





POLICY PAPER

How can the EU Find New Ways to Engage in Security and Defense Cooperation with Eastern Partnership Countries?



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HOW CAN THE EU FIND NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE IN SECURITY AND DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES?

Background

Since Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, Russia has been employing an increasingly aggressive strategy towards its post-Soviet neighbours. During the crisis it sought to destabilize Georgia's separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Georgia was also the target of cyber-attacks and campaigns disinformation by Russia. The war only prompted weak reactions from the European Union¹. Similarly, the March 2014 Russian military incursion in the eastern Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine provoked a mild reaction from the EU. The rounds of sanctions only had a limited effect on the Russian regime². These two experiences lead the Kremlin to believe that they could restore Russia's old sphere of influence in post-Soviet countries with total impunity and receive only a weak reaction from the West.

Similarly to Georgia, Moldova faces the challenge posed by a break-away region, Transnistria, where Russian-speaking separatists are backed by Russia. The war in Ukraine magnified the vulnerability of Transnistria to attacks by Russia, as strategically, it represents a way to cut off Ukraine from the Black Sea and weaken its economy. Russia keeps hold on the region by keeping on its soil a permanent force of 1,500 troops and around 20,000 tonnes of Soviet-era military equipment³. It is not unlikely it could target Moldova through covert hybrid warfare or through a full-blown military invasion⁴. The Moldovan defence ministry has recently admitted it would lack the necessary military equipment and training of troops to face Russian aggression⁵.

The six European Partnership (EaP) countries all signed Association Agreements (AAs) with the EU in 2014, which outline economic and political reforms aiming at aligning these countries closer to the EU. However, the AAs signed with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are by far the most comprehensive and ambitious and contain various security and defence provisions⁶. To further deepen their European integration the three countries signed in May 2021 a Memorandum to establish a joint coordination and cooperation format – the 'Associated Trio'⁷.

In terms of defence and security they have manifested a strong wish to align themselves with EU standards and cooperate as part as the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)⁸, which signals a strong willingness to move away from Russia and closer to the European Union and its values. Since the European Partnership framework is based on the free will and individual preferences of each partner country⁹, this provides considerable legitimacy for the EU to further integrate the

¹ Dickinson, P. 2021, *The 2008 Russo-Georgian War: Putin's green light*, Atlantic Council, accessed 17 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-2008-russo-georgian-war-putins-green-light/>>.

² Ibid

³ Economist, 2022, *What is Transnistria and why does it matter to Russia?*, accessed 25 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2022/04/28/what-is-transnistria-and-why-does-it-matter-to-russia>>.

⁴ Minzarari, D. 2022, *The next war: How Russian hybrid aggression could threaten Moldova*, accessed 25 Oct. 2022, <<https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-next-war-how-russian-hybrid-aggression-could-threaten-moldova/>>.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ European External Action Service, *Eastern Partnership*, accessed 21 Oct. 2022, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership_en>.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2021, *Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova have signed the Memorandum founding the "Associated Trio"*, accessed 8 Nov. 2022, <<https://mfa.gov.ge/News/%E2%80%8Bsaqartvelom,-ukrainam-da-moldovam-evrointegraciis.aspx?lang=en-US>>.

⁸ Mission of Ukraine of the European Union, 2021, *Joint Statement issued by the Heads of State/Government of Association Trio – Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine following the 6th Eastern Partnership Summit*, accessed 21 Oct. 2022, <<https://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/news/spilna-zayava-glav-derzhavuryadiv-asocijovanogo-trio-gruziyi-respubliki-moldova-ta-ukrayini-za-pidsumkami-6-go-samitu-shidnogo-partnerstva>>.

⁹ EEAS, 2022, *Eastern Partnership*, External Action Service, accessed 18 Oct. 2022, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership_en>.

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Associated into the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

Historically, EU Member states have shown little political will to invest in the EU's defence capabilities. However, in the words of De Hoop Scheffer and Weber¹⁰, Russia's war in Ukraine has led to the 'geopolitical awakening' of the European Union. The EU's response to the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, has exceeded expectations in terms of its scope and the speed with which several decisions were adopted. EU leaders have adopted the most comprehensive rounds of sanctions yet implemented against Russia. It is also the first time that the EU financed the purchase and delivery of weapons to a country under attack. This demonstrates the EU's ability to respond rapidly in crisis management situations in its neighbourhood, and to reach consensus over substantial and far-reaching sanctions packages¹¹.

The war in Ukraine also gave the EaP framework a geopolitical dimension¹²¹³. Becoming a holistic security provider in the EaP region is essential to push back against Russian influence. Guaranteeing security in its Eastern neighbourhood is also tied to EU Member States' own security, as HR/ VP Joseph Borrell stated that Ukraine's security "will be our security"¹⁴. It is also central to the EU's ambition to gain strategic autonomy. In addition to soft power, this crisis has shown that developing hard military capabilities, is equally important to counter hybrid threats. In order to guarantee stability and security in its neighbourhood, and to protect the sovereignty of the Associated Trio, the EU needs to develop new policies and initiatives to build closer cooperation with those three countries.

In this policy paper, the approach taken to strategic autonomy is that of 'emancipation'¹⁵, which aims at enhancing the EU's capacity to conduct missions and operations in its Eastern neighbourhood without having to rely on the military support of NATO or the U.S. In this context, the EU would assume more responsibilities within NATO, while also continuing and strengthening the EU-U.S. alliance¹⁶. Currently, the EU spends a lot more than the U.S. on Central and Eastern European countries, which helps finance reforms and contribute to stability in the region. Through NATO, EU member states spend a total of \$230 billion every year, compared to only \$30 billion for the U.S., which directly goes towards European security¹⁷. The strategic interests of the US are now centred elsewhere than on Europe. Rather, the U.S. has declared having turned its attention towards China, with whom relations have become increasingly adversarial over the past six years¹⁸.

¹⁰ De Hoop Scheffer, A., & Weber, G. 2022, *Russia's War on Ukraine: the EU's Geopolitical Awakening*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Insights, accessed 17 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.gmfus.org/news/russias-war-ukraine-eus-geopolitical-awakening>>.

¹¹ The Economist 2022, *The EU's unity over Ukraine has given it surprising heft*, The Economist, accessed 17 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.economist.com/europe/the-eus-unity-overukraine-has-given-it-surprising-heft/21808306>>.

¹² Paul, A. and Ciolan, i. 2021, *Lessons from the Eastern Partnership: Looking back to move forward*, European Policy Centre, accessed 17 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.epc.eu/en/publications/Lessons-from-the-Eastern-Partnership-Looking-back-to-move-forward~44d130>>.

¹³ Cadier, David (2019) "The Geopoliticisation of the EU's Eastern Partnership," *Geopolitics*, 24(1), pp. 71–99.

¹⁴ Tidley, A. & Lazaro, A. 2020. *EU and Ukraine pledge to deepen relations, call on Russia to respect peace deal*, Euronews, accessed 28th Nov. 2022, <<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2020/10/06/eu-and-ukraine-pledge-to-deepen-relations-call-on-russia-to-respect-peace-deal>>.

¹⁵ Fiott, D. 2018. *Strategic autonomy: towards 'European sovereignty' in defence?*, Brief Issue, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Brussels.

¹⁶ Howorth, J. 2019. *Strategic Autonomy: Why It's Not About Europe Going it Alone*, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, accessed 18 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/strategic-autonomy-europe.pdf>>.

¹⁷ Béraud-Sudreau, L. and Childs, N. 2018. *The US and Its NATO Allies: Costs and Value*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Blog, accessed 18 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2018/07/us-and-nato-allies-costs-and-value>>.

¹⁸ Haenle, P. and Bresnick, S. 2022. *Why U.S.-China Relations Are Locked in a Stalemate*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Commentary, accessed 18 Oct. 2022, <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/21/why-u.s.-china-relations-are-locked-in-stalemate-pub-86478>>.

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This policy paper is written against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, which opens a window of opportunity for the EU to deepen cooperation with the associated EaP countries in security and defence policy. Becoming a holistic security provider in the region is central to the EU's ambition to become strategically autonomous from the United States. The policy paper aims at developing a more ambitious set of policies for closer cooperation between the EU and the Associated Trio. The analysis will seek to answer the following question: How can the EU find new ways to engage in security and defence cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries? Amongst the policy areas explored are hard military capabilities, military training, cyber security, intelligence-sharing, well as training political dialogue on security and defence.

Current State of Play

In its Strategic Compass (2021)¹⁹, the EU set its ambition to boost cooperation with Eastern European countries in security and defence through 'tailored bilateral partnerships'. As mentioned in the previous section, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine have signed more comprehensive Association Agreements (AAs) than the rest of the EaP countries. This is also true in the area of defence and security policy, even though it is important to note that different levels of involvement exist between them. The AAs outline commitment to promote convergence and alignment in foreign policy and in the Common Security and Defence Policy, as well as the commitment and the intensification of political dialogue²⁰.

More specifically the Association Agreements with the EaP-3 include provisions for cooperation within the realm of CFSP and CSDP and on some specific security matters, such as counter-terrorism, nuclear proliferation, or international criminal law. In addition to the Association Agreements, the commitment of these countries was reaffirmed during their first joint visit to the EU since the three countries formalised the format of 'Associated Trio'. The foreign ministers of all three countries reaffirmed the importance of "enhancing security and defence cooperation with the EU, including on countering hybrid threats, strengthening cyber resilience, developing cooperation platforms with the relevant EU agencies and services"²¹

First, we must note the existence of political dialogue platforms at both bilateral and multilateral level. The multilateral EU-EaP ministerial meetings²² take place yearly, and bilateral high-level meetings between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the External Action Service (EEAS) political director and the chair of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) used to take place before Russia's invasion twice-yearly to specifically discuss Russian aggression in the Donbas.

Third-country participation in the Permanent Structured Cooperation framework (PESCO) was made possible by a 2020 Council decision²³. Ukraine and Georgia shared interest in joining the projects, with Georgia stating the wish to achieve this by 2026, and Ukraine launching consultations on the

¹⁹ EEAS 2021. "Towards a Strategic Compass." Factsheet, May 6. <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89047/towards-strategic-compass_en>.

²⁰ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, *OJ L 261*, 30.8.2014, p. 4-743.

²¹ Mission of Ukraine to the European Union 2021, *Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: A higher EU ambition*, accessed 11th Nov. 2022, <<https://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/news/georgia-moldova-and-ukraine-higher-eu-ambition>>.

²² EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly, *Introduction*, accessed 21 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/en/home/highlights>>.

²³ Council Decision establishing the general conditions under which third States could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects, 15529/18, Brussels, 27 October 2020, <<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15529-2018-INIT/en/pdf>>.

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subject with the EU in 2021. Ukraine stated it considered participation to PESCO as one of the priority ways to “improving national defence capabilities in accordance with best practices and standards”²⁴.

However, it is important to note it is attached to several stringent conditions that were set by the Council of the European Union. Broadly, third countries must (1) share EU values (2) provides a substantial added value to the project and contributes to achieving its objectives, (3) contribute to strengthening the CSDP²⁵. Another pre-requisite for the participation of a third country in a PESCO project is the signature of an administrative agreement (AAs), which sets the terms of cooperation for military and technology programmes within the European Defence Agency²⁶. Ukraine is so far the only participatory country in the European Defence Agency since 2016, based on a 2015 administrative agreement (AA)²⁷, which includes cooperation on “material standardisation, the single European Sky initiative, logistics and training”²⁸. Georgia expressed the wish to take part in a similar arrangement.

Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia also signalled their commitment to “continue participating in CSDP missions and operations proving our status as reliable and valuable partners in the EU Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects”²⁹. The EaP-3 participate in the CSDP missions within each of the Framework Participation Agreements (FPAs) signed with the EU in 2012³⁰, which establish the legal framework for the deployment of military personnel or national experts by Georgia³¹, Moldova³² and Ukraine. To date, these participations remain limited in scope. An exception is Georgia’s participation to the military mission to the Central African Republic (CAR) launched in 2014, with a contribution of 140 personnel³³.

Within CAR Georgia also contributed the most financially, on a per capita basis. Lastly, the country is also involved in the EUAM Ukraine. As for Moldova, it has so far only contributed to civilian missions, sending eight national experts to EUTM Mali in 2014, 2016 and 2018 and EUMAM in the Central African Republic (2015-2016)³⁴. Ukraine has so far participated in the most missions so far, with two civilian missions (EUPM Bosnia and Herzegovina; EUPOL Proxima FYROM) and one

²⁴ Mission of Ukraine in the European Union, 2021, *Ukraine-EU cooperation in the military-political, military and military-technical spheres*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, accessed 20 Oct. 2022, <<https://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/2633-relations/spivpracya-ukrayina-yes-u-sferi-zovnishnoyi-politiki-i-bezpeki/spivpracya-ukrayina-yes-u-ramkah-spilnoyi-politiki-bezpeki-i-oboroni>>.

²⁵ Council Decision establishing the general conditions under which third States could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects, 15529/18, Brussels, 27 October 2020, <<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15529-2018-INIT/en/pdf>>.

²⁶ European Parliamentary Research Service 2022, *Third-country participation in EU defence*, Members’ Research Service, accessed 19 Oct. 2022, <<https://epthinktank.eu/2022/04/01/third-country-participation-in-eu-defence/>>.

²⁷ European Defence Agency (2015) Administrative Arrangement between the European Defence Agency and the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. Brussels, 07.12.2015, <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/aa---eda---ukraine-mod-07-12-15.pdf>

²⁸ German T. and Tyushka, A. (2022) “In-depth analysis: Security challenges at the EU’s eastern border: which role for CSDP?”, Policy Department for External Relations Directorate General for External Policies of the Union PE653.653 – January 2022.

²⁹ Mission of Ukraine to the European Union 2021, *Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: A higher EU ambition*, accessed 11th Nov. 2022, <<https://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/news/georgia-moldova-and-ukraine-higher-eu-ambition>>.

³⁰ German T. and Tyushka, A. (2022) “In-depth analysis: Security challenges at the EU’s eastern border: which role for CSDP?”, Policy Department for External Relations Directorate General for External Policies of the Union PE653.653 – January 2022.

³¹ Agreement between the European Union and Georgia establishing a framework for the participation of Georgia in European Union crisis management operations, OJ L 14, 18.1.2014, p. 2–7.

³² Agreement between the European Union and Moldova establishing a framework for the participation of Moldova in European Union crisis management operations, OJ L 8, 12.1.2013, p. 2–7.

³³ Tardy T. (2014) *CSDP: Getting third states on board*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, accessed 19 Oct. 2022, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief_6_CSDP_and_third_states.pdf>.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova 2022, *Common European Defence and Security Policy*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova, accessed 20 Oct. 2022, <<https://mfa.gov.md/en/content/common-european-defence-and-security-policy>>.

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military mission (EUNAVFOR Atalanta). At the time of writing, the Council of the EU has launched on 15th of November 2022 the European Union Military Assistance in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) to enhance the military capability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to allow them to push against Russian aggression³⁵. EUMAM also has an extensive mandate to provide specialised and collective training over multiple locations in EU Member States.

Third countries are not yet involved in the early stages of the preparation of CSDP missions and thus are not included in the EU platforms dedicated to that purpose, such as the Civilian Committee, the EU Military Committee, the Politico-Military Group, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, and the EU Military Staff³⁶. In this process, third states are not thus fully integrated, and their contribution to missions entails “a degree of acceptance of EU practices as well as a degree of subordination”³⁷. In fact, there are currently no treaty provisions for joint ownership in the early stages of the planning CSDP missions. Even though they are not fully integrated in the decision-making, participating third countries are invited to share their expertise by the Political and Security Committee (PSC)³⁸. As a candidate country, Moldova can be invited to other informal consultations, as part of the PSC+ format³⁹.

In July 2021, Ukraine launched negotiations for the launch of an ‘EU Military Advisory and Training Mission (EUATM Ukraine), which would replace the current, purely advisory mission EUAM. This new mission would take place within the framework of the European Peace Facility (EPF), an instrument outside of the EU’s long-term budget, with two pillars: Peace Support Operations and Assistance Measures⁴⁰. Its goal would be to provide military training and provide equipment, infrastructure, weapons, and ammunition. In the words of HR/ VP Joseph Borrells, “the EPF is a real game-changer that will allow us to move beyond training the armed forces of partners, to also equip them”⁴¹. By actively growing capacity-building in EaP countries, the EU would be making concrete efforts to become a more credible, and independent security actor⁴². Several Eastern and Baltic Member States currently support the launch of this mission. These are the countries that wish to support their neighbours against Russia’s aggressive tactics, namely Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, along with Sweden and Finland⁴³.

Strengthening cyber security is another commitment made by the EaP-3, as emphasized in a statement by the leaders of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine in 2021⁴⁴. In this area, the EU currently funds two

³⁵Council of the European Union 2022, Ukraine: EU launches Military Assistance Mission, accessed 24 Nov. 2022, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/11/15/ukraine-eu-launches-military-assistance-mission/>>.

³⁶ Wessel, R. A. (2021) The Participation of Members and Non-members in EU Foreign, Security and Defence Policy. In Douma, W., Eckes, C., Van Elsuwege, P., Kassoti, E., Ott, A. & Wessel, R. (eds.), *The Evolving Nature of EU External Relations Law* (pp. 177-201) The Hague: TMC Asser Press.

³⁷ Tardy, T. 2014, *CSDP: Getting Third States on Board*, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), accessed 20 Oct. 2022, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06788>>.

³⁸ Interview conducted with Ambassador Jānis Mažeiks, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, 16th November 2022.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, 2022, European Peace Facility, accessed 20 Oct. 2022, <https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/european-peace-facility_en>.

⁴¹ Borrell, J. 2021, ‘We Should enhance our resilience to prevent and respond to security threats’ – Joseph Borrell blog post on European defence, EU NeighboursEast, accessed 21 Oct. 2022, <<https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/we-should-enhance-our-resilience-to-prevent-and-respond-to-security-threats-josep-borrell-blog-post-on-european-defence/>>.

⁴² German T. and Tyushka, A. (2022) “In-depth analysis: Security challenges at the EU’s eastern border: which role for CSDP?”, Policy Department for External Relations Directorate General for External Policies of the Union PE653.653 – January 2022.

⁴³ Hagström Frisell, E. & Sjökvist, E. (2021). “To Train and Equip Partner Nations – Implications of the European Peace Facility”, *FOI Memo*, 7468, February.

⁴⁴ Mission of Ukraine to the European Union, 2021, *Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: A higher EU ambition*, accessed 21 Oct. 2022, <<https://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/news/georgia-moldova-and-ukraine-higher-eu-ambition>>.

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initiatives which covers the six EaP partners, CyberEast and EU4-Digital. Ukraine is once again the most closely aligned and has been working with CERT-EU, the Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU institutions⁴⁵. The country now also holds a yearly EU-Ukraine Dialogue on the subject, the first of which took place on 3rd of June 2021. Some current cyber security-focused PESCO projects present an opportunity for deeper EU-EaP cooperation in this area: Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform (CTIRISP) and the Cyber Rapid Response Teams (CRRT).

The current state of play reflects a close cooperation between the EU and the three associated Eastern Partnership countries, taking place in multiple areas. As the background section explained, Russia's war in Ukraine prompted strong and rapid response from the EU. It also prompted a change in attitudes from EU leaders towards increasing the Union's security and defence capabilities. To better prevent and respond to changing security threats and challenges in the Eastern neighbourhood, the next section will propose policy recommendations on EU-EaP defence and security cooperation.

Policy Recommendations

In recent years we have observed an acceleration of the pace with regards to the integration and cooperation of associated Eastern Partnership countries with the European Union in defence and security. There is a clear evolution from the AAs signed with each country to the 2020 Council Decision allowing third countries to participate in PESCO projects, to the commitment of the EU to strengthen cooperation with partners through 'tailored bilateral partnerships' laid out in the Strategic Compass (2021). The newly acquired candidate status of Moldova and Ukraine after a decision of the European Council on 23rd June 2022 validates the efforts of each country in implementing the reforms included in the AAs and speaks to the commitment of the EaP-3 to align themselves with EU policies. In order to face the growing Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, the EU must in the short and longer term, help reinforce the defence and security capabilities of its Eastern partner countries. Deepening the cooperation of partner countries is instrumental to better equip them to push back against future potential Russian aggression, and safeguard peace and stability in the region.

#1 Intensifying EPF Support for Specialized Military Training

The ongoing military invasion of Ukraine by Russia shed light on the renewed importance of maintaining effective hard military capabilities in Eastern European countries to counter potential aggression from Russia. The Moldovan government recently admitted that its military forces are inadequately trained and equipped and trained⁴⁶. According to Ambassador Jānis Mažeiks, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, there is a clear need to increase retention of armed forces, which have been under supported by the country for decades⁴⁷. In 2021, EU funds were allocated through the European Peace Facility to support the country's military and medical supplies, including logistics, technical communication units. Although this brings great improvements in military supplies, there is a need to improve technical training for the operation of the equipment and

⁴⁵ German T. and Tyushka, A. (2022) "In-depth analysis: Security challenges at the EU's eastern border: which role for CSDP?", Policy Department for External Relations Directorate General for External Policies of the Union PE653.653 – January 2022.

⁴⁶ RadioFreeEurope, 2022, Defense Minister Says 90 Percent of Moldova's Military Equipment Is Outdated, accessed 30th November 2022, <<https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-military-defense-outdated-underfunded/32095231.html>>.

⁴⁷ Interview conducted with Ambassador Jānis Mažeiks, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, 16th November 2022.

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systems supplied⁴⁸. Thus, to help build efficient military institutions and effectively respond to crises, cooperation in training armed forces officers needs to be increased. This can be achieved through the launch of a new ‘EU Military Assistance Mission’ in Moldova (EUMAM Moldova) and Georgia (EUMAM Georgia). With an extended scope and a bigger, more specialized mandate than previous purely advisory missions, they would aim to fill the gaps existing in technical training. These missions would be financed by the European Peace Facility (EPF) on a similar model as the recently launched EUMAM Ukraine. This new mission format would allow the EU to provide targeted, specialized training as well as continue to provide equipment, infrastructure, weapons, and ammunition on a long-term basis, thus further boosting defence capabilities and resilience. Joint military exercises as part of this mission would reinforce interoperability and cooperation with Eastern partners.

The funding provided through the European Peace Facility enables the EU to launch more ambitious missions with stronger mandates. It also allows it to take concrete measures to step up its efforts to become a more credible, and independent security actor in Eastern Europe, and work towards strategic autonomy. In light of the dramatic deterioration of the Continent’s security environment, filling the gaps in the training of military armed forces in the associated EaP countries is vital to prepare them to potential Russian military aggression. An opinion shared by HR/ VP Joseph Borrell, who argued that if the EU had begun Ukrainian troops a year prior to Russia’s invasion, when some member states called for it, “we would be in a better situation”⁴⁹. In addition, this measure fits within the broader goal of reinforcing the involvement and alignment of those countries with the EU in the CFSP.

#2 Tackling Cybersecurity Threats from Russia: The Necessity of Building Resilience

Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine face relentless cyber-attacks and interference led by Russia. In Moldova the frequency of attacks has increased with the start of the war in Ukraine. The biggest attack so far targeted the Moldovan government in October 2022. In the words of HR/ VP Joseph Borrell, instability and the spread of Russian influence challenge the EU’s Eastern Partnership goals of “promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law”⁵⁰. According to Iurie Turcanu, Moldova’s deputy prime minister for digitalization, the country lacks the expertise to fend off large-scale attacks. And according to Elena Marzac, Executive Director of the Information and Documentation Centre on NATO (IDC), Moldova currently lacks an “integrated and effective national mechanism for preventing and combating cybersecurity incidents and cybercrime.”⁵¹ On the other hand, Georgia is better prepared to resist such attacks.

In this context, it is thus imperative to adapt the digital level thinking to the current security environment⁵². In addition to the 2.5 million euros of funding provided through the European Peace Facility, the EU needs to strengthen cyber resilience through the training of experts. An area requiring

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Preussen, W. 2022, *EU countries are running out of weapons*, Politico, accessed 27th Nov. 2022, <<https://www.politico.eu/article/borrell-warn-eu-countries-running-out-weapons/>>.

⁵⁰ European Commission, 2022, *Eastern Partnership: a renewed agenda for recovery, resilience and reform by an Economic and Investment plan*, accessed 30th Nov, <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3367>.

⁵¹ Madalin Necsutu, 2020, *Concern over Moldova Cyber Security As Election Looms*, accessed 17th Nov. 2022, <<https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/28/concern-over-moldova-cyber-security-as-election-looms/>>.

⁵² Interview conducted with Ambassador Jānis Mažeiks, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, 16th November 2022.

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development is the monitoring and identification of cyber-attacks and threats⁵³, which will help anticipate future attacks aiming at destabilizing the Moldovan government. Training Moldovan organisations as well as increasing the technological capacity of the country will be instrumental for that purpose. In this respect, the launch of a new ‘EU Advisory and Training Mission’ in Moldova (EUATM Moldova) focusing on cooperation between civilian cyber experts from EU member states and Moldovan experts would facilitate the transfer of expertise. This mission would be financed by the European Peace Facility (EPF) on a similar model as the EUATM Ukraine, for which Ukraine recently launched negotiations.

For the case of Georgia, creating a formal dialogue to exchange expertise between cyber experts in the country and at the EU level would be filling a gap in cybersecurity cooperation⁵⁴. It would take a similar form as the EU-Ukraine Cybersecurity Dialogue already established between the EU and Ukraine in June 2021⁵⁵. A new EU-Georgia cyber security dialogue would complement existing security and defence dialogue at the EU-EEAS ministerial meetings⁵⁶ and allow the parties to hold more focused exchanges. Since 2008, Georgia has amassed a significant amount of expertise and practical experience pushing back against cyber threats from Russia, from which the EU would benefit significantly.

Another avenue of future cooperation would be the participation of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia in future and ongoing PESCO projects, such as Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform (CTIRISP) and the Cyber Rapid Response Teams (CRRT), operational since 2019⁵⁷. The latter project corresponds well to the needs of the Moldovan government. In fact, CRRTs are equipped with a deployable toolkit which helps detect, recognise, and mitigate cyber threats. The teams would thus be able to cooperate with Moldovan experts to help them conduct vulnerability assessments.⁵⁸

#3 Strengthening and Expanding Intelligence-Sharing Mechanisms

There is a consensus in Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine that Russia represents the main security threat for their sovereignty and stability. As Russia is increasingly using hybrid warfare tactics to pursue its goals, such as espionage, subversion, disinformation, strengthening existing intelligence-sharing mechanisms and developing new ones is just as important as providing military aid. In fact, intelligence-sharing is instrumental to combat Russian covert operations. As stipulated in the Lisbon Treaty national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State (Art. 4 (2) TEU [Treaty on European Union])⁵⁹, most of the cooperation in this area rests on bilateral agreements between EaP-3 intelligence agencies and those situated in EU Member States.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Interview conducted with Ambassador Pawel Herczynski, Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia, 29th Nov. 2022.

⁵⁵ EEAS, 2022, Cyberspace: EU and Ukraine launch dialogue on cyber security, accessed 30th Nov. 2022, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/cyberspace-eu-and-ukraine-launch-dialogue-cyber-security_en>.

⁵⁶ EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly, *Introduction*, accessed 21 Oct. 2022, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/en/home/highlights>>.

⁵⁷ Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), *Cyber rapid response teams and mutual assistance in cyber security (CRRT)*, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), accessed 22 Nov. 2022, <<https://www.pesco.europa.eu/project/cyber-rapid-response-teams-and-mutual-assistance-in-cyber-security/>>.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ European Union, Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community, 13 December 2007, 2007/C 306/01, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF>.

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However, EU security policy allows for indirect access to intelligence. In particular, the EU can draw on strategic risk analyses synthesised by the External Action Service, from reports coming from Member States national intelligence services. In addition, the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) (a directorate of the External Action Service) also relies on intelligence provided by Member States a directorate for the External Action Service, provides intelligence analysis, assessments, and reporting⁶⁰.

Creating an opportunity to coordinate strategic information and analysis with EaP-3 countries on strategic analysis at the level of the EEAS would allow for more structural embeddedness. Cooperating on intelligence analysis to push back against Russian covert aggression would be beneficial to both the EU and the EaP-3. This is especially true in the context of the war in Ukraine, when intelligence-sharing between the two brings significant strategic benefits, which could make a difference in winning the war and preventing future Russian aggression.

#4 Creating Opportunities for Formal Participation and Dialogue

As highlighted previously, opportunities for participation in the early stages of CSDP missions planning is limited and informal. Involving them in the early stages of EU missions planning would be a good way to create more opportunities for dialogue and exchange of expertise. Formal participation would take place within the organisms responsible for the planning and conduct of CSDP missions, such as the Civilian Committee, the EU Military Committee, the Politico-Military Group, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, and the EU Military Staff.

This form of inclusion would not enable formal decision-making, which still strictly remains within the remit of EU Member States. Formal participation in the early stages of CSDP missions would be particularly beneficial in the case that Ukraine, Moldova, or Georgia are the host of the mission. It would also result in a higher sense of ownership for the EaP partners and encourage further alignment with the CFSP. In addition, this solution would be particularly appropriate to implement for those partners who contribute significantly on a financial basis. This is the case of Georgia, which was the biggest financial contributor per capita to the Central African Republic (CAR) mission launched in 2014.

Overall, involving associated EaP partners in the early planning stage of CSDP operation would bring two main benefits. First it would help offset the lack of formal cooperation mechanisms for the sharing of expertise between the EU and associated EaP partners and strengthen the opportunities for dialogue. Second, it would increase their stakes in the missions, without enabling formal joint decision-making. This would complement the contributions the PSC invites them to make on an ad-hoc basis. In addition, it would compensate lack of access of Ukraine and Georgia compared Moldova, which is able to take part in PSC consultations due to its status as a candidate country.

Lastly, another way to create more opportunities for dialogue would be to increase the frequency of the annual Eastern Partnership Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meetings, held as part of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. For the EaP-3, the aim is to increase contact and consultation between parties on security and defence issues, in order to help advance their alignment with the CFSP and cooperation as part of CSDP missions. Further structurally embed EaP-3 countries would encourage

⁶⁰ Statewatch, 2015, EU INTCEN Factsheet, accessed 28th Nov. 2022, <<https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2016/may/eu-intcen-factsheet.pdf>>.

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EU-EaP-3 exchange of strategic information and would give a more formal platform for them to share expertise. This dialogue format could be extended to include national intelligence agencies from EaP-3 countries. Effective intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies are crucial to the EaP-3's national security and launching such form of cooperation would be instrumental for EU Member States to demonstrate their willingness to work with associated Eastern Partnership countries on security issues that matter to them.

Conclusions

Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, France's President Macron strongly pushed for a more independent EU that would be able to ensure security and stability in its neighbourhood without having to rely on the United States. President Ursula von der Leyen wishes to lead a "geopolitical Commission" and the Joseph Borrell argues that the EU must learn the "language of power"⁶¹. The war in Ukraine has brought this back to the fore the notion that Europeans have fallen back on US leadership and US military strength to take care of security affairs on their own continent⁶². The goals of the 2021 'Strategic Compass' align with this vision, as it aims "to develop a sovereign, strategic EU"⁶³, with the ambition to boost cooperation with Eastern European countries in security and defence through "tailored bilateral partnerships"⁶⁴. Not only did the war in Ukraine represent a wake-up call for European defence, it also brought into focus the need to fill the security gaps in associated Eastern Partnership countries, which remain most vulnerable to Russian aggression.

Since they signed their respective Association Agreements with the European Union in 2014, the Associated Trio have built a close relationship of cooperation in defence and security. The three associated Eastern partnership countries have reinforced their commitment to align their national foreign policy with the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. Particularly from the year 2020, the EU started to intensify cooperation, by enabling the EaP-3 to join PESCO projects as third countries under certain conditions. Their participation and financial contribution to CSDP missions is highly valued and benefits the EU. As for the EaP-3, it signals their commitment to a European future and to EU values.

With Moldova and Ukraine gaining candidate status in 2022 and Georgia gaining 'European perspective' in June 2022⁶⁵, it will be necessary for the cooperation between the EU and these countries to intensify, in order to face the growing security threats created by Russia in the Eastern neighbourhood. The policy recommendations put forward in this policy paper highlight areas where more progress is needed; namely in military and cyber training, the creation of formal participation and dialogue mechanisms in the intelligence, cyber security sector and in the planning of CSDP mission. Should these recommendations not be implemented, the EU will be able to make progress in its ambition to become a more strategically autonomous actor and the EU's role as a security provider in the region will be severely diminished.

⁶¹ Van Middelaar, L. 2021. "Europe's Geopolitical Awakening", Groupe d'Etudes Géopolitiques, <<https://geopolitique.eu/en/2021/04/15/europes-geopolitical-awakening/>>.

⁶² Caulcutt, C., Von Der Burchard, H. and Barigazzi, J. 2022. "When will Europe learn to defend itself?", *Politico*, accessed 25 Nov. 2022, <<https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-olaf-scholz-defense-europe-strategic-autonomy-ukraine-war/>>.

⁶³ EEAS 2021. "Towards a Strategic Compass." Factsheet, May 6. <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89047/towards-strategic-compass_en>.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ European Council, 2022, *European Council conclusions on Ukraine, the membership applications of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, Western Balkans and external relations*, 23 June 2022, accessed 30th Nov. 2022, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/23/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-the-membership-applications-of-ukraine-the-republic-of-moldova-and-georgia-western-balkans-and-external-relations-23-june-2022/>>.

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