



# The changing realities of European defence cooperation

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At the time of writing, Russia is waging war against Ukraine. This follows weeks of speculation about what Moscow was hoping to achieve with its massive military build-up along the border. The masks have come off, the Kremlin has shown its true colours and people are dying in Ukraine as a result. Europe, the West and the entire international community must support Ukraine and its people in their time of need.

The Kremlin's war in Ukraine has reminded Europeans that peace on the European continent cannot be taken for granted. This is not something that we are discovering now for the first time: the wars of Yugoslav secession in the 1990s, the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014 all taught us that war and conflict, regrettably, continue to shape the course of history in Europe.

When the process of European integration first began in the 1950s with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, it was in response to people's desire to make future wars between European countries impossible. European integration and the EU have been overwhelmingly successful in this—the Union has developed into a community of like-minded countries that share, to a large extent, the same values and principles, and that believe that Europe is far more prosperous and secure if they work together as a Union than individually.

Although European countries considered forming a European Defence Community with a common European army as early as the 1950s, security and defence issues were kept outside the process of European integration for decades due to their sensitivity. It was only in the late 1990s that EU countries began to cooperate on these issues in the framework of the Union, through the EU's European (now Common) Security and Defence Policy. The focus of this policy was initially out-of-area crisis management in regions

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such as the Western Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa, where NATO did not wish to become involved. In more recent years, the focus of EU security and defence cooperation has shifted to joint capability development and research, and to enhancing the Union's own crisis resilience to phenomena such as cyber- and hybrid attacks.

Despite these achievements, the EU has a long way to go before it can call itself a genuine defence union. Russia's war in Ukraine has shown that the EU needs to step up its efforts in the field of security and defence to enhance its resilience to sudden shocks, to become a more credible partner to its closest friends, and to contribute more to transatlantic burden sharing in Europe and elsewhere. We need a Union that is able to protect its citizens and member states, a Union that defends its partners when they are threatened by hostile states and non-state actors, and a Union that is able to act when it is time to do so. The EU must therefore become a true defence union.

This issue of the *European View* focuses on the future of European defence cooperation. The topic of this issue was decided before Russia launched all-out war against Ukraine in February 2022. It was chosen with the aim of providing ideas for and inputs to the various ongoing security- and defence-related reflection processes in both Brussels and other European capitals. Although the EU was already in the process of boosting its security and defence dimension before the war in Ukraine, the hostilities have made doing so even more necessary.

The authors who have contributed to this issue cover different aspects of EU (and European) security and defence cooperation. These include topics such as the growing role of the European Commission in the field of EU security and defence cooperation, the EU's ability to act vis-à-vis the great powers on the world stage, the Union's plans to establish a permanent naval presence in the Indo-Pacific region, and the significance of Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union—the EU's mutual aid and assistance clause. The current affairs section includes articles on other important topics such as Russia's role in the 2021 European gas crisis and the implications of climate change in the Sahel region.

I hope that you enjoy reading this new issue of the *European View* and that it will provide you with some food for thought on how European defence cooperation could and should be developed further in the months and years ahead.

### Author biography



**Mikuláš Dzurinda** is President of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and former Prime Minister of Slovakia (1998–2006).