machine](#)', website.

²⁷⁵ For more information, see the investigation by Dr L. Morgenbesser, Associate Professor, School of Government and International Relations, [Griffith University](#), in particular his statement during the Special Committee on Foreign Interference (ING2) and Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) joint [hearing](#) at the European Parliament, 25 May 2023.

²⁷⁶ A. Knuutila, L.-M. Neudert, P. N. Howard, [Who is afraid of fake news? Modeling risk perceptions of misinformation in 142 countries](#), *Misinformation Review*, Harvard Kennedy School, April 2022.

weapon, and 66 % believe that journalists, governments and political leaders purposely mislead them.²⁷⁷

The Media Literacy Index 2023,²⁷⁸ which measures the potential resilience to disinformation of 41 states across Europe, puts Finland at the top (most resilient, with a score of 74/100), followed by Denmark, Norway, Estonia and Sweden. On the other end of the spectrum (i.e. countries most vulnerable to the effects of disinformation), Georgia finds itself at the bottom of the ranking, with a score of 20 points, preceded in ascending order by Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As regards perceptions amongst the EU population, a July 2022 Flash Eurobarometer survey shows that 28% of respondents said they had been exposed to disinformation and 'fake news' very often or often over the past week. A majority of respondents expressed confidence in their ability to spot disinformation and fake news: 12% felt 'very confident' and 52% 'somewhat confident'. The level of confidence corresponded with the level of education – the higher the education level, the higher the confidence – and decreased with age.²⁷⁹

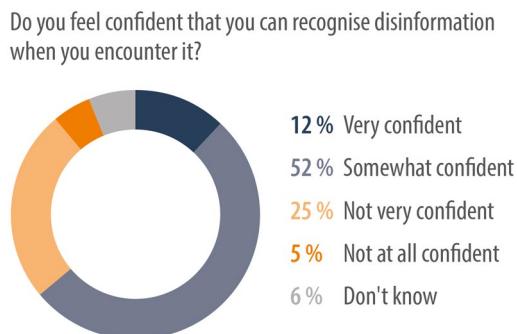
Against this backdrop, EU institutions and Member States have made significant efforts to understand the contours of existing threats, as well as to identify and display appropriate responses.

2.6.3. Disinformation and foreign interference: Shared taxonomy for an evolving landscape

Since the early days, when the term 'fake news'²⁸⁰ was the most commonly used to define what later became 'disinformation', considerable effort has been made to advance towards a taxonomy of shared definitions, able to encapsulate the evolving nature and sophistication of the phenomenon and to enable an appropriate response. The EU and its Member States have contributed to this discussion, which goes beyond academia and has acquired normative and operational implications.

The 2018 Commission communication on 'Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach' defined disinformation as 'verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm'.²⁸¹

Figure 21- Recognising disinformation in the EU



Source: [Flash Eurobarometer](#), July 2022.

²⁷⁷ [2022 Edelman Trust Barometer](#).

²⁷⁸ [Media Literacy Index 2023](#).

²⁷⁹ European Parliament, Flash Eurobarometer, [News & Media Survey 2022](#).

²⁸⁰ L. Haiden, J. Althuis, [Fake News. A Roadmap](#), NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, February 2018 and [A Brief History of Fake News](#), Center for Information Technology and Society at UC Santa Barbara, website.

²⁸¹ European Commission communication, [Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach](#), COM(2018) 236 final. The communication further notes 'public harm comprises threats to democratic political and policy-making processes

After the adoption of the 2022 EU Strategic Compass, the term 'foreign information manipulation and interference' (FIMI) was coined. This 'describes a mostly non-illegal pattern of behaviour that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures, and political processes. Such activity is manipulative in character, conducted in an intentional and coordinated manner. Actors of such activity can be state or non-state actors, including their proxies inside and outside of their own territory'.²⁸² The first EEAS report on FIMI, which introduces and explains the notion, notes that FIMI overlaps with the notion of disinformation, but is at the same time narrower and broader. 'It is narrower in that it only refers to information manipulation by actors foreign to the EU and its Member States, thus not applying to domestic sources. It is broader insofar as it does not require the information spread by threat actors to be verifiably false or misleading. The deciding factor for whether something can be considered FIMI is not false or misleading content, but deceptive or manipulative behaviour.' An illustrative example would be 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour' (CIB) on social media platforms, where actors aim to portray a particular narrative to be more widely supported than it is, by amplifying it through fake and deceptive social media accounts.²⁸³ The information spread by these networks does not need to be verifiably false or misleading to constitute a FIMI incident, which makes FIMI broader than the classical definition of disinformation.

As defined above, FIMI therefore cannot be taken as a synonym of 'foreign interference',²⁸⁴ since it does not cover a whole other range of hybrid threats in domains beyond the information sphere. Hybrid threats, as conceptualised by the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE)²⁸⁵ are 'actions conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by influencing its decision-making at the local, regional, state or institutional level. Such actions are coordinated and synchronised, deliberately targeting democratic states' and institutions' vulnerabilities in the political, economic, military, civil or information domains'.

Discussions are ongoing²⁸⁶ on whether a normative, exhaustive definition of the term 'foreign interference' at EU level is needed. Meanwhile, foreign interference in the EU can be broadly understood as 'any illegitimate interference by foreign powers in the democratic and political processes of the EU and Member States', according to the Chatham House study²⁸⁷ undertaken for the European Parliament. This means influencing their decision-making at any level, and negatively impacting values, procedures and the legitimacy of political processes. Foreign interference would include, according to the above study:

- covert or coercive interference by a foreign power in the political or governmental system from within, such as politicians and officials who are working for or under the influence of overseas regimes;

as well as public goods such as the protection of EU citizens' health, the environment or security. Disinformation does not include reporting errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary'.

²⁸² EEAS, [First EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats: Towards a framework for networked defence](#), February 2023.

²⁸³ J. Aro, [Putin's Trolls](#), Ig Publishing 2022 (Original title: *Putinin trollit*, Publisher Johnny Kniga, 2019).

²⁸⁴ N. Bentzen, [Foreign interference in democracies Understanding the threat, and evolving responses](#), EPRS, European Parliament, September 2020.

²⁸⁵ The [European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats](#) (Hybrid CoE).

²⁸⁶ K. Berzina, E. Soula, [Conceptualizing Foreign Interference in Europe](#), Alliance for Securing Democracy, GMF, March 2020.

²⁸⁷ K. Jones, [Legal loopholes and the risk of foreign interference](#), Policy Department for External Relations, Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament, January 2023.

- influence on the political system from without, such as abuse of the lobbying system, corruption, espionage, cyber-attacks; and
- manipulative influence on public engagement or views, through online disinformation and manipulation campaigns.

Foreign interference can be conducted by state or non-state actors,²⁸⁸ and operates in the interface between legality and illegality, exploiting the blurred lines between domestic and foreign actors.²⁸⁹

2.7. EU response to foreign interference and information manipulation

In recent years, the EU has stepped up its efforts to counter disinformation and foreign manipulation, later labelled as FIMI²⁹⁰ (see Figure 22). In September 2015, the East StratCom Task Force (ESTF) was set up under the EEAS, to raise awareness about pro-Kremlin disinformation, information manipulation and interference, exposing attacks on the EU, its Member States and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. To date, the Task Force has collected, analysed and debunked over 15 000 disinformation stories in its EUvsDisinfo database. The EEAS later added two further task forces – Western Balkans, and South (focused on the Middle East and North Africa, and the Persian Gulf region) – in charge of shaping strategic communication with neighbouring countries.²⁹¹ Alongside the StratCom Task Forces, the CSDP missions deployed abroad are also becoming increasingly instrumental in identifying and responding to disinformation attacks.²⁹² Within the EU, a network of EU anti-disinformation hubs, covering all 27 EU Member States, has been set up as part of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), an independent platform addressing disinformation in Europe.²⁹³

²⁸⁸ M. Normark, Hybrid CoE Strategic Analysis 15: [How states use non-state actors. A modus operandi for covert state subversion and malign networks](#), 12 April 2019.

²⁸⁹ S. Vériter, [European Democracy and Counter-Disinformation: Toward a New Paradigm?](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2021.

²⁹⁰ EEAS, [Tackling Disinformation, Foreign Information Manipulation & Interference](#), October 2021.

²⁹¹ EEAS, [Tackling disinformation: Information on the work of the EEAS Strategic Communication division and its task forces \(SG.STRAT.2\)](#), October 2021.

²⁹² O. Fridman, V. Baudais, G. Gigitashvili, [Enhancing the capabilities of CSDP missions and operations to identify and respond to disinformation attacks](#), Policy Department for External Relations, Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament, February 2023.

²⁹³ See: European Commission, [EU anti-disinformation Hubs now extend to all EU countries](#), press release, 1 December 2022 and European Commission, [European Digital Media Observatory \(EDMO\)](#), website.

The European democracy action plan adopted in December 2020²⁹⁴ was another important step, envisaging new legislation on political advertising, measures to support media freedom and pluralism and to counter disinformation. Since then, the Digital Services Act (DSA) entered into force on 16 November 2022, imposing a range of obligations on online intermediary services, including search engines and social media platforms, to ensure transparency, accountability and responsibility for their actions.²⁹⁵ The Code of Practice on Disinformation, strengthened in 2022, includes additional voluntary commitments by its 44 signatories to date.²⁹⁶ The Commission plans to put forward a defence of democracy package,²⁹⁷ including a legislative proposal designed to strengthen the resilience of the EU democratic space to foreign interference (to curb the influence exerted through covert interest representation services paid for or directed from outside the EU) and other non-legislative support measures. Following debates in the European Parliament, as well as concerns raised by number of civil society organisations regarding the potential restriction of civic space in the EU and beyond, it was decided that a full impact assessment of the proposal will be undertaken.

Figure 22 – Overview of EU joint and coordinated action against disinformation



Main sources: European Commission, [Defending European democracy – Communication](#), website, EEAS [Tackling Disinformation, Foreign Information Manipulation & Interference](#), website. Graphic: EPRS.

The Strategic Compass, sets ambitious goals for developing tools to increase resilience against disinformation and foreign manipulation. A central measure is the creation of an EU hybrid toolbox – a set of measures to respond to, detect and analyse such threats, among other things. The EU hybrid toolbox on foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) should, among other things: strengthen the EU's ability to detect, analyse and respond to such threats; as well as to deal with ways to impose costs on malign disinformation actors – including the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), the rapid alert system (RAS), the deployment of EU hybrid rapid-response teams and the development of an EU cyber-defence policy.²⁹⁸ In addition, as part of its sweeping sanctions on Russia following the Russian war on Ukraine, the EU has already included Kremlin

²⁹⁴ European Commission, [Communication on the European democracy action plan](#) COM/202/790 final, December 2020.

²⁹⁵ T. Madiega, [Digital Services Act: Application timeline](#), EPRS, European Parliament, November 2022.

²⁹⁶ European Commission, [2022 Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation](#), June 2022; [signatories](#). Twitter was initially a signatory but [withdrew](#) in May 2023.

²⁹⁷ European Commission, [Defending European democracy – Communication](#), website.

²⁹⁸ K. Lasoen, [Realising the EU Hybrid Toolbox: opportunities and pitfalls](#), Clingendael Policy Brief, December 2022.

propagandists on the sanctions list, and suspended the broadcasting of major state-owned Russian broadcasters, such as Sputnik and Russia Today, in the EU.²⁹⁹

Furthermore the Anti-Coercion Instrument (ACI),³⁰⁰ on which the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement in June 2023, aims to act as a deterrent against any potential economic coercion, enabling the EU to better defend its interests and those of its Member States on the global stage.

In Ukraine, the RAS has been working closely with Ukrainian authorities to address disinformation campaigns that threaten the country's democracy and stability. Ukraine has been a particular focus of the RAS, due to its vulnerability to disinformation campaigns, particularly those originating from Russia. The system has supported the development of fact-checking projects run by Ukrainian media outlets, and has facilitated the sharing of best practices between fact-checking organisations in Ukraine and other EU Member States. It has also organised training sessions and workshops for Ukrainian journalists, civil society organisations, and government officials. These sessions have focused on building awareness about disinformation campaigns, improving media literacy, and developing effective strategies for countering disinformation.

See: EU NEIGHBOURS east, [Blog: Cooperation between the EU and Ukraine to fight disinformation during wartime](#), Young Europeans Ambassadors blog, 31 May 2023.

Beyond the EU, other international organisations have also undertaken actions to fight against disinformation and foreign interference. The UN, in particular, presented³⁰¹ the Policy Brief on Information Integrity in June 2023,³⁰² a first step towards a UN Code of Conduct, to be developed under the authority of the Secretary-General. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom CoE) was established³⁰³ in January 2014 in Riga (Latvia), to provide a meaningful contribution to NATO's efforts in the strategic communications capabilities field, considered an integral part of the efforts to achieve the Alliance's political and military objectives.

2.7.1. The role of the European Parliament

The European Parliament plays its part in the fight against foreign interference and disinformation. Besides the establishment of Special Committees on Foreign Interference (see below), the Parliament set up a Committee of Inquiry to investigate the use of Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware (PEGA). The PEGA committee's final report denouncing illicit use of spyware systems in a number of countries and issuing concrete recommendations to Member States, was adopted in plenary on 15 June 2023.³⁰⁴

Special Committee for foreign interference in all democratic processes in the EU, including disinformation (INGE)

Parliament established its Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation (INGE) on 18 June 2020, tasking it with drawing up a

²⁹⁹ A. Caprile, A. Delivorias, [EU sanctions on Russia: Overview, impact, challenges](#); EPRS, European Parliament, March 2023.

³⁰⁰ European Commission, [Press corner](#), 6 June 2023.

³⁰¹ See [statement](#) and [press-conference](#) by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

³⁰² United Nations, Our Common Agenda, [Information Integrity on Digital Platforms](#), Policy Brief-8, June 2023.

³⁰³ It should be noted that the [NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence](#) is a multinational and NATO-accredited international military organisation that is neither part of the NATO Command Structure, nor subordinate to any other NATO entity. As such, the Centre does not therefore speak for NATO.

³⁰⁴ Text adopted, see European Parliament, [Spyware: MEPs call for full investigations and safeguards to prevent abuse](#), press release, 15 June 2023.

report of factual findings and recommendations for measures and initiatives to be taken to counter foreign interference and disinformation. After 18 months, including 50 hearings with over 130 invitees, including 5 Commissioners, the committee's final resolution was adopted on 9 March 2022, just days after the Russian Federation began its war of aggression on Ukraine. The resolution identified and mapped the threat of foreign interference in all its forms, including disinformation, manipulation of social media platforms and advertising systems, cyber-attacks, threats against and the harassment of journalists, covert political funding, and elite capture and co-optation. It provided both a diagnosis of the EU's vulnerabilities and recommendations for strengthening the EU's resilience, such as a specific sanctions regime against foreign interference and disinformation campaigns.³⁰⁵

Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (ING2)

On 10 March 2022, Parliament decided to set up a new Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (ING2). The new committee was tasked with following up on the previous INGE report and identifying 'the appropriate legal basis for any necessary legal acts', to prepare the ground for 'permanent EU institutional solutions to address foreign malicious interference and disinformation', not least in the run-up to the 2024 European elections. On 14 February 2023, following alleged cases of corruption and foreign interference affecting some Members of the European Parliament (currently under investigation), Parliament decided to assign an additional responsibility and renamed it the 'Special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and the strengthening of integrity, transparency and accountability in the European Parliament'. Since its constitutive meeting, ING2 has focused predominantly on Russian and Chinese foreign interference operations. The final resolution issued from the ING2 report was adopted in plenary on 1 June 2023, with a substantial majority. It includes further recommendations for the EU's coordinated strategy against disinformation; resilience-building; foreign interference; cybersecurity; interference during electoral processes; covert funding of political activities by foreign actors and donors; deterrence, attribution and collective countermeasures, including sanctions; and neighbourhood policy, global cooperation, and multilateralism. Among other recommendations, it calls on the Commission to develop an effective defence of democracy package, taking the final proposals from the Conference on the Future of Europe into account.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ See: European Parliament [resolution](#) of 18 June 2020 setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office; [INGE Committee](#) webpage; European Parliament [resolution](#) of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2020/2268(INI)); M. Russell, [Foreign interference in EU democratic processes](#), EPRS, European Parliament, March 2022.

³⁰⁶ See: European Parliament [decision](#) of 10 March 2022 on setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2), and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office (2022/2585(RSO)); [ING2 Special Committee](#), website; European Parliament [resolution](#) of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2022/2075(INI)); European Parliament, [MEPs call for coordinated EU strategy against foreign interference](#), press releases, 26 April 2023; A. Caprile, [Foreign interference in EU democratic processes: Second report](#), May 2023; S. Kotanidis, [Conference on the Future of Europe: Overview of the final proposals](#), EPRS, European Parliament, November 2022.

2.8. Combating terrorism

2.8.1. Jihadist attacks – Still the greatest terrorist threat to the EU

Lone actors associated with jihadist and right-wing violent extremism currently pose the biggest threat as regards terrorist and violent extremism attacks in the EU.³⁰⁷ Since 2020, most jihadism-inspired attacks in the EU have taken the form of an assault in public places targeting civilians, carried out by an individual acting alone.³⁰⁸ Jihadists in the EU continue to be strongly influenced by propaganda posted online by jihadist terrorist groups outside the EU, which confirms the crucial role that the internet continues to play in enabling violent extremists to spread their propaganda among potentially vulnerable and receptive audiences.³⁰⁹ Both ISIL/Da'esh and the al-Qaeda network continue to incite lone-actor attacks in Western countries, demonstrating the close interlinks between EU external and internal security. Religiously-inspired extremists were particularly encouraged by the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic provided the background to violent anti-coronavirus and anti-government extremism. Experts believe that the combination of social isolation and more time spent online during the pandemic exacerbated the risk posed by violent extremist propaganda and terrorist content online.³¹⁰

In 2021, the EU took an important step to address the dissemination of terrorist content online.³¹¹ Competent authorities in the Member States now have the power to issue removal orders to hosting service providers, requiring them to remove terrorist content or disable access to it in all Member States. Internet platforms must then remove or disable access to the content within one hour. The rules apply to all providers offering services in the EU, whether or not they have their main establishment in an EU Member State. In 2021, the EU also continued to reinforce its framework for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. The new rules include measures on crypto-assets, extending the obligation to report suspicious transactions to such assets and introducing a ban on anonymous crypto-wallets.

With large numbers of EU citizens who joined ISIL/Da'esh – and their descendants – still abroad, foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) returning from Syria and Iraq continue to pose a challenge. In 2021, the EU placed particular emphasis on preventing the further radicalisation of children and women returnees, with the publication of guidelines for a coordinated EU approach to the prevention of radicalisation.³¹² There are concerns that the difficult conditions that foreign fighters and their families experience in prisons and camps in North-East Syria could be a factor in further radicalisation, leading to calls to provide these foreign fighters with humanitarian aid and support. To date, EU Member States have repatriated an estimated 515 women and children from camps, prisons, and other detention facilities in northeast Syria.

Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in September 2021, the Council published a counter-terrorism action plan on Afghanistan. The action plan identifies four objectives: to prevent jihadists

³⁰⁷ Europol, [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), July 2022.

³⁰⁸ European Commission, [Third progress report on the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy](#), December 2021.

³⁰⁹ Europol, [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), July 2021.

³¹⁰ Europol, [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), July 2022.

³¹¹ K. Luyten, [Addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online](#), July 2021.

³¹² European Commission, [Strategic orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalisation for 2021](#), February 2021.

from infiltrating the EU by improving security checks; to stop Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorist organisations;³¹³ to monitor and counter propaganda and mobilisation of the Jihadi ecosystem; and to tackle organised crime as a source of terrorist financing.

Parts of Africa have become a new global hotspot for jihadist terrorist activity.³¹⁴ Local armed groups have increasingly developed strong Salafi jihadist ideologies and forged ties with jihadist movements predominantly active in the Middle East – al-Qaeda and ISIL/Da'esh. By way of example, experts report that violence linked to militant Islamic groups rose 97 % in Mali³¹⁵ in 2022, compared to 2020, with deaths resulting from this violence more than doubling in 2022.³¹⁶

The Global Terrorism Index 2023 describes the Sahel region in sub-Saharan Africa as the 'new epicentre of terrorism', with the region accounting for 43 % of terrorism deaths in 2022, compared to 1 % in 2007.³¹⁷ The spike in violence attributed to jihadist groups and their ties to foreign movements has prompted international stakeholders, including the EU, to launch counterterrorism operations, alongside local actors. The EU supports the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which the G5 Sahel countries Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali,³¹⁸ Mauritania and Niger launched in 2017, with the aim of fighting terrorism and organised crime in the region. The EU has also deployed four CSDP missions in the Sahel, EUCAP-Sahel Niger (2012), EUTM-Mali (2013), EUCAP-Sahel Mali (2014) and the EUMPM (military partnership mission) in Niger (2023), along with a regional advisory and coordination cell (RACC) based in Nouakchott (2019). In March 2020, 11 EU Member States launched the Takuba common European intervention in the Sahel to fight alongside the Malian army.³¹⁹ The EU also supports the Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (which supports the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group in Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger). However, following coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, the security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate. This has prompted the EU to suspend its operations in Mali.³²⁰ France, which launched its own counter-terrorism operation in the Sahel, Barkhane, in 2014, decided to withdraw its military resources from Mali, together with European States and Canada operating alongside Barkhane and within the Takuba Task Force. These states have agreed nonetheless to continue their joint action against terrorism in the Sahel region, including in Niger and in the West African coastal countries.³²¹ This led to the creation of EUMPM-Niger, to support the capacity building of the Niger Armed Forces.³²² In 2021, the EU also deployed a military training mission to Mozambique (EUTM

³¹³ According to a UN [report](#) published in early June 2022, al-Qaeda has once more found a haven in Afghanistan under the Taliban and 'increased freedom of action', with the potential to launch new long-distance attacks in coming years.

³¹⁴ B. Stanicek, M. Betant-Rasmussen, [Jihadist networks in sub-Saharan Africa](#), September 2021.

³¹⁵ [Malian Military Junta Scuttles Security Partnerships while Militant Violence Surges](#), Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 27 February 2023.

³¹⁶ M. Harris, C. Doxsee, J. Thompson, [The End of Operation Barkhane and the Future of Counterterrorism in Mali](#), Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2022.

³¹⁷ Institute for Economics and Peace, [Global Terrorism Index 2023](#), March 2023.

³¹⁸ In May 2022, Mali [announced](#) that it was pulling out of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

³¹⁹ Sahel Coalition, [The Takuba Task Force is launched](#), 3 June 2020.

³²⁰ Security Council Report, [Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force](#), Monthly Forecast, May 2022.

³²¹ [Joint declaration on the fight against the terrorist threat and the support to peace and security in the Sahel and West Africa](#), 17 February 2022.

³²² B. Bilquin, E. Pichon, [Mission de partenariat militaire de l'UE au Niger](#), EPRS, European Parliament, February 2023.

Mozambique), to help address the terrorist insurgency in the north of the country. Part of the funding for these counterterrorism operations has come from the European Peace Facility.³²³

2.8.2. Terrorism in the world

Measured in terms of individual deaths, the fight against terrorism has recorded significant successes over the past few years. According to the 2023 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), in 2022, deaths from terrorism fell for the seventh consecutive year, from a high of 33 555 in 2014, to 6 701 in 2022.³²⁴ The number of attacks has also fallen – by 28%, to 3 955 –, but attacks have become more deadly. Nevertheless, terrorism is still widespread, and some 42 countries recorded at least one death from terrorism in 2022.

Recent developments

Russia's war on Ukraine has focused minds on risks emanating from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) substances, including the risk of radiation from attacks on, or accidents in, nuclear power stations, or the use by Russia of biological or chemical weapons. There is also a risk of CBRN material being diverted and trafficked to the EU, mainly radiological material from medical facilities in areas that have seen heavy fighting, or material from smaller chemical plants. This material could potentially end up in the hands of terrorists. Shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission announced that it would build up strategic reserves to enhance the EU's capacity to respond to (CBRN) threats. These reserves are to include a strategic stockpile, worth €545.5 million, consisting of equipment (personal protective equipment and detection, identification and monitoring devices) and medicines, vaccines and other therapeutics to treat patients exposed to CBRN agents. It will also include a decontamination reserve, comprising both staff and equipment to decontaminate people, infrastructure, buildings, vehicles or critical equipment.

In March 2022, Europol's Management Board decided to suspend any cooperation with Russia, including through the strategic agreement concluded in November 2003.

In 2022, 98 % of deaths from terrorism and over 88 % of attacks were recorded in countries that were already experiencing political instability and conflict, confirming that violent conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism. In 2022, the 10 countries experiencing the highest impact from terrorism were all engaged in armed conflict. Even though attacks and deaths from terrorism have fallen by 75 % and 58 % respectively, Afghanistan remains the country most affected by terrorism, followed by Burkina Faso and Somalia. ISIL/Da'esh and its affiliates has become the deadliest terrorist group in the world, with 1 833 deaths attributed to the group in 2022. The country most impacted by ISIL/Da'esh violence is Iraq. However, owing to the expansion of ISIL/Da'esh affiliated groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, terrorism has surged in the region, making it a new global hotspot for jihadist activity. Terrorism in the Sahel is believed to have risen by 2 000 % in the last 15 years. Of the 10 countries most affected by terrorism, four are in the Sahel region (Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso). In contrast, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, deaths from terrorism have fallen to the lowest figure since 2013, and terrorist attacks and deaths from terrorism have also continued to fall in Europe.

The Global Terrorism Index 2023 points to the interdependency between ecological degradation and conflict, noting that 'six of the ten countries most impacted by terrorism are also amongst the 25 countries with the worst ecological threats and the lowest resilience'.

³²³ B. Immenkamp, [European Peace Facility, Investing in international stability and security](#), EPRS, European Parliament, October 2021; B.Bilquin, [European Peace Facility: State of play as of 31 March 2023](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2023.

³²⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace, [Global Terrorism Index 2023](#), March 2023.

While religion-inspired terrorism has declined, political terrorism, including far-right terrorism, is on the rise in North America, Oceania and western Europe (the West). Some 37 % of attacks in the West in 2022 can be attributed to ideologically motivated groups or individuals, and far-right terrorists killed 14 people in 2022 (11 of them in the USA).

2.8.3. Terrorism in Europe

Despite a marked decline in terrorist attacks since 2019, the terrorist threat in Europe has nevertheless grown significantly over the past two decades. Groups with an explicitly anti-Western and anti-European 'jihadist' ideology, such as al-Qaeda and ISIL/Da'esh, have expanded in influence and importance.³²⁵ However, it is noticeable that arrests and attacks linked to right-wing terrorism have also consistently increased over the same period, with attacks doubling in 2021 compared to 2020.³²⁶ The total number of deaths from terrorism has nevertheless continued to fall, from a peak in 2015 (151 deaths) and 2016 (142 deaths), to 21 deaths in 2020, and 2 in 2021. The two deaths recorded in 2021 resulted from jihadist attacks in Spain and France.³²⁷ In an encouraging trend, jihadist attacks fell compared to previous years. Moreover, the number of jihadist terrorist attacks that were thwarted (8) outnumbered those that were completed (4).

The vast majority of deadly terrorist acts, and the most deadly terrorist attacks, that Europe has witnessed since 2004 were perpetrated by individuals either directly linked to or inspired by extremist groups with centres outside Europe's borders (see Figure 23). This connection between internal and external security has come to shape EU action. In a more positive trend, religiously-motivated terrorism in the West (including Western Europe, North America and Oceania) declined by 95 % since its peak in 2016. The West recorded only 3 religiously-motivated attacks in 2022, compared to 15 ideologically-motivated attacks.³²⁸

Primary responsibility for combating crime and ensuring security within the EU lies with the Member States. However, the EU provides tools to assist with cooperation, coordination and (to some extent) harmonisation between Member States. It also provides financial support to address this borderless phenomenon. The EU has also stepped up cooperation with non-EU countries to combat the terrorist threat, including through funding. There has been a marked increase in the exchange of information with such third countries, and a counter-terrorism dialogue is now held with 20 countries, including in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans and with Türkiye. Funding for these initiatives has come both from the EU budget and from individual Member States.³²⁹

The Strategic Compass

In the Strategic Compass, EU Member States have resolved to strengthen their response to better prevent and counter terrorism. Using the EU's CSDP instruments as well as other tools, Member States plan to support partner countries, including through diplomatic engagement and political dialogue, stabilisation efforts, programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism and cooperation in the area of rule of law. Member States intend to step up their engagement with strategic partners, including the UN and in other multilateral fora, such as the Global Counter Terrorism Forum and the Global Coalition against ISIL/Da'esh, and further strengthen the network of counter-terrorism experts in EU delegations.

³²⁵ Europol, [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), July 2021.

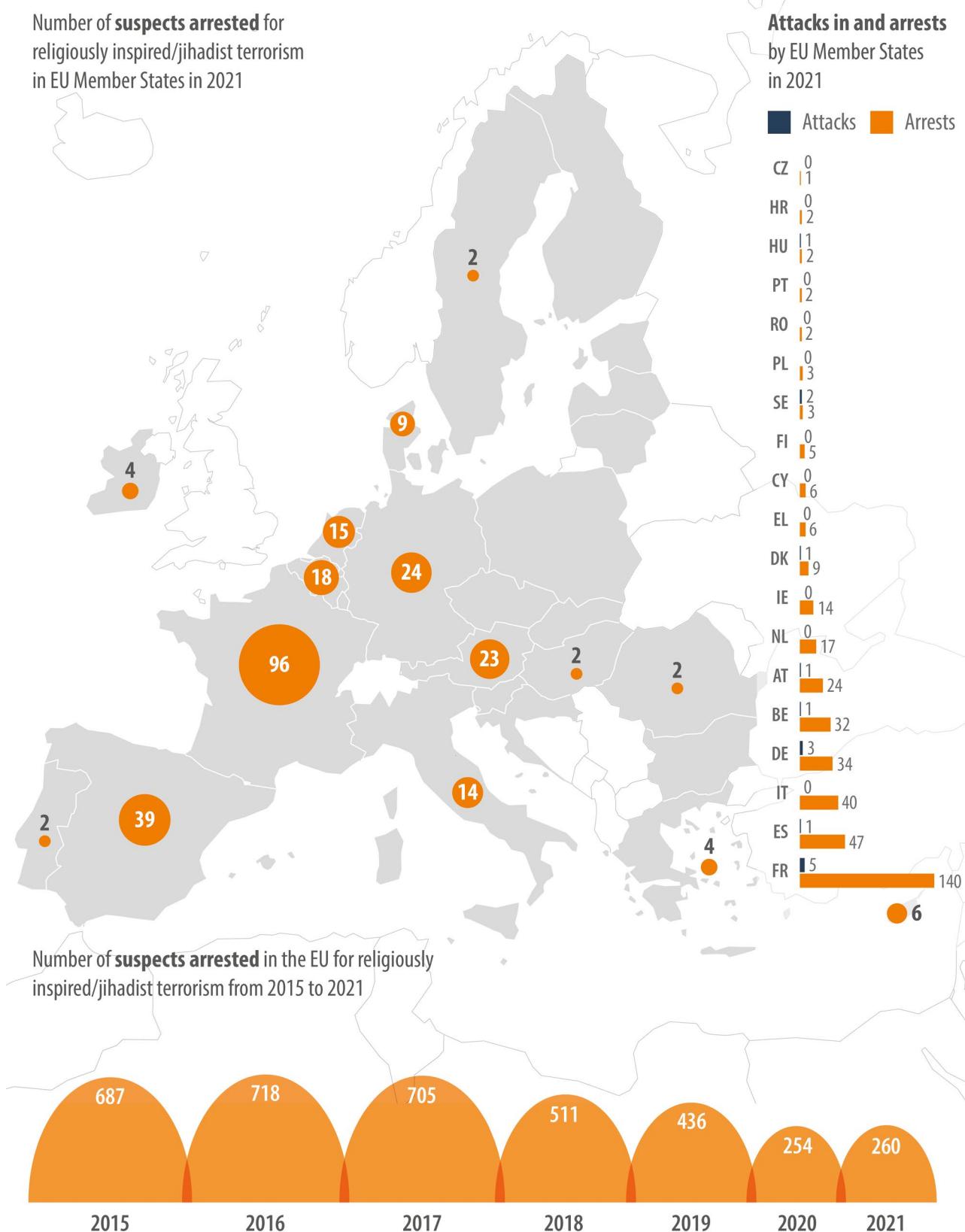
³²⁶ Europol, [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), 2022.

³²⁷ Europol, [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), 2022.

³²⁸ Institute for Economics and Peace, [Global Terrorism Index 2023](#), March 2023.

³²⁹ P. Bakowski, [Understanding EU counter-terrorism policy](#), EPIS, European Parliament, March 2023.

Figure 23 – Terrorist attacks and arrests, EU Member States (EU-27), 2021



Data source: [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report](#), Europol, December 2022.

Legislation, agreements and developments in 2021-2023

Police cooperation: the Commission presented a police cooperation package in December 2021, with proposals on information exchange between law enforcement authorities, on an automated data exchange under a renewed Prüm framework, and on operational police cooperation.

Combating terrorism financing: the Fifth Anti-Money-Laundering Directive complements the existing EU framework for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Several other pieces of legislation harmonise or update existing rules: a Directive on countering money laundering by criminal law, a Directive on facilitating the use of financial and other information, a Regulation on controls on cash entering or leaving the Union and a Regulation on the mutual recognition of freezing and confiscation orders. In 2021, the EU continued to reinforce its framework for combating money laundering and terrorist financing, with an ambitious anti-money-laundering (AML)/Countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) package. The package provides for a new EU authority, in the form of a decentralised EU regulatory agency, in charge of AML/CFT supervision and supporting EU Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs). Moreover, it includes measures on crypto-assets, extending the obligation to report suspicious transactions to cover these and introducing a ban on anonymous crypto-wallets

Terrorism content online: the regulation on dissemination of terrorist content online, which applies as of 7 June 2022, is intended to prevent violent extremism, especially online.

Regulating weapons: a Directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons and a Regulation on deactivation standards ensure that deactivated firearms are rendered irreversibly inoperable, prevent terrorists from easily acquiring firearms or reactivating de-activated ones. The new 2020-2025 action plan on firearms trafficking aims at addressing the 'remaining legal loopholes and inconsistencies in firearms controls that hinder police cooperation' and to step up international cooperation.

Protecting EU borders: to prevent terrorists from circulating freely within the EU, several countries have introduced temporary controls at their borders. In 2021, the Commission proposed new rules with updated procedural safeguards for any reintroduction of internal border controls. Two new information systems have been adopted: the entry/exit system (EES) to register entry and exit data for non-EU nationals crossing EU borders, and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to bolster security checks on visa-exempt non-EU nationals.

European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO): The mandate of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), which began operating in 2021, was extended to comprise terrorism.

Exchange of information with third countries: Europol has concluded operational agreements with a total of 17 non-EU countries, 12 of which in the last 10 years, allowing for the exchange of information, including personal data. Europol also concluded strategic agreements with Armenia, Brazil, China, Russia (suspended), Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates, but these are limited to the exchange of general intelligence. In 2023, Europol also concluded an agreement with New Zealand for the exchange of personal data. In February 2022, the co-legislators agreed on strengthening Europol's mandate, empowering the agency to cooperate more effectively, including by concluding international agreements.

EU counter-terrorism dialogues: held with some 20 countries have focused since 2015 on counter-terrorism cooperation with the MENA countries, the Balkans and Türkiye. Following Brexit, Europol has also stepped up cooperation with the UK.

Counter-terrorism capacity building: the EU provides numerous countries with technical assistance and training, including support for counter-terrorism capacity building efforts, and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) initiatives. The EU has spent nearly €900 million since 2014 to prevent and counter violent extremism in non-EU countries. Sub-Saharan Africa receives more assistance than any other region by a substantial margin.

Support for victims of terrorism

Protecting and supporting victims of terrorism has been an essential part of the measures the Commission has put in place to address all aspects of the terrorist threat. Several strategic documents, including the 2005 counter-terrorism strategy, the 2015 European agenda on security and the 2020-2025 security union strategy have highlighted the importance of solidarity, assistance and compensation for victims, regardless of where in the EU a terrorist attack has taken place. The EU has strengthened the legal framework through a series of directives. Victims of terrorism have the right to immediate access to medical and psychological support as well as information on legal, practical and financial measures.

The Commission has established a European network of associations of victims of terrorism (NAVT) aimed at fostering cross-border cooperation between associations of victims of terrorist attacks in the Member States, and enhancing the defence of victims' rights at EU level. Moreover, in January 2020, the Commission set up the EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism to help ensure that the EU rules on victims of terrorism are correctly applied.

In 2020, the European Commission also presented its first-ever EU strategy on victims' rights to cover 2020-2025. Its main aim is to enable all victims of crime to make full use of their rights. It acknowledges that victims of terrorism are a group of particularly vulnerable victims who require specialised support.

A June 2022 evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive (adopted in 2012) pointed to shortcomings in relation to victims' access to information, support services, and protection tailored to their individual needs. The Commission intends to propose a revision of the directive in 2023, to improve victims' access to justice, enhance their right to information about available compensation and strengthen their physical protection.

2.9. Tackling energy insecurity

Energy security is defined by the International Energy Agency as 'reliable, affordable access to all fuels and energy sources'.³³⁰ In 2021, five main energy sources constituted the EU's energy mix: crude oil and petroleum products (34 %), natural gas (23 %), renewable energy (17 %), nuclear energy (13 %) and solid fossil fuels (12 %). In 2021, part of this energy was produced in the European Union (around 43 %) and part was imported from non-EU countries (57 %).³³¹ This figure increases further for oil and natural gas. Moreover, the largest part of oil and gas came from Russia in the years before the ongoing war on Ukraine. More striking still – until the Russian invasion in 2022, and despite several red flags since 2009,³³² the EU's overall energy dependence has not decreased, but remained both remarkably stable and high, over time. It has increased – from 40 % of its total energy consumption in 1990, to 57 % in 2021. The Russian invasion of Ukraine showed that this reliance on volatile or outright hostile countries creates the risk of supply disruptions, which can affect the EU's citizens and its economies.

2.9.1. Energy sources and reliance on third countries

In 2020, the EU depended on Russia for almost a quarter of all its energy needs (see Figure 24). More specifically, Russia was the EU's top supplier of natural gas (import dependency rate of 83.6 %, EU reliance on Russia 41.1 %), crude oil (import dependency 96.2 %, reliance on Russia 25.7 %) and hard coal (import dependency 10.5 %, reliance on Russia 52.7 %). Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has propelled the urgent challenge of securing energy supplies to the forefront of EU

³³⁰ [Energy Security](#), International Energy Agency.

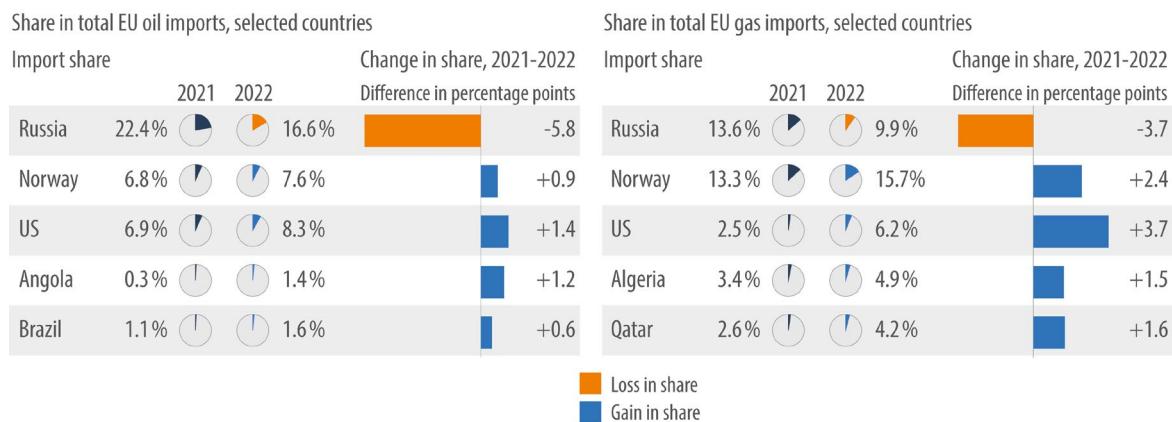
³³¹ [Shedding light on energy](#) – 2023 edition, European Commission.

³³² e.g. the Russo-Ukrainian [gas dispute](#) of January 2009 and the Russian [invasion of Crimea in 2014](#).

policymaking. The extended sanctions and bold decisions adopted by the EU since February 2022 have increased the speed of the EU's decoupling from Russia.

With the exception of unilateral moves,³³³ the speed with which Europe can decouple from Russia depends on the energy source. Decoupling is easier for oil than for natural gas, since oil can be flexibly transported and traded across the world. As a result, EU importers have plenty of alternatives from which to choose.

Figure 24 – Share in trade in key energy resources



Source: [Eurostat NRG TI GASIM](#); [Eurostat NRG TI OILM](#), 2023.

It is much more difficult for the EU to source natural gas from non-Russian sources. The supply of natural gas is usually agreed on the basis of long-term contracts and the gas is transported through pipelines, which are expensive, take years to build and are only economically viable up to a certain distance. While options to diversify gas imports exist (e.g. liquefied natural gas – LNG),³³⁴ there are capacity constraints, both in terms of production, as well as terminal and shipping capacity. In addition, this option is currently at least more expensive and potentially more polluting, and less used as a result. Gas importers therefore have only a limited choice of suppliers, and cannot flexibly switch from one to another.³³⁵

Nuclear energy offers advantages, as uranium is widely available and many nuclear power plants in the EU have a choice of suppliers. The exceptions are for some types of Russian-designed reactors, for which Russia is the only manufacturer of nuclear fuel, although this problem can be at least partly addressed by having sufficient stockpiles. In 2019, the Euratom Supply Agency calculated that EU nuclear power stations had enough uranium to last an average of three years. However, the problem

³³³ A relevant example in 2022 was Russia's decision to stop supplying some Member States, due to the [dispute over payment in roubles](#).

³³⁴ As its name suggests, LNG is created by compressing natural gas into a liquid. Gas in this form can be transported by ship regardless of distance, opening the door to imports from countries such as Qatar, the USA and even Australia. In this context, see: L. Boehm and A. Wilson, [EU gas storage and LNG capacity as responses to the war in Ukraine](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2022.

³³⁵ This is the case, e.g. for Bulgaria and Latvia, who were among several countries where three-quarters or more of gas imports came from Russia in 2020.

of disposing of nuclear waste and post-Fukushima safety concerns have deterred – at least until the Russian invasion of Ukraine – a wider use of nuclear energy.³³⁶

Lastly, the EU is a leader in promoting energy efficiency and renewable sources. Apart from their environmental benefits, both help to cut reliance on energy imports – energy efficiency because it reduces overall energy consumption, and renewable energy because it can be produced locally. However, renewable energy requires a high initial investment. In addition, electricity production from wind and solar power inevitably depends on weather conditions. Batteries and other technologies can store surplus electricity so that it is available for periods of low output, but they also create new forms of import dependence on minerals such as lithium and cobalt, and require higher up-front investment.³³⁷ In the longer term, technological advances should help to solve the latter problem by bringing the cost of electricity storage down to a viable level.

2.9.2. Energy security as a challenge for the EU

Since 2005, the EU's total energy consumption has been on a declining path, thanks to more efficient energy use (see Figure 26). During that period, the composition of the EU's energy mix has also been changing. Many Member States chose to reduce the use of polluting coal in their energy production mix. Similarly, many EU countries were already moving away from nuclear energy in the first decade of the new millennium, a trend that continued following the 2011 nuclear accident in Fukushima.³³⁸ At the same time, the contribution from renewable energy continued to rise: by 2021 EU had reached a 21.8 % share of its gross final energy consumption from renewable sources, more than doubling its share since 2004. However, renewable energy is not yet ready to compensate for the decrease in other sources, although the Commission's RePowerEU plan is certainly an important step towards increasing their share. As a result, during that period, Member States increased their consumption of gas, while they decreased their own production (for example in the North Sea). The result was a sharp rise in gas imports, and with it, continued high overall energy dependence.³³⁹ In 2021, nearly three quarters of the EU's imports of natural gas came from Russia (44 %), Norway (16 %) and Algeria (12 %).³⁴⁰ Moreover, apart from the need to guarantee physical energy supplies for Member States, industry and citizens, as well as meeting the targets the EU has set in relation to the climate transition, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine highlight another important concern: energy prices. Given that energy use accounts for a high and growing share of consumer spending, there is a tangible risk of growing energy poverty and a wider negative impact on economic competitiveness³⁴¹ and economic growth. This explains the identification in the Global

³³⁶ With the invasion of Ukraine and the energy crisis it sparked, some Member States have delayed the closure or phase-out of their nuclear reactors (e.g. Belgium), while others made very quick progress towards creating new nuclear power plants (e.g. Poland).

³³⁷ European Commission, [Critical raw materials](#), website.

³³⁸ Eurostat, [Nuclear energy statistics](#), Data from December 2022.

³³⁹ As explained in the previous section, diversifying gas supplies is often difficult due to the need for pipelines; in the EU's case, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, over two-thirds of gas imports came from just two countries, Russia (41 %) and Norway (23.5 %). See: [Quarterly Report on European Gas Markets](#), European Commission, 2022. Moreover, 10 EU countries (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland) get over three-quarters of their gas imports from Russia. See: [EU imports of energy products – recent developments](#), Eurostat, January 2021.

³⁴⁰ Eurostat, [Shedding light on energy](#) –2023 edition.

³⁴¹ Despite falling gas prices since August 2022, the [price differential](#) for natural gas between the EU and the USA is very wide.

Strategy, the Normandy Index and the EU Strategic Compass of energy security as one of the EU's main external vulnerabilities.³⁴²

Figure 25 – EU energy dependence

% of EU energy consumption covered by imports

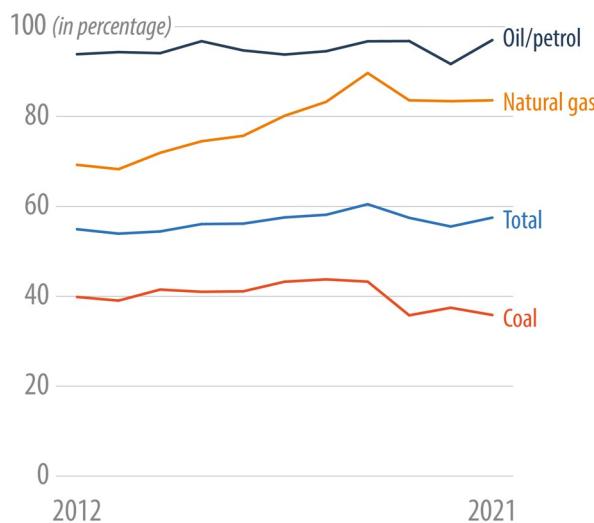
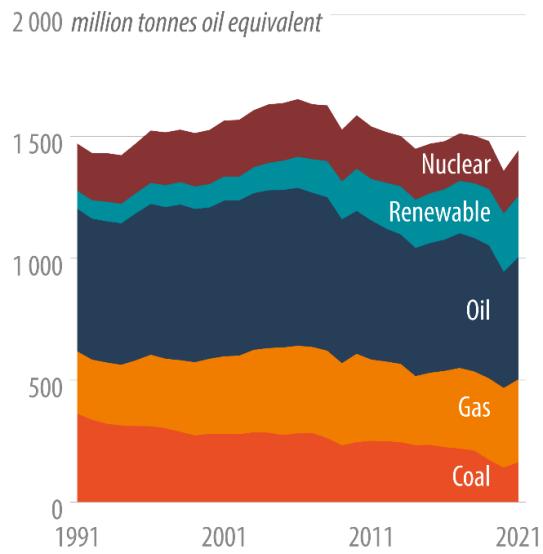


Figure 26 – EU energy consumption

Million tonnes oil equivalent



The EU imports nearly all of its oil, most of its gas, and slightly over half of its total energy needs. The share of renewable sources in the energy mix is rising, but fossil fuels remain dominant. While coal and oil are in decline, gas consumption is rising.

Data source: [Eurostat](#), April 2023.

2.9.3. EU action to reduce energy dependence

The EU has taken concrete action to reduce its energy dependence for more than a decade (see Figure 25). As seen above, those efforts focused on increasing the share of renewable energy into the EU's energy mix and increase energy efficiency. These efforts increased further following the 2019 Green Deal³⁴³ and the Recovery and Resilience Facility,³⁴⁴ in the context of which, national recovery and resilience plans should devote at least 37 % of total expenditure to investment and reform supporting climate objectives. Nevertheless, there are constraints on renewable energy storage. As a result, the reduction in energy dependence must also result from action related to fossil fuels, at least for the short and medium term. The EU has therefore also taken action to secure oil and gas supplies, using the legal basis provided by the Lisbon Treaty (Article 194 TFEU), which gives the EU a role in promoting European energy security. In March 2022, the Commission

³⁴² E. Lazarou, [Mapping threats to peace and democracy worldwide: Normandy Index 2020](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2020.

³⁴³ Communication from the Commission, The European Green Deal [COM/2019/640 final](#).

³⁴⁴ European Commission, the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), website.

proposed an expedited and targeted revision of the Security of Gas Regulation,³⁴⁵ which would require all Member States to fill their gas storage levels to at least 80 % of capacity by 1 November 2022 (rising to 90 % in subsequent winters); introduce solidarity mechanisms between Member States on accessing stored gas; and require certification of all gas storage operators, including those owned by third countries (e.g. Russia).³⁴⁶ In addition, it continued and accelerated the construction of physical infrastructure, such as reverse flow and interconnector pipelines allowing gas to be transported more flexibly from one country to another.³⁴⁷ In March 2022, the EU achieved an emergency synchronisation of the Continental European Electricity Grid with Ukraine and Moldova which is still operating.³⁴⁸ Ukraine will also be able to benefit from EU common purchase of gas and LNG. For 2021-2027, the European Commission is proposing a €5.2 billion budget from the Connecting Europe Facility to support energy investments such as new pipelines and electricity cables linking EU countries and their neighbours, gas storage facilities and LNG terminals.³⁴⁹

In March 2022, the Commission proposed the REPowerEU joint European action, designed with the goal of making Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030.³⁵⁰ To reach that aim, the EU pursued a three-pronged strategy: it took measures to diversify its fossil fuel supply, to reduce demand for energy and, finally, to continue increasing its energy efficiency, as well as the share of renewable power in its energy mix.³⁵¹

Regarding the first priority, the European Commission and national governments have signed new agreements with third countries and strengthened their pledges with well-established traditional partners. Similarly, large companies operating in the energy sector in the Member States have reached agreements with their counterparts in third countries for the provision of oil and gas for the following years.³⁵²

The results of those efforts have been encouraging. According to data from Eurostat, when looking at Russia's share in extra-EU imports for six key products, a strong decline is visible for coal (from

³⁴⁵ The Security of Gas Supply Regulation ([SoGS Regulation](#)), adopted in 2017, creates mechanisms for sharing gas between Member States in the event of a crisis. [Proposal](#) amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1938 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply and Regulation (EC) n°715/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on conditions for access to natural gas transmission networks COM/2022/135 final, March 2023.

³⁴⁶ According to a [2022 report](#) from the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), actual gas in storage in the EU-27 was only around 20 % of annual consumption (as of 1 October 2021), with filling-in levels of only 72 % and particularly low storage levels in sites owned by Gazprom. The ACER report lends support to the need for urgent EU action on gas storage.

³⁴⁷ Unfortunately, RePowerEU neither proposed specific projects nor additional funds relative to this particular element.

³⁴⁸ See: European Commission, [Statement](#) by Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson on Synchronisation of the Continental European Electricity Grid with Ukraine and Moldova, March 2022; A. Sabadus, [Power to Ukraine](#), CEPA, February 2023. In addition, the EU provided 5 500 generators. At the request of the European Commission, around €194 million was also made available to cover the immediate needs in the energy sector under the Ukraine Energy Support Fund established by the Energy Community.

³⁴⁹ European Parliament, Legislative Train Schedule, [Connecting Europe Facility 2021-2027](#).

³⁵⁰ European Commission, [REPowerEU: Joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy](#), press release, 8 March 2022.

³⁵¹ Those priorities were also included in the [EU external energy engagement in a changing world](#) presented on 18 May 2022 as part of the RePowerEU plan.

³⁵² This is the subject of a series of forthcoming EPoS briefings on energy relations with third countries.

45 % in 2021 to 22 % in 2022), natural gas (from 36 % to 21 %), fertilisers (from 29 % to 22 %), petroleum oil (from 28 % to 21 %) and iron and steel (from 16 % to 10 %).³⁵³

This reduction created space for other import partners to increase their supply. In 2022, in oil and petroleum products, the USA increased their annual export to the EU by 25.8 thousand tonnes (+63 %), Norway by 16.7 thousand tonnes (+37 %), Brazil by 8.7 thousand tonnes (+194 %), Angola by 4.1 thousand tonnes (+57 %) and the United Arab Emirates by 1.4 thousand tonnes (24 %) compared to 2019. Similarly, for natural gas in 2022, Norway was the source of 24.4 % of the natural gas entering the EU, with Russia coming second with 15.3 % (-8.3 percentage points (pp) than in 2021), followed by the United States (9.8 %, +5.5 pp), Algeria (8.3 %, +2.7 pp) and Qatar (6.7 %, +2.2 pp).³⁵⁴

With regard to the second objective, Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1369 on coordinated demand-reduction measures for gas, set a reduction target of 15 % for August 2022–March 2023, compared to the average in the same period of the five previous consecutive years.³⁵⁵ As a result, between August 2022 and March 2023, EU consumption of natural gas fell by 17.7 %, compared with the average gas consumption for the same months (August–March) between 2017 and 2022. Member States decided to extend this measure until March 2024.³⁵⁶

The EU and its Member States also fund research into renewable energies and energy efficiency, including in cooperation with international partners such as Japan.³⁵⁷ In June 2022, meeting in Chile, the European Commission and ministers from several countries including Australia, Canada, China, India, Saudi Arabia, and the USA, made a joint commitment to collaborate on a clean hydrogen mission under the second phase of the Mission Innovation initiative.³⁵⁸

To tackle the increase in fossil fuel prices, which weighed heavily on consumers and businesses and contributed to inflation, the EU adopted three regulations and proposed new legislation in March 2023 to partially decouple gas prices from electricity prices across the EU.³⁵⁹ As a result of these measures, as well as a milder than expected winter 2022–2023, prices have fallen since August 2022, and remain lower today.

2.9.4. Is the crisis over?

The prompt and coordinated action taken by the EU and its Member States last year, as well as a milder winter than expected, averted the scenario of an acute energy crisis in the EU so far.

³⁵³ Eurostat, [EU trade with Russia continues to decline](#), 3 March 2023.

³⁵⁴ See, for oil: Eurostat, [Oil and petroleum products trends in 2022](#), 4 May 2023; and gas: Eurostat, [Natural gas demand down 13% in 2022 in cutback efforts](#), 4 May 2023.

³⁵⁵ Council [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1369](#) of 5 August 2022 on coordinated demand-reduction measures for gas ST/11568/2022/INIT.

³⁵⁶ Eurostat, [EU gas consumption decreased by 17.7%](#), 9 April 2023; Council of the EU, [Member states agree to extend voluntary 15% gas demand reduction target](#), press release 28 March 2023.

³⁵⁷ [Research and innovation international cooperation in the field of renewable energy technologies](#), European Commission, December 2020.

³⁵⁸ [Mission Innovation](#) is a global initiative involving 22 countries and the European Commission (on behalf of the EU) to reinvigorate and accelerate global clean energy innovation, achieve performance breakthroughs and cost reductions and provide widely affordable and reliable clean energy solutions.

³⁵⁹ Council [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2576](#) (joint gas purchasing), [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2578](#) (gas price cap) and [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1854](#) (reduce demand for electricity). See also: A. Wilson, [Emergency intervention to address high energy prices in the EU](#), EPRS, European Parliament, October 2022. G. Mácsai, G. Sabbati and A. Wilson, [Monitoring the energy situation in the EU: December 2022](#), EPRS, European Parliament, December 2022; European Commission, [Electricity Market Design: Commission launches consultation on reform to support a clean and affordable energy transition](#), press release, 23 January 2023.

Questions remain, however, regarding the capacity of the EU to reduce its energy dependence and increase its energy resilience going forward. Indeed, while most of the EU's key energy suppliers have significant proven fossil fuel reserves, only the USA has the ability to increase its deliveries with relative ease, especially with respect to LNG supplies.³⁶⁰ Another important element in the context of the push for supply diversification is the (voluntary) joint purchasing mechanism for LNG. While it may increase the bargaining power of the EU as a buyer, its voluntary character limits its impact. Increasing its impact implies, however, greater centralisation (at least at some point in the future), which Member States might not allow. Moreover, in pursuing its goal to replace hydrocarbons from Russia by diversifying imports, the EU must also consider the promotion of human rights, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and social standards in new partner countries.

2.9.5. Supporting partners in building energy security and resilience

The energy crisis was not only an EU phenomenon. As already mentioned above, not only Ukraine but also Moldova experienced an acute energy crisis in 2022.³⁶¹ The EU response was immediate: Romania allowed Moldova to import electricity at a capped price, ensuring 90 % of Moldova's domestic electricity demand was met. At the end of October 2022, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pledged a new support package for Moldova that would include €200 million for energy security. In January 2023, the Commission proposed to increase the macro financial assistance provided to the country by €145 million, with Parliament approving the move in May 2023.³⁶² While this amount is not destined solely for energy-related programmes, it should support the country in its efforts to overcome the recent energy crisis.

Similarly, Russia's war on Ukraine has weakened the Western Balkans' already fragile energy security.³⁶³ In that context, during the EU-Western Balkans Summit, in December 2022, the European Commission announced a €1 billion energy support package³⁶⁴ to mitigate the immediate effects of the energy crisis and accelerate the energy transition in the region in the short and medium term.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have also affected many parts of Africa's energy systems, slowing economic growth, reversing positive trends in improving access to modern energy and deepening financial difficulties of utilities. The EU has a tool in its disposal to help: the Global Gateway, the EU strategy aimed at narrowing the international gap in infrastructure by mobilising up to €300 billion in investment –among other things, in energy and sustainable energy

³⁶⁰ Szymon Kardaś, the author of the paper, notes that Norway is a significant supplier, but it is unable to increase exports. Qatar will only be able to significantly increase their exports once they create new export infrastructure. Countries such as Azerbaijan, Algeria, and Nigeria (as well as Türkiye) face barriers to raising exports that include both infrastructural challenges and problems related to exploration, drilling, and extraction. In the case of Libya, political instability may be a problem for maintaining and increasing the supply of fossil fuels to the EU.

³⁶¹ Moldova generates [about](#) 10 % of its electricity needs domestically, while 20 % is imported from Ukraine and the remaining 70 % is produced in the neighbouring Transnistria region of Moldova, which is controlled by Russia. In [October 2022](#), Gazprom cut gas imports to Moldova by 30 % in an attempt to pressure the country's pro-EU government. The resulting electricity shortage led the Transnistrian authorities to cut power deliveries by 73 %. As a result, Moldova experienced a 200 % increase in electricity prices and 34 % inflation. The average citizen had to spend up to 75 % of their income on energy utilities.

³⁶² European Parliament, [MEPs approve €145 million in additional assistance to Moldova](#), press release, 9 May 2023.

³⁶³ The Western Balkan states rely a lot on coal and much less on natural gas. This protected them from Russia being able to cut off their energy supplies and from surging natural gas prices in 2021-2022. At the same time, they import electricity, the price of which had also increased significantly in 2022.

³⁶⁴ €450 million of that energy package was already disbursed by May 2023. The second part of the package, consisting of the remaining €500 million in grants, will focus on renewable energy, gas, and electricity infrastructure, interconnectors, and aim at advancing the Western Balkans' energy transition, efficiency, and independence in the short and medium term. See: European Commission, [Western Balkans Focus on energy](#), factsheet, December 2022.

projects in Africa – between 2021 and 2027.³⁶⁵ Some experts also suggest using the strategy to invest more in the resource-rich but infrastructure-poor southern neighbourhood states, to create stronger infrastructure connections between them, as well as with the EU.³⁶⁶ Others note that another EU strategy that could be used in this context to promote collaborative investment in energy transition infrastructure and technologies in the EU's southern neighbourhood is the European Green Deal.³⁶⁷

Last but not least, the European Investment Bank supports many developing countries in closing the gap in access to energy, by providing investment for transmission and distribution projects. In addition, it participates in EU initiatives such as the Eastern Partnership, to finance projects that improve energy efficiency in target countries.³⁶⁸

2.10. Mitigating the security impact of climate change and environmental degradation

2.10.1. Climate change implications for peace and security

Respondents to the World Economic Forum's 2022-2023 Global Risks Perception Survey rank climate change and all other environmental risks identified by the WEF as within the top 10 risks for the next decade.³⁶⁹

The synthesis of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report,³⁷⁰ published in March 2023, finds that the adverse impacts of global warming exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels – which is likely to happen – will be worse than previously anticipated if humanity fails to correctly address them. For example, at 2°C of global warming, greater proportions of people would be exposed and susceptible to poverty in Africa and Asia, while risks concerning energy, food, and water sectors could intensify hazards, exposure, and vulnerabilities that could affect large numbers of people and regions. The IPCC emphasised that small island states and economically disadvantaged populations are particularly vulnerable. It drew numerous causal links between the deterioration of environmental factors at land, sea or air and impacts on socioeconomic life, such as the further deterioration of food insecurity in coastal areas due to ocean warming and acidification.

Several climate tipping points might have already been reached or are likely to be reached, with alarming cascading impacts.³⁷¹ Environmental degradation and weather extremes resulting from climate change increase competition over decreasing natural resources and, thus, disaster-related displacement. Between 2008 and 2022, events referred to as sudden-onset (such as earthquakes or

³⁶⁵ M. Szczepanski, [The Global Gateway: Taking stock after its first year](#), January 2023.

³⁶⁶ A. Rizzi, A. Varvelli, [Opening the Global Gateway: Why the EU should invest more in the southern neighbourhood](#), European Council on Foreign Relations, March 2023.

³⁶⁷ L. el-Katiri, [Sunny side up: Maximising the European Green Deal's potential for North Africa and Europe](#), European Council on Foreign Relations, January 2023.

³⁶⁸ See also, European Investment Bank, [Supporting the energy transition in Europe and around the world](#), website; EIB [lending data by country](#); EEAS, [Eastern Partnership](#), March 2022.

³⁶⁹ Failure to mitigate climate change (ranked 1), Failure of climate change adaptation (2), Natural disasters and extreme weather events (3), Biodiversity loss and ecosystems collapse (4), Natural resource crises(6), Large scale environmental damage incidents(10) – [Global Risks Report 2023](#), World Economic Forum, 11 January 2023.

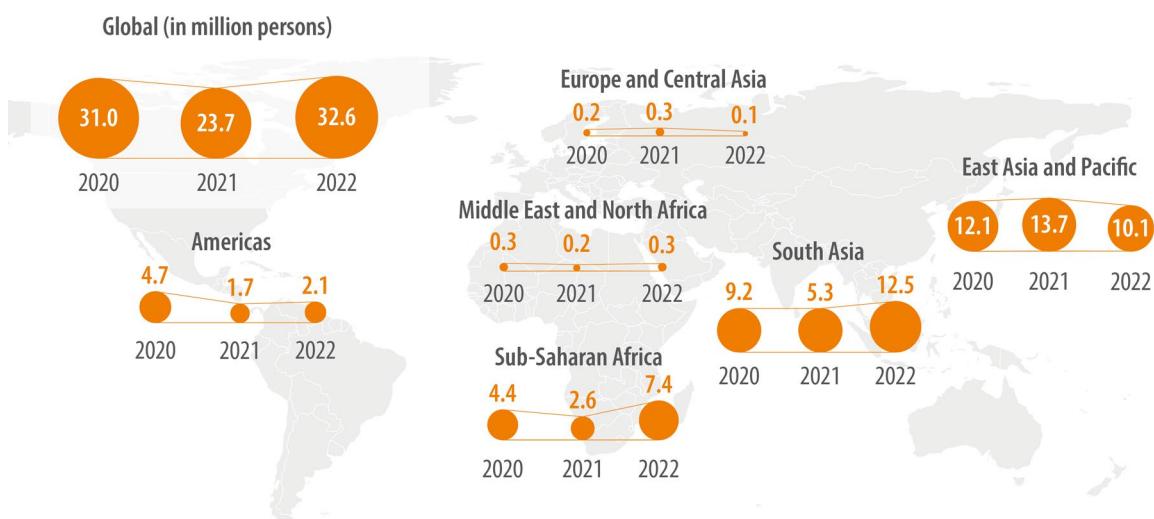
³⁷⁰ [Sixth Assessment Report](#), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, accessed 31 May 2023.

³⁷¹ See more detail in G. Erbach, [Climate tipping points](#) in: Ten issues to watch in 2023, EPRS, European Parliament, 2023.

storms) or slow-onset (such as droughts, coral bleaching, or excessive soil and water salination) hazards – many of them linked to climate change – forcibly displaced an estimated 376 million people, amounting to nearly three times as many forced movements as those caused by conflict and violence (see Figure 27).³⁷² Analysis of weather events suggests that climate change has already affected 85 % of the world's population.³⁷³ The situation in Europe, which experienced the hottest ever recorded temperatures in the summer of 2022 and winter 2022–2023, is also alarming. Climate-related hazards have become more frequent and severe, and the European Environmental Agency (EEA) predicts that 'droughts, forest fires, heatwaves, storms and heavy rain' will become 'even more intense and more frequent' in the coming years, severely damaging property and infrastructure. The EEA estimates that EU economies lost €145 billion over the past decade due to these events.³⁷⁴ The implications for peace and security are undeniable.

Climate change impacts compound security threats, as pressures on natural resources exacerbate social tension or grievances against governments and geopolitical competition. Extreme weather events overstretch military infrastructure and operations, as they are on the frontline in responding to their consequences – which at the same time reduce their readiness. Conversely, climate change mitigation or adaptation strategies, such as phasing out fossil fuels, trigger new tensions, for example over key minerals in fragile states.³⁷⁵

Figure 27 – Internal displacement of persons due to natural disasters, 2022



Data source: [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022](#), IDMC, 2023. Regional figures represent new displacements over the course of the year, and may not equal the global figure due to rounding.

³⁷² [State of the Global Climate in 2022](#), World Meteorological Organization, 2023.

³⁷³ [The Washington Post](#), 11 October 2021.

³⁷⁴ [Extreme weather: floods, droughts and heatwaves](#), EEA, accessed 31 May 2023; [Losses from climate change: €145 billion in a decade](#), Eurostat, 24 October 2022.

³⁷⁵ CGIAR, a global research network on climate change, agriculture and food security published a [review of quantitative and qualitative literature on the climate-mobility-security nexus](#) in 2022. See also: [The Center for Climate and Security](#) list of resources on the nexus of climate change and security.

2.10.2. EU action on climate-related security risks

A comprehensive toolbox

In June 2023, the Commission and the HR/VP proposed a new framework to address the security implications of climate change ('a new outlook on the climate and security nexus').³⁷⁶ This communication proposes to:

- support the EU response to the climate/security nexus with strengthened evidence-based analysis in leveraging data collection and research;
- adapt EU external action to the climate/security nexus, notably by adjusting the CSDP in areas vulnerable to climate change: the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and small island developing states. This includes action to reduce disaster risks and strengthen communities' preparation for such risks – such as climate-related investment through the Global Gateway, and action to mitigate climate-related security risks, such as addressing the needs of internally displaced persons and their host-communities, or securing access to natural resources.
- make European security and defence sustainable and climate resilient, through the establishment of an EU climate security and defence training platform, to develop and share expertise at EU level and between Member States; the Civilian CSDP Compact³⁷⁷ agreed by EU Member States in May 2023 commits them to contribute to the CSDP missions' response to the climate/security nexus;
- strengthen multilateralism and partnerships, to foster cooperation on ways to address the climate-security nexus.

The climate-security nexus influences the role of the EU as a global leader in combating climate change. The EU Strategic Compass acknowledges that 'conflicts and instability are often compounded by the threat-multiplier effect of climate change' and calls for the full implementation of the roadmap. This is in line with the prioritisation of climate action in most EU policies, organised around the flagship European Green Deal.³⁷⁸ The Green Deal not only aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, but also consolidates the commitment to make climate policy implications an integral part of EU external action – including in security and defence.³⁷⁹

In respect of security, the new outlook on the climate-security nexus fits within a wider EU toolbox, as did the earlier EEAS concept for an integrated approach on climate change and security of October 2021.³⁸⁰ This integrated approach explicitly mentions the Lake Chad Basin, the Aral Sea, Iraq and Afghanistan among the numerous examples of 'the interplay between climate change, environmental degradation and security'. It also sets out some pathways to strengthen

³⁷⁶ European Commission, High Representative ..., Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: [A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence](#), JOIN(2023) 19, 28 June 2023.

³⁷⁷ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the establishment of a Civilian CSDP Compact, [9588/23](#), 22 May 2023

³⁷⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – [The European Green Deal](#) (COM/2019/640), 11 December 2019.

³⁷⁹ Under the current 2021-2027 financial framework, 30 % of the Global Europe Instrument will support climate objectives in third countries (see section 1.3.3 on finances).

³⁸⁰ The [Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security](#) (EEAS(2021)770), European External Action Service, 16 September 2021 notably mentions the [Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action](#) (2017), the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#), the January 2021 [Council Conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy](#) and the [May 2021 Council Conclusions on Security and Defence](#).

considerations on climate change impacts into various EU external policies and instruments (conflict prevention, crisis response, conflict resolution, stabilisation and security strategies). Some of the ways in which the EU supports third countries affected by the security implications of climate change are illustrated below.

Support in conflicts and crises

In the context of its strategy on adaptation to climate change (COM(2021) 82), the EU has committed to 'promote sub-national, national and regional approaches to adaptation, with a specific focus on adaptation in Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and Least Developed Countries (LDCs)'.³⁸¹ The European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) works with the least developed (and least resilient) countries via the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+) and supports activities dealing with adaptation, mitigation, disaster risk reduction and desertification. It also contributed to the 'new climate for peace' project commissioned by the G7 to identify compound climate-fragility risks that pose serious threats to the stability of states and societies.³⁸²

In this matter, the EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises identified, as early as 2013,³⁸³ climate change as a global issue 'where the external aspects of internal EU policies have a growing foreign and security policy dimension'. Since then, there has been an ongoing effort to integrate climate security concerns in all stages of the conflict cycle, in areas ranging from early warning and preparedness, to conflict prevention, crisis response and management to early recovery, stabilisation and peace-building.

³⁸¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, [Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](#) (COM/2021/82), 24 February 2021.

³⁸² [Global Climate Change Alliance](#) (GCCA+); [A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks](#), an independent report commissioned by members of the G7, 2015.

³⁸³ Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council [The EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises](#) (JOIN(2013) 30). A [2023 paper by the EUISS](#) even traces EU discussions on climate and security back to 2003.

Figure 28 – The 15 countries most vulnerable to climate change



Data source: [Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative](#) 2021 scores.

In practice, the countries most vulnerable to climate change are situated in regions of conflict and fragility (according to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation initiative, see Figure 28). It follows that CSDP missions and operations are often deployed in countries that are negatively affected by climate change (see Figure 19). The new Civilian CSDP Compact agreed between the EU and Member States in May 2023, aimed at increasing the adaptation of civilian CSDP missions to their field of intervention, commits to strengthen the 'role for civilian CSDP missions in addressing security challenges related to climate change and environmental degradation'.³⁸⁴ The various EU tools used to help prevent, mitigate or emerge from conflict (see section on preventing and addressing conflicts in fragile contexts) integrate climate security thinking. The conflict early warning system (EWS), for example, helps identify evolving climate security risks and relies on decision- and policy-makers to make use of it.³⁸⁵ In this regard, the Copernicus Climate Change Service, part of the EU's Earth observation programme, provides global data on climate change, which can be used to pre-empt and mitigate its effects, for example in food production (crop yields) and desertification – key drivers of mass population movements. In addition, the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the European Commission lead a multi-stakeholder forum that

³⁸⁴ [Conclusions of the Council ... on the establishment of a Civilian CSDP Compact](#) (9588/23), Council of the EU, 22 May 2023.

³⁸⁵ B. Pérez de las Heras, '[Climate security in the European Union's foreign policy: addressing the responsibility to prepare for conflict prevention](#)', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 2020.

provides quantitative analysis relevant to humanitarian crises and disasters, including climate change-related risks through the 'INFORM' platform.

The environmental impact of defence forces

Beyond the death toll, destruction of livelihoods and psychological trauma, wars also have catastrophic effects on the environment. Russia's targeting of hazardous sites in Ukraine, increasing detectable radiation, is the most obvious, but not the only example. Attacks on military and civilian industrial sites, gas pipelines, the Black Sea biosphere reserve and the destruction of the Nova Kakhova dam will cause major contamination. Russia's use of depleted uranium munitions adds to the contamination risks. Ukraine has set up a Green Marshall Plan to rebuild the country in a sustainable way, with a view to become less dependent on Russian fossil fuels, in particular in developing a coal-free steel industry.

More generally, even when not engaged in conflict, defence forces and industries are important CO₂ emitters. A 2021 McKinsey article points out that defence forces 'typically account for at least 50 percent of governments' carbon emission'. In 2019, the EU military sector's carbon footprint was at least 24.8 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, 'equivalent to the annual CO₂ emissions of about 14 million average cars'. The EEAS roadmap includes aspirations to ensure greater defence equipment energy efficiency and lesser dependence on external entities. The European Parliament resolution of 7 June 2022 on the roadmap (P9_TA(2022)0223) supports greater investment in 'green' defence, including through research and development funded from the EU budget, to be allocated to carbon-neutral fuels and propulsion systems for military aircraft, ships and other vehicles. The resolution emphasises that an increase in defence expenditure should not lead to an increase in emissions. As per the Strategic Compass, all CSDP missions have to appoint an environmental adviser, and to report on their environmental footprint by 2025.

Multilateralism and climate diplomacy

According to the 2021 World Climate and Security Report,³⁸⁶ governments and the multilateral system have not updated global governance and international legal norms to manage climate-related security crises. The European Green Deal emphasises that climate change and environmental degradation require a global response and commits to develop stronger EU 'green deal diplomacy', focused on advancing global action and building capacity to support third countries. The EU aspires to set an example, and to use all available instruments, including trade, development and humanitarian aid, to work with partners – bilaterally and multilaterally – to prevent and mitigate the impact of climate change, including on security. The 2021 Council conclusions on climate diplomacy ask the EU and its Member States to pursue the external goals of the European Green Deal and to strengthen and mainstream work on the climate and security nexus. The UN (including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC), the G7, G20, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the World Health Organization are the key multilateral forums in which it can push this agenda forward. The EU stresses the need to build climate and environmental risk factors into the UN's agenda on peace and security at all levels – there is room for improvement, as the Security Council has so far failed to consider climate change as a specific security threat.³⁸⁷ The European Parliament has also called for the recognition of ecocide as an international crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Parliament also supports a rights-based action to strengthen the protection of environmental defenders.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ [2021 World Climate and Security Report](#), International Military Council on Climate and Security, June 2021. See also: Clingendael, [Military responses to climate change](#), March 2020.

³⁸⁷ [Security Council Fails to Adopt Resolution Integrating Climate-Related Security Risk into Conflict-Prevention Strategies](#) (SC/14732), Meetings coverage, United Nations, 13 December 2021.

³⁸⁸ [European Parliament resolution of 20 January 2021 on human rights and democracy in the world](#) (P9_TA(2021)0014).

In addition, the EU has bilateral arrangements for dialogue and cooperation with third countries (OECD countries, countries party to the UNFCCC and emerging economies). It also works with several regional organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Gulf states.

The EEAS supports international organisations and third countries to address the relationship between climate change and civilian or military missions. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States regularly exchange on the climate, energy and environmental aspects of missions and operations with their UN counterparts. Staff-to-staff dialogues with NATO evaluate possible areas of cooperation in the domain. Further prospects for cooperation with the African Union have been explored, and the EEAS and Commission services have examined the prospects of supporting African partner countries' response capacity to disasters, drawing on the EU's climate diplomacy tools.³⁸⁹

2.11. Managing financial and economic crises

The period since 2019 has been rich in economic and financial developments. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound economic and social impact, and obliged most countries to increase their expenditure and take on additional debt to counter its effects on their economies and support their population. Following the vaccination of large parts of the population and the reopening of countries' economies, increased demand for goods and services in all sectors caused prices to rise. This trend worsened significantly following Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, with significant pressure on energy and food supply and prices. This obliged many central banks to raise interest rates to contain inflation, in line with their mandates. However, this caused new issues.

2.11.1. Failures in the financial sector contained, for the moment

In the first months of 2023, several financial institution failures made the headlines. The cases of Silicon Valley Bank, Signature Bank of New York, or Credit Suisse³⁹⁰ highlighted that monetary tightening to stem inflation after a decade of low interest rates and ample liquidity, and fiscal tightening following the extraordinary spending³⁹¹ during the COVID-19 crisis could create challenges for the financial sector. While the quick and decisive responses by fiscal and monetary authorities contributed in averting those shocks becoming a full-blown systemic crisis, the risks to financial stability persist. However, even without a systemic crisis, the shifting of deposits across different banks and non-banks could restrict banks' ability to provide credit to the real economy, thereby impacting economic growth.

2.11.2. Corporate sector debt – The known unknown

Another risk that looms large since the COVID-19 pandemic is the (non-bank) corporate sector. Indeed, the pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and elevated energy prices

³⁸⁹ See for example: E. Pichon, [The African Union's first climate strategy and EU-Africa climate cooperation](#), European Parliament, EPIS, November 2022.

³⁹⁰ For more information on these cases, see, among others: L. Fang, K. Snellman, C. Zeisberger, [Risks and Regulations: The Silicon Valley Bank Collapse](#), INSEAD, March 2023, [Signature Bank failure due to 'poor management,' US FDIC report says](#), Reuters, April 2023, and [The Credit Suisse Collapse and the Regulation of Banking](#), Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business & Government, March 2023, respectively.

³⁹¹ In the USA, see: [President Biden announces American Rescue Plan](#), White House, January 2021. In the EU, resilience and recovery plans were implemented at national levels as well as at the EU level through [Next Generation EU](#). The International Monetary Fund approved a historical [issuance](#) of special drawing rights, a global reserve asset, in August 2021, as 'a shot in the arm of global economy at a time of unprecedented crisis' to 'foster the resilience and stability of the global economy'.

stressed the financial resilience of the corporate sector in the EU and the USA. Moreover, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which constitute the backbone of Europe's economy,³⁹² are disproportionately affected by these events, as they have smaller financial buffers than bigger corporations. While corporate default rates have remained low in the EU and the USA to date, thanks to the various supporting fiscal packages provided in early 2020, these factors drove corporate indebtedness. High corporate debt, in turn, can affect financial stability, as shocks might increase repayment difficulties and lead to rating downgrades, which amplifies the funding stress these companies face and reduces their ability to service their debt. Ultimately, this can lead to insolvency, with repercussions in the real economy. However, even if this more pessimistic scenario does not come to pass, high corporate debt can reduce corporate investment,³⁹³ and may have repercussions on the overall performance of a state's economy, hampering the green and digital transitions, energy security and more diversified supply chains.

2.11.3. Looming global sovereign debt crises

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public debt soared to record levels (global average at 100 % of GDP). High public debt ratios are a significant concern for policymakers, particularly in light of tightening global financial conditions, weak economic growth prospects, and a stronger US dollar.

The link between financial and economic crises and a deterioration in democracy, peace and security is highlighted in a number of empirical studies, and as new data become available, evidence of 'a correlation between sovereign debt crises and the outbreak of civil wars' becomes stronger.

About 56 % of low-income developing countries are estimated to be either already in debt distress or at high risk of it, and about 25 % of emerging market economies are also estimated to be at high risk. Several emerging market and developing economies still face sovereign credit spreads above 1 000 basis points. Total debt service payments on public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) external debt for the poorest countries rose to over US\$50 billion in 2021, with repayments representing 11.3 % of government revenue in the poorest countries – up from 5.1 % in 2010. In most developing countries, the cost of servicing external debt now exceeds expenditures on health, education, and social protection combined.

To prevent a post-pandemic global sovereign debt crisis, the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) established a Debt Service Suspension Initiative in May 2020. Of 73 eligible countries, 48 participated in the initiative before it expired at the end of December 2021. During that time, the initiative suspended US\$12.9 billion in debt-service payments owed by participating countries to their creditors. At the same time, the fact that debt was suspended (i.e. deferred) and not cancelled, and the initiative only lasted until the end of 2021, led to criticism that it had a very limited impact on the mounting debt problem in the developing world. In that context, the focus passed on another initiative, the Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI (or Common Framework), adopted by the G20 in November 2020. The Common Framework raised expectations and was seen as a significant advance, because for the first time it brought together new (China) and established (Paris Club) bilateral official creditors, under one standing mechanism. Despite those high expectations, however, only four countries have applied so far

³⁹² They provide two-thirds of private sector jobs and contribute to more than half of the total added value created by businesses in the EU.

³⁹³ High [corporate indebtedness](#) implies higher interest expenses and thus less money available for investment. Firms with high debt also find it harder to obtain new funds from external sources due to their higher default risk. Moreover, the desire to repair weak balance sheets leads firms to reduce their debt burden, and thereby forgo investment opportunities.

(Zambia, Chad, Ethiopia and Ghana) and, worse still, only Chad reached a debt treatment agreement with its creditors under the Framework. This is far from the 27 countries currently listed as low-income countries (LICs) by the World Bank.

2.11.4. Geoeconomic fragmentation

On a broader scale, the current geopolitical tensions between the USA and China and the West and Russia already affect international trade and investment (FDI), as well as the international financial system through the various restrictions on international trade and transfer of technology, or the reconfiguration of global supply chains. These impacts, in turn, could reduce asset values, or increase the funding cost of debt, thus contributing to liquidity and solvency stress and threatening Member States' macro-financial stability. Another impact is more specific to developing countries: the fall in FDI, already noticeable following the 2007-2009 global financial crisis, could become more pronounced and FDI could become geographically 'fragmented' along groups of allied countries, if the current trends towards reshoring and 'friend-shoring' (e.g. US and EU chips acts, or the US Inflation Reduction Act – IRA) intensify. The IMF estimates that such an FDI fragmentation could reduce global GDP, by about 2 % in the long term. Moreover, the impact would be disproportional for developing economies, as lower capital and technological deepening would reduce their available capital and diminish potential productivity gains. Another recent IMF paper estimates losses from geoeconomic fragmentation through trade, ranging from 0.3 % of global GDP to 2.3 % in the worse scenario for developed countries. For low-income countries, the outlook would be bleaker (more than 4 % of GDP), which would increase social instability and food insecurity. The IMF notes that poorer countries are most at risk from geoeconomic fragmentation because they are heavily dependent on import and export of key products, including commodities, for which it is more costly to find new suppliers.

2.11.5. Commodity prices normalise, but remain high

Since mid-2022, most commodity prices have been falling from the peaks reached following the pandemic economy reopening and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For example, following strategic oil reserve releases in summer 2022, oil prices fell and Ural crude continued to fall in the first months of 2023, following the sanctions imposed by G7 countries (including the oil price cap). Natural gas traced a similar path, falling by almost 80 % in April 2023 from its August 2022 peak,³⁹⁴ as inventories slowly replenished and consumers reduced their consumption. Similarly, fertiliser and food commodity prices declined in the second half of 2022 from all-time highs in April, due to larger-than-expected edible global supplies and the signing of the Black Sea Grain Initiative by the Russian Federation, Türkiye and Ukraine in July 2022.³⁹⁵ Going forward, commodity prices are expected to fall further in 2023 and remain mostly stable in 2024.

Nevertheless, given national currencies depreciated that in several developing countries during 2022, fuel and food prices in domestic currency remained elevated for most of the year. In addition, high international grain and transport prices, logistical bottlenecks, more expensive alternative import sources, and reduced production or export bans implemented by some major exporting

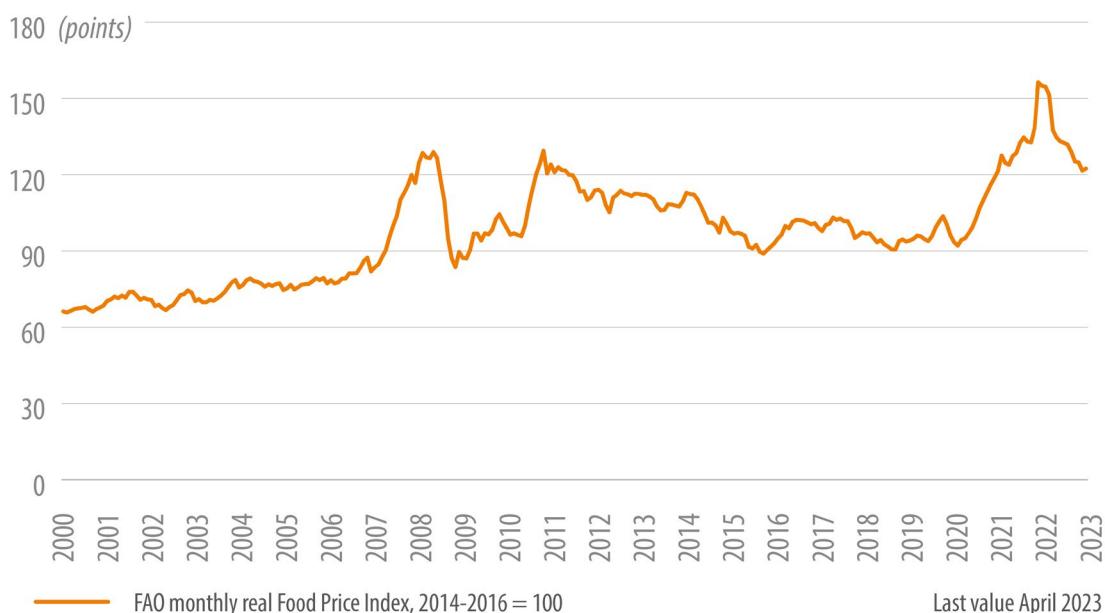
³⁹⁴ The rise in 2022 was caused by aggressive liquid natural gas (LNG) purchases by EU Member States, following their efforts to decouple from Russian oil and gas.

³⁹⁵ The Initiative, officially the Black Sea agreements, allowed for the renewal of agricultural commodity exports from selected Black Sea ports in Ukraine, and the concomitant memorandum of understanding facilitated food and fertiliser exports from the Russian Federation. It was extended in November 2022 for four months, and then again in March 2023 for an unspecified period. On 17 July 2023, Russia announced its [refusal to extend](#) the agreements.

countries, increased import bills for many countries in the Middle East and Africa, impacting their foreign exchange reserves and driving further currency depreciation.

Furthermore, the war continues to affect food security indirectly, particularly in food import-dependent, low-income countries, whose fragile economic resilience was already battered by the COVID-19 pandemic³⁹⁶ (see Figure 29) Indeed, in 2022, 78% of the 42 countries/territories identified as experiencing major food crises in the global report on food crises, were net food importers – with many sourcing staple foods from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Moreover, the report found that the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity and requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance increased last year, with around 258 million people in 58 countries facing acute hunger, and people in 7 countries on the brink of starvation. The numbers from the World Food Programme are even more sobering: it finds that more than 345 million people face high levels of food insecurity in 2023 – more than double the number in 2020.

Figure 29 – FAO Food index in real terms



Data source: [FAO](#), accessed July 2023.

2.11.6. EU support for neighbourhood countries and beyond

The EU supports partner countries in its neighbourhood that are prone to balance-of-payment crises through macro-financial assistance (MFA) – loans or grants that are available to countries benefiting from a disbursing IMF programme. Such MFA is subject to the ordinary legislative procedure, under the provisions of Article 212 TFEU on financial and technical cooperation measures with third countries. It consists of conditional help for non-EU countries experiencing a balance of payment crisis and is complementary to IMF financing. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU reacted promptly to the critical situation in its neighbourhood countries. The EU offered a total €3 billion to support 10 enlargement and neighbourhood partner countries in their efforts to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the coronavirus pandemic,³⁹⁷ in addition to the

³⁹⁶ See section on preventing and addressing conflicts in fragile contexts.

³⁹⁷ The second instalments for [Georgia](#) (€75 million) and [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (€125 million) were cancelled, reducing the total amount to €2.8 billion.

'Team Europe' strategy pledging over €40 billion. The Commission reports annually to the European Parliament and to the Council on implementation of the decision during the previous year.

In the context of the escalating tensions before the Russian invasion, the EU disbursed €1.2 billion in emergency MFA to Ukraine in February 2022 in the form of loans. Following the invasion, and as part of the EU's support to Ukraine, on 18 May 2022, the Commission announced exceptional MFA support for Ukraine of up to €9 billion in a communication on Ukraine relief and reconstruction. In that context, on 1 July 2022, the Commission proposed a new €1 billion MFA operation for Ukraine in the form of a highly concessional long-term loan. This was followed by another MFA operation of €5 billion in loans agreed on 7 September 2022, which was disbursed in three parts, (€2 billion on 18 October, €2.5 billion on 22 November and €500 million on 14 December 2022).³⁹⁸ On 9 November 2022, the Commission proposed to provide €18 billion of support in the form of loans to Ukraine for 2023 through a new MFA + instrument. The first instalment of €3 billion in loans was disbursed on 17 January 2023.

In addition to the above, the EU has several external financing instruments. In 2021, these were merged into a new NDICI – Global Europe instrument, which aims to support countries most in need of assistance to overcome long-term developmental challenges. The instrument has an overall allocation of €79.5 billion. From this amount, €60.38 billion is destined for geographic programmes,³⁹⁹ €6.36 billion for thematic programmes,⁴⁰⁰ and €3.18 billion for a rapid response mechanism that will allow the EU to swiftly respond to crises, contribute to peace, stability and conflict prevention. Finally, there is a buffer of €9.53 billion of unallocated funds, which could top up any of the above-mentioned programmes as well as the rapid response mechanism.

The EU is also active in several regions through the financing of projects by the European Investment Bank. These include enlargement countries (Western Balkans), countries in the MENA region, Eastern Partnership countries, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as Central Asia. In 2012-2022, the European Investment Bank (EIB) mobilised €70 billion in investment outside the EU.

To help developing countries better integrate into the world economy, alleviate poverty and create jobs, the EU has a generalised scheme of preferences (GSP), which removes import duties from products coming into its market from vulnerable developing countries. As of January 2022, 65 countries are eligible. A mid-term evaluation conducted in 2018 showed encouraging developments: in 2014-2019, EU Member States' imports from GSP beneficiaries increased by 25 %, whereas overall imports from third countries increased by 16 % over the same period.

Lastly, contributing to third countries' economic resilience and strengthening economic cooperation with them is a key part of several recent Commission initiatives, such as the 2020 proposed comprehensive strategy with Africa and the 2023 proposal for a new agenda for relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean.

³⁹⁸ European Commission, [Ukraine – Macro-financial assistance](#).

³⁹⁹ The geographic [breakdown](#) is: €29.18 billion for Sub-Saharan Africa; €19.32 billion for the neighbourhood; €8.49 billion for Asia and the Pacific and €3.39 billion for the Americas and the Caribbean.

⁴⁰⁰ The thematic programmes are Human Rights and Democracy; Civil Society Organisations; Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention; and Global Challenges.

3. Looking ahead

3.1. Peace and security in an unpredictable world: The need for foresight and the risk landscape ahead

The EU faces a dual challenge in the field of peace and security. On the one hand, it needs to advance its numerous policies that contribute to these goals and to implement initiatives to mitigate or counter the threats analysed in depth in this publication as well as the immediate effects of the war – for the EU and the world. On the other hand, and crucially for its credibility, it will have to work to adapt its policies and its resilience to a world in which security and peace face multiple interconnected and continuing threats. In that sense, understanding and interpreting geopolitical trends and incorporating them into EU external policies is critical. The momentum for anticipatory governance, which led to the inclusion of a foresight portfolio in the von der Leyen European Commission, held by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, continues to remain as relevant as ever.⁴⁰¹

When one applies foresight methodology in the field of peace and security in 2023, the medium- and long-term consequences of the war in Ukraine inevitably come up as the main focus. Applying foresight to the war in Ukraine means looking beyond the battlefield situation and thinking in terms of the future European and global security architecture. This involves questions as to whether or when Ukraine could join NATO and the EU, but also what this would mean for other countries in the region – Moldova, Georgia, Belarus, and of course Russia itself. Based on an extensive expert consultation, the European Parliamentary Research Service plans to publish a study in September 2023, which will provide a broad outlook on these issues.⁴⁰² According to the report's findings, much will depend on future developments in Russia. With a more constructive Russian government than the current one, a future European security architecture could return to the principles of cooperation and multilateralism, and possibly even include Russia in some way. If, however, relations between Russia and the West remain antagonistic, increased defence spending and new deterrence doctrines are more likely to shape tomorrow's world. Ideas to provide security guarantees to Ukraine, and possibly other countries in the region, have been proposed. These could be considered as an alternative to NATO membership, but would more likely represent an intermediate step. A foresight report on the same theme by the Futuribles think-tank⁴⁰³ focuses more on the development and possible outcome of the war itself.

Foresight-oriented analyses of the consequences of the war in Ukraine confirm a trend, which started before the war, that the concept of security needs broad interpretation. Security is no longer limited to the military, but includes cybersecurity, a battle of narratives and the weaponisation of trade in energy or raw materials. In 2022, the AXA Future Risk report⁴⁰⁴ already identified an inter-relationship between geopolitics, energy and climate change. The 2023 top global Economist Intelligence Unit risk scenarios go a step further and point, *inter alia*, to the risks of high inflation, crisis in the financial sector, or famine, resulting directly or indirectly from the war.⁴⁰⁵ The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2023 Global Risks Report highlights another sensitive issue – that many of

⁴⁰¹ European Commission, [Strategic foresight](#), website; For more detail, see the [2021 edition](#) of this study.

⁴⁰² M. Damen, EU-Ukraine 2035 – Strategic foresight analysis on the future of the EU and Ukraine, EPRS, European Parliament, September 2023 (forthcoming).

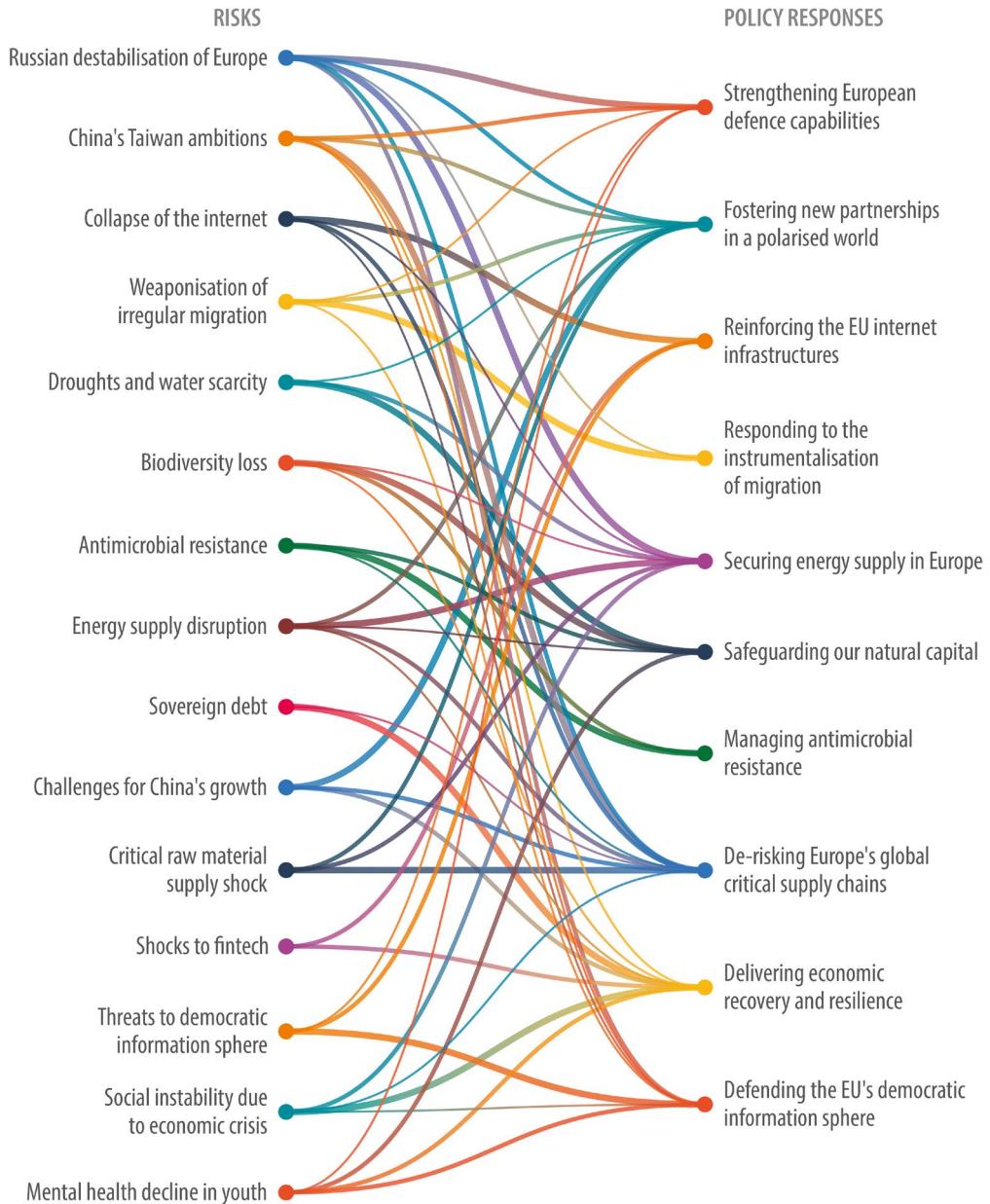
⁴⁰³ F. Bourse, M. Segur, A. Lebec and C. Louis, [What scenarios for the war in Ukraine?](#), Futuribles, 9 August 2022.

⁴⁰⁴ AXA, [Future Risk Report 2022](#).

⁴⁰⁵ Economist Intelligence Unit, [Top global risk scenarios report](#), April 2023.

these risks interact with each other and can create – or have partly already created – a 'polycrisis'. The report contains a section exploring 'resource rivalries', defined as 'a potential cluster of interrelated environmental, geopolitical and socioeconomic risks relating to the supply of and demand for natural resources'.⁴⁰⁶ In July 2023, the European Parliamentary Research Service released its Future Shocks 2023 report,⁴⁰⁷ which too shows the many inter-relationships between 'conventional' security threats and (socio)economic and environmental risks (see Figure 30).

Figure 30 – Linking various risks Europe faces to possible policy responses



Source: [Future Shocks 2023: Anticipating and weathering the next storms](#), July 2023.

⁴⁰⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit, [Top global risk scenarios report](#), April 2023.

⁴⁰⁶ See: World Economic Forum, [Global Risks Report 2023](#), section 3.

⁴⁰⁷ [Future Shocks 2023: Anticipating and weathering the next storms](#), EPRS with the Directorates-General for Internal and External Policies, July 2023.

The multiple threats to peace and stability demand responses that increase Europe's resilience and capacity to act. Following the pandemic, the Commission focused on these aspects in its foresight reports, linking the capacity to act with the EU's (open) strategic autonomy, including in economic terms. In July 2023, the Commission released its fourth foresight report, entitled 'Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy'.⁴⁰⁸ As the title indicates, traditional security matters are not at the centre of this report, which rather deals with the consequences of our new security environment for European citizens and companies.

In one sense, the main exercise for foresight for the European foreign and security policy was the Strategic Compass, analysed earlier in this study. Some Member States have reacted with far-reaching decisions to the sudden change in security environment caused by the war. Finland and Sweden applied for NATO membership, and Germany launched its 'Zeitenwende' in defence policy.⁴⁰⁹ As the March 2023 progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Compass shows, the EU and its Member States are now implementing the vision presented one year before. In response to the war, and in view of the unstable security outlook, national and European policymakers are increasing their efforts to create a resilient European defence and to enhance cooperation with like-minded partners.⁴¹⁰ However, the current challenges for global security go beyond what Europe can do by itself.⁴¹¹ Although the third EU-NATO declaration is said to bring little new substance, it nevertheless contains important language for the long-term view of security, acknowledging the positive contribution of a stronger and more capable European defence to Atlantic security and calling China's growing assertiveness and policies 'challenges that we need to address', for instance.⁴¹²

As this study illustrates, the promotion of peace and security will increasingly involve robust and insightful policymaking in fields corresponding to a broader understanding of security and, consequently, a broader understanding of the threat landscape. The EPRS Future Shocks 2023 report gives several examples of such risks and responses, such as a possible collapse of the internet, drought, famine and biodiversity loss, or sudden shifts in the provision of energy and (often critical) raw materials. Whereas the pandemic already highlighted weaknesses in certain supply chains, the war in Ukraine has mostly affected food and energy dependencies to date. EU countries have responded by diversifying their energy sources away from Russian fossil fuels and therefore, the focus of the European debate on dependencies is shifting towards Asia, in particular to economic relations with China.⁴¹³ While the USA already considered China's economic rise as a risk over a decade ago, it would seem that Europe is following, somewhat hesitantly, today. In her speech of 30 March 2023, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen introduced the notion of 'de-risking' relations with China, distinguishing this from 'de-coupling'.⁴¹⁴ While Europe is mainly concerned about the economic risks linked to its dependencies on China, the USA sees China as a more general

⁴⁰⁸ European Commission, [Communication – 2023 Strategic Foresight Report: Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy](#), COM(2023) 376, July 2023.

⁴⁰⁹ See, for instance: S. Clapp, [Russia's war on Ukraine: reflections on European security, neutrality and strategic orientation](#), EPRS, European Parliament, May 2022.

⁴¹⁰ EEAS, [2023 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#).

⁴¹¹ NATO released its concept three months after the EU Strategic Compass; see: [NATO 2022 Strategic Concept](#), adopted by heads of state or government at the NATO Summit in Madrid, 29 June 2022.

⁴¹² For an evaluation of the third EU-NATO declaration, see: S. Clapp, [The third joint EU-NATO declaration](#), EPRS, February 2023.

⁴¹³ For a recent foresight study on EU-China relations, see: K. van Wieringen, [EU-China 2030, European expert consultation on future relations with China](#), EPRS, December 2022.

⁴¹⁴ [Speech](#) by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on EU-China relations, 30 March 2023.

threat to peace and security. The 2023 Annual Threat Assessment by the US Intelligence Community⁴¹⁵ tellingly puts China first on its list of countries perceived as threats, before Russia, Iran and North Korea. Increasing tensions between China and the USA in various areas, particularly regarding Taiwan could be a potential source of – even military – conflict. China's close relationship with Russia, and its offer to mediate in the war, also point to the need for a close foresight approach.

The US intelligence report also considers other risks, including climate change and environmental degradation, migration, 'digital authoritarianism and malign influence', transnational organised crime and global terrorism, all of which have been addressed in this study as they resonate with the threat landscape identified by the Strategic Compass and earlier the EU Global Strategy (and consequently the Normandy Index, described in detail in the introduction). Migration, in particular, is identified by the majority of foresight and trends reports as an issue to watch and to understand. As the 2023 WEF Global Risks Report indicates, involuntary migration is often a secondary effect of another crisis, be it a war, an environmental disaster or famine. A report by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development lists ten key issues to watch in migration and population movements, and refers to a 'turning point in Europe's migration history', with a new migration environment shaped by a number of complex and interacting factors, such as the continued effects of long-term trends and drivers; the impact of growing geopolitical competition, the direct and indirect impacts of war and conflict; and the instrumentalisation of migration as a means of hybrid aggression.⁴¹⁶ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that 117.2 million people will be forcibly displaced or stateless in 2023.⁴¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, the report predicts that migration pressures as well as population flows will remain high, and that relevant policies will need to continue to adapt.

As illustrated, demographics, technology, climate, democracy and the economy continue to form the broad categories of trends that should inform policymaking for peace and security, acquiring new nuances each year as a result of global developments. The 2023 EU Strategic Foresight report notably identifies broad linkages between those fields and proposes commensurate policy options. The need for a new economic model, aimed at the wellbeing of people and nature, a new social contract, a focus on 'future skills' (including digital), major global partnerships and investment in sustainability, among other things, should, according to the report, guide EU policy in the coming years in all these domains.

3.2. Conclusions

For the second year in a row, Europe faces the unavoidable reality that peace and security can no longer be taken for granted. While Europe has experienced a protracted period of 'long-lasting peace' since the end of the Second World War, and remains a world leader in quality of life, the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have illustrated the speed at which unanticipated events can impact multiple facets of peace and security. In that context, the recognition and study of the wide range of traditional and emerging threats that challenge the EU's interests and values as well as global peace is a necessary exercise for the formulation of EU policies. The adoption of the EU Strategic Compass in 2022, and EU Member States' commitment to return regularly to the exercise of jointly assessing threats, illustrates the complexity of the global environment as well as the level of the EU's commitment to pursuing security. At the same time,

⁴¹⁵ See: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, [Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community](#), 6 February 2023.

⁴¹⁶ [Migration Outlook 2023](#), ICMPD, 2023.

⁴¹⁷ See: UNHCR, [Global Appeal 2023](#).

perhaps more than ever before, it has become clear that partnerships and global engagement are critical to the goal of peace – both in the EU as well as its promotion beyond EU borders.⁴¹⁸

Growing concerns about a more multifaceted international environment and about worsening security, including through the weaponisation of energy, water, information, the economy and supply chains, among other things, are increasingly reflected in the policy initiatives launched by the EU institutions in recent years. Public opinion polls also indicate that citizens continue to perceive security as a top priority for EU-level policymaking. At the same time, the sense of peace as a shared pursuit has also led to consistently high levels of public support and solidarity for Ukraine, in spite of the impact of the war on everyday life – within and beyond the EU and Europe.

With geopolitics now firmly transcending the boundaries between internal and external policies, this year's annual study of the EU's tools to promote peace and security has included examples from the areas of digital policy, technology, industry and innovation, economy, energy, health and climate, as well as more traditional foreign policy tools from the fields of development, defence, diplomacy and democracy promotion.

These examples show that while measuring peace – and hence the EU's contribution to building and maintaining it – remains a complex task, it is possible to identify and analyse the EU's work in its promotion and preservation. Using the Global Strategy, the Strategic Compass and the Normandy Index as a starting point, this study assesses the EU's action for peace and security through an overview of its work in countering recognised threats to peace: weapons of mass destruction; democracy; state fragility; violent conflicts; cyber-attacks; disinformation; terrorism; climate change; energy insecurity; and economic crises.

As in the previous edition, Russia's war on Ukraine and the EU's response to it is the common thread that brings all dimensions of EU external and internal action for peace and security together. As has been illustrated throughout this study, the effects of the war on Ukraine reverberate around the world in the form of decreased food and energy security, inflationary pressures, economic crises, proxy wars and regional conflict, the proliferation of disinformation and hybrid warfare – to name only a few. Insecurity and instability have intensified global polarisation, notably between democracies and authoritarian states, but even beyond that distinction, contributing to an already acute crisis of multilateralism. Given the EU's founding Treaties stipulate that inclusiveness and multilateralism should be at the heart of its pursuit of peace and security, this crisis – reflected notably in voting patterns in the UNGA and paralysis at the UN Security Council – poses even greater challenge to the EU's external action. A number of initiatives outlined in the preceding sections illustrate the EU's commitment to the principles of the United Nations, now combined with a clear-eyed assessment of the principled pragmatism demanded by today's international environment of new security challenges and power distribution.

As in previous years, the EU's action to promote peace and security is underpinned by the concept of promoting resilience in the EU, its neighbourhood and beyond. The implementation of the Versailles Agenda, adopted by the EU Heads of State and Government in March 2022, with its three pillars (defence, energy and economy) has been crucial in this context. Initiatives such as REpowerEU, joint defence procurement and most recently the economic security strategy, all stem from the decisions made by the leaders in that all-important moment. However, resilience has also been fundamental in strengthening EU external policy action in fields such as development and democracy promotion. As revisionist powers challenge international law, democracy and human

⁴¹⁸ [European Diplomatic Academy: Opening remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the inauguration of the pilot programme](#), EEAS, 2022.

rights norms are markedly at greater risk, opening up space for disinformation and malign interference for destabilising actors. In this context, the EU's tools, ranging from political and human rights dialogue and support for civil society and human rights defenders, to development aid, macrofinancial assistance, fair trade, enlargement and diplomacy, are also continuously reinforced to adapt to the geopolitical constellation as well as to the double goals of the green and digital transition.

Geopolitical and economic challenges, emanating from external and internal factors and from new security domains such as technology and the environment, will continue to preoccupy policy-makers in the EU institutions and Member States in the coming years. New types of threats and destabilising factors including pandemics, climate change, foreign interference, economic coercion and bio-terrorism, as well as various types of hybrid warfare, continue to call for innovative thinking and new types of resources and solutions. The proliferation of new strategies and initiatives in all EU policy areas related to peace and security substantiates this fact. While the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine have exposed the vulnerabilities and external dependencies of the EU, they continue to demonstrate the EU's capacity to act boldly and innovatively in the face of major threats.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine serves as a major example of the EU's determination to act in the face of an attack on peace. Following the EU's unprecedented March 2022 decision to finance the delivery of lethal military equipment to a third country at war, financial support to arm Ukraine more than doubled in 2023. Since February 2022, the EU has imposed 11 major packages of sanctions on Russia, which together amount to the biggest – by considerable magnitude – set of sanctions ever agreed upon by the EU-27. Coordination on both these fronts, military support and sanctions, with the United States, NATO allies and G7 partners has been continuous and has solidified major democracies' commitment to the defence of peace.

The war in Ukraine is reshaping the world. It is also reshaping the EU's action in the world. Looking forward, challenges such as the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine and a re-engagement with partners across the world through both old and new EU external action instruments, will be critical to the EU's commitment to the promotion of peace and security. The European Parliament, empowered by the Treaties in the EU foreign policy area, has consistently supported a stronger global role for the EU, perhaps more than ever in the face of Russia's unjustified war on Ukraine. In the words of President Roberta Metsola: 'We must understand that the weight of the global democratic order now rests more heavily than ever before on Europe's shoulders. And we must be able to carry it. It is our whatever-it-takes moment. A moment that comes once in a generation.'⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁹ European Parliament, [Metsola: Europe is fit for the next generation](#), press release, May 2022.

Russia's war on Ukraine has caused the European Union (EU) to intensify its work for peace and security. The Peace and Security Outlook, produced by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), seeks to analyse and explain the European Union's contribution to the promotion and restoration of peace and security internationally, through its various external policies. This study provides an overview of the issues and current state of play. It looks first at the concept of peace and the changing nature of the geopolitical environment, as European security faces the most tangible military threat since the end of the Cold War.

Linking the study to the Normandy Index, which measures threats to peace and democracy worldwide based on the EU Global Strategy, each chapter of the study analyses a specific threat to peace, and presents an overview of EU action to counter the related risks. The areas discussed include proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, democracy support, conflict prevention and mitigation in fragile contexts, the security impacts of climate change, cyber-attacks, disinformation, and terrorism, among other issues. The study concludes with an outlook for the future. A parallel paper, published separately, focuses specifically on the state of play of the EU's relations with Iraq.

EPRS has drafted this study as a contribution to the Normandy World Peace Forum, taking place in September 2023.

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