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## European defence

### The future of EU missions

After the European Council meeting in March 2024, EU High Representative Josep Borrell stated that Europe had reached the Demosthenes moment by putting defence at the centre of EU policies. He referred to a set of actions undertaken by the EU, including the beefing up of military assistance to Ukraine, increasing defence budgets, boosting the defence industry and launching new missions under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).<sup>1</sup> The latter is receiving less attention in the media and in political debates, but EU missions are nonetheless more relevant than ever. Today, the largest military EU mission is taking place in Europe: the military training of Ukrainian military personnel in Germany, Poland and other member states. In the Middle East, the EU has launched Operation Aspides for protecting merchant ships against drone and missile attacks by the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The EU's CSDP missions are affected by the geopolitical turmoil, both inside and outside Europe. This policy brief provides an analysis of the impact of the war in Ukraine and other changes in the international environment on the EU's civil and military missions.<sup>2</sup> The first part of the brief assesses how geopolitical trends are influencing the CSDP in terms of geographical orientation and the required characteristics of EU missions. Consequently, the authors zoom in on the practical consequences, in particular exploring the scope for adjusting existing

missions or launching new missions in Europe, with a specific focus on Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia.<sup>3</sup> After a short section on the possible impact of the potential development of CSDP missions on the EU-NATO relationship, the authors present some conclusions and recommendations.

### CSDP: the impact of the changed environment

Over the last two years, the European geopolitical environment has undergone major shocks. Consequently, a little over two years since the release of its Strategic Compass in March 2022, the EU is under increasing pressure to amend the document. After the European Parliament elections and the instalment of

1 European External Action Service (EEAS), [‘Europe’s Demosthenes moment: putting defence at the centre of EU policies’](#), Press release, 25 March 2024. In ancient Greece Demosthenes warned about the implications of the rise of Macedonian political and military power and he acted as the staunchest and most persistent defender of individual Greek freedom against the new power. See: Encyclopedia.com, [‘Demosthenes’](#), visited on 21 May 2024.

2 In this policy brief the word ‘missions’ entails both civilian missions and military missions and operations.

3 This policy brief does not address the options for new missions in the Middle East and Africa or in the context of protecting EU interests in the global commons.

the new European Commission, the Compass will most likely be reviewed and adjusted.<sup>4</sup> Three major trends will continue to influence the structure and future of the CSDP.<sup>5</sup>

### Trend #1 – Europe focus

The war in Ukraine has fundamentally altered the international security landscape. In response to the full-scale Russian invasion, the EU has provided major assistance to Ukraine's war effort through arms supplies, partly paid for by the European Peace Facility (EPF). Furthermore, in November 2022 the first CSDP mission on EU territory was launched with the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), underlining a shift in focus back to the European continent.<sup>6</sup> The Russian invasion of a sovereign nation has also seen European militaries shift focus back to collective defence, NATO's original core task that has regained priority over the two other tasks.<sup>7</sup> The European contribution to NATO has to be stepped up, while at the same time the EU has to enhance its defence effort in order to strengthen its strategic autonomy.

The threat that Russia poses to European security has also increased the relevance of EU missions elsewhere on the European continent. This can be exemplified through the EU Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova (EUPM), launched in May 2023, aiming at "enhancing the resilience of the security sector of the Republic of Moldova in the areas of crisis management and hybrid threats, including

cybersecurity and countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)."<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the pre-existing border mission EUBAM in Moldova was expanded upon, as the Republic was one of the countries most affected by the war.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, as the war in Ukraine has affected many geopolitical areas and security interests, remaining committed to Kyiv's defensive war effort is crucial if the EU wishes to position itself as a credible actor in international security.<sup>10</sup>

These 'European' missions of the EU are proof of the shift in CSDP, not only in geographical terms but also with regard to their purpose: increasingly, they are used as a geopolitical instrument in countering Russian interference through brutal force (in Ukraine) or by hybrid threats in countries such as Moldova.

### Trend #2 – Sahel

Developments in Europe's near abroad have also had a major effect on the future of the CSDP. Over the last two years, the wave of coups in the Sahel region has forced the EU to scale down its operations in Mali, to terminate the EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger after it had barely started and to end EUCAP Sahel Niger in June 2024, after the country's military leaders terminated the decade-long security agreement with Brussels.<sup>11</sup> The increasing influence of the Russian Wagner Group – whose presence has been noted in the Central African Republic, Libya, Sudan and, as aforementioned, Mali – has contributed to the political instability in the region. The choice to strengthen ties with the Wagner Group (or comparable other groups)

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4 The Strategic Compass itself states: 'Based on the revised threat analysis in 2025 and on the achievement of key objectives foreseen, the High Representative will present proposals on a possible revision of this Strategic Compass.'; EEAS, ['A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence'](#), March 2022.

5 Andersson, Jan Joel. ['Into the breach! EU military CSDP missions and operations'](#), *EUISS*, 7 March 2024.

6 EEAS, ['To secure peace, the EU needs to be ready to defend itself'](#), Press release, 5 february 2024; With this mission, the Union has already provided military training to 40,000 Ukrainian servicemen, with the ambition to train another 20,000 by the end of the summer of 2024, as it continues to play a vital role in the country's self-defence.

7 These two other tasks are: crisis prevention and management; cooperative security.

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8 EEAS, ['About EU Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova'](#), 31 May 2023.

9 European Commission, ['The EU steps up support to border management on the Moldova-Ukraine border'](#), News article, 2 June 2022.

10 Luis Simón, ['The Ukraine War and the Future of the European Union's Security and Defense Policy'](#), CSIS, 30 January 2023.

11 EURACTIV, ['Niger ends security and defence partnerships with the EU'](#), 5 December 2023.

and the subsequent political dependence thereon forces the EU to reconsider its strategy in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, the Chinese influence on the African continent is rapidly growing. Although it has been primarily of an economic nature, more recently China has been expanding its interference. For example, the growing influence of the Chinese (Communist Party) media in the African media ecosystems threatens to replace Western narratives with those of Beijing.<sup>13</sup> These developments raise concerns, as Africa – in particular Western and North Africa – remain of primary importance for the EU's security. Apart from the spillover risks of terrorism, human smuggling and drugs trafficking, the EU continues to hold economic and geopolitical interests in the Sahel, and will be forced to reconsider its strategic priorities.

### Trend #3 – Protecting the global commons

The spillover of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in other regions in the Middle East forces the EU to rethink its interests in the region. The Yemeni Houthi attacks on merchant ships have exposed the vulnerabilities in the EU's dependence on maritime security and the protection of other vital trade routes. In response to these attacks in the Red Sea, Operation Aspides was launched in February 2024. Despite political divisions within the Union about the handling of the ongoing war in Gaza, the member states have demonstrated their ability to act with launching this naval mission, which aims to protect the EU's economic interests in a threatened area of the global commons.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the EU's critical undersea infrastructure could be vulnerable to hybrid

threats from adversaries.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, a reflection on the current model of EU maritime operations is required, as well as an assessment of other vulnerabilities in this domain.

### Balancing European security – reflecting on the CSDP mandate

As a result of an increasing focus on collective defence, political and military attention to crisis management missions has decreased, despite the fact that many of them continue and new ones – such as Operation Aspides – have been launched. Instability in the Middle East and Africa will continue to demand EU presence and consistent efforts by member states, which have been lacking in recent years.<sup>16</sup> With Brussels already struggling to find sufficient funds and manpower to create the Rapid Deployment Capacity outlined in the Strategic Compass, this forces policymakers to prioritise specific geopolitical interests.<sup>17</sup> This shift from wars of choice to wars of necessity is influencing the focus of the CSDP, as a new range of external threats is compelling the EU to rethink its strategic position.

The rapidly changing geopolitical environment also forces the Union to reflect on the legal framework of the CSDP. The exact extent to which the EU's mutual defence clause in Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) suffices in response to terrorism and hybrid threats has been subject to political debate ever since it was invoked by France in response to the 2015 Bataclan attacks.<sup>18</sup> However, in light

12 International Crisis Group, '[Reorienting Europe's Approach in the Sahel](#)', 30 January 2024.

13 Paul Nantulya, '[China's Strategy to Shape Africa's Media Space](#)', *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, 16 April 2024.

14 The Red Sea route accounts for 40% of trade between Europe and Asia. See: Selin Uysal, '[The EU's New Red Sea Naval Mission: Implications and Challenges](#)', *The Washington Institute*, 16 February 2024.

15 Helmi Pillai, '[Protecting Europe's critical infrastructure from Russian hybrid threats](#)', *Centre for European Reform*, April 2023.

16 Timo Smit, '[New Compact, Renewed Impetus: Enhancing the EU's Ability to Act Through its Civilian CSDP](#)', *SIPRI*, November 2023.

17 Andersson, Jan Joel. '[Into the breach! EU military CSDP missions and operations](#)', *EUISS*, 7 March 2024.

18 P.A.L. Ducheine and J.F.R. Boddens Hosang, '[Implementing Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union: Legal Foundations for Mutual Defence in the Face of Modern Threats](#)', *Amsterdam Center for International Law*, 15 December 2020; Bob Deen, Dick Zandee and Adája Stoetman, '[Uncharted and uncomfortable in European defence](#)', *Clingendael Institute*, 27 January 2022.

of the aforementioned new security threats the EU is facing in the near abroad, the legal framework behind the mandate for CSDP missions in Articles 42(1) and 43(1) TEU also requires additional reflection. For example, EUMAM Ukraine is ‘temporarily’ carried out on EU territory, but this is not reflected in the current Treaty text. The description of ‘tasks’ in Article 43(1) might also be amended, preferably by a more general phrase rather than a long list of types of missions which might further change in the future.

As the effectiveness of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been significantly harmed by the deterioration of relations between the West and Russia – which as a permanent member of the Council maintains a right of veto – the EU should also take into account that an UNSC mandate for CSDP missions cannot be taken for granted in all cases. The alternative – an EU mission launched at the invitation of the host nation – is the most likely option for missions of an advisory or assistance nature and/or that occur at the low end of the force spectrum. However, for interventions – including the extraction/evacuation of EU citizens – this might not be the case. In addition, unanimity within the Union itself might be lacking for launching CSDP missions. The Compass has already called for a reflection on the use of Article 44 TEU, which allows for a Council decision “to entrust the implementation of a task to a group of Member States which are willing and have the necessary capability for such a task”.<sup>19</sup> If the Rapid Deployment Capacity is to be successfully operationalised – including for missions at the high end of the force spectrum – the use of Article 44 might be an important option.

## CSDP: the European call

As Russia’s strategy of defeating Ukraine by military force, and of destabilising Moldova and Georgia in order to prevent their EU membership,

will persist, the European call for the use of the CSDP is unlikely to change in the near future.<sup>20</sup> The question to be answered is how CSDP missions can contribute to supporting Ukraine in its war against the Russian invader and to strengthening stability in Moldova, Georgia and Armenia.

## Ukraine

In December 2023 the European Council decided to open accession talks with Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> In March 2024 the EU leaders continued to express their determination “to continue providing Ukraine and its people all the necessary political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed”.<sup>22</sup> What scope exists for CSDP contributions?

### *Extending EUMAM Ukraine*

EUMAM Ukraine is part of the EU’s broad package of providing military support through training the military of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). The existing mandate offers a wide range of training activities that can be tailor-made to the specific needs of the Ukrainian military.<sup>23</sup> One of the challenges for the mission is the short duration of the training modules, as the Ukrainian military are much needed at the front.<sup>24</sup> Other issues are: the disconnection of tactical and strategic training with the context on the Ukrainian battlefield; the weapon systems training of different types of Western tanks, howitzers and armoured infantry fighting vehicles; a lack of sufficient

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19 The Council decision to activate article 44 has to be taken by unanimity. See: [Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union](#), 26 October 2012.

20 Although Georgia (and also Armenia) are located in Asia, they are considered to be part of Europe in this policy brief.

21 As well as with Moldova. See: European Council, [‘European Council meeting \(14 and 15 December 2023\) – Conclusions’](#), 15 December 2023, paragraph 15.

22 Paragraph 1 of the March 2024 European Council Conclusions; European Council, [‘European Council meeting \(21 and 22 March 2024\) – Conclusions’](#), 22 March 2024.

23 See Article 1 in the Council decision on launching EUMAM: European Council, [‘COUNCIL DECISION \(CFSP\) 2022/1968 of 17 October 2022 on a European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine \(EUMAM Ukraine\)’](#), 18 October 2022.

24 EEAS, [‘Fast and flexible: the EUMAM UA Special Training Command’](#), Press release, 20 December 2023.

interpreters and translators to deal with language barriers, particularly in a military context; and the lack of standardisation of the training courses conducted by the military from a variety of EU member states.<sup>25</sup> The latter has to be solved by the EUMAM's command. Conducting parts of the training in Ukraine could help to reduce the battlefield connection problem, to extend training periods and to facilitate weapon systems training, including the speeding up of maintenance and repairs. This would bring 'boots on the ground' under the EU flag, requiring a careful analysis of risks and challenges. Perhaps the participation of EU member states on Ukrainian soil will have to be limited to 'the able and willing', which is perfectly possible under the application of Article 44 TEU (see above). Geographical limits on training in Ukraine – in particular in rear areas away from the front lines – could be another parameter for such an extension of EUMAM's mandate. Other areas that have been proposed for enhancing EUMAM are: connecting its activities to the EU's programmes to step up European defence industrial cooperation such as EDIRPA and EDIP<sup>26</sup>; support for establishing joint EU-Ukrainian defence industries<sup>27</sup>; learning from military innovations, such as the use of drones, and others.<sup>28</sup> In November 2024 the current EUMAM mandate will end. This provides a good opportunity to review the mandate and to consider not only a prolongation thereof but also amendments thereto.

### *EUAM – Adding counter-hybrid*

The EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) supports the country in reforming its civilian security sector. Due to the Russian full-scale invasion, several regional offices had to be closed (e.g. in Mariupol), but new activities were launched, in particular to advise on border control management in view of the refugee flows and on investigating war crimes. EUAM itself is sometimes learning from the Ukrainian experience, for example in the cyber security area.<sup>29</sup> On 14 May 2024 the Council decided to modify EUAM's mandate for a three-year extension period "which will allow for the scaling up of support for Ukrainian law enforcement agencies in Ukraine's liberated and adjacent areas".<sup>30</sup> The character of the EUAM mission is further shifting from advisory to assistance, for example in the context of Ukraine's border management.<sup>31</sup>

Taking into account that some of EUAM's personnel is deployed at slow speed and/or for a too short period, these issues should be addressed in order to optimise the mission's effectiveness.

### *An EU executive mission*

EUAM is a non-executive mission, assisting and advising Ukrainian civilian security sector actors. A new EU civilian mission could be launched with executive tasks in areas such as:

- Border control: gendarmerie-type support for the Ukrainian Border Guard Service which has a strength of about 60,000 personnel.<sup>32</sup>

25 Sascha Ostanina, ['The EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine - A peace actor who teaches to fight'](#), Jacques Delors Centre, 1 November 2023. Laura Pitel, ['Lost in translation: Germany's challenges training Ukrainian soldiers'](#), *Financial Times*, 28 August 2023.

26 EDIRPA = European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act; EDIP = European Defence Industry Programme.

27 Rheinmetall and other defence companies have already launched initiatives to build industrial plants in Ukraine. EUMAM could provide advice and assist in connecting these industries to Ukrainian industries and the AFU.

28 Mario Damen, ['EU-Ukraine 2035: Strategic foresight analysis on the future of the EU and Ukraine'](#), European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), September 2023.

29 "Ukraine is far more advanced than some EU countries when it comes to cyber security," says the **EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine's acting Head of Governance Component, Konrad Wudtke**, speaking at the launch of the Cyber Brama website, on 04 April in Kyiv. See: EEAS, ['Ukraine in the driving seat to fencing cyber-attacks affecting its citizens: Cyber Brama website is launched in Kyiv'](#), EUMAM Ukraine Press Release, 8 April 2024.

30 European Council, ['EUAM Ukraine: Council extends the mandate of the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform until 2027'](#), Press release, 14 May 2024.

31 Nicolas Gros Verheyde, ['The mandate of the EUAM mission in Ukraine expanded'](#), *Bruxelles2*, 16 May 2024.

32 Oleksandr Shumilin, ['Ukraine's Parliament supports increase of Border Guard numbers by 15,000'](#), *Ukrainska Pravda*, 24 April 2024.

- Firefighting services by delivering operational units (equipment and personnel).
- Demining in areas that have been brought back under Ukrainian control.
- Emergency relief after missile attacks and other disasters.

Such a CSDP executive civilian mission should be complementary to activities under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, which is predominantly focused on the delivery of tools and equipment.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the CSDP mission would not replace but rather reinforce Ukraine's own services, as command but also language and local knowledge would always require Ukrainian leadership and presence on the spot. On the other hand, it could help to make additional human resources available for Ukraine's war efforts, for example in rear areas or even closer to the front lines.<sup>34</sup> Geographical limits on an EU executive mission – for example only operating west of the River Dnipro or in oblasts bordering EU member states – could help to reduce the risk of direct involvement in warfighting. Naturally, an ambitious level of executive civilian CSDP missions will require a further adaptation of the Civilian CSDP Compact.<sup>35</sup>

## Moldova

With the EU accession talks having opened and in light of the presidential elections in Moldova in the autumn of 2024 and the elections for the Parliament in the spring of next year, a further increase of the Russian hybrid interference in the country can be expected – in particular to prevent the re-election of the pro-EU President Maia Sandu.<sup>36</sup> This will make the existing CSDP

mission in Moldova (EUPM) – which assists the country in strengthening its resilience, specifically in countering hybrid threats – all the more important. The current strength of EUPM is limited to 40 international staff. Therefore, the EU could consider the reinforcement of EUPM's presence, taking into account the lessons learned so far about the areas of greatest need for assistance. Specific attention could be given to strategic communication as a large segment of the Moldovan population, in particular in the autonomous province of Gagauzia, is receptive to Russian narratives.<sup>37</sup> Strengthening the media could be part of this endeavour.<sup>38</sup>

In a scenario of rising tensions with the Transnistrian part of the country, the employment of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity could be considered to assist in stabilising the situation – albeit this will require close coordination with NATO as eastern and northern EU member states might object to such a military CSDP mission.<sup>39</sup> Hybrid threats are most likely to occur, which will require an RDC mandate and composition, tailor-made to assist in countering such threats. A non-military alternative could be to extend the mandate of EUPM in order to conduct executive tasks.

## Georgia

The Russian military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been slightly reduced since the start of the invasion of Ukraine, but is unlikely to be ended completely. Russian tactics to extend the occupied South Ossetian territory further are unlikely to stop. This has also resulted in the detention of Georgian citizens in those areas and problems with crossing the de-facto border. A reinforcement of the EU Monitoring

33 European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, '[Ukraine](#)', European Commission, visited on 21 May 2024.

34 It should be noted that CSDP missions are often suffering from a shortage of personnel. Thus, this call is of particular importance for the EU member states to offer adequate numbers of qualified experts.

35 See: Timo Smit, '[New Compact, Renewed Impetus: Enhancing the EU's Ability to Act Through its Civilian CSDP](#)', SIPRI, November 2023.

36 James Rupert, '[Russia's War on Moldova Will Be Political in 2024. And Then?](#)', United States Institute of Peace, 30 January 2024.

37 "(...) through cultural, historic, economic, political and other ties, Russia retains a clear influence over Gagauzia"; see: Bob Deen and Wouter Zweers, '[Walking the tightrope towards the EU Moldova's vulnerabilities amid war in Ukraine](#)', Clingendael Institute, September 2022.

38 James Rupert, '[Russia's War on Moldova Will Be Political in 2024. And Then?](#)', United States Institute of Peace, 30 January 2024.

39 Łukasz Maślanka, '[The EU Rapid Deployment Capacity: political priorities and real needs](#)', Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), 24 January 2024.



Mission (EUMM) in Georgia would be welcome with a stronger mandate for border control and the use of the EPF to finance the installation of cameras, sensors and other technical devices, as well as the acquisition of drones for Georgia's own border guards.<sup>40</sup>

The Georgian parliamentary elections will take place in October 2024. The current 'Georgian Dream' government, which in recent months has increasingly taken pro-Russian stances, may not accept a new mission. However, as Russian hybrid interference is likely to occur, the EU could also consider extending EUMM's mandate with a specific task to assist in strengthening resilience in Georgia, albeit the tense situation in the country offers little hope for cooperation from government-controlled actors. Depending on the outcome of the elections, the EU could strengthen its activities in the post-election period.

### Armenia

Armenia is looking for security assistance from the Western world as the country's trust in Russia for its national security has drastically decreased. Russian peacekeepers stood idle when Azerbaijan took over the ethnic Armenian-populated breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh by force in 2023. Furthermore, they refrained from assisting their nominal ally within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) when Azerbaijani troops repeatedly clashed with Armenian troops on or near Armenian sovereign territory. Armenia has frozen its participation in the CSTO, but, so far, has refrained from leaving the organisation. This limits the amount of security assistance that Western partners are willing to provide: only France and the US provide some modest military aid.<sup>41</sup> In March 2024, the EU announced a financial support package of € 270 million, but no security and defence assistance.

The existing EU Mission in Armenia (EUAM) is focussed on border monitoring and makes an important contribution to strengthening the EU's presence in the region. Albeit being restricted to Armenia's internationally recognised borders, EUAM has nonetheless received hostile reactions from Azerbaijan and Russia.<sup>42</sup> As EUAM becomes more entangled in the evolving geopolitical and multidimensional influence on Armenia's security situation<sup>43</sup>, it would be worthwhile upgrading its mandate to also strengthen the country's rule of law and its resilience against Russian interference, similar to EUPM Moldova. However, in the case of Armenia the situation is more complicated due to the country's continued dependence on Russia for energy, trade and security. Nevertheless, together with other EU assistance programmes, such an extended EUAM mandate would allow the EU to help Armenia to gradually reduce Russia's influence over the country.

### CSDP and NATO

With NATO's renewed focus on collective defence, a division of labour – with the EU taking care of crisis management missions – seems to be logical. However, for several reasons this is unlikely to occur. First, the Alliance is still militarily engaged in Kosovo, Iraq and elsewhere. Second, the 360 degree approach remains NATO's credo, not in the last place in view of the instability in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA). Third, the distinction between collective defence (in area) and crisis management (out of area) is less clear than it used to be. Russian interference in North African countries through the activities of the Wagner Group have turned the area into a geopolitical confrontation zone. Fourth, as already stated, the war in Ukraine has resulted in using the CSDP to support the country in its war effort and, thus, to help secure its defence. Fifth, hybrid challenges – below the

40 The use of cameras and drones was already suggested in: Bob Deen, Wouter Zweers & Camille Linder, 'The EU in the South Caucasus: Navigating a geopolitical labyrinth in turmoil', *Clingendael Institute*, March 2023.

41 Elisabeth Gosselin-Malo, 'Armenia deepens military ties with Western allies', *DefenseNews*, 12 April 2024.

42 Denis Cenusa, 'The Russian war in Eastern Europe and the emergence of EU CSDP missions: Three distinct cases in Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova', *EESC*, 28 July 2023.

43 See: Bob Deen, Wouter Zweers & Camille Linder, 'The EU in the South Caucasus: Navigating a geopolitical labyrinth in turmoil', *Clingendael Institute*, March 2023.

threshold of military confrontation and war – require a much wider response than that of a strictly military nature as they are targeted at all possible layers and elements of societies.

How can the EU's CSDP and NATO reinforce each other in this complicated landscape of challenges and threats? Based on the comparative advantages of both organisations,<sup>44</sup> the following elements could be explored:

- With its Hybrid Toolbox and wide set of responsibilities, the EU is better equipped to strengthen resilience in its crisis management missions.
- In the specific case of Ukraine: for the moment, 'in country' civilian CSDP missions might offer scope for extending support and, perhaps, also part of EUMAM's training activities could take place inside the country, while NATO continues to focus on improving its deterrence and defence posture for collective defence and helping to prepare Ukraine for its future membership of the Alliance.
- The coordination via the EU-NATO Structured Dialogue on Resilience should be prioritised in terms of exchanging information for situational awareness, the lessons learned from the counter-hybrid aspects of the war in Ukraine, the use of strategic communication, narratives and other counter-hybrid action.
- In the MENA area: the EU's Rapid Deployment Capacity should be a first option for peace-making operations and post-conflict stabilisation. For operations at the highest level of the force spectrum and of a large scale, NATO should be considered as the preferred organisation (or coalitions of the willing under a lead nation).
- In the global commons: the EU could be the primary actor for protecting sea lines of communication against piracy, terrorism and other threats outside the North Atlantic Treaty area, with a focus on the Gulf of Guinea, the Indian Ocean and adjacent

waters.<sup>45</sup> NATO has to deal with the threats within its Treaty area, including the monitoring and protection of underwater infrastructure (cables, pipelines, etc.) with the assistance of the EU.

- In the global commons: space is a domain of great importance to both organisations and enhancing EU-NATO cooperation should be explored in areas like threat awareness, the protection of space assets and their ground-based infrastructure and access to space.

It should be noted that a great deal of EU activity – such as in countering hybrid threats to the maritime security area and the space domain – takes place outside the CSDP context. This underlines that the existing definition of CSDP as defined in the TEU is in dire need of a review and amendment.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The EU's civilian and military missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have evolved over time, adapting to the changing international security environment. The latest change is the *European call* resulting from Russia's war in Ukraine, as expressed in the EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine. It is the largest EU military mission at the moment. Exceptionally, it takes place on EU soil (in Germany, Poland and other member states), and it is in support of strengthening NATO's collective defence as Ukraine is fighting not only for its own existence but also for Europe's security. At the same time the growing security threats to the *global commons*, in particular in the maritime area, can also require EU responses. The anti-piracy Operation Atalanta and the recently launched Operation Aspides to protect merchant shipping in the Red Sea against the threats of drones and missiles of the Houthi rebel forces in Yemen are proof of this development. Finally, the instability in the Middle East and Africa are likely to ask for EU involvement, perhaps in a more

44 The EU encompassing all sectors of government and NATO being a political-military organisation.

45 Building on the experiences with Operations Atalanta and Aspides.



contested context as Russia is increasing its military (Wagner Group) and political influence, while China is also expanding its influence. In this light, the EU's Rapid Deployment Capacity – reaching operational status in 2025 – is of the utmost importance in case of the need for an intervention.

The EU should not make a choice or rank these three categories of CSDP missions according to priority. First, this could create tensions among EU member states, as their own security priorities diverge – in particular concerning the Eastern and Southern European nations. Secondly, the EU does not decide when conflicts occur; instability and crises are imposed on the EU, be it in Europe, the global commons or in the Middle East and Africa. It implies that the EU should be prepared for a broad range of CSDP missions – or even a *broader range* than today, taking into account that NATO might have to prioritise its core task of collective defence even more than is now already the case. Not prioritising categories of missions should not be interpreted as 'doing everything at the same time': already now, the EU is reaching the limits of its capacities to plan and conduct its missions, and member states have difficulties in deploying the required numbers of qualified personnel. What is meant by non-prioritisation is that a priori none of the categories should be excluded or be given less attention.

All in all, in a more insecure, complex and contested world, the EU's aim to strengthen its geopolitical role has fundamental consequences for its tool box, including CSDP. Therefore, CSDP missions are more and more instrumentalised to counter Russian (and Chinese) geopolitically motivated interference, be it in Europe, the Middle East or Africa. For the near future, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the growing Russian interference in non-NATO and non-EU countries in Europe will continue to have an impact on the European call of the CSDP.

In the light of these conclusions, the Netherlands should, preferably with like-minded partners, aim for the following:

### **CSDP – general**

- The definition of CSDP in the Treaty on European Union (TEU) should be reconsidered in case Treaty amendment is on the political agenda. A more broadly phrased description of the CSDP tasks should be promoted instead of a growing list of types of missions.
- In particular in view of the possible future launching of CSDP missions involving the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, the Union should be prepared to use Article 44 TEU (to entrust the implementation to a group of willing and capable member states).

### **CSDP and Ukraine**

- In view of the end of the current mandate of the EUMAM military training mission in November 2024, the potential and options for carrying out (parts of) the training on Ukrainian soil could be explored in order to connect the training more to ongoing operations, to the environment and to in-place weapons instruction and maintenance, and also to send a clear signal of European support to Ukraine.
- The EUAM civilian mission should be optimised: EU member states should send qualified experts timely and for extended periods of deployment in Ukraine.
- The options, and the pros and cons of launching a civilian executive mission to assist Ukrainian civil security actors – such as border guards, fire brigades, mine clearing services, and emergency relief organisations – should be explored, also in order to free personnel that could be rerolled to assist the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

### **CSDP and Moldova**

- The EUPM mission should be expanded for assisting and advising Moldova on strengthening resilience in view of the 2024 presidential and 2025 parliamentary elections, with a specific focus on strategic communications and promoting free media.
- A contingency plan should be developed for the deployment of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity in view of crisis management in a case of growing tensions with Transnistria that could lead to an escalation.

### **CSDP and Georgia**

- In view of the October 2024 parliamentary elections, and taking into account the increasing tensions in Georgia, the scope for extending the mandate of the EUMM mission should be explored with the aim of assisting in strengthening resilience in the country or, after the elections and depending on the results, considering a new mission with a dedicated mandate.

### **CSDP and Armenia**

- As the country is in need of international security assistance, but in a complex situation with Russian troops on its soil, for the moment the EU could consider extending the mandate of the existing EUAM border monitoring mission to strengthen the rule of law in Armenia as well as its resilience.

### **CSDP: EU-NATO**

- Both organisations should explore how their comparative advantages to assist Ukraine in its war against Russia can be best applied, with the EU extending its CSDP missions and NATO focusing on strengthening collective defence and preparing Ukraine for its membership of the Alliance.
- The work in the context of the EU-NATO Structured Dialogue on Resilience should be prioritised in order to strengthen the complementarity of the activities of both organisations in support of Ukraine.

CSDP missions have developed over time, from crisis management in the Balkans and Africa to security support to neighbouring partner and membership candidate countries in Europe. With the Russian threat unlikely to be reduced in the years to come, the European call for CSDP should be taken as more than a short-term phenomenon. CSDP missions have become an important instrument of the EU's ambition to strengthen its geopolitical role. This requires a strategic rethinking of European security and defence – including its further implications for CSDP missions.

### About the Clingendael Institute

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