RESILIENCE OF EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD & WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES TO MILITARY THREATS

JUNE 2025

REUNIR – D3.2 – WORKING PAPER 9 - RESILIENCE OF EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD & WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES TO MILITARY THREATS

PROJECT NUMBER:	101132446
PROJECT ACRONYM:	REUNIR
PROJECT NAME:	Future-proofing EU security, enlargement and eastern neighbourhood policies for a new age of international relations
WORK PACKAGE:	WP3 - Military threats, aggression and defence resilience
AUTHORS:	Tony Lawrence (ICDS)
	Louise Amoris (SN)
	Felix Gasper (ICDS)
	Georgian Author (GIP)
	Mihai Mogildea (IPRE)
	Ivana Ranković (BCSP)
	Oleh Sabura (NaUKMA)

HISTORY OF CHANGES

VERSION	Publication date	Change
0.1	04.05.2025 (M17)	Initial WP Draft
0.2	29.05.2025 (M17)	Second WP Draft
1.0	01.06.2025 (M18)	Draft for Peer review
2.0	13.06.2025 (M18)	Final version

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Working Paper, the second deliverable of REUNIR Work Package 3, aims to understand how resilient the nine Candidate Countries of the Western Balkans and Eastern Neighbourhood are to military threats, as well as the EU's present capacity to assist in building resilience to such threats in these countries.

For each of the Candidate Countries, we provide a series of resilience assessments, based on several, mostly quantitative, indicators of defence capacity and vulnerability, and on a profile of the defence landscape that describes more qualitative factors. These profiles are partly informed by data gathered in expert interviews and focus groups conducted in each of the Candidate Countries. We also identify the EU's most important tools of integration and intervention in defence and security. These existing EU tools may be used in the future to enhance resilience in the Candidate Countries; some have already been employed to do so—and thus contribute to our considerations of their resilience. To summarise, we provide, on a low-medium-high scale, an assessment of the resilience of each of the nine Candidate Countries to the employment of each of the six military instruments identified in the first deliverable of this Work Package.

These assessments demonstrate various levels of exposure to the range of military instruments that may be employed against the Candidate Countries by third state actors. The quantitative indicators demonstrate that, with few exceptions, resilience in the Western Balkans and Eastern Neighbourhood is weaker than average levels in the EU. This finding is supported by the more qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups conducted in the two regions, and by assessments found in open literature. The EU has several tools of integration and intervention in the military and hard security domain that might assist in building resilience in the Candidate Countries. However, apart from the presence of EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU's remarkable efforts in supporting Ukraine through the European Peace Facility and the EU Military Assistance Mission, these tools have had minimal impact, if they have been deployed at all.

In later work, we will identify and evaluate options for building a more resilient and stronger EU foreign, security and defence toolbox to counter military threats on the European continent.

1. INTRODUCTION

REUNIR Work Package 3 (military threats, aggression and defence resilience) aims to:

- identify and categorise threats posed by third state actors using military instruments against the nine candidate countries (CC) of the Western Balkans (WB) and the Eastern Neighbourhood (EN) in the timeframe 2025-2030;

- identify and evaluate the capabilities of the CC to respond to military threats and of the EU's CFSP, CSDP, neighbourhood, and enlargement toolboxes to assist the CC in their responses; and

- identify what is missing from the CC and/or EU toolbox to allow an effective response to military threats and thus identify and evaluate options for building a more resilient and stronger EU foreign, security and defence toolbox to counter military threats on the European continent.

This Working Paper concerns the second step in this process. It aims to understand how resilient the nine CCs are to military threats, as well as the EU's present capacity to assist in building resilience in the defence domain in these countries.

1.1. Scope and Definitions

REUNIR has adopted the definition of resilience provided by the European Commission in its 2020 Strategic Foresight Report: 'the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges but also to undergo transitions in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner'. The Commission thus stresses that in meeting challenges, actors should not only be able to recover, but also to emerge stronger or 'bounce forward' (European Union, European Commission, 2020, p. 6).

The Strategic Foresight Report considers resilience in four dimensions: the social and economic dimension; the geopolitical dimension; the green dimension; and the digital dimension. The Commission's work is ongoing, and so far, offers no suggestions for how the ability to bounce forward might be assessed in any of these dimensions. Rather, its prototype dashboards for monitoring resilience focus on the ability to withstand and cope with challenges by including indicators for capacities and vulnerabilities. These are defined respectively as 'enablers and/or opportunities to navigate the transitions and face future shocks', and 'obstacles or aspects that can worsen the negative impact of the challenges related to the green, digital, and fair transition' (European Union, European Commission, 2024). The opposing construction of these definitions suggests that indicators might be classified as either capacity or vulnerability depending upon their intended use or context: for example, a numerical cybersecurity index indicates both capacity—the allocated value—and vulnerability—the degree to which the allocated value falls short of the maximum. We do not attempt in this Working Paper to label indicators as either capacity- or vulnerability-based.

Although the Commission notes, for example, the importance of security and defence cooperation within the EU, it does not include vulnerability or capacity indicators for military or hard security aspects in its prototype dashboards. However, it acknowledges that security might be included in a more comprehensive future assessment within the geopolitical dimension (European Union, European Commission 2020, p. 38).

As part of our assessment of resilience in the military domain in the CCs of the WB and EN, we include, in section 2.1, several, mostly quantitative, indicators of capacity and vulnerability. Defence research makes frequent use of these and similar indicators, but typically relates them to a state's ability to conduct defence and, by extension, to provide deterrence, rather than to any notion of resilience.[1] NATO, for example, understands resilience as a civil preparedness effort that complements military efforts to defend territories and populations; indeed, none of NATO's seven baseline requirements for national resilience—against which Allies are expected to measure their level of preparedness—concern military aspects (NATO, 2024b).[2] Defence activities, though, might also be seen as developing abilities to withstand and cope with (military) challenges, and thus analogous to resilience as treated in the Commission's Strategic Foresight work. This is the approach we take in this Working Paper. Resilience as conceived by NATO is thus outside its scope, but companion Working Papers deal with the resilience of the CCs in the economic and political realms (Akhvlediani et al., 2025; Amoris et al., 2025) that touch upon some of the NATO baseline requirements.

It should be noted that capacities for resilience in the military domain may produce vulnerabilities in other domains. An example is police numbers. While larger numbers of police provide greater capacity to deal with military or other hard security threats, in particular sub-threshold threats, vulnerabilities may increase in other domains due to the potential misuse of police forces to repress populations. Similar effects may also be seen with military personnel numbers. In this Working Paper, we consider capacity and vulnerability indicators only as they relate to dealing with hard security threats, and do not consider knock-on effects in other domains.

A further point to emphasise is that, unlike in other domains, enhancing resilience in the military domain in one state may impact threat perceptions in neighbouring states. For example, in the WB, Serbia's generally higher levels of military preparedness make it better placed than other states in the region to defend itself (to be resilient against military attacks). But this higher level of preparedness also creates a threat to Kosovo (Lawrence et al., 2025, pp. 15-16). In this Working Paper, we concern ourselves only with the assessment of resilience in each CC and not with the regional impact, though these linkages will clearly need to be taken account in later policy recommendations.

Finally, REUNIR's analysis is informed by Katzenstein and Seybert's work on control and protean power. These authors associate what they term 'calculable risks' (i.e., 'threats' as used in REUNIR Work Package 3) with 'control power', which is demonstrated through relatively predictable behavioural, institutional, and structural responses to events. They contrast 'risk' with the idea of inherently unpredictable 'uncertainty' which in turn they associate with the concept of 'protean power': 'the results of practices of agile actors

---

[1] States aim to deter aggression in part by communicating to a potential adversary that they have defence capacity sufficient to impose unacceptable costs on an aggressor in defending against an attack (deterrence by denial), or sufficient to impose punishing costs on any aggressor following an attack (deterrence by punishment) (Mazaar, 2018, pp. 2-3).

[2] The baseline requirements concern: assured continuity of government and critical government services, resilient energy supplies, ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people, resilient food and water resources, ability to deal with mass casualties and disruptive health crises, resilient civil communications systems, resilient transport systems.

coping with uncertainty' (Katzenstein and Seybert, 2018, p. 80). Our previous work on threats dealt only with plausible, foreseeable military threats ('calculable risks', per Katzenstein and Seybert) to the security of the WB and EN CCs as 'uncertainties' are, by definition, unforeseeable. Similarly, resilience is assessed against here against foreseeable military threats only. Forecasting and foresight work to be conducted later in the project will include considerations of uncertainty (Table 1).

Table 1. Theoretical framework for REUNIR's threat and resilience assessments. Source: Bressan et al., 2024, p.8, adapted by the original authors.

Nature of the environment	Calculable Risk	Fundamental Uncertainty
Approach to future	Probabilistic thinking	Possibilistic thinking
Empirical basis	Structured data and causal models available	No structured data and causal models available
Foresight/threat identification method	Prediction, forecasting	Scenario foresight
Policy responses	Traditional responses and tools can be sufficient [control power]	Innovation is required [protean power]
Relation to vulnerability and resilience	Specific vulnerabilities associated with known risks can be identified and – ideally – patched. This also increases overall resilience	Under fundamental uncertainty, it is harder to identify specific vulnerabilities and the ways they might be exploited. Resilience can and should be built in relevant areas

1.2. Methodology

The aim of this Working Paper is to develop an understanding of the resilience of the CCs in the military and hard security domain to threats created by the employment of military instruments against them by third state actors. In a previous Working Paper, we identified six military instruments that might be employed by third state actors to create threats (Lawrence et al., 2025, pp. 8-10). In this Working Paper, we assess resilience (or, in the terminology of the military domain, defence and deterrence) in each of the CCs against these threats. To do so, we:

   a) examine several, mostly quantitative, indicators of defence capacity and vulnerability in each of the CCs;

   b) profile the defence landscape in each of the CCs to identify and describe further qualitative factors; and

c) describe the EU defence tools and instruments that might also be employed to contribute to the resilience of the CCs.

Data for the quantitative indicators of capacity and vulnerability was obtained through desk research. Profiling of the defence landscape was based on desk research and on views obtained through expert interviews and focus groups conducted in each of the CCs. The results are set out in chapter 2. In chapter 3, we describe the EU's defence tools and instruments and, where appropriate, their use in and with the countries of the WB and EN, with a focus of any contribution this may have made to boosting resilience here. In chapter 4, we summarise the resilience of each of the nine CCs to the employment of each of the six military instruments.

2. RESILIENCE OF THE CCS

2.1. Capacity and Vulnerability Indicators

In this chapter of the Working Paper, we present several indicators of capacity and vulnerability in the military and hard security domain that may contribute to an assessment of the degree to which each of the CCs is resilient against (or, conversely, vulnerable to) the employment of military instruments against them by third state actors. For comparison, we include indicators for the EU, representing average figures for the Member States (MS).

2.1.1. Defence Spending

Defence spending is widely used as a proxy measure of a state's ability to defend itself against armed aggression and, by extension, of its ability to deter such an attack. While real spending may be used to compare the military capacity of two states, defence spending as a percentage of GDP is commonly used as a comparative indicator of the willingness of a state to take defence seriously within the constraints of its size and economy. In the European context, based on a guideline established by NATO a decade previously (NATO, 2014, para. 14), defence spending of 2 % of GDP has been considered an appropriate level. In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the development of new regional defence plans within NATO, and in the face of US pressure for Europe to do more for its own security, it has become apparent that NATO Allies at least will need to spend much more—perhaps two or three times as much—in the future (Beale, 2025).

Figure 1 shows the defence spending as a percentage of GDP of the nine CCs and the EU average figure in the period 2014 to 2024. In the WB, Serbia has maintained noticeably higher, even if decreasing, levels of defence spending than both other states in the region and the EU average, with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo bringing up the rear. In the EN, Ukraine, at war with Russia throughout the entire period and Georgia, partly occupied by Russia since 2008, have maintained higher spending levels (Ukraine's spending has rocketed since Russia's full-scale invasion). By contrast, Moldova's spending has been the lowest of the nine CCs.

Figure 1. Defence spending as percentage of GDP of the 9 CC and EU average from 2014 to 2023 Ukraine spent 25.9 % in 2022, 36.7 % in 2023 and 34.5 % in 2024. Source: SIPRI (2025).
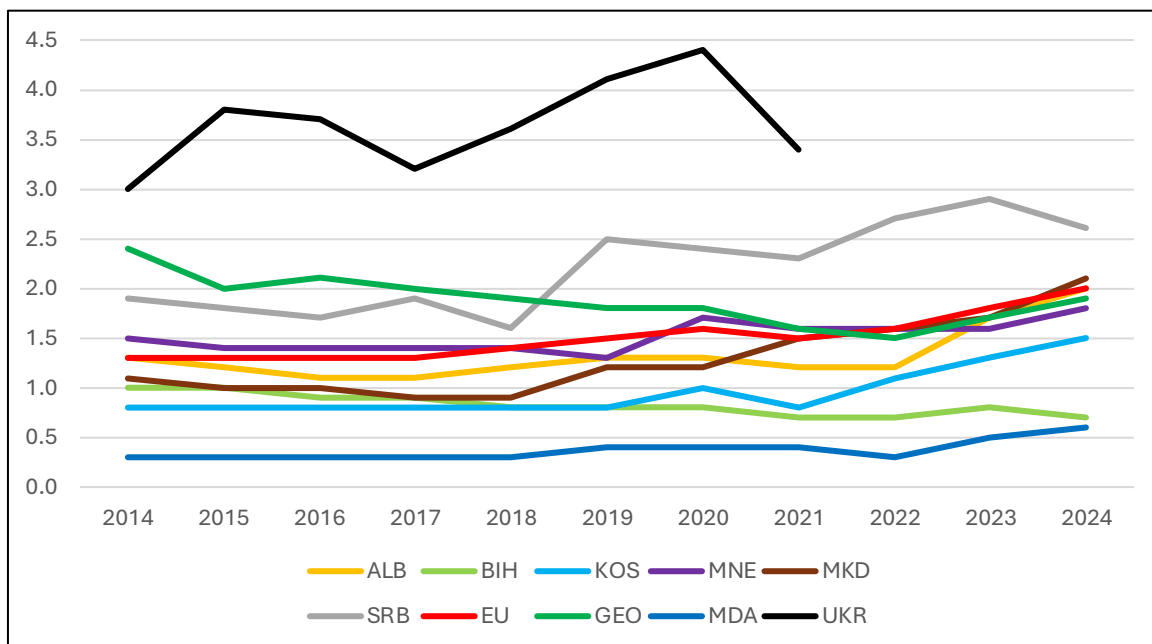
2.1.2. Armed Forces Personnel

Armed forces personnel numbers, often reported relative to the total population to allow comparison between states, may also be indicative of a state's preparedness to defend itself against armed aggression. Figure 2 shows these figures per 100 000 inhabitants for the nine CC and the EU average, distinguishing between active, reserve and paramilitary forces. In the WB, Serbia's already quite high numbers may be further boosted if, as planned, it reintroduces conscription in 2025 (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2024). No other state in the region has a compulsory military service policy, and overall troop numbers vary across the region. Montenegro's apparently large figure represents active armed forces of fewer than 3 000 and most likely arises due to the disproportionate impact of constructing western-standard combat units of minimal credible size—in this case, essentially a battalion—from a very small general population. The lowest rate of military personnel is in Kosovo, where the Kosovo Security Force is currently undergoing a transformation from a lightly armed militia into a force with military capability (Muharremi and Ramadani, 2024, pp. 79-82).

The impact of Russia's wars and occupations on this indicator is again evident in the EN, where Ukraine's population is heavily militarised and Georgia's moderately so. Moldova stands out due to the high number of reservists (58 000 in total) it can call upon.

Figure 2. Numbers of armed forces personnel per 100 000 inhabitants (active, reserve and paramilitary) of the nine CC and EU average in 2024. Number for Ukraine estimated. Source: The Military Balance 2024, pp. 71–143, 184, 189, 211.
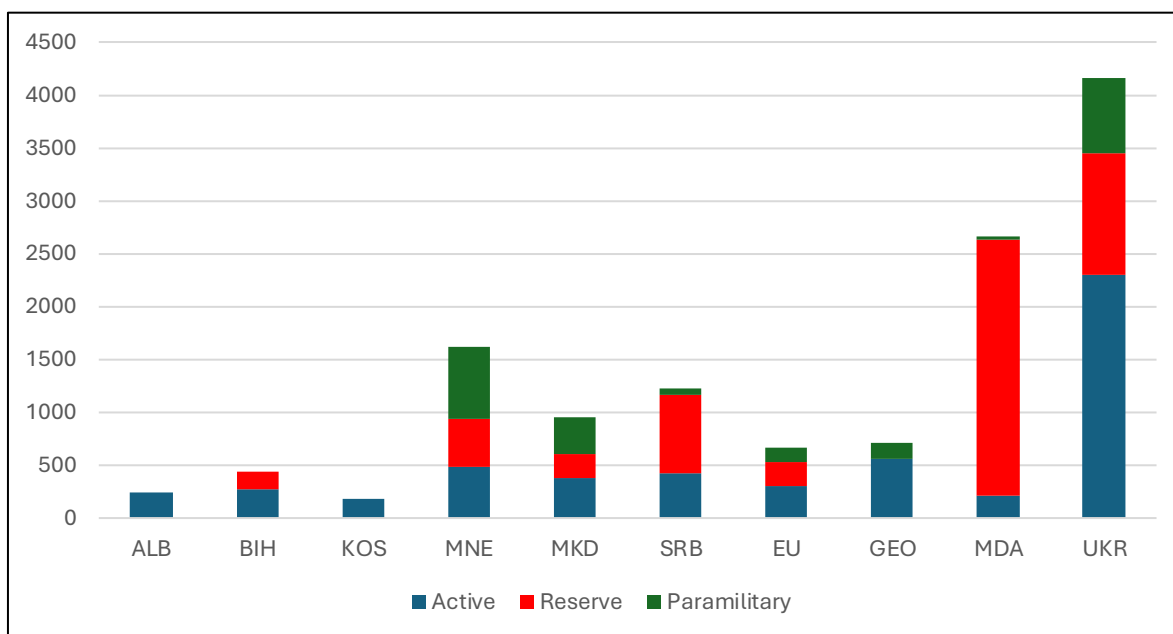
2.1.3. Defence Spending per Personnel

Defence spending per member of the armed forces is a combined indicator that may be used as a proxy measure of the overall quality of armed forces, as it will include factors such as the sophistication of equipment available for defence and levels of training of personnel. However, local economic conditions, such as wage levels and purchasing power parity effects will also influence this indicator.

Figure 3 shows defence spending per active soldier in 2024. Clearly, for this indicator all of the CCs in the WB and EN fall well below the EU average, perhaps indicating armed forces that are less prepared, in particular for high-end contingencies. This supposition is supported for the NATO countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia) who, until very recently, have spent large proportions of their defence budgets on personnel and relatively small proportions on equipment (NATO, 2024a, p. 14).

The figure for Ukraine is 162, but this will have been heavily distorted by the large numbers of active personnel in Ukraine's wartime force structure.

Figure 3. Defence spending (current USD) per active soldier of the nine CC and EU average in 2024. Sources: SIPRI Defence expenditure database 2025; Military Balance 2024, pp. 71–143, 184, 189, 211.
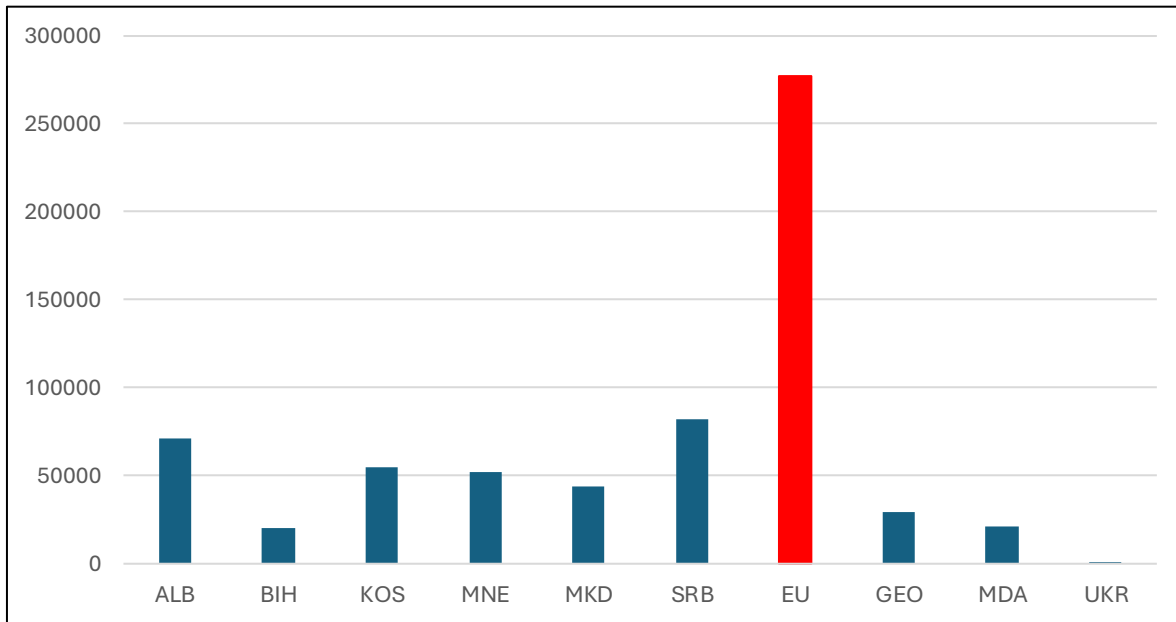
2.1.4. Police Numbers

Police officers also play an important role in a state's preparedness to deal with the hostile employment of military instruments. Their operations will be most relevant when military or quasi-military assets are used in sub-threshold attacks. These cases may, depending on local jurisdictions be treated as civil police or counter-terrorist responsibilities, at least in the first instance. Police forces continue to be responsible for internal security in wartime and thus also contribute to civilian resilience as measured, for example, by NATO's baseline resilience requirements. Figure 4 shows police numbers per 100 000 inhabitants for the nine CC and the EU average. With the exception of Albania and Georgia, numbers in the CCs are higher than the EU average.

Figure 4. Number of Police officers per 100 000 inhabitants of nine CC and the EU in 2022 (BIH and EU 2021) Source: European Union, European Commission, 2023a-i.[3]
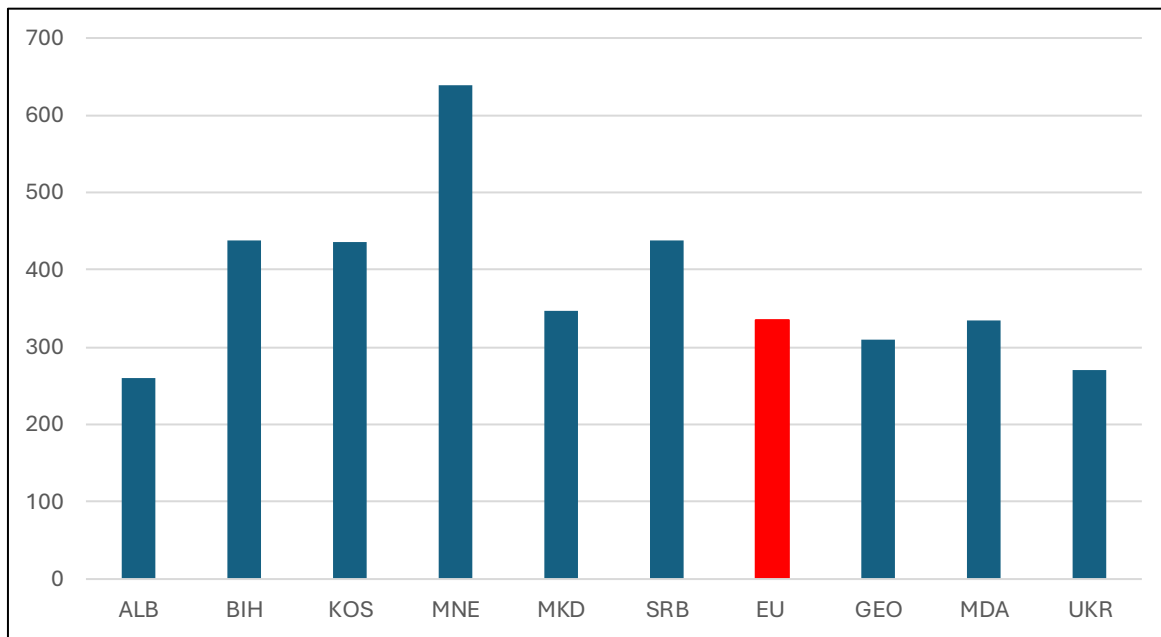
2.1.5. Cybersecurity

Geopolitics are a strong driver for malicious cyber operations (European Union, Agency for Cybersecurity, 2024, p. 10), which can take many forms and manifest in many events. Cybersecurity is thus a key aspect of resilience in the hard security domain. Figure 5 illustrates the National Cybersecurity Index score for the nine CCs, as calculated by Estonia's e-Governance Academy in September 2023 (the most recent date for archived, rather than 'live', data). All CCs fall below the level of the aggregated EU score, with Serbia and Ukraine showing the best performance. There are significant deficits in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in particular.

---

[3] 2023a, p. 43; 2023b, p. 48; 2023c, p. 43; 2023d, p. 43; 2023e, p. 46; 2023f, p. 53; 2023g, p. 40; 2023h, p. 54; 2023i, p. 56.

Figure 5. National Cybersecurity Index of CC and the EU in 2023 (100 high, 0 low). Source: E-governance academy, 2023.
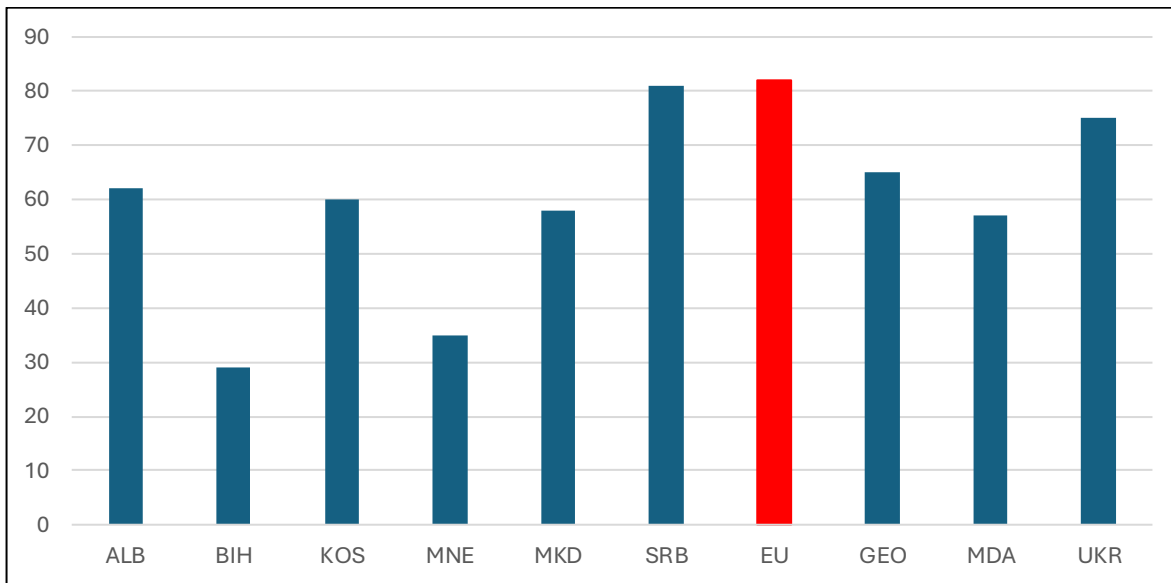
2.1.6. Defence Industry

The existence of a defence industry may increase security of military supply and allow a state to continue to defend itself against military attack when this might not otherwise be possible. In peacetime, a domestic defence industry reduces the need for imports which may, depending on their source, have destabilising or other adverse effects (Lawrence et al., 2025, pp. 21-22).

All CCs in the WB and EN except for Kosovo have defence industries, which are categorised in Table 2.[4] Low-level equipment production includes basic items such as small arms, explosives and ammunition; medium level includes items such as missiles and artillery systems; high level includes advanced military equipment such as armoured vehicles and fighter aircraft. While most CCs can sustain basic needs of low-level equipment, only Serbia and Ukraine can produce equipment at the medium level.

Table 2. Capabilities of CC`s defence industries, 2024. Source: the authors, based on The Military Balance, 2024, pp. 71, 75, 115, 117, 132, 184, 189, 211.

Country	Existence	Production of equipment		
		Low-level	Medium-level	High-level
ALB	✓	✓	X	X
BIH	✓	✓	X	X

---

[4] Kosovo intends to open an ammunition production factory and a drone design facility (Bami, 2024).

KOS	X	X	X	X
MNE	✓	✓	X	X
MKD	✓	✓	X	X
SRB	✓	✓	✓	X
GEO	✓	✓	X	X
MDA	✓	✓	X	X
UKR	✓	✓	✓	X

2.1.7. Corruption in Defence

Resilience in the defence domain may be weakened by corruption. Figure 6 shows Transparency International's assessment of the risk of corruption in five areas of defence in the eight of the nine CCs (Moldova, no data) and an average value for 16 MS (Transparency International, 2015; Transparency International, 2020).

Across the CCs, corruption poses the greatest risk in the operational sector (corruption risk in a country's military deployments overseas and the use of private security companies (Transparency International, 2024)) where all CCs except Georgia have at least a high risk. Montenegro is the CC with the highest levels of risk overall: very high for total risk, and the worst results in four of Transparency International's five categories. The reasons for this are that the legislature in Montenegro barely uses its powers of control, information is not transparent, and procurement is complex and presents a high risk of corruption (Transparency International, 2020). Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and North Macedonia are at the EU average in terms of total risk, but still (including the EU) score only at the moderate level.

Figure 6. Risk of corruption in the defence and security sector of the CCs (except Moldova) and 16 MS on average in 2020 (Georgia, 2015). Scale: Very-Low, Low, Medium, High, Very-High, Critical. Sources: Transparency International, 2020 (Georgia: Transparency International, 2015).
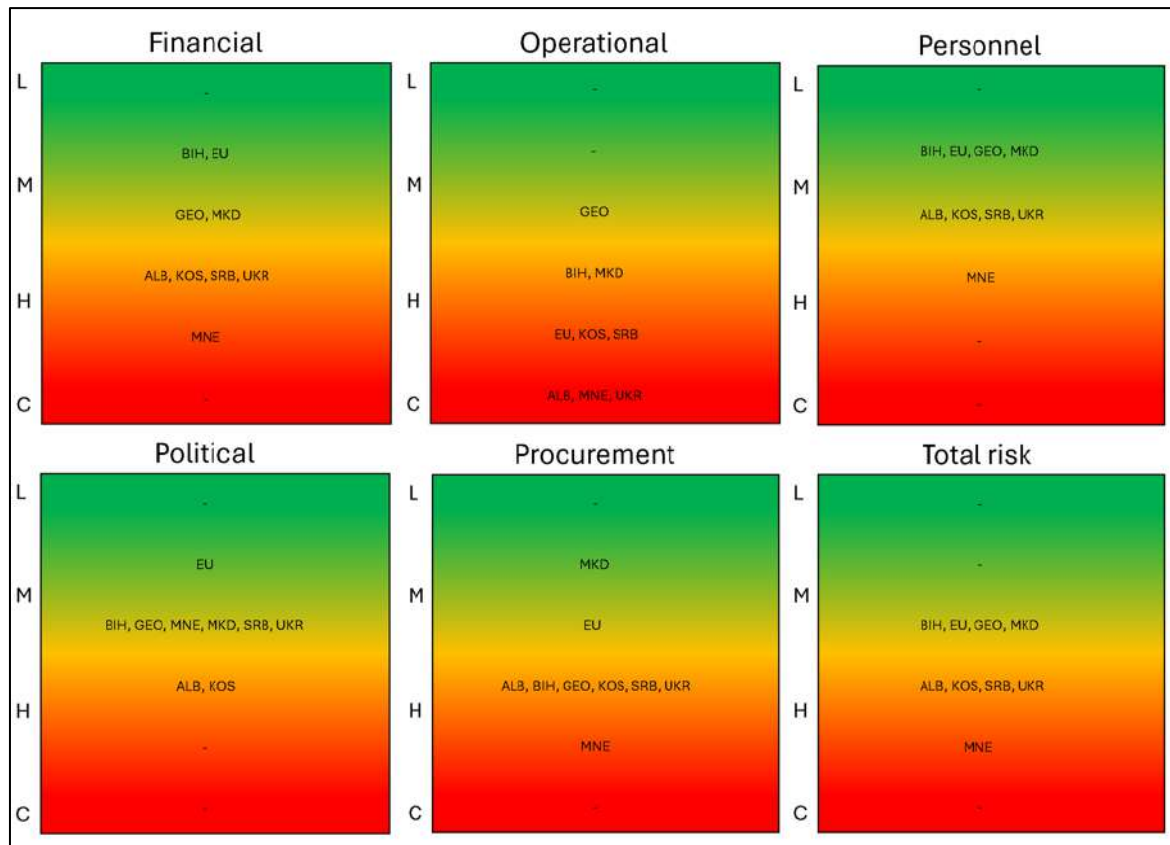
2.1.8. Trust in Institutions

The importance of the resilience of the population in the defence domain has been very evident in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Bidenko, 2025). The Ukrainian armed forces were able to build on the broad support and trust of the population, who themselves demonstrated high levels of will to defend. Figure 7 shows the trust of the populations of the nine CCs and the EU in their police and armed forces. Trust in police forces only exceeds the EU average in Kosovo (75 %) and is notably low in Bosnia and Herzegovina (53 %), Moldova (50 %), Montenegro (43 %) and North Macedonia (35 %). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ukrainians have a very high level of trust in their armed forces (95 %) while approval ratings for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and especially Moldova (30 %) are low.

Figure 7. Trust of the population in state institutions and actors in 2024 (Moldova Police 2022). Percentages of nine CC and EU`s population answering the following question: 'Do you have trust in your country`s …?'. Grey including neutral answers for Georgia. Sources: Regional Cooperation Council, 2024 (ALB, BIH, MNE, MKD and SRB); European Commission, 2024d, pp. 42, 43, 48, 49 (EU); Caucasus Research Resource Center, 2024 (GEO); PISA/CBS, 2022, p. 54, 55 and Institutul de Politici Publice, 2025 (MDA); Razumkov centre, 2024 (UKR).
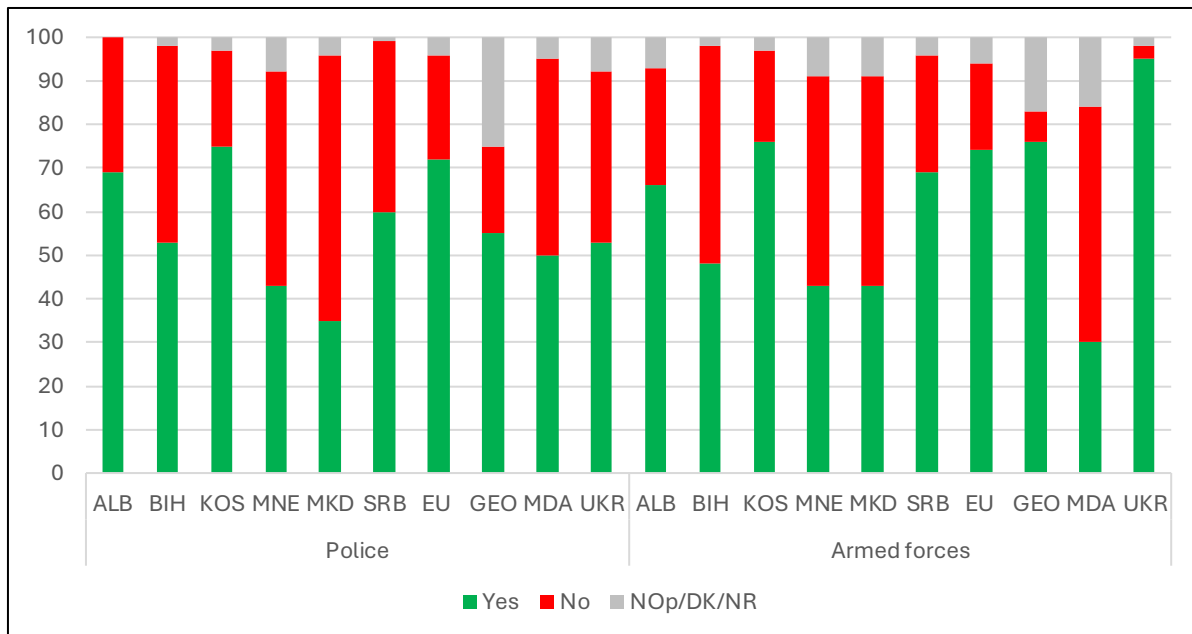
2.1.9. Will to Defend

Figure 8 shows the will of the population to defend their country. All the CCs surpass the EU average in their 'yes' responses, although some also have higher 'no' rates. Levels of positive responses tend to be higher in the EN countries (Georgia - 83 %, Moldova - 55 %, Ukraine - 62 %), but also in Albania (60 %) and Kosovo (79 %).

Figure 8. Will to defend in the CC (except Montenegro) and the EU in 2024. Percentage of answers to the question: 'If there were a war that involved ---YOUR COUNTRY---, would you be willing to fight for your country?' Source: Gallup International, 2024.
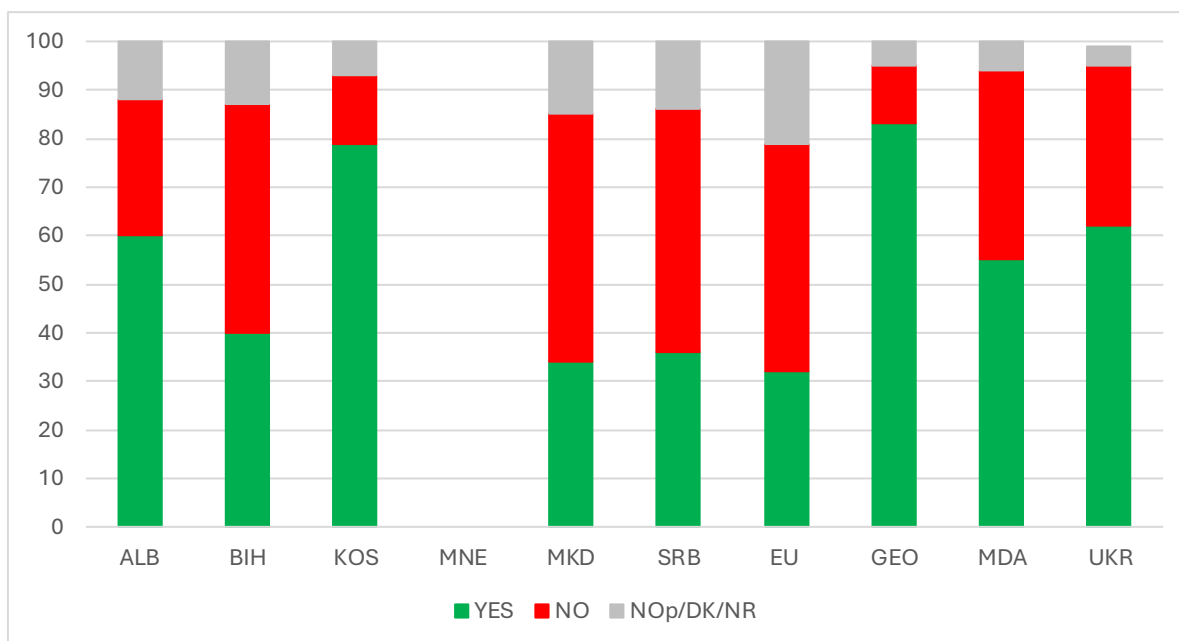
2.1.10. Capacity and Vulnerability Indicators - Summary

As part of the first task of REUNIR Work Package 3, we identified six military instruments that might be employed by third state actors to produce threats in the military domain to the nine candidate countries (Lawrence et al., 2025, pp. 8-10). The capacity and vulnerability indicators discussed in this chapter can assist in assessing resilience against the use of these instruments, although not all will apply equally to each. Table 3 provides a mapping of the capacity and vulnerability indicators most relevant to assessing resilience against the hostile military instruments.

Table 3. Capacity and vulnerability indicators most relevant to assessing resilience against military instruments. Source: the authors.

Instruments	Indicators
A. Armed attack	Defence spending Armed forces personnel Defence spending per personnel Police numbers Cybersecurity Defence Industry Corruption in defence

	Trust in institutions
	Will to defend
B. Armed presence	Defence spending
	Armed forces personnel
	Defence spending per personnel
	Corruption in defence
	Trust in institutions
C. Sub-threshold attack	Defence spending
	Armed forces personnel
	Defence spending per personnel
	Police numbers
	Cybersecurity
	Corruption in defence
	Trust in institutions
D. Military training	None (see section 4.4)
E. Arms transfers	None (see section 4.4)
F. Defence cooperation	None (see section 4.4)

There is no ideal value for any of these capacity and vulnerability indicators, either globally (i.e., internationally agreed standards) or locally (i.e., taking account of particular national circumstances). However, to provide a basis for comparison, we have included EU average values for each of the capacity and vulnerability indicators discussed. While the EU's performance is not advanced here as a standard to be aspired to—the existence of the EU's resilience building agenda (European Union, European Commission, 2020) is itself a recognition that there is work to be done by the MS—it may at least offer a measure of what can be achieved in wealthy, democratic, security-conscious states, and thus be a benchmark against which to compare the CCs.

Table 4 thus compares the capacity and vulnerability indicators discussed in this chapter with EU average values.

Table 4. Overview of indicators, results of nine CC compared with EU average. Source: the authors.

Indicator		ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB	GEO	MDA	UKR
Defence spending (2024)		o	-	-	o	o	+	o	-	+
Armed forces personnel		-	-	-	+	+	+	o	+	+
Defence spending per personnel		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Police numbers		-	+	+	+	o	+	o	o	-
Cybersecurity		-	-	-	-	-	o	-	-	o
Defence industry		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corruption in defence		-	o	-	-	o	-	o	n/a	-
Trust in institutions ('Yes')	Police	o	-	o	-	-	o	-	-	-
	Armed forces	o	-	o	-	-	o	o	-	+
Will to defend ('Yes')		+	+	+	n/a	o	o	+	+	+

Key

+	CC is more than 20 % above EU average
o	CC is between -20 % and 20 % of the EU average
-	CC is more than 20 % below EU average

The summary table suggests that Serbia and Ukraine are the most resilient of the CCs overall (as discussed earlier, however, the indicators that suggest greater resilience in Serbia may be problematic for other CCs in the WB), while Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Moldova and Georgia are all somewhat weak in various indicators. Broadly, resilience of the CCs in the military domain may be adversely impacted by poor levels of defence spending per member of the armed forces, by the capacity of local defence industries, and by weak trust in state institutions. However, it is clear that each CC has its own strengths and weaknesses.

2.2. Qualitative Factors

Our assessment of the degree to which each of the CCs is resilient in the military and hard security domain against the employment of military instruments against them by third state actors is also informed by more qualitative factors. These include aspects such as: armed forces structure and capabilities; military personnel policies, for example the use of compulsory military service or the existence of reserve structures; civil-military relations; crisis management processes and structures; cybersecurity processes and structures; international, regional and bilateral defence cooperation arrangements; the scale and scope of defence industries; and military culture (the 'collection of ideas, beliefs, prejudices and perceptions which determines an army's response to the tasks which it is set by a political authority' (Applegate and Moore, 1990, p. 302)).

The data is derived from interviews and focus groups conducted during the project, and from material from the literature. As such, not all factors are assessed to the same extent in each of the CCs. For example, while many interviewees were able to provide a general view on the overall capacity of a CC's armed forces to mount an effective defence against a third state military attack, relatively few had sufficient insights into the state of civil-military relations or the nature of military culture to offer views of the impact of these factors on resilience in the military domain.

These qualitative factors are described in the country profiles in Annex A to this Working Paper, and an assessment of their contribution to resilience in the military domain is set out in chapter 4.

3. CONTRIBUTION OF THE EU

In this chapter, we identify the EU's most important instruments and tools in the area of defence and security. These are considered in two main categories: tools of integration are EU initiatives and programmes in which the CCs might be included as third states; while tools of intervention are EU instruments that may allow the Union to act directly in a third state.

In addition, there are tools of cooperation—agreements between the EU and third states as equal partners. The EU maintains security and defence partnerships with several countries including three of the CCs: partnership agreements were concluded with Moldova, Albania and North Macedonia in 2024 (as well as with Norway, Japan and South Korea) (European Union, European External Action Service, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). These partnerships reflect a new tailored model adopted shortly after the adoption of the Strategic Compass, which includes 'partnering' as one of four pillars (European Union, European External Action Service, 2024d). They regulate several areas of cooperation, depending on the mutual interests of the EU and partner, for example, hybrid and cyber threats, counterterrorism, border management, and women peace and security (Lazarou and Lamprou, 2025, p. 10).

We do not an attempt an exhaustive assessment of any of these tools as this has been covered in previous research (for example: Engage, 2024; JOINT, 2024). The EU contribution is included in this Working Paper to inform our policy recommendations, as existing EU tools may be used in the future to enhance resilience in the CCs. Further, some tools have already been employed to contribute to the enhancement of resilience—and thus to our assessment of resilience—in the military and hard security domain in the nine CCs.

3.1. Tools of Integration

3.1.1. Permanent Structured Cooperation

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is a treaty-based instrument activated in 2017 that aims to deepen cooperation between MS in building defence capabilities. All MS except Malta take part. PESCO includes a set of 'ambitious and more binding common commitments' in defence, against which the MS report progress on an annual basis (PESCO, n.d.) and a portfolio of projects. More than 60 are currently being developed in all areas of defence, including training and facilities, land formations and systems, maritime, air, cyber and C4ISR (PESCO, 2025). Third countries are also able to participate in PESCO projects: Canada, Norway, the UK and the US have already done so.

Participation in PESCO is unevenly distributed, with only a few MS assuming responsibility as coordinators, and many more observers than participants in many projects (although observers may later decide to join a project). Other challenges include the limited resilience of the framework in the event of a reversal of MS policy, the limited innovation of some projects, the cumbersome project initiation and management procedures, the fact that some MS are using PESCO primarily to attract funding from the Commission, and the fact that not all projects respond to the EU's strategic priorities (Paolucci, 2021, Cordet, 2025, European Union, Council of the European Union, 2024a). Overall, PESCO has not solved the core issue of the limited integration of MS in the defence domain.

Still, PESCO offers numerous advantages, including in-depth and frequent cooperation between the MS, from which the defence industry also benefits through increases in efficiency. In addition, the capabilities of the armed forces of the MS have been strengthened. Other advantages include more transparency, the possibility of using project results in other operations and missions (NATO/UN) and the opportunity for neutral MS to participate (PESCO, 2025; Paolucci, 2021).

As a tool of integration, PESCO could offer new opportunities to strengthen resilience in the military domain in the CCs. In particular, the CCs' defence industries, which lag behind the EU's capabilities, could benefit from cooperation with European defence companies in terms of knowledge and production capacity. The participation of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia in PESCO would also support the EU's goal of ensuring that PESCO contributes to a strong European pillar within NATO (European Defence Agency, 2024). Third countries may 'exceptionally' be invited to participate in PESCO projects provided that they meet several political conditions, mostly related to security and defence convergence, meet the legal requirements for working with the EU (of the CCs, currently only Serbia and Ukraine can meet these requirements), and can make a substantive contribution to the project (European Union, European External Action Service, 2023).

3.1.2. European Defence Fund

Through the European Defence Fund (EDF), an instrument to promote collaborative research in the defence sector through cooperation between companies, the EU has in the past few years invested public funds in military technologies for the first time. From a budget of around EUR 7.3 billion for the period 2021 to 2027, more than EUR 5 billion has already been invested to complement MS contributions: around EUR 1.7 billion in defence research and EUR 3.4 billion in capability development (European Commission, 2025b).

The EDF funded 162 projects from 2021 to 2023 from more than 500 proposals in total (Brehon, 2025, p.8). The Commission ensures that entities from all MS benefit from EDF grants, strengthening the position of smaller MS. Criticism of the Fund has included its lack of transparency and oversight and concerns that public money may be channelled into research into weapons that are problematic for the EU, and wider concerns about spending EU budget funds on defence at all (Csernatoni and Martins, 2019, p.4).

EDF funding is contingent upon multinational cooperation in research and development projects with an additional bonus scheme for PESCO-related projects. Unlike many EU funding schemes, the EDF is thus an important mechanism for promoting defence cooperation among the MS (Brehon, 2025, p. 3) and, more broadly, European integration. Third countries can participate in EDF projects but cannot receive funding (European Commission, 2025b). However, the practical barriers for doing so are numerous, and it appears that no 'true' third countries have taken part in EDF projects (Lawrenson and Sabatino, 2024, p.17).[5]

---

[5] Norway has participated as an associate partner.

3.1.3. European Defence Industrial Strategy and European Defence Industrial Programme

The European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), a strategy intended to guide the development of the European defence technical and industrial base (EDTIB) until 2035, was announced by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in September 2023. As well as strengthening the EDTIB, it aims to promote collaboration in defence acquisition (European Commission, 2025f; Mejino-Lopez and Wolff, 2024, pp. 7-8). Specifically, by 2030, the joint procurement of military equipment is to account for at least 40 %, half of defence procurement budgets are to be spent only on European products and 35 % of defence equipment is to be traded only within the EU (European Union, European Commission, 2025e).

The European Defence Industrial Programme (EDIP) is the first measure proposed by the Commission under the EDIS. A total of EUR 1.5 billion is to be invested between 2025 and 2027 to pursue the objectives of the EDIS during the period of the current Multiannual Financial Framework. One particular focus of the EDIP is Ukraine, which is proposed to participate in the programme (with different rules governing its participation from other third countries which can only participate under similarly restrictive conditions to those established for the EDF) and to receive support to recover from the war and to modernise its defence industry (European Union, European Commission, 2025c; Clapp, 2024, p. 9; Santopinto, 2024, p. 11). In support of these efforts, the EU Defence Innovation Office has been established in Kyiv to act as a mediator between the Ukrainian and European defence industries as well as between political actors and to prepare Ukraine for its EU membership and associated integration into the EU defence programme. The office is thus intended to deepen the EU's relationship with Ukraine and to provide innovative activities and responses directly to the defence policy challenges facing its defence industry (European Union, 2025).

For other third countries, the EDIS offers 'flexible cooperation, varying in form, scope and types of participants in areas of shared interests' (European Union, European Commission, 2024c). While the Commission's communications stress the benefits of such cooperation for the EU, third countries could also benefit, for example through access to modern military equipment, development of their own defence industrial bases, and reduced dependencies on supplies from states with possibly hostile agendas.

3.1.4. Security Action for Europe

The Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument was proposed by the Commission and High Representative in their 2025 defence white paper (European Union, European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2025) and approved by the Council in late May 2025 (European Union, European Council, 2025c). The instrument will provide up to EUR 150 billion in loans to MS for the collaborative procurement of defence capabilities in priority areas identified by the Council (European Union, European Commission, 2025g, p.2).

In addition to permitting MS to use SAFE to procure equipment and supplies for Ukraine, the instrument is intended to provide direct support to Ukraine's defence industry by allowing it to participate in collaborative procurements on the same footing as EU industry (European Union, European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2025, p.11).

SAFE should also allow (in addition to EFTA and EEA states) 'acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as third countries with whom the Union has entered into a Security and Defence Partnership … to participate in common procurements' (European Union, European Commission, 2025g, p.14). More broadly, the defence white paper calls for 'continuing mutually beneficial engagement and cooperation in the field of security and defence with all like-minded European, enlargement and neighbouring countries' (European Union, European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2025, p.19). Of the CCs, it lists Albania, Moldova, and North Macedonia (with which the EU has a security and defence partnership) as well as Montenegro.

3.1.5. Participation in CSDP Bodies

Subsidiary bodies associated with the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)—the European Defence Agency (EDA), European Union Satellite Centre (EUSatCen), European Security and Defence College (ESDC), and European Union Institute of Security Studies (EUISS))—pursue various forms of cooperation with third countries (e.g., staff secondment).

The EDA offers a more formal arrangement in the form of a Framework Participation Agreement, which regulates cooperation between the Agency and third countries and permits their inclusion in EDA programmes. Of the CCs, only Serbia (2013) and Ukraine (2015) have completed such an agreement. Through them, they both participate in the EDA's activities under the Single European Sky Initiative (European Union, European Defence Agency, 2025), while Serbia participates in a range of additional EDA initiatives including air-to-air refuelling, helicopter initiatives, the collaborative database, and the EU SATCOM market (Becker et al., 2025, p. 27).

All four bodies are important exchange platforms and symbols of integration with EU defence efforts. The EDA offers opportunities for engagement in practical defence-related activities that contribute to strengthening military capabilities.

3.2. Tools of Intervention

3.2.1. CSDP missions

The EU has conducted 11 missions in six of the CCs in the framework of the CSDP. Eight have been civilian, three have been military missions. Six missions are ongoing. Table 5 provides an overview.

Table 5. Overview of EU Missions and operations in the CC. Sources: European Union, European External Action Service, 2025a; Flessenkemper and Helly, 2013; 'Qu'est-ce que l'Eufor?, 2017; Ioannides, 2009; Kurowska, 2009.

Mission or operation	Years	Aim
EUPM Bosnia and Herzegovina	2003–2012	Establish a sustainable, professional and multiethnic police service operating in accordance meeting European and international standards
EUFOR Concordia (MKD)	2003–2003	Military. Guarantee security to EU, monitoring the implementation of the *Orhid* agreement
EUPOL Proxima (MKD)	2003–2005	Successor of EUFOR Concordia. Instead of soldiers, police officers were part of this mission
EUPAT (MKD)	2005–2006	Successor of EUPOL Proxima
EUJUST Themis (Georgia)	2004–2005	Assist the Georgian government to develop an overarching criminal justice reform strategy based on local ownership
EUFOR Althea (BIH)	2004-	Military. Support to armed forces, provide deterrence, establish safe and secure environment in the country
EUMM Georgia	2008-	Monitoring to contribute to the stabilisation of the situation after the 2008 conflict
EULEX Kosovo	2008-	Support rule of law institutions in Kosovo to increase effectiveness, sustainability and accountability and avoid political interference
EUAM Ukraine	2014-	Sustainable reform of the civilian security sector, providing strategic advice and practical support for specific reform measures in accordance with EU standards
EUMAM Ukraine	2022-	Military training and education of armed Forces by 24 EU MS and three third countries (conducted in EU states)
EUPM Moldova	2023-	Enhance the resilience of the Moldovan security sector to hybrid threats

While primarily tools of intervention, CSDP missions may also be seen tools of integration as third countries may contribute personnel. Of the CCs, the EU has concluded Framework Agreements for participation in EU CSDP missions and operations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine (European Union, European External Action Service, 2022).

Albania and North Macedonia have contributed to CSDP missions (European Union, European External Action Service, 2024a, 2024c). CSDP missions have had a substantial impact on resilience in the military domain of the CCs in the WB and EN. EUFOR Althea provides a stabilising presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while EUMAM Ukraine has relieved Ukraine's armed forces of a considerable part of the burden of training mobilised forces.

3.2.2. European Peace Facility

The European Peace Facility has, since 2021, provided targeted support to specific actors through the supply of military and defence-related equipment, infrastructure, and technical support. It is implemented through an off-budget fund with a value of EUR 17 billion for the period 2021-2027 (European Union, European Council, 2025b). A second pillar of the EPF provides common funding for EU operations with a military component, replacing the African Peace Facility and the Athena Mechanism.

By the end of April 2025, the EPF had supported 25 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, including eight of the nine CCs (excluding Kosovo). Table 6 provides an overview of the EPF assistance measures to the CCs.

Table 6. European Peace Facility measures for the CC. Balkan Medical Task Force including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. Source: European Union, European Council, 2025d.

Country	Number of Measures	Total budget (in EUR million)	Recipient / Aim
Albania	1	13	Support of armed forces
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	10	Equipment upgrade of tactical support brigade
Montenegro	1	6	Strengthen capabilities of armed forces
North Macedonia	3	37	Equipment for infantry battalion group, capability to support in CSDP operation
Balkan Medical Task Force	1	6	Equipment and material for medical units of the armed forces
Georgia	3	62.75	Strength capabilities of armed forces and cyber-defence services
Moldova	6	157	Finances non-lethal and lethal equipment for the armed forces, strength national resilience

Ukraine	17	10,838.5 + ammunition	Support armed forces with equipment, training, medical services and other. Support also by Norway

EPF assistance has mainly been distributed to support the armed forces of the CC in order to bolster their capabilities with modern equipment. A special feature is the assistance measure for the Balkan Medical Task Force, which provided funding for five CCs and EU MS Slovenia. The EN countries, though, have benefited more, with Ukraine receiving by far the most assistance. The EU's decision, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, to use the EPF to provide almost EUR 11 billion of lethal military assistance was taboo-breaking. The EPF, originally conceived as a conflict prevention tool, has become a vehicle through which the EU can intervene on one side of a conflict, with possible implications for its role as a global actor (Karjalainen and Mustasilta, 2023, p.4). This assistance has been critical to Ukraine's war efforts.

The EPF has thus become a popular and effective instrument of intervention. Its main challenge is that its financing is unpredictable. Funding has been blocked by Hungary's veto since March 2023 and the EPF has relied instead on allocations from the extraordinary profits from Russian frozen assets (Bilquin, 2025, 1).

3.2.3. Act in Support of Ammunition Production and European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act

The Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) was established in March 2023 for a period of two years and with a budget of EUR 500 million to assist in the replenishment of ammunition stocks of the EU MS, a large proportion of which had been supplied to Ukraine, and to deliver further ammunition to Ukraine. The aim was not only to assist in procurement, but also to help speed up the production of ammunition in Europe (European Union, European Commission, 2024a). In the first year of the Act, a total of 31 projects were financed with the participation of 16 MS with a total volume of around EUR 290 million (European Union, European Commission, 2024b).

The European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act EDIRPA, adopted in March 2024 incentivises the joint procurement of ammunition, air and missile defence, and platforms. A budget of just over EUR 300 million will support 20 MS in implementing five collaborative projects. The EDIRPA Regulation also allows MS to make Ukraine and Moldova recipients of their collaborative procurement actions (European Union, European Commission, 2025d).

ASAP and EDIRPA offer models for future intervention actions in support of third states, through longer term instruments (ASAP and EDIRPA will conclude in 2025 and 2027) would most likely be implemented through EDIP and EDIS (European Union, European Commission, 2024c).

3.2.4. Rapid Deployment Capacity

The EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC), initially proposed in the EU's Strategic Compass (European Union, European External Action Service, 2024d), is an instrument for rapid and flexible EU intervention in third states in a crisis management role (Fitzgerald, 2024). It is intended to allow the MS, upon unanimous decision, to deploy a force of up to 5 000 land, sea and air components. The RDC was declared operational in May 2025 (European Union, European External Action Service, 2025b). The EU Battlegroups—effectively,

predecessors to the RDC—were never deployed due to political, financial, and design obstacles (Castagnoli, 2024, p.2).

3.2.5. Military and Dual Use Sanctions

At the time of writing, the EU has implemented sanctions, including UN sanctions, against 30 countries. These include seven sanctions against CC (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine), although these are not military or dual-use sanctions and are mostly directed against collaborators of Russia (EU Sanctions Map, 2025). Table 7 provides an overview of the EU's military and dual-use sanctions, currently directed against 18 countries.

Table 7. Current military and dual-use sanctions implemented by EU and UN. Source: EU Sanctions Map, 2025.

Area of sanction	Countries affected
Arms embargo	Iraq
Arms export	Afghanistan, Belarus, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, North Korea, Russia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe
Arms import	Russia, Syria
Arms procurement	Iran, Libya, North Korea
Critical infrastructure	Russia
Dual-use good export	Myanmar, North Korea, Russia
Embargo on dual-use goods	Belarus, Iran
Restrictions on military training and -cooperation	Myanmar

Military and dual-use sanctions may be employed by the EU in an attempt to change the behaviour of third states. Russian individuals and entities including the armed forces, paramilitary groups and companies in the military and defence sectors, have been the subject of substantial sanctions since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and several dual-use goods have been embargoed (European Union, European Council 2025b). While such sanctions have certainly had an impact, the effectiveness of the EU's sanctions regime has been reduced by MS vetoes, patchy enforcement, and Russia's evasive actions (Szyzszczak, 2025; Terrone, 2025).

4. FINDINGS

In this chapter, we assess the resilience of each of the CCs to the possible employment of each of the six military instruments against them. In our earlier work, we assessed the likelihood of employment of some instruments against some CCs to be negligible—i.e., there is no threat to these countries—but we still include a resilience assessment here. To assess resilience, the REUNIR Work Package 3 team aggregated the available quantitative (section 2.1. of this Working Paper) and qualitative (section 2.2. and Annex A) data. Where appropriate, these assessments also include the contribution to resilience of instruments and tools employed by the EU and other actors, notably NATO, which is present mostly in the WB through the KFOR mission in Kosovo and in the NATO memberships of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Inevitably a degree of subjectivity is inherent in this process, but, as in our previous work, we suggest that limiting scoring to a very coarse low-medium-high scale will largely smooth out the effects of assessor bias. While our results may be imprecise, we propose that they are adequate to provide a broad but useful picture of the resilience status of the CCs. The findings are summarised in Figure 9 and Table 8.

Figure 9. Overview of resilience of CCs against the military instruments. Source: the authors.
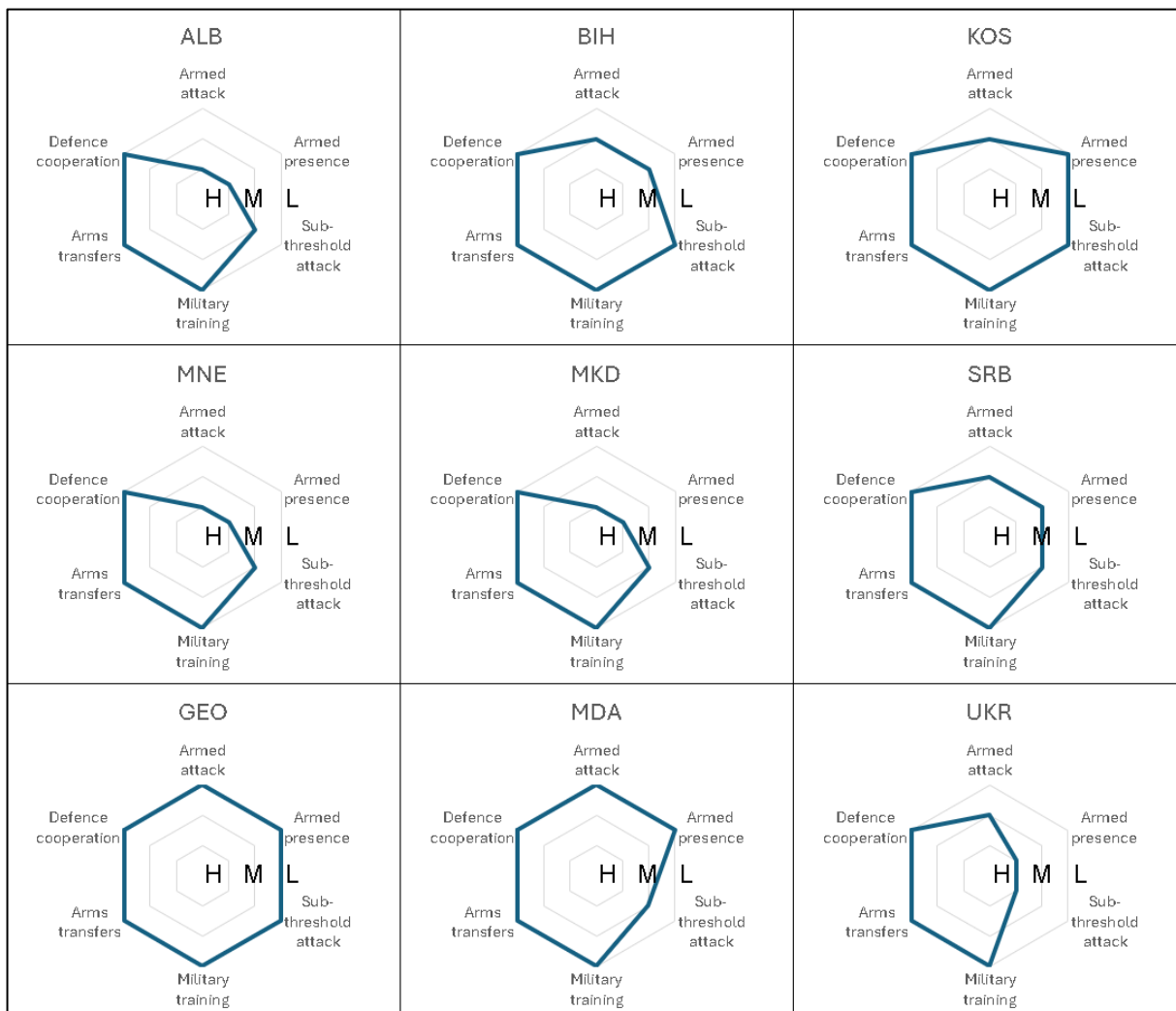
4.1. Armed Attack

While populations in the WB show high levels of readiness to defend their countries, the ability of these CCs to do so is strongly curtailed by weak state defence arrangements. This is perhaps a factor in relatively low levels of trust shown in armed forces across the region. Defence spending is mostly low when compared to (now outdated) European expectations and is especially weak when considered on a spending per active soldier basis. These structural problems are variously compounded by issues such as recruitment and retention problems, inefficiencies in planning and spending, capability limitations, and the impact of corruption. Furthermore, defence industries are mostly small to non-existent, meaning that the WB CCs must rely on external supplies for their defence needs. Experts throughout the region largely agree that the armed forces of the WB CCs are not fit for purpose and would struggle to defend their countries in a crisis. As a result, levels of deterrence are also low. Serbia is by some measure the most significant military power in the region, giving it greater capacity for defence and deterrence compared to its neighbours. Even so, it is perceived to have armed forces that are inadequate to provide the underpinning required for a credible policy of military neutrality.

However, Serbia aside, resilience against the threat of armed attack in the CCs of the WB is substantially boosted by their cooperation with international military actors. NATO membership is considered essential for the military security of Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Membership status requires Allies to conform with NATO standards, improving the quality of local armed forces. Above all, the expectation of a collective response under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty to any armed attack is a key element of deterrence in these CCs. Resilience to armed attack in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, meanwhile, is enhanced by the presence of EUFOR and KFOR respectively. Personnel from these peace support operations assist in the development of indigenous armed forces while the promise of an international response to any attack is also a strong deterrent here.

Although Georgia and Moldova also benefit from bilateral relationships with external military actors, these arrangements do not include the security guarantees present in the WB. Their armed forces, however, suffer deficiencies similar to those of the WB CCs, mostly founded on poor or mistargeted defence spending. In Georgia, the creeping politicisation of the upper levels of the armed forces is an additional problem. Neither country would be able to deal with a military attack from Russia, essentially the sole source of military threats in the region.

Ukraine is a clearly very different case as, at the time of writing, it is engaged in the fourth year of a full-scale conventional war initiated by Russia's unprovoked attack on its territory. The fact that Ukraine continues to defend itself against a large and determined enemy is testament to its military resilience against armed attack. This has increased throughout the duration of the war, notably through innovations in strategy, tactics and technology that have allowed Ukraine to pursue asymmetric approaches that minimise the advantages of its enemy, and through the transition of its economy and industry to ensure security of supply through domestic production capacity. Nonetheless, it remains the case that Ukraine is heavily dependent on material and financial assistance from its western supporters. Furthermore, President Zelenskyy's insistence upon western security guarantees as a condition for lasting peace also indicate that without strong cooperative relations with other military actors, Ukraine would struggle in the event of a future Russian attack. Overall, we assess that Ukraine has a medium level of resistance against the employment of this instrument.

4.2.   Armed Presence

Similar arguments to those presented for resilience against armed attack also apply to resilience against armed presence. In our earlier threat assessment work, we assessed that threats derived from the employment of this instrument are negligible in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; nonetheless, we provide an assessment of their resilience against this this threat here.

Beyond the WB, the evidence is that NATO membership certainly does not prevent the employment of this instrument against Allies, who frequently experience small- and large-scale provocations (Clem and Finch, 2021; Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2022, pp. 13-15). Nonetheless, Allies can be confident that any serious attempt to intimidate or coerce them would likely lead to the invocation of Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and a collective NATO response that would reduce the risk of escalation.[6] In the extreme case of attempted nuclear coercion, NATO Allies are also protected by the Alliance's nuclear deterrence policy and forces (NATO, 2023a). We thus assess that Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia have high levels of resilience against this instrument.

The generally weak armed forces in the remaining CCs of the region, however, prevent them from including credible military components in their responses to the employment of this instrument. Kosovo, which is in the process of building (light) armed forces, has a low level of resilience, while we assess Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia to be at the medium level. Historically, the presence of KFOR has not prevented Serbia from assembling large forces close to Kosovo's borders in response to developments it has considered contrary to its interests (Lawrence et al., 2025, p. 16).

Once again, the situation is somewhat darker in the eastern neighbourhood. Russia has, for some years, maintained an armed presence in both Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Moldova (Transnistria), degrading the security of the two countries. The disparity in size and capability between the Russian armed forces and those of Georgia and Moldova, and the high risk of escalation, essentially precludes any restorative actions. Resilience against this instrument is thus low for both countries.

Because of its large wartime structure, Ukraine is better able to deal with Russia's military presence in Belarus and Transnistria, and with Belarus' own military presence close to Ukraine's borders. We assess this to be high. There are, however, costs for Ukraine in constructing resilience against this instrument as it must maintain a blocking presence in the vicinity of these intimidatory forces and away from the contact line.

4.3.   Sub-threshold Attack

Sub-threshold attacks may take a wide variety of forms and occur on a large range of scales. As with large-scale presence, NATO membership does not appear to deter the employment of this instrument—even less

---

[6] 'The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened' (NATO, 1949). Article 4 has been invoked seven times in NATO's history, twice following Russian aggression in eastern Europe, and five times over tensions in the Middle East (NATO, 2023b).

so as the Alliance is insistent that '[t]he primary responsibility to respond to hybrid threats or attacks rests with the targeted country' (NATO, 2024c). In these circumstances, resilience is negatively impacted by the weaker armed forces and crisis management processes apparent in both the WB and the EN countries. Nonetheless, NATO policy has begun to shift in the light of increasingly audacious sub-threshold attacks against Allies (Maciata, 2025) and the Alliance has been clear for some years that (presumably in extreme circumstances) hybrid attacks could lead to the invocation of Article 5 (NATO, 2024c). Resilience against this instrument should thus be higher for NATO Allies in the WB.

On the downside, cybersecurity appears to be problematic in the region, with most CCs falling some way below the EU's (admittedly, probably high) standards. Both quantitative and interview data indicate that while the CCs have good intentions in this field, plans may not be implemented due to budgetary and other constraints.

In the EN, Georgia is the CC most exposed to threats arising from the employment of this instrument. Like in the WB, this resilience is weakened by a combination of inadequate military capability, crisis planning, and cybersecurity mechanisms. Moldova is in a slightly better position, at least in part due to the establishment of NATO Cyber Response Capability Center in Chisinau. Ukraine, through its experience in wartime and its receipt of external support, has developed high levels of resilience to sub-threshold attacks, including in the cyber realm.

4.4. Military Training, Arms Transfers, Defence Cooperation

These three instruments encompass activities through which a third state actor provides various types of military capacity-building assistance in states or sub-state groups with which it has coincident interests. We have previously assessed that threats derived from the employment of some of these instruments in some of the CCs are negligible. Elsewhere, these efforts may have destabilising effects, which may be intended or unintended. There is, however, little that the CCs can do directly to build resilience against the employment of these instruments as, by definition, the hostile actions take place beyond their borders and between third actors. We thus assess that all CCs have low resilience against each of these instruments.

This line of thinking does not mean, however, that there are no consequences for the CCs if third state actors employ these instruments. The strengthening of the armed forces of recipient states through better training and equipment may mean heightened threats for the CCs, who might themselves need to take steps to mitigate these consequences, for example, by enhancing their own military capability, or building partnerships with other states. However, the direct effect of these heightened threats will be felt in the employment of instruments against the CCs by the recipient states (armed attack, armed presence, sub-threshold attack). CC resilience is better assessed in relation to these directly employed instruments, as we do in this Working Paper.

Table 8. Overview of resilience of CCs against the military instruments. Source: the authors.

Instrument	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB	GEO	MDA	UKR
A. Armed attack	H	M	M	H	H	M	L	L	M

B. Armed presence	H	M	L	H	H	M	L	L	H
C. Sub-threshold attack	M	L	L	M	M	M	L	M	H
D. Military training	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
E. Arms transfers	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
F. Defence cooperation	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

5. CONCLUSIONS

Resilience assessments conducted for each of the CCs of the WB and EN demonstrate various levels of exposure to the range of military instruments that may be employed against them by third state actors. Quantitative indicators demonstrate that, with few exceptions, resilience in these regions is weaker than average levels in the EU. This finding is supported by more qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups conducted in the two regions, and by assessments found in the open literature. The EU has several tools of integration and intervention in the military and hard security domain that might assist in building resilience in the CCs but, apart from the presence of EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU's remarkable efforts in supporting Ukraine through the EPF and EUMAM, these tools have had minimal impact, if they have been deployed at all.

The situation in the EN countries looks somewhat bleaker than it does in the WB. The EN countries are relatively powerless in the face of severe Russian military threats and are susceptible to the hostile actions of third states (mostly, again, Russia) in their neighbourhood. While Ukraine's resilience against Russia's full-throated military aggression has been extraordinary, it has still depended heavily on political, financial, and military support from a coalition of allies to sustain the fight. In the WB, meanwhile, the NATO Member States are better positioned than the non-NATO states as far as resilience is concerned, with Kosovo appearing to be the most exposed country in the region. Cooperation with other actors appears to be a determining factor in the resilience of countries on Europe's peripheries.

But this situation is not irreparable. Measures to patch resilience to foreseeable threats ('risks' in the terminology of Katzenstein and Seybert who provide the theoretical framework for our work) can be identified and applied, either by the CCs themselves, or with the assistance of other actors such as the EU. In turn, such corrective measures in the realm of control power might also enhance general resilience, leaving the CCs better able to 'navigate[d] the fluid environment surrounding them' (Katzenstein and Seybert, 2018, p.85)) and thus to exhibit protean power. This conclusion would appear to offer at least a partial challenge to Katzenstein and Seybert's notion that protean power 'cannot be harnessed consciously' (Katzenstein and Seybert, 2018, p.82)) and thus deserves further attention in our work.

ANNEX A − COUNTRY PROFILES

A.1. Albania

The 2024 security barometer showed that most Albanians still consider corruption (67.5 %) and organised crime (33.5 %) to be their country's most serious security threats. At the same time, the number of respondents who see war with other countries as the main threat has increased from 7.6 % in 2020 to 30.5 % in 2024. Russia and Iran are the two countries whose influence is seen as harmful (68.3 % and 63.1 % respectively), whereas US and Turkish influence is viewed positively and China ambivalently (neither positive nor negative) (Dyrmishi et al., 2024, pp. 29-36).

Albania is ranked 78/145 by the 2025 Global Firepower review—an improvement on the 90th rank it occupied in 2024. This improvement shows the country's ambition to transform itself into a security provider (Jano, 2022, p. 50) and is due to the government's investment in its defence sector as laid out in its National Security Strategy. As a NATO member state, the country is currently increasing its defence spending to the 2 % NATO target and has communicated its desire to become an active partner in multilateral security operations. However, Albania's defence budget planning has notable imbalances (Duro, 2023, pp. 4-5, 7). A portion of the allocated funds is directed toward activities and capabilities that fall under the responsibilities of other ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health. As a result, the actual value of the defence budget is estimated to be less. While allocations for personnel and equipment are near optimal, spending on infrastructure exceeds 9 % of the defence budget—three times the typical NATO standard of under 3 %—often at the expense of equipment investments. This misallocation has contributed to critical capability gaps within the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF). Essential capabilities, such as field artillery, medical and engineering support, and chemical defence, are insufficiently resourced, leading to a gradual erosion of specialised skills. Despite recent efforts to improve wages and benefits, the AAF continues to struggle with attracting qualified personnel, leaving several units—some of them high-priority—understaffed. Additionally, the defence budget bears the financial burden of Albania's Civil Emergency Agency, accounting for approximately 7.5 % of total defence spending, further straining military resources as the AAF remains the primary responder to civil emergencies (Duro, 2023, p. 4).

In terms of international partnerships, Albania 'considers the Atlantic Alliance as the cornerstone of the common security' (Republic of Albania, 2024b, p. 13) and is strongly dedicated to its relationship with the US, a relationship that influences domestic politics as Albanian leaders often align their policies with US interests (interview ALB02). In its National Security Strategy, the country commits to multilateral cooperation, first and foremost as an active member of NATO, but also mentioning NATO-EU cooperation and the UN. In November 2024, Albania signed a new Security and Defence Partnership with the EU. In the framework of this partnership, Albania and the EU will increase cooperation in areas such as crisis management and cybersecurity. Lastly, Albania is also committed to strengthening its bilateral relations with NATO, EU, and other countries in the region. One example of this commitment, is the joint declaration of cooperation on defence that Albania signed with Kosovo and Croatia in March 2025, which 'focuses on developing defence capacities, advancing defence industry and technology, and improving military interoperability'.

In order to further strengthen its army, the government committed to increase its defence spending to 2.5 % of its GDP in its Armed Forces Development Plan 2024-2033, which in turn is guided by NATO planning requirements with additional national requirements related to military support to the civil authorities (interview ALB04). It foresees a gradual increase in active personnel from the current 8 000 to 9 500 in 2033 with an increased reserve force (currently at 2 000). At the same time, it is committed to modernising its infrastructure, in particular the Air Base in Kuçovë which re-opened in 2024, and its equipment, by acquiring Black Hawk helicopters and unmanned drones. With the support of EUR 50 million in funding from NATO, the Kuçovë Air Base is being transformed into a hub for NATO air operations. At the beginning of 2024, Albania received its first two Black Hawk helicopters with the support of USD 50 million in US assistance. Critics suggest, however, that the military's modernisation efforts have been inconsistent, and there is a perceived lack of seriousness regarding defence among political leaders, in part due to an over-reliance on the protection offered by NATO membership and a failure to understand the responsibilities that come with alliance membership (interview ALB01).

Albania's civil-military relations have evolved in form but remain constrained in substance, shaped heavily by its communist legacy and post-transition political culture. While steps toward adopting western-style civil-military norms have been taken—largely driven by the obligations of NATO accession rather than domestic democratic commitment—meaningful democratic oversight remains weak (Dafa, 2021, p. 39). Defence policy has often been executed with minimal legislative involvement. The legacy of party dominance over the military persists. Defence institutions are largely subordinated to executive authority, thereby sidelining the legislative institutions, independent oversight bodies, and civil society organisations. Although formal reforms aimed at establishing democratic control were adopted, in practice civilian control has been narrowly interpreted as executive dominance, rather than balanced oversight by all democratic institutions. The role of civil society remains marginal. Civil society organisations lack both the expertise and access to hold defence institutions accountable. Furthermore, parliamentary oversight is undermined by political patronage and limited institutional capacity (Karabelias, 2020). Thus, in Albania's civil-military relations, old power dynamics and military burdens from the communist era endure (interview ALB01) under the façade of reform.

A current Albanian government priority is increasing resilience in the cybersecurity domain. According to its National Security Strategy, Albania adopts a 'holistic approach' to prevent and respond to cyber threats 'by improving security techniques, procedures and standards; building capacity through education and awareness; continuously improving technology; ensuring online safety for children and youth; and strengthening public-private partnerships at the national and international levels by developing cyber diplomacy' (Republic of Albania, 2024b, p. 19). The first policy goal of Albania's National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020-2025 (Republic of Albania, 2020) is to protect the country's information infrastructure and to strengthen its technological and legal tools. In order do to so, Albania has committed to improving the legal framework through the provision of norms and aligning it with EU legislation, and to establishing incident response teams in all sectors. By 2022, the majority of activities related to this goal (61.2 %) were already realised (National Cyber Security Authority (Albania) (NKSA), 2024). In 2025, Albania adopted a Law on Cybersecurity (No. 24/2025), further improving its legal framework to address cyberattacks. The law contributes to Albania's resilience and capacity to counter cyberattacks 'through its focus on cyber incident response, information sharing, and critical infrastructure protection' (Bino, 2024, p. 5).

Albania's Cyber Defence Strategy 2024-2028 seeks to further develop resilience through a risk-based systems approach enhancing the country's capacities to respond to cyberattacks (Republic of Albania, 2024a). However, as with its military capacities, funding and financial resources are likely to hamper the building of effective resilience capacities, as the Cyber Defence Strategy did not secure a budget for its implementation (Bino, 2024, p. 10). The government has also failed to properly evaluate the damage caused by cyberattacks, creating a vulnerability in Albania's cyber defence (interview ALB01). Repeated successful attacks on government digital infrastructure suggest that cyber resilience is rather weak (interview ALB03). Furthermore, the change in US aid policy with the coming into office of US President Trump in January 2025 has also affected Albania's security sector and, therefore, its ability to develop its resilience to security threats. US funding was suspended to Albania's Ministry of Defence and National Cybersecurity Authority.

In sum, the Albanian government is undertaking important steps to strengthen its defence and cybersecurity architecture. The country's commitment to increasing defence spending, modernising its armed forces, and aligning with NATO standards reflects its ambition to become a credible security provider in the region. However, persisting issues such as budgetary misallocations, capability gaps, civil-military imbalances, and limited democratic oversight hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts. In the cybersecurity domain, Albania has demonstrated a proactive policy approach, yet the lack of dedicated funding risks undermining its implementation.

A.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina's defence and security environment remains complex and deeply fragile, shaped by a fragmented political system and increasing external influences. While external actors, especially Russia, and problematic regional relations continue to have a destabilising influence, the most pressing threat comes from within—from the secessionist tendencies of the leadership of Republika Srpska (RS). This internal challenge poses a serious risk to BiH's sovereignty and institutional stability (interview BIH01).

Bosnia and Herzegovina is exposed to a range of threats: internal separatist pressures (from RS), foreign influence (mostly political and economic, from Serbia, Russia, Hungary, and China), and demographic and social instability (driven by incoming migration, but also 'brain drain'). Bosnia and Herzegovina is often perceived as 'the weakest spot in the Western Balkans' (interview BIH02). Serbia, Russia, and Hungary have openly supported the undermining of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional order, with Russia viewed as the main source of malign influence and Serbia as the key channel through which that influence is amplified within the country (interview BIH01).

When it comes to defence capacities, the reform of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina is broadly considered one of the most successful post-war transformations in the country, compared, for example, to police reform. The current structure features multi-ethnic brigades and a power-sharing model that reflects the ethnic composition of the state. Members of the army are perceived to be professional, and to avoid involvement in the political arena (interview BIH02). The army's symbolic function is often emphasised in the sense that it gives 'psychological security to the population' (interview BIH03).

However, concerns exist over the operational readiness and capacity of the armed forces in the event of a real crisis. Despite the structural strengths, the military is hindered by underfunding, with defence spending

persistently below 1 % of GDP (SIPRI, 2025). Most funds are allocated to salaries, while new equipment is mostly sourced from donations. Given the growing security threats in the region and beyond, funding for defence capacities must increase (interview BIH02). Bosnia and Herzegovina has retained a modest defence industry with expertise in small arms and ammunition and the potential for production of substantial volumes of ammunition. But the ownership and oversight of foreign actors, like Serbia, creates the possibility of misuse (interview BIH03).

Adding to concerns is the paramilitary capacity of RS, especially given training organised by the Ministry of Interior with Russian and Hungarian experts, and systematic equipment buildup (interview BIH02). The RS police is often used to protect the political leadership, for example during the events of March 2025 when an arrest warrant was issued for RS President Milorad Dodik, while he was also losing support among RS citizens (interview BIH04).

Bosnia and Herzegovina's resilience to external threats is limited and dependent on partners such as NATO and the EU through EUFOR. The EUFOR Althea mission continues to provide a stabilising presence and was recently reinforced with additional special forces personnel (interview BIH05). Future membership of NATO is seen as crucial to provide protection from external threats, and an opportunity to align the country's values with those of the Alliance, promoting political stability and security (interview BIH02). Long-term resilience will require reforms to the judiciary, increased defence funding, political unity, and a more assertive response from international actors.

A.3. Kosovo

From a security point of view Kosovo is a quite peculiar case, as it remains a semi-recognised state under the tutelage of international organisations operating under a UN mandate. Only recently has it seriously endeavoured to build its independence in the security field as well.

Kosovo's security is primarily underpinned by external actors, in particular NATO, the EU, and the US (interview KOS02). On the military side, NATO maintains its presence with the Kosovo Force (KFOR), in charge of preventing new hostilities and ensuring a secure environment. Deployed in 1999, in the context of the Kosovo conflict, NATO has over time reduced the size and tasks of its mission but retains its deterrence role. It currently consists of approximately 4 500 troops (NATO, 2025). Besides, the EU has also deployed a civilian mission—the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX)—operational since 2008, following Kosovo's declaration of independence, when it took over from the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (Mulleti, 2023). EULEX's personnel is capped at 503, with the latest data indicating that it currently has approximately 450 staff members (European Union, European External Action Service, 2020).

This military-civil cooperation between NATO and other international organisations in Kosovo was established during the 90s conflict in the field of humanitarian affairs and peacebuilding and continues to this day to ensure security on the ground. Overall, the cooperation between KFOR and EULEX has been assessed to be quite effective. In their mandates, KFOR oversees military matters, while EULEX is responsible for the police. However, some overlaps persist, notably with KFOR retaining a policing role and, more broadly, a more significant and leading presence. With greater resources and a wider territorial reach, KFOR often takes the lead in civilian matters as well (Mulleti, 2023; Pugh, 2000). The two organisations cooperate through a

standardised protocol for border patrol and crossings, exchange of information and intelligence, military support for police operations and procedures on response to civilian disturbances, and finally crowd and riot control (Mulleti, 2023). There are concerns within Kosovo about KFOR's effectiveness in controlling the border with Serbia and preventing destabilising actions from various illegal parallel structures, organised criminal groups, and extremist factions, including larger-scale attacks similar to the Banjska incident (interview KOS01; interview KOS02). However, the internal security situation in northern Kosovo has improved following the withdrawal of irregular armed groups that had been operating in northern Kosovo (it is estimated that around 400 to 600 individuals, primarily linked to Serbian paramilitary structures, left Kosovo to avoid judicial prosecution (interview KOS02).

Kosovo does not have a long-established military culture and perhaps lacks strategic preparedness and political will to address military risks (interview KOSFG01). The Kosovo Liberation Army, a guerrilla movement which fought against the government in Belgrade in the name of Kosovo's independence in the 90s conflict, was dissolved at the end of the war as part of the demilitarisation process. Many of its members joined the newly established security forces, first the Kosovo Protection Corps, then replaced by the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) (NATO, 1999; Sullivan, 2025).

In this framework, Kosovo's own national security forces have remained limited in size. The Kosovo Security Force was set up in 2009 to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, overseen by national civilian authorities. Lightly armed and made up of volunteers, it was mainly charged with civil defence, emergency response, explosive ordnance disposal, management of hazardous material, and firefighting (Cantone, 2025; NATO, 2025). Besides, Kosovo has a police force, the Kosovo Police (KP), composed of about 8 000 officers (Kosovo Police, 2023). The KSF and KP have also been integrated into the cooperation between KFOR and EULEX for civilian security. The Kosovo Police is the first responder to security incidents, with EULEX acting as the second and serving as a liaison between the KP and KFOR. As for the KSF, it has also participated in KFOR-EULEX 'Balkan Hawk' joint field exercises (Mulleti, 2023).

Although NATO has not favoured the building of an actual national army in Kosovo in the name of stability in the region (Vulović, 2023), Kosovo has worked in recent years to develop its own army with enhanced capacities. The process was initiated in 2018 with the passage of a law to transform the 2 500-member KSF (plus 800 reservists) into the Kosovo Armed Forces, which is set to grow to 5 000 personnel (plus 3 000 reservists) by 2028 (Cantone, 2025; Itsik et al., 2024; Kenez, 2024; NATO, 2025). Alongside this transformation, the budget dedicated to defence is planned to be raised to 2 % of GDP, with further investments in all security sectors (Office of the Prime Minister (Kosovo), 2022). New efforts have also been directed toward creating Kosovo's defence industry, including the construction of its first state arms production and drone design factory, as well as the purchase of weapons from abroad (Bami, 2024). For instance, Kosovo bought Bayraktar drones from Türkiye and Javelin missiles and Black Hawk helicopters from the US (Cantone, 2025). In November 2024, the Prime Minister stated that since 2021, Kosovo has 'doubled the number of soldiers, tripled the Ministry's defence budget, quadrupled overseas training opportunities for [their] officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers, and significantly increased investments in armaments and ammunition' (Dimitrievska, 2024).

Alongside these efforts, Kosovo has also striven to diversify its international partnerships in security. It already has established partnerships with NATO Allies, given the organisation's direct involvement in the country,

with the partnership with the US being especially significant. In 2011 the Iowa National Guard-led State Partnership Program was launched, which has 'the long-term goal of building and expanding partnerships with the KSF, which will help Kosovo promote regional security and cooperation' (Department of State (US), 2021). Moreover, it has recently taken steps to strengthen its military ties and cooperation with several actors, such as Türkiye, with which it signed a military framework agreement in 2024. Besides arms sales, Türkiye has been involved in joint military exercises and in the training of the KSF forces on advanced weapon systems, tactical operations and border security management (Kenez, 2024). In its own region, it has also developed defence cooperation with Albania, with which it signed a cooperation agreement in 2021 (Trkanjec, 2021). Seeking to enhance their interoperability and operational capacities, the KSF and Albanian Armed Forces regularly conduct joint training and exercises (Ministry of Defence (Kosovo), 2023). A defence agreement, the 'Declaration on Strengthening Defence Cooperation', was also signed in March 2025 between Kosovo, Croatia and Albania, calling for joint responses to security challenges in their region (Tesija and Bami, 2025; interview KOSFG01).

This new investment in security and defence is also visible in the field of cybersecurity, which has been necessary due to Kosovo's increasing digitisation (interview KOS01). Whereas in 2015, Kosovo's cybersecurity landscape and capacities were assessed to be at a very initiating or formatting stage (Bada, 2015), in a ten-year span, they have been significantly transformed. On top of the Kosovo Security Strategy 2022-2027, which already stresses the necessity to strengthen the country's cybersecurity capacities (Kroçi, 2023), Kosovo also adopted a new National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023-2027, exposing Kosovo's strategic directions and objectives 'aiming to improve the security and resilience of national infrastructures and services' (Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kosovo), 2023). The government has also initiated the creation of other cybersecurity structures, namely the National Cybersecurity Unit (KOS-CERT) in charge of incident response and awareness, the Agency for Information Society of Kosovo (ASHIK), the Kosovo Security Council (KSC), the Kosovo Police Cybercrime Unit and the Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (CSOC) (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2023).

A new cybersecurity law was also adopted in 2023, outlining the responsibilities of authorities, promoting inter-institutional cooperation, and enhancing the security of information systems and networks. It led to the creation of the Cybersecurity Agency as a centralised body overseeing cybersecurity matters. With these structures and legislations in place, Kosovo has proved efficient in fighting cybercrime (Buçaj, 2024). Nevertheless, despite a rather advanced legal framework and visible progress towards harmonisation with the EU framework, it still lacks strong implementation mechanisms (Asllani, 2022). Moreover, Kosovo's cybersecurity still suffers from several shortcomings in terms of capacities and resources, lacking experts and training. It still needs to further enhance protection mechanisms for critical infrastructures (interview KOS01), institutional collaboration and public-private partnerships (Asllani, 2022 Balkans Policy Research Group, 2023; Buçaj, 2024). Finally, limited awareness about cyber threats is noticeable in the country, which the government strives to address by including cybersecurity in educational curricula (Buçaj, 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kosovo), 2023).

Otherwise in the hybrid domain, Serbia is thought to encourage organised crime and paramilitary groups, which are tolerated by the Serbian state and used as tools for exerting influence and maintaining instability (interview KOS01). Kosovo's police forces lack resources and have limited training and investments (interview

KOSFG01). Even so, they have proved quite effective (a 'leader in the region') in dealing with these issues, and also with radicalisation (interview KOS02).

A.4. Montenegro

Montenegro's security environment is increasingly shaped by external dependencies, hybrid threats, and domestic institutional fragility. Local perceptions indicate that Montenegro does not currently face any direct military threats, but tensions could arise if instability occurs in regard to Serbia-Kosovo relations (interview MNE01). The country has limited domestic defence capacity, but its NATO membership, acquired in 2017, is perceived as indispensable to its national security: Montenegro could not organise its own defence outside a collective defence system (interview MNE 02).

The size and capacity of Montenegro's armed forces are central limitations. The army is extremely small, there are no capacities to protect airspace, except within NATO, nor there are capacities to patrol the sea without the help of partner countries (interview MNE02). Although some reform has occurred since NATO accession, there is a consensus that Montenegro can hardly defend itself in any way (interview MNE03), which is viewed as a major challenge.

NATO membership has not, however, shielded Montenegro from non-conventional threats or mitigated the long-standing political and institutional weaknesses that leave the country exposed. Cybersecurity is one of Montenegro's most critical and persistent weaknesses. In 2022, it suffered a major cyberattack against government infrastructure, an incident from which it has yet to fully recover. Websites and emails are still not yet functional (interview MNE04). It is not clear who was responsible for the cyberattacks—initial reports pointed to Russian actors, later revised to a Cuban ransomware group—but no definitive conclusion has been drawn. This lack of clarity and ineffective institutional follow-up points to a broader systemic weakness in crisis response and digital resilience. A capacity-building centre for cybersecurity has been established in Podgorica—the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Centre—but experts are sceptical of its practical impact as it will not provide any kind of reinforcement of infrastructure (interview MNE03). Despite ongoing vulnerabilities, cybersecurity thus remains more of a conceptual commitment than an operational priority.

In the hybrid domain, Serbia is widely identified as a primary source of destabilisation, particularly due to its role in spreading Russian influence throughout the WB ('Vučić's Serbia conflicts its policy of statehood with Montenegro's policy of statehood,' (interview MNE02)) highlighting that Belgrade continues to treat Montenegro as part of a wider 'Serbian world'. Russia's influence, mostly obvious through anti-NATO campaigns, now manifests through hybrid threats and the actions of proxy actors. Before Montenegro's NATO accession, there were 'Russian-like proxies,' (interview MNE01) while today, Russia influences public opinion through localised propaganda, media outlets, and cyber intrusions, with Belgrade as a hub for the translation and dissemination of Kremlin narratives (interview MNE04).

Internally, Montenegro's security is compromised by weak institutions and high levels of political interference. Key security agencies are described as being led by politically connected individuals with no professional experience. For example, the current head of Montenegro's security agency is a businessman with connections to one of the criminal clans in Montenegro (interview MNE04). Moreover, institutional stagnation and corruption hinder the development of robust national strategies. The change of government

showed the limitation of Montenegro's capacity as a state (interview MNE04). This is especially dangerous when combined with widespread inefficiency in public services and an absence of qualified professionals in critical security roles.

Montenegro's resilience to security threats is fundamentally reactive and largely dependent on external structures. NATO membership provides a strategic safety net, but the country lacks autonomous capacities to address hybrid and non-traditional threats. Montenegro's potential to strengthen its resilience is constrained by its institutional weaknesses and political divisions. Nevertheless, its relations with neighbouring countries are mostly stable, and its alignment with Euro-Atlantic structures, despite EU accession challenges, serves as a deterrent against larger-scale destabilisation. However, in a scenario where NATO or the Euro-Atlantic alliance weakens, Montenegro's strategic vulnerability would be significantly amplified.

A.5. North Macedonia

Although not under direct military threat, North Macedonia's security landscape is shaped by the volatile regional environment, increasing cyber challenges, and pressures from global power rivalries and geopolitical circumstances. North Macedonia remains vulnerable to spillover from regional crises—particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. A possible escalation of violence and protests in Kosovo could spur a cycle of wider incidents across the region and easily have spillover effects in North Macedonia (interview MKD07). Through NATO membership and bilateral ties, particularly with the United States, North Macedonia has sought to compensate for limited domestic defence capacities and safeguard national stability.

North Macedonia's defence system is grounded in NATO membership, which is widely perceived as the core pillar of national security. As a NATO member, North Macedonia fully enjoys being part of the collective security system, making military threats to the integrity of the country unlikely (interview MKD01). NATO membership is the one issue on which the majority of political actors in North Macedonia agree (interview MKD02). This security umbrella allows the country to offset its limited military capabilities. For example, while North Macedonia lacks modern military equipment, its airspace is protected by the Greek Air Force (NATO, Allied Air Command, 2021). North Macedonia's armed forces are modest in size and capability, constrained by limited defence spending and a long-standing reliance on donations and external support (primarily by Türkiye, but also the US, and Norway) (interview MKD03). With no domestic arms industry and low defence investment, modernisation is progressing slowly.

Even so, regional cooperation with Serbia and close bilateral ties with the US through a strategic partnership agreement (Department of State (US), 2008) support North Macedonia's operational resilience. The US is seen as a 'patron' (interview MKD04) or 'guarantor of the country's security,' (interview MKD09) having historically played a stabilising role. Serbia, although not a NATO member, is perceived positively. There is a notion that the current Macedonian government looks up to the Serbian leadership and similar 'strongmen'-type leaders, such as Orbán and Erdogan (interview MKD06).

The rise of hybrid and cyber threats is a pressing issue within the national security landscape. North Macedonia was exposed to a wave of cyberattacks, including fake bomb threats, hacking of state institutions'

websites, and sophisticated campaigns of disinformation. One example was the cyberattack on the official website of the State Election Commission, on the day of parliamentary elections in 2020. While this did not impair the results of the elections, which are not carried out electronically, it did undermine the trust and legitimacy of democratic institutions. While the attacks cannot be attributed to a specific actor, the content of the messages has raised suspicions of foreign interference: 'It's very clear that the perpetrator is a malevolent actor who wants to see changes in the strong Euro-Atlantic foreign policy orientation. In that sense, Russia or some proxy actors connected to Russia could be behind those attacks' (interview MKD07).

The resilience of North Macedonia is grounded in its external alliances, political stability, and NATO membership. The state has shown some capacity to respond to hybrid threats and has maintained public order during heightened periods of cyber pressure (interview MKD07). However, long-term resilience depends on institutional reform and political will. There are serious institutional and regulatory gaps. Despite the adoption of cybersecurity strategies, implementation remains insufficient. It comes down to a question of how willing the government is to deal with the threats: it is not about capability, but willingness (interview MKD06).

A.6. Serbia

Serbia's defence landscape is defined by its declared military neutrality, a foreign policy balancing act also reflected in its defence policy, and by a defence sector that is simultaneously undergoing selective modernisation and facing internal challenges. While the country does not face direct conventional military threats, it is vulnerable to non-traditional security risks, including cyberattacks, foreign political influence, and regional instability, particularly related to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The potential for it to orchestrate low-intensity provocations, such as the Banjska incident, remains, but there is a widespread belief that this type of incident is intended more for internal purposes (interview SRB01).

Despite recent efforts to modernise its military, such as the acquisition of new arms and equipment from France and China, Serbia's defence capacity remains limited in terms of manpower, strategic planning, and sustainability. While Serbia is often described as having the strongest military in the WB, this status is undermined by systemic weaknesses, particularly the lack of manpower. Serbia maintains a defence industrial base with the ability to manufacture NATO-standard munitions and weaponry. However, corruption and mismanagement within the defence sector make it unable to be more productive and introduce innovations that would make it more competitive (interview SRB01).

Meanwhile, Serbia maintains bilateral military cooperation, particularly with the US through joint exercises, but also retains historic ties with Russia, especially through intelligence cooperation (interview SRB01). Serbia is not a NATO member, nor does it intend to become one due to its proclaimed military neutrality, but it participates in the Partnership for Peace programme. This is an example of Serbia's balancing act, an approach that weakens the country's ability to articulate a clear strategic vision and, at the same time, increases its exposure to external pressure. Serbia is in a 'geopolitical grey zone' which is a danger in itself (focus group SRBFG01).

Additionally, most of Serbia's security vulnerabilities stem from internal systemic weaknesses that include corruption, state capture, and a centralised and top-down governance structure, all of which provide fertile

ground for foreign influences. If Serbia wants to stay military neutral, it should invest way more in building up military capacity (interview SRB01).

Cybersecurity is a growing area of concern, with recent incidents involving cyberattacks on government websites, including public records databases. However, Serbia is not perceived as the main target of cyberattacks at present. Rather, it is more likely to feel the consequences of spillover in the event of a cyberattack on critical infrastructure in other countries within the region. There is also little public awareness or official transparency around such threats (interview SRB02).

China's influence in Serbia extends beyond economic investment. It includes strategic penetration in the security sphere through smart surveillance technology and even patrols by Chinese police officers. The use of Chinese facial recognition systems and cloud storage for surveillance data has raised serious privacy and security concerns over the possibility of data misuse for political purposes (interview SRB01).

The capacity of the Serbian government to respond to emerging security challenges, particularly cyber threats and foreign influence, remains underdeveloped (focus group SRBFG01). This vulnerability is compounded by internal political dynamics, including the instrumentalisation of foreign policy narratives to consolidate power domestically. Serbia's current security position is defined not by a lack of capacity alone, but by strategic ambiguity and domestic fragility.

A.7. Georgia

Georgia's broader resilience to threats from hostile state actors is presently undermined by its authoritarian drift and the political capture of its security institutions. In the military domain, Georgia's active armed forces are considered too small to deter or defend against a major conventional attack independently. One former defence official assessed that an invading force of 20,000 to 40,000 troops could likely occupy the country (interview GEO10). Furthermore, reserve structures are described as largely underdeveloped, and the overall readiness level of the armed forces is considered "quite low" due to problems with manning and equipment (interview GEO10). To address this, there are proposals to create a "new type of reserve or territorial force … to act as a force multiplier" (interview GEO10).

State capture has led to security institutions becoming more loyal to the ruling Georgian Dream party than to democratic constitutional norms, with state security and police used against political opponents and civil society actors (interview GEO15). While some military professionalism is maintained through ongoing cooperation with western partners, the military leadership and defence system as a whole are increasingly politicised (interview GEO15). This has resulted in a weakened force with a low readiness level (interview GEO15), considered unable to independently defend against a major conventional attack (interview GEO10).

In terms of practical impacts, recruitment and retention in the armed forces are undermined by political interference, including the politicisation of civilian control (interview GEO15). Loyalty-based promotions are also seen to have increased, weakening internal cohesion (interview GEO02). Weak lessons-learning processes, poor knowledge management, and a lack of strategic autonomy further undermine the resilience contributions of the armed forces.

Georgia's defence modernisation and capabilities have been heavily dependent on western assistance. While some operational engagement with some NATO partners continues, relations with the EU and the US have deteriorated due to the country's democratic backsliding (interview GEO06). At the same time, engagements with China and other non-democratic powers (interview GEO13) have introduced a "big strategic uncertainty" (interview GEO06).

The Georgian armed forces are reliant on foreign support for critical military capabilities, including advanced equipment and cyber-security infrastructure (interview GEO06). This near-total reliance on foreign imports, combined with the military's "quite low" readiness level and "problem of manning" (interview GEO10), indicates poor supply-side resilience.

State capture has adversely affected crisis management processes and structures (interview GEO06; interview GEO15). While some structures still mirror Western standards, such as a UK-model crisis simulation room (interview GEO06), they are undermined by centralised and politicised decision-making. Crisis planning appears oriented toward political regime survival rather than national resilience, with interviewees noting that the government's primary fear is threats to its own power, not the state. More practically, crisis management is also hindered by a breakdown of trust and communication, with technical dialogue formats suspended and long-standing channels with civil society experts severed.

Cybersecurity has seen technical improvements due to western assistance, yet major vulnerabilities persist (interview GEO06). Critical infrastructure remains vulnerable to Russian-origin cyber operations, with interviewees noting successful attacks on systems (interview GEO06) and the security sector's susceptibility to infiltration (interview GEO12).

Hybrid threats—cyberattacks, disinformation, political subversion—are entrenched realities. Without a clear strategic re-commitment to democratic governance and Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia's resilience against external threats will continue to weaken.

A.8. Moldova

Moldova's defence policy has been shaped by the country's neutrality status, which was introduced in 1994. For almost three decades, a lack of strategic vision and few significant investments to modernise the defence sector has led to an outdated military infrastructure and limited armed forces. Before 2022, the national spending for the defence sector did not reach more than EUR 40 million or approximately 0.4 % of Moldova's gross domestic product (GDP), leaving the country insufficiently prepared to adequately respond to a potential military threat.

Moldova's constitutional neutrality was a point of contention across focus groups and interviews. While some experts argued it remains a pragmatic safeguard against entanglement in regional conflicts, others considered it outdated and strategically limiting. One interviewee observed: "Neutrality gives us a buffer, but it also deprives us of credible deterrence" (Interview MDA01). Among the general public, views were mixed. Neutrality was often associated more with fragility than with security. "It means we stay weak, hoping nobody notices us," commented one participant. Nonetheless trust in the National Army remains comparatively high, as it is seen as a stabilising institution amid broader public distrust in governance (interview MDAFG01).

After the start of Russia's full scale military invasion of Ukraine, Moldova began to prioritise the reform of the security and defence sector. At the political level, following the adoption of a new National Security Strategy (NSS) in December 2023, Moldova has emphasised accession to the EU as a national security objective (President of the Republic of Moldova, 2023, p.1). For the first time, the NSS has named Russia as the main threat to Moldova's national security, materialised through hybrid operations, as well as corruption and malign kleptocratic practices. The NSS also underlines Russia's military plan to establish a land corridor towards Moldova, pointing out the persistent threat of a military attack on the country. In terms of strategic vision, the NSS puts strong emphasis on cooperation with the EU and EU countries.

In the last few years, Moldova has boosted its security partnership with the EU. In November 2020, the EU Council announced the possibility for third countries to participate in PESCO projects (European Union, Council of the European Union, 2020), providing an opportunity for collaboration in up to 68 ongoing projects. The EU's greater interest in this field was reconfirmed with the 2021 Eastern Partnership Summit Declaration (European Union, Council of the European Union, 2021a), with a focus on training, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities within and beyond the CSDP.

Backed by the newly established EPF budgetary instrument and its Assistance Measures Pillar (European Union, Council of the European Union, 2024b) designed for upgrading the military and defence capabilities of third states, the EU has become the most important security partner of Moldova. Between 2021 and 2025, the EU has provided through the EPF five assistance packages totalling almost EUR 200 million (European Union, European Council, 2025c). Other strategic steps ahead have been the launching of EU – Moldova high level political and security dialogues at the latest EU – Moldova Association Council in October 2021 (European Union, Council of the European Union, 2021b), and the signing of the EU-Moldova Security and Defence Partnership in May 2024 (European Union, European External Action Service, 2024b). These initiatives could provide a strong baseline for a gradual increase of the EU's support for the reform and equipping of military, cyber and intelligence institutions in Moldova, pushing forward security sector reform.

In May 2023, the EU deployed the EU Partnership Mission, which has been responsible for assisting the Moldovan authorities in countering persistent hybrid threats in the areas of disinformation, cybersecurity and foreign information manipulation and interference. The Mission is working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation, as well as the newly created Cybersecurity Agency. The mission's mandate has been recently prolonged by the Council until May 2027 (European Union, Council of the European Union (2025).

Beside benefiting from Brussels-wide support in terms of security and the military, Moldova has also contributed for more than 10 years to EU's CSDP missions, with 30 Moldovan staff currently deployed to EUTM Somalia and EUFOR Althea. These actions have proven Moldova's commitment to engage with the EU's institutional and policy framework in the areas of military and security. As one interviewee mentioned, "It's not just symbolic anymore. We are stepping into real European defence cooperation, even if modestly" (interview MDA01).

Across focus groups and interviews, a recurring theme emerged: Moldova's national resilience depends not solely on military capabilities but also on societal cohesion, credible communication, and institutional trust. One interviewee stated, "Security is psychological as much as it is institutional. The public needs to believe

that the state can protect its sovereignty and its people" (interview MDA02). This was echoed in the general focus group, where a participant noted, "We are not afraid of war, we are afraid of being alone when it comes" (interview MDAFG01). The dominant sentiment is that Moldova's security future is inseparable from its EU integration path. While external threats persist, resilience is understood as residing at the intersection of capable institutions, informed and united citizens, and strategic international alliances. The primary challenge moving forward will be to maintain internal coherence, sustain public confidence, and translate legislative alignment into visible and lived security.

Although EU support for strengthening Moldova's resilience has been significant in the last three years, the governing authorities are equipped with limited capacities and resources. To effectively respond to the increasing threat posed by Russia, Moldova has to consolidate its security and defence dialogue with EU, NATO and Black Sea countries. Continuous investments in defence infrastructure, professionalisation, training and capacity-building for military and civilian staff involved in this process are crucial.

A.9. Ukraine

Throughout the full-scale war with Russia, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) have conducted successful defensive and counteroffensive operations, including incursions into Russian territory in the Kursk region. In addition to ground, air and naval forces, the AFU include special operations, territorial defence, logistics, support and medical forces. A unique, separate arm for uncrewed aerial, land and maritime vehicles was established in 2024, and has achieved notable successes by combining advanced technologies with an asymmetric approach to warfare (Samus, 2025; interview UKR03). Another notable wartime innovation was the implementation of a corps-based command system (previously brigade-based) to significantly improve the coordination of military across large sections of the front and to help facilitate the mobilisation of reserves (interview UKR03). At the time of writing, six out of the planned 18–20 corps have been formed. While details are classified, the AFU are thought to number approximately 880 000 personnel in total. Alongside its successes, Ukraine has also seen a number of problems related to mobilisation, command and control, and munitions production. Attempts made to rectify these problems have been assessed by experts as 'not ideal' (interview UKR01).

The primary document defining AFU personnel policy is the Strategy for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Human Capital in the Defence Forces until 2027 (Ministry of Defence (Ukraine), 2025a). This outlines the creation of a fundamentally new recruitment and staffing system that will ensure predictable career paths for military personnel in selected specialities. It also promotes the adoption of Euro-Atlantic standards and NATO cooperation to enhance the readiness of units for joint operations. A core idea is the principle of 'grow or go', under which officers and non-commissioned officers who reach the maximum tenure for their rank and do not demonstrate potential for advancement will be discharged, opening career opportunities for the most talented, motivated, and professionally prepared personnel. In part, this is a response to the fact that the AFU has found it difficult to fill existing units. Mobilisation efforts have not been sufficiently effective, and a shortage of competent officers has challenged the transition to a corps-based structure is (20 corps will need 6 000–7 000 officers), requiring officers to be reassigned from combat brigades and possibly weakening the AFU's operational strength.

The AFU has, since 2014, intensified its transformation toward NATO standards, distancing itself from Soviet legacies. The process of fully eradicating Soviet military culture requires time, as many of its bearers—those who served in the Soviet army or studied in Soviet military institutions—joined the AFU during mobilisation. Particular manifestations of Soviet influence include: incentives to lie to higher command; dodging the blame for failures at all levels of the command chain; and disregard for human lives, including the replacement of commanders unwilling to execute so-called suicidal tasks. Many challenges in military culture and measures to address them were outlined in the Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine for the Period Until 2028 (Ministry of Defence (Ukraine), 2023). The document stresses military education, training, and self-learning throughout military service; a professional culture of military leadership aligned with NATO principles and standards; the virtues, character traits, and core competencies expected of military leaders; and the commitment of to fulfil their service duties, achieve career growth, and attain high levels of professionalism.

Ukraine adheres to the principle of civilian control over its armed forces. 'On Ukraine's Strategic Bulletin' (President of Ukraine, 2016) strengthened civilian oversight, including through the appointment of civilians to the positions of minister of defence, deputy ministers, and the state secretary of the Ministry of Defence. A 2018 law, On the National Security of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2018), separated the command and planning functions and introduced mechanisms for oversight by parliament and civil society (although parliament still has little control over the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the President of Ukraine). In 2020, a new law, On Defence Procurement, enabled a flexible combination of military secrecy and transparency in financing, enhancing civilian oversight of procurement processes. At the same time, experts argue that a significant issue lies in the narrow understanding of democratic control. They emphasise that democratic oversight should extend beyond the armed forces to encompass the entire state apparatus, warning that limiting civilian control solely of the military is a fundamental mistake that undermines effective governance and democratic accountability (Interview UKR03).

Cooperation between the military and civil society has grown through joint projects and initiatives aimed at supporting the army and veterans. Civil society covers a significant portion of the army's and veterans' needs. In 2024, 86 % of Ukrainians engaged in charitable activities, with the percentage of donors increasing from 65 % in 2023 to 73 %. One notable example of how the war has strengthened trust and collaboration between the military and society is the permission granted in 2022 to the charitable foundation 'Come Back Alive' to procure weapons abroad.

Ukraine's crisis management structure includes the Main Situational Centre of Ukraine, the Governmental Situational Centre, the Situational Centre of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (referred to as the Situational Centre), the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, and other state-level situational centres. During the full-scale war with the Russian Federation, Ukraine has enhanced the capabilities of the Situational Centre and developed and implemented regulatory acts to govern its functioning. Its tasks include collecting, aggregating, and analysing data, to enable timely responses and decision-making to prevent potential crises within the AFU. The Situational Centre also monitors military personnel issues through a special application called 'Army+', launched in August 2024 to combat military bureaucracy.

Ukraine's cybersecurity processes and structures are defined though the law On the Basic Principles of Ensuring Cybersecurity of Ukraine, which sets out the responsibilities of the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection (SSSCIP), the Security Service of Ukraine, the National Police, and intelligence agencies. The SSSCIP coordinates the government's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-UA) and implements policies to protect state information resources. It plays a pivotal role alongside the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre established under the National Security and Defence Council.

In 2025, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine passed Law No. 11290 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2025), amending existing laws to enhance the protection of state information resources and critical infrastructure against cyber threats. This modernised legal framework aligns with European standards, in particular implementing recommendations from the NIS2 directive. Key provisions regulate the national cyber incident response system, critical infrastructure protection, institutional development, and training and cyber hygiene. Ukraine is also expanding partnerships with the private sector in cybersecurity. Critical enterprises host information and analytical centres, while platforms for sharing threat intelligence are being launched. Furthermore, Ukraine emphasises workforce development, with universities introducing specialised cybersecurity programmes, training centres established with Western partners' support, and joint exercises (e.g., regular drills with NATO).

Defence cooperation with key international partners, including EU and NATO countries and others involved in the Ramstein format (approximately 50 participants in total), has been a priority since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In March 2025, Ukraine's defence industry was granted equal participation opportunities to those of EU MS under the SAFE programme, and in April, the European Commission announced a EUR 910 million investment under the EDF, marking the first inclusion of Ukrainian defence companies in this initiative (European Union, European Commission (2025a). There are also cooperation programmes between Ukrainian and European defence companies intended to integrate Ukraine's defence industry into the EU ecosystem and facilitate Ukrainian participation in programmes such as EDIP and SAFE. The EU, meanwhile, is revising its military assistance strategy for Ukraine. Instead of supplying finished weaponry, discussions are underway to finance Ukraine's defence production. This approach might be more sustainable, given Europe's dwindling arms stockpiles. It is also cost-effective, reduces transportation expenses, positively impacts Ukraine's economy, and promotes the integration of Ukraine's defence industry with Europe.

NATO is also a key partner through the 2016 Comprehensive Assistance Package (enhanced in 2022 and 2023), aimed at rebuilding Ukraine's security and defence structures and aligning them fully with NATO standards. NATO launched the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine initiative at the 2024 Washington Summit to coordinate military equipment supplies and training efforts. Allies committed to EUR 40 billion in baseline funding for 2025, ensuring sustained security assistance. In 2024 alone, NATO members provided over EUR 50 billion in aid to Ukraine, with nearly 60 % contributed by European Allies and Canada. The first joint NATO-Ukraine institution, the Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre, was established in February 2025, in Bydgoszcz, Poland. Staffed by Ukrainian and NATO experts, its role is to analyse and apply lessons learned from the war with Russia, shaping defence strategies, policies, and operations. As of February 2025, 29 NATO member and partner states have signed bilateral security agreements with Ukraine.

Ukraine's defence industry has grown tremendously since the onset of the full-scale war with Russia, even as the economy overall has contracted. Since 2022, the government has prioritised attracting investments into the defence industry as the sector as vital for the country's survival. State programmes to bolster the defence industry include the State Preferential Credit Programme, government grants via the Diia Portal, support from the Innovation Development Fund, and organisational and grant assistance via the Brave1 Platform. Private investments in Ukrainian defence-tech, meanwhile, surged tenfold from 2023 to 2024, reaching approximately USD 50 million (estimates range from USD 35 to USD 50 million).

Efforts are also underway to remove bureaucratic and legislative barriers to foreign investment. For instance, Germany's Rheinmetall plans to establish a joint venture with a 51 % stake—previously impossible under Ukrainian law, which required state enterprises to hold controlling shares. Ukraine also intends to lift the wartime ban on arms exports and introduce a special tax regime for defence enterprises to stimulate recovery and prepare the sector for export.

As of 2025, Ukraine's defence production capacity significantly outpaces its procurement capacity. In 2024, defence production increased from USD 12 billion to USD 35 billion, enabling domestic manufacture of over 30 % of the weapons and ammunition used on the battlefield by the AFU. In the same year, the military sector accounted for one third of GDP growth.

Ammunition output increased 2.5 times between 2023 and 2024, electronic warfare systems 340 times, and self-propelled artillery units tripled. In 2024, over 2 million First Person View drones, nearly 2.5 million units of ammunition, and 324 new types of military equipment were produced. However, the industry can produce up to 5 million drones annually. The full potential for drone production—up to 5 million units per year—was not realised due to funding shortages, but the government aims to procure all available drones in 2025.

Innovations include four models of drone missiles with ranges up to 700 kilometres, making them capable of targeting 20 Russian airfields, and robotization of the military. Ukraine's defence industry now manufactures over 1 000 types of weaponry, ranging from artillery shells to long-range missile systems.

ANNEX B. LIST OF REFERENCES

Akhvlediani, T., et al., (2025), Resilience of Eastern Neighbourhood & Western Balkan Countries to Socio-Economic Threats, REUNIR Working Paper 4.2.

'Albania's ambitious military modernization plans' (2024), TemA, https://english.gazetatema.net/politics/albanias-ambitious-military-modernization-plans-i334540.

'Albanian army is strengthened, active forces are increased, high technology introduced' (2024), Euronews Albania, https://euronews.al/en/albanian-army-is-strengthened-active-forces-are-increased-high-technology-introduced/.

Amoris, L., et al. (2025), Assessment of Resilience Capabilities, REUNIR Working Paper 5.2.

Applegate R. A. D. and Moore J. R. (1990), 'The nature of military culture,' Defense Analysis 6(3), pp. 302-305, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07430179008405460.

Asllani, M. (2022), 'Cyber Attacks and Critical Infrastructure in Kosovo,' DCAF, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/imce/ECA/M.Asllani-YoungFaces2022.pdf.

Bada, M. (2015), 'Cybersecurity Capacity Assessment of the Republic of Kosovo,' Global Cybersecurity Capacity Centre, https://gcscc.ox.ac.uk/files/cmmreviewreportkosovojune2015pdf.

Balkans Policy Research Group (2023), 'Kosovo in the Face of Cybersecurity Threats: Critical Actions to Consolidate Resilience,' https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Cyber-Security.pdf.

Bami X. (2024), 'Kosovo Announces Start to Domestic Drone and Ammunition Production,' BalkanInsight, https://balkaninsight.com/2024/11/27/kosovo-announces-start-to-domestic-drone-and-ammunition-production/.

Beale, J. (2025), 'Nato chief is determined to give Trump a win with 5% defence spending plan,' BBC, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crljpwnr220o.

Becker, M., Flach, J. and von Ondarza, N. (2025), 'Third-State Participation in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy Opportunities and Conditions for the United Kingdom,' SWP, Working Paper, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/arbeitspapiere/Third-State_Participation_in_CSDP_Becker_Flach_Ondarza.pdf.

Bidenko, Y. (2025), 'How Ukraine Remains Resilient, Three Years On,' Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/02/how-ukraine-remains-resilient-three-years-on?lang=en.

Bilquin, B. (2025), 'European Peace Facility – For Ukraine, but not only,' European Parliamentary Research Service, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2025)772833.

Bino, B. (2024), 'Analytical Report: Resilience and Gaps in Albania's Responses to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference,' Center Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV), https://scidevcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FIMI-Analytical-Report-Albania_SCiDEV.pdf.

Brehon, N.-J. (2025), 'European support to the defence industry - Mid-term review of the European Defence Fund, Schuman Paper n° 779, Fondation Robert Schuman, www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/779-european-support-to-the-defence-industry-mid-term-review-of-the-european-defence-fund.

Bressan, S., Korb, L., and Rotmann, P. (2024), The Methodology for Threat Assessment to be Conducted in WP 3, 4 and 5, REUNIR Working Paper 2.4, https://reunir-horizon.eu/the-methodology-for-threat-assessment-tobe-conducted-in-wp3-4-and-5/.

Buçaj, E. (2024), 'Empowering Cybersecurity Awareness among The Citizens of Kosovo,' InterEULawEast, 11(1), 1-29, https://hrcak.srce.hr/318687.

Bukatiuk, U. (2025), 'Україна здатна виробляти 5 млн FPV-дронів на рік – Камишін [Ukraine is capable of producing 5 million FPV drones per year – Kamyshin],' Forbes, https://forbes.ua/news/ukraina-mozhe-viroblyati-po-5-mln-fpv-droniv-na-rik-kamishin-28032025-28390.

Cantone, C. (2025), 'Transition of Kosovo's Security Force into an army causes controversy and concern,' Euronews, https://www.euronews.com/2025/02/14/transition-of-kosovos-security-force-into-an-army-causes-controversy-and-concern.

Castagnoli, Riccardo (2024), 'Enhancing European Crisis Response: From EU Battlegroups to the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, Finabel, https://finabel.org/enhancing-european-crisis-response-from-eu-battlegroups-to-the-eu-rapid-deployment-capacity/.

Caucasus Research Resource Center (2024), 'Caucasus Barometer 2024 Georgia,' https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2024ge/codebook/.

Clapp, S. (2024), 'European defence industry programme (EDIP),' European Parliamentary Research Service, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762320/EPRS_BRI(2024)762320_EN.pdf.

Clem, R. and Finch, R. (2021), 'Crowded Skies and Turbulent Seas: Assessing the Full Scope of NATO-Russian Military Incidents,' War on the Rocks, https://warontherocks.com/2021/08/crowded-skies-and-turbulent-seas-assessing-the-full-scope-of-nato-russian-military-incidents/.

Cordet, M. (2025), 'PESCO Must Step Up,' ICDS, https://icds.ee/en/eu-defence-series-pesco-must-step-up/.

Csernatoni, R. and Oliveira Martins, B. (2019), 'The European Defence Fund: Key Issues and Controversies,' Peace Research Institute Oslo, Policy Brief 03/2019, www.prio.org/publications/11332.

Dafa, A. (2021), '(Un)Democratic Control of the Albanian Armed Forces: Centralisation of Defence Policy and Ineffective Oversight,' Institute for Democracy and Mediation, https://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Un-Democratic-Control-of-the-Albanian-Armed-Forces-1.pdf.

Defence Intelligence of Ukraine (2025), 'World First: Defence Intelligence of Ukraine Destroys Russian Su-30 Fighter Jet with a Sea Drone Strike,' https://gur.gov.ua/en/content/vpershe-u-sviti-voiny-hur-udarom-z-morskoho-drona-magura-znyshchyly-vorozhyi-boiovyi-litak.

Department of State (US) (2008), 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Macedonia,' https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/104441.htm.

Department of State (US) (2021), 'U.S. Relations With Kosovo, https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-kosovo/.

Dimitrievska, V. (2024), 'Kosovo takes first steps towards establishing defence industry,' Intellinews, https://www.intellinews.com/kosovo-takes-first-steps-towards-establishing-defence-industry-355447/.

Duro, F. (2023), 'Building and Maintaining Operational Military Capabilities in Albania in the Face of Current and Expected Security Challenges,' Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, https://csdgalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/10.27-Policy-Paper-Oper-capabilities-English-final.pdf.

Dyrmishi, A., Hallunaj, M., & Strati. (2024), 'Albania Security Barometer National Survey 2024,' Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/21240.pdf.

E-governance academy (2023), 'Archived data from 01.09.2023,' https://ncsi.ega.ee/ncsi-index/?archive=1.

Engage (2024), 'Publications,' https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications.

Embassy of France to Montenegro (2024), 'Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Center (WB3C),' https://me.ambafrance.org/Western-Balkans-Cyber-Capacity-Center-WB3C.

Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (2022), 'International Security and Estonia 2022,' https://www.valisluureamet.ee/doc/raport/2022-en.pdf.

'EU Sanctions Map' (2025), www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main.

European Union (2025), 'EUDIO at a glance,' https://eudis.europa.eu/eu-defence-innovation-office-kyiv-eudio_en.

European Union, Agency for Cybersecurity (2024), 'ENISA Threat Landscape 2024,' https://www.enisa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-11/ENISA%20Threat%20Landscape%202024_0.pdf.

European Union, Council of the European Union (2020), 'Council Decision establishing the general conditions under which third States could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects,' https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15529-2018-INIT/en/pdf.

European Union, Council of the European Union (2021a), 'Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Brussels, 15 December 2021), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53527/20211215-eap-joint-declaration-en.pdf.

European Union, Council of the European Union (2021b), 'Joint press statement following the sixth Association Council meeting between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova,' https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/28/joint-press-statement-following-the-sixth-association-council-meeting-between-the-european-union-and-the-republic-of-moldova/.

European Union, Council of the European Union (2024a), 'Council Conclusions on the PESCO Strategic Review,' 14375/24,' https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14375-2024-INIT/en/pdf.

European Union, Council of the European Union (2024b), 'European Peace Facility,' https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/.

European Union, Council of the European Union (2025), 'Moldova: Council extends the mandate of the EU civilian mission for two years,' https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/05/21/moldova-council-extends-the-mandate-of-the-eu-civilian-mission-for-two-years/.

European Union, European Commission (2020), 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. 2020 Strategic Foresight Report. Strategic Foresight – Charting the Course Towards a More Resilient Europe,' https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0493.

European Union, European Commission (2023a), 'Albania Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023b), 'Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/bosnia-and-herzegovina-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023c) 'Georgia Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/georgia-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023d), 'Kosovo Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023e), 'Moldova Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/moldova-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023f), 'Montenegro Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023g), 'North Macedonia Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023h), 'Serbia Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/serbia-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2023i), 'Ukraine Report 2023,' https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/ukraine-report-2023_en.

European Union, European Commission (2024a), 'ASAP | Boosting defence production.' https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/asap-boosting-defence-production_en.

European Union, European Commission (2024b), 'ASAP Results Factsheet,' https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/regulation-support-ammunition-production-asap-aims-reinforcing-and-ramping-ammunition-production_en.

European Union, European Commission (2024c), 'Questions and answers on the European Defence Industrial Strategy and the European Defence Industry Programme,' https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_24_1322.

European Union, European Commission (2024d). 'Standard Eurobarometer 101. Public opinion in the European Union. April–May 2024,' https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3216.

European Union, European Commission (c. 2024), 'Resilience Dashboards,' https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2020-strategic-foresight-report/resilience-dashboards_en.

European Union, European Commission (2025a), 'Commission mobilises EUR 910 million to boost European defence and close capability gaps,' https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1116.

European Union, European Commission (2025b), 'EDF | Developing tomorrow's defence capabilities,' https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en.

European Union, European Commission (2025c), 'EDIP | A Dedicated Programme for Defence,' https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edip-dedicated-programme-defence_en.

European Union, European Commission (2025d), 'EDIRPA | Procuring together defence capabilities,' https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edirpa-addressing-capability-gaps_en.

European Union, European Commission (2025e), 'EDIS | European defence industrial strategy,' factsheet, https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/333faee1-a851-44a6-965b-713247515d39_en.

European Union, European Commission (2025f), 'EDIS | Our common defence industrial strategy,' https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edis-our-common-defence-industrial-strategy_en.

European Union, European Commission (2025g), 'Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) through the reinforcement of European defence industry Instrument, https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6d6f889c-e58d-4caa-8f3b-8b93154fe206_en?filename=SAFE%20Regulation.pdf.

European Union, European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2025), 'White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030,' https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019_en?filename=White%20paper%20for%20European%20defence%20%E2%80%93%20Readiness%202030.pdf.

European Union, European Council (2025a), 'European Peace Facility,' www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/.

European Union, European Council (2025b), 'EU sanctions against Russia explained,' www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-explained/.

European Union, European Council (2025c), 'SAFE: Council adopts EUR 150 billion boost for joint procurement on European security and defence,' https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/05/27/safe-council-adopts-150-billion-boost-for-joint-procurement-on-european-security-and-defence/.

European Union, European Council (2025d), 'Timeline - European Peace Facility,' www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/timeline-european-peace-facility/.

European Union, European Defence Agency (2024), 'What we do. And what it means for you,' https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/eda-in-short.

European Union, European Defence Agency (2025), 'Single European Sky,' https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/all-activities/activities-search/single-european-sky.

European Union, European External Action Service (2020), 'EULEX Kosovo: European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo - Civilian Mission,' https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eulex-kosovo/eulex-kosovo-european-union-rule-law-mission-kosovo-civilian-mission_und_en?s=333.

European Union, European External Action Service (2022), 'Partnerships,' https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/partnerships_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2023), 'Questions & Answers: Third States' participation in PESCO projects,' https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/questions-answers-third-states%E2%80%99-participation-pesco-projects_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2024a), 'Albania: New Security and Defence Partnership with the EU to strengthen capabilities and cooperation,' www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/albania-new-security-and-defence-partnership-eu-strengthen-capabilities-and-cooperation_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2024b), 'EU - Moldova Security & Defence Partnership,' https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-moldova-security-defence-partnership_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2024c), 'North Macedonia: New Security and Defence Partnership with the EU to strengthen capabilities and cooperation,' www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/north-macedonia-new-security-and-defence-partnership-eu-strengthen-capabilities-and-cooperation_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2024d), 'A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence,' https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2025a), 'Missions and Operations,' www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_en.

European Union, European External Action Service (2025b), 'Common Security and Defence Policy: EU Rapid Deployment Capacity becomes operational,' https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/common-security-and-defence-policy-eu-rapid-deployment-capacity-becomes-operational_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20RDC%20framework%20allows,maritime%2C%20space%20and%20cyber%20components.

Fitzgerald, C. (2024), 'Who is Acting, Who is Reacting? Does the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity Signal a New Moment in European Defence?, The Institute of International and European Affairs, www.iiea.com/blog/who-is-acting-who-is-reacting-does-the-eu-rapid-deployment-capacity-signal-a-new-moment-in-european-defence.

Flessenkemper, T. and Helly, D. (2013), 'Ten years after: lessons from the EUPM in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2002-2012,' European Institute of Security Studies, https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/reports/ten-years-after-lessons-eupm-bosnia-and-herzegovina-2002-2012.

Gallup International (2024), 'Fewer People are Willing to Fight for Their Country Compared to Ten Years Ago,' www.gallup-international.bg/en/48127/fewer-people-are-willing-to-fight-for-their-country-compared-to-ten-years-ago/.

Global Firepower Review (2025), '2025 Albania Military Strength,' https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=albania.

Government of the Republic of Serbia (2024), 'Mandatory military service from next September,' www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/231682/mandatory-military-service-from-next-september.php.

Institutul de Politici Publice (2025), 'Public Opinion Barometer. Republic of Moldova,' http://bop.ipp.md/en.

International Institute for Strategic Studies (2024), The Military Balance, London, Routledge.

Ioannides, I. (2009), 'The EU Police Mission (EUPOL Proxima) and the European Union Police Advisory Team (EUPAT) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,' GSDRC, https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-eu-police-mission-eupol-proxima-and-the-european-union-police-advisory-team-eupat-in-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia/.

Itsik, R., Xhixha, H., and Frey, A. H. (2024), Democracy and the 'citizen-soldier' military: The case of Kosovo and Israel,' Security and Defence Quarterly, 47(3), pp. 74-92, https://securityanddefence.pl/pdf-192308-115051?filename=Democracy%20and%20the.pdf.

Jano, D. (2022), 'Albania Moving from Security Receiver to Security Provider,' in N. Džuverović and V. Stojarová (eds), Peace and Security in the Western Balkans, Routledge, pp. 50-69, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003276661-5.

Karabelias, G. (2020), 'Albania: Civil-Military Relations in the Post–Cold War Era,' Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1790.

Karjalainen, T. and Mustasilta, K. (2023), 'European Peace Facility: from a conflict prevention tool to a defender of security and geopolitical interests,' TEPSA, Brief 05/2023, https://tepsa.eu/analysis/european-peace-facility-from-a-conflict-prevention-tool-to-a-defender-of-security-and-geopolitical-interests/.

Katzenstein, P. J., & Seybert, L. A. (2018), 'Protean Power and Uncertainty: Exploring the Unexpected in World Politics.' International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 62(1), pp. 80–93, https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx092.

Kenez, L. (2024), 'Turkish military accelerates training of Kosovo forces,' Nordic Monitor, https://nordicmonitor.com/2024/12/turkish-military-accelerates-training-of-kosovo-forces/.

Kosovo Police (2023), 'Kosovo Police Annual Work Report 2023,' https://www.kosovopolice.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/RAPORTI-I-PUNES-PER-VITIN-2023-ANGLISHT.pdf.

Kroçi, V. (2023), 'Kosovo's Take on Cybersecurity,' Kosovo Centre for Security Studies, https://qkss.org/al/publikimet/kosovos-take-on-cybersecurity/.

Kurowska, X. (2009), 'The Rule-of-Law Mission in Georgia (EUJUST Themis),' GSDRC, https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-rule-of-law-mission-in-georgia-eujust-themis/.

Kyrylenko, O. (2025, 'Чи буде Україна воювати корпусами? Розбір УП [Will Ukraine fight with corps? Analysis of the Ukrainian Armed Forces]', Ukrainian Pravda, https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2025/04/30/7509779/.

Lawrence, T. et al. (2025), Military Threat Assessment in Eastern Neighbourhood & Western Balkans, REUNIR Working Paper 3.1. https://reunir-horizon.eu/d3-1-military-threat-assessment-in-eastern-neighbourhood-western-balkan-countries/.

Lawrenson, T. and Sabatino, E. (2024), 'The Impact of the European Defence Fund on Cooperation with Third-country Entities,' International Institute of Strategic Studies, https://www.iiss.org/research-paper/2024/10/the-impact-of-the-european-defence-fund-on-cooperation-with-third-country-entities/.

Lazarou, E. and Lamprou, P. (2025), 'The EU's new bilateral security and defence partnerships,' European Parliamentary Research Service, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2025)767215.

Maciata, K. (2025), 'Fortifying the Baltic Sea - NATO's defence and deterrence strategy for hybrid threats,' NATO Review, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2025/05/05/fortifying-the-baltic-sea-natos-defence-and-deterrence-strategy-for-hybrid-threats/index.html.

Malyasov, D. (2025), 'Serbia deploys Chinese-made FK-3 air defense system,' Defence Blog, https://defence-blog.com/serbia-deploys-chinese-made-fk-3-air-defense-system/.

Mazaar, M. (2018), 'Understanding Deterrence,' The RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE295.html.

Mejino-Lopez, J. and Wollf, G. B. (2024), 'A European defence industrial strategy in a hostile world,' Bruegel, Policy Brief Issue 29.24, www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/european-defence-industrial-strategy-hostile-world.

Ministry of Defence (Albania) (2024), 'Historic Arrival of Albania`s first UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters,' https://www.mod.gov.al/eng/strategies-activities/1611-historic-arrival-of-albania-s-first-uh-60-black-hawk-helicopters.

Ministry of Defence (Kosovo) (2023), 'Newsletter,' https://mod.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/0b16bf28-faf6-43f4-910a-9fca876964c7.pdf.

Ministry of Defence (Ukraine) (2023), 'Про затвердження Концепції військової кадрової політики в системі Міністерства оборони України на період до 2028 року [On approval of the Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the system of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine for the period until 2028],' https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0637322-23#Text.

Ministry of Defence (Ukraine) (2025a), 'Про затвердження Стратегії залучення, розвитку та утримання людського капіталу в силах оборони України на період до 2027 року [Strategy for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Human Capital in the Defence Forces until 2027],' https://www.mil.gov.ua/content/public_discussion/03_09_2024_proiekt_nakazu.pdf.

Ministry of Defence (Ukraine) (2025b), 'В Армія+ запустилося опитування про ставлення до військової служби [A survey on attitudes towards military service has been launched on Army+],' https://mod.gov.ua/news/v-armiya-zapustilosya-opituvannya-pro-stavlennya-do-vijskovoyi-sluzhbi.

Ministry of Defence (Ukraine) (nd), 'Сили безпілотних систем [The Power of Unmanned Systems],' https://mod.gov.ua/pro-nas/sili-bezpilotnih-sistem.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kosovo) (2023), 'National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023-2027,' https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/EN/2692/Strategjia%20p%C3%ABr%20Siguri%20Kibernetike%20-%20ENG..pdf.

'Montenegro's state infrastructure hit by cyber attack - officials,' (2022), Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/montenegros-state-infrastructure-hit-by-cyber-attack-officials-2022-08-26/.

Muharremi, R., and Ramadani, A. (2024), Transforming a Guerilla into a Regular Army, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-62817-7_5.

Mulleti, N. (2023), 'EU-NATO Cooperation in the Area of Crisis Management: Case of Kosovo,' European Journal of Economics, Law and Social Sciences, 7(2), pp. 64-70. https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/ejels-2023-0009.

National Cyber Security Authority (Albania) (NKSA) (2024), 'Monitoring of National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020-2025,' https://aksk.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Monitoring-of-the-National-Cyber-Security-Strategy-2022.pdf.

NATO (1949), 'The North Atlantic Treaty. Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949,' https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm.

NATO (1999), 'Statement by the Secretary General of NATO, Dr. Javier Solana, on the Demilitarization of the UCK,' https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-125e.htm.

NATO, Allied Air Command (2021), 'NATO officially welcomes the Republic of North Macedonia into Collective Air Policing System,' https://ac.nato.int/archive/2021/nato-officially-welcomes-the-republic-of-north-macedonia-into-collective-air-policing-system.

NATO (2014), 'Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales,' Press Release (2014) 120, 5 September 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

NATO (2023a), 'NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and forces,' https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics_50068.htm.

NATO (2023b), 'The consultation process and Article 4,' https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49187.htm.

NATO (2024a), 'Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2024),' https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_226465.htm.

NATO (2024b), 'Resilience, civil preparedness and Article 3,' https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132722.htm.

NATO (2024c), 'Countering hybrid threats,' https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm.

NATO (2025), 'NATO's role in Kosovo,' https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/topics_48818.htm?selectedLocale=en.

Office of the Prime Minister (Kosovo) (2022), 'Kosovo Security Strategy 2022-2027,' www.//kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2-Strategjia-e-Sigurise-e-Kosoves-ENG.pdf.

Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023), 'Law No. 08/L-173 on Cybersecurity,' https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=70933.

Öztürk, M. (2025), 'Albania, Kosovo, and Croatia sign joint declaration of cooperation on defense,' AA, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/albania-kosovo-and-croatia-sign-joint-declaration-of-cooperation-on-defense/3513345.

Paolucci, F. (2021), 'PESCO: advantages and disadvantages,' https://eurodefense.pt/pesco-advantages-and-disadvantages/.

PESCO (nd), 'Binding Commitments,' https://www.pesco.europa.eu/binding-commitments/.

PESCO (2025): News and Projects. www.pesco.europa.eu/.

PISA/CBS (2022), 'Percepții Publice Asupra Sistemului de Securitate si Apărare a RM [Public Perceptions on the Security and Defence System of the RM],' https://pisa.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/5_Sondaj-Perceptii-publice-asupra-sistemului-de-securitate-si-aparare-a-Republicii-Moldova.pdf.

Prasad, A. (2025), 'Виробничий потенціал ВПК торік зріс утричі, до $35 млрд – Сметанін [The production potential of the military-industrial complex tripled last year, to $35 billion – Smetanin],' Forbes, https://forbes.ua/news/virobnichiy-potentsial-vpk-torik-zris-vtrichi-do-35-mlrd-smetanin-12052025-29656.

President of the Republic of Moldova (2023), 'National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova,' https://presedinte.md/app/webroot/uploaded/Proiect%20SSN_2023_En.pdf.

President of Ukraine (2016), 'УКАЗ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА УКРАЇНИ №240/2016. Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 20 травня 2016 року 'Про Стратегічний оборонний бюлетень України' [Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 240/2016. On the decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine of May 20, 2016 'On the Strategic Defence Bulletin of Ukraine']', https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2402016-20137.

Pugh, M. (2000, 'Civil-Military Relations in the Kosovo Crisis: An Emerging Hegemony?' Security Dialogue, 31(2), pp. 229-242, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0967010600031002008.

'Qu'est-ce que l'Eufor? [What is EUFOR?]' (2017), toute l'europe, https://www.touteleurope.eu/l-ue-dans-le-monde/qu-est-ce-que-l-eufor/#:~:text=L%27op%C3%A9ration%20EUFOR%20Concordia%20a%20pris%20la%20rel%C3%A8ve,pour%20construire%20un%20pays%20stable%20et%20d%C3%A9mocratique.

Razumkov Centre (2024), 'Assessing the situation in the country, trust in social institutions, belief in victory, and attitude to elections (March, 2024),' https://razumkov.org.ua/en/sociology/press-releases/assessing-the-situation-in-the-country-trust-in-social-institutions-belief-in-victory-and-attitude-to-elections-march-2024.

Regional Cooperation Council (2024), 'Balkan Public Barometer,' www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/results/2/public.

Republic of Albania (2020), National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020-2025, https://aksk.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/National-Cybersecurity-Strategy-and-its-Action-Plan-2020-2025.pdf.

Republic of Albania (2024a), Cyber Defense Strategy 2024-2028, https://www.mod.gov.al/images/strategji-MoD/2024/strategjia-Mbrojtje-Kibernetike-2024-2028-290324.pdf.

Republic of Albania (2024b), National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania, https://www.mod.gov.al/images/PDF/2024/SSK-NSS-english.pdf.

Ruitenberg, R. (2024), 'Serbia to buy 12 Rafale fighter jets in nod to European industry,' DefenceNews, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2024/08/30/serbia-to-buy-12-rafale-fighter-jets-in-nod-to-european-industry/.

Samus, M. (2025), 'Russia's War in Ukraine: Drone-Centric Warfare,' ICDS, https://icds.ee/en/russias-war-in-ukraine-drone-centric-warfare/.

Santopinto, F. (2024), 'Understanding the Challenges of EDIP and European Defence. The Main Proposals on the Table Isolated and Explained,' Armament Industry European Research Group, https://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/ARES_2024_09_EDIP_Factsheets.pdf.

Si, N. (2025), 'U.S. Embassy Announces Suspension of Funds for Albanian Institutions,' Euronews Albania, https://euronews.al/en/u-s-embassy-announces-suspension-of-funds-for-albanian-institutions/.

SIPRI (2025), 'Military Expenditure Database,' https://milex.sipri.org/sipri.

Stojkovski, B. (2022), 'North Macedonia Probes Election Day Cyber Attacks,' BalkanInsight, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/07/17/north-macedonia-probes-election-day-cyberattacks/.

Sullivan, C. (2025). 'Kosovo Liberation Army,' Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kosovo-Liberation-Army.

Szyszczak, E. (2025), 'Sanctions effectiveness: what lessons three years into the war on Ukraine?' Economics Observatory, www.economicsobservatory.com/sanctions-effectiveness-what-lessons-three-years-into-the-war-on-ukraine.

Terrone, A. (2025), 'Three years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, how effective are the EU's sanctions?' Transparency International EU, https://transparency.eu/three-years-since-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-how-effective-are-the-eus-sanctions/.

Tesija, V. & Bami, X. (2025), 'Serbia Angered by Defence Pact Linking Croatia, Albania and Kosovo,' BalkanInsight, https://balkaninsight.com/2025/03/20/serbia-angered-by-defence-pact-linking-croatia-albania-and-kosovo/.

Thomas, R. (2024), 'Albania's defence spending forecast to nearly double over next five years,' Airforce Technology, https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/albanias-defence-spending-forecast-to-nearly-double-over-next-five-years/.

Transparency International (2015), 'Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index,' https://government.defenceindex.org/#close.

Transparency International (2020), 'Government Defence Integrity Index,' https://ti-defence.org/gdi/.

Transparency International (2024), 'GDI 2025: A new chapter in fighting corruption in defence & security sectors worldwide,' https://ti-defence.org/gdi-2025-government-defence-integrity-index-corruption-anti-corruption/.

Trkanjec, Z. (2021), 'Agreement on defence cooperation with Kosovo,' Euractiv, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/agreement-on-defence-cooperation-with-kosovo/.

Ukrainian Council of Armaments (2025), 'Український Defence-Tech Переживає Інвестиційний Бум: Обсяги Фінансування Зросли в 10 Разів – Звіт аналітичної групи D.I.D [Ukrainian Defense-Tech Is Experiencing an Investment Boom: Financing Volumes Have Increased 10 Times – Report by the DID Analytical Group],' https://ucdi.org.ua/news-ua/ukrainskyi-defence-tech-perezhyvaie-investytsiinyi-bum-obsiahy-finansuvannia-zrosly-v-10-raziv-zvit-analitychnoi-hrupy-d-i-d/.

Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2018), 'ЗАКОН УКРАЇНИ Про національну безпеку України [Law of Ukraine. On the national security of Ukraine]' https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2469-19#Text.

Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2025), 'ЗАКОН УКРАЇНИ. Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо захисту інформації та кіберзахисту державних інформаційних ресурсів, об'єктів критичної інформаційної інфраструктури [Law of Ukraine. On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Information Protection and Cybersecurity of State Information Resources and Critical Information Infrastructure Facilities],' https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4336-IX#Text.

Vulović, M. (2023), 'Western Balkan Foreign and Security Ties with External Actors,' Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Comment N° 8, https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C08/.

Yermak, N. and Farrell, F. (2025), 'As Ukraine's fate hangs in the balance, 'Soviet' command culture damages war effort,' Kyiv Independent, https://kyivindependent.com/as-ukraines-fate-hangs-in-the-balance-soviet-command-culture-damages-war-effort/.

Zagoriy Foundation (2024), 'Дослідження сфери благодійності [Research on the field of charity],' https://zagoriy.foundation/publications/doslidzhennya-sferi-blagodijnosti-v-ukrayini-2024-u-cifrax-insajtax-ta-visnovkax/.

Zaluzhny, V. (2025), 'Про організацію системи управління у Збройних Силах України. Погляд Валерія Залужного [On the organization of the management system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Valeriy Zaluzhny's view]', Militarnyi, https://militarnyi.com/uk/articles/pro-organizatsiyu-systemy-upravlinnya-u-zbrojnyh-sylah-ukrayiny-poglyad-valeriya-zaluzhnogo/.

'Оборонна економіка майбутнього: як Україна інвестує в силу і технології [The Defense Economy of the Future: How Ukraine Invests in Power and Technology]' (2025), Financial Pulse, https://finpuls.com/ua/oboronna-ekonomika-maibutnoho-yak-ukrayina-investuie-v.html.

'УКРАЇНА ЗНОВУ НА СВІТОВОМУ РИНКУ ОЗБРОЄНЬ: ЯК ЦЕ МОЖЕ ТА МАЄ ВИГЛЯДАТИ [Ukraine on the Global Arms Market Again: What It Can and Should Look Like]' (2025), Defence and Industrial Courier, https://opk.com.ua/48823-2/.

'Україн а готує новий податковий режим для оборонної промисловості та експорт зброї [Ukraine is preparing a new tax regime for the defence industry and arms exports]' (2025) AgroReview, https://agroreview.com/content/agropolitics/ukrayina-gotuye-novyj-podatkovyj-rezhym/.

ANNEX C. LIST OF INTERVIEWS

<u>Albania</u>

ALB01   Arjan Dyrmishi, Executive Director, Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance, Albania, 17 March 2025.

ALB02   Researcher, Albania, 17 March 2025.

ALB03   Security sector researcher, Albania, 17 March 2025.

ALB04   Defence official, Albania, 17 March 2025.

<u>Bosnia and Herzegovina</u>

BIH01   Sead Turčalo, Associate Professor, Dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, 21 March 2025.

BIH02   Kenan Hodžić, Faculty of Criminal Justice, Criminology, and Security Studies, University of Sarajevo, 21 March 2025.

BIH03   Berko Zečević, Associate Professor, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Sarajevo, 21 March 2025.

BIH04   Goran Kovačević, Professor, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Sarajevo, 21 March 2025.

BIH05   Academic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 21 March 2025.

<u>Kosovo</u>

KOS01   Mentor Vrajolli, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, 24 March 2025.

KOS02   Fatos Makolli, Director of the Crime Investigation Division, Kosovo Police, 24 March 2025 (speaking in a personal capacity).

<u>Montenegro</u>

MNE01   Biljana Papović, State Secretary, Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro, 19 March 2025.

MNE02   Policy analyst, Montenegro, 8 April 2025.

MNE03   Jovana Marović, PhD, former Minister for European Affairs of Montenegro and expert in EU integration, 20 March 2025.

MNE04   Milan Jovanović, 19 March 2025.

North Macedonia

MKD01   Zoran Nechev, Associate Head of the Centre for European Integration, Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje, 26 March 2025.

MKD02   Journalist, North Macedonia, 27 March 2025.

MKD03   Andreja Stojkovski, Executive Director and Senior Researcher-Analyst, Prespa Institute, 27 March 2025.

MKD04   Simonida Kacarska, Director of the European Policy Institute, 10 April 2025.

MKD05   Dragan Tilev, State Counsellor for EU Affairs and Coordination Secretariat for European Affairs, Ministry for European Affairs, 26 March 2025.

MKD06   Former adviser, North Macedonia, 26 March 2025.

MKD07   Policy researcher, North Macedonia, 31 March 2025.

Serbia

SRB01   Iztok Bojović, Researcher, 28 March 2025.

SRB02   Researcher, Serbia, 31 March 2025.

SRBFG01   Focus group with experts, Belgrade, 28 March 2025.

Georgia

GEO01   Academic, Georgia, 4 April 2025.

GEO02   MFA official, 19 February 2025.

GEO03   Researchers, Georgia, 23 December 2024.

GEO04   Researchers, Georgia, 20 February 2025.

GEO05   EU official, Georgia, 25 February 2025.

GEO06   Shorena Lortkipanidze, Civil Council on Defense and Security, Georgia, 21 February 2025.

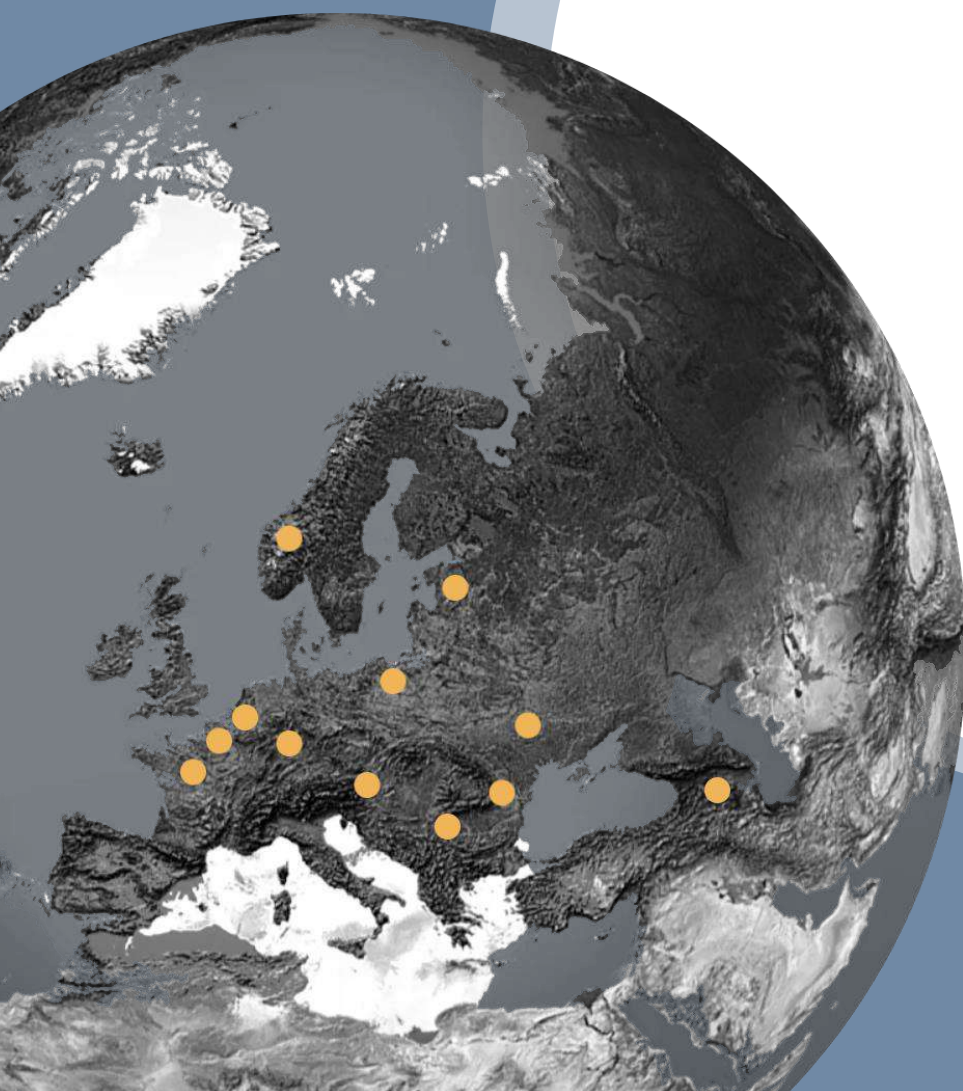GEO07   Business representative, Georgia, 12 March 2025.

GEO08   Business representative, Georgia, 20 February 2025.

GEO09   Academic, Georgia, 11 March 2025.

GEO10   Giorgi Shaishmelashvili, former defence civil servant, 14 January 2025.

GEO11   Giorgi Khishtovani, Policy and Management Consulting Group, Georgia, 20 February 2025.

GEO12   Academic, Georgia, 6 March 2025.

GEO13   Academic, Georgia, 19 February 2025.

GEO14   Akaki Tsomaia, Socio-economic field expert, 21 February 2025.

GEO15   Tamta Mikeladze, 20 February 2025.

Moldova

MDA01   Government official, Moldova, 6 February 2025.

MDA02   Expert, International research centre, Moldova, 6 February 2025.

MDAFG01   Focus group with experts, Chisinau, 4 February 2025.

Ukraine

UKR01   Analyst, civil society, 17 March 2025.

UKR02   Mykhailo Samus, Director of New Geopolitics Research Network, 12 March 2025.

UKR03   Military expert, 14 March 2025.