



Contemporary regional threats and challenges in Europe

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In a fast-evolving environment, the regional threats and challenges in Europe have become more and more multidimensional and complex. The landscape is increasingly being shaped by the international and interregional character of the challenges that Europe is currently facing, and this has become more evident than ever before. Recent developments such as the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine have profoundly called into question the EU's foreign policy and transformed the way we look at our security and policy response (Galland et al. 2022).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is by far the greatest challenge that Europe as a whole is currently facing (Deterrence and Defence 2022). It has caused the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, with over 7.6 million refugees having been forced to flee Ukraine into both EU and non-EU European countries (UNHCR, Operational Data Portal 2022). Alongside the Covid-19 pandemic, recurring security threats have tested Europe's capacity for cooperation and collective action, and have also reminded us that contemporary challenges almost always transcend national borders. This means that state-level action alone is not sufficient for dealing with such problems (EEAS 2018).

In view of this, it is crucial to note that the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war have united the EU member states to an unprecedented extent. However, many gaps continue to exist. There is currently a stronger need than ever for collective European responsibility and a security system that ensures Europe's capacity to act in all situations (EEAS 2022, 14).

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The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy was created in the late 1990s with the aim of promoting security, maintaining peace and stability in the Union's neighbourhood, and preventing future conflicts. The uncertain security environment that Europe is currently facing, as well as the ongoing conflicts and crises around Europe, is evolving at an accelerating pace. At the same time, the need for Europe to respond to and tackle these challenges is also accelerating (EEAS 2021a). Through the prism of the Ukraine war, the EU's enlargement policy has come strongly into focus, giving new momentum to the desire to demonstrate the Union's influence and commitment to a more secure, stable, unified and resilient Europe.

Beyond the war, the key issues affecting Europe's security range from constant hybrid threats to climate change (Dennison et al. 2018, 1). All of these issues have found their way into the region, profoundly challenging internal security and putting the safety of European citizens at risk. According to recent Eurobarometer surveys, the majority of EU citizens expect increased security and stability, and a more unified response to the threats and challenges that Europe is currently facing (EEAS 2018). These threats have impacted both the internal and external security of European countries. The Covid-19 pandemic affected the online dimension of safety and strongly impacted the internal security of European countries. With many activities moving online, our reliance and dependence on the Internet increased to a level that weakened internal security and led to cyber incidents. As malware and ransomware attacks increased, so too did disinformation and radicalisation (Wahl 2021). The continuing brittle security environment in the region demands stronger and more unified cooperation among countries. As a result, the EU has worked to consolidate and enhance its capabilities for addressing various types of threats and challenges (EPP 2015).

With the goal of further strengthening the security and defence mechanisms in Europe, the EU's new Strategic Compass presents an advanced plan for adapting the security and defence programme. It aims to provide the necessary tools and initiatives to ensure a more coherent and stronger Union, able to tackle the security challenges expected by 2030. One of the strands of the Strategic Compass also places a special focus on securing citizens against fast-changing threats (EEAS 2022).

This issue of the *European View* focuses specifically on the regional threats and challenges in Europe. This focus was chosen with the aims of providing input on how to tackle the different security-related challenges that European countries are currently facing, and of reflecting on new patterns of cooperation. It was my wish that the articles it contains highlight some of the regional challenges that are of particular concern to certain European countries but which might not always receive the full attention of Brussels.

The authors who have contributed to this issue cover various dimensions of the security threats in Europe. These include the energy poverty in Central and Eastern Europe, Russian aggression towards Ukraine and its implications for the security order, challenges to interregional cooperation on the rule of law and the security of tourists. The current affairs section includes articles on salient topics such as radicalisation in the context of the war in Ukraine, cybersecurity, the democratic deficit, the EU's quest for

strategic autonomy, EU enlargement in the case of Georgia, climate change and EU law regarding online platforms.

As such, this new issue of the *European View* tackles one of the most important topics that our societies are currently facing. I hope you enjoy reading the rich variety of articles collected and reflecting upon approaches and tools to further strengthen the security architecture in Europe.

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