

## TIME TO ACT TO BREAK SILOS IN SPACE AND BETTER SUPPORT SECURITY AND DEFENCE



The traditional lines between civilian security and defence in Europe are vanishing. People affected by crises and security actors in the field are facing challenges increasingly induced by climate change as well as crises resulting from war. They need help and support. European policy-makers are reacting to the situation: more than €50 billion have been made available to Ukraine by the EU and its Member States for humanitarian assistance, emergency budget and military support; Germany unblocked €30 billion for reconstruction after the floods in 2021. European governments are increasingly addressing security and defence through a whole-of-government approach, beyond the perimeter of the Ministries of Interior and Defence. The European and foreign policy dimension of the challenges, and their duality, are being understood.

At the same time, the strategic importance of space starts to be recognised, as can be seen with the creation of military space organisations in several countries and the higher prominence of the topic on the political agenda. A prime example is the EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence, which acknowledges the dual-use nature of many space solutions, and advocates for greater interconnection between space and security and defence.

With the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the general public has directly witnessed for the first time the actual value of space, as Earth observation, communications and navigation satellites provide help to both civil society and military actors. Yet, this support from space primarily originates from U.S. entities. U.S. commercial companies are supplying Earth observation information (e.g. Maxar) and connectivity (e.g. Starlink), and have been very responsive and instrumental in providing critical help to Ukrainian authorities and people. In comparison, European support through space solutions has been rather reduced in scale, thus not being fully in line with the intentions expected from a €50 billion aid package.

Europe has no clear framework for programmes that would link security policy priorities with space policy decisions to secure fresh funding and generate concrete actions delivering the urgently needed space solutions in the field. In parallel, other space powers have since long defined their industrial capacity and capability to innovate as part of their security and defence strategy. They also increasingly leverage commercial dynamics. Therefore, like in the United States, a European framework should fully include support to industry competitiveness and commercial efforts, in order to safeguard Europe's ability to develop and implement the required technologies, systems and services.

Implementation mechanisms exist in Europe in the civilian space domain, in particular with ESA, and many of the developments entrusted to ESA by its Member States already concern technologies and systems that can later be used for dual-use applications. European space industry, in cooperation with ESA and other public stakeholders, also contribute to the development of these capabilities. It has since long used them to operate in global markets and respond to commercial needs as much as to military ones.

In this context, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ESA Security Conference, co-organised by ESA and ESPI on 16-17 May 2023, provided further insights. More than 250 participants and 40 speakers took part in the event, about twice as many as during the first conference in 2021. Contributions from national, European and international institutions, industry, think tanks as well as security users defined the debate. The Conference reflected on the European response that space can provide to current and upcoming security challenges, in particular through better integration of security aspects into space programmes. Two points received increased attention: the relevance of better involving users and solution providers in the development of space programmes; and the need to consider a competitive space industry as a tool and integral part of a European security policy.

Space endeavours in Europe need to ensure that all relevant stakeholders work together and join their efforts to reach common objectives in support of security and defence actors. Implementation action is urgently required to create the building block precursors and demonstration missions to prepare full-fledged operational programmes. Synergies between the initiatives and investments at national and European levels should be leveraged. The Civil Security from Space Programme of ESA is one small but important example in this direction. Similar approaches are also urgently required from other actors, including national military space organisations, in a federated European effort.

Yours sincerely,



*Hermann Ludwig Moeller*  
Director of ESPI