



Green Approaches to Security and Defence

Credible yet Capable

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List of Abbreviations

AMP: Act on Military Programming	FIIA: Finnish Institute of International Affairs
ASAP: Act in Support of Ammunition Production	GDP: Gross domestic product
AU : African Union	GNSS: Global Navigation Satellite System
BSR: Baltic Sea Region	ICAN: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
CCW: Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons	IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy	ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
CJEU: Court of Justice of the European Union	LAWS: Lethal autonomous weapon systems
CSDP: Common Security and Defence Policy	MEP: Member of the European Parliament
CSP: Conference of States Parties	MP: Member of Parliament
DCNAN: Department of non-armed and non-violent civil defence	MSP: Meeting of States Parties
DDR: Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration	n.d.: no date
HDA: Homeland Defence Act	NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
DTIB: Defence Technological and Industrial Base	NORDEF: The Nordic Defence Cooperation
DSVL: Demokratų sąjunga “Vardan Lietuvos” – Union of Democrats “For Lithuania”	NPT: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
ECFR: European Council on Foreign Relations	OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
ECPC: European Civil Peace Corps	PESCO: Permanent Structured Cooperation
ECHR: European Court of Human Rights	PSC: Post-shipment control
EDA: European Defence Agency	R&D: Research and development
EDF: European Defence Fund	R&D&I: Research and development and innovation
EDIRPA: European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act	SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
EDIS: European Defence Industrial Strategy	SNU: Service national universel
EDTIB: European Defence Technological and Industrial Base	STAR Plan: Security & Service, Technology, Ambition, and Resilience (Belgian Ministry of Defence political guidelines)
EDTs: Emerging disruptive technologies	TEU: Treaty on European Union
ENAAT: European Network Against Arms Trade	TPNW: Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
EPP: European People’s Party	UN: United Nations
EU: European Union	US: United States
EUC: End-user certificate	USD: United States dollar
EUR: Euro	USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Pekka Haavisto, MP and former Minister
of Foreign Affairs, Finland.

Foreword

Pekka Haavisto

What is Green foreign policy? Do the Greens have anything to say, when it comes to security and defence? These are questions that many Green politicians will face during their career. The questions, however frustrating, have some truth to them. Green parties have long lacked a unified political strategy when it comes to security and defence.

We must now evaluate all security policy through the lenses of the post-February-2022 world. The Russian war of aggression has forced security and defence onto the agenda for all parties, not just the Greens. Some have found the process easier, some harder.

The Greens have been proud to bring issues like climate policy, green transition, and feminist foreign policy into the security debate. The Greens have also always advocated for the idea of solidarity to countries and regions that have suffered from poverty or conflicts.

The European Green parties have different views on many topics concerning security and defence. Some parties have their roots in pacifist movements, some have to take note of specific geopolitical factors, such as

the proximity of the Russian border. But, as always, we must concentrate on what we have in common. The Green security and defence policy takes into account human rights, peace as a core value, climate and biodiversity protection, equality, democracy and justice. These are also views which are often forgotten in security policy analysis.

These Green perspectives bring forth an asset: emphasis and expertise in conflict management, diplomacy, and peace mediation. No conflict can be resolved as long as questions of equality and justice aren't taken into account. No positive peace will arise from diplomatic efforts that fail to address human rights.

The Greens must engage in active dialogue on these matters to define Green foreign policy, and formulate a political strategy on security and defence. Hopefully this report will act as a spark for a long and fruitful debate. I wish to thank the Green European Foundation, the different stakeholders, and the authors and experts for bringing this debate to life and light.

Executive summary

Agatha Verdebout is a researcher and deputy director at GRIP. Her main area of expertise is international peace and security law.

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Green Approaches to European Security and Defence

Agatha Verdebout & Anne Xuan Nguyen

Greens across Europe traditionally self-identify as “pacifist”. They share a common commitment to principles of non-violence and multilateralism and a broad understanding of peace as a state of harmony which provides the conditions for a just, equitable and sustainable society that promotes well-being for all individuals and communities. Concepts such as human security and environmental security – emphasising prevention by addressing the root causes of instability – have played a key role in defining Green parties’ stances on international affairs. Recent geopolitical shifts, notably Russia’s actions in Ukraine, have however exposed Europe’s vulnerabilities in several security-related areas, sometimes compelling Green parties to reassess their position on security and defence.

This report aims to map out Green parties’ stance on key security and defence questions in the post-February 2022 era and provide a platform to stimulate broader reflection on the future of Green security and defence policies. The research focuses on eight sample countries from the EU – Finland, France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Croatia – which allows insight into national, regional, as well as cross-cutting positions rooted in party type,

size, or position on the national political spectrum. Understanding these different viewpoints is crucial for coordination efforts towards a common updated green security and defence doctrine. To further inform long-term political planning, the study is complemented by interviews with independent security and defence experts – from neo-realists to critical security studies – aimed at gathering their impressions and comments on the positions and policy proposals emerging from Green parties.

The report is structured in five chapters covering key topics, from EU military cooperation to industrial policies, and from military expenditures to non-violent defence. They portray a nuanced understanding of European security dynamics among Green parties, reflecting varying national contexts, strategic cultures, and historical perspectives.

Chapter 1 delves into the complex institutional landscape of security and defence in Europe. It examines the debates surrounding the identity of the European Union (EU) as either a civilian or a military power, and the frameworks for enhancing military cooperation between Member States aimed at building strategic autonomy (such as the

Permanent Structured Cooperation – PESCO). It also looks at the respective roles of the EU and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as security providers. The chapter shows that while some Green parties (especially those from long-standing EU members) advocate for deeper military integration and/or collaboration, others believe defence is not the priority or, more plainly, argue that this is a NATO prerogative. Despite these differences, all surveyed parties agree on the need to strengthen the EU's role within NATO, ensuring a more balanced partnership.

Chapter 2 focuses on military expenditures and budget allocation. It discusses differing perspectives among Green parties on the use of GDP to set defence government budgets as well as on how these should be allocated (equipment acquisition, infrastructures, training and personnel), emphasising a shift among some parties towards accepting increased military spending. As a matter of fact, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has prompted some Green parties, especially those participating in governmental coalitions, to forego their principled opposition to raising military budgets as well as to the 2% of GDP threshold set by NATO.

Chapter 3 explores Green parties' opinions on defence industrial policies broadly understood. It examines Green positions on grant programs put in place by the EU to integrate and reinforce the European Defence Industrial and Technological Base (EDITB), initiatives aimed at encouraging joint procurement on the EU internal defence market, but also on the need to strengthen export control policies. It shows diverging opinions, in particular on the allocation of public funds to industry. A common commitment towards scrutinising industrial activities by enhancing transparency and accountability nevertheless emerges. These elements reflect the dilemmas of striking

a balance between security concerns, European strategic autonomy, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 analyses positions on nuclear deterrence, disarmament, and arms control. Green parties generally continue to oppose the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, but the war in Ukraine has led some to revise their position on its effectiveness. Likewise, despite remaining strongly committed to multilateral disarmament, they acknowledge that this path is currently strewn with pitfalls, sometimes arguing that disarmament and arms control will have to wait until the end of the Russian war of aggression. This position can seem in contrast to their vocal support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and arms control efforts aimed at regulating the military uses of Emerging Disruptive Technologies (EDTs). These tensions, again, reflect the challenges of carrying a progressive discourse while taking stock of reality.

Chapter 5 delves into the intertwined concepts of civic militarism, civil protection and non-violence; their implications for military involvement in security as well as civilian participation to defence. More specifically, it examines debates surrounding the expansion of military roles beyond traditional defence (for example to carry out civilian missions abroad or participate in disaster relief efforts) or the reinstatement of compulsory military service in some EU countries, but also proposals for alternative non-violent security and defence policies. It highlights anew the tensions that exists among Green parties as regards the role of the military in society and how non-violent security and defence projects – once a trademark of Green approaches to security – seem to have been somewhat forgotten as a result of the current international tensions and conflicts at the EU's doorstep.

The expert views, embedded throughout the report, raise points of attention and provide direct feedback on precise positions or policy proposals emerging from Green parties. A more general appraisal of Green visions for European security and defence is provided in the conclusion. Experts noted the lack of an overall coherent strategy, which underscores the challenges of navigating complex geopolitical realities while maintaining core humanistic principles. They pointed to the rapid adoption of “mainstream” discourses and questioned how this may affect the long-term viability and credibility of Green security and defence policies. One does not necessarily need to adopt a techno-strategic vernacular to be a credible and constructive source of proposals on security and defence issues.

This report thus provides a clear mapping of green defence thinking across Europe, including points of convergence, gaps, and tensions. Complemented by the expert views, it gives a solid basis for further discussion within and beyond the Greens, to strengthen defence and security policy while maintaining a critical and progressive voice, even in uncertain times.



Report

Introduction

Context and background

Europe's Green parties were born in different epochs and geopolitical contexts. In Western and Northern Europe, the Greens grew out of the civil society mobilisations of the 1970s and 1980s, which agitated for détente, diplomacy, disarmament, and arms control. In countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Germany and France, these combats were instrumental for the consolidation of the green movement into political parties.¹ Together with climate and environmental protection and fighting for a more equal and just society, they are part of the original ideological matrix of these parties and continue to inform their political discourses and actions.

With the end of the Cold War, Green parties in Western and Northern Europe began to integrate concepts such as human and environmental security, which place emphasis on the need for a transnational and global understanding of security beyond the traditional state-centred paradigm, into their policies. These concepts also stress the importance of prevention, to be achieved by structurally addressing the root causes of insecurity and conflict – e.g. social and gender inequality, wealth discrepancies,

destruction of ecosystems – rather than reaction by means of military or other “hard power” tools.

The history of Central and Eastern European Green parties is slightly different. Most were established in the late 1990s or early 2000s in the wake of their respective countries' moves towards EU accession. Although the histories of these parties are quite different, their origins can often be traced back to grassroots social and civil society mobilisations such as *Solidarność* in Poland, which contributed to the collapse of the Eastern bloc. They thus share their Western and Northern neighbours' strong commitment to social and environmental justice, gender equality, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. However, because they developed in a relatively calmer international context, security and defence issues are generally less present within their political identities. As the representative of the Lithuanian Green party *Demokratų sąjunga* “*Vardan Lietuvos*” (Union of Democrats “For Lithuania” – DSVL) interviewed for the purpose of this report explained, traditionally, “[f]oreign policy is not something that is considered important for the left-wing parties in our countries. Not even the Greens. Left-wingers never talk about security.”²

Many observers have noted that Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing war on the EU's doorstep has put Green parties' backs to the wall. These events are seen as having heralded the emergence of a new geopolitical environment. Discourses of strategic and great power competition have resurfaced, and perceptions of risks and threats have also evolved, conflicts appearing more volatile and prone to rapid escalation. NATO has regained legitimacy in public opinion as a guarantor of European security, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agreements are being dissolved and the doctrine of deterrence revived, Western countries are stressing the need to rebuild their military capabilities, massive public investments are aiming to strengthen Europe's Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB), and a number of EU member states have recently reintroduced compulsory military service. Faced with these new geopolitical realities, today's discussions on security-related debates are dominated by conservative discourses on the EU's lack of capabilities and military preparedness. In this context, defending alternative visions for security and defence and advocating diplomacy and dialogue has become increasingly complex. Pacifist ideals are indeed quick to be discarded as unrealistic and naïve. Green stances on security and defence are under stress, leading some to reassess their positions in manners that sometimes seem to betray parties' historical commitment to pacifism and non-violence.³

Objectives

Against this backdrop, this report aims to provide an analytical cartography of Green positions on key questions related to security and defence in the post-February 2022 era, focusing on shifts of discourses as well as on identification of points of divergence and convergence. In doing so, it seeks to provide a platform to stimulate deeper extrospective and introspective reflection on what a Green security and defence policy could, or should,

look like in the years to come and beyond. Understanding different viewpoints and priorities, as well as the dynamics that underlie them, is crucial to inform long-term political planning and coordination efforts within the Green movement.

Research design

The research that underpins this report was divided into two broad and complementary phases.

Phase One focused on Green parties stances. The research concentrates on a sample of nine parties across eight countries: Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Poland. This choice ensured the representation of a range of geographical locations, national and sub-national levels, party histories, political positions, and levels of government experience (ranging from current members of a governmental coalition to parties that have never been in government). It also captures different strategic cultures, threat perceptions, and corresponding priorities.

The findings presented in this report are based on an analysis of policy papers and political programmes issued by the selected parties, in addition to their interventions in parliament and at other forums. It is important to underline that the extent to which parties communicate their positions, and the level of detail contained in their programmes – especially regarding security and defence – varies greatly from one to another. Desk research was hence complemented by a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of the selected parties to help clarify party positions on different issues and understand their underpinnings.⁴

Phase Two was dedicated to “expert views”. Through a second set of interviews with independent researchers and practitioners, it gathered feedback on the results obtained during the first research phase, to further

inform long-term political planning on security and defence issues. Interviewed experts come from different backgrounds – think tanks, academia, and military academies – as well as different theoretical and thematic perspectives – from critical security studies to classic neo-realism and from strategic studies to conflict mediation. Together, they bring a diverse set of inputs on the challenges faced by European Green parties and their policy proposals. The reactions gathered through the interviews were sometimes complemented by

desk research to help contextualise as well as bring substantiating and/or explicative data. From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that independent researchers and practitioners do not always have precise alternative policy proposals. Their input more often consists in raising points of attention, and highlighting gaps, contradictions, and/or cognitive biases. The final conclusion offers their more general appraisal of the coherence (or sometimes lack thereof) of Green visions for the future of European security and defence.

Structure of the report

The report is structured around five chapters, offering a comprehensive examination of European security and defence dynamics through a Green lens.

- **Chapter 1 - European and Transatlantic Models for Security and Defence** scrutinises the intricate landscape of security and defence institutions in Europe. It tackles debates surrounding the EU's identity as a civilian or military power, frameworks for enhancing military cooperation, and the roles of the EU and NATO as security providers.
- **Chapter 2 - Military Expenditure and Allocation of Defence Budgets** focuses on military expenditure, including the issue of the relevant indicators and threshold to set defence expense, the general trend towards the increase of defence budgets, and priority allocation of these budgets.
- **Chapter 3 - Industrial, Procurement, and Export Policies for Defence** explores defence industrial policies broadly understood, encompassing EU grant programs aimed at sustaining the defence industry, joint procurement initiatives, and export control policies.
- **Chapter 4 - Deterrence, Disarmament, and Arms Control** deals with nuclear deterrence, disarmament, and arms control, with a special focus on the regulation of military uses of Emerging Disruptive Technologies (EDTs).
- **Chapter 5 - Civil Protection, Civic Militarism, and Non-Violence** delves into the interconnected concepts of civic militarism, civil protection, and non-violence. It examines debates around expanding the role of the military beyond traditional defence, the return of compulsory military service, and the existence of alternative models for non-violent security and defence policies.

Each chapter reflects the nuanced perspectives of Green parties across Europe, influenced by national contexts, strategic cultures, and historical viewpoints. The “expert views” collected during Phase 2 of the research are presented in 28 labelled sections throughout the report. These provide insights and critique, emphasizing the challenges of maintaining coherence and humanistic principles amid complex geopolitical realities.

Écolo (Belgium)	Groen (Belgium)	
<p>Écolo is the French-speaking Green party of Belgium. It was created in 1980, bringing together environmental and antinuclear activists, left-wing Christians, anti-militarists, and pacifists. The party is on the centre-left of the Belgian political spectrum. It has participated in governmental coalitions at the federal, regional, and community levels on several occasions since 1999. It is currently a member of the federal “Vivaldi” governmental coalition (2020-2024). Écolo has a close relationship to its Dutch-speaking counterpart, Groen. The two parties form a single political group in the Belgian federal parliament and regularly consult on their positions.</p>	<p>Groen is the Dutch-speaking Green party of Belgium. Known as Agalev until 2003, the party was founded in 1979 by environmental, antinuclear, anti-militarist, and pacifist activists. Like Écolo, the party is on the centre-left of the Belgian political spectrum, although the Dutch-speaking region of Flanders is considerably more right-wing than Francophone Wallonia overall. Groen has participated in governmental coalitions at the federal and regional level on several occasions since 1999. It is currently a member of the Vivaldi governmental coalition (2020-2024).</p>	
Les Écologistes (France)		
<p>Les Écologistes (formerly known as Europe Écologie-Les Verts) was founded as Les Verts in 1984 by environmental, anti-nuclear, and antimilitarist activists, as well as union members. Today, it defines itself as both a party and a movement. Les Écologistes currently has 13 seats at the Assemblée nationale as part of broader left-wing electoral alliance NUPES.</p>		
Vihreät (Finland)	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Germany)	
<p>Vihreät (The Greens) was established as an association in 1987 and as a party in 1988. It brought together movements focused on environmental activism, the Nordic welfare state, and women's rights. While some members refuse to explicitly situate themselves on the political spectrum, the party's positions are generally associated with the centre-left. The Finnish Greens were the first European Green party to be part of a state-level government, between 1995 and 2003. The party also participated in governmental coalitions in 2007-2011, 2011-2014, and 2019-2023. Vihreät is currently in opposition.</p>	<p>Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens) was established in 1993 following the fusion of Die Grünen, founded in West Germany in 1980, and Bündnis 90, founded in East Germany in 1990. The party has its roots in anti-nuclear mobilisation, environmental protection, activism, and peace movements. It is on the centre-left of the German political spectrum. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen has participated in federal governmental coalitions on three occasions: 1998-2002, 2002-2005, and since 2021. It is currently in the “traffic light” coalition with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The current federal minister for foreign affairs, Annalena Baerbock, is a member of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.</p>	
	Partia Zieloni (Poland)	Možemo! (Croatia)
	<p>Partia Zieloni (The Green Party) was established in 2003. Among other issues, it champions environmental sustainability, social and gender equality, and LGBT+ rights. The party has its roots in civil society movements such as Solidarność and aligns itself with the centre-left. In opposition until 2023, the party is now part of the Civic Coalition government led by Donald Tusk.</p>	<p>Možemo! (We Can!) emerged in 2019 as a left-wing, ecologist party formed by primarily by local activists in Zagreb. Its main focuses are better education and healthcare, social and gender equality, workers' rights, support for migrants, and sustainability. Možemo! currently holds ten seats in the Croatian parliament.</p>
Europa Verde (Italy)	Demokratų sąjunga “Vardan Lietuvos” (Lithuania)	
<p>Europa Verde (Green Europe) is the latest in a series of Italian Green parties going back to the 1980s. Its focuses include environmental sustainability and pacifism as well as gender and social equality. Europa Verde was first founded as an electoral list for the 2019 European elections and became a party in 2021. In 2022, it united with Sinistra Italiana to create the Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra common electoral list for the Italian general elections, which won a number of seats in parliament. It is on the left of the Italian political spectrum and has never been part of government.</p>	<p>Demokratų sąjunga “Vardan Lietuvos” (Union of Democrats “For Lithuania”) was founded in 2022 by former prime minister Saulius Skvernelis as a secession from the conservative agrarian party Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga (Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union). The party sits on the centre-left on economic policies and the centre-right on social and cultural matters. It is currently in opposition. Virginijus Sinkevičius, the European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, is among its members.</p>	

Endnotes

- 1 See for e.g. JERAJ Samir, "Are Green Parties Still Pacifist?", *Green European Journal*, 13 December 2022; PIRON Jonathan, "Quelles balises pour un nouveau pacifisme?", *Etopia*, 17 December 2014.
- 2 Interview by the authors with a representative from DSVL.
- 3 See for e.g. VON DER BURCHARD Hans, "From doves to über-hawks: Ukraine war recast Germany's Greens", *Politico*, 22 April 2022; FELDENKIRCHEN Markus and al., "From Peaceniks To Hawks? Germany's Greens Have Transformed in the Face of Russia's War", *Spiegel International*, 6 May 2022; DEJEAN Mathieu, "Jadot, L'Ukraine, et l'adieu au pacifisme des écologistes", *Médiapart*, 3 March 2022; POL Chez and JACKOWSKI Nina, "De la difficulté d'être un Vert en guerre", *Libération*, 7 March 2022; CHARDON Frédéric, "L'invasion russe a révélé les mutations du pacifisme d'Écolo", *La Libre*, 21 Avril 2022.
- 4 Considering that several of the interviewed representatives asked to be anonymised, the decision was taken in the course of this research to conceal the names of all the interviewees.

European and Transatlantic Models for Security and Defence

The institutional security and defence landscape of Europe is complex and multi-layered. It is composed of a wide array of regional and subregional organisations – among them the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF), for instance – whose purposes, prerogatives, and geographical scope sometimes overlap. Within this constellation, the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are the two organisations with the most integrated security and defence frameworks. From the outset, it is important to highlight that these two organisations were not developed for the same purpose. From its very inception in 1949, NATO has been a collective security and defence alliance. In contrast, the EU's competences in these domains are relatively new. Security and defence, as well as foreign policy more generally, has progressively fallen under the Union's purview since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which set the objective of a “common foreign and security policy including eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence”.¹

Green parties throughout Europe generally define themselves as pro-European. However, they do not necessarily share the same vision of the EU as regards security and defence policy. This chapter investigates this topic. The first section assesses the stances of the nine parties surveyed – Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (DE) (henceforth Die Grünen), Demokratų sąjunga “Vardan Lietuvos” (LT) (henceforth DSVL), Écolo (BE), Europa Verde (IT), Groen (BE), Les Écologistes (FR), Možemo! (HR), Partia Zieloni (PL), and Vihreät (FI) – on the role and identity of the EU on the international stage as a “civilian” or a “military power”. The second turns to frameworks aimed at deepening military cooperation and collaboration between member states, focusing on how Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) can be deepened. The third and final section examines how Green parties conceptualise the relationship and the division of tasks between the EU and NATO.

The role of the EU: a civilian or military power?”

Since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty and the progressive development

of common foreign, security, and defence policy frameworks, a debate has emerged as to whether the EU – initially construed as a peace project – is mutating from a civilian power into a military power. The former is usually used to describe an entity that relies on peaceful means to pursue its foreign policy objectives and maintain influence on the global stage. A civilian power favours diplomacy, dialogue, multilateralism and economic cooperation, soft-power tools, conflict prevention and resolution, development aid, and peacekeeping to contribute to international peace and security. By contrast, a military power possesses structured armed forces and command. It emphasises the strength of its armed forces, capable of deterring potential aggressors, as a vector of (national) security as well as a tool to gain and keep influence on the international stage. The formalisation of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in 2003 and the creation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004 – whose highest decision-making body, the Steering Board, is headed by EU defence ministers and whose personnel is composed of a mix of civilians and military personnel – ushered in a phase of identity ambiguity for EU: neither genuinely “civilian”, nor really “military”.

This ambiguity is also present in Green visions for the EU, its role in international relations, the tools it should employ, and the future of the CSDP. So far, the CSDP is mostly construed as a means for external action (i.e. action outside the EU’s borders); this primarily consists of peacekeeping and capacity-building missions. The key

questions, then, are to what extent this policy should also refocus on ensuring the defence of the EU, in more traditional terms, and what means it should have at its disposal to do so.

With regard to Green views on the institutional future of EU defence, desk research and interviews demonstrated a tension between two conceptions (federalist vs. inter-governmental) of the Union. Green parties from “older” member states tended to espouse a state-like vision for Europe, which they view as the natural evolution of the EU. Die Grünen’s programme for the 2021 federal elections, for instance, stated, “Our guiding star for the future development of the European Union is a Federal European Republic.”² The term “federal” also appears in political communications issued by Vihreät³ and Europa Verde,⁴ and frequently appears in papers issued by Les Écologistes.⁵ France is known for its sustained advocacy for common European defence. Hence, the Greens’ vision is also a reflection of French political and strategic culture. Indeed, in 2019 Les Écologistes campaigned for the creation of a European military headquarters accompanied by permanent battlegroups in the form of permanent transnational units.⁶ Similarly, in Belgium, the Écolo representative interviewed asserted that his ideal army is a “European (defensive) army” and a “united and strong Europe with real strategic thinking, so that it can become a real military power, not just a diplomatic power”.⁷

These parties are nevertheless aware that their vision of genuinely integrated European defence is not a realistic perspective at present. Since 2021, Les Écologistes have

somewhat toned down their plea for a unique and permanent defence structure, emphasising the need to deepen collaboration and advocating for a looser “confederal” framework that only activates in times of crisis.⁶ Along the same lines, the Groen representatives interviewed explained that, although working on the integration of EU defence remains an objective of the party, “focusing on a European army is not desirable in the short term, not with the different positions we have in the EU”.⁹ Going beyond the difficulty of speaking with one voice to abide by the unanimity rule, the representatives interviewed also insisted on the need to question the idea that “unity leads to more ethical results”, using the example of EU migration policy.¹⁰ Representatives of Možemo! also made this point, using the same analogy.¹¹

This quote refers back to the broader issue of the objectives of the CSDP and the means at its disposal. Ensuring the defence of the EU is not problematic per se, but Green parties maintain that the militarisation of the Union should not lead to hawkish policies driven by self-interest. The aim of the CSDP should not be power projection, and the EU must stay true to its core values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).¹² In Poland, Partia Zieloni representatives spoke of the EU as a “peace project”;¹³ in Belgium, both Écolo and Groen emphasise the need for Europe to “return home”;¹⁴ in France, Les Écologistes state that “the objective for European defence must be anchored in its initial project of peace and freedom”;¹⁵ in Germany, Die Grünen “want to defend the fundamental values of the EU within our borders and resolutely champion these values outside our borders”;¹⁶ in Italy, Europa Verde’s vision for

the EU is as “a strong and autonomous actor of peace, uncompromising in its respect for human rights, in a multilateral international context”;¹⁷ and in Finland, Vihreät urges that “the EU must continue to be the force that promotes democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and sustainable development”.¹⁸

“It’s complicated to say that we’re going to create a federal European army [...], so I have stepped back from that idea somewhat. We can have other models in mind: a structural permanent alliance that acts as a joint army when needed.”

Interview with representatives of
Les Écologistes

Consequently – and this applies to all of the parties surveyed – Greens advocate for the reinforcement of the EU’s diplomatic apparatus, tools for civilian and environmental crisis management, conflict prevention and resolution, and development aid policies.¹⁹ The representatives of Partia Zieloni interviewed recommended that the EU should invest more in soft power, while those of Možemo! stated that

“the focus of the Green movement has to be to see how to convince, to see what can be done to prevent conflict”.²⁰ Put another way, European security policy should be geared towards prevention rather than reaction because, as Vihreät emphasises, “Security is not built or guaranteed primarily by military force, as many of the most significant threats are not military in nature.”²¹ Climate change, social inequalities, wealth discrepancies between the global North and the global South, the rise of autocracy or of so-called “illiberal democracies” in Europe and elsewhere: these challenges can only be addressed by investing in ambitious policies, aimed for instance at ensuring the ecological transition, defending the welfare state, fiscal harmonisation, sustainable development, and education. As Vihreät highlights, “The diversity of the security threats we face requires a more comprehensive understanding of security in order to strengthen the resilience of societies”.²² This all demonstrates that the comprehensive understanding of security

that has so far underlain Green politics still lies at the heart of how Greens think about international peace and security, even though – as the next chapters will highlight – “hard security” considerations are ever more present in their discourses.

Ultimately, it seems that the Green vision for the role of the EU on the international stage can be described as that of a civilian power with military capabilities or, as some would put it, “diplomacy with teeth”. Indeed, several parties agreed with the statement that, although the EU should always favour non-coercive means of action, diplomacy must be backed by solid military power to enhance its credibility.²³ The shape this power should take is contested, however. Nevertheless, most Green parties agree on the need to strengthen military cooperation among member states.

“Security is not built or guaranteed primarily by military force, as many of the most significant threats are not military in nature. The climate crisis and associated forced migration, pandemics, fragile states, weak democratic development, inequality, and the polarisation of societies pose serious challenges for the security of individuals and societies. Various security threats require a more comprehensive understanding of security in order to strengthen the resilience of societies.”

Vihreät, 2021

European military cooperation: PESCO as a model to follow?

Articles 42(7) and 42(6) of the TEU respectively establish a duty of mutual aid and assistance in the event of armed aggression and the possibility of creating enhanced defence cooperation mechanisms for willing member states.^{25, 26} This mechanism, known as the Permanent Structured Co-

operation (PESCO), was established in December 2017 as part of the CSDP with the participation of all Member States except for Malta and Denmark.²⁷ PESCO aims to enhance the overall effectiveness of the EU’s defence efforts.²⁸ Participating states commit themselves to developing joint military capabilities, investing in defence research and development (R&D) – including collaborative projects,²⁹ and enhancing the readiness and deployability of their forces. States are also encouraged

Securitising the environment and other non-military threats

Linked to the Copenhagen School of security studies, the concept of securitisation refers to the process of framing a problem as a security issue, allowing for the adoption of extraordinary measures.²⁴ Presenting climate change as a security issue has become common practice. However, two of the experts interviewed – both with a background in critical security studies – called for caution here. Giving the example of Frontex and EU migration policy, they warned that securitisation can open the door to military responses to non-military issues. This can lead to problematic outcomes, for instance in terms of respect for human rights. Another example is humanitarian intervention, which rarely achieves its objectives and more often worsens security conditions, including for individuals, on the ground – a classic example being Libya. The experts in question insisted that a separation should be maintained between the environmental and security agendas, especially with regards to addressing the causes and/or consequences of environmental disasters. They urged Green parties to keep in mind that an issue can be urgent without necessarily being a security issue.

to participate in joint military planning and exercises to improve the inter-operability of their armed forces and are required to meet certain criteria related to defence capabilities, contribution to CSDP missions and operations, and military expenditure.³⁰

Often considered as having enacted the idea of a “two-speed Europe”, PESCO is also presented as a significant step towards achieving greater European strategic autonomy in the absence of truly unified European defence. Its creation was prompted by the sense that EU defence structures were too fragmented and ill-adapted to respond to the evolving European security environment at a time when doubts were starting to emerge regarding the United States’ commitment to NATO and Europe more generally. Donald Trump’s presidency (2017-2021) damaged the transatlantic partnership and, despite attempts by the Biden administration to reassure European allies, several of the Green

parties surveyed indicated or inferred that they currently perceive the United States as an “unreliable ally”.³¹ With the 2024 US presidential elections in view and the risk of seeing Trump re-elected in an even more volatile international environment, most of the parties surveyed agreed on the need to further deepen intra-EU defence cooperation. The only exceptions were DSVL, whose representative argued that this “should be a common project with NATO”,³² and Europa Verde and Možemo!. The latter parties emphasised that the integration of social, health, education or even fiscal policy is more of a priority than defence, but also submitted that the current crisis might constitute a “window of opportunity” to work further on EU defence cooperation mechanisms.³³

In Belgium, the Écolo representative went as far as to identify intra-EU defence cooperation as a key priority.³⁴ The same applies to the French Greens who, in a motion

EXPERT VIEW NO. 2

The problems of “diplomacy with teeth”

Some of the experts interviewed, coming from a conflict mediation background, expressed scepticism towards the idea of “diplomacy with teeth” advocated by some Green parties. Although they highlighted that the “hard security vs. pacifism” dichotomy is oversimplistic as there is a “huge area in between”, the way diplomacy (but also development aid policy) and military capabilities can be articulated must be the subject of in-depth reflection. Greens are still missing a credible political strategy in this respect and must be cautious that “diplomacy with teeth” could quickly turn into “muscular diplomacy”, i.e. when the use of military tools takes precedence over the political resolution of conflicts, leading to a degradation of security. To illustrate this point, they gave the example of Ukraine, but also Yemen, the South China Sea dispute and Taiwan, where political dialogue and avenues for conflict resolution seem to have been altogether abandoned.

In addition, other experts pointed to the limits of the reasoning behind arming for the sake of diplomacy (or peace). How can diplomatic efforts be trusted when they are backed by an implicit threat of force? The question is even more salient in the context of the colonial pasts of many EU member states and the tactics of “gunboat diplomacy” used by former European powers in the nineteenth century to expand their empires. Green parties therefore need to deeply reflect on whether diplomatic and military tools can really be combined without this being perceived as threatening.

issued in October 2022, stated that “the EU’s opponents are counting on division among its member states and their weakness in terms of defence, security and diplomacy”.³⁵

As a result, “Europe must complete the transformation of European defence. We will support the strengthening of military cooperation at EU level, [...] as well as the creation of a European operational military command.”³⁶ Vihreät equally asserts that cooperation must be expanded and deepened to address increasing “instability in neighbouring areas”.³⁷ They emphasise the need to develop the “EU’s independent defence capability” so as to allow it to take “joint responsibility for the safety of the EU and near-lying areas, developing mutual assistance between member states and organising joint exercises to prepare for major accidents and armed attacks”.³⁸ They notably advocate for the “creat[ion] [of a] platform Article 42(7) for the practice of mutual aid”³⁹ – i.e. formalisation the procedures for the activation of this collective self-defence clause. Also explicitly referring to Article 42 of the TEU, the Partia Zieloni representative interviewed considered that the “EU has to have a much bigger role [...] in terms of coordination [and] resource pooling”.⁴⁰

“We know very well that if Trump is back in power, we will be forced to create our own defence identity. We can try to strengthen transatlantic relations as much as possible, but with Trump, this does not work. He is totally unpredictable, and he does not care about the transatlantic alliance.”

Interview with a representative of Europa Verde

Resource pooling and filling capability gaps by identifying specialities and complementarities is also important for the German and Dutch-speaking Belgian Greens. Beyond the immediate or near-

future threats to European security, cooperation and collaboration is simply seen as the logical way forward because it is both more efficient and cost-effective. Die Grünen’s programme for the 2021 German federal elections states that “instead of funnelling more and more money into parallel national military structures, we want to expand the reinforced cooperation of armed forces in the EU, combine military

capabilities, [...] and work together to close generally recognised capability shortfalls”.⁴²

It adds that this will require “strengthening and consolidating the joint EU command structure and European initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)”.⁴³ Similarly, Groen representatives underlined that EU defence integration is something they have been advocating for a long time.⁴⁴ “Identifying specialties and gaps”, as PESCO aims to do, is seen as “more efficient, cheaper and more productive”.⁴⁵ However, on a side note, the representatives interviewed also cautioned that member states should be wary of over-specialisation.

The need for a clear vision for PESCO

Besides the fact that defence cooperation and collaboration – notably when it comes to joint procurement (see Expert view no. 16) – has not always yielded the expected results, experts have criticised the lack of clear vision on the purpose and goals of PESCO.⁴¹ Along the same lines, one of the experts interviewed noted that some Green parties seem to view PESCO as a step towards the full integration of EU defence, while others clearly do not share this position. Without a vision of PESCO’s goals, accompanied by a distinct strategy as to how to achieve them, collaboration might end up being fragmented and, overall, inefficient.

While banking on their respective strengths presents economic, structural, and strategic advantages, they argue it is important for each member state to maintain a diversified set of capabilities that enables them to resist at least the first stages of an attack on their own.⁴⁶

Another key element for Green parties is that deepened military cooperation must be accompanied by processes aimed at increasing transparency and democratic control. The governance of PESCO, like that of the rest of CSDP, is inter-governmental: it depends on member states and on the Council, with little to no oversight from the European Commission or the European Parliament. Die Grünen are adamant that “we can no longer afford for individual states to block action in areas such as foreign and

“Instead of funnelling more and more money into parallel national military structures, we want to expand the reinforced cooperation of armed forces in the EU, [...]. This will require [...] strengthening and consolidation of the joint EU command structures and European initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)”.

Die Grünen, 2021

security policy” and that “as long as national interests can thwart the common good in Europe, the EU will not be able to take on a more active role”.⁴⁷ To remedy this issue, they actively advocate, like many other Greens, for the reform of decision-making procedures by revoking the unanimity rule in favour of qualified-majority and majority voting.⁴⁸ Vihreät representatives argued that this would make Europe’s military structures “leaner and more agile”, allowing

them to better respond to crisis situations. In this respect, they argued that changing the rules is also a defence priority.⁴⁹ The German and French Greens also propose that the European Parliament be given oversight over CSDP and greater power in defining the strategic guidelines for the EU’s external

The wavering line between federal and inter-governmental models

In an article published in 2020 on Bündnis 90/Die Grünen’s attitudes towards EU defence, Gaëlle Winter, an associate researcher at French security and defence think tank Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), argued that the German Greens’ policy line “wavers between inter-governmental cooperation and integration”.⁵⁰ While they support reinforced cooperation, they avoid explicit endorsement of a federal model due to internal divisions. The author argues that these divisions can be traced back to several factors, including ideological commitment (militarisation and/or historical pacifist principles), strategic concerns (loss of sovereignty in setting priorities), and pragmatic considerations related to the feasibility of EU defence integration and how it would work in practice (resource allocation, command structures, decision-making processes).

Overall, she contends that in trying to reconcile its pacifist ideals with the realities of German and European foreign policy, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen are showing signs of the gradual acceptance of mainstream norms, leading to a moderate stance without clear ideological guidelines. This appraisal, which it seems can be extended to other Green parties, echoes that presented in [Expert view no. 3](#).

The EU's capacity to defend itself without the United States

One expert noted that, in terms of military balance, the ability of EU member states to defend themselves without the help of the United States should not be underestimated. For instance, according to the International Institute for Security Studies' *The Military Balance 2023*, EU states together possess 1,764 fighter jets (Russia 1,004), 1,904 automatic cannons (Russia 1,720), 5,858 armoured infantry combat vehicles (Russia 4,570), and 3,989 tanks (Russia 2,070).⁵¹ From this perspective, when taken together, the EU member states armed forces constitute the world's third largest army after the United States' and China's. Beyond quantitative data, it should also be highlighted that EU member states armed forces are qualitatively superior to Russia's, notably in terms of training, know-how, operative and logistic procedures. The narrative under which Europe is helpless without NATO should, therefore, be analysed with some critical distance and perspective.

action.⁵² The idea is that this would ensure that the EU's actions on the international stage reflect the will and interests of European citizens beyond those of individual member states. European Greens are nonetheless well aware that this would require a deep reform of the EU's overall institutional framework, which will not be easy to achieve given member states' reluctance to surrender what they perceive as a core attribute of their sovereignty.

EU-NATO: how can their relation be conceptualised?

When discussing the reinforcement of EU military cooperation, the Možemo! representative interviewed stated that "it is not clear what the relationship of the European defence system to NATO will be".⁵³ Since the establishment of PESCO and increasing pleas for European strategic autonomy, much ink has flowed in attempts to conceptualise a division of tasks between these two organisations and avoid duplication. Studies have also shown that EU member states do not give equal importance to European strategic autonomy, nor do they not share a single understanding of what this concept means, including in relation to NATO. Ulrike Franke and Tara

Varma of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) have noted that while European strategic autonomy is, for instance, deemed "important" in France, Germany, and Italy, countries that incidentally possess the three biggest armies in the EU, it is seen as "not really important" in Lithuania and "contested" in Poland.⁵⁴ As the authors observe, there are different reasons why this project might be contested or considered less important: in Nordic states (such as Sweden and Denmark), this is linked to their neutral status, while in Central and Eastern Europe it mostly relates to how this might affect NATO and the relationship with the United States.

With some variations, these divisions are also palpable in European Green parties' visions of EU-NATO relations and help us to understand them. However, beyond diverging national strategic cultures and identities, the history of each party also comes into play. In newer parties from Central and Eastern Europe that were formed after the end of the Cold War and whose countries joined NATO in the late 1990s, membership of the Alliance goes unquestioned. Perhaps more surprisingly, this is also the case in Italy; Europa Verde does not mention NATO in its programmes or policy papers. As the party representatives interviewed explained, Europa Verde does not

have an official position on this issue, probably because NATO membership was simply taken as fact at the time the ecological movement consolidated politically.⁵⁵ The same applies to *Możemo!*, which, in addition to being a very young party, grew from a municipalist platform in Zagreb and has only recently started tackling issues related to international peace and security.

The positions of the Polish and Lithuanian Greens on NATO and its relations with the EU are more established, if differentiated. As the *Partia Zieloni* representative emphasised, NATO is seen as Poland's main hard security provider.⁵⁶ This is for historical reasons, notably the perception that Washington was the one to step in to help Poland during

past wars, but also as a result of the training programmes offered by the United States to Polish officers in the 1990s.⁵⁹ The United States also has military bases in Poland, which makes it a more visible security actor. Finally, there is also the feeling, shared by many Central and Eastern European countries, that EU partners did not listen when they raised the alarm about Russia's expansionist policies.⁶⁰ Consequently, while *Partia Zieloni* is a deeply pro-European party, it also argues that the role of the EU could possibly be limited to that of a "soft security provider", leaving most hard security matters for the transatlantic alliance.⁶¹ For its part, Lithuania has a difficult history with Russia and longstanding bilateral military ties with the United States, which

EXPERT VIEW NO. 6

Comprehensive security, hybrid threats, and NATO

A number of the experts interviewed stressed that, while they share certain commonalities in seeking to capture the multifaceted and evolving nature of modern security, the concepts of comprehensive security and hybrid threats are fundamentally distinct. Usually associated with the work of British political scientist Barry Buzan, comprehensive security consists in an inclusive and holistic understanding of security that goes beyond traditional military threats to address other types of challenges that affect the well-being of a society or of a state – generally through prevention. Policies aimed at implementing comprehensive security are not necessarily military-focused.

"Hybridity" (hybrid warfare, attacks, threat, etc.), on the other hand, is a military concept. It was first elaborated by US Lieutenant General James N. Mattis and US Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hoffman in 2005 to describe the evolution of operational terrains due to the increasing use of heavy artillery by non-state actors.⁵⁷ The concept worked its way into European military and strategic doctrines, through NATO, from 2013 onwards. As it becomes ever more popular, it has started to lose its original meaning. It is now frequently used to describe "new" ways of waging war, such as cyberattacks, propaganda and disinformation, barriers to trade and access to energy resources, assassinations and poisonings, migration, and even intellectual property theft.

Experts such as strategic studies scholars Chiara Libiseller and Murat Caliskan, and international relations professor Michel Liégeois have warned on the all-encompassing character of hybridity, which blurs the lines of war and peace and is increasingly employed by NATO to mean threats that may need to be met with a military response.⁵⁸ As one of the experts interviewed highlighted: "The danger of hybrid threats is the concept of hybrid threats." This term is best used with caution and with knowledge of the heavy militaristic connotations it carries.

leads it to see its security as NATO-dependent. As previously mentioned, while DSVL believes European countries should reinforce their military capabilities, the party representatives interviewed argued that this must be done within the framework of the Alliance.⁶² Projects aimed at reinforcing European strategic autonomy are seen as problematic as they would lead to a confusion of roles between the EU and NATO as well as damage European security. Moreover, the DSVL representative expressed doubts on the EU's capacity for standalone defence: "If we have players like China or other countries that are very hostile to the Western way of life, it is clear that we have to join forces with the United States".⁶³

The perception of Russia as an immediate threat was also instrumental in Helsinki's decision to join NATO, despite the country's neutral status. In addition to a 1,700-kilometre-long border, Finland also shares a complicated history with Moscow. Traditionally, Vihreät was opposed to the idea of NATO membership, but the party's position slowly started to shift following the annexation of Crimea in 2014. On 3 January 2022, amid brewing tensions in the East, Green MEP Alviina Alametsä argued that joining the Alliance was a "long-term solution [to] ensuring Finland's independence and continued peace in the Baltic Sea region".⁶⁴ At the time, this was seen as a medium-term perspective, but the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine precipitated the centre-left-green government's decision to apply. The Vihreät representative interviewed

"I think the main priority is to stop constructing any kind of alternative security projects reflecting Macron's vision of European security, which failed and never got implemented in any way. NATO is the main security factor, and everything should be based on this."

Interview with a representative of DSVL

aimed at destabilising democracy.⁶⁵ But even under this division of tasks, Vihreät argues that the EU pillar must be strengthened in order to ensure that the Alliance also reflects Europe's voice. This could help modulate the sometimes imperialistic nature of NATO's actions and interventions.

Groen and Die Grünen share this vision for EU-NATO relations. Both parties argue that Greens should be more positive about NATO, especially given the current context. The Groen representative emphasised that "NATO is really important right now; we should acknowledge that".⁶⁶ Along the same lines, Die Grünen stated in its 2021 programme for the German federal elections that NATO "remains, alongside the EU, an indispensable player that can guarantee the joint security of Europe".⁶⁷ Both consider that EU defence can perfectly co-exist with the Alliance. But in order for this coexistence to work smoothly, Dutch-speaking Belgian and German Greens believe that NATO's framework and its strategic outlook need to be rediscussed

and reorientated. Like Vihreät, the Groen representative insisted that "NATO should focus on collective defence as its core task

"We believe we can invest in EU defence as well as in NATO. The two can co-exist [provided] NATO stays focused on collective self-defence as its core task and does not seek to become a policy instrument, because for us it is not."

Interview with a representative of Groen

and not become a policy instrument, because for us it is not”.⁶⁸ Concretely, this means that NATO should stick to Article 5 of its constitutive act and put a stop to offensive missions that do not fall under the category of collective self-defence as defined by Article 51 of the UN Charter. The division of tasks envisioned by Die Grünen is similar: “NATO is for the classical territorial defence of NATO territory; the EU is more for security as the bright and wider concept and also for crisis management”.⁶⁹

From this perspective, strengthening EU defence is part of an effort to re-equilibrate burden-sharing within the Alliance, which

“It is time to give Europe a defence policy that will enable it to gain independence and maintain its Atlantic partnership without being subject to the authority of the United States. [...] We in France need to understand that for many Central European countries, NATO is their life-insurance policy. Hence, in the medium-term, with a view to European unity, we need to think of European defence as complementary to NATO, before considering leaving it in the longer term.”

Les Écologistes, 2022

should help enhance Europe’s weight in decision-making processes and help it steer NATO back to its initial purpose. Strengthening the EU pillar of NATO is a project the parties surveyed are able to agree on, even in places – such as France and the French-speaking part of Belgium – where Green parties have historically been staunchly opposed to NATO. Until recently, it was perceived as an “outdated” institution, an obstacle to the establishment of genuine EU defence, and membership was seen as tantamount to bending to US leadership.⁷⁰ The relationship between EU defence and NATO was then very clear,

On the need to balance Central and Eastern European discourses

One of the experts interviewed recalled that Central and Eastern European countries had warned their fellow EU member states about Russia’s threatening behaviour and the concomitant need to bolster defence capabilities. The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 somewhat validated their analysis. She argued, however, that while assisting Ukraine was “the right thing to do” – a “no brainer” – adopting a policy solely focused on maximum military deterrence is problematic as non-military solutions are being delegitimised. She stated that “I’m pretty convinced that the recipes proposed by the eastern flank countries are not what is going to keep Europe secure, and so, I would love for the Greens to maybe sometimes question what comes from this part of Europe and ask whether this is not risking dragging us into escalating the conflict”. Security and defence policy should not be driven by fear: this leads to short-term “solutions” to the detriment of long-term “vision”.

This expert also warned against a turn to “identity politics”, whereby the adversary – in the present case Russia – is essentialised as “bad”, “irrational” and “imperialistic”. This, in turn, leads to an essentialisation of the conflict itself: the war in Ukraine is not examined as a “traditional” conflict – waged for a diverse set of political, economic or yet cultural reasons –, but as a struggle between democracies on the one hand, and autocracies on the other. Winning the war then becomes about crushing or destroying the enemy, effectively closing off any possibility for dialogue.

because the latter simply had to disappear. The war in Ukraine since 2022 has, however, led Les Écologistes and Écolo to soften their perspective.⁷¹

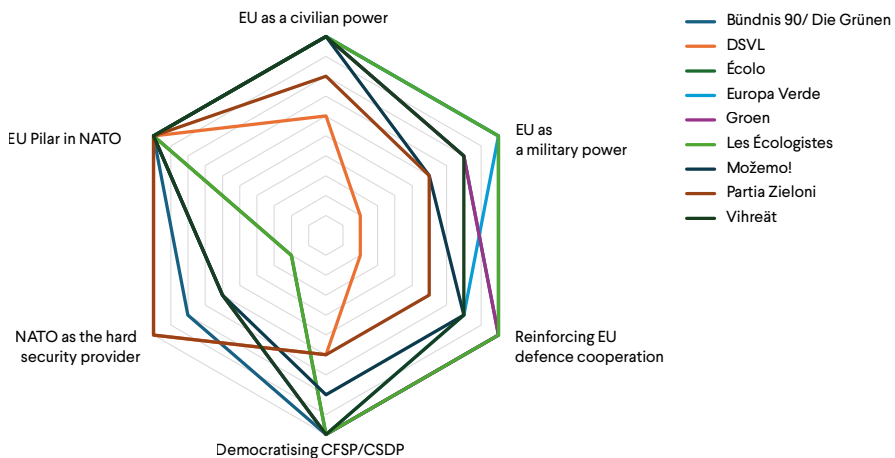
Despite remaining very critical of the Alliance and continuing to view it as an impediment to the consolidation of European defence, the two parties do not currently question NATO membership. Les Écologistes, for instance, speak of developing an EU defence policy that will “enable it to gain independence and maintain its Atlantic partnership without being subject to the authority of the United States”, adding that “in France, we have to understand that for many Central European countries, NATO is their life-insurance policy”.⁷² Consequently, “in the medium-term, with a view to European unity, we need to think of European defence as complementary to NATO, before considering leaving it in the longer term”.⁷³ The Écolo representative interviewed likewise admitted that, while

his ideal would be to substitute NATO with integrated EU defence, “I’m not saying that we have to get out of NATO anymore; I think NATO is here and we have to deal with it [...] by creating a common [European] force that counterbalances the United States’ weight in the Alliance”.⁷⁴ However, both the French and French-speaking Belgian Greens see this as simply being a step on the road towards genuine European defence autonomy.

Main takeaways and recommendations

An examination of the selected Green parties’ perspectives on the role of the EU as a self-standing security and defence actor reveals a nuanced landscape. While the parties surveyed generally classify themselves as pro-European, their visions of the EU – its identity, functions, and relationship with NATO – vary considerably (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Summary of the surveyed Green parties’ views on EU and transatlantic models of security and defence



The main points of divergence between the parties surveyed are:

- **EU's role as a "hard security" provider and military power:** Some advocate for a more assertive and integrated EU security and defence policy, envisioning a federal Europe with unified defence, while others do not believe this to be the role of the EU.
- **EU-NATO relations:** While some parties view NATO as the primary – and indispensable – guarantor of European security, others are deeply critical of the Alliance and view it as an impediment to the development of genuine EU defence. A third group holds a more moderate position, according to which the two organisations can play complementary roles.
- **Approach to defence autonomy and cooperation:** As a consequence, there are also varying views on the extent to which the EU should pursue strategic autonomy in defence. Some parties prioritise strengthening EU capabilities independently of NATO – either because they believe it is more desirable or not incompatible – while others emphasise the importance of cooperation within the NATO framework.

Some broad points of convergence can also be identified, notably:

- **Balanced approach to security:** The parties surveyed generally advocate for a balanced approach to security, which is not only understood as the absence of war ("negative peace") but encompasses the creation of conditions that foster sustainable peace and societal well-being ("positive peace").
- **Favouring "soft" tools and diplomacy:** There appears to be overall agreement that diplomacy and non-violent means should always prevail over military solutions. The use of force must be a measure of last resort.
- **Need for transparency and democratic control:** The parties surveyed advocate for EU institutional reforms aimed at reinforcing transparency and democratic control over the CFSP and CSDP.
- **Create a EU pillar within NATO:** Even though they have differing opinions on the respective roles of these two organisations as hard security providers, all of the parties surveyed agree that NATO's EU pillar should be strengthened in order to make sure that Europe's voice has more weight within the Alliance's decision-making processes.

Recommendations to Green parties based on the expert input received:

- **Exercise prudence when framing the environment as a security concern:** Green parties should be cautious about how they securitise environmental issues as this can lead to inappropriate responses. Urgent matters should be addressed promptly but not necessarily as security threats.
- **Clarify the vision for PESCO:** The Green parties that advocate for reinforced intra-EU military cooperation should devise a clear vision of PESCO's purpose, aims, and objectives.
- **Not underestimating the EU's capacity for self-defence:** Green parties should maintain a critical distance from the narrative that the EU is not able to defend itself militarily. Instead of comparing the EU to the United States, a more meaningful comparison would be with potential adversaries. This assessment should inform defence policies and resource allocation.

- **Distinguish between comprehensive security and hybrid threats:** It is crucial to differentiate between the concept of comprehensive security, which encompasses various non-military threats, and that of hybrid threats, which tends to have heavily militaristic connotations. The latter is best approached with caution.
- **Balance military deterrence with non-military solutions:** While acknowledging the security concerns of Central and Eastern European countries, Green parties should advocate for a balanced approach. Over-reliance on military solutions is a short-term fix that could jeopardise long-term vision and sustainability.



Endnotes

- 1 Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht on 7 February 1992, entered into force on 1 November 1993, Art. B (2).
- 2 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Germany, Everything is possible. Manifesto for the 2021 Parliamentary Elections, 2021, p. 155 and p. 202. See also Vihreät, “Green Europe Programme”, approved at the meeting of party delegates on 3 October 2021.
- 3 Vihreät, “Vihreä Eurooppa – ohjelma”, approved at the meeting of party delegates on 3 October 2021.
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Note that the argument developed by Die Grünen is applied not only to foreign and security policy but also to other domains, such as taxation and energy.
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See, for example, Noël Mamère's intervention at the Assemblée nationale following France's move to rejoin NATO's integrated military command structure in 2009 Assemblée Nationale, or Eva Joly's position during the 2012 French presidential election campaign.
- 71 Note that the Die Grünen representative interviewed indicated that the party's position on NATO had already changed before the events of 2014 and 2022; the party's opposition to NATO is now more of a "historical myth" than a near-past or present reality.
- 72 Europe Écologie Les Verts, "L'Europe a besoin de écologistes pour se réinventer. Livret programmatique 2022", 2022, p. 27.
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Military Expenditure and Allocation of Defence Budgets

It is not uncommon to read that EU member states' defence sectors are structurally underfunded – and have been for many years. With the end of the Cold War, many states indeed decreased their defence investments. Over the last decade (i.e. following Russia's first intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea), however, military expenditure has risen all over the EU, both in monetary terms and as a share of GDP (see Figure 2 on next page).¹

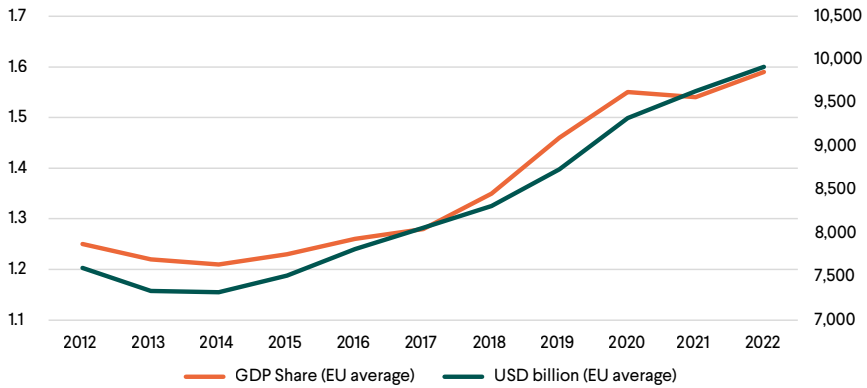
Traditionally, investing in defence and the armed forces has not been a priority for Green parties. In France, Belgium, and Germany, political ecology has also strongly denounced the defence spending threshold of 2% of GDP set by NATO. This chapter evaluates if and to what extent Russia's invasion of Ukraine may have impacted these positions. It starts by tackling the issue of the appropriate benchmark for military spending (2.1). It then analyses whether the current geopolitical situation may have led some parties to revise their principled opposition to military expenditure increases. Finally, and considering that expenditure has risen, it gives an overview of where Green parties think the priorities should be in terms of the allocation of defence budgets.

An appropriate benchmark: percentage of GDP or needs- based?

NATO requires its members to dedicate a minimum of 2% of their gross domestic product (GDP) to defence. PESCO also provides for “regularly increasing defence budgets in real terms” to allow the EU and its member states to fulfil their international responsibilities within the current security environment.² Institutional pressure to increase military expenditure thus does not only come from NATO but also from the EU. However, while NATO's approach is based on an abstract benchmark consisting of a percentage of GDP, EU defence spending is supposed to be guided by “needs” – a concept which, as some experts highlighted, can be seen as vague. As of today, most EU countries currently fail to meet the 2% threshold set by NATO (see Figure 3 on next page), although several have recently committed themselves to reaching (or even surpassing) it in the short or medium term.³

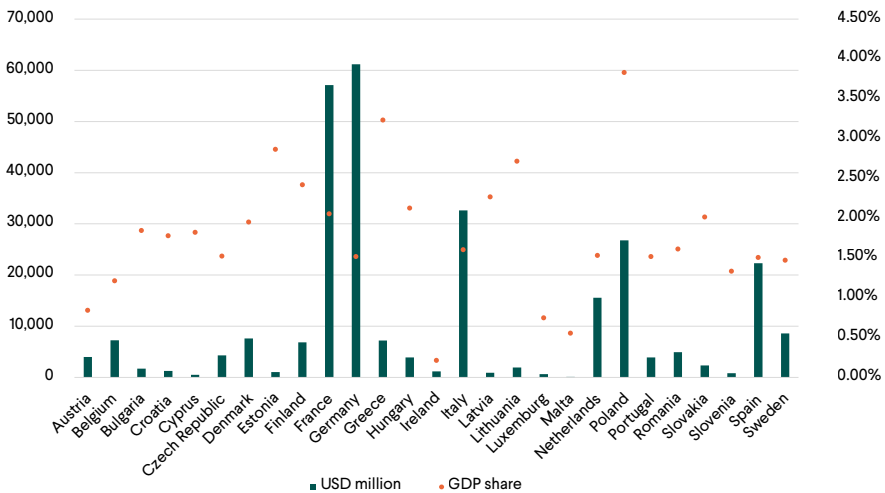
European Green parties, especially in Western Europe, have criticised the use of GDP as an appropriate benchmark. In France, Les Écologistes consider that military spending

Figure 2. EU member states' average military expenditure in USD million and share of GDP (2012-2023)



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, retrieved April 2024.

Figure 3. EU member states' military expenditure as share of GDP and in USD million (2023)



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, retrieved April 2024.

should be “calculated based on real needs and no longer on the basis of an arbitrary indicator such as GDP”.⁴ They further argue that needs must be appraised on a European, rather than national, basis. The purpose is to avoid overlaps and ensure the complementarity and interoperability of European armed forces. It would also allow economies of scale.⁵ In Belgium, French-speaking Écolo holds a similar position. Besides insisting that military expenditure should be guided by needs defined at the European level, they argue that GDP does not make sense as an indicator, as how it translates in monetary terms is highly variable (see [Figure 3 on previous page](#)).⁶ In Croatia, the Možemo! representative interviewed also made this point, agreeing that military expenditure should be based on justifiable needs.⁷

Historically, Die Grünen was another Green party strongly opposed to the use of GDP as a benchmark. The party’s programme for the 2021 federal elections stated that “the share of military spending in GDP is a very truncated and inadequate indicator” and that “we are committed to a new definition of

goals that is not abstract, national and static, but is based on shared tasks”.⁸ While Die Grünen remains critical, its representative argued that discussions about the use of GDP as a benchmark to set military expenses are not timely. Starting such a discussion would be perceived as tantamount to questioning commitment to the transatlantic partnership and European security at a time when this is paramount.⁹

The other parties surveyed do not have strong feelings about the use of GDP to set military expenditure. In Italy and in Belgium, Europa Verde and Groen are against raising defence spending to achieve the 2% threshold, but do not seem to question the use of GDP as an indicator per se. The Europa Verde representative interviewed believes the 2% threshold does not make sense;¹⁰ the Groen representative, on the other hand, indicated that “we are not, in general, against 2% GDP spending on defence” but “our position is that we should always balance [military expenditure] with other investments that should be made in the country”.¹¹

EXPERT VIEW NO. 8

The use of GDP as an annual benchmark

The debate on whether GDP makes sense as a benchmark for military expenditure is an old one. Its advocates argue that it offers a simple and standardised approach that reflects the economic capacities of a country and hence limits the impact on other policy sectors. They argue that it is particularly relevant in an Alliance context as it allows the issue of burden-sharing to be debated.¹² On the flip side, GDP does not directly take into account the strategic requirements of national defence and may result in the underfunding or, on the contrary, overfunding of defence. It is also vulnerable to economic fluctuations, meaning that defence budgets become unpredictable in monetary terms.

What is often deemed more problematic than the use of GDP per se, however, is the setting of a fixed annual threshold. In fact, and as emphasised in [Expert view no. 11](#), defence is not a linear expense. Needs may vary depending on the equipment and operational requirements of a state at a given moment. Furthermore, it is an open question whether it makes sense to continue to insist on a threshold that the Alliance knows most members cannot meet.¹³

Finally, Partia Zieloni and DSVL were the least critical of both the use of GDP as an indicator and the 2% target set by NATO. As highlighted in the next section, Poland and Lithuania are among the EU member states where the share of GDP dedicated to defence has increased most significantly over the past decade – i.e. since Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The representatives of both the Lithuanian and the Polish Greens deemed NATO’s target “relevant” and “justified” as a matter of national security.¹⁴ This position, however, appears conjectural, linked to the current European security dilemma and the perception of Russia as an immediate threat. Indeed, both parties agree that, in an ideal world, they would prefer to see this money being invested “peace rather than war”, including by developing crisis management tools and capabilities as well as a culture of mediation and conflict resolution.¹⁵ In this respect, the positions of Partia Zieloni and DSVL can be viewed as similar to that of Die Grünen: over the short term, and as long as the war in Ukraine continues, technical debates on the usefulness of GDP as an indicator and on the 2% threshold are moot.¹⁶

Increasing military expenditure: the responsible answer?

As the graphic presented in the introduction to this chapter shows, whether in terms of share of GDP or in monetary terms, military expenditure has steadily risen in the EU. European Green parties are rather wary of this trend. As hinted above, although the parties surveyed wish that similar or greater attention (and financing) would be awarded to other policy sectors (including education, health, environmental, and social policy), the war in Ukraine has led some to drop their principled opposition to increasing

military expenditure. In particular, parties participating in governmental coalitions, or that are geographically closer to the eastern borders of the EU, support an increase in the share of GDP allocated to the armed forces.

In Belgium, for example, Écolo and Groen conceded on the need to increase the national defence budget to 1.55% of GDP (approximately 8.8 billion EUR) by 2030

as part of the new strategic plan for Belgian defence, the STAR Plan.¹⁷ The concept of a new federal plan investment plan for defence had been enacted in the coalition agreement of September 2020, but was only officially approved by parliament in June 2022.¹⁸ During the interviews for this study, the representatives of both the French and Dutch-speaking

Belgian Greens admitted that they had been reluctant to support the budget increase, but that the events of February 2022 had helped them come to terms with this decision.¹⁹

Likewise, in Germany, the *Defence Policy Guidelines 2023* provide that at least 2% of GDP will be invested in defence to “realistically and credibly ensure reliable deterrence and defence” and “contribute our fair share to the protection of the Alliance”.²⁰ This view is currently shared by Die Grünen: “If there is NATO planning and there is homework to be done [...], you should do your homework”.²¹ In other words, the party appears to believe that Germany’s defence capabilities are lacking and that this justifies revising the Bundeswehr’s budget to enable it to meet current threats.

In Finland, during Vihreät’s time in government, the country’s national defence budget rose from 1.45% of GDP in 2019 to 1.72% in 2022.²² In August 2023, the newly elected right-wing government further set

“[...] After the attack, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, many people understood that this is not the time for nitty-gritty discussions on the sense of 2% [of GDP for military expenditure].”

Interview with a representative of Die Grünen

the objective of spending 2.3% of GDP on defence in 2024.²³ This topic, which is not mentioned in Vihreät's 2023 general election programme, does not seem to be of particular concern for the party. As previously mentioned, Vihreät is in favour of Finland fulfilling the 2% requirement.²⁴ Finland's particular military culture – being one of the only countries in the EU not to have abolished conscription²⁵ – as well as its history and geographical proximity to Russia, might explain why augmenting defence budgets is overall seen as less contentious than in other EU member states.

This explanation is equally applicable to Central and Eastern European states, where defence expenditure has increased most significantly since 2014. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Poland's defence budget grew from 1.81% of GDP (8.7 billion USD) to 2.39% (16.8 billion USD) between 2012 and 2022.²⁶ Over the same period, Lithuania's jumped from 0.77% of GDP (0.3 billion USD) to 2.52% (1.65 billion USD).²⁷ These countries decided to maintain their military expenditure at a minimum of 3% and 2.5% of GDP respectively in 2023. In Poland, this was codified into law with the adoption of the Homeland Defence Act (HDA) on 11 March 2022. The Sejm's voting record shows that this act was adopted with 450 votes in favour (including all of Partia Zieloni's members of parliament), none against, five abstentions and five absent.²⁸ The representative of the Polish Greens explained that it is "very difficult to find a party in Poland that would

not support it in the current political circumstances. [...] [F]or the national security of the country, we see that we need to be able to protect our citizens and ourselves".²⁹ Likewise, in Lithuania, DSVL indicated that raising defence budgets was part of a broad national and cross-party consensus.³⁰ During current DSVL chair Saulius Skvernėlis' mandate as prime minister (2016-2020), military expenditure grew from 1.48% to 2.07% of GDP.³¹

"[It is] very difficult to find a party in Poland that would not support [increasing military expenditure] in the current political circumstances."

Interview with a representative of Partia Zieloni

France also recently passed a law providing for an increase in the armed forces' budget. On 7 June 2023, the new Act on Military Programming (AMP 2024-2030), which earmarks 413 billion EUR for military spending over the next seven years – i.e. a 40% increase in expenditure – was adopted.³² While Les Écologistes indicated that they would plead for a "concerted reduction in military spending around the world" in their programme for the April 2022 French presidential elections,³³ they abstained when the AMP 2024-2030 was put to the vote. Party members have given different explanations for this. Some mentioned the absence of long-term strategic vision and genuine democratic debate on the allocation of expenses.³⁴ At the Assemblée nationale, Green MP Cyrielle Chatelain declared that her party regretted other policies were not given similar treatment. Still, while insisting that the French Greens had "not forgotten their pacifist and humanistic commitments", she stated that they were taking their "responsibilities" seriously and that, given the current international context, increasing the army's budget was a "vital necessity".³⁵

Increasing military expenditure and the security dilemma

One of the experts interviewed recalled that European states must be aware of the security dilemma. Rooted in realist theories of international relations, this concept describes a situation in which the actions taken by a state to enhance its own security are perceived as threats by other states, leading to a cycle of competitive and potentially destabilising behaviours. Increasing military expenditure and rearmament are prime examples of such actions. A state makes this policy choice in order to strengthen its security, but at the same time it also increases international instability. Moreover, while having advanced military capabilities is often seen as a safeguard, it may not effectively address contemporary, multifaceted, security threats.³⁶

Raising military expenditure, hence, cannot be the only response to heightened perceptions of Russian or other threats. While Europe is legitimate in deciding to invest more in defence, this move should be accompanied by diplomatic efforts to ensure that other countries do not misconstrue this as a threatening gesture leading to escalating tensions across the continent.

Only two (smaller or newer) parties maintain a hard line on this topic. In their 2019 programme for the European elections, Europa Verde called for a “drastic reduction in military spending, in favour of investments in ecological transformation, social welfare, and culture”.³⁷ When, on 16 March 2022, an agenda featuring a motion in favour of Italy seeking to reach the 2% threshold by 2024 was presented at parliament, Europa Verde voted against it. In a press release, the party’s spokespersons explained that an increase in military spending “is an ethically unacceptable choice in the face of the serious social and environmental crisis”.³⁸ This position was maintained by the Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra in the context of the September 2022 general elections,³⁹ and is still upheld by party members and MPs today. The representative interviewed highlighted that, when taken together, the EU as a whole is third only to the United States and China in terms of military spending (see [Figure 4 on the next page](#)). The priority

“In recent years, military spending has increased by 9.6%: this is an ethically unacceptable choice in the face of the serious social and environmental crisis.”

Europa Verde press release, March 2022

should thus be to evaluate what can be done with existing budgets, notably in terms of pooling and resource-sharing to avoid waste.⁴⁰ On the other side of the Adriatic, Možemo! is equally strongly opposed to increasing military expenditure. A representative of the party argued that spending should not exceed 1% of GDP, “1.5% tops, also depending on other priorities in the country”.⁴¹ They further asserted that if a law providing for an increase in defence spending is presented in parliament, party members will vote against it.⁴²

Budget allocation: what should the priorities be?

NATO requires that at least 20% of military expenditure be directed towards the acquisition of major new equipment.⁴³ Likewise, the *List of ambitious and more binding common commitments* annexed to Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 establishing PESCO states that 20% of defence spending

must be geared towards investments aimed at filling EU strategic capability gaps, of which 2% must be allocated to research, development, and innovation (R&D&I).⁴⁴ These guidelines respond to NATO's objectives of enhancing its "technological edge"⁴⁵ – i.e. harnessing emerging and disruptive technologies to deter potential adversaries – and of maintaining combat ready and interoperable capabilities, as well as keeping Europe's defence technological and industrial base (DTIB) up to date.⁴⁶

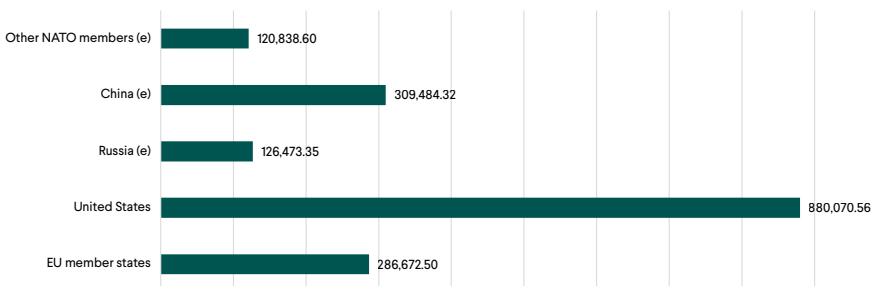
The latest data published by NATO show that in EU member states that are also part of NATO, the percentage of defence expenditure allocated to the acquisition of equipment (including R&D projects) increased between 2014 and 2023, while those dedicated to personnel decreased over the same period. (This does not mean that personnel has necessarily experienced cuts in monetary terms, however, as overall military expenditure has increased.)

EXPERT VIEW NO. 10

On the need to compare expenditure with that of potential adversaries

Echoing Expert view no. 5 and the argument put forward by Europa Verde, one of the experts interviewed underlined that the EU's military spending is third only to the United States and China. Moreover, the difference between EU member states' military expenditure and China's is not particularly significant. The recommendation is that Europeans need to compare their defence spending with that of potential adversaries instead of trying to emulate their allies. The expert agreed with the suggestion that, prior to increasing defence expenditure, Europe should first see what can be done with existing budgets.

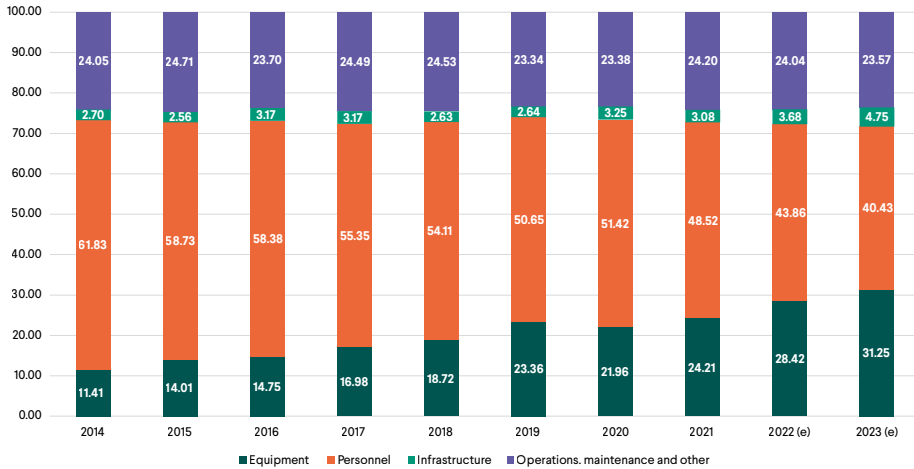
Figure 4. Military expenditure in million USD (2023)



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, retrieved April 2024

(n.b. The data provided for Russia, China and other NATO members are estimates (e)).

Figure 5. Allocation as % of defence expenditure in EU member states that are also members of NATO (2014–2023)



Source: [NATO](#) data published 7 July 2023. (n.b. the data provided for 2022 and 2023 are estimates (e)).

Allocating 20% of defence expenditure to equipment

Some experts highlighted that, beyond questioning the 2% of GDP for defence expenditure, Green parties should also turn their attention to the NATO and EU requirement that at least 20% of military expenditure be dedicated to the acquisition of major new equipment. They underline that the procurement of military gear is not a linear expense – for instance, states do not need to replace their fighter jets or aircraft carriers on a regular basis. This explains the year-on-year variations. In the case of EU member states, the increased share of expenditures dedicated to acquisitions over the past five years can be attributed to the decision of several of them to replace their combat jets with F-35 (which are very expensive) as well as by the need to replenish stocks donated to Ukraine.

More generally, while the 20% threshold can be considered reasonable as it allows to ensure the equipment is up-to-date, problems can appear when more than 25% of military expenditures are allocated to the acquisition of new equipment. In fact, the budgets left to secure sufficient and adequately trained personnel to operate and maintain the equipment might become scant. In the long term, this results in spending more on equipment than necessary or materially manageable. In addition to being a poor allocation of funds and leading to weapons stockpiling, it is also environmentally irresponsible.

The Green parties surveyed have scarcely dealt with the question of how defence budgets should be allocated. This is likely because defence has not traditionally featured among their main areas of interest. The desk research and interviews conducted for this report show that, when they do express their views on the issue of military budget allocation, equipment is not the main priority for all parties. Some even see such investments as problematic. Rearmament is perceived as a self-standing threat to international peace and security. In Italy, for instance, when Europa Verde opposed increasing military expenditure in March 2022, the party insisted that “choosing the path of rearmament, [...] is neither justified nor justifiable”.⁴⁷

Among the parties surveyed, this standpoint is the most radical. While expressing their scepticism regarding investments in military equipment, the other parties do not reject this out of hand. In its programme for the 2022 French presidential elections, Les Écologistes stated that “defence expenditure will be rationalised and optimised, through arms control and reduction measures”, but added that the way forward is “the effective integration (through European regulation) of defence equipment production in Europe”.⁴⁸ Rationalising spending is thus about pooling resources to avoid unnecessary overlap rather than reducing investments in new equipment per se.⁴⁹ In other countries, notably Belgium, one of the representatives interviewed explained that the discussion should also focus on the type and nature of the equipment in question. Besides filling capability gaps and needs, buying defensive and non-lethal gear (for example mine-hunter vehicles) is seen as more acceptable.⁵⁰ However, whether a piece of equipment is classified as defensive or offensive often

relies more on how the equipment is used than on the equipment itself. The same goes for the development of cyber-defence capabilities, which representatives of the

French-speaking Belgian, Polish, and Croatian parties all identified as key.⁵¹

Countries that are closer to the eastern borders of the EU, or that have given more material support to Ukraine, are less critical of equipment-dedicated expenditure. In Germany, the second-largest provider of military help to Ukraine

after the United States, replacing the equipment transferred to Kyiv is seen as a logical and necessary undertaking to ensure national defence and security.⁵² And in Finland, when the budget of the new government (which provided 1.5 billion EUR for procurement) was discussed in parliament on 15 December 2023, Vihreät made the following intervention: “There is barely enough material for our own defence, let alone to support Ukraine as much as we can [...] The allies must now speed up this process [...] because our own security and core values are at stake here”.⁵³ Strengthening military capabilities in terms of equipment thus appears to be considered as essential to ensure both Finland’s and Europe’s security. In this respect, it is worth noting that, when Vihreät was part of the governmental coalition, Helsinki decided to purchase 64 F-35 Lightning II fighter jets from Lockheed Martin for an estimated cost of 9.4 billion USD.⁵⁴

Acquiring new equipment was also seen as important by the DSVL representative interviewed.⁵⁵ Lithuania has a small army and does not, for instance, possess fighter jets. Representatives of both DSVL and Partia Zieloni also considered “speed of reaction” as key and an area in which Europe was

“There is barely enough material for our own defence, let alone to support Ukraine as much as we can [...] The allies must now speed up this process [...] because our own security and core values are at stake here”.

Atte Harjanne (Vihreät),
December 2023

still lacking.⁵⁶ This suggests that equipment should be up-to-date and well maintained, but also that military personnel should be well trained to make sure they can respond effectively to emergency situations.

Training and personnel were also cited as the primary priority by the representatives

from Croatia, France, Germany, and Belgium. In addition to training personnel to develop cyber-defence capabilities, the Écolo representative underlined that efforts are needed to make defence an attractive employer once again.⁵⁷ This is also a way of ensuring that the armed forces can recruit qualified personnel in order to meet capabilities needs and gaps.

EXPERT VIEW NO. 12

Training and personnel as (cost-effective) priorities

In connection with *Expert view n°11*, many experts agreed that training and personnel are key. As a matter of fact, however high-tech and advanced, equipment is useless if military personnel is not adequately trained to use and maintain it. They also highlighted that a well-trained army can reduce procurement needs, especially as regards ammunition (bullets, but also grenades, mortars, rockets, etc.). To illustrate this point, an expert cited the Ukrainian army as an example. They elaborated that one of the reasons for Ukraine's high ammunition consumption stems from its lack of preparedness and current use of weapon systems for which they have not received appropriate training.

It follows from the above that the armed forces' ability to attract and retain qualified personnel is also important. Whether in terms of time or resources, training is expensive. The military therefore needs to be given the means to limit staff turnover, notably by working on reevaluating this career path.

Interestingly, the parties surveyed made very little mention of the ecological footprint of the armed forces and the need for investment to reduce it. Military activities and equipment production are highly polluting, and conflict, by nature, is a destructive endeavour.⁵⁸ Although this issue has come under increasing scrutiny and NATO has vowed to tackle it,⁵⁹ only a handful of European countries have established official strategies aimed at reducing their armies' emissions.⁶⁰ In France, the programme issued by Les Écologistes prior to the April 2022 presidential elections states that “we will commit France to a

process of transparency and the reduction of the carbon footprint and environmental footprint of its armed forces”.⁶¹ The programme, however, does not give precise details on how this could be achieved. In Belgium, the Écolo representative interviewed mentioned that defence is one of the most polluting branches of the public sector and emphasised the need to initiate a broad discussion on how EU states can reduce their military emissions.⁶² For instance, referring to the dire state of some barracks in Belgium, they underlined the need for investments to make military infrastructure more energy efficient.⁶³

“Greening” defence and “decarbonising” the army

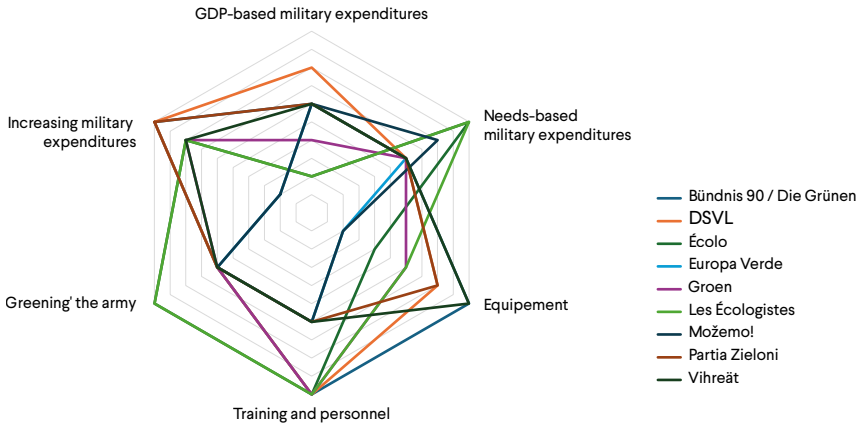
According to a specialist in military affairs, the defence sector has so far been exempted from environmental and transparency obligations. While armed forces may inform governments on a voluntary basis, there are no binding regulations obliging them to disclose their CO₂ emissions,⁶⁴ which was strongly criticised by the expert. As a result, most armed forces do not evaluate their carbon footprint. By extension, military emissions are poorly taken in account in studies conducted by science-policy interfaces such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). While NATO has encouraged its member states to minimise their defence externalities, the Alliance has so far failed to provide a methodology or roadmap to reduce the environmental impact of defence activities. According to the expert, the armed forces will not “green” themselves out of ecological convictions, but because of legal obligation and tactical constraints related to the climate crisis.

Acknowledging that wars cause heavy ecosystem damage, the expert suggested that states undertake European-level research and development cooperation in order to develop materials with less of an environmental impact. They also emphasised the importance of transitioning military transportation to renewable energy. To mitigate the environmental costs of war, the expert underlined the need to extend the rule of proportionality within international humanitarian law to ecosystems, especially in light of the recent adoption of the notions of environmental crimes and ecocide in European states⁶⁵ and the EU.⁶⁶ They also added that civilians in external theatres of operation are increasingly aware of the damage caused by military action, which could lead to hostility towards foreign armed forces. Finally, they stressed the need for the more effective remediation of conflict-related pollution.

Main takeaways and recommendations

The discourse on defence expenditure within the European Green parties surveyed is complex, marked by varied viewpoints and shifting stances (see Figure 6 on next page). Of all Green positions to have been influenced by the war in Ukraine, those on military spending have seen the largest impact.

Figure 6. Summary of surveyed Green parties' views on military expenditure and the allocation of defence budgets



The main points of divergence between the parties surveyed are:

- **2% of GDP as a benchmark for military expenditure:** While some parties continue to argue that GDP is an inappropriate guideline for military expenditure and that the 2% threshold set by NATO is problematic, others view this technical discussion as moot given the current security environment.
- **Increasing military expenditure:** The war in Ukraine and perceptions of Russia as a threat to European security have led some parties to forgo their traditional opposition to raising military expenditure. These parties argue that increasing defence budgets is a necessity. Others, however, view this trend as worrying and a driver of long-term instability and insecurity.
- **Acquisition of new defence systems and equipment:** In keeping with the same line of division, some Green parties believe that it is important to update their armed forces' military equipment. European states need to make sure that their capabilities meet current security threats in addition to replacing any weapons sent to Ukraine. Others argue that this is unnecessary as member states are already sufficiently well-armed.

Some broad points of convergence can also be identified, notably:

- **Investing in training and personnel:** While their stances on investment in new defence equipment diverge, all of the Green parties surveyed agree that training and personnel must be a priority when it comes to the allocation of defence budgets. This ensures capabilities meet security needs by attracting qualified individuals and is an essential aspect of building resilient and efficient defence – particularly in the field of cyber defence.
- **“Greening” defence and “decarbonising” the army:** This issue is only mentioned by a few parties. Nevertheless, it appears that Greens would generally agree that defence needs to be more transparent on its carbon emissions and that defence institutions should devise strategies to reduce their environmental footprint.

Recommendations to Green parties based on the expert input received:

- **Stay critical of the use of GDP as a benchmark for military expenditure:** Although the use of GDP to set military expenditure presents pragmatic advantages, these are outweighed by its limitations. Green parties should advocate for a more nuanced approach that takes strategic defence requirements and individual situations into consideration. They should also push for the reassessment of the 2% fixed threshold, recognising that defence needs are not static and may vary over time.
- **Compare expenditure with potential adversaries, not allies:** Instead of trying to match military expenditure with the United States, Green parties should prioritise comparing expenditure and needs with potential adversaries. This is a more realistic assessment of defence needs and avoids unnecessary arms spending.
- **Address the security dilemma:** Green parties should acknowledge the inherent security dilemma of increasing military expenditure, which can escalate tensions and contribute to international instability. Increasing defence expenditure should be accompanied by diplomatic efforts to promote dialogue and a more sustainable approach to security.
- **Stay attentive to the budget threshold for equipment:** Scrutinise NATO and EU requirements regarding the allocation of 20% of defence expenditure to new equipment acquisition. Green parties should advocate for a more flexible approach that considers actual defence needs and avoids excessive spending on equipment that may not be needed.
- **Prioritise investment in training and personnel:** Emphasise investment in training and personnel development to maximize defence capabilities beyond equipment. Green parties should plead for the allocation of resources to comprehensive training programs and initiatives aimed at incentivizing long-term commitment to the armed forces.
- **Promote environmental responsibility in defence:** Stress the need for greater environmental accountability within the defence sector, including mandatory disclosure of CO₂ emissions and evaluation of carbon-footprint. Advocate for the extension of rule of proportionality to ecosystems within international humanitarian law, taking into account the adoption of notion such as environmental crimes and ecocide.



Endnotes

- 1 The majority of the data used in this chapter was generated by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Its definition of the term “military expenditure” encompasses expenditure on the armed forces (including peacekeeping forces); defence ministries and other government agencies engaged in defence projects; paramilitary forces when judged to be trained, equipped and available for military operations; and military space activities. Personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement, military R&D, military construction, and military aid are included within the definition. SIPRI, “SIPRI Definition of military expenditures”, last accessed on 14 December 2023.
- 2 EU Council, Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States, Annex: List of ambitious and more binding common commitments undertaken by participating Member States in the five areas set out by Article 2 of Protocol 10, 11 December 2017, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 331, 14 December 2017, p. 62.
- 3 See section 2.2.
- 4 Les Écologistes, “Pour une politique européenne de sécurité et de défense à la hauteur des enjeux contemporains”, Conseil fédéral, 1-2 October 2022, p. 2.
- 5 Ibidem.
- 6 Interview by the authors with a representative of Écolo.
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- 8 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, “Wir stehen ein für Frieden und Menschenrechte”, n.d. last accessed on 12 January 2024.
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- 18 Belgian Government, *Accord de gouvernement*, 30 September 2020, p. 77.
- 19 Interviews by the authors with representatives of Écolo and Groen.
- 20 Federal Ministry of Defence (Germany), *Defence Policy Guidelines 2023*, n.d., p. 10 and 23.
- 21 Interview by the authors with a representative of Die Grünen.
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- 23 "Newest NATO member Finland to spend 2.3% of GDP on defence", *Reuters*, 28 August 2023; LAIKOLA Leo, "Finland Seeks to Keep Defence Budget Above NATO Aim Through 2027", *Bloomberg*, 20 September 2023; O'DWYER Gerard, "Finland 2024 defence budget targets arms restocking, border security", *DefenseNews*, 13 October 2023.
- 24 Interview by the authors with a representative of Vihreät.
- 25 See chapter 5.
- 26 SIPRI, *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database* (retrieved December 2023). The monetary data are given at constant 2021 prices and exchange rates.
- 27 It is worth underlining that Lithuania's military expenditure remains very modest compared to that of larger EU member states such as France (57 billion USD), Germany (57.8 billion USD), or even Italy (34.6 billion USD) in 2022.
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- 29 Interview by the authors with a representative of Partia Zieloni.
- 30 Interview by the authors with a representative of DSVL.
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- 33 Europe Écologie-Les Verts, *Vivant – liberté, égalité, fraternité, biodiversité – Projet pour une République écologique*, 2021, p. 84.
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- 36 See Cornelia-Adriana Baciu, "How much Military is Enough?", *Green European Journal*, 21 août 2017.
- 37 Europa Verde, *Un onda verde per cambiare l'Europa e l'Italia – Programma di Europa Verde per le Europee 2019*, n.d. See also Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, *Programma Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra*, 2022, par. 13.
- 38 Europa Verde, "Europa Verde ha votato contro l'aumento spese militari", *Comunicati stampa*, n.d.
- 39 Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, *Programma Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra*, 2022.
- 40 Interview by the authors with a representative of Europa Verde. See also section 2.2.
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- 42 Interview by the authors with a representative of Možemo!.
- 43 NATO, "Funding NATO", last updated 5 April 2024.
- 44 EU Council, *Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States, Annex: List of ambitious and more binding common commitments undertaken by participating Member States in the five areas set out by Article 2 of Protocol 10*, 11 December 2017, *Official Journal of the European Union* of 14 December 2017, L 331, p. 62.
- 45 NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, 29 June 2022, p. 3.
- 46 NATO, *Funding NATO*, last updated on 27 September 2023.
- 47 Europa Verde, "Europa Verde ha votato contro l'aumento spese militari", *Comunicati stampa*, n.d.
- 48 Europe Écologie-Les Verts, *Vivant – liberté, égalité, fraternité, biodiversité – Projet pour une République écologique*, 2021, p. 84.
- 49 On the pooling of resources, see chapter 3.
- 50 Interview by the authors with a representative of Écolo.
- 51 Interview by the authors with representatives of Écolo, Partia Zieloni, and Možemo!.
- 52 Deutscher Bundestag, *Parlamentsfernsehen, Sitzung vom 23.11.23 TOP EPL 14 Verteidigung*, 23 November 2022.
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- 54 The decision was taken in December 2021, with the contract effectively signed in February 2022. Letho Essi and Stone Mike, "Finland orders 64 Lockheed F-35 fighter jets for \$9.4 bln", *Reuters*, 10 December 2021; Johnson Kimberly, "Finland Inks \$9.4 Billion Deal To Buy 64 F-35 Stealth Fighters", *Flying*, 14 February 2022.
- 55 Interview by the authors with a representative of DSVL.
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- 57 Interview by the authors with a representative of Écolo.
- 58 See, for example, Crawford Neta C., *The Pentagon, Climate Change, and War. Charting the Rise and Fall of U.S. Military Emissions*, Boston (MA), MIT Press, 2022; Lawrence Michael J. et al., "The effects of modern war and military activities on biodiversity and the environment", *Environmental Reviews*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2015, pp. 443-460; Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS), "How does war damage the environment?", 4 June 2020; Hay-Edie David, "The Military's Impact on the Environment: A Neglected Aspect of the Sustainable Development Debate", *Briefing paper, International Peace Bureau*, August 2002; Legros Samuel, "La pollution de l'activité militaire. Un fantôme à dévoiler", *Brochure de la CNAPD*, 17 October 2023.
- 59 NATO, "Environment, climate change and security", last updated on 24 July 2023.
- 60 See, for example, Hoorickx Estelle, "Les armées face aux changements climatiques: état des lieux et défis à relever pour la Défense belge", *Sécurité & Stratégie*, no. 153, June 2023. See also Depledge Duncan, "Low-carbon warfare: climate change, net zero and military operations", *International Affairs*, vol. 99, no. 2, 2023, pp. 667-685.
- 61 Europe Écologie-Les Verts, *Vivant – liberté, égalité, fraternité, biodiversité – Projet pour une République écologique*, 2021, p. 85.
- 62 Interview by the authors with a representative of Écolo.
- 63 Ibidem.
- 64 See also Rajaeifar Mohammed Ali et al., "Decarbonising the military – mandate emissions reporting", *Nature*, 2 November 2022; Expert Group of International Military Council on Climate and Security (IMCCS), "Decarbonised Defense: The need for clean military power in the age of climate change", June 2022.
- 65 Gayet Anne-Sophie, "L'écocide fait son entrée dans le Code pénal belge", *Euractiv*, 23 November 2022.
- 66 European Parliament, "Environmental crimes: deal on new offences and reinforced sanctions", last updated on 16 November 2023.

Industrial, Procurement, and Export Policies for Defence

Europe has a relatively sizeable defence technological and industrial base (DTIB);^{1,2} according to SIPRI, seventeen of the world's top 100 defence companies were based in the EU in 2022 (see Figures 7 and 8 on next page).

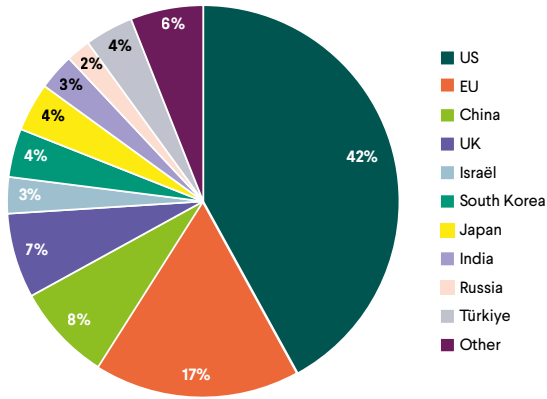
In traditional security studies, a strong and resilient DTIB is presented as an important precondition of defence and security. The European DTIB (EDTIB), however, is regularly presented as fragmented – i.e. riven by protectionism, with member states prone to favour their own national industries in public defence procurement. The EU institutions consider this to be cost- and production-inefficient as well as detrimental to competitiveness, innovation, and, in the longer run, European security and strategic autonomy.³ To remedy this situation, several initiatives have been launched with the purpose of reinforcing and integrating the EDTIB, whether by simplifying procedures for intra-EU arms transfers,⁴ creating a framework that seeks to open defence procurement to cross-border European competition,⁵ establishing grant programmes to finance collaborative projects between EU-based defence companies, or encouraging the joint procurement of Europe-made military equipment.

The present chapter gives an overview of the stances of the European Green parties surveyed on these different initiatives. It starts by looking into their positions on grant programmes aimed at subsidising collaborative projects between EU-based defence companies. It then turns to procurement, focusing on the related issues of joint procurement and whether EU member states should primarily acquire equipment manufactured in Europe. Doing so could help to reinforce the EDTIB in addition to reducing its dependence on exports. In connection with this last point, the final section of this chapter considers Green proposals for stricter and more ethical arms transfer policies.

Funding the defence industry: meeting needs and ambitions?

At present, the main scheme aimed at funding the collaborative development of equipment between EU-based defence companies is the European Defence Fund (EDF). Formally created in 2016 but effectively established in 2021,⁶ the EDF has a funding budget of 8 billion EUR for the 2021-2027 period. Of this sum, 2.7 billion are earmarked for funding collaborative defence research “to address emerging and future challenges and threats”, while 5.3 billion are reserved for

Figures 7 & 8. Top 100 defence companies: Share by country, and ranking of EU-based companies (2022)



World ranking	Company	Country	Arms revenue (million USD)
13	Leonardo	Italy	12.47
14	Airbus	Trans-European	12.09
17	Thales	France	9.42
23	Dassault Aviation Group	France	5.07
28	Rheinmetall	Germany	4.55
29	Naval Group	France	4.53
32	MBDA	Trans-European	4.38
34	Safran	France	4.2
39	Saab	Sweden	3.7
44	KNDS	Trans-European	3.2
46	Fincantieri	Italy	2.82
47	CEA	France	2.79
62	ThyssenKrupp	Germany	1.93
69	Hensoldt	Germany	1.66
71	PGZ	Poland	1.6
90	Navantia	Spain	0.99
93	Diehl	Germany	0.95
TOTAL			76.350

Source: SIPRI Arms Industry Database, retrieved December 2023

collaborative capability development projects complementing national contributions.⁷ The EDF is structured around seventeen themes – including cyber, information superiority, sensors, air combat, materials and components, training and simulation, underwater warfare or yet medical response/CBRN⁸/human factors – and two horizontal categories of action – disruptive technologies and innovative defence technologies.

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, new funds and instruments were created. Among these is the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP).⁹ Presented as a “direct response to the Council’s call to urgently deliver ammunition, and if requested missiles, to Ukraine and to help Member States refill their stocks”, this instrument provides 300 million EUR in financial support to reinforce the EU’s industrial production capacities.¹⁰ Furthermore, on 5 March 2024, the European Commission announced its new European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), designed to “build the EU’s long-term ability to enhance its defence readiness”.¹¹

As with increases in military expenditure, generally speaking, European Green parties would prefer to see this money allocated to other sectors. The Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly against a resolution approving the European Council’s decision on the establishment of the EDF in 2021.^{12,13} When other initiatives aimed at sustaining the industry, such as ASAP, were put to the vote in 2023, the tendency was reversed. Only two Green MEPs – Italians Rosa D’Amato and Piernicola Pedicini – voted against the proposal.¹⁴

These votes are a good reflection of both the divisions between the European Green

parties surveyed on this topic and of Europa Verde’s strong opinions on the arms industry. In their political programmes for both the 2019 European election and the 2022 Italian general election, the Italian Greens advocated for “a reconversion of the arms industry by creating alternatives for workers [in the sector]”¹⁵ and for “a long-term nationwide plan for the transformation of the Italian military-industrial complex”.¹⁶ With regard to the EDF more specifically, the Europa Verde representative interviewed explained that “we don’t need to invest more money in the military-industrial complex”¹⁷ and that “we have to be a bit cautious because

“We are not happy with the European Defence Fund because we have not seen the same amount of investment in non-military conflict prevention. We are seeing this huge disbalance of money.”

Interview with a representative of Možemo!

if you think about [it] [...] this is just to develop and support the defence industry, [which] is not [our] priority”.¹⁸ In Croatia, Možemo! holds a similar opinion. Its representative expressed concerns that the war in Ukraine has helped to give a “carte blanche” to the industry.¹⁹ In times of conflict, defence companies often benefit from greater scope to defend their interests and present them as those of the whole of society.

The other parties surveyed are more positive on this issue and emphasise the need to support Europe’s defence industry in order to reinforce the EDTIB. Les Écologistes, for instance, on the occasion of their federal council in October 2022, qualified the EDF’s 8 billion EUR as “minimal” considering the geopolitical challenges the EU faces and the need to provide it with adequate defence resources.^{20,21} Also on the subject of the EDF, Écolo believes that these funds are integral to building the strategic autonomy necessary for genuine EU defence, with the representative interviewed asserting that the EU needs to be given the “means to its ambitions”.^{22,23}

The role of the defence industry in the establishment of the EDF and other European policies

In September 2023, the European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAAAT) published a report in which it analysed the impact of the defence industry lobby on EU decision-making.²⁴ The authors note that the arms industry had been advocating for the establishment of an EU fund dedicated to military R&D since 2010 and show how this eventually came to fruition with the establishment of the EDF. Beyond the EDF and more recent programmes such as ASAP, the authors highlight that the arms industry has also managed to gain access to financial schemes originally developed for civilian purposes (Erasmus +, the Structural Funds, and even the LIFE environment and climate programme).

In connection to this, one of the experts interviewed for the purpose of this report pointed to the need for Green parties to be aware of the narrative employed by the industry. It presents its activities not only as sustainable but as a pre-condition for sustainable and inclusive societies: there is no sustainability without security, and there is no security without defence equipment. This narrative has allowed the industry to access favourable financing conditions for economic sectors that are environmentally and socially responsible.²⁵

Without expressly referring to the EDF, Die Grünen and Vihreät argue that strengthening the EDTIB is a defence priority, noting that there is currently “a window of opportunity to be more sovereign”.²⁶ They believe that enhancing cooperation and collaboration within the EDTIB could help avoid overlaps, fill capability gaps, and, overall, reduce production inefficiencies and costs. Until 2021, however, Die Grünen were opposed to initiatives such as the EDF, which some party members saw as diverting resources from other sectors such as climate change, development aid, and civilian crisis prevention.²⁷ In its 2021 programme for the federal election, it seems the position of the German Greens had already shifted a little. The programme reads that they “reject the

reallocation of money from the EU budget previously earmarked exclusively for civilian purposes for military purposes” but no longer calls into question the existence of a fund specifically created for the defence industry.²⁸ The Finnish Greens further insist that defence equipment self-sufficiency should involve the whole supply chain, i.e. including critical minerals and rare earths so that Europe can forgo its dependence on imports, notably from China.²⁹ In Lithuania, DSVL’s criticism of the defence sector’s inability to accelerate production and move towards wartime economy dynamics equally suggests that the EU needs to support its industry.³⁰ Initiatives such as ASAP are thus welcome.

“It would be preferable for Europe to have its own military industrial base and to be able to produce the materials European countries need for their defence”.

Interview with a representative of Vihreät

On the need to financially support the EDTIB

One of the experts interviewed argued that building an autonomous Europe “would necessitate a much more robust EDTIB” requiring long-term commitment from the EU. The defence market is a market unlike any another: demand is not necessarily linear, procurement cycles are long and complex, there is a limited number of customers, production costs can be high, etc. All of these elements can have an effect on the economic stability and viability of the sector. The arms industry needs to be able to plan ahead, and the argument is that if EU member states want to make sure that they can rely on European production, they need to support the industry. In this respect, Gaëlle Winter argues that the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen position until 2020 was paradoxical: in favour of strengthening the EDTIB but opposed to the EDF.³¹

It could nevertheless be argued that the notion of sustaining an industry whose 17 top companies generated 76 billion USD in revenues from weapon sales – 196 billion USD in total when including the goods they produce for the civilian market – is a surprising one. Moreover, while Europe’s defence industrial base includes many small- to medium-sized enterprises, studies show that most of the funds distributed by the EDF’s predecessors – PADR and EDIDP – were captured by these 17 companies, which include industry giants such as Leonardo, Airbus, and Thales.³² Greens must also not forget that the activities of the defence industry are among the most polluting; this is an issue across the whole value chain.

That said, these parties also believe that there is room for improvement, especially concerning the modus operandi of the fund. Three problems in particular were identified. The first is a lack of strategy, which impacts the ability of funds such as the EDF, and collaborative development endeavours more generally, to meet their objectives. The Die Grünen representative in particular felt that, at this stage, the EU “is just giving money” without reflecting more broadly on how the projects funded contribute to making the EDTIB more complementary and integrated or on how they fill capability gaps and needs.³³ Les Écologistes share this view and appeal for a “more regulatory approach for the industrial integration of this strategic sector”.³⁴ The second problem is the absence of transparency and democratic control over the allocation of funds. In Belgium, the Groen representative explained that “there should be a very narrow focus on the role of the military-industrial complex; [which] can be achieved through democratic control and

transparency”.³⁵ More concretely, in its programme for the 2021 federal elections, Die Grünen advocated for “participation and control rights for the European Parliament in the European Defence Fund”.³⁶ Finally, several parties insisted on the establishment of clear ethical guidelines for EDF-funded projects. This reflects concerns regarding the use of artificial intelligence and other disruptive technologies by the defence sector. When granting funds to the defence industry, the EU should make sure that it does not finance the development of systems that have deleterious effects and might run contrary to the respect of international humanitarian law.

Procurement: acquiring European equipment together?

Another aspect of the EU programmes aimed at strengthening the EDTIB is encouraging member states to buy their equipment on the EU internal market and to ideally

do so through joint procurement. While instruments aimed at facilitating intra-EU transfers,³⁷ opening defence procurement procedures to cross-border competition,³⁸ and encouraging joint procurement already existed, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine gave them new impetus. In October 2023, the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) was adopted. It provides for a 500-million-euro budget over 2023-2024 to help member states cover some of the costs of joint procurement. To be eligible, the procurement request must be filed by at least three member states and the contracts established with companies based in the EU or in EFTA countries that are not controlled by third-country entities.³⁹ This system is expected to be perpetuated through the European Defence Investment Programme (EDIP), which is to be announced as part of EDIS in February 2024.

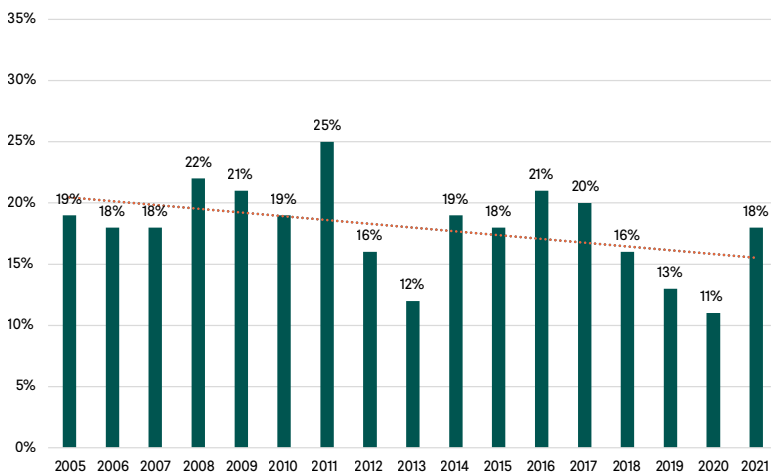
The data gathered by EDA from 2005 to 2021 show that the share of equipment acquired collaboratively remains limited – below the 35% threshold agreed upon within EDA and

PESCO – and has decreased over time (see [Figure 9 below](#)). The Agency estimates that this share declined again in 2022.⁴⁰ According to International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) research analysts Bastian Giegerich and Ester Sabatino, these low percentages can be explained by divergent strategic cultures, the wish to protect national industries, and the impulse to cement external partnerships.⁴¹

Another downward trend over the last five years can be seen in relation to the share of equipment bought on the EU internal market. Data collected by SIPRI show that while 58% of the equipment imported by EU member states in terms of value originated from fellow EU members in 2013-2017 this share fell to 26% in 2018-2022 (see [Figures 10 and 11 on next page](#)).

The dominance of US companies during the latter period could be connected to the decision of several countries (including Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, and Czechia) to replace their ageing air combat fleets with F-35 jets manufactured

Figure 9. Joint procurement as % of total defence equipment procurement (2005-2021)



Source: EDA, Defence Data 2020-2021, 8 December 2022. (n.b. the data for 2022 is unavailable)

by Lockheed Martin. Combat aircraft are expensive and may account for a good part of the value of US exports to the EU, but it is worth underlining that, in terms of units, the most imported items were missiles.⁴² This is not necessarily surprising: if the existing equipment owned by a state is US-made, the compatible ammunition and sensors are also likely to be.

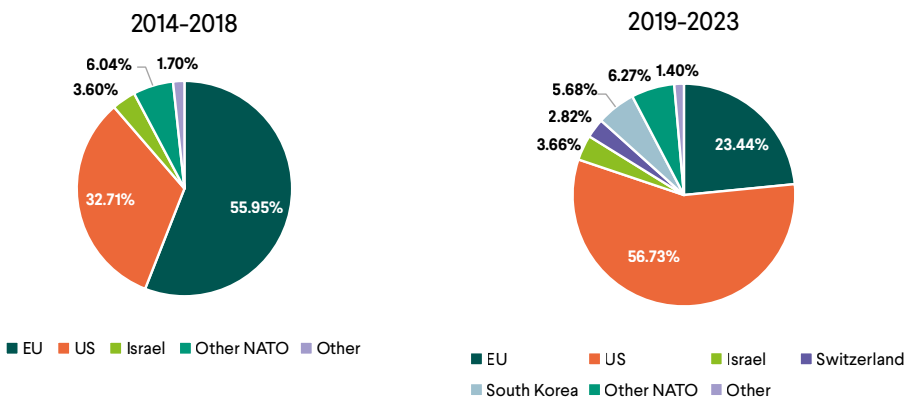
On joint procurement, the Green parties surveyed support the discourse developed by the EU (as well as some experts), which states that it, *inter alia*, strengthens relationships between allies, enhances armed forces' interoperability, reduces acquisition costs for equivalent equipment, and facilitates access to more advanced systems.⁴³ The Greens are particularly interested in the cost-saving and interoperability aspects of collaborative acquisitions. They believe the former would help rationalise and limit military expenditure, while the latter would facilitate the further integration of Europe's armed force. In Belgium, for instance, the Écolo representative interviewed explained that "all the synergies that enable us to

achieve economies of scale" are a priority and that separate defence equipment acquisition thus "make no sense".⁴⁴ Similarly, the Možemo! representative stated that procurement cooperation is "a good way to rationalise military expenses",⁴⁵ while Bündnis 90/Die Grünen MP Sebastian Schäfer declared at the Bundestag that "smart armament policies are not national; they are European and international".⁴⁶

The rationale is that cooperation leads to more efficient investments and strengthens potential coordinated European military actions.⁴⁷ Les Écologistes, in France, are particularly clear on this point and even go a step further by arguing categorically for a common budget. This would guarantee that "increases in the defence budget do not come at the expense of other European or national policies – notably social policies" as well as "avoid duplication, reduce risks, make savings and enable the EU to be a fully-fledged player".⁴⁸

As this last quote suggests, parties' positions on joint procurement are intimately linked to their perspectives on the EU as a

Figures 10 & 11. Origin of the military equipment imported by EU member states by value (2013-17 & 2018-22)



security provider.⁴⁹ Parties whose ideal is a federal Europe that can ensure its security independent of the transatlantic alliance favour EU joint procurement schemes. This is the case for the French and French-speaking Belgians, who view collaborative procurement within NATO as detrimental to European strategic autonomy. At the other end of the spectrum is Lithuania.

As previously highlighted, the DSVL representative interviewed was sceptical about alternative European security and defence projects and emphasised the need to work on the transatlantic partnership. They believed that procurement collaboration and

“We want to expand the reinforced cooperation of armed forces in the EU, combine military capabilities, achieve more efficient procurement, and work together to close generally recognised capability shortfalls by consolidating the European arms sector.”

Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021

cooperation should take place within NATO rather than at the EU level in order to ensure the compatibility of weapon systems and interoperability.⁵⁰ This position also influences DSVL's stance on favouring European equipment in procurement policies. The representative interviewed explained that this is not a priority for the party, nor is it seen as desirable.⁵¹ The Die

Grünen representative also argued that the emphasis should not be on the origin of the equipment so much as on interoperability and compatibility, which can be achieved by limiting the number of different weapon systems used by member states.⁵²

EXPERT VIEW NO. 16

Joint procurement is not always cost-effective

One of the experts interviewed underlined that the much-vaunted cost advantages of joint procurement are in fact questionable. Studies have shown that there is little to no evidence that collaborative acquisition enables purchasing states to obtain better prices. Some have even dubbed joint procurement a waste of time and money, recommending that it be avoided.⁵³ Even those who believe joint procurement can be beneficial point to the many hurdles that often prevent it from achieving its full potential. Having compared procurement in and between France, Germany, the UK, and the US, Tony Kausal of the US-based Defense Systems Management College notes that “different budget cycles, political issues, and cultural perspectives can exacerbate small problems and, in some cases, create larger ones”.⁵⁴ Along the same lines, a paper published by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in 2007 came to the conclusion that the ability of collaborative acquisition to be cost-efficient ultimately depends on how well or poorly the process is managed.⁵⁵

In this context, it is paramount that participating states share clear objectives, whether in terms of expected technical specifications, timelines and budget. Moreover, joint procurement cannot be effective unless a high level of mutual trust exists between all the involved parties. Even between EU member states, this has sometimes proven hard to achieve: their strategic interests do not always align and may even, on some occasion, conflict. Likewise, the industries involved in the process can be reluctant to share knowledge, know-how and technology with each other. Another important element is the willingness of participating states to share the financial risks and burdens associated with joint procurement in order to avoid perceptions of unfair distribution of benefits which could lead to resentment and stall decision-making processes.

Other parties, in contrast, argue for the importance of provenance. The representative of Les Écologistes, for example, contended that the EU defence market should not be “as open to US companies as it is today”.⁵⁶ Equally, the representatives of Vihreät and Écolo saw overreliance on US and/or Israeli weapon systems as “unsustainable” and “problematic”.⁵⁷ Beyond the issue of strategic autonomy, Vihreät’s position is also ethically motivated. Strengthening the EDTIB would allow member states to stop relying on “less human rights-oriented countries” and feed their military industries.⁵⁸

In Belgium, both Écolo and its Dutch-speaking counterpart Groen vocally criticised the decision of the Belgian government to buy F-35 fighter jets in 2018. Although their main argument was that the Belgian Air Force’s F-16s simply did not need replacing, they also felt that the tender was biased in favour of the United States.⁵⁹ This brings us back to another point regularly raised by Green parties, which is the need to ensure greater transparency in defence procurement procedures and all matters pertaining to the arms industry. While Écolo and Groen joined forces on the F-35 file, their views on the need to give priority to European equipment differ slightly. Écolo is very much in favour;⁶⁰ Groen agrees that it would present economic and strategic advantages but feels that “this should not lead to only buying EU equipment”.⁶¹ The idea is that the primary emphasis should not be on buying European, but on securing the best available equipment, also taking into consideration the quality to price ratio.

“Of course, there are a lot of arguments that make sense about investing in European industry, also because it is more reliable to make it ourselves, [...] but it should not lead to only buying EU equipment.”

Interview with a representative of Groen

Exports: towards more responsible policies?

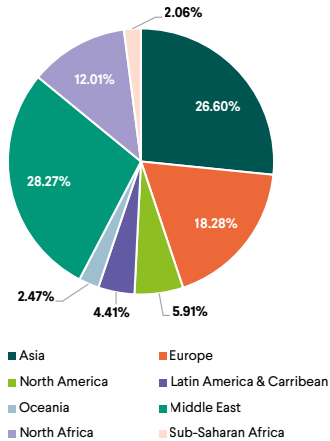
A number of EU member states – France, Germany, Italy, and Spain – are among the world’s top 10 exporters of military equipment and technologies (see Figure 13).⁶² Most of the products sold on the international market by EU-based industries have Asia (notably India, Singapore, and South Korea) or the Middle East (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) as their final destination. During the 2017-2022 period, only 9% of exports were intra-European and 8.6% intra-EU (see Figure 12). As

Christian Mölling, now with the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), and others underlined: “Non-EU destinations have become the lifeline for both EU-based companies and the states, for it allows the one to keep its production and the other to still buy at affordable prices.”⁶³ Europe’s defence technological and industrial base relies heavily on foreign

markets to sustain its activity. It follows that initiatives aimed at reinforcing the EDTIB should be accompanied by a reflection on how member states can ensure that the weapons and technologies they produce do not feed conflict and instability outside the EU’s borders.

The export and transfer of military equipment are regulated at the EU level and subject to licence procedures managed by each member state’s control authorities. Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP provides a general framework and states that licence requests must be examined in light

Figures 12 & 13. Destination of military equipment exported by the EU defence industry and the world's top 20 exporting countries (2017-2022)



	Share		Share
1. USA	40.0%	11. NLD	1.4%
2. RUS	16.0%	12. TUR	1.1%
3. FRA	11.0%	13. SWE	0.8%
4. CHN	5.2%	14. CHE	0.6%
5. DEU	4.2%	15. AUS	0.6%
6. ITA	3.8%	16. CAN	0.5%
7. GBR	3.2%	17. UKR	0.5%
8. ESP	2.6%	18. ARE	0.4%
9. KOR	2.4%	19. POL	0.4%
10. ISR	2.3%	20. BLR	0.3%

Source: SIPRI, [Arms Transfers Database](#), retrieved April 2024

of eight criteria, which seek, among other objectives, to mitigate the risks of exported material being used to commit serious human rights and international humanitarian law violations – or being diverted.⁶⁴ There is no hierarchy between these criteria, but practice shows that self-defence and national security (i.e. considerations linked to alliances) sometimes trump risks related to human rights and arms diversion.⁶⁵ Over the past few years, scandals have frequently emerged surrounding the use of EU-produced equipment by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to commit war crimes in Yemen. Civil society has also denounced transfers to Israel, Egypt, and India.

Against this backdrop, the parties surveyed regularly cite the reinforcement of export

control policies to ensure more responsible transfers as a priority. Europa Verde, for instance, insists that Italy (and ideally all of Europe) should “put an immediate stop to the export of weapons [...] to countries that do not respect human rights”.⁶⁶ Vihreät’s programme for 2023-2027 contains a statement on “banning arms exports to countries run by oligarchs, and to countries that systematically violate human rights or attack other countries”.⁶⁷ And in its 2021 programme for the German federal elections, under the headline “No German weapons in war zones and dictatorships”, Die Grünen explains that “we expect more commitment and reduction in arms deliveries to regimes that violate human rights” and that “arms export controls guidelines are handled too laxly”.⁶⁸ This does not only lead to occasionally questionable

export decisions. Lack of consistency in the application of Common Position 2008/944/CFSP by member states also creates market distortions, which increase

competition between European companies and lead to a downward spiral in the effective implementation of EU guidelines.

EXPERT VIEW NO. 17

Human rights, due diligence, and the defence sector

In August 2022, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights noted that arms industries tend to take refuge behind licensing procedures to justify not conducting their own analysis of the human rights impacts of their export activities.⁶⁹ The defence sector argues it lacks the resources to carry out such assessments and, more fundamentally, that this is the responsibility of states.⁷⁰ If the Greens wish to introduce a due diligence duty within a new EU regulation on arms exports control, they also need to be aware of the proposed EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence. A modification to the directive introduced by the Council in 2022 exempts economic sectors whose activities are already subject to export controls – like arms transfers – from the due-diligence obligation.⁷¹

Increasing transparency and strengthening controls on military exports is thus not only an ethical issue; it also has economic and industrial implications. This is strongly reflected in the discourses of the French and French-speaking Belgian Greens. Indeed, the representative of Les Écologistes insisted on EU coordination on the grounds that “France cannot do it alone, because there are clearly too many interests at stake for the French balance of trade”.⁷² Beyond the balance of trade, Écolo points to how discrepancies in the implementation of the rules on arms exports affect workers in the industry. It argues that “it is untenable to continue to depend on countries that are politically unstable or that contravene international law and humanitarian law” and that “it is vital to work on developing a safer,

more sustainable project [...] [as] the legal uncertainty surrounding arms exports licences to certain countries represents a threat to jobs”.⁷³ More responsible arms export policies are hence presented as a win-win endeavour.

“We support the implementation and enforcement of European arms export rules that prohibit the export of arms to non-democratic regimes involved in violations of fundamental rights and war crimes, as well as strengthening their reinforcement by replacing the Common Position on arms exports with a legally binding text, with sanctions in the event of non-compliance, and whose obligations can be subject to rulings by the CJEU.”

Les Écologistes, October 2022

In terms of concrete policy proposals, the Greens advocate for making the criteria of Common Position 2008/944/CFSP binding by integrating them into a legally binding instrument subject to judicial control by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and complemented by sanction mechanisms in case of non-compliance.⁷⁴ It is worth underlining that, at the EU level, the Greens/EFA group was behind the adoption of several European Parliament resolutions calling for the better implementation of the Common Position.⁷⁵

They have also been working on a draft regulation on arms export controls, the content of which can be deemed to reflect the Greens' common vision for the future of export controls. In addition to CJEU judicial controls and sanctions, the draft provides for: establishing a permanent Common Risk Assessment Body and an Arms Exports Coordination Group; extending the list of criteria to include the risk of corruption in the purchasing country; increasing transparency through enhanced reporting practices; putting effective post-shipment

and end-use controls in place; inserting a human rights due diligence duty for exporting companies; and defining transit in such a way that all military goods passing through the EU's territory be submitted to a licensing procedure.⁷⁶ Because the EU legislative process can be slow, in the shorter term, the representative of Les Écologistes proposed that member states seek stronger guarantees when selling military equipment.⁷⁷ This is usually achieved through end-user certificates (EUC).

EXPERT VIEW NO. 18

End-user certificates (EUCs) and post-shipment controls (PSCs)

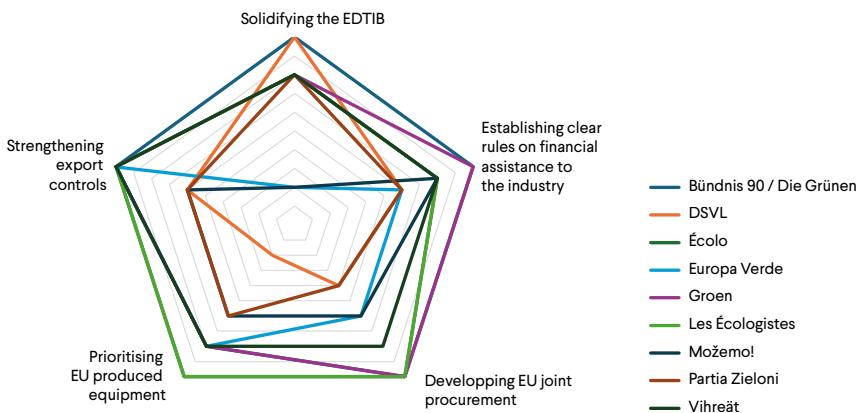
EUCs are established by national control authorities and specify by whom the equipment may be used, how it may be used, and under what conditions it may be transferred to a third party. In addition to mitigating the risk of diversion and illicit use, EUCs are construed as a trust-building measures. Experts argue that they also present shortcomings, however they are far from corruption-proof, and compliance is hard to verify and enforce.⁷⁸

For this reason, several EU member states have introduced legal provisions allowing them to perform on-site post-shipment controls (PSCs), but Germany is presently the only one to have effectively conducted this type of verification. The debates held at the Arms Trade Treaty's 8th Conference of States Parties (CSP) in 2022 show that some European states are reluctant to introduce PSCs.⁷⁹ They perceive them as costly in resource terms and diplomatically complicated to enforce on the purchasing state. Some have also expressed doubts regarding their efficacy due to the need to give notice before inspections are conducted.

Main takeaways and recommendations

Overall, while the European Green parties surveyed share certain common values and goals regarding defence-industry-related issues, there are nuanced differences in their approaches. These are related to their differing national contexts, strategic priorities, and ideological orientations (see Figure 14 below).

Figure 14. Summary of surveyed Green parties' views on industrial policy, procurement, and export policies in relation to defence



The main points of divergence between the parties surveyed are:

- Funding European defence companies to solidify the EDTIB:** Although most parties would rather see EU money channelled towards other policy sectors, some have come to believe that financially supporting the defence industry is necessary to ensure the EU's strategic autonomy and defence. Others continue to argue that funds such as the EDF are deeply problematic.
- The framework for joint procurement:** Most of the parties surveyed believe that joint procurement could lead to economies of scale and better interoperability between EU member states' armed forces. However, mirroring the differences of opinion highlighted in the first chapter, some believe that procurement coordination should take place within NATO rather than the EU.

- **Buying European equipment:** In the same way, the parties hold differing views on whether EU member states should prioritise Europe-produced defence equipment in their procurement policies. Whereas some argue that this is integral to strengthening the EDTIB, others believe cost-effectiveness and quality is as important as origin.

Some broad points of convergence can also be identified, notably:

- **Transparency and ethical guidelines for the management of grants:** There is shared concern about the need to establish clearer rules within the EDF and other instruments offering financial assistance to the defence industry in order to ensure that EU money is not used to develop problematic weapon systems. Transparency and democratic control mechanisms to exercise oversight on the management of funds are also necessary.
- **Establish a more stringent arms export control policy:** The parties surveyed also commonly advocate for the strengthening of the EU's arms export control policy. This should take the form of a new legally binding EU regulation, accompanied by sanction mechanisms in case of non-compliance and judicial oversight by the CJEU. This new regulation should also contain a human rights due diligence duty for defence companies and introduce post-shipment control mechanisms.

Recommendations to Green parties based on the expert input received:

- **Critical assessment of defence industry influence:** Green parties need to be vigilant in ensuring that EU industrial policy prioritises environmental and social sustainability and inclusivity rather than catering solely to the interests of the defence industry. Transparency in reporting the environmental and human rights impact of this sector's activities should be encouraged, but it is important to realise that the defence industry, by nature, cannot be environmentally or socially sustainable.
- **Evaluation of joint procurement mechanisms:** Joint procurement can be beneficial, but coordination problems often arise, leading procurement to be neither more cost-effective nor more time-effective. Green parties could commission independent studies on this topic in order to further understand the conditions under which joint procurement yields positive results and devise a structured approach on this basis.
- **Ensure the overall coherence of the EU's regulatory framework on arms exports:** Greens should continue to push for more ethical and responsible arms export control regulations. When doing so, they must be sufficiently familiar with the content of other regulatory initiatives to ensure their proposals fit with the EU's overall regulatory framework.
- **Engage with relevant stakeholders for post-shipment controls:** Continue to engage with relevant stakeholders – civil society, national export control agencies, and defence operators – to address the challenges surrounding the establishment of post-shipment controls.



Endnotes

- 1 This term is usually used to designate the industrial complex that enables the research, development, design, production, and maintenance of weapon systems, subsystems, components, or parts to meet a state's (or group of states') military needs.
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- 16 Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, Programma Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, para. 13.
- 17 Interview by the authors with a representative of Europa Verde. See also Europa Verde, “È il momento di rinnovare la promessa dell'Europa”, n.d., last accessed on 17 January 2024.
- 18 Interview by the authors with a representative of Europa Verde.
- 19 Interview by the authors with a representative of Možemol.
- 20 It is worth underlining that this is a notable shift from the position expressed in 2021, whereby the allocation of 600 million EUR of European funds to military R&D was deemed “problematic”.
- 21 Les Écologistes, “Pour une politique européenne de sécurité et de défense à la hauteur des enjeux contemporains”, Conseil fédéral, 1-2 October 2022, p. 1. Europe Écologie-Les Verts, “Europe & défense: construire l'Europe de la paix. L'Union européenne autonome et efficace”, Note de cadrage, 2022, p. 1.
- 22 This party's position is in line with the Belgian governmental coalition agreement and new STAR plan for Belgian defence.
- 23 Interview by the authors with a representative of Écolo. See Belgian Government, Accord de gouvernement, 30 September 2020, p. 77; Belgian Defence, Plan STAR 2022, 17 June 2022, p. 151.
- 24 Akkerman Mark and Maulewaeter Chloé, “From war lobby to war economy. How the arms industry shapes European policies”, European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAT), September 2023.
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- 31 Winter Gaëlle, “The German green party Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen and security and defence policy: pursuing a moderate line”, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, September 2020, p. 14.
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- 40 EDA, Defence Data – Key findings and analysis, 30 November 2023, p. 18.
- 41 Giegerich Bastian and Sabatino Ester, “The (Sorry) State of EU Defence Cooperation”, Carnegie Europe, 6 October 2022.
- 42 According to the data collected by SIPRI, EU member states ordered, among others, 465 aircraft, 381 helicopters, 225 sensors, 46 uncrewed vehicles, and 23,289 missiles from US-based defence manufacturers during the 2018-2022 period.
- 43 See, for example, Ford Richard, “Defence Acquisition Cooperation Benefits”, Défense&Industries, no. 6, February 2016; Lorell Mark A. and Lowell Julia F., “Pros and Cons of International Weapons Procurement Collaboration”, RAND Corporation, 1995.

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Deterrence, Disarmament, and Arms Control

The term “arms control” is defined as “international restrictions upon the development, production, stockpiling, proliferation and usage of small arms, conventional weapons, and weapons of mass destruction”.¹ Disarmament, which involves the reduction or elimination of certain types of weapons, is often viewed as a more advanced or ambitious stage in the arms control process. Both share the overarching objective of mitigating the risk that weapons with deleterious humanitarian and environmental effects be deployed as well as enhancing international peace and security by reducing the likelihood of conflict. As such, these two processes can be seen as opposing deterrence, a doctrine and policy that relies on the credible use of military force – including by maintaining nuclear arsenals – to discourage adversaries from attacking.

Historically, these three interconnected topics have been of great interest for many Green parties, especially in Western Europe. The Euromissile crisis – which started with the first deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles along the western border of the USSR in 1977 and ended with the adoption of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

in 1987 – acted as a catalyst for the creation of Green parties in Belgium and in Germany. These parties took a firm stand against security policies relying on the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and in favour of disarmament as well as arms control more generally. But while this remains a strong identity marker for “older” Western European parties, it should, from the outset, be noted that this is less the case in “younger” parties from Central and Eastern Europe. Their position on deterrence, disarmament and arms control is therefore less well established.

Bearing this in mind, this chapter aims to assess Green parties’ positions on deterrence and propositions for disarmament and arms control in light of recent international developments. The first section focuses on assessing Green stances on nuclear deterrence. Do the parties surveyed believe the nuclear deterrent is effective in maintaining peace, and do they think the EU needs it in order to achieve its objective of strategic autonomy? The second looks into nuclear disarmament initiatives, with a focus on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The third and last section broadens the scope of investigation

by turning to arms control, in particular in connection to the military uses of so-called “emerging and disruptive technologies” (EDTs).

Nuclear deterrence: does it work, and does the EU need it?

Even though the Green parties surveyed agree that a world free of nuclear weapons would be safer, not all of them have a position on nuclear deterrence. This is especially the case for parties constituted after the end of the Cold War and at a time when the risk of nuclear war seemed more remote. Despite the fact that tensions with Russia and Vladimir Putin’s threats to use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine have led nuclear deterrence to take centre stage in discussions about European security once again, the Možemo! representative interviewed, for instance, indicated that they had not yet had the time to debate this question thoroughly within the party, also because they lacked in-house expertise on the subject.²

The attitude of European countries and their populations towards nuclear deterrence more generally might also help shed light on why this issue has not been debated within specific Green parties. A study published by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in 2018 noted that, in Croatia, the general public does not view nuclear deterrence as an important issue.³ The same applies to Italy and Lithuania. In contrast, the study observes that the population of Poland is in “favour of nuclear deterrence as a key pillar of NATO and of the alliance with the US that defends Poland against Russia”.⁴ In this type of context, where nuclear deterrence appears as an accepted “dogma”, it can be

hard for a party to position itself on the issue or even to see it as a topic for debate.

Among the parties surveyed who have taken a public position on the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence, opinions are divided, notably since the outbreak of war in Ukraine. In Lithuania, the DSVL representative interviewed was in favour of the “status quo”.⁵ Without dismissing the need to relaunch disarmament efforts in the future, their view is that nuclear deterrence is currently “working”.⁶

“Nuclear deterrence is the worst way to prevent nuclear war – except for all the others. To say it without sarcasm, I think nuclear deterrence is a really bad solution, but it’s the only solution we have.”

Interview with a representative of Vihreät

Borrowing from Winston Churchill’s famous quote about democracy, the Finnish Greens likewise argue that, at this stage, nuclear deterrence is probably “the worst way to prevent nuclear war – except for all the others”, or, to put it another way, “it is a really bad solution, but it’s the only solution we

have.”⁷ It is noteworthy that according to the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), “nuclear weapons were one of the factors influencing Finland’s decision” to join NATO as “Russia’s aggression showed how a nuclear-armed state can acquire freedom of action for itself against a country that is not protected by a nuclear umbrella”.⁸ Interestingly, however, the Vihreät representative interviewed indicated that, if they had had the choice, they would have preferred to be placed under a European – in this case French – umbrella rather than that of the United States.⁹

In countries where the Greens have historically been very critical of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, the war in Ukraine has led to some changes and/or evolution within the discourse. In Belgium, the Écolo representative interviewed asserted that nuclear deterrence is a dangerous doctrine that relies on false assumptions about

rationality and encourages proliferation for the sake of maintaining a credible threat.¹⁰ On 15 June 2022, MP Guillaume Defossé emphasised this point at the Commission on National Defence of the Belgian federal parliament: “The current situation in Europe demonstrates the extent to which nuclear deterrence is more a matter of faith than a tangible reality. [...] We have been living on a knife edge for the last 80 years, and in view of the many incidents

“I believe the current situation in Europe demonstrates the extent to which nuclear deterrence is more a matter of faith than a tangible reality.”

Guillaume Defossé (Écolo), June 2022

and accidents that have occurred in that time, we can say that the fact that we have not yet had a nuclear war owes a great deal to luck”.¹¹

Groen, on the other hand, while acknowledging that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is problematic, considers that NATO’s nuclear arsenal is a security guarantee for Europe and recognises its “legitimacy”.¹²

EXPERT VIEW NO. 19

The normalisation of nuclear deterrence and politics among Greens

One of the experts interviewed noted a tendency among European Green parties towards the normalisation of both civilian and military uses of nuclear technologies. He noted that the discourse on nuclear power has undergone a shift; many now see it as a sustainable alternative to fossil fuels and as a means of ensuring Europe’s energy independence. It is no longer taboo. Based on the parties surveyed, he observed that this normalisation appears to be colouring Green views on nuclear weapons, their deterrent function, and their role in the international security architecture.

Germany is another country where nuclear deterrence appears to have become a divisive issue – including within the Green party itself. In its 2021 programme for the federal elections, Die Grünen dubbed the doctrine of nuclear deterrence “outdated”.¹³ The representative interviewed concurred.¹⁴ Yet, in January 2021, one of the co-chairs of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Germany’s Green political foundation, was among the co-signatories of a paper addressed to the German government entitled “More Ambition, please!”. The paper, inter alia, urged Berlin to renew its commitment to NATO’s nuclear defence, contending that “the U.S. nuclear shield is essential to all non-nuclear NATO countries in Europe” and that

“it should exist for as long as nuclear weapons exist and the nuclear threat looms”.¹⁵ This went against the official party position and spurred internal controversy when it won support from some quarters of the party.¹⁶ More recently, in December 2023, former Green foreign minister Joschka Fischer argued in favour of nuclear deterrence in an interview with *Die Zeit*,¹⁷ despite having signed a letter asking NATO’s non-nuclear members to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2020.¹⁸ This illustrates not only the dissensions within Die Grünen, but also how the war in Ukraine may well have led to shifts in Green positions on nuclear deterrence.

Post-Brexit, France is the EU's sole nuclear-weapon state; it is also the only NATO member that has opted out of participating in NATO's Nuclear Planning Group in order to "retain its nuclear independence".¹⁹ The position of the French Greens is therefore of particular interest. Like their French-speaking counterparts in Belgium, Les Écologistes assert that "nuclear weapons are a danger to world peace" and they "reject the ideology that military nuclear power is a deterrent to conflict".²⁰ As this would suggest, Les Écologistes are not in favour of extending France's nuclear deterrence capabilities to the rest of the EU.²¹ Even though it may appear to contrast with the French Greens' enthusiasm regarding European strategic autonomy and their desire for the EU to become more defence independent from the United States, this position is consistent with their strong rejection of nuclear weapons and belief that nuclear deterrence is, by its very nature, problematic. They also consider that such a move would be incompatible with France's obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). However, they also believe that nuclear deterrence can only be abandoned in a gradual fashion.²² It first needs to be denormalised, and Greens have a key role to play in this process – that of bringing an alternative discourse into the public arena so as to allow the democratic reappropriation of the debates surrounding the use of nuclear weapons beyond military and expert circles.²³

The TPNW: is the time ripe for nuclear disarmament?

On 22 January 2021, after ten years of intense advocacy efforts by civil society through the

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and almost four years after its adoption in 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) came into force. "Acknowledging the ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world, [...] serving both national and collective security interests",²⁴ this treaty aims for "the total elimination of nuclear weapons".²⁵ To this end, it contains a comprehensive list of prohibitions

"The Federal Council of Europe Écologie-Les Verts: [...] rejects any European proliferation of French nuclear weapons – in terms of both European funding and scenarios for use".

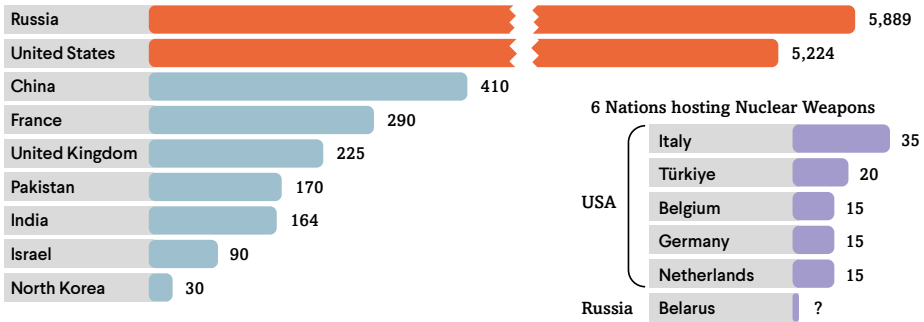
Les Écologistes, October 2022

linked to the development, testing, production, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, use, and threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as assistance and encouragement of these activities.²⁶

As of today, this treaty has been ratified by 70 states, including three EU members:

Austria, Ireland, and Malta.²⁷ Another two – Cyprus and Sweden – voted in favour of the treaty at the UN General Assembly but have not signed it. The remaining 22 states, who incidentally are also members of NATO, either voted against the treaty (the Netherlands) or were absent during the vote.^{28,29} The TPNW's provisions are, in fact, incompatible with NATO's nuclear policy based on maintaining a credible threat and extended deterrence, i.e. offering protection to non-nuclear alliance members through the deployment of US nuclear weapons on the European continent (see Figure 15 below). This is why NATO's official position is that disarmament efforts need to take place within the less stringent framework of the NPT, taking into account the evolving international security environment.³⁰

Figure 15. Nuclear arsenals by country and the location of nuclear weapons hosted in other states



Source: [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#), retrieved January 2024

Many of the Green parties surveyed, especially in Western Europe, have included the objective of becoming an observer state and eventually party to the TPNW in their political programmes and policy statements.³¹ This is not the case for Central and Eastern European parties where, although nuclear disarmament is deemed important, the TPNW appears to have received less attention. This is likely to be for the reasons highlighted in the previous section. Nevertheless, all of the parties surveyed agree that multilateral nuclear disarmament processes must be relaunched. They also acknowledge that

this will be difficult as long as the five official nuclear military powers – chiefly the United States, Russia, and China – refuse to come to the table in good faith, especially in the context of current geopolitical tensions. “Who will lead this, and how can it happen if we have a war where a nuclear country is involved? Nobody will start disarmament at the moment,” asserted the DSVL representative,³² while the Vihreät representative stated that “the number of nuclear weapons in the world [will not be] reduced until Russia and the US are around the table, and they are not”.³³

The TPNW and civil society pressure

For one of the experts interviewed, the TPNW’s vision is defensible, but unrealistic. He emphasised that states such as Russia and China do not face the same pressure from domestic civil society to ratify the TPNW and engage on nuclear disarmament and arms control. A case in point is the fact that Russia and China still have not ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty (1997) or the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008). In his opinion, Greens should take this into consideration when discussing projects and visions for nuclear disarmament. Instead of insisting on the TPNW, focusing efforts on the NTP (to which Russia and China are both party) might offer better avenues to move forward and develop a credible discourse on nuclear disarmament.

Given the difficulty of relaunching multilateral disarmament in the current climate, the question, then, is whether European states can take unilateral measures in that direction. Opinions differ. In Germany, for instance, the representative of Die Grünen admitted that, while becoming party to the TPNW was included in the party's 2021 programme for the federal election and "was a priority before the war started", "unilateral drop-out of the nuclear game at the moment would not be helpful".³⁴ While viewing Germany's attendance of both TPNW Meetings of States Parties (MSP) to date as an observer as "a very good symbol", the representative also argued that Europe needed to avoid publicly showing division with the United States, as this would only serve Vladimir Putin's designs.³⁵ From this perspective, initiatives that could signal dissent within the Alliance had better be avoided. In this context, it is unclear whether the statement contained in the party's 2021 programme "reject[ing] the stationing of new intermediate-range missiles on the continent of Europe",³⁶ including on Büchel Air Base (which hosts the US nuclear weapons stationed on German territory), is still relevant.

Along the same lines, but with something of a different tone, Vihreät in Finland and Groen in Belgium also recognise the need to take NATO's policies and positions into consideration. The representative of Vihreät – which also included becoming party to the TPNW in its programme for the 2023 parliamentary election – admits that the party does not have a "road map" for TPNW ratification and that "realistically, this would necessitate the cessation of hostilities in Ukraine".³⁷ Vihreät is also well aware that the fact that Finland joined NATO in April 2023 has imposed new constraints. In July 2022, the government – which then included the Greens – stated

"[The TPNW] was a priority before the war started. [...] But, of course, it would not be helpful to publicly have a division with the United States on this issue at the moment."

Interview with a representative of Die Grünen

that Finland would retain "its high profile in matters of disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, without questioning the role of NATO's nuclear deterrence".³⁸

That same year, instead of its usual abstention, Finland voted against the annual UN General Assembly resolution welcoming the TPNW and calling upon states to sign, ratify, or accede to it.³⁹

In Belgium, the Groen representatives interviewed stated they were in favour of ratifying the TPNW and "very happy" that Belgium participated in the 2023 MSP as an observer, but that, as a member of NATO, Belgium could not realistically become party to the treaty.⁴⁰

This does not, however, mean that the Finnish and Dutch-speaking Belgian Greens believe that European states cannot take any steps towards nuclear disarmament. The Finnish governmental coalition that included the Greens, for instance, accepted to participate in NATO's nuclear planning and support operations, but drew the line at accepting weapons on its territory.⁴¹ Vihreät's 2023 political programme also states that it will seek to keep "Finland and the Nordic countries free of nuclear weapons".⁴²

The removal of the US B61 tactical nuclear warheads hosted by Kleine Brogel Air Base has also always been a key aim for the Belgian Greens. Officially, Groen claims that these weapons should be removed,⁴³ but according to the representatives interviewed, the party is now working on a proposition to have their number reduced and oppose their foreseen replacement with more modern B61-12 bombs.⁴⁴ While Écolo agrees, they consider this to be a bare-minimum position. In their view, the US tactical nuclear warheads must be removed as their presence constitutes a violation of the NPT,⁴⁵ which provides that

“each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons”.⁴⁶ They also believe that, as these weapons are stationed under a bilateral agreement between Belgium and the United States, their removal is not incompatible with the country’s commitment to NATO.^{47,48} In Italy, Europa Verde seemingly does not have a strong position on the US nuclear weapons that are stationed at Aviano and Ghedi Air Bases. The Italian Greens are

not keen on their presence, but the issue appears less central than in Belgium where, as previously mentioned, the Euromissile crisis was instrumental in the creation of the country’s Green parties.⁴⁹ It is, for instance, not mentioned in party programmes or policy statements. One of the Europa Verde representatives interviewed explained that these weapons were deployed long before political ecology consolidated in Italy. Just as NATO membership is seen as self-evident, so is, to some extent the presence of the B61s.⁵⁰

EXPERT VIEW NO. 21

Nuclear (dis)armament and the European security dilemma

Drawing on the principle of the security dilemma already mentioned in [Expert view no. 9](#), the same expert noted that this logic also applies with regard to nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament and arms control more generally seek to work as confidence and trust-building measures that can address the security dilemma. But the challenge lies in finding a balance that addresses the legitimate security concerns of states while reducing the risks associated with nuclear weapons.

From this perspective and looking at current developments within the international security environment, European states (and Green parties) should realise that moves such as the deployment of new modernised US warheads on European soil will likely be perceived as a threat by Russia, which in turn might lead the Kremlin to adopt an even more aggressive posture in addition to complicating any diplomatic efforts towards relaunching multilateral disarmament discussions. Polish President Andrzej Duda recent declarations according to which Poland would be ready to host US nuclear weapons on its soil should NATO wish to strengthen its eastern flank offers a good illustration. In fact, following these declarations, Russia promptly indicated that it “will take all the necessary retaliatory steps to guarantee [its] security” should this happen.⁵¹

In connection, another expert pointed out that, historically, some of the greatest disarmament achievements were reached in moment of heightened tensions. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) which led to the adoption of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) in 1972 and SALT II Treaty in 1979 are cases in point. They show the importance of keeping communication channels open and be cognisant of other states security preoccupations.

As France has its own nuclear deterrent, coordinated with but independent from NATO, the question of disarmament arises in somewhat different terms. Even though its nuclear arsenal is significantly smaller than those of the United States and Russia (see Figure 15), France has the potential to take on a key role in international nuclear disarmament efforts. Les Écologistes have called on their country to show leadership – at the international level by engaging in talks with other nuclear powers using the TPNW as a basis, and at the European level with the member states that have already ratified the treaty to convince the EU itself to become party to it.⁵² Until the outbreak of full-scale war in Ukraine, the French Greens insisted that such an initiative must be under European coordination, but in October 2022 the party issued a motion in which it “does not rule out the possibility of launching a nuclear disarmament initiative at the French level without a European consensus on the subject and when conditions are right”.⁵³ Exactly what these conditions are is not clear. In any case, the addition of this clarification lessens the impression that the French Greens have actually changed their opinion on the need for a Europe-coordinated approach. This was confirmed during the interviews for this study. On the topic of the US weapons stationed in Europe, the party representatives interviewed insisted that they must be withdrawn. However, they also underlined that Russia too needs to agree to reduce its arsenal and that, in a spirit of cooperation, the position of the Central and

Eastern European member states deserves special consideration.⁵⁴

Arms control: should military uses of EDTs be regulated?

The so-called “Fourth Industrial Revolution” – an expression used to describe the rapid technological progress of the 21st century – has added a new dimension to arms control. States and industries, through their military R&D

programmes, have started to pay increasing attention to emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) – including artificial intelligence, robotics, Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) technologies, hypersonics, new advanced materials, biotechnology, and quantum-based technologies – in the hope of fostering their potential, including for the development of new weapon systems. As seen in the previous chapter, the EU is no exception: the two “horizontal categories of action” identified by the EDF are disruptive technologies and innovative defence technologies. According to the EU narrative, member states are lagging behind the United States, Russia, and China. EU High Representative for Foreign

“For the sake of peace and stability, we want internationally binding regulations on autonomy in weapons systems and the internationally binding outlawing and prohibition of applications that violate ethical and international law principles. This also applies to digital weapons such as attack and espionage software. Germany and the EU must take on a global leadership role here. In order to prevent the militarisation of space, we want to introduce advanced, internationally binding rules.”

Die Grünen, 2021

Affairs Josep Borrell argues that Europe needs to go “further and quicker” or it will run the risk of becoming “defence irrelevant”.⁵⁵

The use of EDTs presents important ethical and legal challenges. The main concerns – as also relayed by European Greens – are the lack of human control over weapons capable of seeking, identifying, and eliminating targets autonomously; racial bias and the “black box” phenomenon; whether

algorithmic systems can respect complex international humanitarian law principles such as discrimination and proportionality; and the lack of clear rules on responsibility and accountability if they fail to do so. There are also broader concerns on how the dehumanisation of warfare might increase the likelihood of conflicts. In response to these concerns, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in 2018 in which it called on the EU to take leadership on global arms control efforts to establish a legally binding international instrument on the development of lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS).⁵⁶ The Greens/EFA group played an important role in this; it was by far the most strongly represented group among the MEPs that tabled the resolution, and no Green representative voted against it or abstained.⁵⁷

At the national level, the extent to which EDTs are on Green parties' radars varies. Once again, the position of the more established Western European parties on this topic is more developed than in the newer parties from Central and Eastern Europe.

The Možemo! representative interviewed, for example, stated that this topic had not yet been discussed within the party.⁵⁸ By contrast, Greens in France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Finland all mention the need to regulate the military use of EDTs, and more particularly to promote and/or achieve a ban on LAWS.⁵⁹ The Écolo representative interviewed even stated that the military use of new technologies may well constitute one of the "greatest dangers" to international peace and security.⁶⁰ As members of the current governmental coalition, both Belgian Green parties have been particularly proactive on this topic. The Greens had a motion on "tak[ing] the lead in developing a regulatory framework for fully autonomous weapons systems, with a view to an international ban" inserted in the governmental agreement in 2020.⁶¹ Three years later, in May 2023, at the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS session held during the Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), Belgium officially declared its support for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument.⁶²

The automation of war and the need to regulate military use of EDTs

From autonomous drones to AI-powered weapon systems, it is often said that the future of warfare is technological and automated. While these advancements offer potential benefits – for e.g. increased accuracy and reduced risks to military personnel, they also raise important strategic, ethical and legal challenges that demand urgent attention. Chief among them is the delegation of life-and-death decision-making to machines, their capacity to effectively respect complex rules of IHL such as the principles of civilian discrimination and proportionality, and the issue of accountability in case of war crimes.⁶³

The proliferation of automated weapon systems may also threaten to upend traditional notions of deterrence and escalation control: the speed and scale at which LAWs can operate raise the spectre of rapid and uncontrollable worsening of conflict situations where human decision-making may struggle to keep pace with the actions of AI driven systems.⁶⁴ In connection, some experts have also warned against the impact of LAWs on the likelihood of conflict. By reducing the human and political cost of war, LAWs might embolden states (and non-state actors) to resort to force and lower the threshold for initiating conflict thus increasing international instability and insecurity.⁶⁵

In light of the above, many have highlighted the urgent need for robust international regulations governing the military use of EDTs, including a preventive ban on LAWs and strict guidelines on military R&D activities. One of the interviewed experts argued that such guidelines could also be useful to the industry which currently faces a situation of legal uncertainty. It would, more specifically, help it make informed investment decisions.

Another international arms control priority cited by a number of the Green parties surveyed is the need to regulate cyberwarfare. They consider the rise of hybrid threats – notably the use of cyberspace to conduct attacks on key infrastructure (hospitals, power stations, transport systems, etc.) – as a significant threat to international peace and security. They also believe that Europe currently lacks cyber-defence capabilities and is therefore unable to efficiently protect itself from cyberattacks.⁶⁶ Beyond reinforcing capabilities and training personnel, many Green parties also advocate for the establishment of internationally binding rules on the use of malignant software as a way to mitigate this threat. This was mentioned

by the representatives of Groen, Écolo, and Les Écologistes during the interviews conducted for this study and was included in Die Grünen/Bündnis 90's programme for the 2021 federal election. The latter states that “for the sake of peace and security, we want internationally binding rules on autonomy in weapons systems [...]. This also applies to digital weapons such as attack and espionage software. Germany and the EU must take on a global leadership role here”.⁶⁷

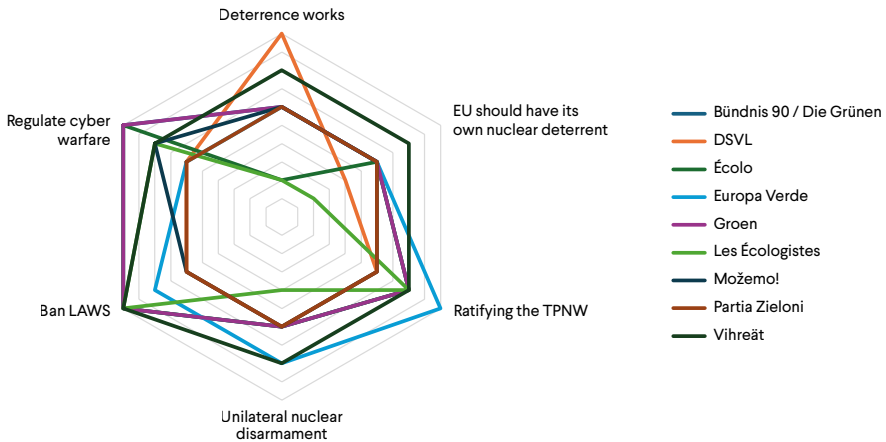
A final issue on which the German Greens' 2021 political programme calls on the EU to take leadership is the introduction of internationally binding rules to prevent the militarisation of outer space.⁶⁸ The provisions

currently contained in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 – which enshrines the principle of peaceful exploration and forbids the placing in orbit of objects carrying weapons of mass destruction or the establishment of military bases or installations on celestial bodies – are considered outdated in light of recent technological developments (for example anti-satellite missiles). Although many states agree that new rules to limit military uses of outer space need to be established, negotiations stalled in 2013.⁶⁹

Main takeaways and recommendations

Nuclear deterrence and disarmament, in addition to arms control more generally, are topics of longstanding importance for many Green parties in Western Europe but have been less significant in defining the identity of younger Green parties, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. This results, once again, in diverging views (see Figure 16 below).

Figure 16. Summary of surveyed Green parties' view on nuclear deterrence, disarmament, and arms control



The main points of divergence between the parties surveyed are:

- **Nuclear deterrence:** Some Green parties recognise that nuclear deterrence is a necessary evil in response to geopolitical tensions while others vehemently reject this approach as inefficient, strategically flawed, and dangerous.
- **Unilateral disarmament measures:** Despite agreeing that multilateral disarmament processes will be very hard to relaunch given current tensions, some parties argue that Europe could take small unilateral steps towards disarmament. This could include opposing the modernisation of the US nuclear warheads stationed on EU territory. Others believe it is important to avoid showing dissension within NATO and that, as a matter of security, it is better to keep in line with the Alliance's deterrence policy, including extended deterrence.

Some broad points of convergence can also be identified, notably:

- **Commitment to disarmament:** All of the Green parties surveyed remain firmly committed to the principle and goal of disarmament, including that of a world free of nuclear weapons. While many believe this is an unrealistic perspective in the short term, they support efforts to relaunch multilateral disarmament over the medium to longer term.
- **Regulation of military uses of EDTs:** Although not all parties make official mention of this issue, there seems to be general agreement on the need to regulate the development and use of EDTs for military purposes, particularly in relation to LAWS and aggressive uses of cyberspace.

Recommendations to Green parties based on the expert input received:

- **Reassess the normalisation of nuclear deterrence:** Take a step back to critically reflect on the progressive normalisation of both nuclear power as a sustainable alternative to fossil fuels and nuclear deterrence in their discourses.
- **Focus on realistic paths to disarmament:** While advocating for the TPNW is of symbolic importance, Green parties should not forget to engage with other forums such as the NTP, which might offer a more practical avenue for advancing nuclear disarmament efforts.
- **Consider the European nuclear security dilemma:** NATO's doctrine of extended deterrence should not be accepted without first questioning its broader impact on European security dynamics. The deployment of new and/or modernised nuclear warheads on European soil could further exacerbate tensions with Russia, potentially leading to a more aggressive stance from Moscow. Steps towards the nuclear rearmament of Europe should therefore be opposed.
- **Keep communication channels open in order to build trust:** Some of the greatest disarmament agreements were reached in moments of high tensions, showing the importance of keeping communication channels open in order to foster disarmament and arms control efforts. Green parties should consequently advocate for continued dialogue, even with "rogue" states, in order to build trust.
- **Advocate for strict rules on military uses of EDTs:** Green parties should continue to advocate for the establishment of strict international rules on military uses of EDTs, including a preventive ban on LAWS. Such regulations are necessary as a matter of international peace and security, as well as to protect human rights.

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Civil Protection, Civic Militarism, and Non-Violence

Civil protection, civic militarism, and non-violence are interconnected concepts in which the role of the armed forces in society and of civilians in security, defence, and resilience efforts are brought to the fore. Civil protection focuses on safeguarding civilian lives and well-being during emergencies. Whether as a result of terrorist attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, or natural disasters, the armed forces have increasingly been called on to support the emergency services in EU member states, prompting debates about the role of the military in such efforts. For its part, civic militarism refers to the integration of military values into society, potentially extending military influence beyond defence into areas like infrastructure and education. A key vector is military service. This concept is currently being debated and/or revived in various EU member states against the background of heightened perceptions of Russia as a threat, leading to questions on the role to be played by civilians in the defence of their national territory.¹ In the current international context, characterised by crisis and diverse types of emergency situation, the contribution the principles of non-violence can make to building more resilient societies has been somewhat overlooked.

This last chapter aims to assess the stances of the Green parties surveyed on these issues. To this end, the first section examines the role of the military, focusing on the development of dual capabilities (military and civilian) within the armed forces. The second section considers civilian-military relations, with a specific focus on military service and democratic (civilian) control over the armed forces. The third and final section investigates alternative, non-violent, and civilian approaches to security and defence.

The role of armed forces in society: the need for dual capabilities?

“Dual capability”, in the context of the armed forces, typically refers to military units, equipment, or personnel that possess the ability to perform multiple functions or roles, depending on the requirements of a mission or the evolving nature of threats. Whether during overseas operations or at the domestic level, armies have increasingly been called on to perform tasks beyond traditional combat roles, from peacekeeping, capability building, and post-conflict reconstruction to the distribution of civil protection assistance,

humanitarian aid, and disaster/emergency relief.

Among the benefits of deploying the military for such missions is the fact that soldiers are usually well trained to react to emergency situations and conduct risk assessments. The army also possesses rapid deployment, logistical (transport, communications, supply-chain management, field hospitals), and search-and-rescue capabilities that can ensure a timely and effective response. It is also argued that a military presence may help address security challenges that can arise in the aftermath of disasters or wars, facilitating the rapid distribution of aid to the affected populations.

The role of the military is not a topic that is commonly addressed by Green parties in their programmes and policy papers. That said, during the interviews conducted for this report, a number of the parties stated that, in their opinion, the military should have a greater role in risk assessment/mitigation (preventative action) as well as disaster/crisis relief and management (reactive action) beyond their traditional national defence role.

The “preventative” aspect as envisaged by Écolo emphasises raising awareness among the armed forces of the impact of their activities. The armed forces should, for instance, take the local environmental situation into account (for example drought conditions and the local population’s access to water) when deployed on operations

abroad.² The representative interviewed explained that “dual capabilities” should also include “adapting defence institutions and practices to climate change”. As mentioned in the chapter on military expenditures, this can be done by initiating reflection within the armed forces on how to reduce their carbon footprint and the investments this would require.³

The former dimension is also important for Les Écologistes. This is not surprising given the frequent deployment of the French army overseas, notably in Africa. But the focus of the French Greens is not restricted to the environment. Referring to the failures of Operation Barkhane (2014-2022) in the Sahel region, the representative interviewed argued that military personnel were asked to carry out civilian tasks for which they were not properly equipped.⁴ He argued that the armed forces have to be given adequate training, notably in international relations and social sciences, to allow them “to understand the societies” in which they operate and, in so doing, conduct better risk assessments as to the impact of their actions on local politics and dynamics.⁵ French military interventions would then be both more efficient in achieving their strategic objectives and less likely to worsen security on the ground for soldiers and civilians alike. Along the same lines, the Partia Zieloni representative interviewed mentioned that the military could be better trained in the use of “soft tools”, i.e. alternative, non-violent methods of conflict prevention, mediation, and resolution.⁶

“Civilian-military” actions and their associated problems

Military involvement in civilian missions such as peacekeeping, capacity building, post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, and the distribution of humanitarian aid has been heavily criticised in recent decades.⁷ Experts point out that the presence of the military can escalate tensions instead of calming them, especially when the mission is carried out by a former colonial power. Mixing military and civilian roles can also blur the lines of authority, raising issues about democratic oversight over the military, in addition to endangering humanitarian workers.

The experts interviewed emphasised that Green parties should take all of this into consideration, especially if they view the implementation of “comprehensive security” as something that should fall to the armed forces. The better option, however, would probably be to continue efforts geared towards genuine civilian missions as emphasised elsewhere in this report.

“Reactive” action is more directly concerned with the role of the army as a complement to domestic civil protection agencies, especially in tackling the consequences of climate change. Several of the Green parties surveyed cited particular events in relation to the development of their views on this issue. The Vihreät representative, for instance, mentioned the Ebola crisis of 2014 and how the United States army was the sole actor capable of providing an efficient emergency response to prevent the spread of

the virus.⁸ In their view, this showed that military expertise can be valuable in crisis situations and that it is worth tapping into this dual potential: “The military needs to prepare for crisis management in the context of climate change. It needs to have operating procedures.”⁹ The interviewed Les Écologistes representative also took a strong stand in favour of developing the dual capabilities of the army in relation to emergency relief. To be more precise, they proposed the creation of a “new armed corps focused on civil protection and capable of using the military’s strike force to respond to environmental disasters”.¹⁰ However, it was

hard to establish whether this was a party position or a personal opinion.

The position of Écolo, on the other hand, is much more established. Referring to the July 2021 flash floods in the Liège region, which, in addition to extensive material damages, caused the death of 39 people, the representative interviewed argued that this emergency had highlighted the Belgian army’s lack of preparedness and the need to enhance its capacity to provide “help to

the nation”.¹¹ This was later integrated in the government’s new strategic plan for Belgian defence – the STAR Plan – in June 2022. This document states that the “terrorist attacks on European territory, [...], the migration crisis and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic and the floods of July 2021 have made national players aware of the need for more integrated cooperation”¹² and that “military capabilities can also contribute more efficiently and interdepartmentally to the provision of security, in the broadest sense of the term, for the population on national territory”.¹³

“The military needs to prepare for crisis management in the context of climate change. It needs to have operating procedures.”

Interview with a representative of Vihreät

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the representative of Možemo! argued that civil protection should remain in the hands of civil agencies and be kept strictly separate from the military. The priority, in the face of climate change and extreme weather events, should be to push for ambitious policies to fight climate change as well as strengthen the capabilities of fire fighters, civil protection brigades, and public health services, not give more responsibilities to the military.¹⁴ The concern appears to be that this could

“I don’t think the military should be dealing with the consequences of severe weather and climate change. Firefighters should be the ones in charge. Firefighters need to be much more supported in the forthcoming period. It may be also crucial now to have them on the top level.”

Interview with a representative of Možemo!

lead to the diversion of essential resources from civil protection agencies under the pretext that the army can take over in the event of a real emergency. The increased presence of the armed forces in public spaces could also lead to the normalisation of the military as a component of civil life. This concern was raised by the representative of DSVL, who underlined the vulnerability of democracy in times of crisis and the need to think long and hard about the role the armed forces are given in “state of emergency” situations.¹⁵

Military participation in disaster-relief missions

A number of the experts interviewed pointed to the sense of usefulness and closeness that French military personnel, for instance, reported having felt during the emergency relief missions that followed Hurricane Irma (2017) in the French overseas territories. This helped create positive relations between the army and the civilian population. It was also argued that the expertise of military actors in rapid response techniques can be used as the basis for valuable knowledge- and best-practice sharing with civil protection agencies.

On the other hand, it was noted that communication and cooperation problems between military and civilian bodies can negatively impact the overall efficacy of relief efforts.¹⁶ An expert with a background in the military stressed that Green parties should seek further dialogue with defence institutions in order to strengthen their position and knowledge on the subject.

More fundamentally, the experts interviewed also warned that the presence of the armed forces in non-military crises could lead to the militarisation of crisis management and, beyond that, society as a whole. The issue of how increased military participation might affect the funding of civil protection services was also highlighted. One expert cautioned that narratives stating that the military is more efficient than civil protection agencies at handling crisis situations should be qualified with the admission that the latter have long been underfunded. The COVID-19 pandemic offers a good illustration of this fact and shows that refunding public services might be more beneficial in the long term in order to build crisis-resilient societies.

Civilians and the military: a two-way exchange?

In most EU member states, compulsory military service was abolished in the 1990s and 2000s. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, however, prompted debates in many European countries on the need to reinstate it. As a result, mandatory military service was effectively reintroduced in Lithuania in 2015, in Sweden in 2017, and, most recently, in Latvia in 2024. As of today, eight of the 27 EU member states have some form of compulsory military service (see Figure 17 on next page).

European Green parties have historically opposed conscription. Where it still existed or exists, in addition to advocating its abolition, they pleaded for the establishment of alternative civilian service options and the possibility of acting as a conscientious objector without being punished.¹⁷ Although the war in Ukraine has prompted something of a shift in Green positions on security and defence issues, this is a topic on which the parties surveyed have generally stood their ground. The extent to which they perceive it as an issue, however, depends on the salience of the debates about the reinstatement

of compulsory military service in their respective country.

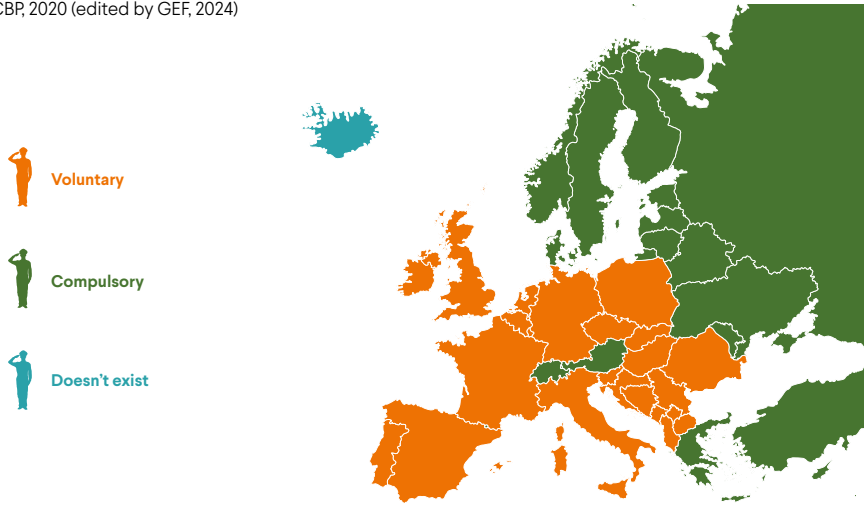
In Italy, for instance, the Meloni government proposed introducing a 40-day period of voluntary military training; this was quickly abandoned in favour of the establishment of a 10,000-strong reserve of trained men and women.¹⁸ Likewise, in Belgium, the return of military service is seen as extremely unlikely. While Chief of Defence Admiral Michel Hofman has mentioned the idea, it has never been seriously discussed at the political level.¹⁹ In October 2022, Minister of Defence Ludivine Dedonder (Parti Socialiste) even indicated that it was “neither on the agenda, nor on the table”.²⁰ Écolo and Groen, in any case, remain opposed to compulsory military service and have urged the EU, as well as Belgium, to give refugee status to conscientious objectors seeking to flee Russia to avoid forced conscription to fight in Ukraine, stating that “conscientious objection is a human right”.²¹ The Groen representative interviewed also argued that the only efficient army is a professional army; as Russia's experience in Ukraine shows, training and adequate equipment matters more than numbers.²²

Conscientious objection is (indeed) a human right

According to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), conscientious objection is indeed a human right. The Court, more specifically, considers that forcing a person to serve in the armed forces when refusal is motivated by serious and insurmountable conflict between the obligation to serve in the army and a person's conscience or his deeply and genuinely held religious or other beliefs, is a violation of Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of thought, conscience and religion).²³ Greens should, therefore, stay strongly committed to defending the right of individuals to opt out of military conscription wherever they may be in Europe.

Figure 17. Military service in European countries

SOURCE: BCBP, 2020 (edited by GEF, 2024)



This is also the position of Partia Zieloni, Die Grünen, DSVL, and Možemo!.²⁴ In Germany, the debate on compulsory military service came back on the agenda in mid-2022 after Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke out in favour of reintroducing compulsory military or civilian service to help address the shortage of personnel in social sectors and the Bundeswehr (German federal army).²⁵ More recently, in February 2023, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – SPD) claimed suspending compulsory military service had been a “mistake”.²⁶ As members of the governmental coalition, this has arguably put Die Grünen, which had included a statement on putting an end to voluntary military service in its 2021 general election programme – in an uncomfortable situation.²⁷ Interrogated on the matter, party leader Omid Nouripour nevertheless indicated that

conscription is costly and unnecessary, and that what the Bundeswehr needs is “skilled and qualified personnel”.²⁸

In Lithuania, where compulsory nine-month military service for male citizens aged between 18 and 23 was reintroduced in 2015, the DSVL representative explained that the party is “still very sceptical” for two reasons: first, because “we are seeing that military work is not done well enough; there is still a big lack of well-equipped professionals”, and second, because “the militarisation of society is something we don’t want for the future”.²⁹ Fears of the militarisation of society were also expressed by the Croatian Greens. The representative of Možemo! explained that, “as a party, we are fully against military service [...] it’s also part of history: in the former Yugoslavia we had compulsory military service and we saw how it has such a deep and strong cultural impact [...] we think that promoting service among young people is the militarisation of society.”

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Interview with a representative of Možemo!

that promoting service among young people is the militarisation of society.”³⁰

In France, mandatory military service was abolished in 1997 and replaced by a defence-focused citizenship course (“parcours citoyen”). All French nationals aged between 16 and 25 are required to follow the *parcours*, delivered by the army. Its aim, as provided by law, is to “strengthen the link between the armed forces and the nation, while raising young people’s awareness of the duty to defend”.³¹ The Les Écologistes representative interviewed indicated that they were not fundamentally against the *parcours*, but felt it should also include “critical” perspectives on French military history and the country’s

colonial past.³² In contrast, the establishment of Universal National Service (“Service national universel” – SNU) in 2019, and especially President Macron’s plan to roll it out to all teenagers aged between 15 and 17 from 2026, has been widely criticised by the French Greens. The SNU consists of a period of uniformed civilian service ranging from two weeks to 12 months under the supervision of the Ministry of Armed Forces and the Ministry of Education. Les Écologistes consider the SNU to be a form of compulsory military service in disguise.³³ They view it as a “forced engagement” that imposes the “militarisation of a whole generation” without the possibility of conscientious objection.³⁴

EXPERT VIEW NO. 26

Why reintroducing conscription would be counterproductive

In an article published on 15 September 2022, political scientists Vincenzo Bove, Riccardo Di Leo, and Marco Giani argue that reintroducing conscription would be counterproductive.³⁵ They point out that, contrary to what is often claimed, there is no convincing evidence that conscription fosters social cohesion and patriotism or promotes civic values among young people. It also appears that ex-conscripts generally have less trust in state institutions, meaning that military service is counter-productive in building resilient democratic societies. Furthermore, the authors underline that the military and especially technological landscape has evolved significantly since military service was abolished in most European countries. Soldier numbers are therefore less decisive for ensuring territorial defence than they once were. Investing in training and recruiting highly qualified professionals therefore seems to be the better way forward.

As the Les Écologistes representative interviewed emphasised, this is even more of an issue when considering the opacity that surrounds the French army – often dubbed the “grande muette” (“the Great Mute”) – and its functioning. They argued that the armed forces in France have become “separated from the rest of society” and largely unaccountable for their actions.³⁶ Democratising

the army by allowing democratic control and the public reappropriation of security and defence issues is consequently seen as paramount.³⁷ Echoes of this can be found in Die Grünen’s 2021 federal election programme, which states that “the Federal Armed Forces should reflect the variety and diversity of our society [...] hateful ideologies and right-wing extremist behaviour

are completely incompatible with [their] mission [...]. We will therefore monitor and investigate this rigorously and break up any such structures”.³⁸

Interestingly, in Finland, where military service has been mandatory since the country’s independence from the Russian Empire in 1917, conscription appears to be seen as part of the process of democratising the army. As the Vihreät representative interviewed indicated: “We see the military as being a functioning part of the democratic system [...] We have a pretty functional societal relationship with the armed forces, partly because of the conscription system.”³⁹ The principle of conscription has never been fundamentally called into question by the party. In 1990s, however, the Finnish Greens opposed compulsory male conscription and campaigned for a civilian alternative in which young people, regardless of their gender, could choose between serving in fields including defence, environmental protection, education, and healthcare.⁴⁰ The Vihreät representative admitted that since then, especially over the course of the last five to eight years, the discourse within the party has changed somewhat and taken a more “militaristic” turn.⁴¹ On 15 December 2023, Green MP Atte Harjanne, for instance, explained to parliament that “the basis of Finland’s defence is universal conscription and a high level of commitment to national defence. We must make every effort to preserve these”.⁴² The 2023-2027 party programme likewise states that “the Greens want to develop conscription and ensure Finland’s defence capability under all conditions”.⁴³ To this end, the programme proposes reforming the system by opening military service to women volunteers alongside conscripted men, shortening

non-military service so that its relative length would not be considered punitive, not sanctioning conscientious objectors, and launching an investigation into military service for both men and women.⁴⁴

Non-violence: alternative models for security and defence?

Non-violence in security and defence involves the use of peaceful and non-military means to address conflict, promote security, and defend against threats. While non-violent security focuses on promoting peace, stability, and security in society and between states, non-violent defence specifically deals with the defence of the nation against external threats without relying on military force.

“We see the military as being a functioning part of the democratic system [...] We have a pretty functional societal relationship with the armed forces, partly because of the conscription system.”

Interview with a representative of Vihreät

Both can be linked back to the concept of comprehensive security, strongly

favoured by the Green parties surveyed and mentioned in this report on several occasions. The first section of this chapter, for instance, discusses the concept in connection with the need for the armed forces to develop conflict resolution and mediation skills for use in overseas operations. More fundamentally, chapter 1 underlines the importance of privileging diplomacy, mediation, and conflict resolution over force at the member state and EU level for the Green parties surveyed. Non-violence appears as a more effective manner to address most “non-traditional” threats, i.e. vectors of international instability that are not necessarily of a military nature, such as climate change.

All of these elements are indeed part of a non-violent security policy, which European Green parties have historically championed, notably at the EU level. In 1994, against the

background of the Yugoslav Wars, Italian Green MEP and peace activist Alexander Langer tabled the idea of establishing a European Civil Peace Corps (ECPC).⁴⁵ First approved by the European Parliament in 1995 and addressed on several occasions since then, the project was also endorsed by the European Commission in 2003 but has not yet seen the light of day. Instead, civilian missions have been deployed under the CSDP framework; 12 of the 21 current missions and operations are, in fact, civilian. They are ordinarily staffed by a mix of civilian and military personnel. The problems this may cause are underlined in [Expert view no. 23](#).

The ECPC, by contrast, would be a purely civilian force. Separate from the CSDP, it would provide the EU with an additional instrument geared exclusively towards non-violent conflict management. The body would conduct a wide range of activities, including mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation; the re-establishment and consolidation of the rule of law; civil administration capacity-building; high-level policy advice, including economic reconstruction; and the implementation of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programmes.⁴⁶ It would work in collaboration with existing institutions, such as the UN, the African Union (AU), and other regional

“The ECPC should be part of the platform [...] giving visibility to a new soft security policy focused on conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This should be a regional proposal of the Greens, as they developed the original proposal.”

Interview with a representative of Europa Verde

organisations or NGOs to ensure sustainable peace through flexible and rapid deployment.

On 12 January 2024, a new motion for a resolution calling on the Council to launch the ECPC was submitted at the European Parliament, carried by a wide coalition of MEPs ranging from the European People’s Party (EEP) to the Greens/EFA group. They

argue this framework would make EU civilian crisis management “more credible, coherent, effective, flexible and visible”.⁴⁷

At the national level, the ECPC project featured in the programme of Les Écologistes for the 2019 European elections.⁴⁸ In addition, the French Greens also advocated for the creation of a European Peace Institute to support the consolidation of civilian crisis management at the EU and member state level. The representative of Europa Verde also mentioned the ECPC during the interviews conducted for this study, emphasising that “the ECPC should be part of platform [...] giving visibility to a new soft security policy focused on conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This should be a regional proposal of the Greens, as they developed the original proposal”.⁴⁹

Reviving the ECPC project

Reviving the ECPC project at the EU level would respond to some of the criticisms voiced by those experts interviewed with backgrounds in peace studies and conflict resolution regarding the Greens' perceived lack of emphasis on non-violent tools to address international security issues. They insisted that the Greens' need to discuss "hard security" should not lead them to forget about civilian crisis management. Relaunching the ECPC project, but with greater strength, could also make Green discourses on the need for the EU to favour diplomatic and non-violent methods for conflict prevention more coherent and credible.

Europa Verde is also the party with the most comprehensive proposal for the establishment of non-violent defence mechanisms. The representatives of Les Écologistes and to a certain extent Možemo! also underlined the need for domestic investment to boost the ability of citizens to recognise threats to democracy and act in its defence. This is a key way of addressing so-called "hybrid threats" such as the use of cyberspace to destabilise democratic regimes and influence electoral processes abroad. As the representative of Les Écologistes explained, "Greens have given a lot of thought to non-violence and civil deterrence as forms of resistance that could also be used to deter an enemy from invading. [While] Greens need to familiarise themselves with defence (as traditionally understood), [...] we also need to make our interlocutors understand that we have something to contribute in return".⁵⁰

"Greens have given a lot of thought to non-violence and civil deterrence as forms of resistance that could also be used to deter an enemy from invading. [...] [While] Greens need to familiarise themselves with defence (as traditionally understood), [...] we also need to make our interlocutors understand that we have something to contribute in return."

Interview with a representative of Les Écologistes

That said, the Italian Greens are the only party surveyed to have included a concrete plan for civil defence in their programmes.⁵¹ The programme issued by the Alleanza

Verdi e Sinistra for the 2022 general election calls for the immediate "approval of the "Another Defence is Possible" bill for the establishment of a department of non-armed and non-violent civil defence (DCNAN)".⁵²

"Another Defence is Possible" was a campaign launched in 2012 by a coalition of pacifist organisations that, in 2014, resulted in the drafting of a bill of popular initiative ("legge di iniziativa popolare") on the establishment of a DCNAN.⁵³ The bill was submitted to parliament in 2015 and examined by the Constitutional Affairs Committee and Defence Committee in 2017, but has since made no further progress.⁵⁴ Based on the idea that "defence of the homeland is much more multifaceted and extensive than simply military force",⁵⁵ the DCNAN it proposes to establish would

be placed directly under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and tasked with protecting the constitution; coordinating and organising civil non-armed defence; conducting independent research on peace, disarmament, and plans for the repurposing of the defence industry; promoting political solutions and mediation; and tackling social, cultural, and environmental degradation.⁵⁶

Independent peace research and the power of expertise

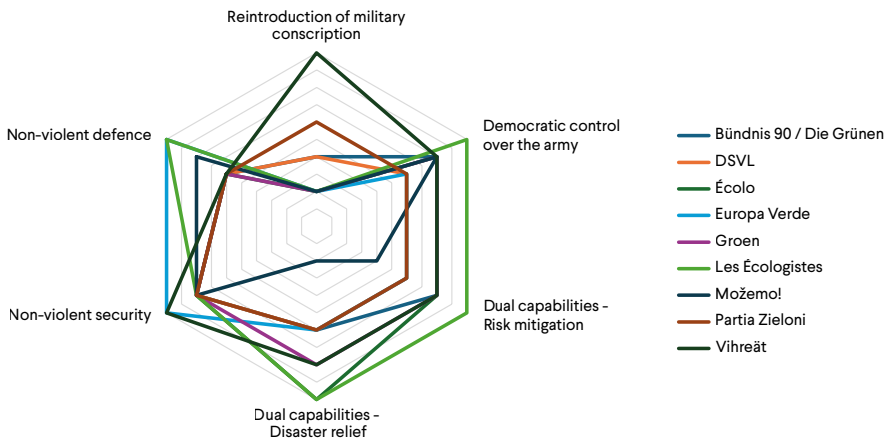
The call of the Italian Greens, but also Les Écologistes, to create a peace research centre echoes experts' views on the need to better fund research in this field. Pacifist research groups should be given adequate financial means to develop discourses on non-violence that can counterbalance the mainstream – and mostly militaristic – expert narratives that currently dominate public space and the media landscape. Knowledge and “expertise” are never neutral; they are a situated construction, even in the case of “purely technical” information.

Establishing and funding independent peace research appears even more important in the current geopolitical – and sometimes domestic – context. The December 2023 decision of the current Swedish government to end financial aid to civil society organisations working on peace and disarmament⁵⁷ is, for example, extremely troubling, leading to the peace discourse becoming ever less audible. Pacifist organisations within civil society also play a key role in protecting democracy and building resilient European societies.

Main takeaways and recommendations

An examination of the nine European Green parties' stances on the complex issues surrounding the role of the military in society, civilian-military relations, and alternative models of security and defence reveals a nuanced and principled approach (see Figure 18 below).

Figure 18. Summary of surveyed Green parties' views on civic militarism, civil protection, and non-violence



The main points of divergence between the parties surveyed are:

- **The role of the armed forces in disaster relief:** While some parties are adamant that the dual capabilities of the armed forces should be developed to meet the challenges posed by climate change, others expressed strong doubts on this approach. They argue that this is the role of civil protection agencies and that these should be adequately funded.
- **Military service and conscription:** This is another polarising topic within the Green parties surveyed. While the vast majority are sceptical of military service, Vihräät are in favour of Finland's existing conscription system and support its further development. It is worth underlining that this is an isolated case in the sample and that the position of the Finnish Green party needs to be read against the background of its country's specific history, including the fact that, unlike most European countries, mandatory national service was never abolished.

Some broad points of convergence can also be identified, notably:

- **Importance of a professional army as the foundation of national defence:** All of the parties surveyed agree that a well-trained and well-equipped professional army should form the basis of a country's armed defence.
- **Defending the rights of conscientious objectors:** Whether they oppose or support the reintroduction or development of conscription, all of the parties surveyed argued that the rights of conscientious objectors should be upheld and protected. Individuals who refuse to serve in the armed forces should not be sanctioned.
- **Democratic control over the armed forces:** Several parties emphasised the need to enhance democratic control mechanisms over the armed forces. The extent to which this is cited as a priority depends on their national contexts.
- **Non-violent security and "soft" tools:** As highlighted in chapter 1, all of the Green parties surveyed strongly advocate for the development of soft tools including diplomacy, conflict prevention, and mediation to address international security challenges.

Recommendations to Green parties based on the expert input received:

- **Prioritise genuine civilian missions:** Given the criticisms and complexities surrounding military involvement in civilian missions, Green parties should prioritise efforts to conduct genuine civilian missions, with the participation of purely civilian personnel. They should renew their advocacy efforts for the establishment of the ECPC. This would strengthen parties' appeals for non-violent tools for conflict prevention and boost their coherence and credibility.
- **Promote dialogue with defence institutions:** Green parties should seek to engage more in dialogue with defence institutions to discuss the role the armed forces can play in emergency situations. Understanding the capacities and challenges faced by the military, in addition to the type of assistance they can offer, would make parties' discourses on this issue more credible.
- **Continue to oppose the reintroduction of conscription and defend the rights of conscientious objectors:** Contrary to what has often been argued, military service does not foster social cohesion, patriotism, or civic values. Moreover, a well-trained professional

army is more than adequate given the current international security landscape. Greens should oppose efforts to reintroduce mandatory national service and continue to uphold the human right of individuals to opt out of military conscription wherever they are in Europe.

- **Support independent peace research:** Green parties should support the establishment and funding of independent peace research centres. This would provide a platform for pacifist research groups to counterbalance mainstream militaristic discourses and contribute to building resilient European societies.



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Conclusion

Towards a New Paradigm for Green Security and Defence Policies?

Agatha Verdebout & Anne Xuan Nguyen

“Green parties are not known for defence issues.” This statement was made during one of the plenary sessions of the 2023 European Green Academy in Warsaw. The principal explanation for this might be the local emergence of Greens and their focus on environmental policies, but also the pacifist heritage of ecologist movements. In 2021, German Green Minister for Foreign Affairs Annalena Baerbock called for Germany to take responsibility and be more proactive on its own security and defence. This call has been labelled as a “post-pacifist shift”,¹ a terminology here used to describe balancing “a centrist tone to win over new voters with the more pacifist desires of the Greens’ base.”² This shift has accelerated as a result of Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In several European countries, Green parties are increasingly adopting a ‘centrist tone’ and seemingly moving away from the pacifist end of the spectrum. Some have stated that pacifism is “a luxury”,³ or “a privilege”⁴ in light of the plight of Ukrainians, pointing out that “you [first] have to win the war to be a pacifist”.⁵ Pacifism and non-violence are somehow labelled as outdated ideals of the past, clashing against the realities of the

current security crises. This view, however, is caricatural: pacifism is understood as naïve, while more militaristic approaches are suddenly seen as responsible. It implies a shift in the means of security; from dialogue, cultural and economic partnerships as well as disarmament to greater allocation of resources to the military.

The war in Ukraine has prompted European governments and Green parties to address and/or take a position on security and defence issues anew. Greens’ core commitments to non-violence were shaken and practically challenged, as some agreed to increasing defence expenditures, supported arms deliveries to Kyiv, and tamed down their opposition to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. This also meant less emphasis on alternative security and defence models based on conflict prevention and resolution than had traditionally been the case. Greens seem to have slid towards “mainstream” discourses articulated around geopolitics, strategic competition and the need to reinforce military capabilities to ensure Europe’s security and defence. While they argue that diplomacy should always be favoured, many of them also argue that EU members states

need to be able to show more “teeth” to become credible actors on the international stage.

These discourses are, of course, not specific to European Green parties. Other political families are also struggling to redefine their approach to security and defence in the face of today’s evolving landscape, leading them to adopt readily available narratives about the EU’s naiveness and lack of military preparation. Moreover, the positions of Green parties across Europe are by no means uniform. If anything, in mapping out Green stances on some key security and defence issues, this report portrays a nuanced understanding of European security, reflecting varying national and sub-regional contexts and strategic cultures, as well as parties’ histories, dynamics and position on the national political spectrum.

Indeed, while the most obvious is the “East-West” divide – connected to a heightened perception of Russia as a direct threat to national sovereignty for both historical and geographical reasons – other lines of tension can also be observed. An important determinant in the type of discourses held and policy choices made by Green parties is their recent or present position in government. Parties participating to government coalitions seem to have tamed down their pacifist pleas, while those in opposition or that remain a relatively marginal or new political force in their country tend to keep a more radical stance. This is not surprising as such: participating to coalitions also means compromise, while being in opposition offers the greater possibility for counter-discourse and critique.

While some stances taken by Green parties – e.g. increasing military expenditures or supporting initiatives to reinforce the defence industry – might suggest otherwise, the core values of Greens have not drastically changed. Decisions are justified in relation

to their commitment to peace and non-violence. Reinforcing the EU’s military capabilities is seen as an integral part of solidifying this organisation’s capacity to weigh on international relations and better defend its commitments to human rights, democracy and rule of law. Likewise, in spite of the fact that sending arms is not a peaceful means of conflict resolution, supporting Ukraine is presented as a measure aimed at enforcing respect for public international law. Allowing Russia to win the war would be tantamount to sending the signal that the use of force, military aggression and annexation are acceptable, setting the stage for an even more insecure and conflictual international order.

Interviewed experts generally praised Greens for finally seriously tackling and seeking to strengthen their position on security and defence. However, they also pointed to the gaps and/or dangers of Green visions as they now seem to stand. An expert on military affairs, for instance, underlined that Green parties still lacked practical knowledge of military operational realities due to a lack of dialogue with defence institutions. This negatively impacts their credibility when debating security and defence. Others warned against the effects and risks of unquestionably adopting a geopolitical and techno-strategic discourse and vocabulary.

This vocabulary is not trivial. As gender and security studies specialist Carol Cohn underlines, this language is laden with rules, values, and unspoken assumptions. Thus, the acceptance of a certain vocabulary can result in the speaker being entrapped in the norms set by said language.⁶ For Green parties, the deep implication of the adoption of a more ‘geopolitical’, more ‘technostrategic’ terminology can be that the decisions made using this language go against the core values of green parties: peace, progress, equality, and justice, as well as environmental and societal sustainability.

The rapid shift towards adopting mainstream strategic culture and terminology, and the justification of these decisions through the progressive language reflects a reactive rather than proactive response. Without a clear strategy in place, Greens risk being sidelined in discussions on defence and security policy, unable to offer meaningful alternatives to traditional approaches. However, not all is gloom and doom: Greens can be a creative force in the shaping of a new European security. Initiatives such as the European Civil Peace Corps show the ability of Greens to reconcile a tense security agenda with the ideals of progressivism they are known for.

As the security architecture of Europe is to be drastically reshaped in the years to come, experts underlined that Greens'

forte lies in their ability to bring innovative and principled solutions to the conduct and resolution of conflicts – solutions that are drawn from the DNA of Greens: social mobilisation, civil consultation but also critical thinking. This will allow them to contribute to the European security agenda, both on the short- and long-term.

Considering these challenges, it is essential for Green parties to engage in internal dialogue and strategic planning to develop a coherent approach to defence and security. This process means finding their own voice and sticking to their originality while reconciling the tensions between pacifist ideals and the imperative of protecting human livelihoods and environmental sustainability in times of security challenge.



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Postface

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Green Parties in Times of War: Reactions and Reflections

Roderick Kefferpütz

Political parties aren't set in stone. They evolve, adapt and advance in accordance with circumstances, political thought and changing membership. This is particularly true for Green parties across Europe, which are diverse, and have different political roots and orientations as well as government and parliament experience.

The report you are holding in your hand or reading online shows how the post-February 2022 geopolitical context forced introspection and a strategic reassessment for a number of Green movements and political parties. It brought an internal tension to the fore: the reconciliation of traditional pacifist ideals with the pressing realities of contemporary security threats. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has acted as a catalyst, compelling Greens to engage more deeply with issues of military capability. While some Green parties remain wary of this shift, viewing it as a potential departure from core values, others argue that it is a necessary adaptation to ensure effective participation in security dialogues and policymaking.

I would go one step further and argue that this isn't just a contention between principles vs. pragmatism. But that the shift of Green parties to deal increasingly with security and defence is also values-based. Green parties traditionally not only hold pacifist ideals, but also the ideals of a vibrant democracy with civil society, human rights, self-determination and freedom. All of which Putin's Russia is fighting against. If autocracies are using force to crush these ideals, as in the case of Ukraine, then force may become necessary to defend them.

The report's analysis of Green parties across eight EU countries reveals significant diversity. From Germany's Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and Finland's Vihreät to France's Les Écologistes, the responses to security challenges vary, reflecting different historical experiences, geopolitical contexts, and levels of governmental influence. This diversity is both a strength and a challenge, necessitating robust structures for exchange and internal dialogue, so as to forge coherent and common policy stances that resonate at the EU level. Green Parties from Central

and Eastern Europe, and particularly the Baltics, will have an important role to play in this regard, as their countries have become frontline states to an aggressive Russia.

Looking forward, the path for Green security and defence policy is one of balance and innovation. It involves bridging classic Green approaches, such as conflict prevention, with defence policy. This calls for ongoing engagement by Green parties with civil society actors, but also with established defence institutions.

Last, this report is also a call to action for Green parties to embrace their role as catalysts for progressive security policies. By navigating the complexities of modern security with creativity, Greens can contribute to shaping a peace-oriented, sustainable, and common European security architecture.

I am grateful to the Green European Foundation, the authors and other experts for bringing this valuable contribution to the democratic debate on these issues.

Green Approaches to Security and Defence

In a shifting geopolitical landscape, Greens are grappling with the interplay between their traditional pacifist roots and the post-February 2022 security challenges. This report delves into their evolving stances on key defence issues, from EU military cooperation to disarmament, offering insights into the varied approaches adopted by Green parties from eight EU countries. Expert viewpoints featured throughout provide further feedback and inputs as to what a Green defence policy could (or should) look like. As Europe navigates turbulent waters, the report calls for renewed commitment to progressive and principled approaches to security and defence.

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