

EUISS

YEARBOOK OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

2022

by

Daniel Fiott and Linnéa Cullman



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Abbreviations

5+5 JMC	5+5 Joint Military Commission	C2	Command and Control	CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
ABL	Administrative Boundary Line	CAI	Comprehensive Agreement on Investment	CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project	CARD	Coordinated Annual Review on Defence	DoSA	Defence of Space Assets
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement	CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism	DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
AFP	African Peace Facility	CEWS	Continental Early Warning System	EaP	Eastern Partnership
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia	CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy	ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	CMP	Coordinated Maritime Presences	ECOWARN	ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting	COP26	Climate Change Conference	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
AU	African Union	COVAX	Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access	ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
AUKUS	Australia, United Kingdom and United States	CPC	Communist Party of China	EDA	European Defence Agency

EDF	European Defence Fund	EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission	GHG	Greenhouse Gas
EDIDP	European Defence Industrial Development Programme	EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission	GNA	Government of National Accord
EEAS	European External Action Service	EUMS	European Union Military Staff	HDP	People's Democratic Party
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone	EUNAVFOR	European Union Naval Force	HERA	Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority
EMA	European Medicines Agency	EUPOL	European Union Police Mission	HR/VP	High Representative for the Union's Foreign and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
ENISA	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity	EU SATCEN	European Union Satellite Centre	IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
EOM	Election Observation Mission	EUSP	European Union Space Programme	IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
EPF	European Peace Facility	EUSPA	European Union Agency for the Space Programme	IHEC	Independent High Election Commission of Iraq
EU	European Union	EUTF	European Union Emergency Trust Fund	IHL	International Humanitarian Law
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission	EUTM	European Union Military Training Mission	IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission	FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	IMF	International Monetary Fund
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission	FIMI	Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference	INF	Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces
EUFOR	European Union Force	G20	Group of Twenty	INSTEX	Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies	GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam		

IOM	NDICI	SHADE MED
International Organization for Migration	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument	Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean
ISGS	NEBE	SNAF
Islamic State in the Greater Sahara	National Electoral Board of Ethiopia	Somali National Armed Forces
ISIL	NIP	SSA
Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant	National Implementation Plan	Space Situational Awareness
ISIS	NIS	SST
Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	Network and Information Systems	Space Surveillance and Tracking
ISWAP	NPT	TPLF
Islamic State West African Province	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons	Tigray People's Liberation Front
JAD	OFAC	TPNW
Jamaah Ansharut Daulah	Office of Foreign Assets Control	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
JCPoA	OLA	UCPM
Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action	Oromo Liberation Army	European Union Civil Protection Mechanism
LGBTIQ	OSCE	UN
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	United Nations
LPDF	PASSAX	UNAMI
Libyan Political Dialogue Forum	Passing Exercise	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
MEG	PESCO	UNGA
Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline	Permanent Structured Cooperation	United Nations General Assembly
MFA	RACC	UNHRC
Macro-Financial Assistance	Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell	United Nations Human Rights Council
MINUSMA	RRF	UNICEF
UN Integrated Stabilization Mission for Mali	Recovery and Resilience Facility	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
M-SASV	SATOC	UNRWA
Medium size Semi-Autonomous Surface Vehicle	Strategic Air Transport for Outsized Cargo	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
NATO	SDGs	UNSC
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	Sustainable Development Goals	United Nations Security Council

UNSCR

United Nations Security Council
Resolution

UNSG

United Nations Secretary General

UNSMIL

United Nations Support
Mission in Libya

UN SOM

United Nations Assistance Mission
in Somalia

US

United States

WHO

World Health Organisation

WPS

Women, Peace and Security

WTO

World Trade Organisation

YPS

Youth, Peace and Security

Country codes

AT

Austria

ES

Spain

LU

Luxembourg

BE

Belgium

FI

Finland

MT

Malta

BG

Bulgaria

FR

France

NL

Netherlands

CY

Cyprus

HR

Croatia

PL

Poland

CZ

Czechia

HU

Hungary

PT

Portugal

DK

Denmark

IE

Ireland

RO

Romania

DE

Germany

IT

Italy

SE

Sweden

EE

Estonia

LV

Latvia

SL

Slovenia

EL

Greece

LT

Lithuania

SK

Slovakia

Introduction

The year 2021 was one in which the European Union (EU) and international partners had to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. In this respect, while 2021 was challenging there were nevertheless signs that the world was turning the corner on the virus, not least because of the mass circulation of vaccines. In this respect, in January 2021 the European Commission was able to authorise a second and third safe and effective vaccine against Covid-19 following scientific advice from the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The Union also engaged in providing up to an additional 300 million doses of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine, in addition to the millions of doses it had already secured for use across the EU. Learning lessons from the early stages of the Covid-19 crisis, where there were low stocks of medical equipment, the EU built up its stocks, placing it under the rescEU initiative to resupply the Union⁽¹⁾. The Commission also expanded its stockpile facilities in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Slovenia which took the total to nine countries.

More broadly, the EU also developed its economic recovery tools with the agreement of a Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which was the centrepiece of a broader financial support initiative called 'NextGenerationEU'. This new tool would see the EU make grants and loans of up to €672.5 billion to help with public investments and reforms in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic⁽²⁾. EU Member States started to receive support in June and by the end of

(1) European Commission, 'Timeline of EU action', 2 May 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/timeline-eu-action_en).

(2) Ibid.

the month, close to €800 million had been disbursed⁽³⁾. Additionally, the pandemic served to advance EU-level response mechanisms and in February the Commission launched a new European bio-defence preparedness plan (the ‘HERA Incubator’) to ensure that researchers, biotech firms, producers and public authorities across the EU would be better prepared to develop new vaccines in case of any future pandemic or health disaster. A fourth vaccine was authorised in the EU in mid-March, and the Union continued to disburse billions of euros in financial support to EU Member States to help manage the economic impact of the pandemic, especially as supply chains were still unstable and economic activity was strained.

Another challenge faced by the EU was to ensure that the single market could continue to function despite the pandemic. In March, the European Commission proposed a ‘Digital Green Certificate’ to allow for the safe free movement of people within the EU during the pandemic. In June, the initiative would go live as the Digital Covid Certificate. Another important step was reached in mid-July as the Union delivered vaccines to 70 % of adults in the EU. This figure was confirmed in late August as over 256 million adults were fully vaccinated⁽⁴⁾.

At the same time, the EU continued to uphold its international commitments and on 19 February the Union announced an additional €500 million contribution to the COVAX Facility, which seeks to secure and share vaccines for low and medium-income countries. Since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the EU had provided €2.2 billion in contributions to the COVAX Facility⁽⁵⁾. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, €34 billion was disbursed by the EU to partners across the globe and in mid-October, the Union announced that it had delivered over 1 billion vaccine doses to more than 150 countries over a period of ten months⁽⁶⁾. International support for vulnerable countries was vital during the year. In March, the EU delivered vaccines to countries such as Moldova, Montenegro and North Macedonia. In fact, in April the EU managed to secure over

(3) ‘Timeline of EU action’, op. cit.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Ibid.

650 000 additional doses for Western Balkan countries⁽⁷⁾. EU partners such as India also benefitted from deliveries of oxygen, medicine and equipment as the country entered a critical moment in its fight against Covid-19. Africa was also a recipient of EU support and on 21 May the Union announced at the G20 Global Health Summit that it would commit €1 billion to help the continent produce vaccines⁽⁸⁾. In August, the EU would take measures to speed up vaccination rates in the Eastern Partnership region by sponsoring vaccination campaigns in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

2021 saw a number of other events that would raise questions for the Union, not least in some of its closest partners. The 6 January saw the storming of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. by individuals that were protesting the results of the US 2020 presidential election. Despite the shocking scenes of armed individuals entering the premises of the US Congress, the 20 January saw the inauguration of Joseph R. Biden as the 46th President of the United States (US). For many Europeans, the election of President Biden was seen as a positive sign and signal to revitalise the EU-US relationship. Indeed, in mid-February President Biden decided to officially rejoin the Paris Agreement after his predecessor, President Donald Trump, took the decision to pull the United States out of the historic accords. Additionally, the EU and United States sought to mend relations during the year and they organised a bilateral summit on 15 June in Brussels. They also discussed an end to the Boeing-Airbus dispute and to trade disputes related to steel and aluminium. They also jointly set up an EU-US Trade and Technology Council and pledged to hold the first-ever EU-US Dialogue on Defence. Europeans also welcomed the US' re-entry into the Iranian nuclear agreement, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

On Europe's eastern borders, trouble was brewing as Russia started a military build-up near Ukraine. In April, NATO publicly called on Russia to stop its build-up and to refrain from interfering

(7) 'Timeline of EU action', op. cit.

(8) Ibid.

in Ukraine's affairs. Relations with Russia would be further strained during the year as the Czech government announced in April that it held the Russian intelligence services responsible for destroying two weapons depots in Vrbetice in 2014. This led to the expulsion of 18 Russian 'diplomats' based in the Czech Republic. Relations with Russia had already hit a low point with the imprisonment of Alexei Navalny upon his return to Russia in January – he had been in Germany receiving treatment for poisoning in August 2020 at the hands of Russian intelligence services. In mid-November, Russia would yet again receive international condemnation as it used an anti-satellite weapon in space on its own COSMOS 1408 satellite and created multiple pieces of orbital debris⁽⁹⁾.

In this wider political context, Russia's military build-up on Ukraine's borders continued during the year. Intelligence reports showed how Russia has substantially built up forces in March and April 2021, but in October 2021 a second build-up occurred and by December 2021 close to 100 000 Russian soldiers were amassed on Ukraine's borders. Despite repeated claims by the Kremlin that the troops were in place for military exercises, military analysts and experts saw the build-up as highly unusual and the US intelligence services had started to warn European counterparts that Russia could be planning to invade Ukraine again⁽¹⁰⁾. In fact, an early December 2021 US intelligence briefing stated that Russia had amassed up to 175 000 troops close to Ukraine and that Moscow was also moving artillery and equipment in the region beyond what would be required for a military exercise⁽¹¹⁾.

In addition to tensions with Russia, the EU had to contend with the worsening situation in Belarus. Indeed, the crisis only got worse

(9) Council of the European Union, 'Statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the EU on the Russian anti-satellite test on 15 November 2021', 19 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/19/statement-by-the-high-representative-of-the-union-for-foreign-affairs-and-security-policy-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-russian-anti-satellite-test-on-15-november-2021/>).

(10) Euronews, 'Russia's military build-up near Ukraine is different this time, say experts', 6 December 2021 (<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/11/24/russia-s-military-build-up-near-ukraine-is-different-this-time-say-experts>).

(11) *Washington Post*, 'Russian planning massive military offensive against Ukraine with 175,000 troops, US warns', 3 December 2021 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/russia-ukraine-invasion/2021/12/03/98a3760e-546b-11ec-8769-2f4ecdf7a2ad_story.html).

during 2021 when Ryanair Flight 4978 was diverted on its path from Greece to Lithuania and forced to land at Minsk. Once the flight was grounded, security services arrested dissident journalist Roman Protasevich and Sofia Sapega and they were forced to make fake on-air confessions about crimes they had supposedly committed against the Belarussian state. Belarus would also turn to a strategy of disrupting the EU in 2021 by forcibly moving migrants across its borders into Union territory. In July, Belarus actively sought to increase the number of people crossing the border from Belarus to Lithuania and Poland. Belarus even organised flights from the Middle East to ensure a high number of people would enter the EU. Not only was Belarus responsible for human rights abuses and appalling treatment of vulnerable individuals, but President Alexander Lukashenko was widely seen as launching a 'deliberate, cynical and dangerous' hybrid attack on Lithuania and Poland⁽¹²⁾. As a consequence, the EU not only supported Poland and Lithuania but it also continued to impose sanctions on the regime in Belarus.

Other international events would surface throughout the year including a *coup d'état* in Myanmar that saw the ouster of Aung San Suu Kyi from office and replaced with a military leadership. In Armenia, there would be instability as calls for prime minister Nikol Pashinyan to step down led to accusations of a planned *coup d'état* – Pashinyan would go on to win the parliamentary elections held in the country on 20 June. On 20 March, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that he would pull his country out of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In Chad, President Idriss Déby was killed during clashes with rebel forces on 20 April and a transitional military council was put in place to govern the country. Another coup followed in Mali on 24 May, with President Bah Ndaw being removed from power and replaced by a military junta. In late April, violent clashes started over border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The conflict between Palestine and Israel intensified in mid-May with military clashes in the Gaza Strip. In late July,

(12) European Commission, 'Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg and Lithuanian President Nausėda in relation to the situation in Belarus and at its border with the EU', 28 November 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_21_6401).

Tunisian President Kais Saied seizes greater control of the country by suspending parliament and getting rid of Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi. A coup d'état in Guinea took place on 5 September as President Alpha Condé was detained by a military unit in the country. A further coup took place in Sudan on 25 October and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok was placed under house arrest.

The EU also had to contend with long-standing and pressing crises during 2021. This not only included a response to repeated ballistic missile tests by North Korea close to Japanese and South Korean territory, but the need to support Hong Kong in the face of continued constraints on fundamental freedoms. Regarding China, the biggest challenge emerged in relation to the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), which saw the new US administration urge Europeans not to sign the agreement with China. Although Europeans argued that the CAI was not dissimilar to the United States' own Phase One Trade Deal with China, the EU failed to ratify the agreement in the European Parliament given open opposition to the deal by parliamentarians. Following sanctions on Chinese officials in March 2021 for their involvement in the repression of and gross human rights violations towards the Uyghur population in Xinjiang (China), Beijing retaliated by sanctioning members of the European Parliament.

Finally, the summer of 2021 was taken up by the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. In mid-August, the Taliban strode into Kabul following seizures of territory throughout Afghanistan in the preceding months, and the US-backed government of President Ashraf Ghani left the country. NATO forces had started to draw down in April 2021 but by August a massive evacuation effort got underway to ensure the safe exit of NATO forces and dependents. In total, more than 120 000 people were evacuated from Kabul airport and around 2 000 Afghans and their families who had worked for NATO were airlifted out as well⁽¹³⁾. Even though the United States and Taliban had signed an agreement in early 2020 for the withdrawal of international forces by May 2021, the way the evacuation

(13) NATO, 'NATO and Afghanistan', 31 August 2022 (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm).

took place raised questions about coordination between US and European allies.

The 2022 Yearbook

As per every year, the task of the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) Yearbook of European Security is to provide an overview and analytical framing of events that affected European security. The Yearbook details how the Union acted in 2021 and what events challenged the EU into a response. The book therefore remains the most comprehensive account of the year in the life of the EU as a foreign, security and defence actor. As per usual, the yearbook does not cover every country or region as the guiding principle is whether the EU had an influence or involvement in a particular development or crisis. Therefore, in some cases the reader should not be surprised if a certain country or region is not covered in this book.

We have endeavoured to ensure that the yearbook is easy to follow. This is why we continue to divide the book into two main sections: 1) external action; and 2) security and defence. We adopt a broad definition of security to cover the broadest possible number of pertinent issues that were tackled under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Therefore, this Yearbook contains entries on the EU's multilateral efforts and work in the area of security and defence, as well as specific geographical sections on North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. In the specific section on security and defence, the Yearbook provides an overview of EU defence tools such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), as well as an overview for security issues such as space, cybersecurity, terrorism, border management, hybrid threats and more.

Each edition of the Yearbook benefits from informative data visualizations. All of the data used in this book can be found listed in the annex and the data sources are made available on the EU's Open Data Portal. We also highlight relevant EUISS analysis produced by the Institute during the year. As is customary, each section ends with a

list of core documents. Finally, there is an index in the annex that is designed to enhance the use of the book as a reference guide.

The authors would like to thank Fanny Pollet and Christian Dietrich for all their efforts in formatting and publishing this Yearbook. Beyond the EUISS, we must thank the Council of the EU, the EU Military Staff (EUMS), the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Defence Agency (EDA), European Commission, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) for making their databases available for use. Finally, it goes without saying that any errors are the sole responsibility of the authors.



Image: Free-Photos/pixabay

EXTERNAL ACTION

Multilateralism

A range of international topics remained on the EU's agenda in 2021 including human rights, democracy and climate change. In particular, the year was one in which the Union continued to support multilateralism and to safeguard the international order based on norms and laws. At the United Nations (UN) in New York, the EU emphasised a number of critical issues at the UN Security Council (UNSC) and UN General Assembly (UNGA). In this regard, during 2021 it made several statements related to violent conflict and sexual violence, the rights of women and children in conflict, environmental security, outer space, sustainable development and non-proliferation. The EU also used its position in the UN

The security implications of the art market

'Illicit traffic in art and antiquities is by no means a new phenomenon, but its role in facilitating international insecurity is increasingly appreciable. As described in the EU's 2020 Security Union Strategy, 'trafficking in cultural goods has become one of the most lucrative criminal activities and a source of funding for terrorists as well as organised crime'. The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the radical jihadist group that has perpetrated or inspired some of the deadliest terrorist attacks on EU Member States in recent years, is known to have institutionalised this traffic as a source of fiscal income. Despite growing awareness of this fact, the wider ways in which the legitimate art market can be exploited for nefarious purposes such as sanctions evasion and money laundering are relatively understudied. Closer scrutiny of the art market – a grey economic arena that can utilise licit methods and legitimate actors to produce illicit money – is an important step in combating the major security threat that stems from the link between organised crime and terrorist groups.'

Munnely, A. 'Compliant or complicit? Security implications of the art market', *Brief No 23*, EUISS, October 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/compliant-or-complicit-security-implications-art-market>).

system to highlight its stand on a range of conflicts including those currently in motion in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Syria and Yemen. The EU also stressed its concern at the multiple *coups d'état* (successful and attempted) that had taken place around the world in 2021 including in Armenia, Burkina Faso, Guinee, Mali, Myanmar, Niger and Sudan.

At the beginning of 2021, the Council of the EU set the Union's priorities in UN human rights fora for the year. Council conclusions on 22 February 2021 stressed that the EU was committed to supporting the UN human rights system to ensure that human rights, democracy and rule of law are upheld on a global basis. In particular, the Council of the EU stressed the importance of upholding human rights in a period where the Covid-19 pandemic was still in circulation on a global basis. Here, the EU underlined that Covid-19 'exacerbates pre-existing inequalities and disproportionately affects persons in vulnerable situations'⁽⁴⁾. In this respect, the Council of the EU stated that 'the European Union undertakes to ensure that all human rights, including women's and girls' full enjoyment of

Digital technologies and civil conflicts

'Most attention relating to digital technologies and conflict has focused on cyber or information operations between states. Yet, it is civil conflicts that have increased in number and become more protracted over the past decade due to a number of factors, including their increasingly internationalised character. Moreover, it is in these contexts that societies are more vulnerable and likely to be more affected by the misuse of digital technologies; and it is in these contexts that states show less restraint in their behaviour and can cause more harm to civilians. Mediating or facilitating a solution to civil conflicts, already an enormously difficult task, is compounded by the ways in which numerous actors use digital technologies to disrupt or delay conflict resolution efforts. For mediators and others engaged in peace-making efforts, understanding these challenges is critical to designing already charged engagement strategies.'

Kavanagh, C. 'Digital technologies and civil conflicts: insights for peacemakers', Brief No 4, Conflict Series, EUISS, February 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/digital-technologies-and-civil-conflicts>).

(1) Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on EU Priorities in UN Human Rights Fora in 2021', 22 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48557/st06326-en21.pdf>).

human rights, as well as the rights of persons with disabilities, older persons and children, remain at the core of the response to the pandemic and the global recovery⁽²⁾. Accordingly, the EU reiterated its support for the UN Secretary-General's call to action on human rights during the Covid-19 pandemic and it lent its strong support to the mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, then Michelle Bachelet.

Overall, the Council of the EU used these conclusions to underline that the Union would focus on the following issues⁽³⁾ within the UN system:

- > Gender equality: promote the human rights of women and girls and use every possible occasion to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in the UN system;
- > Sexual and reproductive health and rights: reaffirm its commitment to the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, as well as supporting universal access to quality and affordable health information, education and health-care services;
- > Gender-based violence: work against gender-based violence including, domestic violence and violence against women and girls. Continue to uphold and implement UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security;
- > Protection of children: combat child labour and discrimination, as well as to protect children from armed conflict and violence;
- > Discrimination and racism: strongly oppose all forms of discrimination on the 'grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity'⁽⁴⁾. Commit to upholding the Durban

(2) 'Council Conclusions on EU Priorities in UN Human Rights Fora in 2021', op.cit.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid., p. 6.

EU Delegations around the world

Staff levels by contractual status, Dec 2021



Data: European External Action Service, 2022

Declaration and Program of Action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance;

- > Freedom of religion or belief: condemn all forms of discrimination, intolerance, violence and persecution based on religion or belief.
- > Minorities: oppose all forms of incitement to violence and hatred on the basis of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic discrimination. Pursue the goal of monitoring the situation in Xinjiang, China, and the rights of Uyghurs;
- > Indigenous Peoples: engage actively to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and seek the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in the UN system;
- > Climate change and the environment: work towards human rights in the spheres of climate change, biodiversity and environmental degradation and call for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement;
- > Sustainable development: promote a human rights-based approach to sustainable development and work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- > New and emerging digital technologies: raise questions about how human rights will apply online as well as offline, and look to uphold an open, free and secure

Internet, protect data and combat cybercrime and disinformation;

- > Democratic institutions, respect for the rule of law: work through the UN system to uphold the principles of good governance, independence of the judiciary and fight against impunity and inequality. Strongly condemn threats and attacks against journalists, bloggers and other media workers;
- > Death penalty: commit to strongly opposing the death penalty in all circumstances;
- > Torture: work with the UN to condemn and combat widespread use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment around the world. Specifically, the reported cases of arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment in China, Russia and Belarus, as well as in Burundi, DRC, Egypt, Iran, Libya, Myanmar, Nicaragua, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen are concerning;
- > International Humanitarian Law (IHL): work through the UN system to urge conflict parties to protect civilian, women and children. Closely monitor the application of IHL in ongoing conflicts such as Russia's illegal annexation of areas of eastern Ukraine and Crimea;
- > Refugees: develop the EU's approach to migration, refugees and internally displaced persons and place particular importance on children, women and other persons in vulnerable situations;
- > Terrorism: work with the UN to ensure that international human rights law, humanitarian law and international refugee law are adhered to in the context of the fight against terrorism;
- > Business and human rights: work with the UN to ensure that human rights are adhered to in the world of business and to avoid discrimination, violations and abuses.

2021 was also an important year for the EU in terms of its approach and commitment to multilateralism. On 17 February 2021, a

Joint Communication on the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism was released and it sought to update how the Union should support multilateralism in an era of major geopolitical and economic power shifts and where new and rising powers were seeking to influence the rules-based order. In this sense, the new EU approach to multilateralism sought to combat the increasingly confrontational and unilateralist tendencies of certain states. The Joint Communication on multilateralism underlines that the world is undergoing a period of transition towards a more multipolar world. To this end, the EU stresses that it 'needs to become more assertive in the light of the more transactional nature of the global system and build and reinforce coalitions of like-minded partners on key priorities. Multilateralism has been and will remain the cardinal principle of the EU as the most effective means to govern global relations in a mutually beneficial way. But we cannot be multilateralists alone nor only for the sake of it'⁽⁵⁾.

Accordingly, the EU spells out a strategy for how it wants to maintain a multilateral order that is conducive to its interests and values. To this end, the Union seeks to promote global peace and security through international law, universal values and fundamental rights but this will go hand-in-hand with a more interests-based approach to multilateralism where the EU can leverage its power and partnerships in areas such as clean energy, human rights, public health, sustainable development, the digital and green transitions, and more. Additionally, the Union's strategy of supporting multilateralism is based on a rejuvenation of the multilateral system and the desire to modernise bodies such as the UN, WHO and World Trade Organisation (WTO) to meet the challenges of new technologies, the digital transition and evolving global power dynamics. Lastly, the EU wants to achieve these goals by leveraging its social and market power, its long-standing position as a peace actor and

(5) European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 'Joint Communication on Strengthening the EU's Contribution to Rules-Based Multilateralism', JOIN(2021) 3 final, 17 February 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf).

through partnerships and alliances with states and organisations that share the EU's democratic values and priorities⁽⁶⁾.

The Union's global efforts to contain and combat Covid-19 in 2021 continued. Indeed, given the 2021 autumn resurgence of the pandemic in the EU and across the globe, international efforts needed to be enhanced. In particular, the Omicron and Delta variants were spreading on a global basis and the Union underlined that these new variants prove that 'international efforts to support all countries in tackling the pandemic have not gone far enough'⁽⁷⁾. With infections in 2021 on the rise, the EU redoubled its international and multilateral efforts by working with the WHO to increase surveillance and genomic sequencing efforts, assist with reporting on individual cases and clusters, and to perform field investigations and laboratory assessments. The EU stressed that although over 1 billion vaccines produced in the EU had been shipped to more than 150 countries since the pandemic started, the Union needed to do more to help with secure and affordable access to vaccines in low and middle-income countries. The Union wanted to make these countries a priority because 'only 2 % of the population in low-income countries and 19 % of the population in lower-middle income countries had been vaccinated' by the end of 2021⁽⁸⁾.

One major area hit by the pandemic was humanitarian assistance. In March 2021, the European Commission published a communication on humanitarian action which noted that, while the EU is responsible for some 36 % of total global humanitarian assistance, the pandemic had exacerbated the challenge of humanitarian assistance⁽⁹⁾. As the Commission noted, '[h]umanitarian needs are at an all-time high, driven largely by the resurgence in state-based conflicts, combined with the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, global population growth and failed governance.

(6) 'Joint Communication on Strengthening the EU's Contribution to Rules-Based Multilateralism', op. cit., p. 2.

(7) European Commission, 'Communication on Addressing together current and new COVID-19 challenges', COM(2021) 764 final, 1 December 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2021\)764&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2021)764&lang=en)).

(8) Ibid., p. 10.

(9) European Commission, 'Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles', COM(2021) 110 final, 10 March 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2021\)110&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2021)110&lang=en)).

Climate change and conflict prevention

‘Climate change has an undeniable, growing impact on nature at large and its deleterious consequences for natural resources, food production and living conditions places increasing stress on societies and communities. Digitalisation, while in many aspects an equalising and empowering force in our societies, also provides new means to suppress dissent, and polarise or wage conflicts. Alongside these two, fragmentation of authority – both in terms of a shift in the international system as well as diffusion of authority within states – challenges our existing models and frameworks to manage and mitigate conflicts.’

Mustasila, K. ‘The future of conflict prevention: preparing for a hotter, increasingly digital and fragmented 2030’, *Chaillot Paper No 167*, EUISS, May 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/future-conflict-prevention>).

Yet, the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available globally is increasing. Basic norms and principles are being challenged as rarely before, making the delivery of aid more difficult and dangerous’⁽¹⁰⁾. What is more, the Commission noted that because of the pandemic 150 million people were projected to fall into extreme poverty in 2021 alone⁽¹¹⁾. To this end, the Commission called for more flexible and efficient EU humanitarian actions and funding mechanisms, better means to deliver humanitarian assistance swiftly and efficiently, and the mainstreaming of climate change and environmental factors into humanitarian assistance, among other measures⁽¹²⁾.

Climate change remained on top of the EU’s international and domestic agenda in 2021. As part of its ‘Fit for 55’ initiative, the Union made clear that while it is only responsible for 8 % of global CO₂ emissions, it has a much higher historical and cumulative share of emissions⁽¹³⁾. In this respect, the EU stated that in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) held in Glasgow, United

(10) ‘Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles’, op. cit., p. 1.

(11) Ibid.

(12) Ibid., pp. 20–23.

(13) European Commission, ‘Communication on “Fit for 55”: delivering the EU’s 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality’, COM(2021) 550 final, 14 July 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2021\)550&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2021)550&lang=en)).

Kingdom, from 31 October to 12 November 2021, it would adopt a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to use market dynamics to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally. The CBAM was effectively designed to ensure that commercial and state actors decarbonise products and services when trading with the EU. Its aim is also to make sure that producers in the EU Single Market would not move to carbon-intensive countries and regions to avoid the additional costs of carbon neutrality⁽¹⁴⁾.

EU voting at the United Nations

In 2021, 58 individual UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) were voted on and only one was vetoed by the Russian Federation. This veto was exercised in relation to a draft resolution on the maintenance of international peace and security of 13 December 2021. During this vote, China decided to abstain and India voted against (the country was as a non-permanent member of the Security Council). Overall, two abstentions were cast by Russia on the situation on the Middle East (25 February 2021) and the situation in the Central African Republic (12 March 2021). India and Kenya each exercised an abstention on the resolution concerning Sudan and South Sudan (28 May 2021). In total, 54 resolutions passed unanimously, five abstentions were cast (China, India, Kenya, Russia) and one veto was made by a permanent member (Russia) in 2021. In addition to France as a permanent member of the Security Council, the EU was represented by Estonia and Ireland. All EU Member States voted in favour of all 58 individual UNSCRs.

The European Parliament, through its annual report on the implementation of the CFSP, also pronounced itself on a number of international issues. In this annual report dated 17 February 2022, the European Parliament underlined its fear that the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, 'the evolving role of the US on the global stage, Russia's efforts to dismantle the European security architecture and

(14) 'Communication on "Fit for 55"', op.cit.

its continued attacks on Ukraine and occupation of territories in Georgia and Ukraine', plus 'hybrid attacks against the EU Member States, such as the instrumentalisation of migrants' and 'the continuous breach of international law by Belarus', is challenging the EU in new ways⁽¹⁵⁾. The Parliament also believes that 'the increasing assertiveness of the Chinese Communist Party and other authoritarian and totalitarian regimes' is of deep concern for the EU. Additionally, parliamentarians agreed that 'the recent rapid collapse of the state structures of Afghanistan and subsequent takeover of the country by the Taliban [and] the tensions in the Indo-Pacific, especially in the South and East China Seas as well as in the Taiwan Strait' should be of major concern to the Union.

On this basis, the European Parliament used its 2021 annual report to set out what it believed should be the major strategic objectives of the EU including: 1) defending the rules-based international order based on the principles and commitments enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe; 2) taking the lead in strengthening multilateral partnerships on global priorities, in particular its partnership with the UN, and in protecting and promoting democracy and human rights globally; 3) improving EU visibility and decision-making, and making full and more effective use of the EU's hard and soft power instruments, including by introducing qualified majority voting for decision-making in EU foreign policy; 4) achieving European sovereignty by coherently interlinking the EU's external and internal actions, combining the ability to act autonomously if needed with the readiness to pursue strategic solidarity with like-minded partners; 5) further developing regional strategies, including diplomatic and economic engagement and security cooperation; and 6) strengthening democratic oversight, scrutiny and accountability, and the parliamentary dimension of the EU's CFSP.⁽¹⁶⁾

The EU also continued to work towards non-proliferation in 2021. In October, before the tenth review of the Conference of the Parties

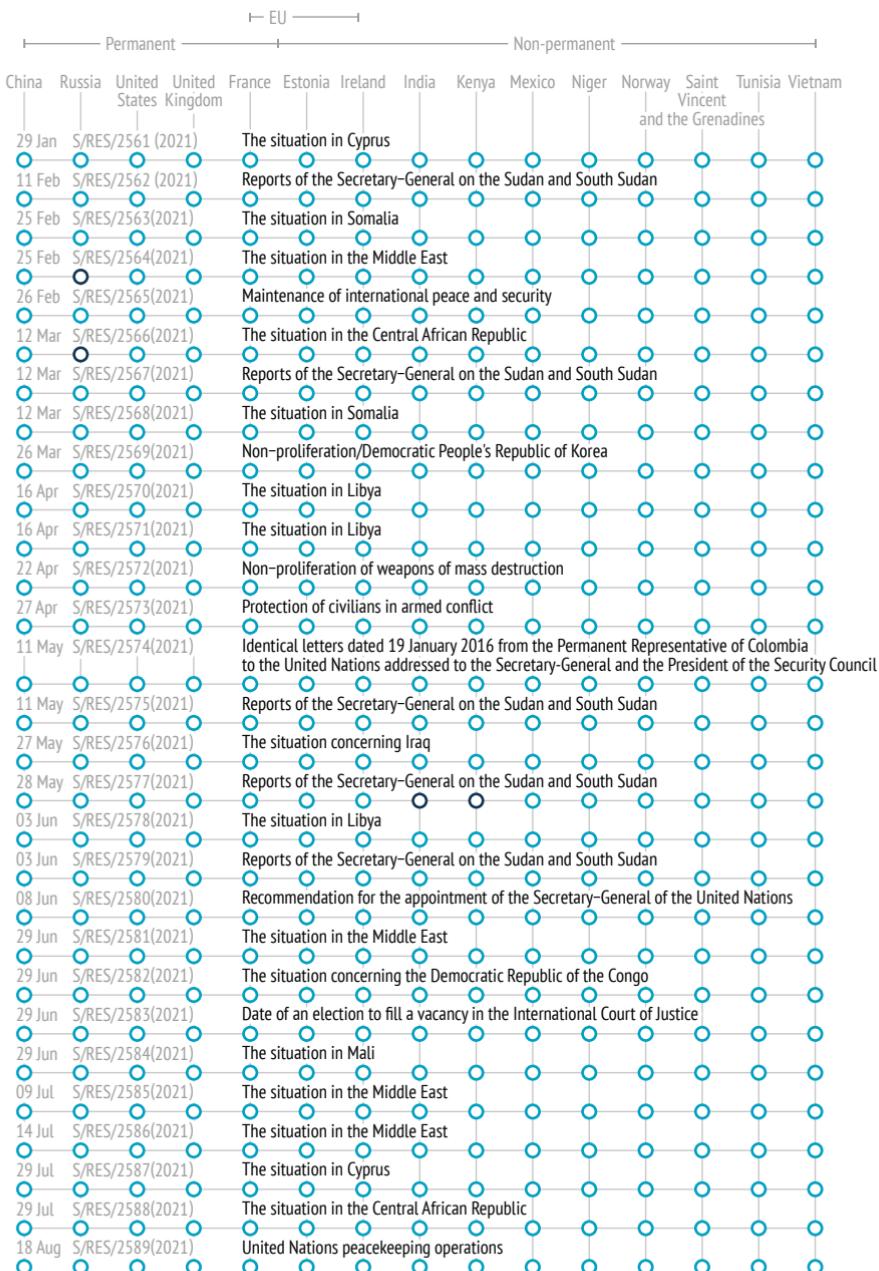
(15) European Parliament, 'Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy – Annual Report 2021', 17 February 2022 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0039_EN.html).

(16) Ibid.

UN Security Council voting

By permanent and non-permanent members, 2021

● Veto ● No ● Abstention ● Yes



EU																
	Permanent												Non-permanent			
China		Russia		United States	United Kingdom	France	Estonia	Ireland	India	Kenya	Mexico	Niger	Norway	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Tunisia	Vietnam
30 Aug																
	S/RES/2590(2021)															
30 Aug																
	S/RES/2591(2021)															
30 Aug																
	S/RES/2592(2021)															
30 Aug																
	S/RES/2593(2021)															
09 Sep																
	S/RES/2594(2021)															
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03 Nov																
	S/RES/2604(2021)															
12 Nov																
	S/RES/2605(2021)															
15 Nov																
	S/RES/2606(2021)															
15 Nov																
	S/RES/2607(2021)															
03 Dec																
	S/RES/2608(2021)															
13 Dec																
	S/2021/990															
15 Dec																
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	S/RES/2615(2021)															
22 Dec																
	S/RES/2616(2021)															
30 Dec																
	S/RES/2617(2021)															
Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)																
The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina																
The situation in the Central African Republic																
Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan																
The situation in Somalia																
The situation in Somalia																
Maintenance of international peace and security																
Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan																
Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts																
Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts																
The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo																
The situation in the Middle East																
The situation in Somalia																
Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist attacks																
Maintenance of international peace and security																
Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist attacks																

to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Union underlined its commitment to combating proliferation and advancing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. It also used its presence on the UN's First Committee on disarmament, peace and security to call states to do their utmost to prevent a new arms race⁽¹⁷⁾. The EU stressed its unequivocal support for the NPT and it called on all states that have not joined the Treaty to do so, as this is a way for the international community to pursue nuclear disarmament and achieve a world without nuclear weapons. In this sense, the Union welcomed the United States–Russia extension of the New START Treaty, despite the ongoing tensions between the countries and the collapse of other arms control treaties such as the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Noting the precarious nature of global arms control mechanisms, the EU also called on the United States, Russia and China to engage in global efforts to decrease nuclear tensions and ensure arms control.

The EU also used its time on the UN First Committee to underline the risks involved with Iran and North Korea's nuclear programmes. The Union underlined the importance and commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran and the United States, on Tehran's nuclear programme. The EU welcomed the United States' intention to re-join the JCPOA after President Trump decided to withdraw, but the Union also stressed the repeated violations of the Plan of Action by Iran. The EU remained deeply concerned at Iran's continued accumulation of low and highly enriched uranium, as well as its continued investments in advanced centrifuges and uranium metal. In this respect, the EU stated that Iran was engaged in repeated violations of the terms of the JCPOA and its decision to suspend the Plan of Action's transparency provisions has led to much lower access to information by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In relation to North Korea, the Union underlined its concern about the country's ballistic missile programmes and its decision to abandon its moratorium on nuclear testing. In this respect, the EU reminded North Korea of its obligations under

(17) EU Delegation to the UN, 'EU Statement – United Nations 1st Committee: Nuclear Weapons', 12 October 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement---united-nations-1st-committee-nuclear-weapons_en?s=63).

the NPT and urged it to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)⁽¹⁸⁾.

Core documents

- > Council of the European Union, 'EU priorities at the 76th United Nations General Assembly', 12 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/12/eu-priorities-at-the-76th-united-nations-general-assembly/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on EU Priorities in UN Human Rights Fora in 2021', 22 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48557/st06326-en21.pdf>).
- > European Commission, 'Communication on Addressing together current and new Covid-19 challenges', COM(2021) 764 final, 1 December 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2021\)764&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2021)764&lang=en)).
- > European Commission, 'Communication on 'Fit for 55': Delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the Way to Climate Neutrality', COM(2021) 550 final, 14 July 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2021\)550&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2021)550&lang=en)).
- > European Commission, 'Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action: New Challenges, Same Principles', COM(2021) 110 final, 10 March 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2021\)110&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2021)110&lang=en)).
- > European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 'Joint Communication on Strengthening the EU's Contribution to Rules-Based Multilateralism', JOIN(2021) 3 final, 17 February 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf).
- > European Council, 'Conclusions', EU CO 22/21, 16 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53575/20211216-eu-co-conclusions-en.pdf>).
- > European Parliament, 'Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy – Annual Report 2021', 17 February 2022 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0039_EN.html).

(18) 'EU Statement – United Nations 1st Committee: Nuclear Weapons', op.cit.

Turkey and the Western Balkans

Turkey

Although a momentum at the beginning of the year showed a readiness for a more positive dynamic in EU-Turkey relations, the further backsliding in many areas related to the accession and the rise in tensions regarding the Eastern Mediterranean and the Cyprus settlement process deteriorated relations between the two sides. The EU also expressed its concerns over the situation in the south-east, where Turkey carried out domestic and cross-border security and military operations in Iraq and Syria. Although the government has a legitimate right to fight terrorism, the EU and human rights organisations reported serious violations of human rights by security forces and the situation did not allow the resumption of a credible political process to achieve a peaceful and sustainable solution.

The functioning of Turkey's democratic institutions showed serious deficiencies. The state of emergency, which was supposed to end in 2018, was extended in July 2021 by Turkey's parliament for one more year. It provides extraordinary powers to government authorities and has a significant impact on democracy and fundamental rights while its legal framework still needs to be brought into line with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Many mayors from opposition parties were dismissed and replaced by

government-appointed trustees, keeping municipal assemblies suspended and denying citizens their chosen representation. Turkey's Constitutional Court accepted in June an indictment demanding the closure of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), where 451 HDP executives risk a political ban and 4 000 members and officials of the HDP remain in prison, including parliamentarians. Likewise, civil society faced serious pressure, particularly regarding the shrinking space to operate freely, thus limiting their freedom of expression and of association.

The backsliding was also visible in the systemic lack of independence of the judiciary, in particular the lack of regard for the principle of the separation of powers or to improve the selection process of members of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors. Corruption is widespread and remains an issue of concern for the EU. The deterioration of human and fundamental rights continued too. Turkey's refusal to implement ECtHR rulings, especially regarding the cases of Selahattin Demirtaş and Osman Kavala, but also its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March raised serious concerns for the EU and was considered 'devastating news' by the Council of Europe's Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić⁽¹⁾. The decision to annul Turkey's ratification was seen as a blow to women's rights as the agreement is considered as crucial to combating domestic violence. Gender-based violence, discrimination, hate speech against minorities, in particular LGBTIQ, were a matter of concern for the EU and the UN Human Rights Office which condemned homophobic and transphobic comments by Turkish officials on social media (Twitter), inciting hatred and discrimination against LGBTIQ people.

The EU also expressed deep concern over Turkey's encroachment on freedom of expression, of assembly and association during the year. This concern was made known in April after a high-level meeting in Ankara with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and at the European Parliament plenary session. Indeed, President Michel urged Turkey to respect freedom of expression and to stop targeting political parties and the media. In addition, after more than 4.5

(1) European Council, 'Remarks by President Charles Michel after his meeting in Ankara with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan', 6 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/06/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-after-his-meeting-in-ankara-with-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan/>).

The Russian – Turkish partnership

‘Turkey and the EU have plenty of problems with each other but also shared interests, and intertwined economies and security arrangements. That is why the EU has to pursue differentiated policies towards Turkey and Russia, putting aside their ‘family resemblance’. As Turkey is a member of NATO and deeply connected to the European market, a customised strategy vis-à-vis Ankara has higher chances of success. The EU will need to adopt a fine-tuned approach, which relies on both coercion and co-option. Europe’s economic sanctions against Turkey have high potential to deter Ankara’s bullying tactics. At the same time, the EU will have to keep the lines of communication open and under the right circumstances offer Turkey closer integration in the European market and thus more economic advantages. Europe could also play more actively on Russian-Turkish differences in the neighbourhood. The EU may encourage Turkey to open the border with Armenia, a move which would ultimately increase Ankara’s influence in the South Caucasus. Europe and Turkey can also complement each other in strengthening statehood and resilience in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.’

Secrieru, S., Saari, S. and Bechev, D., ‘Fire and Ice: The Russian-Turkish partnership’, *Chaillot Paper* No 168, EUISS, June 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/fire-and-ice>).

years in jail for an unreasonable conviction on terrorism charges, the ECtHR ordered Turkey’s Court of Cassation to release veteran journalist Ahmet Altan. A development welcomed by the European Parliament’s Turkey rapporteur Nacho Sanchez Amor⁽²⁾.

On migration and asylum policy, progress was made on Turkey’s side, leaving behind the incidents of March 2020. Turkey ensured the effective management of migratory flows along the Eastern Mediterranean route and continued its efforts in hosting and meeting the needs of refugees. The Facility for Refugees’ budget of €6 billion contracted by the end of 2020 disbursed over €4.2 billion by August 2021. Projects financed by the Facility focused on humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure and socio-economic support⁽³⁾. In 2020 and 2021, €585 million were set aside for humanitarian support and

(2) European Parliament, ‘Resolution on the 2019–2020 Commission Reports on Turkey’, 19 May 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243_EN.html).

(3) European Commission, ‘Turkey Report 2021’, 19 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/turkey-report-2021_en).

cash support programmes for refugees⁽⁴⁾. In December 2021, the European Commission adopted two financing decisions, amounting to €560 million, to support quality education for refugees in Turkey, access to higher education as well as for migration and border protection. These measures were part of an additional €3 billion announced in June 2021 to continue EU assistance to refugees in Turkey for the period 2021–2023⁽⁵⁾. As for the integration of refugees in the country, the EU recommended increasing access to public health for migrants and refugees. It also recommended to further align Turkey's visa policy with the EU's *acquis* as no outstanding visa liberalisation benchmarks were fulfilled in 2021.

Turkey's foreign policy was increasingly at odds with EU priorities under the CFSP, particularly because of Turkey's military missions in the Caucasus, Iraq and Syria. Turkey's military support in Libya and lack of cooperation with the EU's naval operation IRINI hampered the EU's efforts to contribute to the UN's arms embargo implementation. Although the EU and Turkey share the same objectives for Syria, the EU felt side-lined when Turkey launched its own military agenda in northern Syria, including through Turkish-backed militias.

As from the beginning of 2021, tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean decreased as Turkey stopped its unauthorised drilling activities in the maritime zones of Greece and Cyprus, which was welcomed by EU leaders at the European Council in June⁽⁶⁾. Nevertheless, the early October obstruction by Turkish warships in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the unilateral change of status of the city of Varosha, against UNSC Resolutions 550 and 789, ignited tensions with the EU which strongly condemned and called for the immediate reversal of these actions. Council conclusions also agreed to further evaluate the options which include the creation of a specific sanctions regime focused on persons and entities

(4) European Commission, 'Turkey Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/turkey_en).

(5) European Commission, 'EU continues supporting education of refugees and addressing migration in Turkey with additional €560 million', 21 December 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_6931).

(6) European Council, 'European Council, 24–25 June 2021 – Main results', 25 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2021/06/24-25/>).

directly involved in the opening of part of Varosha after July 2021⁽⁷⁾. Furthermore, no progress on normalising bilateral relations with the Republic of Cyprus was registered, proving the failure of the April 2021 informal talks aimed at resuming formal negotiations.

Despite tensions, the EU continued to support Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the EU has helped Turkey by reallocating over €103 million in EU funds to help prevent and treat Covid-19 and to mitigate the economic and social impact⁽⁸⁾. Furthermore, ravaged by forest fires, Turkey activated the Union Civil Protection Mechanism in August for which the European Commission helped mobilise one Canadair plane from Croatia and two Canadairs from Spain⁽⁹⁾. In addition, the European Commission adopted in October its 2021 Enlargement Package, recalling that rule of law and fundamental rights remains an integral part of the EU-Turkey relationship, as well as addressing the weakening of effective checks and balances in the country's political system. The EU, however, welcomed Turkey's ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change and looked forward to engaging with Turkey on the implementation of the European Green Deal⁽¹⁰⁾.

Western Balkans

The Western Balkans continued to be a critical region of interest for the Union in 2021, as shown by the number of summits held during the year between the EU and Western Balkan countries, and the 2021 Enlargement Package, which was adopted on 19 October 2021. On 5 July, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der

(7) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 13 December 2021 – Main results', 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/12/13/>).

(8) European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, 'Turkey Report 2021', 19 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/turkey-report-2021_en).

(9) European Commission, 'Forest fires: EU mobilises planes to support Turkey', 1 August 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_4001).

(10) European Commission, '2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey', 19 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5275).

Leyen and the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi, attended the 2021 edition of the ‘Berlin Process’ summit, which brought together heads of state and government from the region, EU Member States and representatives from the United Kingdom. Held under the auspices of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the summit focused on ways in which the EU can support Western Balkan countries with the post-pandemic recovery, support investments in the digital and green economies and work towards a common regional market action plan to aid with eventual integration with the EU⁽¹¹⁾.

On 6 October 2021, EU and Western Balkan leaders would meet again at Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. Held during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the EU-Western Balkan Summit addressed the European perspective of Western Balkan countries and it established support for economic connectivity, the green and digital transitions, and political and security cooperation. In particular, the Brdo Declaration of 6 October 2021 spelled out that the EU had agreed to invest €30 billion into the region’s Economic and Investment Plan (EIP), pledged to boost vaccination rates against Covid-19 and help lower phone roaming charges, agreed to an Innovation Agenda for the Western Balkans and to support Green Lanes and Transport Community Action Plans⁽¹²⁾. Most importantly perhaps, the Brdo Declaration made a firm commitment to EU enlargement and underlined the mutual and strategic interest involved in Western Balkan countries joining the EU⁽¹³⁾.

On 19 October 2021, the European Commission adopted its 2021 Enlargement Package which detailed the state of play in each country of the Western Balkans and their path towards EU accession. Following the summit at Brdo pri Kranju on 6 October, the Commission made clear that it was important to keep the accession process on track, especially during crises such as Covid-19 and the need to continue to encourage the long-term economic development

(11) European Commission, ‘Berlin Summit: Western Balkans strengthen regional cooperation and foster closer ties with the EU’, 5 July 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3401).

(12) European Council, ‘Brdo Declaration’, 6 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/52280/brdo-declaration-6-october-2021-en.pdf>).

(13) Ibid.

of the region. The Enlargement Package outlined how in June 2021, both Montenegro and Serbia accepted the revised methodology for the application process and intergovernmental conferences were held with both countries to provide an additional political stimulus. Montenegro was broadly perceived to be following the accession negotiation chapters, but the Commission stated that further progress is required in the area of rule of law and freedom of expression⁽¹⁴⁾. President von der Leyen raised this point during her visit to Montenegro on 29 September 2021 where she outlined the EU's support to the country to deal with Covid-19, including the delivery of 260 000 vaccine doses since the outbreak of the pandemic⁽¹⁵⁾.

In the 2021 Enlargement Package, Serbia was called upon to fight corruption and organised crime, ensure media freedoms and handle war crimes. Additionally, the Commission called on Serbia to further normalise relations with Kosovo and to align itself with EU CFSP rather than the policies of external actors. An official visit by President von der Leyen to Serbia on 30 September 2021 had already seen the president raise these points. In addition to the €93 million in financial support provided to the country since the outbreak of Covid-19, the president called for strategic investments in key economic sectors in order to put Serbia on a lasting economic footing. Referring to the need to further integrate Serbia into the EU economy, the Commission President highlighted the ongoing investments in the Trans-Balkan electricity corridor and the need to ensure that Serbia 'engages with European investment projects'⁽¹⁶⁾.

During the European Commission President's visit to Albania on 28 September 2021, the point was made that 'Albania's future is in the European Union' and that it is recognised that Albania has taken all the necessary steps to join the Union. President von der Leyen was clear that 'Albania has clearly delivered all that [the EU]

(14) '2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey', op. cit.

(15) European Commission, 'Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Montenegro', 29 September 2021 (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-montenegro-2021-09-29_en).

(16) European Commission, 'Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Serbia', 30 September 2021 (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-serbia-2021-09-30_en).

ha[s] been asking for [...] and now it is [the EU] who ha[s] to deliver' on the EU accession process⁽¹⁷⁾. Talking about the pandemic, the Commission President detailed how the Union had delivered 450 000 vaccine doses to Albania since the start of the pandemic and €230 million in grants and financing for Covid-19 recovery efforts⁽¹⁸⁾. The Enlargement Package stated that delays in the official launch of accession negotiations were 'having a negative impact on the credibility of the EU'⁽¹⁹⁾. In particular, the document referred to the pending bilateral issues between Bulgaria and North Macedonia that need to be resolved as part of the broader EU accession process in the region⁽²⁰⁾.

During her tour of the Western Balkans, President von der Leyen visited North Macedonia on 28 September 2021 and reiterated the point made in Albania, thanking North Macedonia for its accession efforts and regretting the EU's own delays in moving the process forward. The Commission President took the opportunity to recall how the EU had provided Albania with €220 million in financial support to recover from Covid-19 and some 275 000 vaccine doses⁽²¹⁾. The 2021 Enlargement Package made a clear reference to the conditions that were stalling the EU accession process and again, the Commission referred to the ongoing disagreement between Bulgaria and North Macedonia over the lack of progress made under the 2017 Friendship Treaty agreed by the two countries. The European Commission hoped that the disagreement could be settled so that the intergovernmental conference for EU accession could be organised as soon as possible⁽²²⁾.

(17) European Commission, 'Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Albania', 28 September 2021 (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-albania-2021-09-28_en).

(18) Ibid.

(19) '2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey', op. cit.

(20) Ibid.

(21) European Commission, 'Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to the Republic of North Macedonia', 28 September 2021 (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-republic-north-macedonia-2021-09-28_en).

(22) '2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey', op. cit.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, President von der Leyen used her official visit to the country on 30 September 2021 to call for greater efforts on economic recovery. The president used the announcement of its €9 billion Economic and Investment Plan for the region, to state that the EU was helping Bosnia and Herzegovina to modernise its rail and road connections and to demine the Sava River⁽²³⁾. Nevertheless, President von der Leyen used the occasion to remind leaders that political reconciliation was essential for the accession process and that tensions between Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina needed to be overcome⁽²⁴⁾. In the Enlargement Package, the Commission recognised that ‘the strategic goal of EU integration has not been turned into concrete action’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁽²⁵⁾. In this regard, the Commission called on the country to further align with the EU’s CFSP as there had been a ‘marked decrease in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s rate of alignment’ as well as a worrying roll back of political reforms⁽²⁶⁾.

Finally, the European Commission President stated that some €168 million and 387 000 vaccine doses had been delivered to Kosovo⁽²⁷⁾. Von der Leyen also underlined that Kosovo had made good steps towards EU accession but that greater efforts were required, especially regarding conflict reconciliation. As the president noted, ‘it is vital that Kosovo and Serbia normalise their relations [...] I must say that I am very concerned about the current crisis. It is important to de-escalate and to return to the negotiating table’⁽²⁸⁾. The president was referring to a series of measures introduced in north Kosovo related to border crossings and the blocking of traffic. Protests and acts of arson followed the measures, and

(23) European Commission, ‘Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina’, 30 September 2021 (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-bosnia-and-herzegovina-2021-09-30_en).

(24) Ibid.

(25) ‘2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey’, op. cit.

(26) Ibid.

(27) European Commission, ‘Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Kosovo’, 29 September 2021 (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-kosovo-2021-09-29_en).

(28) ‘Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Kosovo’, op.cit.

armed forces in the region were put on a state of high alert⁽²⁹⁾. These were all concerns that were raised in the Enlargement Package, with the Union recognising that Kosovo had ‘fulfilled all visa liberalisation benchmarks’⁽³⁰⁾.

Core documents

- > Council of the European Union, ‘Foreign Affairs Council, 13 December 2021 – Main results’, 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/12/13/>).
- > European Council, ‘Brdo Declaration’, 6 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/52280/brdo-declaration-6-october-2021-en.pdf>).
- > European Council, ‘European Council, 24–25 June 2021– Main results’, 25 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2021/06/24-25/>).
- > European Commission, ‘2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey’, 19 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5275).
- > European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, ‘Turkey Report 2021’, 19 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/turkey-report-2021_en).
- > European Parliament, ‘Resolution on the 2019–2020 Commission Reports on Turkey’, 19 May 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243_EN.html).

(29) European External Action Service, ‘Statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell on the situation in the north of Kosovo’, 26 September 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-situation-north-kosovo-0_en).

(30) ‘2021 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses and sets out reform priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey’, op. cit.

The southern neighbourhood

North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf Region

What concerned the EU the most in Libya in 2021 was preserving the ceasefire agreement signed between the Government of National Accord (GNA) and Khalifa Haftar in October 2020. The 5+5 Joint Military Commission (5+5 JMC) decided on a permanent ceasefire contingent on the departure of foreign mercenaries from Sirte and Jufra, and on the freezing of military training agreements until a new government is selected. Additionally, the two parties decided to form specialised engineering teams to clear mines, a civil sub-committee to combat hate speech and to resume flights at the Sabha and Ghadames airports. In January, the 5+5 JMC welcomed the outcomes of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) and the election of a new Presidential Council and Prime Minister, praising the efforts of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

In February, the EU and its Member States welcomed the agreement by the LPDF on a transitional unified executive authority for Libya (the GNA), an important milestone on the way to lead the country towards national elections (initially scheduled on 24 December

2021)⁽¹⁾. March saw the approval of Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah's cabinet by the Libyan parliament, a news welcomed by the EU and the international community⁽²⁾. In the same month, the EU decided to extend for two years its military operation EUNAVFOR IRINI⁽³⁾ after UN experts warned that the embargo imposed on Libya in 2011 was ineffective and being violated by numerous international actors. Additionally, the Council of the EU imposed restrictive measures on individuals and entities responsible for extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in the country⁽⁴⁾.

A vow to support Libya's interim government from the European Council's President Charles Michel was pronounced at the beginning of April, mentioning migration as a major theme in the relationship between Libya and the EU. In a show of support, Greece, France, Italy and Malta reopened their embassies and consulates, and an intention to reopen European airspace to Libyan aircraft was mentioned. In mid-April, the UNSC unanimously approved a resolution calling for all foreign forces and mercenaries to leave Libya and gave the green light for a UN team to monitor the ceasefire agreement. The 'Libya Quartet', bringing together the UN, the African Union (AU), the EU and the League of Arab States also showed its support for this withdrawal and full compliance with the arms embargo⁽⁵⁾.

To assist Libyan authorities in the building of state security structures in the country, the Council of the EU decided in June to extend the mandate of the EUBAM Libya for a further two years.

(1) Council of the European Union, 'Libya: Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the formation of the transitional unified executive authority', 7 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/07/libya-formation-of-the-transitional-unified-executive-authority/>).

(2) Council of the European Union, 'Libya: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the approval of the new Government of National Unity', 11 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/11/libya-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-approval-of-the-new-government-of-national-unity/>).

(3) Council of the European Union, 'Council extends the mandate of Operation IRINI until 2023', 26 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/26/council-extends-the-mandate-of-operation-irini-until-2023/>).

(4) Council of the European Union, 'EU imposes further sanctions over serious violations of human rights around the world', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/22/eu-imposes-further-sanctions-over-serious-violations-of-human-rights-around-the-world/>).

(5) EEAS, 'Libya: Joint Statement by the Quartet', 20 April 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/96947/libya-joint-statement-quartet_en).

Despite a truce between warring factions, further human rights violations, in particular in Libyan migrant detention camps, were reported in July by human rights organisations. Although the coastal road linking the east and west of Libya was reopened by the end of July, the 5+5 JMC condemned hostile acts undermining the stability of the coastal road at the beginning of August. In the same month, the Libyan High Council of State rejected the 5+5 JMC's demand of freezing military agreements and Memoranda of Understanding that were signed by the previous GNA.

As violence waned during the year, the number of migrants intercepted on their way to Europe doubled compared to the same period of 2020. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said 20 257 people had been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya during 2021. In his visit to Tripoli at the beginning of September, HR/VP Josep Borrell pledged to help with the 'reform in the security sector' and the Libyan Foreign Minister Najla al-Mangoush asked for more cooperation in managing the 'porous southern borders'.

October saw the birth of a comprehensive Action Plan set by the 5+5 JMC, which was aimed at gradually removing mercenaries and foreign fighters from the country. The embassies of Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States in Libya as well as the Special Envoy and Head of UNSMIL, and the UN Secretary General (UNSG) all welcomed the announcement of this Action Plan. In November, Germany, France and Italy co-hosted talks in New York to talk about Libya two days before holding the Paris International Conference on Libya, co-hosted with the UN and several regional and international leaders. The final declaration expressed the unanimous commitment to hold the presidential elections on 24 December, it urged the implementation of the Action Plan and condemned violations of human rights and international law in the Libyan context. At the end of the same month, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on human rights violations by private military and security companies, condemning

foreign interference and involvement in the Libyan conflict, in particular by Russia and Turkey⁽⁶⁾.

The Libyan High National Electoral Commission decided to postpone the presidential election just 48 hours before it was set to begin on December 24, pushing the date back by one month to 24 January 2022, a proposal that has yet to be confirmed by the national parliament.

Although having entered the Covid-19 crisis while already experiencing slow growth, Tunisia's economy stabilised during the first quarter of 2021, with quarter-over-quarter growth no longer in negative territory⁽⁷⁾. However, unemployment rose from 14.9 % to 17.4 %, contributing to the wave of protests breaking out around the country over the 10-year anniversary of the ousting of former President Ben Ali⁽⁸⁾. The political deadlock since the 2019 elections hampered efforts to address economic problems, dividing Tunisia's political leadership, with Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi moving for a major cabinet reshuffle in January, considered unconstitutional by President Kais Saied. Nevertheless, at the beginning of June the EU reiterated its long-term commitment to Tunisia and willingness to support the country in its efforts to consolidate its democratic institutions and promote a green, competitive and inclusive economy, in particular by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and promoting foreign investment⁽⁹⁾.

President Kais Saied dismissed the government and froze parliament at the end of July, filling the capital's streets with crowds of people. A decision decried as a 'coup' by the big opposing political party Ennahdha. France, the EU, the US State Department and the Arab League expressed an urge for Tunisia to return to stability and calm and preserve its democratic gains, in addition to the respect of the rule of law and maintaining an open dialogue with all

(6) European Parliament Think Tank, 'At A Glance. Libya: Political situation ahead of elections', 17 December 2021 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA\(2021\)698859](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA(2021)698859)).

(7) The World Bank, 'Tunisia Economic Monitor, Spring 2021: Navigating Out of the Crisis', June 2021 (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36123>).

(8) Ibid.

(9) European Council, 'EU-Tunisia relations: "For a renewed partnership"', 4 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/04/communiqué-conjoint-a-la-presse-relations-ue-tunisie-pour-un-partenariat-renouvelé/>).

Islamic State and the future

‘Where Islamic State is innovating now is in its approach to an even younger generation. Although it always had a strong youth component in line with its future narrative, it now seizes two strategic openings. The first is the 27,000 children of IS supporters still held in camps in Syria, 600 of which are European citizens. Although the vast majority are minors (i.e. under 18 years old), this does not mean that they are automatically innocent. However, even if IS children have not committed any crime, the question is whether they will. For most, life with IS indoctrination – even after losing territory – has been the norm. During its territorial heyday, IS used children as spies, soldiers, suicide attackers and executioners and provided them with military training. Unaddressed trauma from living in a war zone is likely to incite further violent behaviour.

In addition to this pool of potential future supporters, IS also increasingly targets teenagers who have never lived on its territory, both in Europe and abroad. In Indonesia, its affiliate Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) staged two terrorist attacks perpetrated by children in 2018. In Europe, IS is expanding among Generation Z as well. In 2019, British police arrested 12 children under 18 on charges related to terrorism, some even as young as 14. The pandemic has made this even easier for IS: two thirds of children between 14 and 17 (up from one third) and every second child between 5 and 13 now spend more than 4 hours a day online. Their time spent on social media exposes them to the IS mindset and to brutal graphic images and videos – but, more importantly, it is their fragile mental state that makes them vulnerable to IS recruitment. As one survey has shown, 43 % of young adults currently suffer from mental health issues or even have clinical-level risk of mental disorders, making them the age group experiencing the greatest mental health impact from the pandemic.’

Gaub, F., ‘How the Islamist State sees the future’, *Brief* No 10, Foresight Series, EUISS, April 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/how-islamic-state-sees-future>).

political actors and the Tunisian people. Turkey called for democratic legitimacy to be restored while Russia said it was monitoring the situation.

In October, the EU welcomed the nomination of Najla Bouden Ramadan as prime minister, the designation of the cabinet ministers and the appointment of ten women as ministers. Emphasising that EU funding is conditional on the democratic advancement of the country, the EU also welcomed the prioritisation of economic recovery by Prime Minister Bouden and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Tunisia on its path towards democratic consolidation

as well as in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic⁽¹⁰⁾. The Tunisian President announced in December it would hold a constitutional referendum in July 2022 and that parliamentary elections would follow at the end of that year.

Algeria's year started with the dissolution of its parliament and the issuing of a pardon by the Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, for 30 jailed activists of the 'Hirak' protest movement. However, systematic abuses against political opponents by the Algerian authorities continued, prompting the concern of the European Parliament and human rights monitors. They urged countries participating in the 47th UNHRC session to condemn the criminalisation of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression in Algeria⁽¹¹⁾. The Union stressed that the respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights are also an essential element of EU-Algeria relations⁽¹²⁾. In June, out of a €20 million humanitarian aid package for vulnerable populations in North Africa, the Union mobilised €9 million to support the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria⁽¹³⁾. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who ruled the country for two decades before resigning in 2019, died on 17 September 2021, aged 84. The end of October saw President Tebboune decide to halt gas exports to Spain via Morocco, thereby terminating the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline contract — a decision deemed as a source of serious concern for the EU⁽¹⁴⁾.

One of the big challenges between Morocco and the EU in 2021 related to both migration and human rights. On 17 May, an unprecedented surge in crossings (around 9 000 people) occurred in the

(10) European Parliament, 'Resolution on the situation in Tunisia', 18 October 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0440_EN.html).

(11) Human Rights Watch, 'Joint Letter: Algerian Authorities' Alarming Crackdown on Pro-Democracy Forces during HRC 47', 25 June 2021 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/25/joint-letter-algerian-authorities-alarming-crackdown-pro-democracy-forces-during>).

(12) European Parliament, 'Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell on behalf of the European Commission, Question reference: E-001476/2021', 12 May 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-001476-ASW_EN.html).

(13) European Commission, 'North Africa: EU mobilises €20 million in humanitarian aid for vulnerable populations', 18 June 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/north-africa-eu-mobilises-eu20-million-humanitarian-aid-vulnerable-populations-2021-06-18_en).

(14) European Parliament, 'Question for written answer E-004956/2021 to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Rule 138, Subject: Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline (MEG)', 2 November 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004956_EN.html).

autonomous city of Ceuta, after Moroccan police temporarily eased border controls. The European Parliament rejected Morocco's use of border control and migration, and in particular of unaccompanied minors, as a form of political pressure against Spain. It adopted a resolution calling on Spain and Morocco to work closely to allow for the repatriation of the Moroccan children to their families⁽¹⁵⁾. On 29 September, the General Court of the EU moved to annul both the EU–Morocco agricultural and the fisheries agreements because they applied to the Western Sahara.

The EU provided €5 million in humanitarian funding to help refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt access protection services and education, as well as helping them meet their most basic needs⁽¹⁶⁾. The Council of the EU drafted a recommendation of the EU–Egypt Association Council agreeing to the extension of the validity of the EU–Egypt Partnership Priorities⁽¹⁷⁾. Both also committed to furthering cooperation in key policy areas based on the Joint Communication and the Council Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new agenda for the Mediterranean.

For Lebanon, 2021 was a year of political deadlock and one of economic and financial devastation, with the World Bank calling it one of the world's worst economic crises since the mid-19th century⁽¹⁸⁾. The political deadlock between the Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri and President Michel Aoun on the formation of a new government continued as the pressure from the international community mounted, especially from France and the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon. In March, the EU announced €50 million for Lebanon during the Brussels V Conference, as part of the Syria Crisis response supporting the needs of the Syrian refugees

(15) European Parliament, 'Human rights breaches at the Spanish/Moroccan border, in Russia, and in Sri Lanka', 10 June 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210604IPR05533/human-rights-breaches-at-the-spanish-moroccan-border-in-russia-and-in-sri-lanka>).

(16) 'North Africa: EU mobilises €20 million in humanitarian aid for vulnerable populations', op. cit.

(17) Council of the European Union, 'Draft Recommendation of the EU–Egypt Association Council agreeing on the extension of the validity of the EU–Egypt Partnership Priorities', 11 October 2021 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12260-2021-INIT/en/pdf>).

(18) The World Bank, 'Lebanon Economic Monitor, Spring 2021: Lebanon Sinking (to the Top 3)', 31 May 2021 (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-economic-monitor-spring-2021-lebanon-sinking-to-the-top-3>).

across the region⁽¹⁹⁾. Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Hariri stepped down in July as his cabinet proposal to President Michel Aoun was not accepted. After consultations with members of parliament, Najib Mikati secured enough votes to be designated as the new prime minister-designate.

On 30 July, the Council of the EU adopted a framework for targeted restrictive measures, providing 'the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon'⁽²⁰⁾. The Conference in Support of the Population of Lebanon, organised by both the French President Emmanuel Macron and the UNSG on 4 August, amounted to \$370 million in pledges. For its part, the EU offered €5.5 million to strengthen the Covid-19 response in the country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that Lebanon stood to receive \$860 billion in Special Drawing Rights, while it was advised to promptly start launching, conducting and concluding negotiations in good faith with the IMF, as well as preparing the 2022 elections according to a planned schedule⁽²¹⁾.

Security wise, a flare-up at the southern border between Lebanon and Israel prompted the head of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, to vow a 'suitable and proportionate' response to any Israeli air strikes on the country. A week later, 28 people died and nearly 80 were injured by a fuel tank blast in the north of Lebanon. In September, in defiance of US sanctions and acting independently from Lebanon's government, Hezbollah chief Nasrallah brought Iranian diesel fuel via Syria under claims of easing the crippling energy crisis in Lebanon. At the end of the month, and at a first meeting in Paris, French President Macron urged Lebanon's Prime Minister Mikati to implement urgent reforms regarding the security, economic, social and humanitarian challenges

(19) European Commission, 'Lebanon Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/lebanon_en).

(20) Council of the European Union, 'Lebanon: EU adopts a framework for targeted sanction', 30 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/30/lebanon-eu-adopts-a-framework-for-targeted-sanctions/>).

(21) French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 'Co-Chairs' Conclusions (France and United Nations) – Conference In Support of the population of Lebanon (4 August 2021)', 4 August 2021 (<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/lebanon/news/article/co-chairs-conclusions-france-and-united-nations-conference-in-support-of-the>).

facing the country⁽²²⁾. In mid-October, Lebanon's parliament voted to hold legislative elections on 27 March 2022.

However, at the end of October four Gulf states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) pulled diplomats from Beirut over the Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi's criticism of the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, which he deemed pointless and called for its end. A day after the minister resigned seeking to end the diplomatic row, France and Saudi Arabia agreed to do more to help the Lebanese population, work to solve the diplomatic quarrel and jointly push to get the Lebanese government running. During the December visit to the country by UNSG Antonio Guterres, he expressed his stand of solidarity with the people of Lebanon and urged politicians to work together to resolve the crisis, stressing the fact that the Lebanese people also expect their political leaders to restore the economy, 'including through a functioning government and state institutions, and by effectively fighting corruption'⁽²³⁾.

The year started with the repatriation of seven children of French jihadists from northeast Syria, raising to 35 the number of children so far repatriated to France. On 15 January, the Council of the EU decided to add recently appointed Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal Mekdad, to the list of persons subject to EU restrictive measures entailing a travel ban and an asset freeze⁽²⁴⁾. In March, HR/VP Borrell stated on behalf of the EU, that it would be prepared to support free and fair elections in Syria in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2254 and under the supervision of the UN. The declaration was made as the EU did not deem as recognisable the results of the 2020 parliamentary elections or the presidential elections that took place in late 2021. HR/VP Borrell also reaffirmed the EU's readiness to 'enhance dialogue among all international actors with

(22) Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, 'Security Council Press Statement on Lebanon', 27 September 2021 (<https://unscol.unmissions.org/security-council-press-statement-lebanon-0>).

(23) Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, 'Transcript of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Press Conference in Beirut', 21 December 2021 (<https://unscol.unmissions.org/transcript-un-secretary-general-antonio-guterres-press-conference-beirut>).

(24) Council of the European Union, 'Syrian foreign affairs minister added to EU sanctions list', 15 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/15/syrian-foreign-affairs-minister-added-to-eu-sanctions-list>).

influence in the Syrian crisis', calling on them to join forces at the Fifth Brussels conference on 'Supporting the future of Syria and of the region' and to consolidate support for a Syrian-led political solution⁽²⁵⁾. At the conference, which took place on 29–30 March, the international community pledged €5.3 billion for 2021 and beyond for Syria and the neighbouring countries hosting the largest Syrian refugee population. Of this amount, €3.7 billion were announced by the EU, with €1.12 billion coming from the European Commission and €2.6 billion from EU Member States⁽²⁶⁾.

In May, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States denounced and condemned Syria's 2021 presidential election as illegitimate. At the end of May, the Council of the EU decided to extend sanctions against the regime for another year (until 1 June 2022) in light of the continued repression of the civilian population in the country⁽²⁷⁾. In June, UNSG Guterres declared that 'the humanitarian situation in Syria is now worse than at any previous time since the conflict began, with more than 13.4 million people now in need'⁽²⁸⁾. The severe drought Syria suffers from impacted the country's food security, with the IOM reporting 12.4 million out of 17.5 million people being food insecure⁽²⁹⁾. Power blackouts and limited water pumping capacities in the north-east were also caused by the low water levels of the Euphrates River, further limiting agriculture and food security in the region.

On 17 July, President Bashar Al-Assad was sworn in for a fourth term for seven more years, after winning 95 % of the votes in the 26 May elections. These results were dismissed by the EU and the

(25) Council of the European Union, 'Syria: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the 10 years of the conflict', 14 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/14/syria-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-10-years-of-the-conflict/>).

(26) EEAS, 'Supporting the future of Syria and the Region. Brussels V Conference – 29–30 March', 30 March 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/93313/brussels-v-conference-%E2%80%93-supporting-future-syria-and-region_en).

(27) Council of the European Union, 'Syria: Council extends sanctions against the regime for another year', 27 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/27/syria-council-extends-sanctions-against-the-regime-for-another-year/>).

(28) International Organization for Migration, 'IOM Syria Regional Situation Report 2021 (April–June)', 30 June 2021 (<https://syria.iom.int/resources/iom-syria-regional-situation-report-2021-april-june>).

(29) Ibid.

Arab climate futures

'Climate change in the Middle East and North Africa is a story of injustice and paradox. Injustice because while the region has contributed a mere 3 % of total global CO2 emissions over the past century and a half, it will be severely impacted by its effects. Paradoxical because although the alarm was raised already several decades ago that the region is at risk from the fallout of climate change, public awareness and policy responses have been even slower to emerge than elsewhere. Although recent developments have contributed to a growing insight that climate change is not 'just' an environmental affair, it still ranks below the many other challenges the region is grappling with, particularly economic and security issues.'

Gaub, F. and Lienard, C. 'Arab climate futures: of risk and readiness', *Chaillot Paper* No 170, EUISS, November 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/arab-climate-futures>).

United States as illegitimate and considered a sham by the Syrian opposition. In addition, the 24th report of the UN Syria Commission of Inquiry declared Syria not fit for safe and dignified returns of refugees due to the upsurge in fighting and return to violence⁽³⁰⁾. In September, Syria agreed to transit gas and electricity to Lebanon, which struck a deal to import gas from Egypt and electricity from Jordan. Later that month, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with President Assad in Moscow for the first time since 2018.

In November, the Council of the EU decided to add four recently appointed ministers to the list of persons subject to targeted EU restrictive measures⁽³¹⁾. A month later, the Council of the EU adopted a set of restrictive measures against the Wagner Group, a Russia-based unincorporated private military entity, targeting the group itself as well as eight individuals and three entities connected to it⁽³²⁾. A couple of days before Christmas, the EU mobilised an additional €10 million to help people access water, fix infrastructure,

(30) UN Human Rights Council, 'UN Syria Commission: Increasing violence and fighting add to Syria's woes, making it unsafe for return', 14 September 2021 (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27456&LangID=E>).

(31) Council of the European Union, 'Syria: four new ministers added to EU sanctions list', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/15/syria-four-new-ministers-added-to-eu-sanctions-list/>).

(32) Council of the European Union, 'EU imposes restrictive measures against the Wagner Group', 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/13/eu-imposes-restrictive-measures-against-the-wagner-group/>).

provide medical services and food supplies, bringing EU humanitarian support to Syria in 2021 to €141 million. An additional €1 million was allocated to the Covid-19 response⁽³³⁾.

The year started with the opening of an Israeli embassy in the United Arab Emirates, four months after Israel and the United Arab Emirates along with Bahrain signed the US-brokered ‘Abraham Accords’, which were aimed at normalising relations with Israel. Sudan also signed the Accords at the beginning of January, but this normalisation process was condemned by the Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held their first call since the change of administration in the United States. On 28 February, 442 parliamentarians from 22 European countries, serving in national legislatures and senates or in the European Parliament, signed a letter addressed to European foreign ministers and to HR/VP Josep Borrell, urging action against Israel’s ‘de facto annexation’ of the West Bank⁽³⁴⁾. After the fourth general election in less than two years in late March, the inconclusive results gave way to Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin to mandate Prime Minister Netanyahu to form a new government in under 28 days. Failing to form a governing coalition in the time frame given, Prime Minister Netanyahu was replaced by Yair Lapid, a centrist former television anchor and on the opposing side of Netanyahu.

During the same month, the Council of the EU appointed Sven Koopmans as the EU’s Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process from 1 May 2021 to 28 February 2023⁽³⁵⁾. An escalation of hostilities between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups were at their worst from 10 to 21 May, although tensions had been rising in East Jerusalem since 13 April, with clashes between the two factions erupting on a daily basis. The ongoing violence was

(33) European Commission, ‘Syria: €10 million to help vulnerable people in Syria affected by the drought’, 22 December 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/syria-eu10-million-help-vulnerable-people-syria-affected-drought-2021-12-22_en).

(34) Haaretz.com, ‘Joint letter by 442 parliamentarians from 22 European countries to European governments and leaders against Israeli *de facto* annexation of West Bank’, 28 February 2021 (https://www.haaretz.com/embeds/pdf_upload/2021/20210228-214451.pdf).

(35) Council of the European Union, ‘New EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process appointed’, 29 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/29/new-eu-special-representative-for-the-middle-east-peace-process-appointed/>).

condemned by the UNSG at the UN General Assembly meeting on the situation in the Middle East and Palestine, in which Guterres was ‘dismayed’ and ‘deeply disturbed’ by civilian casualties in Gaza and Israel’s strike on Gaza’s building housing international media outlets, such as Al-Jazeera and The Associated Press news agency⁽³⁶⁾.

On 21 May, a truce between Israel and Palestine set by Egyptian mediators ended 11 days of heavy fighting. The agreement was commended by the UN, the EU, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and the United States. However, the EU reiterated that ‘only a political solution will bring sustainable peace’ and ‘restoring a political horizon towards a two-state solution now remains of the utmost importance’⁽³⁷⁾. A break with US policy under former President Donald Trump was set when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, vowed to rebuild relations with Palestinians by reopening a consulate in Jerusalem and giving \$235 million in aid to help the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)⁽³⁸⁾. In 2021, the EU provided close to €35 million in humanitarian funding for Palestinians, including funds to address needs due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the violence in Gaza⁽³⁹⁾. The Council of the EU also decided to extend the mandates of EU CSDP civilian missions EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS until 30 June 2022.

In 2021, the EU mobilised €17 million in humanitarian assistance for Jordan, including €2 million to help the Kingdom tackle the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and build the resilience of the country’s health system against future surges⁽⁴⁰⁾. In June, the European Council urged the European Commission to send

(36) United Nations, ‘Secretary-General’s Remarks to the General Assembly Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East and Palestine [as delivered]’, 20 May 2021 (<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-05-20/secretary-general%20%99s-remarks-the-general-assembly-meeting-the-situation-the-middle-east-and-palestine-delivered>).

(37) European Commission, ‘Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell on the ceasefire’, 21 May 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/israelpalestine-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-ceasefire-2021-05-21_en).

(38) U.S. Department of State, ‘Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas Statements to the Press’, 25 May 2021 (<https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-palestinian-authority-president-mahmoud-abbas-statements-to-the-press/>).

(39) European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, ‘Palestine Factsheet’, last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/palestine_en).

(40) European Commission, ‘Jordan Factsheet’, last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/jordan_en).

Arab youth futures

‘Young Arabs (those aged between 15 and 35) are often seen as a generation beset by hopelessness, stuck between dreams of emigration and the reality of violence and unemployment. This impression does not come out of nowhere: the last decade took a heavy toll on this generation – it was during their childhood and adolescence, between 2013 and 2019, that the region suffered the highest number of terrorism casualties, that three wars interrupted the education of 13 million children and that riots and repression led to economic losses of \$600 billion following the Arab Spring. But how much does this generation feel that they can *change* matters and create a better future?’

Gaub, F. ‘Arab Youth Futures: No lost generation’, *Brief* No 20, EUISS, September 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/arab-youth-futures>).

formal proposals for the continuation of financing for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and other parts of the region, following through on the commitments made during the European Council of March 2021 and in the context of the EU’s migration policy⁽⁴¹⁾. President Charles Michel reiterated this call during the July European Parliament plenary session⁽⁴²⁾. The same month, the European Commission disbursed €250 million in macro-financial assistance (MFA) to Jordan, an amount coming partly from the €3 billion emergency MFA package for ten enlargement and neighbourhood partners, and partly from Jordan’s €500 million third MFA programme (MFA-III programme)⁽⁴³⁾.

Iran’s largest breach of the 2015 nuclear deal happened on 4 January, where it said it had begun enriching uranium up to 20 %. The move came after Iran’s parliament passed a bill allowing enrichment to pressure Europe into providing sanctions relief and the United States to re-enter the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The EU responded by regretting Iran’s actions

(41) European Council, ‘European Council conclusions on external relations, 24 June 2021’, 24 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/25/european-council-conclusions-on-external-relations-24-june-2021/>).

(42) European Council, ‘Report by President Charles Michel to the European Parliament plenary session’, 7 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/07/report-by-president-charles-michel-to-the-european-parliament-plenary-session/>).

(43) European Commission, ‘EU disburses €250 million in Macro-Financial Assistance to Jordan’, 20 July 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3787).

and reiterated its strong commitment to and continued support for the JCPOA, welcoming also US President-elect Joe Biden's positive statements on the deal⁽⁴⁴⁾. On 18 February, the E3 (the governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom) and the United States deplored Iran's activities in breach of the nuclear agreement while 'express[ing] their [...] interest in upholding the nuclear non-proliferation regime' and 'affirmed their shared objective of Iran's return to full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA'⁽⁴⁵⁾. A week later, Iran decided to suspend the provisional application of the 'Additional Protocol' as well as additional transparency provisions under the JCPOA, which restricted the International Atomic Energy Agency's ability to verify that nuclear activities remained for peaceful purposes only and which had the EU 'deeply concerned'⁽⁴⁶⁾.

An initial progress in JCPOA discussions was reached during the Vienna talks at the beginning of April. Brokered by the EEAS Deputy Secretary General Enrique Mora, two working groups including China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia, and the United Kingdom were formed to first list the sanctions relief steps the United States should take to return to rejoin the deal and second, to gauge what measures Iran would need to take to return to full compliance with the JCPOA. However, following the attack on its Natanz nuclear site a week later, which was blamed on Israel, Iran announced that it would enrich uranium to 60 %, the highest level reached so far. In the same month, the Council of the EU decided to extend its restrictive measures responding to serious human rights violations in

(44) Council of the European Union, 'Iran: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), following latest Iranian activities', 11 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/11/iran-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action-jcpoa-following-latest-iranian-activities/>).

(45) The United Kingdom official site, 'Iran and other international issues: statement from E3 and the United States, February 2021', 18 February 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-by-the-foreign-ministers-of-france-germany-the-united-kingdom-and-the-united-states-of-america>).

(46) Council of the European Union, 'Iran: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)', 25 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/25/iran-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action-jcpoa/>).

Iran until 13 April 2022⁽⁴⁷⁾. Following human rights issues, British-Iranian national Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was sentenced to an additional year in prison, a verdict the then British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab rebutted.

During the third to the fifth round of Vienna talks in May and June, progress was made in trying to bring the United States back into the nuclear deal, but high-ranking diplomats from the E3 plus Russia, China and Iran said that more time was needed to bring about a future agreement. In the sixth round of talks, the United States did not have a representative at the table and the negotiations were stalled due to disagreement between the parties. The JCPOA was also discussed at the EU-US summit in Brussels, where European Council President Charles Michel expressed the importance of keeping ‘a channel of dialogue and a capacity to prevent risks of escalation’⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Iranian elections took place on 18 June, welcoming Ebrahim Raisi as the new president of Iran, who replaced Hassan Rouhani, whose landmark achievement was the 2015 nuclear deal. The elections were described as ‘neither free nor fair’ by human rights organisations⁽⁴⁹⁾. In response to the European Parliament’s question to the HR/VP on Raisi not being subject to EU sanctions, and if the EU’s stance was to change in the near future, HR/VP Borrell answered that the EU was engaged in a ‘comprehensive policy approach towards Iran’ based on the common position the Council conclusions of February 2019 reflected. Furthermore, the HR/VP insisted on the importance of keeping diplomatic channels open with the country, while continuing to address all aspects of the human rights

(47) Council of the European Union, ‘Iran: Council concludes annual review of the EU’s Iran human rights sanctions regime’, 12 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/12/iran-council-reviews-eu-human-rights-sanctions-regime/>).

(48) European Council, ‘Remarks by President Charles Michel following the EU-US summit in Brussels’, 15 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/15/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-following-the-eu-us-summit-in-brussels/>).

(49) Human Rights Watch, ‘Iran: Overseer of Mass Executions Elected President. Further Erosion of Political Rights, Accountability’, 19 June 2021 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/19/iran-overseer-mass-executions-elected-president>).

situation there⁽⁵⁰⁾. July and August saw Iran threatening a successful outcome to the Vienna talks by moving forward with producing enriched uranium metal (up to 20 %) and enriching uranium up to 60 %, a move decried by Germany, France and Britain⁽⁵¹⁾.

The United States and the G7 found Iran guilty of the deadly attack on the HV Mercer Street oil tanker in the Arabian Sea on 29 July — an accusation Iran's deputy ambassador at the UN, Zahra Ershadi, rejected. In a bid to hold Iran accountable, Britain's UN ambassador Barbara Woodward asked about a possible UNSC action stating that there was room for dialogue, but if Iran chose not to take that path, then holding Iran accountable and applying a cost would be the way forward. On 29 November, the seventh round of talks on the mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA resumed in Vienna but were paused for a few days by European missions to consult with their respective capitals. Indeed, the demands of Iran meant a walk back on many of the issues agreed on in the sixth round of talks. After the 9 December round of talks, the eighth round took place on 27 December, still not getting to a common agreement but Western diplomats insisted on setting February 2022 as the final deadline to get to one.

As a leading donor to Iraq, the EU allocated an extra €3.5 million to facilitate access to Covid-19 vaccination for the displaced population, in addition to €25 million directed to humanitarian programmes⁽⁵²⁾. Requesting more time to implement a framework to hold free and fair elections, the Independent High Election Commission of Iraq (IHEC) collected the unanimous vote from Iraq's cabinet to delay the general elections from 6 June to 10 October. On

(50) European Parliament, 'Parliamentary questions: Answer given by High Representative/Vice President Borrell on behalf of the European Commission. Question reference: P-003332/2021', 8 September 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2021-003332-ASW_EN.html).

(51) French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 'JCPOA - Statement by the Foreign ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom (6 July 2021)', 6 July 2021 (https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/iran/news/article/jcpoa-statement-by-the-foreign-ministers-of-france-germany-and-the-united?debut_ssra=30&page_courante=4#pagination_ssra); and Ministère de l'Europe et des affaires étrangères, 'Iran - JCPOA - Statement by spokespersons of the foreign ministries of France, Germany and the United Kingdom (19 August 2021)', 19 August 2021 (<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/iran/news/article/iran-jcpoa-statement-by-spokespersons-of-the-foreign-ministries-of-france>).

(52) European Commission, 'Iraq Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/iraq_en).

Cheap oil and conflict dynamics

‘When the price of oil goes down, there is often a sigh of relief among oil-importing countries, as cheap oil means a boost for the economy and increased savings for consumers and businesses. As a result, most of Europe tends to notice price shocks only when prices go up: consumers are squeezed while producers accumulate enormous wealth. Yet, for oil-exporting countries cheap oil means increased poverty and tighter budgets – a recipe for instability and conflict.’

Ilardo, M. ‘Curse or blessing? How cheap oil influences conflict dynamics’, *Brief* No 6, Conflict Series, EUISS, March 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/curse-or-blessing>).

21 January, two suicide bombers from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) targeted Baghdad, a first in three years, killing 32 people and injuring over 100 more. The attack was swiftly condemned by the UNSC and the EU through the acting chair of the European Parliament’s Delegation for relations with Iraq, Domènec Ruiz Devesa, reaffirming their support for Iraq’s security and fight against terrorism⁽⁵³⁾. In view of alleged forced evacuation of refugees from the Jedaa Camp, the EU expressed its concerns and called for a safe and dignified return of the internally displaced people, fearing the closure of the camp to result in more secondary displacements.

Human rights monitors denounced forceful arrests of peaceful protesters in the first few months of the year in Iraq, where security forces used ‘live ammunition and military-grade tear gas grenades, killing dozens of protesters in Baghdad, Basrah, Karbala, Diyala, Najaf and Nasriya’⁽⁵⁴⁾. UN experts expressed alarm at the killing of Jasib Hattab Abboud Al Heliji, father of a human rights defender who went missing in October 2019, stating concern on further consequences for all human rights if the government of Iraq did not

(53) United Nations Iraq, ‘Security Council Press Statement | Terrorist Attack in Baghdad’, 22 January 2021 (<https://iraq.un.org/index.php/en/122830-security-council-press-statement-terrorist-attack-baghdad>); and European Parliament, ‘Statement of 26 January 2021 on the recent terrorist attack in Baghdad’, 26 January 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/d-iq/documents/communiques>).

(54) Amnesty International, ‘Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The state of the world’s human rights’, p. 51, 7 April 2021 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol0/3202/2021/en/>).

take decisive action against the perpetrators⁽⁵⁵⁾. A UN investigation also found ‘clear and compelling evidence’ that ISIL ‘committed’ genocide against the Yazidi minority in 2014⁽⁵⁶⁾. Following a year of documentation and research, the UN also published a report in which it denounced the increasing curtailment of freedom of expression in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, a report the Kurdistan Regional Government responded to by reaffirming its commitment to defend and advance media freedoms in the region and thanking the UN’s commitment to dialogue⁽⁵⁷⁾. During the visit of the Prime Minister Mustapha Al-Khadimi to Brussels at the end of June, the European Parliament expressed a deep preoccupation ‘about the escalation of violence and the targeted political murders of civil society activists in Iraq’, and the low accountability rate for serious crimes and human rights violations despite a ‘firm commitment to punish perpetrators [...] by the Government [of Iraq]’⁽⁵⁸⁾.

Between February and July, rocket attacks hit military bases where foreign troops, including US troops, were stationed as part of an alliance fighting the ISIL/Da’esh. The EU condemned these attacks along with other EU Member States, the United States, the UN and Iraqi ministers⁽⁵⁹⁾. In light of the security situation remaining critical in Iraq, the Foreign Affairs Council of 21 June decided to hold the Cooperation Council on the EU-Iraq partnership and Cooperation Agreement at ministerial level before the end of the

(55) United Nations, ‘Iraq: UN experts appalled by killing of disappeared human rights defender’s father’, 26 March 2021 (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/03-iraq-un-experts-appalled-killing-disappeared-human-rights-defenders-father?LangID=E&NewsID=26951>).

(56) United Nations, ‘ISIL/Da’esh Committed Genocide of Yazidi, War Crimes against Unarmed Cadets, Military Personnel in Iraq, Investigative Team Head Tells Security Council’, 10 May 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14514.doc.htm>).

(57) United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Freedom of Expression in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq’, May 2021 (https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/IQ/Freedom-of-Expression-in-the-Kurdistan-Region_En.pdf).

(58) European Parliament, ‘Statement by Domènec Ruiz Devesa, acting Chair of the EP’s Delegation for relations with Iraq, on the visit of Prime Minister, H.E. Mustapha Al-Kadimi, to Brussels on 30 June – 1 July 2021’, 2 July 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/237611/20210702_Statement_Ruiz_Devesa_visit_Prime_Minister_Iraq_EN.pdf).

(59) European Parliament, ‘Statement by Domènec Ruiz Deveda, Acting Chair of the EP Delegation for Relations with Iraq on the recent terrorist attack in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan’, 17 February 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/230038/D-IQ%20statement%2017.02.2021.pdf>).

year⁽⁶⁰⁾. In a move to build closer ties with Arab countries, Iraq — together with Egypt and Jordan — agreed to bolster security and economic cooperation at the June tripartite summit in Baghdad. Deeper cooperation with Saudi Arabia was also established as the Iraqi Prime Minister boosted ties with the top Saudi leadership by signing five agreements covering financial, commercial, economic, cultural and media areas, and agreed to maintain energy cooperation during his visit to the kingdom in April.

The visit of HR/VP Borrell to Iraq resulted in the expansion of the EU Advisory Mission to Iraq (EUAM Iraq) to open a permanent presence in Erbil (the Kurdish region of Iraq)⁽⁶¹⁾. It also resulted in the decision to deploy, for the first time and at Iraq's request, an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the parliamentary elections scheduled for 10 October⁽⁶²⁾. In its preliminary statement, the EU EOM qualified the elections as 'well-managed, competitive [...] despite low turnout and problematic legal framework'⁽⁶³⁾. Despite a peaceful and orderly election day, the EU and the UNSC deplored 'threats of violence against the personnel of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the [...] IHEC and others, following the publication of preliminary elections results'⁽⁶⁴⁾. Ratified by Iraq's Supreme Court, the final electoral results confirmed the victory of Muqtada al-Sadr, a prominent Shia leader, whose political bloc the Sadr Movement won a total of 73 out of 329 seats, clearing the way for a new parliament to hold its inaugural session. In the meantime, the EU condemned the terrorist attack against Prime Minister al-Khadimi, emphasising its commitment to ensuring

(60) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 21 June 2021 – Main results', 21 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/06/21/>).

(61) EEAS, 'High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell concludes his first visit to Iraq', 8 September 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sierra-leone/103830/high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-concludes-his-first-visit-iraq_en).

(62) EUAM Iraq, 'EU High Representative Borrell visits Iraq', 7 September 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/euam-iraq/103799/eu-high-representative-borrell-visits-iraq_en).

(63) EEAS, 'EU EOM Iraq 2021 Preliminary statement', 12 October 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-iraq-2021/105451/eu-eom-iraq-2021-preliminary-statement_en).

(64) EEAS, 'Iraq: Statement by the Spokesperson on threats against UNAMI and Electoral Commission', 23 October 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/homepage/106117/iraq-statement-spokesperson-threats-against-unami-and-electoral-commission_en).

security in the country and its fight against terrorism⁽⁶⁵⁾. However, ISIL outbreaks of violence at the end of the year have reinforced EU's concerns over the expansion of the group's activities and the endangerment of Iraq's reconstruction process⁽⁶⁶⁾.

The political and humanitarian situation in Yemen had the EU worried as violence between Houthis and Yemen's internationally recognised government went on. The Houthi movement launched an attack on a civilian plane on the tarmac of Abha International Airport in south-western Saudi Arabia at the beginning of February. A few days later, Houthis killed dozens of people in order to lay siege to Marib, a city that could give them full control of the north of Yemen, potentially weakening the government's negotiating position. The pro-government military coalition ensued by conducting airstrikes on Houthi military targets in Sanaa. In a bid to urge the end of the war, the US President Joe Biden announced it was ending support for the Saudi-led military offensive in Yemen and called for a ceasefire, an opening of humanitarian channels and a return to peace talks.

The European Parliament also adopted a resolution on Yemen, calling on the EU and Member States to address the 'accountability for perpetrators, to halt all arms exports to, and military co-operation with, all parties to the conflict' and 'to impose targeted sanctions through [the] Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime'⁽⁶⁷⁾. The E3 (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) along with the United States also expressed their joint determination to support UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in its efforts to end the war and called on all warring parties to 'engage constructively in the political process'⁽⁶⁸⁾.

(65) European Parliament, 'Statement by Sara Skyttedal, Chair of the EP's Delegation for relations with Iraq, on the recent terrorist attack against Prime Minister al-Kadhimi', 9 November 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/241975/20211109_Statement_Sara_Skyttedal_terrorist_attack_against_Prime_Minister_Al_Kadhimi_EN.pdf).

(66) Ibid.

(67) European Parliament, 'Resolution on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen', 11 February 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0053_EN.html).

(68) The United Kingdom official site, 'Iran and other international issues: statement from E3 and the United States, February 2021', 18 February 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-by-the-foreign-ministers-of-france-germany-the-united-kingdom-and-the-united-states-of-america>).

At the same time, the UNSG deplored the low turnout in aid raised at the high-level event on Yemen in March, totalling approximately \$1.7 billion (over €1.5 billion), which is less than was donated in 2020 and a billion dollars less than pledged in 2019⁽⁶⁹⁾. Among the major pledges was the EU's with \$116.2 million (over €105 million). Despite a new EU-backed peace plan proposed by Saudi Arabia, which suggested a UN-supervised ceasefire between Yemen's Saudi-backed government and Houthi rebels, reopening vital air and sea connections and the start of political negotiations, the Houthi leadership rejected the offer considering it did not offer anything new⁽⁷⁰⁾. The fight over the city of Marib continued until the end of the year, resulting in hundreds of victims on both sides. In October, the situation worsened as members of the UNHRC voted to shut down the war crimes investigation, the Group of Eminent Experts, in Yemen, which was deplored by Western countries and human rights groups. To alleviate Yemenis' dire situation, the Commission announced an additional €119 million in humanitarian (€44 million) and development aid (€75 million) to be implemented through partner organisations working on improving people's resilience, improving food security and boosting early economic recovery⁽⁷¹⁾. The month of December was rocky, as UN aid flights into Yemen's capital Sanaa were allegedly halted by air strikes carried out by the military coalition supporting the government in Sanaa International Airport. UN flights were allowed to resume a week later on a 'temporary basis' following the decision of the Houthi leadership.

(69) United Nations, 'Disappointing Outcome of Yemen Funding Conference Mere 'Down Payment' to Prevent Famine, Secretary-General Says, Asking Donors to Boost Pledges', 1 March 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20609.doc.htm>).

(70) European Parliament, 'Statement by Chair of Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula, Hannah Neumann, on new peace-plan for war-torn Yemen', 25 March 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/statement-by-the-chair-on-the-new-peace-/product-details/20210325DPU29215>).

(71) Relief Web (UN OCHA Service), 'Yemen: EU allocates €119 additional million for humanitarian crisis', 22 September 2021 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-eu-allocates-119-additional-million-humanitarian-crisis>).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Due to the lingering Covid-19 crisis, the European Union–African Union Summit was postponed to 2022. However, the EU-AU 2nd Ministerial Meeting focussed on the EU–Africa strategic partnership and the key priorities of their joint agenda such as a joint Covid-19 response, a green and digital transformation, working together for peace, security and governance and on migration and mobility⁽⁷²⁾. In terms of supporting Africa’s recovery from Covid-19, Team Europe provided around €2.5 billion for COVAX and 200 million vaccine doses made in the EU. A new initiative, announced at the G20 Global Health Summit in May and backed by €1 billion, was also launched to ramp up African manufacturing of vaccines, medicines and health technologies in order to tackle barriers on both supply and demand sides⁽⁷³⁾. In cooperation with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the European Commission announced an additional €100 million in EU humanitarian assistance to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in Africa⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Regarding the economic recovery, €40 billion was allocated in emergency support for economies in distress. Debt relief through the IMF’s Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust amounted to €170 million. In addition, a new Team Europe initiative was started to invest in Young Businesses in Africa⁽⁷⁵⁾. Envisaging an even closer partnership with Africa in the future, the EU proposed a comprehensive investment package to boost Africa’s green transition in order to fulfil the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, support the

(72) Council of the European Union, ‘Joint communiqué of the second African Union – European Union Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting Kigali, Rwanda, 25 – 26 October 2021’, 27 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/27/joint-communique-of-the-second-african-union-european-union-foreign-affairs-ministerial-meeting-kigali-rwanda-25-26-october-2021/>).

(73) European Commission, ‘€1 billion Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa’, 21 May 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_2594).

(74) European Commission, ‘EU humanitarian initiative to support COVID-19 vaccination rollout in Africa’ (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/support-package-covid-19-vaccination-rollout-africa_en).

(75) European Commission, EU–Africa: Global Gateway Investment Package (https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway/eu-africa-global-gateway-investment-package_en).

The future Africans want

'Africans' aspirations go well beyond economic and social security: they evince a desire for self-sufficiency and autonomy as well as democratic, accountable and responsive governance. Citizens are largely ready and willing to take action and even to put their own financial resources into the pot in order to realise their ambitions. Examples abound of citizens joining together to do everything: from fighting corruption in the management of local natural resources in Ghana, to initiating local awareness-raising and relief campaigns in response to Covid-19 in Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa and South Sudan. Yet too often, governments resist and fail to listen to citizen voices, respond to popular expectations and build the governance systems their people demand.'

Gyimah-Boadi, E. and Asunka, J., 'The future Africans want: When optimism is power', *Brief No 14, Imagine Africa Series, EUISS*, June 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/future-africans-want>).

continent's digital transformation, help Africa's economies grow, create jobs through sustainable investments and closer economic integration through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), and improve access to quality education for all. In addition, the EU would promote peace, security and good governance by better supporting African peace efforts and integrating in the cooperation agreement good governance, democracy, human rights, rule of law and gender equality. It would also work together with Africa on migration and mobility based on solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility, ensuring a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach. The partnership will be financed over the next seven years by the new EU financing instrument 'Global Europe' from which €29 billion out of the €80 billion in total is foreseen for Sub-Saharan Africa⁽⁷⁶⁾.

To strengthen its cooperation with Africa in digital and space technology, the EU mobilised €82.5 million under the Pan-African Programme in December 2020. In this framework, the programme supports several projects in multiple sectors, starting with a contribution to food security and building resilient ecosystems through earth monitoring by using space technology. The last part of the

(76) European Commission, 'Team Europe mobilises to support African economies', 18 May 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_2543).

programme's first phase was concluded in 2021, benefiting from €26.5 million between 2017–2021 and another €25 million was allocated to support the second phase of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security & Africa programme (2022–2025)⁽⁷⁷⁾. The EU also funded the 2021–2023 Pan-African Support to Geological Sciences and Technology Africa – EU Partnership with an additional €8 million, contributing to sustainable management and better governance of natural resources in Africa.

Regarding digitalisation and knowledge sharing, in 2021 the EU supported the recently launched Africa–Europe Digital for Development Hub with €8 million, facilitating knowledge sharing and structured dialogue between African and EU partners to boost the digital transformation. An additional €5 million was allocated to accelerate the Single African Air Transport Market, investing in satellite systems for safer aviation infrastructure. The third phase of the Satellite Navigation in Africa Support Programme that started in 2021 was supported by the EU's additional contribution of €4.5 million.

Recognising the 17th AU–EU Human Rights Dialogue as a manifestation of a strategic partnership of equals in the long term, the AU and the EU both acknowledged the challenges brought by Covid-19. They called for a rights-based response to the pandemic, especially in light of a concerning increase in human rights violations and restrictions on the exercises of fundamental freedoms in the continent⁽⁷⁸⁾. Noting the finalisation and adoption of the AU Strategic Plan for the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in Africa (2021–2030), the EU expressed its readiness to consider possible joint actions contributing to its implementation in Africa. The AU welcomed the EU's upcoming support to implement its transitional justice policy and agreed to hold a 2022 edition of the expert-level seminar on the matter. Both the AU and the EU commended the key role of civil society in the dialogue. They welcomed

(77) European Commission, 'EU mobilises €82.5 million to strengthen cooperation with Africa in digital and space technology', 21 December 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2429).

(78) EEAS, '17th AU–EU Human Rights Dialogue Joint Communiqué', 16 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african-union-au/17th-au-eu-human-rights-dialogue-joint-communique_en?s=43).

African futures to 2030

‘Political violence is on the rise in Africa, but peaceful protests and non-violent resistance can be channelled, contained, and serve as a stimulus for democratic development as well as an antidote to prevent escalations into violence and conflicts. Peaceful mobilisation is also another way to define local engagement, providing people in urban or rural areas, and especially young people, with a voice, and an opportunity to express their opinions and discontent. An efficient and well-functioning democracy, whereby communities can have a seat at the decision-making table, is perhaps the most powerful antidote against the rise of violent extremism. In the field of urban planning, it has been highlighted that investing in mobility and infrastructures, and implementing ambitious energy policies, only makes sense if guided by bottom-up participatory and inclusive processes.’

Faleg, G. (ed.), ‘African Futures 2030: Free trade, peace and prosperity’, *Chaillot Paper No 164*, EUISS, February 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/african-futures-2030>).

the recommendations put forward by civil society representatives of the AU-EU Steering Committee and committed to explore concrete ways for further engagement.

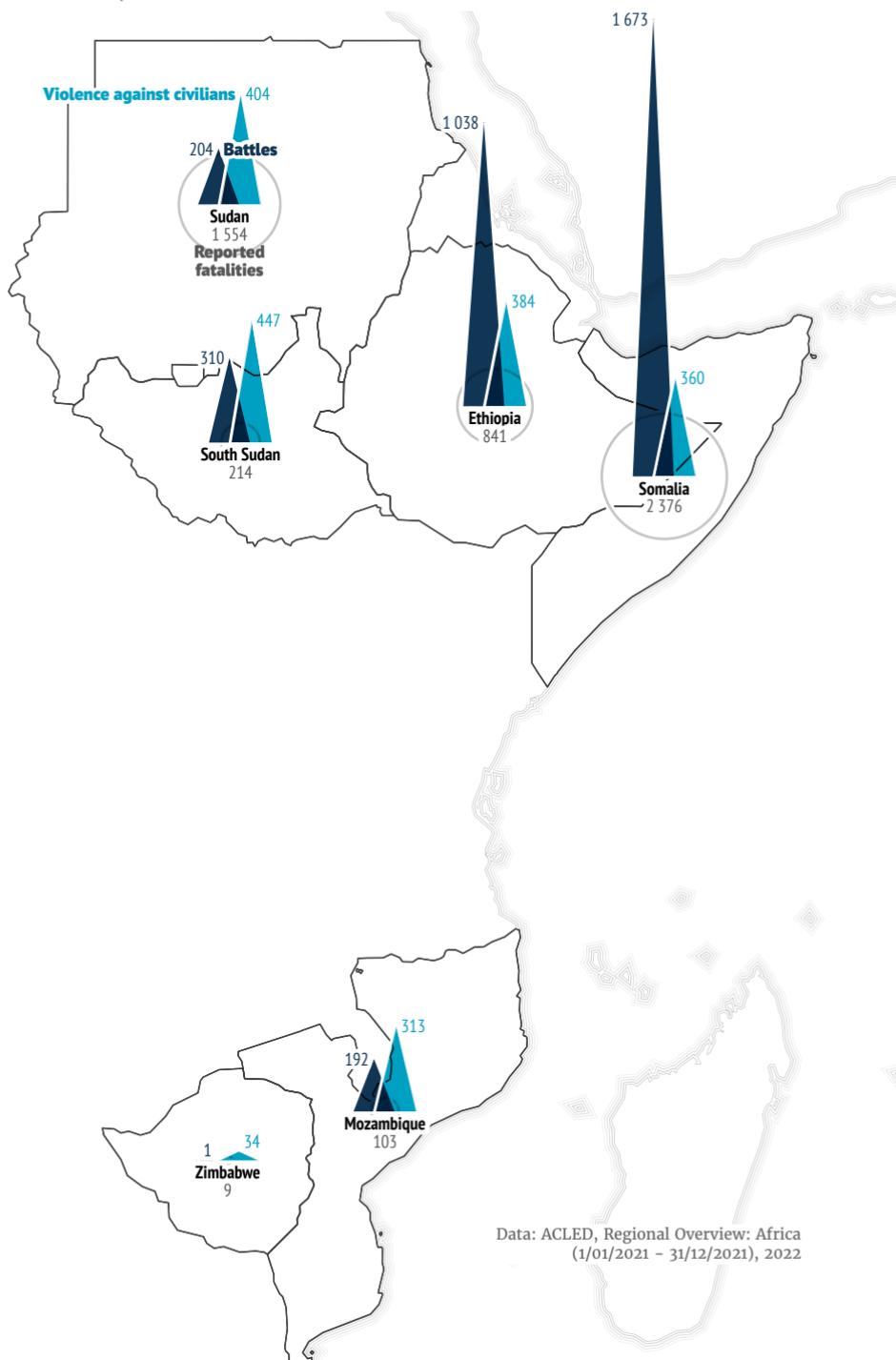
In 2021, the first recipient of aid through the EU Trust Fund was the African continent, with €783.6 million divided between the south of Sahara (€599.8 million), north of Sahara (€164.32 million) and the rest of the continent with €19.49 million⁽⁷⁹⁾. In December, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, partly funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), marked its five years supporting migrants along key migration routes in Africa (North Africa, Sahel and Lake Chad and Horn of Africa), ensuring that migration is safer, more informed and better governed for both migrants and their communities⁽⁸⁰⁾. However, conflicts in the region continued to displace millions from their homes, including 1.5 million in DRC and 573 000 people in Somalia. Most of the region’s refugees were hosted by a few

(79) European Commission, ‘EU Aid Explorer – Recipients 2021, EU Trust Funds’, 2021 (https://euaidexplorer.ec.europa.eu/explore/recipients_en).

(80) European Commission, ‘EU-IOM Joint Initiative marks five years of supporting migrants and their communities across Africa’, 16 December 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/all-news-and-stories/eu-iom-joint-initiative-marks-five-years-supporting-migrants-and-their_en).

Horn of Africa

Conflict map, 2021



countries such as Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda and Sudan, but Uganda hosted the largest refugee population in the continent with over 1.5 million people, mostly from South Sudan and the DRC⁽⁸¹⁾.

Droughts aggravated by climate change had an impact on several countries in the region. Angola, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, South Africa and Zambia suffered from low rainfall, causing in some places a lack of food, safe water and adequate sanitation, and leading to preventable deaths. Severe droughts had also an impact on those reliant on subsistence agriculture, often leaving people without their main sources of livelihood such as livestock and fishing. Natural hazards, such as the volcanic eruption of DRC's Mount Nyiragongo in 2021, created additional suffering and needs, for which the EU provided humanitarian funding. Additionally, the Far North region of Cameroon, prone to climate hazards such as droughts, floods and disease outbreaks was hit at the end of 2021 by inter-communal clashes over scarce water and land resources that lead to the displacement of over 70 000 people, half from which sought refuge in Chad.

The Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa (which took place on 6–7 December) gave space for the EU to put forward its willingness to develop a new economic and social model, taking into account the digital transition, ensuring financial and budgetary stability and tackling security matters to provide prosperity and economic development. Regarding the digital transition, the EU expressed its readiness to work together, to tackle disinformation and new hybrid threats, and promote a better use of digital resources, foreseen as the next main economic resources for this century⁽⁸²⁾.

In April 2021, the EU and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States concluded the negotiations of the Post Cotonou

(81) 'Amnesty International Report 2021/22: The state of the world's human rights', p. 24, op. cit.

(82) European Council, 'Speech by President Charles Michel at the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa', 6 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/06/intervention-du-president-charles-michel-au-forum-international-de-dakar-sur-la-paix-et-securite-en-afrique/>).

Agreement. The European Parliament Chairs of the Development (DEVE), Foreign Affairs (AFET) and International Trade (INTA) Committees as well as the Chair of the Delegation for relations with the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly called for the swift signature of the Partnership Agreement in October⁽⁸³⁾. Indeed, the future agreement has promised to enhance the political partnership between the EU and the ACP, particularly the one covering climate change, migration and peace and security. To meet the objective of prosperity, and social and security challenges, the EU proposed to ensure financial and budgetary injections by boosting public-private partnerships as well as attractiveness, legal certainty and stability. Last but not least, the EU expressed that security on the ground needed a better connection between African and European security architectures. The question of making available flexible, rapid and effective instruments deployed for political dialogue was raised, with the EU reiterating the need to take the whole chain of security fully into account as well as lessons learned in the recent years. This means taking action to prevent conflicts or stop them from worsening to consolidate peace and make sure it lasts.

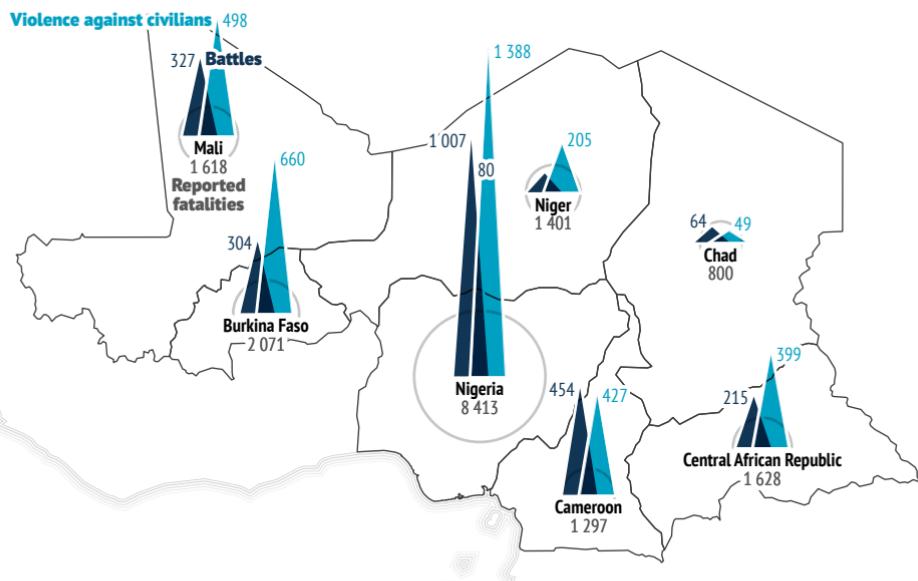
Throughout 2021, the EU remained fully engaged in the Sahel. This was not only shown by summits and high-level meetings but also in Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, extension of sanctions, missions and operations, and through humanitarian aid. The G5 Sahel Summit and the Pau+1 summit on 15–16 February 2021 brought together the G5 Sahel countries and their international partners, and reaffirmed the shared commitment to re-establishing security and stability in the Sahel⁽⁸⁴⁾. All parties agreed that peace can be found by striking a balance between measures promoting security and those supporting development, and through inclusive public policies. The debate about more sustainable funding of the G5 Joint Force under the Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter was also reopened. The UNSG stressed the need for the Joint Force to

(83) European Parliament, 'The EP calls for the swift signature of the ACP-EU Post-Cotonou agreement', 29 October 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/2021029IPR16203/european-parliament-calls-for-swift-signing-of-acp-eu-post-cotonou-agreement>).

(84) EEAS, 'The Sahel: a shared responsibility', 15 January 2021 (https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/73022/sahel-shared-responsibility_en).

The Sahel

Conflict map, 2021



Data: ACLED, Regional Overview: Africa (1/01/2021 – 31/12/2021), 2022

receive a mandate by the UNSC and sustained financing⁽⁸⁵⁾. Another proposal was the will to enhance coordination with the G5 Sahel on matters of strengthening the security and defence capabilities of the Sahel states and giving greater support to restore the state's sovereign functions in these countries.

On 19 March, the second ministerial meeting of the Coalition for the Sahel adopted a roadmap, setting clear milestones for each pillar of the Coalition⁽⁸⁶⁾. Participants declared their intention to im-

(85) United Nations, 'Secretary-General Stresses Need for Sustained, Predictable Funding of Joint Force, in Message to G5 Sahel Summit', 16 February 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20582.doc.htm>).

(86) Sahel Coalition, 'Second ministerial meeting of the Coalition for the Sahel (March 19, 2021)', 19 March 2021 (<https://www.coalition-sahel.org/en/second-ministerial-meeting-of-the-coalition-for-the-sahel-march-19-2021/>).

Pivoting to African conflict prevention

‘Although many regional and international forums have reaffirmed conflict prevention as a priority, in practice it still takes second place. Stakeholders are “more sensitive to open crisis than to crisis signals and indicators”, not only in Africa. ECOWARN and CEWS are efficient but, as it stands, they are limited by the willingness of Heads of State to decide on concrete preventive action. The main difficulty is the ability of decision-makers to intervene without hitting the barrier of sovereignty and having to pay a political price for their audacity.’

Gnanguenon, A., ‘Pivoting to African conflict prevention? An analysis of continental and regional early warning systems’, *Brief No 3, Conflict Series, EUISS*, February 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/pivoting-african-conflict-prevention>).

plement the ‘civil and political surge’ decided at the N’Djamena Summit, which included the establishment of inter-ministerial political mechanisms in the G5 Sahel countries. In April, the Council of the EU approved the conclusions on an EU integrated strategy in the Sahel region. It reaffirmed the EU-Sahel partnership through a framework for its policies and actions in the region such as intensifying its political efforts based on the principle of mutual accountability, going beyond military involvement focusing both on short-term stabilisation and long-term prospects for sustainable social, environmental and economic development, as well as continuing to support Sahel partners in fighting terrorism and following through with security sector reform⁽⁸⁷⁾.

During the ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition against Daesh at the end of June, ministers reaffirmed their determination to continue the fights against Daesh/ISIS through a comprehensive, coordinated and multifaceted effort⁽⁸⁸⁾. Additionally, as well as welcoming the Central African Republic, the DRC, Mauritania and Yemen as new members of the Coalition, the discussion highlighted that reinforcing civilian state institutions and consolidating the rule of law are essential components of combatting

(87) Council of the European Union, ‘Council Conclusions on the European Union’s Integrated Strategy in the Sahel’, 16 April 2021 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7723-2021-INIT/en/pdf>).

(88) EEAS, ‘Ministerial Meeting of the Global Coalition against Daesh: Joint Communiqué’, 28 June 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/ministerial-meeting%20%AF-global-coalition-against%20%AFdaesh-joint-communiqu%C3%A9_en).

Daesh/ISIS. During the Sahel Alliance 7th Operational Steering Committee in December 2021, members of the Alliance reiterated their commitment to support the new Development and Security Strategy of the G5 Sahel and commended the commitment of the Sahel Alliance members to the Great Green Wall initiative, exhorting them to continue efforts and identify synergies⁽⁸⁹⁾.

In the context of the end of Operation Barkhane, where France declared that it would pull more than 2 000 troops from the Sahel, HR/VP Borrell reassured the EU would remain fully engaged in the region, reiterating that the Takuba Task Force was an important actor in the security field taking over from Barkhane and that its CSDP engagement through EUTM Mali, EUCLAP Sahel Niger and EUCLAP Sahel Mali would pursue increased activities in Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as non-executive 'accompaniment activities'⁽⁹⁰⁾. The Council of the EU decided in November to extend the existing restrictive measures against ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaeda and persons, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them until 31 October 2022⁽⁹¹⁾. The EU restated its commitment to the region during the November Foreign Affairs Council by appointing Emanuela Claudia Del Re as the EU Special Representative for the Sahel from 1 July 2021 until 30 August 2022⁽⁹²⁾.

The EU's humanitarian assistance to the region stood at €237 million in 2021, making the Union one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel. Additionally, the European Commission provided €100 million in humanitarian assistance to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in countries in Africa, where €10

(89) Coalition pour le Sahel, '7e Comité de Pilotage Opérationnel', 15 December 2021 (<https://www.coalition-sahel.org/alliance-sahel-7e-comite-de-pilotage-operationnel-face-aux-perils-en-cours-au-sahel-miser-sur-les-potentielles-de-la-region-et-renforcer-la-coordination-et-les-partenariats/>).

(90) European Parliament, 'Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell on behalf of the European Commission, Question reference: E-003714/2021', 8 September 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003714-ASW_EN.html).

(91) Council of the European Union, 'Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures against ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda and persons, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them', 8 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/08/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-alignment-of-certain-countries-concerning-restrictive-measures-against-isil-da-esh-and-al-qaeda-and-persons-groups-undertakings-and-entities-associated-with-them/>).

(92) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 15 November 2021 – Main results', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/>).

million went to West and Central Africa⁽⁹³⁾. In 2021, 114 programmes under the EUTF for Africa amounting to €2217.8 million were approved for the Sahel and Lake Chad region⁽⁹⁴⁾. Among the new programmes is one called '*Contribution au financement du Secrétariat de la Coalition pour le Sahel*', with €500 million aimed at improving coordination between the main actors active in the Sahel and strengthening partnerships with regional partners.

In 2021, the regional situation worsened, resulting in mass displacements amounting to more than 7.7 million forcibly displaced people in the region (1.4 million refugees and 6.3 million internally displaced people)⁽⁹⁵⁾. Mauritania, hosting over 76 400 refugees from Mali and being a crucial transit point on the route to Europe via the Canary Islands, was the recipient of EU support through a new programme called '*Partenariat Opérationnel Conjoint pour la Mauritanie (POC Mauritanie)*', which, with €4.5 million fully funded by the EUTF for Africa, sought to ensure an effective fight against criminal networks involved in smuggling and trafficking of human beings and improving the control of irregular migration in the country.

After a four-day visit to Burkina Faso, the UNHCR concluded that the country faces many challenges which directly impact the human rights of its people.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Following murderous raids in several villages in northern and eastern Burkina Faso in the spring, the deadliest attack in the country since 2015, counting 160 people killed by suspected jihadists happened in the north. The attack was strongly condemned by the UN who offered its full support, as did the then French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. Violent episodes by suspected jihadists continued until the end of the year, particularly in the north, killing dozens at a time, including civilians, army soldiers and pro-government civilian militia. In December, Burkina Faso's Prime Minister Christophe Joseph Marie Dabire and

(93) European Commission, 'Sahel Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/sahel_en).

(94) European Commission, 'EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa 2021 Annual Report', 2021 (<https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/eutf-report-2021-eng-for-digital.pdf>).

(95) 'Sahel Factsheet', op.cit.

(96) United Nations, 'Burkina Faso facing 'multitude of challenges' – human rights chief Bachelet', 1 December 2021 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1106942>).

Africa's demographic dividend

'Africa's working-age population (aged between 15–64) was estimated to be 750 million in 2019 and is forecast to exceed 1 billion before 2030 and to reach 1.1 billion by 2035, with young Africans (aged between 15–24) entering the labour force at a rate of about 20 million each year. The boom in Africa's young population could result in either a demographic dividend or a demographic time-bomb [...] Based on trends in fertility, education, job creation, climate risks and economic growth, a business-as-usual scenario argues that Africa will miss the demographic dividend in 2030, if current trends continue. A more optimistic scenario shows instead how the dividend can be achieved as a result of effective policy actions to address the frontline issues of population growth, education and climate risks.'

Asafu-Adjaye, J. and Brown, E.K, 'Reaping Africa's demographic dividend', *Brief No 25, Imagine Africa Series, EUISS*, December 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/reaping-africa's-demographic-dividend>).

government resigned as protests mounted against its inability to combat a wave of jihadist attacks that killed thousands. A few days later, the country's President Roch Marc Christian Kabore, picked Lassina Zerbo as the new Prime Minister, a democratic transition which was commended by the UNSC⁽⁹⁷⁾.

As France looked to reduce its longstanding military presence in the Sahel region, Chad deployed 1 200 troops to combat jihadists to the flashpoint 'three border' zone between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. In an effort to enhance the operational capabilities of the regional force of the G5 Sahel, Chad deployed an additional battalion to support the force's Operation Sama 3, which was launched in March⁽⁹⁸⁾. On human rights compliance and justice sector reforms efforts, the UN's Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations welcomed the force's demonstration of commitment, alongside the governments of Chad and Niger, to investigating and prosecuting serious allegations of sexual violence reportedly committed by members of the eighth Chadian battalion deployed in Niger.

(97) United Nations, 'Issuing Presidential Statement, Security Council Expresses Grave Concern over Dire Situation in West Africa, Sahel, Gulf of Guinea', 17 August 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14605.doc.htm>).

(98) United Nations, 'Sahel Force Vital in Fight against Extremist Armed Groups, Peace Operations Chief Tells Security Council, Calling for Increased Funding', 18 May 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14523.doc.htm>).

If the battle against terrorism is one of the biggest challenges for the country, Chad suffers also from millions of displaced people and inaccessible health care, particularly during the pandemic. In April, the country was hit when President Idriss Déby Itno died while visiting troops on the front line of a fight against rebels situated in the north, a day after he had been re-elected to a sixth term in office. A few days after the deadly attack was condemned by the United Kingdom, France and Sahelian countries, Mahamat Idriss Déby, the son of the deceased president, took power joined by the military. Called a coup by the opposition, civil society groups called for demonstrations against the military while countries relying on Chad's military force pleaded for stability.

The violence, intermingled with inter-communal conflicts, has spread from the north to the centre of the country, which had become the main focus, and then to neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger. Suspected jihadists attacks on the Malian army took the life of six soldiers in January, and of 40 civilians in August near the border with Burkina Faso. The UNSG condemned an attack perpetrated against a temporary operating base of the United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission for Mali (MINUSMA) in central Mali, wounding 27 Togolese peacekeepers and killing one⁽⁹⁹⁾. Still, in central Mali, France's Barkhane Force was also targeted by a massive bomb attack injuring several soldiers. In June, six Malian soldiers were killed in a raid and 15 UN peacekeepers were wounded in a car-bomb attack further north. Another car bomb detonated in central Mali wounding six French soldiers and four civilians at the same time. Jihadists hit the Malian army in September, killing five soldiers.

MINUSMA reported a sharp increase in abductions by armed groups and militias but also recorded violations by State actors, of which the majority were perpetrated by the Malian Defence and Security Forces, including extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of civilians. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, condemned the rampant impunity in the country and called on Malian authorities to 'break the cycle of impunity'

(99) United Nations, 'Secretary-General Condemns Attack against Temporary Base of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali', 13 February 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20580.doc.htm>).

Salafi-Jihadism in Africa

‘Territorial fluidity and tactical shifts combined with flexibility at a strategic level have made Salafi-jihadist groups resilient. [...] Counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel, including Operation Barkhane, the G5 Sahel joint force (FC-G5S), and MINUSMA, face parallel challenges with achieving sustainable wins against violent extremism, as the militants move swiftly and return when the strategic environment allows. In particular, this game of cat and mouse between militant groups and counter-terrorism forces pushes groups to explore new areas and move across borders as tactical responses to more capacitated opponents in the face of military onslaughts.’

Faleg, G., Mustasilta, K., ‘Salafi-jihadism in Africa: A winning strategy’, Brief No 12, Conflict Series, EUISS, June 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/salafi-jihadism-africa>).

and to establish impartial investigations into allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including those committed by the military⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

A major change in the Malian security landscape occurred in 2021, after French President Emmanuel Macron announced on 20 July that after nine years deployed in Mali, the country would withdraw more than 2 000 troops from the Sahel region. As part of the withdrawal process, France handed over its Operation Barkhane Kidal base to UN’s MINUSMA forces and the Malian army on 13 October, and the last three bases in Northern Mali on 14 December. For its part, the EU extended the mandates EUTM Mali until 18 May 2024 with a budget of €133.7 million, of EUCAP Sahel Niger until 30 September 2022 with a budget of €73.7 million and EUCAP Sahel Mali until 31 January 2023 with a budget of €89.1 million⁽¹⁰¹⁾. The EU intended to continue its cooperation with the country, in particular when it came to the provision of security to civilians. Indeed, under the European Peace Facility (EPF) and in conjunction with the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali), the Council of the

(100) United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, ‘Mali: Rampant impunity for human rights violations poses grave risk for protection of civilians – Bachelet’, 29 June 2021 (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/2021/06/mali-rampant-impunity-human-rights-violations-poses-grave-risk-protection-civilians>).

(101) European Parliament, ‘Question for written answer E-003714/2021 to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Rule 138, Subject: European Union strategy in the context of the end of Operation Barkhane’, 22 July 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003714_EN.html).

EU decided to help strengthen the capacities of the Malian Armed Forces, a measure funded to the tune of €24 million over a period of 30 months⁽¹⁰²⁾.

Over five years after its signing, the Algiers Peace Agreement's implementation has proven to be slow, while being rejected by civil society and the Malian group Front. On 24 May, Mali's political situation changed abruptly when the Malian Army led by Vice President Assimi Goïta captured President Bah Ndaw, Prime Minister Moctar Ouane and Minister of Defence Souleymane Doucouré in what was considered as a *coup d'état* by the international community. In response, the UN, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the EU, the United States and the AU issued a joint statement condemning the coup and called for the release of the three politicians, some of them threatening sanctions. Two days later, President Ndaw and Prime Minister Ouane resigned during mediation efforts, giving way to Mali's Constitutional court to name Colonel Assimi Goïta the new interim president. Marking its deep concern and discord, the AU announced it was suspending Mali, and France suspended its joint operation with the Malian military, as well as national advisory missions for a month.

The European Council reaffirmed its call on the Malian transition authorities to fully implement the Transition Charter and its continued support for the stabilisation of G5 Sahel countries, in particular through the Takuba Task Force⁽¹⁰³⁾. Relations between France and Mali were tense at the UNGA when Prime Minister Maiga declared France was unilaterally leaving Mali and withdrawing troops, an accusation French Defence Minister Florence Parly refuted, calling them unacceptable. In November, ECOWAS imposed sanctions against Mali's transitional leaders after they announced they would not hold elections in February, a promise set by the interim government which was supposed to oversee an 18-month transition back to democracy, ending in elections on 27 February 2022. Supporting

(102) Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Mali', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-for-georgia-the-republic-of-moldova-ukraine-and-the-republic-of-mali/>).

(103) European Council, 'Conclusions 24–25 June 2021', 25 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>).

ECOWAS' decision, the EU agreed to establish a dedicated framework for restrictive measures in Mali at the 15 November Foreign Affairs Council, which was adopted on 13 December⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. The EU had, however, set in place a new programme called '*Programme de Soutien à la Transition en République du Mali*', worth €60 million, which aims to support the transitional government in its efforts to return to democratic order, including activities related to security and the electoral process in fragile areas (centre and north of Mali).

In 2021, Niger was also struck by repeated jihadist attacks, as Islamist movements spilled over from neighbouring Mali and Nigeria. Although Operation Barkhane eliminated Adnan Abou Walid al-Sahrawi, the head of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Soumana Boura, leading member of the Islamic State group in Niger, President Mohamed Bazoum deplored the low results Operation Barkhane had in the region, calling it a 'relative failure' and that a partial withdrawal of troops would only have a limited impact. Along the same lines, the representative of Niger at the UNSC thanked the EU, France, the United States, ECOWAS and other partners who have provided support for the joint G5 Sahel force and individual countries of the region, but also regretted that the results from the joint force had only 'been done in the limitations of a low logistical capacity', mentioning delays in disbursement of promised funds and a fast escalating dangerous security environment in the region⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.

In the wider West African region, the humanitarian and human rights situation in Nigeria was a subject of concern for the EU and international partners. Indeed, Boko Haram but also Nigerian security forces kept on committing serious crimes in the north-east such as war crimes and crimes against humanity⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. Strongly condemned by the UNSG, Boko Haram and other criminal gangs were responsible for repeated abductions of schoolgirls, schoolboys and

(104) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 15 November 2021 – Main results', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/15/>).

(105) United Nations, 'Sahel Force Vital in Fight against Extremist Armed Groups, Peace Operations Chief Tells Security Council, Calling for Increased Funding', 18 May 2021 (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14523.doc.htm>).

(106) 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The state of the world's human rights', p. 268, op. cit.

college students during the year, resulting sometimes in the loss of life of some of the students⁽¹⁰⁷⁾. The leader of the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) militant group, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, was pronounced dead in October, marking the third death of a leader of an Islamist group in West Africa in 2021, after Boko Haram's Shekau in May and Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi of ISGS in August.

To face the dire situation in Nigeria, the EU reaffirmed its solidarity through humanitarian projects worth €37 million in the framework of a humanitarian budget of €210 million in 2021 that supported Central Africa and the Sahel⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. In 2021, the EU also provided €57.8 million in humanitarian funding, partly to address food insecurity, and a fraction of the €10 million granted to support vaccination campaigns for the most vulnerable in West and Central Africa went to Nigeria⁽¹⁰⁹⁾. In response to the cholera outbreak affecting the country, the EU supported with €400 000 the NGO The Alliance for International Medical Action's efforts to reduce fatality rates⁽¹¹⁰⁾. In an effort to support the dignified return and sustainable reintegration of migrants unable or unwilling to remain in host countries, the EU and the IOM commissioned a new transit centre for returned Nigerian migrants in Lagos State⁽¹¹¹⁾. The new centre served as a safe temporary accommodation, ensuring access to social support and specialised services to return migrants, unaccompanied children and victims of trafficking.

Among the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for the DRC that required almost €2 billion to meet the needs of vulnerable people, the EU allocated over €70 million to support emergency humanitarian actions in 2021, including provisions of food assistance, shelter, protection, emergency healthcare, improving water, sanitation

(107) United Nations, 'UN chief calls for 'unconditional release' of abducted students in Nigeria', 12 March 2021 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1087292>).

(108) European Commission, 'Sahel and Central Africa: €210 million in EU humanitarian aid', 11 May 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_2421).

(109) European Commission, 'Nigeria Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/nigeria_en).

(110) EEAS, 'The European Union and ALIMA step up their support against the latest cholera outbreak in Nigeria', 3 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nigeria/european-union-and-alima-step-their-support-against-latest-cholera-outbreak_en).

(111) EEAS, 'EU and IOM Provides Safe and Secure Transit Centre for Returned Nigerian Migrants in Lagos State', 12 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nigeria/eu-and-iom-provides-safe-and-secure-transit-centre-returned-nigerian-migrants_en).

and hygiene conditions and ensuring access to schools for children caught in humanitarian crises⁽¹¹²⁾. In April, the EU announced new funding of €54.5 million in humanitarian aid to Africa's Great Lakes region from which €44 million went to the DRC, allocating €4.5 million for education in emergencies and €1.5 million for disaster preparedness⁽¹¹³⁾. In efforts to support pandemic relief, the EU provided the DRC under the COVAX multilateral mechanism with the first batch of 1.7 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines as part of the national immunisation strategy⁽¹¹⁴⁾. In May, the European Commission provided €160 000 in humanitarian funding to assist the displaced and most affected by the volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in the North Kivu province of the DRC⁽¹¹⁵⁾.

The EU was seriously concerned by the political situation in 2021 and decided to maintain existing restrictive measures against 10 individuals in the DRC until 12 December 2022. These individuals were accused of obstructing the electoral processes and perpetrating human rights violations. The Council of the EU also announced that it would continue to closely monitor the situation in the country as it expressed its concerns regarding the UN report highlighting an increase in hate speech and messages in the public space and social media calling for violence and discrimination, often directed against ethnic groups or public figures⁽¹¹⁶⁾.

In the Horn of Africa, the rising conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region in 2021 caused serious concerns for the EU in terms of massive

(112) European Commission, 'Democratic Republic of the Congo Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/democratic-republic-congo_en).

(113) European Commission, 'Humanitarian aid: EU allocates €54.5 million to Africa's Great Lakes region', 13 April 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1667).

(114) EEAS, 'A l'occasion de l'arrivée des premiers vaccins en RDC, l'Union européenne et ses Etats membres avec représentation à Kinshasa réaffirment leur soutien au pays dans la lutte contre la COVID-19', 3 March 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/l%e2%80%99occasion-de-l%e2%80%99arriv%C3%A9-des-premiers-vaccins-en-rdc-l%e2%80%99union-europ%C3%A9enne-et-ses-ets-membres-avec_en).

(115) EEAS, 'European Union brings relief to the victims of Mount Nyiragongo Volcanic eruption in North Kivu, DRC', 28 May 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/european-union-brings-relief-victims-mount-nyiragongo-volcanic-eruption-north-kivu-drc_en).

(116) Council of the European Union, 'Democratic Republic of the Congo: Council extends current sanctions against 10 people for one more year', 9 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/09/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-council-extends-current-sanctions-against-10-people-for-one-more-year/>).

displacement of people, of access to humanitarian assistance, serious human rights violations and the fragile democratic transition process in the country. In Tigray, violence forced close to 3 million people to flee their homes and more than 5 million people were found in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. In the regions of Afar and Amhara, over 1.5 million people were estimated to be in need of urgent assistance⁽¹¹⁷⁾. In October, the HR/VP strongly condemned the decisions taken by the Government of Ethiopia to expel seven UN officials, stressing the risks to further undermining the possibility of bringing relief to millions of Ethiopians in a dire humanitarian situation⁽¹¹⁸⁾. During a Foreign Affairs Council in the same month, the HR/VP deplored that humanitarian aid continued to be blocked and declared the EU might respond with sanctions in view of the UN Human Rights report⁽¹¹⁹⁾.

Despite these concerns, the EU agreed to continue humanitarian relief through 2021 because Tigray had been essentially cut off from external assistance, resulting in critical needs and loss of life⁽¹²⁰⁾. Two flights of the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge to Tigray delivered 15 tons of life-saving cargo and ready-to-use therapeutic food for severely malnourished children in September and October⁽¹²¹⁾. In April, the EU allocated €53.7 million in humanitarian aid to address the most acute needs of people affected by the crisis⁽¹²²⁾. Besides the humanitarian crisis, the Council of the EU expressed serious concerns over possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in

(117) Council of the European Union, 'Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in Ethiopia', 4 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/04/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-situation-in-ethiopia/>).

(118) Council of the European Union, 'Ethiopia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the decision to expel seven United Nations officials', 4 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/04/ethiopia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-decision-to-expel-seven-united-nations-officials/>).

(119) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 18 October 2021 – Main results', 18 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/10/18/>).

(120) European Commission, 'Ethiopia Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/ethiopia_en).

(121) European Commission, 'Ethiopia: new EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight reaches Tigray', 7 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5107).

(122) European Commission, 'EU continues to address humanitarian needs in Ethiopia by allocating over €53 million', 19 April 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1817).

the country, including extra-judicial killings and other serious human rights violations and abuses, calling for these actions to end immediately and for independent investigations on human rights abuses to be launched⁽¹²³⁾. In 2021, and under the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024, the EU took the lead in UN Human Rights fora on initiatives addressing human rights violations in Ethiopia⁽¹²⁴⁾. Indeed, at the request of the EU, and presented by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al-Nashif, a special session at the UNHRC was held in December to discuss the impact of the conflict in Tigray and concluded with a vote in favour of setting up an international rights probe over alleged severe human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia⁽¹²⁵⁾.

The conflict in northern Ethiopia worsened and expanded after a year of fighting, particularly in the Amhara region and following the military advances of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), including aerial bombardments by the Ethiopian Air Force of Mekelle. The EU called for a ceasefire and for all parties to engage in political negotiations, fully supported regional and AU mediation efforts and called for the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Ethiopian grounds⁽¹²⁶⁾.

Regarding relations with neighbouring countries, the EU regretted Ethiopia’s second filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in July, without reaching a prior agreement with downstream partners such as Egypt and Sudan⁽¹²⁷⁾. In July, the Council of the EU Conclusions on Ethiopia declared the EU should focus on ensuring the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Ethiopian

(123) Council of the European Union, ‘EU–Ethiopia relations: EU Council conclusions stress the strategic partnership and EU’s deep concerns about the situation in the Tigray region’, 11 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/11/eu-ethiopia-relations-eu-council-conclusions-stress-the-strategic-partnership-and-eu-deep-concerns-about-the-situation-in-the-tigray-region/>).

(124) Council of the European Union, ‘Human Rights Day: Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the European Union’, 9 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/09/human-rights-day-declaration-by-the-high-representative-josep-borrell-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).

(125) United Nations, ‘Ethiopia crisis: Human Rights Council sets up international rights probe’, 17 December 2021 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108172>).

(126) Ibid.

(127) EEAS, ‘Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: Statement by the Spokesperson on the announcement of the second filling’, 8 July 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam-statement-spokesperson-announcement-second-filling_en).

territory and launching an Ethiopian-led inclusive national dialogue on reconciliation to preserve the integrity and political unity of the country⁽¹²⁸⁾. The EU regretted the impossibility of sending an election observation mission as Ethiopia prepared for the 21 June elections. However, the EU supported the electoral process and the work of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) and commended the efforts deployed by NEBE personnel and the commitment of the Ethiopian government to hold democratic and peaceful elections, designating Abiy Ahmed Prime Minister for the next four years⁽¹²⁹⁾.

In Somalia, a state of emergency was declared in November 2021 because of the drought, increasing the risk of famine and affecting close to 5 million people. In addition, insecurity spread also through reported upsurges of inter-community clashes and conflict over natural resources, particularly water⁽¹³⁰⁾. In response to the drought, the EU allocated €18.5 million in December 2021 and supported the response to the pandemic by promoting the rollout of Covid-19 vaccination campaigns and by launching together with UN-Habitat a €5.3 million project to support preparedness and reduce the negative impacts of Covid-19 by providing cash transfers and improving health, water and sanitation facilities in Mogadishu⁽¹³¹⁾. Additionally, to help protect the livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists in Somalia against the locust outbreak, the EU provided €17.5 million in humanitarian aid. On the occasion of the 'International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation' and with the aim of defending women's rights and creating a safe environment for them, the EU launched the FIRM ACTS Project in the Gedo region in Somalia⁽¹³²⁾. On 22 July 2021, the Council of the EU adopted

(128) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 12 July 2021 – Main results', 12 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/07/12/>).

(129) Council of the European Union, 'Ethiopia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union', 18 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/18/ethiopia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).

(130) European Commission, 'Somalia Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/somalia_en).

(131) EEAS, 'EU and UN-Habitat join forces to improve the response to COVID and other crises in Mogadishu', 3 February 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/somalia/eu-and-un-habitat-join-forces-improve-response-covid-and-other-crises-mogadishu_en).

(132) EEAS, 'The EU launches a new project combatting Sexual Gender Based Violence in Gedo, Somalia', 5 February 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/somalia/eu-launches-new-project-combatting-sexual-gender-based-violence-gedo-somalia_en).

an assistance measure taking the form of a general programme for support to the AU in the second half of 2021, with a budget of €130 million. Support to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army had been approved under this general programme⁽¹³³⁾.

In December, Somalia's international partners, including the EU, expressed serious concerns over the escalating power struggle between the country's president and the prime minister, as soldiers loyal to the Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble circled the presidential palace a day after President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed suspended the prime minister's powers for suspected corruption. The AU, EU, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UN were also concerned over the gravity of the ongoing political stalemate in Somalia as the country struggled to hold long-delayed elections⁽¹³⁴⁾. By the end of 2021, the situation had not been resolved. Though elections for the House of People were scheduled to end on 24 December, by 25 December only 24 of 275 representatives had been elected, sparking concerns for the country's stability.

The EU, among other participants of the Paris Conference to support the Sudanese transition in May 2021, expressed its deep concerns about the tensions in the region, threatening stability and jeopardising development opportunities⁽¹³⁵⁾. Besides being taken off the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, Sudan concluded an agreement with the IMF thanks to significant economic progress. Clearing Sudan's multilateral debt arrears by the EU, France, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, paved the way for the country to re-engage with international financial institutions, receiving nearly \$2 billion in donations in the short term. For instance, France said it would provide Sudan with a \$1.5 billion bridge loan to facilitate the clearance and relieve

(133) Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measure worth €40 million for Mozambique', 19 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/19/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measure-worth-40-million-for-mozambique/>).

(134) United Nations, 'Joint Communiqué on the Situation in Somalia (AU, EU, IGAD and UN)', 10 April 2021 (<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2021-04-10/joint-communiqué-the-situation-somalia-%28au-eu-igad-and-un%29>).

(135) Elysée, 'Chair's Statement – International Conference on Sudan', 17 May 2021 (<https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2021/05/17/chairs-statement-international-conference-on-sudan>).

the country from paying it back the \$5 billion owed. After two attempts in April 2021 by the DRC and Sudan to hold negotiations to reach an accord on the GERD, and after Egypt and Sudan both called on the UNSC to help resolve the dispute, UNSC members backed the AU to be the mediator between Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia of the dispute over the filling and management of the dam.

After a coup attempt in September, condemned by the international community as an attempt to disrupt the country's transition towards democracy, a second coup followed on 25 October⁽¹³⁶⁾. Days later, the World Bank froze aid to Sudan in response to the military's seizure of power and the United Kingdom, United States, EU and other nations published a joint statement reiterating their continued support for the Prime Minister and his cabinet as the legitimate leaders of the transitional government. As anti-military protests were met with a harsh crackdown in the streets of Sudan, HR/VP Borrell stressed the need to return to the path of a civilian-led transition to democracy and welcomed all mediation efforts for a dialogue between all parties, calling on the military to respect human rights and international humanitarian laws⁽¹³⁷⁾. On 21 November, Sudanese Prime Minister Hamdok was freed from house arrest and signed an agreement with the *junta* to form a government of technocrats, in the hope of sparing further bloodshed.

The political gridlock had devastating consequences on the people of Sudan. In 2021, the country had more than 3 million internally displaced people and it hosted over 1.1 million refugees due to regional instability⁽¹³⁸⁾. In late 2021, the EU mobilised €10.1 million in emergency assistance to provide food and financial assistance throughout the country. Moreover, the European Commission provided €100 million in humanitarian assistance to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in Africa, from which €2.8 million supported the vaccination campaign in Sudan.

(136) Council of the European Union, 'Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Sudan', 26 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/26/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-sudan/>).

(137) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 15 November 2021 – Main results', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/15/>).

(138) European Commission, 'Sudan Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/sudan_en).

The EU took positive note of announcements on transitional justice and the nomination of some of the local governments in 2021, one year after the formation of South Sudan's Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity⁽¹³⁹⁾. However, the HR/VP stressed the urgency of a rapid implementation of the Security Arrangements of the Peace Agreement and the importance of laying the foundation for future elections, marking the end of the transitional period. The EU reaffirmed its readiness to deepen its partnership with South Sudan through a possible Mutual Accountability Framework on future cooperation with international partners, and through continued efforts to strengthen the resilience of local populations by providing humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable. In fact, among the €100 million in humanitarian assistance provided by the European Commission to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in Africa, €2.8 million went to South Sudan. The Commission also implemented the decision on the financing of the multi-annual action plan for 2021–2022, which allocated €70 million for the promotion of sustainable development and stability in the country⁽¹⁴⁰⁾.

Furthermore, the EU allocated emergency humanitarian funding worth €2 million in November 2021 for the victims of the unprecedented floods in South Sudan, in which 40 people died and over 750 000 people were affected⁽¹⁴¹⁾. After the Foreign Affairs Council in March, and under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, the Council of the EU imposed sanctions targeting people and entities responsible for torture, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and killings in South Sudan, subjecting them to an asset

(139) Council of the European Union, 'South Sudan: Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the European Union', 4 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/04/south-sudan-declaration-by-the-high-representative-josep-borrell-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).

(140) European Commission, 'Commission implementing decision of 16.12.2021 on the financing of the multi annual action plan in favour of the Republic of South Sudan for 2021–2022', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.gtae.de/resource/blob/788116/d70065dd86ef64cd2f4eb45b83b678ae/PRO20220127788070.PDF>).

(141) European Commission, 'South Sudan: EU provides €2 million in emergency humanitarian funding for victims of floods', 3 November 2021 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/south-sudan-eu-provides-eu2-million-emergency-humanitarian-funding-victims-floods-2021-11-03_en).

freeze and a travel ban to the EU⁽¹⁴²⁾. If South Sudan's Vice-President Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior declared that the country was 'determined to never go back to war' during her speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2021, the UN Special Representative in South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, issued a warning to the UNSC that challenges such as building a national army, election preparation, restrictions on civic space, a logjam in the operationalisation of parliament among others could threaten the country's peace accord⁽¹⁴³⁾.

During a meeting of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly on 30 March, the co-presidents expressed serious concerns over the further escalation of violence in the Northern Province of Mozambique, Cabo Delgado. In response to Mozambique's request for EU assistance to help address the security crisis and the terrorist threat, the Council of the EU adopted a decision in June to set up an EU Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM MOZ) with the aim of training and supporting the country's armed forces⁽¹⁴⁴⁾. In November 2021, under the EPF, the Council of the EU adopted assistance measures to support Mozambique worth €40 million in addition to the first €4 million that was approved in July and which was destined to complement the training of military units with the provision for the most urgently required equipment⁽¹⁴⁵⁾. In 2021, the EU complemented its humanitarian assistance, worth €17.97 million, with three EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flights in June and July 2021, transporting 20 tonnes of humanitarian cargo such as medical equipment, supplementary food and water and sanitation equipment⁽¹⁴⁶⁾. Moreover, the European Commission allocated €2.5 million to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in Mozambique.

(142) 'EU imposes further sanctions over serious violations of human rights around the world', op. cit.

(143) United Nations, 'South Sudan: 'Headwinds' warning from UN mission chief over peace accord', 15 December 2021 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108032>).

(144) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 12 July 2021 – Main results', 12 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/07/12/>).

(145) Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Mali', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-for-georgia-the-republic-of-moldova-ukraine-and-the-republic-of-mali/>).

(146) European Commission, 'Mozambique Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/mozambique_en).

In February, HR/VP Borrell welcomed further opportunities to continue engaging with Zimbabwe and reiterated its ambition for a more constructive relationship. The EU, however, showed concern over the prolonged and multifaceted crisis that had further deepened in the country during the year. It was particularly concerned about the rise in arrests and prosecutions of journalists, opposition actors and individuals expressing dissenting views and the use by high-level officials of speech that could be interpreted as incitement to violence⁽¹⁴⁷⁾. Indeed, human rights groups reported that authorities used Covid-19 regulations to deploy security forces to abduct, assault and torture perceived critics and opposition members, killing at least ten people⁽¹⁴⁸⁾. Reviewing its restrictive measures, the EU decided to renew its arms embargo and to maintain a targeted assets freeze against one company, Zimbabwe Defence Industries.

In 2021, the EU's humanitarian funding to Zimbabwe was worth €12.25 million and the country received €2.05 million of the funding provided by the European Commission supporting vaccination campaigns in the Southern Africa region⁽¹⁴⁹⁾. The third EU-Zimbabwe Political Dialogue held in Harare on 10 June allowed for both parties to exchange views and look for constructive cooperation. The EU expressed its concern over a curtailed democratic space, persistent violations of human rights and limitations to the freedom of expression and the media, and urged the government to conduct investigations and bring perpetrators to justice. The EU acknowledged the government's efforts to stabilise the economy and reaffirmed its readiness to continue to support the Zimbabwean people in its current challenges⁽¹⁵⁰⁾.

(147) Council of the European Union, 'Zimbabwe: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union', 19 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/19/zimbabwe-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).

(148) 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The state of the world's human rights', p.403, op. cit.

(149) European Commission, 'Zimbabwe Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/zimbabwe_en).

(150) EEAS, 'Third EU-Zimbabwe Political Dialogue held in Harare', 11 June 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/zimbabwe/third-eu-zim-political-dialogue-held-harare_en?s=129).

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- > Council of the European Union, 'Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in Ethiopia', 4 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/04/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-situation-in-ethiopia/>).

- > Council of the European Union, 'Joint communiqué of the second African Union – European Union Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting Kigali, Rwanda, 25 – 26 October 2021', 27 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/27/joint-communique-of-the-second-african-union-european-union-foreign-affairs-ministerial-meeting-kigali-rwanda-25-26-october-2021/>).
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- > Council of the European Union, 'Lebanon: EU adopts a framework for targeted sanction', 30 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/30/lebanon-eu-adopts-a-framework-for-targeted-sanctions/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 12 July 2021 – Main results', 12 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/07/12/>).
- > European Council, 'Conclusions, 24–25 June 2021', 25 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-eu-co-conclusions-en.pdf>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 21 June 2021 – Main results', 21 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/06/21/>).

- > Council of the European Union, 'Ethiopia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union', 18 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/18/ethiopia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).
- > European Council, 'EU-Tunisia relations: "For a renewed partnership"', 4 June, 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/04/communique-conjoint-a-la-presse-relations-ue-tunisie-pour-un-partenariat-re-nouveau/>).
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- > Council of the European Union, 'New EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process appointed', 29 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/29/new-eu-special-representative-for-the-middle-east-peace-process-appointed/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on the European Union's Integrated Strategy in the Sahel', 16 April 2021 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7723-2021-INIT/en/pdf>).
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- > Council of the European Union, 'Syria: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the 10 years of the conflict', 14 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/14/syria-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-10-years-of-the-conflict/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Libya: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the approval of the new Government of National Unity', 11 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/11/libya-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-approval-of-the-new-government-of-national-unity/>).

- > Council of the European Union, 'EU-Ethiopia relations: EU Council conclusions stress the strategic partnership and EU's deep concerns about the situation in the Tigray region', 11 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/11/eu-ethiopia-relations-eu-council-conclusions-stress-the-strategic-partnership-and-eu-s-deep-concerns-about-the-situation-in-the-tigray-region/>).
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- > Council of the European Union, 'Iran: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)', 25 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/25/iran-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action-jcpoa/>).
- > European Parliament, 'Resolution of 11 February 2021 on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen (2021/2539(RSP))', 11 February 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0053_EN.pdf).
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- > Council of the European Union, 'Syrian foreign affairs minister added to EU sanctions list', 15 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/15/syrian-foreign-affairs-minister-added-to-eu-sanctions-list/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Iran: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), following latest Iranian activities', 11 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/11/iran-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action-jcpoa-following-latest-iranian-activities/>).

The eastern neighbourhood

Russia

During 2021, relations between the EU and Russia were tainted by human rights issues, political tensions putting the European energy supply sector under a strain and the beginning of a Russian deployment at the border with Ukraine fearing a new war or invasion. The detention of Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader in January was condemned by the EU, and the European Council President Charles Michel, several EU governments, Canada and the United States called for his immediate release⁽¹⁾. The detention of Navalny was also accompanied by a call from the HR/VP Borrell to stop the negative pattern of shrinking space for the opposition, civil society and independent voices in the Russian Federation⁽²⁾. The crackdown on protesters and disproportionate use of force that led to an estimated 5 000 detentions at the mass demonstrations for the release of Navalny was publicly

(1) European Council, 'Video conference of the members of the European Council, 21 January 2021', 21 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2021/01/21/>).

(2) Council of the European Union, 'Russia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the arrest of Alexei Navalny upon his return', 18 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/18/russia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-arrest-of-alexei-navalny-upon-his-return/>).

How does Russia do foresight?

‘Despite these similarities, there are some important specificities. In Russian foresight thinking, the guiding question is often kuda dvizhet-sa mir? – “where is the world going?”’ The main points of analytical focus are the global context and the way that politics shapes economics: geopolitical and geoeconomic developments are front and centre. Analysis therefore addresses the ‘world economy’, ‘world security’ and ‘global governance’, and then the deductions that can be made for Russia: essentially, global trends and shifts and the need to identify Russia’s place in the new world. Many of the assessments simultaneously point to a changing world order, with power moving from West to East, and are pessimistic about what this means for Russia.’

Monaghan, A., ‘How Russia does foresight: Where is the world going?’, Brief No 1, Foresight Series, EUISS, January 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/how-russia-does-foresight>).

deplored by the HR/VP through a tweet he published on 31 January⁽³⁾. Following the imprisonment of Navalny, the European Parliament also demanded stricter sanctions against Russia⁽⁴⁾.

Relations between EU and Russia were at their lowest during Borrell’s visit to the Kremlin at the beginning of February. Indeed, although HR/VP Borrell admitted the relationship was going through a rough patch, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declared the EU as an ‘unreliable partner’. During the same visit, Lavrov also announced that a number of diplomats from Germany, Poland and Sweden had been declared *persona non grata* and were being expelled for taking part in ‘illegal demonstrations’ on 23 January 2021 in support of jailed Alexei Navalny, a move condemned by the HR/VP, several European leaders and the European Parliament⁽⁵⁾. The Foreign Affairs Council on 22 February was a turning point as

(3) Tweet from Josep Borrell Fontelles’ official account, published on 31 January 2021 (<https://twitter.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1355922398814605312?s=20&t=-ZejsnqEP-bbTnhjLMpXQ>).

(4) European Parliament, ‘Parliament demands significantly tighter EU sanctions against Russia’, 21 January 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210119IPR95904/parliament-demands-significantly-tighter-eu-sanctions-against-russia>).

(5) European Parliament, ‘EU–Russia relations: MEPs condemn the decision by the Russian authorities to expel three EU diplomats’, 8 February 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210208IPR97332/meps-condemn-the-decision-by-the-russian-authorities-to-expel-three-eu-diplomats>).

the HR/VP announced the EU would proceed to impose restrictive measures against the people responsible for Navalny's arrest and persecution, using for the first time the EU Global Human Rights Regime⁽⁶⁾. On 2 March, the EU sanctioned four Russian individuals responsible for serious human rights violations by imposing on them a travel ban and asset freeze⁽⁷⁾.

Bilateral relations between the EU and Russia took another hit when the Czech Republic expelled 18 Russian diplomats over espionage allegations and Moscow retaliated by doing the same to 20 Czech embassy staff. After a call from Czech Interior Minister Jan Hamacek for partners in the EU and NATO to do the same in solidarity, Slovakia, Romania and the Baltic states expelled a total of eight Russian diplomats. At the end of the month, Russia barred eight European officials from entering the country, responding to EU restrictive measures over the Navalny issue, including European Commission Vice-President for values and transparency Vera Jourová and the former European Parliament President, the late David Sassoli.

Tensions regarding Russia's military build-up in the illegally-annexed Crimea and on the Ukrainian border was discussed at the informal meeting of EU defence ministers on 6 May, reaffirming the EU's position that Russia must de-escalate and reduce tensions, taking into account the full implementation of the Minsk agreements for a lasting political solution⁽⁸⁾. Later that month, Russia blocked some European flights from its airspace in a stalemate over the arrest of a Belarusian journalist and dissident, Roman Protasevich and his girlfriend, Sofia Sapega on 23 May. After the European Council Summit on 24–25 June, EU leaders failed to agree on France and Germany's proposal to hold a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, after meeting resistance from the

(6) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 22 February 2021 – Main Results', 22 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/02/22/>).

(7) Council of the European Union, 'Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime: EU sanctions four people responsible for serious human rights violations in Russia', 2 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/02/global-human-rights-sanctions-regime-eu-sanctions-four-people-responsible-for-serious-human-rights-violations-in-russia/>).

(8) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 6 May 2021 – Main results', 6 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/05/06/>).

Russia and the challenge of climate change

‘The Russian leadership regards the climate domain as another arena of geopolitical competition, where powers vie for political influence and economic advantages. What draws Russian attention are the side effects of the EU’s efforts to reduce the carbon footprint. Russian officials interpret the EU’s decarbonisation plans, in particular the Carbon Border Mechanism, as another form of protectionism entailing negative effects for Russian companies (54). It is estimated that the EU’s carbon tax will affect 42 % of Russian exports and will cost Russian companies initially up to €5 billion annually and nearly €8 billion by 2030 (55). After doing this arithmetic, Russia takes Europe’s overtures to cooperate on climate change with a grain of salt. In Moscow’s view, the Green Deal and related measures are tools to promote EU countries’ competitiveness, achievable only through a ‘zero-sum game’ in relations with external partners.’

Secrieru, S. and Prandin, F., ‘Melting ice, frozen heart: Russia’s posture on climate change and decarbonisation’, *Brief* No 19, EUISS, September 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/melting-ice-frozen-heart>).

Baltic states and Poland. However, the leaders called the European Commission and HR/VP Borrell ‘to present options for additional restrictive measures, including economic sanctions’⁽⁹⁾.

The regional and local elections that took place on 17–19 September, retaining Russia’s ruling United Russia party’s parliamentary majority, were largely criticised by the EU. Indeed, the HR/VP regretted Russia’s decision to ‘severely restrict the size and format of an international OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission which prevented its deployment’⁽¹⁰⁾. The EU also reiterated its deep concerns about the increased crackdown on opposition politicians, civil society organisations and independent media outlets and journalists. Days later, the ECHR found that Russia was responsible for the assassination of ex-KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died

(9) European Council, ‘European Council meeting (24 and 25 June 2021) – Conclusions’, 25 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>).

(10) Council of the European Union, ‘Russia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the State Duma, regional and local elections’, 20 September 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/20/russia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-state-duma-regional-and-local-elections/>).

through poisoning in 2006; a conclusion the Kremlin dismissed saying the statement was unfounded.

In October, Alexei Navalny was awarded the European Parliament's 2021 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought because of his consistent attempt at restoring the freedom of choice to the Russian people, thus fighting for human rights and fundamental freedoms in his country, while still being imprisoned⁽¹¹⁾. Later that month, the UN urged the Central African Republic to cut ties with Russia's Wagner Group, which was accused of human rights abuses on civilians, peacekeepers, journalists, aid workers and minorities⁽¹²⁾. EU sanctions followed against the Wagner Group as well as eight individuals and three entities connected to it⁽¹³⁾. At the end of 2021, Russia's Supreme Court ordered the closure of Memorial International, Russia's most prominent human rights group, after President Putin accused it of supporting and advocating for terrorist and extremist organisations.

From November until the end of 2021, two security events unfolded, pitting the EU and Russia against each other. First, the EU accused Belarus of mounting a 'hybrid attack' by instrumentalising migrants for political purposes at the border with Poland. Russia dispatched two nuclear-capable strategic bombers to patrol Belarusian space in a show of support for Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and condemned the EU for imposing sanctions on Belarus over the crisis. Russia vowed to continue gas supplies to the EU despite the Belarusian regime threatening to cut off deliveries in response to possible EU sanctions. Although Russia had already threatened the Ukrainian border earlier in the year, this second crisis developed a new dimension in which NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned Russia that it was standing beside

(11) European Parliament, 'Alexei Navalny awarded the European Parliament's 2021 Sakharov Prize', 20 October 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/2021014IPR14915/alexei-navalny-awarded-the-european-parliament-s-2021-sakharov-prize>).

(12) ReliefWeb, 'CAR: Russian Wagner Group harassing and intimidating civilians – UN experts', 27 October 2021 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/car-russian-wagner-group-harassing-and-intimidating-civilians-un>).

(13) Council of the European Union, 'EU imposes restrictive measures against the Wagner Group', 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/13/eu-imposes-restrictive-measures-against-the-wagner-group/>).

Ukraine after it spotted an unusual and large concentration of Russian troops on Ukraine's borders.

Starting in December 2021, Russia claimed to be concerned by the aggressive rhetoric from Ukraine and an increase in 'provocative' actions, meaning the probability of conflict remained high. During the Foreign Affairs Council on 13 December 2021, the EU reiterated its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and warned any aggression against Ukraine would mean political and economic sanctions against Russia⁽¹⁴⁾. The European Parliament also adopted a resolution condemning the military build-up and demanded the EU take credible steps to reduce its dependence on Russian energy imports while showing stronger energy solidarity with Ukraine, particularly by urging the suspension of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline⁽¹⁵⁾. The European Council of 16 December showed that EU leaders were ready to consider a new set of sanctions which could include banning EU transactions with private Russian banks, cutting Russian banks from the SWIFT network and targeting Russian oligarchs. In December 2021, Russia demanded – as a form of blackmail – security guarantees from the EU and NATO if it was to avoid conflict with Ukraine.

Eastern Partnership

Although 2021 saw deteriorating relations between the EU and Belarus, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) remained high on the EU's agenda. This agenda, based on the five long-term objectives as set out in the Joint Communication and Council Conclusions on the EaP policy beyond 2020, was discussed by the European Commission and HR/VP Borrell in July in view of the 6th Eastern Partnership Summit that was held in December 2021. Underpinned by a €2.3

(14) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 13 December 2021 – Main results', 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/12/13/>).

(15) European Parliament, 'Russia must immediately withdraw its forces threatening Ukraine', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211210IPR19223/russia-must-immediately-withdraw-its-forces-threatening-ukraine>).

billion Economic and Investment Plan in grants, the comprehensive agenda aimed at increasing trade, growth and jobs, investing in connectivity, strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, supporting the green and digital transitions, and promoting fair, gender-equal and inclusive societies⁽¹⁶⁾.

During the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 October 2021, Ministers agreed that in the face of the difficult geopolitical context in the region, the EU would keep pushing for fundamental values and remain focused on a sustainable and inclusive long-term socio-economic recovery, including support with vaccines⁽¹⁷⁾. The EaP Foreign Ministers meeting in November brought together all eastern partners except Belarus. The EU however, reaffirmed its strong commitment to the region and touched on the implementation of the new EU-EaP agenda⁽¹⁸⁾.

The 6th Eastern Partnership Summit on 15 December in Brussels was again marked by the decision by Belarus to suspend its participation in the EaP. However, the EU recalled the need for continuous cooperation with the people of Belarus. In their joint declaration, the leaders stressed that their partnership remained firmly based on common fundamental values, mutual interests and shared ownership, responsibility, inclusivity, differentiation and mutual accountability⁽¹⁹⁾. The EU expressed its deep concern about the destabilisation and violations of the principles of international law in the region that were posing a threat to peace, security and stability, and called for efforts to promote a peaceful settlement of unresolved conflicts. Although it condemned the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by the Belarusian authorities, the EU insisted it would continue to engage with and support Belarusian citizens, civil society and independent media. The leaders pledged to enhance

(16) European Commission, 'Eastern Partnership: a renewed agenda for recovery, resilience and reform underpinned by an Economic and Investment plan', 2 July 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3367).

(17) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 18 October 2021 – Main results', 18 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/10/18/>).

(18) Council of the European Union, 'Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting, 15 November 2021 – Main results', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2021/11/15/>).

(19) European Council, 'Eastern Partnership summit, 15 December 2021', 15 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2021/12/15/>).

resilience, focusing notably on promoting gradual convergence in the area of foreign and security policy and on the fight against disinformation and information manipulation.

In terms of solidarity, €75 million were made available to support the vaccination process and access to vaccines. Leaders welcomed the mutual recognition of Covid-19 digital certificates by Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, allowing safer travel to and from the EU. The leaders also called for stronger joint ownership and emphasised the need to further engage with civil society and promote gender equality, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. Additional initiatives in support of the EaP showed the will of the EU to boost cooperation with eastern partners. A financing agreement for €60 million in budget support for Moldova was signed to help the country cope with the impact of the severe gas crisis⁽²⁰⁾. Likewise, the European Commission mobilised a €30 million assistance package to support the people of Belarus, focusing on providing support to young people, independent media, SMEs in exile and cultural actors, both inside and outside the country⁽²¹⁾.

Different crises on different fronts strained relations between the EU and Belarus. First, the crackdown against human rights defenders, civil society and journalists set the HR/VP Borrell to consider the adoption of further sanctions on the regime as part of the conclusions adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 February. Indeed, the EU did not recognise the results of the 9 August 2020 presidential elections and called on Belarus to engage in a serious political process resulting in free and fair elections.

Second, on 23 May, the EU condemned the Belarusian government for redirecting a plane to Minsk, in which Belarus journalist and dissident Roman Protasevich and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega were meant to fly to Vilnius⁽²²⁾. In response, EU leaders agreed to ban Belarusian planes from flying over EU airspace or using EU airports.

(20) European Commission, 'The EU and the Republic of Moldova strengthen engagement and cooperation on reforms', 28 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5601).

(21) European Commission, 'EU further steps up its support to the people of Belarus', 12 December 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_6794).

(22) European Parliament, '#FreeRomanProtasevich: EU calls for release of Belarus journalist', 28 May 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20210527STO04907/freeromanprotasevich-eu-calls-for-release-of-journalist>).

It also called on the International Civil Aviation Organization to urgently investigate the incident, invited the Council of the EU to adopt stronger sanctions against regime officials and those who took part in the forced landing and abduction, and invited the adoption of further targeted economic sanctions⁽²³⁾. In coordination with Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, the EU adopted sanctions in June against those responsible for the escalation of serious human rights violations and violent repression of civil society, democratic opposition and journalists in Belarus. The restrictive measures were imposed on 78 Belarusian individuals and eight entities. Moreover, seven individuals and one entity in connection to the forced landing flight in Minsk were also subjected to this new round of sanctions. The EU reiterated its readiness to support a future democratic Belarus with a comprehensive plan of economic support of up to €3 billion⁽²⁴⁾.

Third, Belarus-EU relations severely deteriorated from July onwards. The EU condemned Belarus' instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees in order to advance political goals at the border with Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.⁽²⁵⁾ Accusing Belarus of mounting a hybrid attack, the EU broadened its scope for sanctions, allowing it 'to target individuals and entities organising or contributing to activities by the Lukashenko regime that facilitate illegal crossing of the EU's external borders'⁽²⁶⁾. The HR/VP commended efforts of countries of origin and transit such as Iraq, who helped stem the actions of the Belarusian regime. In November, after months of stalemate and continued sanctions against the regime, such as the decision by the Council of the EU to suspend visa facilitation provisions

(23) European Council, 'Conclusions 24–25 May 2021', 25 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49791/2425-05-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>).

(24) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 21 June 2021 – Main results', 21 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/06/21/>).

(25) Council of the European Union, 'Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by the regime', 30 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/30/belarus-declaration-of-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-instrumentalisation-of-migrants-and-refugees-by-the-regime/>).

(26) Council of the European Union, 'Belarus: EU broadens scope for sanctions to tackle hybrid attacks and instrumentalisation of migrants', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/15/belarus-eu-broadens-scope-for-sanctions-to-tackle-hybrid-attacks-and-instrumentalisation-of-migrants/>).

for officials of the Belarus regime, Belarus warned it would cut gas supply to the EU if it continued taking new restrictive measures⁽²⁷⁾.

Progress was seen on the EU side as Turkey barred citizens of three Middle Eastern countries (Syrians, Iraqis and Yemenis) from flying to Minsk, and Russia dismissed Belarus' threat to cut off gas supply to Europe. The 15 November Foreign Affairs Council saw the adoption of a fifth package of sanctions and an agreement to expand the scope of the sanctions regime on Belarus. This made it possible for the EU to sanction more individuals over their involvement in the organisation of the flights of people from several countries going to Belarus and from there to the EU's borders⁽²⁸⁾. In December, the European Council reiterated its condemnation of Belarus' hybrid attack and the humanitarian crisis it had created. The European Council stressed it would continue to counter the attack with a determined response, meaning it would promptly implement the 5th package of restrictive measures and be prepared to adopt further measures as necessary, stepping up humanitarian support and supporting the return of migrants from Belarus whilst effectively protecting its external borders⁽²⁹⁾. The Council also reiterated its call for the immediate release of political prisoners, the end of civil society and independent media repression and holding free and fair elections.

Ukraine's security situation was high on the EU agenda in 2021, particularly regarding the Russian military standoff at the border with the country. Although a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine decreased violence and civilian casualties since July 2020, the overall situation in February remained fragile and UN Under-Secretary General Rosemary DiCarlo expressed her concern over the increase in security incidents along the line separating government-controlled

(27) Council of the European Union, 'Belarus: Council suspends visa facilitation provisions for officials of the Belarus regime', 9 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/09/belarus-council-suspends-visa-facilitation-provisions-for-officials-of-the-belarus-regime/>).

(28) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 15 November 2021 – Main results', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/15/>).

(29) European Council, 'Council Conclusions 16 December 2021', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53575/20211216-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>).

territory and regions held by separatists⁽³⁰⁾. In a European Parliament report welcoming progress on Ukraine's EU association agenda, Parliamentarians reiterated the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence and sovereignty. They also called for sanctions on the Russian government, albeit urging political actors to renew their commitment to the reforms Ukraine must carry out to avoid any backsliding on fulfilled commitments under the Association Agreement⁽³¹⁾. Furthermore, following the 7th Association Council meeting, the Council reconfirmed the launch of the cyber dialogue in 2021 and both sides noted the importance of enhancing cooperation in the area of CSDP and alignment with the CFSP, welcoming Ukraine's participation in EUFOR Althea⁽³²⁾.

In April 2021, in an informal video conference of foreign affairs ministers, HR/VP Borrell expressed concerns over the Russian military build-up at the Ukrainian border and in Crimea, and urged Ukraine for a restrained response and Russia to de-escalate and defuse tensions⁽³³⁾. Days later, Russia began withdrawing troops from the Ukrainian border, a decision welcomed by Ukraine and NATO, but they said a close monitoring of the situation would still be carried out. In July, the Council of the EU decided to extend restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol until 23 June 2022⁽³⁴⁾. The EU's unwavering stance on Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty of illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol was reaffirmed by President Charles

(30) United Nations, 'UN political affairs chief warns against 'backsliding' in Ukraine', 11 February 2021 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/02/1084432>).

(31) European Parliament, 'Ukraine: MEPs urge the authorities to step up the fight against corruption', 11 February 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/2021/02/11/PR97124/ukraine-meeps-urge-the-authorities-to-step-up-the-fight-against-corruption>).

(32) Council of the European Union, 'Joint press release following the 7th Association Council meeting between the EU and Ukraine', 11 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/11/joint-press-statement-following-the-7th-association-council-meeting-between-the-eu-and-ukraine/>).

(33) Council of the European Union, 'Informal video conference of foreign affairs ministers, 19 April 2021', 19 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/04/19/>).

(34) Council of the European Union, 'Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol', 27 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/27/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-alignment-of-certain-countries-concerning-restrictive-measures-in-response-to-the-illegal-annexation-of-crimea-and-sevastopol/>).

Michel at the International Crimea Platform Summit in August⁽³⁵⁾. In September, the Council prolonged for a further six months the sanctions targeting those responsible for undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, meaning the sanctions would continue to apply to 177 individuals and 48 entities⁽³⁶⁾. These measures were imposed on an additional 8 individuals, including law enforcement officials responsible for enforcing Russian law in the illegally-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol⁽³⁷⁾.

The 23rd EU-Ukraine Summit in October reaffirmed the strong commitment to further strengthening the political association and economic integration of Ukraine with the EU, including through continued close cooperation to strengthen the rule of law, advance reforms, foster sustainable economic growth, support the green and digital transitions and increase resilience⁽³⁸⁾. At the end of the month, the European Commission disbursed the second and final tranche of €600 million under Ukraine's Macro-Financial Assistance programme aiming to help Ukraine, along with nine other enlargement and neighbourhood partners, limit the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic⁽³⁹⁾. Over the 2014–2021 period, the EU has provided assistance to Ukraine under three pillars: EU emergency and early recovery assistance (€1.7 billion), EU Member States

(35) European Council, 'Speech by President Charles Michel at the inaugural session of the International Crimea Platform Summit', 23 August 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/23/speech-by-president-charles-michel-at-the-inaugural-session-of-the-international-crimea-platform-summit/>).

(36) Council of the European Union, 'Ukraine: EU sanctions over territorial integrity prolonged for a further six months', 10 September 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/10/ukraine-eu-sanctions-over-territorial-integrity-prolonged-for-a-further-six-months/>).

(37) Council of the European Union, 'Ukraine: EU sanctions eight more people over territorial integrity', 11 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/11/ukraine-eu-sanctions-eight-more-people-over-territorial-integrity/>).

(38) Council of the European Union, 'Joint statement following the 23rd EU-Ukraine Summit, 12 October 2021', 12 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/12/joint-statement-following-the-23rd-eu-ukraine-summit-12-october-2021/>).

(39) European Commission, 'Ukraine - Macro-financial assistance' (https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/international-economic-relations/enlargement-and-neighbouring-countries/neighbouring-countries-eu/neighbourhood-countries/ukraine_en#).

humanitarian aid (€350 million) and European Commission humanitarian aid (€194 million)⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Under the EPF, and in order to enhance the overall resilience of Ukraine and help strengthen the capacities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the Council of the EU decided to finance military medical units including field hospitals, engineering, mobility and logistics units, and support on cyber — a measure funded to the tune of €31 million over a period of 36 months⁽⁴¹⁾. This was needed as from November until the end of 2021, tensions mounted between Ukraine and Russia as military drills on both sides were staged at the Ukrainian eastern border. The European Council, the United States and the G7 stressed that they would impose biting sanctions on Russia if it did not retract troops from the Ukrainian border, while Russia demanded no further expansion eastward by NATO forces and an effective Russian veto on future NATO membership for Ukraine⁽⁴²⁾. Towards the end of December, Russia announced a withdrawal of 10 000 troops claiming the end of drills near the Ukrainian border.

On 11 January 2021, talks hosted by Russia brought Armenia and Azerbaijan together for the first time since the war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region broke out from September to November last year. Later in the month, the tripartite group adopted a joint statement which reaffirmed its commitment to implement the ceasefire, the termination of all types of military operations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone and unblocking all economic and transport links in the region, in view of implementing the 9 November 2020 Statement and the 11 January 2021 Statement⁽⁴³⁾. The 44-day long conflict in 2020 resulted in thousands of casualties, including civilian deaths and injuries. The EU proceeded to

(40) European Commission, 'Ukraine – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022, 6 May 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/ukraine_en).

(41) Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Mali', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-for-georgia-the-republic-of-moldova-ukraine-and-the-republic-of-mali/>).

(42) European Council, 'Conclusions, 16 December 2021', op. cit.

(43) The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 'Armenian Prime Minister, Russian President, Azerbaijani President adopt joint statement', 26 February 2021 (<https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2021/11/26/Nikol-Pashinyan-Sochi/>).

In Russia's hands

[...]he most important factor shaping the long-term outlook for the region will be the policies of the Russian Federation. If Baku does not object to the continued presence of the Russian forces, nor does Moscow decide to withdraw its forces, then the *de facto* independence of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan will be prolonged for an additional five years. However, if Baku objects to the extension, but Russia decides to keep its forces on Azerbaijani soil regardless, the Azeri leadership will hardly be able to push out the Russian troops. Legal tools are unlikely to be effective, nor would military means bring a solution, regardless of support from Turkey.

Hence, Moscow is clearly a winner of the situation created by the ceasefire agreement, because its regional position is now much stronger than it was before the war. Russia's open disregard of the numerical and armament-related limitations on the deployment of a peacekeeping contingent, as well as the considerable autonomy with which Russian forces operate within Nagorno-Karabakh, already indicate that Moscow is confident about having the upper hand versus the Baku leadership.⁴⁴

Rácz, A., 'In Russia's hands: Nagorno-Karabakh after the ceasefire agreement', Brief No 8, Conflict Series, EUISS, April 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/russias-hands>).

respond to the impact of the conflict with €6.9 million in humanitarian support and it mobilised an additional contribution of €10 million in humanitarian relief. The European Commission estimated that 100 000 people needed assistance to overcome the shock of the 6-week long conflict⁽⁴⁴⁾.

After months of political unrest in Armenia, Prime Minister Pashinyan announced his resignation to enable parliamentary elections on 20 June 2021. In the meantime, it accused Azerbaijan troops of crossing the southern border and trying to claim it as Azeri territory. President Charles Michel's visit to Armenia on 17 July showed a political will to strengthen the Armenia-EU partnership. Michel congratulated Prime Minister Pashinyan on winning the elections and confirmed the EU's decision to mobilise a financial package of €2.6 billion to support Armenia's priorities such as infrastructure, ambitions in the digital, climate and transport fields, or efforts to

(44) European Commission, 'Armenia and Azerbaijan – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/armenia-and-azerbaijan_en).

Appeasement and autonomy

‘[...]llowing Armenia to lose Karabakh would mean losing Armenia as an ally. Therefore, Russia supplied Armenia with weapons during the war, but, as some experts argue, only with enough to prevent complete defeat, in order to be able to subsequently deploy its peace-keepers and exert more influence over Armenia. The inception of the war and, moreover, the defeat of Armenia by the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance, was not in Russia’s regional interests and constitutes a major setback for Russia in the context of the balance between the capabilities of regional powers. In spite of the strategic loss, Russia has won a long-desired tactical victory by having a direct military say in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.’

Sukiasyan, N., ‘Appeasement and autonomy: Armenian-Russian relations from revolution to war’, *Brief* No 2, Geopolitical Series, EUISS, January 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/appeasement-and-autonomy>).

pursue the agenda of democratic reforms to enhance governance⁽⁴⁵⁾. On 18 July, President Michel met with the Azeri Prime Minister in Baku and expressed the EU’s willingness to make a joint commitment to innovation in the technological sector and to a dialogue on economic matters in line with climate change and the digital revolution, both EU’s priorities in terms of economic development⁽⁴⁶⁾. On the Azerbaijan and Armenia conflict, the EU thanked both parties’ commitments to the mapping of mines and on the issue of prisoners, and expressed its readiness to mobilise European experts and resources on the question of border demarcation.

In December 2021, the trilateral meeting hosted by European Council President Charles Michel with Armenian and Azeri leaders, led to the EU’s commitment to work closely with both countries to build a South Caucasus region that is secure and stable. President Michel commended the steps taken by both leaders to de-escalate recent tensions along the border, particularly the establishment of

(45) European Council, ‘Speech by President Charles Michel after his meeting with Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan’, 17 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/17/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-after-his-meeting-with-the-acting-prime-minister-nikol-pashinyan-in-yerevan/>).

(46) European Council, ‘Remarks by President Charles Michel after his meeting in Baku with the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev’, 18 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/18/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-after-his-meeting-with-azerbaijan-president-ilham-aliyev-in-baku/>).

a direct line of communication between the Ministers of Defence of both countries⁽⁴⁷⁾. The EU leader emphasised the importance of resolving lingering humanitarian issues such as the release of detainees, and promised it would continue to support confidence building measures between the two countries. The leaders also discussed prospective trade and economic partnerships as well as the importance of restoring communications infrastructure, the restoration of railway lines for which the EU expressed its readiness to support the development of these links in line with its Economic and Investment Plan.

In Moldova, 2021 started with an exchange in visits by Moldovan President Maia Sandu to Brussels and President Charles Michel's visit to Chisinau. The EU showed its political willingness to remain a reliable partner to Moldova through trade and investment partnerships, but also in the mobilisation of resources to help Moldova fight the Covid-19 crisis and deal with its socio-economic impact. To this effect, Moldova benefitted from €50 million in EU emergency Macro-Financial Assistance and the same sum would be granted as soon as agreed conditions were fulfilled⁽⁴⁸⁾. The country also benefited from vaccine distribution under the COVAX Facility. On 2 June, the European Commission announced an Economic Recovery Plan for Moldova that would mobilise up to €600 million over the next three years to promote investments in the country and support its recovery from the Covid-19 crisis⁽⁴⁹⁾.

President Michel also stated that the opportunity to enhance EU-Moldova relations depended on Moldovan partners' political will, referring to the EU's support being linked to strict conditionality on the rule of law and democratic standards. The EU urged Moldova to hold early elections able to deliver a Parliament capable

(47) Council of the European Union, 'Statement of President Charles Michel following the trilateral meeting with President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan', 14 December 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/DELEGATIONS/DSCA/DV/2021/12-16/03a_CharlesMichelstatementfollowingthetrilateralmeeting_14December2021_EN.pdf).

(48) European Council, 'Remarks by President Charles Michel at the press conference with President Maia Sandu in Chisinau', 28 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/28/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-at-the-press-conference-with-president-maia-sandu-in-chisinau/>).

(49) EEAS, 'EU-Moldova relations – factsheet', 16 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-moldova-relations-factsheet_en).

of supporting the President's reforms. On human rights, no progress was made in the case of the abduction and forcible return of seven Turkish nationals by Moldovan security services in 2018. The EU warned that the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers was considering the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights' decision on this case, firmly reiterating the need to ensure effective oversight and accountability of the security services. Moldova committed in October 2021 to review past judicial decisions by adopting legislation intended to increase the accountability of its security services.

The 6th EU–Moldova Association Council on 28 October showed a strengthened engagement and cooperation on reforms between the two parties. Through their Joint Communication, the EU and Moldova reconfirmed their strong partnership through a series of concrete actions. These included strengthened cooperation on energy by providing €60 million to Moldova to help it face the gas supply crisis, and enhanced ties in foreign and security policy by launching a High-Level Political and Security Dialogue to discuss how joint initiatives could enhance regional security and cooperation. It will also promote further alignment of Moldova with CFSP declarations and decisions⁽⁵⁰⁾. Furthermore, in order to help build the capacities of the Military Medical Service (MMS) and the Engineering Battalion (EB) of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova, the Council of the EU decided in December to finance the provision of medical equipment for the Moldovan MMS and of explosive ordnance disposal equipment for the EB. The measure under the EPF is worth €7 million and is meant to run over a period of 36 months⁽⁵¹⁾.

The visit of European Council President Charles Michel set the tone for 2021 for Georgia, by reiterating the Union's commitment

(50) European Commission, 'The EU and the Republic of Moldova strengthen engagement and cooperation on reforms', 28 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_5601).

(51) Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Mali', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-for-georgia-the-republic-of-moldova-ukraine-and-the-republic-of-mali/>).

to the EaP partnership including the country⁽⁵²⁾. However, the EU showed concern for the deepening political crisis in Georgia and called for all parties involved, government and opposition, to work towards a de-escalation of the situation and find common ground. During President Michel's visit to the South Caucasus from 17 to 19 July for the Batumi International Conference, he met with President Salome Zourabichvili and Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, as well as with leaders of the parliamentary opposition. He urged them to implement the 19 April agreement as it remained the best guarantee to advance Georgia's democratic agenda⁽⁵³⁾. Michel did stress the importance of consolidating the rule of law through political and judicial reforms, as the latter is a condition for the disbursement of EU macro-financial assistance to Georgia⁽⁵⁴⁾. The rights of minorities were also mentioned as fundamental rights and freedoms play a central role in EU-Georgia relations. The 5 July violence against Tbilisi Pride organisers, activists and journalists were particularly deplored and condemned by the European Parliament⁽⁵⁵⁾.

At the end of July 2021, the European Parliament and European Council President Michel regretted the decision of the ruling Georgian Dream Party to withdraw unilaterally from the EU-brokered 19 April agreement and took note of its continued non-signature by the United National Movement⁽⁵⁶⁾. The EU called on Georgian Dream to annul its decision and urged all the political parties to see that the agreement is implemented thoroughly. The 2 October local elections were nonetheless commended by the EU and it recognised the

(52) European Council, 'Press statement from President Charles Michel following his meeting with the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili', 1 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/01/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-at-the-press-conference-with-president-salome-zourabichvili-in-tbilisi/>).

(53) European Council, 'President Michel meets Eastern Partnership leaders during South Caucasus visit', 19 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/president/news/2021/07/19/20210718-president-michel-visits-south-caucasus/>).

(54) European Council, 'Statement by President Charles Michel on developments in Georgia', 19 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/19/statement-by-president-charles-michel-on-developments-in-georgia/>).

(55) European Parliament, 'Joint statement on the cancellation of the Tbilisi Pride', 6 July 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/237780/Joint%20statement%20on%20the%20cancellation%20of%20the%20Tbilisi%20Pride.pdf>).

(56) European Parliament, 'Joint statement on Georgian Dream's decision to withdraw unilaterally from the 19 April agreement', 29 July 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/238534/Joint%20Statement%20on%20Georgian%20Dream%20's%20decision%20to%20withdraw%20unilaterally%20from%20the%2019%20April%20agreement.pdf>).

improved legal framework despite the polarised political environment and epidemiological situation in the country. However, according to the recommendations from the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with South Caucasus, together with the OSCE/ODIHR's International Elections Observation Mission, the pre-electoral environment did not provide a level-playing field for all parties and candidates, diverting attention from local to national issues. Observers also urged the country to improve the electoral legal framework in view of future elections, especially regarding campaign financing, disputes resolution and the misuse of public resources as well as the underrepresentation of women in politics⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Finally, the EU continued to support Georgia with its response to the pandemic and its security. With regard to Covid-19, the EU mobilised a tailor-made response package specifically for Georgia worth over €183 million in grants and a €75 million Macro-Financial Assistance package⁽⁵⁸⁾. The EU also reiterated its firm support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly regarding the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Under the EPF, and in order to help strengthen the capacities of the Georgian Defence Forces, the Council of the EU decided in December 2021 to provide non-lethal medical engineering equipment and civilian-type mobility assets, which amounted to some €12.75 million over a period of 36 months⁽⁵⁹⁾.

(57) European Parliament, 'Joint statement on the first round of the local elections in Georgia', 5 October 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/240292/Joint%20statement%20on%20the%20first%20round%20of%20the%20local%20elections%20in%20Georgia.pdf>).

(58) EEAS, 'EU-Georgia relations – factsheet', 16 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-georgia-relations-factsheet_en).

(59) Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Mali', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-for-georgia-the-republic-of-moldova-ukraine-and-the-republic-of-mali/>).

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- > Council of the European Union, 'Russia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the State Duma, regional and local elections', 20 September 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/20/russia-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-state-duma-regional-and-local-elections/>).

- > Council of the European Union, 'Joint statement following the 23rd EU-Ukraine Summit, 12 October 2021', 12 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/12/joint-statement-following-the-23rd-eu-ukraine-summit-12-october-2021/>).
- > European Commission, 'The EU and the Republic of Moldova strengthen engagement and cooperation on reforms', 28 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_5601).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 15 November 2021 – Main results', 15 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/15/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Mali', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-for-georgia-the-republic-of-moldova-ukraine-and-the-republic-of-mali/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Statement of President Charles Michel following the trilateral meeting with President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan', 14 December 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/DELEGATIONS/DSCA/DV/2021/12-16/03a_CharlesMichelstatementfollowingthetrialateralmeeting_14December2021_EN.pdf).
- > European Council, 'Eastern Partnership summit, 15 December 2021', 15 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2021/12/15/>).
- > European Council, 'Conclusions, 16 December 2021', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53575/20211216-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>).

Asia

China

The EU's relationship with China was further complicated in 2021 due to a range of concerns including cyberattacks, a disregard for fundamental freedoms, aggressive diplomatic acts towards EU Member States and questions about the security dimensions of trade with China. 2021 started with further reflection on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), which, while seeking to gain greater European access to Chinese markets, raised questions about the extent to which the EU should be engaging in such an agreement given the security tensions between the two actors. The European Commission in particular was keen to stress the benefits of the CAI, although European parliamentarians had deep misgivings about the agreement when the Union was engaged in growing strategic rivalry with Beijing. In particular, the European Parliament was concerned that the CAI was not being leveraged to incentivise the protection of human rights in China, among other things.

In any case, the CAI was further challenged in March following China's decision to sanction members of the European Parliament and European think tankers. China had reacted to the Union's own imposition of sanctions on China for human rights abuses. Clearly, with members of the European Parliament under Chinese sanctions there could be no way for the Parliament to ratify the CAI. In a report calling for a new EU Strategy on China in September, the European Parliament reiterated that the 'consideration and

ratification process of the EU–China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) cannot start until the Chinese sanctions against MEPs and EU institutions have been lifted’⁽¹⁾. Indeed, earlier in May 2021 the European Parliament had voted overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution (599 votes in favour, 30 against, 58 abstentions) condemning China’s sanctions on MEPs and refusing any agreement with China while sanctions are in place⁽²⁾.

This situation was coupled with a number of other worrying Chinese actions during the year including a rise in its ‘wolf warrior’ tactics towards Europe and its decision in December 2021 to apply import restrictions against Lithuania. In terms of China’s ‘wolf warrior’ tactics, which takes the form of public outbursts by Chinese ambassadors and state-owned/backed media houses to push back against perceived harmful narratives towards China, the Union suffered a number of examples during the year. For example, China specialist and academic, Antoine Bondaz, was the victim of a social media onslaught by China’s embassy to France in March, which resulted in the French Foreign Ministry summoning China’s Ambassador to Paris Lu Shaye⁽³⁾. Antoine Bondaz was accused by China of inflammatory language about China’s actions towards Taiwan, but the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, made clear in a tweet that ‘there is no place in Franco-Chinese relations for insults and attempts at intimidation against elected officials and researchers’⁽⁴⁾.

In terms of China’s actions towards Lithuania, in December Chinese customs were not clearing Lithuanian shipments to China due to Lithuania’s decision to allow Taiwan to open a representative office in its country. The European Commission called on China to stop its trade practices towards Lithuania and stated that it would

(1) European Parliament, ‘Resolution on a new EU–China strategy’, 16 September 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0382_EN.html).

(2) EEAS, ‘MEPs refuse any agreement with China whilst sanctions are in place’, 20 May 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/meps-refuse-any-agreement-china-whilst-sanctions-are-place_en?s=169).

(3) France 24, ‘Wolf warriors and a “crazed hyena”: French researcher “not intimidated” after clash with China envoy’, 23 March 2021 (<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210323-wolf-warriors-and-a-crazed-hyena-french-researcher-not-intimidated-after-clash-with-china-envoy>).

(4) Le Drian, J-Y, ‘Tweet by @francediplo_EN’, 22 March 2021 (https://twitter.com/francediplo_EN/status/1374085943892840450).

Strategic foresight in China

‘Over the last few decades, analysis of international relations and strategic issues has developed rapidly in China, both within the Chinese Communist Party– state apparatus and in think tanks and universities. However, the richness of this field of study is in stark contrast to the absence of any real open reflection on the question of foresight. If, like other nations, China is committed to understanding the world in which it is evolving and to identifying possible changes, the function of foresight has not been conceptualised or institutionalised to the same degree as in the West. Foresight analysis in China is marked by several salient features: firstly, it remains almost non-existent in Chinese institutional frameworks dedicated to the analysis of international relations; secondly, the concepts of the ‘black swan’ and the ‘grey rhino’ have made a significant breakthrough, particularly in economics, before being cannibalised and politicised by the Party; and thirdly, the reading of the horizon remains essentially informed by the Party’s vision, fears and obsessions.’

Charon, P. ‘Strategic Foresight in China: The Other Missing Dimension’, *Brief No 5, Foresight Series*, EUISS, March 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-foresight-china>).

consider Beijing’s actions against its obligations under the WTO. As a joint statement by HR/VP Borrell and Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis made clear, the ‘EU is ready to stand up against all types of political pressure and coercive measures applied against any Member State. The development of China’s bilateral relations with individual EU Member States has an impact on overall EU-China relations’⁽⁵⁾.

The cybersecurity dimension of EU-China relations also came under the spotlight in 2021. For example, on 19 July 2021 the HR/VP released a declaration calling on China to take action against malicious cyber activities against the EU taken from its territory⁽⁶⁾. The July attack from China on the Microsoft Exchange server had

(5) EEAS, ‘Joint Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis on China’s measures against Lithuania’, 8 December 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-statement-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-and-executive-vice-president_en).

(6) Council of the European Union, ‘China: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union urging Chinese authorities to take action against malicious cyber activities undertaken from its territory’, 19 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/19/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-urging-china-to-take-action-against-malicious-cyber-activities-undertaken-from-its-territory/>).

China, blockchain and cryptocurrency

'China was initially cautious in the development and application of blockchain technology. Among the technology's best-known attributes are the relative anonymity and immutability of the information, as every blockchain transaction has a digital record and signature that can be identified, validated, stored and shared. This technology could therefore become a double-edged sword for the Communist Party of China (CPC), as it goes against the government's efforts to censor content it considers sensitive and, in more general terms, efforts to assert its cyber-sovereignty. However, after at first observing the emergence of blockchain technology with concern, China's central government has increasingly seen it as an opportunity, as has been the case with most emerging technologies. Since the launch of the 13th five-year plan in 2016 and the release of the first *White Paper on Blockchain Technology and Application Development* by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology the same year, the CPC has increasingly considered that blockchain could become an economic, political and geopolitical asset for the country, if 'guided' well.'

Ekman, A. 'China's Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Ambitions', Brief No 15, EUISS, July 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/chinas-blockchain-and-cryptocurrency-ambitions>).

repercussions for the EU and its Member States. The activities of groups known as 'Advanced Persistent Threat 40' and 'Advanced Persistent Threat 31' were particularly alarming as they targeted the cybersecurity of government institutions and political organisations in the EU⁽⁷⁾. EU's partner, the United States also took the July 2021 cyberattacks on Microsoft servers seriously, and it took the decision to charge Chinese nationals for hacking US companies, universities and government agencies. The EU and the United States made clear their deep concern about the actions of China's Ministry of State Security⁽⁸⁾.

Human rights continued to be a major issue of contention between the EU and China in 2021 and in March the Council of the EU imposed sanctions on 11 individuals and four entities in China

(7) 'China: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union urging Chinese authorities to take action against malicious cyber activities undertaken from its territory', op.cit.

(8) Reuters, 'U.S. and allies accuse China of global hacking spree', 20 July 2021 (<https://www.reuters.com/technology/us-allies-accuse-china-global-cyber-hacking-campaign-2021-07-19/>).

for serious human rights abuses and violations⁽⁹⁾. In January, the human rights defender Tashi Wangchuk was released from jail after five years of wrongful imprisonment for peacefully advocating for Tibetan language rights. In August, the EU condemned China's decision to confirm the death penalty imposed on Canadian citizen Robert Schellenberg, especially as the EU had concerns about the due process of law and the arbitrariness of the sentencing. The EU had the same concerns for another Canadian citizen, Michael Spavor, who was sentenced by Chinese authorities for 11 years after a suspect criminal trial that was held behind closed doors and where he was not permitted to appoint his own lawyer⁽¹⁰⁾. Additionally, in late November 2021 the EU raised concerns about the health of Ms Zhang Zhan, who was imprisoned by Chinese authorities for four years on the spurious basis of 'picking quarrels and stirring up trouble' as a journalist⁽¹¹⁾. Furthermore, the EU had expressed its concern about the missing Chinese tennis player, Peng Shuai, after she had posted claims of sexual assault at the hands of tennis trainers on social media. Even though Peng Shuai was seen in public in late November, the EU called on Chinese authorities to 'conduct a full, fair and transparent investigation into her allegations of sexual assault'⁽¹²⁾.

Throughout 2021, the EU was concerned about the growing threats posed to foreign correspondents working in China. In March, the Union raised what it saw as growing harassment of foreign journalists through increased visa restrictions, risks posed to their and their families' safety, and monitoring by public authorities⁽¹³⁾. For example, on 2 April 2021 the EU raised serious questions

(9) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 22 March 2021 – Main results', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/03/22/>).

(10) EEAS, 'China: Statement by the Spokesperson on the sentencing of Mr Michael Spavor', 11 August 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/china-statement-spokesperson-sentencing-mr-michael-spavor_en?s=166).

(11) EEAS, 'China: Statement by the Spokesperson on deteriorating health situation of Zhang Zhan', 23 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-statement-spokesperson-deteriorating-health-situation-zhang-zhan_en).

(12) EEAS, 'China: Statement by the Spokesperson on the reappearance of Peng Shuai', 30 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-statement-spokesperson-reappearance-peng-shuai_0_en).

(13) EEAS, 'Statement of the European Union Delegation to China on the situation of foreign correspondents', 2 March 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/statement-european-union-delegation-china-situation-foreign-correspondents_en?s=166).

about how the BBC China Correspondent, John Sudworth, and his wife, RTE China Correspondent, Yvonne Murray, left China after ‘a long period of harassment of Mr Sudworth and his BBC colleagues by the authorities, comprising surveillance, threats of legal action, obstruction, intimidation and the posting online by official media of videos that personally named him and made use of police video footage’⁽¹⁴⁾.

In December, the EU announced that while China had made efforts to combat poverty and improve access to healthcare and education, ‘civil and political rights are not guaranteed and are in some cases even deliberately systematically violated’⁽¹⁵⁾. In particular, the EU pointed to the existence of the death penalty in China and in some cases organ harvesting from detainees, as well as severe restrictions on freedom of expression and the media. Specifically, the Union underlined its concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and it pointed to large-scale arbitrary detentions, widespread surveillance, forced labour, forced birth control and the unjust sentencing of human rights defenders⁽¹⁶⁾.

Despite all the tensions between the EU and China, the HR/VP was able to continue to conduct diplomacy with Chinese counterparts such as Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During a video meeting on 8 February 2021, the HR/VP discussed the fight against Covid-19 and the need to strengthen efforts to deal with climate change. Although the HR/VP raised issues related to human rights and the need to develop a response for the *coup d'état* in Myanmar and the Iran nuclear deal, Foreign Minister Wang Yi was interested in the evolution of the EU’s relationship with the United States. HR/VP Borrell made

(14) EEAS, ‘China: Statement by the Spokesperson on the departure of BBC’s China correspondent and the presence of foreign journalists in the country’, 2 April 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-statement-spokesperson-departure-bbc's-china-correspondent-and-presence-foreign_en).

(15) EEAS, ‘Statement of the EU Delegation to China on International Human Rights Day’, 10 December 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/statement-eu-delegation-china-international-human-rights-day-1_en?s=166).

(16) Ibid.

China's data strategy

'In 2019 and 2020, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States issued strategy papers on data governance acknowledging the importance of data to their economic development and national security. With different emphases, four competing objectives dominate these data strategies: innovation (using data to create new business models and boost economic growth); security (ensuring that sensitive data is not used by a hostile foreign power); privacy (protecting citizens from abusive use of personal data); and surveillance (using data to monitor and control citizens' and companies' behaviour). In the past two years, China has been defining its own data strategy and governance regime and, while juggling the same four competing objectives as its Western counterparts, is taking an innovative approach. While the specific data governance framework is still being debated among scholars, policymakers, industrial lobbyists and state institutions, local pilot regulations on data and stakeholders' public positions have already hinted at its future characteristics.'

Boullenois, C. 'China's Data Strategy: Creating a State-led Market', *Brief* No 21, EUISS, October 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/chinas-data-strategy>).

clear the strong bonds between the EU and United States as well as the need to foster EU-US-China cooperation where appropriate⁽¹⁷⁾.

Another video meeting was held between Borrell and Wang on 10 July 2021, where they discussed the Union's decision to impose sanctions on China for its human rights abuses and the measures Beijing was taking in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. They also discussed China's decision to impose counter-measures⁽¹⁸⁾. Indeed, in retaliation to the sanctions imposed on China in March, the country decided to launch its own sanctions against think tankers, European parliamentarians and members of the EU's Political and Security Committee. During a debate in the European Parliament on 28 April 2021, HR/VP Borrell announced his full solidarity with all those affected by the Chinese sanctions and he called on China to respect the

(17) EEAS, 'China: High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell holds video conference with State Councillor/Foreign Minister Wang Yi', 8 February 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-holds-video-conference-state_en).

(18) EEAS, 'China: High Representative Josep Borrell spoke to Foreign Minister Wang Yi', 10 July 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/china-high-representative-josep-borrell-spoke-foreign-minister-wang-yi_en?s=166).

freedoms of Europe's parliamentarians and thinkers⁽¹⁹⁾. The HR/VP echoed these same thoughts during another European Parliament plenary debate on 14 September 2021.

In late September, a third meeting between the two was held to discuss the security of Taiwan and the recently agreed AUKUS agreement, as well as the EU's own Indo-Pacific Strategy and the summer's fallout from the evacuation from Afghanistan⁽²⁰⁾. Again, the issue of EU-US relations was raised during discussions. Interestingly, at the start of December during the second high-level meeting of the EU and US Dialogue on China, the two partners agreed that some of China's actions were of great concern. Here, the EU and United States recalled the need to work to uphold international law and principles, as well as developing the resilience of the two partners in areas such as technology and supply chains and a need to address economic coercion by China. The two partners also underlined the need to monitor China's concerning and unilateral actions in the South and East China Seas as well as in the Taiwan Strait, areas which they recognised 'have a direct impact on the security and prosperity of both the United States and European Union'⁽²¹⁾.

Finally, tensions in the South China Sea continued to concern the EU. In March 2021, large Chinese fishing vessels appeared at the Whitsun Reef near the Philippines and this caused tensions between China, the Philippines and Vietnam – which all claim territorial rights over the reef. The EU claimed that China's actions were endangering peace and stability in the region and it called on Beijing to uphold 'secure, free and open maritime supply routes in the Indo-Pacific, in full compliance with international law' such as

(19) EEAS, 'China: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP debate on the Chinese countersanctions on EU entities and MEPs and MPs', 28 April 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-ep-debate-chinese_en).

(20) EEAS, 'China: High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell holds the 11th EU-China Strategic Dialogue with State Councillor/Foreign Minister Wang Yi', 28 September 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-holds-11th-eu-china-strategic-dialogue_en).

(21) EEAS, 'EU-US: Joint Press Release by the EEAS and Department of State on the Second High-Level Meeting of the EU-US Dialogue on China', 2 December 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-us-joint-press-release-eeas-and-department-state-second-high-level-meeting-eu-us-dialogue_en).

the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.⁽²²⁾ Again, in November 2021 the EU raised its concerns about China's coastguards, which blocked two Philippine supply boats near the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea near Palawan, Philippines. The EU reported that China used water cannons against Philippines' supply boats and the Union called for China to halt unilateral actions of this kind, which, regrettably, had been on the rise in 2021⁽²³⁾.

Indo-Pacific

For the EU, the Indo-Pacific was an important region in 2021 as the Union finally published its Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific on 16 September. Based on Council of the EU conclusions of 19 April 2021⁽²⁴⁾, the strategy stressed the importance of the region for EU security and defence, and it made the case for why the Union 'intends to increase its engagement with the region to build partnerships that reinforce the rules-based international order'⁽²⁵⁾. In particular, the strategy made clear that the Indo-Pacific and the EU are inextricably linked through economies and global challenges and it called for closer relations with Australia, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and international organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The strategy highlighted that the Indo-Pacific and Europe account for over 70 % of global trade and 60 % of foreign direct investment flows, and it

(22) EEAS, 'South China Sea: Statement by the Spokesperson on challenges to peace and security', 24 April 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/south-china-sea-statement-spokesperson-challenges-peace-and-stability_en?s=166).

(23) EEAS, 'South China Sea: Statement by the Spokesperson on recent incidents', 21 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/south-china-sea-statement-spokesperson-recent-incidents_en).

(24) Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', 16 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/19/indo-pacific-council-adopts-conclusions-on-eu-strategy-for-cooperation/>).

(25) European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 'Joint Communication for the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', JOIN(2021) 24 final, 16 September 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0024>).

underlined that annual trade between the two regions reached a total of €1.5 trillion in 2019⁽²⁶⁾.

However, the Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific also recognised the important security dimensions of the relationship, with maritime areas like the Malacca Straits, the South China Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait being particularly sensitive and crucial waterways. Furthermore, the strategy also recognised the region as a place where carbon dioxide emissions are on the rise and where climate change ‘is expected to further increase pressure on marine biodiversity, natural resources and fish stocks’⁽²⁷⁾. Aside from environmental concerns, the strategy also underlined the importance of geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific with a significant military build-up in the region and tensions near the South and East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Here, the strategy made particular reference to the increasing relevance of hybrid threats and cybersecurity in the Indo-Pacific. The rise of China was seen as a key driver behind the intense competition there⁽²⁸⁾.

The EU’s strategy set out eight guiding principles for its interaction with the Indo-Pacific. First, it referred to the need to strengthen and defend the rules-based international order through the promotion of democracy, human rights and rule of law. Second, it called for a level playing field for trade and investment. Third, it underlined the EU’s commitment to achieving the SDGs and the need to address climate change and environmental degradation. Fourth, the strategy called for closer cooperation in bilateral and multilateral formats to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Fifth, it stressed the continued relevance and importance of the UN, ASEAN, the AU and other international and regional organisations. Sixth, it called for engagement with civil society, the private sector and social partners. Seventh, the strategy spoke about inclusive economic growth and stability as well as promoting sustainable connectivity. Lastly, it underlined the need to engage the region in awareness raising for global demographic trends⁽²⁹⁾.

(26) ‘Joint Communication for the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific’, op. cit.

(27) Ibid.

(28) Ibid.

(29) Ibid.

To meet these objectives, the Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific set out some of the proposed actions that the EU would pursue in the years ahead. Such actions include a focus on building more resilience and sustainable value chains, as well as the development and promotion of technological standards and regulations. Furthermore, the EU seeks to complete free trade agreements with Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand, as well as resuming trade talks with India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. The Union also seeks to conclude partnership and cooperation agreements and to push green alliances and partnerships in the region, as well as promote digital partnerships and connectivity with key partners such as India and Japan. This should be complemented, the strategy went on to say, by closer research and innovation cooperation under Horizon Europe, as well as closer health and pandemic preparedness. Finally, the strategy called for enhanced naval deployments by the EU to the region in order to protect sea lines of communication and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific⁽³⁰⁾.

However, the EU's own strategy for the Indo-Pacific was up-ended to some degree by the surprise announcement, a day before the strategy's release, that a new deal on the provision of nuclear-powered submarines and emerging and disruptive technologies (cybertechnology, hypersonics and artificial intelligence) between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (AUKUS) was to be agreed. The deal struck a nerve due to the fact that Australia had already signed a contract with France for the provision of diesel-powered submarines, which was torpedoed following the public announcement of AUKUS. The move by the three countries resulted in France recalling its ambassadors to the United States and Australia, which was a historically unprecedented step that underlined the level of grievance felt in Paris at the time⁽³¹⁾. The United States subsequently acknowledged that the 'situation would have benefited from open consultations among allies on matters of strategic interest to France and [the United States'] European

(30) 'Joint Communication for the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', op. cit.

(31) France 24, 'France recalls its ambassadors to US and Australia in submarine deal backlash', 17 September 2021 (<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210917-france-recalls-its-ambassadors-to-us-and-australia-in-submarine-deal-backlash>).

partners' (32). This prompted France to reinstall their ambassador to Washington and President Biden affirmed the 'strategic importance of French and European engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, including in the framework of the European Union's recently published strategy for the Indo-Pacific (33).

Nevertheless, the EU continued to engage with the Indo-Pacific during the year. On 8 July, the EU and ASEAN held a video conference meeting of senior officials where the two sides stressed the importance of cooperation on economics, security, health and climate change. In the context of the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership and Plan of Action for 2018–2022, both sides looked at ways to increase mutual trust and respect in the region and ASEAN called the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific as a valuable contribution in this regard (34). In terms of the 13th Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) that took place on 25–26 November 2021 via video conference, senior officials and heads of government worked on the overall theme of 'strengthening multilateralism for shared growth' in the Indo-Pacific (35). With 30 European and 21 Asian member countries involved, the leaders discussed the post-pandemic recovery, the green transition and foreign and security policy issues. On the occasion of ASEM's 25th anniversary, the leaders also had the opportunity to discuss Asia–Europe connectivity and ways of better investing in sustainable infrastructure (36).

2021 was also an important year for the EU's Global Connectivity Strategy, and specifically its 2018 Joint Communication on Connecting Europe and Asia. Indeed, the Council of the EU approved conclusions on 12 July 2021 to reaffirm the Union's geostrategic approach to global connectivity that brings together its economic, foreign,

(32) White House, 'Joint Statement on the Phone Call between President Biden and President Macron', 22 September 2021 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/22/joint-statement-on-the-phone-call-between-president-biden-and-president-macron/>).

(33) Ibid.

(34) ASEAN, 'Co-Chairs' Press Release of the ASEAN-EU Senior Officials' Meeting', 8 July 2021 (<https://asean.org/co-chairs-press-release-of-the-asean-eu-senior-officials-meeting/>).

(35) Council of the European Union, 'Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM), 25–26 November 2021', 26 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2021/11/25–26/>).

(36) Ibid.

development and security interests. In particular, the Council of the EU called for more effective investments in physical infrastructure and the development of regulatory frameworks, and ministers called on the European Commission and the HR/VP to work more intensely with governments and business to enhance global connectivity through public and private investment. The Council of the EU also underlined the importance of connectivity with like-minded countries and regions and ministers encouraged the rapid operationalisation of partnerships with Japan and India⁽³⁷⁾.

With India, the EU adopted a Connectivity Partnership on 8 May 2021 at the EU-India leaders' meeting in Porto, Portugal. Following the 2020 EU-India Summit, the two sides agreed to jointly promote a partnership in a sustainable and comprehensive manner. To this end, the EU-India Connectivity Partnership stressed the need to develop digital, transport and energy networks, as well as to leverage and incentivise large-scale private investments. On digital connectivity, the EU and India stated that they work on developing submarine cables and satellite networks, as well as investing in a secure and safe cyber domain. The two sides also stressed the importance of the roll-out of 5G networks and to look at ways of enhancing cross-border payments and remittances. The two sides also underlined the importance of investing in sustainable energy and networks such as offshore wind generation, and floating solar and hydrogen storage. The partnership also spoke of the need to invest in railway networks, more resilient ports and harbours and people-to-people relations in science and innovation⁽³⁸⁾.

The Union also strengthened its strategic partnership with Japan in 2021. At the EU-Japan Summit on 27 May 2021, the two partners reiterated their common interests in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as challenges such as climate change and security in the Indo-Pacific. The two sides underlined their commitment to supporting a rules-based international order and the SDGs. In addition to stressing the importance of international trade, connectivity

(37) Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on A Globally Connected Europe', 12 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/12/a-globally-connected-europe-council-approves-conclusions/>).

(38) Council of the European Union, 'EU-India Connectivity Partnership', 8 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49508/eu-india-connectivity-partnership-8-may-2.pdf>).

and innovation, the EU and Japan called for more intense work on non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as countering hybrid threats and cyberattacks. Both sides acknowledged the growing importance of maritime security and they reiterated their ‘commitment to promoting an open, free, stable and secure cyberspace’⁽³⁹⁾. In particular, the summit resulted in a call for a more ‘intensified naval cooperation between Japan and EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta’⁽⁴⁰⁾. Additionally, Japan and the EU acknowledged the value of the ‘first joint port call and accompanying activities in Djibouti [in October 2021] and the first trilateral EU–Japan–Djibouti anti-piracy exercise earlier [in 2021]’⁽⁴¹⁾.

In terms of security in the wider Indo-Pacific, the EU had to contend with events in Myanmar, where a *coup d'état* occurred on 1 February 2021. This led to a deterioration of the security environment for citizens in the country, including the repression and detainment of individuals and brutal acts against protesters. In response, in March 2021 the Council of the EU imposed sanctions on 11 individuals responsible for the military coup staged on 1 February and the subsequent police repression against peaceful demonstrators that followed⁽⁴²⁾. Human rights concerns were also raised in relation to Vietnam where the European Parliament, in January 2021, condemned the moves to imprison journalists Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Toung Thuy and Le Huu Minh Tuan for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Pham Doan Trang, a journalist and blogger, was also sentenced to 9 years in prison on trumped up charges of ‘anti-state propaganda’, which the EU condemned on 16 December 2021⁽⁴³⁾.

(39) Council of the European Union, ‘Joint Statement – EU–Japan Summit 2021’, 27 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49922/eu-japan-summit-may-2021-statement.pdf>).

(40) Ibid.

(41) Ibid.

(42) Council of the European Union, ‘Foreign Affairs Council, 22 March 2021 – Main results’, 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/03/22/>).

(43) EEAS, ‘Vietnam: Statement by the Spokesperson on verdicts against human rights defenders’, 16 December 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/vietnam-statement-spokesperson-verdicts-against-human-rights-defenders_en).

Central Asia

In 2021, the biggest crisis to confront the EU was the case of the evacuation of Kabul, Afghanistan, which saw US and European forces having to leave the country in a hasty manner. Indeed, in the middle of the summer the United States and coalition forces left the country to the Taliban, which took control of Afghanistan following a 20-year presence by European and American forces. President Biden's decision to evacuate American forces and personnel following the fall of the Afghan government on 15 August 2021 left the EU with a major challenge, as it had to evacuate its own citizens from Afghanistan, local staff and Afghan citizens. At the time, the EU called for the establishment of 'legal pathways for Afghans at risk' and for a level of security at Bagram airport while individuals were evacuated⁽⁴⁴⁾. On 30 August 2021, US forces had completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan and, fortunately, the EU and its Member States had achieved the same objective by evacuating a total of 17 500 people from Kabul (including 4 100 EU nationals and 13 400 Afghans)⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The Council of the EU moved relatively swiftly to address the crisis by holding an extraordinary meeting on 17 August 2021. The EU called for the 'safety and security of all EU citizens in Afghanistan, as well as local staff working for the EU or Member States'⁽⁴⁶⁾. In particular, the Council of the EU stressed the fact that with the Taliban moving into Kabul and other areas of Afghanistan there was a need to 'pay special attention to those Afghans whose security might now be in jeopardy due to their principled engagement for [the EU's] common values'⁽⁴⁷⁾. The extraordinary meeting also set the scene for the EU's longer-term commitment to Afghanistan,

(44) Mentzelopoulou, M.-M., 'Evacuation of Afghan nationals to EU Member States', European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2021 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698776/EPRI_BRI\(2021\)698776_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698776/EPRI_BRI(2021)698776_EN.pdf)).

(45) Ibid.

(46) Council of the European Union, 'Afghanistan: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union', 17 August 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/17/afghanistan-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).

(47) Ibid.

with promises of financial assistance and support for humanitarian assistance to Afghans.

In Council conclusions on 21 September 2021, the EU spelt out in more detail how it would support Afghanistan and its people after the American and European evacuation of the country. The Council of the EU fully recognised that the seizing of power by the Taliban would create major challenges related to the delivery of humanitarian aid and protecting the rights of women and girls. The EU acknowledged that the Union would have a minimal presence on the ground, but that it should work to ensure that this presence would facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and allow the Union to ensure the orderly and secure departure of Afghans wishing to leave the country. This would not be easy given the rise of terrorist attacks and the use of violence and intimidation since the take-over by the Taliban. In this respect, the EU was not only focused on the rights of vulnerable Afghans but also the need to contain any negative spillovers that might occur in the region, not least that Afghanistan could be used as a base for terrorist attacks regionally and globally⁽⁴⁸⁾.

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- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 22 March 2021 – Main results', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/03/22/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', 16 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/19/indo-pacific-council-adopts-conclusions-on-eu-strategy-for-cooperation/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'EU-India Connectivity Partnership', 8 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49508/eu-india-connectivity-partnership-8-may-2.pdf>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Joint Statement – EU-Japan Summit 2021', 27 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49922/eu-japan-summit-may-2021-statement.pdf>).

(48) Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on Afghanistan', 15 September 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/21/afghanistan-council-conclusions-set-out-the-eu-s-position-and-next-steps/>).

- > Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on A Globally Connected Europe', 12 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/12/a-globally-connected-eu-rope-council-approves-conclusions/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'China: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union urging Chinese authorities to take action against malicious cyber activities undertaken from its territory', 19 July 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/07/19/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-urging-china-to-take-action-against-malicious-cyber-activities-undertaken-from-its-territory/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Afghanistan: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union', 17 August 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/17/afghanistan-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on Afghanistan', 15 September 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/09/21/afghanistan-council-conclusions-set-out-the-eu-s-position-and-next-steps/>).
- > European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 'Joint Communication for the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', JOIN(2021) 24 final, 16 September 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0024>).
- > European Parliament, 'Resolution on a new EU-China strategy', 16 September 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0382_EN.html).

Americas

North America

Transatlantic relations in 2021 were buoyed by the election of President Joseph Biden in 2020. Although the Trump administration had caused several concerns to European partners during his tenure, no least due to the forceful messaging on defence burden-sharing and spending, Europeans looked to President Biden with hope that transatlantic relations could be restored. Of course, such feelings towards the Biden administration were only reinforced following the 6 January 2021 attacks on the US Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The rioters, seemingly supported by former President Trump, sought to keep Trump in power by preventing Congress from counting the votes for the electoral colleges, which was the final step to formalising the electoral victory of Joseph Biden. Not only were senior US lawmakers hemmed in at the Capitol Building, but five people eventually lost their lives in the riots. As law enforcement agencies around the Capitol Building were overwhelmed by the rioters, EU leaders expressed shock at the incident and called for a peaceful and democratic transition of power in the United States⁽¹⁾.

Nevertheless, once President Biden was safely in office the EU and United States moved swiftly to repair transatlantic relations and

(1) EUObserver, 'EU in "shock" as Trump mob storms "temple of democracy"', 7 January 2021 (<https://euobserver.com/eu-political/150531>).

Foresight, the US way

'The United States is a highly polarised society. Over the past decade, any consensus about how it views itself or its future has broken down despite the country having well-grounded capabilities on foresight which could help steer it towards a united vision and the steps needed to realise its desired future. It is unclear whether the Biden administration can project a vision that appeals to most Americans, binding together a nation deeply split in its view of America and its role in the world. At the tactical level, foresight tools and mechanisms remain in use throughout the bureaucracy even if they have not been able to reconcile contrasting societal perspectives. 2016 was a dramatic turning point in which the US Intelligence Community – the leading foresight practitioner in the US government – fell out of favour with the president and many of his senior advisors. Biden's vision for the country embraces diversity and renewed US leadership in the world. Biden's Secretary of State Antony Blinken talks about humility and confidence being "the flip sides of America's leadership coin", repudiating Trump's America First stance.'

Burrows, M. 'How the US does Foresight', Brief No 22, Foresight Series, EUISS, March 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/how-us-does-foresight>).

to put them on a more sustainable footing. This process was greatly aided by the United States' decision to return to the Paris Agreement and its decision to ultimately not leave (or to return to) several UN agencies. What is more, the Biden administration signalled an interest in returning as a party to the JCPOA, after President Trump had put a halt to US participation in the agreement with Iran. On this basis, the EU and United States sought to embed their partnership into more institutional settings and, following the EU-US Summit in Brussels on 15 June 2021, the partners set up the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, and a dedicated US-EU dialogue on security and defence. Although the 15 June EU-US Summit was an opportunity for European leaders to meet with the new US president, the discussions centred on past sensitive issues for the partners, including a cooperative framework on large civil aircraft and

the intention to resolve differences on measures against steel and aluminium⁽²⁾.

The Joint Statement made after the EU-US Summit indicated that the partners wanted to make headway on ending the Covid-19 pandemic, protecting the planet and fostering green growth, strengthening trade and investment and building a more peaceful and secure world. Interestingly, the EU-US Summit led to political discussions about the need to ensure supply chain security, and, with specific reference to the Covid-19 pandemic, the partners signalled an intention to address unnecessary export restrictions for vaccines and therapeutics production. On 22 September for example, the EU and US established an agenda for beating the global pandemic and the two sides called for a global 70 % vaccination rate⁽³⁾. What is more, the summit conclusions underlined the intention to provide leadership on combatting climate change, with the partners underlining the need for greater green investments. The EU and United States also agreed to intensify the coordination of energy strategies through the EU-US Energy Council⁽⁴⁾.

In terms of security, the partners resolved to 'reject authoritarianism in all its forms around the globe, resisting autocrats' efforts to create an environment that protects their rule and serves their interests, while undermining liberal democracies'⁽⁵⁾. The EU and United States also underlined their desire to intensify cooperation on combating cyberattacks and cybercrime, as well as addressing disinformation and foreign interference. Furthermore, the partners announced that they would consult and cooperate on the full range of issues related to China and its actions to erode the autonomy of Hong Kong, undermine the rights of minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet and deploy economic coercion and disinformation campaigns,

(2) Council of the European Union, 'EU-US summit, Brussels, 15 June 2021 – Main results', 15 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2021/06/15/>).

(3) European Commission, 'Timeline of EU action', 2 May 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/timeline-eu-action_en).

(4) Council of the European Union, 'EU-US summit partnership: "Towards a renewed Transatlantic partnership"', 15 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press-releases/2021/06/15/eu-us-summit-statement-towards-a-renewed-transatlantic-partnership/>).

(5) Ibid.

US extraterritorial sanctions

‘Scarcely familiar with sanctions as a policy tool, much of the European public has followed the headlines about international sanctions with some puzzlement. After the UN lifted sanctions on Iran following the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), why was it necessary to create a channel for bilateral trade, the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), following the US withdrawal from the deal in 2018? Why is Iran insisting that the US lift sanctions ‘in practice, not verbally or on paper’? How did the US Senate approval of new legislation targeting Nord Stream 2, a pipeline under construction between Russia and Germany, bring work to an immediate standstill in late 2019? Why do European banks and private companies fear the US Department of the Treasury’s sanctions enforcement agency, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)? If sanctions regimes are endowed with humanitarian exemptions, why do humanitarian agencies report difficulties in getting aid to places like Syria? As it turns out, these are ramifications of the same phenomenon: the extraterritorial effects of US sanctions.’

Portela, C. ‘Creativity Wanted: Countering the Extraterritorial Effects of US Sanctions’, *Brief No 22*, EUISS, October 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/creativity-wanted-countering-extraterritorial-effects-us-sanctions>).

as well as create tensions in the East and South China Seas. The EU and United States also condemned ‘Russia’s continued actions to undermine Ukraine’s and Georgia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence’⁽⁶⁾.

With the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, the partners sought to create a forum to coordinate transatlantic approaches to trade, economic and technology issues. The Council is comprised of working groups focusing on technology standards, climate and clean technologies, secure supply chains, data governance and technology platforms, export controls, investment screening, global trade challenges and much more⁽⁷⁾. The inaugural meeting of the Trade and Technology Council took place on 29 September 2021 in Pittsburgh, United States. The meeting saw the participation of Commission Executive Vice-Presidents Margrethe Vestager

(6) ‘EU-US summit partnership: “Towards a renewed Transatlantic partnership”’, op. cit.

(7) European Commission, ‘EU-US Trade and Technology Council: Commission launches consultation platform for stakeholder’s involvement to shape transatlantic cooperation’, 18 October 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5308).

and Valdis Dombrovskis and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai. At the Pittsburgh meeting, the EU and United States agreed to avoid the imposition of new and unnecessary barriers to trade in new and emerging technologies, as well as to monitor semiconductor supply chains and assess the technical requirements needed to develop trustworthy artificial intelligence⁽⁸⁾.

Following the diplomatic fallout from the AUKUS initiative announced in September 2021, the United States and EU sought to put security and defence cooperation on a sounder footing. Indeed, on 3 December 2021, HR/VP Borrell and US Secretary of State Blinken met to announce the start of a dedicated US-EU dialogue on security and defence⁽⁹⁾. The first such dialogue was to be held in early 2022. Relations between the EU and United States on security and defence had evolved over the course of 2021, with the European Defence Agency approving a negotiating mandate for an Administrative Arrangement with the US and participating EU Member States agreeing to permit the United States to join the PESCO project on Military Mobility. The United States and EU also affirmed their intention to strengthen EU-NATO cooperation while also recognising the ‘contribution EU security and defence initiatives can make to both European and Transatlantic security’⁽¹⁰⁾.

Latin America and the Caribbean

2021 started with an objective to reinvigorate EU relations with Latin America, especially in the areas of climate change, trade, humanitarian assistance and cooperation to combat the Covid-19

(8) European Commission, ‘EU-US Trade and Technology Council Inaugural Joint Statement’, 29 September 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_4951).

(9) EEAS, ‘EU-US: Joint Statement by the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission’, 3 December 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-us-joint-statement-secretary-state-united-states-america-and-eu-high-representative-foreign_en).

(10) ‘EU-US summit partnership: “Towards a renewed Transatlantic partnership”, op. cit.

pandemic. Regarding humanitarian assistance and the fight against Covid-19, the EU, its Member States and European financial institutions (the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) decided to support the region with nearly €3 billion. By October 2021, COVAX had delivered over 30 million doses to 31 countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region⁽¹¹⁾. The EU also announced that €3.4 billion would be made available under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe (2021–2027) in support of a sustainable long-term recovery from the pandemic⁽¹²⁾. In the Caribbean region, over €600 000 from ongoing humanitarian operations were redirected to support the coronavirus response, from technical assistance to local institutions and public awareness campaigns, to providing medical equipment and help to improve the health system's capacities. Additionally, to control the Covid-19 outbreak and respond to most urgent needs, the EU allocated an additional €600 000 to the UN's International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), improving health systems in Cuba⁽¹³⁾.

During the European Parliament's Plenary Session on Latin America and the Caribbean on 19 January, HR/VP Borrell recalled that the 14 December Berlin Ministerial Conference showed a real commitment to step up ambitions on climate issues, looking ahead to the COP26⁽¹⁴⁾. The HR/VP also insisted on the need to move forward with the signature and ratification of the modernised agreements with Mexico and Chile, as well as the EU Agreement with Mercosur, despite the freeze in the European Parliament's ratification of the

(11) EEAS, 'Latin America and the Caribbean: The COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to build back better', 20 January 2022 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/latin-america-caribbean/covid-19-pandemic-opportunity-build-back-better_en).

(12) European Council, 'EU-Latin America & Caribbean Leaders' Meeting: Joining forces for a sustainable post-COVID recovery – Press release by Presidents Michel and von der Leyen', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/eu-latin-america-caribbean-leaders-meeting-joining-forces-for-a-sustainable-post-covid-recovery/>).

(13) European Commission, 'Caribbean – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/latin-america-and-caribbean/caribbean_en).

(14) EEAS, 'Latin America and the Caribbean: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP debate', 19 January 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/latin-america-and-caribbean-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-ep-debate_en).

Russia in Latin America

‘The Soviet Union’s withdrawal from Latin America in the early 1990s was as sudden as its meteoric rise in the region three decades before. Its clients states were among the first affected. In Nicaragua, the left-wing Sandinista government was refused more cash ahead of the 1990 elections. After the Sandinistas lost, the Kremlin swiftly recognised the results of the elections and called for a peaceful transition. In the same vein, Moscow drastically cut its economic assistance to Havana and in 1991 announced the withdrawal of its military brigade from Cuba. Similarly, a wide network of sister communist parties across Latin America was left to its own devices. Soviet power and influence in the region was rapidly shrinking. However, international relations are rarely a linear affair. It is not unusual for world powers to temporarily reduce their footprint in a region only to make a comeback later. Russia, the legal successor of the Soviet Union, is no exception. After the Soviets’ precipitous withdrawal from Latin America in the early 1990s, Russia slowly worked its way back to the region.’

Secrieru, S. ‘The Comeback Kid: Russia in Latin America’, *Brief* No 24, EUISS, November 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/comeback-kid-russia-latin-america>).

Mercosur agreement because of a lack of clauses ensuring a better protection of the environment.

The EU and Brazil signed a Memorandum of Understanding on international cooperation in November 2021, which allowed both actors to join forces on projects contributing to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The EU reiterated the importance of Brazil as a key partner for advancing the Green Deal, digital transition and cyber and human rights objectives. To this effect, Team Europe supported 70 actions to prevent and combat the pandemic with grants worth €22.6 million. In addition, the new Global Europe assistance programme, with around €3.4 billion available for the region in 2021–27, would define initiatives aiming for digital transformation, developing sustainable smart cities and promote forest conservation.

Besides the spread of Covid-19, the consequences of climate change and unpredictability of weather-related events also had a negative effect on the most vulnerable populations. From 2016 to 2021, the EU allocated €33.6 million to disaster risk reduction projects in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela, as well as to strengthen regional disaster risk reduction strategies

in South America⁽¹⁵⁾. In 2021, the EU earmarked €5 million for disaster preparedness projects for specific situations in Colombia and Venezuela. As for the Caribbean, in July 2021 the EU allocated over €740 000 in emergency aid to La Soufriere Volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and Grenadines, and provided €150 000 in emergency support for the floods in Guyana.

In 2021 the contribution to disaster preparedness increased to €3 million, and an additional €1 million was dedicated to address the situation of Venezuelan asylum seekers⁽¹⁶⁾. In Haiti, 4.4 million people needed emergency food assistance and help to recover from the August 2021 earthquake that killed more than 2 000 people and injured over 13 000. The EU allocated €14 million to cover the food crisis, needs generated by increased gang-related violence and forced displacement/repatriation, disaster preparedness and humanitarian coordination⁽¹⁷⁾. Activated 114 times in 2021, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was used to respond to the earthquake and hurricane in Haiti, activating also the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge which resumed in June 2021 with flights delivering humanitarian aid to the country⁽¹⁸⁾. For 2019–2021, the EU allocated €47.3 million to respond to different needs across the Central American region, for instance, the recurrent droughts in the Dry Corridor of Central America, the dengue epidemic in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, Covid-19, tropical storm Amanda in Guatemala and El Salvador, as well as hurricanes Eta and Iota in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua⁽¹⁹⁾.

Despite the challenging environment due to the pandemic, the EU continued to support democracy in the Latin America and Caribbean region by sending EOMs to monitor elections in Ecuador, Honduras

(15) European Commission, 'South America – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/latin-america-and-caribbean/south-america_en).

(16) 'Caribbean – Factsheet', op. cit.

(17) European Commission, 'Haiti – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/latin-america-and-caribbean/haiti_en).

(18) European Commission, 'EU Civil Protection Mechanism – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en#how-are-we-helping).

(19) European Commission, 'Central America and Mexico – Factsheet', last accessed in November 2022 (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/latin-america-and-caribbean/central-america-and-mexico_en).

and Venezuela. Moreover, the EU reiterated its commitment to advance the goals of its Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024, particularly by tackling inequalities and furthering women and girls' empowerment, as well as promoting the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups.

On human rights and rule of law issues, the Council of the EU imposed sanctions on eight more individuals in Nicaragua for serious human rights violations and actions undermining democracy or the rule of law, including Vice-President Rosario Murillo⁽²⁰⁾. The August 2021 sanctions brought the overall total to 14 people targeted with restrictive measures in Nicaragua since October 2019. Moreover, the EU declared the 7 November general elections in Nicaragua to have been stripped of its democratic guarantees, their results lacking legitimacy and called for the release of all political prisoners, as well as the return of human rights organisations to the country⁽²¹⁾. The European Parliament also urged Haitian authorities to organise free, fair and transparent elections, with a view to appointing a provisional president, a call that Haitian President Jovenel Moïse refused in May⁽²²⁾. After the assassination of President Jovenel on 7 July, the European Parliament called the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and their Member States to support and assist Haiti in addressing the humanitarian, political and security situation in the country⁽²³⁾.

Unceasing political persecution and attacks against peaceful dissidents, journalists and human rights defenders in Cuba were cause for grave concern for the EU in 2021. Indeed, the year started with the European Parliament's condemnation of the crackdown of the San Isidro movement, fighting for the freedom of artistic expression

(20) Council of the European Union, 'Nicaragua: EU imposes sanctions on eight more individuals', 2 August 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/02/nicaragua-eu-imposes-sanctions-on-eight-more-individuals/>).

(21) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 18 October 2021 – Main results', 18 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/10/18/>).

(22) European Parliament, 'Human rights: Chad, Haiti and Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan', 20 May 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210517IPR04125/human-rights-chad-haiti-and-armenian-prisoners-of-war-in-azerbaijan>).

(23) European Parliament, 'Resolution on the situation in Haiti', 7 July 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0252_EN.html).

in Cuba⁽²⁴⁾. The EU kept condemning the Cuban government for the extreme violence against and repression of protesters in the aftermath of the large-scale protests on 11 July, triggered by a shortage of food and medicine and by the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic⁽²⁵⁾. The EU regretted that despite the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Cuba in 2017, the situation for democracy and human rights in the country had only deteriorated since⁽²⁶⁾.

As for Latin America, during the 2 December EU-Latin American & Caribbean Leaders' Meeting, EU representatives referred to a new regional 'Team Europe' Initiative on Security and Justice to support bi-regional cooperation on citizen security, organised crime and the rule of law⁽²⁷⁾. Although the persistent violence caused by illegal armed groups and organised criminal groups in Colombia was deplored by the EU, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in April 2021 to express its readiness to continue providing political and financial assistance to the 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement, which ended five decades of conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)⁽²⁸⁾. It condemned, however, the abuses committed by police during the nine days of marches and revolts in May, and rejected the violence of some protesters trying to spread chaos in the country. Here, the European Parliament called upon Colombian society, authorities, political forces, civil society and young people to resort to dialogue to find a peaceful solution⁽²⁹⁾.

(24) European Parliament, 'Cuba: Maria Arena condemns crackdown on San Isidro movement', 30 April 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210430IPR03219/cuba-maria-arena-condemns-crackdown-on-san-isidro-movement>).

(25) European Parliament, 'Human rights breaches in Kenya, United Arab Emirates and Cuba', 16 September 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210910IPR12048/human-rights-breaches-in-kenya-united-arab-emirates-and-cuba>).

(26) European Parliament, 'Human rights breaches in Russia, Cuba and Serbia', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211210IPR19224/human-rights-breaches-in-russia-cuba-and-serbia>).

(27) 'EU-Latin America & Caribbean Leaders' Meeting: Joining forces for a sustainable post-COVID recovery – Press release by Presidents Michel and von der Leyen', op. cit.

(28) European Parliament, 'MEPs call for political and financial support for Colombia', 29 April 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210422IPR02624/meps-call-for-political-and-financial-support-for-colombia>).

(29) European Parliament, 'Colombia: lead MEPs defend right to peaceful protest, call for national dialogue', 7 May 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210507IPR03746/colombia-lead-meps-defend-right-to-peaceful-protest-call-for-national-dialogue>).

Implementing the peace agreement in Colombia

‘The role of international state and non-state actors that have supported the process with foreign aid has guaranteed the presence of a third party between local communities and the government. The outcome of these interventions by international actors is in general terms positive. However, some studies highlight the need to clarify the role of these actors and their degree of intervention and participation in the peace processes, and in peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The EU has built strong relations with Colombian civil society in an endeavour to transform the local dynamics of violence and conflict. Throughout the armed conflict and in particular since the 1990s, the EU has actively engaged with local civil society actors, strengthening links between civil society organisations and local and national government, and raising the visibility of the peace work that those organisations have developed over a long period in the national and international arena, in a country with a highly centralised political system.

The EU can continue to play a constructive role by monitoring the coherence between the key provisions of the peace accord articulated as state policy in the National Development Plan, its respective programmes, projects and activities, and the actual implementation of that policy, ensuring consistency between the mandate of the peace agreement and the concrete actions undertaken at the local level. Its participation as a third party and as a guarantor in the planning exercise at the Commission for Monitoring, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Peace Accord (CSIVI) is key for safeguarding the implementation of the agreement at the local level and overcoming the limitations of the country’s centralised system.’

Amaya-Panche, J., ‘Implementing the peace agreement in Colombia: Challenges for peacebuilding and reconciliation’, *Brief* No 11, Conflict Series, EUISS, June 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/implementing-peace-agreement-colombia>).

In September, the EU and Colombia agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding, highlighting the intention to deepen and strengthen the ties between the two around five priorities:

- > the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement;
- > the agenda on the Green Deal;
- > the economic and social agenda;
- > the migration chapter — including the Venezuelan refugee and migratory crisis (for which the EU praised the laudable step by Colombia to give Temporary Protection Status to 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants residing in the country);

- and finally, the multilateral agenda and cooperation on foreign policy issues.

The continuing deep economic, social and political crisis in Venezuela kept the EU engaged in 2021. As such, the Council of the EU stressed that the 6 December 2020 elections were a missed opportunity for democracy as they did not comply with international standards and did not benefit from a national agreement on electoral conditions⁽³⁰⁾. The EU stated that the only way out of the crisis was to resume political negotiations by establishing a Venezuelan-led dialogue and transition process that would lead to credible and transparent legislative and presidential elections. Relations between the two parties deteriorated in March, when the head of the EU Delegation to Venezuela was expelled from the country, and the Venezuelan ambassador to the EU was declared as *persona non grata*⁽³¹⁾.

The EU, however, reaffirmed its support to Venezuelan refugees and migrants at the International Donors' Conference in June by pledging €147 million, in addition to pledges by the EU Member States⁽³²⁾. Earlier in the week, the EU along with Canada and the Coalition for the defence of the rights of refugees, migrants and displaced people in Latin America and the Caribbean held a high-level meeting with civil society in solidarity with Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The goal was to provide international organisations and civil society organisations with visibility and an active role in the 2021 International Donors' Conference. To support democracy in the country, the EU deployed an EEOM to monitor regional and local elections held on 21 October, for which international observers reported a good electoral process and high turnout, despite structural deficiencies such as arbitrary political disqualification of candidates,

(30) Council of the European Union, 'Venezuela: Council adopts conclusions on the outcome of the legislative elections', 25 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/25/venezuela-council-adopts-conclusions-on-the-outcome-of-the-legislative-elections/>).

(31) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 22 March 2021 – Main Results', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/03/22/>).

(32) European Commission, 'Venezuela: EU reaffirms support to refugees and migrants at International Donors' Conference', 17 June 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_2994).

unequal access to the media and the extensive use of state resources during the electoral campaign⁽³³⁾.

Core documents

- > European External Action Service, 'Latin America and the Caribbean: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP debate', 19 January 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/latin-america-and-caribbean-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-ep-debate_en).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Venezuela: Council adopts conclusions on the outcome of the legislative elections', 25 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/25/venezuela-council-adopts-conclusions-on-the-outcome-of-the-legislative-elections/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 22 March 2021 – Main Results', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/03/22/>).
- > European Parliament, 'MEPs call for political and financial support for Colombia', 29 April 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210422IPR02624/meeps-call-for-political-and-financial-support-for-colombia>).
- > European Parliament, 'Cuba: María Arena condemns crackdown on San Isidro movement', 30 April 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210430IPR03219/cuba-maria-arena-condemns-crackdown-on-san-isidro-movement>).
- > European Parliament, 'Colombia: lead MEPs defend right to peaceful protest, call for national dialogue', 7 May 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210507IPR03746/colombia-lead-meeps-defend-right-to-peaceful-protest-call-for-national-dialogue>).
- > European Parliament, 'Human rights: Chad, Haiti and Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan', 20 May 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210517IPR04125/human-rights-chad-haiti-and-armenian-prisoners-of-war-in-azerbaijan>).

(33)

EEAS, 'Venezuela: Statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell on the regional and local elections', 23 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/venezuela-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-regional-and-local-elections_en).

- > Council of the European Union, 'EU-US summit partnership: "Towards a renewed Transatlantic partnership"', 15 June 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/15/eu-us-summit-statement-towards-a-renewed-transatlantic-partnership/>).
- > European Parliament, 'Resolution on the situation in Haiti', 7 July 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0252_EN.html).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Nicaragua: EU imposes sanctions on eight more individuals', 2 August 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/02/nicaragua-eu-imposes-sanctions-on-eight-more-individuals/>).
- > European Parliament, 'Human rights breaches in Kenya, United Arab Emirates and Cuba', 16 September 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210910IPR12048/human-rights-breaches-in-kenya-united-arab-emirates-and-cuba>).
- > European Commission, 'EU-US Trade and Technology Council Inaugural Joint Statement', 29 September 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_4951).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 18 October 2021 – Main results', 18 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/10/18/>).
- > European Council, 'EU-Latin America & Caribbean Leaders' Meeting: Joining forces for a sustainable post-Covid recovery – Press release by Presidents Michel and von der Leyen', 2 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/02/eu-latin-america-caribbean-leaders-meeting-joining-forces-for-a-sustainable-post-covid-recovery/>).
- > European Parliament, 'Human rights breaches in Russia, Cuba and Serbia', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211210IPR19224/human-rights-breaches-in-russia-cuba-and-serbia>).



Image: European Defence Agency



EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE

Crisis management

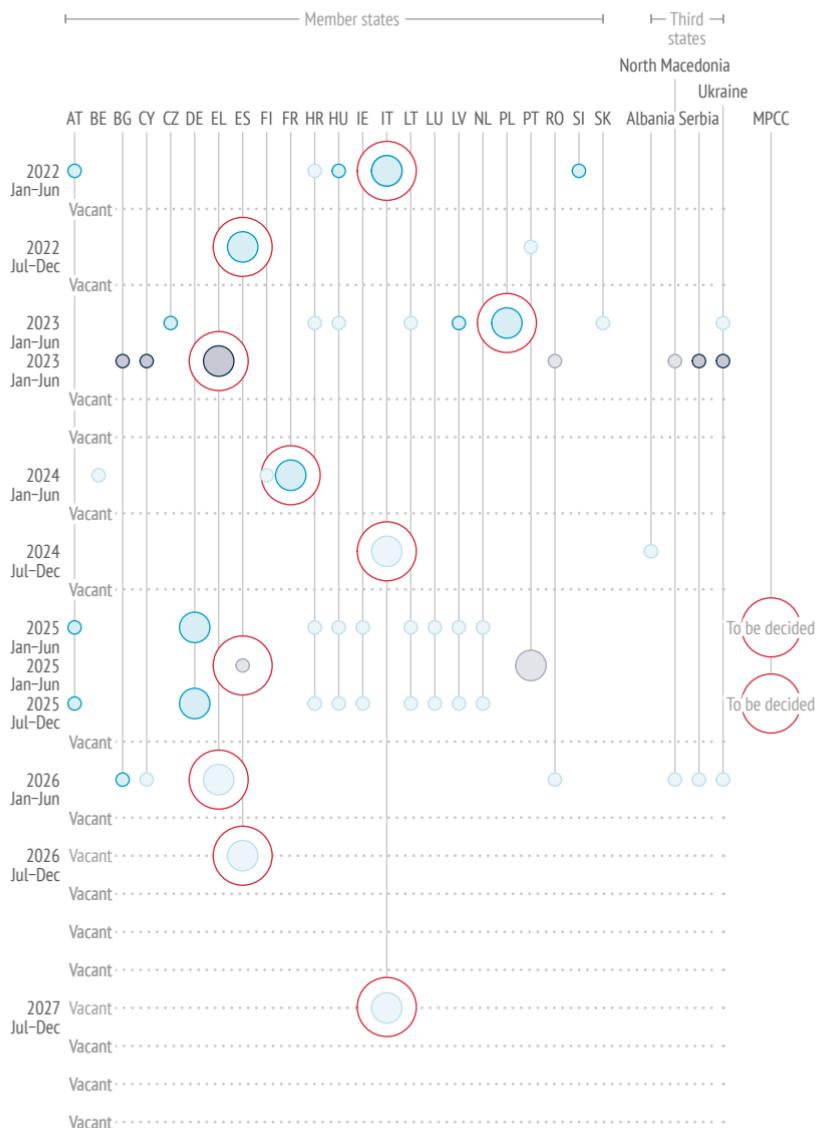
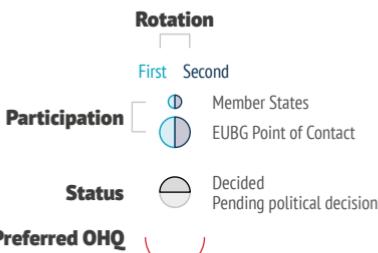
Civilian and military CSDP

2021 was another eventful and busy year for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. Not only was the EU having to continue to deal with the operational impact of Covid-19, but new threats and challenges meant the Union decided to launch new missions and operations, while also adapting existing deployments. In particular, a deterioration of the security environment in the Sahel, Horn of Africa and in the Western Balkans meant that the EU needed to be on heightened alert. On 15 October 2021, the EU decided to establish a new military training mission to Mozambique (EUTM MOZ) in order to support the country's ability to protect civilians from insecurity in the Cabo Delgado province. This deployment was particularly important as it was the first mission that also made use of some €89 million in assistance (2021–2022) under the European Peace Facility (EPF)⁽¹⁾. With this, the EU wanted to ensure that any military units trained in Mozambique would have the right military equipment. Basing its mission headquarters in Maputo, and with a 2-year initial mandate, EUTM MOZ reached initial operational capability at the start of November 2021, and it started its work in training locations in Maputo, Katembe and Chimoio.

(1) EEAS, 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', July 2022 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/CSDP_Annual_Report_2022_EN_updated_web_0.pdf).

EU Battlegroups (EUBG)

Offers and commitments,
as at Nov 2021



In the Western Balkans, the EU continued to support the region with civilian and military efforts under EUFOR Althea and EULEX Kosovo. As underlined at the Brdo Summit on 6 October 2021, the Western Balkans are essential to Europe and there is a need to ensure the security of the region as a whole, especially in the context of ongoing EU accession initiatives. EUFOR Althea, the Union's oldest CSDP deployment, was extended in 2021 to continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's armed forces with their core security tasks such as defence, the disposal of weapons, ammunition and explosives, and demining efforts⁽²⁾. What is more, under the EPF a decision was taken in November 2021 to provide €10 million in support for the development of a demining battalion for the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under this measure, '68 medical and transport vehicles and 150 metal detectors' will be provided to ensure that the country is mine free by 2027⁽³⁾.

For its part, EULEX Kosovo had conducted 64 field operations by the end of November 2021 to ensure that missing persons and exhumations could take place. This led to the repatriation of human remains to Kosovo in September 2021 following the discovery of a mass grave at Kizevak in November 2020⁽⁴⁾. During the border tensions that erupted in the region in September 2021, EULEX Kosovo was called upon to provide security assistance including 650 patrols since the start of the year⁽⁵⁾. The mission also continued to support exercises and training in Kosovo. During 2021, it trained over 530 individuals on working with mentally ill prisoners, investigation techniques, as well as on institutional responses to gender-based violence and domestic violence⁽⁶⁾. EULEX Kosovo also participated in close to 60 exercises with NATO's forces and Kosovo Police and it provided legal advice on 17 laws developed by Kosovo for state border control, public gatherings, domestic violence and more⁽⁷⁾.

(2) 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', op. cit.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

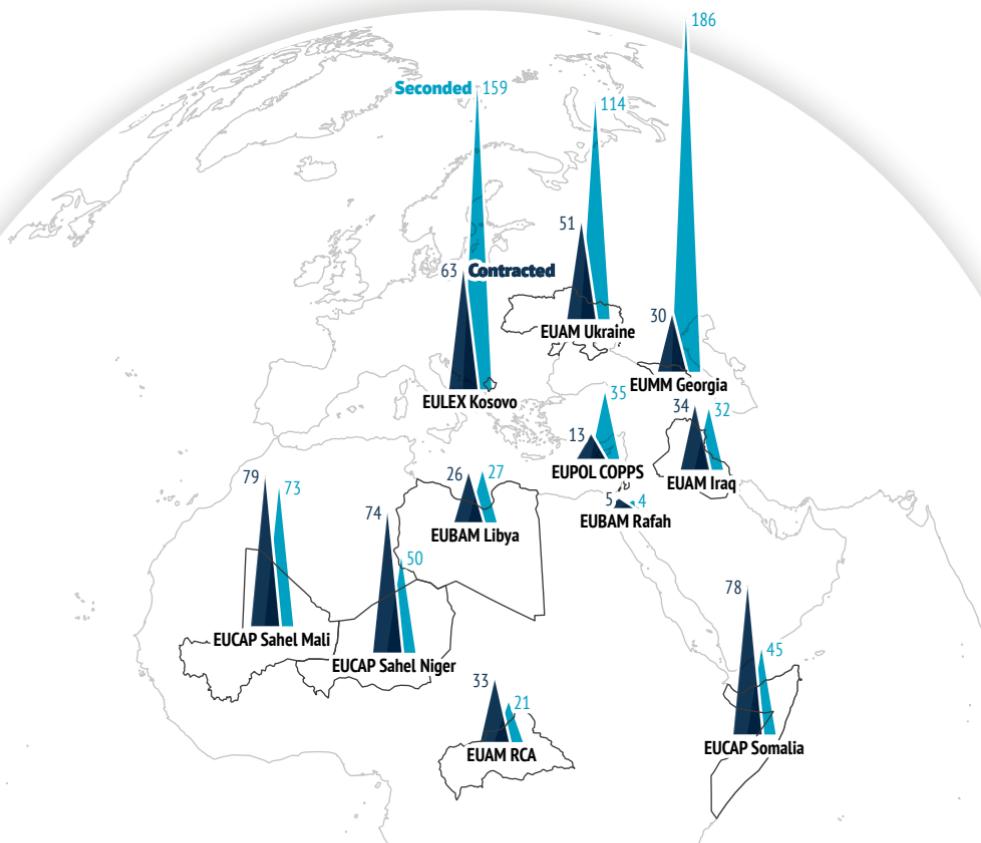
(5) Ibid.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

CSDP civilian missions

Personnel totals as of 31 Dec 2021

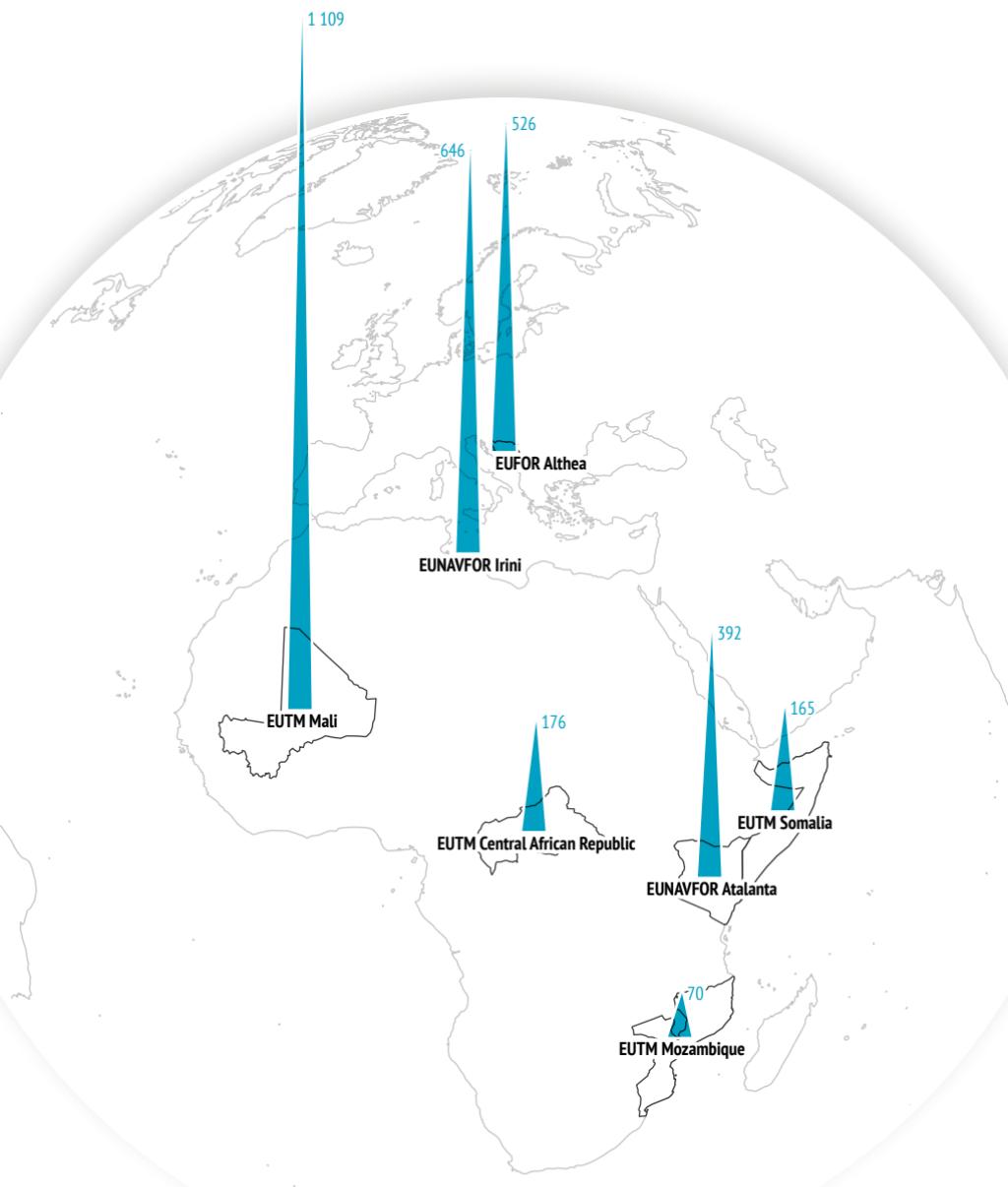


NB: Kosovo Specialist Chambers & Specialist Prosecutor's Office not included. Heads of Mission are coded as contracted personnel. Data: SIPRI, Multilateral Peace Operations Database, 2022

In the Eastern Partnership countries, the EU was faced with mounting challenges related to Russian military aggression, hybrid threats from Belarus and the repression of its people, Covid-19 and ongoing conflicts in countries such as Georgia. The advisory

CSDP military missions and operations

Personnel totals as of 31 Dec 2021



Data: EU Military Staff, 2022

The impact of Covid-19 on CSDP

‘When the Covid-19 pandemic began to sweep through the world in the early months of 2020, no country or international organisation had contingency plans in place to deal with a crisis that could occur anywhere and affect everybody simultaneously. In the case of the missions and operations deployed under the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Covid-19 had a severe impact, including on Brussels-based personnel and structures, early on. In hindsight, it is easy to criticise the first three months of crisis management at the CSDP structures in Brussels as well as what operations and missions did in the field. However, the unique and novel challenge of this pandemic must never be lost sight of in any assessment of CSDP performance. The pandemic and its effect on the CSDP revealed some crucial challenges faced by EU missions and their operational and planning structures.’

Pietz, T. ‘The Impact of Covid-19 on CSDP’, Brief No 17, EUISS, September 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/impact-covid-19-csdp>).

mission to Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) was extended and, even after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it continued to provide support to the Ukrainian government through training and projects, albeit at a far more basic level⁽⁸⁾. In 2021, ‘EUAM Ukraine played an integral role in advising and supporting the attestation of more than 10 000 prosecutors and 9 000 customs officials’⁽⁹⁾. The monitoring mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) continued to provide assistance for both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) between Abkhazia and South Ossetia by conducting over 3 500 continuous patrols, as well as handling over 2 190 activations of the hotline that ‘allows security actors to address issues as diverse as military exercises, detentions, medical crossings, water supply and livestock’⁽¹⁰⁾. Furthermore, EUMM Georgia supported 13 confidence building projects in 2021, including trust-building initiatives with people living either side of the ABL⁽¹¹⁾.

In the Mediterranean, the EU continued to support the UN and Libya with stability and capacity building efforts through its border

(8) ‘Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations’, op. cit.

(9) Ibid.

(10) Ibid.

(11) Ibid.

assistance mission (EUBAM Libya). It also underlined its support for the UN-backed arms embargo under UNSC Resolutions 1970 (2011) and 2292 (2016) through EUNAVFOR MED IRINI⁽¹²⁾. Set up in 2020, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI has been responsible for inspections at sea, interdicting vessels suspected of being in breach of the UN resolutions, halting illicit exports of crude oil and disrupting human smuggling and trafficking networks at sea⁽¹³⁾. In December 2021, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI reported that since its inception the operation has boarded and inspected 21 suspect vessels, made 46 inspections in EU ports, conducted 231 friendly approaches to vessels in the Mediterranean, investigated 715 suspect flights and provided 33 special reports to the UN Panel of Experts on Libya⁽¹⁴⁾. At the start of the year, EUNAVFOR Med IRINI signed an agreement with Frontex to improve its surveillance capacities. For its part, EUBAM Libya conducted in May 2021 the first in a series of visits to the border crossing with Tunisia at Ras Ajdir⁽¹⁵⁾. It also continued to support authorities and international missions with capacity-building, as well as ensuring that financial assistance for border management could be better targeted.

In the Middle East, the EU underlined its support to the Palestinian people and for a two-state solution between the Israeli-Palestinian people. It continued to provide assistance in the face of the conflict in Gaza following an escalation of violence there in May 2021⁽¹⁶⁾. Through its civilian police mission to the occupied Palestinian territory (EUPOL COPPS), the EU developed a curriculum for human rights training for law enforcement agencies and it contributed to gender-mainstreaming in the Palestinian Security Forces. In the first six months of 2021, EUPOL COPPS trained over 380 people, including 201 women⁽¹⁷⁾. Through the border assistance mission in Rafah (EUBAM Rafah), the Union contributed to capacity building by organising a total of 19 training activities for anti-smuggling

(12) 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', op. cit.

(13) Ibid.

(14) Ibid.

(15) Ibid.

(16) Ibid.

(17) Ibid.

techniques, combating corruption and enhancing border authority performance⁽¹⁸⁾. In Iraq, the advisory mission (EUAM Iraq) continued to provide security sector reform advice to the Iraqi government and the Office of the National Security Advisor in the form of counter-terrorism and counter-violent extremism training. In 2021, EUAM Iraq also started to provide advice on the protection of cultural heritage and established a 'limited permanent presence in Erbil' to liaise with the Kurdistan Regional Government⁽¹⁹⁾.

In the Horn of Africa, the EU agreed to a new Strategy for the region (building on the 2011 version) to underline the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa for the EU⁽²⁰⁾. The new strategy, agreed in May 2021, called for a more intensified engagement with the region on security and growing challenges such as climate change, irregular migration and human rights abuses. Through its military training mission (EUTM Somalia), its civilian capacity building mission (EUCAP Somalia) and its naval operation (EUNAVFOR ATALANTA), the EU continued to deal with issues such as piracy, combating organised crime and security sector reform. EUNAVFOR Atalanta continued to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2021, as well as to protect World Food Programme shipments and vulnerable commercial vessels operating in the region⁽²¹⁾. In January 2021 however, the mandate of EUNAVFOR Atalanta was extended from counter-piracy operations to include counter drugs and arms smuggling. Furthermore, EUNAVFOR Atalanta also played a critical role in the EU's broader approach to the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, in the context of the September 2021 EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the EU conducted passing exercises (PASSAX) with the navies of Japan, Djibouti, Oman, India, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea during the year.

For its part, EUTM Somalia continued to provide strategic-level advice to Somali authorities in the Mogadishu area. Faced with the threat of Al-Shabab, EUTM Somalia continued to develop the skills of the Somali National Armed Forces and it conducted more

(18) 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', op. cit.

(19) Ibid.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Ibid.

than 25 courses and trainings during the year⁽²²⁾. Such training related to countering improvised explosive devices, medical logistics, doctrine development, command and control (C2) and ensuring interoperability with AMISOM and UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSO). EUCAP Somalia complemented these efforts with security sector reform activities such as civilian policing, maritime administration, search and rescue, coast guard functions, communications and border management⁽²³⁾.

Finally, in the Sahel region the EU approved a new Integrated Strategy in April 2021, which made the point that the Sahel was falling into a deeper crisis. Through its Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC) in the region, which was established in 2019 to link 31 international mission members operating in the Sahel, the Union continued to provide region-wide advice and assistance with civilian and military training to the G5 Sahel structures⁽²⁴⁾. Throughout the year, the RACC conducted 13 training courses for the G5 Sahel Joint Force and its police component. It also assisted with pre-deployment training for the G5 Joint Theatre Command Post for the forces based in Nouakchott and Bamako respectively. Additionally, the RACC contributed to regional initiatives such as the G5S Women's Platform, as well as providing support for the identification of border management projects in the region⁽²⁵⁾.

Operationally speaking, the Union continued to implement its integrated approach despite the worsening security situation. In Mali, with its military training mission (EUTM Mali), the EU continued to 'train, educate, advise and accompany the Malian Armed Forces'⁽²⁶⁾. In 2021, EUTM Mali helped the Malian Armed Forces try to restore territorial integrity under civilian authority despite considerable political challenges in the country following the May 2021 coup d'état. EUTM Mali helped considerably with the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2021, especially by working closely with other European and international engagements such

(22) 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', op. cit.

(23) Ibid.

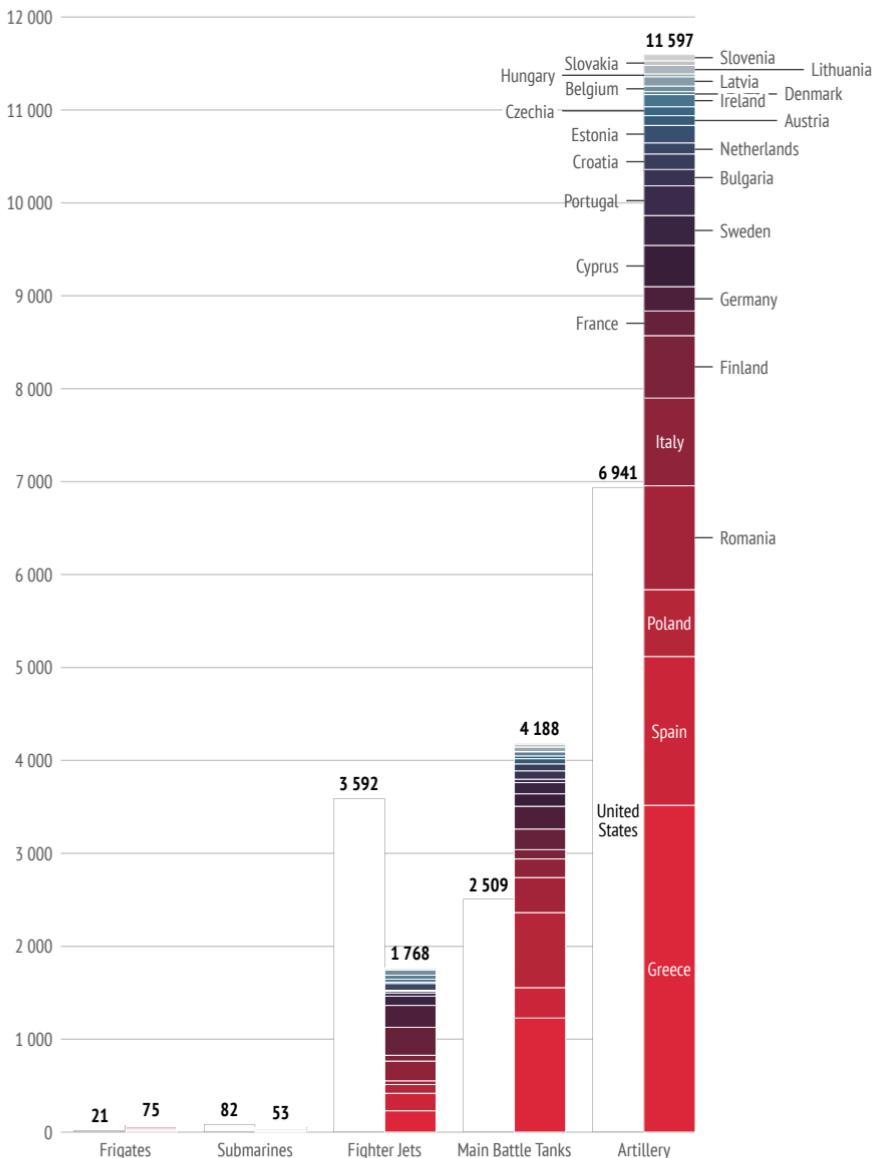
(24) Ibid.

(25) Ibid.

(26) Ibid.

European military capabilities

A comparison of major systems, 2020



Data: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021

as the Takuba Task Force, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA. The Union's civilian capacity building mission to Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) also assisted with capacity-building, and in 2021 the mission continued to support the country in the fight against terrorism and organised crime⁽²⁷⁾.

In Niger, the EU's capacity building civilian mission (EUCAP Sahel Niger) worked to establish within the Nigerien police a second border control company in the area of Birni N'Konni at the border with Nigeria. It also contributed to creating a mobile force of the Nigerien National Guard to fight terrorism and ensure rule of law. Although the Covid-19 pandemic affected the performance of elements of the mission, in October 2021 EUCAP Sahel Niger organised the first exercise for the National Guard within the context of the Regional Operational Centres⁽²⁸⁾.

Furthermore, the EU civilian advisory mission to the Central African Republic (EUAM CAR) reached full operational capacity by the end of 2021. It continued to support authorities with tasks such as security sector reform with a total of close to 80 staff working from Bangui⁽²⁹⁾. For its part, the EU military training mission to the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) was suspended in December in a temporary and reversible manner due to the increased presence of Russian-affiliated forces on the ground⁽³⁰⁾. Despite this suspension late in the year, throughout 2021 EUTM RCA was able to provide strategic advice and operational training to the country's armed forces and it even supported the 'reintegration of more than 500 former rebels into Central African Armed Forces as part of the national disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation programme'⁽³¹⁾. Given the increased incidents of foreign interference directed towards CSDP mission and operations, the EU decided to enhance raising awareness efforts in civilian and military missions and operations. It did this in 2021 by organising roundtables

(27) 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', op. cit.

(28) Ibid.

(29) Ibid.

(30) Ibid.

(31) Ibid.

and dialogues with journalists, fact checkers and civil society in places such as the Central Africa Republic⁽³²⁾.

(32) 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', op. cit.

Defence cooperation

Strategic Compass

The Union spent much of 2021 working on the Strategic Compass for security and defence, the first draft of which was presented by HR/VP Borrell to the Council of the EU on 15 November 2021. This draft, presented before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, called on the EU to enhance its role as a security and defence actor by improving how it acts with civilian and military missions and operations, secures its access to strategic domains, invests in military capabilities and strategic enablers, and partners with like-minded actors to enhance global security. As HR/VP Borrell remarked at the time, the EU had been 'working on the Strategic Compass for months, gathering input and refining the text' and the EU Member States were quite enthusiastic about the structure and thrust of the document⁽¹⁾. With an aim to direct EU security and defence policy until 2030, the Strategic Compass was developed as the first document of its kind for the EU and detailed how the Union would act in a world marked by greater strategic competition.

Throughout 2021, EU Member States and the EEAS organised over 50 dialogues on specific issues related to the Strategic Compass, and more than 10 non-papers were co-drafted by EU Member States

(1) EEAS, 'Time to move forward with the Strategic Compass', 18 November 2021 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/time-move-forward-strategic-compass_en).

to highlight security and defence matters of particular importance to them. Indeed, following the delivery of the classified Threat Analysis at the end of 2020, EU Member States set about providing content for the Strategic Compass. Drafted by the EEAS, the Strategic Compass process was supported by the EUISS. For example, in February 2021 the EUISS worked with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU to organise a high-level conference that set out the general parameters of the Compass drafting process. This was followed by dedicated dialogue workshops co-organised by the EUISS on the global commons (with France), national defence planning (Croatia), missions and operations (Netherlands), defence industry (Spain), security of supply (Finland and Latvia), Western Balkans (Slovenia), cybersecurity (France), capability development (Hungary), space (France), EU-NATO cooperation (Slovenia) and air security (France)⁽²⁾.

In a joint session of foreign affairs and defence ministers on 15 November 2021, the EU Member States discussed the first draft of the EU Strategic Compass and they encouraged further work on providing clear political-strategic guidance for the EU over the next 5 to 10 years⁽³⁾. Furthermore, at the European Council meeting of 16 December 2021 leaders expressed their wish for the Council of the EU 'to take forward work on an ambitious and actionable Strategic Compass' to provide the Union with a 'common strategic vision over the next decade'. A strategic vision that 'makes best use of the entire EU toolbox, including civilian and military policies, tools and instruments'⁽⁴⁾. With a view to endorsing the Strategic Compass at the March 2022 European Council meeting, heads of state and government called on the Commission and the HR/VP to continue to develop initiatives in the areas of technology, space security, cybersecurity and the fight against hybrid threats, as well as developing further EU-NATO cooperation⁽⁵⁾.

(2) See the activities of the EU Institute for Security Studies on the Strategic Compass (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/tags/strategic-compass>).

(3) Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 15 November 2021 – Main results' (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/15/>).

(4) European Council, 'Conclusions, 16 December 2021', op. cit.

(5) Ibid.

A Strategic Compass for the EU

‘Since 2016, and beyond CSDP missions and operations, the Union has intensified work on a broader set of security and defence tools that include capability development and defence-industrial policy. For example, today the EU can finance and develop military capabilities to support the European defence industry. The EU is also investing in dual-use transport infrastructure to facilitate military mobility across Europe. What is more, the EU is generating the capacities required to counter hybrid threats such as the manipulation of the information environment, attacks and disturbances against critical infrastructure and election interference. Bridging its efforts between security and defence and justice and home affairs also allows the EU to address cross-border security concerns such as cyber-attacks and the instrumentalisation of irregular migration and borders.’

Fiott, D. and Lindstrom, G. (eds.) ‘Strategic Compass: New Bearings for EU Security and Defence?’, *Chaillot Paper* No 171, EUISS, December 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-compass>).

The European Parliament also welcomed the Strategic Compass in its 2021 Annual Report on CSDP and called it the first major step towards a genuine European Defence Union. The report also called for the EU to develop more flexible and robust CSDP military missions and operations, as well as underlined the continued importance of civilian CSDP. Interestingly, the European Parliament also stressed the importance of ensuring EU access to contested strategic spaces, as well as to build its capacities for mutual assistance and solidarity between EU Member States. The Parliament called for greater efforts in countering hybrid threats and ensuring EU sovereignty in the space and air domains, as well as protecting strategic infrastructure such as subsea cables, satellites and economic inputs such as semiconductors. Furthermore, MEPs emphasised the importance of the Threat Analysis that preceded the Compass drafting process and called for its findings to ‘be subject to a regular and realistic review aiming to develop a mechanism for a continuous threat assessment and parliamentary consultation’⁽⁶⁾.

(6) European Parliament, ‘Report on the Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – Annual Report 2021’, 21 December 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0358_EN.html).

Permanent Structured Cooperation

The Union's efforts to further develop military capabilities through PESCO continued in 2021 with the announcement of a fourth wave of projects. Through a Council of the EU decision on 16 November 2021, 14 new projects were added to an existing list of 46 PESCO projects. The new wave of projects included:

- > a project for Strategic Air Transport for Outsized Cargo (SATOC) to fill critical shortfalls in the transportation of outsized and heavy cargo;
- > a Medium size Semi-Autonomous Surface Vehicle (M-SASV) to allow for littoral operations and special naval tasks;
- > a Next Generation of Small RPAS (NGSR) to be used in the maritime and air domains;
- > and the Defence of Space Assets (DoSA) to protect current and future space assets⁽⁷⁾.

Furthermore, the fourth wave of projects would also focus on filling capability gaps in areas such as cyberdefence and air, land and maritime systems. Following this announcement, the total number of PESCO projects stood at 60 and were divided between ten training and facilities projects, eight land, formations and systems projects, eight maritime projects, ten air and systems projects, ten cyber and C4ISR projects, ten enabling and joint projects and four space projects⁽⁸⁾.

Furthermore, on 16 November 2021 the Council of the EU published two recommendations based on the binding commitments in PESCO. The first recommendation (2021/C 464/01) called on

(7) Council of the European Union, 'EU defence cooperation: Council launches the 4th wave of new PESCO projects', 16 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/16/eu-defence-cooperation-council-launches-the-4th-wave-of-new-pesco-projects/>).

(8) European Defence Agency, 'PESCO Projects' (<https://www.pesco.europa.eu>).

PESCO projects

Number of PESCO projects Member States share with each other bilaterally, 2021

FR	ES	DE	IT	NL	PL	BE	EL	RO	HU	PT	EE	CZ	CY	HR	LU	SK	BG	LT	SI	AT	FI	SE	LV	IE
21	21	21	21	12	10	11	10	12	8	9	6	6	6	5	6	4	6	4	5	6	5	7	4	1
21		15	15	8	7	9	7	5	6	10	3	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	2	1
21	15		11	11	8	7	4	6	6	7	3	7	3	2	5	3	2	3	5	4	4	3	2	
21	15	11		6	7	6	11	6	5	7	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	3	2	4	4	2	1	1
12	8	11	6		7	7	3	4	5	3	4	5	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	4	2	3	
10	7	8	7	7		8	4	6	7	5	4	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	
11	9	7	6	7	8		3	4	5	3	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	3		
10	7	4	11	3	4	3		5	3	5	1	1	8	5	2	3	4	2	2	3	1	1	2	1
12	5	6	6	4	6	4	5		2	6	4	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	1	3	3	
8	6	6	5	5	7	5	5	3	3		2	3	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	
8	10	7	7	2	4	2	4	5	2		1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	1	
6	3	3	4	4	4	3	1	4	3	1		3	1	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	3	2	3	
6	5	7	4	5	3	4	1	2	3	1	3		1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	
6	5	3	5	2	2	3	8	1	3	2	1	1		3	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	
5	4	2	4	3	3	2	5	2	3	1	2	1	3		1	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	
6	4	5	4	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	1	1		2	2	3	1	3	2	2	1	
4	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	2	4	1	2	2	2	2		2	2	2	1	1	3	1		
6	3	2	4	2	2	2	4	3	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	2		3	2	1	2	1	1	
4	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	2	3	3	2		2	2	2	1	1		
5	3	5	2	3	3	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	2		2	1	1	1	
6	3	4	4	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	2		1	1	1	
5	4	4	4	4	3	3	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2		
7	5	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
4	2	2	1	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1		
1	1		1			1				1	1			1				1						

Data: PESCO Secretariat, 2021

participating EU Member States to take a common approach to fulfilling the PESCO binding commitments and it set out a plan for sequencing the commitments over the period 2021–2025⁽⁹⁾. Among the recommendations were a call for more precise financial data

(9) Council of the European Union, 'Recommendation concerning the sequencing of the fulfilment of the more binding commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and specifying more precise objectives, and repealing the Recommendation of 15 October 2018', 17 November 2021 ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1117\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1117(01)&from=EN)).

regarding defence spending and defence investment when reporting such spending under the National Implementation Plans (NIPs). The first recommendation also called on EU Member States to provide detailed information in the NIPs 'on how and by which means they seek to increase the number, size and impact of joint and collaborative strategic defence capability projects' ⁽¹⁰⁾. The second recommendation (2021/C 464/02) provided a critique of ongoing efforts under PESCO and it showed how some of the projects 'may encounter some difficulty in achieving the expected outcomes' by 2025 ⁽¹¹⁾. The assessment also recognised that only modest efforts had been made by EU Member States under the binding commitments towards defence spending and joint capability development ⁽¹²⁾.

Coordinated Annual Review on Defence

At the end of 2021, EU Member States agreed to begin the second cycle of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) ⁽¹³⁾. Given the deteriorating situation for Europe in security and defence, the CARD process was expected to lead to an identification of greater capabilities and defence spending. Launched in December 2021, the second CARD cycle initiated a process whereby individual EU Member States meet with the EDA on a bilateral basis to discuss opportunities for European capability development collaboration and areas where EU Member States might explore enhanced research and technology efforts. This process will lead the EDA to provide an

(10) 'Recommendation concerning the sequencing of the fulfilment of the more binding commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and specifying more precise objectives, and repealing the Recommendation of 15 October 2018', *op. cit.*

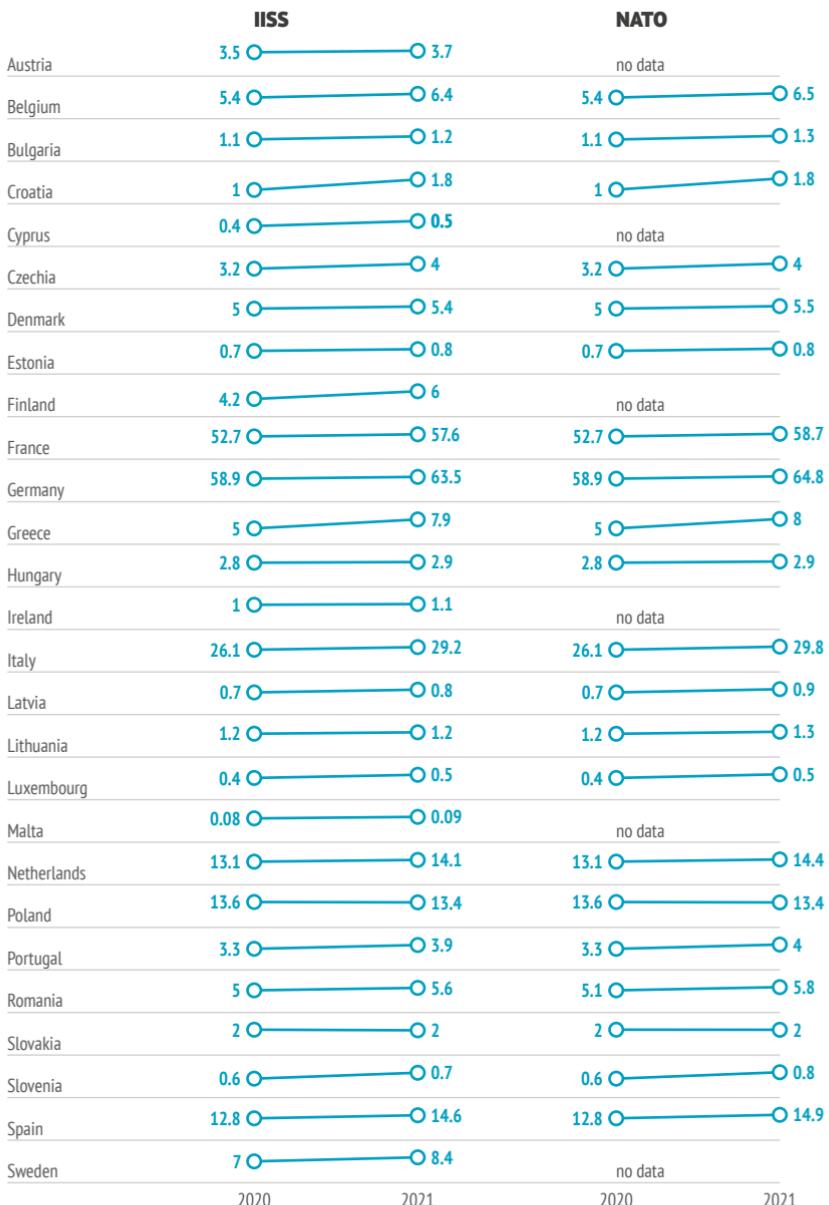
(11) Council of the European Union, 'Recommendation assessing the progress made by the participating Member States to fulfil commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO)', 17 November 2021 ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1117\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1117(01)&from=EN)).

(12) *Ibid.*

(13) European Defence Agency, 'Second CARD Cycle (2021–2022)' ([https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-\(card\)](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-(card))).

Defence expenditure

Current \$ billion, 2020–2021



Data: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 2022; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2022

aggregate analysis of the needs of EU Member States and the second CARD report, detailing needs and cooperation possibilities, will be delivered to EU defence ministers on 15 November 2022.

European Defence Fund and Investments

2021 was a productive year for the European Defence Fund (EDF), as the European Commission welcomed the European Parliament's decision to approve the EDF Regulation on 29 April 2021⁽¹⁴⁾. With a budget of €7.9 billion, the European Commission could finally begin the work programmes under the EDF as a way of investing in collaborative research (€2.6 billion for the period 2021–2027) and capability development (€5.3 billion for 2021–2027) projects. More specifically, the Commission announced that it would also dedicate up to 4 %-8 % of the EDF to develop disruptive technologies and stressed the important role of SMEs in Europe's defence market. With the European Parliament's approval, the Commission moved towards the next step in the process by getting ready for its first open call for proposals⁽¹⁵⁾.

This call emerged on 30 June 2021 with the announcement that in 2021 the Commission would invest €1.2 billion for 23 calls of proposals⁽¹⁶⁾. This news was coupled with the announcement that the European Commission had also agreed to fund 26 new defence projects worth more than €158 billion under the EDF's precursor programme, the European Defence Industrial Development Programme

(14) European Commission, 'EU defence gets a boost as the European Defence Fund becomes a reality', 29 April 2021 (https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-gets-boost-european-defence-fund-becomes-reality-2021-04-29_en).

(15) Ibid.

(16) European Commission, 'Defence Industry: the Commission kick-starts the European Defence Fund with €1.2 billion and awards 26 new industrial cooperation projects for more than €158 million', 30 June 2021 (https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/defence-industry-commission-kick-starts-european-defence-fund-eu12-billion-and-awards-26-new-2021_en).

(EDIDP)⁽¹⁷⁾. By December 2021, Europe's defence industry had submitted over 140 joint defence project proposals to the first-ever call under the EDF⁽¹⁸⁾. Even though these projects were working towards the de-fragmentation and competitiveness of the European defence market, the European Parliament – in its Annual Report on the CSDP – continued to deplore the decision by Member States to reduce the financial envelopes for the EDF and military mobility⁽¹⁹⁾.

On top of the work on the EDF, the European Commission was tasked with further duties by the European Council during 2021. For example, on 22 February 2021 the Commission presented its Action Plan on Synergies between civil, defence and space industries. This followed a call by the Council in June 2020 to analyse ways in which synergies between EU financing tools such as the EDF, Horizon Europe, the EU Space Programme and more can be better aligned. The Action Plan on Synergies made clear that the EU could ensure greater cross-fertilisation between its programmes. Among 11 specific recommendations and action points, it stated that this was most obviously the case with regard to drone technologies, space-based communications and space traffic management⁽²⁰⁾. Additionally, during the 25–26 February 2021 European Council meeting the European Commission was tasked with presenting 'a technology roadmap by October 2021 for boosting research, technology development and innovation and reducing [the EU's] strategic dependencies in critical technologies and value chains'⁽²¹⁾. Delivering the communication on 15 February 2022 instead, the Commission set

(17) 'Defence Industry: the Commission kick-starts the European Defence Fund with €1.2 billion and awards 26 new industrial cooperation projects for more than €158 million', *op.cit.*

(18) European Commission, 'European Defence Industry submits over 140 joint defence R&D proposals under first EDF calls, and 26 collaborative defence projects selected for funding under EDIDP', 21 December 2021 (https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/european-defence-industry-submits-over-140-joint-defence-rd-proposals-under-first-edf-calls-and-26-2021-12-21_en).

(19) 'Report on the Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – Annual Report 2021', *op. cit.*

(20) European Commission, 'Action Plan on Synergies between civil, defence and space industries', COM(2021) 70 final, 22 February 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0070&qid=1671179969043>).

(21) European Council, 'Statement of the Members of the European Council', 26 February 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48625/2526-02-21-euco-statement-en.pdf>).

out how the Union would encourage the development and resilience of critical technologies for security and defence⁽²²⁾.

The importance of security and defence to the European Commission was further highlighted in the 15 September 2021 State of the Union speech by Commission President von der Leyen. During the speech, which followed the crisis in Afghanistan, the president stated there was no option but cooperation in security and defence. Here, the president remarked that Europe is ‘connected to the world by narrow straits, stormy seas and vast land borders’, and this is why the EU could not afford to overlook crises in its neighbourhood or slack off in the areas of hybrid threats and cybersecurity⁽²³⁾. Indeed, President von der Leyen stated that there will be instances where the UN or NATO will be unable or unwilling to engage and so the EU had to develop a European Defence Union. This meant, according to the president, developing the political will to act, to improve the EU’s situational awareness and intelligence, and generate greater interoperability between Europe’s armed forces by investing in common European weapons platforms and enablers such as cyberdefence tools⁽²⁴⁾.

Space

At the start of 2021, senior EU political leaders stressed the importance of space for the EU at the 13th European Space Conference, which took place on 12–13 January. Leaders such as European Council President Charles Michel and the HR/VP Josep Borrell, underlined that the EU must be stronger in space as a way to reinforce the Union’s strategic autonomy. On 19 April, ministers reunited in the Council continued to negotiate the proposed Regulation establishing the EU Space Programme (EUSP) for the period 2021–2027.

(22) European Commission, ‘Communication on a Roadmap on critical technologies for security and defence’, COM(2022) 61 final, 15 February 2022 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0061&qid=167180076402>).

(23) European Commission, ‘2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen’, 15 September 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_4701).

(24) Ibid.

The role of space in the EU's Strategic Compass

‘The next 5–10 years will see an evolution of space-based threats and challenges because traditional and new space powers like China, India, Russia and the United States will increasingly use space to undergird their military power. The likelihood is that, without maintaining and extending its autonomy in space, the Union will be exposed to greater military risk in space and on earth. The Strategic Compass will no doubt view space as a key strategic enabler, but space has a wider application to EU policy and key challenges such as the digital and green transitions. In this respect, the Strategic Compass is the EU’s first real opportunity to craft an EU Space and Defence Strategy that can simultaneously link various policy domains while also enhancing the visibility and importance of space for security and defence. After 2022, and on the back of the Compass, there may very well be recourse to revise the EU Space Strategy too.’

Fiott, D. ‘Securing the heavens: how can space support the EU’s Strategic Compass?’, *Brief* No 9, EUIS, April 2021 (https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/securing-heavens#_in_defence_of_space).

At this Council of the EU meeting in April, ministers agreed that the EUSP should contain an €14.8 billion financial envelop under the Multi-annual Financial Framework⁽²⁵⁾. The Council of the EU would meet again on 28 May to adopt Conclusions on space for people in European coastal areas, where ministers agreed that EU space programmes such as Copernicus, Galileo and EGNOS should better help with climate change mitigation and economic efforts.

The EU’s space policy evolved further in 2021 as the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on space for everyone. In these conclusions, the Council of the EU underlined the importance of strengthening the links between space and non-space sectors, as well as stressing the importance of EU initiatives such as the programme for space skills (called ‘Cassini’) and Horizon Europe. The ministers in the Council of the EU agreed that the Commission and the relatively

(25) Council of the European Union, ‘Timeline: EU Space Policy’, 10 June 2022 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-space-programme/timeline/>).

new EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) played a crucial role in developing the Union as a space actor⁽²⁶⁾.

Furthermore, at the end of 2021 the European Commission announced that it would make a legislative proposal in 2022 to develop an EU space-based global secure connectivity system. As European Commissioner Thierry Breton stated, 'connectivity is a major structural change. It will condition our economic power and digital sovereignty and societal resilience. Europe must not be left behind. It is imperative that the EU launches its own highly connected initiative'⁽²⁷⁾. The EU Secure Connectivity Initiative, as the programme is known, will provide 'reliable, secure and cost-effective governmental connectivity' to support critical infrastructure protection, crisis management, space and maritime surveillance and enable high-speed broadband availability across the EU⁽²⁸⁾.

The EU Satellite Centre (EU SatCen) enjoyed a year of activities, especially in the context of the 10th year anniversary of the EEAS. In this context, SatCen was able to underline its activities related to geospatial intelligence and its Space Situational Awareness (SSA) tasks on behalf of the Union. For 10 years, SatCen has played an important role as the 'front desk' for the EU Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) Support Framework⁽²⁹⁾. These efforts were recognised at the ministerial board meetings in February and May. Most importantly, for the first time in nearly 30 years the SatCen board met on 6 May 2021 at the level of ministers. The HR/VP chaired the board meeting and ministers discussed space-based threats, as well as how to build on the work of SatCen in the coming years. The board meeting led to a commitment to meet again at the ministerial

(26) Council of the European Union, 'Council stresses the importance of participation of all in the space sector', 26 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/26/council-stresses-the-importance-of-participation-of-all-in-the-space-sector/>).

(27) European Commission, 'Work to build an EU space-based global secure connectivity system to start in 2022', 10 November 2021 (https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/work-build-eu-space-based-global-secure-connectivity-system-start-2022-2021-11-10-1_en).

(28) Ibid.

(29) EU Satellite Centre, 'Satcen's SSA activities: more than 10 years providing security in space', 2021 (<https://www.satcen.europa.eu/News/satcen-s-ssa-activities-more-than-10-years-providing-security-in-space>).

level in 2022⁽³⁰⁾, where ministers will have the opportunity to reflect on the role of SatCen in the context of the Union's forthcoming first Strategy for Security and Defence in Space (expected by the end of 2023).

Military Mobility

On 24 September 2021, the European Commission and HR/VP Borrell adopted the Third Joint Report on the implementation of the Action Plan on Military Mobility⁽³¹⁾. The project, which combines regulatory and financing efforts by the European Commission and a specific project under PESCO, is designed to improve transportation links and procedures in the EU for military equipment and cargo. Military mobility is a core element of cooperation between the EU and NATO. The third joint report made clear that good progress had been made since the last such report in October 2020, including steps to finance dual-used transportation links under the Connecting Europe Facility worth €330 million⁽³²⁾. The EU's efforts on military mobility over the course of 2021 also included a decision to develop a digital information exchange system, which would be funded under the EDF's annual work programme for 2021 to the tune of €50 million⁽³³⁾. The third joint report also indicated that in terms of procedural and regulatory matters, the EU had completed its work on 'EU Form 302' which will enable smoother customs formalities at borders when transporting military goods⁽³⁴⁾.

(30) EU Satellite Centre, 'SatCen Board Meeting Ministerial Level, Chaired by HR/VP Borrell', 6 May 2021 (<https://www.satcen.europa.eu/News/satcen-board-meeting-ministerial-level-chaired-by-hr-vp-borrell>).

(31) European Commission, 'Defence Union: further progress made towards military mobility in the EU', 27 September 2021 (https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/defence-union-further-progress-made-towards-military-mobility-eu-2021-09-27_en).

(32) Ibid.

(33) Ibid.

(34) Ibid.

European Peace Facility

On 22 March 2021, the EU finally set up the European Peace Facility (EPF) to provide a more effective financial instrument to cover all external actions with military or defence implications under the CFSP. More specifically, the EPF would be a new financial mechanism to allow the Union to cover a portion of the common operating costs associated with EU-led CSDP military deployments, while also endowing the EU with the ability to financially support partner militaries with procuring military equipment for training and security purposes. Following its decision, the Council of the EU announced that the EPF would be financed with an off-budget fund worth some €5 billion for the 2021–2027 period. Therefore, for the first time in its history, the EU could use the EPF to ensure that its training missions could operate alongside the provision of military equipment to partner countries. The EPF, although a new instrument, is built on past financing mechanisms including the Athena Mechanism, which covered the common costs associated with CSDP military operations and missions, and the African Peace Facility (AFP), which provided support in the past to African or AU-led operations⁽³⁵⁾.

Civilian CSDP

It was another important year for civilian CSDP, especially in terms of the implementation of the Civilian CSDP Compact and its 22 specific commitments related to ensuring a more capable and effective civilian CSDP⁽³⁶⁾. Through the NIP clusters, six EU Member States led work on national secondments, career path development, women's participation and strategic communication, among other issues.

(35) Council of the European Union, 'EU sets up the European Peace Facility', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/22/eu-sets-up-the-european-peace-facility/>).

(36) Council of the European Union, 'Civilian CSDP Compact: Council conclusions commend progress', 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/13/civilian-csdp-compact-council-conclusions-commend-progress/>).

Working with the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management, which was established in Berlin in 2020, a number of workshops were organised during 2021. The year brought greater flexibility for CSDP mission mandates and it saw closer cooperation between CSDP and justice and home affairs actors, as well as closer coordination with EU actors working under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument. Civilian CSDP also improved its preparedness and responsiveness through the Strategic Warehouse, which was opened in 2018, and provides missions with logistical support. Finally, even though Member States had agreed to increase the number of seconded national staff to civilian CSDP missions, targets set out in the Civilian CSDP Compact were not met⁽³⁷⁾.

Coordinated Maritime Presences

In January 2021, the EU launched a new concept for maritime security called the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) and it deployed the new concept for the first time in the Gulf of Guinea as a pilot project. The CMP is a new, flexible, tool designed to allow the warships of participating EU Member States to coordinate maritime information collection and sharing in areas of maritime interest for the Union. Given the present deployment of European navies to the Gulf of Guinea to combat piracy and other naval tasks, the CMP is designed to ensure that the EU has as complete as possible maritime situational picture of the region. In its conclusions in January 2021, the Council of the EU designated the Gulf of Guinea a 'Maritime Area of Interest' and this led to the creation of a special coordination cell in the EU Military Staff. In this regard, the Council of the EU was interested in ascertaining what added-value the CMP could bring in response to armed piracy, kidnapping and maritime security. Here, it was planned that a review of the pilot case would take place in

(37) Council of the European Union, 'Civilian CSDP Compact 2021: Council adopts conclusions', 7 December 2020 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/07/civilian-csdp-compact-2021-council-adopts-conclusions/>).

January 2022 before considering whether the CMP concept could also be applied to other maritime areas⁽³⁸⁾.

The Union's ambitions in the maritime domain

'The Union has accrued experience in deploying naval operations, undertaking border and coastguard functions, performing maritime safety tasks, countering piracy and conducting maritime surveillance assignments. More recently, the EU has even established new maritime initiatives such as the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) concept, which is designed to enhance maritime security in fragile areas such as the Gulf of Guinea. EU Member States such as France, Germany and the Netherlands have also invested in national strategies and guidelines for maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific, and the EU will follow suit by the end of 2021 with its own strategy. A new EU Arctic strategy will be released in October 2021. NATO is also about to revise its own Strategic Concept, which will undoubtedly focus on maritime issues too.'

Fiott, D. 'Naval Gazing? The Strategic Compass and the EU's Maritime Presence', Brief No 16, EUISS, 26 July 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/naval-gazing-strategic-compass-and-eus-maritime-presence>).

Greening European security and defence

In 2021, the EU also took important steps forward in ensuring the greening of its security and defence policy under its 2020 Climate Change and Defence Roadmap. During the year, environmental advisors were deployed to the EUAM CAR and EUCAP Sahel Mali civilian missions. The EEAS also started to draft a 'mini concept' designed to better integrate climate change and environmental issues into the operational tasks of EU CSDP missions and operations. The Union continued to work with the EDA to develop a 'smart camp', which should ensure energy efficiency during EU deployments – such a smart camp has already been deployed to Mali as a pilot

(38) Council of the European Union, 'Gulf of Guinea: Council conclusions launching the pilot case for the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept', 25 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/25/gulf-of-guinea-council-conclusions-launching-the-pilot-case-for-the-coordinated-maritime-presences-concept/>).

case. The Union also analysed, reviewed and updated its Concept for Environmental Protection and Energy Optimisation for EU-led Military Operations and Missions, which is a concept that guides EU-led military missions and operations in their environmental planning activities⁽³⁹⁾.

Furthermore, in October 2021 the EU published its Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security, which 'aims to increase the impact of the EU's external action on peace and security by ensuring that the climate and security nexus, including consideration for environmental degradation, is addressed in all relevant EU activities in this field'⁽⁴⁰⁾. The concept followed Council of the EU conclusions on 25 January 2021, which not only recognised climate change as an existential threat to humanity but called for greater efforts to reinforce the external dimensions of the Union's European Green Deal⁽⁴¹⁾. Specifically, the Council of the EU called on the HR/VP and the European Commission to reinforce 'EU climate and energy diplomacies in pursuit of the global transition towards climate neutrality, while ensuring the EU's own resilience and competitiveness in a shifting security and geopolitical environment'⁽⁴²⁾.

Partnerships

In 2021, the EU continued to build partnerships with key partners such as the UN. For example, during the year the EU and UN agreed to a set of new priorities under the UN-EU Strategic Partnership in Peace Operations and Crisis Management. The new priorities will apply over the 2022–2027 period and see more intensified cooperation on peacekeeping, police and military missions and operations,

(39) Council of the European Union, 'Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security', 5 October 2021 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12537-2021-INIT/en/pdf>).

(40) Ibid.

(41) Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy – Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal', 25 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48057/sto5263-en21.pdf>).

(42) Ibid.

as well as work towards increased attention and action for Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Furthermore, the new EU-UN priorities see more intense work on climate change, managing mis/disinformation and rising to the challenge posed by emerging and disruptive technologies. A similar approach was taken for EU-AU cooperation where ministers agreed during the 2nd EU-AU foreign affairs ministerial meeting in Rwanda that the partners needed a strategic approach to responding to crises in the Sahel, Horn of Africa, Lake Chad Basin and the Gulf of Guinea. More specifically, the official communiqué called for a greater focus on conflict prevention, early crisis response, peace support operations and conflict cycle management⁽⁴³⁾.

In 2021, the Union also continued to develop its cooperation with NATO. As the 7th progress report on EU-NATO cooperation showed, the two partners had to intensify their cooperation in August due to the unfolding crisis in Afghanistan. This led to senior officials from the EU and NATO meeting regularly to discuss and ensure safe passage for citizens. In October, NATO was asked to brief the EU's Politico-Military Group on the alliance's maritime operations and missions. The same month, the EU and NATO jointly hosted the 10th edition of the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED Conference). Also in October, EDA was invited to participate in the NATO Annual Discipline Conference in order to update the allies' cyberdefence education, training and exercises. Furthermore, EU staff were invited by individual allies to consult on NATO's 2021 capability targets initiatives within the context of the NATO Defence Planning Process⁽⁴⁴⁾.

The two partners continued their political dialogue on common strategic messaging during a visit to Lithuania and Latvia in November 2021 – such measures built on the profitable strategic communication witnessed during the reaction to the SolarWinds cyber operation in April, and the attack on the Microsoft Exchange

(43) African Union / European Union, 'The Second African Union – European Union Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting, Kigali, Rwanda, 25–26 October 2021 – Joint Communiqué' (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/52671/2021026-au-eu-fam-meeting_joint-communique.pdf).

(44) EU and NATO, 'Seventh progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017', 20 June 2022 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57184/eu-nato-progress-report.pdf>).

Server in July. In this sense, the EU and NATO boosted their cyberdefence cooperation, with NATO officials being invited to the Union's annual table-top exercise on the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox, as well as being actively involved in the planning and conduct of the EU's CYBER PHALANX 21 exercise. In November, NATO organised its annual conference for the Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence (CBRN) Centre of Excellence and this was an opportunity to explore ways of enhancing cooperation in the area of CBRN defence and resilience. Furthermore, a month later EU staff were invited to observe NATO's Martial Vision Technical Exploitation Seminar⁽⁴⁵⁾.

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- > Council of the European Union, 'Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy – Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal', 25 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48057/st05263-en21.pdf>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Gulf of Guinea: Council conclusions launching the pilot case for the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept', 25 January 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/25/gulf-of-guinea-council-conclusions-launching-the-pilot-case-for-the-coordinated-maritime-presences-concept/>).
- > European Commission, 'Action Plan on synergies between civil, defence and space industries', COM(2021) 70 final, 22 February 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0070&qid=1671179969043>).
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(45) Ibid.

- > Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions – Space for People in European coastal areas', 28 May 2021 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9164-2021-INIT/en/pdf>).
- > European Commission, '2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen', 15 September 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_4701).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security', Brussels, 5 October 2021 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12537-2021-INIT/en/pdf>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Recommendation assessing the progress made by the participating Member States to fulfil commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO)', 14 November 2021 (<https://www.pesco.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Council-Recommendation-Progress-made-by-pMS-to-fulfil-commitments-undertaken-in-PESCO.pdf>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Foreign Affairs Council, 15 November 2021 – Main results' (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/11/15/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'EU defence cooperation: Council launches the 4th wave of new PESCO projects', 16 November 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/16/eu-defence-cooperation-council-launches-the-4th-wave-of-new-pesco-projects/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Recommendation concerning the sequencing of the fulfilment of the more binding commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and specifying more precise objectives, and repealing the Recommendation of 15 October 2018', 17 November 2021 ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1117\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1117(01)&from=EN)).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions – Space for Everyone', 26 November 2021, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14307-2021-INIT/en/pdf>.
- > Council of the European Union, 'Civilian CSDP Compact: Council conclusions commend progress', 13 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/13/civilian-csdp-compact-council-conclusions-commend-progress/>).
- > European Council, 'Conclusions, 16 December 2021', 16 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53575/2021216-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>).
- > European Parliament, 'Report on the Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – Annual Report 2021', 21 December 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0358_EN.html).

- > European Commission, 'Communication on a Roadmap on critical technologies for security and defence', COM(2022) 61 final, 15 February 2022 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0061&qid=1671180076402>).
- > European Union Satellite Centre, 'Annual Report 2021', June 2022, (https://www.satcen.europa.eu/keydocuments/AnnualReport_2021_2%20-%20web62a9edd9601f2a0001c84688.pdf).
- > European Union and NATO, 'Seventh progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017', 20 June 2022 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57184/eu-na-to-progress-report.pdf>).
- > EEAS, 'Annual Report 2021 – Missions and Operations', July 2022 (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/CSDP_Annual_Report_2022_EN_updated_web_0.pdf).

Security

Hybrid threats

In 2021, the EU continued its efforts to counter hybrid threats. On 2 June 2021, the European Commission delivered its communication providing guidance on the strengthening of the Code of Practice on disinformation⁽¹⁾. In light of the Covid-19 crisis, the EU decided that it needed to respond to the ‘infodemic’ that emerged during the pandemic and resolved to ‘make the online environment and its actors more transparent and accountable, making content moderation practices more transparent, empowering citizens and fostering an open democratic debate’⁽²⁾. Back in 2018, the Commission had advanced the centrepiece of its efforts against disinformation through a self-regulatory Code of Practice. The aim was for the signatories to adhere to certain principles including those related to advertising, but a further assessment of the Code of Practice by the Commission in 2020 ‘revealed significant shortcomings’⁽³⁾. To remedy these shortcomings, the Commission proposed in 2021 to introduce additional measures to limit the monetisation

(1) European Commission, ‘Communication on a European Commission Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation’, COM(2021) 262 final, 26 May 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2021:262:FIN>).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

of disinformation and broaden the definition of disinformation under the Code.

Furthermore, during the 9–10 December 2021 meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council hybrid threats were discussed by ministers. In particular, the coming together of migratory and hybrid challenges on the back of Belarus' behaviour at the end of 2021 raised serious concerns. The European Council picked the issue as well during its meeting of 16 December 2021, with a promise to tackle Belarus' instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes. On this front, the EU heads of state and government called not only for strengthening sanctions against the regime in Belarus but also to begin diplomatic engagement with countries in the Middle East, where Belarus leader Lukashenko was attracting people from with financial inducements before forcing them over the border from Belarus into Poland and Lithuania⁽⁴⁾.

Interestingly, in the draft Strategic Compass presented to EU foreign and defence ministers by the HR/VP on 15 November 2021, the EU continued to develop its toolbox to counter hybrid threats. Indeed, under the EU's proposed Hybrid Toolbox in the draft Compass the Union made clear its intention to enhance its ability to counter foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). Here, the HR/VP's draft made clear that state and non-state actors are using hybrid strategies to directly interfere with the democratic and political integrity of EU Member States. Such actors are also given to misusing existing law (or gaps in this law) to achieve political, economic and military coercion. Interestingly, the draft (and indeed final) Strategic Compass made clear that strategic rivals such as Russia and China are honing their hybrid tools and that the EU must be better prepared to counter harmful actions, tactics and techniques. More specifically, the Compass would go on to state that the proposed Hybrid Toolbox would 'provide a framework for a coordinated response to hybrid campaigns'⁽⁵⁾.

(4) European Council, 'Conclusions, 16 December 2021', op. cit.

(5) Council of the European Union 'A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security', 21 March 2022 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>).

Cybersecurity

The Union continued to be subjected to cyber incidents throughout 2021. As the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) Threat Landscape report for 2021 indicated, the EU is still faced with the growing challenge of ransomware, malware, cryptojacking, e-mail related threats, threats against data, disinformation and others. In 2021, ENISA pointed to the rise of highly sophisticated supply chain compromises and cyber espionage, which only increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although instances of malware cases were in decline in 2021 compared to 2020, a larger number of threat actors grew and so too did the activities of organised crime online. For example, the report shows how in 2021 there was a record high of cryptojacking infections and crypto-mining, as well as phishing activities and breaches of healthcare data. Furthermore, ENISA also listed a growing threat from Artificial Intelligence-enabled disinformation as a particular challenge for the EU. Last, but certainly not least, the ENISA report continued to make the point – as it has done for multiple years – that one of the main reasons for cyber incidents are human errors and system misconfigurations⁽⁶⁾.

The EU continued to enhance its cybersecurity in 2021. On 22 March, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on the 2020 EU Cybersecurity Strategy for a Digital Decade. In their conclusions, ministers underlined that the EU's cybersecurity strategy needed to help build a resilient, green and digital Europe⁽⁷⁾. In April, the Council went a step further by establishing a European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre in Bucharest, Romania. The EU decided to create the centre to 'pool investment in cybersecurity research, technology and industrial development' and to 'channel cybersecurity-related funding from

(6) EU Agency for Cybersecurity, 'ENISA Threat Landscape 2021', October 2021 (<https://www.enisa.europa.eu/publications/enisa-threat-landscape-2021>).

(7) Council of the European Union, 'Cybersecurity: Council adopts conclusions on the EU's cybersecurity strategy', 22 March 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/22/cybersecurity-council-adopts-conclusions-on-the-eu-s-cybersecurity-strategy/>).

Green digital diplomacy

'Any international actor aspiring to global leadership on climate change needs to look beyond the energy consumption, GHG emissions and natural resources related to design, production and end-of-life of the digital sector. To be responsible digital players, states need to address the environmental cost of using digital services that rely on large volumes of data and to promote green solutions as part of their international digital engagement strategies. For the EU's foreign policy, this means embracing 'green digital diplomacy' as one of the priorities. Such an approach would bring digital and climate – two of the EU's key policy priorities – under the same roof and contribute to promoting a 'European way, balancing the flow and wide use of data, while preserving high privacy, security, safety and ethical standards'. It also offers a new opening for the EU's commitment to strengthening multilateralism and a rules-based international order, including through setting norms and principles for the world's digital transition, and the EU's capacity-building and development cooperation.'

Pawlak, P. and Barbero, F. 'Green Digital Diplomacy: Time for the EU to Lead', *Brief* No 18, EUISS, September 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/green-digital-diplomacy>).

Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme⁽⁸⁾. Furthermore, on 17 May 2021 the Council of the EU took the decision of prolonging the framework for cyber sanctions for another year until 18 May 2022. Such restrictive measures are a key part of the Union's ability to respond to cyberattacks⁽⁹⁾.

In October, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on exploring the potential of a Joint Cyber Unit as a way to enhance the Union's ability to ensure crisis management in case of cyber incidents. The conclusions followed a proposal by the European Commission on 23 June for a Joint Cyber Unit to ensure that a single platform would bring together resources and expertise from cyber communities across the Union to prevent, deter and respond to cyber incidents. In this regard, the Council of the EU pushed for a more staggered

(8) Council of the European Union, 'Bucharest-based Cybersecurity Competence Centre gets green light from Council', 20 April 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/20/bucharest-based-cybersecurity-competence-centre-gets-green-light-from-council/>).

(9) Council of the European Union, 'Cyber-attacks: Council prolongs framework for sanctions for another year', 17 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/17/cyber-attacks-council-prolongs-framework-for-sanctions-for-another-year/>).

approach that emphasised a ‘need to consolidate existing networks and to establish a mapping of possible information sharing gaps and needs within and across cyber communities’⁽¹⁰⁾.

Finally, on 3 December the Council of the EU agreed on its position on the new cybersecurity directive, the so-called NIS2 directive designed to increase a high common level of cybersecurity across the EU. Whereas the old NIS directive saw Member States determine which entities would meet the criteria to qualify as operators of essential services, NIS2 foresees a wider scope with all medium and large entities falling directly under the scope of the directive. In this regard, the Council of the EU sought to clarify that the directive will ‘not apply to entities carrying out activities in areas such as defence or national security, public security, law enforcement and the judiciary’ and the text would also exclude parliaments and central banks. Such exemptions would continue to be the focus of further deliberations with the Commission and European Parliament until the co-legislators reached their own provisional agreement on NIS2 on 13 May 2022⁽¹¹⁾.

Terrorism and extremism

The EU continued to be at risk from terror attacks in 2021 and, according to Europol, a total of 15 completed, foiled and failed terrorist attacks were recorded in the Union during the year. In addition, Europol estimates that in 2021 approximately 388 suspects for terror-related offenses were arrested by EU law enforcement authorities and agencies. What is more, European courts convicted 423 individuals for terrorist offences in the EU during the year. Europol underlined that there is increasing reason to be cautious about the

(10) Council of the European Union, ‘Cybersecurity: Council adopts conclusions on exploring the potential of a joint cyber unit’, 19 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/19/cybersecurity-council-adopts-conclusions-on-exploring-the-potential-of-a-joint-cyber-unit/>).

(11) Council of the European Union, ‘Strengthening EU-wide cybersecurity and resilience – Council agrees its position’, 3 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/03/strengthening-eu-wide-cybersecurity-and-resilience-council-agrees-its-position/>).

The wicked problem

'On almost every major foreign policy issue, the EU faces a path-defining choice. It finds itself split between loyalty to longstanding policy principles and a new pressure to pursue its interests through value-free *realpolitik*. Crucially, policymakers lack the evidence to weigh up the implications of either course – continuity or compromise – and so risk being gripped by inaction. Such situations, where policymakers face a dilemma and lack the evidence to guide their choices, are called 'wicked problems.' And a failure to solve its wicked problems could leave the EU paralysed on the world stage at a time of huge global change. This *Chaillot Paper* proposes that the EU tackle such problems by means of a thought exercise/experiment. This means posing a series of hypothetical questions in order to explore the potential consequences of policy continuity or change and thereby to help the EU realign its principles and its interests.'

Parkes, R. and McQuay, M. 'A Wicked Problem: How to Cooperate with Collusive States?', *Chaillot Paper* No 165, EUISS, March 2021 (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/wicked-problem>).

actions of jihadists and groups such as al-Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State as Covid-19 increased the potential for radicalisation and allowed terrorist propaganda to exploit themes related to the pandemic. Furthermore, the pandemic gave rise to violent anti-Covid-19 and anti-government extremism, which is not necessarily related to traditional extremist or terrorist groups and actors. As Europol made clear, this phenomenon 'materialised in open threats, hateful messages spread online and, in some cases, the use of violence' ⁽¹²⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ Europol, 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2022 (TE-SAT)', 13 July 2022 (<https://www.europol.europa.eu/publication-events/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2022-te-sat>).

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- > Council of the European Union, 'Cyber-attacks: Council prolongs framework for sanctions for another year', 17 May 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/17/cyber-attacks-council-prolongs-framework-for-sanctions-for-another-year/>).
- > European Commission, 'Communication on a European Commission Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation', COM(2021) 262 final, 26 May 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2021:262:FIN>).
- > EU Agency for Cybersecurity, 'ENISA Threat Landscape 2021', October 2021 (<https://www.enisa.europa.eu/publications/enisa-threat-landscape-2021>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Cybersecurity: Council adopts conclusions on exploring the potential of a joint cyber unit', 19 October 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/19/cybersecurity-council-adopts-conclusions-on-exploring-the-potential-of-a-joint-cyber-unit/>).
- > Council of the European Union, 'Strengthening EU-wide cybersecurity and resilience – Council agrees its position', 3 December 2021 (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/12/03/strengthening-eu-wide-cybersecurity-and-resilience-council-agrees-its-position/>).
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- > Council of the European Union 'A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security', 21 March 2022 (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>).
- > Europol, 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2022 (TE-SAT)', 13 July 2022 (<https://www.europol.europa.eu/publication-events/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2022-te-sat>).



Image: Sambeetarts/pixabay

ANNEX

Statistical annex

CSDP military missions and operations

Personnel totals as of 31 Dec 2021

Mission/Operation	Personnel
EUFOR Althea	526
EUNAVFOR Atalanta	392
EUNAVFOR Irini	646
EUTM Central African Republic	176
EUTM Somalia	165
EUTM Mali	1 109
EUTM Mozambique	70

Sources: EU Military Staff, 2021

EU Delegations around the world

Staff levels by contractual status, Dec 2021

	EEAS	Commission	Total
AD	427	535	962
AST	186	89	275
AST-SC	1	1	2
Local agents	1 543	1 587	3 130
Seconded national experts	61	25	86
Contract agents	246	1 044	1 290
Total	2 464	3 281	5 745

Source: European External Action Service, 2022

PESCO projects

Number of PESCO projects Member States share with each other bilaterally, 2021

	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU	NL	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	ES	SE	ES	SE
Austria	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	6	4	3	2		4	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	1	3	
Belgium	1		2	2	3	4	3	3	11	7	3	5		6	3	2	2	7	8	3	4	2	3	9	3	1	1
Bulgaria	1	2		3	3	1	2	2	6	2	4	2	1	4	1	3	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	1		
Croatia	3	2	3		3	1	2	1	5	2	5	3	1	4	1	3	1	3	3	1	2	3	2	4	1	2	1
Cyprus	1	3	3	3		1	1	1	6	3	8	3	1	5	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	5	1	2	1
Czechia	1	4	1	1	1		3	2	6	7	1	3		4	2	1	2	5	3	1	2	2	2	5	2	1	
Estonia	2	3	2	2	1	3		3	6	3	1	3		4	3	3	3	4	4	1	4	1	2	3	2		
Finland	1	3	2	1	1	2	3		5	4	1	2		4	2	2	2	4	3	2	1	1	4	1	1		
France	6	11	6	5	6	6	6	5		21	10	8	1	21	4	4	6	12	10	9	12	5	4	21	7	1	
Germany	4	7	2	2	3	7	3	4	21		4	6		11	2	3	5	11	8	7	6	5	3	15	3	1	
Greece	3	3	4	5	8	1	1	1	10	4		3	1	11	2	2	2	3	4	5	5	2	3	7	1	1	
Hungary	2	5	2	3	3	3	3	2	8	6	3			5	2	2	2	5	7	2	3	4	4	6	3	2	
Ireland		1	1	1				1	1			1											1		6		
Italy	4	6	4	4	5	4	4	4	21	11	11	5	1		1	3	4	6	7	7	6	2	5	15	2		
Latvia	1	3	1	1	1	2	3	2	4	2	2	2		1		1	1	3	3	2	3	1	1	2	1	1	
Lithuania	2	2	3	3	2	1	3	2	4	3	2	2		3	1		3	3	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	1	
Luxembourg	3	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	6	5	2	2		4	1	3		3	2	3	3	1	2	4	2		
Netherlands	2	7	2	3	2	5	4	4	12	11	3	5		6	3	4	3		7	3	4	3	3	8	2		
Poland	2	8	2	3	2	3	4	3	10	8	4	7		7	3	3	2	7		5	6	3	3	7	3		
Portugal	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	8	7	4	2		7	1	1	3	2	4		5	2	1	10	2		
Romania	3	4	3	2	1	2	4	1	12	6	5	2		6	3	2	3	4	6	6		2	2	5	3		
Slovenia	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	5	5	2	4		2	1	2	1	3	3	2	2		2	3	1		
Slovakia	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	4	3	3	4		5	1	2	2	3	3	1	2	2		3	3		
Spain	3	9	3	4	5	5	3	4	21	15	7	6	1	15	2	3	4	8	7	10	5	3	3	5			
Sweden	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	1	7	3	1	3		2	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	1	3	5			

Source: European Commission, 2020

Note: This visual shows participation in EDIDP projects awarded in 2020 by country of establishment

Link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/european-defence-industry-results-calls_en

EU Battlegroups (EUBG)

Offers and commitments, as at Nov 2021

Year	Semester	Rotation	Member States	Third States	EUBG point of contact	Preferred OHQ
2022	Jan-Jun	First	Italy, Austria, Croatia*, Hungary, Slovenia		Italy	Italy
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
	Jul-Dec	First	Spain, Portugal*		Spain	Spain
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
2023	Jan-Jun	First	Poland, Czechia, Hungary*, Croatia*, Lithuania*, Latvia, Slovakia*	Ukraine*	Poland	Poland
		Second	Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania*	Republic of North Macedonia*, Serbia, Ukraine	Greece	Greece
	Jul-Dec	First	Vacant	Vacant		
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
2024	Jan-Jun	First	France, Belgium*, Finland*		France	France
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
	Jul-Dec	First	Italy*	Albania*	Italy*	Italy*
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
2025	Jan-Jun	First	Germany, Austria, Croatia*, Hungary*, Ireland*, Lithuania*, Luxembourg*, Latvia*, Netherlands*		Germany	MPCC**
		Second	Portugal*, Spain*		Portugal*	Spain*
	Jul-Dec	First	Germany, Austria, Croatia*, Hungary*, Ireland*, Lithuania*, Luxembourg*, Latvia*, Netherlands*		Germany	MPCC**
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
2026	Jan-Jun	First	Greece*, Bulgaria, Cyprus*, Romania*	Republic of North Macedonia*, Serbia*, Ukraine*	Greece*	Greece*
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
	Jul-Dec	First	Spain*	Vacant	Spain*	Spain*
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
2027	Jan-Jun	First	Vacant	Vacant		
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
	Jul-Dec	First	Italy*	Vacant	Italy*	Italy*
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		
2028	Jan-Jun	First	Vacant	Vacant		
		Second	Vacant	Vacant		

Notes: * Pending political decision; ** To be decided

Source: EU Military Staff, European External Action Service, 2022

UN Security Council voting

By permanent and non-permanent members, 2021

	China	Russia	United States	United Kingdom	France	Estonia	India	Ireland	Kenya	Mexico	Niger	Norway	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Tunisia	Vietnam
S/RES/2608(2021) The situation in Somalia															
03-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/2021/990 Maintenance of International Peace and Security															
13-Dec-21	A	V	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2609(2021) Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan															
15-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2610(2021) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts															
17-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2611(2021) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts															
17-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2612(2021) The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo															
20-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2613(2021) The situation in the Middle East															
21-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2614(2021) The situation in Somalia															
21-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2615(2021) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist attacks															
22-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2616(2021) Maintenance of international peace and security															
22-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/2617(2021) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist attacks															
30-Dec-21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Key: Yes = Y, Abstention = A, Veto = V

Source: United Nations, 2022

Link: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-2021>,
https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact_veto_table_en.htm

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The 2022 Yearbook of European Security provides an overview of events in 2021 that were significant for European security. The book charts major developments in the EU's external action and security and defence policy.

Divided into region and issue-specific sections, this Yearbook contains entries on the EU's multilateral efforts and work in security and defence, as well as specific geographical sections on North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. The section on security and defence provides comprehensive information about EU defence tools such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative, and an overview of security issues such as space, cybersecurity, terrorism, border management, hybrid threats and more.

To enrich the reading experience, the document contains references to key EU texts, various EUISS analytical publications, an index and informative infographics.